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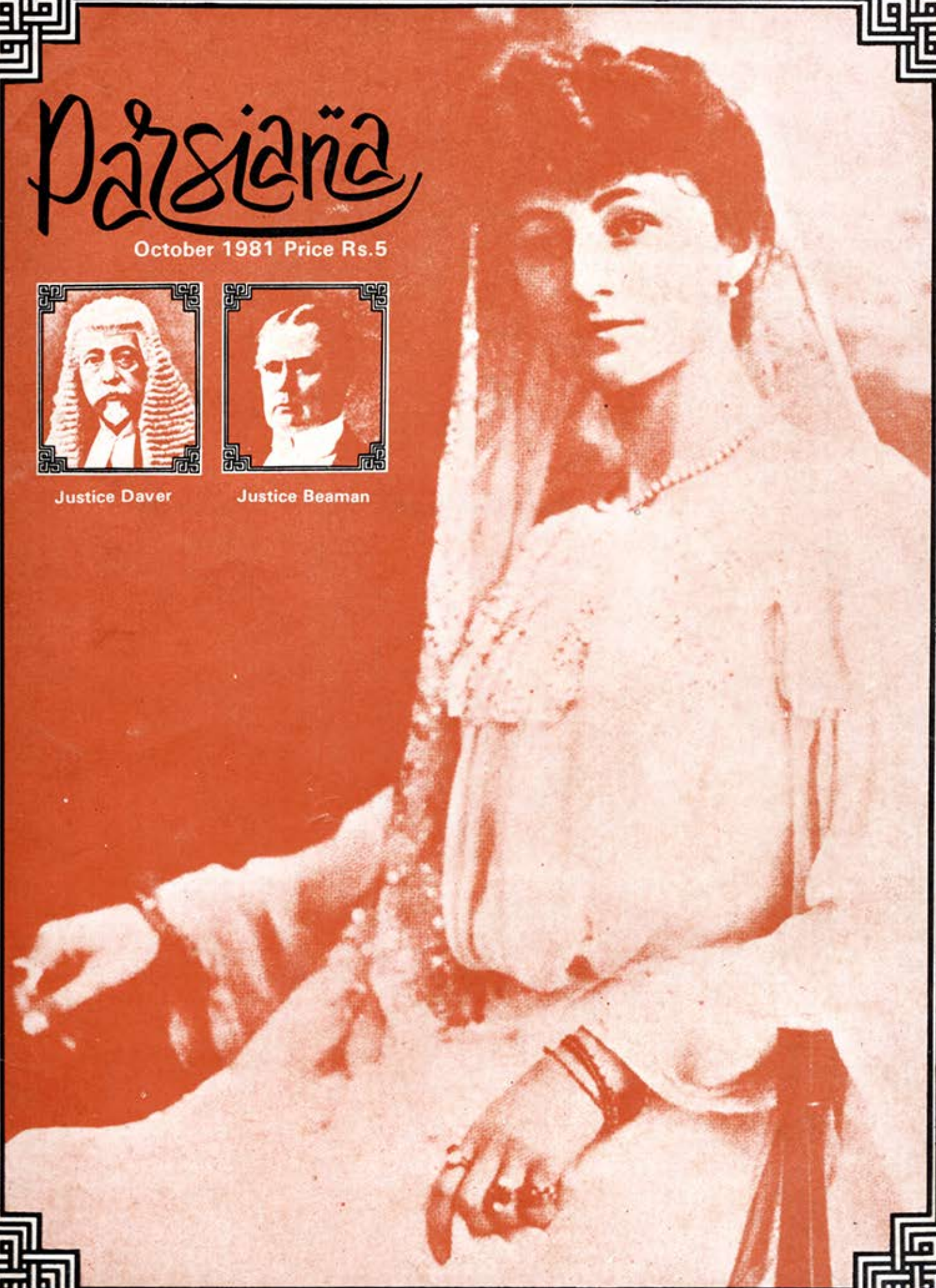
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Justice Daver



Justice Beaman



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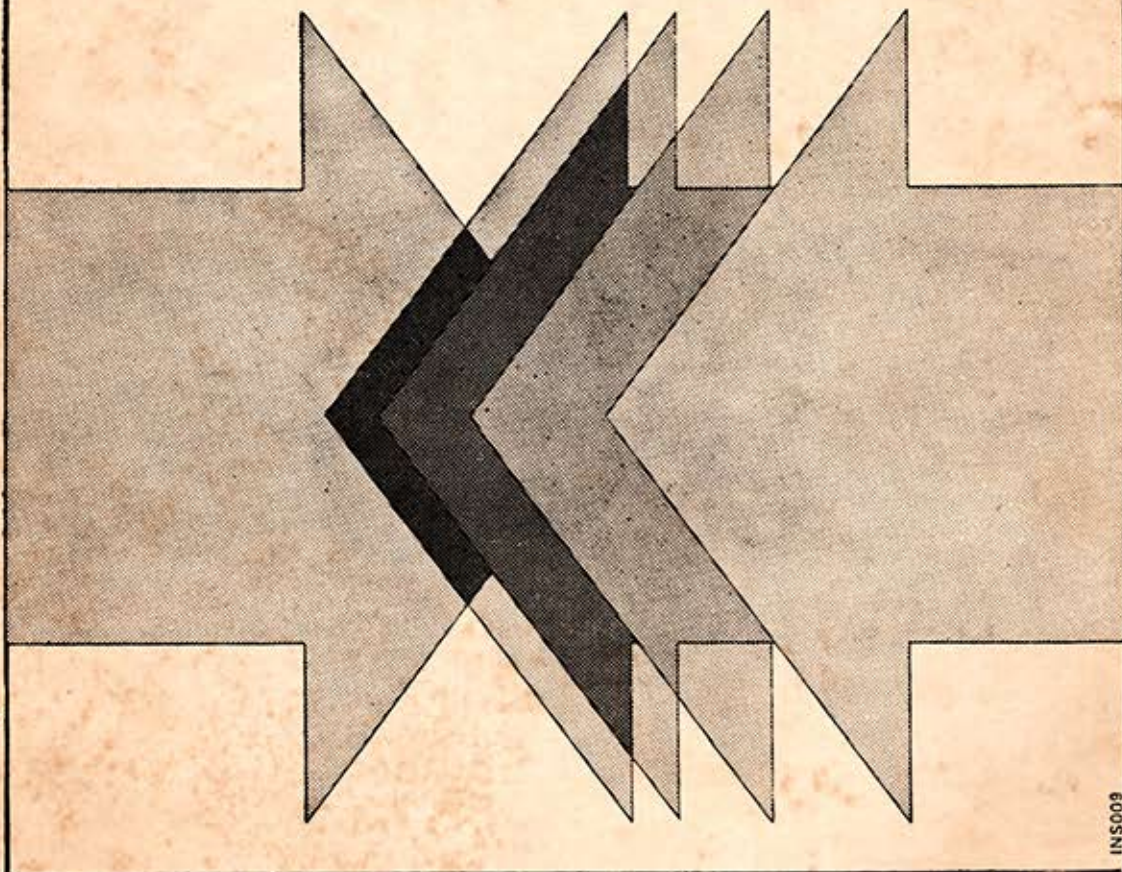
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Parsiana

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Cover depicting Ms. R.D. Tata designed by Sean Mahoney

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In Memoriam

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Director

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Readers' views are welcome on any subject of interest to the community and should be sent to The Editor, Readers' Forum, Parsiana, G.P.O. Box 892, Bombay 400 001. Letters are subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity.

Conversion

In regard to the letters published in *Parsiana*, about Parsis converted to Christianity by Dr. John Wilson, I would like to quote from Sir Rustom Masani's biography of Dadabhai Naoroji.

Sir Erskine Perry, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Bombay and President of the Board of Education, impressed by the intelligence and love for learning of Dadabhai made a suggestion to send him to England for the study of law.

Seeing there was no response from the wealthy of the community to help Dadabhai of poor pecuniary circumstances, the noble Englishman made an offer to bear half the expense, if the other half came from the community.

The community refused to do so in light of the conversion of two Parsis. Sir Rustom narrates the thinking of the community of that time as under: "To

break through the citadel of Hinduism was not a very difficult task for the (missionaries), but the staunch followers of Zoroaster, who had abandoned their homes and sought refuge in India, for the preservation of their faith, could not think of any calamity more appalling than the renunciation of the ancient creed by even a single soul.

"They, therefore, took special care to guard Parsi youths from the snares of the missionary. No Christian evangelist could hope to enter their sanctuary. Nevertheless, a few of the more ardent missionaries, of whom Dr. John Wilson was the most prominent, ventured to cast covetous eyes on some of the schoolboys. The method of these zealous followers of the cross was simple - for one hour given to Christianity a gift of four hours' English, History, Geography and Mathematics.

"At last in the year 1839, they succeeded in inducing two lads, Dhanjibhoy Naoroji and Hormusji Pestonji to embrace Christianity. Nothing ever convulsed the Parsis more, or caused them greater chagrin and humiliation, than these two solitary cases of conversion. The whole community was up in arms. The missionaries were anathematized as 'devils in human shape'; and brochures denouncing Christianity were written as tracts for the times."

Masani continues: "So bitterly were the feelings of the community outraged that a disturbance of the peace was apprehended. It was alleged that the Parsi leaders were inciting their followers to violence and scheming to get forcible possession of the two lads, with the ulterior object of sending them to Navsari and there terminating their existence.

"Thereupon they sent a representation to the Government affirming their earnest desire to prevent any disturbance. They had appealed to the tribunal of justice and as law-abiding people were willing to bow to its decision. The law, however, could not give them relief in as much as the boys had come of age. This kept the embers of controversy smouldering for years, and it made the creed-bound Zoroastrian fight shy of anything savouring Christianity."

Masani ends the topic thus: "In course of time, however, the Parsis were reconciled to the work of the missionaries, and they marked their appreciation of it by liberal donations to the missions. They even looked upon the two converts

with respect, when they had taken Holy Orders and had become Christian priests. The Rev. Dhanjibhoy died in England in the year 1905. When the cables announced the death of 'D. Naoroji', people thought the Grand Old Man of India had passed away."

Ratan R. Marshall
Surat

Tribute to Dadabhai

The item "Rich Indians who sided with British" (*Parsiana*, July 1981) cites the obstacles that nationalists like Dadabhai Naoroji faced during the last century.

I would like to add some more information on this great man. Dadabhai founded the Rahanumai Mazdyasni Sabha in the year 1851. At that time, 130 years back, there were two parties as there are today, the Rahanumai Mazdyasni Sabha and Rahe Rastnumai Zarthusrian Sabha.

Dadabhai had the support of another reformist and educationist Navroji Furdunji. He was called the Tribune of the People. Dadabhai and his associates wanted to restore the Zoroastrian religion to its pristine purity and simplicity.

Sir Rustom Masani in his book on the life of Dadabhai states that Sir Jam-

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shedji Jeejibhoy and his colleagues stayed away from the reformists. However, Dadabhai succeeded in bringing about reforms.

The other organisations came to an end in three years while Dadabhai lived to see the silver, golden and diamond jubilees of his Society. Today the Rahnumai Sabha holds regular meetings every Wednesday at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute in Bombay.

Dr. S. R. Wadia

Cover Caricatures

I wish you would not print on the cover of *Parsiana* - caricatures of Parsis since the magazine passes into the hands of members of other communities. Why should we project our brethren in an absurd manner? *Parsiana* is not a frivolous or comic magazine, it relates to the affairs of a community - once upon a time a nation. Please, therefore, do not project the community's abnormalities or racial deformities.

A. B. Bhiwandiwala

Prayer Power

The July serial of Aek Atmakatha, the autobiography of Dr. Maneck Nusserwanji Dhalla, illustrates the futility of reciting prayers in Avesta, an extinct language not understood by many

Our prayers should be in an intelligible tongue. Religion will not regain its power unless it changes with the times. Its principles remain eternal but the expression of those principles require continual development. It is therefore imperative that prayers are recited in a colloquial language which is understood by a vast majority of our community.

Ms M. Balsara

Shops at Doongerwadi

I would like to bring to the notice, especially of our Parsi Panchayat, that facilities for buying sandalwood, aggarbatis, loban, diva glasses and oil floats be made available at the Bombay doongerwadi. It is difficult and expensive in the monsoon and during odd hours to go to Gowalia Tank, which is the nearest place for buying these items.

Why can't a small shop be opened at doongerwadi for the sale of such items? Such a shop, when open day and night would give employment to three to four elderly Parsis who may work six to eight hours a day.

I would even suggest having a flower shop opened day and night.

