

Parsiānā

September 1981

Volume 4

Number 3

Price Re. 1

Amending Adoption

The meeting was coming to a dignified close, when a woman with a scarf on her head, escorted by four men, climbed on to the stage. Before a bewildered audience at the Sir Cowasjee Jehangir Hall, Bombay, the group commandeered one of the microphones and the woman launched a tirade against the organizers of the meeting, the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP) trustees.

The occasion was the Samast Anjuman meeting called for 28 August to recommend an amendment to the Adoption of Children Bill, 1980, now before the Indian Parliament. The woman, Ms Meher Master-Moos, a fiery lawyer and one of the leaders of the United Orthodox Graduates (UOG) party that swept the 'C' graduates register in the recent BPP Anjuman Committee elections, charged that the amendment proposed by the BPP and supported by leaders of the Committee for Electoral Rights (CER), the Committee of United Zoroastrians (CUZ) and others, would be the cause of the disintegration of the Parsi community. Among her companions was Jal A. Vakil, a former additional Chief Presidency Magistrate now with the M. N. Sett Charities.

With that unorthodox gesture, the BPP's last hope of presenting a "united front" to the government on the controversial Adoption Bill, fell flat. Even prior to the ill-fated meeting, BPP trustee Jal Vimadlal, a former high court judge, publicized his note of dissent in the conservative Gujarati daily, *The Jam-e-Jamshed*: "The amendment suffers from...defects...I...hope that in the interests of the community, 'the powers that be' will propose the amendment in the form suggested by me before it is too late."

The amendment that Master-Moos, Vimadlal and others are opposed to is the one proposed by Rustom Gae, a senior advocate of the Supreme Court and a former law secretary to the Government of India, with an additional line pertaining to succession and inheritance.

The amendment states, "For the removal of doubts it is hereby declared that nothing in sub-section (2) shall be construed to change the religion or religious denomination or sect of an adopted child into any other religion, religious denomination or sect to which the conversion of a person not born in such religion, religious denomination or sect is not permissible according to the doctrines, usages or customs applicable to the followers of such religion, religious denomination or sect save that so far as the rights to succession and inheritance are concerned, such adopted child shall be governed by the relevant law applicable to the adopter or adopters."

Gae's amendment differs from the BPP's original draft in that a non-Parsi child adopted by Parsis would be "equated with a natural born child for all purposes except purposes of a religious nature." The original BPP amendment would have denied the child "any rights in regard to matters relating to race, community or religion."

Gae's amendment with the additional lines was accepted by the BPP trustees at a meeting on 21 August attended by leaders of the CER, the party that swept the recent Anjuman Committee elections, the CUZ, the major opposition party claiming to represent the orthodox point of view, and the UOG.

An advertisement in the *Jame* of 28 August, the day of the Samast Anjuman

meeting, Supported Master-Moos' amendment and attacked Gae's for being "too wide and ambiguous" and providing "no protection to Parsis."

"Personally, I am not very happy with some of the words" incorporated in the amendment, said CER chairman, Jamsheed Kanga, speaking at the Samast Anjuman meeting. But in order to obtain a "consensus", Kanga acquiesced. He urged the gathering to support the amendment.

While noting the purpose of the adoption bill was to "protect the material property of the child", he felt the bill should not be used as an occasion to change the customs and traditions of the community especially regarding the acceptance of converts.

"This (conversion) should be done after proper debate, discussion and ascertaining the views of the community", he added.

Dadi Engineer, a noted Bombay lawyer and CER leader, stated it was essential the "controversy must end because we are making a representation to government". He was in New Delhi recently and found "the government is really confused" because of all the amendments that were being proposed by various Parsi factions. Engineer said that the government officials recommended the community make their views known and leave the drafting of the amendment to the law department. "Instead of reasoning against each other, let us reason together", said Engineer.

At which stage, Ms Master-Moos and her entourage ascended on the podium and marched toward the microphone. While the seven BPP trustees and other dignitaries on the stage looked on helplessly, Master-Moos' companions formed a semi-circle around

her. As anxious Panchayat officials converged near the group, Master-Moos shrilled inaudibly into the microphone; Boman-Behram, in turn, entered into a verbal duel on his microphone. Master Moos microphone was shut off and Boman-Behram asked the congregation whether they wanted her to speak or not. The general reaction appeared unfavourable.

