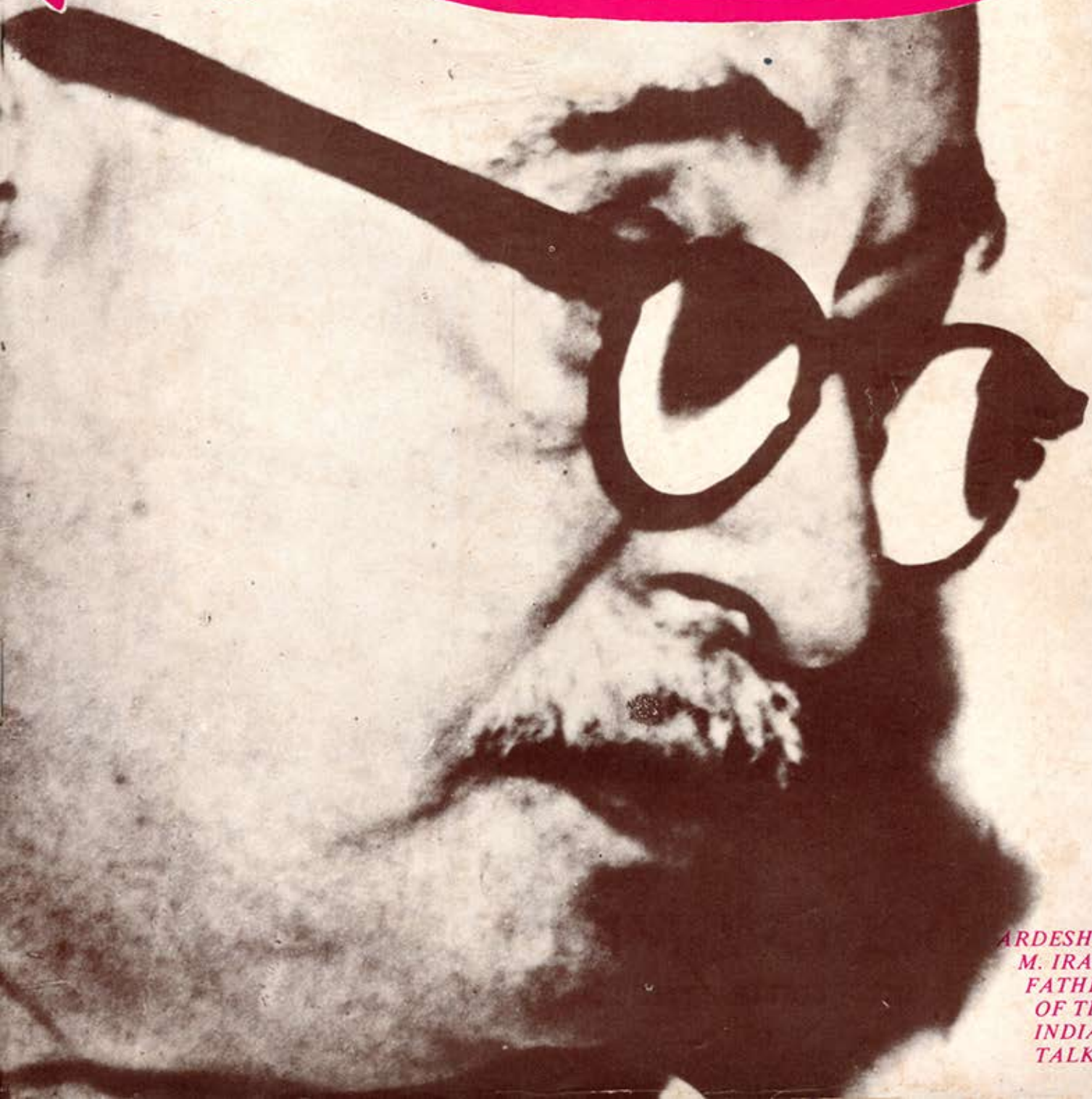


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FATHER
OF THE
INDIAN
TALKIE

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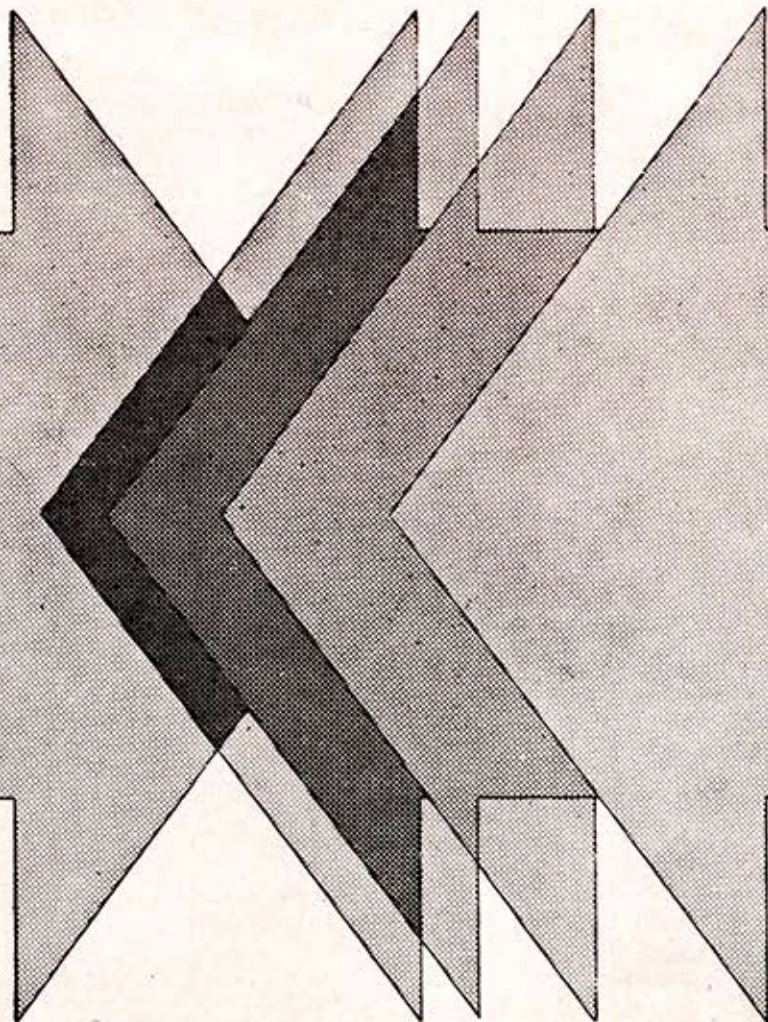
This kind of activity results in a chain reaction releasing the energy for greater development. From the nuclear technological base we launched into space technology. And long before that, in 1938, we developed Indian manufacturing capability. Then it was restricted to dairy equipment. Today, we have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



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Parsiana

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Cover design of Ardeshir M. Irani by Sean Mahoney.
Photo courtesy: Screen.

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Parsiana is published by Jehangir R. Patel at C/o. H. L. Rochat, Navsari Chambers, ground floor, 39 A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Bombay, 400 001, printed by him at Jyoti Industries, 324 A to Z Industrial Estate, Bombay 400 013 and phototypeset at Decora Printers, Bombay 400 009. All rights reserved. Address all editorial and business correspondence to Parsiana, G.P.O. Box 892, Bombay 400 001. Phone: 268730.

Annual inland subscription: Rs 30 for one year (12 issues); Rs 55 for two years (24 issues); Foreign subscription rates: Seamail Rs 60 for one year, Rs 110 for two years; Airmail Rs 120 for one year, Rs 215 for two years.

For U. S. personal cheques add \$2 to cover bank charges.

For Indian upcountry cheques add Rs 3 for bank charges. Cheques and drafts are to be drawn in favour of Parsiana. Single copy price Rs 5 and Re 1. All rate; s. subject to change in postal rates.



In Memoriam

Mr. Fali Meherji Variava,

Director

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Readers' Forum

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.

IGNORANCE AND ADOPTION

Regarding the Adoption Bill going before Parliament, and the campaign being conducted by the Zoroastrian community to oppose it, I would like to draw your attention to the manner in which this campaign was conducted in Kanpur.

A lengthy cyclostyled letter from a Mr. Wadia of Bombay was circulated to the Zoroastrian community together with blank sheets for signatures endorsing Mr. Wadia's views. No copy of the Bill was attached, nor were members advised about the contents of the Bill. An objection was raised to this method of gathering signatures and a meeting requested and convened to discuss the topic. The meeting had to be abandoned as no copy of the Bill was available, and no one present could admit to having read the Bill to advise the rest regarding the contents of the Bill, and why Zoroastrians should oppose it. The meeting was abandoned on a very unhappy note.

A request was made to the President of the Zoroastrian Anjuman that no formal communication voicing... opposition to the Bill be forwarded to the Prime Minister until a copy of the Bill was received and discussed. This was accepted by the President.

A few days later a similar letter, but a more impassioned one, was received from the same source from Bombay, and circulated together with cyclostyled forms for signatures. I deeply regret to write that Zoroastrians have attested their signatures to the forms without knowledge of the contents of the Bill. Opposition to the Bill is certainly not unanimous, since two members at least have not signed and have resigned from the Anjuman in protest against the manner in which the campaign was conducted.

During my recent visit to Bombay I unfortunately found the same willingness to lend support to opposing the Bill

with the same lamentable lack of knowledge of the contents of the Bill.

MRS. A.N. PATEL
Kanpur

PILGRIM FATHERS

Amongst scholars and those who study the history of the Parsis perfunctorily there is a lot of doubt about the movement of various Zoroastrian groups in Iran immediately before the accession to the throne by Shahanshah Yazdgerd Sheriar and after. This is due to a lot of reliance being placed on Western scholars whose researches in our past were based on conjectures and prejudices where they could not lay their hands on authentic proofs. These Western scholars with the exception of a very few have even twisted facts about Zardust and his religion, some of which will be examined in this paper.

Parsi scholars today continue to harp on the unauthenticated Western view that our ancestors left Iran in 936 A.D. For any scholar to say that the Arabs conquered Iran in the seventh century A.D. and "gradually" imposed their religion taking almost three centuries to kill us or chase us out is to rewrite history and give respectability to these illiterate marauders. Further, to say that in the early tenth century a small group of Zoroastrians seeking freedom of worship and economic redress left Iran and found "Heaven" in North West India (in A.D. 936) is absurd. Actually they were so harassed and persecuted that they had to hide from place to place till 696/697 A.D. when they became "boat people" and set sail from Port Hormazd arriving at the Island of Div in Gujarat in 697 A.D. After staying at Div only 19 years, they set sail again for an unknown destination and destiny brought them - after enduring storms and hazards at sea - to the coast of Sanjan in 716 A.D.

Irrefutable evidence of our advent in India earlier than 936 A.D. is our most venerable and sacred Atash Behram Iranshah at Udvada which celebrated

its 1260th Anniversary on Adar Roz of Adar Mah last year (1350 YZ). Our sacred fire now at Udvada was consecrated by the leader of the group Naryosang Dhaval of Sanjan on Adar Roz of Adar Mah in the year of 90 YZ (721 A.D.). We did not bring any fire from Iran.

Nine families known as Sanjana Tola of Udvada are his direct descendants. If our Western oriented scholars had approached them they would have got their facts from the horses mouth.

R.J. KATILA

BLIND TRUST

I was surprised to read about the various trusts that do not function for some reason or another of (Trusts and Distrusts, Parsiana, November 1981). I am not very clear whether the study was confined to those trusts where the income is meant only for the Parsi community, or whether the founders were Parsis, and the income could be used for general benefit. In case the latter holds, I would appeal to these trusts, and the trustees thereof, to hear a plea for capital funds.

About 15 years ago, my grandmother left about three lakh rupees in various investments in a trust (named after her, Bai Navajbai Perojsha Sett) to be utilised in educating the blind from primary to graduation, as well as in



professional degrees. As my grandmother died shortly thereafter, estate duty took a bite of the capital. Recently, Government policy changes forced the trustees to sell the shares, debentures, etc., and invest the remaining (and sadly depleted) capital in long-term bank deposits. The Bank of India is the managing trustee, and I am also a trustee.

The income from this trust is channeled through the National Association for the Blind (NAB), and has been, and is being, utilised as under:

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AIR-INDIA

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(b) Providing capital grants for institutions engaged in training/educating the blind. For example, the Merwanji Institute for rehabilitation of the blind in Mt. Abu has been more or less completely equipped through this trust. The Happy Home at Worli and some other schools in Bombay have received teaching aids from here.

A small committee formed by the NAB scrutinises the applications received by the trust (I am a member of this committee), and scholarships granted through such recommendations.

In the event that some trustees of the trusts referred to in your article are too busy to meet, can we not get together and pool our money? If some trusts have too much money, and pay tax instead of using money for charity, can we not use the money for charity?

As the Bank of India is the managing trustee, you will appreciate the lack of office staff, etc. The Bank arranges for annual audit, keeps track of the requirements of the Charity Commissioner, and takes a small commission. Surely this is enough evidence of the bona fides of our trust.

What we need is capital funds. The needs of the blind are immense; our efforts are small. Any and all donations, specially from large trusts as above, will be welcomed. We may consider merging other trusts along with our trust, if the trustees can arrive at some consensus.

R.D. SETTNA

Post Box 19125, Prabhadevi, Bombay 400 025.

