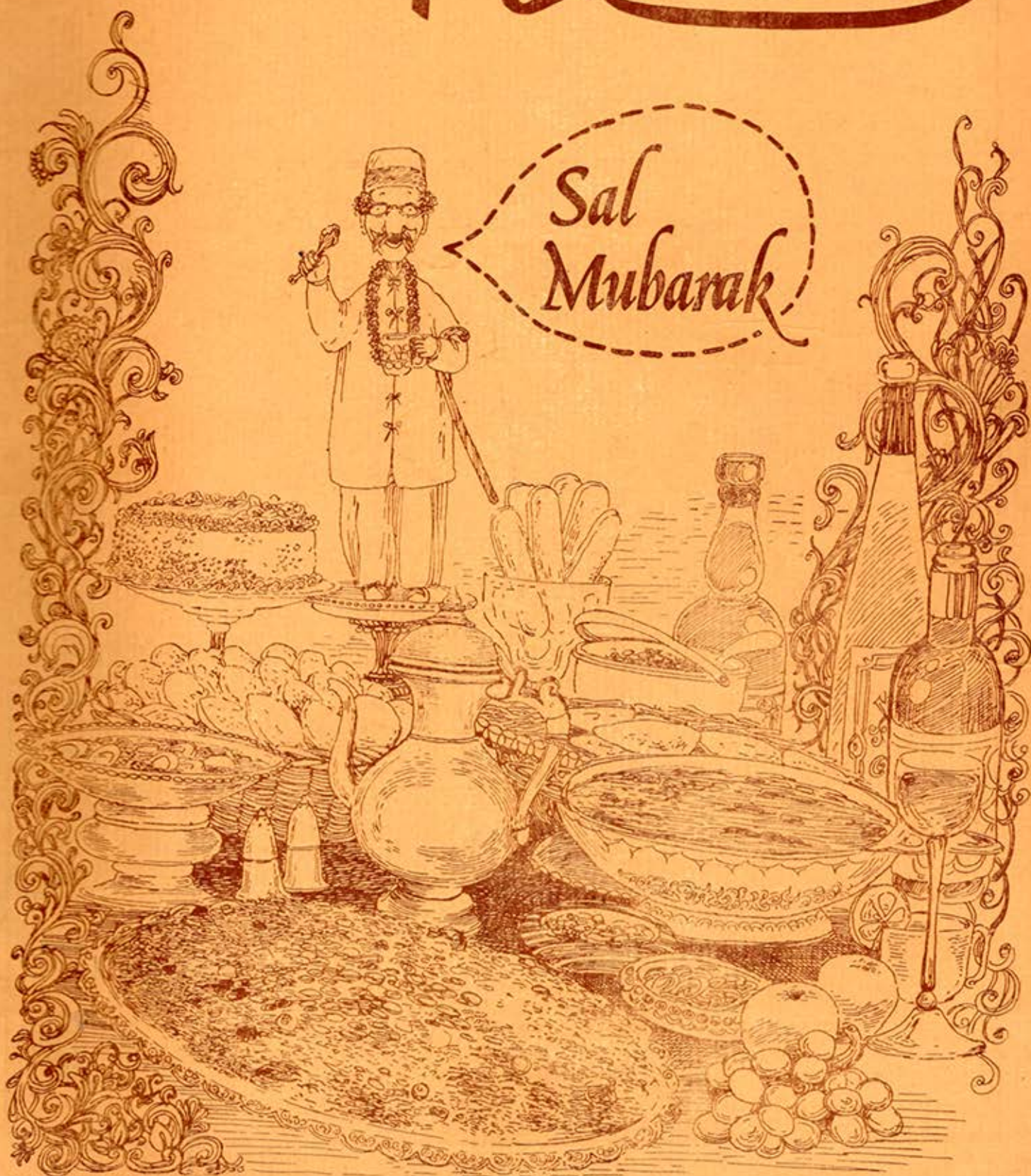


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# Parsiānā



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# Parsiana

August 1980 Volume 3 No. 4

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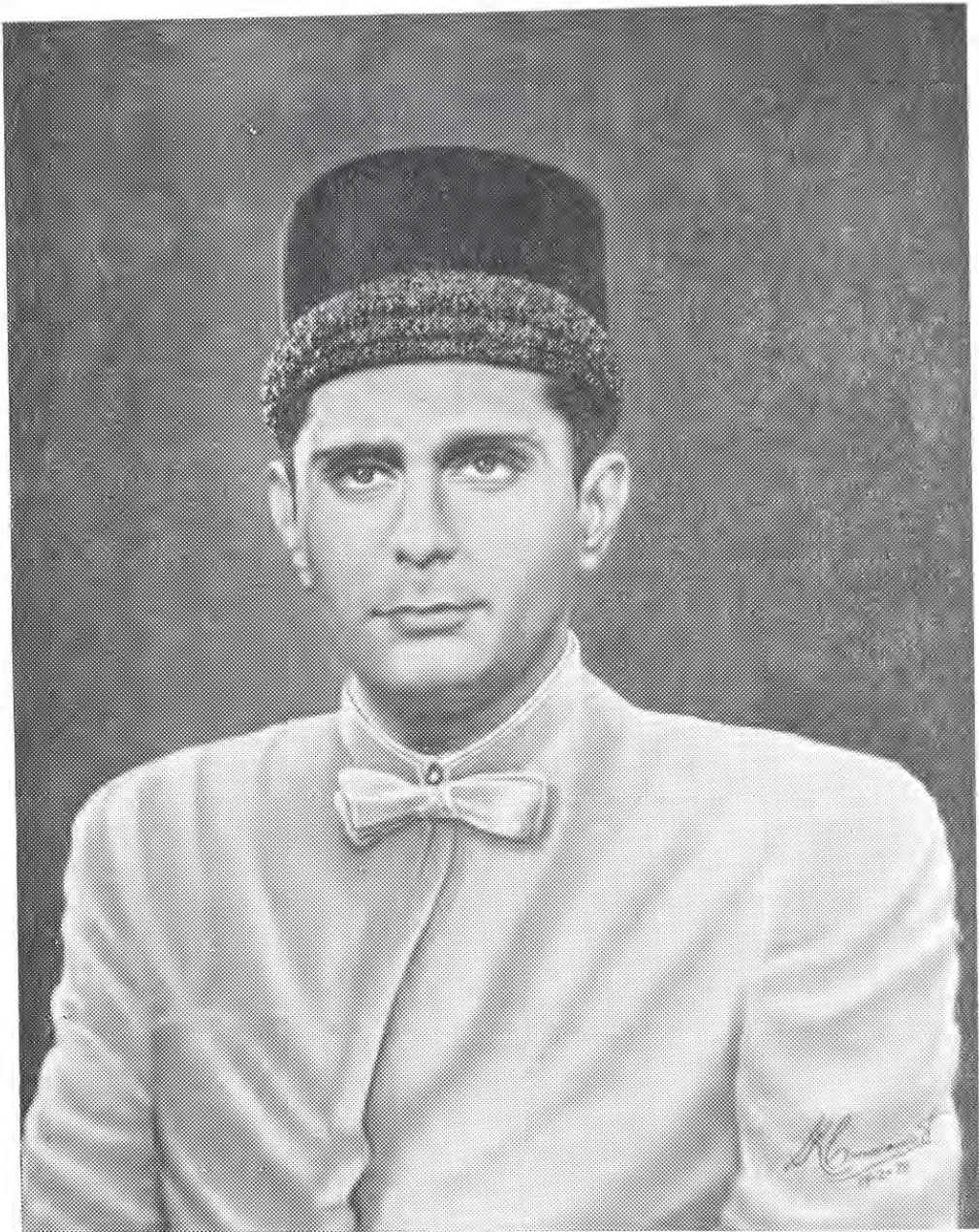
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In Memoriam  
**Mr. Fali Meherji Variava,**  
Director

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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.

## 'A Pity'

For a small community like ours, it's a shame to see so many poor Parsis who are eventually forced to be on the road due to the negligence of a few people. There are so many cases where even married couples have to wait for years to have decent accommodation and there are people who shift from one sanatorium to the other every few months.

Is it not a pity when everybody is harping about how small our community is that nothing is being done about it? There surely must be a solution and the stalwarts of our community should come together and solve this gigantic problem.

SHAHNAZ HOMAVAZIR

## Religion of the dead

I have observed that, whether it be in our magazines, community meetings or in religious discourses, the emphasis invariably appears to be on the dead, rather than on the living. We spend so much time energy and money on finding ways and means of making sure that our dead cross the *chinwat* pool that we have completely forgotten to uplift the living.

Zoroastrianism as practised by the Parsis in India has been reduced to a religion of the dead, for the dead, by the dead. We go to great lengths to teach and fight for traditions such as, having a dog diagnose whether life exists in the deceased, disinfecting our hands with cow's urine in the days of Dettol and Listerine, not allowing the deceased's best friend to see his face because he is a non-Parsi, and not allowing the dead ghambars funds to be used for the advancement of the living generation. It is such a pity that very little effort is ever made to find out the overall needs of the community.

The priestly class and the anjuman, if they so wish can continue to carry on their research on how to cross the bridge of death, as long as the money today being spent on this, is diverted to the spring of life.

BRIG. N. B. GRANT (Retd.)  
Pune

## 'Ghetto Mentality'

Our youth have developed "a ghetto mentality", as Shiavax Nargolwala president of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman aptly describes it in his World Congress paper (*Parsiana* July, 1980), which prevents them from stretching themselves beyond their immediate horizons. One sees the descendants of illustrious families who were pioneers in enterprises holding jobs of clerks in commercial firms. Parsi business concerns that still operate have about them an air of indolence and decadence. After the innumerable frauds and swindles in which Parsis have been involved, we cannot even adopt the 'holier than thou' attitude of being the most trustworthy community in India!

What we need just now is the rehauling and rejuvenation of our community—the practical common sense that our forefathers had. There must be polytechnics and institutions to impart skills which will in time provide job opportunities to our youth and wean them away from the

soft jobs in offices. Philanthropists instead of endowing museums and libraries should consider actively encouraging and advising the young in setting up businesses and every encouragement must be given to the youth to spread to places other than Bombay.

The reluctance to leave this city which is ill-equipped to provide today even the basic services has been one of the biggest factors contributing to the lack of progress of our community. Indirectly this may even solve our problem of dwindling numbers, since it is the lack of housing in Bombay that often prevents our young from getting married or having large families.

K. R. JAVERI

## Encore

Two articles by orthodox scholars—Firoze Kotwal and Faribourz Nariman—and an interview with another and equally orthodox scholar—Khojeste Mistree—were indeed a treat.

Zoroastrians need enlightened and scholarly men like them to discuss some of our burning problems dispassionately and with foresight. Can we not have something from their erudite pens at regular intervals?

ZUBIN D. SANJANA

## Khojeste Mistree

As I think of some of the worthy Parsis I have met in recent times, Khojeste Mistree stands out bold and clear. He has made his mark on the community. Here is someone who could have lived in great style as a foreign-returned Chartered Accountant but has preferred the task of arousing the community from the lethargy into which most of us have sunk.

It is obvious that Mistree's love and reverence for Zarathushtra is uncommonly great, but it should be equally obvious that he must have the wherewithal to carry on his mission. Even if we disagree with him on certain matters, it is our duty as Zoro-

Please turn to page 63

## Rashid D. Bamanbehram

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# Events and Personalities

## Cheers and Jeers

What started out as a meeting to commemorate the birth centenary of the late social worker and freedom fighter, **Burjorji Bharucha**, ended up instead as a stinging condemnation of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat. Speaker after eminent speaker criticised the Panchayat, firstly for not participating in the 7th July function, and then for their ineffectual management of community affairs and property.

Leading the list of speakers and critics was Nani Palkhivala, the eminent jurist and India's former Ambassador to the U. S. A. "It is surprising that the trustees of the Parsi Panchayat are not associated with this function," he told the gathering at the Sir Jivanji Modi Memorial Hall at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute in Bombay. "It is a matter of deep distress, for true Zoroastrianism is in the life of Burjorji Bharucha."

Seventeen years ago, on the death of Bharucha, the Parsi Panchayat had disregarded the call of the community to hold a condolence meeting in his

honour. The community had then called its own meeting. At the Centenary celebrations too, the name of the Parsi Panchayat was conspicuously absent from the list of patronising associations on the invitation card, which included the Bharucha Trust, the Youths' Own Union, the Gamadia Colony Welfare Association, the Bombay Parsi Association, the Rahnumai Mazdayasni Sabha, and the Navsari Parsi Association amongst others.

In an impassioned speech, Rustom Gagrai, Chairman of the Bharucha Committee, a trustee of the Bharucha Trust and a noted solicitor, decried the Panchayat for not holding the condolence meeting and participating in the centenary celebrations. He urged the Parsi community to act on The Bombay Samachar Editor, Jehan Daruwala's recommendations to get Palkhivala to lead the community, rather than tolerate the present trustees who he said do more harm than good to the community and country.

Chief Guest Palkhivala, said in

his "personal homage to one of the finest human beings I ever knew," that Bharucha was one of the unsung freedom fighters of India, who though he "walked with the great, never sought office...he was not on the scene when the salute (independence) was taken, he worked behind the scenes. To my mind such a man is truly great. If we Indians had half his intelligence, and half his character, we would be great. He lived the religion of Zarathushtra—not the external paraphernalia but the good thoughts, good words, good deeds. Quietly, unostentatiously, he did his job."

Dr. Sarosh Wadia, noted homeopath, associate of Bharucha, and the chief convener and organizer of the function, declared that Bharucha was not only a "com-sevak" but a *desh-sevak*. "A man who though born with a golden spoon in his mouth, was always simply dressed in khadi."

Former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, S. K. Patil, sent a letter on the occasion, which was read out by Jehangir Shroff, president of the Bombay Parsi Association. Patil encouraged the starting of a Bharucha Centenary Trust Fund, or a Centenary Foundation, and recalled Bharucha's maxim of 'do your own work with your own hands.'

A man of simple habits, Bharucha was nevertheless a man of action. "Few people can be called institutions; Burjorji Bharucha was one such. He translated the word service into action," said Jal Heerjibehedin Editor of *The Kaiser-E-Hind*. "Bharucha was a one-man Panchayat," declared Heerjibehedin, and more worthy of praise than the present trustees of the Bombay Panchayat.

The president of the Youths' Own Union, Homi Tavadia, called Bharucha, "a man who lived like a fakir and gave like a millionaire." He was also an inspirer and encourager, of the YOU, said Tavadia. Well-known *kirtankar*, Parvez Katrak, talked of the goodness of the man, who would rather walk than take a tram, to save



Palkhivala : "A matter of deep distress"



**The Jalejar Shapoorjee Gandhi Dar-E-Meher**

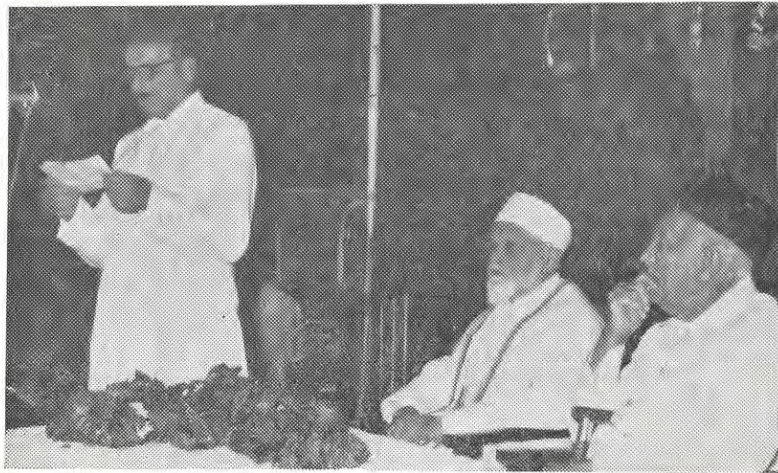
even one paise, so that the money saved could be given to the poor. Bejon Desai, Principal of Boy's Town School, Nasik, proclaimed that Bharucha was "righteous for the sake of further righteousness." Social worker Shera Vazifdar, also spoke of her association with Bharucha, while Burjor Paymaster of the YOU proposed the vote of thanks.

#### **Celebrating Gold**

50 years ago the Jalejar Shapoorjee Gandhi Dar-E-Meher was consecrated in Allahabad.

On 29 March this year the members of the Gandhi family whose forefathers were responsible for the building of the fire temple celebrated the Dar-E-Meher's golden jubilee at a function attended by the local Zoroastrian community as well as non-Parsis and presided over by Dastur Hormazdyar K. Mirza, the Udvada high priest.

Dossu Framroze Gandhi, grandson of the founder, Shapoorjee, narrated in his welcome speech the history of the Dar-E-Meher: "The temple was built in the year 1930 by my grandfather, the late Sri Shapoorjee Rustamjee Gandhi who had come to Allahabad in the closing years of the last century from a place in Rajasthan known as Bandikui. My grandfather was a deeply religious man and of austere habits. When he came to Allahabad from Bandikui, he had a bare Rs 18 in his pocket; slowly my grandfather, by hard work, integrity and honesty, became the owner of properties. .he lost one of his sons, Jalejar, at a tender age in the year 1921...he felt that the most appro-



**Gandhi, Mirza & Gandhi: "A bare Rs. 18 in his pocket"**

priate manner in which he could perpetuate the memory of his beloved son would be to build a fire temple after his name. With the guidance and counsel of devoted friends like the Hon'ble Sir Burjorji Dalal, a judge of Allahabad High Court, and Sri Ardeshir Guzder, a noted citizen and businessman of Allahabad, the construction work of the temple began in the year 1928 after its foundation stone was laid by Sir Burjorji Dalal on 25 March 1928. The temple was completed and consecrated on Sunday, 23 March 1930...The ceremony was performed by Sardar Dastur Noshervan Dastur Kaikobad, high priest of Deccan Malwa, United Provinces etc."

Gandhi went on to note that the

temple is owned and maintained by his family and, "we consider ourselves fortunate to have the services of our priest Sri Bamonsha B. Surti who has been looking after his duties towards the fire temple for the last 19 years with singular sincerity and devotion."

Dossu Gandhi's father, Framroze, placed the shawl on Mirza, while Dossu's daughter, Gulzarina, garlanded the chief guest.

