

The CER Victory

It was an astounding victory, a triumph of concerned citizenry over entrenched powers. By an average margin of around 1,000 votes, the Committee for Electoral Rights (CER), a group of lay individuals who banded together barely six months ago, swept 224 of the 227 seats in the crucial Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP) Anjuman Committee 'D' Register elections.

The results, which were formally released to the Press on April 24, came over five weeks after the polling ended on March 15. One reason for the delay in the announcement is the archaic and complex electoral system in which voters had to elect 227 candidates out of a total of 475 aspirants. Another reason, is the threat of lawsuits on the BPP by disgruntled losers.

In the 'A' Register in which CER endorsed candidates won 45 of the 46 seats, the last one being tied, one of the candidates Jal M. Pavri, alleged electoral malpractices. His plea was reportedly dismissed. In 1974 the 'A' Register had been swept by BPP Trustee Nelie Noble and her Pundote group, followers of the late mystical leader, Minocher Pundole.

Of the 227 Committee of United Zoroastrians' (CUZ) candidates only three won: Dastur Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal, high priest of the Wadiaji Atash Behram in Bombay, (3,741 votes), Jal B. Contractor, a former deputy commissioner of police (3,641 votes), and Dr. Dinyar M. Gamadia, president of the Cusrow Baug United Sports and Welfare League, (3,628 votes), Dr. Sarosh Wadia, a well-known Bombay homeopath who narrowly lost, was the 228th candidate with 3,598 votes.

The most humiliating defeat was Noble's in the 'D' Register (rank: 242,

votes: 3,155). In 1974 she was the second highest vote getter after B. K. Boman-Behram, the present Chairman of the BPP. But this time, she trailed several of her other party members who were routed.

A controversial person, Noble was disliked by many of her CUZ allies who resented having to rely on her band of volunteers for much of the

More than anything else, it was the electoral system with its inherent defects that alienated the BPP from the community and led to the CUZ downfall.

campaign organization. Noble has on several occasions clashed with Boman-Behram and it was only the election that brought them together. While pressure on her to resign from the BPP trusteeship is mounting in light of her defeat, it is doubtful the feisty medical practitioner and social worker will oblige.

With the exception of Dastur Kotwal who ranked 156 in the list of victors, the community by and large voted along party lines. The independent candidates, many of whom canvassed hectically, ended up at the bottom of the list, most of them lagging behind the lowest CUZ candidates by margins of 500 to 1,000 votes. The highest independent vote getter was Freney Ponda, (1,304 votes), a lawyer and one of the six women to take the BPP to court on the voter registration rights of Parsi women married to non-Parsis but professing the Zoroastrian

faith.

The cross voting made no impact on the final outcome other than affecting the rank of the contestants. Doctors topped the list of successful candidates with Dr. Pilloo Pervez Hakim, a noted ear, nose and throat specialist, securing the largest number of votes, 4,261. The other top vote getters are: Dr. Aloo Billimoria, 4,219, Dr. Sam Edulji Batliwala, 4,164, Dr. Kersi Navroji Hozdar, 4,140, Dr. Ratan Hormazdiar Doctor, 4,126.

The reasons for the CER victory are as many as for the CUZ defeat. The CER built its election campaign around the economic and social plight of the Parsis, claiming religious reforms were a matter for priests and scholars. Through a series of public meetings, printed leaflets and newspaper advertisements, the CER put their message across to a community that had tired of the past leadership. The CER also had some of the best managerial and legal talent on its side, not to mention three of the four leading Parsi publications.

That onslaught, coupled with the community's disillusionment with the BPP, proved too much for the dispirited CUZ campaigners. Though the CUZ had the support of the BPP chairman and the *Jam-e-Jamshed* daily, which in the final weeks of the campaign virtually blanked out all literature supporting the CER, the CUZ could not overcome their biggest liability, the past record of the BPP. The party, as one critic put it, had to "defend the indefensible". Many of the CUZ leaders appeared unaware as to how much hostility there was towards the BPP. It was only at the later stages of the campaign that the

CUZ took to attacking the BPP in order to salvage credibility. But then it was too late. Both Noble and Boman-Behram had identified too visibly with the CUZ.

Another mistake the CUZ made was attacking Nani Palkhivala, the eminent jurist, for stating his personal views on Zoroastrianism. However incompatible his opinions may have been with the CUZ, Palkhivala is greatly respected in the community, and by denigrating him, the CUZ lost considerable support even from amongst its own members.

But in the final analysis, the CUZ hardly ever functioned as a party. It was basically an electoral alliance of disparate, often warring factions with no common ideology or purpose other than winning the elections. Their total election campaign was based on the charge that the religion was in danger, and the threat arose from the CER which was a front for an evil force of reformists. The CER quickly countered this charge and directed the public's attention to the economic ills facing the community.