Jehangir K. Panday

The Agreement



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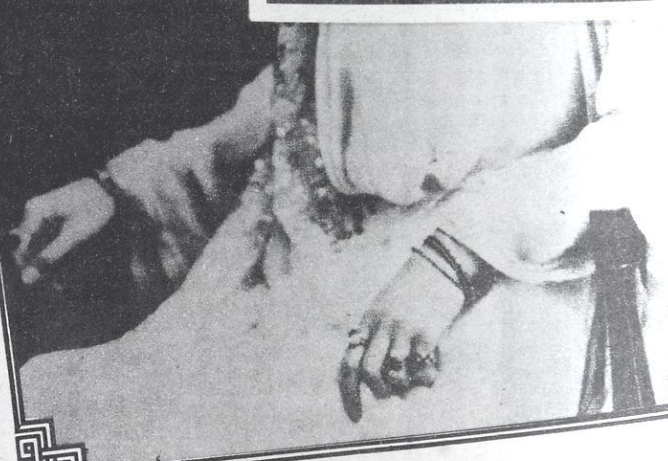
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Justice Davar Justice Beaman



The Parsi Punchayet Case

Suit No. 689 of 1906
Sir Dinsha Manockji Petit and others
v/s
Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy and others

Seventy-five years ago in the judicature of the Bombay High Court, Sir Dinsha Manockji Petit and others filed a suit against Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy and others. That historic suit, which came to be known as 'The Parsi Punchayet Case', affected the course of the community for three quarters of a century and still haunts the Parsis.

What the two judges of the High Court, Justice Beaman and Justice Daver, had to determine was, whether a person born in another faith but converted to Zoroastrianism was entitled to the benefits of certain trusts.

Their judgement delivered on Friday, 27 November, 1908, raised as many issues as it attempted to solve. Both the orthodox and liberal factions in the community cite the landmark decision to bolster their point of view.

In order to acquaint the community with the judgement, Parsiana, serializes, starting with this issue, an abridged version of the two judgements. In abridging the judgements, those portions dealing with technical legalities have been omitted.

The suit dealt with two issues, one pertaining to conversion, and the other,

whether the then trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet were validly appointed and had the right to fill vacancies upon the death or resignation of a trustee. The portion dealing with the appointment of the trustees is omitted on account of the technical nature of the judgement and limitations of space. But readers will be interested to know that the court ruled the trustees were not validly appointed and a new election scheme was drawn which is in use till today.

In the year 1903, Mr. R. D. Tata, the 6th Plaintiff in the suit, married a French lady in Paris. He brought her to Bombay and got one of the Shenshai High Priests, Dastur Kaikhooshroo Jamaspji, to perform the Navjote ceremony, thereby investing her with Sudra and Kusti—the sacred shirt and girdle which are the outward symbols worn by those who profess the Zoroastrian religion. He then went through with her the marriage ceremony according to the rites and forms observed by Parsis.

He claimed that his wife had become a Parsi professing the Zoroastrian religion and that as such she was entitled to participate in all the charitable and religious funds and institutions of the Parsis. He claimed that she was, amongst other things, entitled to enter all Fire Temples and on her death she was entitled to have her body taken to the Towers of Silence.

This created a great uproar amongst the bulk of the Parsi community. Committees were appointed, public meetings were held, and it was eventually resolved by the Parsi community in a general meeting that the lady was not entitled to the privileges or rights that were claimed on her behalf.

After the investiture and marriage of Mrs. Tata, a Rajput lady, in a much humbler sphere of life, who had children by a Parsi, got herself similarly invested with Sudra and Kusti. The whole fight is in connection with these two ladies. Really speaking, the fight was on behalf of the French wife of the 6th Plaintiff: the other lady we heard very little of and was merely mentioned incidentally.

Conversion to Zoroastrianism

My learned brother, (Justice Beaman) may possibly not be in accord with some of the conclusions to which I have

arrived. The question for decision between the Plaintiffs and Defendants is: "Whether a person born in another faith and subsequently converted to Zoroastrianism and admitted into that religion is entitled to the benefit of the Religious Institutions and Funds mentioned in the Plaint and now in the possession and under the management of the Defendants."

Besides the religious and charitable institutions under the management and control of the Defendants, there are numerous other institutions in Bombay, such as Atash Behrams Agiaries, Dare Mehers, Sanitariums, etc., dedicated to the use and for the benefit of the Parsi community, with which the Court is not concerned, as they are under the control and management of the donors—their successors or other Trustees.

In fact, the Court is not concerned with all the institutions and funds in the possession and management of the Defendants; for the Plaintiffs' Counsel, at the hearing, has narrowed down his demands on behalf of the converts to Zoroastrianism, whose cause the Plaintiffs have so warmly espoused in this suit, and confined his contention to the Dockmas, Sagdis, Nasakhanas, and the Godavra Agiary, and to only one fund—the one for carrying the dead bodies of all Zoroastrians to the Towers of Silence.

The Plaintiffs contend that the Zoroastrian religion not only permits but enjoins the conversion of aliens born in another faith, and that the moment an alien is invested with a Sudra and Kusti, after undergoing the Navjote ceremony at the hands of a Parsi priest, he or she is invested with all the rights and privileges of a born Zoroastrian and is entitled to the benefits of all religious and charitable institutions and funds that exist for the benefit of the

Zoroastrian community.

They say the Defendants have threatened to exclude such converts from the benefits of the funds and institutions under their control and management, and they have instituted this suit, as the champions of such converts, to obtain from the Court a declaration that such converts are entitled as of right to participate in the benefits of the religious and charitable institutions and funds established for the use of all Zoroastrians.

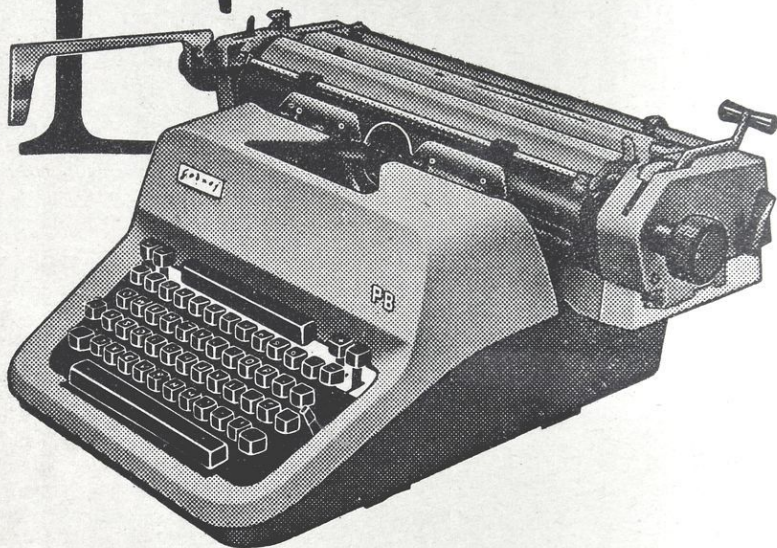
The Plaintiffs are not content to base their case merely on the ground that the Zoroastrian religion not only permits but enjoins conversion: they go further, and contend that it has been usual and customary amongst Parsis to admit Juddins—that is, persons born in another faith—into their religion. They say that such Juddins, on being admitted into the Zoroastrian faith, became not only Zoroastrians but Parsis; and that such converted Parsis have been always allowed to be carried to the Towers of Silence on their death, and that during their lifetime they have entered all places of religious worship, such as Atash Behrams, Agiaries and Dare Mehers as a matter of right.

The Plaintiffs' contentions shortly put are: It is both usual and customary for Parsis to admit Juddins into their religion and give them all the benefits of all religious funds and institutions endowed or dedicated for the benefit of their own people.

They further contend that by the mere performance of the Navjote ceremony by a Parsi priest, thereby putting on a Sudra and Kusti on the person of a Juddin, he makes him or her a full-fledged Zoroastrian without any other religious ceremony.

The Defendants dispute the correctness of these contentions: they say that,

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although the Zoroastrian religion permits of conversion into the faith, the Parsis, ever since their advent into India, have not admitted a Juddin into their fold; that no entire alien, that is, a person born of non-Zoroastrian parents, has ever been admitted into the faith. They admit, however, that children born of a Zoroastrian father by an alien mother have been allowed to come into their fold by the performance of the Navjot ceremony, by investing such children with the Sudra and Kusti.

In order to controvert the contentions of the Defendants that it is not customary to admit Juddins or entire aliens into the Zoroastrian faith, and that even if the religion enjoined conversion, such tenet of the religion had fallen into utter disuse, and that long-continued usage prevailing amongst the Parsis prevented the admission of Juddins to Zoroastrianism, the Plaintiffs called certain witnesses who professed to give some concrete instances of conversions of Juddins into Zoroastrianism.

The very first witness called on behalf of the Plaintiffs is Mr. Pestonji Framji Bhowmagree, a Government employee in the Secretariat, getting a hundred rupees a month as his salary. He is 52 years of age, and came to Bombay from Surat when he was 23 years old. He has since visited his home at Surat off and on during the holidays. When at Surat, he lived with his father and grandfather in their family house. Most, if not the whole, of this witness' evidence is based on what the elder members of his family told him, and in my opinion this evidence is worthless.

When the statements made by this witness were subjected to cross-examination, without exception, every one of his statements which were in any way material to the questions before the Court were a "mere repetition of hearsay."

Let us for one moment look into that evidence and see what it amounts to. He said, in his family there were four individuals who were converted Juddins. They were Jivi and Rupli, Rustom and Jina. Rustom and Jina were the sons of Jivi. Rustom married first Rupli, then a woman called Dhunbai, and then a third wife named Awabai. He had a son named Temulji, who was a stationmaster at Bhynder.

The witness talked very glibly about these peoples conversions, their death, their funeral ceremonies, and their disposal in the Towers of Silence; but, in

the end, it turned out that he knew very little personally of what he was talking, for he said—almost at the beginning of his cross-examination—"I personally know nothing about any conversion." When first examined, he said: "I don't know who the father of Jina and Rustom was."

In cross-examination, referring to these two persons, Jina and Rustom, he said: "I have no idea as to who their father was or when or where they were born." In answer to the Court, he said: "The children of Jivi were born in my grandfather's house... Jivi's husband was also purchased by my grandfather. He lived in my grandfather's house, but I had not seen that man ... I don't recollect what the name of Jivi's husband was. Perhaps my grandfather or father did tell me the name, but I don't recollect."

He was asked about the *namgahran* of his family. A *namgahran* literally means a record of names. Amongst Zoroastrians, it is customary when a priest recites prayers in a Parsi house to invoke blessings on the souls of the dead members of the family; and most families have a sort of book in which the names of the dead members of the family are recorded. It is usual to couple the names—with the name of the father or husband—and use the word "Behedin" or "Ervadin" between the two names.

The family priest would know the *namgahran* of his employer by heart, and the witness probably knew that although the *namgahran* of his family was not then forthcoming, it did exist and there would be people who would be able to recite it, so he had to admit that Rustom's father in the *namgahran* was mentioned as Sorabji. This witness then said: "I did not know Sorabji. I heard that he had been converted about 100 or 125 years ago. Sorabji was the husband of Jivi ... I did not remember about Jivi's husband when I gave evidence."

The statement in the last sentence quoted by me, I refuse to believe. He was pressed on the point of Jivi's husband and deliberately pretended ignorance. He knew the object of the questions, as may be gathered from the following answer he gave to the Court.

"I know that Parsis in the Surat district kept Dubris as mistresses. In Surat itself Parsis did keep Dubris but not in their houses."

The witness knew perfectly well that he was being cross-examined with a view to find out whether Jivi was not the

mistress of one of the male members of his family, and whether this progeny—Rustom and Jina—were not the children of such relationship. He deliberately introduced the saving clause "but not in their houses" to guard against any presumption of paternity against his ancestors. It was only when he was cornered that he admitted about Sorabji; and then again he tried to belittle the importance of his admission by suggesting—I think, purely out of imagination—that Sorabji was himself a convert.

Unless these persons were the progeny of either the witness' own grandfather or some other male member of the Bhowmagree family, the story told by this witness is preposterous. A man may buy a low-caste Hindu girl from famine-stricken people for domestic service, but he does not go buying a husband also for her, as this witness wished us to believe at first. Then, again, he does not allow these purchased waifs to breed in his house and submit himself and his family to the nuisance of having Dubra infants brought up in the house.

What can be the object of investing Dubra children with Sudra and Kusti, getting them married, and taking them to the Towers at the expense of the family. Surely this witness was much too intelligent to believe that his ancestors would do all these things for the children of a Dubri woman, brought as a sort of domestic slave and fed in the house in return for work done!

It is to my mind quite clear that Sorabji was either an ancestor of this witness—some elderly male member of the Bhowmagree family, or that Sorabji was a fictitious name given to the younger members of the family to screen the delinquencies of some male member of the witness' family.

Before I proceed to discuss any further the evidence of other witnesses who gave somewhat similar evidence, I would like here to explain how, as I understand it from the evidence, the Parsis came to make an exception in the case of children born of Parsi fathers by alien mothers.