ALPAIWALLA MUSEUM

The F.D. Alpaiwalla Museum at Khareghat Hall, Khareghat Colony, N.S. Patkar Marg, Bombay, is open to the public from 10.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. every day except Tuesday. The museum remains closed for lunch from 1.30 p.m. to 2.30 p.m. There are no entrance fees.

P.H. BALSARA

Asst. Secretary, Bombay Parsi Punchayet

MADRESSA JUBILEE FUND

The Athornan Mandal decided to celebrate the "Diamond Jubilee" of the Athornan Boarding Madressa in Dadar. To commemorate this occasion the Mandal plans to construct an extension to the existing Madressa Building for which the Mandal has kept aside a

sum of Rs. 1,00,000.

The proposed extension will have residential accommodation for the teaching staff, a library and reading room, gymnasium facilities, a community hall and residential facilities for students.

This Madressa has at present 38 students who are receiving training in "Sampurna Yozdathregari," both in theory and practice with academic education upto "S.S.C. with Avasta Language". Students desiring to graduate in "Avasta Pahelvi" are given facilities to stay in the Madressa. There are at present six such students. More students can be taken into this Madressa, if philanthropic persons give financial help.

A sum of about Rs. 3,500 and over per annum is required to educate and maintain one student, who is provided free boarding, lodging, medical aids, tuitions, books, sports and welfare amenities, etc. A student stays in this Madressa for about 10 years. He enters at the age of six to seven years and leaves when he is about 16 to 17 years. All these years the Madressa looks after him and educates him.

We, therefore, approach you to donate to the Madressa. Cross and order cheques drawn in the name of the "Athornan Mandal" should be sent to Farrokh Jehangir Sidhwa, Fali Shapurji Master (Elavia), Jt. Hon. Secretaries, Athornan Mandal, Navsari Building, 2nd floor, 240, Dr. D.N. Road, Bombay 400 001 or Rustom Noshirwan Panthaki, Principal, Athornan Boarding Madressa, 651/652, Firdausi Road, Muncherji Joshi Parsi Colony, Dadar, Near Five Gardens, Bombay 400 014.

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The Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsee Charitable Institution Old Boy's Union appeals for donations towards its various funds: Education, Scholarships, Milk, Medical Relief, Books, Uniforms, etc., for the needy students of the Institution.

All Cheques should be in favour of the "B.J.P.C. Institution Old Boys' Union" and sent to the Institution Opp. Charni Road Rly. Station, 33 M. Karve Marg, Bombay 400 004

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Jt. Hon. Secretaries

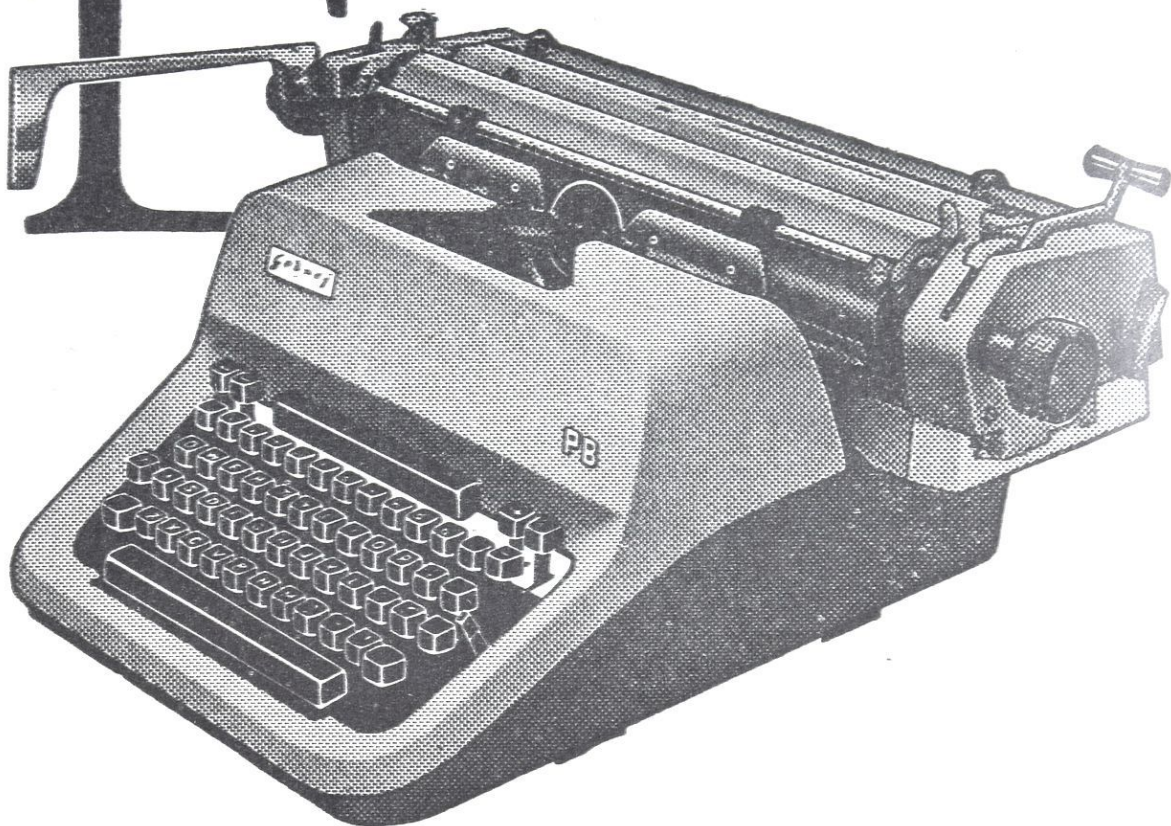
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CAPTAIN OOKERJEE

Whilst I found the article on Captain Sam Aga informative (Parsiana, October 1981), I am sure your readers will be interested to know of the late Captain Kavas Ookerjee the first Indian captain of a sea-going vessel. He was the first Indian to be trained on H.M.S. Conway in England; passed the examination of master mariner held by the board of trade in August 1911; was Captain of S.S. Mahamadi and Zainani owned by a Persian Shipping Company and plying between Bombay and Basra from 1913 to 1916 and marine superintendent of Scindia Steam Navigation from 1919 to 1948.



Capt. Kavas Ookerjee

Ookerjee attended several loadline and maritime conferences as a delegate or an observer. Along with Captain Digby-Best he inaugurated the training ship Dufferin. Ookerjee also inaugurated the naval training establishment near Bori Bunder in Bombay.

DHUN MEHTA

Jahabux Pestonjee Bhandara a contemporary of the late Captain Kavas Ookerjee was also a pioneer of Indian Shipping - Editor.

TALENT PARADE

We propose to stage a Zoroastrian Talent Parade Programme in the first week of July, 1982.

The object of the programme is to provide a platform for the recognition and appreciation of the talents, of the participants.

Such a programme calls for the involvement, co-operation and participation of the Zoroastrian at all levels. Send us the names, bio-datas, achievements etc of the talented Zoroastrians from your area.

Although we would very much like to offer this opportunity to all talented Zoroastrians, we are compelled to restrict the programme to a duration of about three hours which would amount to our selecting the best talents for the final performance on stage.

K.P. GAZDAR
General Secretary,
C.E.R. Youth Wing

BAROT WEDDING?

On the 9th and 10th January the Pundolites made their annual trek to Mount Barot. There, after breakfast, Jashan ceremony was held and the blessings of the Iran Shah were evoked for the Parsi community and a special mass prayer was recited for the safety and welfare of our Irani brothers in Iran.

Mount Barot was the place where Parsis had taken refuge in the past. There are natural caves on the top and natural cystem in which fresh spring water flows. Some brick masonry work was observed in the cave. It was said that 70 years ago a Parsi had performed his daughter's marriage there. Can anyone throw light on this?

Z.M. ZEND

BAN THE BAR

Non-Parsee mourners at Parsee funerals are debarred from paying their last respects to the deceased because custom forbids those of other faiths to see the face of the departed! It is high time Zoroastrians put an end to this ridiculous practice.

At largely attended funerals with many non-Parsee mourners present, it is shameful to have to witness their hurt feelings and observe the acute embarrassment of the Parsees.

It is also imperative to replace the gruesome method of disposal of our dead by a humane method, preferably burial. The existing practice of disposal by birds of prey (Vultures) is abhorrent to say the least.

T.C. KATRAK
Calcutta

ROYAL PARADE

Ervad Eruch Rustomji Daruwalla, a

station supervisor in the London Transport Underground Railways and member of Lions International had the honour of participating in the Royal British Legion Remembrance Day (Poppy Day) parade on 8 November 1981 carrying a wreath to the Cenotaph, White Hall.

If you have any knowledge of any Parsi having previously participated in this parade, please let us know.

MS E. DARUWALLA,
London, England.

ELOCUTION WINNERS

On 9th of January 1982, four students of Boys' Town Public School, Nasik won prizes at the Elocution Competition conducted by the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman on the topic "Problems Facing Our Community and How I can Help to Solve Them." the first and the third prizes were won by M.J. Patel and N.H. Karanjawalla respectively.

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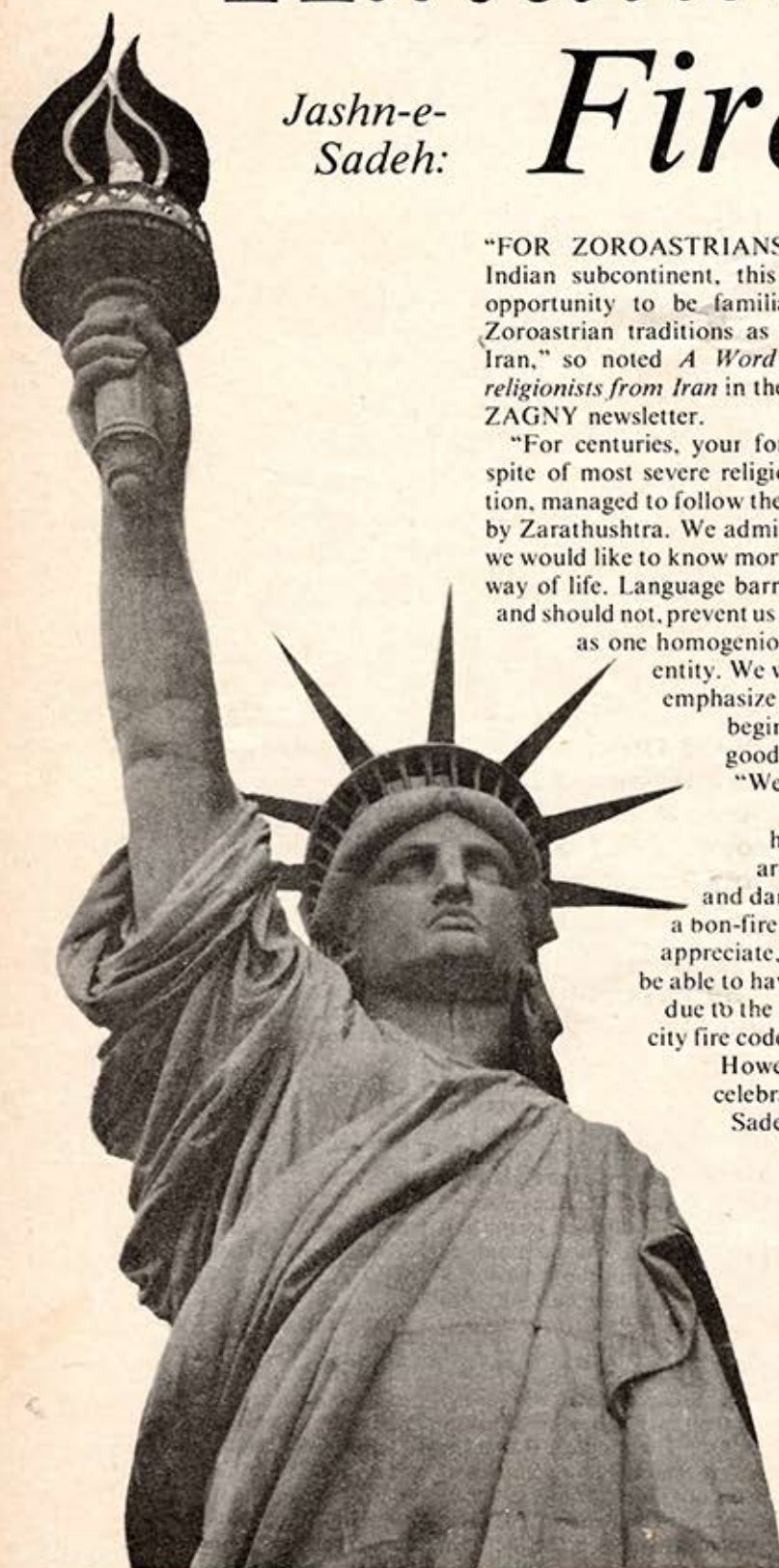
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Kindling Fires

Jashn-e-Sadeh:



"FOR ZOROASTRIANS from the Indian subcontinent, this is the first opportunity to be familiar with the Zoroastrian traditions as practiced in Iran," so noted *A Word to our co-religionists from Iran* in the 29 January ZAGNY newsletter.

"For centuries, your fore-fathers in spite of most severe religious persecution, managed to follow the path shown by Zarathushtra. We admire that, and, we would like to know more about your way of life. Language barriers, do not, and should not, prevent us from uniting

as one homogenous, religious entity. We would like to emphasize that this is a beginning, a very good beginning."