The CUZ, disheartened and without any tangible leadership, could not effectively counter. Their earlier argument that things should continue the way they are and God will look after the Parsis was poor comfort to a community that is economically and socially floundering.

The CUZ did not correctly conceive the felt needs of the community nor comprehend its aspirations. Like the Panchayat they chose to champion, they were alienated from the community they claimed to represent. The leader of the CUZ, Cowasjee N. Dinshaw, was selected because his candidature was acceptable to all the factions rather than as a person who could weld the various parties together.

The CER in the course of the campaign inducted many new members into its decision making processes while the CUZ by contrast, atrophied.

But while the results brought cheer to the CER camp, the voter mandate brought also a responsibility to deliver the goods which the CER charged the past administration had failed to do.

The CER's first priority, and a step dear to many of its members, is the professionalization of the Panchayat office. This would include a thorough study of the existing situation, followed by a rehauling and streamlining of the various systems, accounts procedures, delegation of powers and a long term plan for uplift of the community.

But these reforms may take years

to bring about as the only responsibilities the Anjuman Committee has are to elect trustees as and when vacancies arise, and to move the courts of law for changes in the electoral system.

It will be towards the end of the year that Boman-Behram's second 10-

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year term of office expires. At that time the CER can elect its candidate to the board of trustees. After Boman-Behram, the next election is that of Noble's in 1984. The CER's main ally on the existing board is Trustee Jamshed N. Guzder. The others are either impartial or hostile.

Thus the CER may find its programmes stymied for a number of years, unless the other trustees co-operate. Trustees, Dr. Aspi Golwala, Eruch Desai, Maneck Hodiwala and Jal Vimadlal have stayed aloof from the political squabbling and should therefore be in a position to work with the new Anjuman Committee. But Noble, whose relations with Guzder have been strained ever since he contested for the trusteeship, remains an enigma. Therefore, the new Anjuman Committee's first line of action is limited to amending the electoral system. This is a reform the CUZ also propounded and the community favours. More than anything else, it was the electoral system with its inherent defects that alienated the BPP from the community and led to the CUZ downfall.

In the meantime, the CER's ability to offer some succour at the present juncture, its capacity to act innovatively as it has in the past, with very limited resources in an exceedingly

short period of time, may well determine its ability to make the BPP into a vibrant, responsive and accountable institution.

The popular vote was not so much against orthodoxy as it was against the establishment. The majority of the community are ignorant as to the powers and resources of the BPP. Instead of educating and informing the public about the Panchayat's role, the BPP and CUZ unwittingly made the institution appear a far more potent body than it is in actuality. Having thus attempted to build up the image of the Panchayat, they were, in the final analysis, hard put to explain why the once venerable institution had failed to deliver the goods.

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How the Candidates fared

'A Register'

List of candidates according to votes secured. The first 46 candidates have been elected to the Anjuman Committee. The winners are CER endorsed candidates in alliance with a group led by Dinshaw R. Mehta.

Rank	Candidate	Votes
1.	Dr. Gustad Patel	142
2.	Khurshed J. Bardi	140
3.	Kaikhushru N. Navroji	139
4.	Arni N. Sethna	139
5.	Rusi N. Sethna	139
6.	Jamshedji J. Khambatta	138
7.	Sheroo C. Sanjana	138
8.	Jamshed K. Sanjana	137
9.	Minoo F. Patel	137
10.	Minocher D. Mistry	137
11.	Behram S. Engineer	137
12.	Mani M. Antia	137
13.	Faroukh J. Irani	137
14.	Shapur J. Irani	137
15.	Pesi A. Khambatta	137
16.	Noshir R. Mehta	137
17.	Ratan D. Surveyor	137
18.	Darius R. Madon	137
19.	Naoroji F. Tata	137
20.	Homi R. Khushrukhan	137
21.	Jal M. Mistry	136
22.	Jimmy D. Talaty	136
23.	Bomi M. Mehta	136
24.	Gev F. Kharas	136

