

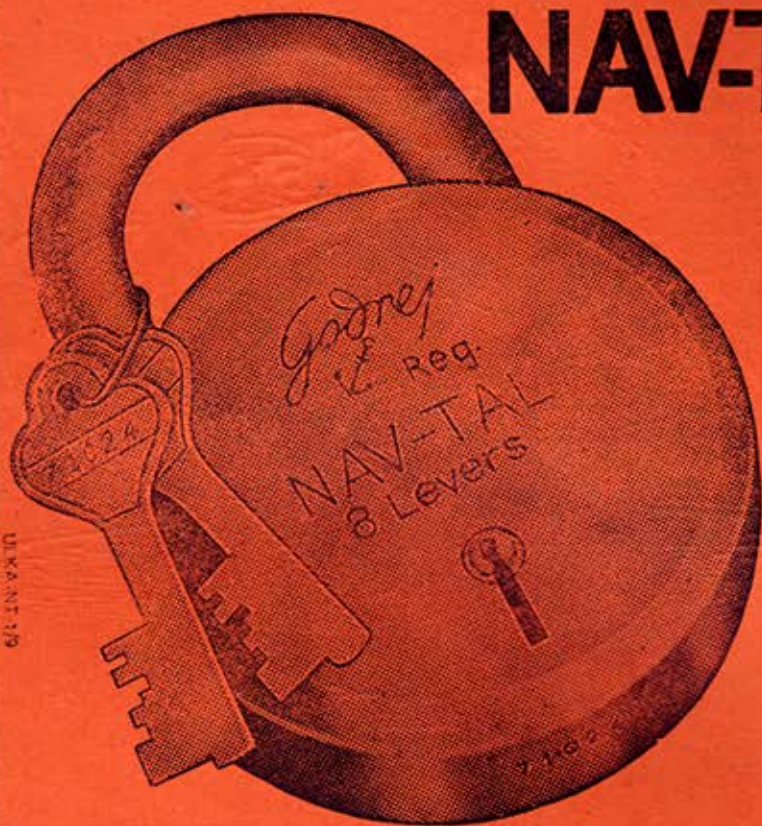
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Parsiana

July 1980 Volume 3 No. 3

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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.

"Encourage Them"

I refer to the letter "Encourage Them" by Azmi Bharucha (March 1980, *Parsiana*.) It is heartening to note that the writer is only 14 years old and feels very strongly about the religion, quite unlike the present generation who do not know much about their own religion.

The writer contends that the Parsi community is getting smaller day by day and as such many Parsi boys and girls marry outside the community and bring up their children as non-Parsis. If the community is getting smaller, then it is all the more important the Parsis should marry within their own community and allow it to grow.

The writer further contends that it

is ridiculous to expect all Parsis to marry in the community. If the writer feels very strongly about the community, then it does not befit the writer to encourage people in the community to marry outside.

It is very well known that if a Parsi male marries a non-Parsi, his children can be brought up as Parsis. But if a Parsi female marries a non-Parsi, then her children take on the religion of the father. Under the circumstances, it is neither right nor encouraging for Parsi females to bring up their children as Parsis, if they marry outside the community. The writer does not want converts but how else can Parsis marry outside the community and allow their children to be Parsis?

Let Parsis understand that if they want their children to be Parsis, they must marry in their community only and impart to their children the Zoroastrian religion. Then and then only will the Parsi community grow.

JEHANGIR B. SATTHA.

II

I had read the letter 'Encourage them' by Azmi Bharucha and am amazed how one could even think of accepting a non-Parsi child (a child of one non-Parsi parent and a Parsi parent) into our religion.

Religion is not a toy that one can play around with. It is something serious, and the rules and regulations are set for the benefit of our soul, our health and for our own good. It is not in our hands to twist and turn them according to the whims and fancies of each individual, thus causing pollution and disorder in our religion. There is a deep, serious reason as to why we should not accept non-Parsis in our community. It's not just a matter of emotions and sentimentality.

In order to prevent our religion from fading away, we should strive to spread the influence of our Zoroastrian religion into the hearts of Zoroastrian youth. It could be done by wise and sensible means; through good books on our religion, through meetings, through lectures etc., instead of taking the easy way out and letting non-Parsis take care of the growth of our community. Fine! our community will flourish with all sorts of people; but then what will happen to our religion?

Our religion can only be preserved

by us—Zoroastrians. One should feel indignation at even mentioning such a thing as to accept non-Parsi in our pure and divine religion. We don't need to fear that our religion will eventually become extinct without these non-Parsis. Our religion has been taken care of and preserved throughout the ages by Great Souls unknown to us. Why should it suddenly become extinct after all these centuries. Nevertheless, when the time is ripe, these spiritual souls will step out on this earth and start our religion once again. So don't panic; our Zoroastrian religion will shine on eternally.

VERA R. DAROGA

"The Complete Parsi"

In the *Parsiana* March 1980 issue, you have published Ashok Dube's letter ("The Complete Parsi"). I am firmly of the view that if more Parsis take to politics, it will tone up the administration and vastly improve the standards of public life by virtue of their honesty, integrity and straight forwardness. The contribution of the Parsis in the past to the civic and commercial life of Bombay is a clear example of what the Parsis can do.

Ashok Dube says sarcastically that one Parsi, Sanjay Gandhi was enough to improve the standards of public life, conveniently forgetting: that one swallow does not make a summer and there are always exceptions which prove the rule, that Sanjay Gandhi is not a fullfledged Parsi, his mother being a non-Parsi, and that this brilliant young man, has proved himself more than a match for so many experienced elder statesmen and politicians. With proper guidance, he would have made a strong and worthy Prime Minister himself. I repeat, give us more Parsis because their honesty and integrity are well-recognised, no matter what Ashok Dube thinks.

NOSHIR H. NAGARWALLA.

Those Poor Adarans

In the years to come *shukhad* (sandlewood) will be out of bounds for the Parsis due to export, felling trees by smugglers and very high prices. Already ordinary wood for *kathi* is gone up four times due to dearth of kerosene, diesel oil and coal; (*Parsiana* March 1980, request from Igatpuri for *Kathi* Fund.)

Parsi families are leaving the

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villages of Udwarda, Navsari, Surat and Broach for the cities and selling their fore-father's houses and land. As a result old adarans founded in the villages are finding it difficult to maintain themselves.

I suggest that all adarans lacking funds, should be shifted to cities like Bombay, Surat etc., and amalgamated with other adarans. With the permission of the trustees, the building of the old adarans should be demolished, the land sold and the proceeds merged with the sister adarans, so both may prosper. Take the example of Sir Cawasji Adenwala; the old adaran at Aden was brought to India and was merged with adaran at Lonavla in November 1976.

Further I request Parsis not to build any more adarans in India; but to donate to Parsi education funds.

In times to come we will be short of Mobeds, short of *Shukhad*, short of *Kathi* and even short of space. Why not act now?

NAREIMAN S. BAXTER
Pune

Work, Study and Preach

The crying need of the day, as far as our community is concerned, and

apart from the economic problem of a section of the community, is to cultivate in the present, and particularly the younger generation, knowledge of and pride in the Parsi community and the Zoroastrian religion. This can be done by a band of young, enthusiastic Parsi men of the type of Khojeste Mistree.

To achieve this I suggest that we look for young men, who, apart from pursuing their particular profession or calling, are willing to devote themselves to the study of and then lecturing on the Zoroastrian religion, its history and allied matters. They can be employed by Parsis in business and industry, who, while paying them for full time work, will permit them to devote 50 per cent of their time to the study of the Zoroastrian religion. In due course they will address small gatherings. These gatherings could be made into social affairs.

Needless to say I will gladly participate in the scheme as an employer. In my opinion employers will be easily available, the shortage, if at all, will be finding the necessary employee-preachers of the type required.

KAIYOS T. MARFATIA.

Roots

According to French archeologist R. Ghirshman in his book *Iran*, we Zoroastrians came either from the Steppes of Southern Russia; from the area around the river Oxus or from Jaxartes and Transoxiana both in U. S. S. R.; then we went on horse-back through the Caucasian mountain passes to a land known as "Elam" in 900 B.C. Gradually as we settled there we changed the name to Persia (later Iran). We brought our "Mazdayasni" religion with us and the worship of Atash (fire) is Mazda-yani not Zoroastrian. The author points out that Zarathushtra reformed the Mazdayan religion and hence the two religions, Zoroastrianism and Mazdayani, must be separate.

ROSHAN H. MEHTA
Calcutta

Omission

In *Parsiiana* November 1979 the life sketch of late Dastur Dabu I find a discrepancy in the statement that Dabu is survived by his son Noshir. The fact is that Dabu is survived by his two other sons, Adi and Minoo and his daughter Najoo.

K. F. ANTIA

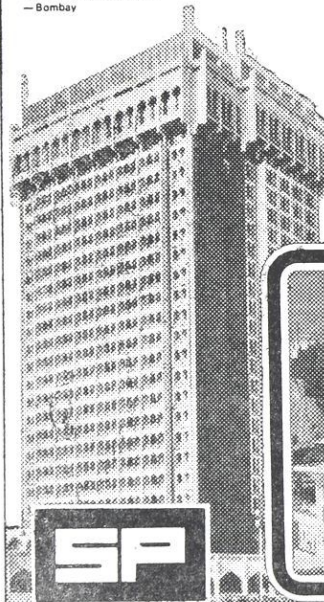
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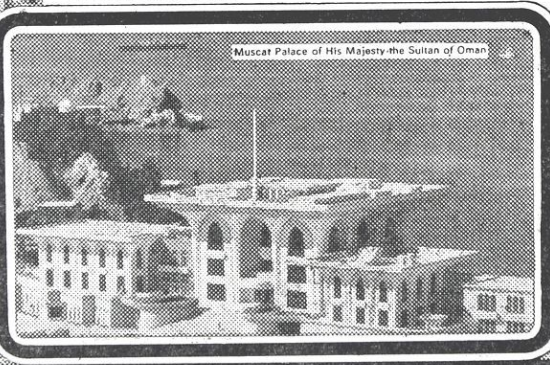
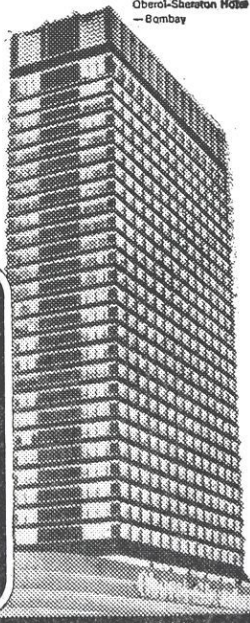
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Events and Personalities

Woman at the Helm

Ms Thrity H. J. Taleyarkhan, a well known social worker and organizer of long standing, was elected president of the Maharashtra State Women's Council, a premier women's organization in the State, for the year 1980-81. Earlier she had served twice as the elected vice president of the council according to her bio-data.

A member of other social work organizations, Taleyarkhan was the



Taleyarkhan: Social Worker

youngest person to have been awarded the Padmashri award by the Government of India in 1965 notes her bio-data. Presently she is a member of the All India Handicrafts Board and the Governing Body of the National Council of Women in India. She also serves on the Board of Governors of the Institute of Catering Technology and Applied Nutrition.

In the past Taleyarkhan has worked as the general secretary of the All India Women's Food Council and

chairperson of the Committee of the State Small Savings Programme, where she is reported to have collected millions of rupees as investment in the National Defence Collections.

Born in Bombay and educated at St. Xavier's College, Bombay Taleyarkhan has travelled widely and represented India in a number of international conferences. During her stay in Libya where her husband, Homi, was India's ambassador, she is reported to have successfully projected India's image in the Arab world.

The day of the 'Water Angel'

Nostalgia is "the scene near Churchgate Station of the steam-train days. . . Where Eros Theatre and Asiatic Stores are at present, there was a sandy beach washed by the waves of the Arabian Sea. . . and here, from morning till sunset, hordes of Zoro-

astrians—men, women and children—would pray" to Avan Ardvi Sur Banoo, the Angel of Water, on her special day Ava Roj, Ava Mah. This year on Ava Roj, Ava Mah an Avan Ardvi Sur Prabh/festival and Jashan which the organizers hope, in the welcome-programme, will "mark the resumption of (this) wholesome practice which was abandoned for all these years."

A Hama Anjuman Jashan, or community jashan performed by 21 mobeds and led by Dastur Kekobad of Iranshah (Udvada), started the 2 April evening programme organized jointly by Andheri Zoroastrian Association (AZA), the Zoroastrian Building Fund (ZBF) and the Zoroastrian Colony Association (ZCA) according to a report sent by Dinshaw Merchant of AZA. The programme



Prayers to the Water Angel: Some of the 21 Mobeds who performed the Jashan

included a 'Ham Bandagi,' or prayers in which the entire gathering participates, led by Kekobad, a talk by Khojeste Mistree of Zoroastrian Studies on the "Significance of Ava Yazad in Zoroastrian Scriptures" and 'Jarhosti Jalso' songs on the Parsi religion and culture compiled and presented by Dali Palkhiwala. Merchant delivered the welcome speech and Naval R. Unwala of ZCA proposed the vote of thanks.

In his report Merchant quotes from Andrew Carnegie, an American millionaire who had witnessed the celebration of the occasion at Chowpati beach at the turn of the century: "I do not expect in all my life to witness a religious ceremony which will so powerfully affect me as that of the Parsis on the beaches of Bombay." Dr Samuel Lang in his book *A Modern Zoroastrian* endorses Carnegie's views and adds: "Here is an ideal religious ceremony combining all that is true, most touching, and most sublime in the attitude of man towards the great unknown," Merchant adds.

"Praying the Avan Yasht from Hormuzd Roj of Avan month for 40 days is supposed to fulfill one's desires, particularly in respect of children," the welcome programme observes. The programme adds: "Many have offered prayers to the female Avan Ardivisur and have begotten children as a result of their devoted prayers."

Bright Lights

There were green lights, amber and red too, for 20-year-old **Homi F. Warden**, whose working model of an automatic traffic signal so impressed the Traffic Police Department that they reportedly bought it off him to use in a district town of Maharashtra State. The model was originally put on display at the "Road Safety Week" Traffic Police Exhibition held in Bombay in February and Nasik in April.

The facilities for fabricating the traffic signal were reportedly provided by the B. M. Gamadia Polytechnic where Warden completed a one year course in Electrical and mechanical engineering in 1977. Presently Warden is studying for the Maharashtra State PWD First Class Electrical Supervisors examination.

"Though my first model (traffic signal) was based on mechanical principles I expect to develop another electronic model," says Warden. "Then maybe I could go commercial," he speculates.



Deboo:
"Arabesque"
"Modern and
Classical"

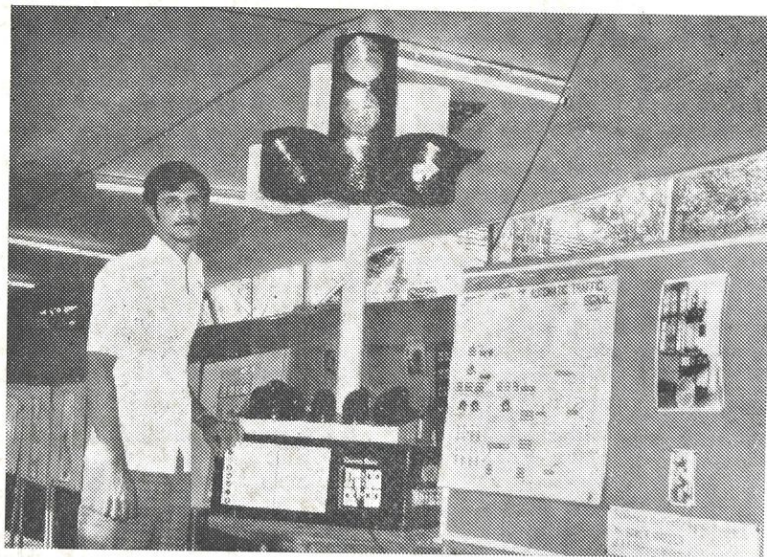
Dance Performance by Deboo

Astad Deboo greeted his audience as a frozen statue, then slowly he started to move to the urgings of the music and as the tempo increased he threw himself into it completely. For the next two hours he held his audience down to their seats as he, alone on the stage, went through a series of modern dances which he had choreographed himself. The programme titled 'Arabesque' was held in April at the Patkar Hall and Prithvi Theatre under the sponsorship of the Max Muller Bhavan, Bombay.