After some internal discussions, it was decided to let Ms Aloo Chibber, a member of the state Minorities Commission read out a resolution on behalf of Master-Moos and company.

But no sooner had Chibber begun to speak, a white coated, becaped, elderly Parsi seated on the first floor gallery, entered into a shouting match with her.

Boman-Behram then put the original amendment sponsored by the BPP to a show of hands vote which demonstrated that the crowd wholeheartedly supported the official amendment.

In letters to the *Jame*, both Master-Moos and Vakil defended their tactics: "Every person has a right to speak at a Samast Anjuman meeting when democratic processes prevail" wrote Master-Moos. But from the high-handed way in which Mr. B.K. Boman-Behram conducted the meeting it was evident he

wanted to railroad the Parsi public, without giving an opportunity to any person to speak and consider the pros and cons of the BPP Clause 14 draft amendment.

"The amendment was sprung as a surprise on the public without the public being given time to consider it. Why did the BPP trustees fail to publish their proposed amendment in the Parsi press at the same time as the meeting announcement?"

Vakil lamented in the *Jame* issue of 1 September, that the amendment draft prepared by Master-Moos and himself was not even circulated for consideration prior to the BPP deliberations and neither he nor Master-Moos received any "written invitation letter" to the 21 August meeting.

Boman-Behram replied to Master-Moos' allegations surprisingly in *The Bombay Samachar* (6 September 1981) a paper whose editorial policies have earned the ire of the BPP and the orthodox group. Boman-Behram noted that at the 21 August meeting the trustees and leaders of the various groups including the UOG, with the exception of Vimadlal, "voted for the final amendment."

"I am informed that the president of

the UOG (Ms Perviz F. Dotivala) had invited Mrs Meher-Moos (sic) to the meeting but she could not attend as she was away in Poona.

"Before the vote was taken" (at the Samast Anjuman meeting), wrote Boman-Behram, "I had decided to invite those from the audience, who had any suggestion to make, to speak from the stage. But after the last speaker in support of the Resolution had completed his speech, Mrs. Meher-Moos, according to a pre-arranged plan, rushed to the stage in the manner of gate-crasher". Boman-Behram also took a swipe at the BPP's strongest ally of the past, the *Jame* referring to it as a "so-called responsible paper" for publishing some of Master-Moos' statements. Boman-Behram also may have been peeved with the *Jame* for publishing the views of Shiavax Nargolwala, the controversial Delhi Parsi Anjuman's president on adoption in an earlier issue.

But whatever the political upheavals, what shocked the community the most was the B P Ps' inability to hold a public meeting without disruption. It was yet another stark reminder of the deterioration in relations between the Panchayat and the public.

LET'S BUILD THEM TOGETHER!

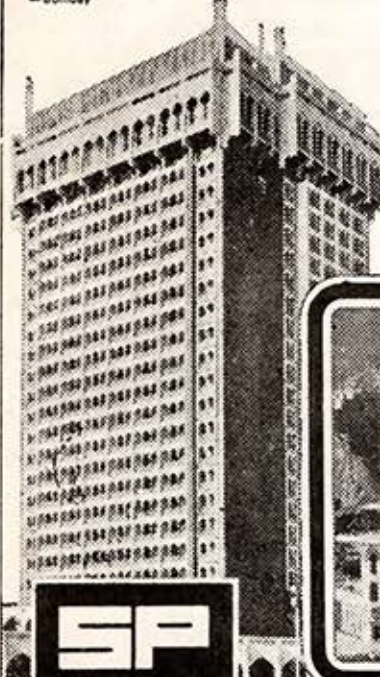
Whether it's a five-star hotel, a Sultan's Palace, a hospital, a chemical factory, a fertiliser plant or a housing project—we have the expertise and experience—to handle any turn-key construction project anywhere in the world.

