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Parsiana

November'79—February '80 Vol. 2 No. 11

READERS' FORUM	3
EVENTS AND PERSONALITIES	5
ZOROASTRIANS ABROAD	11
NEWS FROM THE MEDIA	15
NEW ZOROASTRIAN PERSONALITY Porus Cooper	20
IRAN'S BOAT PEOPLE Gustasp Irani	22
LAND'S END? Gustasp Irani	25
AUTOBIOGRAPHY : DASTUR DHALLA III	29
WORLD CONGRESS PAPERS: KEEPING PACE WITH CHANGE	33
IN MEMORIAM	38
COMMENT: ASHA'S SEARCH FOR TRUTH Behram S. Deboo	40

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In Memoriam

Mr. Fali Meherji Variava

Director

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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.

Apex Body

The Trustees of the Parsi Panchayat have been telling us time and again that they are essentially a body created for managing various trusts and properties and that they do not represent the community in religious, social, cultural, ethnic, economic and other matters of the community. In other words 60,000 Parsis of Bombay, forming over 70% of the total world population of Parsis have no representative body elected by them and that too in one of the worlds most advanced metropolice of a democratic country.

There is an immediate need for creating a representative apex body elected by adult franchise. No section of the community is to be left out of the electoral rolls. Rules should be so framed and amended that no vested interest creep in or take advantage of them. The question of accountability of every member of the body's working committee as well as all honorary and paid office bearers should be dealt with in detail. Our cardinal objective should be to keep politics out at any cost and to keep the body uncorruptible.

The word charity has played havoc with our community. Doles distributed over the last 50 years could have built and financed a large number of enterprises and spared the poor Parsis the utter humiliation of lining up each month to receive a dole of Rs. 3 to Rs. 5. Instead they would have been employed and had the opportunity to earn a living with self-respect.

One of the responsibilities of the body should be to open the eyes of the community by conducting surveys to determine the literacy and employment rate in the community. Since the last few years the Parsi population has been falling at an alarming rate. Against approximately 1,100 deaths in the community per year only 500 are born each year.

If the apex body is launched on firm grounds and can provide comfortable housing, with good education and the opportunity to earn good incomes, the community by 2000 A.D. should be able to hold its head high once again.

And why not? we are so few.

R. J. KATILA

Bottom Post

Men folk have not brought about inter-religious co-operation, though there have been conferences of religions. I wished that women folk should be given a chance. Consequently I started the "Order of the United Religions" made up of mostly women, if not exclusively of women. The object of this "Order" is to bring about a body of "United Religions" as there is of the "United Nations."

To do that I believe we should have a force of women. There should be one World Commander-in-Chief, another Commander-in-Chief of the British Commonwealth & Europe and one of the Americas. These Commanders are authorized to appoint "Champions of the Order of United Religions", in different countries and States. These "Champions" have the authority to appoint "Captains" in towns and these "Captains" have the authority to appoint "Lieutenants" in districts of towns.

Thus I had the honour of appointing Her Imperial Highness Princess Ashraf of Iran the World Commander-in-Chief, and H.R.H. Princess Margaret of Great Britain the Commander-in-Chief of the British Commonwealth. I have not received any communication from them declining to accept the appointment. Perhaps they communicated but the Karachi postal service did not deliver these to me.

Some seven years ago Dr Ernest Key, Litt. D. Dr Journalism & F. R. S. A. sent four autographed books of his authorship none of which the postal service has delivered to me. About five years back the "grand-prix" for "Idealistic Literature" was sent from Brazil. The postal service delivered the diploma but not the prize. I wrote to Brazil and was assured the prize was posted to me.

Early in 1978, the "National Society of Published Poets", Riverview, Florida, U.S.A. awarded to me the first prize for my poem but it is August and the prize is not delivered to me. I appointed Dr. (Miss) Lou Lu Tour the Commander-in-Chief for the Americas, 1270, Fifth Avenue, New York 10029, U.S.A. and the lady has responded. Any one wishing to be appointed to represent the "Order of United Religions" is requested to apply to her.

I will be very happy to receive any such application, and to appoint representatives, but the wonderful Karachi postal service may not deliver the letters to me.

PESHOTON SOARABJI GOOLBAI DUBASH
'Villa Esperanta'
7, Katrak Parsee Colony, Karachi 3, Pakistan.

A Hundred Year Ago

An American View Of The Parsees Of Bombay

.... The Parsee merchants are the sharpest, shrewdest, most enterprising, and progressive class in India. The trade of Bombay has long been in their hands or under their management in one capacity or another. The fame of Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy reached America long years ago, and his benefactions to Bombay are to be seen on every hand. But at present despair and gloom reign in almost every godown and counting house, and commercial adventure is at a standstill...

Before the cotton crash of '65 the richest Parsee in the world was Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, whose fortune, divided among his three sons, was 80 lakhs, or 80,00,000 rupees ($4,000,000 less exchange). A man of five lakhs stood just at the threshold

of the temple of Plutus where rich men are worshipped. Let me show you how he spends his income:

	Rupees per month
Rent of bungalow, if hired, or its equivalent in interest on cost	150
Servants (indoor and outdoor)	100
Horses and carriages, keeping	80
Table expenses for the family (say of two adults and four children)	800
Dress of whole family (which includes rich satin wraps for the wife and daughters, but not dress making, for the Parsee ladies have no need of dressmakers, their clothes being almost altogether long wraps, which they wear without the help of pins, hooks, eyes, buttons or buckles), an average of	200
Entertainment of guests at table	100
Grand ceremonies, such as the investiture of boy or girl at the age of 7 with the peculiar shirt or sudra and waist cord — kusti — and the marriage feast	100
Total average monthly expenses of an average family of a Parsee of five lakhs fortune	1030

New York Sun.
Times of India.

'Imam Khan' at the Shiraz Parsi Dharmshala

He looms large a shadow
Morning
The cypress avenue
He is caretaker — gardener
He labors
A pomegranate ripens to a crack
He contemplates
His hat is his marking
No other god-sign will he accept
Sowing dog-bones in a bed
So the greens grow better
Turning over
The soil
His credential:
The 'mobed' took him in
Searching out his root in Yezd
Bonafide
Imam Khan is beneficiary and bounty
So the sparrow too is fed.

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Events and Personalities

"The Best Thing"

"I think it's the best thing I can give my children." The gift that **Ms Tehmina Alphonse,** a Parsi married to an American, gave her 7-year-old daughter, **Lylah,** was the performance of her navjote ceremony. The navjote was performed on 2 August at Greenlands, the Andhra Pradesh Guest House in Secunderabad, by Dastur Framroze Bode and two other mobeds from Hyderabad.

"I felt nice, but just a little nervous," says Lylah. "I know all the (kusti) prayers and I say them twice a day. I like the navjote being done." The Alphonses intend to have the navjote of their other two children, also performed.

"I had told Gerard (her husband) that any children we have would be Zoroastrians and he agreed. The mother's influence is a very strong one and it is just right that they (the children) take up the mother's faith," notes Tehmina, who resides in the U.S.A. She points out that with the Jews it is the practice that the children not only follow the faith of their mother but also use her name. "Gerard," she adds "is a Roman Catholic who lives his religion."

Except for a few people who threatened the other mobeds accompanying Bode there was little opposition to the navjote, either from both the families or the local Parsi anjuman, says Tehmina.. Only one of the mobeds, "who was next in succession to becoming the high priest, dropped out from the navjote," says Tehmina. The navjote, which was attended by the members of the anjuman, was held in India because Tehmina's mother, Roda Mistry, wanted it to be held in the twin cities rather than in the U.S.A. "My mother was very adamant from the beginning that the children be taken into the faith," Tehmina states.

Tehmina and Gerard were married in the U.S.A. where they reside and work. No *ashirwad* was performed when they returned to India but the high priest of Secunderabad and Hyderabad blessed the couple. Tehmina runs the Curries and Spice Cooking School in Princeton, New Jersey and also provides bread to three restaurants daily. "There is a lot of enthusiasm for Parsi food (in the U.S.A.)," she says. Her husband works for the RCA Corporation in Princeton. Next in line for the thread ceremony are Lylah's two brothers Navroze, aged five and Cyrus, aged three.



Dastur Bode and Lylah: 'little nervous...but nice.'

'77' Spokesman

A Pakistan diplomat, **Jamshed K. A. Marker,** has been selected by the Group of 77 Developing Nations to represent their case on monetary and financial issues before the developed nations.

Marker, who is Pakistan's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations European Headquarters in Geneva as well as a member of the country's delegation to the UNCTAD-V conference in Manila in May 1979, will have to convince the technologically advanced nations to transfer some of their resources to the developing world.

Marker started his diplomatic career in the 1960s when he went to Ghana as Pakistan's representative. He was later posted to Rumania, the USSR, the German Democratic Republic, Japan and eventually as his country's permanent representative and ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, in which capacity he presently serves.

Early this year Marker lost his wife, Diana, who died of cancer in Geneva on 4 January. A letter in the *Pakistan Times* noted: "she gave of herself unstingingly, representing Pakistan in international conferences, writing her own speeches, campaigning for her country's point of view, unmindful of her slowly deteriorating health."

Noted Zoologist

She works with rats and scholars and brushes shoulders with the world's leading authorities in Zoology. Her name appears in the "Directory of Indian Women Today—1976", "Famous India, Nations Who's Who—1977" and "Reference Asia — 1977" The noted Parsi is **Dr Ms Niloufer Jamshed Chinoy,** a research zoologist and lecturer in Zoology at the Gujarat University, Ahmedabad.

Dr Ratan Marshall of Surat sent *Parsiana* Chinoy's bio-data which runs into 11 typewritten sheets to list her achievements, all primarily in the field of academics and Zoology; an additional 18 sheets list her 127 publications in scientific journals in India and abroad.

Born on 17 October 1939, Chinoy finished her schooling in 1956 from Queen Mary's in Delhi and then joined the Delhi University from where she obtained her B.Sc. and M.Sc. in Zoology in 1959 and 1961 respectively, in both instances topping the merit list with a first class. In 1966, she was awarded her doctorate degree from the M.S. University of Baroda, her thesis being "Studies on some aspects of the structure and physiology of the vertebrate skeletal muscles."

The scholarships and other distinctions she has received run into 18



Chinoy: 'rats and scholars'

items, including a three year research grant by the World Health Organization (WHO), and an invitation to participate in a research and teaching programme at Rutgers Medical School in New Jersey, U.S.A. She is also a member of 10 national and international societies, and was invited to participate in 32 conferences, seminars and symposiums held in India and abroad.

In 1971 she received official recognition as a guide for Ph.D. students and since then has helped a number of students obtain their degrees.

A Good Account

While the Bombay Parsi Panchayat struggles in vain to keep pace with accounting deadlines, the other anjumans, panchayats and associations in India are coping efficiently with the task. Though their work load is less, so are their staff and resources. The Surat Parsi Panchayat recently published its accounts, copies of which were reportedly sent to donors and others; the Borivli and Suburban Zoroastrian Association sent cyclostyled copies of their audited statement of accounts for 1978 to members, donors and subscribers of their newsletter while the Poona Parsi Panchayat, the second largest Panchayat in India, has prepared cyclostyled copies of their audited statements for 1977.

The annual report of the Poona Panchayat notes that 13 meetings of the Panchayat were held during the year, out of which four trustees, including the president, Pesi S. Anklesaria, were present at all the meetings.

Aware of the Panchayat's need to maintain good relations with the community, an eight member public relation committee has been formed; a proposal to build two or three buildings for poor and middle-class Zoroastrians is under consideration and a building fund has been started. A subsequent newsletter of the Panchayat reports that the body has submitted plans for these new buildings to the Poona Municipal Corporation. The news bulletin adds that because of better financial management and investment of funds and a generous increase in donations, the Committee for Medical Help, Grain and Education Aid has been able to step up its help to needy families, not only in terms of an increase in the number of beneficiaries, but also in the quantum of assistance in each case.

According to the report, the total number of Panchayat members from the five registers is 701 out of a total Poona Parsi population around 6,000. The assets of the Panchayat are stated to be over 15 lakhs and it has an annual income of over Rs. 1,60,000.

Trustees of the Panchayat are: Persi Shapoorji Anklesaria, Pershi Ardeshir Chindhy, Maneck Nusserwanji Anklesaria, Nozer Hormusji Homji, Dr Ms Roshan Nadirshaw Minocherhomji, Ms Homai Nusserwanji Pudumjee and Rustomji Burjorji Patel.

The Athornan Aid Trust, Poona, a body working "for the amelioration of the priestly class since 1966," has also published their accounts for the year ending March 1978. The Trust handed out cash and household items to 15 priests and 23 religious workers. According to the Annual Report of the trust, the trust conducts religious study classes in three schools in Poona "where over 80 Zoroastrian boys and girls are taught the details of our prayers.....(and) the history" of ancient Iran by Ervad Minocher Maneckji Karkaria. The office bearers of the trust include chairperson Mehroo Rustomji Boga, co-chairperson, Ms Frannie Bejonji Boywala, honorary treasurer, Ms Rati Jal Ginwala and honorary secretary, Noshir Ardeshir Press.

The accounting statement of the Borivli and Suburban Asociation for 1978 shows that the total assets of the Association were Rs. 7,505.82 while the income for the year was Rs. 3,840.80.

Learn and Earn

Cash incentives have been introduced by the "Dharam Gnan Varg" religious classes in Poona to encourage the younger members of the community to study Zoroastrianism, according to the minutes of a Dharma Shikshan Mandal meeting. The three year advanced Avesta course for children over 12 offers each student Rs. 50, Rs. 75 and Rs. 100 on completion of the first, second and third year respectively, notes the report. The programme, which started in 1972, includes courses in the Avesta language, the life of Zarathushtra, and the history of the Zoroastrian religion and ancient Iran and is held every Sunday.

The minutes also report the nature of the other classes for children in the age group of four to twelve. The very young are taught prayers by rote and their meaning, while those who are 10 and above are given the religious and spiritual significance of these prayers. A select group is taught Avesta and Gujarati and learn to write the prayers in these scripts. In addition the significance of the navjote, sudreh, kusti and other aspects of Zoroastrianism is also explained.

Ms Jeroo Pudumjee of Poona writes to say that the activities of the Mandal began in 1962 under the presidentship of the late Prof. D. D. Kapadia, the then president of the Poona Parsi Panchayat. Sorabji R. Gandhi, who began and conducted the religious classes for many years, has now handed over the responsibility owing to failing health to Ms Shirin Dastur, the joint secretary, and Ms Zinobia J Aga, a member. Gandhi, however, still maintains affiliation to the classes in the capacity of a guide and advisor.

Pudumjee adds that the Mandal is operated purely on a voluntary basis and is funded by sympathetic donors. Dr Dinshaw D. Kerawala, principal of the Law College of Poona and former principal of the Petit Technical Institute, is the present president of the organization.