In the olden times, the Parsis were a poor community. A great many of those that settled in Bombay and the larger cities of Gujarat had to go out into the interior for the purpose of earning their livelihood by some sort of trade or service. Some of those that went out had no wives, and others who had wives found it most inconvenient to take them with them to the remote parts where



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they served, so they left them in their native places where their families were settled, either with their own families or the families of the wives.

While in these remote villages—far from their homes and their families, some of these Parsis took to having unlawful intercourse with women whom they took into their quarters as their mistresses. The women whom they could persuade to live with them were necessarily from the poorer and the lower classes. In the districts of Gujarat, a low caste of Hindus, known as Dubras, abound, and most of the Parsis settled in remote villages took to themselves mistresses from this caste. It was not unusual in those days for Parsis, in some of the cities of Gujarat, to introduce Dubra women in their houses ostensibly as servants and subsequently treating them as their mistresses.

Alliances such as these sometimes resulted in the birth of children. The father naturally did not wish to desert them, but usually got some friendly priest to perform the Navjot ceremony on them during their young age and thus smuggled them into the community. Though this course of conduct nowhere received the sanction of the community openly, the people who became

aware of this, shut their eyes and no noise was made about the matter.

When the fathers returned to their native places and to their families, they brought these children with them; and although they were allowed to pass as Parsis, their birth was always regarded as tainted. The reason for regarding such children with favour and allowing them to be invested with Sudra and Kusti, was that they were taken to be children born in the faith of their fathers and therefore they were not regarded as Juddins. They were the children of Parsi *boon* (i.e., seed); they were children of Parsi *olad* (i.e., origin) and therefore in some cases the mere performance of the Navjot ceremony and the investiture of Sudra and Kusti by a priest, without any other ceremonies, was considered sufficient to let them in.

These children in time grew up and begot families. These original half-breeds and their families were always regarded with a certain amount of disapprobation by the community. The class of people descended from Dubra mothers is extremely limited. They are getting extinct. As the Parsis progressed in education, wealth, and civilization, the moral influences brought to bear on delinquencies such as I have described

were so powerful, that instances of keeping mistresses and having children by them became very very rare, till, in the more modern times, they have become almost extinct.

The evidence in this case, however, shows that Surat was the stronghold of these Dubri-bred Parsis, and there are still some families of this kind who are known by the name of "Parvara houses," as appears from the evidence of Surat witnesses examined in the case.

Another witness, Mr. Khushrubhai Nusserwanji Khan Saheb, also hails from Surat, and he gave somewhat similar evidence to that given by the witness, Mr. Bhowmagree. His evidence is also more or less a repetition of hearsay, but he spoke of two Dubra converts in his family, named Jivaji and Hiri, who were supposed to have been bought by his grandfather from famine stricken people and were brought up in his family. He said he knew these two and attended their funerals.

This is the witness from whom a good deal of evidence is extracted as to the easy morality of some of the Surat Parsis. He told us of the instance of Parvara families in Surat: he told us that Parsis in villages kept Dubris as mistresses, but not in Surat itself; but he

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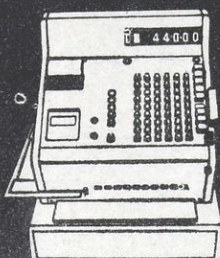


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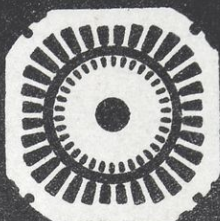
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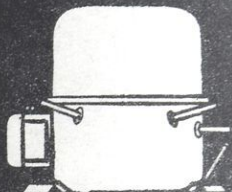
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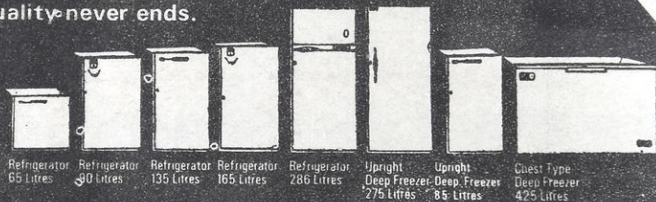
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had to admit that Framji Sorabji Ghandy, of Surat, did keep a low-caste Hindu woman (a *Mochan*) as his mistress.

He qualified his statement by saying that respectable Parsis did not keep mistresses, and gave it as his opinion that the man who kept the *Mochee* woman was not a respectable man *because* he kept a mistress in his house.

Of the conversion of these two Dubras, Jivaji and Hiri, whom he knew and who were brought up in his house, he knew nothing. He said they were converted before his time—before his birth. He does not know for certain whether these two were brought or merely taken into the house. They both died in the house, and on behalf of his father, who had been bedridden, he defrayed their funeral expenses.

Hiri had been married to another Dubra convert, named Hiraji, and brought up her children in the house of the kind old gentleman who had taken her in out of charity. This witness appeared to me to be perfectly well acquainted with the real position of Jivaji and Hiri in his family, and he was prepared to conceal that from the Court.

He evidently knew what to expect in cross-examination. He anticipated

what was to come by telling the Court that in his family it was customary to recite the names of good and faithful servants of the family in prayers. This was to account for the names of the Dubra converts in the family *namgahran*. The attempt to explain away the presence of their names in the *namgahran* was weak in the extreme, in the face of the fact—which, under stress of cross-examination, he had to admit—that this man, Jivaji, used the name of the witness's grandfather, Darasha, as that of his father and that he was generally known as Jiva Darasha.

This is how he tried to explain this very significant fact:—"Jivaji had no father, and therefore when he had to give his name as the owner of the gymnasium at the time of the City Survey he gave the name Jivaji Darasha." The witness cannot mean that Jivaji had no father. What he means is that there was no father who acknowledged him as his son. He admits that he knows of no other family that include servants' names in the *namgahrans*, and I refuse to believe him when he says their names in the *namgahrans*, are merely there as the names of faithful servants.

I am afraid I must here record my belief, in spite of the violent protesta-

tions of Mr. Khushrubhai, against such an assumption, that the two Dubras he spoke of, Jivaji and Hiri, were the children of the family. His own evidence leaves no doubt about this in my mind. By putting Darasha's name after his own, Jivaji claimed Darasha as his father, and neither Darasha nor any members of his family seem to have done anything to stop Jiva from using Darasha's name as that of his father.

The fact that he and Jivi were brought up in the family, that Hiri was married and brought up her children in the house, that all their expenses were paid by the family, that they were allowed to be taken to the Towers of Silence on their death, all these circumstances lead one to the conclusion that is irresistible, that they were children of the family, born of a Parsi father.

This witness evidence is useful in one other respect, which, I think, had better be noted here before I pass on. It shows that even in Surat, the stronghold of Dubri-born Parsi converts, there is an objection to taking such people to the ordinary Towers where Parsi corpses are disposed of and their bodies used to be placed in an old and dilapidated Tower that had fallen into disuse for ordinary Parsi purposes.



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Fourth North American Symposium

'The nouveau Zoroastrian' will be the theme of the Fourth North American Symposium to be hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec on April 10 and 11 in Montreal, note the newsletters of the Zoroastrian Associations of Chicago, Ontario and British Columbia.

A highlight of the meet is a special session for young adults who will debate on 'The Zoroastrian youth in the 21st century will be a faceless creature of the environment'. To coincide with the Symposium an essay competition on 'Why should I remain a Zoroastrian' has been organized for those between the ages of 9 and 16.

The first symposium was held in 1975 in Ontario, Canada. A second symposium entitled 'The survival and Perpetuation of Zoroastrians in North America' was hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago in May 1977. 'The Historical Perspectives of Zoroastrianism' was the topic for the third symposium which was held in New York in October 1979.

A Dream Fulfilled

"Every Zoroastrian community in North America has two dreams: The first to establish a temple and community center and the second, to organize a function with Maestro Zubin Mehta", said Rohinton Rivetna, President of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago, at the Zubin Mehta banquet, held at the Naperville Sheraton, on August 23, 1981, to raise funds for a

Zoroastrian community center in Chicago.

Addressing the gathering of about 400 guests Rivetna continued: "Tonight our one dream has come true, let us pray that when this distinguished gathering meets again, it will be at the opening ceremony of the Chicago Zoroastrian center."

"The Zoroastrian gala was a beautiful affair, a huge success, if the enthusiasm of the capacity crowd of Zoroastrians and guests was any indication," writes the *Naperville Sun* correspondent Horace Jahn.

The programme began with an invocation ceremony, performed by Dastur Minocherhomji and three other priests, followed by an address on Darbe Mehrs in America by Dr Rostam Sarfeh, a close associate of the late millionaire philanthropist Arbab Rustam Guiv after which Robert Stuart, Chairman of the American Can Corporation, spoke on "An ancient cultures contribution to a modern nation," notes Jahn.

"There were several short speeches, introductions and acknowledgements, and a proper tribute was paid to Mrs Morvarid Guiv, whose late husband had bequeathed \$ 150,000 to the Zoroastrian Association," continues Jahn.

Awards were presented to the guest of honour, Zubin Mehta, whose short address was amusing and self-effacing. "The fact that no one knows about our religion is not our fault, because we don't know very much about it ourselves," mused Mehta, notes a report by Bruce Buursma in the *Chicago Tribune*.

The programme ended with dinner, followed by a fashion show of 'beautiful authentic Zoroastrian costumes' and a disco-style dance, notes Jahn. "One had the feeling, as one swung ones hips, that the Zoroastrians would be rock-and-rolling into the future with the rest of us", he adds.

A ZAC center progress report published in the associations newsletter notes that ZAC members have pledged amounts ranging from \$ 1,000 to \$ 10,000 to form a partnership to purchase a five acre lot in Lake Forest Illinois for \$ 62,000. This is an addition to the \$ 55,000 generated earlier to purchase the Hinsdale property.

According to the report the Arbab Guiv foundation has pledged \$ 150,000 for the center of which \$ 20,000 have already been received by the association. The ZAC board of directors have resolved to call the center Darbe Mehr and name it after Guiv.

Even after these generous contributions, the budget will be very tight, and every effort is being made to solicit extra funds.

Zoroastrians in Iran

"The Zarthustis in Iran are enjoying their religious freedom and the Islamic Revolution has brought them wisely closer to their own faith", notes Dr. Ali Jaferey, author and former Iranian government official in a letter from Iran that was published in 'The News from British Columbia'.

"The Islamic Government of Iran has been kind enough to give religious minority communities the permission to

Tandarosti ceremony



Mehta with Cyrus and Roshan Rivetna and award



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conduct their own religious classes for primary and secondary schools. They have classes with hundreds of students, have their own publication department and text books", he writes.

In addition to this, Jaferey conducted gatha classes for adults on a weekly basis which were well attended and also held a one and a half year Avesta course with 15 students some of whom have become his assistants, according to the letter.

Among his activities is the popularization of the navjote ceremony, which were not very common among the Irani Zarthushtis, notes Jaferey. "A way was found and we started with the navjote of three adult girls. The invitees were from both the orthodox and moderate groups, among them two top mobeds.

"First I explained at length that the initiation into the religion as proved by the Gathas and other scriptures, was for adults — fresh adult at the ripe age of 15, if the candidate was born of Zarthushti parents.

"This was because the Religion of Good Conscience is not an inheritance or imposition but a choice by an individual with good understanding of discrimination between good and evil, even good and best.

"The missionaries of the ancient days, from the Gathic era down to the Sassanian period, did not go after children. Maidhyomah, Asho Zarathustra's cousin and the first person to embrace the Good Religion was a fully grown person. King Gushtasp was initiated at the age of 72 or more. Lohrasp must have been a well-advanced centurian. And this was the case with every *daevayasniah/drvant* who chose the Good Religion.

"Then we had a collective navjote of seven adults — three males and four females. Thereafter, we had eleven with one of the ladies being a deaf and mute".

Encouraged by the events, the Zoroastrian International Cultural Association (ZICA) mainly manned by

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Indo-Pakistani Parsi residents of Tehran, arranged a mass navjote of 33 in Yazd. Now the city of Kerman is preparing for a similar ceremony with 40 candidates, notes Jaferey.

The letter ends: "Do feel optimistic and pray for us all."

German Contributions

Funds are being solicited for the publication of *Zarathustra and World Religions*, a compilation of literature on the subject, by German scholars translated into English, notes the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago newsletter.

"Eminent non-Parsi scholars on the Continent (Europe) have devoted their lives to unearth and unravel the secrets of Zarathustra and his achievements," notes Dr. P.J. Saher of West Germany in a synopsis of the book.

"Shall we leave all this buried in a language few Parsis understand? If we wait longer, these works of German scholars will become redundant and unavailable even in Germany, and an opportunity to see our precious heritage confirmed by all humanity will be lost by Zoroastrians".

Saher, who is keen to see the book published, estimates the cost of publication to be around one and a half lakh rupees.

Sports Day

Contestants from the age of three years to over 50 participated in the first Zoroastrian Sports Day in British Columbia, notes the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia board of directors minutes.