#### **Tata Scholars**

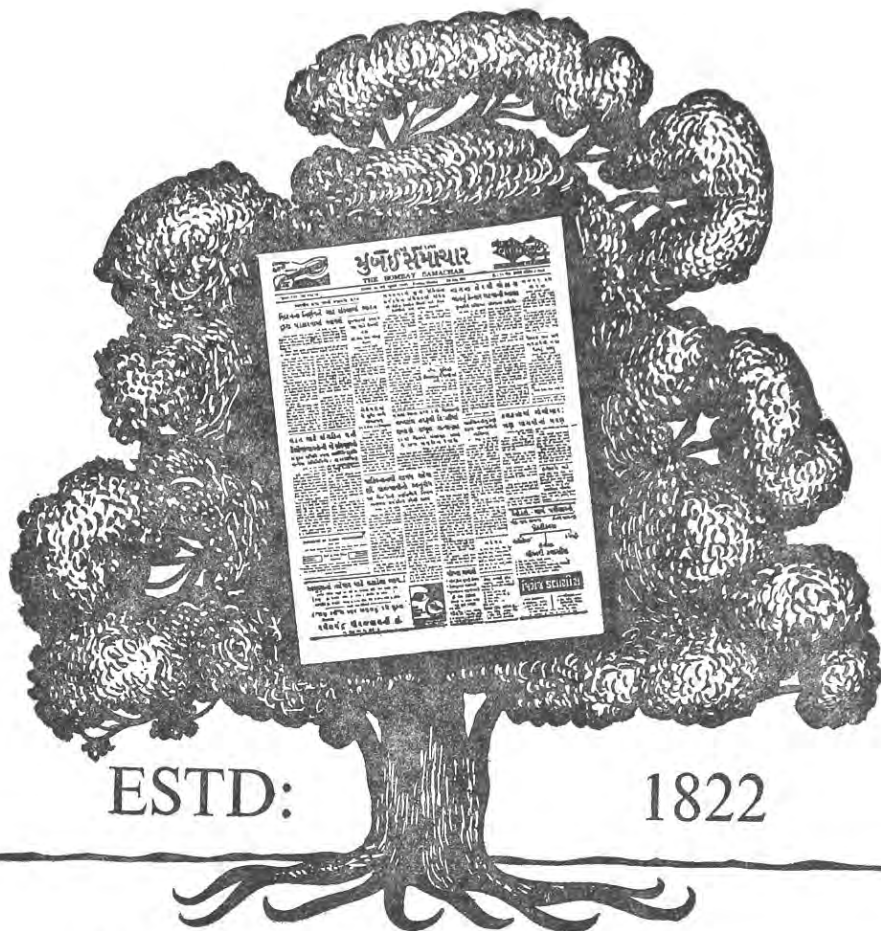
Among the 87 J. N. Tata scholars selected for the academic year 80-81 are 16 Zoroastrians, notes a press release issued by Dinshah K. Malegamvala, a director of the J. N. Tata Endowment.

"The U. S. A. has monopolised most of the admissions," notes the release, with almost 12 of the 16

Zoroastrian scholars opting for North America.

The selected 16 students, their subjects and the colleges they will attend are: Kersasp R. Anjirbag, M. S. industrial engineering, Cornell University; Dr. Kamal K. Burjorjee, postdoctoral work in psychotherapy, The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, London; Dinyar R. Contractor, M. S. in electronics, University of Michigan; Khushroo P. Daruwala, Doctorate in organic chemistry, Oregon State University; Hosang J. Engineer, M. S. in civil engineering, University of Texas, Austin; Mahiyar R. Irani, M. S. in operations research, Stanford University; Boman J. Irani, M. S. in architecture, McGill Univer-

*Please turn to page 32 G*



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## 'TIME' Bomb

"It was the most destructive and audacious act of sabotage in South Africa's history," stated the *Time* magazine of June 16 this year. Eight fuel storage tanks were destroyed in a series of "co-ordinated night time raids" in which several limpet mines were planted with "expert precision."

Among the two key people behind the raid, according to *Time* was **Frene Ginwala**, who the newsmagazine described as "a radical woman lawyer believed to be living underground within Southern Africa."

## 'The Odd Couple'

"How a little old lady from India plugged into our diplomatic circuit." That's how *The Toronto Sunday Star* of 20 April subtitled a disparaging article by writer Stephanie Cameron on the **Marchioness of Winchester Bapsybanoo** and her brother **Dr. Jal Pavry**.

The article started, "with neither youth nor beauty to recommend them, a pair of elderly Indians came to Ottawa a few weeks ago and successfully plugged into the diplomatic social circuit of free champagne, smoked salmon and hot canapes."

"You've got to have a gimmick to get in and theirs is one of the tried and true winners—a title."

Cameron then went on to write of how the Marchioness and her brother would get themselves invited to diplomatic teas and parties: "Within hours of their arrival, the Marchioness had not only informed several staff members in the hotel (the Chateau Laurier) of her high rank and interesting history, but she had contacted an officer in the department of External Affairs for a list of all the ambassadors in town as well as the dates of their national day celebrations. She wrote each ambassador—on Chateau letterhead—announcing their arrival in Ottawa and her availability for social engagements."

The Marchioness took great exception to Cameron's piece and in the paper's 15 June edition, they carried her rejoinder.

"I deny that I have 'plugged' myself to 'diplomatic social circuit.' I deny that I have written to a single ambassador or high commissioner to invite me, and the words that I announced to them my 'availability for social engagements' are not true."

"Social engagements are no novelty to me. They are part of my life side

by side with my honorary work for relief of human suffering for the past 52 years. I have been a guest of kings, queens, presidents, world leaders, men of great achievements, hundreds of ambassadors and others during the past over half a century."

Cameron had described the Marchioness as "a mysterious woman. She changes the subject if one tries to discuss her personal life or recent history... she married the 16th Marquess in 1952 when he was 90; he lived nearly another 10 years. The family lost their estates many years ago and one diplomat speculated that the late Marquess died bankrupt, leaving his spry young widow ennobled but poor. British press officer Adrian Hill scoffed at the idea that Bapsy Pavry was hard up."

"Why, she's a Parsi, you know, and I never met a Parsi who wasn't rich. All the Parsis I knew in Bombay were dripping with jewels and rupees."

Bapsybanoo on her part noted she had come to present some letters to the Canadian National Archives, but now your newspapers has changed it all," lamented the Marchioness.

"I shall not present the letters and how I regret not going to France, Italy, Austria or Switzerland where I had the happiest of holidays before. Instead I came here to suffer a thousand indignities showered upon me by Cameron and published by

you—the worst article ever published in the history of journalism of the whole world."

## S.R.V. Vs. B.P.P. 1980

One of the prerequisites of being a trustee of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat is the ability to withstand sustained criticism from all sections of society at all times.

Amongst the most recent broadsides against the beleaguered BPP Trustees came from a former trustee, **Shiavax R. Vakil**, legal advisor to the House of Tata.

In an interview with writer Delshad Karanjia for an article on the declining numbers of the community that appeared in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* (June 15, 1980) Vakil was quoted as saying: "Fanaticism of the worst sort is being perpetrated in the name of orthodoxy. It's not surprising that our numbers are dwindling. The Parsi Panchayat's properties are thoroughly mismanaged."

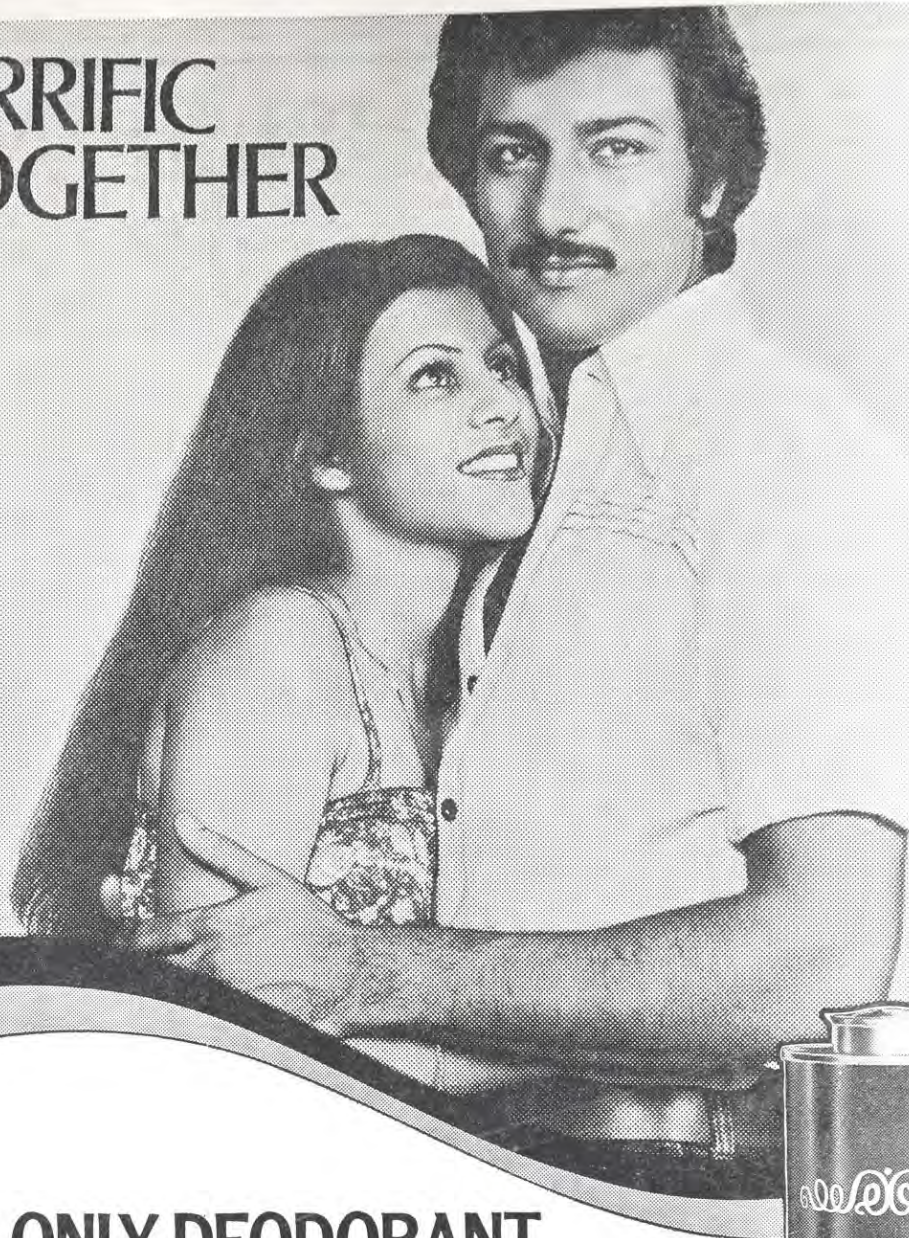
"I have Rs 50 lakhs under various trusts which I'm willing to spend on housing for the community. I do not have the land. Time and again the Panchayat has been approached, but they have done nothing. One can draw any of two conclusions from

(Please turn to page 32c)

**The Pavrys: "Social engagements are no novelty to me"**



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# The Navroz That Was

Bhicoo Manekshaw

The *toran* is hung on the front door. The *chok* are *poorod* on the steps.

It is breakfast time. We are at the table. My husband is having buttered toast, fruit and coffee. My younger daughter, who is staying with us for awhile, is hurriedly eating porridge, fried egg, toast and drinking Horlicks before rushing off to work.

It is Navroz!

There is no *sev*, no *dahi*, no *ravo*, no *bafeka eeda*, no *elchi kera*!

I was told, "Come on Bhicoo, one day is as good as another, why all the fuss! By all means if you wish, do make or cook what you like, but don't insist that I should eat it too."

"Oh mummy, please don't make *dahi*, *sev* etc. I just will not have the time in the morning."

Frustration!

And it is Navroz!

There will be no one for lunch; this is Delhi. No holiday is declared for 'Navroz—it is only a sectional holiday—but which Parsi takes it? No one in my family will take a day off; they feel their respective organizations will collapse without them!

And it is Navroz.

There will be no *tareli machi* or *salti ma gosht*, *dhan dar ne patio*, or *ravo* for lunch—who wants to eat alone? To-night, we go to the Parsi Anjuman for dinner, we make it a point to go there and meet all our friends.

It is 9 a.m. Husband and daughter have gone to work, both looking very determined and perhaps a little guilty, or maybe its just my imagination.

The cook comes to me to ask what he should prepare for lunch. Nothing! is the curt answer. I snatch an apple from the table, go into my little potted garden with a guava tree, sit

under it, munch my apple and look at my beautiful plants. Slowly the plants start soothing me, I smile—and suddenly I am a little girl.

And it was Navroz!

I was woken up in my grandmother's home to the sound of a *nankhatai* band playing at the garden gate. Nantalin, my ayah wakes me saying: "*Baby oothija. Jo bandwala*

called and given new clothes and *bakshish*. Then comes the best moment of all—presents—all of us receive presents from everybody!

It is now time to go to the Atash Behram in our old Essex car. At the temple, every one from the poorest to the richest is dressed gaily. We meet friends and felicitate each other. My brothers and I are given a stick of sandalwood each by our mother. I bend down to pray; "Dear God—don't let the next Navroz be too long in coming! And thank you for the lovely presents."

Prayers offered, we go off to lunch at my paternal grand parents' home. More greetings, more presents, more joy. We sit down to the traditional lunch of *dahi*, *sev*, and the most magnificent *papeta ma marghee* ever prepared (my *Foois* were excellent cooks). There is of course *dhan dar ne patio* and *ravo* or some other sweet to finish the meal. But it is the *papeta ma marghee* that is the highlight of the meal and always has been.

The meal over, we return home to rest in the afternoon. But who rests? As soon as the elders are asleep my brothers and I quickly unwrap our presents. Every toy or book given was just what we wanted! We take all our new acquisitions on to our beds and drop off to sleep.

We are woken up to get dressed in our new dresses and get ready for tea and then to the cinema as a special treat. As children we were not allowed to see too many pictures.

All the cinema houses in Bombay on Navroz day showed comedies or musicals—no Parsi would see a *ravvatartarvanoo* picture on an auspicious day—no matter how good: "*Apré ava doovar nahee thaiye*."

In the days of the silent movies, Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin were the favourites. When the talkies came, the Marx brothers, Bob Hope, Bud Abbot and Lou Costello, Ginger Rogers and Fred Astair were among the favourites.

After the pictures, dinner at my *Masi's* place. There would be an *hors d'oeuvre*, soup, fish or chicken and the traditional Parsi *pulao* and *dar*. A

Please turn to page 53



*ayach*, *jaldithe* *doodh peeja*, *ne naile*, *pachee navo jabloo pahervano che*." I jump out of bed, go to the window to see the bandwalas, while I sip my milk.

My brothers and I get dressed for the Atash Behram, with our new clothes and Parsee *topees*: I in a gorgeous *kasbi bhareli* one, and a beautiful *jabhla*, and my two brothers in *duglees* and *tanchoi* skull caps.

After every one greets each other, three generations—grand mother, uncles, aunts, cousins, sit down to a traditional breakfast. By this time at least three more bands have played, been paid and gone. The servants are

Bhicoo Manekshaw (Cordon Bleu, London) is a dedicated cook and author of 'Traditional Recipes of India' (Nachiketa Publications Ltd.) She and her husband retired Air Vice Marshal J. H. F. Manekshaw reside in New Delhi. Parsiana publishes some of Bhicoo's tried and true recipes on the following pages.

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# Balsara: A Promise Fulfilled

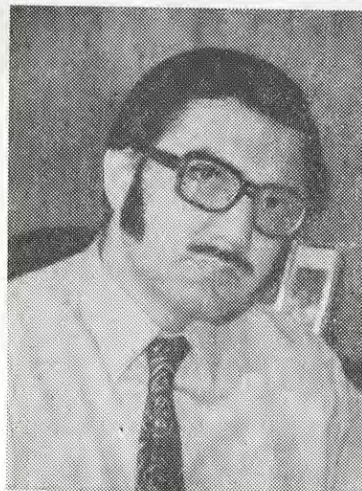
In the highly competitive market of household products, the name of Balsara has become a household word. *Business India*, a Bombay based fortnightly magazine focussing on the Indian corporate world carried a write-up entitled "Balsara: a promise fulfilled" (April 28 to May 11, 1980 issue) in the magazine's 'Enterprise' section. The article was written and researched by Dilip Thakore and Angelica Jacob. Published here is a slightly abridged form of the article.

A handful of small scale sector companies have made a dent in the multinational hold on the household products market, notwithstanding the formidable competition that they have to contend with.

One such small scale sector group is the Balsara group of five companies, which has not only entered the household products market with a range of six household products but even in the competitive market for tooth-pastes and kitchen scouring powders is standing up to transnationals such as Colgate and Hindustan Lever, while cutting into their market shares with conspicuous success.

Established in 1925 by the late R. N. Balsara in a "dilapidated one-room tenement" in Meadows Street now (given the proclivity of the city fathers to change the names of roads and streets at the drop of the proverbial hat) known as Nagindas Master Street, Balsaras today manufacture a range of six household products including air purifiers, cleaning powders, mosquito repellents, lavatory cleaners, drain cleansers, water filters and toothpaste, and is expected to record a turnover estimated at Rs. 6.5 crores in the year ending 30th June 1980.

The company commenced business in 1925 as an importer of and dealer in sanitary fittings from Shanks and Doulton, UK, companies which had achieved a reputation for sanitary ware. "We were the pioneers in this field and to this day most of the older



A. R. Balsara: 'Giving the consumer a price advantage'

buildings along Marine Drive and the Oval in Bombay have Shanks and Doulton sanitary fittings supplied by us," says A. R. Balsara (40), chairman and managing director of the group.

When sanitary fitting imports were

gradually phased out in the late fifties, Balsaras were compelled to search for a new line of business. "At first we entered into a distribution agreement with Hindustan Twyford, an Indian owned company which manufactured sanitary fittings. This distribution arrangement lasted for five years but we found that we had considerable difficulty in adjusting to conservative Indian styles and ideas," says Balsara, "and at this stage, we realised that we would have to enter the field of manufacture."

## Tentative Launch

Yet the group entered the field of manufacture not as one would have expected by setting up a high value sanitary fittings factory, but by establishing Balsara Hygiene Products, a partnership firm, which tentatively launched a low value (Rs. 1.25 per unit) bathroom air purifier under the brand name Odonil in 1962.

"Initially we had no production facilities and Odonil was manufactured by several small scale sector units as per our specifications, which were obtained by breaking down imported air purifiers," recalls Balsara. "But when the initial market response to

(Please turn to page 57)

## The Balsara range of products: 'Careful choice of a product line'



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## Reflections on the Zoroastrian religion: The philosophy of belief and practice

K. D. Irani

KAIKHASROY DINSHAW IRANI is a professor of philosophy and chairman of the department of philosophy at the City College of New York. He is vice-president of the Academy of Humanities and Sciences of the City University of New York and is a member of the Academy of Science. He is a director of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York and a privileged fellow of the Zoroastrian Foundation, Los Angeles.

These reflections are ideas and perspectives which emerged in an attempt to answer the question: What is the essence of the religion of Zarathushtra? First, it required an exploration of what it is we are seeking when we ask for the essence of a religion. The view here expounded is that it is found in the commitment to a religious vision which interprets the world and at the same time provides a way of life. This is a philosophic view; and such vision can be elicited from religions with a philosophic base, of which Zoroastrianism is one, but not from others, particularly archaic religions which essentially consist of cultic practices.

Recognizing this contrast is important for appreciating the message of Zarathushtra. We shall see that the presentation of these ideas calls for an examination of the peculiar relations between the view of the world

in Zoroastrian theology, the way of life in Zoroastrian ethics and the practices, ritualistic or otherwise, of the Zoroastrian tradition; issues which have claimed the attention of the community for almost a century.