Lucknow Housing Project

Three of the six proposed flats of the Lucknow housing project for poor Parsis have been completed, according to Ms Bapsy B. Khodaiji, the social secretary and former president of the Lucknow Parsi Anjuman. The foundation stone of the six flat building, the Kaikhashru Hormusji Katrak Block, was laid on 21 March 1978 on the property belonging to the Lucknow Parsi Anjuman.

The original cost of the housing project was estimated at Rs. 2,10,000 or Rs. 35,000 per flat. However, with escalating prices, Khodaiji writes that the cost of each flat now could well be Rs. 40,000. A donation of Rs. 40,000 from the late Kaikhashru Katrak and Mr and Ms Noshir Dhanjibhai Surty got the project started.

"Names of all those who donate Rs. 1,000 and above," Khodaiji says "will be engraved on the main slab of

the block. Those who donate for one flat...that flat will be named as desired by the donor." Cheques or bank drafts may be issued in favour of Lucknow Parsi Anjuman, New Building Fund, and sent to the Lucknow Parsi Anjuman Office, C/o B. B. Khodaiji, 14 Gautampalti, Lucknow 226 001.

Khodaiji also writes that eight families are staying in the existing structures on the Anjuman property. Of these "six are widows and the rent of one widow is subsidised by the Anjuman besides giving her monetary help of Rs. 60 per month." She adds that "according to Government rules this (the new six-flat block) is perhaps the last building to be constructed in our Anjuman compound."

In Memoriam

The Vice-president of the Borivli and Suburban Zoroastrian Association (BSZA) **Sohrabji R. Painter,** who died on 7 August 1979 at the age of 59, was a founder, life member of the Association, and "one of the oldest Parsi residents of Borivli who took a very keen interest in the affairs of the Association and attended almost all the functions," notes the BSZA newsletter.

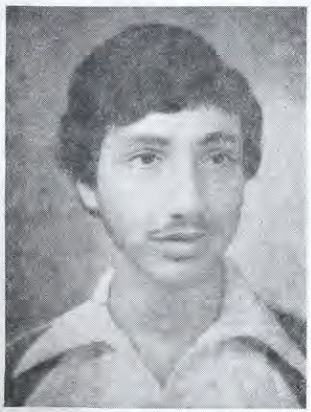
According to the bulletin, members of the Association scheduled a condolence meeting for 8 September to mourn Painter's death and to "pass a resolution expressing deep sorrow." Painter leaves behind his wife, two sons and a daughter.

Don't Discard

The next time you discard a greeting card Ms Jerbanoo B. Deboo, a social worker, requests you to redirect it her way. Deboo and her colleagues will touch up the cards be they pateti, christmas, diwali, birthday, get-well, anniversary or any other card and prepare them for resale. Proceeds from the sales of these cards are distributed between various charities, notes Ms Deboo. In 1977, she says, Rs. 6,222 was donated to lepper and blind homes, hospitals and other institutions including Rs. 1,300 to the cyclone relief fund. In 1978 the figure was Rs 6,515, including Rs. 901 for the flood relief fund, she notes. Cards may be sent to Ms Deboo C/o Leach & Weborny Washing Company, Hamam Street, Fort, Bombay 400001 or at her residence at 3/5 Tata Mills Housing Society, Parel, Bombay 400 012.

Dr P. S. Dastur

In the January 1978 issue, *Parsiana* had referred to the late Dr P. S. Dastur in whose memory the P. S. Dastur Memorial Award was instituted by the Alumni Association of the Government Dental College, Bombay. Through an oversight Dastur's initials had appeared as D. P. instead of P.S. The error is regretted.



Soonawalla: Bhavnagar Award

SPOTLIGHT

Jamasp Jal Madan has won the coveted "Ideal Agent" Award for 1978 from the Association of L.I.C. Agents. Madan, who is 49, has sold 2,300 policies and has to his credit business in force of Rs. 2.75 crores, mostly under the salary saving scheme ..... **Ms Vera Confectioner,** a 25 year-old deaf student from India, has graduated in liberal arts from Gallaudet College, Washington, reputed to be the only accredited liberal arts college for the deaf in the world. The BA degree awarded to her bears the signature of the President of the United States of America...**Phiroze Fardoon Soonawalla** has been awarded the Bhavnagar State Scholarship for topping the merit list of students seeking admission to medical colleges throughout Bombay. Hailing from a family of well-known doctors, 17-year-old Phiroze has been admitted to the G. S Medical College and K.E.M. Hospital...**Ms P. D. Anklesaria,** a Bombay lawyer who won the Mithroff Editorial Scholarship of the University of the Pacific, Salzburg, Austria left for Austria on a four month study tour. Anklesaria has also secured placement in the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation ... **Kashmira Marazban Bharucha** topped her class in the final BA Sociology examination from the Maharaja Siyajirao University, Baroda. A first class first student she was the joint honorary secretary, accounts, in the sociology Students Association of her University...

Jimmy Patel, of Pune, was awarded the "Sahyadri Shree — 79" title for the Maharashtra-level open best physique competition held recently in Bombay. Patel, who also holds the current Mr Maharashtra and Mr India titles was elected to represent India in the Mr Asia contest to be held in the Philippines.....**Dilnaaz M. Patel,** immediate past president of the Mahalaxmi Jaycees, has been awarded the Certificate of Merit by Jaycees International as the "Most Outstanding Jaycee of the Year" at the recent Hong Kong conference. Patel was the only Indian to receive recognition at this conference.....An invitation by the German Foundation to attend an International seminar on 'Role of Liberalism' in the 'North South Conflict' at Spain has been extended to 19-year-old **Ms Kashmira Sutaria** of Bombay...**Ms Rashna Boywalla** was chosen as 'Miss Mermaid — 1979' at the National Maritime Day Ball in Bombay recently.....Noted homeopath, **Dr S. R. Wadia,** who was on a three-month tour of the United States, is reported to be the first Indian homoeopath to be invited by the National Centre for Homoeopathy to deliver a series of lectures at the annual refresher course in Millersville... **Jamshed N. Guzder,** managing director of National Peroxide and director of Bombay Dyeing was elected the president of the Indian Merchants Chamber...**Ms Roda Mistry** was elected president of the Indian Council of Social Welfare for 1979-81 at the biennial session held recently in Hyderabad.

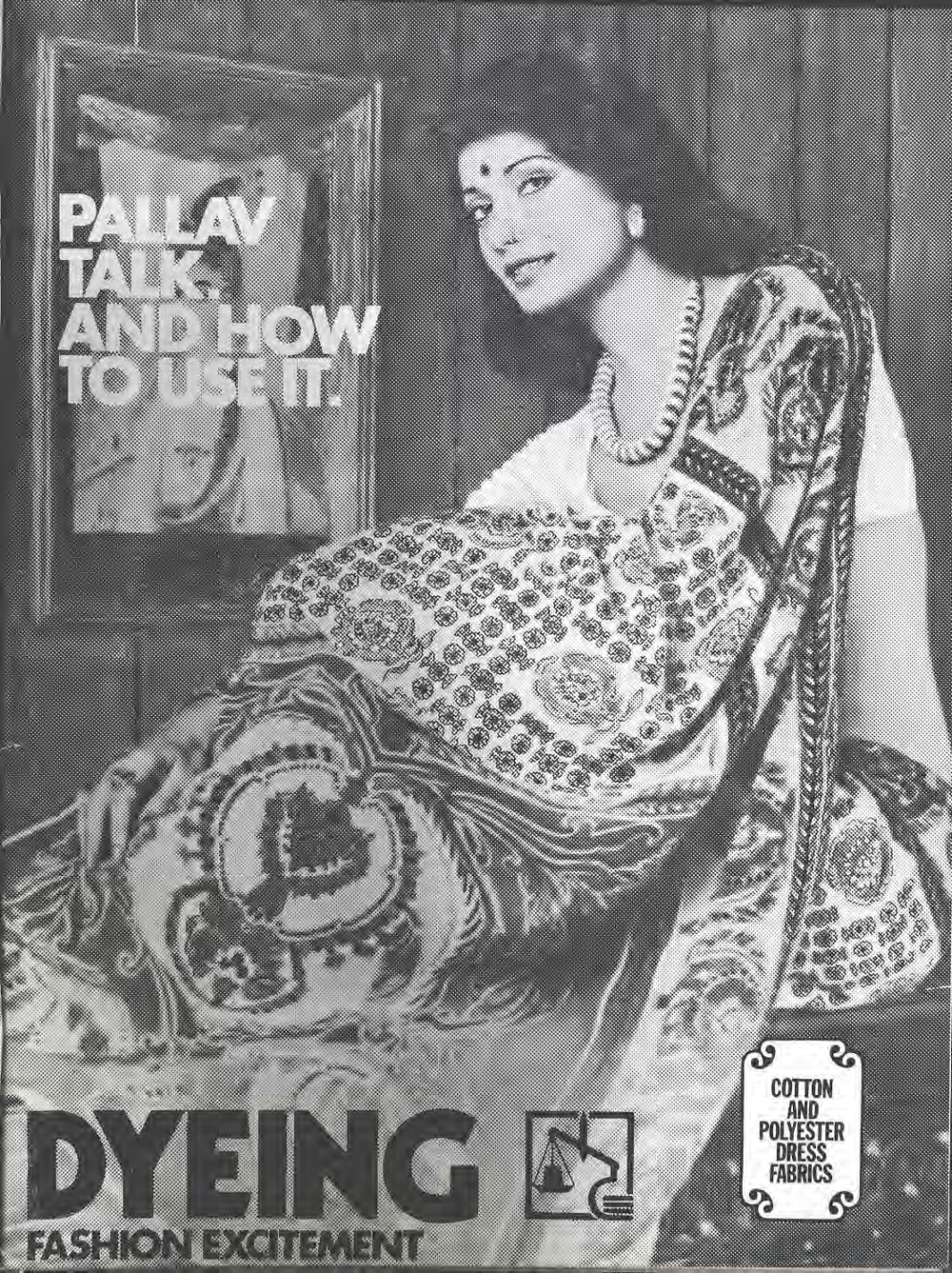
The New Fire Temple

At Isfahan

It is marble
A staircase leads upwards
The roof slants in rays to a chimney
Topped by a ziggurat
Conceived by a parsi
Two stenotypists in piety donated plaque
Their names though misspelled are lasting
Outside a stone-carver
Labors lovingly on the haunches
Of a Bull-Man (he doesn't believe)
He shall remain

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TIMES ART

Historic Landmark

The story of the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZSBC) one of the oldest Zoroastrian associations on the North American continent, is told in a 372-page tome titled 'The Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia 1968-1978'. Compiled by Jamshed Pavri, the ZSBC's honorary secretary since its inception, and published by the Society, the mimoeographed, typewritten volume contains a wealth of information on the pioneering activities of the community in the New World.

"The principle objective of this undertaking," Pavri writes in the preface, "is to inform our community members" whom he expects "will keep the book safely for their children." He also hopes that "at least every 10 years, future generations will bring out such books to maintain a proper record of their Anjuman body."

With painstaking effort Pavri has compiled together minutes of important board and general body meetings. annual reports, financial statements, the constitution and by-laws of the Society, papers prepared for special occasions, condolence messages sent by the Society in case of deaths in the community, a list of navjote ceremonies performed by members and lists of members and directors; also included are selected articles on the Zoroastrian religion and its roots in Iran and the New World and the Fasli and the Parsi Shenshahi calender, the latter from 1756 to 2632 A.D. when the calendar will eventually correct itself.

"Our ultimate hope happens to be that in the years to come, there will evolve a genuine Zoroastrian Anjuman of Canada — or North America," the minutes of the first meeting prior to the establishment of the Society records. The constitution spells out the objectives in greater detail: "To promote the interests and welfare of, and render necessary service to Zoroastrian residents in British Columbia...to promote knowledge of the Zoroastrian religion...to preserve, maintain and carry out purposes of the Society." The last item refers specifically to acquisition and maintenance of burial grounds, land and buildings for worship or schools, donations and gifts, and the maintenance of relationships with other Zoroastrian bodies.

Subsequent reports give a fair idea of what the Society has achieved. For instance, ZSBC project for the blind, whereby five eye-camps were established in Uttar-Pradesh, or its yearly Navroze present of a navjote ceremony to a needy child in India, or hosting the celebrations on Friday August 21, 1970 officially recorded as Zoroastrian Day in Vancouver Citizenship Court.

The 11th annual report of the Society suggests the degree of integration that has been achieved not only with other Zoroastrian communities in North America but also with the local community of British Columbia as a whole. "We participated in B.C. (British Columbia) Interfaith Thanksgiving service at Temple Sholom on October 8, 1978 and the Disarmament Week prayer meeting at the Canadian Memorial Church on October 29, 1978. Ervad Ardaviraf Minocher-Homji read from the Gathas at both these meetings," the report states. Another section of the annual report records the first meeting of the "Zoroastrian Associations of North America" on October 7, 1978 in Montreal which was attended by representatives of New York, Chicago, Toronto and Montreal. "It was too expensive for our Society to send a representative to attend the meeting," the report adds.

Membership to the Society grew from 20 at the time of its inception in 1968 to 105 by 1978. Over this period Pavri estimates the Zoroastrian population of British Columbia to have grown from 51 to 268. He traces the community's roots back to 1859 when Rustamji Hiribhai came to New York ("He stayed for about a year and a half, had an interview with President Buchanan but eventually returned to Bombay") and the 1860s when Maneckji Framji Javeri was prospecting for gold in California and probably later in Bakerville which would have made him the first Zoroastrian to come to Canada, according to Pavri. Over the years other Zoroastrians visited the continent, first for business and later to settle permanently.

However, since there is no indexation of the various topics covered by the book a person desiring information on a specific subject might find himself reading more than what is required.

The idea of publishing the book was proposed at the 10th annual meeting of the Society on 15 April 1978. Pavri, a founder member of the Society and a member of the board of directors right from its inception, except for the year 1975/76, has been closely involved with all spheres of its activities.

Only 300 copies of the book have been printed and can be obtained at a cost of Canadian $5.00 each, plus postage, by writing to the Society at 5693 Heather Street, Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 3M3, Canada. "We (the Zoroastrian community in North America) all seem to have one thing in common," Pavri concludes in his forward to the book, "namely to leave to our progeny the excellence of our religion and heritage. Unless something concrete takes shape, this will remain only a dream."

ONTARIO

Study of Zoroastrianism

In addition to reading and conducting religious classes to learn about the religion, Zoroastrians abroad are turning to the academic community for scholastic guidance. A ten-lecture series on Zoroastrianism is fast becoming a regular feature of the academic programme of the School of Continuing Studies, at the University of Toronto. The course which was conducted for the first time in 1978-79 will be held once again during the academic year 1979-80, according to the newsletter of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO).