25.	Baji A. Khambatta	136	62.	Godrej M. Pundol	125
26.	Goolu F. Dhalla	136	63.	Perin J. Hansotia	125
27.	Pericher A. Bakshay	136	64.	Parvez D. Mithaiwala	125
28.	Siloo D. Zaiwalla	136	65.	Fali B. Dastoor	125
29.	Piloo M. Maneckji	136	66.	Roshan H. Daruwalla	125
30.	Savaksha D. Udwadia	136	67.	Hoshang B. Charna	125
31.	Nadir F. Langrana	136	68.	Darayus M. Talaty	125
32.	Dee A. Irani	136	69.	Behroz R. Crawford	124
33.	Jimmy D. Adajania	135	70.	Faroukh R. Sidhwa	124
34.	Minoo M. Antia	135	71.	Parvez J. Rabadi	124
35.	Jehanbux M. Wadia	135	72.	Jaloo F. Dastur	124
36.	Sohrab Dishaw	135	73.	Percy B. Charna	124
37.	Jal J. Ollia	135	74.	Gool M. Unwalla	124
38.	Dara B. Sidhwa	135	75.	Baji J. Bharucha	124
39.	Marzi M. Antia	134	76.	Jal M. Pavri	124
40.	Naval R. Mistry	134	77.	Sherry F. Sidhwa	123
41.	Sheru P. Navroji	134	78.	Homi P. Mehta	123
42.	Rustomji C. Suntuok	134	79.	Bomi K. Sidhwa	123
43.	Gool D. Oomrigar	133	80.	Mahrugh B. Sidhwa	123
44.	Minoo R. Shroff	133	81.	Soli R. Hataria	123
45.	Scylla R. Vatcha	133	82.	Fardoon M. Bajana	123
46.	Khodabad B. Irani	129	83.	Gool P. Dalal	123
47.	Dr. Ratanshaw K. Pavri	129	84.	Jeroo D. Chhayela	123
48.	Dinyar R. Panthaki	128	85.	Minoo S. Mehta	123
49.	Maneck D. Engineer	128	86.	Rusi N. Gandhi	123
50.	Hoshang M. Unwala	128	87.	Framroz Variava	123
51.	Dr. Minoo R. Bambot	127	88.	Kersi B. Makihatana	122
52.	Jehangir J. Hansotia	127	89.	Faram H. Kerawalla	122
53.	Maj. Noshir M. Pundol	127	90.	Banoo B. Makihatana	121
54.	Firoze M. Pundol	127	91.	Spitman R. Panthaky	120
55.	Dadi J. Burjor	127	92.	Bakhtavar M. Charna	118
56.	Tehmuras N. Anklesaria	127	93.	Navroji Kutar	14
57.	Fali K. Sidhwa	126	94.	Dr. Hoshang R. Mobedji	11
58.	Armaity P. Mithaiwala	126	95.	Firoze K. Sholapurwalla	10
59.	Aspi C. Sidhwa	126	96.	Khorshed J. Cooper	6
60.	Hormuz D. Anklesaria	126	97.	Minocher S. Patel	5
61.	Mahtab P. Daruwala	125	98.	Keki C. Kararia	5

'C Register'

List of candidates in order of votes secured. The first 30 candidates have been elected to the Anjuman committee; 29 belong to the United Orthodox Group. The CER contested only 18 of the 30 seats.

Rank	Candidate	Votes
1.	Meher Mastermoos	386
2.	Perviz F. Dotivala	359
3.	Dr. Behram S. Pardiwalla	356
4.	Dr. Minoo F. Wadia	354
5.	Dr. Rustom Hakim	353
6.	Roshan P. F. Driver	347
7.	Jal Vakil	342
8.	Feroz N. Dotivala	329

9.	Burjor Paymaster	328	31.	Dr. Nergish P. Dastur	262
10.	Daulat Doongaji	318	32.	Pearl Daruwalla	256
11.	Homi Chibber	311	33.	Dr. Perin C. Kerawalla	244
12.	Zenobia P. Daroga	308	34.	Dr. Syrus Darvish Irani	215
13.	Adi Confectioner	306	35.	Burjor M. Mehta	211
14.	Rustom F. Taraporewala	304	36.	Jehangir M. Shastri	211
15.	Homi Mehta	303	37.	Aspi N. Katgara	210
16.	Piroja P. Nargolwalla	303	38.	Katy Adi Merchant	209
17.	Khoshed F. Tarapore	298	39.	Tehmtom M. Kavarana	206
18.	Manek Medhora	295	40.	Maneck B. Vakil	206
19.	Dadabhoys S. Boyce	294	41.	Adi P. Madan	205
20.	Tehmi R. Damanwalla	290	42.	Phiroze M. Banaji	205
21.	Gool D. Kolah	289	43.	Jal J. Wadia	201
22.	Kausy K. Kalapesi	288	44.	Naoroze D. Baria	200
23.	Firdaus P. Bhatena	284	45.	Merwan P. Khambata	200
24.	Kamal D. Dotivala	283	46.	Murzban M. Master	198
25.	Dinshaw Spencer	283	47.	Dorab R. Sopariwala	198
26.	Firoz Patel	278	48.	Rusi D. Lakdawala	191
27.	Adi Doctor	278	49.	Framroze M. Gotla	188
28.	Dr. Adi H. Dastoor	269	50.	Amy Sam Darvish Irani	151
29.	Meher P. Khurodi	265	51.	Dara Noshir Vania	143
30.	Phiroze Tarapore	264	52.	Gustasp Behramji Forbes	49

'D' Register

List of candidates in order of votes secured. The first 227 candidates have been elected to the Anjuman Committee; 224 of them are from the CER and three from the CUZ (see main article).

