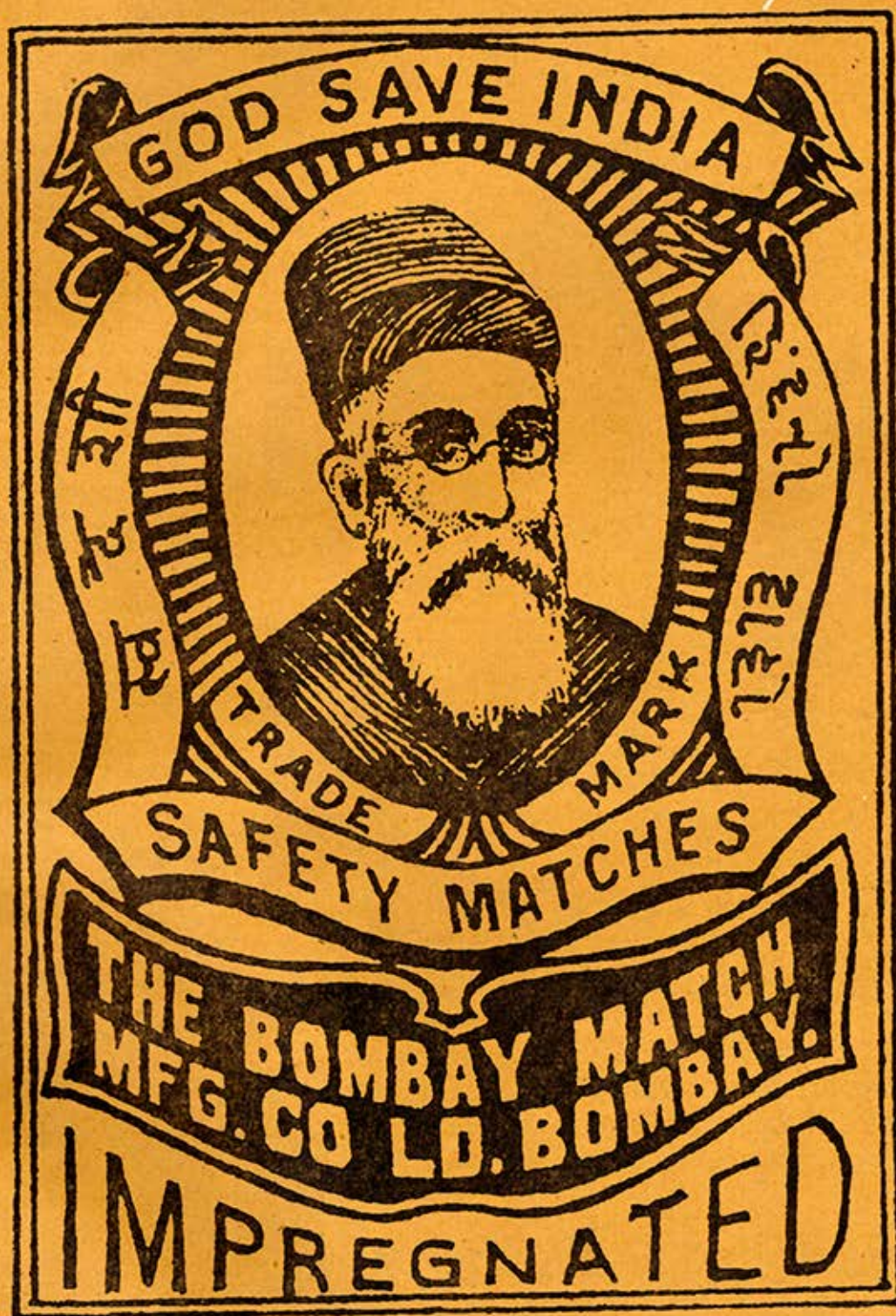


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Parsiana

December 1980 Volume 3 No. 6

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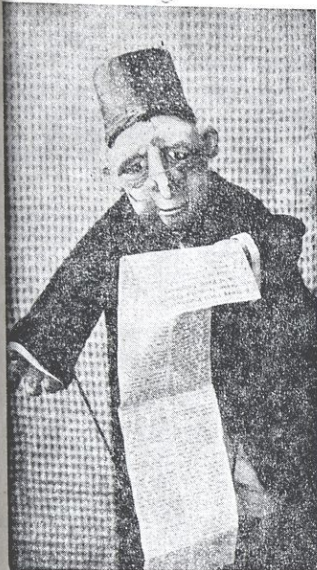


In Memoriam

Mr. Fali Meherji Variava,

Director

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AND ASSOCIATE COMPANIES.



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.

WZO: Cart Before Horse?

I am a director of the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZSBC), Vancouver, B.C. and am constrained to write this letter following two meetings of the directors last week when the issue of the World Zoroastrian Organization, Ltd. (WZO) of London was discussed at length.

Jamshed Pavri, honorary treasurer, of the ZSBC, was present at both meetings and Mehraban Farangi, who had attended the WZO meeting in London, was present at the second meeting by invitation.

I had previously gone through the correspondence exchanged between Shahpur Captain, vice-president of the WZO, and Dr Shirin Kutar, chairman of the WZO, with Pavri as well as certain WZO documents. I sensed the frustration and growing impatience of good Zarthosti souls in London at the protracted delay in the formation of a viable Zoroastrian world body

at this critical juncture in our long history. May I say that I, and most Zoroastrians, share that frustration.

In his letter of May 20, 1980 to Jamshed Pavri, Shahpur Captain wrote, "One has to start somewhere, with some constitution, drawn up by some people." I agree if "somewhere" related to some authorized representatives installed by a Zoroastrian world body of standing, e.g. the World Zoroastrian Congress... if "some constitution" was similarly an authorized draft constitution to be ratified by a representative body. Otherwise there is nothing to prevent a plethora of WZO's being registered all over the world — something disastrous to our cause.

In the absence of a solid foundation, no superstructure can endure. Unfortunately such a foundation does not exist for the newly-formed WZO Ltd., London. Three papers on the subject of establishing a broad-based, responsible WZO were read and discussed at the last World Zoroastrian Congress. Unfortunately nothing of substance was adopted.

In Kutar's letter of May 23, 1980 to Jamshed Pavri, she was categorical, "Once the organization is established every Zoroastrian anjuman, Zoroastrian society and Zoroastrian association in every part of the world will be notified."

This world is full of talkers, but few doers. As such, I applaud the collective zeal to get that ball of World Zoroastrianism rolling — but what has hitherto been achieved is not a WZO *per se*, rather an *Ad Hoc* committee of world Zoroastrians by personal invitation at random.

HOMI M. ENGINEER
Vancouver, Canada

'Encourage Them'

I refer to the letter 'Encourage them' by Jehangir B. Sathia (*Parsiana* July 1980).

I fully support Parsis marrying within their own community and allowing it to grow. But it is ridiculous to expect all Parsis to marry in the community. My suggestion is that if a Parsi female marries a non-Parsi then her children can take on the religion of the mother, only if the father agrees. There are many incidents I know which occurred in Iran. Under these circumstances it should be right for Parsi females to bring up their children as Parsis if they marry outside the community.

Let Parsis understand that if others want to convert, we should welcome them in order to enlarge the Parsi community.

S. H. IRANI
Tehran

'Rejection Syndrome'

We went to the Pateti dinner at the Arbab Guiv hall in New Rochelle this year. It was fun to see so many of the faces only Parsis could have. While the folks danced inside to the strains of *Bumbai Amchi*, bratty looking teenagers played Gin Rummy outside with cigarettes hanging out of the corners of their mouths, listening to the latest unmemorable disco album on the local radio station. I think many children of Parsi couples have a strong rejection syndrome when they are teenagers or even younger against all forms of identification as Parsis. What a loss — to them.

FAROKH CONTRACTOR
New Jersey U.S.A.

The Strange Case of George Edalji

'The Case of the Short-sighted Parsi' in the *Parsiana* issue of March-April 1980 was interesting and more so as it revealed the name of the father of this unfortunate man who suffered on account of the miscarriage of justice, until Sir Arthur Conan Doyle appeared on the scene.

The account of the case as stated in the book *Famous Crimes Mysteries and Romances — The Great Stories of Real Life*, edited by Max Pamberton, concurs with the account stated in *The Times of India*. However, the following facts do not appear in the newspaper's report:— 1. George Edalji was the son of the Vicar of the Parish of Wyrley in Staffordshire. 2. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle describes George's father as the coloured clergyman, but does not mention his name. 3. George's mother has been described as 'brave, blue-eyed and grey-haired', but she is not described as a coloured woman. 4. George has a younger sister. 5. George was 27 years old when the incident took place in 1903. 6. £ 300.00 raised by *The Daily Telegraph* as donation for George was used in repaying an old aunt who had advanced the funds for his defence.

Taking into consideration facts 1 and 2. George Edalji cannot be passed off as a Parsi who professed the Zoroastrian faith. It also appears that his father Shapurji Edalji at some stage of his life must have changed his Zoroastrian faith for Christianity.

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migrated to England and served the Church. In 1839 Dr. John Wilson converted two young Parsis of his school. One of them was Dhunjibhoy Navroji who also joined the Church. Is it possible that Shapurji Edalji was the second convert of Dr. John Wilson.

Can readers throw more light on the subject?

VIRASP P. MEHTA
Karachi

Darvish: The Last Farewell

Recently, my father Darvish Rashid Irani (Arestani), who had served the Parsi Community throughout his life, "crossed the bar," and took the path of heaven.

When his corpse was being carried by the *Nassasalars* and *Khandias* after the *Paidash* ceremony, his face was left uncovered. This was probably the first incident where this happened and I think there must be a controversy in the minds of a few Parsis, as to why the usual custom was broken. I am writing this letter as a result of a friendly argument, which I had with a Parsi gentleman who is 70 years old, almost the age of my father.

This gentleman asked me why Darvish made this *gotala*? He went on to ask why his face was kept uncovered after the *Paidash* ceremony, which is against the religion.

I do not think the Zoroastrian religion has even mentioned this. These

are wrong customs which are followed, which were laid down a 100 years ago.

Nobody is to be blamed for the incident, because I was the one who had ordered this to be done, as he was my father and I did what was right for him. I have not done anything against the religion. If at all anyone thinks that the above incident was wrong, then he or she should come forward and give concrete proof of facts to the contrary, and answer the queries running in my mind, which are:— Why are Parsi dead bodies carried into the *Dhakhmas* by people other than *Nassasalars* in small villages? Why is nothing being done about that? I believe that this is against the religion.

Does any Parsi know why a dog has to be shown to the dead body twice or thrice in between the *Paidash* ceremony? It is believed that the dog shows the way to the eternal path (way to heaven). I further believe that a dog is the only animal who gets premonitions; but we cannot understand each other.

Why are non-Parsi not allowed to see the face of the dead body after the *Paidash*? Is there any concrete proof for doing so? I firmly believe that non-Parsi cannot enter the Bungli because, our religion is sacred and to preserve secrecy, I also believe that when a non-Parsi respects our religion, their feelings should be respected and

faces of the dead bodies should be kept uncovered to let them have a last glimpse of their departed friend.

If what I say is not true then non-Parsi should not be allowed to work at the Doongarwadi (e.g. as watchmen and *malis*). These are the people who are nearest to the *Dhakhmas*, because they work in the gardens right up to the top and also provide security at night. There are many other such examples which can be put forward.

I do not wish to create any ill-feelings amongst my fellow Zoroastrians. I am myself, a firm believer in my religion. I am strictly against cremation or any other method of disposing the dead bodies other than what my religion permits i.e. *Dokh-menashin*.

Dr. SYRUS DARVISH IRANI

Zopadpatti Zoroastrians

As per statistics there are 1200 dilapidated houses in Bombay. Say there are 100 such houses occupied by Zoroastrians, and in each house there are four families, then we immediately need 400 flats. Within the next 5 to 7 years some more houses in Bombay will collapse and if within that time some 600 to 750 flats are not provided take my word you will find the Zoroastrians staying on the footpaths in *zopadpattis* like other communities.

Shiavax R. Vakil says he has 50 lakh rupees at his disposal he also says that he was the ex-trustee of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, (*Parsiana* August 1980). As the ex-trustee he must know of how much vacant land there is with the trustees and where? He also must know the name of the donors.

I have got four suggestions to make: 1) Collect some 50 Zoroastrians. 2) Ask the families of the donors to bring pressure on the trustees to spare the land for housing or start construction of houses. 3) We have 40,000 male and 20,000 lady earning members, request them to donate Rs 10 or more to file a civil suit against the trustees. 4) We Zoroastrians believe in the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, if all three methods fail then let us have a *satyagraha* before the office of the BPP trustees or a *hartal* fast to death.

NAREIMAN S. BAXTER
Pune

Acknowledgement

The newspaper clippings on 'The Odd Couple' (*Parsiana* August 1980) were contributed by Cyrus B. Presswalla of Toronto, Canada, a Chartered Accountant with the Income Tax Department of the Government of Canada.



Grieved family members mourning Darvish Photo Rashid Bamanbehram

Events and Personalities

'Sezdo' in Navsari

The funeral of **Nariman Pithawala**, the former vice-president of the Surat District Panchayat who was brutally murdered in September, (see *News from the Media*) created a flurry because his face was left uncovered outside his home following the *geh-sarna* ceremony.

The *Bombay Samachar* of 5 October 1980, prominently featured a photograph of the incident which is reproduced in *Parsiana*. "If this can happen in Navsari, the Vatican of the Parsis", commented Jehan Daruwala, editor of *The Samachar*, "there is no reason why Bombay should not follow it as a matter of regular practice".

The Bombay Parsi Panchayat wrote a letter to Dastur Meherji Rana, the

high priest of Navsari, asking if the report of Pithawala's face being shown to the public after the *geh-sarna* ceremony was correct. Rana replied that he was not present on the occasion, but that the face was uncovered outside Pithawala's residence. It is not known whether the Bombay Parsi Panchayat trustees asked for verification from the president of the Surat Parsi Panchayat, Maneck Gheyara who was present at the funeral.

Threat to Zoroastrian Bank

A Directive issued by the Reserve Bank of India, threatens the Zoroastrian Co-operative Credit Bank with closure, feared the bank's president **Rustam Gagrati** in his speech at the fifty-third annual general meeting of the bank held on 17 October 1980.

The Directive imposes, "restrictions

on advances to be granted by urban co-operative banks against security of shares of various joint stock companies," said Gagrati.

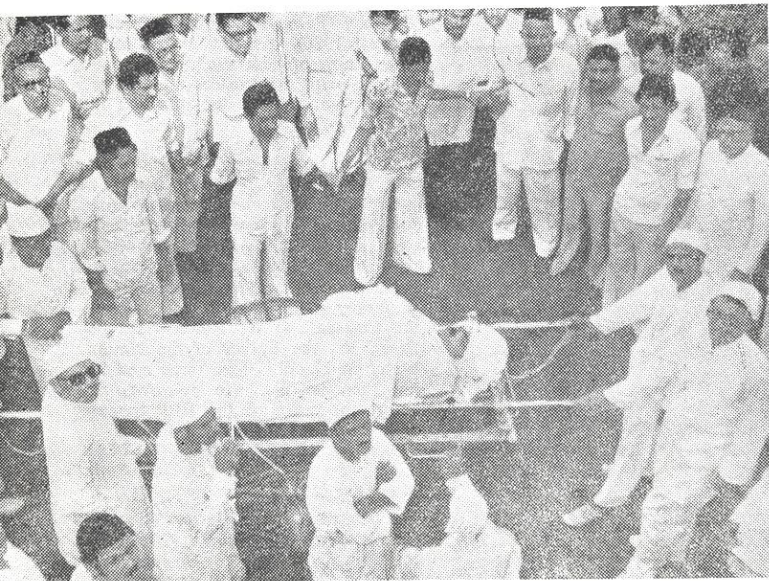
Issued on 19 April 1980, the Directive "not only restricts fresh advances but also renewals of existing facilities and by its enforcement the business of the urban co-operative banks in general and our bank in particular will not only be seriously affected but will result in closure..." warned Gagrati.

These "unreasonable restrictions on the activities of the bank", would aggravate the problems and difficulties of the middle and lower middle class community members which the bank helps, pointed out Gagrati, adding that a representation had been made to the Reserve Bank of India requesting exemption from the operation of the Directive, and that the matter was under correspondence.

The bank's profit and loss account for the year ended 30 June 1980 showed a profit of Rs 3.81 lakhs against the previous year's profit of Rs 3.41 lakhs; the total deposits of the bank increased from Rs 89.61 lakhs to Rs. 98.28 lakhs during the year under report, said Gagrati.

"Since the introduction of the budget in June 1980, the economic condition had not only not improved, but on the contrary considerably deteriorated. It is high time that Mrs Indira Gandhi realised that in order to have a democratic, stable and effective government and to maintain law and order she should have a consensus, which can only ensure a truly democratic government for our country," stated Gagrati.

The managing committee also expressed regret and sorrow at the passing away of Saros Jehangir Rustomji, who Gagrati noted was "on the committee since the last 12 years and was intimately connected with its activities. He was a devoted worker and his advice and assistance as a retired banker were greatly valued by all of us. By his death, the bank has lost a



Pithawala's face uncovered outside his home

highly experienced adviser, a selfless and sincere friend..."