Solomon Nigosian, special lecturer of religious studies at the univeristy, who delivered the first series will once again be responsible for the current year's programme. "Nigosian's reputation within the University community ranks him as one of the most knowledgeable exponents of our ancient religion and history," the ZSO notes.

The current lecture series will cost each participant $70 and classes are scheduled for every Tuesday from 16 October to 18 December. Commenting on the 1978-79 programme which was conducted between 8 February and 12 April 1979 the newsletter notes, "The course encompassed Zoroastrianism widely — its historical development, the Prophet Zarathushtra and his sacred writings and teachings, the impact and influence of Zoroastrianism on other religions, and the present interaction of Zoroastrianism immersed in Hindu, Muslim and Christian cultures. Other topics such as how best to keep Zoroastrianism alive and well on the North American continent were also discussed. The enrolment from ZSO membership

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was fifteen only, but not one dropped out — in fact others joined in to 'audit' the lectures."

ZSO Committee

The Annual General Meeting of the ZSO on 17 June elected the following members as officers of the Executive Committee for 1979-80: Jehangir Karanjia, president; Shavak Madan, vice-president; Bahram Parsi, executive officer; Soonie Patel, secretary and Phiroze Dotiwala, treasurer.

The Committee has nominated the following to head the various sub-committees: Yezdi Antia, religious; Julie Agboatwalla, library; Sabar Patel, senior citizens; Yezdi Antia, directory; Moti Balsara, telephone; Kobad Zarodia, entertainment, Sabar Balsara, editorial & newsletter; Bahram Parsi, public relations; Noshir Parakh, youth & sports.

Making their Mark

Though small and relatively new, the Zoroastrian community in Canada is making its presence felt through the achievements of its members. According to the ZSO, **Jamshed Mavalwala** has been promoted to the rank of full professor at the University of Toronto's Department of Antropology...**Neville Austin** the son of Dina and Hosie Austin, has been awarded the Andrew Alexander Kinghorn Scholarship by the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto...and **Yasmin Shroff,** a furniture designer who operates her own workshop/studio — Yasmin Designs — won a certificate of merit for her desk-cum-dining chair design at a competition for Designer Craftsmen sponsored by the Cambridge Public Library and Art Gallery.

Gavashni, the publication of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, writes that Blanchard-Ness Ltd. was awarded the first prize for the best educational exhibit at the International Meeting of the Refrigeration Service Engineers Society, held in Montreal for their exhibit "Heat Reclaim from Refrigeration."

Pierre Trudeau 'at home'

The ZSO reproduces an extract from the 'Insight' column of the *Toronto Star* newspaper of 26 May 1979 which quotes **Pierre Trudeau,** the Prime-Minister of Canada, as follows: "In my formative years the people who influenced me most were the Christian existentilalists...I was inclined to judge the validity of a man's faith more by the depth of his roots in reality and brotherhood and love. So I felt more at home, shall we say, with some Zoroastrians in the Far East than I did with some Catholic missionaries."

NEW YORK

Sad but Inevitable

The "important issue on steps to be taken in case of death in our community and our responsibilities in arranging the ceremonies etc." are being initiated by the Board of Directors of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY). In the newsletter of July 1979 members of the Association have been provided with "Information Regarding Funeral Arrangements" available in North America and a questionnaire to assess the mood of the community in this "sad but still inevitable" matter.

The newsletter writes that "there are three ways of making the final disposition (in America): cremation, burial, and bequeathal of the body for medical science.

"The services for appropriate disposition can be made in advance with various licenced funeral directors through a number of memorial societies. A memorial society is a voluntary group of people who have joined together to obtain dignity, simplicity and economy in funeral arrangements through advance planning.

"There are six types of services available through most memorial societies: immediate cremation, cremation with attendance at crematory, cremation with viewing and attendance at chapel, immediate burial, burial with viewing and attendance at chapel.

"On the average, the cremated remains weigh between four and six pounds and will occupy a standard container of 180-200 cubic inches. Some crematoriums have provided small garden areas in their property for the scattering of cremated remains., often with the option of individual identification."

The questionnaire that accompanies this information is aimed at obtaining feed-back on the community's reaction towards the different methods of disposition of the dead and the degree to which the Association should help in matters like acquiring a common burial plot for Zoroastrians, establishment of religious guidelines for funeral services, making arrangements with memorial societies and forming its own memorial society.

North Ameria: Mistree's good word

The North American tour of Khojeste Mistree, the charismatic, Oxford educated scholar-cum-preacher on Zoroastrianism who is familiar to audiences both in India and abroad, proved to be a tremendous success in North

America judging from the ovations reportedly accorded him by the Zoroastrian communities of Quebec, Ontario and Greater New York. Between October and December 1978, Mistree visited Montreal, Toronto, Chicago and New York at the invitation of the associations, to spread the 'Good Word' about the Zoroastrian religion and its heritage through a series of lectures, informal discussions and audio-visual demonstrations. "Mistree's 'debut" the bulletin of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) writes "has proved that what the community seeks is more religious knowledge, either by word of mouth or through printed literature."

Perhaps the most spirited response to Mistree's message was from Quebec where the December 1978 issue of *Gavashni* was dedicated to his visit. Dr. Jehan Bagli writes in the editorial.

"With the power of his oratory, and his mastery over the Gathas, the Zoroastrian texts of the younger Avesta, and those of the middle Persian literature, Khojeste portrayed a picture of confidence in the religion of Zarathushtra sometimes overflowed into subjective opinion. With his ability to lighten the heavy weight of the subject he spoke of, he overwhelmed all those who heard him. With his critical judgement of the existing literature on our religion he removed once and for all the dilemma of credibility, by suggesting some definite alternative volumes. Finally, his transposition of the 3500 years old doctrine of the Mazdayasna religion, into an audio-visual of the most sophisticated order, using modern day techniques, was the best example of starting of an 'oral tradition' that today's generation can carry through centuries with confidence.

"In short, Khojeste did more than just stimulate the thinking (Good Thought), he actually started people talking (Good Words); and that is more than any visiting speaker ever achieved during his visit to this part of the world. These fires of enthusiasm must be continually fanned and Zarathoshties of today must learn to appreciate the finer doctrinal points embedded within the ritualistic performances."

Among the many others who paid their individual tributes to Mistree in *Gavashni* were Ness Lakdawala: "(He) awakened the inborn heritage of the Zoroastrian faith within us."; Kaiser Golwalla: "my life is so much the richer for it."; and Dinaz Mirza: "For many — especially the youngsters — it was their first structured exposure to our religion. Khojeste made religion come alive to us."

"He certainly had the Zoroastrian community in Ontario in flurry," the ZSO newsletter notes, "some agreed with his views and others agreed to differ. Nevertheless he inspired us. He introduced Zoroastrianism to us, explained the basic principles of the religion, the concept of two opposing spirits of Good and Evil and the Amesha Spentas, nature of prayer and rituals, the Navjote and Jashen ceremonies and the theory and practice of Zoroastrianism."

The Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York bulletin describes Mistree as "a young Zoroastrian who studied to be a Chartered Accountant in England (and in whom) a transformation took place and his interest in religion grew to such an extent that he gave it up and studied Zoroastrianism at Oxford and the University of London under Dr Mary Boyce. Because of the overwhelmingly positive response of our community to Khojeste's lecture series," the newsletter noted, "an additional lecture has been arranged."

Keeping track

The publication of directories has become a regular and essential feature of the Zoroastrian associations in North America.

The Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) has published the third edition of its directory with a total listing of about 256 member and non-member Zoroastrians living in the eastern states of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Philadelphia and the surrounding areas. The typewritten, mimeographed publication, interspersed with advertisements, also includes a brief list of select individuals under the title of "Contacts with Zoroastrians in Other Areas". In addition there is also a list of past and present members of the Board of Directors.

The smaller Quebec directory, the first of its kind for the Association, has about 78 entries of both member and non-member Zoroastrians living in the Canadian province. An interesting inclusion is a list of 24 Zoroastrian priests living in Quebec, Ontario and Vanvouver. Other features are the addresses of eight other community centres in North America a list of past presidents and present members of the Executive Committee, and the telephone numbers of frequently called or important institutions in Canada such as hospitals, government offices and police offices.

Copies of either directory may be ordered by writing to ZAGNY, Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr, 249 Weyman Avenue, New Rochelle, New York 10805, and The Zoroastrian Association of Quebec: P.O. Box 654, Station Tour De La Bourse, Montreal, Quebec H4Z 1J9.

SINGAPORE

Singapore's Vakil Honoured

"A large gathering of prominent Singaporeans met at the Raffles Hotel to honour the High Priest, Ervad



Dastur Vakil (second from right), who was honoured at a special function in Singapore, with chief guest Ghows (second from left), solicitor general of Singapore.

Behramgore Ratanshaw Vakil for his yeoman services to the Singapore and and Malaysia Parsis during the last 30 years," according to a report by Ms. Feroza R. C. Cooper of Singapore. "The Chief Guest of the function was the Solicitor General of Singapore, Mr. A. W. Ghows who recalled in glowing terms the selfless service rendered by Vakil at great personal sacrifice," the report adds.

The function, which was held on 29 July, was presided over by Ms Behroze Setna, the president of the Singapore Parsi Association. A citation by Rutton Patel, reportedly the oldest Parsi resident of Singapore, presented at the occasion says of Vakil: "he not only follows the principal tenets of the Zoroastrian faith — Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds—but also puts them into practice in everyday life."

Vakil according to the citation, became the high priest of the Parsi community in Singapore in 1949 and on 29 May 1954 convened the first meeting of the Parsi Association of Singapore. He represented the Pasis of Singapore and Malaysia at the First Zoroastrian Congress in Bombay and the World Conference on Religion and Peace in Kyoto and is the current representative of the Zoroastrian religion in the Council of Inter-Religious Organisation in Singapore. He is also the president of the Gita Ashram and the Hans Anderson Club and the governor of the Singapore Polytechnic and was a former president of the Lions Club of Singapore and former vice-president of the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce.

Vakil, who is the brother of the noted Bombay lawyer, Shiavax R. Vakil, was presented with a shawl and a gold memento by Ms. Nargis K. Medora on behalf of the members of the Association.

EUROPE

A grave problem

While the controversy over the use of dokhmas continues in India, the Zoroastrians in England are pondering the fate of eight graves in the Church of Berlin.

Shapur Captain notes that the Zoroastrian Association of Europe (Incorporated) "pays for the maintenance of a part of a graveyard belonging to the Church of Berlin. Eight Zoroastrians are buried there and the grave maintenance costs have now escalated considerably. I would like to make a general appeal to the relatives of those buried at Berlin (the graveyard), to undertake to contribute towards the maintenance costs of the graves and the cemetery every year.

"If we are unable to get a response from the families of the deceased we may have to stop maintenance payments, (although we will do our best to avoid this) in which case the graves will be dug up and re-used by the Church. I sincerely hope that we will not come to that stage and that the relatives to the deceased would respond to our request."

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News from the media

Under siege in Iran

Teheran, Iran — For more than 2,500 years, the Zoroastrians have suffered invasion, massacre, persecutions, conversion by the sword and exile. But they have survived — the last of the original Persians. Survived, but just barely.

And now these people, a tiny minority in a land awash with revolutionary fervor and Moslem orthodoxy, are threatened again. At least they feel under siege.

"We are very vulnerable here. We face great difficulties," a leader of the Zoroastrian community said, his voice soft with suppressed anxiety.

Four years after the death of Mohammed, Arab armies swept into Persia and imposed Islam on the land. Those who resisted were killed or fled, mostly to what is now India and Pakistan. The handful who stayed had to adopt Moslem law and pay a heavy poll tax, which was not lifted until early this century by the Reza Shah, founder of the Pahlavi dynasty and father of the deposed Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi.

In addition to the poll tax, Zoroastrians along with Jews suffered under other burdens of Moslem rule. They were forced to live in ghettos, wear identity badges and follow many islamic religious mandates.

An example of the treatment of Zoroastrians and Jews was a regulation prohibiting them from going outside during a rain. It was thought that rain washing over them would corrupt the ground.

Ever since such laws were rescinded by the Pahlavis, the Zoroastrians have been fairly treated, a community leader said, although no member of the sect has been eligible for high government or military office and the group has been limited to one member of parliament.

In return for improving treatment, the Zoroastrians gave Reza Shah and his son their political support.

It was explained that "in our religion we shouldn't do anything against the law of the land," the Zoroastrian leader said. "We should be faithful to the law of the land."

Besides, he said, "being such a small minority, we cannot do anything anyway."

The problems they now face seem to be more in the realm of anxiety than reality.

"The mullahs have been very kind to us, so far," one Zoroastrian said "but they may not be able to control all the people."

It is the ordinary Moslem that worries the Zoroastrians.

"It is the Iranian young people who don't understand our place here and they sometimes make trouble," one said. "Some have even charged we are Communists. They just don't understand the ideas of freedom and liberty."

Zoroastrian religious life here centers on a building in the downtown part of the city on what is called Zoroastrian Alley. Unpretentious from the outside, the building houses schoolrooms and meeting places on its upper floors. The first floor is the Zoroastrian sanctuary, where members of the community join in prayer five times a day, usually in the early mornings or evenings.

Although Tehran has more Zoroastrians, the religious center is really in and around Yazd in south-central Iran. Besides the main fire temple in nearby Kerman, the area also holds another major symbol of Zoroastrianism, the Towers of Silence.

Now the Zoroastrians have adapted in order to survive, generally following the burial practices of their rulers. The Towers of Silence no longer are used.

This attitude of accepting at least some of the majority's laws and practices is what Zoroastrians hope will get them through this unsettled time. So far, it seems to be working. Only three arrests of Zoroastrians by the Islamic revolutionary committees have been confirmed. There has been one report of Zoroastrian property being confiscated.

But there are signs of potential trouble. For instance, Zoroastrian schools are some of the best in Iran and depend heavily on Moslem students to help pay the costs. But some elements in Khomaini's government say that Moslem children should no longer attend non-Islamic schools.

Zoroastrians are highly educated, with more than 90% of their children attending college. They represent a percentage of the nation's doctors and lawyers far out of proportion to their size.

They tend to have a Western or cosmopolitan outlook because of their close relations with the larger Zoroastrian communities in England and India. Most speak several languages.

All this has led to resentment by many of their Moslem neighbours.

What to do to protect themselves? In a word, nothing.

Zoroastrian leaders here stay in touch with other minorities, particularly Jews, but this is a loose association and everyone is very careful to say that the contacts are not aimed at the present government.

Leaving Iran does not seem to be an attractive option for the Zoroastrians still here.

"We are not like the Jews, who can go to Israel, or even the Christians who have foundations in other countries," one Zoroastrian said.

"This is our home. We have been here thousands of years and left only when forced out. We have been here through very hard conditions."