Rank	Candidate	Votes
1.	Dr. Pilloo Parvez Hakim	4261
2.	Dr. Aloo Phirozshaw Billimoria	4219

3.	Dr. Sam Edulji Batliwala	4164	17.	Kali Jal Shavaksha Banaji	3993
4.	Dr. Kersi Navroji Hozdar	4140	18.	Sheroo Dara Bhabha	3988
5.	Dr. Ratan Hormazdiar Doctor	4126	19.	Firoz Pestonji Gandhi	3986
6.	Shireen B. Motivala	4085	20.	Dady Kaikhushru Contractor	3975
7.	Dinyar R. N. Contractor	4084	21.	Dr. Sam Framroze Boyce	3969
8.	Dr. Sam Minocher Mahalaxmiwalla	4084	22.	Roshan Aspi Khambata	3968
9.	Ardesheer Mancherji Joshi	4072	23.	Shavak Keki Bhungara	3961
10.	Nariman Framroz Kanga	4060	24.	Jehangir Dadabhoys Daroga	3961
11.	Dr. Dina Nanabhoys Patel	4052	25.	Sohrab Edulji Morris	3958
12.	Jehangir Eruchshaw Palkhiwalla	4046	26.	Dr. Adi Kaikhushroo Sahiar	3958
13.	Dr. Yasmin Khurshed Vajifdar	4024	27.	Zal Kaikhushru Contractor	3955
14.	Jamshed G. Kanga	4021	28.	Parvez Jamshed Tata	3953
15.	Persis Jehangir Banaji	4001	29.	Firoze Darabshaw Gheyara	3953
16.	Ervad Sam Sorab Panthaki	3994	30.	Koover Cawasji Vajifdar	3952
			31.	Ervad Dadi Framroze Vacha	3943