### Types of Early Religions

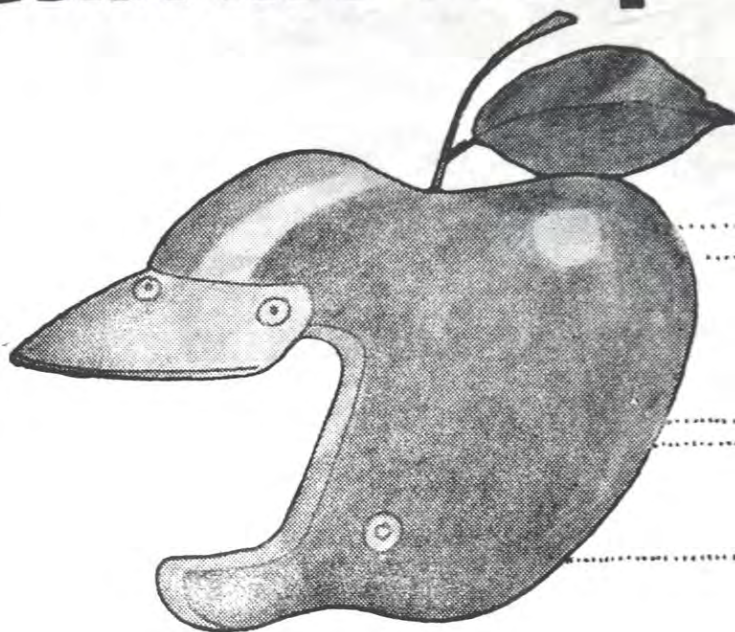
Religions even in the remote antiquity of the lives of tribal societies manifested an institutional structure. The science and technology of maintaining the world in its fruitful and productive state as well as the techniques of preserving the social order were all part of one established activity which was religion. Religious activities consisted of practices conducted by a

priestly class, but in which the entire community participated; the practices being related in some way to divine beings.

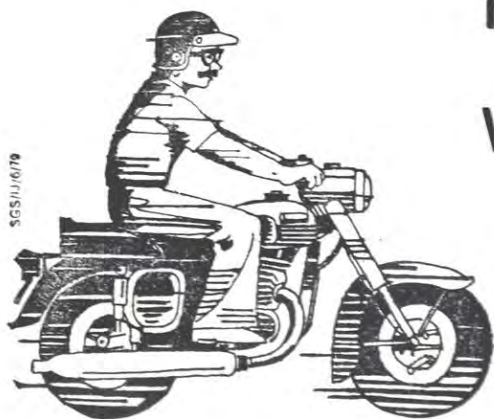
There were two types of early religions, each having an appropriate set of rituals and practices. The first type of religious tradition was centered on the fertility cycle in nature, the seasonal changes which affected the lives of people in an agricultural community. The second type, frequently associated with pastoral or nomadic cultures, was highly dependent on the vagaries rather than the regularities of the forces of nature. Let us consider them in order.

The first type, i. e., religions of the fertility cycle, existed widely in the ancient world, particularly in river valley civilizations of the Nile, of Mesopotamia and many locations in Southern Europe, the Middle East and Western Asia. In simplest terms the common aspect of their theology was the following. The god who was the representative of the community died at a specified time of the year, either by accident or by design. The members of the community believed they had visible evidence of the death of the god in the barrenness of nature, the desolation of the parched soil, the drying up of the waters, and above all in the absence of crops and food-stuff. The goddess who is the wife (or in some accounts the mother) of the dead god mourns the passing and prepares to perform the miracle of resurrecting the dead god.

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At a later crucial moment, for example, the rising of the waters in the rivers, following the right intimations, the god is reborn and reunited with his wife (or mother). Sometime later, in the period of the fullness of the harvest, he is installed on his altar or throne to engage in his divine reign until the accident overtakes him once more and he dies to be reborn over again in a repetition of the cycle. This cycle expressed the most vital hopes and fears of the population and the parallel rituals associated with the critical moments in the life cycle of the god constituted their religious practice. Thus there was mourning and the ritual for the dead, and the descent of the dead into the abode of the other world with appropriate sacrifices when the god died. The next ritual was concerned with prayers and offering for bringing him back which included, for instance, promises of good behaviour, liberal support of the temple, and sacrifices. Then came the celebration of birth with rituals of joy and dedication to work in the fields. And finally the festival of a successful year at the beginning of the harvest when the first fruits and crops were presented to the divine pair.

This most ancient and widespread religious theory and practice was extended by analogy to the problem of individual salvation. The god had through his death and resurrection achieved immortality. An individual believer, through appropriate ritual and an acceptable life, put his soul under the power and protection of

the god and became immortal, not to return here again but be reborn and have a life after death. A particularly prominent ritualistic practice of this belief was that the god in dying gave part of his substance and his essence to his devotees who by eating that substance and thus incorporating that essence achieved the salvation of immortal life.

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**"The god who was the representative of the community died at a specified time of the year, either by accident or by design."**

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In the second type of ancient religion, nature is viewed as functioning through the actions of deities, each with a special task. Such tasks, for example, include the daily motions of the sun and moon, the fructification of the earth, the flowing of the waters. Each of these deities had special characteristics articulated in mythology. They were remembered in the prayers addressed to them on the days of their festivals or occasions of veneration or propitiation. The rituals of such recitation frequently required the offering of sacrifices which were ceremonially shared by the divinity and the congregation. There were two theological reasons for such practices. One was the obvious reason of making a request, offering thanks or a simple veneration of the deity. The other was rooted in the idea that the ritual and sacrifice were acts by which

humanity cooperated with divinity in the performance of cosmic functions.

From these descriptions of religious activities and beliefs we can gather the essential character of the religious consciousness of ancient humanity. They believed that the workings of the universe and the functioning of human life depended upon many specific actions of supernatural entities. There were important human activities in which the priests, a group, or the entire community engaged to relate to these divine entities in a trans-natural communication i.e., a communication across the boundary between the natural and the supernatural. These were the rituals. They were of different kinds. Some were sacrificial banquets of veneration, jointly attended by gods and men. Others were operations of trans-natural cooperation needed by the divinities to perform their cosmic tasks. Still others were imitative or emotional responses to events in the lives of divinities with whom the community felt a trans-natural familial bond.

The religious life of the community consisted of these ritual acts based upon the mythological conceptions underlying them. It is appropriate to call these acts *Hieratical Acts*, meaning thereby, acts of sacred significance or import. The force and effect of hieratical acts lay in the consequences they generated; and also perhaps, in the graver consequences that might result if the acts failed to be performed or were faultily performed. Religion in such traditions was the art of

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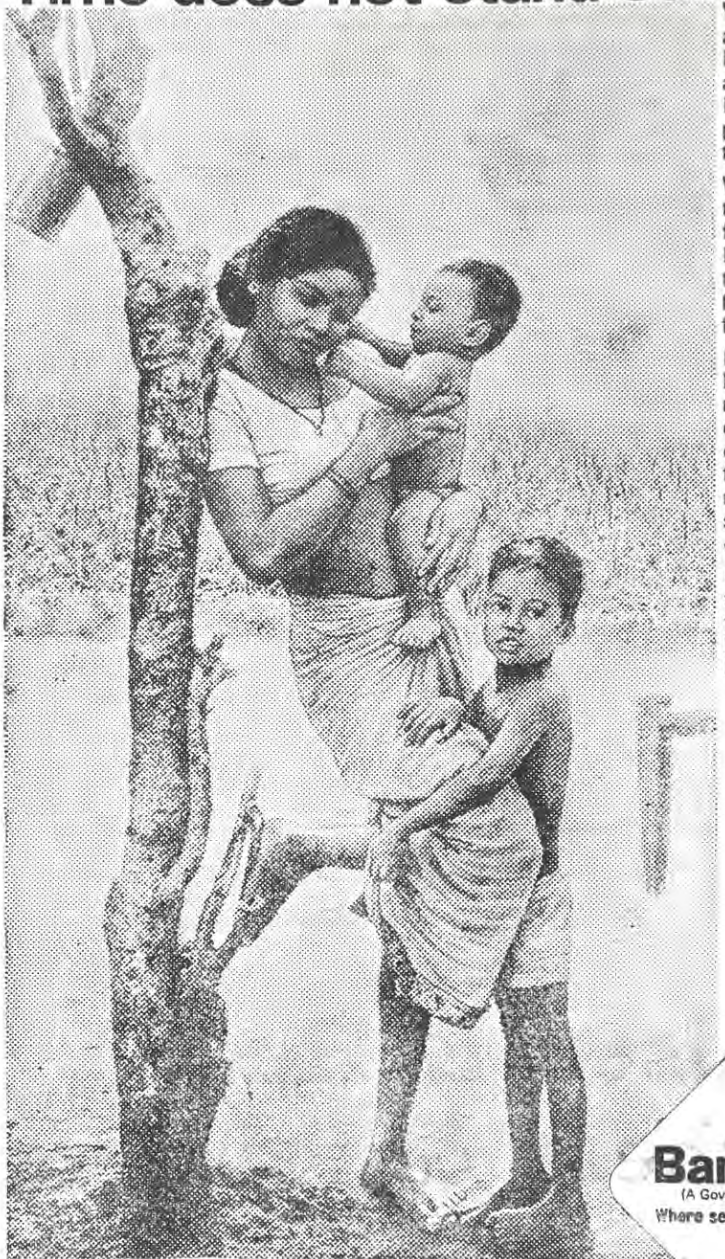
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performing hieratical acts. These acts either constituted the practice of a kind of trans-natural technology keeping the world safe for human civilisation generally and for the community specifically; or they constituted appropriate ways of dispatching requests to the divine world.

### **Change from Archaic to Prophetic and Philosophical Religions**

Throughout the ancient world, at different times in different places, a profound change took place in the nature and content of religion. The dominant theme in this change was the emergence of the moral dimension in religious thought and practice. It was accompanied, and not accidentally, by the idea that the religious life of the individual had its own significance over and above the preservation of the natural and social order. The conviction of the worth, or more properly, the spiritual dignity of each individual was intimately related to the notion of the life of each after death and of eternal salvation therein. And, most importantly, the life of moral worth became the basis of the religious justification for divine acceptance and eternal salvation. Not only did the *Ethical Act* become a religious requirement, add-

ed on to the *Hieratical Act* it began to be looked upon as the more significant one, perhaps even the more holy. We shall see this in the teachings of Zarathushtra. In varying forms this conception appeared in the message of Moses in the Ten Commandments, and also some of the prophetic declarations in the Hebraic tradition; in the teachings of Buddha, of Confucius, of Socrates, of the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagvad Gita*; in the sermons of Jesus, and elsewhere. Indeed, the emergence of the moral dimension as the ground for the justification of one's life marks a turning point of the highest significance in the history of human consciousness.

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**"Every religion offers a religious vision to which a believer is, or ought to be, committed."**

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The philosophically important point to notice here is that at this crucial time in the history of human thought the very concept of religion underwent a significant change. No longer was religion a set of ritual practices; it became a way of life in the form of moral behaviour, behaviour made

imperative because of certain beliefs about the world and its Creator.

The elements of belief and behaviour now become the focus of religious consciousness. How was this new form of religion grasped or comprehended by the human mind? We find that what a religion provided its believers was a fundamental religious vision from which all else followed. To be a member of a religious faith now meant being one who was committed to the religious vision of that tradition.

### **The Concept of a Religious Vision**

The *religious vision* in the theologies of all religious traditions presents the following characteristics. There is a view of the World (meaning here, the entire universe), not just as it appears to the senses but as it is conceived in terms of its origin, purpose and destiny, i.e., as it will unfold to the end of time. This, by itself, is not enough. Within this view is incorporated the role and function of human life. The goal of life must be seen to emerge from this conception. This is the content of the religious vision, and if it is effective it generates specific moral principles in accord with the idea of the goal of life and the view of the World. These princi-

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ples become the ethical component of the religion.

Looked at in its most essential form every religion offers a *religious vision* to which a believer is, or ought to be, committed. The vision is a fusion of two distinct notions: a view of the world and its destiny, on the one hand, and a morally directed way of life, on the other. It is the fusion of the two notions which makes the view distinctively religious. For if it was only one or the other, one would have a pure cosmology or a straight ethical system.

### **The Religious Vision in the Teachings of Zarathushtra**

It is instructive to approach the teachings of Zarathushtra from the point of eliciting their religious vision. From the Gathic poems and some commentaries upon them we can extract the following conceptions: The one supreme God, Ahura-Mazda conceived ideal creation in accordance with a principle identified with Asha. It is understood as Truth, for it represents the true order of the universe; but Asha is also the principle of righteousness, for righteousness is

**"The world prospers when we work for the well-being of humans, cattle, the earth and the waters."**

action according to Truth. In concert with the divine principles identified with the *Amesha-Spentas* the holy spirit, called *Spenta-mainyu* (*Spentisto*, in the Gathas) works to promote Ahura-Mazda's ideal design. The world we live in, however, is not the ideal world, it has been afflicted by opposition from another spirit which works to vitiate that design. This spirit is the unrighteous fount of all evil, later called *Angra-mainyu*.

The history of the world, as we humans know it, is the unfolding of this cosmic conflict. But there is an assurance given that the end of cosmic history will arrive when evil shall be utterly destroyed and the perfection of existence shall be manifest. However, in the period of conflict many aspects of creation receive protection and help from the holy immortals, i.e., the *Amesha-Spentas*, which are personified aspects of divine characteristics. Of great significance, as we shall see, is *Vahu-mano* (the good mind), who in one aspect is the rationality of creation, in another, the power of the mind to comprehend and reason; it is also protective of life, especially cattle.

So far we have the world-view of the religious vision of Zarathushtra; we must now turn to the way of life to be elicited from the role of humanity in this conception, which will constitute the ethical component. Human life is pictured thus. We come into this morally confused and pain-ridden world, we learn that though the constituents of the world are the good creations of Ahura-Mazda the world is flawed by the presence and action of Evil. The goal of life then clearly is to promote the Good, that is to strive to make the world and society evolve towards perfection in accordance with the principle of Asha, and to oppose Evil, making its operations as ineffective as possible.

The ethical component, integrated into the religious vision can be formulated in the following prescriptions. It is a person's religious duty to lead the good life, that is, the life of good thoughts, good words and good deeds. It is through the spiritual gift of the good mind (*Vahu-mano*), each one of us is endowed with, that we can comprehend the world in both states, that is recognise it for what it is and realize what it could be in its ideal state of perfection. Thus knowing the good, we can, and must, with righteous resolve act to promote the good and dispel evil. The way of life is one of action in bringing the world towards perfection.

This is the essence, in summary form, of the religious vision preached by Zarathushtra. So that one for whom the teachings of Zarathushtra constitute his religious beliefs, this religious vision is the way he sees the world and finds the framework for a way of life.

A particularly significant aspect of this religious vision is the notion that the life of moral striving itself constitutes religious justification. To put it in the more concrete terms of salvation, the departing soul faces judgement at "the bridge of the separator" solely on the issue of whether its stock of good thoughts, good words and good deeds outweigh the stock of bad thoughts, bad words and bad deeds. Thus in each of the two loftiest goals of human striving, namely, the betterment of the world and the salvation of the soul, it is the ethically good life that is the sole principle of achievement and realization.

The world prospers when we work for the well-being of humans, cattle, the earth and the waters. It is not ritual but good works that brings this about; and good work itself constitutes religious justification. One's

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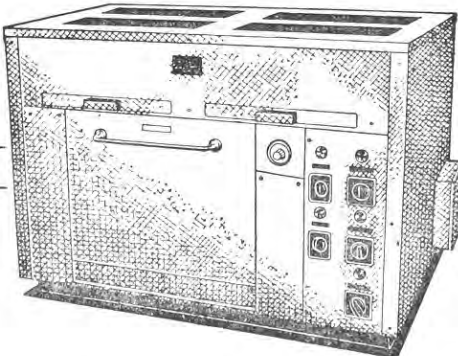
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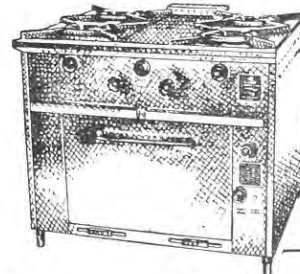
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soul receives heavenly vindication through good thoughts, good words and good deeds as conceived in the religious vision. It is thus one receives the salvation of bliss hereafter, not through ritualistic operations. Imagine the contrast of these teachings from the archaic sacrificial fertility and venerative cultic religions which Zarathushtra's audience must have experienced in full measure and which we must attempt to comprehend with historical imagination. Perhaps we can understand the opposition and rejection he encountered, so poignantly expressed in some of the verses of the Gathas. Indeed there is no mention of any sacrificial act in the Gathas, save one, in which Zarathushtra offers his thoughts of love, his best words and deeds to Asha, dedicating his life to Ahura-Mazda. As a poet-priest he preached in the language, the idiom, even the poetic form of the poet-priests of his, and more ancient, times; but the message of Zarathushtra, the prophet, must be recognised as a religious transformation of major magnitude.

This religious vision did become an established religion. It had an official church and clergy. It was the national or state religion of three Persian empires. The Zoroastrian

church, or churches, certainly had practices; and the question naturally arises: How is the prophetic religion of the good life (as Zoroastrianism came to be called) related to the practices, that is, the hieratic strand, which in course of time became a dominant aspect of the Zoroastrian tradition? In order to explore this historically hazy, and conceptually obscure subject, it is wise to start with a few conceptual distinctions regarding religious acts.

#### **Religious Acts: Ethical and Hieratical**

We shall describe an act as a *Religious Act* if it is prescribed in the scriptural literature of a religion, or by religious tradition, and which is believed to have sacred significance. There are two kinds of religious acts: *Hieratical Religious Acts* and *Ethical Religious Acts*.

In a *Hieratical Religious Act* some sacred operation is performed, either by a priest or oneself, which has no specific terrestrial function but is believed to have supernatural purpose which is achieved through what is believed to be a trans-natural interaction. An *Ethical Religious Act* is an ethical act which is prescribed or recommended in a religious tradition.

And an *Ethical Act* is one which is directed to promote, in this world, some ethical value such as well-being, happiness, justice, freedom and harmony. With this distinction in mind we can ask two questions which have been raised from time to time. What is the justification for hieratical acts in the Zoroastrian tradition? and how do we resolve the incompatibility between hieratical and ethical acts, which may arise either through intrinsic disparity, or through limitations of time and effort which a choice between one or the other may impose.

#### **Hieratical Acts in the Zoroastrian Tradition**

The existence of the two kinds of religious acts creates problems of some complexity in the philosophy of religion. In the context of the Zoroastrian religion many varying opinions have been expressed between the extremes of making Zoroastrianism a purely ethical religion, on the one side, and making it an essentially hieratical series of ritualistic religious practices where significance may or may not be comprehended on the other.

As we have seen Zarathushtra inaugurated in the history of ancient



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**"Zarathushtra inaugurated in the history of ancient religions a movement toward making the ethical component central to religion."**

religions a movement toward making the ethical component central to religion. We know too from some verses of the Gathas that he repudiated the magical, cultic practices of some priests and their princely patrons, particularly the bloody sacrifices. But it must be remembered that Zarathushtra was himself a priest (probably a poet-priest and not a sacrificial-priest) and there is one clearly hieratical act approvingly referred to by him in the Gathas. It appears in a request that Zarathushtra makes to Ahura-Mazda to learn from Him a powerful mantra, i.e. words whose utterance have causative rather than communicative effect on the environment. For the use of mantras is preeminently a hieratical act. It may be that Zarathushtra viewed the recitation of mantras as instances of good words and/or good deeds. Thus these hieratical acts could also be construed as ethical acts.