The item which evoked greatest

audience response was 'disco dance' where Deboo seemed to poke light fun at this more popular form of 'modern dance' with a 'see-I'm-having-a-good-time' grin frozen on his face as he went through the motions. But Deboo's forte, as the press release described it, is in Indian Classical and Modern dance which becomes apparent in the other items, where the movements of the body are increasingly governed by control and technique.

Deboo, who is presently studying Kathakali (dance) under the guidance of Guru E. Krishna, has performed



Warden: positive signals

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in Bangkok, Djakarta, London, Manila, Mexico, New York, Rio De Janeiro, Sydney, Toronto, to mention a few cities, according to the Press release. He is also reported to have given a Royal Command Performance in Japan and Thailand, was the only Indian artist at the Opening Festival Season of the Royal Opera House and was the lead dancer in the opera "Rose Garden."

"Deboo's remarkable gift has also proven to be of therapeutic value in the drug addiction programmes in Canada and Hongkong," the press release notes. He is also reported to have conducted the National School of Drama in Delhi recently.

NAGPUR :

Youth Salute

Instead of the usual army colonel, air marshal, or police commissioner, 14-year-old **Naushad E. Bhagwagar** declared open the 33rd Annual Athletic Meet of the St. Joseph's Convent School and Junior College, Nagpur, some months ago, writes our Nagpur correspondent Dilnavaz E. Bhagwagar. "This is our way of saluting the children of India and of the world, in this, the International Year of the Child," Sister Angela, Principal of the school, is reported to have said in her welcome speech.

Naushad Bhagwagar, a tenth standard student of the St. Francis De Sales School, smartly took the salute at an impressive march past, according to the report. Ten year old Shilpa Mankeshwar, the other dignitary of the afternoon, gave away the prizes.

The Biking Vikings

"The exhilaration of the outdoors and a spirit of adventure spurred four young Parsi boys, between the ages of 18 and 20 to pedal their way to Secunderabad, some 500 Kms. away from Nagpur," writes our Nagpur correspondent Dilnavaz Bhagwagar. The journey, which was made by **Malcolm Bhamgara, Shahrukh Cassad, Naushad Bhamgara and Aftab Bharucha**, was sponsored by the Forum of Young Zoroastrians (FOYZ) and the Parsi Cricket Gymkhana of Nagpur, according to the report. "During their five day stay in Secunderabad, they were hosted and feted by the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. At a special felicitating function where Ms. Rohda Mistry, M.L.A. from AP, was the Chief Guest, Professor Faroukh Vakil of Osmania University gave a talk on 'The Role of Youth'," writes Bhagwagar.

"Talking of their journey, the boys said they normally covered about 150 kms a day. They would start in the morning at 4 a.m., rest during the noon day heat and pedal on again till 9 p.m., 'hitting the sack' at some way-side *dhaba* where everyone from the owner to the truck-drivers and the bed-bugs in the *khatias* were most friendly. Villagers on the way-side were curious but always helpful and hospitable. The four have now set



**Chief Guest Bhagwagar:
Presenting the school colours**



**"The Pedal Pushers"
Four Nagpur youths who
cycled to Secunderabad
500 km away (L to R) M.
Bhamgara, Cassad, N.
Bhamgara and Bharucha.**

their sights on cycling to Dubai and eventually hope to make it over-land to Europe! Any sponsors?"

SPOTLIGHT

Dr Fali Mehta, noted dentist of Bombay, has been elected president of the All India Dental Council according to an 'Executive Diary' column of the *Economic Times*...

Five Parsi students cornered the academic limelight by winning a number of gold medals in various faculties at the Bombay University convocation held earlier this year, according to a report in the Gujarati daily *The Bombay Samachar* in an article captioned 'They Grabbed all the Gold.' The five students were: **Mehelli R. Cama, Berjis M. Desai** (two medals), **Ms Freny K. Sanjana, Hoshang J. Engineer** (three medals) and **Ms Meher M. Hodiwala**. The convocation was held on 31 March 1980.

Cama was awarded the Kinloch Forbes Gold Medal for securing the highest number of marks in the subject Jurisprudence and Comparative Law in the Second L.L.B. examination held in 1978. Desai won the M. N. Wadia and the B. J. Patel Diamond Jubilee Memorial Trust Gold Medals for obtaining the highest total marks in the LL.B. examination held in 1979. Desai is reported to have started his higher studies in law at the Oxford University under a Rotarian Scholarship granted to him.

Sanjana was awarded the Kashinath Trambak Telang Gold Medal for securing the highest marks in MA Philosophy examinations held in

1979. Engineer, in addition to winning the James Berckly Gold Medal for obtaining the highest marks in Civil Engineering of the B.E. examination of 1979, also won the S. B. Junnarak and the Rao Bahadur Rajadhyaksha Gold Medals for topping the merit list in two other subjects.

Hodiwala secured the Devidas J. Desai Gold Medal for obtaining the highest number of marks in Commercial Law I and Commercial Law II in the LL.M. examinations held in 1979...

In yet another area of academic achievement, five Zoroastrian boys were placed in the first 50 candidates to have been declared successful in the Final Chartered Accounts examination (New Syllabus) held in November 1979, according to a letter by Peshotan Nargolwala, published in *The Bombay Samachar*. The five boys are: **Mehernosh Kapadia, Robinton Anklesaria, Dadiba Penthaki, Jehangir Irani and Aspi Bhesania**....

The distinction of being the first Indian woman Chief Reporter of a National daily goes to **Ms Coomi**



Contractor: speaking of speakers

Kapoor of Delhi, writes Piloo N. Jungalwalla, author of *The Parsis*. Ms Kapoor works for Delhi edition of the *Indian Express*...

Dinyar Russy Contractor, a 23-year old final year B.E. student at the Walchand College of Engineering, Sangli, reportedly captured the gold medal at the 1980 Students' Technical Session of the Institute of Engineers, India held in Calcutta earlier this year. Contractor won the award for his paper "A new class A audio

amplifier scheme" which he presented at the Session where students from all over the country meet to present their own new theories or inventions, note his parents. In his paper Contractor discussed the various kinds of amplifiers, the technical difficulties that one encounters in the higher class amplifiers and the progress and developments that are going on in this field the world over...

Road Safety Petrol Officer, **Khurshed Noshir Variava**, of Surat, was awarded a cash prize and a Certificate of Merit by the District Superintendent of Police, Surat, for integrity, humanity and gallantry, reports the *Free Press Journal*. Variava, who had earlier won the award twice in 1975 and 1979, was the only RSP officer in Gujarat to be recognised for his gallantry...

M. D. Karkhanavala

In the 'In Memoriam' column of *Parsiana* March 1980, we add that Minocher D. Karkhanavala who died on 17 November 1979 is also survived by his mother Mani. The omission is regreted.

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NORTH AMERICA

Canadian Mobeds

Four young boys in Quebec, Canada, are preparing to become priests by attending special classes and courses organized by individual members of the Quebec Zoroastrian community, according to Dr Ervad Jehan Bagli, editor of *Gavashni*, the quarterly publication of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec. Bagli who had visited India in May this year explains that the four boys, three of whom are from athornan (priestly) families and one from a behdin (lay) family, Zubin Panthaki, Khsnoom Panthaki, Zubin Dastoor and Jehangir Irani, are all around 12-years of age, very enthusiastic, keen and serious about becoming navars and maratabs.

The significance of this development Bagli emphasises is that these four boys represent the second generation of the Zoroastrian community in the North American Continent, that it is the first reported case of the community being able to generate a supply of priests from within itself rather than depending totally on India for their future supply.

The four boys meet regularly at the homes of either Bagli, or Kersi Bhedwar, who teach them the necessary prayers and ceremonies that a priest should know. Yet it will be necessary for the boys to return to India for a while to be initiated into priesthood as these facilities are not available in North America, Bagli observes. In the case of the behdin boy however, there might be some problems in initiating him into the priesthood, but Bagli believes that this will not be a deterrent as the boy

is interested nevertheless. He points out that something will be worked out in his case and if necessary some innovative steps taken.

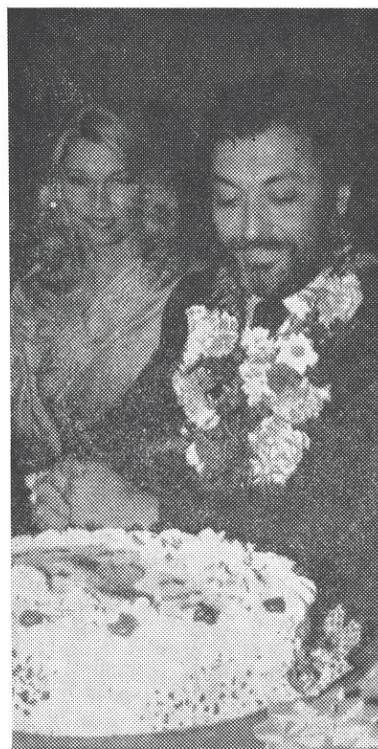
ZAGNY fetes Zubin Mehta

New York Philharmonic Music Director Zubin Mehta was felicitated by nearly 200 area Zoroastrians who attended a contributory luncheon and



Mehta, at mike, as Erach [Munshi, Darbe Mehr trustee, looks on

a jashan hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) earlier this year, reports Porus Cooper, honorary editorial contributor to *Parsiana* from North America. The function was held at the Arbab Guiv Darbe Mehr hall on 26 April.



With wife, Nancy, pondering the birthday cake icing

"Mehta, sporting a salt-and-pepper beard—a souvenir from a recent vacation—came with his wife Nancy. Speakers on behalf of ZAGNY lauded the maestro's musical achievements and hailed him as an inspiration to Zoroastrians everywhere," writes Cooper.



The Mehtas (centre) with Freddy Patel, president of ZAGNY and Ms Armaity Patel

The report adds: "the room was thick with excitement and Mehta, who was celebrating his 44th birthday, was treated to a large cake and a half-dozen standing ovations.

"Responding to the unabashed adulation, Mehta remarked mischievously how when he was a young boy one of his grandparents used to wonder why he had been given such an obscure first name. 'Now I find Zubins everywhere I look in this room,' he said."

Preparing for the 'Great Crash'

"We are heading for a crash—whether a soft-landing or otherwise—which could greatly affect Zoroastrian assets unless defensive action is taken now," warns a 'concerned Zoroastrian' in a talk given to the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia, extracts of which are reproduced by the quarterly publication of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, *Gavashni*. Extract of the talk "How to protect yourself during the coming bad years" deal with strategies against possible runaway inflation.

The speaker refers to recommendations by Mark Tier, editor of *World Monetary Analyst*, "a very shrewd economist from Hongkong," who predicts the behaviour of various forms of investments: "assets that will retain purchasing power through: Gold... silver... storeable food... farmland and Swiss francs (may be)—assets that will loose initially, but recapture power after hyperinflation: real estate... shares... others (furniture, etc.)—assets that will increase (in) purchasing power during hyperinflation but loose it afterwards: collectors coins and stamps... diamonds... anti-ques etc."

Recommendations made by Howard Duff, "a very knowledgeable specialist with a big following", in his book *How to prosper during the coming bad years* are: "Store enough food and vitamins for a year, since there is only a few days supply in most American/Canadian supermarkets, in case panic buying is triggered by a Teamster's strike, shortage due to inflation, or whatever (please read the book for detailed information on how best to do it).

"Obtain one bag of junk silver (\$1,000.00, face value of pre-1967 Canadian dimes, quarters and half-dollars) from a reputable coin dealer for each member of your family. Keep at hand for insurance primarily in case proper money starts to collapse in future. The silver is also likely to multiply in value.

"Payoff unsound debt (mortgage debt is not unsound, provided you can always make payments in bad times) and avoid paper investment (deposit a/c, bonds, annuities, mortgage investment etc.) Since money is going broke.

"Sell off big city real estate (except perhaps your own house or farmland).

"Be prepared for price controls, and a possible black market economy by buying ahead essentials for day to day living, which are in any case going to go up in prices, so you can't lose by doing so."

For further information on the above talk *Gavashni* has offered to oblige those who write to them at *Gavashni*, 12, Allancroft Rd, Kirkland, P. Q. H9J 2G9, Canada.

Los Angeles Committee

A new body of members to the Executive Committee of the Zoroastrian Association of Southern California, Los Angeles, for the years 1980-82 was elected to office in February this year. News of the election was conveyed by Rustom A. Irani who has come visiting India from Los Angeles.

Members of the committee are: Ms Armity R. Irani, president, Rasi Alamshah, vice president, Ms Dhunmai Dalal, honorary secretary, Burjor Vaghaiwalla, honorary treasurer and Ms Dogdo Arjani, programme chair—person. The address of the association is: ZASC, 5272 Los Adornos Way, Los Angeles 90027.

PAKISTAN

"The Star" on Pakistan's Parsis

"Parsis in Karachi, as far as non-Parsis are concerned, have managed to remain a closed community. They lead an insular existence, maintaining a respectable distance in terms of social fraternisation and cultural cohesion, carrying an aura of aloofness, relishing their privacy as a protective shell," so observes the introduction to the article "The Parsees: Survival or Extinction?" by Hameed Zaman in the Karachi paper *The Star*.

The clipping, submitted by Ervad Godrej D. Sidhwa, the "acting high priest of the (Karachi) Parsis" and honorary lecturer in Zoroastrian Theology and Ancient Iranian History at Karachi University, provides glimpses of the various social issues facing the community in Pakistan. The article quotes Sidhwa on the social psychology and growth of the Parsi race: "Socio-religiously we are Aryans while culturally we are

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Semetics—did you notice the domes on the fire temples and the bulls supporting the pillars of Persepolis?" On the question of non-conversion Sidhwa states: "Man is not born with a body alone. He comes in this world with the seeds of his destined faith which he will acquire from his mother who had nurtured him for nine months in her womb. This womb has shaped and moulded not only his psyche, but also the contours of his spiritual destiny."

In another part of the article Professor Firoze C. Daver, whose position or occupation is not detailed, comments on the question of inter-communal marriages: "We are against mixed marriages not on the grounds of our assumed superiority but because we emphatically maintain that our religion and culture deserve to survive and not to be frivolously frittered away. We only wish that our communal solidarity may not be shaken to the roots and that as a unified and compact community we may be left alone to serve God and man according to our own rights and to the best of our capacities."

According to the article "Karachi's first Tower of Silence, known as Ghadialy Dokhma, was consecrated in 1847. Presently there are two where on an average 50 bodies are disposed off every year. The bigger tower known as Anjuttan Dokhita was constructed in 1875. However, with the development of Karachi Airport, the Civil Aviation Authorities launched a campaign to eliminate vultures from the vicinity of Karachi's air space with the result that these two Towers of Silence have no vultures to attend the scavenging business. Now the bodies are just exposed to the sun or to stray birds like crows or kites which circle ominously over the site."

In conclusion the author of the article observes: "With a minuscule population (Karachi 4,500; Lahore 200; Quetta 50) the Parsi community is a very closely knit one. It hopes to survive and flourish this way. Immigration to western Europe and North America has eroded Pakistan's Parsi population still further. Unofficial sources estimate Karachi's Parsi population at only 2,500 today... If the community that spearheaded the development of Karachi in this century dies out, the loss will be tragic. With the strategy for survival the community has adopted, they alone can be considered the best judges of their own actions."

Spotlight from Karachi . . .
Dr Roshan Boman Bhappu, originally

from Pakistan, was one of the "select few" to be honoured with the Distinguished Member Award for 1979 by the Society of Mining Engineers of the American Institute of Mining Engineers (AIME), according to a news item in the *Parsi Sansar*, the Karachi bi-weekly, sent to *Parsiana* by Ms Mehran P. Kavasi.

Bhappu, the report notes, has been the vice president and general manager of Mountain States Research and Development (MSRD), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Mountain States Mineral Enterprises Inc. for more than seven years. "He supervises many services at MSRD, including assaying, minerology, pilotplant testing, process development, computerised process simulation, environmental engineering and geological and hydrological studies," the report adds.