KENNETH FREED

Los Angeles Times, 15/6/79

IN THE NEWS AND SPOTLIGHT

Do you know of any Parsi who has won distinction in any special field of endeavour or has merited a mention in the press? If you feel that such information will be of interest to our readers please send it to the Editor, Spotlight or In the News, Parsiana, G. P. O. Box 892, Bombay 400 001. Items are subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity.

In the News

Diana Ratnagar, chairperson of the Beauty Without Cruelty organisation, who has been campaigning in Bombay against cruelty and industrial exploitation of animals by leather goods manufacturers was stung by an editorial in the *Times of India*: "Imagine man, the most blood-thirsty of animals, shedding tears for the manner in which a snake is skinned or an aged buffalo left to die. The tear-shedder would rather save the cattle than look steadily at the sight of starving human derelicts, living in appaling conditions." In a re-joinder in the Letters Column Ratnagar hit back: "Ironically enough it (the question 'Why the concern about animals when so many human beings are starving') comes from those very people who, if asked to do something to alleviate human suffering, wouldn't help in the least. Reverence for all life is what counts and is true compassion."

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Children's Orthopedic Hospital in Bombay is eminent surgeon **Dr Perin Mullaferoze** for she has brought much sweetness and light into their lives," notes a Bombay *Free Press Journal* feature. Mullaferoze, who is a LRPC (London), a MRCP and a FRCS, is the Chief Orthopedic Surgeon and the Managing Director at the hospital. "A little enthusiasm and much idealism" is how she described the beginning of the project back in 1947, then a small clinic in a doctor's waiting room. Today the hospital has 50 beds and an out patient facility where 200 to 250 children come daily for treatment. Mullaferoze was also honoured with the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.) in recognition of her services during World War II. In 1943 she was appointed as Surgical Specialist with the rank of Major and rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel...

Ms Mehroo Boga, chairperson of the action committee of the Society for the Rehabilitation of Paraplegics (persons paralysed below the waist due to spine injury), disclosed the progress being made on the Society's undertaking to establish a Rs 25-lakh, 50-bed treatment-cum-training centre at New Bombay, according to the Bombayman's Diary column of the *Evening News of India*. Boga, the column writes, was also instrumental in establishing Asia's biggest paraplegic Home for disabled Jawans at Kirkee, Pune in 1974 and is also a member of the All-India Handicrafts Board and an honorary advisor to a pilot silk brocade weaving centre at Surat...

"A 78-year-old Parsi **(Manchershah Framji Suraliwala)** is a widely sought-after orthopedic physician in Bombay, though he does not hold any medical degrees," notes an *Indian Express* news item. What makes Suraliwala, who comes from the village Madhi in Surat district, sought after is that he is able to set the bones of his patients suffering from ailments like slip disc etc., by "thuds" and "kicks" and without the assistance of modern orthopedic gadgets or equipment...

Farrukh Dhondy, author of three books, "East End At Your Feet", "The Siege of Babylon" and "Come to Mecca", was the topic of discussion in the Bombayman's Diary column of the *Evening News of India*. Dhondy, according to the column "has mostly been writing about young Asians and blacks in England (and) got involved in their political movement in Britain."...

A. R. Balsara, managing partner of Balsara Hygiene Products was awarded the 1979 IMM Bata Gold Award for "Marketing Man of the year." The company, *Kaiser-e-Hind* notes, has grown from humble beginnings to be economically competitive with multinational giant companies which previously had monopolized certain markets like the toothpaste market...

When **Jal N. Billimoria,** who retired after 11 years as president of the Retail and Dispensing Chemists' Association (RDCA), was facilitated by the association, the *Evening News of India* sent a reporter to interview him. The RDCA, of which Billimoria was a founder member, has, apart from its struggle for better trade terms with pharmaceutical companies, also fought corruption in the Food and Drug Administration which resulted in a large scale reshuffling of officials in the organization, according to the report. Billimoria, who is the proprietor of Bills and Sons, recalls how over the years from 1932, when he opened his shop at Dadar, to the present day, modern drugs have been displacing the dispensing profession...

The "Meet Your Entrepreneur" column of the *Financial Express* Bombay, introduces **Minoo Marphatia,** proprietor of Mazda Electronics, to its readers. The focus of the article is on the man, Marphatia, and how a small-scale entrepreneur survives in the electronics industry in India. Marphatia says that business is "Real tough going...mine is basically a business of contacts." He explains that if he is unable to get orders from big manufacturers for assembling components his business suffers...

"Most of the heroines wear falsies also the vamps" the *Free Press Journal's* film reporter got his information straight from **Ms Mani Rabadi,** a leading costume designer of the film industry in Bombay. Commenting on her profession she says "In films everything has to be filmi. One can't go for realistic dresses and the real colour schemes unless it is an art film...the costume is designed with one eye on the star's figure and another on her image."...

"Slightly different from other taxi drivers is **Kersi Wadia,** perhaps one of the few Parsis to have joined the profession," is the theme of a brief news item that appears in the Bombay edition of the *Times of India*. Wadia according to the report, is not a member of any union and finds his work interesting as it gives him the opportunity to meet a variety of people every day...

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Third North American Congress

New Zoroastrian Personality



A view of the audience at the Third North American Congress. In the first row are Prof. Keki Irani of Columbia University (second from left) and to his left Dastur Firoze Kotwal, high priest of the Wadiaji Atash-Behram.

Porus Cooper

NEW YORK — Slowly but certainly a new Zoroastrian personality seems to be evolving on the North American continent. The trend ran distinctly through all the deliberations at the Third North American Zoroastrian Conference and Symposium hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) October 6 and 7.

The new personality is being shaped by what one speaker called the fear of being engulfed by the "electronic sea" of the New World where the handful of Zoroastrian immigrants from India, Pakistan, Africa and Iran have chosen to make their secular future. It is growing more and more anxious about the survival of the community as a distinct entity beyond the first few generations. It still looks to the traditional center of spiritual authority, Bombay, for the answers, but is despairing of getting them. It hopes for salvation in extending the characteristic adaptability of the community beyond the limits set by Bombay.

Officially the theme of the New York symposium was "Historical perspectives on Zoroastrianism." Under that heading it featured an array of scholarly presentations on the community's past in Iran and India. But that in many respects was only a corollary to the more immediate question of the community's survival and prosperity in the New World, a concern that was addressed in different ways and with varying degrees of urgency by speakers from 11 Zoroastrain groups in the United States and Canada.

The problem facing the community in the United States and Canada was perhaps best articulated by Dolly Dastoor, who combines motherhood with a career as clinical psychologist, and is president of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, in Canada: "We survived in an era when word of mouth was law; we lived in a time when religion and culture was transmitted in an environment where there was no opposition in the family. Today we live in a pluralistic society where all religious concepts are subject to debate, nothing is accepted at face value.

"We have often said that the hope for the future lies in our children, that we must educate them, have religious classes, etc. But what will we teach them? That we adult cannot agree on whether we should perform wedding ceremonies for non-Zoroastrian spouses? That we cannot agree on whether we should or should not permit persons not born of Zoroastrian parents to espouse the religion? That we adults cannot agree on the way of disposing of our dead? That the schisms which divide us in India remain with us and divide us still?"

If the problem was diagonised as survival, the remedy that was most often recommended was "communication." The word encompassed several elements. One participant interpreted it to mean the dissemination of information about the activities of the different Zoroastrian groups operating in North America. Another said it should involve the teaching of the scriptures in English to make them more interesting to youths who know no other language — an idea endorsed by visiting high priest Dastur N. Minochehr-Homji so long as the translation preserved the spirit of the original. A third speaker recommended the exchange of books and tape recordings on Zoroastrian religious and cultural subjects.

For the Iranian Zoroastrians and their sympathizers in the audience, apprehensive about the future of the community under fundamentalist Muslim rule in Iran, the main issue seemed to be the insularity of the community. The issue came to a head when Erach Munshi, a trustee of the New York association's Dabe Meher revealed that the community could obtain the protection afforded by affiliation with the United Nations only if it pledged to open up to converts from other faiths.

"We cannot have a close community in America," one Iranian Zoroastrian, less inhibited than his Parsi brethren from India, told Minochehr-Homji. The venerable high priest would not respond. The influential Iranian community leader, Dr. Rostam Sarfeh, even called for a vote on the issue. Later, talking to *Parsiana,* Dastur Firoze Kotwal, head priest of the Wadiaji Atash Behram in Bombay and currently a research scholar at Harvard University, said it was unreasonable to demand the summary scrapping of a tradition that has helped to preserve the community's identity for over a thousand years. The last public word on the

Dastur Minocher-Homji



Erach Munshi



Lovji Cama



Rustam Sarfeh



Keki Irani



Dolly Dastur



Jehan Bagli



Dale Bishop



Faroke Mistree



Alyar Debastani



Willard Oxtoby



Janet Amigli



subject was had by Faroke Mistree, brother of the charismatic Khojeste Mistree and visiting here from Sydney, Australia. You cannot vote on an issue without studying it, said Mistree suggesting the establishment of a committee of community experts to study it. There was no dearth of volunteers.

Later, as representatives of the particapating groups met in a caucus to discuss the formation of a federation, the issue cropped up again. Wasn't the issue of opening up the community the crux of the matter and shouldn't it be the chief aim of the proposed umbrella group, asked Adi Davar of the fledgling Washington, D.C., association. That set off a polite skirmish in which representatives from New York, Montreal, Vancouver, Chicago and Philadelphia-New Jersey argued that it would be futile to list issues before a mechanism was set up to deal with them. Washington then reserved its options and the rest went on to accept a name for the federation : United Zoroastrian Associations of North America (UZANA).

The tough logitsic of bringing together repesentatives of the far-flung oganizations promise to insure that UZANA will not become a reality very soon. There is only so much business one can do over the telephone or by mail.. Besides there are differing interests to reconcile. But Jehan Bagli, a past president of the Quebec association and the man chosen to coordinate the drafting of a constitution, says once it is formed the federation should make the community more effective in protecting its interest. It could become, for instance, a persuasive spokesman for Zoroastrians who may face political peril elsewhere in the world. In that sense, he told *Parsiana,* the New York conference was a greater success than the one in Chicago two years ago, where the idea of a federation was first suggested. "It is slow going, but at least it's going," he said.

Porus Cooper is a young Zoroastrian journalist in the U.S.A. A former editorial staff member of the 'Times of India' in Bombay, Cooper received a degree in journalism from Columbia University in New York and worked with 'India Abroad' before joining 'The Courier-Post' in New Jersey. He was invited to Israel recently on account of his editorials on the Middle East situation.

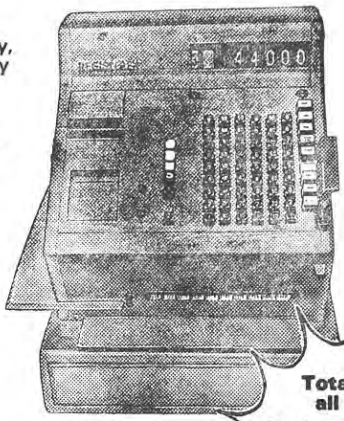
Cooper was present at the Third North American Congress which he covered for 'Parsiana' on an honorary basis.

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Iran's Boat People

Gustasp Irani

"We have become — what you might call — international nomads." Jeru G. Irani, might well have been articulating the sentiments of most of the other Indian Zoroastrians interviewed, who, like herself, returned to India in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution. Jeru, who worked as a secretary in a legal firm in Teheran for the last four years, was, however, commenting on the predicament of her family on their recent return from Iran.

All of those interviewed by *Parsiana* on their stay in Iran were undecided on whether to re-settle in India or go abroad again. The general mood was to move to other Middle Eastern countries. Many have already found jobs in these areas or are exploring the prospects of such openings. Given the choice, most would prefer to settle in the West but, as they themselves acknowledge, the possibility of getting there is more difficult. They fret about the prospects of settling in India again. Dara Billimoria, a Yale graduate and a senior engineer in Teheran construction company, summed up the mood when he pointed out that in India one has to reconcile oneself to "low salaries, high taxes and low savings .... after all we left India for those reasons in the first instance."

"Low salaries, high taxes and low savings . . . we left India for those reasons in the first instance' '

Since the early 1970s, a number of Zoroastrians from India set out in the spirit of enterprise and adventure to make their fortunes in the land of their ancestors which was blessed with oil and the promise of economic opportunity. Overcoming the problems of acclimatising themselves to an alien culture and language, most were able to establish themselves and start families there. However, their plans and dreams were swept aside with the onrush of the Islamic revolution which engulfed the country in early 1979. In the wake of the economic collapse that followed, they were faced with the problem of relocation once again. Some decided to stay on in Iran and hold on to what they had established, others moved to neighbouring Middle Eastern countries. Those who could, moved to the West, mainly the U.S.A., Canada and the U.K., and some returned to India.

More Hospitable Shores

The return to so-called fundamental Islamic principles in Iran, caused concern for the safety of Iranian Zoroastrians, the second largest Zoroastrian community, outside India. In Canada. three Zoroastrian associations, British Columbia, Quebec and Ontario, and in Australia, the Zoroastrian Association of New South Wales, wrote to their respective governments requesting their immigration departments to view applications of Iranian Zoroastrians sympathetically and to grant them refugee status. These requests were made on behalf of those who might wish to start their lives afresh on more hospitable shores.

While there is no news of the Australian government's response, the initial reply of the Canadian authorities was encouraging. They promised "sympathetic consideration" to applications made by Zoroastrians at their embassy in Teheran but suggested that this would apply only to Iranian nationals. In a subsequent letter, the Canadian government conveyed its ability to consider only those applicants who were sponsored by relatives in Canada.

Meanwhile for those who returned to India, the struggle to come to terms with their predicament goes on. Cawas Pardiwalla, a chartered accountant who worked for an international cosmetic and chemicals firm in Tehran, captures the ambivalence of the sentiments when he asks himself if the five years he spent in Iran should pose a problem to his readjustment to India where he spent the major part of his life. He thinks not. Pardiwalla is waiting for his new appointment from the company that he worked for in Iran, to one of its Middle East branches. He states that he would settle in India if he had to.

Jal Tafti feels otherwise. "I will never settle in India," says the B.Com. from India who did a mechanical engineering course in Iran and was employed by the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) as a pipe-line superviser Tafti subscribes to the *laissez-faire* philosophy and does not approve of the economic socialism of India. He would like to settle in the West but would not mind returning to Iran if he had the choice.

The disposition of employers was not favourable... their reaction was: you have come to the wrong place.

Darayush D. Irani, a B.Com., was offered a job in Dubai with the American based international oil service company he was with in Teheran. The few prospective employers that he has met in India had been, according to him, "sympathetic." Yet he noted that they were unable to make offers that would have met his minimum expectation which he felt was fair, given the Indian environment.