Over the last 100 years we have not only pioneered the construction industry in our country but spread our wings to Muscat and the Middle East—where against competition from the best construction companies, we won the contract

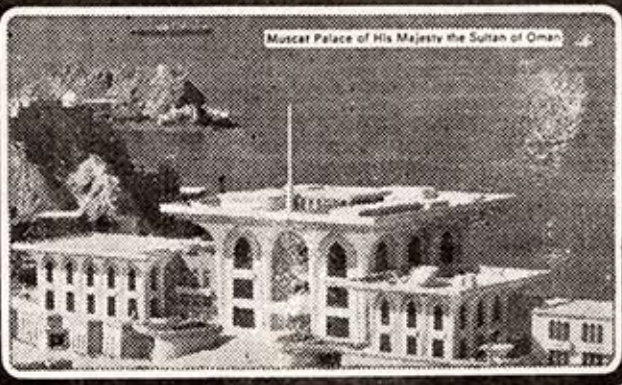
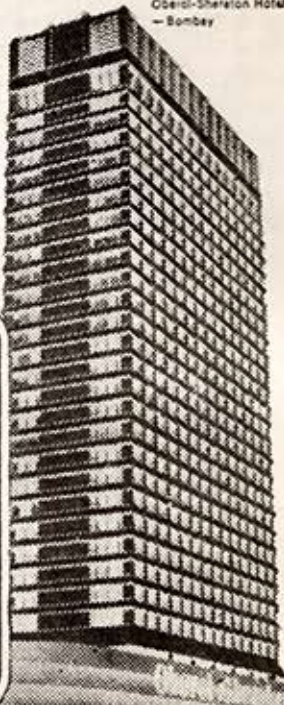
for putting up the imposing Muscat Palace complex of His Majesty the Sultan of Oman—and completed it in time.

The multiplicity of projects carried out by us over several decades has resulted in the building up of expertise in numerous aspects of the construction industry. We proudly offer this expertise for any construction project and proposals for joint ventures would be welcome.

Taj-Intercontinental Hotel
— Bombay



Oberoi-Sheraton Hotel
— Bombay



SP

SHAPOORJI PALLONJI & CO. (PVT.) LTD.

International Operations Division,
Engineering & Construction Contractors,
New India Centre, 17 Coopers Road,
Bombay 400 039 India



research holds the answer to Industrial Productivity

Put simply, Ahura are Pioneers in the manufacture of Process Chemicals in India. Throughout 4 decades of association with industries Ahura Research has led to the timely production of vital Process Chemicals to industries. Ahura have been witness to the emergence of an entirely new spectrum of industrial activity in India and have kept pace with their ever widening demands.

Quality Process Chemicals to satisfy every conceivable need of industries is Ahura's aim. Ahura is in the service of industries since 1936.

AHURA CHEMICAL PRODUCTS PVT. LTD.

84, Sion Road, Sion (East),
Bombay-400 022
Phone : 473351,
Grams : AHURACHEM
Telex 011-3917.

The Best Man

The announcement came as no surprise. Ever since the declaration of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat Anjuman Committee election results in April, the most favoured candidate for the next vacancy on the BPP Board of trustees was Jamsheed G. Kanga, the moderate, introspective leader of the Committee for Electoral rights (CER). An Indian Administrative Service officer, with a distinguished record, Kanga had brought into existence and nurtured the well-intentioned group of professionals, executives, businessmen and lay people who successfully contested and won the Anjuman Committee elections held in February and March this year.

Announcing the candidature at a meeting of the newly convened Anjuman Committee on August 15 at Bombay's Sir Cowasjee Jehangir Hall, Dadi B. Engineer, one of the CER vice-chairmen and founder member, listed the requirements for a trustee: total dedication, balanced views, education, a record of personal and professional success, awareness that the trusteeship is an office of great responsibility more than great honour, and willingness to devote time to community affairs.

"No one fills the role as admirably as Jamsheed Kanga," said Engineer. The statement was not an exaggeration. More than any individual, it was Kanga with his dedication, drive and persistence who was responsible for the CER scoring an upset victory at the polls.

And Kanga is acutely aware of the responsibility that comes with the job. Realizing that the election campaign had raised the community's expectations, Kanga sought prior assurance from the other members of the CER that they would continue to lend their support should he contest the trusteeship once BPP Chairman B.K. Boman Behram's term expires around November. "We must come together and work together", he told the 500 or so people gathered at the Cowasjee Jehangir Hall, "only if we are united, we are strong, only if we are strong, are we respected."