The present managing committee consists of: Rustam Ardeshir Gagrat, Noshir Sorabji Pochkhanawala, R. P. Marzban, N. B. Jeejeebhoy, C. N. Dinshaw, Jehangir F. Shroff, J. J. Gandevia, Homa D. Petit, T. R. Andharyujina, H. P. Ranina and B. S. Bulsara.

FOZAWAC's Amateur Athletics

The first Zoroastrian Athletic Championships, hosted by the two year old Federation of Zoroastrian Associations for Welfare and Culture (FOZAWAC), were held on 27-28 December 1980 at the Bombay University Stadium. FOZAWAC's maiden venture was open to amateur Zoroastrian athletes and featured events such as sprints, hurdles, discus throw, relay, tug of war, high jumps and long jumps amongst others.

According to a write-up on the Federation, FOZAWAC was formed by Dr Aloo P. Billimoria, a medical practitioner, president of FOZAWAC and the A. H. Wadia Baug Welfare Centre, and Jivanji Jamadar, an advocate, vice-president of FOZAWAC and the president of the Rustom Baug Association; who together with a few friends and well-wishers endeavoured to establish a federation of all Zoroastrian associations. They wanted "to have an apex body to consolidate the efforts made by various Zoroastrian bodies and associations for the upliftment of the community in the fields of sports, welfare, culture and social activities.

FOZAWAC was registered under the Societies Registration Act in December 1978, and also with the Bombay Public Trust Act in January 1979.

Initially the idea faced antagonism from local associations, who felt their autonomy would be threatened, said Dr Billimoria. "Individual colonies have their activities," explains Jamadar, "but this is a handicap to those outside... we want to reach and encourage the largest section of the community."

At the first meeting to discuss FOZAWAC, representatives of 30 Associations attended, notes Billimoria, of which only 11 are at present affiliated. They are: The A. H. Wadia Baug Welfare Centre, The Bombay Parsi Association, The Rustomji Wadia Welfare League, The Rustom Baug Association, The Delhi Parsi Anjuman, The Sir Ness Wadia Club, The Gamadia Colony Welfare Association, The Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman, The Malcolm Baug Zoroastri-

an Association, and the only foreign member association so far is the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia. The Zoroastrian Students Teachers Association (ZOSTA), the brain child of FOZAWAC's Sports Sub-Committee Secretary Jamshed Hodiwala, says Billimoria, has been specially brought



Gagrat: 'unreasonable restriction'

into existence by FOZAWAC to represent Zoroastrian school children who will participate in the championships.

"The lack of finance is the biggest hurdle," points out Jamadar. Billimoria anticipates that a minimum of Rs 20,000 will be required for the championships, but adds that most of these will be initial expenses like the FOZAWAC banner with its embroidered emblem. Some of the finance has already come in from the proceeds of a *natak* sponsored by the Federation in October 1980 and Rs 10,000 has been donated by a party Jamadar declined to name, according to the donor's request.

Prizes include trophies, medals and Certificates of Honour. "There are some dormant Parsi associations with idle funds and trophies," says Jamadar, who might donate; the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia will be contributing some of the prizes, though it is unlikely to send any participants, he states.

Though these championships are intended to include Zoroastrians from all over the world, the only organizations from outside Bombay likely to send representatives are from Surat, Poona, Ahmedabad and Delhi, according to Jamadar.

The FOZAWAC Managing Committee consists of: Dr Aloo P. Billimoria, president; Jivanji M. Jamadar, vice-president; Meherjibhai K. Daruwala and Burjor M. Mehta, joint honorary secretaries; Framurze K. F. Madan, honorary treasurer; and members: Cyrus P. Dastoor, Bomi E. Dotiwala, Zal K. Erane, Jamshed S. Hodiwala, Jamshed S. Kermani, Adi D. Mehta, Peshotan D. Nargolwala and Dara K. Parakh. The Sports Sub-Committee consists of chairman: Peshotan Nargolwala, secretary: Jamshed Hodiwala, members: Farrokh Engineer, Ninaz Irani, Arna Motiwala and Naval Pithawala.

Nassalars: A Dying Breed

The professional corpse bearers in the twin cities of Secunderabad and Hyderabad are "dying out fast." In a speech made by E. J. Tarapore, honorary-secretary of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and Hyderabad, on the occasion of the diamond jubilee celebrations of The Khan Bahadur Seth Edulji Chenoy Anjuman Dar-e-Meher, he noted that, "in the very near future this category of service will be extinct and we will have to depend on the services of young volunteers of our community to perform the functions of the *Nassalars*. There seems to be a feeling amongst our youth that to perform the functions of the *Nassalars* is below their dignity or a prohibited ritual. Let us assure them that such service is in fact the highest tribute they could pay to the dear departed."

Tarapore also noted, "in view of the difficulties encountered by the *Nassalars* to meet more than one death on the same day or frequent deaths in a short spell of days your Anjuman has thought it fit to acquire a Utility Van to convey the dead body to its last resting place, at a cost of Rs. 60,000. Our appeal to the Anjuman has met with a magnificent response..."

Among the highlights of the diamond jubilee year celebrations are *ghambers*, *machis*, *kirtans* and *jashans*. As a 'jubilee project,' the managing committee has taken up the construction of eight flats in the Anjuman compound for needy families. "The climax of the jubilee celebrations will be the opening of the new blocks with a *jashan* ceremony when they are ready," notes an Anjuman circular.

The jubilee celebrations started with a *machi* and *jashan* on 24 July, the presiding high priests for which were Hormazdiar Dastur of Poona

and N. D. Minochehr-Homji of Bombay. The function was chaired by the Anjuman president Sq. Ldr. Jamshed Italia, who gave the welcome speech, and called for a prayer for Panthaky Noshirwan Dastur who has been serving the Agaury for 40 years and suddenly took ill, reports *Parsiana* correspondent Sanobar Marker.

Italia hoped that the fire in the Agaury which had burned for "sixty years will burn for centuries more."

Booklet on Zoroastrianism

A 12-page booklet entitled 'The Teachings of the Prophet Zarathushtra' published and distributed free of charge by Mehraban Zartoshty of Iran, can be collected from Mahyar Patel, secretary and treasurer of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman, Kermani Building, 2nd floor, Sir Phiroze-shah Mehta Road, Fort, Bombay 400 001.

P. R. Congress Chiefs

Adi N. Confectioner, public relations advisor to the House of Tatas, has been appointed chairman of the Publicity Committee for the 1982 World Public Relations Congress to be held in Bombay.

The theme of the congress which is being held in the east for the first time, will be 'The Interdependent World,' says Confectioner, and notes, "We hope that the main objective of this congress will be to consider the integration of all mankind into one world community and how this can be achieved through public relations."

Jamshed Bhabha, director of public relations of Tatas, says Confectioner, will be the General Chairman of the World Public Relations Congress Committee, and Confectioner will be his executive assistant.

Confectioner, who was the former chief Public Relations Officer of Tatas, is also elected chairman of the Bombay chapter of the Public Relations Society of India (PRSI). The only professional organisation of Public Relations practitioners in the country, explains Confectioner, the PRSI has 800 members all over India, 300 of whom are in Bombay. The organisation holds regular meetings and also conducts diploma courses in Public Relations at St. Xavier's and Bhavan's Colleges in Bombay, he adds.

An economics graduate of Calcutta University Confectioner started his career as a journalist with *The Bombay Chronicle* in 1953, and was later western India correspondent for the *United Press International*, *The Hindustan Standard* and *The Amrita*

Bazar Patrika successively, until he joined Tata Services in 1968 as a Public Relations Officer, notes the bio-data.

A member of the Managing Committee of the Tata Agricultural and Rural Training Centre for the Blind and a former Secretary-General of the Public Relations Society of India, Confectioner was also the past president of the Indian Association of Industrial Editors states the bio-data.

He has authored three books, *The*



Confectioner: Publicity Chairman

Decline of Bombay, The Shiv Sena, and Gehraos.

The Observer

The Alibag Observatory which celebrated its platinum jubilee in November 1980 was started 75 years ago, by the late **Dr N. A. F. Moos**. According to a report in *The Indian Express* dated 29 October 1980, Moos was the first Indian director of the former Colaba observatory, which was threatened by the imminent advent of the electric tram system nearby in 1900. Alternative sites for the observatory were then chosen by Moos in Alibag, Maharashtra, and at Manora, Karachi. "Today the Alibag observatory ranks amongst the leading magnetic observatories in the world", notes *The Express*, adding that Moos's work, *Terrrestrial Magnetism — a discussion on the Colaba Magnetic data of 60 years*, "is regarded as a standard work by scientists in Europe."

Moos, who died in 1936 at the age of 77, was considered an authority on the science of Seismology and had made a special study of earthquakes.

Swedes Select Sethna

Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission India, **Dr Homi N. Sethna**, has been elected member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences, in recognition of his contributions in the field of atomic energy.

At a formal ceremony held at the Vienna International Centre on 26 September 1980, Dr Sigvard Eklund, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, presented the certificate of membership to Sethna, reports *The Times of India* dated 30 September 1980.

Dr Eklund, also a member of the Academy, spoke of the significant contributions made by Sethna "to the development of numerous programmes for the utilisation of atomic energy in India," noted *The Free Press Journal* dated 30 September 1980.

The select group of Foreign Members of the Academy includes, among others, prominent nuclear scientists such as Nobel Laureate Dr Glenn Seaborg of the United States, Dr A. M. Petrosyants, President of the State Committee for the Utilisation of Atomic Energy, of the Soviet Union and Dr Walter Marshall, Deputy Chairman of the Atomic Energy Authority of the United Kingdom.

The Company's Catalyst

The Associated Cement Companies (ACC) director, **Pesi Jagus**, who was responsible for the planning and execution of the company's catalyst and absorbents (CATAD) project, received the Indian Chemical Manufacturers Association (ICMA) award for process engineering of chemical plants, for 1979, on behalf of ACC.

At the ICMA Annual General Meeting held recently at the Crystal Room of Bombay's Taj Mahal Hotel, the union minister for petroleum, chemicals and fertilizers, Veerendra Patil, presented the award "in recognition of the successful penetration of the company into sophisticated areas of advanced technology even by contemporary world standards and their great enterprise in undertaking the manufacture of such a wide range of products from catalysts to refractories involving intensive efforts and heavy risks," states the ICMA citation.

Joining ACC in 1947 as a civil engineer after graduating from Bombay University, Jagus was awarded the U.S. Government Fellowship for Post-Graduate training at Purdue University, Indiana. In 1975, he assumed the office of Director of Research, and in 1980, he was appointed as a full-time director to serve

on the Board of ACC. Jagus is also a member of numerous technical committees of the Indian Standards Institution, Research Advisory Committee of the Cement Research Institute of India, Working Group (Concrete) of the Central Board of Irrigation and Power, and the Civil Engineering and Public Health Committee. He is also director of STUP Consultants, a structural engineering consultancy company.

Tribute to a Teacher

Professor of philosophy at Bombay's Wilson College, **Sheriar K. Ookerjee**, was presented an award by the National Foundation for Teacher's Welfare Greater Bombay Committee on Teacher's Day, for his "valuable services rendered in the field of education." The award was presented to the 55 year old, congenial, educationist by the Maharashtra Chief Minister, A. R. Antulay on 5 September 1980, at Metro Theatre, Bombay.

A trustee of the Alexandra Girls School, Bombay, founded by his grand father Maneckjee Cussetjee, Ookerjee has read papers on philosophy and logic at various conferences and seminars in India and abroad and has been a regular contributor of articles to various journals, notes his bio-data. A former secretary and president of the Bombay Philosophical Society,



Ookerjee: receiving the award from Antulay

Ookerjee is keenly interested in the problems of higher education and has also given courses in western music appreciation to M.A. students in Aesthetics and students of Indian music of the University of Bombay, notes the bio-data.

SPOTLIGHT

Well-known architect and social worker **Jamshed Aga** has been elected pre-



Jagus: receiving the ICMA award on behalf of ACC

sident of the Special Executive Magistrates Club. (*Sunday Standard*, 22 June 1980)

Noted Bombay architect, **Homi N. Dallas**, was re-elected president of the Art Society of India for 1980-81. (*Times of India*, 26 August 1980)

A doctoral degree in commerce has been awarded to **Viraf Minocher Dhalla** by the Bombay University for his thesis entitled: 'Forms control programme in selective firms with special reference to study of forms of their personnel departments.' (*Times of India*, 27 October 1980)

The first professor of Oncology to be appointed in India is **Dr. D. J. Jussawalla**, at the Tata Memorial Hospital, Bombay. He will be in charge of planning and development at the hospital and its Cancer Research Institute. (*Free Press Journal*, 3 July 1980)

Lieutenant-General A. M. Sethna has been appointed vice-chief of the Army staff. (*Times of India*, 7 July 1980).

Road Safety Patrol Officer **Khurshed Noshir Variava** of Surat is reportedly the only officer in Gujarat to get the awards for bravery, gallantry and humanity all together for the third time. A B.A. Hons. graduate in History and English from the South Gujarat University, 23 year old Variava now hopes to join the police force as an inspector in the traffic department, according to his bio-data. "It has always been my ambition to be a police inspector," says Variava.

Three Bombay students figured in the list of winners in the Bombay High Schools Badminton Championships held in August 1980. The winners in their respective age groups are **Meherzin Mistry** (senior girls) of J. B. Petit School, **Jehangir Mahaluxmiwala**

(junior boys) of Campion School, and **Farokh Irani** (sub-junior boys) of Cathedral School. (*Times of India*, 20 August 1980).

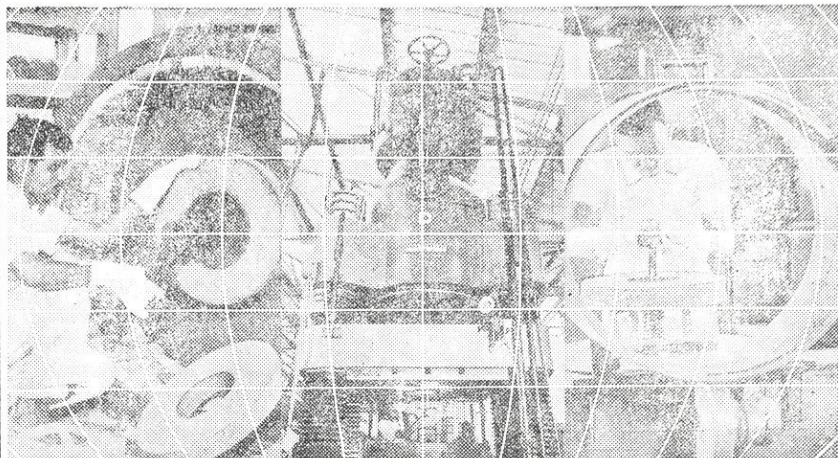
Swimmer **Persis Madon** led Maharashtra's seven-member women's team for the national aquatics, held in Lucknow, from October 8 to 12, 1980. Sixteen year old Madon, an 11th standard student of St. Xavier's College, Bombay, also won eight gold medals in this year's national age-group championships in group one (under 18). (*Times of India*, 26 September 1980)

Swimmer **Kurush Contractor**, also of St. Xavier's College, Bombay, won four events in the Inter Collegiate Aquatic Meet held at the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Olympic Pool in Bombay, in September, and retained the men's individual championship, according to newspaper reports.

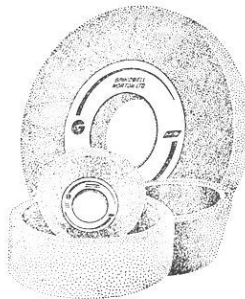
Cricketer **Farrokh Engineer** is among the 30 newly appointed honorary life members of the Marylebourne Cricket Club. Engineer has served as wicket-keeper and batsman for Lancashire. (*Indian Express*, 10 September 1980)

Rustom Havewalla, of Tata Sports Club, gained his eighth successive title of 'fastest man on wheels' on winning the 1,000 metres sprint (men's) at the 30th Maharashtra State Cycling Championships held at the Vallabh Patel Stadium, Bombay on 25-26 October 1980. Second and third runners up in the men's were Sprinters **Firdaus Irani** and **Yezdi Khambatta** respectively. **Pannese Khodabux** (MCC - Promise) bagged first place in the boy's 1,000 metres and in the women's 1,000 metres **Armin Arethna** (MCC-Promise) bagged first place, followed by **Rakshin Patel** (Sprinters). (*Times of India*, 27 October 1980).

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The Nagpur Eleven

Eleven Nagpur students were presented merit prizes by the Nagpur Parsi Anjuman on the 85th anniversary celebrations of the **Bai Heerabai Noshervanji Mullan Dar-E-Meher** in Nagpur.