32. Eruch Kavasi Tarachand	3939	114. Silloo Kaikhushru Kavarana	3793	197. Farokh Noshir Rivetna	3700
33. Rustom Sapuri Sagar	3932	116. Minoo Jehangir Poncha	3792	198. Phiroze Hormusji Patel	3698
34. Rohinton P. Chiniwala	3930	117. Aloo Jehangir Colah	3792	199. Farokh Pheroze Munsiff	3697
35. Tehmurasp Erachshaw Limathwalla	3930	118. Jehangir Khurshedji Screwvala	3790	200. Dali Maneckji Bhatena	3692
36. Rustom Ardeshir Davierwala	3930	119. Adil Jamshed Patuck	3789	201. Pola Burjor Mistry	3692
37. Rusi Kaikhushroo Choksi	3928	120. Kersi Pirojsha Gazdar	3788	202. Dhanjisha Framroze Ichhaporia	3691
38. Sohrab Framroze Ranji	3925	121. Dara Fali Master	3785	203. Burjor Pirojshaw Randeria	3689
39. Pilloo Cyrus Aga	3923	122. Vera Dara Mehta	3784	204. Hosi Minoo Bhatena	3687
40. Hoshi Hirji Malgham	3920	123. Vispi Rusi Balaporia	3783	205. Kali Sohrab Mehta	3685
41. Rustom Framroze Zaiwalla	3919	124. Dolly Pesi Jagus	3783	206. Sohrab Navroji Billimoria	3680
42. Jamshed Framroze Motafram	3916	125. Minoo Dinshaw Siodia	3782	207. Sam Nariman Kateli	3679
43. Ardeshir Nusserwanji Chinoy	3914	126. Jamshed Dorabjee Engineer	3781	208. Kaiyos Tehmurasp Marfatia	3678
44. Katy Keki Baam	3913	127. Nariman Eruchshah Mehta	3780	209. Adi Nariman Mogrelia	3676
45. Firoze Rustomji Kanga	3908	128. Sam Ardeshir Bharucha	3778	210. Eady Jamasjee Eduljee	3671
46. Minoo Faramroze Balsara	3907	129. Jehangir Jamshedji Wadia	3775	211. Bakhtawar Nozer Karbhari	3668
47. Restomji Minocher Cursetji	3906	130. Firoze Jehangirji Damania	3775	212. Jehangir Tehmurasp Parekh	3667
48. Nilam Khurshed Kanga	3905	131. Rusi Noshir Kapadia	3774	213. Shernaz N. Munshi	3663
49. Fali Ardeshir Poncha	3901	132. Zarir Parvez Poonawalla	3773	214. Lily Sheriar Khandhadia	3660
50. Dr. Noshir Sorabji Hadvaid	3901	133. Adil Polad Irani	3772	215. Ardeshir Kaikhushru Kathawalla	3658
51. Cyrus E. Lalkaka	3896	134. Aloo Sam Bharucha	3772	216. Phiroze Cawasji Pithawalla	3653
52. Peshotan Shavux Daver	3893	135. Rusi Pirojshaw Jesia	3771	217. Homi Phiroz Kanga	3653
53. Rusi Kaikhushroo Boyce	3891	136. Arnavaz Adi Patel	3770	218. Sorab Edulji Shastri	3644
54. Prof. Ratan Nadirshaw Sukheswalla	3890	137. Freny Minoo Presswalla	3769	219. Dara Nasserwanji Vaghchhipwalla	3644
55. Kersi Jamshed Limathwalla	3885	138. Nariman Sam Kotwal	3768	220. Jal Bomanji Contractor	3641
56. Eruch Darabshaw Bharucha	3878	139. Keki Nanabhoy Shroff	3766	221. Rusi Jal Currawalla	3638
57. Vistasp B. Vimadlal	3877	140. Naval F. Damania	3765	222. Ardeshir N. Italia	3631
58. Khurshed Framroze Antia	3875	141. Bapsy Pesi Chubb	3765	223. Dr. Dinyar Maneckji Gamadia	3628
59. Noshir Cawasji Shroff	3875	142. Rusi Phirozeshaw Mistry	3763	224. Gayomard Minoo Kathawalla	3628
60. Dara Jehangir Khambatta	3868	143. Behram Jamasji Fataki	3762	225. Jeri Soli Doctor	3626
61. Firoz Maneckshaw Lam	3868	144. Rusi Nusserwanji Wadia	3759	226. Mehernosh Homi Kapadia	3622
62. Phiroze Eruchshaw Dastur	3865	145. Nariman Ratanshah Daruwalla	3758	227. Perveen Nariman Mehta	3615
63. Nargish Samy Engineer	3864	146. Perin Erach Marker	3758	228. Dr. Sarosh Ratonji Wadia	3598
64. Roshan Hosi Tata	3864	147. Farokh Nariman Katgara	3755	229. Ervad Dr. Peshotan Framroz Peer	3595
65. Rohinton Burjor Dhalla	3861	148. Dhunji Cawasji Naterwalla	3752	230. Keki Sorabji Bharucha	3594
66. Nariman Hormusji Daruwalla	3858	149. Fareedoon B. Meherji	3750	231. Jehanbux Jehangirji Gandevia	3575
67. Pheroze Kaikobad Bookbinder	3857	150. Firoz Darabsha Bhatena	3749	232. Prof. Khurshed Cawasji Sheriar	3390
68. Farokh Dolly Kapadia	3852	151. Jerry Kumana	3749	233. Jehangir Framroz Shroff	3311
69. Minoo Bomanshaw Tavadia	3850	152. Nani Framjee Davar	3748	234. Dr. Homi Burjor Dhalla	3293
70. Frainy Manecksha Nanavati	3846	153. Kersi Savakshaw Setna	3745	235. Nadirsha Navroji Aibara	3259
71. Homi Darabsha Daboo	3845	154. Samy S. Engineer	3743	236. Dr. Jamshed Ardeshir Modi	3248
72. Jamshed Dhanjishaw Chacha	3838	155. Heroo Dhanjee Cooper	3742	237. Ervad Ratanshah Cawasji Panthaky	3158
73. Parvez Maneckshaw Poonawalla	3837	156. Dasturji Dr. Firoze Meherji Kotwal	3741	238. Ervad Nadir Eruchshah Turel	3219
74. Yezdiar Navroji Edal-Behram	3833	157. Russi Fram Balaporia	3741	239. Kaikhushru Navroji Dastur	3177
75. Roda Hiraji Parekh	3828	158. Dadiba Ratansha Driver	3739	240. Dr. Rustom Behram Panthaki	3162
76. Mani Sohrab Dalal	3828	159. Meher Dadi Powwala	3738	241. Ervad Faramroj Behramji Panthaky	3158
77. Khushroo Phirojshaw Battiwala	3828	160. Diana Nani Davar	3738	242. Dr. Nelly Rustomji Noble	3155
78. Farokh B. Bhesania	3826	161. Jesse Ruttonsha Kavarana	3737	243. Adi S. Dhondy	3149
79. Thrity Edul Bharucha	3825	162. Hormasji Edulji Billimoria	3736	244. Rustom Behramji Furdoonji Kuka	3138
80. Pesi Jamshed Paymaster	3825	163. Dara Tehmurasp Marfatia	3735	245. Dorab Eruch Tata	3118
81. Farokh Eruch Dadabhoi Mehta	3824	164. Jaloo Behramji Randelia	3734	246. Dr. Soonu Khurshed Sheriar	3108
82. Noshir Burjorji Kotval	3824	165. Framroze Tehmurasp Gorimar	3734	247. Bomanshaw Hormusji Minocherhomji	3105
83. Maneck Hormusji Engineer	3824	166. Edul Phiroze Bharucha	3733	248. Mani Maneck Vajifdar	3088
84. Bomi Hormusji Hansotia	3824	167. Peterasp Rustom Dubash	3733	249. Dr. Rusi Maneck Billimoria	3036
85. Behram Keki Divecha	3821	168. Maneck Nadirshaw Goiporia	3732	250. Dr. Noshir Maneck Billimoria	3025
86. Jasi Jal Pardiwalla	3821	169. Zarsis Dorabsha Udhawala	3731	251. Noshir Nariman Vajifdar	3023
87. Rustom K. J. Khambata	3821	170. Nariman Edulji Mehta	3730	252. Bomi Burjorji Shroff	3020
88. Homi Phirozshaw Daruwalla	3819	171. Daulat Phiroz Mugaseth	3730	253. Hormazdiar Dinshahji Choksey	3008
89. Gev Homi Irani	3818	172. Nozer Phiroz Karbhari	3728	254. Rustom Noshirwan Panthaki	3002
90. Hoshie Jalejar Daboo	3817	173. Minoo Shapur Sethna	3728	255. Dr. Jal Hormusji Amaria	3002
91. Dishaw Keki Arsiwalla	3817	174. Behramshaw Jal Kalianwala	3728	256. Sheroo Maneck Billimoria	2996
92. Kersi Minocher Ghada	3817	175. Minoo A. Kheshwalla	3727	257. Kersi Kaikhushroo Commissariat	2994
93. Nergis Rusi Unwalla	3814	176. Farida S. Patel	3726	258. Col. Pesi Sorabji Cama	2992
94. Jivanji Maneckji Jamadar	3813	177. Dara Kaikhushroo Parakh	3726	259. Aspi Framrose Langarana	2991
95. Zarin Erich Pithawalla	3813	178. Sarosh Hormasji Batliwalla	3725	260. Rustom Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy	2980
96. Aspiandiar Rashid Irani	3813	179. Rustom Eruch Bharucha	3719	261. Dr. Rumi Ferdoon Byramjee	2978
97. Burjor Darabshaw Thanawalla	3813	180. Adi M. Patel	3718	262. Dr. Maneck Homi Pavri	2958
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LET'S BUILD THEM TOGETHER!