Amaz Mehta and Turaj Kaboly were jointly awarded the society's revolving trophy for the best athlete of the year and Human Alghabi bagged a special prize for his remarkable performance in the open age one mile race, note the minutes.

The success of the programme was largely due to the ability of the organizers, "our community is lucky to have one of Canada's top-most professional coach", the directors noted.

Even greater participation is expected in future sports activities and the directors are confident that people will donate trophies for the events. Jalbhai Dastur, an active member of the community has donated a trophy in the name of his late wife Threaty.

History Of A Race

.ioshang Merchant

*This is time's story
Of kings hand-supported by forty tribes
At Susa, Hagmatana and Persepolis
Possessed of good horses and good men
Protected from famine, falsehood, foe
In an unbroken happiness father to son
Saviours of Jerusalem and Babylon
In the name of a god who made
And who preserved what was made
Unless rebellion rose
Ahriman winged, lion-footed, bird of prey
Scorpion-tailed, eagle-clawed or a wild bull
Was crushed by Mazda cruelly
Be he Mazdak or Nineveh
Fire shall fight fire: Athens answer for Sardis
And waters connect
The empire shall have three tongues
And the bull without pastor, pasturage
Each man boy girl paid according to deed
So came a young boy weeping to conquer the world
And a drop abolished it
Three thousand camels carried away
The glory of a king of kings
Killed in the desert, brought back, buried
Conquerors' love a pitiful thing
And the praying mobeds fed
Bread to the dead sons of Xerxes. . . .
Mithra's bull was slain across Europe
From his semen, grain/Set for a second flowering
In a mountain-fastness chaste stayed the daughter of Yezdegi.
Salman gave secrets and a lead
What sword or eunuchs couldn't, pen accomplished
Taxes' tyranny took the rest
Why bleed when sweet words do as much?
So a sun-king became a lord of light
He burns: an olive in glass, veil on veil
Once again bull and lion in mortal fight
Once again the earth abolished
For a paradise in sight
Till kill father forty years
Then on to heaven in as many days
And when a prophet sonless died
His grandsons' perfumed deaths survived
So lights' lord was given a body
Arms legs limbs fragmented or compacted
As the land that took to him
So beauty became a suffering thing
In the memory of slaves
And tyranny a name for kings of kings
Such is time's story
That mingled forty tribes sea-driven
Mingled more with forty 'div'-worshipping
Keeping purity's fire
Who steps in the same river twice?
Of Hagmatana seven-terraced, each the color of stars
Of Parsa, of the hundred columned hall
Of Naqshe-Rustam of the fire altars
Even a worshipper falling into fire burns.
So each new king by forty tribes hand-supported
Fire shall fight fire.*

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PIONEER SHIP BUILDERS

Dr. M.D. David

The Status Enjoyed by Bombay as the country's premier ship-building centre is due to the efforts of one man and his descendants.

Lowjee Nusserwanjee Wadia, born in a Parsi family at Siganpore eight miles from Surat was the pioneer in ship building in India. His descendants dominated the ship building industry for 111 years.

For nearly eight years the East India Company had been attempting to set up a ship building centre at Bombay but efforts were only fruitful when a chance meeting took place between Dudley, Master Attendant of the Bombay Dockyard and Lowjee, the 35-year-old

build defence vessels for them.

From Lowjee Nusserwanjee to Jamsetji Dhunjibhoy, the last and ninth Master Builder who retired in 1881, the Wadia family constructed 417 vessels. Among them was Asia built in 1824. She took part in the Greek war of independence as the flag ship *Navarino* in 1827. As a token gesture the Government of Greece issued a centenary commemorations stamp of the vessel.

Flourishing industry

Seven vessels were also built for the Imam of Muscat. Under Nowroji Jamsetjee, the sixth Master Builder, the first steam vessel *Hogh Lindsay* was built in



The stern of Asia built by the Wadias.

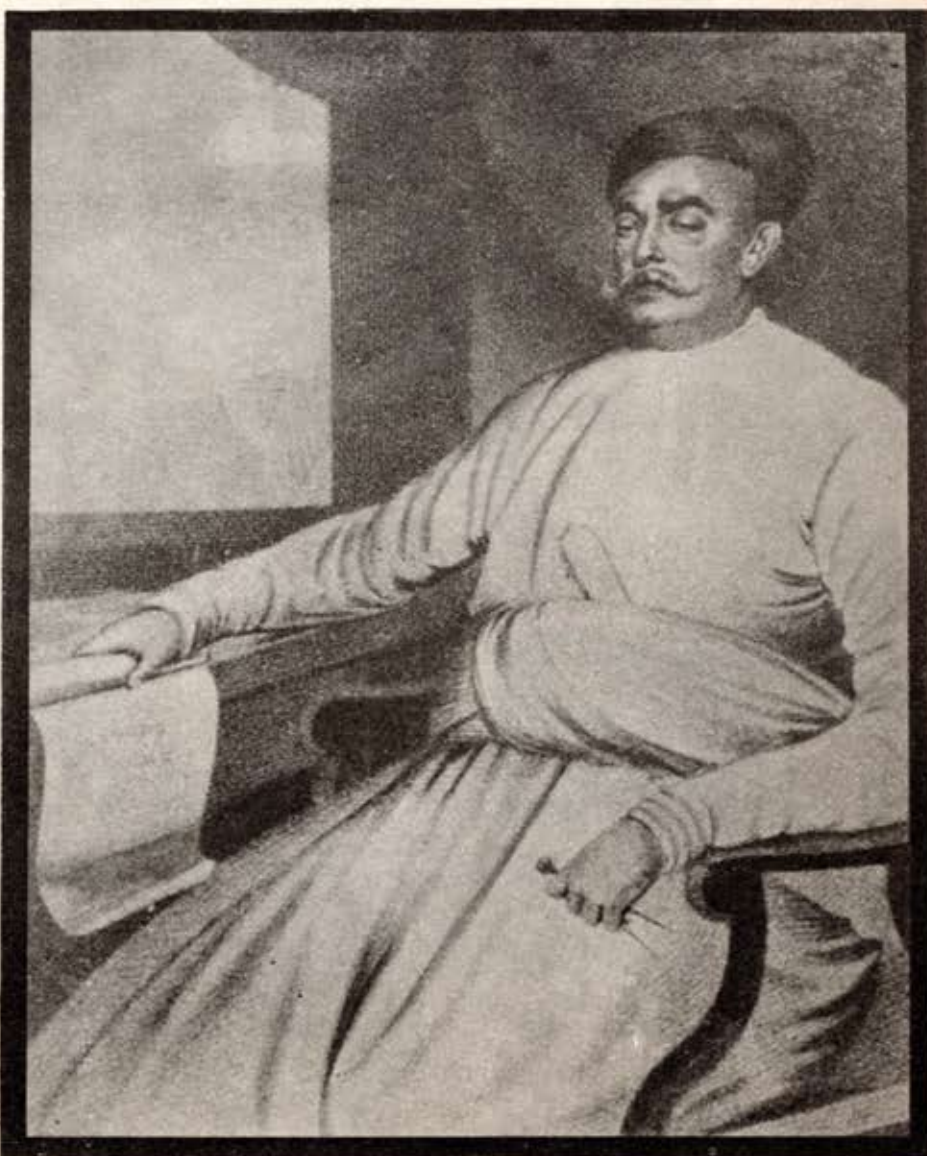


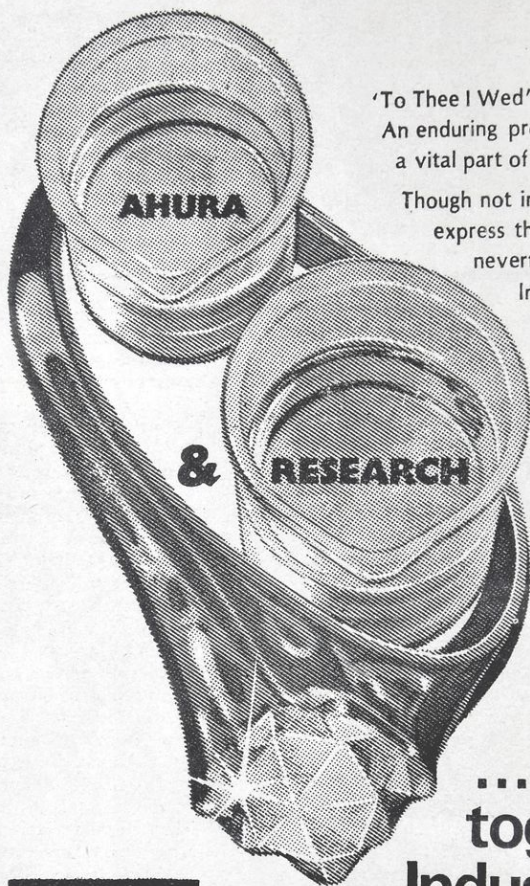
Nowrojee Jamsetjee (1774—1860)
Builder of the first iron steamer. |

Jamsetjee Bomanjee : The Fifth Master Builder and the most distinguished. ♦

Master Carpenter of the Surat yard. So impressed was Dudley by the genius of this young Indian that he invited him to Bombay to develop the ship building industry. It was the beginning of an illustrious career.

Under the Wadias, orders for ships poured in from Madras, Calcutta as well as from several private merchants both Indians and foreigners. They reached the zenith of their glory when the Royal Navy asked the Wadias to





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1829 and the first iron river steamer *Snake* in 1838.

The ship building industry flourished because of the availability of Malabar teak which was far superior to oak and the avid interest taken by the Wadia family in training the younger generations.

Curiously enough, the ship building industry, while bringing the Wadia family several accolades never really generated much wealth for them.

In fact Jamsetjee Bomanjee, the fifth Master Builder and the most distinguished of them all, had to send a frantic appeal to the government in 1821 to make the grant of land promised to the

family. But they had to wait for nearly twenty eight years before the Inam lands of the villages of Juhu and Ville Parle were given to them—the first ever Inam land granted by the English on the island.

Despite the praise lavished by the English, Jamsetjee was sensitive to racial prejudice and had a fierce pride in his worth. He registered his protest against the English prejudices by carving on the keel of *Cornwallis*, the first frigate built at Bombay for the Royal Navy, the words, "This ship was built by a Black fellow. AD 1800"

The fast expanding ship building industry attracted the ire of British capi-

talists who viewed it as a threat to their own industry. Under their mounting pressure, the British Parliament decreed that only English captains and English crew should be employed on Indian built ships. They further hampered growth by imposing a 15 per cent tax in 1811 on all goods imported into India, on Indian built ships. This measure coupled with the lack of interest of succeeding generations of the Wadia family saw the end of their monopoly of nine generations on the ship building industry.

by Dr. M.D. David, Professor of history at Wilson College and author of the History of Bombay. The Daily October 3, 1981.

A Hundred Years Ago



A correspondent writes :- The friends of Khan Saheb Furdoonjee Pestonjee at Poona will be glad to hear that at last Government have thought fit to decorate this deserving servant of Government with the Mutiny medal for his services in the Indian Mutiny of 1857. The uninitiated perhaps do not know that the grant of a medal to a non-combatant means really hard service, one of the chief conditions of which being actual exposure to the enemy's fire requiring to be certified to by an officer present at the action. Under similar conditions Khan Saheb Furdoonjee has earned the Abyssinian medal. He is the only Zoroastrian since the ancient Parsees sought refuge in India, 1251 years ago, who has seen so much active service, for he numbers in addition to the Mutiny and Abyssinia, the Crimean War and the Persian Expedition. I hear that on Monday, the 26th inst., H.E. the Commander-in-Chief intends to hold a Durbar, when I believe the medal will be presented to him. Khan Saheb Furdoonjee has done good service to Government, and his numerous friends and admirers, when they hear this news through the medium of your widely circulated paper, will be glad to find that at last it has pleased Government to reward his war services in the commissariat Department. In peace, too, he has been equally useful, and for his various works and improvements he has received the commendations of Government. He is now in charge of the field column carriage at Poona.

The Times of India,
September 26, 1981.

Khan Saheb Furdoonjee

A Victim of Sea Fever

A career in the merchant navy was traditionally the unfortunate lot of disgraced younger sons of patrician families or reckless adventurers with wanderlust in their veins, due to the appalling conditions of service. Not surprisingly, until very recently a career in the merchant marine was generally frowned upon by the middle classes.



Aga : Firmly anchored

However, in these inflationary times, attitudes seem to have undergone a sea change as it were, and an increasingly large number of perfectly respectable, sober young men from 'good families' attracted more by the mind-boggling salaries rather than the glamour of travel to distant and exotic climes, are queuing to join merchant shipping companies.

Comments Capt. Sam Aga (66), the Lucknow born son of a civil engineer who opted for a life on the ocean wave way back in 1931 at the age of 15, when he joined the *T.S. Dufferin* : "In those days only the fool of the family went to sea."

Currently the Bombay based managing director Ericson and Richards (Surveyors) Pvt. Ltd., ship and marine surveyors to "practically every Indian and foreign shipping company," Aga says that if he had to choose a career all over again his choice would be the same.