"We understand that sacred hymns of fire are being sung and danced around a bon-fire. As you will appreciate, we will not be able to have a bon-fire due to the weather and city fire code restriction.

However, we will celebrate Jashn-e-Sadeh in spirit.

"Due to the language barrier, we would appreciate if fellow Zoroastrians knowing Farsi would come forward

to sing the hymns.

ZAGNY has managed to obtain these hymns and songs, which are in Farsi."

With those sentiments Zoroastrians from Iran, India, Pakistan and elsewhere celebrated *Jashn-e-Sadeh*.

Dr Farang Mehr, the noted educationist who held several high government posts in the Pahlavi regime, was the principal speaker. The significance of *Jashn* goes back to the discovery of fire by Shah Hushang, said the newsletter citing Mehr.

"He explained the relationship between celebrating Gahambars and Jashn; by expounding on the central theme of the celebration of Jashn, viz:— 'homogeneity' of the congregation; by the participation of rich and poor, priests and laymen, and nobles and peasants.

"In keeping with the tradition, hymns were sung in Farsi by a friend of this congregation, Ms Mahim Hambly."

According to Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, the noted scholar, Jashn-e-Sadeh fell "on the 10th day (Aban) of the 10th month Deh. They say that a large fire was kindled in the fields on this day to symbolize the approach of winter which necessitated the kindling of fires."

Pioneering Service

FEELING THE need for "understanding the meaning of the Zoroastrian prayers written in Avestan language," and "the participation of the lay persons of the congregation, in some form, in the conduct of religious ceremony," a half-hour "service" was held by ZAGNY president, Framroze K. Patel and member at-large, Prof. Kaikhosrov D. Irani. The two members presented their "personal" views in conducting the service.

"This was not a new idea," noted the 22 February newsletter, "it was in vogue in India in various Parsi orphanages and Athornan institutes."

The service consisted of recitation of three stanzas of the gathas along with their translation in poetic English by the late Dinshaw J. Irani, readings from Dastur Dhalla's *Homage Unto Ahura-Mazda* and an explanation of righteousness in Zoroastrian philosophy by K.D. Irani.

"It is hoped this type of service will be held monthly," noted the newsletter.

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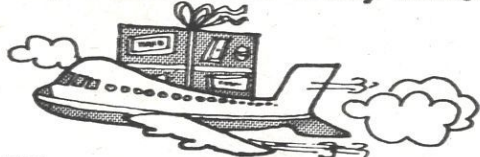
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Committed Classes

EIGHT YEARS ago ZAGNY started religious classes with two teachers - Dastoorji Pervaz P. Patel and Dr Lovji Cama who "committed" to carry on the classes even if one student were present, notes the 14 December ZAGNY newsletter. "A milestone was reached this year when instead of one - four students graduated after five years of intensive training in Kusti prayers, ancient Iranian History and general knowledge of Zoroastrian customs and rituals." They are Friar Hakim, Kurush Morris, Pashang Patel and Rohi Sukhia.

Three students, children of Mr and Mrs Kavay Dastur, travelled 185 miles (each day) to attend the classes - they were among the students who were awarded certificates. "This is dedication, commitment and devotion," notes the newsletter.

The Board of directors recognised the contribution of every teacher since the inception of the religious classes and thanked Lovji Cama, Noshir Hormuzdiar, Pervaz Patel, Hoshang Unvala, Navaz Bhavnagri, Nancy Daruwala, Niloufer Daver, Ivy Gandhi, Zahver

Morris and Armaity Patel for their work.

Dhansak Fried Rice?

THE FEARS of the orthodox Parsis that Zoroastrians overseas are lost to the community may be coming true. The Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York celebrated their fourth anniversary not with palav dal but a Chinese (Szechuan) lunch.

As though that was not sufficiently sacrilegious, the ZAGNY newsletter (14 December 1981) heretically went on to note "the food was delicious, may be

heavenly is the right word." To the *Chinvad Pul* on Chinese food !!!

The mitigating circumstances cited for this reformist act as noted in the newsletter edited by Ivy F. Gandhi, ZAGNY's joint secretary, are: "lack enthusiasm among the members to volunteer to cook; each time we had to request the same eight to ten families to bear the responsibilities for cooking for over 200 people; significantly different food habits of our congregation; our moral responsibility to give you your money's worth and at the same time add a few dollars to ZAGNY's general fund."

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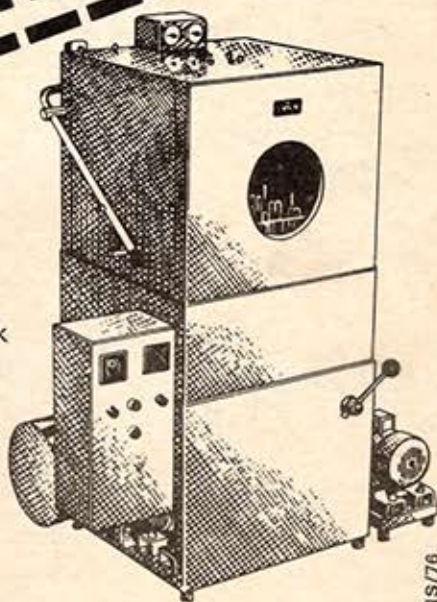
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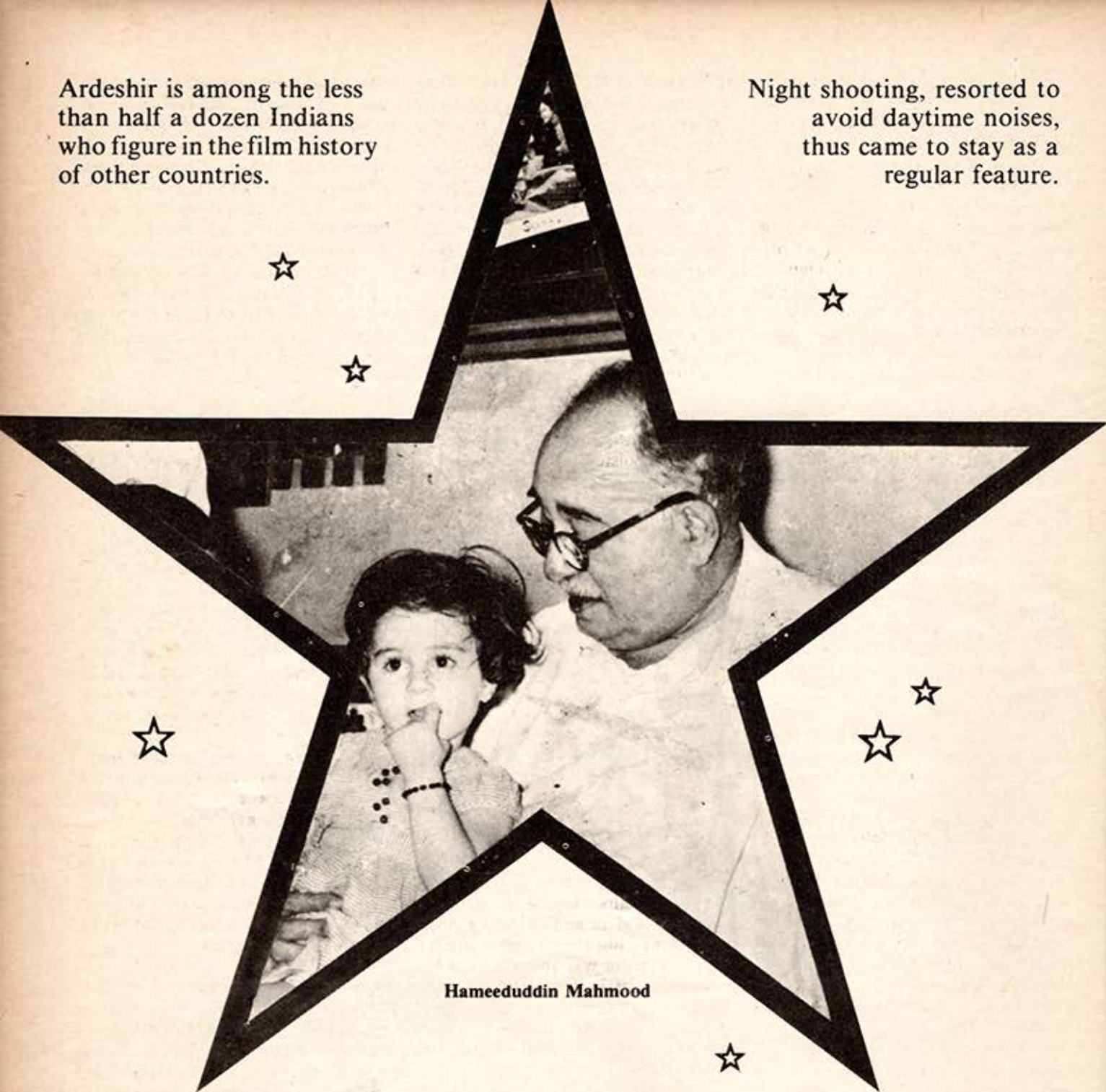
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Ardeshir is among the less than half a dozen Indians who figure in the film history of other countries.

Night shooting, resorted to avoid daytime noises, thus came to stay as a regular feature.



Hameeduddin Mahmood

ARDESHIR M. IRANI: FATHER OF THE INDIAN TALKIE

THE first thing that strikes me about Ardeshir or for that matter, any other film pioneer, is the absence of "first-person" documentation due to several socio-personal factors. I'll indicate just one: they did not hope to be respected and remembered by posterity. Ardeshir Irani was born in Poona (now Pune), according to one date on December 10, 1885; and, according to another, on December 15, 1886. The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885: the process of industrialisation had been initiated by the Tatas and later by the Kirloskars and Wages; Ardeshir grew up in rather different times which partly explain his courage and zeal for innovation. Indians were beginning to have a national purpose and a national identity. He began as an exhibitor of imported films as early as 1905 and was so successful that he was designated the India rep. of Universal Pictures. Further, he was able to acquire Alexandra cinema in partnership with Abdulally Esoofally. This raises a wide range of questions about film exploitation techniques in the first two decades of this century.

Long Partnership

The Irani-Esoofally partnership lasted 55 years until Irani's death in November, 1969—the longest in the history of Indian cinema. What moral code and business discipline characterised those times that made such a long partnership possible? Irani once said, "We then honoured even verbal promises." But, by the early 1960s, even written agreements were being ignored. Mehboob had a bitter experience of it in the case of 'Son of India'. And today, friendships are bartered for money, while every other Hindustani film talks of "dostana" and "yaari". Professional rivalries have obviously taken on a different hue.

According to one source, Ardeshir Irani set up the Star Film Company in 1917. According to another, he did so in 1920. But the company's maiden film, 'Veer Abhimanyu' was released in 1922. Those days, films were made in just about three to four months. Ardeshir has gone on record confirming that this film was his maiden venture, and that it cost Rs. 10,000. Later, films were budgeted for less. Two years later, Ardeshir set up the Majestic Film Co. and Royal Arts Studio. If Star concentrated on mythologicals, Majestic devoted itself to historical subjects more accurately to the cinema of spectacle on the pattern of

Hollywood—with films like 'Shah Jehan' (directed by Ardeshir and Naval Gandhi) and 'Razia Begum'. The closing of one and the setting up of another enterprise in such quick succession could be due to any or all of the following factors: Competition was growing with more and new banners coming up; cinema's early star images were beginning to take shape; audience tastes were in the process of change, due to Hollywood films worldwide sweep; and the silent cinema was entering a phase of great maturity and development as an art form.

Founding of Imperial

JUST two years after he set up Majestic, Ardeshir "hoisted" a new banner, the



Imperial Film Company, in partnership with Abdulally Esoofally. Imperial started as a giant and stayed a giant; it left a lasting impact on Indian cinema. At 40, Ardeshir was now a big name—exhibitor-distributor, studio-owner-producer-and-director. At this stage, I must add that Ardeshir's film career spanned the interregnum between two wars: He started at the end of the First World War in 1918, because, as an intelligent exhibitor of imported movies, he could foresee the collapse of the European cinema after the war and called it a day with the start of the Second World War in 1939, visualising the fall of the movie industry as he knew it with the advent of the war. Hence, 1918 to 1938 is the reference period within which to study Ardeshir's contribution to the development of Indian cinema.

Imperial was a veritable nursery: it gave Indian cinema a large number of 'stars'—the largest for any banner in the history of Indian cinema—Jillobai,

Zebunnisa, Ermeline, Gohar (who later moved to Ranjit), Sulochana (Ruby Meyers), Mazhar Khan, Yaqub, E. Billimoria, D. Billimoria and that 30-rupee-extra Mehboob Khan, who rose to become the Supremo of Indian cinema. Apart from an amazing variety of movie-fare, Imperial produced a host of directors and technicians.