Apart from Darayush Irani only Perci Darukhanavala, a chartered accountant who was attached to the National Iranian Oil Company's (NIOC) refinery in Abadan, explored the possibility of employment in India. Darukhanawalla says that the disposition of employers was "not favourable .... their initial reaction was 'you have come to the wrong place.' " He explains that this not-so-encouraging attitude was influenced chiefly by the disparity between the salaries that they could offer and that which he earned in Iran. Darukhanawalla suspects that the employers were afraid that he would soon be dissatisfied and leave. He nevertheless, has some offers but is still undecided whether to accept or reject them. He is also considering the prospects of returning to Iran with his Iranian wife.

Accommodation is another matter of concern for those who were interviewed. Since most had lived independently in Iran, they are now appre-



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hensive of moving in with their families. Jeru Irani points out that "though the rents were high in Teheran, there was no *pagri* system and we could live comfortably without dipping into our savings." She feels that the choice in India is one between investing their savings in accommodation or establishing their own business. On the same premise, the Meher-Homji brothers Xerxes and Feroze, have invested their savings in apartments in Poona and are decided on returning to the Middle East to rebuild their capital to start their own enterprises. Xerxes, who was the assistant financial controller of an International five-star hotel in Teheran is awaiting his new appointment to one of the branches of the hotel in Saudi Arabia; while Feroze, who was the product engineer at the General Motors plant in Teheran, is exploring the possibility of finding employment in Dubai.

Deep Emotions

When talking about their experience in Iran an unsuspecting "we" when referring to the country hints at the degree to which they have come to identify with Iran. They discuss news items that have been dug out from tucked away corners of the newspapers just as they had combed the Iranian papers for news about India. They talk about the Shah and Khomenini as personal acquaintances. Surprisingly, they do not talk about the Shah returning to power but rather follow the activities of former Prime Minister Shapur Bakhtyar in Paris as best as they can. They feel that Bakhtyar, who ruled the country for 36 days before the revolutionary forces took over, might have the answers to Iran's problems.

They talk of the pre-revolutionary days, their struggle to establish themselves, of *Chelo Kababs*, of Iranian gourmet and customs that they have assimilated, of the good old days. They talk of the revolution, the fears that haunted them then, of the cold, candle-lit, nights they spent without fuel or electricity, music or television, of sporadic gunfire that interrupted the silence of the night or the chanting of protesters. They talk of the post-revolutionary Islamic courts, of the economic collapse, of shattered expectations, of the bitterness of having to eventually leave and of the homecoming. And in their talk they betray deep emotions for a country they knew but briefly and have come to identify with in a special way.

Would they have taken up Iranian nationality were it not for the revolution? "Never" was the emphatic response by Darayus Irani. "We are not fools", answered Nina, Feroze Meher-Homji's wife, who worked as a secretary with an American company that was installing the telephone system of Iran. Mahrookh G. Irani, who was the secretary-cum-office manager of a legal firm in Teheran, explains that the propensity to opt for citizenship or to stay on in Iran after the revolution was greater among the not-so-highly-qualified as they were more apprehensive about their prospects in India or abroad.

Those with families expressed the fear of bringing up their children in an environment alien to those they themselves grew up in and more specifically the problem of their children's education, a system they felt was suspect in Iran. Compulsory military service for two years was another deterrent from opting for citizenship. Perhaps the one common fear shared by all was the nagging suspicion that Iran's prosperity would not last long, a fear that was eventually well-grounded and confirmed by the revolution.

Did the fear of religious persecution of the minorities prompt them to leave? No, they say. However, they are cautiously apprehensive of such persecution becoming a reality in the future. Though the ruling clergy has reassured the minorities and there has been no blatant discrimination against the Zoroatsrian community they still remain sceptical especially of the common illiterate man who forms the backbone of the clergys popular sup-

(Please turn to page 39)

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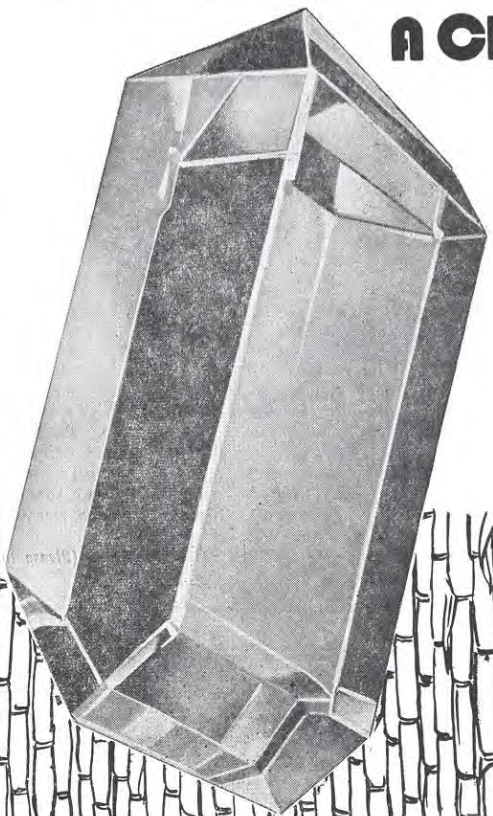
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Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman

Land's End?

Gustasp Irani

Under the pall of an impending court battle with the Government of Maharashtra over its claims to the Palghar lands, from which about 75% of its annual income is reportedly derived, the new General Committee of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman of Bombay took office earlier this year. The committee, which will serve for a period of five years from 1979 to 1984, faces perhaps the bleakest period in the 61-year history of the Anjuman. Members contacted were hesitant to commit themselves to statements about the Anjuman without first obtaining permission from the president, Noshir Muluk Irani, a noted Bombay businessman. They noted however, that with the Anjuman's claims to the Palghar lands which are situated near Dahanu in the Thane district of Maharashtra being sub-judice, the effectiveness of the organization will be severely impaired especially if the court decision should go against them. One viewed the future of the Anjuman as "depending on the Palghar land" while another saw "no future" without the land. The income from the land is said to be about Rs. 3,50,000 per annum.

The election to the General Committee which was scheduled for 14 April 1979 turned out to be a no-contest as only 19 nominations were filed for the 28 available seats. Consequently the 517 Irani Zoroastrians who registered themselves as voters did not get to cast their ballot. Bombay was the only constituency that had the makings of a potential showdown when six nominations were filed for its five allocated seats. The impending contest, however, fizzled out when one of the nominees withdrew his name to facilitate the unanimity of the eleciton. The withdrawee, along with others, was later co-opted to the body to fill in the uncontested seats. The total strength of the Committee is 40.

Another problem that frustrates the Irani representative body is its efforts to transfer the assets located in Iran to the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman of Teheran, a parallel but non-affiliated body in Iran. Processes set in motion to effect this transfer have come to a standstill since the new Islamic revolutionary government came to power in Iran early this year.

Ironically enough while the fortunes of the Anjuman body are on the wane durnig the re-emergence of Islamic fervour in Iran, it was back in the mid-nineteenth century when stringent Islamic restrictions on the minority communities were being relaxed, that the Anjuman traces its origins. Around 1850 the Parsi community in India started to be concerned over the plight of Zoroastrians living under the Islamic yoke back in Iran. In



Anjuman Building at Palghar

1854 Maneckjee Limji Hataria was sent to Iran by an ad-hoc committee to report on the conditions of the community there and during the same year the "Persian Zoroastrian Amelioration Fund" was established with Maneckji Nusserwanji Petit as president. Apart from providing material and financial assistance to the Iranian Zoroastrians, the Fund petitioned and prevailed upon the Iranian government to stop the discriminatory Jazia poll-tax upon religious minorities. The tax was eventually lifted in 1882.

The Fund also started to build schools, orphanages and hospitals for the Zoroastrians in and around Yazd and Kerman where the community was concentrated. Another function of the organization was to assist Zoroastrians re-locate in India.

In 1918 the Irani Zoroastrian residents of Bombay founded the Iranian Zoroastian Anjuman of Bombay in order to take a more active and direct responsibility for their brethren back in Iran. The assets and activities of the Anjuman started to grow as philanthropist donors entrusted the body to care for the various charitable contributions for the uplift of the community. These included a number of village schools in areas surrounding Yazd and Kerman, the Marker Orphanage Institution built by a founder patron of the Anjuman, Pestonji D. Marker, the Boman Maternity Home built by Gustad Khodadad Irani which was later handed over to the Iranian Red Cross, or 'Shir-e-Khurshed', to run, a vacant building that was once the Ratan Tata Memorial Hall and a plot of land at Tehran Pars.

In recent times many of the institutions, especially the village schools, have been lying vacant as there has been a migratoin of Zoroastrians, the youth in particular, towards the urban centres. According to an estimation by Sarosh T. Lohrasbe, who has been the Anjuman's representative in Iran since 1927, there were about 1,028 Zoroastrian families, or 6,000 Zoroastrians, living in and around Yazd in 1966. Since then there has been a steady exodus, mainly towards Tehran which has the largest concentration of the community at present.

In India Jamshed Khodoram Nassabadi, as a token of appreciation for the legal assistance that Dinshaw Jeejeebhoy Irani, a solicitor and founder president of the Anjuman. had rendered him in getting possession of the Palghar land, donated around 2,000 acres of the property to the Anjuman to administer for the benefit of the community.

The present problems of the Anjuman started in 1962 when the land

ceiling act came into force on 26 January. Though the law did not apply to charitable bodies like the Anjuman, it stipulated that any land above the ceiling limit should be in the actual possession of the organization at the time the law becomes effective. Since the Palghar land was occupied by a third party and not the Anjuman, the Government filed its claims to the land. However the Anjuman had already started court proceeding to obtain the eviction of the occupant before the law came into force. This formed the basis of the dispute which has led to a number of meetings, discussions, negotiations and the crux of the present court proceedings.

The functioning of the Anjuman was further impaired by the introduction of foreign exchange regulations and it found itself unable to remit adequate funds to support the running of its Iranian assets. Official sanctions were obtained to send Rs. 60,000 per year and in 1968 the last remittance of Rs. 30,000 was made For want of funds the institutions in Iran started to suffer. In face of the development the Anjuman decided to donate its Iranian assets to the parallel Iranian Anjuman of Teheran to administer. However, the efforts were frustrated, for the present time at least, with the change in government in Iran.

Apart from its claims to the Palghar land and its Iranian estates, the main assets of the Anjuman comprise of its offices at Kermani Building in Bombay's Fort area, securities with the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat and fixed deposits with various nationalised banks in India. Income from these and other sources are dispersed in the form of quarterly doles and educational assistance to poor Zoroastrians, grants to students for higher studies, contributions to other trusts and charities and the support of publication of books on the religion.

Recently the Anjuman reportedly donated Rs. 1,001 to the Golward Parsi Home and another Rs. 50,000 on behalf of the late Shapoor Irani to the Behramji Jeejeebhoy School towards the building of a laboratory. The school is reported to be the only Parsi school not taking grants from the government.

One of the members of the newly elected General Committee expressed the view that the idea of distinction between Irani Zoroastrians and Parsis is dated. He feels that there should be a closer working agreement between the Anjuman and the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, if not a total amalgamation. He notes however, that the Panchayat has been most un-cooperative in this matter, especially in the case of housing, where there were instances when the Panchayat has turned away requests from Irani Zoroastrians on the grounds that they should approach the Iranian Anjuman for help.

"I have always argued that our community is most spoiled. They expect too much from the trustees," noted Noshir M. Irani. president of the Anjuman, in an interview with *Parsiana* some years ago. Whether the fault lies with the leadership or the rank and file, the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman will have to chart new courses if it is to remain a viable body.

Who's Who Past and Present

Office Bearers of the First General Committee of 1918.

Dinshaw Jeejeebhoy Irani, president Dr Ardeshir Seheriar, vice-president; Hurmaz Seheriar, vice-president; Rashid Jamshed, vice-president; Rustom Khodadad Shehraiar, secretary; Behmard Noshirwan, secretary; Aspendiar Namdar Murzban Kuchebeyogi, treasurer; Merwan Rustom Kasnabia trustee; Pestonji Cursetjee Eranee (Aga), trustee; Rustom Sharukh Kermani, trustee; and Merwan Mondaigar Khorabadi, trustee.

Past Presidents

Dinshaw Jeejeebhoy Irani, Pestonjee Cursetjee Eranee (Aga), Rustom Hormuzd, Lt. Col. Merwan Sorab Irani, Pestonji Dosabhoy Marker, Burjor Sorabji Aga, Rustom Kharegat and Dr Major Aderbad B. Irani.

Present Office Bearers

Noshir M. Irani, president and trustee; Aspendiar T. Azarmi, vice-president and trustee; Shapur B. Irani, trustee; Kaikhushru M. Yezdegardi, trustee; Behram, R. Atai, trustee; Hoshang B. Bakht, trustee; Aflatoon K. Shokn, trustee; Soli H. Mubarakai, vice-president; Zal K. Eranee, vice-president; and Jamshed B. Aga, vice-president.

Working Committee Members

Dara F. Devlaliwalla, Khodayar K. Kyani, Firoz K. Firozi, Jehangir B. Irani, Rusi G. Yezdegardi, Meheraban K. Kola, Jamshed S. Kermani, Rustom G. Kushesh, Jamshed R. Ahrestani, Shapoor A. Irani, Keki J. Marker, Ms Soona J. Irani, Ms Goola K. Tafti, Peshotan D. Nargolwala and Noshir A. Udwadia.

General Committee Members

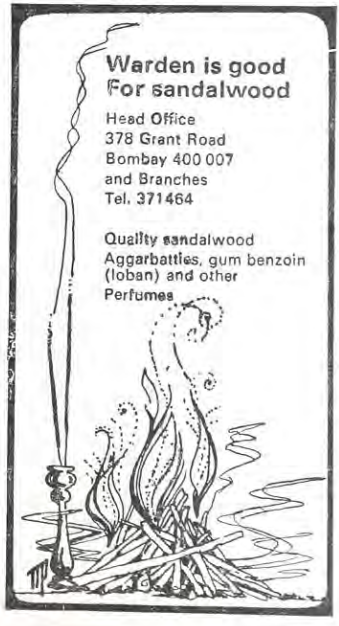
Rustom K. Khanjari, Faredoon G. Yazdani, Mehraban R. Bahmani, Rustom K. Khushrovian, Behram S. Afarin, Jehangir K. Abdehi, Merwan K. Yezdmaidi, Prof. Dinshaw M. Irani, Ardeshir R. Khormai, Sam B. Aga, Vafadar K. Irani, Cyrus K. Kyani, Shapur S. Zohrabi.

Patrons

Furrokh D. Irani, Jehangirji K. Marker (patron's nominee) and Sohrab J. Irani (patron's nominee).

Secretary & Treasurer

Mahyar B. Patel



Elections Aims

"What elections?" appears to be the standard response to and dismissal of any enquiry put to some of the members of the newly formed General Committee of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman about the recently scheduled elections. According to the election rules of the Anjuman, at least, the objective is to have Irani Zoroastrians elect representatives to protect and promote the interest of their villages back in Iran, once in every five years. Accordingly there are 28 representative seats to the General Body of which five, the largest, are reserved for Bombay and the others distributed between the various provinces and villages in Iran.