As chief executive of Ericson &

Richards, supported by a staff of qualified officers, Aga is responsible for the completion of different types of surveys including the enforcement of the Union government's statutory requirements on behalf of the ministry of shipping and transport.

Apart from being a firm of reputable shipping surveyors, Ericson and Richards also operates a training and examining wing in which seamen are trained and tested in the use of modern nautical equipment. "These days shipping companies install expensive equipment on their ships, but very often the seamen on board lack the expertise to use it properly. Our training programme is designed to ensure that men and machines become complementary to each other," says Aga.

When Aga joined the merchant marine in 1933 service conditions were radically different. Families accompanying officers on board were unheard of and leave was given to merchant marine officers for only 14 days per year. The winds of liberalism have since wafted through the merchant shipping community. Comments Aga : "Today the fortunate marine officer can travel in luxury with his family on board and he gets between 120 and 203 days paid leave per year."

Among the few Indians to join the merchant marine as officers, Aga began his career in merchant shipping with a three year "rigorous" apprenticeship on board a ship owned by the British Indian Navigation Company (BI). On completion of his apprenticeship in 1936, Aga qualified and continued to serve as an officer with BI. In 1939 he joined the Scindia Steamship Company and remained with them until 1944 when he joined Bombay Port Trust (BPT) as a pilot, guiding visiting ships into BPT's docks. In 1953 Aga joined Ericson and Richards, a British company (then a partnership concern), as chief surveyor and was made a partner the following year.

A highly respected figure in merchant shipping circles, Aga feels that merchant shipping has extricated itself from the trough of depression into which it had sailed in 1977-79.

Though freight traffic to the oil rich West Asian countries has slowed down due to the apparently endless Iran-Iraq

war, Aga believes that the outbreak of hostilities between the two countries will inevitably result in an increase in shipping traffic to these countries after the war is over. "These countries will require extensive replenishments when the war ends and that will be profitable for the shipping industry as well as manufacturers and exporters in India."

Aga, who is now firmly anchored to his apartment at Kemps Corner, Bombay still has 'sea fever' in his blood, and even now would like to return to the sea if the opportunity arises. Very active in his youth on the sports field, Aga played cricket, hockey, tennis and he jokes "anything but golf. And today, in spite of my involvement with numerous maritime associations, I still find time to play billiards and bridge."

*Abridged from Business World,
April 13 to 26, 1981*

Iron Irani

The new deputy managing director of the Tata Iron & Steel Company Limited (TISCO), the largest private sector company in India, is 44 year old **Dr. Jamshed Jiji Irani**.

Irani who has been with TISCO for over 13 years is to be stationed in Jamshedpur to supervise the operations of the steel plant as well as town matters.

A recipient of the National Metallur-



Irani : 'Morale is high'

gist Award in 1974, Irani is on the board of directors of Guest Keen Williams and Bisra Stone and Lime.

"The two major strengths of TISCO are the quality of the company's resources and its very good raw material base," said Irani in a *Business World* article on TISCO published in the April 13 to 26, 1981 issue. "Industrial relations in the company are excellent and morale is high," he had noted.

Irani, who obtained a doctorate in metallurgy from the University of Sheffield, UK, worked with the British Iron and Steel Research Association for about five years and was general manager, operations, of TISCO prior to his new appointment on July 11, 1981.

Central Head

Some of the best things in life have happened to **Dady K. Contractor** at the Central Bank of India. The most recent is his appointment as the general manager of the bank, the second largest in India. Another happy occasion as he noted in a brief interview, was meeting Gool Kudaniwalla, who he married while they were working in the Bank.

Contractor's appointment coincides with the centenary year of the Central Bank's founder, Sorabji Pochkhana-walla, the father of modern Indian banking. The Central Bank was the first completely Indian bank, notes Contrac-



Contractor : 'sense of loyalty'

tor.

"Our Bank has expanded in the priority sectors; small scale industry and agriculture...we have done better than any other bank...fifty-one new branches are to be opened."

The Central Bank was the first to open a branch in London, "but had to close down much before its time,"

lamented Contractor. "We missed the bus in foreign business" he said.

Countering the myth that the Central Bank was staffed mainly by Parsis, Contractor noted, that "Parsis only accounted for a little over five percent of the staff in the old days, now it is one percent ...in those days Parsis dominated the cash department."

A commerce graduate from the Sydenham college, Contractor started his career in the Central Bank in 1946 at the age of 19 as a trainee officer. His last assignment was deputy general manager of the industrial finance division.

"Most of the managers have worked their way to the top. Nowadays we have people filling top positions from outside. We accept them and make them feel at home. The employees have a sense of loyalty which you don't find elsewhere...the atmosphere here is informal. The members of the staff call me by my first name," says the 53-year-old; tall, affable banker.

Contractor, who has an architect daughter settled in Chicago and a son studying in the Indian Institute of Technology at Powai, escapes from the rigors of his Nariman Point office by playing bridge, watching movies and gardening.

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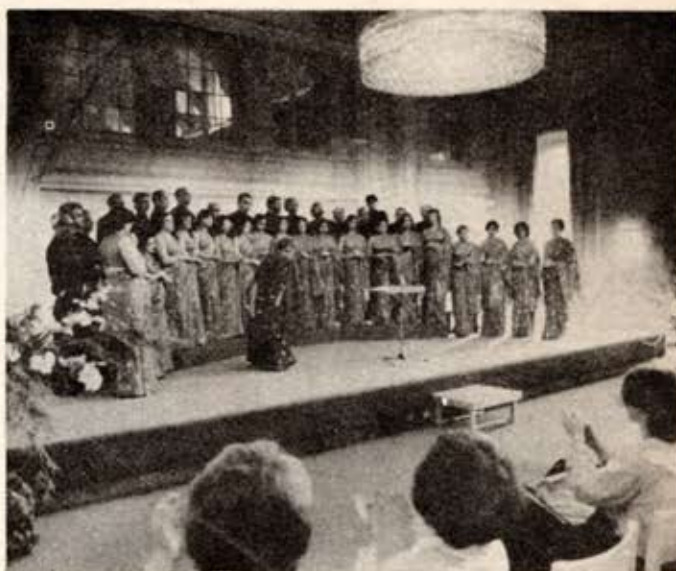
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"Paranjoti": A Harmony of Sounds



Wadia with the mayor of Stuttgart, Manfred Rommel



Wadia conducting the choir at Stuttgart

The Paranjoti Academy Chorus, conducted by **Coomi Wadia**, participated in a choral festival organised by the city of Stuttgart for three days from May 28. For Coomi and the Chorus, the journey, which took them not only to Stuttgart, but to other German and European cities as well, was a much awaited come back.

Harmony of sounds

"There is so much happening in the world today," explains Coomi Wadia, conductor of the Paranjoti Academy Chorus. "There's a lot of rubbish music being written, but there's a great deal of new beautiful music as well."

And creating a harmony of sound to soothe many a savage beast, is just what Coomi did to prove her mettle.

Barely five years after assuming Dr Victor Paranjoti's mantle in 1967, Coomi was one of the very few conductors from around the world to be invited to represent her country at the 1972 International University Choral Festival as a guest of New York's Lincoln Centre for the Performing Arts.

About two years ago, Coomi participated in a workshop conducted by Helmuth Rilling, currently acknowledged to be one of the foremost exponents of the music of J. S. Bach.

The workshop was held at Stuttgart, and Coomi was one of 25 conductors who were active participants, the others being observers. And Coomi's partici-

pation is all the more praiseworthy because she was the only Asian woman invited to wield the baton.

Perhaps it was this which emboldened her to perform the majestic music—"Mass in B Minor" by Bach.

The incredibly difficult and complex Missa was planned originally to be performed as a tribute to the late Gool Shavaksha.

Unfortunately the idea fell through due to various reasons. The idea of getting the Paranjoti chorus to work with the Rajneesh Ashram orchestra was also introduced.

Unlike most choirs, whose members gravitate between two choirs and in some cases, even more, the Paranjoti members profess total allegiance to Coomi. Of course, Coomi has been criticised for not allowing them to sing in other choirs. "I'm very demanding. I must be a very difficult person to work with," says Coomi.

But it seems to me, they wouldn't be there, unless they loved her and had faith in her musical ability to lead them. And it is this that makes Coomi very happy—the knowledge that she can make beautiful music—to be able to create, mould, shape, and process a choir—a difficult task and yet intensely satisfying.

Although Coomi's world obviously revolves round the Paranjoti choir and her husband, and their only son Sorab, the days in her life are never quite the

same. In May she had been busy running around for ads, donations, making contacts, producing the brochure to be taken to Europe for Stuttgart's first choral festival.

In recognition of Coomi's efforts in international choral music, she was elected to conduct the farewell performance at the Stuttgart Choral Festival in which seven chorus from all over the world and six local choirs, a total of 750 voices sang together under her baton.

Husband Nariman, a diamond merchant and jeweller is her critic and has been a tremendous source of help and encouragement all through her career. A career which has been taxing, at times, intruding on her personal plans. Strangely enough, Nariman's the one who has studied conducting with Ernest Read, in Queenswood, England.

"When people sing together, they love each other," says Nariman. "You can achieve international harmony through international music... We are instrumental in bringing people from far away together."

And like all the other tours, in the past, this, the fifth tour was also a success. Coomi and Chorus forge and strengthen anew, the bonds of friendship, whilst they sing, with one voice the universal language of love.

Extracts from article by Ronita Torcato
(The Daily 22 May 1981) and Parsiana
interview with Nariman Wadia



Daruwala, Hakim and Pandole

SQUASH CHAMPION

The Junior National Squash Championship was won by **Meherwan Daruwala**, a first year commerce student in Podar college. In a keenly contested final bout at the Cricket Club of India courts, Daruwala beat the reigning champion **Darius Pandole**.

ASIAN GAMES COORDINATOR

The recently appointed coordinator for the Asian Games 1982 is **K. T. Satara-wala**, who has held several top positions in the government and is currently a member of the Minorities Commission, notes a report in *The Statesman*, 22 September 1981.

ASIAN HOCKEY SECRETARY

The first secretary of the newly formed Asian Ladies Hockey Association is **Arnavaz Damania**, manager of the Indian Women's Hockey team at the recently concluded Asian Women's Hockey Championship.

Damania who also managed the women's hockey team at the Moscow Olympics, noted in a *Times of India*

report (10 September 1981) that India played a leading role in the creation of the new body whose member countries are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan and South Korea.

Formerly there were two rival bodies, The Asian Ladies Hockey Federation and the Asian Women's Hockey, which have now merged into the Asian Ladies Hockey Association.

SEASON'S FIRST

The season's first cycling race held by the Maharashtra Cycling Association was won by **Mehernosh K. Hakim** of the Tata Sports Club, notes *Times of India* (7 September 1981) **Homi Bhathena** was a close second.

OUTSTANDING ALL-ROUNDER

Piloo Palia, who passed away in Bangalore on Wednesday Sept. 9, was an all-rounder who graced cricket in the thirties. The word all-rounder is loosely applied these days, but Palia could have walked into an Indian side for either his batting or his bowling. And in the close

positions he gave little away.

There is a special grace about left-handers. And at a time when there were many contenders, Palia stood apart from the rest by virtue of his bearing, polish and the range of his strokes. As a bowler he was equally versatile, being able to swing the new ball and cut it off the seam when the shine was off.

He was a regular for South Zone at Chepauk where I watched most of my early cricket. And it was at Chepauk, in later years, that he was seen at his best. Memory warms to the thought of his many performances with bat and ball.

I can recall him holding U.P.'s innings together on a lively wicket against Ramsingh and Rangachari.

Palia was to play the part of a loner when he moved to Mysore. For apart from the elegant Shyamsunder, Palia had no one to back him. When Madras got Palia out of the way the match was as good as won. Memory often returns to that cool January day. There were but a few wickets left and Palia's was one of them.

A few of the faithful gathered under

the casuarina tree to watch Palia use the cut and cover drive against Rangachari and company. And great sportsman that he was he would rest his bat against his pads to clap; as Richardson, then working for Shell and now living in retirement in Bombay, and Robinson fielded marvellously in the deep.

As a bowler, with just a three-step run up he could swing and cut the ball either way. For South Zone, he worried the best from the Indian team and the Australian Services.

He was a favourite of the Chepauk crowd, especially the women students' stands. And he loved patrolling that area in the outfield, his ruddy countenance under a sola hat ever breaking out into a pleasant smile. He will rank high among those who found fun and pleasure in cricket and spread this feeling around those who saw him.

K.N. Prabhu, Sports' Editor
Times of India, 11 September 1981.

KUKA PIONEERED POWERLIFT

Though the Powerlifts of Squat, Bench Press and Dead Lift were being practised by most weightlifters and bodybuilders as useful exercises in the gymnasiums in Greater Bombay for over 40 years now, it took considerable time to think of commencing Powerlifting competitions (also called strength lifting contests).