The problem of the ritual ceremonies still remains to be considered. The earliest to appear in the history of Zoroastrian ceremonials is un-

doubtedly the Haoma ceremony which is called the *Yazashne*. Though its structure took form over some period, its language (i.e. of the *yasnas*) and style, the fact that it incorporates the recitation of the entire body of the Gathas (the hymns of Zarathushtra) makes it likely that it emerged very early in the history of the religion. Perhaps it first crystallised in the worship of those to whom Zarathushtra was a living memory, and who thus enshrined the songs of their prophetic teacher in their liturgy. Though the concept of the ceremony, as we shall see, lies in an antiquity beyond the time of Zarathushtra.

What makes this ceremony noteworthy in the history of ritual, and incidentally in harmony with the Zoroastrian respect for life, is that it completely avoids the shedding of blood (only some twigs of the plant are cut). Haoma is the plant of life, "it drives death away." The essence, taken to be in the sap, is extracted in a highly precise ritualistic operation, it is mixed with milk and water, some

of it is drunk by the priest, some by the community, and some returned to the flowing waters (or a well) and the earth. The essence of the divinity, Haoma, is provided for the worshipping congregation, and it is also Haoma who is venerated in the ceremony.

There are indeed identifiable echos here of the rituals of both types of early religious practices. It may be that the Haoma ceremony is one of the most ancient, if not the most ancient of ceremonies still performed in a more or less unchanged form, as part of a living religion. In it one finds a dramatic preservation of the ritual insights of the fertility and salvation cults and also the venerative and sacrificial cults transformed into a bloodless, partly moralizing, partly devotional ritual; but it is a hieratical act of trans-natural interaction. One cannot fail to see the analogy to the ancient fertility myth of a tree of life in the Babylonian *Gilgamesh* epic; also the tree of life which appears as an object of veneration in innumerable Assyrian religious sculptures. The ritual of incorporation of the essence of the divinity, common to all salvation cults, is captured in the drinking of the Haoma juice. The venerative,

*Please turn to pg 43*

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# LAW AND LIGHT

## Social and Cultural Survey

Continuing the series on the papers read at the Third World Zoroastrian Congress, in this issue appear two of the six papers on the 'Social and Cultural Survey of Zoroastrians in the Recent Past and Suggestions for the Future.'

These papers were prepared and read by Rustom S. Gae, a senior advocate, Supreme Court of India and a former Law Secretary to the Government of India and Manoochehr Mobarak, a member of Garooh Zartoshtian Taft va Tavabe-Tehran, Iran. The situation in Iran having altered since the Congress was held in 1978, Mobarak's paper may appear slightly dated. Both papers have been subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity.

### REFORM IN PARSİ LAW

Rustom S. Gae

Winds of change are blowing across the community; change however must not become a threat to our survival and ultimately affect the existence of the Parsis as a separate community. Different communities in India have different personal laws. Some aspects of the laws relating to marriage, divorce, succession and adoption applicable to Parsis are dealt with below.

Inter-communal marriages among Parsis are said to be high. Parsi girls continue to marry outside the community and the community has not been able to arrest or prevent the increasing number of such marriages. This has prevented the influx of fresh blood into the community, leading to a continuous decline in population.

### Need to Redefine 'Parsi'

Once public opinion is properly mobilised, the government of India

may be moved for an amendment of the definition of 'Parsi', so as to include therein children—of a consenting non-Parsi father and a practising Zoroastrian Parsi mother—who have been initiated into the Zoroastrian religion by the navjote cere-



Gae : Advocating amendments

mony. Nowise should this be equated with outright conversion or proselytization in the sense in which it is understood and recognised among other communities.

### Divorce by Mutual Consent

The Parsi Marriage Act contains no provision regarding divorce by mutual consent. The Special Marriage Act, however, enables parties married under forms of marriage other than that prescribed by the said Act to get their marriage registered under that

**"The system of delegates prevailing only under the Parsi Marriage Act should be dispensed with."**

Act on complying with the procedure laid down therein. Thus two Parsis who are already married under the Parsi Marriage Act may at any time register their marriage under the Special Marriage Act and after this their matrimonial rights and obligations (including the right to obtain

divorce by mutual consent) would be governed by the provisions of the latter Act and not by the Parsi Marriage Act.

The time has come to include the provision of divorce by mutual consent in the Parsi Marriage Act, so that two adults may have their marriage dissolved honourably while remaining within the provisions of law applicable to them.

### Delegates for Parsi Matrimonial Courts

Under the Parsi Marriage Act the judge constituting the Parsi Chief Matrimonial Court or the Parsi District Matrimonial Court is assisted by seven Parsi delegates, selected from a panel appointed by the State Government, for a period of ten years. The jury system on which the delegate system is based has been abolished throughout the country. Besides, since the Constitution contemplates uniformity in personal laws of all communities, the system of delegates prevailing only under the Parsi Marriage Act should be dispensed with.

### Other Amendments to the Parsi Marriage Act

On the other hand religious conversion being a ground for divorce in the Parsi Marriage Act militates against the freedom of religion guaranteed by the Constitution as a fundamental right.

The Act also recognises the right of the wife to maintenance, both alimony *pendente lite* (during the pendency of the suit) as well as permanent alimony, but does not recognize the corresponding right of the husband to claim maintenance from his divorcing wife in matrimonial suits.

In the context of the changed social status of Parsis, coupled with the avowed declaration of equality of man and woman as envisaged by the Constitution, the Parsi Marriage Act

And so, at L&T, tomorrow is past history. All our yesterdays that were once our tomorrows were thought of years ahead. To take one example, we did not wake up to nuclear technology the night before the nation planned a major shift towards nuclear power. We spent a whole decade developing nuclear technology. Finally the great moment came. L&T was able to manufacture critical equipment for India's nuclear power projects.

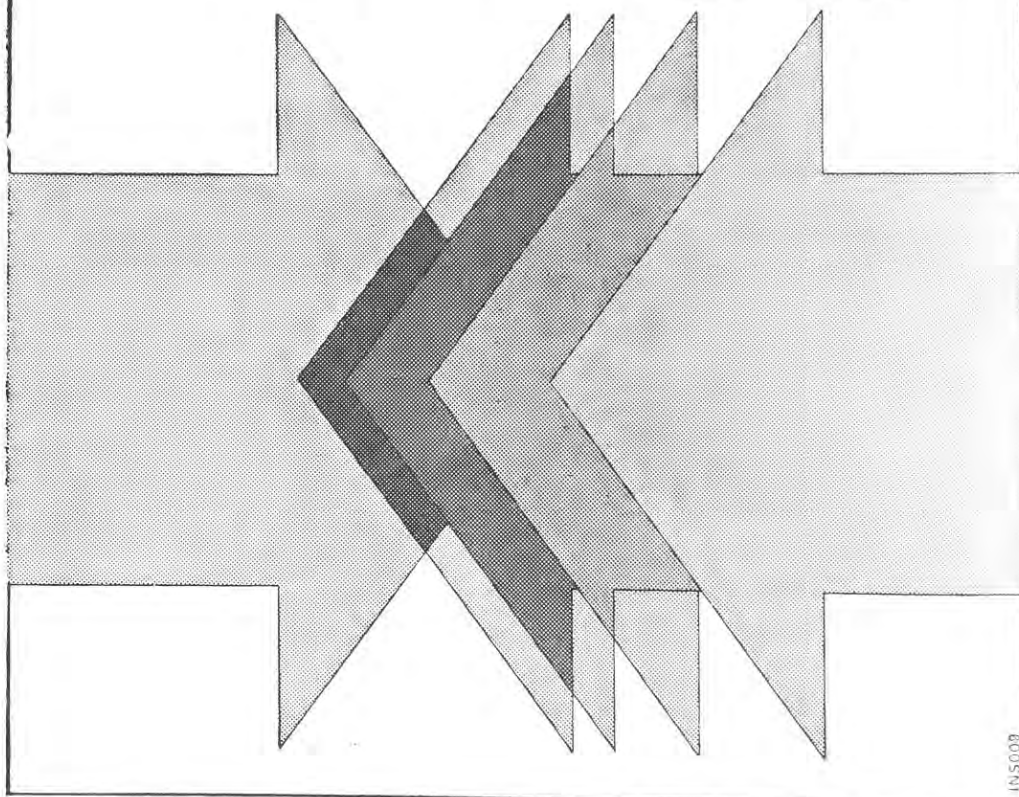
This kind of activity results in a chain reaction releasing the energy for greater development. From the nuclear technological base we launched into space technology. And long before that, in 1938, we developed Indian manufacturing capability. Then it was restricted to dairy equipment. Today, we have the know-how and can do in every field of engineering — food, chemicals, petrochemicals, fertiliser, cement, steel, paper and pulp, power...



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## **"Religious conversion being a ground for divorce in the Parsi Marriage Act militates against the freedom of religion."**

should be amended to impose such an obligation on economically independent women.

Amendments are further needed regarding divorce on grounds of cruelty, desertion, leprosy and mental disorder (including psychopathic disorder), expeditious disposal of matrimonial cases, holding of proceedings in camera, provisions regarding reconciliation, and other such factors.

### **Intestate Succession**

The Indian Succession Act, 1925 contains a separate chapter dealing with special rules for Parsi intestates, i.e., Parsis dying without leaving a will. This Act was amended in 1939 making several fundamental changes.

There are separate rules for division of property of male and female intestates. It is significant to note that while a son is entitled to an equal share alongwith the daughter, in the property of the mother, the daughter is not entitled to the same right along with the son when she inherits the property of the father.

With the passage of time these rules are now out of tune with progressive trends in society. Further, our Constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex envisaging equality of man and woman. It is therefore necessary that the Indian Succession Act is so amended that all children, whether sons or daughters, get equal shares and each parent, whether father or mother, gets half the share of each child.

## **"The time has come to include the provision of divorce by mutual consent in the Parsi Marriage Act."**

Another glaring discrepancy appears in the devolution of agricultural land of a Parsi intestate which is governed by the Indian Succession Act, 1925 before its amendment in 1939, which continues as the existing law on the subject. Here the son's share is four times that of the daughter, the widow's share twice that of the daughter and the father and the mother do not get any share.

The anomalous position emerging

as above requires to be remedied by duly amending the Indian Succession Act on the lines referred to above.

### **Adoption among Parsis**

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

The Adoption of Children Bill, 1972, pending before the Rajya Sabha, applies to all communities in India including Parsis. Clause 13 of the Bill regarding the effect of an adoption order needs careful consideration in respect of the adoption of a non-Parsi child by a Parsi.

From the date on which the adoption order takes effect, an adopted child shall be taken to be the child of the adopter, and the adopter shall be taken to be the parent of the child as if the child had been born to that adopter in lawful wedlock, for all purposes including intestacy. The adoption order virtually equates the

an *athornan* would not automatically become an *athornan*.

It is understood that the representation made to the Government of India by the Federation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans in the matter is under the consideration of the Government.

## **"The urge and the demand for the reform must come from the community itself."**

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

### **Conclusion**

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

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

## **"Would a non-Parsi child adopted by a Parsi automatically become a Parsi?"**

position of an adopted child with that of a natural born, legitimate child.

### **Adoption of non-Parsi child**

Does it mean then, that a non-Parsi child adopted by a Parsi would automatically become a Parsi or that a child of a *behdin* adopted by an *athornan* would automatically become an *athornan*?

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

*Parsiana carried a larger piece by Rustom S. Gae on the above subject in the June-July 1977 issue.*

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## "TOWARDS THAT LIGHT"

### Manouchehr Mobarake

Zoroastrians in Iran had faced centuries of difficulty. It was only with the advent of the Pahlavi Dynasty that the Zoroastrian community in Iran regained freedom of religion and a revival of its culture.

The mode of living, society, culture and customs in Iran have undergone many changes in the past decade because of Iran's dynamic progress. The Zoroastrian community too has accepted the need for change.

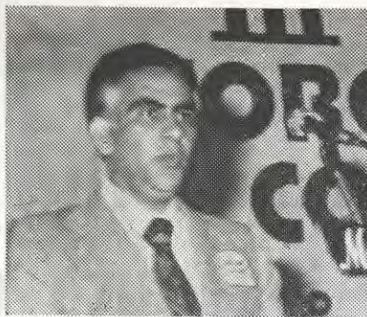
The number of Zoroastrians who refrain from wearing sudra and kusti is increasing. The wearing of the sudra and kusti is not only to distinguish a Zoroastrian from others, but is necessary for the true method of offering prayers and will be a constant reminder to Zoroastrians of their religion and faith. Every religion is

### "The wearing of the sudra and kusti is necessary for the true method of offering prayers."

prescribed with certain rituals and symbols. In order to preserve the true religion, it is necessary that the rituals prescribed should be observed implicitly.

The tradition of consigning the dead body to the Tower of Silence has become impractical: overflight by planes and expansion of cities and towns have led to the extinction of scavenging birds. The Towers of Silence in Iran have been closed and the dead are buried. Some wrongly contend that burying the dead is in violation of our customs and religion. In Iran preparations are underway to cremate dead bodies. To my knowledge Zoroastrians in India and Pakistan also face such difficulties in using Towers of Silence. The system of disposing the dead bodies varies among Zoroastrians from one country to another.

Dastoor and Mobed hunting is a new game for the Zoroastrian community in Iran. Many of our religious ceremonies in Iran are not properly performed due to shortage of Mobeds. No religious ceremony is complete if the prayer is not recited by a Mobed or a Dastoor. Mobeds and Dastoors play a leading role in keeping alive the resplendent fire of our religion and culture. By the end of this century the shortage of priests will cripple the community everywhere. In order to



Mobarake: 'preserving the true religion'

encourage the younger generations to choose this holy profession steps must be taken to improve the condition and status of Mobeds and Dastoors.

Unity between Zoroastrians is very essential. Use of different calendars by Zoroastrians is a threat to our unity. An authentic calendar must be adopted and recommended for use by the Zoroastrian communities throughout the world. A common script and language would bind the Zoroastrian communities more strongly together and remove the existing barriers and differences between them. For this purpose why not revive the Avesta script and adopt it as the official language of the Zoroastrians?

Interpolations from our religious ceremonies must be removed. Greater comprehension of Zoroastrianism and eradication of superstitious and non-Zoroastrian beliefs are important, particularly to the youth of our community. Religious ceremonies should be properly studied and explained, and steps taken to impart more of the teachings of Zarathushtra to the

### "Dastur and Mobed hunting is a new game for the Zoroastrian community in Iran."

younger generation. Equally the wrong interpretations of the Zoroastrian religion by non-Zoroastrian writers should be corrected by our scholars. We should accept into our fold non-Zoroastrians who are deeply interested in our religion and allow them to merge with our community.

Many Zoroastrians remain unmarried or marry very late. Divorce has also become common among Zoroastrian couples. Both these are severe blows to our small population.

### "Accept into our fold non-Zoroastrians who are deeply interested in our religion."

A proper track of the Zoroastrian population should be kept. Influx of Zoroastrian youths from India and Pakistan to Iran, U. S. A., Canada and other countries and their cosmopolitan marriages is another factor contributing to the downward trend in our population.

The need for change if accepted in the right spirit could mean rejuvenation rather than extinction. May Ahura Mazda guide us "Towards That Light."

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# J. N. TATA and the Story of The Indian Institute of Science

Dr Ratan R. Marshall

**The establishment of the first post graduate institute of scientific research in India, the Indian Institute of Science at Bangalore, was the brain child of Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata. In this article Dr Ratan R. Marshall recaptures the spirit of the Indian nation that rallied around Tata's vision to make it a reality.**

In the biography of Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata by Frank Harris there appears a footnote as under:

"Sir Dorabji Tata is of the opinion that his father had at that time little hope of getting the Government of India interested in his (educational) scheme. In November 1898, Mr. Tata wrote a letter to Swami Vivekanand, adjuring him to rouse the country by a pamphlet relating to educational reform on ascetic lines, and offering to defray the expenses of publication."

The scheme referred to was in connection with starting an Indian Institute of Scientific Research. Tata had high ambitions of seeing India march forward in various directions, but scarcity of qualified people hampered the country's progress. He did not like the idea of inviting people from abroad at every stage. During his constant travels abroad he saw the great progress made by other countries. Why could India not do the same? Japan's scholars were teaching in American universities. Would India have to depend on foreign scholars and experts for all times to come? Then how could the country progress? How could his dream of a progressive India be fulfilled?



**Tata: 'Spirit of Research'**

While Tata was thinking along these lines he came into contact with Swami Vivekanand, who has gone down in history as the man who did much to rehabilitate Hinduism in the eyes of both, the Indians and the world. They first met on the steamer "Empress of India" on their way to America from Yokohama. Vivekanand was proceeding to Chicago to participate in the World Conference of Religions. His speech at that gathering at once made him a world figure. At the time of their first meeting however, Vivekanand was an unknown monk; but his thinking, his views and his love for the country and humankind impressed Tata. Both

of them were of the view that there should be facilities for scientific research in India, if the country was to progress.

In 1898, Tata made a sensational announcement which appeared in *The Times of India* of 28th September 1898:

"Tata, the well-known millionaire and merchant of Bombay has, we hear, offered under certain conditions to put at the disposal of a properly constituted body, landed property

**Tata is known to value higher education even as a preparation for industrial and commercial vocations.**

which is calculated to bring an annual income of about Rs. 1,25,000, for the purpose of maintaining an institution for post-graduate studies. Tata is known to value higher education even as a preparation for industrial and commercial vocations, and he frequently selects a number of graduates to undergo training for about three years at his mills, the graduates, contrary to the prevailing custom, being paid during the period of their apprenticeship...Tata, however, has felt for some time the need of making an advance in our university education...

"He felt that it was no small disappointment that while Japan could produce men whose researches brought them world-wide renown, that the Indian Universities should have no such record to show. The development of the resources of the country, too, Tata is persuaded, in a large measure, must depend on a number of talented youths working at the scientific problems which arise in industrial pursuits...It was suggested to Tata that either a new university or a development of one of our existing

## Would India have to depend on foreign scholars and experts for all times to come?

universities on the model of the post-graduate universities of the United States, would be the first step towards the creation of the spirit of research in India; and after preliminary investigations made in Europe, and advice sought and obtained from the highest educational authorities of England and the Continent, he has decided to make the offer..."

Tata's offer created a flutter amongst the enlightened. A donation worth 30 lakhs of rupees. And that too for education purposes.

Sankri Prasad Basu in his article "Vivekanand, Nivedita & Tata's Research Scheme," in *Prabuddha Bharat*—or 'Awakened India'—October 1978 writes:

"The timing of the announcement lent special significance to it, for it came at a time when the stage was being set by the British rulers for launching a policy calculated to restrict higher education in India. It was an act of great courage and generosity on the part of Tata; for through this seemingly innocuous and noble offer, he threw a challenge to the Government...It was a big challenge for the foreign rulers. And they took it just in the manner that was most natural to them..."

"Lord Curzon, the Viceroy, came out in open criticism of the scheme, though not forgetting to maintain the stipulated air of sympathy, so usual with this class."

The Viceroy and his advisors while sympathizing with Tata's scheme, expressed opinions that it was doubtful whether a sufficient number of students would come forward, whether the services of highly paid educationists would be available to lecture before empty benches, whether the successful students would get ready employment. In their opinion all that was needed was a humble beginning, which may be extended gradually as funds came in and after considering the result of the start.