A doctorate of Science from the Colorado School of Mines, Bhappu had spent 13 years as senior metallurgist and research professor and vice president of research with New Mexico Bureau of Mines and New Mexico Institute of Technology. In 1976 he was awarded the Van Diest Gold Medal for Outstanding Achievement by the Colorado School of Mines, according to the news clipping.

... and from Lahore

Noshir F. Dastoor, noted personality in the financial circles of Lahore and Pakistan, was elected the president of the Lahore Stock Exchange for 1980, according to a report sent by Nadir H. Wankadia, vice president of the Lahore Parsi Anjuman. Prior to his election as president, Dastoor reportedly served as vice president of the Exchange for four consecutive years and has represented the organization and the Punjab business community in a number of government councils and forums.

Dastoor was born in Bharuch and studied initially at the place of his birth and later in Ahmedabad from where he obtained his B. Com. degree, according to Wankadia. The report credits Dastoor as being the first person to start a Stock and Share business in post-independence Lahore and being instrumental in establishing the Stock Exchange in 1971.

Recounting Dastoor's other achievements Wankadia observes that in April 1980 he was nominated as a member of the Provincial Council, Punjab, by the Governor of Punjab; recently, in coordination with the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industries, he founded a Financial Development Board for the development of Central and Northern Zones

of Pakistan; and he is an elected director of the State managed Cement Company.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

Parsis of Hongkong

"The Parsis were the first Indians to take interest in the China trade. They became the middlemen of the opium trade—the most profitable commodity for the British East India Company." The extract appears in a *Far Eastern Economic Digest* article based upon an academic paper prepared by K. N. Vaid: "The Overseas Indian Community in Hongkong."

The article, submitted by Homi Sethna who is posted with the United Nations in Rome also refers to the influence of the Indian and Parsi community reflected in the names of important roads, for instance, Bisney Road and Mody Road. It also mentions the Ruttonjee Sanatorium, "a leading chest clinic in this part of the world," set up by a Parsi family, and the "famous" Star Ferry which was also started by a Parsi.

"The last Indian to hold public office," the report adds, "the late Dhun Ruttonjee, retired as Senior Unofficial Member of the Legislative Council in 1968. Ruttonjee, who was born in Hongkong, was a legislative councillor for 15 years. His articulate but well-tempered criticism of the (previous) Sir David Trench administration after the 1967 riots is memorable for students of 'loyal opposition' systems anywhere: 'The single most important issue that faces us today is the problem of leadership... There is a vacuum of leadership waiting to be filled and I urge this government to fill (it) before it is too late.' Ruttonjee's brave line of attack has not been taken up by any other Indian Hongkong 'belonger.'"

Singapore Committee

A new committee of office bearers for the year 1980 has been elected to office by the Parsi Association, one of the two community organizations in Singapore, at its annual general meeting held on 3rd March 1980, according to a report sent by Rutton M. H. Patel, president of the body.

Members of the General Committee are: Patel, president; Jamshid K. Medora, vice president; Noshir J. Mistry, secretary and treasurer; Behram R. Vakil, Khushru J. Khajotia, Rohinton R. Marolia and Dara E. Rupa, committee members.

Members of the Managing Committee of the Parsi Lodge Charity, are: Medora, Vakil and Patel.

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News from the Media

Let there Be Light

In Bombay, the coal-gas illumination was first demonstrated by a young Indian amateur, **Ardaseer Cursetjee Wadia**. The demonstration, which lagged behind a similar one in Europe by about four decades, preceded the commercial venture in this city by more than three decades. And, perhaps, this was the first demonstration of gas-light in this country.



Wadia : Pioneering Engineer

Interestingly, the electric lighting too was first demonstrated in this city by a group of amateurs and events occurred almost in a similar succession. That is, the first demonstration took place about four decades later than that in the West, about three decades earlier than the commercial venture and perhaps was the first in this subcontinent.

The responsibility of design and supervision of the construction of 'Voltaic Batteries' for electric lighting was entrusted to one Captain Inglefield of the Royal Navy. On 28 February, 1849, Bombay newspapers announced a special demonstration of the light in the Town Hall that evening.

The exhibition was successful, doubts notwithstanding. According to the report of *The Bombay Times*, the light was sustained for about half an hour, and it exhibited no flickering or

interruption. It was so intense that the eye at the distance of 100 feet could scarcely rest on it. Measuring its intensity by the method of shadows, it seemed as powerful as a thousand wax candles.

Presumably on popular demand, another demonstration was arranged on March 6. The second demonstration proved even more successful. "The Town Hall was thronged with spectators of all creeds, castes, and colours — who expressed their delight by repeated clapping of hands" reported the *Times*.

The Bombay Times now conceded that on the previous occasion light did not come out altogether so brilliantly as had been anticipated; but then, it was the first attempt of the manipulators—mere amateurs in science, who did their best to satisfy the public." And it was the first time that the *Times* mentioned one more name. To quote:

"We are indebted to the enterprise of Capt. Inglefield and Cursetjee Ardaseer, Esq., of our Dockyard... Captain Inglefield, we regret to learn, soon leaves us; but it is to be hoped that his enterprising colleague, who is at the head of the engineer (sic) department of our dockyard will not allow the novelty thus so fairly broached to lie at the rest..."

It appears, this report—rather plainspeaking—of the *Times* earned the wrath of the 'distinguished electrotypist and electrician' (Captain Inglefield). On March 10, most of the Bombay papers, except the *Times* carried a letter written by him. In the attached editorial note the *Telegraph* kept no secret of the Captain's ire about the incorrect report of some newspaper. In the letter, the Captain gave a detailed account of his problems and his dexterity in tackling them. At the end, he showered unequivocal praise on one Commodore Hawkins of the Indian Navy and expressed his gratitude for the Commodore's help that "facilitated the success of the experiments." Poor Ardaseer's name found no mention!

As one analyses this incident in the light of prevalent situation, one is led to conclude that this was, perhaps, one of the raw 'deals' to a native by a parochial Britisher. Ardaseer Cursetjee was, by far, an enterprising person with a wonderful background. In his youth, he successfully assembled a steam-engine and fixed it to a boat constructed by himself. Steam-engines, needless to say, were quite uncommon in those days. Again, in 1834, when he was merely 26, he fabricated and commissioned the first

ever coal-gas plant of this country, in his home at Mazagon. Even the Royal Society of London, in appreciation to the capabilities of this young Indian, elected him a member in 1841. Judging from his background, it appears that Ardaseer most willingly associated himself to the project of Electric Lighting and possibly made significant contribution to it. The conjecture grows into a belief as one notes that the contrivance was fabricated in the dockyard where Ardaseer headed the machine shop. Could anything have materialized there at all but for his help and co-operation? One may recall here that Ardaseer's appointment as the head of an establishment, which had many Englishmen in its payroll, was already a thorn in the flesh of many a parochial Britisher. A few of them had even given vent to their resentment in the columns of newspapers. Captain Inglefield's letter might have something to do with these narrow sentiments.

Kudos to the objective journalism of *The Bombay Times*. Or else we would have never known the involvement of an Indian amateur in the efforts of demonstration of Electric Light, for the first time in this city and, perhaps, in this subcontinent.

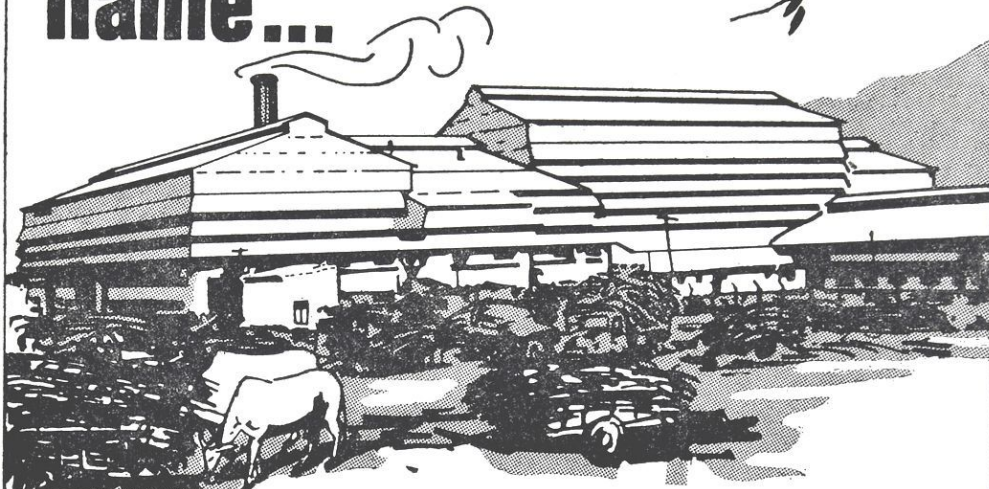
Free Press Journal; 2 March 1980

IN THE NEWS

"In a sleepy hamlet of Buchenbach of southern West Germany lives **Dilnawaz Bana**, an Indian with an unusual profession—curative eurhythmic," notes a *Times of India* Sunday Magazine feature by Sima Mital. Eurhythmic, Bana explains in the article, is a form of sound-movement therapy "based on the principle that sound, when supplemented with movement is potent enough to evoke in the patient a state of acute self-realization." For instance by pronouncing the letter 'M' with a deep breath and concentration and matching the sound of the letter with the rhythmic wave of the arm is supposed to cure a patient of asthma.

Explaining how she came to get interested in this form of therapy, Bana says: "I had obtained a degree in psychology from Bombay University and had also learnt Indian classical dancing, so I wanted to combine my knowledge of psychology and dance and use movement as therapy." Before "her search came to an end" however, she had left India 12 years ago, given many dance recitals in Iran, Peru, Syria and other countries and even worked as a graphologist, or handwriting analyst, for a while in Vienna."

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PAPER TIGER

Arnavaz Mama

A rickety stairway leads to the office premises of Jamshedji Rattanji & Co., Bombay's oldest paper merchants. Heaps of equipment littering the office, silently testify to the incumbent's interest in mountain-climbing and yatching.

At an antique desk full of papers and memorabilia sits Jamshed Batliboi—a father of three with a receding hairline and dark twinkling eyes. He has been at the receiving end of many accolades recently at what IMC president Jimmy Guzdar called "a unique function." Thirty-six paper traders in their individual capacity had organized a special reception and dinner at the Catholic Gym on Thursday 10th April 1980 where 600-700 people gathered to honour Jamshed Merwanji Batliboi, "not in his official capacity as outgoing president of the paper traders association but for the outstanding work he has done as an individual," according to Arvind Shah of the noted Chimanlal Paper Company.

Batliboi had "worked very hard for the Paper Traders Association and the Master Printers Association when he was a printer," attests Rusy Cama of the *Bombay Samachar*, recalling Batliboi's stint at printing as partner of Conway Printers. Batliboi himself says, "The Association has always been a personal affair. Whenever there is anything special to be done, I am available."

One such occasion was the prolonged Matadi labour strike. "The Matadis called me a very obstinate fellow, created my effigy and gave me a mock funeral," laughed Batliboi ere they scaled down their demand of Rs 75 per bundle to accept the Chief Minister's prescription of Rs 2.40 instead.

"They called me a very obstinate fellow, created my effigy and gave me a mock funeral"

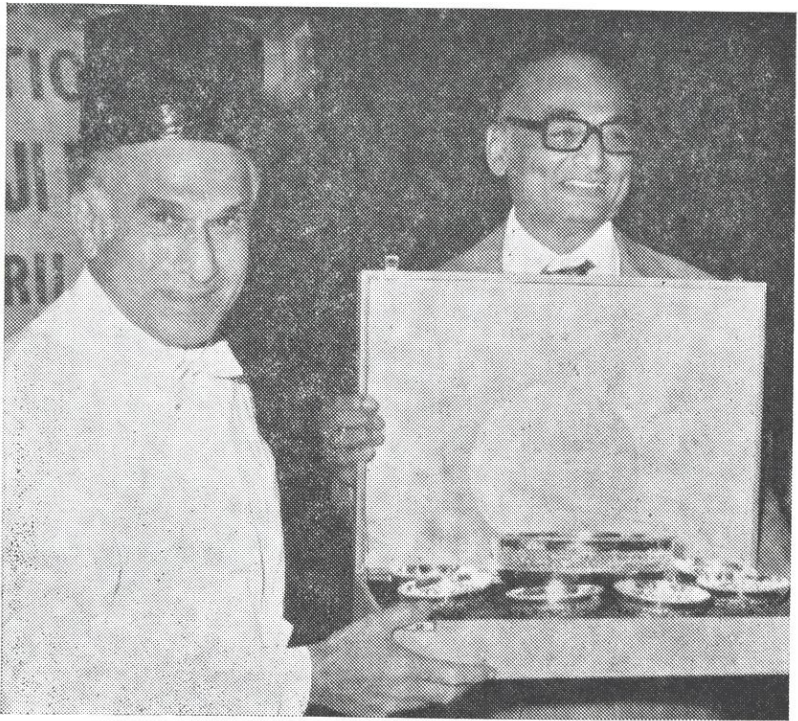
Another tailor-made opportunity for an activist was the new Sales Tax Act which branded any trader late at filing his ST returns a criminal and faced him with the prospect of six months in jail. Forty thousand traders in

Maharashtra banded together to fight the obnoxious portions of the act, proving Batliboi's point that "a little fear is required to move Indians in the right direction." Batliboi was a part of the action group.

Chimanlal Shah founder of Chimanlals, described Jamshed's father Merwanji as a "colourful personality with high personal integrity who guided the trade for over 42 years." In this day and age, however, Batliboi

in readymade garments for the young.

The system of distribution of the major paper manufacturers today does not cater to "people like me who don't believe in cash premiums," says Batliboi. "Jimmy is hardly in tune with the 80s," one school chum declares grimly. Active participation in the association's affairs may have touched peoples hearts as Keshavlal R. Shah, founder of Keshavlal Amba-



Batliboi (L) and Jairambai M. Patel, chairman of the Rohit Pulp and Paper Mills Ltd. who presided over the eulogies and presented the memento to Batliboi

finds it hard to integrate the two. "I've been in the trade for 43 years. I must have attended most weddings and funerals," he says but is loathe to discuss plans for the firm's centenary which is barely five years away. His first born is qualifying as an architect; the second, an only daughter, has opted for catering and hotel management. The youngest has just completed his SSC: the paper trade is not obviously on their minds.

Not to be outdone by her activist husband, Bhicoo Batliboi specialises

lal & Co., claims; but it is obvious that the trade as a whole considers his repudiation of a major paper manufacturer with dubious business practices as attested by the association's secretary, Navinbhai Shah, worthy of honour, not of emulation. "If there is unity among the traders," notes Batliboi, the paper traders' Don Quixote, "the mills can be brought to book." But then, he concedes with a touch of irony, "patriotism and civic consciousness is what we expect from others."

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Burjor Bharucha Centenary

The birth centenary of the late Burjor Bharucha, honorary secretary of the Indian National Congress and social reformer who strove for the social and economic upliftment of the poorer sections of the Parsi community will be commemorated by the Bombay community at a meeting scheduled for 7 July 1980. The meeting which is jointly sponsored by the Youths' Own Union and the Bharucha Trust will be held at Cama Hall.

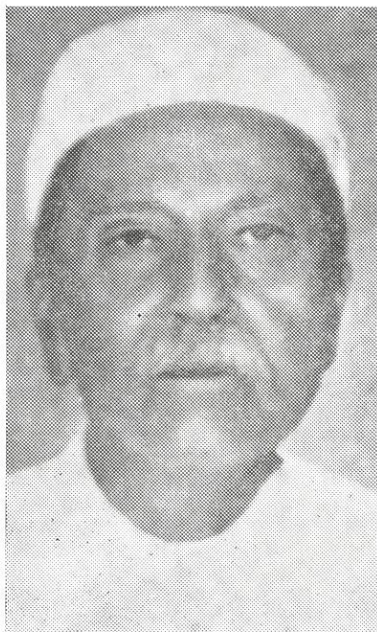
Bharucha was personally acquainted with leading national personalities including Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel, Dr Annie Besant and Abdul Gafur Khan with whom he worked in the North West Frontier Province for the national cause, according to his life-sketch prepared by Dr Sarosh Wadia, homeopath and associate of Bharucha. Wadia notes that Bharucha however, chose not to remain with the Indian National Congress and devoted the rest of his life to the welfare of the Parsi community. He travelled extensively between pockets of the community in the rural areas of Gujarat, making arrangements for the education of the youth and opening classes to teach sewing, handicrafts and other trades to illiterate women so that they could earn a living for themselves says Wadia. Pardi, Bulsar, Gandevi, Billimora, Navsari and Surat were some of the places where these institutions were established.