"The Anjuman Dar-E-Meher celebrations were spread over five days from October 11 to 15 and were organized by the Nagpur Parsi Cricket Gymkhana, under the leadership of its President Khushroo Doongaji, helped by committee members Mehru Watchmaker and Nargis Desai, with festivities as varied as they were interesting," notes Dilnavaz Bhagwagar, *Parsianna's* Nagpur correspondent. They included a flower arranging competition, a cooking competition, an exhibition-cum-sale of embroidery and handicrafts, a quiz, a fancy dress, a dinner and a dance. "To balance the frivolities and inject a tone of religious sobriety, two evenings were devoted to lectures by Dasturji Minochehr-Homji of Bombay," adds Bhagwagar.

The prize winning students, writes Bhagwagar, are: **Mehru Hoshang Dadachanji**, for her Ph.D. thesis — The Phonetics and Phonology of Parsi-Gujarati and English — considered an original contribution of academic value in Linguistics; **Samanaz Robinton**



Karbhari : Junior Shield Award

Darukhanawalla, for passing her M.A. with Linguistics in the first division; **Dr Ruxana Dadi Dalal**, awarded the Professional Degree Course Merit Prize for passing her final MBBS examination in the first division; **Sher-e-Az Jehangir Govadia**, for standing first class first in the post-graduate diploma course in travel and tourism; **Tester Feroze Mukadam** for successfully completing a course at the ITI

in textile engineering with 72 percent; **Hiraz Keki Medhora**, **Pervin Phiroze Kotwal** and **Adil Keki Bala**, for securing the highest marks among Zoroastrian students at the B.Sc., H.Sc., and S.S.C. examinations respectively.

A special prize was awarded to 15 year old **Hoshang Behram Irani** for his outstanding performance in the short term course held at the Bhosla Military School, Nasik, during the summer of 1980. Hoshang secured a gold medal in horse riding and swimming and was selected as the best cadet out of 318 cadets, notes Bhagwagar.

The Late Seth Rustamji Bala Best All Round Sportsman shield was awarded to **Aftab Burjor Bharucha**, and the Late Bapaji Dastur championship shield for juniors went to **Rashid Feroze Karbhari**.

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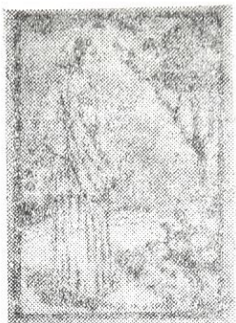
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Matchbox Midas

Arnavaz Mama



An empty matchbox, a useless contemptible castaway, may yet have a claim to fame if its label is espied by a certain pair of eyes. Those eyes belong to fair, fastidious-looking Rustom Sagar; and his cognitive fingers have retrieved many a treasure from the Taj's collection of international waste during his 34 year-old association with that bastion of good living.

Retrieved, reviewed, the minutiae of its label is mentally docketed before the box is skillfully denuded of its splendour and replaced among its lowly surroundings. Thus philumnist Sagar has built up, almost since boyhood, a priceless heritage of matchbox labels.

"Where would you like to begin?" asks Sagar and continues, "You name it, I have it." Not all the originals are on display: many have been reduced to beautiful colour transparencies. Its a lot easier to carry them this way, professionally strung into plastic encased strips and far less of a strain.

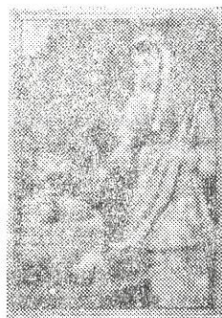
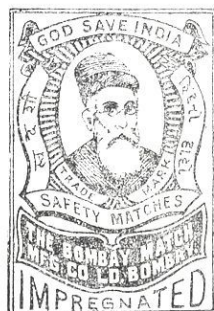
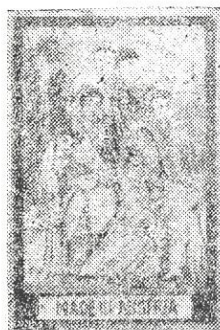


'Sagar of the Taj'

Having lost a few prized pieces in transit, Sagar seems to be chary of carrying all his treasures in one briefcase!

Printed in Austria, Sweden, Japan, Burma, India, England, the US, Canada, Czechoslovakia, China and the USSR, often bilingual, sometimes trilingual, the labels record their own tales of the social, cultural and historical changes of the 20th century. There are labels that belong to the presafety match age and others that proclaim the virtues of safety matches.

Kings, emperors and demagogues, European and oriental, hobnob together, historical enmities laid at rest under the stern eye of matriarch Victoria. There is a circus series in colour and all the sports — tennis, swimming, rowing, golf, cricket, racing. The professional series includes the rope dancer and the rickshaw-walla, the toddy tapper, leaf cutter and the *Kiimatgar* (waiter) in all the



The matchbox labels in Sagar's collection are a vivid commentary on the socio-political scene. Among the various communities depicted, the Parsis held their own: Offering *sukhad-lohan* over the *atah dadgah* was a daily ritual in Parsi homes, ladies of the community dressed in the fashion of the times; Dadabhoy Naoroji (cover) fighting for India in the British Parliament.

finery of his uniform. Victoria, Edward, Gandhi and Nehru virtually relive their lives in Sagar's albums, from youth to old age. Nor is the Nazi menace eliminated — the once ubiquitous Jack Boot finding a lone representative as befits the victory of time over people's perspectives!

But it is over Hira Jan, Manek Jan, Goher Jan and other beauties that Sagar waxes eloquent: "Have you noticed how they were named after precious stones? Look at their costumes, their features. These were the singers and actresses of those days. Did you know that Goher Jan is alive? She is an old lady now. She was featured briefly on Bombay TV not too long ago!

"Look at Khorshed", Sagar continues, "see the gold ink used. It still shines." Indeed, the meticulous detail of Sagar's collection of matchbox labels provide a resume of past craftsmanship and colour and the quality of the material that went into their production.

How does he preserve this amazing

collection from the onslaught of dust and pests? Sagar smiles. "I have to be very careful and limit handling to a minimum," he says simply.

The discernment and devotion with which Sagar has piled label on label have been amply documented. Not only have the Tata and Taj house journals eulogised, *Asia Magazine* and *Orientations* have paid colourful tribute; Sagar and his collection have also appeared on TV in the United States.

Pleasantly friendly, the Indian Hotels Company's (of which Taj is the flagship) dapper Director-Sales was for so many years the Taj's banquet manager that people instinctively ask for Sagar when they want to book a party, says the hotelier.

Rusi Sagar is the third generation of his family to serve the Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay: "My grandfather Dhunjibhoj Sagar was there from 1908 to 1914. My father Shapoorji joined in 1911 and retired in 1958. I myself joined in 1946." Thus the Sagar family has given the Taj 87

years of service — 10 years more than its own 77 years — amply justifying the legend on Sagar's visiting card: "Sagar of the Taj."

But alas, there may not always be a Sagar at the Taj: "My son Porus qualified from the Catering College and joined me here. But then he changed his mind. Now he has decided to settle in the States along with Vispi. Vispi, my elder son, is a chemical engineer."

Sagar began collecting matchbox labels largely "because everyone else collected stamps." Today, the Smithsonian Institute, USA, considers them an heirloom worth evaluating because, unlike most boys when they grow up, Sagar continued, enthusiastically, avaciously tucking fresh labels away as they came to him, as solitary finds or as mini collections from friends: "A lot of people know of my hobby" says Sagar, "so whenever they spot a matchbox with a good label, they pass it on to me..."

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News from the Media

Migration of Parsis Distresses Community

The brain drain has spread significantly to the minority Zoroastrian community in India.

An increasing number of qualified Parsis are adopting homes in Western countries with their settlements particularly marked in the U.K., the U.S. and Canada.

The trend of migration among Parsis forms a vital section of research on the socio-religious aspects of Zoroastrians made by **Dr. Cyrus R. Pangborn**, professor of comparative religion at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

Dr. Pangborn, an acknowledged Indologist, has virtually finalised his findings and his manuscript for publication titled *Zoroastrianism — a beleaguered faith* is ready.

Dr. Pangborn has been in Bombay for a week talking of his research with leaders of the Parsi community and with publishers for an Indian edition of the study.

The American scholar's research has taken nine years and has involved discussion with leading Parsis in Bombay, Surat, Navsari, Hyderabad, Calcutta, Allahabad and Ududa, the St. Peters of Parsis, keeping the oldest of fires in Parsi temples.

Settlements of Parsis have been springing up at an amazing speed in London, Vancouver, Toronto, New York, Chicago and Washington.

The migration of Parsis is particularly disquieting to the community which has been losing 10 per cent of its population because of the death rate overtaking the birth rate.

Punning on the plight of Parsis, Dr Pangborn said: "The current demographic pattern has frightened the community to death."

Leaders of the Parsi community in India have been concerned over their declining numbers. Its existing strength is placed at 90,000, thrice that of Iran, which has the next largest number of Zoroastrians. England has

3,000 which is also the combined number of the U.S. and Canada.

Recently, Jamshed Guzder, president of the Indian Merchants' Chamber, described Parsis as a "vanishing tribe" in view of the community's exceptional pattern of shrinking population.

The population of Parsis has been declining because of the deferment of marriages. The average age of a bride was 30 years and the males put off marriages still further, according to Dr. Pangborn.

The postponement of marriages is owing to the delay in earning a "decent income" and gaining residential accommodation. This delay also induced young Parsis to stay single as evidenced by the growing number of bachelors and spinsters.

The stimulus to migration is provided by better job prospects abroad. The early emigrants invite and sponsor the ones left behind at home.

Dr. Pangborn finds emigrant Parsis adapting themselves to their new homes abroad quite easily because of their familiarity with Western mores and the facility of communication through the medium of English.

Migration is also inspired by the impoverished state of Parsis. Some 40 per cent of the community members have to be supported on some sort of aid or the other, Dr. Pangborn observed.

Although the situation appears hopeless, Dr. Pangborn has an optimistic prognosis to make. He considers the present sense of urgency to trigger a "renaissance" in the community.

Except for some diehards along the western Indian seaboard, most Parsis are becoming more liberal, making widespread compromises on socio-religious matters.

The migrating Parsis, for instance, are believed to accept priests outside the hereditary confines. The orthodox among them, however, insist on people from priestly lineage to perform temple rituals.

Priests at Parsi temples abroad are generally "moonlighters", the ones who work for a living and are trained to perform rituals when called upon to do so.

The emigrants are also less rigid in their attitude to inter-community marriages so long as the inducted members participate in the Parsi association activities. The associations, holding progressive ideas, are deemed to be instruments of the desired social change.

Dr. Pangborn's choice of Zoroastrianism for study has been based on the threat of the religion's extinction and inadequate study of it so far. "I also chose Zoroastrianism because other religions have been studied so much in depth that they are 'burned-out territory,'" he said.

Dr. Pangborn has also studied Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and modern religious movements like the Ramakrishna order, the Arya Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj. He was the only Western invitee at the centenary celebrations of Swami Vivekananda.

R. K. RANGAN

(Times of India 13.8.80)

Vanishing Parsis

I have read the report about the migration of Parsis in your paper (August 13/14). I do not agree with Dr. Pangborn's prognosis about the Parsi community nor with the observation that Parsis are a vanishing race.

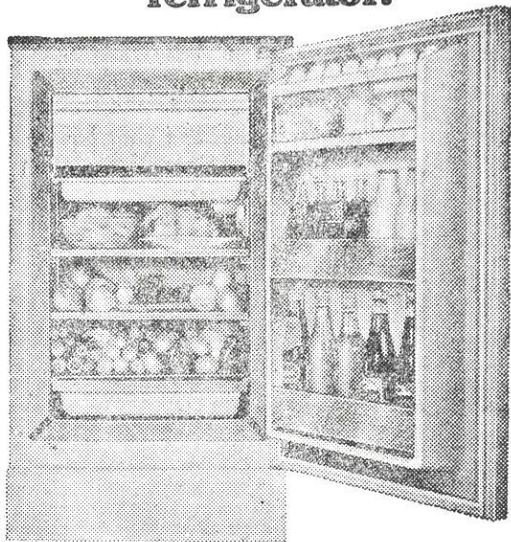
First, Parsis are not a race. We are a community of India, small indeed but which has been playing its part in the political, economic and educational development of our great country of which we are very much a part and parcel. It may be noted that Parsis as a minority community of India had never asked for separate representation in any elected body.

The Parsis are not "vanishing" by any means, just because our numbers continue to remain small. We are playing as important a role as ever before in the life of the nation. It is true we had played a pioneering role in the growth of industry, commerce, shipping, banking, education and in various professional fields. Today, because our larger sister communities have come up, the role may appear to be numerically small. But none the less it is significant.

Just because some Parsis are going abroad to earn a lavish living, there is no reason to feel that the community is going down the drain at home. I am not in favour of such "outgoings", but I certainly do not regard it as a matter of vital concern affecting the future of our community. After all, Zoroastrianism is one of the several great religions of our country which is the world's largest secular democracy, Hindus, Muslims, Jains, Sikhs and members of other faiths who live abroad practise their religions there. So do Parsis living abroad.

The matter we are certainly concerned about is our poverty. A mistaken impression generally prevails that the Parsis are a well-off commu-

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ity. We are not by any yardstick. The Parsis are as poor proportionately as any of our sister communities. Sixty percent of the Parsis live below the poverty line. Over 1000 Parsis in Bombay sleep on the footpaths or in our fire temple premises or compounds. We have lands and funds—some of them are lying uselessly locked up with the Parsi Panchayat—but we are not building for the poor as we should. Unemployment is another bugbear, being an all India problem, affecting the Parsis as any other community.

All these do affect the growth rate, but it is far better to have a restricted community like a small family, than a bigger one we cannot afford. Nor is the small size of the community cause for any distress. It is by no means affecting the importance or the contribution of the community towards national welfare.

HOMI J. H. TELYARKHAN
(Times of India 14.8.80)

Lament for a King

Since the death of the Shah of Iran I have been seething with frustration at not being able to voice my opinion on this subject. But I decided to give vent to my feelings after reading Mr. A. Radhakrishna's letter "Death of a King" (IE, Aug. 2). He has voiced my own thoughts. If he as an outsider can do so, I, who had roots in Iran, having lived there, having all my ancestors from that country, should be able also to express my true feelings.

I am surprised that not a kind word was uttered by any Indian on the death of the Shah of Iran. I realise that all countries, because of the "black gold," have to be diplomatic; but to what extent?

Has anyone noticed that most of those who have been executed in Iran have Zoroastrian-Iranian names? That all these unfortunates like Hoveda and the rest were originally followers of Zarathustra and that their forefathers had to either flee the country or embrace Islam at the point of the sword 1,300 years ago. Even the Shah's father and his father's father favoured the Zarathusthi sect and that is why the mullahs were never given the upper hand. True, after embracing Islam they respected that religion and its precepts; but Iran was never ever an Islamic country till the Turks and the Arabs invaded it 1,300 years ago.

Who were Jamshed, Shapoor, Xerxes, Darius and Cyrus the Great? They were all followers of Zarathustra. The Parsees from India were invited to come back to their ancient homeland

by the Shah, and to make Iran their home again. They were given much respect and all facilities to this end. This aggravated the animosity of the Muslims, especially the mullahs. When the Shah refused to let the mullahs crown him and his Queen, that was the last straw!

During the famous celebrations of the Cyrus centenary at Persepolis everybody who was somebody from every country was invited, including from India. It is sad to relate that after eating the salt at the Shah's table neither India nor any country has expressed sorrow at the Shah's demise. President Sadat, may God shower blessings on his family now and always, befriended the Shah. Even though his country was not wholly self-sufficient, nothing stopped him from doing the right thing.

It was deplorable to observe that even the most devout pro-Shah Iranians who own restaurants in Bombay could not down their shutters in grief on the day the Shah died for fear that the talons of the Khomeini Government would reach across the seas to destroy them.

BATHSHEBA SOPARKAR
(Indian Express 22.8.80)

Award for Fire Chief

The Chief Fire Officer of the Bombay fire brigade, L. S. D. Mehervanji, has been awarded the President's Fire Services Medal for distinguished service.

Mehervanji joined the fire brigade 30 years ago and was promoted to Divisional Fire Officer in 1969 and Deputy Chief Fire Officer three years later. Before joining the fire brigade he was in the auxiliary fire service and was seriously injured in the 1944 Bombay Docks explosion. This did not deter him from resuming his duties once he was on his legs.

He has been concerned with almost every major house collapse and fire and the rescue of hundreds of people. He was the recipient of the Police Medal in 1975 for meritorious service and the Municipal Corporation gave him a silver medal for his extraordinary gallantry.

(Free Press Journal 15.8.80)

Surat Leader Killed

Nariman Pithawala, former vice-president of the Surat district panchayat, was reportedly bashed up at Chalthan village this morning. He succumbed to his injuries at the civil hospital, Surat, shortly before noon.

Pithawala was badly mauled and his body was found about 85 feet

away—from the battered car, which had skidded into a field after collision with a truck. Ramanlal alias Gumla, the driver of the truck, later reported to the Palsana police that the accident occurred while he was trying to save a goat.

Only yesterday, Pithawala had complained to the Surat rural police about Gumla and the complaint had been forwarded to the Palsana police with instructions to prepare for externing Gumla, an alleged bootlegger. Gumla, it was said, was employed years ago as a driver in Pithawala's poultry unit, but he was later sacked. Subsequently, he was reported to have taken to bootlegging. The truck is registered in the name of Shantibhai Patel, brother-in-law of Gumla.