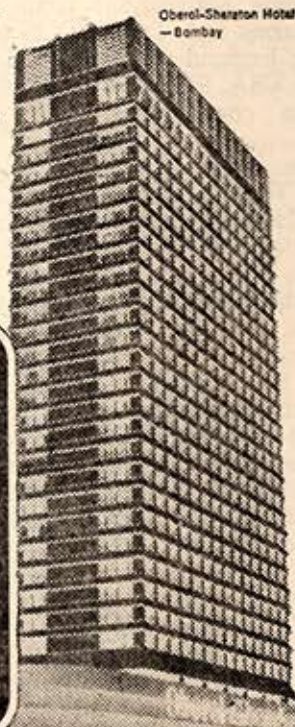
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PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

The newly formed Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington (ZAMW) wishes to establish an Atash Dadga, if not a full-fledged agiary in the North American capital city of Washington D.C. Adi Daver, president of the ZAMW and Dinshaw Joshi, both senior officials of the World Bank in Washington, were in Bombay some months ago and explored the possibility of raising funds for such a project. They are also investigating the possibility of taking an atash from India to Washington if an Agiary or Atash-Dadgar were to donate it and some funds. A donation of Rs 20,000 from the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, says Daver, has been the first favourable response towards the establishment of a fire-temple in the West. Below the ZAMW tells its story.

This is the story of hope for a new beginning and of a determination to survive. It is a story, where with hope and determination, the quest for the survival of our Zoroastrian faith, will succeed.

The story began some 50 years ago, when some Zoroastrians from India, Iran, Burma and Pakistan, began to settle in England and later, in Canada and the USA. Since then, sizeable Zoroastrian communities have grown there.

These settlers initially clustered around Toronto, Chicago and New York. However, more recently, new ones have been settling around Washington D.C., the capital of the USA, and in the adjacent states of Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, West Virginia and the Carolinas.

With the recent sizeable number of emigrants from Iran, the Zoroastrians in this area of the USA, are roughly estimated at over 400. Until the early '70s, the number was no more than 30. The increase took place around 1975, and especially after 1978.

Since the Washington community is so young, it is not affluent, unlike some of the established ones in North America. All are struggling to establish themselves in a new land, they now call home.

The Will to Survive

However, what marks this young community is not merely the will to grow and prosper. What marks it singularly,

is its determination to plant the Zoroastrian faith into the new alien soil of their homeland, and with love, devotion and determination — to nurture that plant — into a strong tree which can flourish for generations.

The pressures against which these Zoroastrians, as indeed similar settlers, have to contend, are formidable. The USA is not known as "the melting pot of cultures", without cause. The American culture exerts a subtle but powerful force, which melts any culture over time, and melds it with others into something distinctly American.