Any Irani Zoroastrian desiring to register himself as a voter must do so three months before the date scheduled for the election and must stipulate the constituency from which he will cast his ballot, regardless of whether he has voted in the previous election or not. Only male Irani Zoroastrians who have been resident of Bombay for the last two years might stand for election by filling their name at the Anjuman offices two months before the election and must also stipulate the seat that is being contested.

Should any seat remain unrepresented after the election, members of the General Committee may co-opt Zoroastrians to fill the vacancies. Since the term of a trustee is seven years, those trustees who have not been elected must be co-opted into the body. In addition all patrons of the Anjuman, that is people who have donated Rs. 25,000 or more and the patron's nominee (three nominations are permitted) also form part of the General Committee.

The committee then elects an 18-member working committee as per a prescribed schedule of representation of constituencies and may co-opt another seven members from within itself.

Though the rules state that only male Irani Zoroatsrians may stand for elections, Parsis and women may be co-opted into the organization. The first Parsi representative was Pestonji D. Marker, a founder patron of the Anjuman. Subsequently two other Parsis have also been co-opted. Presently the only Parsi serving on the body is Peshotam D. Nargolwala who is also a member of the Working Committee.

Under the stewardship and encouragement of the former president Dr Major Adebad B. Irani, the noted Bombay eye specialist, two women were co-opted to the representative committee for the first time. Presently Ms Sona J. Irani and Ms Goola K. Tafti are also members of the Working Committee.



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AEK ATMAKAHTA

The life of Dastur Dhalla-III

School and Failure

Both professionally and personally Dastur Dr Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla lived the religion of the good life. Born and bred in poverty, he grew up as, in his own words, a "narrow-minded, orthodox to the core." Later his determined quest for knowledge led him to the shores of America where he obtained his doctorate degree in Iranian languages from the Columbia University in New York. An outstanding scholar whose contributions to the religion rank him among the top scholars on the subject both in India and abroad, he was the compassionate and revered high priest of the Karachi Parsis.

Aek Atmakatha is his autobiography published by the Dastur Dr Dhalla Memorial Institute, Karachi and translated from Gujarati into English by Gool and Behram Rustomji. This is the third extract from the book which is being serialized by *Parsiana*

THE STORY SO FAR

Born into a poor dastur family in Surat on 27 August 1875, Dhalla lost his mother at three. His family, which included three elder sisters, moved to Karachi in 1878 when a uncle arranged a job for his father. Though still poor, life was a little more comfortable than it was in Surat. At six Dhalla was enrolled into local Parsi school and by eight he was wedded to five-year-old Cooverbai, daughter of wealthy family that traded with Bengal and China.

My education at the Parsi Virbaiji School did not last long. My uncle was anxious to give me the best and highest education possible. All his hopes were harboured in me. Cost was no consideration if expended on educating me and from childhood it was dinned into me that education alone would pave the way to success and independence. His sister's son had gone to China and after making a name for himself there, had called his brother's son too who was also well established. Such a promising future lay ahead of me also.

A certain layman from another town had been appointed the Head Master of a local vernacular Municipal school. He wrote to my uncle to arrange boarding and lodging for him at Karachi. In response he was invited as a permanent guest in our home, at no cost whatsoever. Whatever food was bestowed on us by the Almighty would be shared with him. In return he was to supervise my studies personally. My uncle believed that by the constant and continuous care and concern of a teacher in the home, my knowledge would grow by leaps and bounds and his cherished hope of seeing me as a business magnate of China would be fulfilled.

In my vernacular school the majority of students were Hindus, a few were Muslims and there were two Parsi pupils. My tutor took me to school with him and brought me home again. As a teacher he was very vigilant and conscientious. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" was his maxim, hence he used the cane freely. Sundays and holidays were as strenuous as week days. On such holidays, after prayers he would announce that if I studied attentively the whole day he would allow me to sit on the doorstep for an hour in the evening. The method of enjoying that free period would be that he would take his seat upon a chair in the entrance and I would sit at his feet on the steps. Just to while away the hour he would go on testing my aptitude in mental sums. My greatest joy would be to go to post some letters or to be sent on some other errand. My aunt had pity on me and invented excuses to send me out for something or the other, to the great annoyance of my tutor.

At dusk my teacher would listen to the recital of my prayers. Should I make a mistake, or should my tired and errant mind — and that too with lessons on a holiday — tempt me to skip a few lines, the punishment of a few cuts of the cane would be meted out. As soon as those were completed, some multiplication tables were shot at me which I had to answer in a flash. By then sleep would be demanding its toll and my eyelids would droop with drowsiness. In that state should there be some slight slip in replying to what would 37 x 1¾ make, all my sleep would vanish under the stroke of lightning that would emerge from the master's cane, which would tear open the skin sore with daily beatings.

Never did my master allow me to go out in the evening or to play cricket. Some friends who came to visit us would venture to advise that I be allowed to go to the Frere Hall on Saturdays to listen to the band. In reply my honoured tutor would warn my uncle that it would not be his responsibility if such frivolities should turn me into a vagabond. My aunt and sister shed many a tear and at times in desperation the former would dare to say: "A cow is being led to the slaughter house". My uncle himself was very unhappy and at times his eyes too would fill with tears. But as it was a question of educating me and preparing me for the important role of a business magnate of Indo-China, he was not willing to incur the displeasure of the tutor and bore everything with a bleeding heart.

I was then nine years old. Two years passed by in such distress. All my love for learning vanished. I detested reading and writing. Books were poison to me and my body became feeble and emaciated. My right eye was weak since birth. Now it lost its vision completely. Life became intolerable.

Our dog Tipu was my great favourite. One night, as a result of naughtiness, the master picked him up and threw him out of the house. I cried aloud and created a great commotion. Tipu was severely injured so he barked and whined. The entire household was in a state of turmoil and everyone came panting in panic. In the excitement everyone sided with me. Masterji felt humiliated and walked away quiety to his room. The next morning he gave notice to my uncle that he would tutor me no longer and that he wished to be relieved of his responsibility. Without the slightest hesitation my uncle accepted his resignation, and I regained my freedom.

Schooling

My uncle then took upon himself to educate me. By that time I was unable to read or write with my right eye so the doctors had forbidden me

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to work at night.

My uncle woke me up at 4 in the morning. The moment my feet touched the floor I had to stand there and perform the Kusti ceremony, commencing with the Hormuzd Khudai prayer, leaving out the opening Kemna Mazda. After that I took some 'taro' and prayed that the devil be destroyed then washed my face with cold water and did the Kusti all over again, this time including the Kemna Mazda prayer. My uncle then took me for a quarter of an hour's outing in my night dress with neither coat nor shoes, so as to shake off my drowsiness. It would be 4.30 by the time we returned. I would then sit at my studies. At sunrise I bathed and prayed for about half an hour before breakfast. After that I studied until it was time to go to school. On returning from school I went out to play cricket. At sundown I prayed again for half an hour or so. Then my aunt, sister and I sat upon a mat to dine. My uncle dined at table. My father placed his meal on a low stool and sat upon another.

According to doctor's instructions I was not allowed to study at night. Instead, every night my uncle took me to his room and gave religious and moral instruction by rote and advised me through stories and parables. He found my working method slip-shod and he constantly admonished me. Procrastination was my weakness. Whenever he assigned some work to me, as if to mock me he would at once repeat, "I'll do it afterwards."

Besides delivering sermons to me daily, he addressed a couple of letters every month to me. He had ordered me to read these letters three times attentively. He took care to test whether I had bothered to read them or not by asking questions regarding them. Should I have erred in some way, a long letter was sure to arrive. If, perchance, I gave vent to anger, I would have to study a lesson on the evils of becoming a slave to anger. When I showed some sort of discontent it would be my lot to study a discourse on the sweet fruits of contentment. Should I happen to be unwilling to awake at 4 in the early hours of dawn, I had to be prepared to read a five to seven pages essay on the malady of succumbing to the demon of indolence. Over and above all these sermons, he would write out in a beautiful hand ten or twelve points conducive to a pure and noble life, frame them and hang them up in front of my desk and gently advise me to read them carefully every day before starting my studies.

Zoroastrian priesthood is hereditary. In olden days every priestly family would initiate its sons into the ranks of priesthood. If not a Maratab, they would at least be made Navars. Later, even those parents who taught their sons English and hoped that in future they would become doctors or lawyers or engineers or even serve in English firms, instead of following the profession, believed it was wrong to let their sons remain mere 'Austas' instead of becoming Navars. Whether they pursued the priestly profession or not, it was considered a virtuous act to initiate their sons into Navarhood. It was believed to be a religious injunction. My uncle was determined not to let me join the profession. He was anxious to send me to China. I had now reached the age of initiation into Navarhood, so my uncle started giving me the necessary education. A great part of the day passed learning by rote the compulsory Nyaishes and Yashts and also Haas of the Yajashnes, Afringans, etc. At fifteen I became a Navar. Because of the prayers I was obliged to learn, plus a month's absence from school , I lost an academic year.

Temperamentally I was timid. I feared visible and invisible, real and imaginary foes. According to my beliefs, man's life was beset with a thousand demons and evil spirits and precautions had to be taken to escape from their clutches. I firmly believed that the 'taro' (sacred bull's urine) had the miraculous effect of conquering and subduing these forces of evil. A Zarthosti applies 'taro' to his face and limbs as soon as he awakes and

"I firmly believed that the 'taro' had the miraculous effect of conquering and subduing forces of evil."

wages war against them. As I had great faith in the efficacy of 'taro', I used it lavishly. In April 1891 two young Parsi ladies had thrown themselves off the Rajabai Tower and sacrificed their precious lives in order to preserve their chastity. That night I was very frightened at bedtime. I poured half a bottleful of 'taro' around my little bedstead. The obnoxious odour filled the whole room. My wife's uncle had come from China to spend a few days. He was a reformist. He jeered at me and chided me. With two tumblerfuls of water I was made to wash away my fluid embankment. It was sheer good fortune that in spite of the destruction of my fortress the devil's disciples did not attack me that night.

My uncle always took me to all the Jashans, Navjotes and Uthamna ceremonies that were performed at the Daremeher where all the Mobeds were invited. On birthdays or anniversaries of the wealthy, when members of the family came to the Daremeher to pray, they would distribute silver coins amongst the mobeds. On such occasions, I too would be present and

"The white turban was greatly disparaged in those days, so I was quite ashamed to stir out in that head-gear."

earn some small gratuity. I was now obliged to wear the white turban of the priest. On the whole the community paid scant respect to priests. Should there be some farcical portion in a drama, mobeds were assigned that role and they were made the target of ridicule. The white turban was greatly disparaged in those days, so I was quite ashamed to stir out in that headgear. Should someone happen to cross my path on the streets, I would cover my face with a handkerchief under pretext of wiping perspiration, be it summer or winter. My uncle dissuaded me from doing so. He would tell me that in bygone days mobeds of the highest degree sat to the right of kings, the greatest of Dasturs were prime ministers and high-ranking Ervads were the tutors and counsellors of princes. Such were the honour and respect they enjoyed. I listened to all this attentively with great joy. Yet my daily experiences were very different. I told my uncle that these were tales that would fill any heart with pride, but today laymen addressed mobeds with contempt and ridiculed them as badshahs and religious mendicants. When women went on rounds to invite people to some wedding they sat in state in carriages while the accompanying mobed was perched on the coach-box beside the driver. Expressing his sorrow at this state of affairs my uncle would explain that the reaon for this was that the Athor-

nans of ancient times were learned men, while their present-day descendants were illiterate and therefore disdained. However this would not continue for long. Sons of mobeds would emerge as educated men and the lay men would realize their error and give due respect.

Despite all my uncle's care and concern I did not pay sufficient attention to my studies. My home-work was rarely done. Mathematics was my weakest subject. When my cousin came to know of this through my uncle, he wrote from China that without mathematics all else was of no avail. He who is not up to the mark in counting can never succeed in any business. This bit of good counsel had no effect on me. As I always secured good marks in other subjects I managed to retain my seat on the first bench, but my failure in sums was responsible for my missing the prize in the annuals.

Parsi boys were generally less attentive to their studies and more mischievous and playful than boys of other communities. Moreover, should a teacher be timid or tolerent, the education of Parsi students of that grade was sure to suffer.

"Parsi boys were generally less attentive to their studies and more mischievious than boys of other communities."

At sixteen when I entered the 6th grade I was made the monitor of the class. In maths I was as weak as ever, due to my own fault. My English was good and often my essays were read aloud in class. At the time of the Annual Prize Distribution I would be awarded the 1st prize in elocution.

The senior members of my family were anxiously awaiting my graduation from the matriculation class, whereas I was already eager to join some service rather than study. There was a reason for that. We were poor. My father's salary which was Rs. 12 at first had now increased to Rs. 15 per month. My father's health was always poor. On her death-bed, his mother had enjoined on my uncle, to care for his younger brother's children as his own and to make them very happy. My uncle was fulfilling his obligation most faithfully. Every morning I would take tea and chapattis to my father at the Agyari. Just to be of some service to him and to lighten his burden I would dust and clean all the benches there. He would come home to lunch and to dine. The distance was short and could be walked within a couple of minutes, yet he was obliged to rest for a moment or two on the interlinking bridge, so feeble was he. To relieve the fatigue caused by the day's drudgery, he was accustomed to take a very small glass of locally produced liquor with his evening meal. He tried his utmost to keep his limbs active and strained himself beyond capacity to contribute his mite to the household expenditure at any cost. I yearned to assuage his troubles and thought it advisable to start earning as early as possible. This idea did not appeal to my elders. They felt that this was no time for me to think of household expenses. My only duty was to study diligently. They strongly opposed my point of view.

My studies progressed in such a half-hearted manner. An intense love of reading was born in me. And I was obsessed with the idea of becoming an author.

When I went to Navsari to become a Navar, two elderly mobeds were in retreat. At night they would tell tales of kings and courtiers. I would listen to them with rapt attention. I had neither the knowledge nor the skill necessary to write a story. Yet after frequent alterations and amendments, a great deal of wastage of paper, ink and energy, I conjured up a plot and started to scribble, all unknown to my revered uncle. Seeing me spend many more hours in concentration at my desk, everyone believed that good sense had ultimately prevailed and I was at long last paying greater attention to my studies. I was in the matriculation class then. In seven months the story was completed. At last, I summoned courage one day and revealed all the details to my uncle. He was taken completely unawares and my strange story caused him a great deal of surprise and sadness. Examinations were fast approaching and, at such a time instead of studying my mind was absorbed in writing stories. This knowlege pained him deeply. The following morning, I received a long letter from him. Respecting his counsel I began to pay greater attention to my lessons. I knew it was impossible for me to pass as my mathematics would surely go against me. Even China had no attraction for me now. Rather than be a businessman in China, I was now bent upon being an author. Yet, in deference to the wishes

Please turn to page 36

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World Congress Papers

Keeping Pace With Change

Religious Education Of Younger Generation Of Zoroastrians In India



Dr Homi Dhalla

Four papers at the Third World Congress were devoted to the subject of "Religious Education for the Younger Generation of Zoroastrians in India and Abroad". The speakers were Dr Avan Godrej Billimoria, a psychologist from Chicago, Dr Homi Dhalla, a Zoroastrian scholar who teaches at the Pahlavi University in Shiraz, Iran, Ms Piloo (Nanavutty) Jungalwalla, noted author of books on Zoroastrianism, and Aspi Moddie, a management consultant and former director of Hindustan Lever.