Ardeshir's total output—the largest for any Indian producer—is estimated at 225 or 250 films, of which 125 or 150 are silent films. This huge output falls into four categories: the mythological and devotional films which have always attracted audience attention; the repertoire of the Parsee Theatre (which included Indian mythological lore) Persian/Arabic or Indian love legends and popular operas of the time, such as 'Heer Ranjha' and Pandit Daya Shanker Naseem's classical Urdu opera, 'Sahrul Bayaan' (filmed as 'Prince Budur'); Indian equivalents of Hollywood comedies, such as on marital life and finally socials, as wide-ranging as 'Khuda Ki Shaan' (which ran into trouble for a character impersonating Gandhi) and 'Madhuri' (Sulochana's hairstyle became a rage with women) to 'Dulhan' and 'Dhanwan', both featuring Rattan Bai.

Stylistically, at the hands of Bhavnani and Ezra Mir, the Hollywood-style costume and spectacle film became an Imperial trademark. Ardeshir filmed almost all the major love legends of India and made bio-pics about some famous women of Indian history. He also tried to dub his earlier hits into talkies. When he did not like the results, he remade them as talkies.

Man of Many Tongues

Imperial was the only institution to make films in several languages—Hindustani, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Burmese, Malay, Pushtu and Persian. Ardeshir, in fact, is among the less than half a dozen Indians who figure in the film history of other countries (the others being Himansu Rai, Mehboob, K.A. Abbas, Ismail Merchant and Harbance Kumar). The story of Iranian cinema begins with 'Dukhtar-e-Lur' which Ardeshir made in Persian. His partner, Abdulally himself took the print to Iran. Later Ardeshir made 'Shirin Farhad', 'Firdausi' and other Persian films, with an Indo-Iranian cast. This was repeated in 1970, with A. Bhimsingh's 'Subh-o-Shaam'. Burmese and Indonesians came to him for the filming of their first talkies. He also



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tried his hand at making English language films ('Noor Jehan' and 'Temple Bells'). All these reveal not just his enormous enterprise but sheer confidence establishing Imperial as a global film centre. The story of a captive market in West Asia for Indian films really begins in these early attempts of Ardeshir.

Hectic Days

His Imperial years (1926-38) were the most hectic as he continuously strove to do something new and something outstanding. The first Tamil talkie, 'Kalidasa' was filmed on 'Alam Ara' sets with Tamil dialogue and Telugu songs (this may sound crazy but then Telugu, because of the preponderance of Sanskrit, was a better vehicle for Kalidasa's poetry). Ardeshir filmed the golden jubilee of the Aga Khan (the grandfather of the present Agha Khan) when the greatest of all Ismaelia leaders, was weighed in gold. He despatched his team to Quetta to film the devastation of the 1935 earthquake. The famous clock, silenced by the quake, is even today a symbol of the Quetta tragedy.

The following year, he began preparation for making India's first colour film 'Kisan Kanya' using the cine-colour process. Even the second colour film, 'Mother India' (not to be mistaken for the Mehboob epic of 1957), was his and Ardeshir was happy that the film ran for 32 weeks. But others failed to follow his lead and consequently not until Mehboob's 'Aan' in 1952, did colour filming come to this country to stay.

Ardeshir was a man not frightened by the advent of any new technology. Rather he saw in it a challenge for himself. As you can see in that he made the first Indian talkie.

The first Indian talkie

The talkie was not a welcome revolution the world over. Ardeshir saw 'Show Boat' at Excelsior cinema in 1929 (his own Majestic Cinema had not switched over to showing talkie pictures). It inspired him to make India's own talkie "in our national language." "Show Boat" was "only a 40 percent talkie." Early talkie pioneers in America had proceeded guardedly. Ardeshir could also have opted for a safety margin in the partial talkie. But he decided to make India's first talkie a "hundred per cent talking picture." In Europe, a debate was raging against the talkie. Ardeshir's decision was bold but "too hazardous," as there were "no facilities, no equipment and no experience," as he said, on

the occasion of talkie silver jubilee function of IMPPA on December 22, 1956. "There was not even a shadow of any set pattern for us to follow," he had stated. Rustom Bharucha and Ardeshir learnt the technique of sound recording in just about a month and recorded India's first talkie.

From stage to screen

'Alam Ara' had been an important production of the Parsee Theatre. Joseph David, who adapted his own play for the screen, was one of the outstanding Jews who contributed to Indian drama and film—the others being Ezra Mir, Sulochana, David and Nadira. He died in penury in 1948.

There were songs in the theatrical production and they came into the film



as well naturally. Said Ardeshir, "We had no dialogue writer, no lyricist, no music director and everything had to be started and planned from scratch." Ardeshir himself selected the tunes and chose the singers. Only three instruments were used: *tabla*, harmonium and violin. India's first talkie, presenting the first songs in the history of the world's talkie, bore no credit card for music direction, lyrics or for singers.

By using songs in the first talkie, (Parsee Theatre incorporated elements of Indian folk theatre), Ardeshir did two things: breaking new ground and continuing an old, tradition. Ardeshir gave Indian cinema its first singer, W.M. Khan, and the first song: "*De de Khuda ke naam par pyaare, taaqat hai gar dene ki.*" This *Saayal geet*, song of the minstrel, became a 'type' that has lasted in Indian movies ever since. Unfortunately, the music of 'Alam Ara' never

got recorded in disc form. The first disc of film songs was cut in 1934. 'Alam Ara' became popular in India, Burma, Sri Lanka and West Asia.

Filming the songs, was another ordeal. "There was no model for picturising songs," mused Ardeshir. There was no boom. All songs had to be filmed by direct take. A little cough and a little lapse in articulation, and you do it all over again. Indoors, the problem was solved by a person holding the mike out of the field. Outdoors, the main difficulty was to hide the mike by ingenious camouflage. "Technically," said Ardeshir, "the single system which we were called upon to follow in the beginning, had its plethora of problems. In this single system, the sound track was exposed at the far end of the camera while the pictures were photographed in the front."

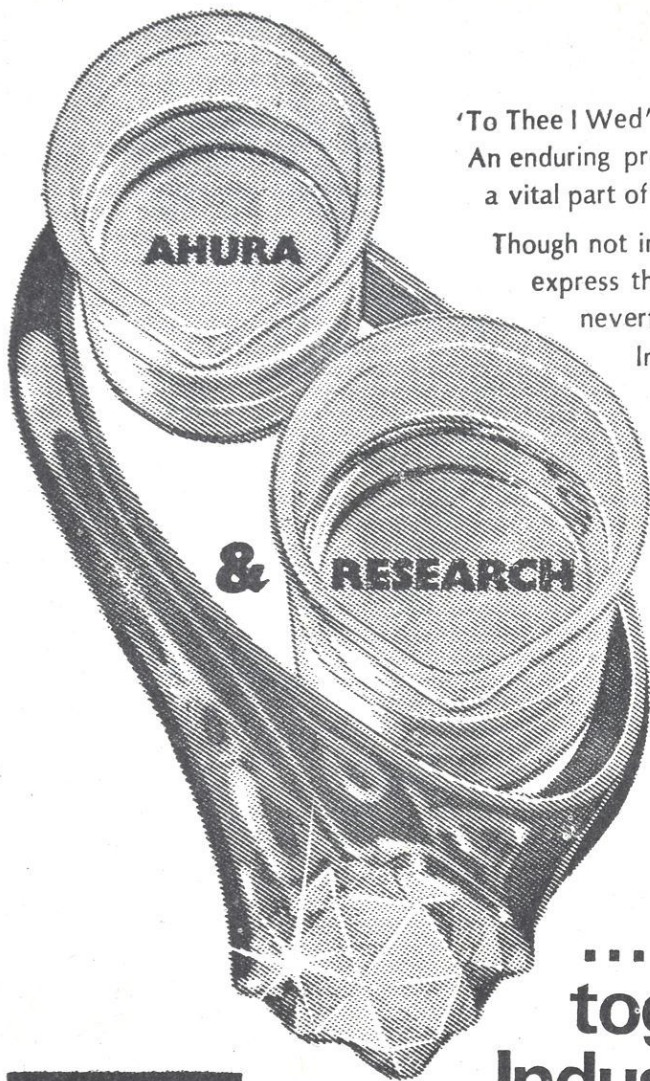
Departing from the usual practice of shooting in sunlight with reflectors, Ardeshir shot indoors with "half a dozen lights." "It was a novel experience," recalled Ardeshir. Night shooting, resorted to avoid daytime noises, thus came to stay as a regular feature.

A great cast had been assembled: Elizer, Jagdish Sethi, Sohrab Modi, Yaqub, Prithviraj Kapoor and W.M. Khan. The lead roles were played by Zubeida and Master Vithal, who could not speak Urdu. In a last-minute change, Vithal had replaced Mehboob as the lead player. (The casting of Vithal had led to a legal suit against Vithal by the company on whose payroll he was. It was Mohammad Ali Jinnah who appeared for Vithal and won the case for him).

Despite all the problems, the tenacious Ardeshir completed the 10,500 ft. film within the schedule—in four months, at a total cost of Rs.40,000, and released it at Majestic cinema on March 14, 1931—to enter history. It ran for an impressive eight weeks. "Popular enthusiasm was almost delirious," recalled Abdulally Esoofally.

The title of "Khan Bahadur" was conferred on the 46-year old Parsi pioneer for his multiple contribution to cinema. When the film industry honoured him on December 22, 1956 as "the Father of the Indian Talkie," Ardeshir replied with humility, "I do not think that anybody should lionise me for producing the first Indian talkie, because I merely did my bit for our national industry."

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The Politics of Healing

Interview with Bombay Parsi Punchayet Chairman
Dr Aspi Golwalla

The influence of great institutions is determined by their ability to adapt to changing expectations, time and events. In the last decade, the Zoroastrian community underwent a social and religious revival. Those institutions that were slow to respond to the new consciousness were confronted by an antagonistic community.

Perhaps the institution that bore the greatest brunt of the community's displeasure was the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and its board of seven trustees. Through the trauma of a World Congress, a fractured Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian anjumans and a keenly, oft times bitterly, contested election, the 300-year-old body saw its prestige and influence decline. Though rich in endowment, the Punchayet appeared ineffectual in stemming the community's economic rot.

But the winds of change have come to the venerable institution on 209, Dadabhai Naoroji Road. In the short span of three months since he took over the chairmanship of the BPP, Dr Aspi Golwalla, a noted cardiologist and social worker, has moved quickly and effectively to bring the community together. Both well-wishers and critics of the Punchayet are being approached, largely to assist in what Golwalla believes to be the number one problem facing the Bombay community today, housing.

In the following interview with *Parsi-ana*, the Karachi-born physician gives his views on the Punchayet and the community.

Born on 21st August 1920, Dr Aspi Golwalla had a distinguished academic record. He graduated from the B.V.S.



Parsi High School in Karachi, completed inter-science at the D.J. Sind College and won the Coyajee Scholarship of Bombay University. He joined the G.S. Medical College and K.E.M. Hospital in 1940, graduated in 1945 and took his M.D. in 1949.

He was appointed as tutor to the Grant Medical College and Honorary Assistant Physician at the G.T. Hospital in 1949. In 1951 he was appointed Honorary Assistant Physician at the K.E.M. Hospital, and later, Honorary Emeritus Professor of Medicine. He has been examiner for the M.D. degree for several Indian Universities. He is Medical Adviser to the Atomic Energy Commission and Honorary Visiting Specialist, Tata Memorial Hospital.

A noted author, his most widely-selling text book *Medicine for Students*

first published in 1951 is now in its 12th edition. The other popular publication is *Clinical Diagnosis* co-edited by the late Dr R.H. Vakil. Other books by Golwalla are: *Electrocardiography for Students and Practitioners*; *Diagnostic Medicine*, *A Handbook of Emergencies*, *Practical Prescriber* and *ABC of Medicine*.

Dr Golwalla was elected Fellow of the American Colleges of Cardiology in 1969. He is a co-Editor of *The Indian Practitioner*.

Golwalla's association with the Parsi Punchayet began in 1950 when he joined the medical panel of the Parsi Punchayet Health Unit and Cottage Hospital. He was first selected trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet in October 1968 and successfully stood for a second term in October 1978. He is a trustee of the Banajee Trust, Sir Pheroze Sethna Memorial Fund, H.K. Kolah Trust, Zoroastrian Association, Masina Hospital and the Fort Gratuitous Dispensary. He is chairman of the Pirojsha Godrej Foundation and Honorary Secretary of the Parsi Lying-in Hospital.

An active member of the Lions Club for 15 years and a former committee member of the Indian Red Cross Society, Golwalla has been chairman for the last 12 years of the Parsi Medical Amateurs Association, who from the performance of the plays of the late Dr Jehangir Wadia, has distributed lakhs of rupees in charity.

Married to Bhikhu (Sahiar), Golwalla has a daughter, Meher. Aspi Sattha, who works in Kuwait Airways and a son, Sharukh, who is studying for his M.D.

Question: What are your thoughts about the Parsi Punchayet Anjuman Committee elections held last year?

Answer: I think it was a more fair election, in the sense that the so-called king-makers had lost their say in the election. There is an awakening in the community. We have not only registered many new voters but aroused interest in the intelligentsia of the community, especially the youth.

Question: Do you favour reforms in the electoral system?

Answer: As far as electoral reforms go, I favour the indirect method because the direct method has many disadvantages. It would not only involve a lot of expense for the punchayet but the candidate himself would have to spend, especially if there is adult franchise. In the last election the Parsi Punchayet spent about two and half lakh rupees which is quite an expense. So I favour the indirect system with some modifications.