The incident occurred while Pithawala was driving to his poultry office at Chalthan from his Navsari residence. While the staff members of his office were waiting for him, Guni, a Halpati servant girl, who had accompanied Pithawala in his car, ran to the poultry unit shouting that Pithawala had been beaten up. Guni had not been traced yet. She seems to have run away during the confusion after the incident.

A man then rushed to the spot of the 'mishap' down the road and they found Pithawala bleeding. He was lying on the road supporting himself on his palms. When the police reached the site, following a complaint by the son of Pithawala's aide, some bamboos were seen lying on the road. One of his chappals was on his leg, while the other was not seen. He was rushed to the hospital. A file and a bag were found missing.

Pithawala's assistant, Nashi Ahmed, claimed that some eight to ten people battered Pithawala and ran away. After the incident, Jinabhai Darji, a former GPCC (I) president, demanded an inquiry. In a statement, he noted that Pithawala had recently been campaigning against bootleggers in the Chalthan area.

Pithawala who has been associated with the Surat district poultry co-operative society, was a former director of the district co-operative bank. Over the years, he has reportedly clashed with big landlords while supporting the cause of landless *Adivasis*.

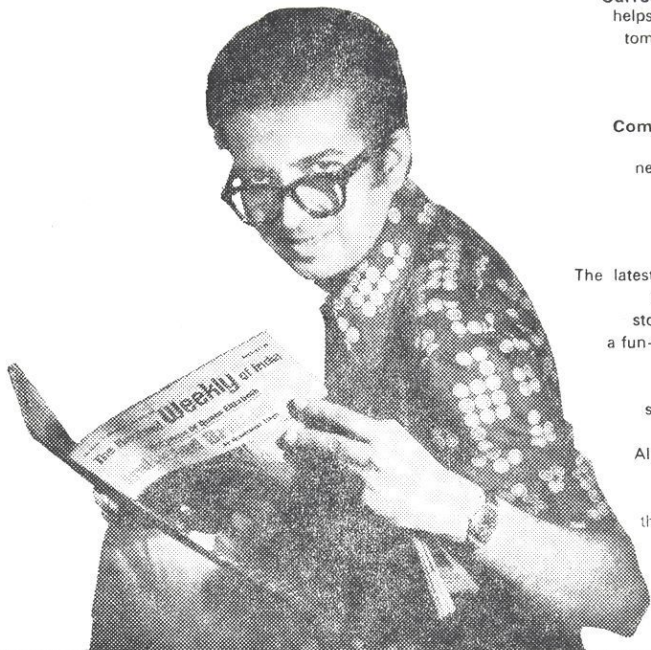
Six persons have been arrested in connection with the murder, according to reports.

Pithawala is survived by his father, his two sisters, two brothers and wife.

(Times of India 3.9.1980)

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Life Terms for 3: Parsi Couple Murder

Additional Sessions Judge B. S. Govakar on Tuesday convicted Shivaji Amarnath, Murli Yellappa and Amrappa Gopalappa and sentenced them to life imprisonment on charges of house trespass by night, robbery and murder of an elderly Parsi couple at Gamdevi, Bombay, on December 27, 1978.

Shera, 85, and her husband, Feroze Nagarwala, 86, the deceased, used to reside with Shera's brother, Framroze Dhondy, at Dhanesh Mansion, Gamdevi. At the time of the crime, their niece, Ms. Roshan Mehta, was also staying in the flat to look after her father, Mr. Dhondy, who had turned blind.

Roshan and her father slept in the living room and the elderly couple slept in a room adjacent to the rear side door.

In the morning of December 28, 1978, Shera did not open the rear door as usual for Hari, their domestic servant. Hari, therefore, rang the doorbell at the main entrance and Roshan let him in.

When Roshan and Hari went to wake up Shera, they found Shera and Feroze lying with their hands tied with cloth pieces and blood oozing from their mouths. They were apparently dead.

Their bedroom had been ransacked during the night. An autopsy revealed the cause of death to be asphyxia due to throttling and suffocation.

Amarnath, an ex-servant of the Nagarwalas, was arrested at night on the following day (December 28) at Dadar railway station as he was about to board a train to Gulbarga in Karnataka. Murli was arrested a few hours later near the V.T. railway station and the third accused, Gopalappa, was arrested at his native place of Gurguntha in Karnataka on January 3, 1979.

There was also a fourth accused in the case, one Mohammed Hanif, who was absconding for seven to eight months after the incident. Hence, evidence against him was not found sufficient for conviction and he was acquitted.

The investigations were carried out by PI B. G. Salunke, PSIs A. R. Tambaku, V. B. Sharma and P. S. Gokhale and PCs T. P. Shaikh, P. M. Ikke and L. K. Bhiwangede.

(Indian Express 13.9.1980)

Gruesome Murder in Vatcha Fire Temple

The Vatcha fire temple in Bombay was

the scene of a gruesome murder in the early hours this morning.

Cawas Elavia (45), a devoted servant working in the Agiary since years, was reportedly stabbed on the chest 12 times and dumped into a well, when he attempted to stop a newly-hired servant from stealing silver utensils belonging to the temple.

According to a police source, the alleged murderer, Homi Karanjia had been employed on a temporary basis by the Agiary just a few days before the Pateti festival last week.

It is understood that at about 2 a.m., Homi went up to the first floor of the Agiary to break open a cupboard and steal valuable silver utensils. Cawas, who was asleep, was disturbed by the sound and caught Homi red-handed, it was alleged.

According to reports, Cawas, raised an alarm, it was stated, but his voice was not heard downstairs as Homi had carefully preplanned the theft and had shut the windows. The accused reportedly, then hid himself under the staircase and as Cawas was descending, stabbed him on the chest repeatedly. After that, the accused allegedly tied a big stone with a white sheet on Cawas's leg and threw the body into the Agiary well.

According to inquiries by the police, Homi then panicked and went to meet Dasturji Dadina, head priest of the Vatcha Agiary, who had gone over to the Banaji Agiary nearby. Homi is said to have told the priest that Cawas had been kidnapped by some men. The priest then lodged a complaint with the police.

It is learnt that Homi slipped off and Dasturji Dadina then went in a taxi towards V.T. to find him. At 3.30 a.m., reportedly, Homi was found in the Modikhana area and arrested.

The accused was brought to the Vatcha Agiary, where he reportedly confessed to the crime and pointed out the well, where the body had been thrown. The fire brigade was summoned to take out the body.

The Palton Road police are investigating the case.

(Times of India 3.9.80)

Great Ship-Builder

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B. P. DASTUR,
(Indian Express 5-9-1980)

Died : Ardeshtir Rustamji Irani, alias Kelisetsh, 66, a former president of the Igatpuri Municipal council and businessman of Kalyan, Maharashtra, of a heart attack on 26 August 1980, according to a report in *The Free Press Journal*, dated 29 August 1980. The paper added that cinema houses at Kalyan and Ambarnath and the Kalyan market remained closed for a day as a mark of respect.

Died : Freany Wadia, 81, joint honorary treasurer and one of the founders of All India Animal Welfare Association. According to a report in *The Free Press Journal*, dated 18 June 1980, the Managing Committee of the All India Animal Welfare Association called a meeting to mourn Wadia's death. A recipient of the Indian Government's Prani Mitra award in 1967, Wadia, notes the newspaper, was instrumental in the improvement of the conditions at the Lethal Chambers and the Slaughter Houses and the minimising of cruelties at these places.

"It was a common sight to see her pass through streets, followed by a large number of dogs almost reminiscent of St. Francis of Assisi," noted *The Journal*.

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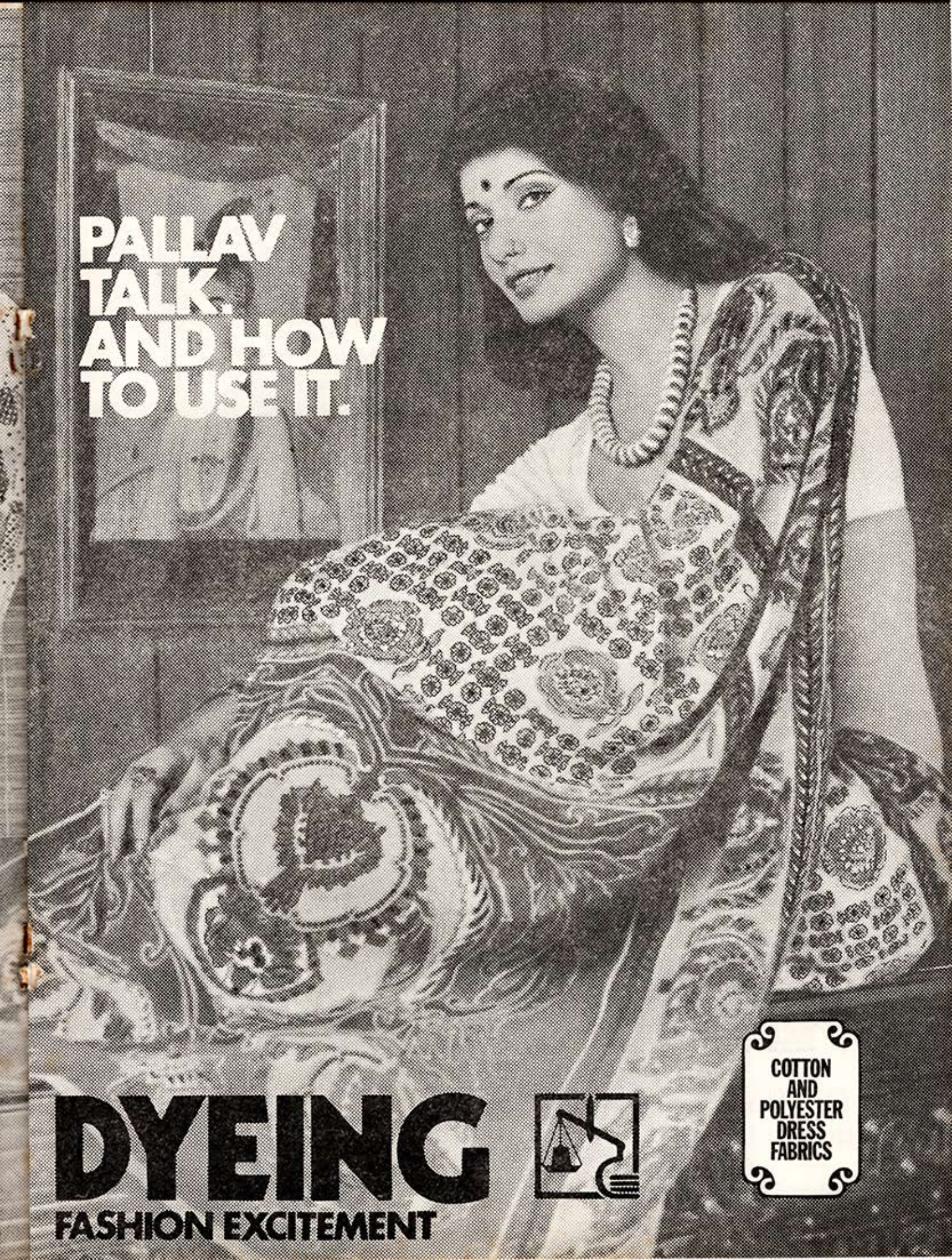
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BPP ELECTIONS

"The winds of change"

Till early October it appeared that the forthcoming Bombay Parsi Panchayat Anjuman Committee elections would be a cake-walk for BPP Chairman B. K. Boman-Behram and Trustee Dr Nelie Noble. The community at large was ignorant of the impending 31st December deadline for voter registration and those who wished to form an opposition were unclear how to proceed.

But then a small group of concerned individuals who had been meeting at intervals since a year prior, decided to take up the challenge. Meeting in an office once a week in the evenings, they called themselves the Committee for Electoral Rights (CER) and their prime objective was to enrol as many Parsis as possible on to the electoral rolls.

In a leaflet entitled "Do You Know?" which was distributed to Parsis throughout Bombay and reprinted in the Parsi press, the Committee noted that in the 1974 Anjuman Committee elections, only three percent of the community voted and that "most Parsis do not know how the election system works."

"We felt alarmed at the lack of interest displayed by the average Parsi Zoroastrian in Bombay," said Jamshed Kanga, an Indian Administrative Service official and convener of the group. Kanga, along with 29 other prominent Parsis, wrote and circulated a letter ('Need for Change,' *Parsiana* June 1980) pointing out the ills in the present election system and suggesting reforms.

Several of the signatories, namely Noshir Sidhva, managing director of Grindwell Norton, Behram Hathi-khanawala, a director in the same company, Homi Kanga, an executive in Philips, Tehmtan Andhyarujina, Dadi Engineer, Dara Zaiwalla and Sohrab Morris, all prominent lawyers, and others formed the CER core group and chalked out a programme of Sunday morning meetings in the various Parsi neighbourhoods as well as a public meeting at Cowasjee Jehangir Hall on 28th December. Aided by a group of about 30 public spirited persons from various parts of Bombay, CER started a door-to-door,

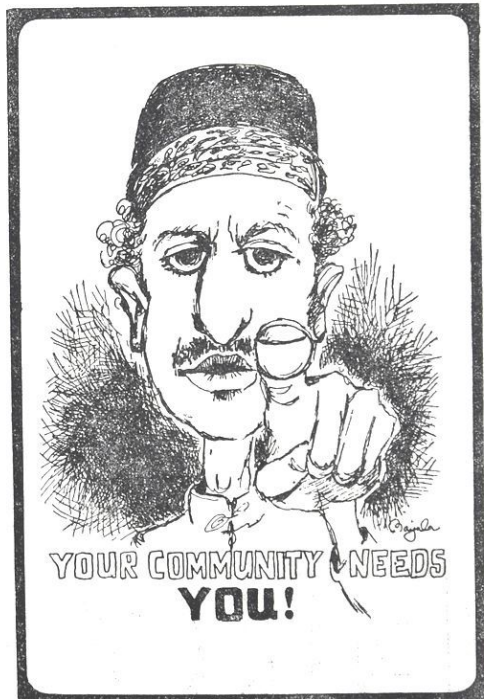
office-to-office registration drive.

No sooner had the voter registration campaign begun, than the CER faced a barrage of criticism from the Boman-Behram — Noble and other opposition camps through letters in the conservative Gujarati daily, *The Jame-Jamshed*, that alleged the CER members were reformers who were out to destroy the religious customs and practices and that the old ways were the best and should be continued. The letters alleged that the CER was a front for Shiavax Vakil, the controversial former trustee of the BPP, Rustom Gagrati, a noted critic of the Panchayat and Jehan Daruwalla, the Editor of *The Bombay Samachar*, the prestigious Gujarati daily that espouses liberal causes.

Even Nani Palkhivala, the noted jurist and India's former ambassador

to the U.S.A., was not spared from the smear campaign for stating his views on the community in an article in the *Samachar*. "We do not think that the recent tirade of Nani Palkhivala against our customs and the Panchayat was a mere coincidence," noted a letter in the *Jame*, linking Palkhivala's name to the CER.

Undaunted by the criticism, Palkhivala publicly stated his support to the CER. "CER deserves the support of the entire community. It is a group of individuals who are sacrificing their time and energy to bring about an awakening in the community regarding its right as voters. Perhaps the plight of the Parsi community was never so desperate within living memory as it is now. Only the official leaders of the community who have control and management of the vast



charities existing for Parsis can possibly implement broad-based schemes for the amelioration of the community."

From the beginning the CER faced an uphill task. Obtaining the registration forms in sufficient quantities involved a meeting with Boman-Behram, who sanctioned 5,000 forms on condition that further forms be given on these being filed.

The community by and large was either apathetic or hostile at the mention of the Panchayat. Only when they were told they had a chance to improve matters and participate in the decision making process, did they relent. Added to CER's difficulties was an archaic and complicated electoral procedure which few could comprehend and in which money played the dominant role.

The A, B, C, of the BPP

For years the Panchayat had made no attempt to acquaint Parsis with their rights aside from the mandatory notices in the Gujarati papers. The electoral scheme, laid out by the Bombay High Court in 1910 and subsequently amended, permits Parsi Zoroastrians over the age of 21 an indirect vote for the trustees.

There are two registers of voters who elect the trustees directly, the 'F' Register comprising of people who have donated Rs. 5,000 or over to the BPP and the 'E' Register. These two registers form the Anjuman Committee. The 'E' Register comprises of three other registers, namely 'A', that is people who have donated Rs. 500, 'C', university graduates and 'D' all those over the age of 21. On a proportional representative basis, the A, C and D registers elect people to the 'E' Register.

The number of people on the 'E' Register is determined by the number of donors on the 'F' Register. Therefore, if the number of donors is 300 in December 1980, the number of candidates elected to the 'E' Register on February 21, the date of the elections, will be 300. Thereafter, the 'E' Register will remain constant at 300 till 1988, but the 'F' Register will continue to grow. As a result, it will be those with bought votes who will be in the majority when electing a trustee to the Panchayat board.