Despite this inexorable process, other religious communities like the Jews, Sikhs, Moslems and Hindus have still been able to retain their respective faiths, while they are Americans in all respects. Can their approach offer an object lesson which a young Zoroastrian community like the one around Washington can emulate, and succeed in its quest to ensure the survival of the Zoroastrian faith in that area?

The leaders of these religious communities in North America, sought and obtained the financial support of those still in their home countries, to build an environment and infrastructural facilities designed to ensure the survival of their faith. However small the numbers, these facilities were built, with a determined sense of purpose. When the preservation of one's faith and identity is concerned, costs can hardly be measured in economic terms.

The indispensable facility which these religious communities built as soon as possible after settling, was a centre, and ultimately, a place of worship. It served as the focal point for community gatherings, learning more about their faith and acquiring a sense of cohesiveness and belonging. It is not surprising that this approach worked so well for them. If we think back, we will also recall that a "feeling" about our faith was kindled in us, when our parents took us as children to social and religious gatherings of the community, as well as to *Atash-Behrams* and *Agiaries*. That feeling was then ignited easily into a flame, as we grew older and comprehended the basic tenets of our Prophet's teachings.

That is what the community around Washington now needs urgently, in its quest to perpetuate the Zoroastrian faith in that area. They have the necessary zeal and determination. However, their zeal will not be sufficient, unless it is firmly buttressed by a minimal infrastructure, just like other religious communities have built in America.

Accomplishments

These Zoroastrians incorporated them-

selves into a non-profit religious organization in May 1979, styled the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington. A simple, but far-sighted, constitution and by-laws were adopted, at a large community meeting. The community elected a dynamic Board of Trustees, to govern its affairs. A staunch Zarathushti like Nani Palkhivala, eminent jurist and India's former Ambassador to the U.S.A., became its Patron Member. To institutionalize the Association, the Trustees have initiated the practice of producing an Annual Report and Accounts, which are discussed and approved at an Annual Meeting. To foster in-depth management ability for directing the community's affairs and produce future community leaders, the Trustees have consciously organized some members having such potential, into a Religious/Cultural Education Committee and a Social Committee. These Committees now organize the activities of the Association, with policy guidance provided by the Trustees.

The former Committee has organized a series of monthly talks and seminars, designed to provide a basic knowledge not only of the religion, but also a clear awareness of Zoroastrian heritage, history and values. This combined approach is so necessary for those living in the US "melting pot", in-order that they may proudly preserve their religious identity and beliefs, while being, at the same time, a living part of American society.

To ensure the attendance of the young, despite large distances in the Metropolitan Washington area, a unique approach of having talks on the same topic, for the young as well as the parents who bring them, was successfully tried. At least 50 persons regularly attend them. In addition, talks by visiting *dasturjis* or eminent Zoroastrians, have been frequently arranged. These have consistently attracted substantially larger audiences. A library of literature on Zoroastrian themes, is being gradually built. Its meagre collection, is already very much in demand. An elementary book on religious instruction, has also been reproduced. To build an acceptance of this community, based on knowledge and awareness, in the American society in which it has to survive, Americans are being encouraged to attend such talks and seminars and to use the Library.

The other Committee organizes a *jashan*, together with a *Hambandagi* and dinner, on Jamshedi Navroz, Patei and New Year. Nearly 75 percent of the members attend; some travel 300 to 400 miles to do so. A welcome wagon, to make new settlers feel at home, has been organized. A quarterly

Newsletter is published. And, a shop, offering Zoroastrian accoutrements to its members, has just been started.

However, because the community has no physical facilities, and their rental is prohibitively high, all these activities take place in the homes of one or two members. That so much has already been organized despite this handicap, offers testimony to the demand within this young community for activities designed to preserve the Zoroastrian faith and heritage. That what has been so far organized, is so well patronized, is a further proof of this community's sense of purpose.

It should be rather heartwarming for all Zoroastrians to know about the efforts of the Washington Association. It hardly appears to support the thesis of some, that communities like these in North America, should be considered "lost to Zoroastrianism". On the contrary, the desire of this, and similar, groups to perpetuate our faith, appears to be as strong as that of our 700 forebears who settled in Sanjan.

Despite the fellowship provided by thousands of Zoroastrians in India, as well as the infrastructural facilities like *Atash-Behrams*, *Agiaries*, libraries, meeting halls and *Madrasas*, besides priests and other institutional arrangements, it is continuously being debated; "Will Zoroastrianism survive here for long?" How much more difficult the task of young and growing communities like the one in the Washington area must be, without even a shred of such infrastructure or institutions.

If these Zoroastrians are to be helped in their quest to perpetuate the faith, one cannot understate the im-

portance of assisting them in establishing the nucleus of such an infrastructure.