In Udvada, Bharucha also provided the community residents with a gymkhana and a library according to Wadia. Along with Dastur Dhallal of Karachi, who visited India in 1937, Bharucha repeatedly mediated the differences between the rival factions which had split the Anjuman in Udvada in two and provided the body with its first written constitution and by-laws.

"He believed in giving all he had, even sometimes more. He collected from every person who could afford it and passed it on to the really needy and deserving, not by way of alms but as a means of putting them on their feet," writes Jehan Daruwalla, Editor of the *Bombay Samachar*

in his *Parsi Teri Arsi* column.

Born into a noted, and wealthy family on 5th July 1880, in Kathiawad, Gujarat, his father being the Chief Justice of Kathiawad and later Dewan of Jamnagar, Bharucha gave up his professional career as an accountant



Bharucha: Patriot and reformer

to join the national freedom movement, notes his bio-data.

Wadia recounts how Bharucha provided the forum for a dialogue between Gandhi and the Parsi community in Bombay when the community's sentiments to the national freedom movement were suspected by the other Indian communities. It was during the 1920s when the Prince of Wales visited India and the Parsis were profuse in welcoming the British Crown Prince. This in addition to the community's non-participation in Gandhi's 'boycott the British' movement led to communal tension and antagonism against the Parsis. Bharucha invited Gandhi through the Parsi Rajkiya Sabha, a body which he had founded, to a "frank and open discus-

sion" with the community at the Excelsior Theatre. The meeting, where Gandhi recalled the contributions of great Parsi patriots and called on the community to participate in the national movement, reportedly cleared up unnecessary misunderstandings and eased the social tension.

Bharucha's personal life-style was simple and hermit like. A strict

"Bharucha provided the forum for a dialogue when the community's sentiments to the freedom movement were suspect.

vegetarian, he lived in a small single room at Esplanade Mansion in the Fort area of Bombay where he washed his own clothes and cleaned his own room, Wadia recalls.

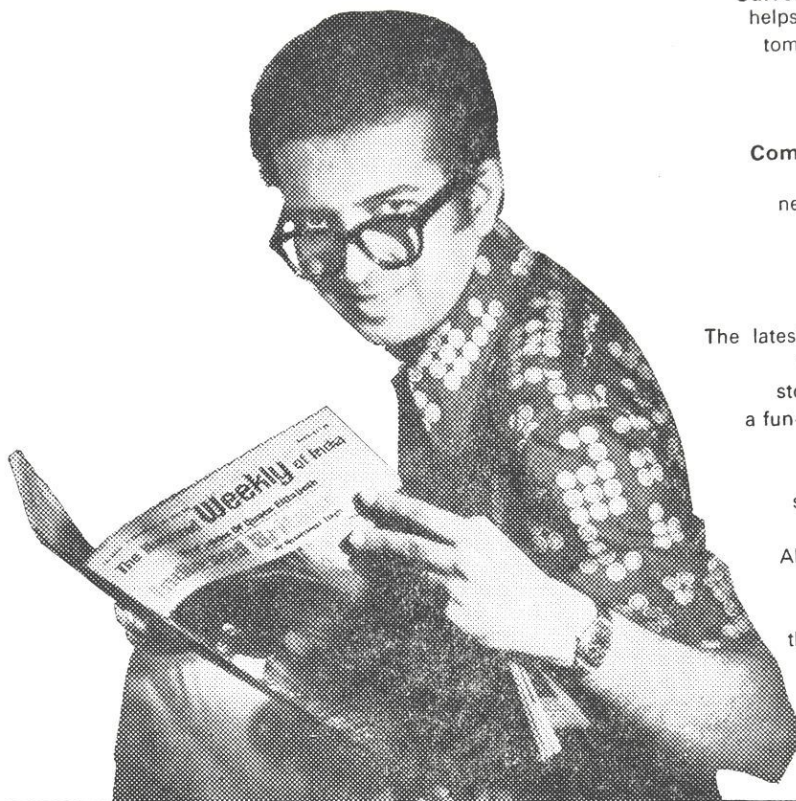
During the last two decades of his life Bharucha became increasingly interested in homeopathic science. "What impressed him about this science was that so little medicine could serve so many people, and it was cheap...he saw in it the best medical system for the poorer masses," says Wadia. With Wadia's assistance he founded the Gamadia Colony Homeopathic Dispensary which operates on charitable lines even today.

When Bharucha died on 24 June 1963 at the age of 82, a number of condolence meetings were convened in Bombay and Gujarat, including meetings held under the auspices of the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee and the Bombay Municipal Corporation, according to Wadia. At the meeting called by the Sheriff of Bombay the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra State, Mr Kanamwar, presided over the proceedings. Wadia adds that the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, however, failed to hold a condolence meeting for Bharucha despite a petition signed by over 13,500 members of the community. Regardless of the BPP rebuff, Wadia notes, the community held its own meeting, over which Sir Rustom Masani presided, and where prominent leaders of the community paid glowing tributes to his memory.

Commenting on the coming centenary commemoration meeting Wadia says: "We want to pay tribute to a man who did so much for the country and the community...to perpetuate his memory...to inform those who did not know him that such a man existed."

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Equities With A 100% Yield (Parsi Style)

Homi Kharas

Cowasji Karai, a retired pensioner in his early seventies, had started life as an accounts clerk in one of Bombay's reputed business houses. Young Cowasji had no special qualifications or aptitude; he was just hard working and scrupulously honest. After 39 years of pen pushing at the same desk, he was given a company farewell with a gold watch and a small pension.

strategy to get the maximum yield from each of the 20 shares he held.

Amongst his shares, two of Rs 25 each, were in a leading group of textile mills in Bombay. With the government restriction on dividends, Cowasji could count on a bare 12%. But then he received a set of shareholder's coupons, enabling him to buy up to Rs 300 worth of textiles at 10% discount—a cash benefit of Rs. 30.



The first four months of retirement found Cowasji still relishing his modest pension, his watch and the farewell party picture in the company's house organ. However, he soon began to realise that escalating prices of essential commodities made it impossible for him to make two ends meet. To land a job, at his age, seemed improbable. Besides, he did not have the energy to work long hours.

A thought struck him one evening as he was strolling down Chowpatty beach. He had always prided himself as a shareholder of a dozen or so of India's leading industrial enterprises though his total invested capital never exceeded Rs 500. That night he burned the midnight oil and planned a

Around X'mas time Cowasji received a post card to be signed by him and exchanged for the Company's 12-page art calendar worth Rs 9. Twelve glamorous models garbed in the mills' latest fabrics, for Cowasji to peer at for the next 12 months.

Along comes the Annual General Meeting of the company and Cowasji trudges to the auditorium of the Indian Merchants' Chamber. At the entrance he is handed a refreshments' coupon which provides him with a bottle of Thums Up worth 90 paise and a box of snacks worth Rs 3.25 containing a packet of wafers, a packet of *chevda*, two *vadas* a *peda* and a sachet of scented *supari* thrown in for good measure. Cowasji makes sure of occupying a

seat in the front row not only to obtain a good view of the directors or to exercise his right to address the Chair, but to ensure he appears prominently in the photograph to be published in the Company's house organ.

Back from the Meeting, Cowasji has one last look at the lavish 92-page Annual Report before selling it for 30 paise to the *channawalla* on the pavement.

Once in a while Cowasji receives a letter from the Company, announcing a Plant Visit for shareholders. Thrown in for those attending: free bus transport for the 45 km. return trip (value Rs 4.50), a *thali*-lunch (value Rs 5) and a key-chain souvenir (value Re 1) all adding up to a Rs. 10.50 benefit. No wonder Cowasji says a special thanksgiving prayer for the management after every such visit to the mills.

In order to understand why Cowasji smirks every time he attends an annual general meeting, one must study the arithmetic: 1979-80 dividend at 12%—Rs 6; value of textile

"He had always prided himself as a shareholder of a dozen or so of India's leading industrial enterprises"

coupons—Rs 30; 1980 wall calendar—Rs 9; bottle of fizz at AGM—90 paise; box of snacks at AGM—Rs 3.25; AR copy sold to *Channawala*—30 paise; Plant visit amenities—Rs 10.50 all totaling up to Rs 59.95 on an investment of Rs 50 only. A glorious return of 119.50%.

When one considers that Cowasji has held these two shares for 18 years since he inherited a fifth of his grandpa's small estate, one begins to realise how much he must have made additionally on the sale of fractional coupons issued to him every time the Company made a Bonus or Rights issue.

At sunset and sunrise Cowasji hopes and prays that the Government may not issue an ordinance to stop these fringe benefits which are nothing but oblique tax-free dividends for shareholders.

Homi Kharas, 66 is a "semi-retired" advertising executive and a member of the Board of Advertising Consultants (India) Limited. A keen photographer and hiker, he has been the past president of the Photographic Society of India and of the Bombay Hikers.

The Priestly Tradition

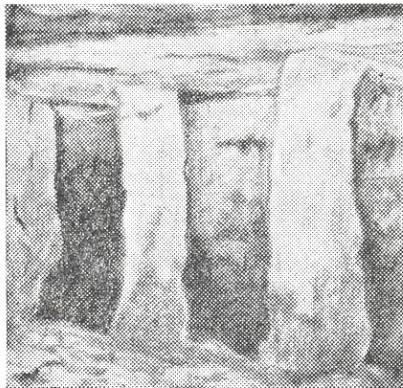
Firoze Kotwal

It is now 1000 years since the Parsis came to India as a small emigrant band, seeking a friendly haven where they could practise freely the religion of their forefathers. They were kindly received by the Hindus of the Northern Konkan; and thereafter they created their own small independent community within the framework of a tolerant and generous Hindu society. They had the friendliest relations with their Gujarati neighbours; and the structure of Indian society, with its many interdependent but separate groups, exactly fitted their own wishes, since it enabled them to make their contribution to society while keeping to their own ways of life and upholding their own religious beliefs and observances, undisturbed.

Down the centuries the Parsis had occasional contacts with their co-religionists, the Zoroastrians of Iran; but these contacts were slight until the 17th century A.C.; and because of the state of society in Iran, and the difficulties of travel, they did not become frequent or important to the two communities until the 18th century. By that time the Zoroastrians of Iran had been greatly reduced in numbers, which had so shrunk that they had become a tiny minority, centred in just two towns. Iran was, however, the mother country of the faith; and so when education and prosperity made the Parsis more conscious of their ancient history, some of them began to look to their co-religionists there as being the leading authorities on all matters of religion. The Parsis themselves, they thought, might gradually have altered some of the traditional ways of their forefathers under new influences in their adopted land. These people ignored the other possibility which exists, that down the centuries the Zoroastrians of Iran may themselves have been influenced in some respects by the Muslim society which had surrounded them and which exerted much pressure on them. Hence, when small differences in observance are to be found between the priestly usages of the two communities, it is necessary to study these very carefully in an attempt to decide which represents the authentic ancient

tradition. No easy assumptions can be made.

Fortunately such differences are not only small but are comparatively few, despite the many centuries of separation: for both communities seem to have been outstandingly faithful to their heritage, upholding the ways of their ancestors with ardent fidelity. And with regard to the priestly tradition, means exist to establish its



The cave in Bahrot Hills: where the Iranshah Atash Behram was reportedly kept for 12 years.

(reference: the book "1251st Anniversary of Installation of Sacred Iranshah Atash Behram," published by R. M. D. Chambaugvala)

authenticity, apart from simply comparing the usages of Parsis and Iranis in modern times; for there have come down to us, preserved by the devotion of priestly copyists manuscripts of ancient works in which are described rituals and ceremonies as they were

"During the Muslim conquest of Gujarat, whole families of Parsi scholar-priests were killed."

performed in days of old. The most comprehensive and ancient of such books is the *Nirangestan* or "Book of the Place of Rituals", which represents the tradition of Sasanian times, before the conquest of Iran by the Arabs. One manuscript of this invaluable work was brought to Surat by an

Irani priest in 1720, and another was sent to Bombay from Iran for safety in the late 19th century, and was entrusted to the learned Godavra scholar-priest, Ervad Tahmurasp Dinshaw Anklesaria. The work was edited in 1894 by Dastur Darab Sanjana, and in 1915 a pioneer translation of it was published by Mr. Sohrab J. Bulsara. The *nirangestan* still presents enormous difficulties, however. It is composed in Middle Persian, which was the language of Iran at the time of the Sasanian empire; and it is written in the ambiguous Pahlavi script, which is very hard to read. To add to these difficulties is the nature of the work itself; for it was composed by priests for priests, in order to give instruction in the niceties of ritual usage, both in the "inner ceremonies", to be performed at a sacred place, and the "outer ceremonies", which may be celebrated in the home. The writers could assume, therefore, that those who read their words would have a good knowledge of the basic material, as trained priests, and needed guidance only in details; and so they used a highly condensed style of exposition, with brief, allusive sentences, full of technical terms. To understand the *Nirangestan*, therefore, one needs a twofold equipment: training as a Pahlavi scholar and experience as a practising priest. Once the work has been elucidated, it provides admirable material for testing the authenticity of the Zoroastrian priestly tradition, since it enables one to compare living usages with the practice of well over a millennium ago.

Before we enter into consideration of a particular instance in which the *Nirangestan* authenticates the Parsi tradition, it will be as well to look briefly at the history of the Parsi priesthood, in order to understand something of its own particular developments. The Parsi pilgrim fathers landed on the coast of Gujarat, not far from Sanjan in the Northern Konkan, in Vikram Samvat 992-936 A.C., and it was at Sanjan that they established their first home. There they prospered and thrived, priests and laity alike. We do not know how many priests were among the first group of

"Udvada was so tiny a place that it seemed at first a hard exile after Navsari."

settlers; but soon after the colony was established they were able to establish a sacred fire according to the due rites of their forefathers, a fire which the Sanjana priests have tended faithfully to the present day.

Gradually as the community increased in numbers, laymen moved away to seek their fortunes in other towns of the Northern Konkan; and when they prospered, they sent back, after a while, to Sanjan, asking for priests to come to them to serve their religious needs. So in course of time four other Parsi priestly groups or *panths* came into being, at towns or in districts strung out northward from Sanjan. The first of these, called the *panth* of the Bhagarias or "sharers" (because they divided the priestly work among them on a strict pattern of sharing) was established at the little town of Navsari. There followed others in Godavra, and at the great ports of Bharuch and Khambhat. These *panths* were independent of one another in that each was responsible for its own usages and discipline, and trained its own young priests. All of them seem to have been established by the 13th century A.C., although records remain scanty until the 17th century A.C.

By that time the priests of the oldest *panth*, the Sanjanas, had been driven away from their ancient home; for in the 15th century Sanjan was sacked during the Muslim conquest of Gujarat, and many of its inhabitants slain. Among those killed were, it seems, whole families of Parsi scholar priests. But those who tended the fire managed to carry it away to safety; and for a number of years they guarded it in remote places. Eventually they were invited by the Parsis of Navsari to bring the sacred fire and enthrone it in their town, and this was done, probably during the last decade of the 15th century. And there the sacred fire remained for well over 200 years, some seven generations.

During this time Navsari was the stronghold of Parsi learning and tradition, with priests of the two oldest *panths*, the Sanjanas and Bhagarias, living harmoniously together and striving to uphold the ancient ways; and the presence of the sacred fire made the small town a place of pilgrimage for all Parsis. During these centuries disaster overwhelmed the

most northerly *panth*, as it had earlier done Sanjan; for Khambhat was sacked repeatedly during the Muslim wars of conquest, and there was tremendous loss of life and property. The last priests of the old Khambatta *panth* seem to have left the city early in the 17th century. Bharuch in its turn was much damaged by the Portuguese, who sacked and burnt the ancient port, again with great destruction, the Parsis suffering among the rest. Many priestly records must have been destroyed at the time. The old traditions were maintained, therefore, with the greatest quietness and continuity in the mainly rural area of Godavra, and at Navsari, which was too small a place to attract the greed of would-be conquerors.