As you know, we have more important problems, so this can wait. The trustees have appointed a committee, to look into the election scheme and some suggestions have been made which can be put into effect after we give it a thought. But as I said, there is no particular hurry because we have more important problems at the moment to tackle.

Question: Which do you believe are the more important problems?

Answer: The main problem today is housing. We are meeting at least once a month on this subject. We have plenty of land and so a lot of F.S.I. (Floor Space Index) but not enough funds. Our first thought is how to generate funds.

One approach is the Rayomand Committee which has collected about twelve and a half lakh rupees. If we build out of their funds I am sure more donors will come forth to donate to the Rayomand Committee. Another possible way we can collect funds is if we can have the tenants of our baugs, especially the affluent baugs, like Cusrow Baug, Rustom Baug, Ness Baug and other colonies, donate money. If they would voluntarily donate 10 rupees or more monthly, we could collect a good bit.

The other thing is to co-operate. The statistics that the Zoroastrian Community Development Institute has collected, show that we have about 1.5 crores in other trusts, apart from the Parsi Punchayet. I plan to call a meeting of all the trusts, very soon.

Through co-operation amongst the

The best way is to build on advance rent. We don't want to part with the management and the ownership of land.

trusts we can achieve a lot. An example is the Panday Dharamshala at Colaba. As you know it's a beautiful site but the living conditions are far from satisfactory. Now if they seek our help, we can provide temporary accommodation for the present residents. The trustees of the dharamshala could develop this place by keeping the dharamshala as well as have residential buildings. I believe the ground floor can be made a commercial area - which could be very profitable for the trust.

When I met Mr. Shiavax Vakil (former BPP trustee) recently, he told me that the lady Hirabai Tata Memorial trusts had enough funds to construct about 40 to 50 flats. But they have no land and if we (the Parsi Punchayet) could offer them land on some mutually worked out terms, we could build for the weaker sections of the community. I will put it before the trustees for a final decision which I think will be a favourable one. Mutual co-operation is the only way by which we can at least partially solve the housing problem.

Another proposal is to build some flats on an ownership basis. This is a good proposal but we have had bad experiences in the past. Unfortunately, all Parsis are not honest. They try to sell the flats at a premium and that is a great disadvantage. What I would prefer is to have an advance compensation scheme - this is nothing new because at Dadar, already a number of flats have been built very successfully on this advance payment basis. We have 30 buildings in Dadar. Only one has a terrace. All the others have roofs. Now we propose to first build about 12 flats on this terrace building. The tenants can be shifted temporarily with all facilities to the temporary accommodation and once the flats are ready, they can go back. In this way, we can build about 125 flats and there will be no dearth of demand because we have, I think, about 350 applicants willing to have flats on this

Having another Federation where one already exists, will be encouraging further disunity in the community.

basis.

Young couples waiting to get married can obtain loans which will also be a very helpful way of building. Besides, we can only appeal to the generosity of the Sethias like Pallonji Mistry who I am sure if they wanted to, could build buildings of their own. And then land as I said, is plenty. We have 35,000 square yards at Godrej Baug alone.

What happens, you will say, to the weaker sections of the community? There is a proposal that we build for the affluent class and from the profits subsidise or build for the weaker section. Now that I think, will be difficult because the exemption from the land ceiling has been given especially for the weaker sections of the community. I don't think we can build at Godrej Baug for the affluent class since we have got an exemption for the weaker sections and I don't know if the charity commissioner would ever allow this. If we made a profit, the tax question would arise and that would involve a lot of problems.

So I feel personally that the best way is to build on advance rent. We don't want to part with the management and the ownership of land. Then what happens to those who cannot afford to buy on advance rent basis, nor pay higher rents? We have a formula for calculating rents. Municipal taxes are so high now that naturally the rents even for a one-room flat has to be between 250 and 300 rupees. And a number of poor Parsis cannot afford this. So we must have subsidised rent for them for which we will have to set up a separate subsidy fund.

Question: What happens when people pay low rents and the baugs require repairs?

Answer: The Parsi Panchayat has always had a repair fund or a sinking fund but the Wadia trust buildings, especially Navroze Baug, are in bad shape and do not have a sinking fund. Efforts are now being made to have these buildings repaired with the tenants contributing 50 percent. In fact, some residents of the Navroze Baug came to see me. It was very nice of them to volunteer to contribute towards these sinking funds.

Question: In one of the Zoroastrian Institute Development Community meetings, BPP trustee Jimmy Gazder said that for allocation of flats, the Panchayet was contemplating computeris-

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ing the information?

Answer: Yes, that is what they said, but in the meantime we will have to write to most of the applicants to find out the present position and whether they still require flats. Once we have that, we might be able to computerise the information.

Every Tuesday about 15 to 20 people come and see me just for accommodation. You find that each one of them is very deserving and needs immediate accommodation. I tell them we have started building, please give us some time, have a little more patience, I am sure we will be able to help you.

Question: Aside from housing, what do you feel is the next major problem or issue facing the community?

Answer: One important problem is the reduction in our numbers. I feel this is very closely connected with the problem of housing. A Parsi boy and a girl were engaged for a number of years but the girl broke off the engagement because the boy could not find a roof over his head. The girl then married outside the community.

The other difficulties are that we don't have enough social and cultural activities. I am sure the youth wing of the CER (Committee for Electoral Rights) can help in this direction. Recently, about 55 of them went to this *Barhot no Pahr* near Golvad. We, of course, provided accommodation for them in our Golvad homes. If such social and cultural activities are arranged where boys and girls meet each other more often, I am sure marriages will be arranged.

It took us two years to get sanction from the Municipality (for construction.)

I know Nadir and Homai Modi have this youth organization (Young Collegiate Zoroastrian Association) where a number of boys and girls have met and married because they came in contact with each other there. So if we can have youngsters meeting each other, I am sure there will be fewer marriages outside the community.

The other problems as I see them are the large amounts spent on education scholarships - given partly as loans and partly as gifts. Our statistics show that about 40 percent of the students do not come back to India. They settle abroad

and I feel out of this 40 percent a large number get married outside the community, in the United States, in Canada, and are virtually lost to the community. This is a big drawback. Not that we don't want to give scholarships but this is a brain drain. Moreover, we are losing good Zoroastrians. They marry outside the community and merge in the mainstream of the environment where they live.

Question: Many people are marrying outside the community and if this is the trend, do you feel that a move should be made to accommodate these spouses in the community? Or do you feel they should be left out?

Answer: No, I normally feel they should be left out. I don't think that by diluting the community, our purpose will be served. Of course, some people say it is better to have quality than quantity, I am not firmly of this view but I would not encourage this sort of attitude.

Question: What do you feel about the Delhi Parsi Anjuman decision to let the spouses become members of the Anjuman?

Answer: That is the biggest obstacle in our rejoining the Federation (of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India) since this is also an important problem. There was a move, a suggestion or a proposal, that we should have another Federation where the rules and regulations strictly forbid non-Zoroastrians from becoming members of the various Anjumans. Some trustees are of the view, and I agree with them, that having another Federation where one already exists, will be encouraging further disunity in the community.

And I think today, the biggest need of the community is harmony; if we have harmony, we can achieve much more in the future. So that if we can sit across the table, iron out our differences in a spirit of give-and-take, we might be able to revive the Federation. The only important thing is that one must stick to the rules and regulations. There can be no second opinion. If anybody breaks the rules and regulations, then he cannot continue to be a member. And if the Delhi Anjuman is willing to co-operate with us, sit across the table, as I said in a spirit of give-and-take, the Federation can be very useful especially to the smaller Anjumans of India. But every Anjuman has to abide by the constitution of the Federation.

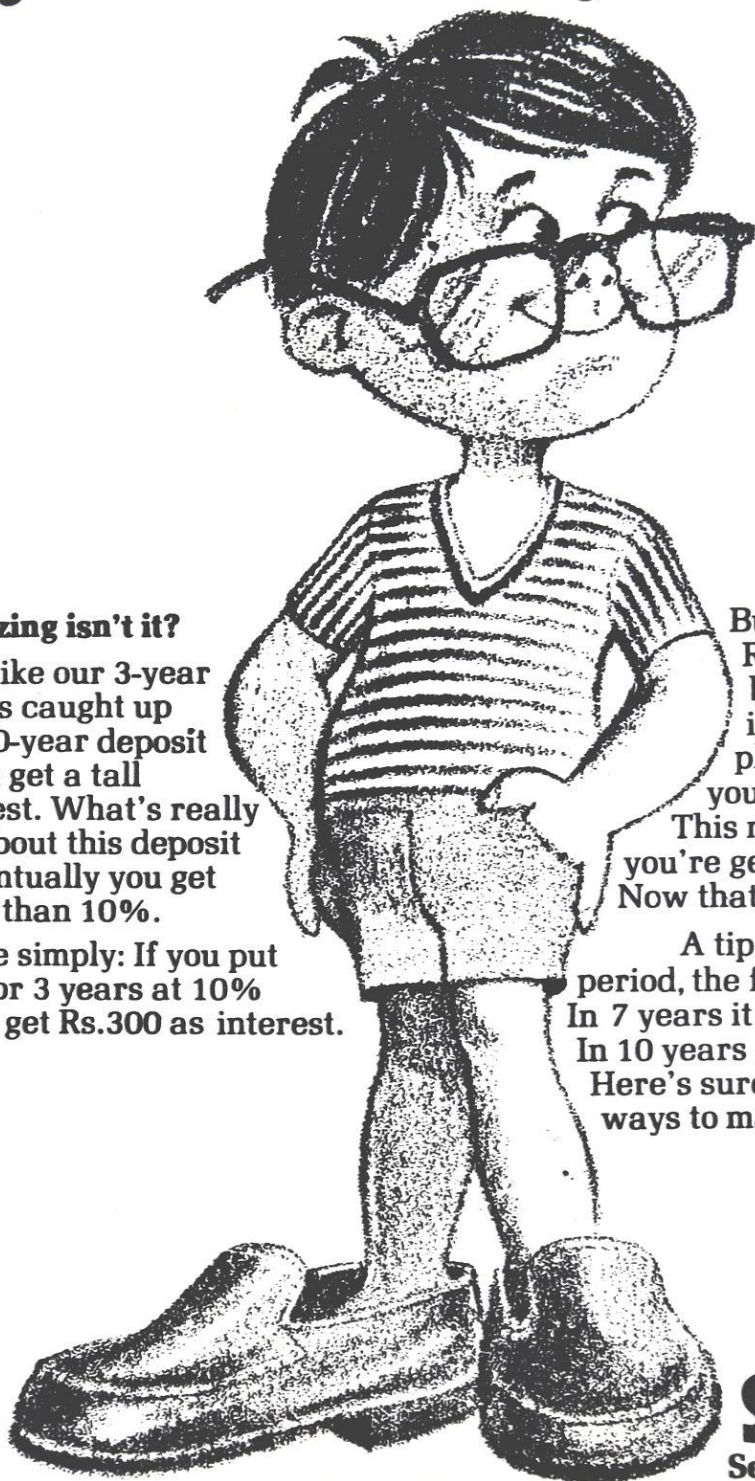
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and this will continue in the years to come.

Question: You had mentioned that a reason for the declining numbers was the housing shortage. But in other communities, for example, the South Indian community, members have migrated to Bombay, secured jobs; don't have many institutions to support them, and still they get married, and manage to have children. Nearly every other community also faces a housing problem but continues to increase in numbers. So aside from housing are there other reasons for the population decline?

Answer: I think it is mainly housing. Of course unemployment may play a part. As you know the standard of living of Parsis is a little higher than of other communities. This may be a reason. Sometimes the boy is not earning enough to feel confident to maintain a family. Undoubtedly, from my experience, housing is the biggest problem. Look at the number of couples waiting on the list to get accommodation. That in itself will give you an idea; it is a fairly large number.

Question: What is the role of the chairman of the Panchayet? How does it differ from that of the trustees?

Answer: Well, the chairman has no special privileges in respect of the other trustees. But as a chairman, I would have certain objectives in mind. As you know in recent years due to various difficulties, people outside the Panchayet do not know what problems we have to face.

The late Arbab Rustam Guiv gave us a donation of six lakh rupees for housing. We decided to construct on existing shops at Mahim - Contractor Baug. It took us two years to get the sanction from the Municipality - there is a heap of correspondence. I am sorry to say today things are not straight and we, as trustees of the Panchayet, cannot afford to give any unofficial money to hurry things up. People say these donations were given and blame us. But only when you are in the Panchayet do you realise the obstacles we have to surmount.

Now the first building in the Godrej Baug with 40 one-room flats will be ready in a few months. This would have been completed much earlier, but for lack of cement. Another step we are thinking of now is that people - Parsi philanthropists living outside the country can donate cement as a gift.

Yes, with the permission of the Reserve Bank - this is permissible. We have already approached one or two

people. I hope affluent Parsis living abroad will follow the example of Mr. Shapoorji Jokhey who will donate two crore rupees in Navsari, only for housing. What pleased me is that out of about 120 flats built, 40 have been taken by Parsis from Bombay. Yes, this is a most encouraging trend. Those who cannot find accommodation and are not doing much in Bombay should move to Navsari - I am sure they will be able to find employment and at least some accommodation. Mr. Pestonjee Davar from California donated 56 lakh rupees to the Panchayet - his entire wealth.