In the 1974 election, Noble, a medical practitioner and social worker, who along with Boman-Behram had formed 'The Independent Orthodox' party, had submitted 1,000 registration applications on the last date of enrollment. When the Panchayat reportedly refused to accept them, Boman-Behram, who was convalescing

at home, went to the Panchayat office to see the forms were accepted. The Anjuman Pax, the opposition party, took the matter to court alleging the forms were presented after the Panchayat's office hours and that the electoral rolls were not properly maintained.

The Bombay High Court, however, turned down their plea for preventing the trustees from holding the election and the Pax then called for a boycott of the elections. In that election the main plank of The Independent Orthodox was that the religion was in danger and the threat was Shrivastav Vakil. Vakil had issued a statement on the Towers of Silence noting that while he believed in *dokhmanashini*, the ancient system of disposal was not working to satisfaction in Bombay.

Dharam Danger

Once again Boman-Behram, Noble and others are raising the same 'religion in danger' cry. But this time they will have to convince a larger number of more knowledgeable voters that the CER, which states that religious issues should be decided by the priests and the community at large, is a threat to the 'dharam.'

Boman-Behram, a lawyer and former mayor of Bombay, and Noble, a disciple of the late mystical leader Minocher Pundole, made it clear they would not give up their hold on the E Register without a fight. Applications of Parsi women professing the Zoroastrian faith but married to non-Parsi were rejected by the Panchayat staff on orders from the two trustees. Only when the issue threatened to explode and the applicants turned to lawyers, did the two relent but not before demanding the applicants sign sworn affidavits pertaining to their religious beliefs.

Another controversy arose over the 'A' Register which comprises those who have donated Rs. 500 and over to the Panchayat. The Rayomand Committee, which had collected several lakhs of rupees for housing on behalf of the Panchayat and who had been told by BPP Trustee Jamshed N. Guzder that they would be entitled to have their names on the 'A' or 'F' Register depending on the amount of money donated, found when they applied for membership, that Boman-Behram and Noble opposed their applications. They charged that the Rayomand Committee was not entitled to this right. Guzder managed to forge a compromise, requesting the donors to state the money could be attributed to a Panchayat account for housing at the proposed Godrej Baug instead of the Rayomand Committee

fund. Here also because of the intense distrust among the community at large towards the Panchayat, many of the Rayomand Committee members refused to sign the compromise note.

Noble's Pundolite group swept the 'A' Register in the 1974 poll and if the Rayomand Committee members were to be enrolled on the 'A' Register, Noble would lose her hold on those seats.

In addition to Boman-Behram and Noble's groups, which appear to have an electoral alliance, the other major groups in the fray, include the Anjuman Pax, Boman-Behram's old party prior to 1973 which for years controlled the 'E' Register, and Ms Meher Master-Moos' party which is concentrating on the 'C' graduates Register.

Boman-Behram's second term of trusteeship expires in December 1981 and he is expected to stand for another ten year term. Ms Moos, a lawyer by profession is the founder of the Mazdayasnie Monasterie mystical school of thought.

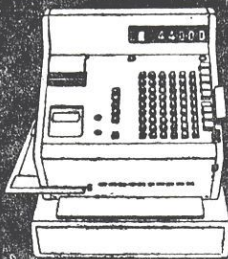
None of the other groups reportedly are holding public meetings, possibly to avoid questioning as to their stand on the various issues and because they have no stated plan or programme chalked out for the community's ills.

The measure of CER's success could be gauged by the voter registration figures which shot up from around 7,000 to over 20,000 in less than three months, a figure the Panchayat had not been able to achieve in over 20 years as registration is for life. The BPP staff worked on Sundays and other holidays to clear the applications.

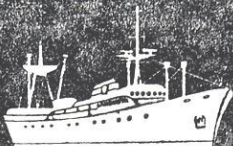
At the C. J. Hall meeting Trustee Guzder said that for years the Panchayat had been protected from change. Now he said "the winds of change" had finally come to the Dickensian office of the Panchayat where for even a 50 rupee dole seven trustees had to reportedly sanction the amount. A retired IAS officer, R. K. Anklesaria would be the BPP's first chief executive, relieving the trustees of the day to day routine of the office and permitting them to concentrate on the larger issues, said Guzder.

"We do not feel today that the Panchayat lacks resources...What it lacks is the proper managerial system that will make the organization more effective and capable in preparing long term schemes for tackling the community's problems," said Kanga at the meeting. To that extent, the community without casting a single vote, had already set the Panchayat on the right path.

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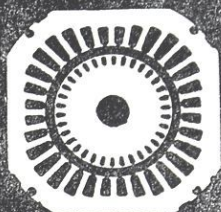


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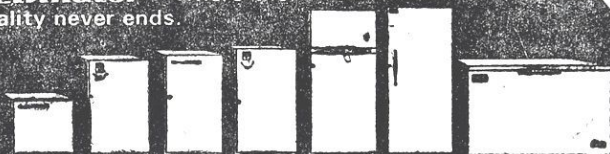
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THE TOWERS OF BABEL?

A new dimension has been added to the perennial controversy over the disposal of the dead, namely, how silent should the Towers of Silence be.

The issue was raised on *Farvardin Roj, Farvardin Mah*, (13 September 1980), the most sacred day for the remembrance of the dead, when a group of well-intentioned Parsis decided to hold a *Hama-Anjuman Jashan* and *Humbandagi* at the Ichhaporia Pavilion at Bombay's Doongarwadi. According to newspaper reports and letters from readers in *The Bombay Samachar*, the prestigious Gujarati daily which espouses liberal causes, the organizers, Rustom B. F. Kuka, Naval R. Unwalla of the Zoroastrian Colony Association, Chikalwadi and Dinshaw A. Merchant of the Andheri Zoroastrian Association obtained permission from the Bombay Parsi Panchayat to use microphones and loud speakers at a low volume.

"This function was attended by nearly 2,000 persons and the capacity of the Ichhaporia Pavilion is less than

"In this case nobody can substitute for me. This prayer is intimately personal."

1,000 persons," wrote the organizers in a letter to *The Bombay Samachar* issue of 5 October 1980. "This means that 50 per cent of the people who wanted to participate in the *Hama-Anjuman Jashan* and *Humbandagi* were sitting outside the Pavilion. One will appreciate that it is not possible to keep the attention of the participating public focussed on the prayers recited by Dasturji Saheb Kaikobad Dastur (of Udvada) without the aid of a microphone... It is a common experience of many that when we go to our Atash Behrams, Agiaries and Doongarwadi, we do hear fellow worshippers or the priest offering their prayers rather loudly. But this does not mean that we should admonish others by telling them what they should do."

Critics, however, charged that the occupation of the pavilion and the use of microphones "hurt the sentiments and feelings of a number of Parsis who had come to Doongarwadi to pay their homage to the dead," noted Sohrab M. Dastur in a letter to *The Samachar* of 21 September, that initially sparked off the controversy.

"We talk of sound pollution, we pride ourselves on being civilized and yet we do not allow our other co-religionists to say their prayers at the Doongarwadi in peace," editorialized *Samachar* Editor Jehan Daruwalla.

But several participants of the public function strongly differed. "Such public functions reinforce our communal ties and revive our ancient traditions," wrote Jamshed Modi of the Havrashta Foundation. Peshotan Nargolwala, an active community worker felt the volume of the microphones was too low and "that occasionally the persons sitting outside the pavilion complained that they could barely hear the prayers... the chairs and the loudspeaker system were supplied at no cost... some of the mobeds did not accept the *ashodad*."

Two other letters one by Shirin Manekshaw and another by N. Z. Kooka, readers of *The Samachar*, raised the issue of communal versus individual prayer on an occasion to remember the dead. "I have been praying for the soul of my dear departed husband and son for years," wrote Ms Manekshaw. "For saying other prayers, I avail myself of the paid services of our Mobed *sahebs*... in this case nobody can substitute for me. This prayer is intimately personal. Apart from saying prayers, myself and many like me meditate and recall the loving memories of our beloved ones. It may be that the organizers meant well. Perhaps they thought that *Humbandagi* would give greater solace to bereaved persons and lend dignity to the occasion... Two thousand voices do not help me."

Kooka noted in his letter "that some of the organizers with whom I had a talk argued that disturbances are everywhere, in the Agiaries, Atash Behrams and even at Doongarwadi where hundreds of Parsis gather... does it however mean such disturbances should be officially encouraged and even organized... for many, many years, we have been used to praying by ourselves... when the *Humbandagi* is meant to be heard by 2,000 persons, it would be loud enough to shatter the solitude of individual devotees... for such purposes we do not need high priests or mobeds. We have been leaving too much of our prayers and ceremonies to the priestly class. So much so we have forgotten to pray for ourselves."

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Desai: declining trend

World Congress Papers

Social and Cultural Survey

THE WILL TO LIVE

Sapur F. Desai

Sapur Desai, a former joint-secretary of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat is an authority on Parsi demography, having written several books on the subject. His paper on the 'Social and Cultural Survey of Zoroastrians in the Recent Past and Suggestions for the Future,' entitled 'A Worm's Eye View,' was among the six papers presented on the subject at the Third World Zoroastrian Congress held in Bombay in January 1978. We carry below an abridged version of his paper. The other five papers on the 'Social and Cultural Survey' appeared in the May, July and August issues of *Parsiiana*.

In a short compass at our disposal we shall deal with that part of the population that is comprised in Maharashtra and Gujarat, insofar as its demographic and social trends are concerned and make a general statement or reference to several artifacts of culture common to all.

Social Structure

Starting as a small community of refugees over 1200 years ago in this country the Parsis reached their maximum growth, in 1941, see table below:

Parsi Population 1891-1971 with Variation Percent.

Year	No. of Parsis	Percent $\pm$ Variation
1891	89,887	—
1901	94,190	+ 4.79
1911	100,096	+ 6.27
1921	101,778	+ 1.68
1931	109,752	+ 7.83
1941	114,890	+ 4.68
1951	111,791	— 2.70
1961	100,772	— 9.86
1971	91,266	— 9.9

While discounting the decrease shown in 1951 on account of the partition of India, there has been a constant declining trend. This trend may have many facets to expose, the main ones being physiological, sociological, psychological and migratory. The community is slithering at the rate of 10 percent a decade in the last two census decades. At the present rate, the next 75 years will see us a paltry 40,000 or may be less. As it is we are today in India what we were in 1891, almost 90 years ago.

The recruitment at the entry point of life is growing meagre from decade to decade. In 1911 for every 100 persons there were 28 persons in the age group 0 to 15; in 1961 it was 18, (for every 100) i.e., 10 percent down. The community gained, however, in its

The population is aging, a factor one has to take into account if we are planning for the future.

population above the age of 51. The old age population had doubled. Obviously the population is aging, a factor that one has to take into account if we are planning for the future.

The mean age of males and females in 1911 was 28.80 and 28.60 respectively; it rose to 37.00 and 37.50 respectively in 1961. Again the mean age at marriage was 29.08 (males) and 24.30 (females) in 1901. It rose to 31.38 and 26.55 respectively in 1961.

In 1971 the total number of Parsis recorded in India was 91,000 and in Greater Bombay 64,000 approximately.

In 1901 the percentage of Parsis living in Bombay in relation to their total population in the country was

49 percent. In 1961 (the ratio had) increased to 69 percent and in 1971 it stood at 71 percent. Taking the country as a whole the Parsis are over 95 percent urbanized. It is left to the community to consider where the Parsis will be in A.D. 2000 when the Indian population may have reached anywhere from 80 to 100 crores (800 to 1000 million) and the world population over 6000 million.

We are today in India what we were in 1891, almost 90 years ago.

Gujarat Rurals

At one time Gujarat was the reservoir of talent and adventure and that was what made Bombay what it is today. That part of the Parsi population has now fallen on bad days. There is depletion everywhere. In 1961, the Parsi population of Gujarat was a little under 18,000. In 1971 it was recorded about 2,500 less, mostly due to migration. Mobility between Bombay and Gujarat has been very high. The result is that what is spent on the growing period of the child and adulthood is a clear loss to the local community (when) the youth goes elsewhere to earn and spend.

At one time the Bombay and Surat Panchayets ran through a gamut of vocal exercises along with other Anjumans to do something for the Gujarat Parsis, especially the rural population. The 1967 survey made a surprising revelation — of the 754 families having nearly 25,000 acres of land, most were burdened with debts to the extent of 57 percent, and that of the 1,100 families 3.5 percent were found to be affluent, 16.1 percent

comfortable, 43 percent with just sufficient income, 28.1 percent with barely sufficient income and 9.3 percent half-starved. The last two categories not only needed outside help but the medium group (43 percent) needed help to keep its head above water, to avoid sinking below the poverty line. The two punchayets after having talked a lot with other local Anjumans petered off in to an unfathomable silence. If anything, today the situation must be worse as perhaps our Gujarat delegates alone can show. It is time the community woke up to its duty.

Steps to be Taken

What steps can we take to set the matter right? First is a population register. For a small community it is not very difficult, provided every family participates actively and passes on the requisite information, which will remain confidential. Bombay can take a lead in the matter.

Second is a marriage loan programme. Today a number of young people postpone marriage until they are able to earn well. A marriage loan programme can set them up on their feet at an early age. A further inducement to marry early could be by way of amortisation of the debt on the birth of each child on a graded scale and a guarantee to look after the children's education upto university or vocational stage, if parents cannot meet the expenses.

At one time one used to see with satisfaction a large force of Parsi butlers serving the guests.

Third is housing. The crux comes in here, more so in congested Bombay. If Bombay keeps attracting Parsis there is no way out but to provide housing. Today, we fear, there are over 500 couples looking for a place to live in and get married or settled. There may be others who live in joint or extended families in small flats who cannot bear or refrain from bearing children. Consider the numerical loss to the community if the couples postpone marriage till they find a place or postpone bearing children, till they have a decent place to live in.

Fourth is a marriage counselling bureau. At a not very distant date, the community must go in for counselling. In a sprawling city like Bombay, there are hardly any opportunities for the young to meet and know

The first four days ceremonies on death are crippling in their expenses, indeed a nightmare for the poor and even the middle-class.

each other. And now that a number of them are emigrating, their children in time will find it more difficult. A properly kept record in a confidential place can go a long way to meet this urgent need. Remember if there is no marriage, there are no children; if there is late marriage, there are fewer children. The minimum should be at least three children to maintain equilibrium of number. The more the better.

Fifth, children born in the community should be the wards of the community. There are some 1,500 Parsi charitable trusts, which could if properly coordinated, look after all the children's needs from the prenatal to the post-college stage, besides acting as the welfare pool of the community.

Sixth is genetic counselling. This requires a professional set-up and absolutely confidential treatment and administration preferably in a hospital. Genetic disadvantages arising out of dreaded diseases can be minimised or avoided altogether by intelligent counselling.

The billion rupee question is: Do the Parsis want to survive? Though a slow breeder, the community not only survived for 1200 years but also made its mark in the last 300 (or so) years. Are we to lose this historical perspective and be second class citizens in our land of adoption, merely because this generation cannot see beyond its nose?

Cultural Aspect

Culture is a thing that does not grow out of nothing. It is an accumulation of all knowledge and belief and all that goes as human endeavour, a product of the interaction of environmental and physical forces over the ages and more particularly in the milieu in which a society lives. There is no doubt the Parsis have acquired several cultural aspects of Indian origin and as time wears on, some of these cling and others get loosened or lost.

Marriage and Inheritance

We do not know if the forbears that touched the shores of India brought with them their book of laws. Even if they went by the word of the patriarch, in such matters the word was

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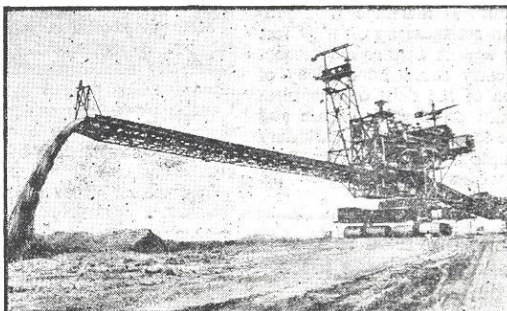
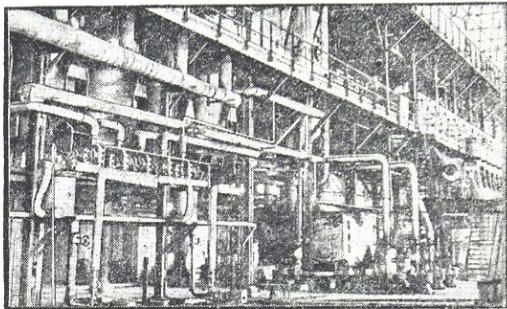
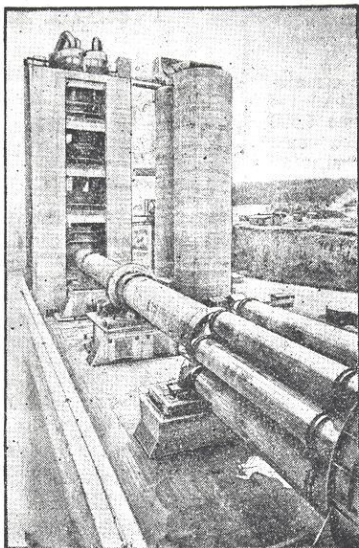
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lost or forgotten in time to come; the Iranian concept of monogamy became a thing of the past for the subsequent generations. It was from A.D. 1478 onwards that the Parsis of India began to learn from the Zoroastrians of Iran about Zoroastrian traditions.