The golden age of tranquility and brotherly co-operation between the Bhagarias and Sanjanas in Navsari came gradually to an end during the late 17th and early 18 centuries. The cause was essentially one of growing numbers. There was not enough work in the little town to support the priests of both *panths* as they grew more numerous; and so quarrels developed between the younger and less disciplined of them, which led in time to a serious breach; and in the end the Sanjanas departed, with the sacred fire, to settle in a little coastal village, Udvada, in the region of their old *panthak*.

"The Sanjanas of Udvada adopted the Irani practice of crossing the legs of the dead, and abandoned the Parsi one of covering the face."

Up to this time, as far as is known, there had been complete general harmony among the Parsis with regard to rituals and observances, with probably only tiny local divergences in custom between the different *panths*. But it was natural that the Sanjanas should, after this breach, have felt some measure of resentment against their former hosts, the Bhagarias, especially since Udvada was so tiny a place that it seemed at first a hard exile after Navsari, with its large Parsi population, its libraries of manuscripts and its ancient place of worship. And it seems that in order to mark the completeness of the break between them and the Bhagarias, the Sanjanas began, after this time, to introduce certain small changes in their own rituals, to mark themselves as apart

from the other *panth*. Since theirs is the oldest *panth*, they naturally have great prestige, and this therefore led in time to some uncertainty as to where the true Parsi tradition lay.

Some of these small changes appear to derive from Irani tradition; for at about the time when the Sanjanas left Navsari, more contact was developing between the Parsis and their co-religionists in Iran. Thus, for example, the Sanjanas of Udvada adopted the

"Parsis assumed that because the Iranis had remained in the mother-country of the faith, they must necessarily possess the authentic tradition."

Irani practice of crossing the legs of the dead, and abandoned the Parsi one of covering the face of the corpse with a *padan*, whereas the Sanjanas of the older centres of Nargol and Bulsar (who were not involved in the rift with Navsari) continued, like the Bhagarias, to lay out the deceased with straight legs, and with *padan*.

In the matter of priestly observance, differences between the Parsis and Iranis seem to be few and slight; but some Parsis assumed that because the Iranis had remained in the mother-country of the faith, they must necessarily possess the authentic tradition in every respect; and so they tended to disparage the authenticity of their own inheritance. The only way by which the soundness of the two priestly traditions can in fact be tested is to go back to the ancient manuscripts; and when we make use of these; we find evidence to show that the priests of both communities, agreeing as they do in all major matters, have remained strikingly faithful to the ways of their forefathers. There are, however, tiny changes introduced here and there for social or other reasons in both communities, which means that neither has absolute authority.

To illustrate this with regard to the Parsi tradition, as preserved in its purity in Navsari, let us consider one passage from the *Nirangestan*. This is concerned with ceremonies of the category called *afrinagan*—that is, ceremonies of praise and blessing dedicated by name to different *yazads*. Most of these ceremonies may be celebrated either at a sacred place, or in the home. This is the custom still today. Among the former ceremonies the *Nirangestan* sets the *afrinagans* of *Sros*, *Nog-nawar* and *Ratwo-Burzad*.

That of *Nog-nawar*, or *nabar* as we call it today, is regularly solemnised by an initiate as part of the ceremonies by which he is made priest; and according to the *Nirangestan* it should be performed during the *Hawan Gah*, that is, the first watch of the day, between sunrise and noon; but present Parsi practice is for the initiate to celebrate it in the third watch, *Uzerin Gah*, that is, between 3 o'clock and sunset. The reason for this small change is that the *Afrinagan i Nabar* is solemnised on the first of the four days of initiation, and on that day it is customary among the Parsis to invite all the Zoroastrians of the local community to witness the celebration by the initiate of the *yasna* service—the main Zoroastrian act of worship, which can only take place in the *Hawan Gah*. Accordingly there is little time remaining for the performance in this *gah* of the *Afrinagan* also, and for convenience its celebration has been transferred to the *Uzerin Gah*. This is an example of a small modification in observance being made for purely social reasons.

Among the *afrinagans* which may be performed either at the fire temple or in the home, the *Nirangestan* mentions one which it identifies simply by its dedication (*xsnuman*), from which it is

“In Zoroastrian usage, each day is dedicated to a divine being, a ‘yazad’.”

plain that this is the *afrinagan* known to us now as the *Afrinagan i Do Dahman*. The *Nirangestan* states that this ceremony is to include the Avestan verses beginning *ia ahmi nmane*, as is the invariable custom still. Further, old manuscripts which give the text of the various *afrinagans* enjoin that in the Pazand introduction to the *Afrinagan i Do Dahman* all the *hamkars* of the day should be invoked. In Zoroastrian usage each day is dedicated to a divine being, a *yazad*; and the *hamkars* or “fellow workers” are other divinities who aid him in his benign guardianship of it. Accordingly, it seems that the *Afrinagan i Do Dahman* is to be celebrated in honour of all these *hamkars* everyday; and this is exactly the usage of the conservative Bhagaria priests of Navsari, who duly celebrate it daily, just as they do the *baj* ceremony called *pani tay* or *lesser khub*, in which too the *hamkars* of the day are always invoked. In a manuscript of the Khorda Avesta, copied from one written in A. Y. 1009, the original scribe, a venerable Sanjana priest, Dastur

Hormazdyar Framroze, enjoined that the *xsnuman* of the *Afrinagan i Do Dahman* should be *hamkara vispesa ardafravas be rasad*: May it reach the *hamkars* and all the righteous *fravasis*”.

In these two instances, therefore, we see in the first case essential faithfulness to the old tradition, modified only slightly to meet a new social need that had developed; and in the second case, utter fidelity. The *afrinagans* are minor ceremonies, without the profound significance and importance of the *yasna* itself, or the *baj* ceremony; and when we see such scrupulous care over the centuries to perform these lesser ceremonies exactly as they had been performed of old, we can be sure that the Parsi priestly tradition, as maintained in unbroken continuity in Navsari, is a trustworthy one, and deserving of the highest respect.

Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal, high priest of the Wadiaji Atash Behram at Bombay's Princess Street since 1977 and former principal of the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute at Andheri, is presently in the U. S. A. as a research scholar with Harvard University. The article which appears above was first published in the Journal of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, No. 45, 1976 as "The Authenticity of the Parsi Priestly Tradition."



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Filling The Void

Gustasp Irani

"In the autumn of 1977, Alan Williams and Khojeste Mistree delivered a few lectures and presented a slide show, as an experimental venture to feel the pulse of the Zoroastrian community in Bombay. The enthusiastic response generated was a clear indication that Zoroastrians were interested and ready to rouse themselves from a state of apathy. Thus, the seed for the activities of Zoroastrian Studies (ZS) was sown in India." So the January 1980 newsletter of ZS capsules the inception of the body whose "main aim and objective is to encourage, promote and support an awareness of the Zoroastrian religious tradition for those who seek it." Two and a half years since this inception, ZS has circulated a questionnaire to the 1,800 members on its mailing list to evaluate its past, present and future activities and on the basis of the information provided by the 627 members who have responded the organization feels that it is on the right path.

"ZS is filling a gap, a religious vacuum, that exists in the community," observes Mistree, the charismatic Oxford graduate who has played a pivotal part in the organization. He refers to the results of the survey, conducted with the technical assistance of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences to substantiate his claims: that 76.1% of the respondents were of the opinion that greater awareness of the religion is the most pressing need of the community; 46% confessed little knowledge of the religion when asked if ZS lectures conflicted with their own knowledge; 88% say that ZS activities made them appreciate the religion more; 78.2% would like to participate in the organization's programmes to a greater or lesser degree and 63.9% have offered their services or expertise towards these projects.

"One of the objectives of the survey was to determine the mood of the community," says Mistree, explaining that this would largely determine the course for ZS to steer. "Our aim is to operate on the golden path of moderation, the middle of the road... it is one of the reasons why we have

been able to generate a fund of goodwill. . . The community is fed up with controversies. . . Instead of fighting controversies we believe in doing our homework," says Mistree.

Part of the homework was conducting the survey. The results, according to Mistree: "The community wants an educational religious organization of



Mistree: "No personality cult"

highly trained Zoroastrians who will in turn produce the material to satisfy the needs of a young twentieth century Zoroastrian."

Mistree attributes the positive response to ZS to the "scholastic and professional" approach of the organization. "We seem to have attracted the intelligentsia of the community. . . (and) we have youth on our side," he says pointing out that about two thirds of the respondents had obtained their bachelor degree or were studying towards one and the majority of respondents, 62%, were below the age of 50. However, Mistree takes pains to disassociate the projection of his own personality from the success of ZS. "I don't see myself as a personality figure. . . I am against the whole concept of pop cults and pop personalities," he says emphatically. Nevertheless he makes special mention of Ms Shernaz Panthaky the executive secretary of ZS, whom he describes as "the behind

the scene organizing and administrative genius."

Yet the past activities of ZS have largely been woven around the activities of Mistree as can be surmised from the listing of achievements of ZS in the January 1980 newsletter, which was a part of the questionnaire survey. These activities were made possible with the assistance of a number of trusts, organisations and individuals, notable among them Dr Freddie Mehta, director of Tata Economic Services, and Ketayun Mehta, solicitor with the noted law firm Mulla & Mulla Craigie, Blunt and Caroe.

The greatest exposure for ZS has been through the organizing of public lectures in Bombay and other cities in India and abroad. In Bombay alone 27 lectures were organized between September 1977 and December 1979 of which Mistree held the stage alone on 20 occasions and shared it twice, according to the list.

Mistree has also visited Calcutta, Hyderabad and Secunderabad, Poona, Thana, Bangalore, Delhi and Nagpur on the invitations of the Anjumans there. In addition he has delivered a number of lectures at various Parsi housing estates in Byculla, Dadar, Vile Parle and Jogeshwari. He has also made lecture tours of Australasia, Iran, the U. S. A. and Canada, three visits to the U. K. for academic, research and professional reasons, and recently in May he visited Karachi, Pakistan, to address the Zoroastrian community living there.

" Parsis don't like reading. We are the bearers of an oral tradition "

The survey shows that there are 175 or 28% of the respondents, the "hard core" as Mistree sees them, who attend his lectures very regularly (76%-100%). In addition there are another 190 respondents or 30% who are moderately regular at his lectures (50%-75%). On the question of information content and interest of the lectures around two thirds responded that they were "very infor-

"I am against pop cults and pop personalities"

mative" (64.6%) and "very interesting" (66.9%). Further 87.3% responded that they were either "very inspired" (46.5%) or "moderately inspired" (41.3%) and 42.9% claimed retention above 50%. Only a marginal percent of the respondents have reacted negatively to the lectures. On the question of holding the lectures on weekends the respondents are almost evenly split in their choice, 46.3% in favour of such arrangements and 49.1% against it.

Other activities of ZS listed are the making of the audio-visual: "Revelation—A Light in Darkness," organizing a religious painting competition for the youth and the screening of a BBC production "The Sacred Fires." The survey shows that of the 67.7% of the respondents who saw "Revelation—A Light in Darkness" 64.8% found it "extremely informative" and 57.7% were "inspired to a great extent." "Parsis don't, as a rule, like reading. We are the bearers of an oral tradition... hence the audio-visual media has a greater impact," Mistree observes.

With the conducting of the survey, ZS appears to be entering a new phase of activities. The newsletter of January 1980 which accompanied the questionnaire details in chart form the proposed "Zoroastrian Secretariat." The plan envisages two major branches of activity: one 'socio-economic affairs' and the other 'religious affairs,' which is further subdivided into 'structured education' and 'priests.'

Mistree points out that much of the work of the proposed secretariat has already started. In the area of structured education, in addition to the continuing practice of public lectures and audio-visual presentations there are items listed as research, to which the survey testifies, training of teachers and running of religious study groups, towards which end an intensive evening course for 30 students, who meet twice weekly, was started in June 1979 and is scheduled to end in the middle of the current year. The Secretariat also proposes to publish books of high quality and under this scheme the book by Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians—Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* has already been released. Other items include "The media of theatre", "Heightened cultural awareness of festivals like ghambars" and "The funding of

academic activities."

One of the socio-economic activities is "an information service to offer solutions to possible problems." Mistree explains that ZS has been receiving a number of calls and letters from people in distress: "people with family or marital problems, people considering suicide and the like, and we have been able to help them." He then adds: "I have also done a professional course on marriage counseling which has proved to be most helpful." Other activities of the socio-economic scheme include research surveys and welfare programmes for "spiritual and economic well-being."

In the matter relating to the welfare of the priests a foot note to the secretariat plan states: "For the survival of our religion, ZS is in the process of formulating a much needed plan to attract young boys to join the priesthood. Support and encouragement has already been proffered by two of our distinguished priests." Mistree hopes to establish a fund in the area of Rs 50 to 60 lacs which will be used to provide ZS sponsored priests with monthly remunerations in addition to their own earnings so as to equal what they would earn had they sought employment in commercial fields, and also to provide such facilities as provident funds, bonus etc. In return the priests will be expected to do more than perform rituals. They will also be expected to involve themselves in scholastic activities, travel to remote pockets of the community and keep the flame of the religion aglow in more than just physical terms.

Much of the success of the secretariat's projects will however, depend on the availability of finance, Mistree observes. ZS on its own will be unable to generate the resources to the degree that is required and its effectiveness will largely hinge on what it can generate through the community. "Our community is one of the richest in the world but one of its characteristics is that there is a lot of talk but not much action," says Mistree. He speaks from experience. Repeated appeals for accommodation of ZS brought no response till the trustee of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute offered the organization premises at its own building.

"Parsis and Iranis seem to want something for nothing," says Mistree. However in the case of ZS it appears that if the community is unable to invest in the organization then in accordance with its verdict the organization will fade away, Mistree warns.

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The Zoroastrian Studies Survey

An increase in the number of inter-marriages was selected as the major problem facing the Zoroastrian community by 83.1% of the respondents to the survey conducted by Zoroastrian Studies. The survey was conducted amongst the 1,800 members on the ZS mailing list of which 627 responded. Other problems facing the community according to the results of the survey and in order of urgency are: Lack of priests, (72.2%), Conversion to other cults, (48.1%), Marital disharmony, (24.4%), Lack of religious knowledge, (21.5%), Educational imbalance between women and men, (17.3%) and Emancipation of women to men, (9.1%). The last two items, the ZS interpretation of the survey observes "are also causes for the increase of marital disharmony."

Greater awareness of the religion was selected by the largest number of respondents (76.1%) as the most pressing need of the community. The other needs of the community in order of importance are: Commitment to work for community improvement, (44.3%), Pride in one's religion and community, (41.5%), Respect for priesthood (29.8%), Greater unity by minimizing conflicts (27.7%), Community based programmes (27.3%), Promoting religious scholarship (13.2%) and Marriage guidance (5.9%).

"This was an evaluative survey so that the results could be studied care-

fully and future activities shaped accordingly," says Ms Vera Mehta, who teaches at the College of Social Work affiliated to Bombay University and assisted in the preparation and execution of the survey. She notes also that a 34.8% response to any survey conducted through the postal system is considered a good response. One disappointment however, was the poor response from abroad.

The questionnaire of the survey dated January 1980 was divided into five major sections. The first dealt with the personal bio-data of the respondent, the second, "Your general opinion on the Zoroastrian Secretariat" (an ambitious ZS plan to structure its various activities) tackled the social issue questions by listing possible answers and asking the respondents to mark off three with the option that they list any others that they might feel are relevant. The next three sections solicited reactions to the lecture series of ZS, the ZS audio-visual presentations and the degree to which the respondent was willing to commit himself or herself to the activities of ZS. This was done by listing the possible response in degree and requesting the respondent to mark one. For instance, "Did the audio-visual inspire you? To a great extent. To some extent. Not at all."