If Tata was dejected by the official attitude, it was quite natural. Rumours spread that he was thinking of withdrawing his princely proposal. There was great disappointment amongst the educated and the enlightened. *The Bengalee*, on April 6, 1901 wrote: "Tata's Institute is destined, in the



**The Institute of Science : a dream fulfilled**

times to come, to be the centre of high intellectual culture—the area where the best and the noblest of our young men, smitten with the divine frenzy of original investigation, will vie with each other in extending the bounds of knowledge and establishing the empire of mind over matter. All these great hopes centre round Tata's institution. He has been the inspirer of these hopes. He cannot withdraw now. His public spirit—his care for the welfare of his countrymen—will

### **Through this seemingly innocuous and noble offer, he threw a challenge to the Government.**

not permit him to withdraw. Let him begin with 30 lakhs; God willing his noble example will stimulate others when the scheme is in working order, (including) the people rearing up this noble temple of science which contains in it the promises of such unspeakable good."

During this period, Tata wrote a letter to Vivekanand, recalling their discussion on the "Empress of India."

His letter reads: "I trust you remember me as a fellow-traveller on your voyage from Japan to Chicago. I very much recall at this moment your views on the growth of the ascetic spirit in India, and the duty, not of destroying but of diverting it into useful channels.

"I recall these ideas in connection with my scheme of a Research Institute of Science for India, of

which you have doubtless heard or read. It seems to me that no better use can be made of the ascetic spirit than the establishment of monasteries or residential halls for men dominated by the spirit, where they should live with ordinary decency, and devote their lives to the cultivation of sciences—natural and humanistic. I am of the opinion that if such a crusade in favour of asceticism of this kind were undertaken by a competent leader, it would greatly help asceticism, science, and the good name of our common country; and I know not who would make a more fitting general of such a campaign than Vivekanand. Do you think you would care to apply yourself to this mission of galvanizing into life our ancient tradition in this respect? Perhaps, you had better begin with a fiery pamphlet rousing our people in this matter. I should cheerfully defray all the expenses of publication."

The journal *Prabuddh Bharat* started by Vivekanand, in 1896 in its issue of April 1899 said:

"No idea more potent for the good of the whole nation has seen the light of day in modern India. Let the whole nation, therefore, forgetful of class or sect interests, join in making it a success."

The journal continued to agitate public opinion in this direction. When Queen Victoria died and plans regarding her memorial were considered, the journal in its issue of March 1901, said:

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**Rumours spread that he was  
thinking of withdrawing  
his princely proposal.**

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"In her gracious proclamation of 1858, her Majesty expressed an 'earnest desire to stimulate the peaceful industry of India.' Could there be a better time than the present to do this? ... It would be an exceedingly happy arrangement if the Tata Research University Scheme could be combined with this, for the princely gift of the Parsi patriot is fully deserving of the honour of being associated with her Majesty's memorial. Thus the path of a new era of prosperity, a new lease of life and happiness for India could be paved. Would not our farseeing and sympathetic Viceroy seize this supreme opportunity?"

It was in March 1902 that the Government of India approved the proposal to start an institution at Bangalore to be called the "Indian Institute of Science." The foundation stone was laid early in 1911 by the Maharaja of Mysore and on 24th July the first students were admitted to the Department of General & Applied Chemistry, and Electro-technology; and soon thereafter to the Department of Organic Chemistry.

Both Vivekanand and Tata had passed away before that. Tata's sons put into practice the ideas of their father. Tata's biographer writes: "Though his sons were not in any way bound by their father's will, they at once announced their intention of devoting the requisite share of their heritage to the Institute and of carrying out their father's wishes to the full"

Vivekanand's *Prabuddh Bharat* mourned Tata's death in the following words (June 1904):

"India has suffered an irreparable loss in the passing away of her truly good and patriotic son, the first great captain of Indian industry, Mr. J. N. Tata of Bombay. We all know of his magnificent gift for a post graduate Research Institute. The making of a prosperous Indian nation depends on the qualities of head and heart like those possessed by Mr. Tata. A few more Tatas would change the face of India. Let our wealthy countrymen imitate the Parsi patriot in the direction and munificence of his charity."

---

*Dr Ratan Marshall is Special Officer of the Surat Parsi Panchayat, and author of several publications and articles pertaining to the Zoroastrian community.*

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Continued from page 7

such behaviour; either they are thoroughly incompetent or they are intellectually dishonest".

"As a community, we have the ability, the intelligence and the funds—and yet we are unable to provide even a basic necessity like housing. Unfortunately, the leadership is more concerned with the disposal of the dead than the uplift of the living. Swami Vivekananda showed more foresight than any of our community's present day leaders when he said, nearly 100 years ago: "The only one ancient religion—namely Zoroastrianism—will be dead because of two reasons: forbidding conversion and cousin marriages".

### Winning Weekly Playwright

(Abridged from the Editor's page of *The Illustrated Weekly of India* (May 6, 1980) edited by M. V. Kamath.)

*The Illustrated Weekly of India's* Short story Editor **Dina Keki Mehta**, has won pride of place in the BBC's first ever world wide playwriting competition. A three-member panel of judges, including the internationally acclaimed playwright, Tom Stoppard, announced their choice after examining no fewer than 500 scripts submitted from dozens of countries. The winning play, submitted by Mehta deals with the suicide of a young Indian woman and the subsequent attempts of her brother and sister to ascertain whether or not her death had anything to do with dowry and her failure to produce a son. The play is entitled *Brides Are Not For Burning*.

According to a spokesman of the BBC, what marks the play out as something out of the ordinary is its depth of social comment and the portrayal of society ranging from political agitation to religious bigotry.

Dina has written recently a stage-play based on Bhagwan Gidwani's novel, *The Sword of Tipu Sultan*, called *Tiger, Tiger*. English theatre groups in Bombay seem content with producing vacuous frivolities from abroad which in no way relate to our audiences or our problems or the Indian ethos, for that matter. Surely there are enough plays written in English on Indian subjects that our theatre groups can produce? They have the talent and the money and, if they don't reach out for and encourage local talent, who else will? The BBC? At least it has done its bit.

### The Minerva Man

The powers-that-be, they say, are

obsessed with the present and give a damn for the past. But in the case of **Sohrab Meherwanji Modi**, the veteran film maker, the powers-that-be have become nostalgic and travelled down memory lane to honour him with the Dadasaheb Phalke award for his outstanding contribution to Indian cinema.

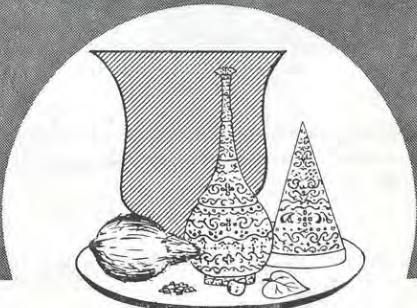
The producer, director, actor and studio owner has been part of film industry for over 60 years. He has had glorious success and suffered dismal failures.

Born on November 2, 1897 in Bombay, Modi joined the film world as an exhibitor in 1914 in Gwalior and opened the first cinema house there. The Parsi youth was fascinated by the stage. From 1925 to 1933, he organised stage shows and made a name for himself by producing Shakespearean plays in Urdu.

He sarked Minerva Movietone in 1936 which went on to become a prestigious concern. Modi could rarely get over his stage days and theatrical acting. Historicals always remained his forte. Take his very first film *Khoon ka Khoon* alias *Hamlet*. It was so stagey that it gave one an uneasy feeling that not a film but a stage play was shot and being screened.

But his *Pukar*, *Sikandar* and *Prithvi Vallabh* are considered landmarks in the history of Hindi cinema. The lavish settings, the period ambience and the portrayals of characters in these films are still talked about. Though he produced many social films, it is obvious that he relished only historical subjects. They suited his majestic personality and gruff voice.

The name of his concern carried



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so much weight in those days that Modi gave a full page advertisement of *Pukar* in a leading national daily without mentioning any of his stars though the film could boast of big names. The advertisement carried a huge trademark of the concern and merely said: "Remember! It is a Minerva Movietone presentation."

That was enough to draw the audience to the cinema houses.

His ambitious venture *Jhansi Ki Rani* was India's first technicolour film. It flopped and Modi suffered heavy financial losses. One of the reasons for the film's failure was the undue importance Modi gave to his role as *Rajguru*, the queen's consultant. It turned out to be *Rajguru's* film and not that of the *Jhansi Ki Rani*.

*Mirza Galib*, a film on the life of the immortal Urdu poet, which had melodious music by the late Gulam Mohammad, won Modi the president's gold medal in 1955.

He rarely acted in "outside" films so long as his own company was producing films. The notable exceptions were *Yahudi*, *Farishta* and *Nausherwan-e-Adil*.

According to one story, even the blind would go to his films just to hear his sonorous voice. It is easy to understand why.

*Indian Express* (Shireesh Kanekar) 5 April 1980.

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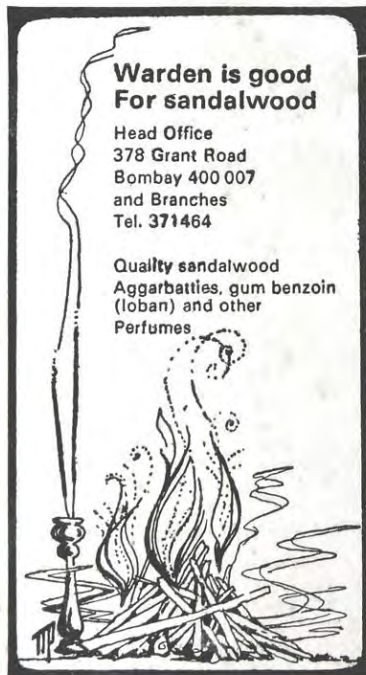
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Continued from page 5

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### Say a little prayer

"In this age of science and progress, children have no time to recite long prayers." With that in mind, **Irach Kuka**, a Bombay businessman, has



Kuka: "less than cost price"

written several small books which attempt to explain the basic precepts of the Zoroastrian religion. His latest publication is a pocket-sized 150 page prayer book titled *Unto Thee I Pray*, nominally priced at Rs 3.

"Our youth wants to know something about our religion, but they have no guidance," says Kuka. A former religious instructor and teacher of Iranian history at the Lady Jehangir School, at Tardeo, Bombay, and Petit Orphanage at Parel and honorary secretary of the Gatha Society and

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Zarthosti Dharmane Khoalkarnari Mandli, according to his bio-data, Kuka believes religion is to be lived. "There is no time for vague philosophy. Because we Parsis live our religion, we progress," he says.

Thus Spake Zarathushtra was Kuka's first book in English, and he has written two others in Gujarati on the Gathas, of which even the second editions, were sold out, he noted. "This has given me encouragement," says Kuka, who then ventured to interpret and summarize the *Khordeh Avesta*. "I have no intention of earning," claims Kuka "the books are sold at less than cost price."

A qualified but non-practicing priest, Kuka along with his brother Pesi, manage the family's chain of cinema theatres which include Novelty and Dreamland in Bombay and Capitol in Surat.

### Coaching Success

From sparring partner to coach, Bomi Amalsadvala is reported to be 'part and parcel' of the Bombay Table Tennis scene for over two decades.

Amalsadvala was responsible for assisting the coaching of the Indian players preparing for the Fifth Asian Union Table Tennis Championships held in Calcutta earlier this year, where he is said to have initiated the use of 'multiball' practice.

In 1975, he was adjudged 'ideally suited' to attend the Asian Coaches Assembly held in Otsu, Japan according to a write-up in the souvenir commemorating the first Asian Table Tennis Seminar, which was brought out to enable Amalsadvala to defray the cost of attending the seminar and assembly in Japan.

Winner of the All India State Bank Inter-Circle title and a ranked player of Maharashtra for the past several years, Amalsadvala, who recently featured on Doordarshan's 'Looking



Amalsadvala (right): "ideally suited"

Back, Looking Forward' programme, is reckoned to be no mean player. But his pupils have excelled the master, and perhaps brought him greater fame. "As I could not realize my ambition of becoming a top class player, I decided to channelize my energies into coaching," Amalsadvala modestly says. Amongst those he has sparred with and trained are Niraj Bajaj, Sudhir Thackersey and Baji Khambatta.

Very nostalgically Amalsadvala describes the "dancing feet" at the Procter Y. M. C. A. which he could spy as a young lad from his home near Bombay Central. Intrigued, he made investigations, and discovered the "dancing feet" belonged to table tennis players, and since then Amalsadvala has been hooked on the game, although he did not start serious playing until he joined the

State Bank where he now works as a public relations officer.

He can even boast of a collection of books on the game "from all parts of the world," which he would be happy to share with interested parties. "A library where the books could be kept would be considered," offers Amalsadvala, who is keen to inculcate interest in the game among the younger generation, who he feels lack potential and a spirit of adventure as far as the game and sports in general are concerned.

As for Parsis in the sport today, Amalsadvala regrets that there are no outstanding players. He makes special mention of Farrokh Khodaiji and his wife Katy Khodaiji (nee Chargeman); he being the only world ranked Indian player and she holding the outstanding record of being Triple Crown winner at the Nationals in a



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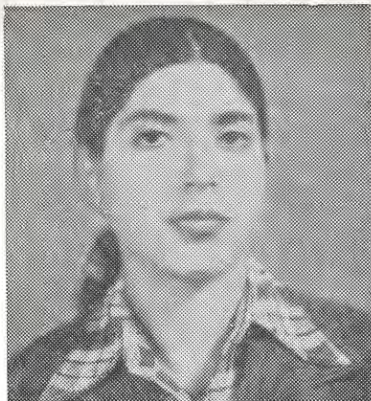
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**Bagli: Goal-keeper**

row, besides being the 'pillar' of the Indian team. "It's not a very popular sport, but those who go in for it, really go," says Amalsadvala; he mentions a few promising names like: Cyrus Irani, Homi Heerjibehedin, Kashmira Patel, Meher Hodiwala, the Kapadia brothers, Jal Vania and Rohit Turkhed among others.

Parsis should be less communal minded, Amalsadvala feels. He himself is happily married to a Sikh—Balbinder Kaur and they have one son—Siddharth.

"On the whole the signs are good," concludes Amalsadvala. "Stop making excuses about studies and lack of money," he says, "all those who played well were good students" and as for money, he believes there are many people like himself who are willing to help out. Those who are genuinely interested will find a way, he says.

## Parsi Olympics

Among the five Zoroastrian members in the Indian contingent at the Moscow Olympics was 19-year-old, final B. A. student **Hutoxy Bagli**, daughter of Minoo Bagli, manager of Lucknow's Alankar Theatre. Bagli was the custodian (goal keeper) of the Indian Women's Hockey Team competing at the Olympics.

Bagli has represented Uttar Pradesh in interstate women's hockey matches, and has also played in the Abel David Hockey Tournaments held in Pune, according to her bio-data. A recipient of a Gold Medal as a member of the Women's National Hockey Team at Jabalpur, Bagli was selected to play in the series held in India against the visiting USSR women's hockey team in which India won, notes the bio data.

The other Zoroastrian members

representing India at the Moscow games were **Arnavaz Damania**, manager of the Women's Hockey Team and **Nazleen Madraswalla** forward of the women's hockey team. Track sprinter, **Adille Sumarivala** of Bombay went as a member of the athletic squad, and **Dinyar P. Irani** of Jamshedpur was a member of the Indian Basketball Team.

## "Khorshed Designs"

**Khorshed Panthaki**, fashion designer with 'Sansappelle' of Chicago returned to Bombay after a ten year absence to hold her first local exhibition-cum-sale in early May.

Instead of the usual export surplus

**Model in a 'Khorshed' design**





"Each garment is individually hand cut, stitched and painted"

garments awaiting disposal at bargain prices, visitors to the Aakar Art Gallery at Bombay's B. Desai Road were faced with a display of original creations, each one professionally designed and finished by Panthaki.

Being "a little out of touch" with the Indian fashion set up, Panthaki had to feel her way through the local trends and market conditions. The Aakar exhibition-cum-sale was one of her first approaches to the Bombay public at large. Earlier on she had held the 'Maid of Cotton' show in collaboration with Jeannie Naoroji, at the Hotel Oberoi Towers in Bombay.

"I like designing evening and sports wear for the young," says Panthaki, whose speciality is hand painted silk outfits. "Each garment is individually hand cut, stitched and painted, so no two are ever the same," she adds. She is partial to natural fabrics like silk and cotton, but finds that Indians generally have a higher opinion of synthetics, the reverse being true in the west. Panthaki also observed that hand painted clothes were regarded with scepticism.

After completing a course in commercial art from the J. J. School of Art, Bombay, Panthaki worked as a textile designer at a Tata concern, before taking off for the Art Institute of Chicago, where she studied fashion designing. On graduation she joined 'Sansappelle', then a small organiza-

tion specializing in hand painting silks.

Asked by her boss to try her hand at designing garments from the painted silks, Panthaki did, and since then there has been no looking back for either Panthaki or 'Sansappelle.' Now

one of the leading fashion houses of Chicago, 'Sansappelle' competes with the fashion houses of New York and with such established names as Dior; Panthaki claims Barbara Striesand and Ms Bob Hope among her clients.

Panthaki's creations are not only an expression of her creative originality, they also let the wearers, originality come through in the way they are worn. One size fits all, and the simple classic cuts she employs might not look like much on a clothes hanger, they need a body to display their total effect.

Arnavaz Patel

### Corrigendum

Professor Kaikhosrov Dinshaw Irani's name has appeared as Kaikhasrov instead of Kaikhosrov on page 13. The error is regretted.

On page 49 in the first sentence of the second paragraph, the words "viewing them as acts of transnatural technology," have inadvertently been left out. The sentence should therefore read: "We see then that though one may justify *hieratical religious acts* in the other two ways, viewing them as acts of transnatural technology, they fail to be of persuasive justification in this day and age..."

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# AEK ATMAKATHA

## The life of

### Dastur Dhalla-VIII

# At the Temple of Learning

Eighth extract from 'Aek Atmakatha', the Autobiography of the revered Dastur Dr Maneckji N. Dhalla, noted Zoroastrian scholar and high priest of the Karachi Parsis, and an outstanding scholar whose contributions to religion rank him among the top scholars on the subject both in India and abroad. Published by the Dastur Dhalla Memorial Institute, Karachi, the book has been translated from Gujarati into English by Gool and Behram Rustomji.

#### THE STORY SO FAR

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

Failing to pass his school exams, Dhalla sought various forms of employment while educating himself in religious subjects. He wrote books and delivered lectures on religious matters which brought him public acclaim and arrangements were made for him to study Iranian languages at the Madressahs of Bombay. He arrived in Bombay when controversies prevailed between the orthodox and liberal Parsi factions of the city, and the Parsi Theosophists were gaining ground.

At the very first of my series of lectures on my premier visit to Bombay, a gentleman came up to me at the conclusion of the talk and introduced himself as Shapurji Dorabji Saklatvala, a nephew of Seth Jamsheji Tata with whom he was living.

After this preliminary acquaintance we met regularly. He had a religious bent of mind. Although he was a Zoroastrian by birth, I felt from the outset that he was more inclined towards Christianity.