According to the available records one of the earliest contests for Squat and Bench Press was conducted by the ever-enterprising-organiser-par-excellence, Khurshed Kuka, India's International Boxing Referee. He has the unique record of attending and officiating at four consecutive-Olympic Games.

He conducted the contests for the Iron Club at the Tata Sports Club, Bombay House, first on 22nd February 1953. And imagine, in those far off years Kuka dared to conduct Dead Lift contests for women-employees of the Tata organisations along with the Annual Physique contests.

The scene is still vivid in this writer's mind of the boisterous enthusiasm and ovation of the spectators when one girl after another used to come to the stage to attempt a heavier weight than that lifted by the previous contestant.

For years Power lifts were Kuka's exclusive prerogative, but the more he got entangled in National and International boxing he found less time for the Power parade.

T. V. Hazrihar The Daily, 26 August 1981.

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The Jooddin Question

The life of Dastur Dhalla XVIII

Aek Atmakatha is the autobiography of the late Dr. Maneck Nusserwanji Dhalla, high priest of the Pakistan Parsis and a scholar of world repute. This is the 18th 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 on 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 Columbia University in New York, where he was awarded a Ph.D. in 1908. On his return to India he was nominated head priest of Karachi in which capacity he tried to critically evaluate old religious beliefs and customs in the light of his broadened outlook.

He was active in forming a Zoroastrian Conference to study the problems of the community but his efforts met with severe criticism from orthodox groups. Despite the opposition, Dhalla returned to Bombay in 1915 to chair the fifth Zoroastrian conference; but it floundered on the issue of religious controversy and in 1919 after the seventh session the conference closed down.

Due to their numerical strength and the support of the press, the orthodox group forged ahead of the reformists.

On my return from America by the end of 1908, I heard that a Parsi gentleman of Surat had recently come into the limelight making some queer claims. At that time we happened to be on a lecture tour of the towns of Gujerat and we had the opportunity of seeing him at Udvada with his first two main disciples.

He claimed that he had been to Persia via Peshawar and had stayed for three years with a mysterious and secret tribe called Saheb Dalaan which lived in the Damavend Mountains and had studied the esoteric side of Zoroastrianism from their leader, Dastur Stroshvarej Murzban! He stated that the tribe was invisible and could not be seen if searched for so mysterious was it.

Later a noble and prominent co-religionist of Peshawar who came and settled in Karachi permanently, related the details of the hardships that had befallen a simple and credulous *Athornan* who had set out in search of that tribe. Many a learned and educated man and woman had come forward to accept as gospel truth this fictitious story, so far removed from fact and from common sense. After 100 years of the spread of higher education, a section of the community had developed this pitiable mentality.

This tale of the supposedly Zoroastrian sect that is imperceptible coincides completely with another similar event in our community that took place exactly 100 years ago. In November 1840, a Muslim, named Sayyed Hussain, had come to Bombay. He introduced himself as an inhabitant of Shri Khatau Khotan in Central Asia. He used to say that it was a Zoroastrian kingdom and that its capital city, Khanba Lake, was ruled by a Parsi king called Gustasp Bahman.

In that country there were many fire-temples and towers of silence and the people spoke *Zend* and *Pazend*. Many had been enticed by the narratives of this adventurous gentleman and their hearts throbbed with joy to know that the Zoroastrian dynasty still survives.

Jamshedji Jeejibhoy called a meeting of leading co-religionists and Irani Moguls at his orchard at Mahalaxmi and after questioning Sayyed Saheb, resolved that letters be sent to some country near Khotan to find out further details. Another similar meeting was called by Khurshedji Cowasji Banaji. At that meeting Navroji Fardoonji who had been to Kabul cross-questioned Sayyed Hussain but he was unable to

supply satisfactory answers.

In spite of that, many people from the community, led away by emotion, approached the learned Mobed Dosabhoj Sohrabji Munshi, a patron of orthodoxy to compose an address in Persian poetic form and forwarded it to HRH King Gustasp. At the conclusion of the address was added a benediction that 'as long as there is the canopy of the skies above us, may your crown and your kingdom remain resplendent'. Together with that they presented a purse of Rs. 1000 to Sayyed Mian and with due honour sent him forth to the Parsi *Padsha's* court. And he went forever - never to return.

Navroji Fardoonji immediately wrote to the British Ambassador in Kabul, Sir Alexander Burns, informing him of the details and requested him to investigate. The Ambassador's reply stated that Khotan was under the Chinese Government and the majority of the population there was Muslim. Neither there, nor in its vicinity, was there any sign of the existence of a Parsi kingdom. He added as a jest that the Sayyed must be aware of the fact that Parsi pockets are weighty, hence he had contrived to lighten them.

From the middle of the last century the feelings of the community had been stirred to acquire an educated priest class. Now it seems that they have had a surfeit of educated *dasturs*. It has been publicly proclaimed that rather than have such so-called educated American *dasturs*, it is preferable to have less learned but strictly conventional '*Yoj-dathragars*' who religiously abide by rituals and traditions.

Conventions and ceremonials were given preference over knowledge. The

Proselytising became a burning issue when in 1915 Bela's Navjote was performed in Rangoon.

prestige of performing priests was in the ascendant and many trustees of fire temples honoured their own *panthakies* by giving them shawls of distinction and elevated them to the ranks of high priests. There was an increase of *dasturs* in the community.

The decade of the Zoroastrian Conference, 1910-1919, ended by thrusting the reformists into the background and

promoting the prestige of the orthodox party. Side by side it succeeded in becoming an event that confounded ritualism with devotionism, credited fanaticism as piety, supported superstition, fostered fancies, encouraged gullibility and created a credulity in the community such as would shame the intelligence of the most simple-minded.

The Joodin Question

The problem of proselytising which had created such a furore in the community in 1902 again became a burning issue when in 1915 Bela's *Navjote* was performed in Rangoon.

A high ranking Parsi official had first approached me to perform this *Navjote*. I did not consent. He wrote back to ask what was the purpose of my posing as a reformer. I responded that I did not believe that initiating children born out of wedlock into our faith was a progressive step. This annoyed the reformists and they branded me with having no moral courage. Such rumours often reached my ears, but so far no one had the courage to say this openly to me.

On our return from Bombay to Karachi, after delivering my series of lectures during the 1919 Zoroastrian Conference, I published a booklet on this issue

Rather than have such so-called educated American dasturs, it is preferable to have less learned but strictly conventional 'Yojdathragars'

under the caption *Joodin Savai* (the question of people of another faith; in this context it refers to the conversion of non-Parsis to Zoroastrianism) and had it freely distributed in different parts of India. Extracts from this publication are being reproduced below.

"If for the last 15 years a problem has divided the community it is the issue of proselytisation. It is our misfortune that during the last 100 years, whenever this question has appeared before the community it has always been associated with the issue of marriage with women of another community and on the question of initiating children born of such wedlock with *Sudreh Kusti* and even more so, has it been associated with the question of bringing into the Zoroastrian fold the offspring of the mistresses

of Parsi men.

"From my intimate personal experience of the last ten years, I have seen that those who are otherwise very conservative in their views, and who normally oppose tooth and nail the question of proselytising - even they, when the question affects the children of mistresses kept by their relatives or friends, strangely take the lead in getting such children initiated into the faith.

"From 1909 to 1919 I was asked to perform *Navjotes* of 14 children between the ages of 8 and 22 born of Parsi fathers and their non-Parsi mistresses. According to the Zoroastrian faith, it is permissible to welcome people of other faiths into our fold. I know that in the time of the Zoroastrian Empire, people of other faiths were taken into the fold. But at present when Zoroastrianism is no longer a missionary religion and its gates are closed to outsiders, so long as they are not thrown open by common consent, I have not thought it proper to give my sanction to admitting the children of such unfortunate unions through the backdoor.

"So far men had gone out of the community in search of foreign wives and

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had enjoyed certain privileges. These were now demanded by Parsi women themselves. This has shocked the community and even those who at one time favoured the marriages of Parsi men and non-Parsi women, have strongly opposed the idea of Parsi women marrying non-Parsi men.

"Non-Parsi women are welcomed into Parsi homes, while Parsi women marrying non-Parsis go out of the community.

"But mankind has now begun to realise that moral codes applicable to men and women cannot differ. Hence, according to this precept if the Parsi *Anjuman* made up mainly of men, wish to resolve to stop their women marrying out of the community, they will have to agree to observe the same rule themselves. The problem of *jooddin* marriages has on the whole become more confusing and difficult to solve. We have seen at the commencement that this question has not been tackled with the purpose of spreading the good faith or of increasing the dwindling population, hence the value of this has been reduced.

"Our religion, history and common sense tell us to spread the light of the Zoroastrian faith among the unfortunate people, yet just for the sake of giving our sanction to *jooddin* marriages, in welcoming their children into the faith and above all initiating into the faith children born out of wedlock practically the entire community has opposed the issue.

"As a result innocent children born of mixed marriages, have become the victims and *Navjotes* which were once performed publicly or privately have now been opposed and steps taken to apply sanctions against priests who perform such *Navjotes*.

"Our community should have the right to ban entry into the fold the offspring of mixed marriages or illegitimate children.

"It would be truly regrettable if a new schism be created in our small community but rather than remain within the circle in a state of constant bickering and ill-will and expend all energy on the self-same problem, it would be preferable that a small group of believers be formed who would conduct their lives according to their own convictions and members of the old and new folds while going their own way learn to work in unison.

"Those of the community who profess to join the reformist group appear

to have reached a stage of bankruptcy in both feeling and in enthusiasm. Since the foundation of this controversy has not been laid on the noble ideal of spreading the grandeur of the Zoroastrian faith, any structure raised thereon cannot be assured a sound existence.

"When a sect is born out of mere selfish ends and only to justify its own purpose by admitting into the fold children of parents married under the Civil Marriage Act or of unlawful unions, it cannot enjoy a prolonged

He claimed he had stayed with a mysterious and secret tribe called Saheb Dalaan.

existence nor can it serve any beneficial purpose.

"The taboo of initiating into the faith children of *Navjote* age, born of parents married according to the Civil Marriage Act should be done away with. Those in opposition to the *jooddin* question should withdraw the resolutions passed by them because they are one-sided and therefore, despite all their threats, mixed marriages and *jooddin Navjotes* continue to be performed. If the majority group succeeds in bringing the smaller group to the brink of desperation, the responsibility of creating a faction in the community will rest squarely on its shoulders.

"Even at this juncture, if the two parties would come to an understanding to let by-gones be by-gones and formulate fresh resolutions to preserve the future solidarity of the community, then at least for the time being this dilemma could be brought to an end.

"Indeed such a decision would not bring a lasting solution to the problem. No one can foretell the effect on future generations, of resolutions that will seal the gateways of the community's progress.

"At the moment, until the social atmosphere of the community undergoes a change, it is understandable that, due to the high death-rate consequent upon living in a congested centre like Bombay, the high cost of living, the restriction in the number of marriages because of the dowry system, the fall in birth-rate due to family planning and other reasons, the strength of the community shows a downward trend.

"It is just possible that after decades the community may create an enlight-

ened and educated priest-class and a popular understanding that to spread the good faith and to increase our strength is not only commensurate with the precepts of our religion but also in the interest of our social well-being."

The 'Namgharan' Controversy

In our community the memory of those who have enhanced the welfare and glory of the community by their valuable contribution has been preserved through their photographs or their statues; or after their death, the '*Hama Anjuman*' meets to pass a resolution of appreciation which is recorded in the offices of the *Anjuman* or their names are recited in the *Dhupnirang* ceremony at public *Jashans* or at *Uthamna* ceremonies.

In our sister communities there is a custom that when their church or temple or religious institution is founded, it is named after their gods, goddesses, saints or religious sects. Christianity associates the names of St. Paul and St. Peter with their churches or they are known as the Trinity Church, the Unitarian Church and the Presbyterian Church.

It is the weakness of our community since long that when an individual, through his munificence, establishes an *Agyari* or an *Atashbehran* or an *Atashdadgah*, it is named after him or his relatives. From references in the *Atashni Nyash* we find from the names of different types of fires that this was not done in the past.

The Muslims do not place any portraits in their *Masjids*. Christians usually etch pictures of Christ, his revered Mother, the Virgin Mary, and their saints in stained glass windows. Hindus place the images of their gods and goddesses in their temples.

In this respect we do something quite different. In this sub-continent there are about two hundred *Atashkadehs*. On the establishment of these religious centres, along with the picture of Prophet Zarathushtra, as if by virtue of right the photographs of the donor or his forefathers also find a place of prominence. With the passage of time photographs of leaders and benefactors of the community are added. In many such religious centres in various cities, it sometimes happens that along with the pictures of the deserving, those of people of dubious or questionable character also find a place. When the collection of pictures becomes cumbersome and there is no wall-space left, if

there is no one to question the right of some person or no heir remains to enquire, the care-takers quietly remove the picture and store it away in some unknown corner or niche.