Mehta observes that one of the surprise findings of the survey was

the very high reaction of the respondents to the problem of inter-marriage. She explains that those at ZS expected the lack of religious knowledge to have been ranked higher as a problem than it was. The interpretation paper of the survey prepared by ZS, comments on the choice of intermarriage as the major community problem: "This (choice) is so because of social conditions, with the younger generation growing up in a more secular world, where the contact with other communities takes place easily. With a meager knowledge of religion and little opportunity for interaction with other Zoroastrians, there is minimal cultural heritage and a sense of belonging to the community, with which the youngsters can identify."

Despite the fact that the survey was restricted to members on the ZS mailing list, those at ZS believe that the sample was representative of the community and the results reflected to a degree the reactions of the community and more so of its educated young (about 62% have already obtained a bachelors degree or higher qualification or are studying towards one, and over 60% are below the age of 50). Yet in terms of the scope of the "Evaluative survey" the organizers, ZS, appear to have met their primary objective—direction.

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PUNDOLE: MESSIAH OR HERETIC ?

Faribourz Nariman

Faribourz Nariman, a noted Avesta-Phalavi scholar hails the publication of the book 'Pundole-Chalval : Zarthosti Dharmane Name Bhayankar Thagai' (in Gujarati) 1980; pp. 131; Price Rs. 10, written by Dastur Dr Hormazdyar Mirza, high priest of the Iranshah Atash Behram in Udva and principal of the Sir J. J. Z. Madressa and the Mullan Firoze Madressa. In the book Mirza attacks the mystic teachings of Minocher Pundole and his followers.

For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

St. Matthew 24.24.

Today, more than at any other time in the past, when democracy is the rule of the day, any man or woman may exercise their "democratic right" to preach or propagate a "new religion." Objections are not supposed to be raised as long as the "new religion" does not turn out to be a tampering with or a travesty of one of the Great Religions. Similarly, extremely delicate scriptural issues may be discussed without any inhibition by those who are qualified, provided a proper forum is chosen for such discussions. On the other hand, an attempt to tamper with the doctrine, ritual and dogma of a religion would be tantamount to heresy.

The Zoroastrian Church, in its long and chequered history, has seen the attacks of many arch-heretics. In the last hundred years traditional orthodoxy has been attacked on quite a few occasions. However, almost every onslaught has been followed by the emergence of a stalwart who exposes

the heretic concerned. In the case of the *Pundole-Chalval: Zarthosti Dharmane Name Bhayankar Thagai* (in Gujarati) Dastur Dr Hormazdyar Mirza has decided to take the initiative.



Mirza: 'Defender of the faith'

Minocher Pundole, the founder of the Pundole-movement, was born in Bombay in 1908 and passed away in 1975. He was working as a typist-clerk in a private office. During the last 15 years of his life, Pundole had come in close contact with the *sahibs* of the invisible Demavand Enclosure (kas) in Iran. According to the Pundole souvenir, before Pundole came in contact with the *magav sahibs* he had no knowledge of Zoroastrianism and that, during his life-span, he had never read a book on our religion. A few years before his death, Pundole started conducting religious classes. At present these classes are conducted by some leading Pundolites. Reports of these discourses are not published. It is difficult to estimate the exact number of the followers of Pundole. The souvenir claims that "within 10 years his followers have increased by

thousands," but certain knowledgeable persons hesitate to put the total number of Pundolites above seven hundred. A trustee of the Parsi Panchayat, Bombay, a couple of medical practitioners and a few professionals are among the Pundolites in the limelight.

There are those who believe that the Kshnumists and the Pundolites have everything except the colour of their headgears in common—the former opt for black and the latter for red. This is, to say the least, an assertion of falsehood.

The Kshnumists have not come out with theories like "the necessity of a vizir (*adaran*) where a king (*atash-behram*) exists;" the Pundolites have.

Kshnumists like Ervad Firoze Masani and Dr Framroze Chiniwala had devoted themselves to the study of some of the Iranian languages. In the case of the Pundolites the "sahibs" are reported to have informed Pundole that "to translate the Avesta or to read a translation of the Avesta would be to give rise to atheism!"

Generally speaking, the Kshnumist leaders have respected the traditional viewpoint as interpreted by orthodox dasturs and scholars: the Pundolite leaders equate orthodoxy with innovation.

"Almost every onslaught on the traditional orthodoxy has been followed by the emergence of a stalwart who exposes the heretic"

The Kshnumists have published reports of their meetings and functions: the Pundolites refrain from publishing anything as far as possible.

Before we come to Mirza's book proper however, we might recount that he received his formal education in Navsari, Bombay, Vienna and London. He is the principal of the Sir J. J. Z. Madressa and the Mullan Firoze Madressa since 1961. He is a scholar of international repute, having

several research papers and publications to his credit. He has delivered lectures bearing on Iranian Studies in various parts of the world. Mirza's task has been not only to expound the Zoroastrian doctrine in the light of traditional orthodoxy, but also to track, attack and deflate the heresies perpetrated by those who put on the mantle of a Messiah. Devastating clarity is the hall-mark of his speeches and writings. During the last four decades, Mirza has exposed many theosophists, reincarnationists and twilit mystics who were popularly supposed to represent Zoroastrian ideas.

In his prefatory clarifications in his latest book *Pundole-Chalval, Zarhosti Dharmane Name Bhayankar Thagai*, written in Gujarati Mirza says, "readers of *Jame Jamshed* may have noticed the announcement of the Pundole Religious Classes every Thursday. Since many years the subject, namely 'genuine details (*khari babado*) of Zoroastrian Religion,' remains the same, but generally speaking, the community is not aware of these 'genuine details.'" (No sooner the book under review came out than a significant omission was noticed in

are exposed. The author's felicity in dealing with the "religious career" of Pundole and a number of contradictory statements made by the leaders of the movement is remarkable. Of special interest is a chapter on "Un-Zoroastrian topics in Zoroastrian garb," a part of which is devoted to the "cutlets miracle in Udvada." The miracle occurred when a number of Pundolites were on their way to pay respects to eight *atash behrams*. While having meals at Udvada, cutlets were not served, as they were not prepared on that day. The leader of the Pundolites ordered: "Open the frig and you shall have as many cutlets as you want!" The manager opened the frig, and lo, it was full of cutlets and that, too, there was not a single cutlet less or more than the number of persons at the table! Later on it was found that the cutlets were prepared by a rich man's chef in Bombay. From what Mirza, citing R. A. Nicholson, *Studies In Islamic Mysticism*, goes on to show, the "miracle" performed by the Pundolite leader could as well be a travesty of the miracle performed by the Sufi mentioned by Nicholson.

In the chapter on "Ahura Mazda & Ohrmazd" one may find proofs of the sense of discrimination which the Pundolites exhibit: "Ahura Mazda is the name of God and Ohrmazd is a ray of His." Such blunders can be committed only by those who are ignorant about Avesta, Pahlavi and Pazend, for Ohrmazd (generally *Hormazd* in Gujarati) is nothing but a later (Pahlavi-Pazend) form of Avestan Ahura Mazda. The contradictory statements regarding Zarathushtra are amusing, and the same can be said of the "origin" of the Pundolite slogan *kshnaothra ahurahe mazdao* as well as the samples of the "different language" used by the inhabitants of the Demavand Enclosure. The Pundolites, however, seem to use yet another "language" while giving references or "scriptural proofs" to support their theories. Let us take the "king-vizir" theory as an illustration. The *shahadat* (testimony) can be cited from five "scriptural works," among which are mentioned *Rahnumae Din* and *Rahe Mazdayasni*—both containing newspaper articles penned by the late Dastur Khurshed Dabu. Of course, as Mirza adds, not one of the five books referred to as "scriptures" support the theory, and yet it is remarkable that the Pundolites should look for support, rightly or wrongly, in the writings of the late theosophist scholar. Remarkable because the Pundolites are very close to the Dabuites in many respects.

It is to be regretted that the author did not (perhaps, could not because of want of space) dilate on this point of considerable importance.

Mirza's book is necessarily one which falls in the category of the "literature of indictment." The main purpose of this work is to underline how the Pundolites have tampered with and travestied the Zoroastrian tradition, in terms that will be easily understood even by laymen having some idea of the outlines of Zoroastrianism. The questionable nature of Pundole's teachings apart, the book goes to show that many leading Pundolites preach and act contrary to Pundole's admonitions. The thoroughness and fairness with which the author has sifted the material is praiseworthy. Individuals are mentioned only because of the prominent part played by them as leaders of the movement. If at all the author has used violence of words, it is not with a view to "kill" anybody; his sole intention is to warn the community of the dangers of the ensnaring and misleading teachings trotted out by the Pundolites in the name of Zoroastrianism.

Mirza's blows are so well-timed and well-placed that the theories and fallacies of the Pundolites fall to pieces before the scriptural, historical, philological and legal issues raised by him. At a time when Zoroastrian intelligence is on a decline among those who are projected as the spokesmen of the community, when false Christs and false prophets are trying their utmost to carry the day, the appearance of this book is gratifying. Except for a few blemishes, the printing and the simple paper back meets with the requirement. The price may be just sufficient to cover the cost. It would be in the interest of the community if some charitable institutions or individuals were to come forward and purchase hundreds of copies of this eye-opener for free distribution.

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"Open the frig and you shall have as many cutlets as you want.... and lo, it was full of cutlets."

the weekly announcements of the Pundole Religious Classes: the word *khari* 'genuine' was dropped.) With a view to acquaint us with these details the author has taken pains to quote in extenso from some of the pamphlets published by the followers of Pundole, the writings of the leaders and propagators of the Pundole-movement and the letters and post cards received by the author from such persons. One by one, the author sets them up in their own words and then cuts them down adroitly. The Pundole-movement is indicted on several counts.

Each one of the 21 chapters of the book has been embellished with interesting sub headings. The printing and publication of the Pundole Pamphlet and Souvenir is called "a public fraud." The pretensions of a "leading light" of the movement in Udvada, Mobed Behramashah Bharda (who, among other things, claims to know the fate which awaits the soul of a man who opposes the movement)

World Congress Papers

Social and Cultural Survey

A QUESTION OF APPROACH

Six papers on the "Social and Cultural Survey of Zoroastrians in the recent past and suggestions for the future" were presented at a single session of the Third World Zoroastrian Congress held in Bombay in 1978. Speakers presenting the papers were Dr Lovji Cama, presently the president of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) and research scientist with Merck & Co. USA, E.F. Desai, former joint secretary of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP), S. D. Nargolwala, president of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman and vice-president of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, Manouchehr Mobarake, member of Gorooth Zarthoshtian Taft va Tavabe, Teheran, Iran, R. S. Gae, former joint secretary to the Law Ministry and B. H. Antia, noted Bombay Solicitor. Dr Farhang Mehr, Chancellor of Phalavi University in Shiraz, Iran, also spoke briefly at the session.

As the papers are of considerable length we reproduce in this issue of *Parsiiana* edited versions of the papers by Nargolwala, who called on the community to recognize the writings on the wall and act if it wants to survive, and Antia, who believes that no sacrifice is too great to maintain the purity of the Zoroastrian religion and Parsi race. The paper by Cama appeared previously (*Parsiiana*, May 1980) and remaining will appear in the following issues.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE

Shiavax D. Nargolwala

This paper will mainly be concerned with the various problems facing the Parsi community in India today and their solutions. The social and cultural status of a community is closely allied



Nargolwala: 'threatened existence'

to its economic condition. The economic condition of the community has been steadily deteriorating. The danger of becoming "a community of educated paupers" is looming large on the horizon.

Moreover, the fact that the Parsis in Bombay are concentrated in housing colonies of a charitable nature has reduced their contacts with their Indian environment and has resulted in a ghetto mentality. The leadership of the priestly class has declined due to social change and secularisation. The priestly class is itself in great distress. Apart from the fact that it has lost its status, the need for amelioration of this class is urgent. The Parsis are still trying to preserve their elite consciousness in order to make them forget the actual dangers to the community's future.

To understand the social and cultural environment of the Parsis in India, it is necessary to highlight the demographic characteristics of the community. The Parsi population in

India continued to rise till 1941. But it has declined steadily since then. On the other hand the percentage of Parsis in Bombay which was 49 in 1901 has risen to more than 70 per cent now. This urbanisation coupled with lack of adequate housing has resulted in social and economic decline. There is a reluctance amongst the younger people in Bombay to go to other parts of India for better jobs or for establishing new businesses. The low birth rate and a higher death rate has not only led to the decline of population, but also to a change in the age composition of the community with the result that elder persons are, to an increasing extent, dependent on social and financial support through community organisations. The number of marriages between Parsis and non-Parsis is increasing rapidly. This is creating social and cultural stress and tension.

The growing tendency towards mixed marriages has led to a heated discussion about conversion into the Zoroastrian religion of the children of such marriages and the non-Parsi spouses. There has been a change in the occupational pattern of the community resulting in partial socio-economic deterioration. Ignorance of the main tenets and the fundamental principles of the Zoroastrian religion has increased. There is a lack of education and religious teachers.

Culturally the Parsis are now without any sheet anchor. Their westernised culture is out of tune with the rapid revival of Indian cultural activities as a whole in post-Independence India. The community is suffering from a lack of leadership and internal organisation. Most Parsis know that their existence as a community is being threatened. But there is a reluctance to draw conclusions of a basic nature. As stated by Mr. Katrak in his book *Who are the Parsis?* "they philosophise that as God has looked after them for 1,200 years. He will continue to do so for ever." It is however more correct that God helps only those who help

"They (Parsis) philosophise that God has looked after them for 1,200 years, he will continue to do so for ever."

themselves. There is a continuous lament over the problems facing the community in India but hardly any concrete solutions are offered for these problems.

Demographic Trends

Dr Kulke has estimated the Parsi population in the world in 1970 at 1,20,000, made up of 91,000 in India, 5,500 in Pakistan, 18,000 in Iran, and about 5,000 living scattered in Europe, America, Africa and Far East. More than 70 per cent of the Parsis in India live in Bombay and the decline in the Bombay population is even greater than it appears at first sight because the Parsi population in other parts of India has declined by migration to Bombay. Even a zero growth rate will not be adequate for the Parsis. We must therefore aim at even a modest rate of growth. The solution lies in 2 or 3 main directions.

Firstly, early marriages should be encouraged. Lack of adequate housing is the main obstacle in the way of early marriages. This is more so in Bombay than elsewhere in India. Therefore a very heavy responsibility lies on the Parsi Panchayat, Bombay, to undertake massive programmes for low cost housing. Establishment of marriage bureaux and subsidising of education of Parsi children would also encourage the growth of population.

Migration by itself is not an adverse factor as it does not lead to a reduction of the total Zoroastrian population in the world. It rather betters the economic conditions and prosperity of Zoroastrians as a whole. But instead of migration outside India, migration from Bombay to other cities of India should be encouraged as there are better job and business opportunities for enterprising young men and women outside Bombay.

Economic Decline

The economic decline of the community has been quite marked since Independence. This is partly because of the rise of the other communities in industry and trade and partly because of the lack of the entrepreneurial spirit among the younger generation of Parsis. While the Parsis are still holding their own in professions like law,

medicine, accountancy, architecture, etc., their strength in services like the I. A. S. and in the Armed Forces is becoming less and less. The tendency for the younger generation is to seek secure white-collar jobs confined to Bombay. The solution lies in setting up small scale and medium scale industries for the Parsis, particularly outside Bombay. It is necessary to set up vocational guidance bureaux and to encourage the younger generation to train for and to join the higher civil and military services. There is also considerable scope for the younger generation to set up small shops and agencies. There is need for a comprehensive socio-economic census of the entire community in India.

Ignorance of the Religion

Jal R. Vimadlal, a trustee of the Bombay Panchayat, in a speech in Poona has categorically stated "the young Parsi of today knows practically nothing of his religion". Even the parents with some exceptions know very little of their religion. There is a crying need for religious education classes for the younger generation. For the older generation, on whom the responsibility rests for training the younger generation, it is necessary to have advanced lectures delivered by well known scholars of the community. Graded text books are already overdue. They should explain the cardinal tenets of our religion in a simple and straight forward language. There should be adequate translations in English, Hindi and Gujarati of our sacred scriptures so that even if the prayers are recited in Avesta Pahlavi, the meaning is clearly known and understood. Adherence to rigid and out moded customs and rituals is the bane of our community. Thousands of rupees are spent on funeral and post-demise ceremonies by persons who can ill-afford this expenditure. Lavish expenditure is incurred in many cases on marriage and Navjote ceremonies. The Federation and the Parsi Panchayat with the help of scholar priests should come forward with a statement of the minimum ceremonies to be performed on all such occasions.