It was not till over 100 years ago that the Bombay Parsis became conscious of their own personal laws, like those of the Hindus and Moslems, and started to agitate. Today (since 1865) we have two sets of laws, Marriage and Divorce, and Inheritance and Succession. From time to time these laws have undergone certain changes.

Society is always in a flux and be it said to the credit of our elders in the past, that they saw the writing on the wall and did the right thing at the right time. The community expects the same from the present elders, if not more. The community must keep thinking in an ascending curve insofar as social change is concerned.

Community Organisation

Almost 350 years ago Navsari had its first community organisation — the Samast Anjuman. Every Parsi population pocket of a substantial size all over India and abroad has an Anjuman. The root of the world lies in our prayer the *Atash Nyaesh*. The word used there is *Vyakhnam*. In Pahlavi the word used is *Hanjaman* which has become Anjuman.

These Anjumans took birth on the felt human needs: First, disposal of the dead and for that matter creation of a *dokhma* and socio-religious festivals like *Gahambars*.

Later some Anjumans developed into social welfare bodies and even adopted the Indian name, Punchayet. Many of these are doing yeoman service to the community, notable of which are Bombay and Surat Punchayets with funds running into over 10 crores between them. These two Punchayets have good liaison but if the present climate could be put to a more constructive use it could benefit the Parsis of both Maharashtra and Gujarat to a great extent.

Gujarat needs to contain its Parsi population in its confines and if concerted measures are taken, there is potential for a healthy growth in a place which once was the cradle of great Parsis.

Resource Utilisation

The total assets of all Parsi trusts, approximately 1,500, could easily run into Rs 30 crores. For a community of less than 90,000 in India it is a sum which, if put to judicious use, could promote the welfare of the weaker sections.

In 1945, the Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet had called a conference of trusts in which some three dozen Bombay trusts had participated. One of the committees known as the Resource Pooling and Planning Com-

mittee headed by one of the trustees, the retired High Court Judge, Sir Navroji Wadia, had suggested the creation of a Federated Charities Reconstruction Administration. It said in its report:

"It is essential for the progress and well-being of our community that there should be co-operation between various charitable trusts, not only in one branch of their activity but in all. The suggestions must be carried out under the direction of one central body. If any post war reconstruction worth the name is to be attempted in earnest, it cannot be done except by a Federation of Charities. We, therefore, propose that we should have without delay an organisation known as Federated Charities Reconstruction Administration (FCRA)".

The Wadia Committee wanted no delay. That was 30 years ago. A whole generation has missed the bus and the advantages that could have accrued these 30 years. Will the community revive its will and do the right thing?

Politics and Civics

The community has never been parochial. It has never hankered after loaves and fishes. But when the time comes it needs direction.

What have we done to create political and civic consciousness in the community? Nothing. There was once a Parsi Political League but now it is moribund, or just does not exist.

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Cannot something be done to revive it? We need no special rights and privileges, but to be a good citizen of this great country every Parsi needs political and civic consciousness. Nationalism must burn in his veins. The Parsis are very much the people of the land.

Religious Beliefs and Customs

Religious beliefs and customs are a part of culture. And a social contact with different cultures makes for synthesis of certain ideas. Indeed certain customs permeate into bordering cultures, witness, the *sesi*, the *divo*, the *loran*, the *sathia*, borrowed from the Hindu culture. Again the rites that go with marriage, the coconut, the rice, the *bandhan* and a myriad other things we call 'culture'. In Iran a dowry was given by the bridegroom to the bride and as a sort of faint reminder of this, we talk of *do hazar diram* in the *Ashirwad* but till to date the boot was on the other foot. Perhaps we have today dowryless marriages. The Sanskrit *Ashirwad* is already on the way out. Blessings in Pazard make a beautiful recitation but some day one may innovate the same in an understandable language.

I would be stepping on somebody's corns if I were to refer to some of our ceremonies like *geh sarna*, *dhop nirang*, and *muktad*. A very devout Zoroastrian, trustee of an Atash Behram and some Agiaris, always used to ask if anything could be done to curtail the first two ceremonies. Today perhaps we are still in the same boat and though it is the concern of the laity and others, the ball of solution lies with the dasturs and mobeds. It is generally best to stick to certain beliefs and practices in the absence of other tangible ones taking their place but sometime some beginning may have to be made.

The muktad ceremonies should be a communal affair, not individual.

The first four day's ceremonies on death are crippling in their expenses, indeed a nightmare for the poor and even the middle-class. These can be brought down to the minimum, and the subsequent occasions could be curtailed.

The *muktad* ceremonies should be a communal affair, not individual. Our prayers are designed for intonation, proper pronunciation with due regard to syllables and halt at the end of a sentence. How many mobeds do so?

Marriage and Navjote Expenses

These expenses are considerably high. At one time one used to see with satisfaction a large force of Parsi butlers serving the guests. Today either that class has disappeared or is just not employed as others can be so employed on a smaller wage. In the event that satisfaction of spending money to employ a few Parsis for an evening is just not there.

The Fourth Estate

The community has progressed considerably and much can be attributed to the Parsi press that has contributed in no small measure towards that end. Their strength lies in highlighting a small idea or trend, or in frustrating a good idea or trend. "These are people in our society — mostly obscure people whose influence, in many causes, is unrecognised even by themselves — who effectively act as intellectual referees," says James Hitchcock.

If the pen of the journalist brings change it is improvement; a stable existence portrays backwardness. But when the pen is stretched too far against an established order then "the more the establishment is attacked and subjected to hostile scrutiny, the more likely it is to suffer growing self-doubt and demoralisation," says Hitchcock. While one agrees with him one would wish the journalist would use his pen and paper with intellectual restraint so that the public he serves gets tangible benefits.

Social Values and Intergenerational Change

It is true each generation acquires values and norms and conforms to certain behavioural standards which the parent generation had acquired from an earlier generation. For the last two generations we have seen a few disturbing factors. These may have been due to several reasons, principal of which are education, more contacts with the outside world, absorption of values belonging to a differing society or culture and other environmental factors. Values and norms held earlier began to be warped.

Today's youth is growing up in a milieu that is different from the last generation. From foreign domination the country has emerged into independence. This is the great divide between the last generation and the present one. The youth demands answers to several questions — social, biological, religious, and cultural. To satisfy these a certain amount of adjustment

is necessary. The community has to hold together and this is the time to act.

Conclusion

The Zoroastrian cultural values, in which our forefathers believed and lived tempered their way of life. The community has come a great way these 1,000 years and more, has seen skirmishes and wars, pestilence and

If the pen of the journalist brings change, it is improvement; a stable existence portrays backwardness.

plague, beneficent rulers and despots, oligarchic and other forms of government, and has remained unscathed.

It will continue to do so for an unknown period if the Zoroastrian dictum of universal brotherhood, of live and let live, and of love for labour continues to hold sway over the minds of Parsis.

We have overcome many a barrier and if the ship of destiny is to remain on an even keel it should be the endeavour of every Parsi to see that it remains so and sails smooth. In short the *elan vital* that has characterised the growth of the community should be a reminder to the rising generation and to generations yet unborn.

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AEK ATMAKATHA STUDENT OF NEW IDEAS

The life of Dastur Dhalla X

The high priest of the Karachi Parsis, Dr Maneck N. Dhalla, was an outstanding religious scholar of world repute. He has left to posterity a rich and precious legacy of wisdom and scholarship through his books on Zoroastrian theology, history, literature and life.

'Aek Atmakatha' is his autobiography in Gujarati, first published in 1942 and revised after his death by his wife, Cooverbai, to whom he had dedicated the work as a gift on the diamond jubilee of their wedding.

'Dastur Dhalla: The Saga of a Soul' is the English translation of the autobiography by Gool and Behram Rustomji, and published by the Dastur Dhalla Memorial Institute, Karachi.

This is the tenth condensed extract from the book.

THE STORY SO FAR

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

After failing in his school exams, Dhalla sought employment while educating himself in religious matters; arrangements were made for him to study Iranian languages at the Mulla-Pheroze and the Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy Madressahs in Bombay. He arrived in the city when the Parsi orthodox and liberal factions of Bombay were engaged in controversies and the Parsi Theosophists were gaining ground.

Dhalla came into contact with several prominent Parsis of the times, among whom were Jamshedji Tata, Jeevanji Modi and Shapurji Dorabji Saklatvala.

He obtained his masters degree in Iranian languages from Bombay University, and with the help of Saklatvala, Tata and others

fulfilled his ambition of studying at some western university.

Four years were spent at New York's Columbia University, under the guidance of Professor A. V. W. Jackson, a well-known Zoroastrian scholar of the west. During this time, his father expired, and Dhalla was obliged to remit more money home to enable his family to meet the household expenses. Besides following the prescribed course of study, Dhalla read widely on his own, attended and gave lectures, and grew interested and involved with the debate on cremation prevalent among Zoroastrians at the time.

In 1906 he secured his masters degree, and in 1908 his Ph.D. from Columbia University.

I began to look at life from a fresh angle. My religion took a new turn. All that existed perished while the non-existent became a reality. It was the renaissance of my religious life, and all this transpired within the span of less than four years of my study.

Under the advice and direction of Professor Giddings, the renowned professor of sociology, in my spare time I commenced a study of the social history of savages, semi-civilised and civilised people. By reading books on anthropology and sociology, I began to examine scientifically, questions relating to superstition, magic, customs, ceremonies, prayer, priesthood, society, marriage and other allied subjects. I studied their origins historically, and, for the very first time I began to see vividly how they have progressed from the primitive stage to their present condition. My three years and nine months of scientific and critical study at Columbia University of subjects such as theology, ethics, anthropology, sociology and philosophy eradicated religious misconceptions that had gathered in my mind due to my blinded mental vision, traditional beliefs and upbringing.

I was now eager to become the

thinker of new thoughts, the student of new ideas and the propagator of new concepts. In 1905, I had set foot on American soil as an orthodox. Now in 1909, I was leaving the shores of the New World as a reformist.

The followers of every faith have reckoned their own religious literature to be God-given and sacred—the language of their religion to be divine and celestial. Likewise, since childhood I had heard and read that Avesta was a celestial language and that Ahura Mazda and His *Yazdas* and *Amshas-pands* (angels and archangels) spoke in that tongue and heard and accepted prayer in that language only. It was also stated that our ancestors possessed the esoteric knowledge of the laws of evolution and were aware of all the problems of birth and death. Hence whatever they had written was transcendental and supernatural and should be accepted unquestioningly with humility and credulity. It was the bounden and sacred duty of religious scholars — particularly of religious leaders, dasturs and mobeds — to establish through whatever means possible, the traditions of our forefathers as correct, intelligible and equally applicable to all ages. Believing that "old is gold," they must be preserved intact.

I had been reared in the midst of such thinking and had left the shores of Karachi for America with such bigotted thoughts playing in my mind.

Prophets like Zarathushtra and Mohammed have left their teachings in the form of the written word, while others like Jesus spread it by word of mouth, which afterwards his pious disciples put into writing. But these religious books do not contain only their own teachings. Religious books are continuously increasing and by the time they are declared perfect or sealed by royal or ecclesiastical command, much of the ancient teaching before the prophets' birth and also much of their later disciples' teachings, have found a way into them.

Place, time and conditions alter, yet that which is unsuited and what seems superstitious, ridiculous and wrong for

the development of a nation is not abolished. Due to ignorance or to appease a large conservative majority, leaders volunteer to prove them correct and to make them applicable to all ages. They are obliged to do so because unthinkingly they deem everything equally sacred and persist in presenting them as part of religion.

To meet with the meaningless responsibility that has been shouldered under the pretext of religion and to find a solution to this problem, from very early times, religious literature is considered to have a dual meaning. The propagators of this theory of duality declare that the meaning that can be gleaned from the surface of religious literature is not its intrinsic meaning. They encompass within its depths a hidden and true purport. The esoteric meaning is for the masses while the esoteric meaning is for scholars, saints and highly evolved souls.

It is quite understandable that our writers of the Pahlavi age, while translating Avesta or interpreting this obsolete language made free use of this popular method. It is possible that such occultists existed in that period and have left behind them literature that can solve the so-called mysteries of Zoroastrian scriptures. But the Pahlavi literature that has come to us con-

tains no such references. Posterity has not preserved them.

Our religious books — the *Yasana Visparad*, *Vendidad* and the *Yashts* are all written in Avesta. But the student of Avesta through philology, the science of languages, will be able to

A hundred years ago we firmly believed that Zarathushtra himself had written the Gathas and the complete Avesta.

state at once that the language of the *Gathas* is Avesta, but it is different and older than the Avesta of the *Vendidad*. A 100 years ago we firmly believed that Zarathushtra himself had written the *Gathas* and the complete Avesta, so they are equally sacred and important. A large majority of the community stirred by sentiment, still clings to this mistaken belief.

As the *Gayatri* of the Hindus and the Lord's Prayer of the Christians are their main prayers, the basic prayer of Zoroastrians is the *Ahunavar*. It is said in the *Yajeshna* that Ahura Mazda composed the primary verse of the *Ahunavar* before the birth of either of the two worlds. The *Ahunavar* is com-

posed of 21 words. On the strength of this, a legend took birth over 2,000 years ago, that each of these 21 words represents a volume and that Ahura Mazda sent his holy Prophet Spitaman Zarathushtra into this world with 21 *Nasks*. About a century ago, the mobs as well as behdins, believed that these *Nasks* were God-sent or that Zarathushtra, having received a divine inspiration, had composed them himself. Even today a large majority of the community credulously accepts the validity of this myth.

With the passage of time a very large portion of these *Nasks* have been lost, yet the *Vendidad* in its completeness, together with other bits and parts have been preserved in the existing Avestan literature. Hence an unbiased study of philology has proved that all the *Nasks* have not been the composition of one person or of one period. The construction of the words, their composition, their grammatical structure clearly manifest that they have been written by different people and at different epochs.

There has elapsed a span of about 5,000 years between the time when Zarathushtra wrote his own words and those written by his last disciples.

Many a time Zarathushtra, in his *Gathas*, begins a verse in the form of

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a query. For example: "Tat thva perasa areshmoie vaocha Ahura": "Tell me clearly what I ask of you, O Ahura Mazda." There is no reply from Ahura Mazda. Zarathushtra himself replies or it can be gleaned from the meaning of the script. The later writings of the *Vendidad* function in another manner. They assign to Zarathushtra their own personal beliefs as questions and paint Zarathushtra as the questioner. "*Parest Zarathushtra Ahurem Mazdam*" "Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda, 'Oh, Ahura Mazda'" and after that, "*Aat mroot Ahura Mazda*" ("Then Ahura Mazda said"). This method is very objectionable and misleading. Thoughts that did not emanate from Zarathushtra, opinions which he did not uphold, have been accredited to him. The authors intention was that anything written in the name of the Prophet or under his authenticity would be faithfully believed by the people. The aim is noble but the method is most confounding.

Amongst the Roman Catholics the heir to St. Peter's throne is known as the Pope; according to the *Yajashne* the disciples of Zarathushtra have been qualified as *Zarathushie-tamo* -- 'greatly resembling Zarathushtra.' Greek authors have written that there was not just one single Zoroaster but many bearing that name. This *Nask* of the *Vendidad* has been written hundreds of years after Spitama Zarathushtra, the founder of the Zoroastrian religion. The prophet himself has not composed, compiled or written it. Some disciple of his has written it and handed it down as Zarathushtra's. This is the plain truth.

Zoroastrianism has passed through many forms of existence. One was when the Achaemenians were defeated by Alexander and another when the Sassanian dynasty was destroyed by the Arabs. Besides, such hardships have been inflicted on the religion as to alter permanently the tone and texture of the pure and pristine faith of Zarathushtra. When Zarathushtra propagated his new religion in Persia, the Persian Aryans followed the Indo-Iranian faith of their forefathers. They remained aloof from this new religion.

Some time before the fall of the Achaemenian dynasty there was a large-scale syncretism of religions in Persia. There was a fusion of the ancient Indo-Iranian religion and the new Zoroastrian religion and this new-born synchronized religion gave rise to the belief that Ahura Mazda's own holy prophet, Spitama Zarathushtra had founded it. The vast

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literature of both these religions on various subjects was collected. It was then apportioned into 21 parts and interwoven with the 21 words of the *Ahunavar* and the 21 *Nasks* were propounded in their entirety as composed by Zarathushtra. This myth still exists.

We are often told that we have not the authority to stray even an iota from our literary heritage. We have no right even to suggest any alterations to it. Yet the history of religion reveals that ancient tales have not been preserved intact. They have

Greek authors have written that there was not just one single Zoroaster but many bearing that name.

undergone various changes. As generations passed, some of these changes were wrought in ignorance while others were made knowingly. It is not correct to say that the prayers as recited today and the ceremonies we perform are exactly as they were during the days of our forefathers.