We carry in this issue an edited version of the papers by Dhalla, Jungalwalla and Moddie. The paper by Billimoria appeared earlier in the September 1979 issue of *Parsiana*

SPIRIT OF CONVICTION

Dr. Homi Dhalla

Till the 19th century it was an axiom that religion was the core and motive force of education, the very foundation on which the edifice of education must be built. But the wave of secularism that followed the French Revolution as well as other events, divorced education from religion. This influence soon spread to India where, coupled with the British policy of neutrality in matters of religion, it led to a predominantly secular type of public education throughout the country. Since then, secular education has been the order of the day in all public schools, though side by side, private schools run by certain religious denominations do conduct religious classes for students belonging to that particular faith.

However, my teaching experience convinces me that secularism has put religion in the back seat. In all Government grant-aided schools, classes in religion cannot be held during school hours. Due to this inconvenience and the excessive work-load, the commonest plea of students is 'No time' for religion. Every other subject is carefully apportioned a time quota. Though an examination is held in religion, the marks for this paper cannot be included in the total. This adds to the indifference with which a statusless subject (it is not part of the curriculum) is treated. Theorising is not going to help. What can help, are the school authorities, by reserving inviolable periods (out of school hours) for the study of religion, and by convincing Zoroastrian students that this subject is as important, and so valuable, as any other.

Religious Education in Parsi Schools

Educationists have recognised the value of ethical principles and so urged for the teaching of religion. This need had been acknowledged by the leaders of the Parsi community who arranged to provide religious instruction from very early times. A circular dated December 18, 1852, of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, states, that one class for imparting religious instruction to boys and three classes for girls were already in existence. From the records of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat we also learn that similar classes were being conducted under its auspices in the mofussil areas viz., Billimora, Daman, Surat, Nargol, Navsari, Tarapore, Bulsar, Broach, Davier and Gundevi.

It was not only the Panchayat but also the Bombay Zoroastrian Jashan Committee, as well as the Society for the Promotion of Zoroastrian Religious Knowledge and Education which took an active interest in providing religious instruction in the various schools of Bombay. Classes in religion were organised by the Bombay Parsi Panchayat in mofussil areas till 1974, when they petered out as students had moved to urban locations.

'Secularism has put religion in the back seat."

At present, Zoroastrian religious education is being imparted to all the Parsi students in the Byramjee Jejeebhoy Parsi Charitable Institution, Lady Engineer High School, Bai Maneckbai N. Gamadia Girls' High School, Bai Bhikhaji Shapurji Bengallee Girls' High School, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Fort Boys' High School and Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Fort Girls' High School.

At their inception, these institutions were meant only for Zoroastrian children. But in recent years, to qualify for Government grants, almost all these schools had to open their doors to students from all communities. When this was done, the communal solidarity of a common religious tie was lost, to be replaced at will, by classes in religion. The sole Parsi school today, is the Byramji Jejeebhoy Parsi Charitable Institution.

As one of the religious instructors in these schools, I was concerned when I discovered that our youngsters had the scantiest possible knowledge about Zoroastrianism. To give them a perspective of their historical heritage and a pride in their cultural identity, I have introduced courses in Iranian and Parsi history.

Relevance

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"After the navjote, the parent's zeal for religion flags."

the process of religious education, all efforts ought to be made to make Zoroastrianism relevant to modern society. Children do not take kindly to bald assertions, e.g., 'As truth is for all time, so is Zoroastrianism'. They are perceptibly interested when offered illustrations from our scriptures, which infuse vitality into the lessons.

Whatever the manner of teaching be, it should take into consideration the mental level of the students. All too often teachers of religion in India ignore this factor, with the result that the lessons are abstruse. Senior students can be motivated into examining the reasons for belief if the teacher can present valid ones. This will enable the student to form his own convictions and acquire values that, as he matures will become motives of action.

The Teacher

To speak with the certainty needed to present the truth forcefully, the teacher of Zoroastrianism should be well grounded in the various aspects of Zoroastrian studies. He ought to be conversant with ancient history so as to be able to interpret the background against which the Avesta was written. By reading contemporary journals, the teacher can keep abreast of research; he cannot afford to be ignorant of the agreed conclusions of modern scholarship.

The Duty of Parents and Priests

Although the role of the teacher is crucial, that of the parent cannot be minimised. As the natural educators of their children, parents must shoulder the primary responsibility for religious knowledge. Unfortunately, their indifference and incompetence prevent them from doing this. Today there is no excuse for ignorance. Elementary books on Zoroastrians can be fruitfully utilized as introductory works. Besides these, prayer books with a free translation of our daily prayers are also available in English and Gujarati. For children who have not been taught Gujarati, the Khordeh Avesta in Roman script can be used.

After the child's navjote, the parents' zeal for religion flags. In the years of adolescence there is little or no religious moulding of the growing adult. Zoroastrian parents must recognize this lacuna and make efforts — individual or concerted — to fill it. My observation is that students who go to convents and schools run by Christian organisations for the affluent upper middle-class, are denied even the religious instruction offered by Parsi schools. Generally, these children grow up in a religious aridity, unfamiliar with Zoroastrianism. It should not be an onerous task for parents to arrange for weekly classes, one to a neighbourhood. Parent — child participation, besides ensuring attendance, will make for the religious education of both. It is certainly time for Zoroastrians to go to their own Sunday Schools! It is also time for a correspondence course for religious instruction to be offered to Zoroastrian children in any part of the world (including India).

The Parsi priesthood ought to play a more dynamic part than it does in the religious education of Zoroastrian children. The community must stake a claim on the erudition of the Dasturs by seeking knowledge from them on the individual level. Public discourses should be better organised and more frequent. Arrangements should be made for scholars and priests to be sent to other parts of India and abroad to lecture to Zoroastrian youth. These schemes may sound grandiose, but they are a necessity if our religion is to remain meaningful to the younger generation at home and overseas.

The teachings of our Prophet have been a guiding force to millions of Zoroastrians through the centuries. His message had sustained the rulers of the mighty Achaemenian and Sassanian empires, besides influencing some of the major world religions. It is for educators now to let that message once again breathe the spirit of conviction into the hearts of Zoroastrian children and into the edifices of our institutions.

GOOD COMMUNICATORS

Aspi D. Moddie

The education of young Zoroastrians in many parts of the world may be visualised in two parts: first the education at the hands of parents and priests upto and beyond the age of formal schooling and the second, the formal education system of the societies in which they live. Our problem is with the first.

Basic Propositions

In attempting to approach this difficult problem of a community well launched into the modern world, but finding itself rootless in its past, it may be desirable to lay down some basic propositions.



Aspi D Moddie

The first basic proposition is that the community, and particularly, the young have the problem of living with change meaningfully. Change has come, and must continue to come in a rapidly changing world. If this is accepted, then the status quo attitude must be more flexible.

The second proposition is that seeing and understanding should be through the eyes and minds of the young, who represent the future. In other words, the touchstone of all we say think and do, must be its credibility with youth.

The third proposition is that the leaders of the community in their different groups in different parts of the world, the panchayats and the trustees, cannot afford to confront the problems of change with a rigid change and no-change dichotomy. On the one hand, there is the spirit of the Visperad which says: "We praise the sweet reasonableness that exists between the righteous co-religionists". On the other hand, there is the historical lesson of the early panchayats in Western India, which showed that periodically the authority of these very panchayats "dwindled into insignificance and their decisions failed to command respect and obedience previously accorded to them". And this was so especially when their views became out-dated.

The fourth proposition is that the fundamental educational problem of the Zoroastrian child is: (a) the drying up of cultural and religious

roots; (b) its identity and involvement in a microscopic community which is now fragmented and spread among so many other societies all over the world, and (c) the absence of a clear perception of a body of living values, which may serve as a guide and support in a changing problematic world.

The fifth proposition is that this problem of the pre-school education is squarely the responsibility of parents, priests and local panchayats. The question is how these groups of people begin to approach the problem when they are so dispersed. The problem of the education of Zoroastrian youth both religious and secular, must be dealt with in an organised way by local leaders, in each local community.

Response to the Problem

Ironically, the richest community in South Asia, in per capita terms, Parsi Zoroastrians, have practically no research-based knowledge about their contemporary condition. As a result, diverse impressionistic opinion are banded about with regard to the cultural and socio-economic conditions of the community, including, its apparently declining demographic situation. Even its most educated members do not seem to know the facts, the hard data, for the simple reason that it does not exist. Therefore, the approach to every social problem of the community should begin with appropriate research.

In the case of educational problem, it would be desirable to begin with a study of child-rearing practices of Zoroastrian children — even of mixed marriages — before and after the Navjote; of their parents and of their priests also.

Such interpretations of the Zoroastrian religion and culture which exist are in archaic idiom and context, not sufficiently meaningful to the young generation of today, who are better educated. There is, therefore, need for the community to muster its best brains to produce contemporary interpretations.

To do all this, it will be necessary to commission knowledgeable and imaginative writers and creative people to interpret, produce and publish the material which comes out of their creativity through suitable literature, audiovisuals, plays, tapes and L.Ps and films for both child and youth. The various local communities might commission cultural ambassadors to move between these communities, to give talks to stimulate lively interest and discussion on both the spiritual and cultural aspects of present-day Zoroastrians.

The role of the priests is cardinal, especially in this relationship with parents and children. The Zoroastrian priests need to conceive their role beyond that of mere reciters of prayers at the fire temple. As in some other religions, e.g. Christianity and Buddhism, they need to regard themselves as pastors of their community, spreading messages of compassion, goodness, happiness and well-being; and being supportive to members of the community in times of stress and conflict and hardship.

There is a pristine simplicity about the essentials of Zoroastrianism, which needs to be brought out of ritualistic darkness into the morning sun of a child's awareness. The message is simple: it only needs good communicators with empathy and imagination.



Piloo N. Jungalwalla

MODERNISTIC APPROACH

Piloo N. Jungalwalla

Our children are growing up under tremendous pressures. Secular studies have taken on such enormous dimensions that religious education is relegated to an afterthought. Moreover, among young people all over the world, there is an impatience with doctrines and dogmas, rituals and ceremonies. What is demanded is a direct apprehension of the Divine. Our children need to be well integrated in their faith so as to compare and contrast the teachings of Zarathushtra with those of other prophets and seers.

To achieve this aim we need not only good teachers, but a graded series of religious text books for all ages. There is, therefore, a crying need to have a Standing Publications Committee which will plan and publish these books. We also need to reprint earlier works now long out of print.

I would plead for a more modernistic approach in teaching our children. Full use should be made of such modern media as Radio and Television.

Our youngsters today have keen and alert minds. They want to know what is the relevance of Zarathushtra's teachings in the world as it is? Did he have anything to say on the nature of human consciousness? Certainly, he did. Do we believe in a life after death? Do we believe in re-incarnation? What is Zarathushtra's explanation of the origin of evil? These and many other questions should be answered by our scholar-priests, and small pamphlets printed for ready reference. The young are also keen that the priests should know something about psychology so that they could guide the young in the problems they face today.

(DHALLA :*Continued from Page* 32)

of my elders, it was imperative that I appear for the examination. In all other papers I fared well but I avoided even to appear for the maths paper. I failed, yet I was declared successful in the results coulmn of the Jame-Jamshed. A friend came, to congratulate me. I acquainted him with the facts. He referred to the University Registrar who confirmed my failure.

My failure was a severe disappointment to my family. All their hopes in me were shattered. My uncle persuaded me not to lose heart and to continue my studies, but I refused to abide by his advice. From China word arrived that, not withstanding what had happened, I should prepare to go to China now. Even this I did not obey. Everyone was most dejected. My wife's father feared that the future of his dearly loved and favourite youngest daughter had been placed in the hands of a vagabond and that naught but gloom was in store for her.

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Died: **Kaikhushru H. Cama,** 90, noted philanthropist, chairman of the M. F. Cama Athornan Madressa, founder of the Parsi Hunnershala, founder member of the Bombay Gramophone Society and former president of the Philatelist Society of India, on 12 May at his Bombay residence.

"He was a devout Zoroastrian... who had a deep and sympathetic understanding of the plight of the priests," says Dastur Dr Firoze M. P. Kotwal, high priest of the Wadiaji Atash-Behram and principal of the M. F. Cama Athornan Madressa during Cama's stewardship. Nariman Bhagalia, who has been in the services of the Cowasji Jehangir family for many years described Cama as a man "with uncanny commonsense — a man of integrity."

"Publicity was repungnant to him" the *Bombay Samachar* noted in its obituary on him. "He believed in dedicating his talent and possessions to public and community service. This however, did not remain a mere sentiment, he put it to practice." A close family member says that Cama was against the idea of ornamental membership of committees. The source adds that at one stage the trusteeship to the Bombay Parsi Panchayat was offered to Cama but he turned it down.

"One could almost without exaggeration say that Cama was the Bombay Gramophone Society," the Gramophone Society, which dedicated the programme of June to his memory, writes in its bulletin.

Born in 1889, Cama joined the family business after graduating from St. Xavier College in Bombay. However, because of his many other interests, he started to devote his time and energy to the community and served on the board of a number of charitable and social institutions. He founded the Parsi Hunnershala to help boys who came to Bombay from villages to get a decent education and gainful employment. Towards the end of his life, Cama took up the responsibility of chairman of the board of trustees of the M. F. Cama Athornan Madressa for priests and it was under his guidance that major changes were introduced in the running of the Madressa — changes that Kotwal feels were of great benefit to the priests. Kotwal says that Cama had "penetrating insight into the problems of the community — the shortage of priests." He knew that the community and religion were inseperable "if one dies so does the other. If there are no priests there will be no religion and eventually no community." By looking after the priests he rendered a great service to the community, said Kotwal. Cama himself, according to a family source, was "not a praying but a prayful man."

A keen western music lover, "Cama and other enthusiastic music-lovers, inspired by Cama's ideals, formed the Bombay Gramophone Society in 1940 to bring the benefits of good music to less-fortunate music lovers," the publication of the Society notes. A fellow founder-member of the Society, Buji Chenoy, said that "Cama infused the love of music in all of us...he was the life and guiding spirit — the live wire — behind the society." Chenoy says that Cama, among others, encouraged and assisted Mehli Mehta, father of the famous conductor, Zubin to go abroad and pursue his interest in music. The trip, according to Chenoy, "set the ball rolling for Zubin."