That means there are people who still have high regard for the Parsi Panchayet. If we have lost some prestige, my task will be to revive the prestige of the Parsi Panchayet. And of course, as I told you, to see that the other Parsi trusts, co-operate with us in solving the various problems that face the community.

Also, the community must be kept fully informed about what the Parsi Panchayet is doing. We have already taken two modest measures in this direction. One is the Quarterly Review. The second issue will be ready soon. Another modest attempt is the publication of the Statistical Outline. We want

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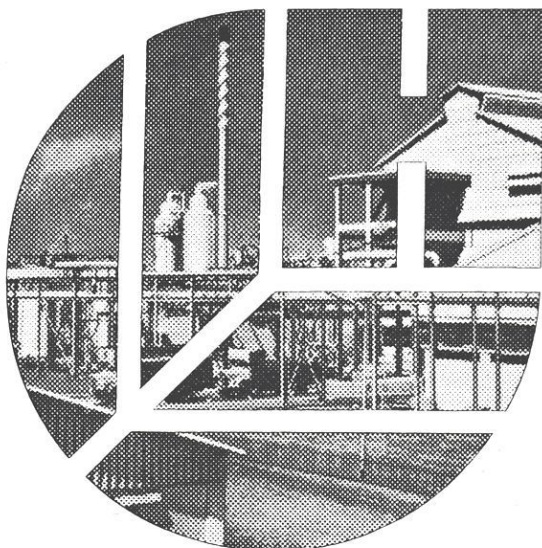
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to form new action committees. I have found that after I became the chairman, at least, the response from people is favourable - stalwarts of the community are willingly coming forward to ask where they can help. I hope they can spare the time because today the gift of time is the biggest gift an able person can give to the community.

Question: You mentioned the poor image of the Punchayet. How did that come about?

Answer: I think it was this communication gap between the Punchayet, the community and the Press. Now we are trying to bridge the communication gap, because the Punchayet should have nothing to hide. Once we bridge the gap and have more dialogue with the Press, things should be better. In fact, I think we should have a meeting with the Press once in three to six months. A section of the Press has been slightly antagonistic to the trustees for reasons of their own. Sometimes they have printed letters where there is no truth at all, without verifying the facts. And once the public reads these letters, it of course creates a bad image.

Another factor is the disunity and disharmony among the trustees themselves. I am sure this is a thing of the past and we are all going to work in harmony. No doubt differences of opinion have to be there because differences of opinion help solve problems. But they should not turn into conflict. If we work in harmony for the good of the community, I am sure all of us will find very active support from the Anjuman and from the Press itself. There is no doubt about that in my mind.

Question: On the board of trustees, the chairman is the first amongst equals?

Answer: That's right.

Question: What other powers would he have that the other trustees may not have?

Answer: Though the chairman is one among equals, he has added responsibilities. Much of the correspondence is addressed to the chairman. Some urgent decisions are taken by him, sometimes even without consulting his colleagues. As a rule, he heads a number of subcommittees. More members of the community want to see him with their problems than any other trustee.

Question: And the allocation for the

portfolios is done by the chairman of the Parsi Punchayet?

Answer: Yes, it is done by the chairman. I've already done it. It was already done before I took over, but if any of the trustees wants to change the portfolios or to come on the other committees he can do so. A month has passed and I have not received any requests. It seems they are satisfied with the allocation. But any trustee has the right to attend any meeting.

The only committee which has all the trustees in it is the Allocation Committee because we did not want to exclude any trustee. The allocation for flats has created such rumours and problems in the past that it is much better if all the trustees are present.

Question: You mentioned a communication gap. One was perhaps meeting the Press, the second was the Quarterly Review and the statistical booklet. Are you considering any other kinds of meeting with the public?

Answer: Yes, we will, of course. Not the entire public, that is not possible, but we must have meetings with the present Anjuman committee and have a tete-a-tete. See what problems there are for us, how they can help us and what suggestions they have to offer, at least once in three months, if such a meeting is held it would be very useful. In fact, the Anjuman committee is very anxious to do that and I am sure the trustees are going to respond very favourably to this.

Question: During the Anjuman committee election, many people said the Punchayet should be run like a company; there should be more professional staff, more delegation from the trustees to the staff, what is your thinking?

Answer: This is a good suggestion. There was a suggestion that either we should have an executive trustee or a chief executive. We already have a chief executive in Mr. Rusi Anklesaria who is a retired IAS officer. We find that since his taking over, things have started happening in the Punchayet. In fact, we are gradually giving him more and more powers so that laying down policy is our responsibility and execution is left more to the chief executive and his assistants. So that we devote more of our time and energy to important problems, rather than dealing with minor problems of no consequence.

As far as the administration goes, of course, it does need some change. Another administrative difficulty is our

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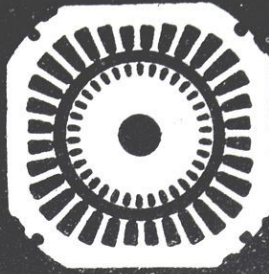


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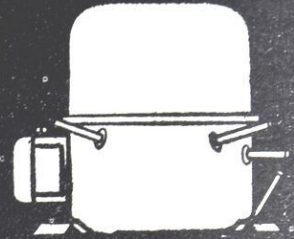
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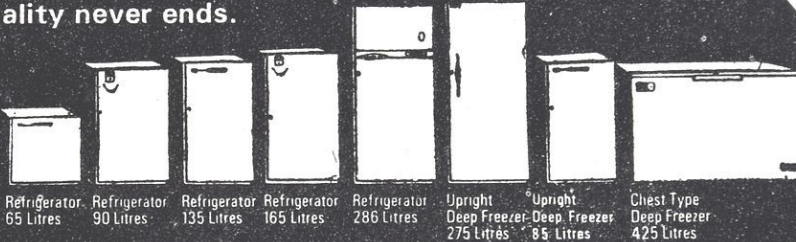
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accounts department. It is very difficult to find suitable applicants. In fact, we are also willing to take non-Parsis. We have already taken one since there are no suitable Parsi applicants for the post. We have so many sub-accounts and the mofussil Anjuman accounts that it is a big problem for us. We are trying to sort this out with the help of specialists in this line.

Question: Does the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, aside from its own funds and properties, also look after the funds and properties of other Anjumans?

Answer: Oh yes. There are so many mofussil Anjumans. There are institutions and trusts like the B.P. Petit Parsi General Hospital. All these funds are with us and we look after them. Of course, we take a service charge, of five percent from a institute like the Parsi General and 10 percent from others, since our monthly wage bill itself comes to about 1,10,000 rupees; so unless we have these charges collected, it would not be possible to run the Punchayet.

Question: In the past, say about a hundred years ago, there were no Parsi beggars, yet today we see them. What do you attribute this decline to?

Answer: Whenever we come across a Parsi beggar, we try to get his name and address and we ask the Liaison Committee to investigate. The Liaison Committee has helped us to do this and beggars have been approached. Some of them are young and in good health, but they say, "No, we don't want any doles from the Parsi Punchayet because we get much more money by begging." We have an employment bureau, and we are willing to employ them though these people are not very intelligent. They are lazy and they are just not willing to work. What can we do? We are helpless.

Question: Is this a moral decline?

Answer: This is definitely a moral decline, no doubt about it.

Question: Isn't there anything that the community or the Punchayet can do for them?

Answer: We try to persuade these people, through the help of various social organisations. We have succeeded in some cases. I'll give you one example-a person was begging at Doongerwadi. I said to him, "Please don't beg." He told me that he had nowhere to live. I accommodated him in the Punchayet Parekh Dharamshala - free accommodation,

completely free. We are giving him 30 rupees a month, just as help, and he's come and settled there. So wherever people are willing, old people who are begging, we are willing to accommodate them in the Parekh Dharamshala where they will be very well looked after. But you cannot force anybody, you can only persuade them.

Question: In what respects would you like the community to be of assistance to the Punchayet? For example, the community keeps saying that the Punchayet should do this and that. What in turn would you like the community to do for the Punchayet?

Answer: The community can help us first by not criticising us because this hampers our morale to some extent, especially where criticism is not due. Again, people are not always co-operative. I will give you an example. You know when we started building additional floors, because Cusrow Baug still had a good FSI, the tenants were not at all co-operative. The people who had to shift, demanded all sorts of things from us. If there were three air-conditioners, they wanted all the three to be fitted although it was only a shift for a few months.

With the result that we got so fed up that Mr. Neville Wadia (the noted industrialist and philanthropist) decided not to build any more additional floors, and the work stopped. So just because you have lived in comfort, you should not forget the needs of others and this is also where the community can help us. As I said before, the trustees have nothing to hide. But if the community co-operates with us, realises our difficulties, much can be achieved.

Question: Since you have been involved with the community for a long time, you must have observed various developments over the course of the years. What does the future of the community look to you 25 years from now?

Answer: Many people have of course said that there are doubts about the survival of the community. But I think with the awakening of the spirit which has been created both in this country and abroad, and the intellectual, emotional and religious revival that has come about - all these are harbingers of a hopeful future. We have had a glorious past and we have made an outstanding contribution to the nation in various ways. For a versatile community like ours, the future cannot be but bright!

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Are These Parsis?

Shiraz Nanporia



"An Indian Nabob with his son." Source: Painting by George Chinnery reproduced in "George Chinnery 1774-1852". While strictly true - a nabob being a rich man, George Chinnery had made several paintings of Sir Jamshedjee Jeejeebhoy and the fire; burning in the background, details of dress etc. clearly suggests he wished to emphasise the Parsi aspect.



"Hindoo ladies paying a visit to a Parsi lady" Source: Shoberl's Hindoostan (Vol.II) Published by Ackerman - 1822. The text mentions "The holy females who take care to keep up a fire before their habitations and strictly observe the rites of their religion are held in great veneration by the Parsis. The annexed

engraving represents one of these women receiving a visit from a lady of her religion, accompanied by her son and daughter. The boy falls at the feet of the saint, while the mother presents her with some fruit. By her side, in the fore-ground is a fire, in which pieces of various kinds of fragrant wood burn.

FROM antiquarian books to modern day publications, one sometimes comes across photographs, prints and paintings of people wrongly listed as Parsis. Sometimes the reverse is true. Whilst scholars like Shakuntala Rao Shastri in her *Women in Vedic Times* has shown Zoroastrian influences had a liberating influence on Atharva-Vedic times, the general wisdom of the day is that Parsis were affected by their close association with the rulers of India - Hindu and Muslim - after they took refuge in India.

As early as between 916-1153 A.D., an Arab traveller informs us that "the Mussulman and the Parsis as well as others living between Cheul and Cam-bay put on the same type of dress and wore their beards in the same style."

Garcia De Orta writing in the 16th Century refers to a Parsi called Khoja Per-

culim, 'a rich merchant well known to common fame.' Sir C. Markham notes that when Bahadurshah ceded Barcain to Nuna de Cunhas, Khoja Perculim served as interpreter and he then became known to Garcia De Orta. However as we all know, "Khoja" Perculim could not have been a Parsi. In fact Professor Hodivala suggested that he was Khoja Pir Quli - a Moslem.

And so it goes on through the centuries. In 1626 the well known traveller Sir Thoam Herbert informs us that travelling on the ship 'William' with a fleet of two more ships "300 slaves were put aboard; they were Parsis, Gentoos, Ban-nares and others. Rustom Burjorji Paymaster in his 'Early History of the Parsis in India' is horrified at this reference and vehemently states that "Herbert mistook some of the slaves he saw to be Parsis."

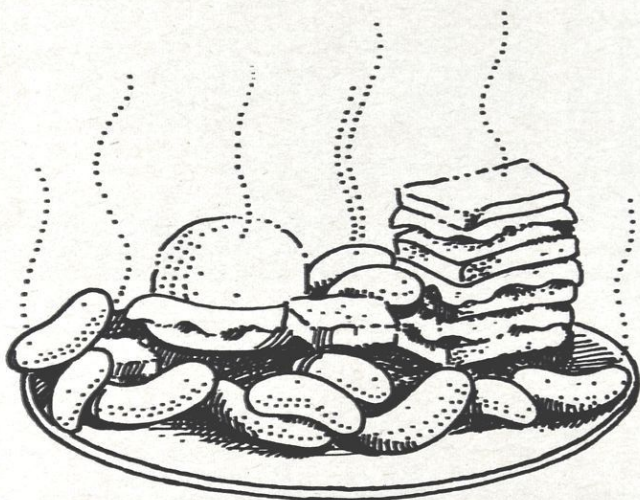
Maria Graham writing as late as 1809 informs us that "the women put on garments similar to Muslim women." Mr.

K.N. Kabraji writing at the turn of the century noted that, "the head-dress of the Parsis has undergone various changes. The orthodox turban of old was a heavy bundle consisting of many yards of cloth wrapped round the head. The weight of the turban was accounted a measure of the dignity and respectability of the wearer. One can get an idea of it from the portraits now extant of the progenitors of the Dadysett, Wadia, Banaji and other families.

"But the burden was after all too heavy to bear, and a reduction in weight was made until the head-dress took the form of mere skeletons of turbans, made of cloth mounted from pasteboard. Subsequently Parsi merchants from China introduced a round faced turban with a facing of a particular kind of silk cloth. Again the distinguished poet and orientalist, Mulla Pheroze, put a round phenta or shawl wrapped round a blood red cap, and this fashion was readily adopted by the young. It has undergone

"A Parsi Family" Source: The Last Empire - Photography in British India 1855-1911. Published by Gordon Fraser, London 1976.