Let us take a few examples. On important occasions like Navjotes and marriages almost half of the prayers

recited during the Navjote and almost the whole of the marriage ceremony are recited in Pazend. (Pazend is Pahlavi written in the Avesta script without ideograms — i.e. non-Iranian words.) If Zarathushtra or his disciples were present on these occasions they would be bewildered because of their ignorance of this language. Their state would be similar on hearing the *Dhupnirang* prayers recited at an *Uthamna*. On the solemn occasion of a funeral the *Ahunavad Gatha* is recited today. This sacred prayer has no relationship with death. Zarathushtra has included therein the philosophy of his religion and the pure precepts of ethics. As the prayer for the funeral rites has not been preserved, it has become a tradition to recite this first, sacred *Gatha*. (From stray references in Zoroastrian literature one may infer that in olden times the *Ushavard Gatha* was recited during funeral ceremonies. It is not known when and why the change was made).

Many such instances can be quoted. Those who state that it is impossible to suggest the addition or alteration or deletion of a single syllable or a sentence in the ancient Avestan prayers are ignoring historical facts and speaking and writing from sheer

sentiment and lack of study.

The primary lesson that philology teaches us is that religious language is not celestial and its writings follow the rules and regulations of philology. Ninety years ago, when Khurshetji Cama came from Europe after studying the Zoroastrian scriptures according to this new method, and, on the strength of that new, scientific knowledge, declared that only the five *Gathas* had been composed by Zarathushtra and other works were written by his disciples from time to time, that by comparing the languages, by weighing them historically, everything was not equally important, there was a great uproar in the community.

The science of philology has thrown much light on our religious scriptures. It has supplied us with correct translations. Even he who translates on philological lines is liable to err. But the true philologist cannot do so, because philology is a science. Philology demands the scrutiny of every sentence, every word. Avesta is an obsolete language. Its literature is limited. Sanskrit is its sister tongue and its literature is vast. Hence, very often, the explanation of some difficult Avestan words can be derived from similar Sanskrit words. At times it so

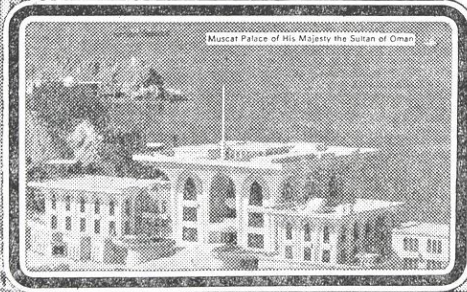
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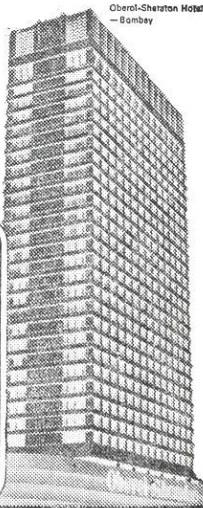
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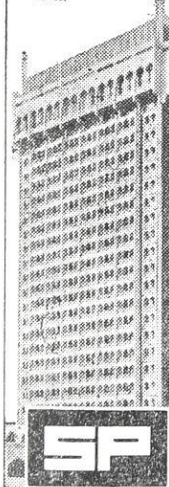


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"Saints do not fly but their disciples give them wings."

happens that in the entire existing, Avestan literature some word appears only once or twice and even in Sanskrit no word can be found to correspond with it. Even at such a time the philologist has not the privilege to let loose the reins of imagination and arrive at unfounded conclusions.

Philology teaches him that if a suitable word is not to be found in Aryan languages, it is possible that, due to the contacts which the Persians had with Semetic languages, it may be found therein. He can try to unravel these complexities through scholarly research. In spite of doing this, if he is not able to arrive at a positive result, then, as a genuine philologist it is his duty to confess his inability to translate such a sentence.

The history of religions teaches us the undisputed lesson that, with the passage of time, religions have not preserved their pristine purity and from the abstract have leaned towards the concrete. In the same way, legends have made of prophets what they were not. It is written in Persian: "Saints do not fly but their disciples give them wings". Even so do the later Avestan and Pahlavi writings entwine the sacred name of Zarathushtra with all kinds of myths and

legends, making them unbelievable and very different from the characterization gleaned from the *Gathas*.

Since the end of the last century, there has been an increasing number of occultists in our midst. Time and again they, in ignorance, defame philology and discredit philologists as "dry grammarians." To them everything in the scriptures seems esoteric. They declare that philologists can scan only what is on the surface and cannot fathom the latent implications. They make an airy claim of understanding these hidden secrets. Zoroastrian occultists of the 17th century introduce Asho Zarathushtra as a mystic and present all his writings as mysterious or secret. Thus these present-day occultists think that by presenting the works of the prophet as having an incomprehensible and concealed meaning they are enhancing its value and pride themselves as being able to decipher the secrets.

For example, they inform us that the description of 16 cities that appears in the first stanza of the *Vendidad* and what is in the 13th to 15th stanzas which relates to dogs, according to ancient Pahlavi and Persian or the 125 year old Gujarati and modern philological translations are all wrong, because Zarathushtra would not waste time in writing about such mundane matters. The details about cities and dogs are merely superficial

and their hidden purport is deeply philosophical. The primary fact is that Zarathushtra has not written the *Vendidad*. It has been written by others long after him and many of the items included relate to customs and practices prevalent prior to Zarathushtra's age.

For example, in the 7th stanza, giving an account of how a physician should be repaid for his services, it is stated that according to one's means these doctors should be given cows and cattle, horses, camels etc. In other words this refers to a primitive age when currency was not in vogue. In the 9th stanza of the *Vendidad* there is an injunction that should a person ignorant of the laws governing the giving of a sacred bath to him who has touched a corpse, perform such rites, then he should be handcuffed, dismantled and beheaded. The same punishment is meted out to the corpse bearer who carries a dead body alone. Many such ancient customs and traditions and various subjects which are absolutely unsuited to changing times and circumstances and matters mingled with superstitious animism of the infancy of religion are included. The task of the true scholar is to differentiate between these. Religion, ethics, philosophy, ceremonies and prayer should be set apart and the rest discarded.

Our spiritual leaders try to wean out from religious literature their own preconceptions and beliefs, without inspection or examination, guided only by sentiment. They select paragraphs that have no relevance to the main subject under consideration, assign imaginary meanings to words and as a result pose as occultists and evangelists and satisfy the credulity of the illiterate and uneducated. They attempt to appease their soul's hunger by offering indigestible fare.

Take the debatable question of vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism that has been discussed in our community repeatedly. These good people stress that the eating of flesh is prohibited according to Zoroastrianism and they believe and make others believe that their statement is beyond doubt and well proven. Since they hold the personal belief that animal slaughter is irreligious and sinful, they also believe that a religion cannot possibly allow flesh-eating and they attempt to make others believe likewise.

The history of the origin and progress of the religions of the world proves their opinions are unfounded. Our Indo-Iranian forefathers were

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Our Indo-Iranian forefathers were totally flesh-eaters and constantly sacrificed cows, bullocks, horses, lambs and goats in their ceremonials.

totally flesh-eaters and constantly sacrificed cows, bullocks, horses, lambs and goats in their ceremonials. The *Rishis* of the *Rig Veda*, Zarathushtra, Moses, Buddha, Jesus or Mohomed have not prohibited animal-slaughter in their religions.

With the advent of Jainism, the religions of India, coming under its influence, gradually began to express opinions against animal slaughter. There is sufficient evidence in the Avesta that our ancestors 3,000 years ago included flesh in their daily meals and offered meat-dishes in ceremonials. There is ample proof in our Pahlavi books that our forefathers 2,000 years ago did so. Amongst the 21 Nasks (litanies), pages and whole chapters are assigned to animal slaughter; the particular verses to be recited by the mobed while killing the animal that is to be used for ceremonies, how its various parts are offered to different *Yazads*, how to offer them, which animals to use are described at length.

We are obliged to reveal such facts, since Zoroastrian vegetarians, openly and with emphasis declare that flesh-eating is prohibited in Zoroastrianism. When we do so, these gentlemen pose to be pious and accuse us of disgracing our religion by publicising such evidence. The truth is that they do not hesitate to say and to write whatever they please under cover of religion, only to substantiate, without scrutiny or examination, their own pre-conceived ideas. When sentiment-alists profess to pass wrong as right under the pretext of religion, then I am obliged to give lectures that would reveal the truth and to write such articles. Besides, religion is truth. There is no religion higher than truth.

Fifty years ago on the occasion of laying the foundation-stone of a building or while inaugurating it, on any such auspicious occasion, we were wont to sacrifice a goat or at least a chicken. Today happily we hardly ever do that. But merely to protect the fair name of our elders of about 50 to 75 years ago, it is wrong to indicate with baseless arguments, that they never did so. According to the 11th verse of the *Yajashne*, as per age-old tradition, right up to the last century, we offered a goat's tongue and his left eye in ceremonies dedicated to *Hom Yezad*.

It is false to say that it is a misconception that our fore-fathers of the last century did any such thing or that should there appear any such references, they are merely allegorical. Today many of our families refrain from eating flesh on *Bahman, Mohor, Gosht* and *Ram roj*. They are doing so voluntarily now, but a 100 years ago it was obligatory on all. For, like a child's fear of a school-master's rod, the trustees of the Panchayat of those days kept our fore-fathers under their thumb.

In 1796 the General Body of the Anjuman of Bombay assembled and passed a resolution to the effect that should a behdin be caught making use of flesh on those four *Anroja* days he would be fined a *doti* and given a sacramental bath. (A *doti*, according to the Gujarati meaning of the word is (a) a gift given to the bride's father (b) coarse Indian calico cloth. In this context, the fine would be anything equivalent to the cost of the *doti*). Should a mobed be guilty of such a crime, he would be prohibited from practising his profession for a year. In 1823 they placed this resolution again before the community and amended it to read that perchance should *Chahram* of a deceased person coincide with one of the four *Anrojas*, even on such an occasion meat should

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not be utilised. To protest against this resolution certain gentlemen approached the Anjuman at Navsari. They unanimously replied: "Should a *Chahram* fall on *Behman*, *Mohar*, *Gosht* or *Ram roj*, you may certainly perform the ceremony with meat and its fat be placed on the sacred fire with incense and agar. This would please the deities of the animal world."

Today we neither place the fat on the sacred fire nor do we sacrifice a goat's tongue or its left eye to the *Hom Yezad* as our forefathers in ignorance did for 300 years. But it is futile to nullify what has been recorded in history. It is wrong to whitewash what came down to us through the ages. It is a mistake to assign a latent and esoteric meaning for clear and straight-forward statements.

Religion has always befriended philosophy and has called her to its aid to simplify its task. The present age is an age of science, so these esu-

Thoughts that did not emanate from Zarathushtra, opinions which he did not uphold, have been accredited to him.

teric spiritualists frivolously make use of the power of electricity, vibrations etc. to bring to light the so-called unseen meanings of our prayers, to solve the mystery of our ceremonies and to

prolong age-old queer practices that are best buried.

The present-day Parsi graduates and post-graduates of Arts, Science, Law and Medicine believe and try to make others believe matters that only children or illiterates can accept. If legend related that Dastur Adarbad Marespand poured nine maunds of molten metal on his chest without any harm to himself, just to prove the greatness of the Zoroastrian religion, they accept it as a historical fact. If it is rumoured that in Akbar's reign some magician by his feats manifested two suns in the sky instead of one, and at that time Dastur Meherji Rana, by the strength of his mystical incantations brought down the artificial sun, they accept it as a historical fact.

Should some fictitious author write that to waylay some Arabs who were following King Yazdezdard's daughter a dastur recited the *Tir Yasht* and at once there was a downpour of hail and snow and on reciting the *Avan Yasht* immediately, there was a flood in the River Jechem, and all the Arabs were drowned, they would believe this imaginary tale to be the plain truth. Moreover, the ignoramus question us verbally or in print: "Is there any dastur or mobed to be found today, so staunch and so religious?"

The people who delight in keeping themselves entangled in the web of such ideas abide in a world of fantasy.

It is not correct to say that the prayers as recited today and the ceremonies we perform are exactly as they were during the days of our forefathers.

If they were to be wise and seek real miracles in this living world, today's extraordinary and bewildering discoveries of science would supply them with a fund of such experiences. Rather than these imaginary spirits, the inventions of intellectuals, like the talkies, or the aeroplanes that enable us to breakfast in Bombay and lunch at Karachi, or the wireless and the radio or many such latest inventions, are believable miracles.

Asho Zarathushtra with great emphasis tells his audience that has come from far and near that they should listen to his teachings attentively, think about them calmly, meditate on them, and then only should they accept them from the choice of their head and of their heart.

The first lesson that I learnt through my study in America was to discard all pre-conceived ideas. The fetters of prejudice should be shattered. All facets of a question should be rationally examined through historical perspective, the laws of philology, comparative religion, scientific reasoning and an intuitive awareness of humanity.

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A Pahlavi Commentary on the Asem Vohu

Maneck F. Kanga

This translation of a Pahlavi commentary on the Asem Vohu by Professor Maneck F. Kanga, is reproduced from *The Bulletin of The Asia Institute* (No. 2 1975) of the University of Shiraz, Iran. The Bombay based, 72-year-old Kanga is an internationally reputed linguist, scholar and author specializing in Iranian studies. A member of the governing body of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, Bombay, he was also the Institute's honorary secretary upto 1974. He was professor of Avesta-Pahlavi at St. Xavier's College, Bombay, the J. J. Zarthusht Madressa, Bombay, the Universities of Bombay and Poona and a guest professor at Frankfurt University in 1965. Kanga headed the Iranian Studies section of the 1953, 1961 and 1966 All India Oriental Congresses. He was the Indian delegate at the Shiraz Congress of Iranology on the occasion of the 2500th anniversary of the Persian Kingdom.

The Asem Vohu, one of the three efficacious formulae of the Zoroastrians, is found in its complete form in Yasna 27.14. The commentary on this short prayer, which forms a part of the Ba an Yasna, is contained in Yasna XX. One more explanation on the same text is found in the Persian Rivayats. The Pahlavi version of this latter commentary, which contains explanations of all the twelve words of the Asem Vohu, is met with in two manuscripts of the Mulla Feroze Library at Navsari. The efficacy of this short formula is also discussed in the Ha oxt Nask, frakart I, and in the Persian Rivayats.

Translation

1. What is asem? Asem is righteousness. Who utters asem? He utters asem who has held this path of the Bountiful Spirit and he has been enjoined to relinquish the path of the Evil Spirit. What is the path of the Bountiful Spirit and what is the path of the Evil Spirit? What is the treaty which has been contracted, what is the commandment which has been given? The path of the Bountiful Spirit (is the performance) of meritorious deeds, and the will and action of God, and the path of the Evil Spirit

(is the commitment) of sin and the will and action of the devils. What (is) sin and what (is) meritorious deed? Sin (is) that which is taught as sin in the Mazdayasnian Religion. Meritorious deed (is) that which has been taught as meritorious deed in the Mazdayasnian Religion. The treaty (which) has been contracted (is) that which (is) between Ohrmazd and Ahriman. The commandment which has been given to Zartoxst Spiraman in the Mazdayasnian Religion: 'Do ye conscientiously worship God'.



Kanga: linguist and scholar

2. What is Vohu? Vohu is goodness. Who utters vohu? He utters vohu who (is by) name Zartostrotom. Who is by name Zartostrotom? (Zartostrotom) is he who has learnt the entire Avesta and the commentary and has taught (the same) again (to others). He eats with the good, moves about with the good and abstains from the wicked people: then whatever he recites is yasna, and whatever he partakes of is the votive offering.

3. What is vahistem? Vahistem is excellence. Who utters vahistem? He utters vahistem who has performed these three things, namely, good thought, good word and good deed, and has relinquished three things, namely, evil thought, evil word (and) evil deed. What is good thought, good word (and) good deed? Good thought is steadfastness to reli-

gion. Good word is good intercession. Good deed (is) taking care of water and fire, because when he takes care of water and fire well, he has thought of the entire creation of Ohrmazd perfectly. Who has thought of the entire creation of Ohrmazd perfectly? (He has thought perfectly of the creation of Ohrmazd who) does not do unto others whatever is not good for his own body. What is evil thought, evil word, evil deed? Evil thought is infidelity (and) doubtfulness towards religion. Evil word is injurious desire, evil desire and evil aspiration on anything of others. It is he who smites and injures others (and) deprives them of their things. Evil deed is lack of care of water and fire, because when one does not take good care of water and fire, then the whole creation of Ohrmazd is scorned (by him). What is that which (is) scorn? Scorn is that, when one does unto others what is not good for his body.

4. What is asti? Asti is obedience. Who utters asti? He utters (asti) who (practises) lawful obedience and proper protection. What is the word of God? Obedience is that by which he listens to the virtuous utterance. Proper speech is that when one knows everything in goodness (and) he knows that "I know", and that (which) he does not know he knows: "I do not know". The word of God is that whereby he performs anything well, and he says to others that he performs in this way what is best.

5. What is usta? Usta is goodness and fearlessness. Who utters usta? He utters (usta who is) fearless. Who is fearless? Fearless (is) he who (performs) his own actions without fear here (in this world) (and) there (in the world beyond)

Fearless is he who performs his own actions without fear here in this world and there in the world beyond.