Inter-Community Marriages

It is not a problem peculiar to the Parsi community. Inter-community marriages are increasing in other communities and some State Governments even encourage them. But the problem assumes great importance for the Parsi community because it leads to a decline in the Parsi population. Inter-community marriages cannot be

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"A Parsi woman who marries a non-Parsi but continues to be a Zoroastrian is, in law, fully entitled to enter into the Parsi Fire Temples."

prevented merely by threats and hostile attitudes from the orthodox sections. They can be reduced to a certain extent by social and cultural activities where young Parsi boys and girls can come into greater social contact with each other.

So far as the question of conversion was concerned, it was settled by the Privy Council decision (*Saklat v. Bella*) that a person born in another religion and of non-Zoroastrian parents had the right to be converted into the Zoroastrian religion. This law stands even today.

Bella's appeal was allowed to the extent that she could enter and use the fire temple not as a matter of right but as a matter of discretion on the part of the trustees. Even, according to the Privy Council, the trustees had such a discretion, and obviously if they exercised the discretion in favour of Bella they would not be committing any breach of trust. I must emphasise

that we are here considering not the use of the funds of a public or charitable trust for the benefit of persons who are not objects of the trust. We are here considering a case where the "subject matter is of such a nature that it will not hurt the lawful recipients if others share with them."

The main apprehension entertained by the orthodox section of the community in 1906 that the poorer sections of the other communities wanted to marry Parsis, only to become entitled to the benefits of the funds and properties of the Parsi Panchayat no longer holds good. Most of the inter-community marriages are financially above the average. Such persons are quite well off and are in no need of any help from the Parsi funds and properties. Moreover, a Parsi woman who marries a non-Parsi but continues to be a Zoroastrian is, in law, fully entitled to entry into the Parsi Fire Temples and to the benefits of the Parsi funds and properties. The children of a Parsi father and non-Parsi mother are also Parsi Zoroastrians in law. The only problem that now remains is the position of a non-Parsi father married to a Parsi mother and the children of such marriage. The Privy Council has held that such children can be Zoroastrians and can be allowed by the Trustees at

their discretion to enter the Fire Temple.

It is desirable and necessary to accept children of a Parsi mother and a non-Parsi father into the Parsi Zoroastrian community with suitable safeguards. The acceptance would have to be by a Navjote properly performed and by the written consent of the non-Parsi father. Normally the mother has a greater religious influence than the father over the child. If she genuinely wishes with the consent of her husband to make the child a Parsi Zoroastrian, there should be no social or legal objection. Reform must sooner or later be adopted in India to put an end to a needless controversy. This can be done through a suitable amendment in the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Law.

Disposal of the Dead

I personally am a believer in the system of Dokhmas wherever they exist. But if it is not possible to maintain the Dokhmas because of the scarcity of birds, then I see no objection to the system of burial. In the rare cases where both systems exist at one place, it should be left to the relatives of the deceased to decide which facility they would like to avail of. There should be no threat from the priests that they will not perform the funeral ceremonies if the burial system is availed of.

As regards 'Sezdo', the system in Bombay is now antiquated. When a Parsi dies his non-Parsi friends and relations naturally would like to pay their last homage to the deceased. To prevent them from doing so under the guise of antiquated customs and false religious doctrine will only harm the image of the Parsi community amongst the other communities. In Delhi this (Sezdo by non-Parsis) has been always permissible and the public image of the Parsi community has been enhanced thereby.

The question of crematoria for disposal of the dead in the Parsi community has been the subject of some controversy in recent years. There is no doubt in law the disposal of the dead body must be done in accordance with the wishes of the deceased or his near relatives. The question which arises is whether a Parsi priest can perform the funeral and other ceremonies in such cases. Some priests are already willing, and do perform such ceremonies. This is a matter of their own belief and conscience and calls for no controversy. There is no compulsion on anybody in such matters.

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Lack of Leadership

The leaders must be enlightened, forward-looking and not afraid to tackle controversial problems and come to the right conclusions. The Parsi Panchayat of Bombay has in recent times failed to give such leadership to the community. This is because the Parsi Panchayat Board of Trustees is elected on a very narrow franchise based on an election procedure introduced in 1906 with the approval of the Bombay High Court.

"The trustees increasingly owe their election to a caucus of about 300 voters."

This procedure is now outdated and it is alleged that the Trustees increasingly owe their election to a caucus of about 300 voters. In the present democratic age it is necessary that every Parsi in Bombay should have a right to elect the Trustees. This can be done only through adult franchise under a new scheme to be approved by the Bombay High Court. In many other parts of India including, Poona, Delhi, Calcutta, etc., the Trustees are now elected by voters of all the members of the respective Panchayats or Anjumans.

QUALITY NOT QUANTITY

Burjor H. Antia

The law of genetics is no respecter of personalities. Across the corridors of history men have discovered that certain ethnic traits regulate the characteristics of every individual, tribe and race. Man is a creature of heredity and environment. So long as man retains the bonds of association with his tribe or race, these ethnic traits run like a golden thread across centuries of time and make their mark in the history of the age.

We, the Parsis, are no exception to this rule. During 13 centuries, we have scrupulously retained our racial identity and in the process have enriched the heritage of our race. To appreciate the subject in its proper perspective, let us refresh our memory that we migrated to India about 1300 years ago so as to prevent the onslaught of invading Arabs and to preserve our religion, race and culture in this part of the world.

We, Parsis led a simple, honest and hardworking life and always took great care for the preservation of our religion, culture and hereditary characteristics. Today it appears that some of the Zoroastrians are forgetting our aim and objectives in coming to India and also our obligations to preserve

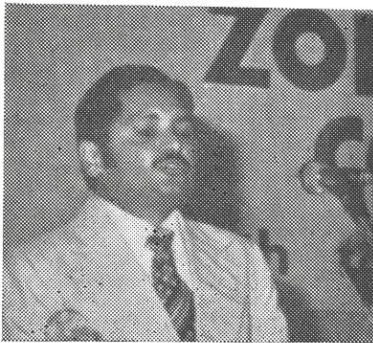
our religion, race, culture and traditions, and are violating the religious injunctions.

There is a clamour for conversion of persons of other communities to our religion under the guise of increasing the number of Zoroastrians; for allowing the children of Parsi mothers and alien fathers to be treated as Zoroastrians; for ridiculing our religious tenets and ceremonies and to belittle our age-old traditions, customs and usages; for allowing the members of the other religions to enter our Fire Temples; for allowing non-Parsis to see the dead body after *sachkar* ceremony.

Conversion to Zoroastrianism

Before dealing with the first aspect regarding the conversion to Zoroastrian religion so as to increase the number of Parsi Zoroastrians, one must bear in mind the two aspects of the matter, namely, Zoroastrianism is a religion whilst the Parsis are a race. You can convert a person to any religion, but you cannot convert a person to a race.

No one can have any objection to a person converting himself to the Zoroastrian religion but it must be clearly understood that he will not be entitled to the benefit of any of our Trusts



Antia: 'Bounden duty'

such as, Agiaries, Atash Behrams, Dokhmas, as those Trusts are specifically meant for Parsi Zoroastrians.

It is pertinent to note that in all these cases, it is a handful of the Parsis themselves who clamour for permitting non-Parsis to have access to these institutions. Scarcely do we ever hear of a non-Parsi seeking to knock at the doors of our Fire Temples.

Once the flood gates of conversion are open, quantity will replace quality. The yearning for more numbers and the lure of our opulent funds and resources would submerge our closely

knit community into the morass of an orphan's tribe. In the process our extinction will be accelerated.

Children of Parsi women and alien fathers

About the Navjot of children born of Parsi woman and alien father, following the principles laid down by another famous Judgement of the Privy Council in the Case of Saklat vs. Bella, children of Parsi women can never become Parsis. No law or amendment can change that position, as it would create the absurd result that the children of such marriages would belong to two different races. If any person dealing with this topic distinctly and clearly remembers the difference between the words "Zoroastrian" and "Parsi" there will not be scope for any controversy.

Parsi girls marrying outside

Some advocate that Parsi girls who are marrying outside the community should be treated as Parsi Zoroastrians. To my mind they were lost to the community and our religion on the day they married outside our community. Even our religious scriptures condemn such marriages:

Then Ahura Mazda replied "O Holy Zarathushtra those who are Mazdayasnis mixing their seeds with non-Mazdayasnis are committing sins." (*Vandidad Paragard 18 para 62*)

A bogie is raised every now and then that if you take a rigid view, our community will die down soon, but I would prefer quality rather than quantity and would like to see that our community may have few Zoroastrians following scrupulously the tenets of our religion instead of increasing the number by including the progeny of mixed marriages who do not understand our religion or the significance of its tenets or usages.

Dokhmanashini is the best

With the passage of time, our religious knowledge has become very scanty as a result of which some of the Parsis were more attracted to other religions rather than appreciating the importance and significance of our religion and religious ceremonies. Parsis should make an honest endeavour to understand their religion and culture. The main target of vilification campaigns is our Dokhmanashini ceremony and the Muktdad ceremony. Dokhmanashini ceremony is the most scientific method which does not pollute any element of nature. Moreover the Dokhmanashini ceremony is economical and expeditious and it does not make any

"Zoroastrians are forgetting our aims and objectives in coming to India."

difference between rich and poor. There is a fashion nowadays to dispose of the dead bodies by cremation. Needless to say that when Parsis worship Fire, the system of disposal of bodies by cremation is contrary to the principle of the Zoroastrian religion as it pollutes fire by cremation.

Cremation and four days ceremony

After committing a breach of the clear cut tenet of our religion, the relatives of Parsis who have been cremated, bring pressure upon the priests to perform the ceremonies for the first four days. Hats off to our poor priests that because they want to preserve our religion in its pristine purity, they decline to perform the ceremonies for the first four days. Religion is a matter of principle for all of us and our priests are justified in declining to perform the four days ceremonies and I believe that there is no power on the earth which can compel them to do this.

Sezdah Ceremony

I believe that the controversy regarding Sezdah ceremony is also unnecessary because we the Parsis never refuse to show the dead bodies to

non-Parsis prior to Sachkar ceremony. When the significance of our Sezdah ceremonies is explained to non-Parsis, they have accepted the position without any grudge, but in our own community a few persons are unnecessarily raising this dispute so as to claim themselves as reformists.

Fire Temple and non-Parsis

With reference to the demand of entry of non-Parsis in our Fire Temples, it is pertinent to note that the said demand has come not from the non-Parsis, but from certain so called protagonist of secularism of our community. They should know that similar practices are being followed in other religions and communities. When the non-Parsis do not want to hurt the feelings of Parsis by entering into Parsi Temples, I ask for whose benefit and for whose sake such controversies are being raked up in our community.

Zoroastrians settled outside India

The problems of the Zoroastrians residing outside India, stand on a different footing as they live at such places where there may not be Fire Temples, Dokhmas and Mobeds. According to *Shayast Ne Shayest* a Pahlavi work, they may be excused for not following our religious tenets in the special circumstances where one becomes helpless but that does not mean that what they do is correct and what we do in India is dogmatic.

The aim of coming to India

The aforesaid survey in the social and cultural field of Zoroastrians, indicate beyond doubt that some of us have forgotten the tenets of our religion and the purpose for which we came down to India: to preserve our religion and race, what our ancestors of pious memory vividly described as "Dini Pasbani and Bunyadi Pasbani."

Guidelines for future

Considering all these aspects, let us resolve:

That under no circumstances we will give up the principles and tenets of our Zoroastrian religion and we will sacrifice everything to follow the same. It is our bounden duty to protect the religious institutions which were left by our ancestors and to see that they are used for the same purpose for which they were found. Our young generation is today bereft of the religious and cultural knowledge and let us take steps to impart to them our religious knowledge and culture so that they can become proud of their religion and community.

From Plato and Demosthenes to Gandhi and Kennedy, men have always looked to the past with reverence for inspiration and for survival. Let us not abandon those values for which our forbearers sacrificed their all and pledged their lives at the altar of their faith.

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AEK ATMAKATHA

The life of Dastur Dhalla-VII

At the Madressah

Seventh extract from 'Aek Atmakatha', the Autobiography of the revered Dastur Dr Maneckji N. Dhalla, noted Zoroastrian scholar and high priest of the Karachi Parsis : published by the Dastur Dr Dhalla Memorial Institute, Karachi and translated from Gujarati into English by Gool and Behram Rustomji.

THE STORY SO FAR

Born into a poor dastur family in Surat on 27 August 1875, Dhalla moved with his family to Karachi in 1878. At six Dhalla started his schooling and by eight was wedded to five-year old Cooverbai.

His failure to pass his matriculation or to answer an invitation to come to China proved to be a severe disappointment to his family. Instead Dhalla became the editor and later the proprietor of a fiction magazine which he discontinued publishing after three years of sustained losses.

Dhalla meanwhile started to educate himself in religious and scholastic subjects through extensive reading. He wrote three books on religious matter and started to deliver a number of religious lectures, which brought him public acclaim and certain leading members of the community made arrangements for him to study in the Madressahs of Bombay.

There was no provision in colleges for Parsi students studying in the Bombay University who wished to take Iranian languages as an elective subject. Arrangements therefore had been made at the Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy Madressah and the Mulla-Pheroze Madressah—both institutions established and endowed by communal funds—for five years' study to the master's degree. To cover this entire course I had to stay in Bombay for five years.

More than half the population of our community resides in Bombay, hence the mode of living and the movements of co-religionists in Bombay influence all the Zoroastrians in India. Major religious and social problems are discussed there. I set foot on the soil of Bombay at the dawn of the 20th century. Religious and social discussions were in the ascendant. In our community hardly a year passes without heated arguments about some problem. As the community is largely led by sentiment, a great deal of ill-feeling is aroused in opposing factions. Fifty years have elapsed since the commencement of the major conflict between reformists and orthodoxy. Many a minor and major battle has been fought; many a warrior wounded by the sting of words and many a hero's heart pierced; many have resigned their positions. A hundred wars were waged on the battlefield but none conquered—no one was vanquished.

A hundred years ago Parsi women worshipped idols and frequented temples. They made offerings on tombs and temples, dargahs and churches. On holi they made 'holias' of their sons. During the days of Mohurrum they turned them into mendicants, made them recite the Fatwa and follow some customs like fasting, sacrificing, etc. In their ignorance they were lured by all sorts of superstitious beliefs—such as black magic, the evil eye, being possessed by the evil spirit, etc. With a view to doing away with these false beliefs and practices and to spread knowledge, the Rahnumai Mazdayasnan Society was founded in 1851 under the chairmanship of Navroji Fardoonji and the secretaryship of Dadabhoy Navroji. Along with this the society also tackled questions relating to Zoroastrian ceremonials and customs.

In 1855 the orthodox group founded an opposite party known as the Rahe Rastnumae Zarthostian, which was dissolved within two years. The reformist group published their views from the platform of the Rahnumai

Sabha, whereas the orthodox section worked under no auspices. In 1880, under the permanent presidency of Dastur Jamaspji Minocherji, Muncherji Mansukh established the "The Society for the Furtherance of Faith in the Zoroastrian Religion". Mansukh himself was the most vociferous speaker from this platform. In his speeches he would tell his listeners that they had parliamentary privilege to interrupt and disrupt the lectures delivered by the members of the Rahnumai Sabha, and, true to the command of their leader, our young people often went to the meetings of the reformists and created a commotion. Besides publicising their lectures against the reformists through newspapers and hand-bills, the Society of the Faithful engaged a Parsi herald to make the announcement in Parsi quarters. This Parsi had a loud yet melodious voice. Once this man came along chanting dirges; "Old dame Rahnumai is on her deathbed.

"A hundred wars were waged... but none conquered—no one was vanquished."