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Are These Parsis?

"A reduction in weight was made until the head dress took the form of mere skeletons of turbans, made of cloth mounted from pasteboard."

quite a transformation in recent years, having being greatly reduced in bulk and weight."

Until quite recently, Parsi and Bohra/Khoja children used to be seen wearing 'jhablas' and the Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island (1909) has interesting pages of head gear worn by different communities and it is amazing how similar the turbans of Bohras from Kathiawar and the Vanias from Surat are to the various turbans worn by Parsis down the centuries.

Clearly the confusion has come about because of some similarity in dress, customs and perhaps the fact that all these chroniclers were foreigners, travellers and scholars of a sort.

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The Parsi Punchayet Case

Petit vs Jeejeebhoy VI

The Untouchables

THE JUDGEMENT SO FAR

In 1903 R. D. Tata married according to Parsi rites, a French lady, after having her navjote performed. Tata claimed his wife "had become a Parsi professing the Zoroastrian faith and consequently she was entitled to participate in all the charitable and religious Funds and Institutions of the Parsis" including the right to enter fire temples and have her body consigned to the Towers of Silence.

Thus the scene was set for the historic court case of Petit vs Jeejeebhoy, also known as "The Parsi Punchayet Case."

The question before the two judges of the Bombay High Court, Justice Frank C. O. Beaman and Justice Dinshaw Dhanjibhoy Daver, was whether a person born in another faith but converted to Zoroastrianism was entitled to the benefits of certain community trusts.

The plaintiffs (Sir Dinsha Maneckji Petit; Tata and others) contended Zoroastrianism enjoins and practices conversion and that converts are entitled to all the benefits provided. The defendants (Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy and others) while admitting that Zoroastrianism permits conversion state that "ever since their (Parsis) advent into India (they) have not admitted a Juddin (person belonging to another religion) into their fold. They admit, however, that children born of a Zoroastrian father by an alien mother has been admitted into their fold by the performance of the Navjote ceremony."

Daver in his part of the judgement discredited the evidence of witnesses claiming to know of "concrete cases of conversion."

In the last instalment he spoke of the traditions, circumstances and attitudes relating to conversion.

The fact of the matter is that for years and years after they obtained a foothold in India, their position in the country was most precarious. They were allowed to land and settle in the country on sufferance. They had no claims on the Gujerat Chief who allowed them to settle in the country. They had no Funds, no Dokhmas, no Atash Behrams or Agiaries. The observance of their own religious rites and the performance of the ceremonies enjoined by their religion must for years have been matters of the greatest difficulty. Who were they to convert: their then enemies the Mahomedans—the people whose persecution had driven them out of their fatherland—or the Hindus, the subjects of the Ruler who had given them refuge? If they did attempt anything of the kind, the chances would have been that they would have had to go in search of another place of refuge.

It is all very well for the Parsis to say we did not attempt to convert Hindus to our faith, because it would have been ungrateful of us to do so. This may sound well; but, if the truth is told, they made no attempts because they knew not only the utter hopelessness of any such attempt, but they knew further that any such attempt would have been so seriously resented that it would have resulted in ruin to the community, living in the country on sufferance, and whose further countenance in the country depended on the good will of the ruling classes, the Hindus. Far from trying to proselytise, the Parsis, as years went on, adopted a great many of the customs and usages of the Hindus, and so adapted themselves to the ways of the people they lived amongst, that they earned their good will. As they increased in numbers and prospered, they began building Dokhmas, Atash Behrams, and Agiaries in various places where they settled in large numbers; but centuries had to elapse before they were able to do this. Although Parsis came to India 1200 years ago, most of their religious institu-

tions came into existence in comparatively recent times. From the earliest days of their advent into India up to the present day, anything like even an attempt to proselytise other people and induce aliens to become Zoroastrians is wholly unknown. Although Parsis are now settled in various parts of India, and as communities are in many places both influential and wealthy, no instance is known of any Parsi ever attempting to induce a Juddin to become a Zoroastrian. Even when, at the earnest desire of fathers, children born of alien mothers were allowed to be invested with Sudra and Kusti, it was done more in a spirit of toleration, and that, too, not without a growl from a section of the community.

Under these circumstances, while I find that although the conversion of Juddins is permissible amongst Zoroastrians, I also find that such conversions are entirely unknown to the Zoroastrian communities of India; and far from it being customary or usual for them to convert a Juddin, the Zoroastrian communities of India have never attempted, encouraged, or permitted the conversion of Juddins to Zoroastrianism.

During the progress of this case, it was abundantly clear that the Parsi community of Bombay, as a whole, most strenuously objected to the admission of Juddins. We made great efforts to bring this suit to a termination in an amicable manner. My learned brother Beaman indicated the lines of a fair settlement. One of the terms we suggested was that the Defendants might treat the case of these two ladies as exceptions and admit them to the benefits of the Funds and Institutions in even a limited form, and the Community of Parsis may then make what rules and pass what resolutions they like for future events. The Defendants said they could not agree to any such course without being guilty of breach of trust, unless they obtained the sanction of the Community. We adjourned the hearing of the case to enable them to do



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- who has followed the occupation
of a Sweeper, a Barber, a Butcher or a Shoemaker.

50.

The late Sir Jamsedji exerted himself to put the matter before a Public Meeting of the Community, but the result was the unanimous refusal to accede to our suggestion. The Plaintiffs' Counsel said this was due to a "wave of fanaticism," and in an unguarded moment said that the Public Meeting was composed of the "riff-raff" of the Parsi community. Such an imputation against the composition of the meeting had apparently nothing whatever to justify it, and was calculated to give great offence, but I feel sure that the learned Counsel never intended to give any offence or seriously meant what he said.

The fact, however, remains that the community of Bombay Parsis, as a whole—with the exception of a most microscopic minority—are most unmisstakeably opposed to the admission of Juddins into their fold, and the reasons are most obvious. Who are the people that are most likely to ask for admission? Generations may elapse before a well-born, well-educated, and cultured person like the French lady would ask for admission; but throw the door open and thousands of undesirable aliens—such as Bhangis, Mahars, Kahars, and Dubras—will seek admission; and men of the stamp of the Plaintiffs' witness, Sorabji Punthakey, are always ready to perform their Navjot ceremony for a small monetary consideration. The funds of 50 odd lacs of rupees, richly-endowed institutions for poor Parsis; comfortable homes for the blind and infirm, Dispensaries, Sanitariums, Convalescent homes, would attract many thousands of the most objectionable people. Plaintiffs say there should be no restrictions to the admission of all Juddins. If their contentions are to prevail, the ruin of the Community would be accomplished in as many days as it has taken generations to attain to that position of prominence and prosperity which the Parsis of India have now achieved.

When Sorabji Punthakey was cross-examined on this point, his attempts to

explain the position he took up were most puerile and even he had not the grace to stop short at Sweepers and Lalias. Not so Mr. Sheriarji Bharucha, who, for eleven years, was the paid agent of the Rahanu Maye Mazdyeshni Sabha. His mission in life, in his own words, is "*to reform religion, correct superstitions, and disseminate religion according to the ideas of the Sabha.*" This witness is undoubtedly a learned man but his zeal for reforming religion led him into giving some very disingenuous answers when he was asked about the conversion of sweepers and other people of that kind. A man may launch himself on a mission of expounding his religion and disseminating that religion as found in scriptures, but there must be something radically wrong with the religious perceptions of a man who starts on a campaign of "*reforming religion and disseminating it according to the ideas of a Sabha.*"

Mr. Sheriarji Bharucha, in support of the Plaintiffs' case, said: "Any single priest may convert. He is not bound to make any enquiries, and he is not under any obligation to take anybody's permission."

He followed this by admitting that amongst Parsi priests there are many poor and unscrupulous men - black sheep he called them. He never seemed to realise that he was putting the whole Community at the mercy of such black sheep when he advocated wholesale conversion without enquiry and without permission of any responsible person. He would admit Mahars and Bhangis to Atash Behrams and allow their bodies

after death to be taken to the Towers, but he would insist on Bhangis giving up their dirty work first before being admitted to the Fire Temples.

He then institutes an analogy between a Bhangi and a Nassesalar. He bases most of his opinions on the Ravayats, which, in another case, he said, were compilations of third rate authority. His conception of religious writings, however, are quite as peculiar as his other opinions. Referring to the answers recorded in the Ravayats, he says they would be binding if they are conformable to our Avesta, and if they were reasonable, then alone they were considered binding. He then makes this remarkable statement: "If I find any of the Ravayats to conform to religion according to *my opinion*, then I consider them good authorities."

This witness admits that during the whole time he has lived in Bombay, "he has never known any instance of any effort being made by his co-religionists to convert an entire alien." He also says: "The practice of conversion has not been in vogue since the Parsis came to India." But nevertheless, he sees no objection to converting all the Sweepers, Mahars, and Dubras of Gujerat to the Zoroastrian religion! The evidence of a witness such as this, however great may be his learning, does not help the Court, and such blind and erratic advocacy is not likely to help the cause advocated. This witness, more than any one else, has succeeded in demonstrating to my mind how very unreasonable is the attitude adopted by the Plaintiffs on the question of the conversion of Juddins.

Centuries of association with Hindu brethren have made the Parsis entertain the same feelings towards a Hindu of the lower castes as the Hindus themselves entertain. The Zoroastrian religion inculcates doctrines of purity and teaches cleanliness at every turn. Parsis, however poor, have never taken to occupations which may bring them in contact with unclean things. There is no Parsi—and there never has been a Parsi—who

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has followed the occupation of a Sweeper, a Barber, a Butcher, or a Shoemaker.

Though in all other matters they have lived on terms of great friendship with their Hindu and Mahomedan fellow-subjects, in religious matters they have been most singularly nervous of any association of any kind with Durvands. This word again is not used in any offensive sense. To a Zoroastrian, his best friends amongst Europeans, Hindus, or Mahomedans are as much Durvands from a religious point of view as the humble Hamal or Massal who serves in his household. No Durvand (non-Parsi) is ever admitted inside of a Zoroastrian's Atash Behram, Agiary or Dare Meher. No Durvand is allowed to remain in the edifice where Mukhtad ceremonies are being performed. No Durvand is allowed to go beyond a certain limit in the grounds of the Towers of Silence. No Durvand is allowed to look in when any of their religious ceremonies are being performed; and this feeling is carried to such an extent that the most honoured guests who are sometimes invited to witness a marriage ceremony are not allowed to have their chairs on the carpet over which the chairs of the bride and bridegroom are placed. Even at the present day, as Dustoor Darab told us, "an old-fashioned Parsi will not drink water touched by a Juddin, and he will not eat food cooked or prepared by him."

The last resting-place of the Parsis—the Towers of Silence—are regarded by them with sentiments of the utmost reverence. They are regarded as places of the greatest sanctity. When a new Tower is built it is consecrated with most elaborate religious ceremonies. Thousands of people travel long distances to be present at the consecration. Such presence is regarded as a pious act of great religious merit. Once the Tower is consecrated, none but a Nassesalar can enter it; and the Nassesalars lead a life of exclusion from the members of the community in various ways. The dead body of a Zoroastrian is regarded with peculiar

reverence. On death the body is washed and purified and then handed over to the corpse-bearers, who recite prayers over it and clothe it in pure white linen. After the Suchukvani ceremony is performed, no one could touch it, not even the nearest relatives. Before being taken from the house for being carried to the Towers, other solemn ceremonies are performed: relatives and friends - and in the case of a well-known person, all leading members of the Community - assemble and prostrate themselves before the body when they are taking their last look.

The face is covered up and then the body starts on its journey to the Towers. No Juddin or Durvand is allowed to look at a dead body after the purificatory ceremony is performed, much less touch it. Many a time it has happened that when a faithful servant of a European is dead, his master, entertaining kindly feelings towards him and wishing to have a last look at his faithful servant, goes to the house of the dead, only to find that his request is, with many explanations and excuses, refused. The bodies of persons who have suffered capital punishment, the bodies of suicides, and the bodies of people on whom *Post-mortem* examinations are held, are supposed to be contaminated and not fit to be put in the same Dokhma as the bodies of ordinary Zoroastrians, because their bodies after death have been touched by Durvands. In Bombay, there is a separate place for these bodies known as Chotra. In other places, if there is no Chotra, some unused Dokhma which has fallen into disrepair is used for disposal of these bodies, as was said to be done at Surat.

Mr. Jivanji Modys says: "The Towers... would be defiled if an alien's body is taken in, because of the associations, sentiments, and religious feelings of the Community, which are attached to the place as a sacred place."

It is under these circumstances that the communities of Zoroastrians in India object to the conversion of aliens.

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THE PRIESTLY PROBLEM

The life of Dastur Dhalla XXIII

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 23rd 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.

This approach caused him to clash with the more orthodox section of the community and he became involved in several religious and social controversies.

But despite the opposition, Dhalla proceeded with his efforts to educate the community and resolve old conflicts.

One of Dhalla's prime concern was the intellectual, spiritual and financial condition of the priesthood. In the January and February issues of Parsiana Dhalla spoke of "the accident of birth creating our dastours and our mobeds," and of the steps taken to create a more enlightened priesthood.