Kanga noted that around a dozen subcommittees had been formed to

"bring the talent of the community together" and tackle the problems. Area committees in 15 parts of the city also have been initiated "to meet and discuss the local problems and to be the eyes and ears of the community."

Zal Contractor, an active CER member who heads the area committees stated that each of the area committees would cater to around 6,000 Parsis. "Unless we proceed area wise, we will not know what assets we have" in the various parts of the city and the suburbs, he noted.

Housing

High on the list of the CER's priorities is housing, a sensitive portfolio handled by CER deputy chairman, Fali A. Poncha. A former insurance executive, currently serving in Tata Sons, Poncha reeled off a list of statistics at the C.J. Hall meeting to demonstrate that the community has the space to construct around 1,300 flats of around 500 square feet each. To raise part of the funds, some of the flats would be sold on an ownership basis, others rented, depending on the individual's capacity to pay, said Poncha. He also felt that the government could be convinced to allocate cement as the community's annual requirement would be only 1,200 tonnes a year for the next 10 years; this amount was only a fraction of the cement allocated for Bombay, said Poncha.

Electoral Reforms

While the success of the housing schemes will depend largely on the cooperation of the various trusts, especially the BPP, the one area in which the Anjuman Committee has the jurisdiction to act immediately, is electoral reform. Engineer who heads the legal committee noted that though the "electoral scheme has outlived its usefulness," there are certain "legal impediments" to modifying the scheme. "Direct adult franchise is not possible," he noted, as the rights of the donors, those who have donated Rs.5,000 and above to the BPP trusts or the B.D. Petit Parsi General Hospital, and are thereby entitled to vote, have to be protected.

Engineer noted that in 1977 the BPP

had constituted an electoral committee to recommend reforms, and that the committee's report should be submitted shortly.

Both Kanga and Engineer are on the committee and had submitted dissenting notes. Ironically, it was their disillusionment with the committee's attitude to electoral reforms that had prompted both of them to contest the Anjuman Committee elections. The CER strategy appears to be to wait for the report to be made public, examine its recommendations and if they are suitable, let the BPP move for a change. This procedure would be simpler and quicker than if the Anjuman Committee were to move for reform.

The only drawback is that the committee chairman, Nadirshah R. Mulla, a former president of the BPP, and other members are known to favour the status quo, as are several of the BPP trustees. As a result, nothing tangible may emanate from the recommendations. If that be the case, the Anjuman Committee will have lost precious time.

On the controversial subject of adoption, Engineer made it clear that the "CER is opposed to adoption if it leads to conversion." Otherwise, the Adoption of Children Bill, 1980, now before Parliament deserved the CER's support because it is a piece of social welfare legislation, Engineer said.

Even though the CER manifesto stated that all religious matters should be left to the clergy and scholars to decide, both Engineer and Kanga felt the CER should take a stand on the issue as the manifesto also states the party would "revive, uphold and strengthen" the Zoroastrian faith. This was a departure from the CER's earlier stand on the issue of Parsi women professing the Zoroastrian faith married to non-Parsis being denied the right to register as voters. At that time the CER remained silent stating it was a matter for the clergy and the scholars to decide.

Welfare

In the field of medicine, Dr Sam M. Mahaluxmiwalla, a member of the medical committee headed by Tehmtan Andhyarujina of the CER, spoke of the



Kanga : balanced views

need for local medical centers in the various parts of the city for treating minor ailments. This would greatly benefit Parsis who have presently to travel from all over the city and suburbs to the Parsi General Hospital. By establishing these outpatient clinics, there would also be less pressure on the hospital, Mahaluxmiwalla noted.

Professor Noshir Kaikobad who

heads the social welfare committee noted that the community had "no family counselling bureaus," and its major social welfare institution had only three or four social workers to handle 2,000 to 3,000 applications.

Men and Machines

In his introductory remarks at the meeting, Kanga noted that while the CER was painfully aware of the needs of the community, the new Anjuman Committee did not have the "machinery to implement" programs.

"The Bombay Parsi Panchayat has traditionally" been geared for "taking up this role," said Kanga. "It has an organization. Given proper staff and support from the community," much could be achieved, he said. "But are the trustees prepared to take this leadership role?" Or would they take the "leadership role when it suits them," he asked.