Time and again the question of prayer in an intelligible language would be debated with real bitterness. Help was taken from great Hindu scholars to attune Zoroaster's Gathas to the melody of Hindu bhajans, without much success. Due to his constant visits to churches, Shapurji knew the tunes of many of the Christian hymns. Once he took it upon himself to set the Gathas to the music of the hymns. A function was arranged one evening at the new Atashbehrum under the Chairmanship of Camaji where Shapurji sang the Gathas to the tune of hymns. Those present received the talk in good humour, or with a few cryptic remarks or with silent smiles, but the attempt to set to music Zarathustra's Gathas was a failure and was abandoned.

Once a week Shapurji conducted discussions at the Bazme hall. To him the Khorshed and Meher and other Nyashes seemed to convey a worship of the sun, moon, water and fire. The debates evoked intense hostility. On the surface Shapurji appeared cool and calm but his arguments were fierce and fiery. Spitama Zarathustra gives promise of the coming of a Messiah and it was Shapurji's contention that the Messiah had already appeared in the form of Jesus Christ. Because of his obvious leanings towards Christianity, his friends had given him the appellation of 'Padre Shapurji.'

One evening I went to Shapurji's. He was making hurried preparations for a short trip. He was going on some urgent work for four days to Anik and urged that I should accompany him. Such was the urgency of his persuasion that we immediately alighted a carriage and drove towards the station. I had a feeling that something untoward was bound to happen as I had left without informing anyone. Meanwhile there was no end of turmoil and turbulence at home. The man who brought my meals as usual from the mobed's had to take it back. As this was repeated the next after-

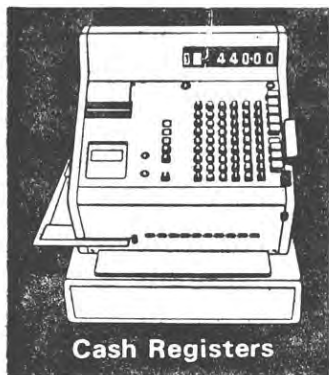
noon, the mobed informed my father-in-law at his shop. A rumour was afloat in those days that Shapurji had been baptized. My father-in-law was aware of my friendship with Shapurji so my sudden disappearance evoked doubts in his mind. At a chance meeting with my father-in-law a friend informed him that three days ago he had met me at Dadar and that I had told him that I was on my way to meet Shapurji. Connecting this bit of information with the tales about Shapurji having accepted baptism, my father-in-law felt convinced about his suspicions. He feared that I too had been converted together with Shapurji. In vain did my wife argue that even the shadow of such a doubt was unfounded. His prompt reply was: "Even saints become sinners when seduced."

#### **"It was Shapurji's contention that the Messiah had already appeared in the form of Jesus Christ."**

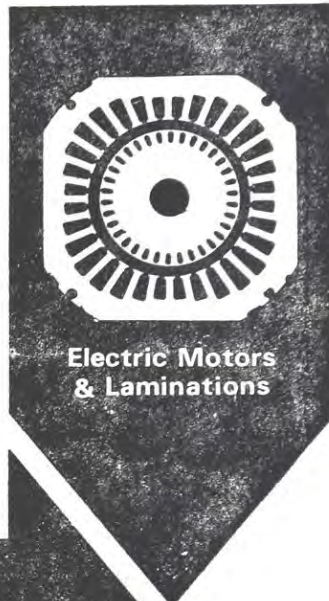
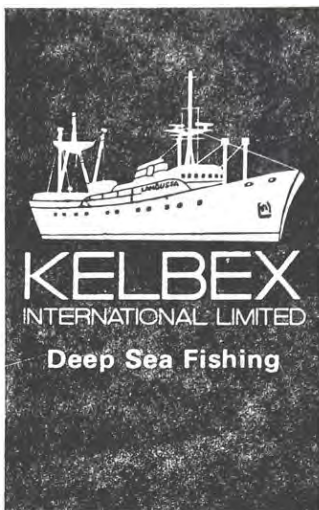
In his anger he said many a thing. I had dishonoured the fair name of the family; brought a slur upon the lineage; shamed the entire priestly flock; and with many such stinging remarks he wreaked his vengeance upon my wife in my absence. Eventually, on the fourth day we reached Bombay. On reaching home I was in the process of changing my clothes when, just as I was in my sudreh, my revered father-in-law entered, shouting wrathfully about something. For some time I simply could not fathom the cause of his anger. On repeated questioning about the reason for this 'deluge', to my great surprise I heard the fanciful story of my conversion. I could hardly suppress a smile and I showed him my sudreh and kusti. On returning home he told my wife that God be praised I had been saved from conversion thanks to the good deeds of my predecessors, for I still wore a sudreh and kusti. But he added there must have been some real struggle and persuasion about converting for he had noticed that my sudreh was torn!

I always preferred to use words derived from Persian and from its fore-runners Pahlavi and Avesta, rather than words of Sanskrit derivation. One evening, a learned Zoroastrian speaker referred four or five times to our great prophet as Hazrat Zarthost. At that time Camaji was in

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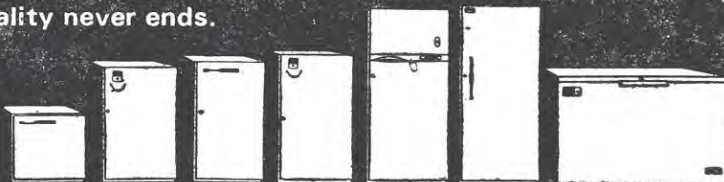
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## "Even saints become sinners when seduced."

the Chair. He pointed out that it was improper to set aside our grand appellation of 'Asho' and choose the alien term 'Hazrat.' I was of the same opinion. I would never qualify a pure and pious Zoroastrian as saint, sadhu or mahatma but as 'Asho'.

There was dire need in the community of a booklet on Zoroastrian religion, ethics, philosophy, history etc. compiled by well-known scholars. The Theosophists did publish such a journal but the articles published therein naturally bore the stamp of their ideology. On his return from Germany, the learned Camaji published eleven issues of a pamphlet entitled *the Study of Zoroastrianism*—between 1866 and 1869. After these no attempt was made to publish another booklet. In 1903, under the joint editorship and proprietorship of Ervad Tehmurasp Anklesaria, a very high-ranking and famous scholar of the Pahlavi language, and his equally learned and brilliant son, Behramgor, we commenced publishing a quarterly magazine called the *Zarhisti Namu*.

Thought-provoking articles written by many eastern and western scholars of Iranian languages and literature were published in that magazine. In 1905, as I had to leave for America, Behramgor maintained the publication single handed for quite some time. Due to the community's lack of appreciation of good literature, the quarterly had to be stopped after a duration of five years as it ran into a deficit which Behramgor bore alone without burdening me.

## "There must have been some real struggle and persuasion about converting for he had noticed that my sudreh was torn!"

The work for which I had come to Bombay was nearing completion. For the convenience of Zoroastrian students studying in colleges, our two Madressahs had arranged to conduct courses in Avesta, Pahlavi and Cuneiform according to the syllabus laid down by the University for the five years previous to the master's degree. After passing the first year, I was promoted to the third class and on

successfully completing that year's course I was given a double promotion to the fifth and final class which I passed at the end of 1904.

Besides Iranian languages, I studied the English translations of Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Bahai texts. Over and above religious study I enhanced my knowledge of philosophy and history. My acquaintance with classical English literature blossomed according to my taste.

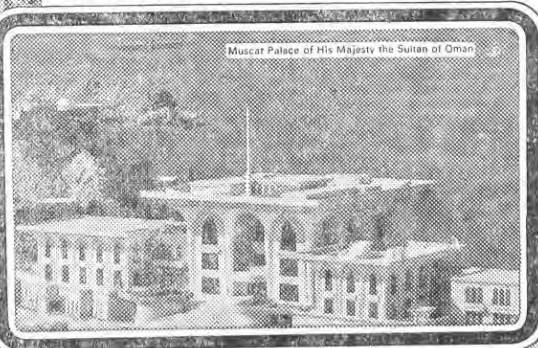
In religious matters I was still strictly orthodox although I had become slightly more tolerant. I took pride in adhering to popular opinion and treating the religion as sacred and too delicate to discuss. A simple practical and convenient religion cannot be a true religion. Such was my conviction. I believed that its greatness lay in the measure of difficulty encountered to adhere to its commandments. Its apparent impracticality seemed to me its uniqueness. I thought that what our ancestors had conceived and written could never be wrong. When their opinions differed from ours, we were sure to be erring. They had lived nearer to Zarathustra's time, had understood the religion in greater detail and had left behind a

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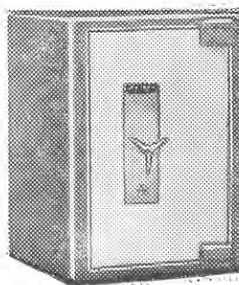
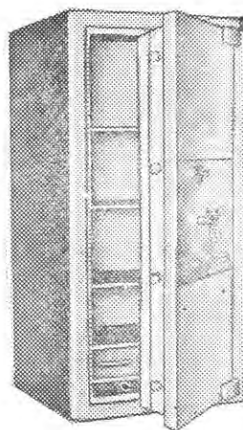
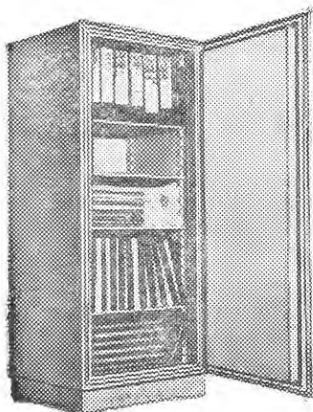
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**"I would never qualify a pure and pious Zoroastrian as saint, sadhu or mahatma but as 'Asho'."**

rich and thought-provoking heritage. Age-old traditions were true, sacred, infallible and unchanging, hence it would be improper to tamper with them. I had entered Bombay as a conservative. Three years later I was leaving it, still a conservative.

I had decided a year in advance what course to follow on completion of my studies at the Madressah in Bombay. The study of Iranian languages which was being conducted on a philological basis emanated from the West. A correct text of the Avesta had been prepared by Westergaarde, Spiegel and Geldner; its vocabulary had been compiled by Justi and Bartholomae; its translations had been done by Spiegel, Harlez, Darmesteter and Mills; its grammar had been constructed by Jackson. The Cuneiform writings of the Achaemenian Kings which had been like a mystery for two thousand five hundred years were deciphered by Grotenfeld and Rawlinson; wise travellers of the West had discovered the archaeological ruins of Iran. Ervad Cowasji Kanga's dictionary, grammar and translations were based on the authority of the books of western scholars. Critical essays were also written in the West. Discoveries throwing new light on any subject originated in the West. I believed that there was much that we could learn from western scholarship and with that in mind I had harboured the hope that I would live in some university of the West and further my education.

Shapurji had set up his headquarters for a week at Jamshedji Tata's bungalow situated on the seaside at Juhu. I was also staying with them. One day was spent in discussing plans for my further education in the West. The study of Iranian languages was conducted at the Oxford University in England, at Berlin and Heidelberg in Germany and at New York in America. Shapurji's choice was the Columbia University at New York. The main reason for this was that in 1901 when Jackson had come here, Shapurji had met him at an evening party given in Jamshedji Tata's splendid mansion. Besides, there were two branches of the firm of Tata Sons and R. D. Tata in New York. Because of these reasons it was decided to write to Jackson and immediately a

letter was drafted and mailed to him.

Within seven weeks a reply was received from Jackson. He welcomed the idea with great enthusiasm. According to the details supplied by Jackson, the college fees, the boarding and lodging expenses etc. would amount approximately to Rs 300 a month. Even before Jackson's reply arrived, Shapurji who had undertaken the responsibility conveyed to me the welcome news of having received a generous allowance of Rs 125 per month for three years from the Tata family—the benefactors and patrons of literature and culture. When I placed all the facts before Camaji, he favoured my plans and with the help of Jeevanji Mody, who always enthusiastically upheld all good causes, he started appointing a committee to work on this scheme to raise funds. The Zoroastrians of Karachi decided to send Rs 50 per month as their contribution.

The time to leave India was drawing near. I was to stay away from home for nearly four years. It was becoming increasingly difficult to meet the expenses of running the household. Our family was growing. I was the father of four and now, at the age of thirty I was going ten thousand miles away from home.

**"A simple practical and convenient religion cannot be a true religion."**

It was possible to repay only the interest on the loan incurred upon withdrawing my share from the dairy, but the capital to be repaid remained intact. My uncle was seventy-five and my father three years younger. He was still in harness and only if he was able to earn a little was it possible to make two ends meet with great difficulty. In spite of that my noble elders did not dampen my ideals of studying further and dedicating my life to the service of the community. My uncle boldly proclaimed that since the community was prepared to spend the munificent amount of Rs 300 per month on my education, I should not let such a precious opportunity go by. I had undertaken to live in America as economically as possible and to send something every month to Karachi from the allowance received from the committee.

On 15th May 1905 I left the shores of Bombay to become a four-year devotee at the 'Temple of Learning' at Columbia. As Professor Jackson had written to me I sailed with a

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**"I had harboured the hope that I would live in some university of the West and further my education."**

solemn pledge to place my eastern knowledge of Iranian languages on the altar of the scientific method of western scholarship.

Due to delay in booking a passage a second class ticket was not available, so the committee had to purchase a first class passage for me from Bombay to Genoa. From there onwards a second class passage in an Italian ship was secured to take me to New York. Referring to Persian nobility, the ancient Greek writers state that their tables overflowed with varied delicacies and rich wines. I had read about this, but I had never seen so much rich and expensive food and such lavish drinks served at table at a single meal. First in a plateful of ice, tiny raw oysters in their shells were served. I had never seen these before. A set of at least ten or twelve cutlery was arranged in front of each person. Neither at school nor at the Madressah had I been initiated into the use of knives and forks. Nor had I been taught in the school of life, because I never

dined out. I was aware that eating was also an art guided by certain rules and regulations. Now I began to inculcate those arts by watching my companions and imitating them. From seven in the morning to eleven at night, about seven times food and drinks were served on the ship.

The ship set sail in the evening and soon the dinner bell rang. At that time I dined in my Parsi dress. The next morning I changed my attire. With the fastening of the vest and coat buttons I would be ready in my national attire. The intricacies of this new attire were a nuisance to me. After struggling with the buttons of the cuffs and collar they were fixed in place. Then followed the process

**"Neither at school nor at the Madressah had I been initiated into the use of knives and forks."**

of fixing the neck-nooze called the neck-tie. As stated in the third stanza of the Vendidad I had to turn it over from left to right and from right to left, looking at myself seven times in the mirror, stretching it seventeen times this way and that, in keeping with western style. At last I

managed to fix it in position. In matters of dress, etiquette and deportment I always ranked in the lowest division.

The first class was fully booked. There were passengers of position, passengers possessing wealth and passengers who were truly philanthropic. There was a bigoted Bahai businessman from Tabriz who could put to shame the staunchest missionary in his zeal for conversion.

From the moment this gentleman knew that I was going to America at the expense of the community for further studies in Iranian languages, he began to persuade me that I would find nothing new in America and that it was a folly to spend so much money and labour on advanced studies of these dead languages. He stated that Zarathushtra had promised that a Soshyost would come. True to the prophecy the Soshyost had already arrived and he was Bahauallah himself, the founder of the Bahai faith. The headquarters of the Bahais was at Acca and he was on his way there. True light would come to me only in Acca. Bahaism was God's newest religion and his last and final prophet was Bahauallah. He could not tolerate my praises of the Zoroastrian faith. Being acquainted with the Bahai religion I told him that it did not teach anything more than what the Zoroastrian faith teaches. My religion was dear to me and I held it in higher esteem than Bahaism or any other religion in the world. Hearing my words he attacked me with missionary fanaticism. After that, communication between us ceased. On reaching Port Said he disembarked without even bidding me good-bye.

We reached the shores of Genoa. Our New York bound steamer was to sail after four days so, I lodged at a small hotel. This was my first experience of living amongst westerners in their own land. All the white people who went to India were either officers or businessmen, generally only people from the higher rungs of society. We therefore get a false impression that all white people would be well-dressed, neat and clean in their habits and well-mannered.

For the first time I saw that poverty, misery, wretchedness, filth, ignorance and immorality abounded in equal measure amongst the whites and the browns.

Finally we set sail in an Italian steamship. On the thirty-fourth day after leaving Bombay I reached New York.

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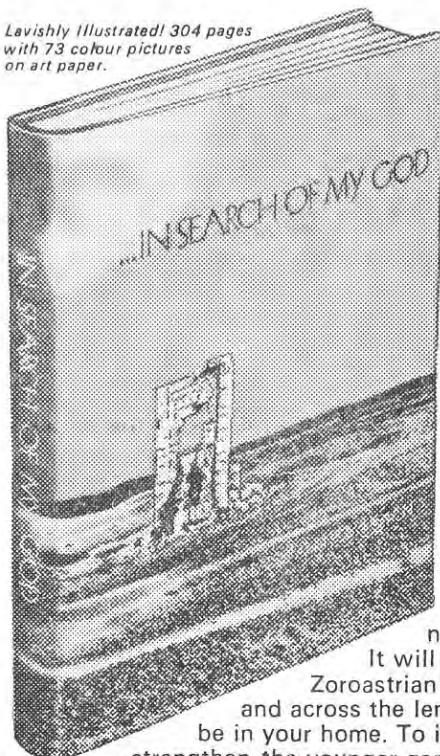


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propitiatory and sacrificial rituals of many religions, but particularly of the Indo-Europeans, is explicitly present in the recitations of praise to Ahura-Mazda, Haoma and other worthy divinities, with the sacrificial liquid offered to them by way of libation. The *Yazashne* ceremony is the fundamental hieratical act of the Zoroastrian liturgical tradition, and it is undoubtedly the most ancient, authentic and untouched part of it. Because of its all-inclusive character one might suppose that this is the only hieratic part of Zoroastrianism. That, however, is not the case. For in the literature of the younger Avesta we find a whole series of hymns, called the *Yashts*, which are hymns of request and praise; and also other rituals of veneration and commemoration.

The scriptural material of the *Yashts* presents, at first glance, a paradoxical picture. They are addressed to a variety of divine entities, their tone is one of veneration, their content is essentially the offering of praise, and on some occasions, sacrifices. They remind us strongly of the very ancient venerative and sacrificial hymns of the Indo-European tribes, such as the ones found in the *Rig Veda*, the hymns to the gods of the Greeks and Teutonic tribes. In style and structure they belong to an archaic period before Zarathushtra. And since they are concerned with

**"The Yazatas help us by giving us protection against the demonic attacks on our physical and mental health, on our material and social environment and general well-being."**

praise and offerings and are largely devoid of moral or philosophical content their function in the reformed religion of Zarathushtra is hard to discern. However, the language in which we find them in the Zoroastrian scripture leads us to conclude that they were formed in the days of the later Avesta, some generations after the period of the prophet.

How and why these prayers entered into the body of Zoroastrian scripture is not known; though it has generated energetic scholarly speculation. In any case these prayers and the rituals which emerged at that time are part of the hieratical acts in the Zoroastrian tradition.