In our ceremonial prayers we recite the names of ancient Iranian kings, heroes, religious teachers, famous women and others. The earliest reference to this is found in the *Fravadin Yasht*, written in the Avestan language. Today we are quite ignorant about some of the personalities mentioned therein. After Alexander's invasion we lost our Empire and the *Avestan* language was discontinued in daily usage. After a period of nearly five hundred years, when the Persian Empire revived, the names of great men and women of the Sassanian dynasty are not referred to in this Avestan prayer, the *Fravadin Yasht*. In the meanwhile, during this period, many new prayers were composed in *Pazend*, the living language of those days. In the latter part of these new prayers the names of the Sassanian kings upto the last King Yazdagard Sheriar are mentioned. In our *Afrigan*, *Satum*, *Farokshi*, *Dhupnirang* ceremonies we recite and remember all these names. In sacred memory of our dear departed ones, in our own homes or in

temples, after the recitation of the above names, the priest includes the names of the deceased of the family.

We consider it a great honour to include in public *Jashans* or at the *Uthamna* ceremonies and the *Dhupnirang* prayers, the names of people who have worked for the welfare of the community or have led an exemplary and noble life. After our arrival in India, the names of three famous religious teachers were mentioned in our prayers—viz. Mobed Shapur Mobed Sheriar, Mobed Hormuzdiar Ervad Ramiyar and Mobed Neriosang Dhaval. Centuries later, no name of any religious leader or layman or historic personage residing at Surat, Navsari, or Broach was included in the *Namgharan* recital. This custom has been revived only since the last three hundred years, beginning with the name of the reputed Dastur Meherji Rana who died in 1592 at Navsari. The sacred fire, originally consecrated at Sanjan and later at Navsari, Surat, Balsar and other places was first brought in 1742 to Udvada by two *mobeds*, Bhikaji Rustomji and Rustomji Sheriarji. A fresh beginning was made by mentioning their names in public prayers by the *Punthaky* of Udvada. Thus the *Mobeds* of different *punthaks* at differ-

ent times started including the names of famous people of their individual *panthaks* in their prayers.

As the custom of placing photographs of charitable men and women who are instrumental in establishing places of worship continues, even so are their names remembered in the prayers together with those of other well-known personalities. Hence, in the approximately fifty-two *Agyaris* and *Atashbehras* of Bombay, each recites the names of its own particular group of people. Together with that the names of their chosen followers or helpers are constantly being added. The result is that the names recited in one *Atashbehras* or *Agyari* may not be heard in another. Thus, the names recited in different *punthaks*, different *Atashkadehs* or different cities vary in nomenclature and in number.

According to custom, the right of the declaration of an additional name to the *Namgharan* rests with the *Dastur* or *Punthaki* of a religious centre and it is done before the assembly at the *Uthamna* ceremony of the deceased. At the *Uthamna* ceremony the high priest proposes that the name of the deceased be recited in all future religious ceremonies, and in complete silence and solemn-

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nity it is understood as passed. There are times when, among the assembly there are some who opine that the deceased is not worthy of the honour of having his name included in the honour-roll of the *Namgrahan*, and are not in agreement of having that particular name remembered in public prayers, yet out of sheer respect for the solemnity of the occasion they are unable to voice their opinion, and return home disconcerted.

In the Bombay press, among the communal questions that were being discussed with great bitterness about six or seven decades ago, one was the custom of the *Namgrahan*. The main objections of the press and of the educated class of the community were that on such a sad and solemn occasion as an *Uthamna*, there should not be the undue haste of raising this question nor should the *dastur* or *panthaky* have the sole right of executing such a task.

Most of our *Atashbehras* and *Agyaris* are of private proprietorship. The *Anjuman* has no jurisdiction over their administration. The trustees of the *Atashkadeh* or of the *Anjuman* have no right to interfere with the ceremonial prayers and performances of the *dasturs* and the *panthakies*. The decision of a request to include the name of a departed one rests entirely with the *dasturs* or *panthakies* and it appears that no one has the authority to question their traditional privilege. Despite the sound backing of the Bombay press the voice of the majority was suppressed and a necessary reform was shelved.

Mankind's progress commenced with the rule of sole authority of tribal kings, emperors and chiefs; today, after ages of constant and continued struggle, nations and societies have wrenched that sovereign right from their hands and have created a democracy for themselves. At our own doorstep we have witnessed that formerly the trustees of our punchayats everywhere exercised supreme authority and were answerable to none. A hundred and twenty-five years ago, the Punchayat of Bombay had the authority to excommunicate a Zoroastrian, to fine him, or, with the sanction of the government, even to mete out the punishment of spanking him with slippers. Upto the beginning of this century the community had no voice in their administration. When one of the five trustees died the remaining four filled the vacancy at will. In our own times we have witnessed the change of this age-old custom. The Zoroastri-

ans of Bombay, Karachi and other places secured the right to vote and began to elect their trustees. To-day all over the world, social and political administration is conducted according to these rights secured by society and nations. From the beginning it has been my opinion that at such a time, it is improper for the *dastur* or *panthaky* alone to have the sole right of deciding whose name is to be included in or excluded from the *Namgrahan*. From the time I accepted the role of High Priest in 1909, whenever an occasion arose at an *Uthamna* ceremony of admitting the name of some deserving personage into public prayers, I would sing praises of that person's fine qualities and end at that. Then the *panthaky* would propose the inclusion of that name in public prayers. His proposal was virtually a command, hence it was accepted. In 1924 under unpredicted circumstances a storm arose against this practice. What had not been achieved by Bombay after years of struggle was attained over-night in Karachi.

On the death of a prominent member of the community, prior to steps being taken regarding the announcement at the *Uthamna* of the inclusion in public prayers of his name, a diversity of opinion had arisen in the community. The rival parties brought conflicting pressure upon the *panthaky*. Eventually, the *panthaky* proposed his name before the assembly at his *Uthamna*, and, as was customary the *Mobeds* observed respectful silence and it was adopted. When the *Uthamna* ceremony ended, everyone departed peacefully, but the question gained impetus. The opposition party sent a requisition to the Trustees of the *Anjuman* requesting them to call a meeting of the *Anjuman* to regularise this question. At the meeting of the *Anjuman* it was resolved by a majority that when the community wishes to include a certain name in the *Namgrahan*, after the expiry of a month from the time of the person's death, the community should send a requisition to the Trustees of the *Anjuman*. The Trustees would then call a meeting at which any member of the community over the age of 21 has the right to vote. No discussions would be allowed at that meeting, but votes would be secured by secret ballot, and if 80% of those present voted for the inclusion of the name, then it should find a place in public prayers.

The *Mobeds* who work in Karachi come mostly from Udvada. So the *Anjuman* passed a resolution to the

effect that should either of the two *Dastur Sahebs* of Udvada or their heirs happen to die, then the sole right of including their names in public prayers will rest entirely with the *Mobeds*. On the strength of this resolution the *Mobeds* have included the name of the recently demised learned Dastur Kaiy-oji Mirza.

It is twenty-two years since this resolution has been passed and practised. At times it happens that due to the customary carelessness of the Parsis, not even one-fourth of the signatories of the requisition bothers to attend the meeting. When such an emergency arises, members of the community residing in the vicinity of the *Daremeher* have had to be sent for and requested to come in order to carry on the business of the meeting.

At present (1946) such a delicate situation has arisen amongst the Parsi community of Karachi. As a requisition had been received requesting the inclusion of a certain name, the Trustees of the Panchayat called a general meeting. But, as the proposition did not get the necessary support of 80% of the members present, the requisition could not be passed. The party that was not successful in its purpose has been sorely offended and is threatening to obstruct all future requisitions of the kind by vetoing the inclusion of the name of any deserving member of the community. In the heat of controversy it seems to say "If you accept our nominee we are willing to accept yours". Among all the Zoroastrians of the sub-continent, only the community in Karachi has been able to secure this necessary and welcome reform of conducting the question in consonance with the times. But at present there is a dead-lock confronting us, and some, losing courage, are even prepared to forego this privilege won by the community and to retreat into the ancient dogmatic system of selection, so contrary to the fast-advancing and progressive principles of the modern age.

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A Curious Case Of A Much Married Parsi

Does he retain his religion ?

Dasturjisaheb Firoz M. Kotwal,
Respected Dasturji Sahab

We write to you under instructions of our clients whose relative (hereinafter referred to as Mr. X) had married a Parsi lady but she was subsequently divorced. After his divorce Mr. X has openly lived with three different ladies at different periods as man and wife without being married to them. Each of these ladies were non-Parsi Zoroastrian. The first lady as far as our clients are aware was a European lady with whom Mr. X lived for a period of about a year. The second lady was a Christian lady converted to Islam with whom Mr. X lived for a period of more than a year. Mr. X underwent a ceremony of engagement with this lady and was engaged to be married to her. However some time thereafter Mr. X and the second lady separated. The third lady was a European lady with whom Mr. X lived for some months.

We are seeking your opinion as an expert in the Parsi Zoroastrian religion and customs whether by reason of Mr.

X having lived with the three ladies openly as stated above he has forsaken the Parsi Zoroastrian religion.

Thanking you,

A SOLICITOR

Dasturji's Reply

Dear Sir :

In reply to your query contained in your letter of 31st ultimo (No. KIM/1479) I have to state as under :

According to Zoroastrian doctrine and usage a Parsi Zoroastrian has to maintain the continuity of Zoroastrian traditions throughout his whole life. If Mr. X (a Parsi Zoroastrian termed so in your aforesaid letter) has flouted openly the Zoroastrian doctrine by consorting himself with three non-Parsi ladies at different periods of his life, he ceases to be a Parsi Zoroastrian and has thereby forsaken the Zoroastrian faith.

Yours faithfully,
F.M. KOTWAL

The Bombay Samachar 30/8/81

Willing Estates

Have the parents a right to debar under the Parsi Law two sons out of their four sons from their property after their demise. Have the parents a right to give equal shares to the sons as well as the married daughters ? Has a mother a right to give her jewellery to her married daughters only and not at all to her sons. If the parents die without a Will how is the property to be distributed amongst the children ?

A : The parents have every right to debar any of their sons from their property by their Will. The parents have a further right to give their property equally to their sons as well as married daughters if they so desire. A mother has a right to give her jewellery solely to her married daughters and not at all to her sons. If a Parsi male dies without making a Will his property would be divided so that the share of the widow and that of the son shall be double the share of each daughter. When a Parsi female dies without making a Will then her property would be divided equally amongst the widower and children whether male or female.

Law at your service : K.C. Vajifdar
Jam-e-Jamshed 14/9/81

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A Living Faith

Zoroastrianism and the Parsis by John R. Hinnells, Ward Lock Educational, London, 80 pages.

In answer to a need for readable introductory literature on Zoroastrianism, John R. Hinnells, a noted scholar, winner of the Trench prize for New Testament Studies, and an authority on Iranian religion, has written *Zoroastrianism and the Parsis*, for the young the world over.

This book is part of the *Living Religions Series* whose objectives are "providing a clear and factual account of the beliefs and practices of the chief religions of the world, that will help to remove much of the ignorance from which racial prejudice stems, and through discussion and further enquiry help to develop tolerance and understanding vital to any multiracial society", notes a write-up in the book.

In the preface, Hinnells notes that "although Zoroastrianism is the oldest of the great prophetic religions this book is concerned with its living form, especially the Parsis in India". The ancient religion is dealt with in an earlier work by the author entitled *Persian Mythology* published by the Hamlyn Publishing Group.

The 80-page review book which is illustrated with about 20 photographs is a well researched, socio-historic, religious account of the Parsis. Its scope stretches from the sacred to the mundane. The important topics covered are Zoroastrian myths, ethics, prayers, rituals, priesthood, festivals, customs and traditions, moving on to women, poverty and intermarriage between the Parsis and other socio-religious groups.

Hinnells rounds up with a chapter on "an ancient religion in a modern world".

The author provides interesting insights on how the religion has changed with time. He feels that modernization has produced more changes in the practice of Zoroastrianism than persecution.

In Iran, the oil boom led to a drastic change in the lifestyle of the Zoroastrians, long isolated in the desert cities and nearby villages of Yazd and Kerman. "Many migrated to Tehran attracted by the wealth and comfort of the capital. There, many have turned their backs on the traditions of the village, seeing them

as old fashioned, even primitive. A number turned to Islamic mysticism and more turned to Bahaism. Yet others kept their own religion", notes Hinnells.

The Parsis in India have not been exempt from the onslaught of the larger socio-economic changes taking place in the country. However Hinnells points out that "it would be wrong to think that the great social and economic changes have affected the religion of everybody in the community. Though Parsis in the villages feel left far behind in more senses than one, their commitment to their religion remains strong.