The question that Kanga raised is one that has been plaguing the BPP trustees for decades: whether they are the leaders of the community or merely the custodians of funds and properties. The trustees appear to opt for one or the other depending on the individual trustee

and the circumstances. As a result, the community remains in the dark as to the role of the BPP. As the existing BPP trustees were elected by the former Anjuman Committee which in turn was elected by barely three percent of the eligible voters, the trustees leadership mandate was greatly limited. "A few ambitious persons were able to control the assets," said Kanga, "but the giant (the community) at last has been stirred. For the first time we have a democratically elected legislature".

Andhyarujina echoed that sentiment when he noted in his summary of the meeting, "For the first time we have tried to find out what are the problems of the community. There is a qualitative difference in the approach of the Anjuman Committee." He termed the meeting, "the beginning of accountability", and added he was, "confident there will be real accountability when we have Jamsheed Kanga on the board of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat."

If it is possible to revitalize that once august institution on Dadabhai Naoroji Road, there is little doubt that the CER has selected their best man to do the job.

CER Office Bearers

Chairman: Jamsheed G. Kanga.
Dy. Chairman : Dadi B. Engineer, Minoo. R. Shroff, Fali A. Poncha.
Hon. Secretaries : Homi P. Kanga, Ms Mani S. Dalal.
Hon. Treasurer : Ms Silloo K. Kavarana

Housing :

Fali Poncha, convener, Jamsheed Kanga, Darayus Batliwalla, Rattan Dubash, Rutton Surveyor, Maneck Engineer.

Employment :

Noshir Sidhwa, convener, Minoo Shroff.

Medical

Tehmtan R. Andhyarujina, Convener, Dr. Sam Mahaluxmiwalla, Dr. Pilloo Hakim, Dr. P.K. Antia, Dr. Tehmtan Udwadia, Dr. Roda Minina, Dr. Dina Patel, Dr. Jimmy Sidhwa, Dr. Kersi Hozdar.

Education

Dr. Perin H. Cabinetmaker, Convener.

Ms Roshan Driver, Ms Vispy Balaporia, Dara Zaiwalla.

Religion Education & Welfare of Priests

Ms Vera Mehta, convener, Edul Bharucha, Adi Patel, Jehangir Bulsara, Ms Silloo Kavarana.

Electoral Reforms

Dadi Engineer, convener Jamsheed Kanga, Bergis Desai, Rohintan Magra, Dinshaw Mehta.

Modernisation of BPP Management

Minoo Shroff, convener, Kersi Limathwala, Jahabux Gandevia, Kersi Garda, Dr. Soli Parukh.

Liaison with BPP & other Trusts & Panchayats

Jamsheed Kanga, convener, Fali Poncha.

Social Welfare

Prof. Noshir Kaikobad, convener, Ms Vera Mehta, Dr. Perin Cabinetmaker, Ms Silloo Kavarana, Homi Talati, Ms Hera Pithawala.

Communication & Public Relations

Bergis Desai, convener, Ms. Arni Sethna, Perin Cabinetmaker, Kersi Limathwala, Jehangir Merwanji.

Legal Affairs

Dadi Engineer, convener, Tehmtan R. Andhyarujina, Dara Zaiwalla, Sorab Morris, Jahabux Gandavia, Edul Bharucha, Burjor Mehta, Bergis Desai, Rohintan Majra.

Funds/Resources & Budget Management

Minoo Shroff, convener Noshir Sidhwa, Kersi Limathwala, Homi Kanga, Ms Silloo Kavarana.

Zonal Groups

Zal Contractor, convener, Kersi Limathwala.

Statistics & Data

Ms Arni Sethna

Youth Wing

Kersi Limathwala,

'The Best Orthodox'

The Life of Dastur Dhalla XVII

Aek Atmakatha is the autobiography of the late Dr. Maneck Nusserwanji Dhalla, high priest of the Pakistan Parsis and a religious scholar of world repute. This is the 17th edited and condensed extract from the book "Dastur Dhalla - The Saga of a Soul" - an English translation by Gool and Behram Rustomji of the original Gujarati, published by the Dastur Dhalla Memorial Institute, Karachi.