Now suppose a present day believer asks why, i.e. for what religious reason, should we perform these hieratical acts, what would be a reasonable response to give in terms of the framework of the religious vision of the faith of Zarathushtra? Before we attempt a reply in the present day context, let us consider what it might have been sometime in the 5th century A. C. at the height of Sasanian empire, where Zoroastrianism was the established religion. The response then, as may be gleaned from the Pahlavi texts of that age,

would have been that the *Yazatas* (i.e. celestial beings) are invoked to carry on a struggle against a large variety of demons, assistants and creations of *Angra mainyu*, who perform special nefarious tasks. The *Yazatas* help us by giving us protection against the demonic attacks on our physical and mental health on our material and social environment and general well-being. They provide us with assistance in our resolve and action against the corrupting evils of physical pollution and spiritual perversion. And, most importantly, they assist us in crossing the bridge to the here-after, when the soul is susceptible to evil contamination.

Part of this response, which was convincing 1500 years ago, is hardly convincing to the modern believer; because our view of the world has been markedly changed by the development of scientific thought in the last two hundred years. We think of disease, pollution and the physical condition of our environment no longer in demonic or angelic terms, but in a different conceptual framework. We use the framework of contemporary science and, as will be discussed later, construct explanations differently.



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The ways in which we construe the world changes; and there is no guarantee that our present views will remain unchanged a few generations from now. But the conception of how the world works which prevailed when hieratical acts were taken to be the efficient means of promoting our welfare has been changed for ever.

Does this imply that hieratical religious acts have lost significance in the modern context? The answer is: No; but it entails interpreting the significance of hieratical acts differently. To come to that view we must begin by making some distinctions.

### Three Types of Hieratical Religious Acts

We distinguish three notions of *Hieratical Religious Acts*, each associated with an appropriate function:

1) Those hieratical religious acts where it is believed that the hieratical agent (i.e. the performer of the act) by interaction with some divine entity or force, produces effects either in the physical or spiritual domain, either in this world or the next. Let this type of act be called *Hieratical Acts of Trans-natural Technology*. This is the view of ritual as a technological operation, i.e. it is meant to produce some desired effect on this or that side of the gates of death.

2) Those hieratical religious acts which are expressions of the devo-

tion of the agent; and which by their performance generate in the consciousness of the agent a communion with a reality beyond, or at least an elevation from the web of mundane existence. The function of the act is here construed as producing a change not in the world outside, but in the consciousness of the agent. Let this type be called *Hieratical Acts of Inner Realization*.

3) Those hieratical religious acts which by the antiquity and continuity of their practice generate in their practitioners a visible sense of belonging to an ancient yet living tradition and of sharing with generations past a belief in a religious vision reflected in the ritual. Let this type be called *Hieratical Acts of Traditional Piety*. The function here focuses on the traditional and historical aspect of spiritual awareness, which is an aspect of the life of every religious tradition. It is this aspect which is the life blood of the social existence and continuity of a religious tradition.

Let us consider each one of these in reverse order. When we look at the third notion of a hieratical act, that is, as an act of *Traditional Piety*, what is claimed as its significance is the social aspect of spiritual awareness. This is not the sort of hieratical act which would be in conflict with an ethical religious act. One who rejects the traditional pietistic form of a hieratical act is not an immoral

person (although perhaps asocial), nor even irreligious; he fails to appreciate the vital, socially cohesive character of religion, and lacks the awareness of the collective power of religious faith. It becomes a repudiation not of the religious vision, but of the life of its collective consciousness in the traditions of the community of the faithful.

Looking at the second notion, a hieratical act of this type needs no justification, nor, indeed, can it be argued for. To a believer in whose consciousness the performance of a hieratical act generates a sense of spiritual communion or upliftment, the act is thereby justified. And for one in whom this is not the case, the justification is absent. Neither can convince the other of the opposite. There is, however, a genuine value to the experience. For the experience of communion with a greater reality beyond, de-emphasizes the self's exclusive concern with itself and releases it from the vicissitudes of social abrasion, facilitating the selfless life of good thoughts, good words and good deeds. But there is a danger too. If the conscious experience, no matter how uplifting, becomes an end in itself, it may fail to motivate the individual to a life of action. Indeed, it may stand in the way of a life of striving to bring about the good, a state which can be described as the indolence of spirituality.

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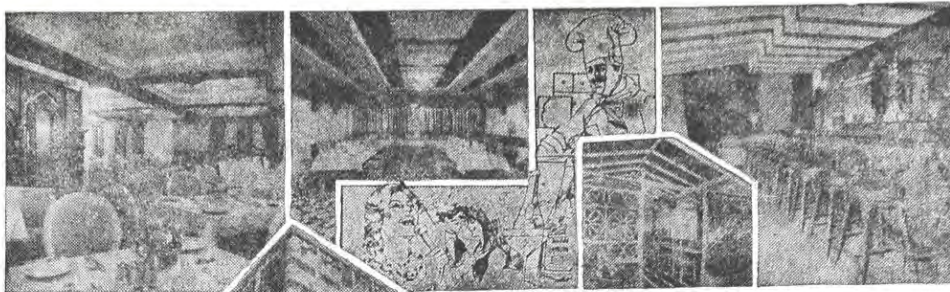
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We now come to the most complex notion: *Hieratical acts of Transnatural Technology*. This view completely dominant in ancient religions, and widely prevalent in most religions until the last century, has waned steadily in the last hundred years. This view requires us to hold that there is a two-way interaction between the material or natural world and the divine or supernatural world. We pray to the divine, engage in ritualistic performance and the divine force does something appropriate to the world. However, in the framework of contemporary thought our way of understanding the world through, what is called, the scientific world-view has made that notion unacceptable. So when hieratical acts are interpreted in this way they become impossible to justify at this time in the history of human thought.

Of course, there are hieratical acts which are justifiable within the scheme of contemporary science. For example, the religious injunction against throwing dead matter into water is perfectly warranted on the purely scientific grounds (i.e. the germ theory) of the likelihood of spreading disease. Once this is explained by the germ theory of the transmission of disease, the act is justified as one of Natural (or Scientific) Technology, there being no need or point to making it a subject of Hieratic Trans-natural injunction.

### Reasons for Hieratical Religious Acts

With these distinctions in mind we are in a position to respond to the question of why a religious person should perform hieratic religious acts. For example, why should he attend the performance of the *Yazashne* ceremony, recite the *Yashts*, or recite the daily prayers?

In each of these cases, from what we have seen, these acts would be justified by the notion of Traditional Piety. This would particularly be the case in the *Yazashne* ceremony which encapsulates the history of religious consciousness.

Again, a particular believer may have an Inner Realization of spiritual upliftment, which would be a justification. But can we also claim a justification in terms of the achievement of some goal through Trans-natural technology? Why was this view so significant in past centuries and is so ineffective today?

### Nature of Changing Ideas: Core and Associated Practices

The answer to the above question emerges when one looks at the history of ideas. Consider first the total set of religious beliefs and practices of a religious tradition. The beliefs incorporated into the *religious vision* constitute the *central core* of that religion; let us call that the *Core*. As

we have seen it will contain a fusion of a view of the world's destiny and a way of life.

Alongside the Core there will be certain *associated practices* which are part of the religious tradition; some of these being ritualistic, others, prescriptions concerning social, communal or personal life. The associated practices, unlike the Core, may be seen to change from time to time. Religion, however, does not exist in a vacuum of ideas; so that at any period in the history of a religious tradition, the members of the tradition will possess the knowledge of the times. This knowledge would extend from day to day occurrences of the simplest sort to the most scientifically refined. We know that our knowledge of the world changes with the passage of time. Not only do we add to knowledge, we correct past misconceptions and sometimes radically reformulate our view of the world.

The relevance of these remarks becomes apparent when we recognise that a religious practice is justified if it achieves or promotes some goal or value contained in the Core, and our knowledge of the world is required to establish that it does or does not. Religious faith implies commitment to the Core, whereas practices need justification which depends not only upon the unchanging Core but also upon the changing state of our knowledge of the world.

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In antiquity men believed that the blowing of the wind, falling of rain, lightnings, earthquakes, and epidemics were natural phenomena having supernatural causes. This was the knowledge of their day. Our knowledge today explains these phenomena differently; hence the practice of praying for rain, or the ending of an earthquake or epidemic would not be a justifiable religious practice for one in the 20th century, though it might have been eminently justifiable in the 5th century B.C. And in general our scientific framework of explanation demands that we explain any event by showing that it is the result of other events in the world which are its causes and that this relation between cause and effect be expressed as a law of nature.

Thus our contemporary framework of knowledge requires that all events be understood in terms of the law of causation in space and time, and thereby excludes any explanation given in terms of a natural-supernatural interaction, in other words, causation which is trans-natural. Of course, the scientific framework of contemporary thought may itself change in the future and the practices we find justifiable now may have to be reassessed; but that possibility does not alter our views today, it merely makes us humble in proclaiming them.

We see then that though one may justify *hieratical religious acts* in the other two ways, they fail to be of persuasive justification in this day and age, and insistence upon them leads only to disinterest and disaffection. But there is a further problem. The performance of a hieratical act with the conviction that its trans-natural function is efficient may prevent another naturally (i.e. scientifically) warranted act from being performed. For example, if one believed that an epidemic was a divine warning or punishment, and was convinced that a particular ritual was the remedy for it, one might not just be performing an ineffective act, one might prevent appropriate sanitary and preventive medical steps from being taken. If that happens, and indeed it could, a hieratical act interferes with an act which is ethically imperative in the religion. For from the Zoroastrian point of view the moral act of eliminating disease is a religious requirement.

There are many practices in the Zoroastrian tradition, as in any religious tradition, which were justified as significantly related to the message in the religious core and whose justifi-

## **"From the Zoroastrian point of view the moral act of eliminating disease is a religious requirement."**

cation was bound to the historical context. How such practices come into existence, persist, or change, is an interesting question in the history of religion.

Let me illustrate:

Purificatory and cleansing ritual practices which use purified bull's urine as a cleansing agent were justifiable in antiquity when such urine was one of the very few antiseptic agents available. But with far better antiseptics available now the practice cannot be justified. What is the nature of the justification here?

In the original religious vision disease and illness in general were viewed as evil, and one was required to combat them. Pollution from dirt or decaying matter spreads disease. Hence polluted areas or objects, or parts of the body which have contacted them must be cleansed. Purified bull's urine was such a cleansing agent. Of course, bull's urine is not used for this purpose any more, it is only ritually employed on special rare occasions. If one who uses it as a hieratical act justifies it by an appeal to *traditional piety* he may, but he has missed the point of its original use. And anyone who fails to use better antiseptics when they are available is acting contrary to the injunctions in the *core* of the religion.

A similar problem is the practice of the disposal of the dead. Exposure in the tower of silence is justified as a method of disposal which is non-polluting to elements of divine creation and generally diminishing the hazards of contamination. If, however, one can provide a non-polluting, non-contaminating method different from the present and which is more efficient and effective, one would have to evaluate it to see if it does not implement the concept of the religious core better. To strive for the better implementation of the values in the core is itself a religious obligation.

There is a practice among the Parsis that non-Zoroastrians are not permitted to enter fire-temples. This practice is obviously late in the history of the Zoroastrian tradition. The original fire altars in Iran were in the open, and even in the Sasanian period non-Zoroastrians could enter fire-temples, though some fire sanctuaries were open only to priests. After the Arab conquest of Iran circum-

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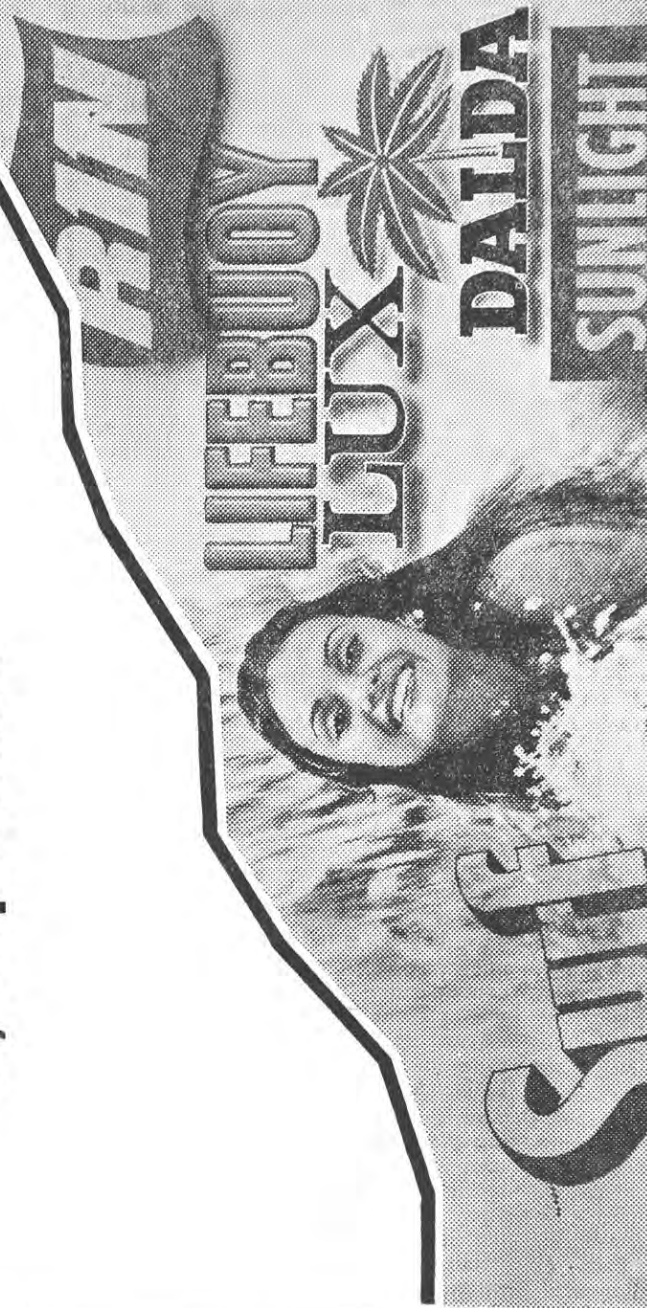
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stances changed. In the interest of promoting conversion to Islam among the Zoroastrians, a law appeared which gave the right of inheritance of a parent's property to a son who had converted to Islam, in preference to his other Zoroastrian brothers.

The conversions which resulted in the wake of this law were not all above suspicion; and one of the ways of establishing the authenticity of the conversion and proof of detachment from one's erstwhile faith, was for the convert to go to a fire-temple and spit into the fire. Under these historical circumstances, limiting entry into the fire-temple seemed an eminently reasonable practice. But with no such threat today, the rationale for maintaining that practice seems altogether obscure.

Unlike the situation prevailing in archaic religious traditions where religion and ritual were identical, in the living religions of historical times, members of a religious group are a community of believers, believing in what we have called the *Core* or *Religious Vision*, and who are thereby committed to uphold a moral way of life. To what extent are they committed to the *associated practices*? Those practices which constitute the tradition of prayer and worship may well be maintained for they establish the continuity of tradition by which adherence to the faith finds concrete and communal expression. Other practices should be examined and evaluated to ensure a maximum implementation of the religious core.

There is, however, a seriously held opinion which takes practice itself to be the central focus of religious life. According to that opinion the religious person is one who performs the rituals; and also that rituals and practices of whatever kind should be maintained without change. Frequently such a position is called *orthodoxy*, which is a mistaken use of a precise

**"Law gave the right of inheritance of a parent's property to a son who had converted to Islam in preference to his other Zoroastrian brothers."**

term. That position is to be properly called *orthopraxy*. For "orthopraxy" is derived from "praxis" meaning practice, whereas "orthodoxy" is derived from "doxa" meaning belief.

In any case, to hold on to a traditional practice merely because it is traditional is an insufficient reason, particularly for a Zoroastrian who, enjoined to think good thoughts through the gift of the Good Mind (*Vohu Mano*), is under a religious obligation to reflect, reason and then choose.

The Zoroastrian community, if it is to be responsive to the message of the prophet, must clearly formulate and articulate the religious vision he preached to this world, and then apply its ethical principles to the complex and varying conditions of modern existence. Not only would such

actions be intrinsically right, beneficial to all and justifiable in the eyes of rational humanity, such acts would also be a valid affirmation of the faith of the faithful. But if the *Core* of this religion is relegated to minor significance and the unreflective preservation of practices becomes the focus of religious life; if moral resolution is replaced by ritualist fervour, one may wonder if Zoroastrianism, supported for millenia by a vision of a perfecting world, may not now be on a path to oblivion.

Indeed there have been historians who have concluded that Zoroastrianism, like so many ancient religions, has outlived its significance and is quietly passing away. This misconception arises because Zoroastrianism is viewed as a cultic religion of a particular tribe or people. The religious concepts in the message of Zarathushtra are completely universal and the ethical imperative of good thoughts, good words and good deeds utterly timeless. Seeing this world and human life therein in radically moral terms, and giving significance to human life in the moral endeavour to perfect this world, is as relevant and meaningful today as it was when Zarathushtra preached it. And that vision will not for ever remain unfulfilled. The world will be made to progress towards perfection; for humanity will tend towards righteousness, since righteousness must result with the apprehension of Truth, and in the long run, Truth must prevail.

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Navroz continued from page 9

magnificent sweet and coffee would end the meal. The younger children were always seated on a separate table. Throughout the meal wine would be served to the elders and a light claret cup to the children.

After dinner there would be piano playing and group singing, where the old and the young joined in singing the latest hit tunes. The evening always ended with "Chayye humme Zarhosti."

And that was Navroz.

### Papeta ma Marghee: (serves 12)

Ingredients:

3 chickens weighing 1 kg.  
(2 lbs 2oz.) each  
20 cloves garlic  
100 gms (3½ oz.) ginger  
3 tablespoons pure *ghee*  
8-10 slit green chillies  
8 large potatoes  
salt to taste

Wash and joint chicken and dry. Peel garlic and ginger, grind to a paste and apply to chicken and leave for half an hour. Heat *ghee* in a large shallow pan. Fry chicken for about 5-7 minutes. Do not over fry. Add salt to taste (about 2 teaspoons) and 1 cup water. Cover. Add water on lid and simmer. Keep adding water from the lid into the chicken whenever necessary, at the same time replacing the water on the lid to prevent burning. Cook chicken till half done. Add green chillies. Peel and slit potatoes lengthwise and add to chicken. Add more water and salt and simmer till both chicken and potatoes are tender and a thick gravy remains.

*Note.* The potatoes must be cooked till very tender but still hold their shape.

### Parsi Pulav: (serves 12)

Ingredients:

1½ Kg. lamb cut into large pieces with the bone on  
6 tablespoons *ghee*  
1½ kg. thinly sliced onions  
600 gms peeled and quartered potatoes  
1 kg. (2 lbs 2oz.) old *basmati* rice  
2-3 bay leaves  
½ kg. (1 lb) curds  
*Masala* to be ground:  
25-30 cloves garlic  
150 gms (5oz.) ginger  
6 cloves  
6 cardamoms (keep aside the peel of cardamoms)  
2 pieces cinnamon  
3 teaspoons cummin seeds  
12 green chillies

Rub meat with ground *masala* and

keep for half an hour. Wash rice, cover with water and leave for half an hour, drain and hang in wet cloth for half an hour. Heat *ghee* and slowly brown onions till crisp. Remove ¼ of the cooked onions on kitchen paper and keep aside. Remove about 2 tablespoons of *ghee* from pan. Add meat in the pan with rest of *ghee* and onion. *Saute* for about 10 mins. Add salt to taste. Add about 2 cups water. Cover and simmer till meat is ¾ done. Add potatoes and more water if needed and simmer till potatoes and meat are tender and about 2 cups of thick gravy remains. Adjust salt. While the meat is cooking, heat water for rice, adding bay leaves and cardamom peels and bring to boil. Add drained rice and 2 tsp. salt. Boil rapidly until ¾ done. Drain. Beat curds till smooth and mix with rice, add browned onions to rice and curds and mix well. Spoon rice over meat. Cover with a cloth rinsed out in milk. Cover with lid and weigh the lid down. Put pan in preheated oven (350° F) for about 20 mins., or on a *tava* with a low heat for about 20 mins.  
Serve with *masala nee dar*.