She is breathing her last," etc. The poor fellow had no idea that a carriage was coming from behind, so an old Zoroastrian gentleman shouted loudly: "Forget about the Rahnumai dying. You will unnecessarily lose your own life." It was the unhappy destiny of this invincible soldier to witness the uncontested authority of the society being endangered. Its lectures became well-known under various titles such as 'Wretched and miserable Rahnumai', 'Elegy of the Rahnumai', 'Last rite of the Reformists' etc. But they were not able to do so for any length of time. One evening, Mansukh returned home at eleven. At twelve his heart stopped beating and the curtain was drawn on the memorable Mansukh era.

During the sacred Muktd days I delivered seven lectures which were greatly appreciated. Whoever the lecturer, Camaji was always present; so naturally such a scholar was bound to attract attention. Kaikushru Kabraji, the reformist editor of the 'Rast Gofar', Darashah Chichgar and other leading personages of the reformist movement attended my lectures; hence, although I was a conservative, chance placed me in an environment of reformists at Bombay from the very outset. For every lecture I delivered the Bazme paid me Rs 10/-. The secretary of the Society for Furthering Religious Fervour offered me Rs 15/-

"However un-Zoroastrian (their) thinking... they had entwined their destiny with the orthodox."

per talk to speak under its auspices. I accepted that offer also, with the idea of substantially increasing my remuneration. When this matter was placed before their Committee of Management, Mansukh did give his consent. From the beginning I was well-versed in the art of sailing with the time and tide of circumstance. I had come to the conclusion that my main purpose in going to Bombay was to study the Iranian languages. Hence during my career of scholarship I should abstain from speaking or expressing my opinions on any religious or social problems that were being discussed in the community. True to this resolution, for my long series of seven lectures at Bombay, I selected five on ethical topics and two relating to the Athornan clan. I firmly abided by my resolve not to refer to controversial topics.

During the course of the year at Bombay, I delivered about twenty-five lectures at Dhobi Talao, Fort, Colaba, Khetwadi, Mazagaon, Dadar, Bandra and other places. I also gave talks in the suburbs of Bombay and townships in Gujarat, Poona, etc.

During the first two years of my stay in Bombay I lived in the library of the Bazme which was housed in a spacious room of a building next to the Faranji Cowasjee Institute at Dhobi Talao. The library table was my bed at night. I made my own tea in the premises while I had my meals with a few other mobeds in a house nearby. Later, as the library closed down, I shifted from there. There being great financial stringency at home in Karachi, I took special care of every pie that I spent.

To my wife I wrote regularly and those letters always ran into five or seven pages. In my absence she preserved the honour of the home and ran the house most economically. During vacations if I was not obliged to go out of Bombay to lecture, I went to Karachi and rendered service there.

There was one senior member less in our family now. One day my Kakiji (aunt) was weaving the kusti as usual. Suddenly she complained of pain in the heart and, within half an hour, she surrendered her spirit to the Lord. She was seventy years old.

Meanwhile the conflict between the

reformists and the orthodox party was going on.

In our community there was only one association which was capable of conducting scholarly discussions on questions concerning Zoroastrianism and throwing light on those problems, and that was the "Society for Research into the Zoroastrian Faith". Camaji was its President. Those portions of its weekly meetings which were printed and published contained scholarly essays and articles. Mansukh would amuse his audience by putting a pun on the word research, turning it to skin—thereby meaning that this society of the reformists has been skinning the faith and has taken away the light and lustre of the religion. The Rahnumai Sabha aroused the intellectual curiosity of people while the Society of the Faithful (Etehad Mandli) played upon their sentiments.

The Theosophists

The Theosophical Movement founded in 1875, became increasingly active after the arrival of its exceptionally gifted President, Mrs Annie Besant. Her magnetic eloquence attracted many of our community members to this movement. The aspect of discussions on religious problems altered with the participation of Parsi theosophists. Besides questions relating to ceremonies and customs, deeply philosophical subjects like the manifested and unmanifested forms of God, reincarnation, the meaning and purpose of life and whether the soul retains its individuality and attains eternal bliss in heaven or is perfected through thousands of births and becomes one with God, came to the forefront in religious discussions. The noble, learned and brilliant speaker, Mr. Jehangir Vimadlal, emerged from the theosophical camp. With his coming into prominence, the theosophical movement gained great impetus in the community. In the words of Dasturs Darab and Kaikhushru and the learned Camaji, however un-Zoroastrian the thinking of Parsi theosophists be, they had entwined their destiny with the orthodox majority of the community, for they were the guardians, inheritors and sustainers of ceremonies and traditions which to the orthodox was the soul and substance of religion.

I was a believer in conventions, so it would be presumed that my sympathies would be with the theosophists who were out to uphold them. But it did not turn out so. Their arguments seemed baseless and pretentious. From earliest times religion has befriended philosophy and through

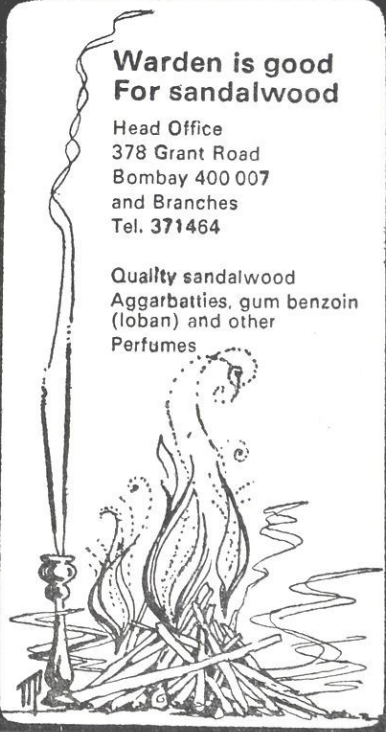
its aid has sought to prove its concepts correct. This is an age of science; hence whatever is expressed under cover of science and stated upon its authority greatly influences the educated youth. Because of this, theosophists claimed to examine customs and practices from the view point of science and tried to prove them beneficial. The orthodox group was greatly pacified by them. They were content to find that what the reformists had classified as superstition the theosophists were establishing as valid. Their science appeared incomplete to me and the opinions they expressed on the strength of science seemed airy creations of imagination.

An enthusiastic and highly qualified Athornan, came to me once and informed me that there was to be a Jashan performed by the dasturs and mobeds of Bombay. A resolution was to be passed that it is improper to include flesh, fish, eggs, liquor, etc. in the offerings to be consecrated and suggested that I should participate in the Jashan. My reply was that the custom which had come down through the centuries was in accordance with the religious opinions expressed in the

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"Those who were extreme reformists . . . waged war against reforms."

Avesta, Pahlavi and Pazend books. As I had no sympathy with such a resolution, it was not possible for me to participate. They pleaded that it would not be proper for me to disassociate myself when all others were joining hands in the movement. My request was that, if I would be permitted to express my opinions in opposition at the meeting, I would be present. They did not comply with my request so I did not go. The Jashan was performed and in the report that was published the following day I read that one dastur was unable to participate due to sudden illness and other gentlemen could not be present due to unforeseen circumstances.

The Orthodox Newspapers

Life is a great school. In the beginning it pleased me to see my name in the papers or to read passages of praise. As my acquaintance with the daily and weekly papers grew my feelings for words of praise or blame were benumbed. It became apparent that praise is not always given only to the praiseworthy nor was criticism always levied honestly. The Rahnumai Mazdayasnan Society was unpopular with an orthodox group. Hence the newspapers with an orthodox viewpoint—or claiming to be orthodox—avoided all mention of the Society. The reason for adding 'claiming to be orthodox' is that, I found out that those in charge of the newspaper did not practise what they preached. Those who were extreme reformists in their thoughts and ways and in whose homes convention had not even a corner, waged war against reforms. They were proprietors of a paper from a business angle. There was no relationship between their personal viewpoints and the policy of their newspapers.

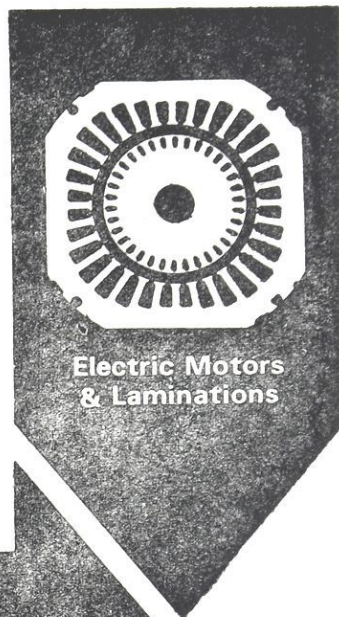
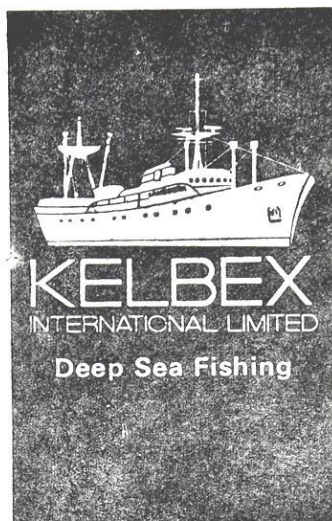
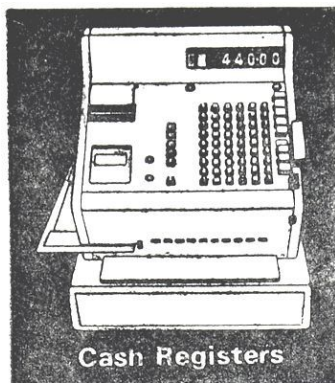
At the time of the Zoroastrian Conference some leaders of the community cooperated to boycott the communal orthodox paper that had a very wide circulation and exercised great influence. Many put the resolution into practice. Within a short while the womenfolk in those families complained that although they did not agree with the policy of those papers no other paper supplied the same amount of information about communal matters and life seemed dull and drab without them. Very

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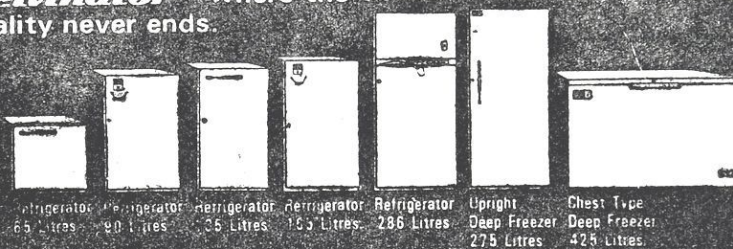
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soon those newspapers found re-entry into their homes.

The reformist paper, 'Rast Gofar', died shortly after celebrating its jubilee, because when it encountered a loss and its proprietor wanted to close it down, no reformist society or individual member was sufficiently enthusiastic to render financial assistance.

Rev. Mott and the Parsis

Once a large coloured placard suspended from the gallery of the Faramji Cowasji Institute attracted people from afar. On it was printed in bold letters: "A special lecture for the Parsis". I went at the time announced for the lecture. Rev. Dr. Mott, the head of the branches of the Y.M.C.A. in the East, had come from America to lecture. In the beginning the lecturer spoke highly of Zarathushtra and his religion and all were very pleased; but later he stated that Jesus was even greater than Zarathushtra and his religion superior. No one but Jesus was capable of working out man's salvation. Those who are outside the fold of that religion are in the pits of vice, but Jesus stretches out his hand to them in his boundless mercy. Those who hold the outstretch-

"He stated that Jesus was even greater than Zarathushtra and his religion superior"

ed hand in due humility, have yet an opportunity to be saved from damnation. Three lectures were delivered in this strain. At the end of each lecture he would request those who were eager to gain more advice should remain seated, others may leave. Ten or twelve Zoroastrian youths and a few Hindus stayed behind on the first day. I too remained seated in one corner to watch what was going on. Dr. Mott called forth the Lord's blessings upon the young people for having seen the Light and prayed that God guide them to accept the sublime religion of Jesus Christ. I made up my mind to dissuade them from taking such a hasty step and as the priests left I began to dissuade them. Everyone burst out laughing and assured me that they had put up a false front. The next day the priest made a similar request to those who had shown the eagerness to forge ahead the previous day, to remain seated.

Rev. Mott advised them and strengthened them saying that their thoughtful decision would gain for them happiness in both the worlds. They would definitely have to endure great opposition from their relatives and their friends and their community, but that would be nothing compared to the untold suffering that Jesus himself had been subjected to, and since God's one and only true prophet was now their guide and their guardian, they need fear no one. On the third day the priests arrived. Mott must have felt that this time it was worth having sailed all the way from America for his mission was bearing rich fruit. He began his talk but he was taken aback, for those who had made a show of being in search of a new faith began to disrupt the lecture by whistling and by critical remarks. The speaker had to pause twice or thrice. The priests of the Bombay missions tried to plead with the youths and to quieten them. The lecture ended thus and the young Parsi boys accompanied the American missionary right upto the doorway, making him appear ludicrous. After years, on meeting Dr. Mott again in New York, I found that he had not forgotten the Parsi youths.

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Died: **Rustom Dhunjishaw Sidhwa**, 82, one of the founders and directors of Grindwell Norton, Bharat Tiles and Marbles Pvt. Ltd., and Bharat Metal Printers amongst others, on 1 April 1980, of heart trouble, in Bombay.

A former Chairman of the Association of Indian Industries, the Marble and Tile Merchants Association, and a member of the Indian Merchant's Chamber of Commerce, Sidhwa's motto was reported to be: "You can't run a business if you can't run with it." Till the end, he was said to have been pouring over chemical directories in the hope of starting something new, introducing new concepts and products, according to *In House*, the journal of Grindwell Norton.



Sidhwa

The Bombay West Rotary Club weekly bulletin, *The Flying Carpet* in its 15 October 1966 issue, describes Sidhwa as a "crusader for good causes."

Born on 2 June 1898, into a large middle class family, Sidhwa was educated in Bombay, and his early plunge in business is reported to be as romantic as his success in it. He is remembered as the pioneer of the indigenous manufacture of tiles, as well as of metal printing. In 1940, in an effort to meet the war time shortage of grinding wheels, he started

Grindwell. "He along with his associates, continued to improvise, innovate and economise in order to keep up the production and even expand. In this he was motivated by the twin objectives of self sufficiency in industrial production and creation of job opportunities," says *In House*, the Grindwell journal.

Sidhwa is survived by his wife, three daughters, sons-in-law and grandchildren.

Died: **Dhunjisha Pestonji Ruttanji Cassad**, 73, prominent citizen, businessman and industrialist of Nagpur, of a heart attack on 6 February 1980, at Nagpur.

Director of the Byramji Mining Combine Pvt. Ltd., Bombay and the Bombay Suburban Electric Supply Company Ltd., Cassad was also Chairman, Managing Director and Liquidator of the Nagpur Electric Light and Power Company, besides holding high offices in other organisations.

Cassad, "belonged to a generation of executives who were sticklers for efficiency and honesty when at work, and who, in club life gave out the best in fraternization and goodwill," comments *The Nagpur Times* in its editorial dated 9, February 1980.

"Though a very outspoken man, Mr. Cassad was very popular both because he was always helpful to others and because he championed just causes, concerning mostly the development of Nagpur," reports *The Hitavada*, the oldest English daily of Central India.

Cassad began his education at St. Paul's European High School in Rangoon. From there he went on to take his B.Sc. degree in physics and mathematics from the Deccan and Fergusson Colleges in Poona. After obtaining his M.Sc. from the Banaras Hindu University, he was an Edulji Dinshaw Scholar for engineering at the University College, London, from where he was awarded his B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees.

According to his bio-data he was a consulting civil engineer at Quetta, and at Tata Chemicals, Mithapur. He was also Civil Engineer Emergency Commissioner Officer, Corps of the Indian Engineers, and professor at the school of Military Engineering, Roorkee.

A former Rotarian and a founder President of the Lion's Club of Nagpur, his contribution to Lionism was recognized and appreciated at the Lion's International assembly at New Delhi.

In a tribute to this well-known



Cassad

citizen of Nagpur, the *Nagpur Times* says, "A fine citizen of Nagpur has passed away in the death of Mr. D.P.R. Cassad, who proudly associated himself with clean, honest social work. . . Nagpur city has lost a guardian of high social values and a citizen of high social tastes and polished manners."

Cassad is survived by his wife Kamalrukh, a daughter and two sons.

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*"Isn't there an easier way to
understand geometry?"*

Euclid replied:

*"There is no royal way to
geometry. Everyone has to think
for himself when studying."*

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