THE STORY SO FAR

Born to a poor dastur family in Surat 27 August 1875, Dhalla moved with his family to Karachi three years later. He was married to five-year-old Cooverbai when he was eight years old. After failing his matriculation, Dhalla sought employment while educating himself in religious matters. With the assistance of the Karachi Parsis, Dhalla studied Iranian languages in Bombay and then proceeded to New York's Columbia University. He was awarded his Ph.D. in 1908 and on returning to India was nominated the high priest of Karachi at the age of 35. His outlook broadened by his stay in the West. Dhalla critically evaluated old religious customs and beliefs. He was active in forming a Zoroastrian Conference to study the problems of the community, but met with criticism from the orthodox groups.

Dhalla made a trip to the U.S. in 1914 to publish one of his books and give lectures on Zoroastrianism. He returned to Bombay in 1915 to chair the fifth Zoroastrian Conference.

When the Conference was inaugurated, it was intended that it would be held at a different city every year, but as this could not be done, four consecutive sessions were held in Bombay only.

In spite of the exhaustive efforts such as had never been experienced by the community to prevent the birth of an organization, thanks to Dadabhoy Navroji's benedictory message, Pherozshah Mehta's complete cooperation and the collaboration of the representatives of many leading families like the Camas, Petits, Wadias, Tatas, Banajis, Dadachanjis, Kangas, Narimans, Sethnas and others, the meetings of the Conference had taken place regularly year after year.

The Conference had succeeded in securing the cooperation of the community's wealth, rank, learning and nobility, but the majority was in opposition from its very inception. The Conference had been able to attract the influential minority but it could not secure the affiliation of the masses, hence it failed to be the instrument of the entire Anjuman.

The opposition press waged a war against it in full force for three whole years and eventually ceased its persecution, eradicated it from its annals and obliterated it from its records.

That opened a new chapter for the Conference. It found scope to exist in a serene atmosphere. The season to engage in efforts for the uplift of the community had set in. The Conference had the chance of proving the necessity of its existence. But it failed to seize this golden opportunity. It proved itself incapable of meeting the challenge of changed circumstances. It could not create the intelligence and vitality necessary to exist in the sunshine of new era.

Those who had stood by it and defended it while the opposition was bent upon destroying it with criticism and reproach, seemed to feel that their work was over, their obligations fulfilled, and each returned to this own abode.

Their emotions had been aroused and their sentiments incited to come to the aid of the Conference during the critical times of its inception. But when calm ensued, they had neither the selfless spirit of service nor the enthusiasm to become the servers of the community.

Besides, as the years passed, those associated with the Conference realised through experience that the resolutions passed from the platform of the Conference and the projects formulated, were

as difficult to put into practice as they were simple to put on paper.

Due to the lack of sufficient enthusiasm of its supporters and the absence of the cooperation of the masses, the Conference closed down after holding its seventh session in 1919.

The lesson that the activities of the Conference had taught was that our community was incapable of getting around a conference table and working in a spirit of give and take. Since a long time the community had been divided between the orthodoxy and the reformists, the conservatives and the liberals. The two sections already viewed each other with suspicion; but since the struggle on the non-Parsi problem had commenced, the gulf between them had widened.

Since the middle of the last century, the reformist group seemed to be gaining ground. This century started with a reaction against it. In this new age, the conservatives qualified the liberals as 'anti-Parsi', 'corpse-burners', etc.

The powerful voice of the Parsi press resounded mainly in favour of the conservatives. The life of the reformist press was being increasingly endangered.

Our community was incapable of getting around a conference table and working in a spirit of give and take.

This first-rate and famous *Rast Goftar* founded by Dadabhoy Naoroji, having rendered memorable service to the progress of the community, died a natural death shortly after celebrating its jubilee.

Sound and solid monthlies and quarterlies, rich with Zoroastrian religion, ethics, philosophy and history, published by the reformists found their heavenly abode no sooner than they were born; whereas immature pamphlets fostering superstition, blossomed from their inception.

New societies born with the purpose of immortalizing orthodoxy flourished. Amongst the organizations that had been founded during this period, the Athornan Mandal was one that echoed my longed for ideals. But as its founders, advisors and supporters who, though born in the priestly fold were not in the profession, the very gentlemen who were waging war against the reformists, this one and only organization of

the *Athornan* fold came into existence as a one-sided and biased society and there was a flaw in its usefulness right from its inception. For this reason I could not cooperate with it.