Cama's other interests included philately, photography and carpentry. He was the president of the Philatelist Society of India and at one time, according to a family source, his personal collection ranked second only to that of King George.

Jehangir Wadia, a close family friend, recalls Cama's easy sociable nature: "He could talk to anyone from 8 to 88." Cama, according to Chenoy, "placed a huge premium on the character of a man 'be a gentleman if anything else' he would say," recalls Chenoy.

Cama is survived by his two daughters, Lady Jinoo Jehangir and Aloo.

Died: **Ervad Daraius Bagli,** head priest of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman, who actively participated in the social and cultural affairs of the capital's Parsis; of a heart attack, in Delhi on 5th January.

Aside from his priestly duties, Bagli also managed the dharamshala and arranged, produced and acted in plays and organized and participated in sporting events.

A condolence meeting held by the Delhi Parsi Anjuman on 14 January at the Bhiwandiwalla Hall under the Chairmanship of the Anjuman's president, Shiavax Nargolwala, passed a resolution "appreciating" Bagli's many "services to the Anjuman and the community at large" and "with a deep sense of sorrow, and grief we mourn his passing away."



Bagli

Dadi Mistry, a trustee of the Anjuman and Editor of its semi-annual publication *Dipanjali* referred to Bagli's "indefatigable spirit and tireless energy, his willingness and single-minded devotion towards any work, whether it was arranging a social function, a community dinner, or religious ceremonies and prayers or games and sports for the youth or drama and entertainment for all."

"To a great many he (Bagli) had become a vital force of life, a source of trust and faith and of inspiration," writes Sugan Bhatia in *Dipanjali*. Ava Khullar, who also pays tributes to Bagli in the magazine, writes that "for the Parsis of Delhi, Bagli was the focal point around which much that happened within the community revolved."

Born on 19 March 1923 in Bombay, Bagli reportedly answered the priestly calling on the persuasion of his grandfather. He took to the priesthood and performed many important *kria-kaamo* under his grandfather and later in the Tardeo Sethna Agiary. In a 1975 interview with *Parsiana*, Bagli recalled his stay in Bombay as "absolutely miserable. The priest in Bombay suffers from such a sense of inferiority that sometimes I felt ashamed to wear my *pugri* and go outside." On 16 January 1952 he went to Delhi after a brief stay in Agra. During that time the Delhi Parsi

Anjuman was still in its formative stages and did not have an Agiary of its own. Bagli performed his priestly duties and also managed the Mengusi Parsi Dharamshala which had opened only a few years earlier. In December 1961, the Delhi Parsi Anjuman Agiary was inaugurated and Bagli was made its first head priest.

Speaking of the time when he first came to Delhi, Bagli said in the *Parsiana* interview: "I felt proud to wear my *pugri*. I got respect from people of other religions also...Today," he added "I am very happy and I don't think there is any mobed as happy as me."

"The performance of a religious ceremony was a task which involved him (Bagli) emotionally and aesthetically," writes Khullar.

Khullar also recalls the time when Bagli helped arrange the Navjote ceremony of the child of a Christian lady whose Parsi husband had died earlier. "Daraius himself was unable to perform it (the naviote) due to a vow he had given his father (that he would not perform such navjotes) but he arranged to have a friend perform the ceremony." Khullar also recalls how Bagli had wanted the funeral ceremony of the Christian woman's husband to be performed in Delhi instead of Bombay: "he was concerned for the Christian widow who he felt would be treated as an outsider in Bombay. In Delhi, he argued, she would have her rightful place by her husband's side during the last rites."

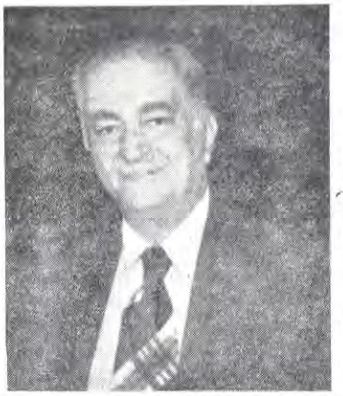
Bagli staged and acted in a number of plays, including one during the Chinese aggression and another for Bangladesh Refugee Relief Fund. He enjoyed a good game of badminton and billiards, played cricket, normally as the wicket-keeper, and was fond of driving. He reportedly never missed any major football, hockey or cricket match played in Delhi.

Bhatia writes "I still recall the moment when two football friends of Daraius walked into the Anjuman premises to enquire why he had not been at the game for the last two days. Alas! Daraius had played his last game a few hours back."

He is survived by his mother, wife, three sons and daughter.

Died: **Dr M. D. D. Gilder,** 96, freedom fighter, cabinet minister, mayor of Bombay, physician to Mahatma Gandhi and one of the "patron-saints" of the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Bombay; at his Malabar Hill residence on 20th May 1979.

The AA Bombay chapter Chairman, in a letter to the press paid tribute to Gilder as "a great patriot, a great gentleman and a great lover of humanity." He writes that Gilder was the first man of medicine to promote the activities of the AA Bombay group and that he "was solely responsible for the allotment of six beds free of charge to the suffering alcoholics in the seamen's ward at St. George's Hospital...he used to examine free of charge alcoholic patients almost daily for a number of years."



Noble

While imprisoned in the Poona jail in 1940 for his activities in the national freedom movement Gilder served as the private physician to Mahatma Gandhi, a fellow prison mate. He was also the health minister in the first Congress cabinet of B. G. Kher in 1938-39 and again held the same post in the cabinet of 1946-52. His public service also included a term as mayor of Bombay.

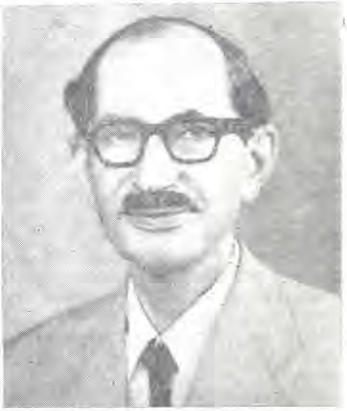
Gilder withdrew from public life at the age of 76 but still served as chairman of the S. K. Patil Arogyadhan at Malad, was connected to the Parsi General Hospital and was a member of a number of social and charitable institutions. He is survived by his daughter Dr (Ms) K. Gilder.

Died: **Minoo Kaikhsroo Noble,** 63, vice president and trustee of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman, chief technical consultant to the State Bank of India and retired chief engineer and joint secretary to the Government of Maharashtra; on 17 May 1979, of cerebral haemorrhage, in Bombay.

"He was an esteemed trustee" the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman noted in the condolence message to his family "who had endeared himself to all by his selfless and sincere service in the cause of the community". The Anjuman's offices were closed on 18 May 1979 in his memory. Noble also represented the Anjuman on the Executive Council of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India.

Born in Poona on 19 July 1916, Noble graduated from the Poona Engineering College. He served as captain in the Indian army and was on active duty during the World War II in Burma. He then joined the Government as an executive engineer. In 1969 he was appointed as the housing commissioner of Maharashtra and in 1972 as the chief engineer — buildings and communications. After his retirement he was appointed as chief technical consultant to the State Bank of India, in which capacity he was working until his death.

Noble is survived by his wife Khorshed, two sons and three daughters.



Saklath

Died: **Rustom Tehmurasp Saklath** 78, former president of the Parsi Zoroastrian Association of Calcutta, author and publisher of a number of books on the Zoroastrian religion and a social worker; on 5 March 1979 at his Calcutta residence.

Saklath was instrumental in the Parsi Zoroastrian Association of Calcutta publishing six books on Zoroastrianism by the eminent Gathic scholar, Jatindra Mohan Chatterji, and also in publishing the works of the late Framroz Rustomjee of Colombo who wrote on the religion, its practice and prayers. Saklath initiated religious classes for the young in Calcutta and jointly with Piloo Jungalwalla authored the book *Fravarane*, 'I Believe'.

"What endeared Rustom was not only his seraphic smile and merry brown eyes," writes Jungalwalla, "but the steel-like quality of his integrity. Children adored him."

"He was a devout Zoroastrian and

Iran *parasht* (Iran-lover) who lived a simple and useful life" wrote Dr Sarosh Wadia, a noted Bombay *homoepath, in The Jam-e-Jamshed* daily of 5 April. Saklath also served a term as president of the Indo-Iran Society.

Mahyar Patel, secretary of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman, in a condolence letter to the family, noted Saklath "was the truest, whitest and sincerest Zoroastrian...always in the forefront of *Humata, Hukkhata, Havrashta.*"

Born in Srinagar on 19 November 1900, Saklath joined the Singer Sewing Company at the age of 19 and worked with them till his retirement in 1967 when he was requested to continue as a consultant. He was closely involved with the activities of the Zoroastrian community in Calcutta, to where he was transferred, and at one time served as the president and later the secretary of the Parsi Zoroastrian Association of Calcutta. He was also an ardent theosophist, notes his wife, Homai.

Members of the Association in Calcutta felicitatated Saklath two years ago on 26 November 1977, "for his long and meritorious service" to the Parsi community. "Despite being a keen student of religion he harboured no dogma," the *Navroz* weekly quoted Adi Rabadi, president of the Association, to have said on that occasion. "He kept an open mind and tried his best to resolve the eternal controversies that plague the community."

Burjor Modi, joint secretary of the Association referred to him as "an optical illusion — a small man with the energy of an ox."

Saklath is survived by his wife, Homai, and three daughters, Aban, Frenny and Katayun.

(Continued from page 23)

port. These people, they point out, might suddenly and unpredictably turn against the community. Mahrookh Irani notes that Khomeini in his first address to the country on his return, is reported to have started with the declaration, "We are not fire-worshipers". Further she says, that during the height of the revolution, when anti-Shah feelings were running at their strongest, the former ruler of the country was accused of being a Zoroastrian by the Muslim Iranians in her office. The Shah's favourable disposition to the religion and its contribution to the traditional heritage of the country was beyond question. Darukhanawalla notes that in Abadan there was a Zoroastrian organization, Anjuman-e-Mazdayanshan of Abadan and Kermanshah which was converting Iranians into the religion. According to one of the members of the Anjuman, the activities of the organization had the blessing and the encouragement of the Shah. The most blatant display of the Shah's inclination to Zoroastrian tradition was the changing of the Iranian calander from the 13th century, from the times of Prophet Mohammad, to the 25th century, from the time of Cyrus the Great when Zoroastrianism was at the zenith of its glory. This change, according to all, created deep resentment and was a contributing factor in fanning the revolution and could provide an excuse to the people and the clergy to turn against the community in the future. For the moment, however, as Billimoria points out, the revolution "is more liberal to Zoroastrians than to the Muslims, at least by the statistics."

But these statistics offer little comfort to the Indian Zoroastrians who have been displaced from Iran by the revolution. For them, burdened by the harsh economic realities of India, the search for the promised land continues.



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Asha's Search for truth

Behram S. Deboo

While Zoroastrians in India, today, are debating whether a non-Parsi or a child born of a non-Parsi parent should be allowed to enter into their faith, a cautious movement is on its way in America and Canada to welcome new entrants, regardless of their birth or previous religious experience, into our Mazdayasnan faith. Recently I had the opportunity to meet 30-year-old Heather Foster of U.S.A. who has been initiated into the Mazdayasnan-Zoroastrian faith and is now also known by her Avestan name, Asha Amordad.

Heather was born in Portland, Oregon. She grew up much like any other American girl would. However, instead of listening to bedtime stories such as Peter Rabbit, or Goldilocks and the three bears, she heard adventure stories about India from her father who had spent five years in India as an officer of the Royal Canadian Air Force. "The stories," she said, "were fascinating to me and intriguing to my young imagination. There were subtle meanings behind each story and I learned about other people in this world and their belief systems."

Asha studied many religions and knew about Parsees from her father. However, it was not until she met a devout, sincere Mazdayasni-Zoroastrian, Dr Parthaver Behesht-Nejad that she found the missing link that she was searching for in her quest for truth. Behesht-Nejad was born into a devout Muslim family in Iran and grew up as a follower of the Islamic faith. His family still follows the religion. After 18, he studied Zoroastrianism. His deep sense of pride in what Iran stood for in cultural as well as spiritual values, led him to embrace the path of Asha. He knew there would be unconquerable hurdles in his search for Iran's ancient heritage. He was almost disowned by his family and some Parsees gave him a hard time. He was initiated into the Mazdayasnan-Zoroastrian faith by Dr Dastur Bode and he in turn initiated Heather.

Heather is presently working for the State of Oregon Employment



Foster: seeking immortal truth

office as an applicant interviewer and is also studying journalism at the University of Oregon at Springfield. After completion of her studies she hopes to work as a journalist.

First Impression

When asked of her first impression on Mazdayasnan-Zoroastrianism, she replied earnestly, "It is the only viable religion. It is not hypocritical." I requested her to elaborate on it some more. She proceeded to explain, "The religious ethics of the Semitic religions teach us to strike out tooth for tooth or to turn the other cheek when confronted with a problem of evil. Mazdayasnan-Zoroastrianism, on the other hand, believes in preventing an act of evil, and it does not allow evil in order to accomplish its eradication." She feels "Sufists found their core inherent in Zoroastrianism. If Sufis are Muslims, why do they write in code, why don't they write their beliefs openly? It is because the Sufis are none other than the Mazdayasnan-Zoroastrians who could not express their beliefs publicly for fear of Moslem reprisal."

I requested Asha to explain to me Mazdayasnan-Zoroastrianism as she understood it. She said with enthusiasm, "Zarathushtra was more human than other prophets, in him we find a cachet of humanitarianism. He wished people to be happy and he promoted love of God and the concept of God dwelling within human beings. He teaches in *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* that we progress from the human level to God's level. Thus Daena, or soul, is transcendental." Furthermore, she added, "Mazdayasnan-Zoroastranism is easy to understand and it is adaptable. Zarathushtra knew human nature better than other prophets. He gave you and me guidelines on how to improve. His three principles of *Humata, Hukhata* and *Havarasht:* are unique and their meanings of Good Words, Good Deeds and Good Thoughts will hold true for all eternity."

Improvements and Orthodoxy

"If Mazdayasnan-Zoroastrianism is to survive," she said, "we must modernize it without sacrificing the original beliefs. We must make it appealing to all of those people who would like to embrace Zarathushtra's teachings. I have read many books on Mazdayasnan-Zoroastrianism and found them sadly lacking in smoothness and coherence and often outdated. In these books, however, Zarathushtra taught the doctrine of free choice, not birthright. God is not limited to one race of people. God is open to anyone. So, which orthodox people can say that they are the promised people?"

Behram S. Deboo, a B.S., M.T., and A.S.C.P., is a resident of Washington, U.S.A.

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