6. What is ahmai? Ahmai is unity of men in the world. Who utters ahmai? He utters (ahmai who takes) good trouble, for the store of good and just moderation. Of good trouble is he who is contented with that which is his own. He is of good and just principle who keeps food and clothing moderately and gives to the worthy that which is left over.

7. What is hyat? Hyat is victory. Who utters victory? He utters victory (who is) the Emperor of men, who brings the world to triumph along with his confederates, cavalry (and) army and affords protection to the world. But injury reaches to the body (and) soul of those men who do not obey (him).

8. What is asai? Asai is righteousness. Who utters asai? He utters (asai who) is liberal, glorious (and) honourable. Who is liberal? The liberal is he whose goodness reaches him, who possesses goodness in a precious manner. Glorious is he who has welcomed him (and says) drink the nectar. Honourable is he who keeps his hand by the side, so that by that which has come up he becomes contented.

9. What is vahistai? Vahistai is excellence. Who utters vahistai? He (utters vahistai) who (has) excellent wisdom, knowledge (and) information from this Mazdayasnian Religion (and) believes without doubt in the purity of the good Mazdayasnian Religion, which Ohrmazd taught to Zartoxst and Zartoxst by means of the strength and power of God, and even by means of his own holiness brought the spiritual lore into the world and promulgated it. Such a person is well informed (about) that thing and (also about) that which is evil (and) unseen (unto) men. Next is that (he should be enlightened) on the substance of God and on the testimony of the effective holy spell, so that by his own pure utterance he nourishes the word and the pure religion of Ohrmazd with goodness, whereby he is grateful and knows that (it originates from) Ohrmazd and the holy immortals. And as to the injury which comes upon him (if) he is not able to withstand it he should be resigned and realise that (it comes) from Ahri-man and the devs. In order to perform duty and meritorious deeds he endures hardship. He adorns meritorious deeds who imprecate. He who has no mean (i.e. religion) runs away and similarly spurns meritorious deeds, which is an armour of man in war, which withholds the wrath from the body. The fruit of meritorious deeds is the principal source to the resplendent heaven. O mortal body! perform meritorious deeds, so that the soul shall attain to that which is the best existence. Be ye a liberal descerner, be ye righteous, just, undeceivable, of virtuous deed in the world, and may you be renowned and of righteous soul in the spiritual realm. Happy is he who is liberal, just, righteous worker, and thankful to the will of God.

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The Last Tycoon

He was known as the doyen of the Iranian Zoroastrians, a slim, soft-spoken, self-made millionaire with a quick temper and a large heart. When he died on 7 October 1980 at La Jolla, California, following a bout of pneumonia, **Arbab Rustam Guiv** was the greatest benefactor of the fledgling Zoroastrian associations in the New World, having given over a million dollars for the creation of Zoroastrian centres in New York, Ontario, Illinois, California and many million dollars more over the course of his 92 years to countless charities within and without the community.

"His life exemplified the visions of his faith — a life lived with honour, nobility and generosity," noted a memorial resolution passed by the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York, the first association in North America to receive Guiv's contribution for a community centre.

The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) to which Guiv gave over half a million dollars noted in an editorial titled 'Lest We Forget', in their ZSO newsletter: "Arbab Rustam Guiv has touched the heart of every Zoroastrian who has known him and his acts of benevolence and generosity have followed him wherever he has travelled... he was a man of his word and a true Zoroastrian, a true follower of the Path of *Asha*, devoting his time and energy to the service of humanity and to spreading the message of *Humata, Hukhta, (and) Huvarshita*."

About two weeks before his death, the Mehraban Guiv Darbe Mehr had been formally inaugurated in Ontario, but Guiv and his wife, Morvarid, could not attend, "due to reasons of health and personal reasons," noted the newsletter.

"He was foremost in charity, first in the service of his fellowmen and first in the hearts of the Zoroastrians", wrote *The Bombay Samachar Editor* Jehan Daruwala in his *Parsi Tari Arsi* column of 19 October 1980. "Anything that added to and enhanced the greatness and prestige of Iran was a deserving cause for his munificence. He, however, passed his last days (longing) to go back to his motherland and lay down his weary bones

with those of his ancestors and dear departed friends. This ultimate wish was not granted to him."

The Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZSBC) in a resolution referred to Guiv as "a true Zoroastrian, full of warmth, understanding and sympathy especially for the poor", and resolved that his name "be taken in all future religious ceremonies" of the ZSBC.

Guiv represented the Zoroastrians



Guiv: addressing the Chicago Zoroastrians in 1978

in the Iranian *Majlis* or Parliament, and served the Tehran Zoroastrian Anjuman for 32 years, 27 of which were as president and five as vice-president.

Early Years

Born in Yazd, Iran in 1888, Guiv attended the Daribestan-e-Kaikosrovi school there, under a teacher named Ostad Khodabux, notes a biography of Guiv prepared by Jamshed Pavri, a chronicler of Zoroastrians abroad.

Guiv used to recall that he was not the best of students, till one day for some misdemeanor he received a thrashing at the hands of Khodabux. After that Guiv became a model pupil, was eternally grateful to his mentor Khodabux and later dedicated a school in his memory.

In 1908, Guiv left Yazd for Tehran on mule back to join his elder brother in the family business. Half-way through the journey, Guiv managed to travel by carriage and comparing it to the mule-back-ride, he found it such a luxury, that years later he would always say that though he had travelled by the best and most modern and luxurious means of transport, it never compared with that carriage ride.

The family had begun dealing in homemade cotton goods and later expanded into importing shoes and general merchandise from Europe. They had a shop-cum-office and above it a room in which Guiv and his family resided. Guiv would work till close to midnight and then sleep in the room above and the next morning by seven or so begin working in the shop. For almost the first 35 years of his life, he kept up this strenuous schedule. It was only as the business expanded and prospered that he married Morvarid, the daughter of a Yazd businessman named Ardesheir Mehraban, and started to travel abroad annually.

Aside from the money he garnered from running the family business, Guiv multiplied his wealth many times over through his shrewd real estate dealings. According to Pavri, Guiv purchased between 150 to 200 acres of fallow land at the foot of the Demavand mountain about 100 kilometers north of Tehran and with "determined zeal, boring tube wells, converted it into fertile land and cultivated fruits and grain which were exported to European countries as well." To this land, he gave the name, 'Rustamabad.'

He purchased more land at a neighbouring village named Koochan, where he also built a large training and educational organization for the youth of the village, writes Pavri.

Guiv began taking interest in community affairs around 1933 when he was elected member of the Tehran Zoroastrian Anjuman, notes Pavri. In March 1935 he became vice-president and upon the death of his friend, Arbab Kaikhusrow Shahrokh, Guiv became the president of the Anjuman as well as a member of the Iranian Majlis.

Inspired by the housing colonies in Bombay, Guiv bought about 15 acres of land in Tehran-Pars, a suburb of Tehran and built 80, two unit houses for low and middle income Zoroastrian families, named Rostam Baug. He also built an *Adaran* a hall for religious and community activities and two schools in the memory of Aga Pouré Dawood, the noted Avestan scholar and Ustad Khodabux, his former teacher. Guiv also started the Guivar factory in Tehran which manufactured pipes and fittings and in which it was said Zoroastrians from any part of Iran could find work.

"In all his acts of charity", writes Pavri, "it was his wife Morvarid Khanum who impelled and pushed him all the time. Between them they created the Guiv Foundation."

It was around 1975 that Guiv's attention was drawn by his friend Dr Rostam Sarfeh to the young Zoroastrian associations springing up in the New World. Guiv offered monetary assistance to help establish places of worship and the first Darbe Mehr was inaugurated in December 1977 for the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY).

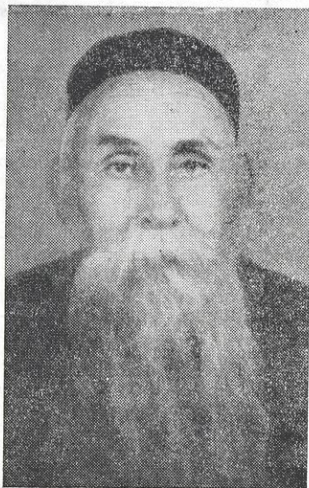
"Be united... be broad-minded and welcome newcomers who desire to know and study Zoroastrianism," said Guiv at the opening ceremony, "Our prophet did not ever put restrictions on anyone who willingly wanted to follow his principles."

Aside from assisting ZAGNY, Guiv financed Darbe Mehrs for the Zoroastrian associations of Ontario, Chicago and California. The Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe received large donations from Guiv over the course of the years. During the Third World Zoroastrian Congress in Bombay, several appeals were made to him to donate money for housing in Bombay. Though Guiv had donated considerable sums to Zoroastrian communities in various parts of India, he was hesitant to spend in Bombay as he felt that Bombay had enough wealthy Parsis and trusts. He said he wished to give his money to those associations whose resources were limited.

And yet he often commented that when he sat in the lobby of the Taj

Mahal Hotel in Bombay, he would be approached incessantly by people asking him for money. The constant demands on his generosity often made him distrustful of people and their motives. It was largely at the urging of his cousin, Ms Mahino Batliwalla, that he finally gave six lakh rupees to the Bombay Parsi Panchayat for housing in 1978, shortly after the hosting of the Third World Zoroastrian Congress in Bombay.

Guiv had the curiosity of a school boy, always enquiring, marvelling at new developments, sometimes voicing his disapproval of them, always happy when he felt he had bought something at a fair price, annoyed when he had been cheated. Seated outside the



Darvish : an institution in himself

Sea Lounge restaurant of the Taj, he would carefully check every bill and though he always felt that hotels were a luxury for a man like himself, he would often invite groups of Iranian Zoroastrians to lunch if they happened to reside in the same hotel.

The late band-leader Goody Seervai, when he spied Guiv in the Taj buffet room, would often play the Iranian national anthem, which pleased Guiv greatly, and even though his feet were slowly being crippled by a circulatory ailment, he would clutch his walking stick and stand.

Under the Pahlavi dynasty, the persecution of Zoroastrians lessened and the community began to prosper. "We Zoroastrians enjoy the same rights as what all Muslims enjoy. One cannot

find words to thank Shahenshah Arya Mehr and Reza Shah Pahlavi (the late Shah of Iran and his father) for all they have done," said Guiv at the ZAGNY function. The subsequent developments in Iran made it impossible to remain in that strife-torn country.

After residing in Bombay for sometime, an increasingly dejected Guiv and Morvarid moved to La Jolla in California where following a fall he was hospitalised and developed pneumonia. "He was in a state of coma for the last four or five days", writes Pavri, "and the stout noble Zoroastrian heart breathed for the last time on 7 October 1980 at 4.15 a.m." Guiv's last wish to die in Iran was denied to him.

He was buried two days later in Rosehill Memorial Gardens, Whittier, California. A week later, notes Pavri, Morvarid purchased 50 burial lots in the same cemetery and reserved another 100 to 150 lots, for a separate Zoroastrian section.

In the last five years of his span of 92, the redoubtable Guiv had affected and guided the course of Zoroastrians in the New World. He was perhaps the last of the great millionaire philanthropists who with a signature on a cheque could alter the fortunes of a community overnight. The circumstances that permitted an individual in the course of his life to amass such great wealth and spend it as he thought fit are no more; and even should such circumstances exist again, how many would be guided by the instinct for benevolence that characterized the life of this great Zoroastrian? In the final analysis it was the deeds of Rustam Guiv, rather than his wealth, that made him a legend.

The Death of Darvish

For 41 years, Rashid Arestani's name was linked with that of the dead. Better known to Zoroastrians throughout the world as Darvish, the 71 year old custodian of the Bombay Towers of Silence died alone in an obscure hospital in Shirdi, of cerebral hemorrhage on 4 August 1980. The man who had comforted countless families in their hours of bereavement and through his persuasion and contacts circumvented post mortems for so many, had himself to undergo the last legal ritual.

Darvish's death was the cause of mourning throughout the community. Metropolitan and community newspapers carried news of his death, with *The Free Press Bulletin* front page story noting, "What an end for this friend of the dead". The coroner's court

held a meeting to mourn his death, noted a report in *The Indian Express* of 6 August. But the most outstanding tribute was the convening of a Samast Parsi Zarhosti Anjuman Sabha on 4 September at Bombay's Framji Cawasji Institute Hall by the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP), in whose employ Darvish served. According to a report in the Gujarati daily *Jam-E-Jamshed*, this was the first time a man of limited means and humble circumstances was so honoured. The BPP, however, sent notice of the meeting to only two of the four Parsi news publications.

"He must have carried to their final resting place thousands of corpses, of the very rich, the important, the ones with titles as well as the bodies of the poor and the destitute," noted *The Bombay Samachar* Editor Jehan Daruwala in his Gujarati *Parsi Prakash* column of 6 August. "In God's court they are all alike. Darvish realized this much better than us all."

"He has been an *akabar* (leader) in the fullest sense of the word," noted *Kaiser-E-Hind* correspondent Phiroj Mau in a Gujarati write-up.

BPP Chairman B. K. Boman-Behram, who was requested to chair the Samast Sabha, paid tributes to Darvish saying that he was always at the call of those who were suffering and unhappy, helping them with the preparations for the last rites of their dead relations. It was through his help, noted Dastur Hormazdiaz Mirza, head priest of Udvada, that many a Parsi left this world with the proper rites. Peshotan Nargolwala, an active community worker, called Darvish an institution and said that it was because God had blessed Doongarwadi, that he gave the community a caretaker like Darvish.

Ratan Kakalia, joint secretary of the Dadar Parsi Youths Assembly, suggested keeping a copy of Darvish's services to the community on record at the Panchayat and sending a copy to his family. He also suggested the setting up of a memorial at Doongarwadi so that future generations may be inspired by Darvish's selfless services. Kakalia noted that the memorial would be financed by the community.

Early Years

Born on 3 August 1910, Darvish started working at the age of seven, painting cinema posters at Calcutta's Madon Theatre, states his bio-data supplied by press photographer Rashid Bamanbehram. At the age of 15, Darvish came to Bombay, and was married to Goola Jamshed Kermani in

1931, and was employed as a general handyman during wedding ceremonies. Eight years later, Darvish started work at Doongarwadi on a salary of Rs. 30, meanwhile supporting a wife and two children.

At accident sites, fires, house collapses, hospitals and homes, Darvish would be present in his bedraggled coat and black cap. "He helped people from other communities at times of fires or accidents," noted *The Bombay Samachar*. "He never asked for anything for himself." The large gathering of Parsis and non-Parsis at his funeral was proof of his service, noted *Jam-E-Jamshed* writer Adi Dhondy. At Darvish's son Syrus's request, non-Parsis were permitted to see Darvish's face and pay their last respects after the *geh-sarna* ceremony. "I did what was right for him", said his son.

In addition to his duties in Bombay, Darvish's services were borrowed by the Panchayats throughout Maharashtra and even in Gujarat. "His death is a great loss to our community, noted the trustees of the Poona Parsi Panchayat, in a letter of condolence to Darvish's family. Aside from tending to the dead, Darvish also made substantial efforts to help beautify the Doongarwadi lands and solicit donations for the upkeep of the estate.

The End

A believer in the Shirdi Sai Baba, Darvish left for Shirdi near Ahmednagar in Maharashtra on 29 July, with a premonition that he would not return, recalls Syrus. He was 71 on 3 August, and the next day, his family in Bombay received a message stating that Darvish had been admitted to hospital since the past three days and was serious. Sam and Syrus, two of his sons, rushed to Shirdi, and after the ordeal of trying to locate which hospital their father was in, finally traced him, only to find him dead since the previous evening.

Two days after his death, Darvish's body finally made it to Doongarwadi, Bombay, for its last rites, after the intervention of retired Deputy Commissioner of Bombay Police, Jal Contractor, notes Bamanbehram.

"Yes, he was a close friend of the dead. Death, however, did not treat him kindly. Nor did it respect the sanctity of his body. When he died, he died alone.....," wrote Pradeep Shinde in *The Free Press Journal* dated 11 August 1980.

Darvish is survived by his wife Goolbai, two sisters, and 11 of his 14 children, Rusi, Sheroo, Thrity, Sam, Jehangir, Freny, Maharukh, Syrus, Amy, Zarin and Soli.

MATRIMONIAL

Matrimonial correspondence with returnable photograph cordially invited from only parents of Parsi ladies for hard working, jolly Zoroastrian country boy, belongs to poor family of Gujarat — settled in North America, never married, 34, 5 ft 6 inches, handsome, teetotaler, prejudice free, emancipated with broad cosmopolitan outlook, employed in U.S.A. with Green Card obtained through employer, \$36,000/year, M.S., multi-disciplinary engineering-energy background. Canadian Citizen — Passport, blend of eastern-western culture, champion of woman's higher education & rights and actively participating honorary life member of Verzavand aey Behram Verethrangha's Peace Mission. No Bar what so ever, except quit smoking. Rich-poor, orphans, vegetarians, professionals, doctors, teachers, nurses, — all welcome. Air fare on us. Visiting India shortly.

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