Due to its quantitative strength and the support of the press, the orthodox group was able to forge ahead of the reformist party. As a result, not only did ancient customs, conventions and ritu-

Belief in astrology, palmistry, horoscopes and other superstitions revived and regained strength.

als gain a firmer foothold, but side by side belief in astrology, palmistry, horoscopes and other superstitions revived and regained strength.

Despite every care and caution, the Conference floundered on the rock of religious controversy and was shipwrecked. The reformists and the conservatives could not work hand in hand.

Man's infant religion is the religion of rituals and ceremonies. It is an objective religion. It is bent upon attaining spiritual guidance through external aids and through the strict adherence to customs and conventions. With enlightenment man learns to search his inner self. The prophets teach him the religion of morality and devotion. This higher form of religion is subjective—it is the religion of the mind, the heart and the soul. It contemplates upon the merits of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, and knows that man is the designer of his own destiny.

Asho Zarathushtra propounds this noble ideal of religion in his *Gathas*. But this pure and unadulterated form of religion could not endure long after him. Setting aside the Indo-Iranian religion which was based on ceremonies and rituals, he gave his devotional religion to the world; but in the days of his disciples, the ancient Indo-Iranian religion recaptured it and made it a part and parcel of itself.

From that time Zoroastrianism became a ritualistic and conventional religion and has continued to be so to this day. Even today the conservatives measure the excellence of the religion not on the scales of its high idealism and its deep philosophic teachings, but on those of the finess of its conventions. They are untiring in their affirmation that the Zoroastrian religion is finer than a strand of hair. They seem to

Now on sale

The Parsiana Book of Iranian Names

The Iranian names of boys and girls along with their meanings which originally appeared in Parsiana have now been reprinted in an attractive 24 page booklet.

The book, which is priced at Rs. 9 is available on sale at:

* Faredoon and Burjor Sandalwood Shop, Princess Street.

* K. Bomanji and Sons Sandalwood Shop, Next to Dadyseth Agiary, Flora Fountain.

* Nalanda Book Shop, Taj Inter-Continental Hotel, Apollo Bunder.

* H. L. Rochat & Co. (Next to Roneo Vickers) Navsari Chambers, Ground Floor, 39 A. K. Nayak Marg (Bastion Road), Bombay-400 001.

* Minoo Sukhadwala Sandalwood Shop, Next to Aslaji's Fire Temple, Draupadi Bldg., 386 V. Patel Road, Bombay-400 004.

Write to Parsiana
G. P. O. Box 892,
Bombay-400 001.
Phone: 268730

Rashid D. Bamanbehram

Professional Photographer for Photos of Weddings, Navjotes and Birthday parties. Contact:
Flat No. 3, First Floor, No. 6 Wadia Block, Khareghat Colony, 30A Hughes Road, Bombay 400 007.

Phone: 826074

Old post cards etc./wanted

Advertiser wishes to buy OLD picture postcards, photographs, cigarette cards, playing cards, posters, prints, illustrated books, albums and other related material. Willing to pay top prices for single items or entire collections. Please send, detailed list with expected prices to The Advertiser, (OLD) C/o. Parsiana, G.P.O. Box 892, Bombay 400 001.

Gift shopping at its best at



the friendly Gift Shop at
Bombay Swadeshi Stores Ltd.
Sir P.M. Road, Bombay 400 001. Tel: 253443/252730

**ZOROASTRIAN ARTEFACTS & SILVER
PENDANTS AVAILABLE**

imagine that such statements enhance the stature of our religion.

Our religion is said to have derived this qualification of being finer than hair from the association that Sultan Mahumed Ghaznavi had with our forefathers. It said that from time to time

Zoroastrianism became a ritualistic and conventional religion and has continued to be so to this day.

the poet, Firdausi, composed the Shah-Nameh at the King's command, the verses were recited continuously at the King's court.

The *Mullas*, nobles and courtiers did not approve of these narratives in praise of Zoroastrian kings and heroes of old, so they complained about them and excited the Sultan's feelings against them. The Sultan summoned their leader to the court and ordered that all of them should embrace Islam, and should they fail to do so they were threatened with immediate execution.