The Trustees of the Washington Association are waging a difficult struggle to secure the necessary financing to build a small and modest Zoroastrian Centre. They realise that it cannot be built in one scoop, and it will have to be built in phases, as funds and donations become available. Their initial target is to first build a small hall, which could include a library, reading room and three rooms to be used either for classes and periodic meetings or daily contact among the community members and their friends; the moveable partitions between them could be opened up, to provide space for large community gatherings like *jashans*, *navjotes*, *gambhars*, annual meetings etc. They envisage a later phase, when the Centre could also have facilities to house new settlers temporarily, besides visiting Zoroastrians and full-time *mobeds* they consider so important to have. The hub of the Centre, ultimately, would be an *Atash-Dadgar*, if not an *Agiary*, attended by two well trained and enlightened *mobeds*. They consider that these should be employed full-time, to minister to the community's needs, and not have religious duties as a part-time vocation. They would also envisage that one such *mobed* could travel to other communities in North America.

Should, and when, this far-sighted project is realised, it will be the first *Atash-Dadgar* in the West. Strange as it is, only *Darbe Meher*s exist so far, in that part of the world. With nearly 10,000 Zoroastrians in North America,

is it not necessary that one should eventually be established? What place can be more fitting for the very first one, than "the capital of the Americas"? If and when established, it could well become an "Udwada" of the Americas. And it would be so fitting, to entrust the responsibility for it, to a growing and dynamic community which lives, there, and which, despite its lack of affluence, has the zeal to accept that responsibility.

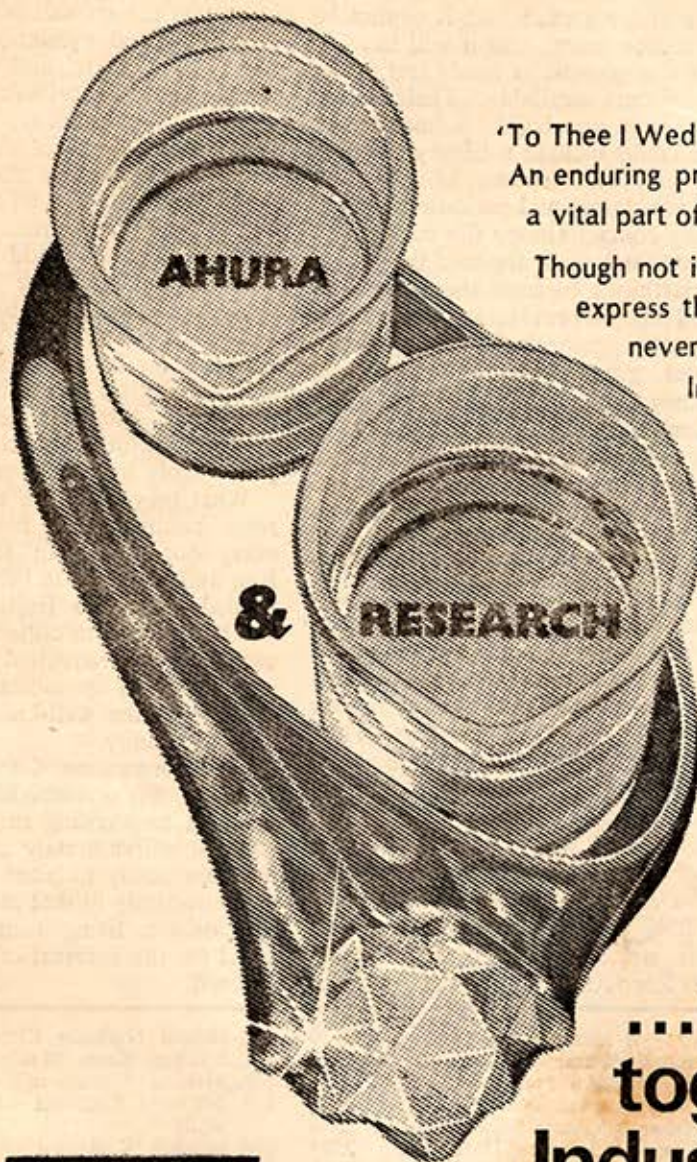
The phased project will involve construction of no more than about 5,000 square feet, for the whole Centre. Inclusive of a Trust, from whose income full-time *mobeds* would be paid decent monthly salaries, the total cost is roughly estimated to be around US \$ 600,000. However, because most Zoroastrians in the Washington area are new settlers struggling to establish themselves, they can hardly make a dent in meeting this cost, despite digging deeply into their pockets.

What they therefore need, are generous contributions from each and every Zoroastrian in India, Pakistan Iran and England, to bring their much-needed project to fruition. It should not be difficult to collect this amount, especially if individual contributions are buttressed by substantial contributions from the well-known doyens of our community.

The Zoroastrian Center, eventually with the first *Atash-Dadgar* in the West, is an exciting cause. Its establishment will not only enable a growing community to plant the Zoroastrian faith firmly in that part of America, but offer a living testament that the quest for the survival of our faith, can succeed.

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