"Fire temples are still kept in the villages where there are only as few as five Parsi families. Many choose to sell what few possessions they have left in order to pay for the religious ceremonies associated with birth, marriage, or death. In the poverty and isolation of village life, the Zoroastrians once again keep determinedly to their religious beliefs and practices", writes Hinnells.

In the cities, particularly Bombay, the author finds that, "a high proportion of the community have been affected by some of the ideals expressed in English literature, notably Christianity. The educated, liberal Parsi youth looked for, and emphasized, those parts of their religion which seem in keeping with the times, and dropped part of their religion which seemed unreasonable in the modern age. As some Zoroastrians in Iran have often turned to Bahaism, so some Parsis in Bombay have turned to theosophy".

The significance of Zoroastrianism in the modern world can best be described in Hinnells' own words: "Zoroastrianism is the oldest of the prophetic religions. Its history is almost twice as long as that of Christianity. It therefore raises some of the basic questions in the study of religion in a very clear and full way. How does or should, a religion change with the passage of time? What effect does it have when a religion is transferred from one culture to another (Iran to India). From village to city (villages in Gujarat to Bombay)? What is the link between faith and practice, between doctrine and ritual? Is religion largely a matter of race?"

The book, written in an easy, lucid style, successfully stimulates thinking on these various issues even if it does not fully answer these questions.

Hinnells' sharp perceptions and deep sensitivity mark his considerable involvement with a foreign people and their religion which he has grown to admire. His concern over the threat of extinction facing the Zoroastrians today makes his message contained in this book to the young generation even more poignant.



Hinnells : Clear and factual accounts

"It would be a sad loss if these ideals did not once again inspire Zoroaster's followers to overcome the latest threat in order that Zoroastrianism may remain a living religion", Hinnells laments, but not without expressing the hope that "a religion which has overcome so many dangers and difficulties in the past may well triumph once again"

Shiraz Bulsara

Treatise on Tradition

Treatise on Zoroastrian tradition, customs and ceremonies of the Parsis, written and published by Rusi B. Pastakia, 7/B - Parsi Colony, Pipe line Road, Jamshedpur - 831001, 68 pages.

In an effort to impart religious knowledge to the community, Rusi B. Pastakia an active member of the Jamshedpur Parsi community has published a 68-page booklet entitled *Treatise on Zoroastrian Tradition, Customs and Ceremonies of the Parsis*.

Pastakia, a retired Tata Iron and Steel Company employee, had initially

cyclostyled his literary efforts but due to "public demand" decided to expand and print his work.

Any work of this nature, entered into by a lay individual, is bound to suffer from inadvertent errors. However as a personal document it should be welcome.

The first part of the book deals with religious beliefs, practices, traditions and ceremonies; the latter part deals with the advent and progress of the Parsis in India and the problems facing the community today.

The book in the introductory pages carries a write up by Piloo Mody noted politician and Member of Parliament which *Parsiana* publishes below :

"The efforts of our religion to produce a work ethic in our people have been mummified as a result of the lush trusts that have been created by our forefathers. Too many Parsis think that it is their birth-right to be on dole from the Parsi Panchayat. This is against the exhortations of our religion which expects every Zoroastrian to work hard, to earn a lot and endow a part of that earning for philanthropic purposes .

"This obviously presupposes that there should be more contributors than beneficiaries. The rich trusts of the Parsis must devote their attention to training and making the members of the community self-reliant. It does not mean putting a large part of the community on dole. The purpose of the trust should be to create further wealth for the community through its members and not to dissipate itself on outright charity which is constantly depreciating through inflation.

"We have been watching for the last century the disastrous genetic consequences of inbreeding in the name of preserving the purity of blood. The very concept today runs against current modern thinking. This concept of 'purity of blood' should certainly not transcend the inner core of our belief which is *Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni* (pure thoughts, pure words, pure deeds).

"In fact, I am of the opinion that the present controversy on whether the children of Parsi women married to non-Parsis can take on the faith or not is too timid and insipid. I am for more robust reforms.

"I believe all those who are even remotely connected by blood to the Parsis should be ordained into the community through a *Navjote* ceremony at any time in their life, but by choice. And I would like to repeat that it should be

done through their own free will and preference.

"I would go further and recommend that all those who voluntarily practice the Zoroastrian faith and subscribe to the Zoroastrian ethic should be taken into the fold.

"Obviously, the arguments against my suggestions stem from those who are today operating the rich trusts of the Parsis and those who are enjoying their benefits and do not wish to share these with others. I can see their argument and readily concede their point, that such an arrangement would lead to a great many malpractices and seduce the destitute into the community to reap the largess of the Parsi Trusts.

"This objection can be easily overcome by the simple process of declaring that these trusts made in the past were not meant for those who wish currently to convert. They can be restricted for the use of those who are members of the community under the present dispensation. However, any new trusts created hereafter can specify for what purpose they should be used and who should be their beneficiaries. I would like to re-emphasise the need to vitalise the community genetically and economically by reforms and by using its wealth to produce self-reliance and self-employment.

"Any effort at reforms must find validity in the original scriptures even if it is through some loaded interpretation of certain passages. I have no doubt in my mind that Zoroastrianism was, and is, a sufficiently enlightened religion to cope with its problems. I have also no doubt that the Prophet, who was the embodiment of enlightenment, would have had no difficulty in finding the remedies and suggesting the actions necessary to stop his flock from facing extinction.

"Therefore the question is not

whether any reforms should take place or not, but whether the reform should be as brutal and far-reaching as suggested by me or cautious and timid as suggested by some others. In my opinion, these sweeping reforms are necessary to bring about a renaissance".

Healing : An Alternative

Heal Your Mind, Heal Your Body by J. M. Jussawalla, published by IBH Publishing Company, 166 pages, Rs.15.

Authored by the eminent naturopath Dr. J. M. Jussawalla *Heal Your Mind, Heal Your Body* is not only a treatise on existing methods of healing, ancient and modern, but also a practical guide to positive health and preventive medicine.

One of the six books written by the author on the subject of nature cure, the publication catalogues and explains various healing systems like auto-urine therapy, chromo-therapy, exercise and yoga.

Taking off from the premise that what ails humanity today is gloating materialism and an absence of spirituality, Jussawalla dwells on aspects of reincarnation, astrology, and the other mysteries of life. He does not claim to have answers or special insights in any of these matters, however he does recognise them to have a bearing in his system of healing the mind and the body.

The explanation for treading such unsure ground can be found in his firm belief, best accounted for in his own words "do not scoff at statements offered to you today, the truth of which you probably cannot comprehend, for time may bring you better understanding, and you may tomorrow hail as truth that which today you ridicule"

S.B.

Scholar-Preacher

The Anjumans of foreign countries like the U.S.A., Canada, Australia wishing to engage the services of an eminent Athornan educationist to work as a Scholar - Preacher on Zoroastrian and Iranian History as well as a Priest for performing Navjote, Marriage and/or Funeral ceremonies should contact The Advertiser (Foreign), Parsiana, G.P.O. Box 892, Bombay 400001, giving details of salary, allowances together with amenities offered.

IN MEMORIAM



Died : Hilla Nader Nariman, 61, noted social worker who helped organise the annual mass navjote ceremonies of Parsis under the auspices of the Youths Own Union; on 27th September at the B.D. Petit Parsi General Hospital of a massive coronary attack.

A noted actress on the Gujarati stage "she lived every character she played," noted Homi Tavadia, producer and director of numerous plays. Tavadia noted that henceforth his drama group would be named the "Hilla Nariman Theatre Group" and "from every production we shall set aside a suitable sum and give it to some charity in her name and memory so that in a small way we shall continue to alleviate the sufferings of the poor the way she would have wished and done had she been alive."

Adi Marzban, the noted director, playwright and Editor of the *Jam-e-Jamshed*, in an article paid tribute to Nariman stating "I will not be able to fill the void that she has left in my stage work."

At a time when the cost of a navjote ceremony deterred some Parsi families from holding the ceremony, Nariman and the Youths' Own Union, a community recreational and social welfare organisation began organising navjotes

of several Parsi children at the same time. The functions, held at community baugs would be followed by dinner and all the fanfair associated with the ceremony.

In a Youths' Own Union felicitation function held on 20th May to honour Ms Nariman, the citation noted, "Ever since you were appointed in-charge of the Jashans and Navjotes you have collected donations with such zeal and assiduity that every year the number of poor Parsee Children brought into the Zoroastrian Fold has increased and... is a proof of your untiring devotion to selfless service of the Community."

A telephone operator and typist at the Bombay Parsi Panchayat for over 25 years, Nariman, a matriculate of the Young Ladies High School, joined the Youths Own Union in 1947. "She initiated the Navar and Kathy Fund & Children's Milk Fund in the Youths Own Union," amongst other activities, noted Tavadia.

The Daily newspaper noted in its obituary write-up that her death was "a blow to the poor of the Parsi community."

Ms Nariman is survived by her husband, Nader, daughter, Hootoxi Billimoria, sister, Dhan, and brother, Eruch Dastoor.

Jai Vakeel Anniversary

With a prayer, over 400 students, teachers and staff members of The School for Children in Need of Special Care remembered the institution's founder Ms Jai H. Vakeel on her first death anniversary.

The school which started 37 years ago

with two children at Ms Vakeel's Warden Road residence in Bombay, today has students "from every province in India as well as children from Africa, Middle East, Far East and other parts of the world", notes a write-up prepared by the teachers of the school.

The school whose history is inseparably entwined with the history of its founder built its own premises on its two acres of land on Sewri hill with a beautiful garden, lawns, play-fields, gymnasium, 2 boarding cottages, a teachers' training center and a fully equipped rehabilitation center for those students who have reached school leaving age, notes the write-up.

There are also facilities for speech therapy, psycho-therapy, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy and the school now admits not only the educationally backward children, but also those who are mentally retarded and physically handicapped, notes the write-up.

Run by the Society for the Care, Treatment and Training of Children in Need of Special Care, which was founded in 1949, the institution has a research center to investigate the causes of mental retardation, and a center for training teachers in the special techniques of teaching mentally retarded children, notes the write-up.

In recognition of her outstanding services to the mentally retarded a host of awards were bestowed upon Ms Vakeel including the *Padma Shree* by the Government of India and the *Dalit Mitra* by the Government of Maharashtra.

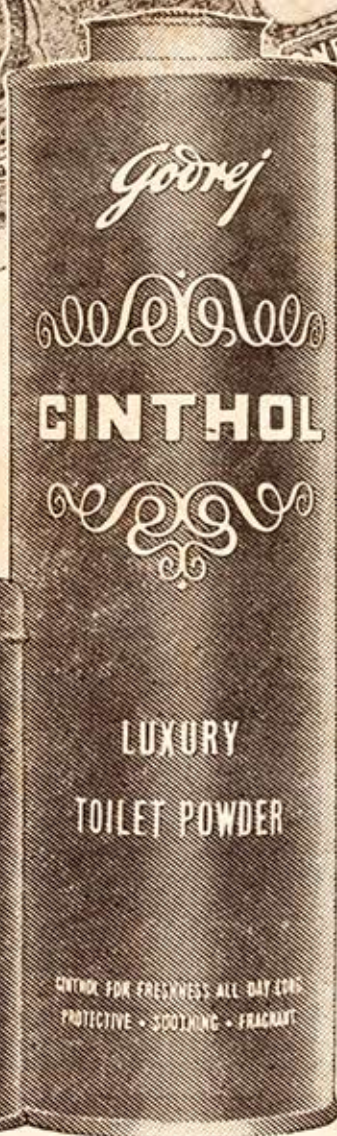
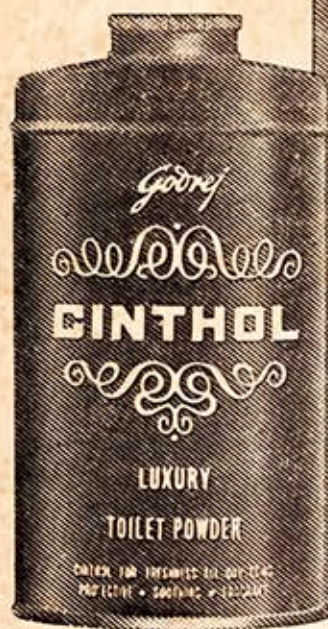
Ms Vakeel's publications on mental health include a paper on "The Mentally Deficient Child" read at the World Conference on Mental Retardation in Geneva and a book *The Role of the Mentally Handicapped Child*, notes her biodata.

Born Jai Rutnagar, she was one of the 15 Indian girls to pass their Senior Cambridge examination from Cathedral High School in 1916. Her father Sohrab Rutnagar, the editor of the *Indian Textile Journal*, was keen his daughter receive a formal education and encouraged her to write articles.

At the age of 29, she married a lawyer, Homi Vakeel of Surat, notes the write-up. When one of their four children was mentally afflicted, Ms Vakeel sought medical advice and from slowly alleviating her child's predicament, she began to help other similarly handicapped children.

Y.O.U.'s mass navjotes : proof of devotion





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