### Rava: (serves 12)

Ingredients:

2 pints milk (imperial pints=20 oz.)  
1 tin (400 gms) sweetened condensed milk  
1 cup cream  
2 tablespoons fine semolina  
2 tablespoons butter  
sugar to taste  
2-3 tablespoons triple strength rose water. *Not rose essence*  
Garnish: 2 tablespoons blanched, slivered and lightly browned almonds  
2 tablespoons fried sultanas

½ teaspoon powdered nutmeg  
½ teaspoon powdered cardamoms  
a few pink or red rose petals.  
In one pint of milk add condensed milk and cream. Melt butter in a large based pan, add semolina and cook for a minute, do not brown. Slowly add 1 pint of plain milk, stirring constantly until thick and boiling. Now add the milk mixed with condensed milk and cream. Add sugar to taste. Keep cooking until the consistency of porridge. Remove from fire, stir until cool. Add rose water and pour into a serving bowl. Cool completely and chill. Sprinkle with garnish and serve.

### Hors D'Oeuvres Varies:

These were either served individually, or on a long silver tray, grouped attractively and divided by finely chopped parsley. They were usually: Baby asparagus rolled in thin slices of ham

Sliced peeled beetroots  
Sliced gherkins  
Stuffed eggs with cheese  
Sardines  
Pickled tongue  
Prawns in vinegrette dressing  
Potato, tomato and Russian salads  
Olives  
Salami  
Caviar sprinkled on stuffed eggs

### Pomfret Meuniere with Almonds: (serves 12)

Ingredients:

12 large fillets of pomfret  
seasoned flour  
clarified butter  
100 gms (4 oz.) blanched and slivered almonds  
2 tablespoons chopped parsley  
Wash and dry fillets of fish. Heat



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clarified butter, in a large frying pan. Dip fillets of fish in seasoned flour and fry on a medium fire till pale gold and crisp. Remove from pan, drain and keep warm in a slow oven, till rest of fish is fried. In a separate smaller frying pan, heat 3 tablespoons of clarified butter and lightly fry the almonds. Place fish in a warm serving dish, pour almonds over the fish with the butter, garnish with chopped parsley and serve at once.

#### **Chicken Kiev: (serves 8)**

**Ingredients:**

4 whole chicken breasts each weighing about 375 gms (12 oz.)

180 gms (6 oz.) chilled butter

salt

pepper

1 tablespoon chopped parsley

3 beaten eggs

seasoned flour

dried white breadcrumbs

Flatten breasts of chicken by holding them breast side up and then bending them until they lie flat on the surface of the table. Remove skin from breasts. Cut the breast in half, leaving the small wing bone intact, debone, and remove the small fillet (the supreme) from each breast. Place on a sheet of damp greaseproof paper. With a wooden mallet or rolling pin flatten out the pieces of chicken until thin. Do not allow them to tear.

Mix salt, pepper and parsley with butter. Divide into 8 portions, shape into fingers, about 2 inches long and chill till hard.

Remove greaseproof paper carefully from chicken. Put one finger of seasoned butter on a breast of chicken, cover with a fillet. Fold over like a parcel. Twist the wing bone of the breast to seal the butter and prevent it from oozing out. Take the outlet in your palms and shape it into a long cylinder tapering slightly at each end. Roll in seasoned flour making sure the entire surface is coated; shake off excess flour, dip in beaten eggs and then coat well in breadcrumbs. Place on a plate and chill in a refrigerator for 2 hours. Deep fry for about 5-7 minutes.

Keep warm in an oven until all the cutlets are fried. They should not be kept in the oven for more than 10 minutes, otherwise they will lose their crispness. I suggest you fry them in two pans as they should be served as soon as possible after they are fried, for the diner to be greeted by a spurt of delightful melted butter when pierced with a fork!

Garnish with crisp straw potatoes and boiled green peas filled in savoury tents.

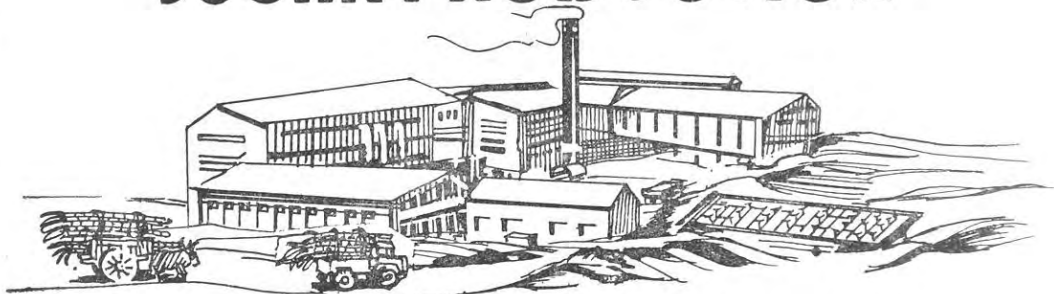
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Balsara continued from page 11

the product was positive, we entered into an agreement with a friend who had manufacturing premises in Dongri, Bombay, to let us utilise a part of his premises to manufacture and package Odonil." Such were the origins of the product that laid the foundation of the five companies of the Balsara group that manufacture and market a range of household sanitation products in spick and span manufacturing units located in Bombay, Thane and Vapi in Maharashtra, and provide employment to a labour force of 400.

**"Balsara's faith in the power of advertising—scoffed at by leftist intellectuals and puritanical politicians alike—remains unshaken."**

Actually market response was more than positive. Within a matter of months not only had the sales of Odonil shot up to 5,000 units per month, but Balsara *pere et fils* gained the valuable experience that would serve as the bedrock formula for their product diversification plans.

"During the successful launch of Odonil we learnt some important lessons," comments Balsara who assumed the responsibilities of chief executive of the group companies shortly after the launch of Odonil in 1962. "These lessons were the careful choice of a product line so as to avoid competing with established multinationals, giving the consumer a price advantage, (Odonil was priced at a third of the price of imported air purifiers), restricted distribution in terms of area coverage (Odonil was initially retailed only in the Fort and Colaba areas of Bombay), utilisation of already existent trade contacts and a belief in the efficacy of advertising in carefully selected media," says Balsara.

#### Effective Advertising

And while the other elements of the Balsara marketing formula such as choice of product line and pricing have been modified beyond recognition with the enterprises gaining confidence and market shares, Balsara's faith in the power of advertising—scoffed at by leftist intellectuals and puritanical politicians alike—remains unshaken.

"Odonil was the first product to be advertised on the front page of *The Evening News of India*, a Bombay based afternoon paper which (given our geographically restricted market segment) proved to be a very effective

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tive advertising medium. We also advertised the product fairly extensively in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*—which then had affordable advertising rates—with positive results," recalls Balsara.

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**"I was quite alarmed that  
our annual advertising  
budget was expended in  
less than three months."**

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Balsara's faith in the efficacy of advertising was further reinforced when an effective campaign enabled their second branded household product, Odopic, a cleaning and scouring powder to get off to a flying start. The product which had been marketed as a cheap industrial cleaner in 1962 was introduced as a branded product in 1964 by Balsara who had been encouraged by the way "things fell into place" when Odonil was launched.

"Apart from the fact that we had a good product which was priced low, the critical marketing input that made the product was the highly effective advertising campaign devised by our advertising agency, LPE Aiyars, and Walter Saldanha, currently chief executive of Chaitra Advertising. The campaign which dramatically highlighted the price differential between the market leader—which shall be nameless—and Odopic, had the copy headline 'Half this tin is free'. This message was hammered home in a short but intensive campaign. I remember at that time I was quite alarmed that our annual advertising budget was expended in less than three months. But as it turned out the campaign made an impact and today we have 50% of the market share in the prime market, Bombay, to which part of the country we have confined the distribution of this product because of high freight charges and because the packing is easily damaged in transit. We hope shortly to commence manufacturing Odopic in the other regional centres," says Balsara.

The successful launch of Odonil and Odopic was followed not only with the launching of several other products including Odomos, a hugely successful mosquito repellent, and several liquid soaps under the brand names Odorama, Odosol and Odopar (which have since been phased out), but also the induction of professional managers into the Balsara companies. One of the first such professionals to be inducted into the Balsara companies was N. S. Rajadhyax, a former pro-

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duct manager in Hindustan Lever, who joined Balsara in 1969 and is currently the marketing controller of the Balsara group of companies.

"Leaving a well established and growing company such as Hindustan Lever and joining a small company such as Balsara necessitated my taking a difficult decision. But at that time I reasoned that the challenges in Balsara would be far greater than I would ever face in Levers and in retrospect I am glad I took the decision that I did," says Rajadhyax.

#### **Credibility Problem**

"According to Balsara, Rajadhyax's initial major contribution" was to question the overwhelming emphasis attached by the Balsara management to substantially lower retail prices. "Rajadhyax was able to convince us that pricing a product too low could adversely affect the sale of a product line by creating a credibility problem," recalls Balsara.

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**"Pricing a product too low could adversely affect the sale of a product line by creating a credibility problem."**

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"Consequently we began to price our products more scientifically and with higher unit margins we were able to make larger advertising outlays to emphasise product attributes rather than price in our advertising campaigns, while at the same time providing our dealers with more attractive margins and incentives to push our products."

While he admits that advertising takes a large chunk of the marketing outlay of the Balsara group, Rajadhyax admits that even by spending up to 20-25% of their sales turnover the Balsara companies are not able to advertise as intensively as the established multinationals who spend only 3-4% of their much larger sales turnover on advertising and advertise much more intensively.

"To make up for our inability to match the advertising budgets of our better established competitors, we have adopted the strategy of placing a great deal of emphasis on the development of a dealer network," says Rajadhyax. "Therefore not only are our dealer commissions almost twice as high as those given by the market leaders, but we pride ourselves on giving the wholesaler or stockist a quality of service that the competition is not able to provide. Thus our

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force of 80 field reps have the widest possible discretion in settling claims for damages in transit, for example, and in general I think it would be true to say that we treat our dealers as a part of the Balsara family," says Rajadhyax.

But if in the past, the Balsara management has been introducing and successfully marketing product lines that necessitated the tiny group engaging the mighty multitis in minor skirmishes on the periphery of the consumer market, in launching Promise toothpaste they took the MNCs on in a head on confrontation when they staked a claim for a slice of the highly lucrative core of the consumer market. "The launch of Promise was preceded by the investment of a large number of manhours in the planning process during the course of which, given the fact that the market leader brands were based in Bombay, we decided to launch the product in Delhi on 1st February 1978," says Rajadhyax.

#### Unique Sales Proposition

Apart from the fact that the product line chosen was one that has to compete with several well established and intensively advertised brand names, the marketing strategy of Promise has the stamp and impress of the *modus operandi* developed by the Balsara management over two decades. "The product has a USP (unique sales proposition)—clove oil, the traditional remedy for ailing teeth—it is priced marginally lower than Colgate and Ciba's Binaca, the distribution began in the north and now covers the north and western parts of the country, advertising is effective and a great deal of emphasis is given to dealer incentives. And thus far we are more than satisfied with our rising sales and market share, which we have projected at Rs 5 crores and 7% in 1980-81," says Balsara.

Through the latest entrant into the

burgeoning Balsara product range, the Balsara management seems to have hitched the group's fortunes to the promise of Promise. "In 1980-81 when we propose to market Promise all over India, we expect this particular product line to contribute 50% of our sales turnover," says Rajadhyax confidently.

The obvious and early success of Promise in a highly competitive market has had additional spin-off benefits for the Balsara group: professional managers and young management graduates are beginning to take an active interest in the Balsara companies. "If one wants a challenging job and wants to acquire a reputation as a marketing man who is going places, the Balsara group of companies is an inviting prospect. They delegate authority, make quick decision and make assessments based on results rather than personal prejudices," comments a young management graduate who is making a choice between several offers of a placement in industry.

And though the Nagindas Master Street offices of the Balsara group of companies, which have a favourable employee-management ratio (400:40), are humming with activity, the managers in the group are understandably cagey about their future product diversification plans. "We are examining several alternative proposals relating to the household and consumer product markets," says Balsara cryptically. However, the establishment of two new companies within the group—Besta Laboratories for the development of a range of herbal toiletries and Balsara Consultancies to provide management and marketing advice to small scale sector industries—indicate that there are more arrows in the Balsara quiver than are easily apparent.

Which may also mean more shocks to the MNCs and good news for the consumer.

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*Readers' Forum continued from page 3*

astrians to assist him in whatever way we can. There is nothing unusual for scholars to be at variance in matters, small or big.

If recent findings, archeological, numismatic, or other evidence throw new light on ancient beliefs, what has Mistree to do? Should he disregard them, deny them or keep them secret just because, some are likely to flare up and cause a commotion? A true reformer does not aim at pleasing all and sundry at the cost of being untrue to himself.

Mistree is not a passing fad or fancy. Judging by the overwhelming response, wherever he goes, it is clear that he rekindles the dormant spark. In the very near future he may have to abandon his excellent work unless we help generously to meet the heavy expenses he has to incur. If we lose him, it will be because of those who could have helped, but backed out. Do we want to lose him? Let our conscience alone be our guide.

N. A. CHINYO

## Karkhanavala Fund

The Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsee Charitable Institution Old Boys' Union has established a Fund to commemorate the memory of Late Ervard Dr. Minocher D. Karkhanavala who was a distinguished student of B.J.P.C. Institution and also a very active member of the managing committee of the B. J. P. C. Institution Old Boys' Union. At the time of his death, he was a director of the Chemical Division of The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre. He was connected with Bombay University and several other educational institutions. He was also an eminent religious scholar, and a staunch defender of our Zoroastrian rites and customs.

This Fund has been established to promote the cause of education of the students studying in the B. J. P. C. Institution.

We appeal to all our generous patrons, donors and well-wishers to donate generously to this cause. Donation may be forwarded to the Principal, B. J. P. C. Institution, 33, M. Karve Marg, Opp. Charni Road Railway Station, Bombay - 400 004. Cheques should be drawn in favour of "B. J. P. C. Institution Old Boys' Union."

G. C. DORDI

Jt. Hon. Secretary

## 'Star on Pakistan'

In the 'Zoroastrians Abroad' column (*Parsiana* July 1980) there is a passing reference to Professor Firoz C. Davar. For the information of

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your readers, Davar is the principal of the Bahauddin College, Junagadh, a professor of English at the University of Gujarat, and a well-known writer on Zoroastrianism.

DINSHAW MERCHANT.

### 'Gentle Shepherd'

In your article on 'Calcutta's Gentle Shepherd' (*Parsiana*, May '80) Bachi J. Karkaria has quoted me as saying "we also ask Bapuji to pray a *Tandarosti* for our horse running in this Saturday's race."

Since jokes can be double-edged I should like to note the context in which the reference was made so that there is no misunderstanding.

What I stated was "In his day-to-day dealings with the Calcutta Parsis, Bapuji uses but two words *Ha ji*. Whatever your request he will accede to, because he considers it a pleasure to make others happy. If you were to tell Bapuji—"My horse is running in the 3 o'clock race, please say a *Tandarosti*"—his answer would be: '*Ha ji, pun gora nu nam soo?*'" (but what is the horse's name?)

Please do not think that I am trying to belittle our Head Priest. This story is merely meant to establish that Bapuji derives happiness from making others happy. If someone derived solace and strength from a *Tandarosti*, Bapuji is ready to help.

J. B. MADAN  
Calcutta

### 'Paper Tiger'

Ms Mickoo Jimmy Batliboi was mistakenly referred to as 'Bhicoo' Batliboi in the article 'Paper Tiger' (*Parsiana*, July 1980). The error is regretted.

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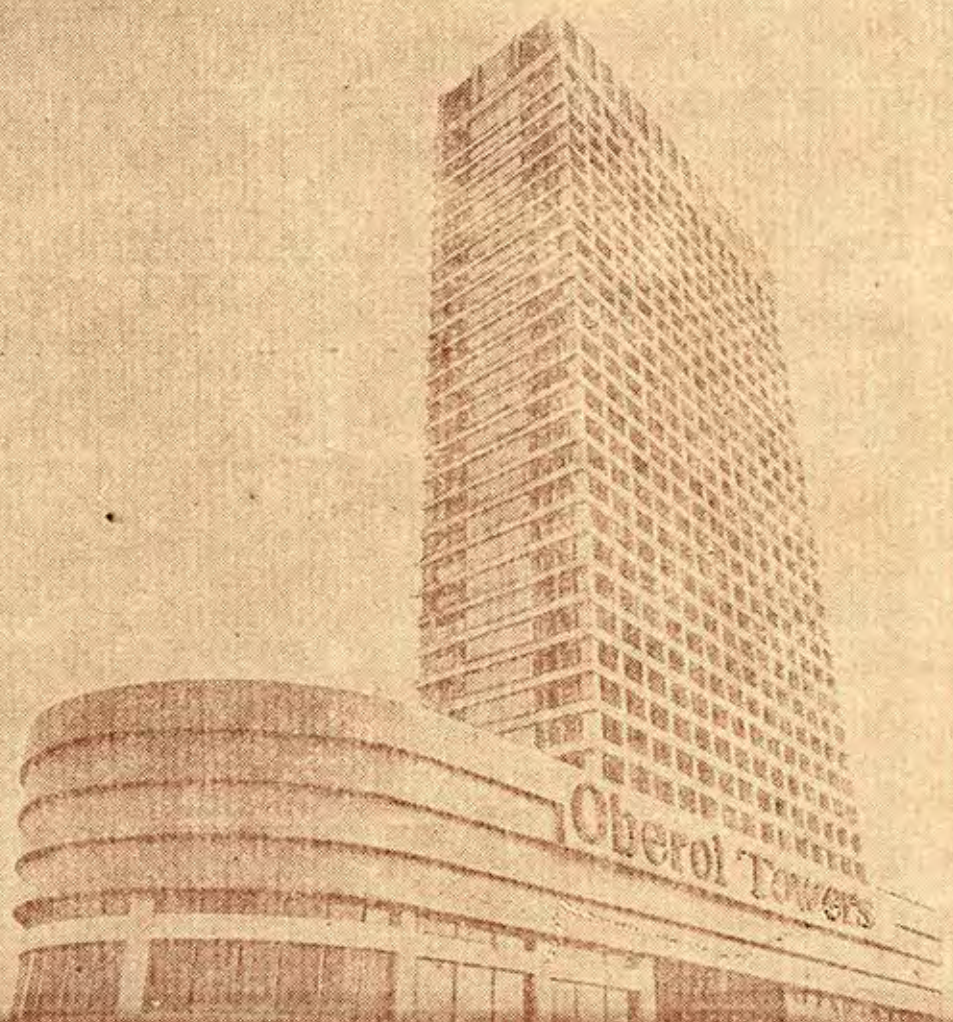
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