The leader of the Zoroastrians pleaded their cause and explained the fine qualities of the religion to the king and begged of him to allow them to continue to practise their faith. The king demanded that he should perform some miracle to prove the validity of their religion.

The Zoroastrians accepted this challenge. The *mobed* began to perform the *Yajeshni* ceremony and the king and his soldiers beheld its performance from a distance. After a while angels clad in green, riding green horses were seen in the sky. The following day the angels were sighted clad in white and the king and all his men were bewildered. On the third day a black demon riding an elephant was visible in the northern horizon.

When the king asked for an explanation, the *mobeds*, after some investigation, revealed that a hair of the beard of the priest performing the ceremony had fallen into the ceremonial implements. In an endeavour to remove it, another procession of angels in red passed across the sky.

The purport of the narrative was that the religion was so refined that a single hair could compass such changes in the atmosphere.

Such exaggerated notions about the importance of conventions have placed us in the ranks of the most orthodox of all the nations of the world. There is no exaggeration in such a statement. A single example will suffice to clarify the point.

According to our religion, a noble person is said to be pious, whereas an evil or sinful one is called in Avesta, *dragvant* and in Pahlavi and Persian *darvand*. Convention classifies all non-Zoroastrians as *darvands* and they are kept aloof from all our ceremonials.

Everyone is at liberty to enter the places of worship of the Jews, Christians and Muslims. Unshod, anyone is permitted to enter even a Hindu temple. We allow no one to step into our fire temples.

Today we frequently hear the term 'best orthodox' being used during a controversy between the liberals and the conservatives. The phrase was born during the decade of the Conference in relation to Sir Pherozechah Mehta. The constant complaint of the Parsi press against him was that while he was rendering exceptional service to the vast population of the country, he seemed to be completely neglecting his own beloved community and was disassociating himself from all its activities.

Four days prior to the inauguration of the First Conference, I requested him to accede to the call of the community and to give it the benefit of his fine mind

Remarks to the effect that 'We do not want such an Americanized dastur', were flung at me.

and his rich experiences, and invited him to honour the Conference with his presence. He laughed and replied that as we were as zealous as the Jews he thought it wisest to keep to himself.

He agreed, however, to be present at the final sessions of the Conference and to address it on that occasion. On the third day, the atmosphere of the Conference became highly inflammable. He rose to speak and in praising me as the founder of the Conference, he remarked that by my stay and study in the free atmosphere of America, my thoughts had been moulded.

No sooner had those words escaped

his lips than shouts of 'shame, shame' and hissings and booings rent the air and remarks to the effect that 'We do not want such an Americanized dastur', were flung at me. Later, he humourously reminded me of his remark regarding our Jewish zealotry.

The very next year, under unforeseen circumstances, he had an opportunity to evaluate the feelings of the community towards him. He had gone to England at that time. According to the ruling of the High Court there was to be an election of the Trustees of the Parsi Panchayat as per its constitution.

Bombay was alive with controversy and contention. There was a regular 'tug of war' going on between the conservatives and the reformists. The latter tried

The orthodox majority was stirred up through speeches and articles to vote against Sir Pherozechah Mehta.

to put up as its candidate the most suitable and the most brilliant person. Sir Pherozechah Mehta's name was on all lips, yet everyone felt that it was almost impossible to get him to contest the election.

Telegrams and messages of appeal were sent to him and midst everyone's surprise and joy, his reply accepting the request of the reformists reached Bombay. The opposing camp was terror stricken and the orthodox majority was stirred up through speeches and articles to vote against Sir Pherozechah.

A leader of their group openly declared that as the very important question of the preservation of the religious rights of the community depended upon the Trust Board of the Panchayat, the community should exercise great caution, and beware of being bewitched by the grandeur of a name, and to select only the 'best orthodox' from amongst themselves.

This shining star of the community did not seem a suitable candidate in the eyes of this group. Pherozechah Mehta proved immature on the touchstone of orthodoxy whereas his close friend and equally keen reformist Sir Hormusji Wadia, won thrice the number of votes secured by Sir Pherozechah, and he was elected as the 'best orthodox'.