Despite the community's frantic efforts of a 100 years to attain a highly qualified and enlightened priestly class to suit modern conditions, its hopes and aspirations have not been fulfilled. Instead of trying to tackle this puzzling question superfluously we should examine the root-cause of the problem. We can see approximately 800 white turbans in our Parsi population of less than one and a quarter lac in India. In Navsari, Udvada, Surat, Bombay, Poona, Decan Hyderabad, Karachi and other cities, the community is maintaining approximately 15 dasturs whose monthly income ranges from two to three hundred upto 2,000 and more. It provides for approximately 300 punthaks earning Rs. 150 or 200 to Rs. 500 or 700 p.m.

Apart from these about 300 mobeds who do not have a punthak of their own but who take the sacred bath and work on a paid basis with some punthaky eke out about Rs. 75 to Rs. 100 p.m. Of the remainder, those who do not take the sacred bath but exist on whatever incidental jobs they may get from time to time from the punthaky, manage to get approximately Rs. 50 to 60 monthly, while some who find no work or do no work are constantly begging for alms and are despised and condemned by all. A few there are, with or without bareshnum, who try to supplement their income by doing some other job simultaneously.

This means that the community is spending a great deal of money to maintain its priestly fold — in fact more than

other communities. There is no dearth of money. Where spending is concerned the community surpasses all other communities. If mere finance were the impediment to solving the priestly problem, the community would immediately shower thousands and find a solution. The aggregate income accruing from behdins for the priestly flock is sufficient to maintain everyone most honourably; but because of the hereditary constitution of mobeds, the distribution of the income is unsystematic and unbalanced.

By reproducing hereunder certain passages from my article on this subject which appeared in the 'Rahnuma', a quarterly published by my son in 1926, some light may be thrown on the topic.

"When we study sociology or the progress of society, we say that the main unit of society in the east is the family. In western society, however, the unit of society is the individual — the independent man alone. Similarly if we wish to find out the causal, central and chief unit of our present day priestly sect, it is not the so-called High Priest but the 'punthaky'. Nominally the Dastur ranks higher—functionally the punthaky supercedes. From the economic angle they are the principal spiritual leaders. The religious life of the community revolves around the punthaky. Knowledge plays an insignificant part. Ceremonials are more prominent. They are the quintessence of life, hence the punthaky who is the hereditary guardian of the family's ritualistic activities is as dear as life itself. The community cares not whether there be a learned Dastur in their midst or not, whether he delivers sermons and speeches or not, whether he develops their literature or not. The community cannot be reconciled to a single day without a punthaky but it can adjust itself to a life-time without a dastur. A punthaky is a necessity in the religious life of a community whereas a Dastur is an ornament and a luxury.

"A Zoroastrian family, besides being composed of its offspring, its parents, its brothers and sisters and other close relatives, takes into its fold the family priest or punthaky as an integral part of its spiritual life. Just as the sacred flame is kept akindle eternally in a Zoroastrian home, unless some unprecedented incident occurs, the punthaky is linked with the family forever. Notwithstanding the death of the senior member of a family, just as the home fire continues to burn, at the demise of the head of a behdin family, the punthaky remains.

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"In case the punthaky himself passes away, his son, by right of inheritance, immediately and automatically secures his lineal linkage with that behdin family. In ordinary terms a behdin youth could say to his family priest: "Your great grandfather was my great grandfather's punthaky." Many times it so happens that if both the behdin and the punthaky are of compatible temperaments and have warm feelings for each other, they participate in each other's joys and sorrows as though they are bound together by ties of blood; in times of trouble they stand by each other, they guard each other's family secrets like joint treasurers. At times the behdin families themselves do not remember the death anniversaries of their departed ones as well as their punthakies do. Where there is such an exemplary relationship between the layman and the punthaky, mutual respect and affection reign supreme.

If a working mobed is honest and noble, he wins the favour of a behdin family and becomes its punthaky.

"In any human institution whenever the question of hereditary rights and responsibilities is involved, the sentiment to safeguard the same is most keen. Accordingly our punthakies are always alert to preserve their own privileges and should there arise the slightest danger of snatching them away, they tenaciously fight against it. In Central Europe, wherever Guilds and later Trade Unions exist no non-member is allowed to carry on business there. Similarly mobeds living in a certain city and working through some 'punthak' did not allow any outsider to take the 'bareshnum' nor did they grant him the authority to practise as a priest there.

"Even today in every town and city where groups of mobeds are conducting their own practice, an unwritten but unmistakable law exists not to trespass upon each others' rights. All have the authority to monopolize the business of any newly-arrived behdin family. If the new arrivals have some relative already living in that city, the punthaky of that relative has the right to claim the newcomers. But if this new family is perfectly alien to the place, the most alert and enthusiastic punthaky who is the

first to approach, wins the race. Since there is wisdom and the welfare of all in abiding by this self-made system, as far as possible, every mobed is careful not to encroach upon the rights of other mobeds. Wherever this cooperative arrangement is sufficiently strong, in times of dissension the layman has to succumb and come to an understanding with his own family priest. But when this cooperation amongst mobeds is slack, then it happens that, opportunity arising, efforts are made to capture each other's business, resulting in rancour. So long as such a situation does not arise and disharmony does not find its way into the priestly fold, each continues to enjoy his own rights and privileges.

"Just as there is an understanding between the mobeds of a place not to interfere with each other's rights, there is a similar agreement between one city and another, one punthak and another punthak. Glancing through the opening entries of the late Khan Bahadur Bomanji Behramji Patel's 'Parsi Prakash', it will be seen that as the population of our community spread in the townships of Gujerat, such bonds of agreement came into existence amongst the mobeds. A limit was laid as to the extent of the jurisdiction and mode of conduct of each punthak and every group of families. No one had the authority to venture beyond his limits to earn a livelihood. So long as everyone abides by such an agreement all is well. But such a period of peaceful co-existence does not last long and as a result at intervals we witness dissensions between punthaks.

"In the manner in which our religion is practised, ceremonies play a major role, and our priests are constantly occupied in performing ceremonies for the dead or for the living. It is but natural that the priests who perform the ceremonies get a large portion of the foodstuff, clothing and other commodities utilized in ceremonials. Thus, in addition to a punthaky's cash income he is given useful articles — the chief among them being flowers, fruits, sacred bread, rice, coconuts, sweetmeat, dry fruits, prepared meals, sacred shirts and utensils, which are used in ceremonies.

"This system of a punthaky's income is very profitable to him. Senior punthakies receive several 'chasnis' daily from their respective laity. On Baaj days sweetmeats and dry fruits are included in the ceremonies. Evening meals are dedicated to the deceased and on many

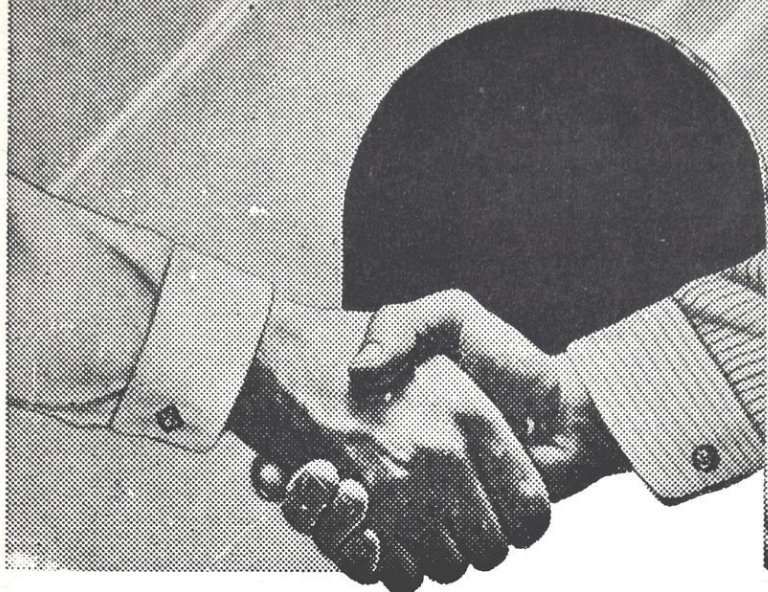
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such occasions large feasts are prepared. All these eatables and utensils help a great deal in the up-keep of the family and thus senior punthakies are quite comfortably established.

"It is true that the punthaky gets this income, but in return he is not only the spiritual guide of the behdin family but also the caretaker and contractor of its ceremonial life. Let us examine the kind of relationship between a punthaky and a behdin. Imagine that a death occurs in a behdin family of Karachi at midnight. Immediately someone from the family runs to the punthaky, knocks at his door and informs him. The punthaky's duty commences from that moment. He immediately informs the corpse-bearers, brings pure water, fetches a dog, brings the necessary clothes. Should a wealthy behdin so desire, he runs to a blacksmith and orders a new bier and makes all other arrangements.

A major punthaky's condition does not, in any way, differ from that of a businessman.

When everything is in order he returns home at dawn. He is the first to arrive in the morning, arranges for the performance of the funeral rites, looks to the seating accommodation of the assembly, arranges for the prayers and ceremonies during the various parts of the day and night and helps the chief mourner to salute the congregation on the third day.

"The behdin informs the punthaky that all the requisites for the various ceremonies are to be purchased by him e.g. the muslin for the sadras that are to be given to the mobeds together with their gratuity, the sandalwood, incense and flowers, cloth for the shroud, silver, copper or brass utensils according to the means of the family, etc. Similarly on the tenth day, the monthly, six-monthly and anniversary ceremonies, the order for everything needed is given to the punthaky. With the advent of any auspicious event in the family, like a Navjote or a wedding, the behdin informs his punthaky, who prepares the darun, varadhvara sarya, papad, etc. foodstuff of happy augury — in his own home. He brings all the necessary requisites for the ceremony, greets the guests as they arrive and ushers them to their seats. He performs the marriage rites and accom-

panies the couple to the Fire Temple.

"In a small town the punthaky takes up the responsibility of catering for the wedding feast. His whole day is spent in cooking and in the evening attired in his traditional garb he welcomes everyone, bestows the nuptial benediction and, that duty over, supervises the meal and proposes the toast. He looks to the signing of the Marriage Registration Forms by the required parties. In Bombay these signatures are taken on the spot. In Karachi and other places, on the second or third day, the punthaky goes to the respective residences sometimes more than once if the party is not contacted and collects all the signatures, and, as a 'finale' to his mission, gets the marriage legally registered at the office of the Registrar.

"In short, just as a contractor in a military organisation or a stevedore in a shipping company supplies the requisite foodstuff and other commodities and earns a livelihood, from olden times the punthaky has been acting as a contractor to a behdin family. If a major punthaky has under his jurisdiction 50 to 100 or even more of such behdin homes he has the contract of supplying all the goods. Ordinarily it will be seen that a panthaky's income accruing from the purchase of these commodities exceeds the proceeds he earns from prayer. In a well-to-do family having faith in prayers for a departed one, the aggregate expenses of all the ceremonies throughout the year, plus the Muk-tad, Nirangdin, Hamayasht, Navar and other ceremonies, would amount to nearly 2,000 to 3,000 rupees. Trayfuls of sweetmeats, food, clothing, utensils etc. play a major role in this expenditure.

"A Punthaky later draws up a bill of all that he has spent on his client's account. At times a controversy arises over this bill. Just as a customer bargains with a shopkeeper over the purchase of some article, a bickering and bargaining goes on between the Punthaky and the behdin. Such controversies are not of recent origin — they have been going on since early times. The Parsi Prakash reveals that the Samast Parsi Anjuman of Bombay passed a resolution in 1796 to the effect that: 'In case a punthaky has a demand on a behdin, or a Mobed has some claim against a punthaky, the party has to place the facts before the Anjuman which will decide the case and secure for him his just demands; but with immediate effect no mobed or punthaky shall register a complaint in the mayor's court

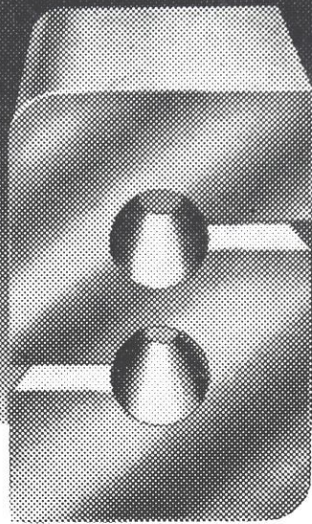
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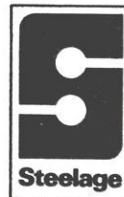
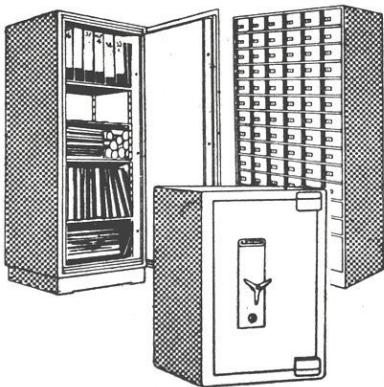
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"It is not surprising that such arguments should ensue. Our method of repaying our priests for their services is such that it is bound to create misunderstanding. Many a time the matter reaches the court of law, while sometimes both parties arrive at a compromise. Sometimes it so happens that the behdin family incurs a large debt due to the punthaky and owing to straitened circumstances is unable to repay anything. At such times the punthaky loses not only the payment due for his prayers but also what he owes to the

grocer, green-grocer, fruitier, florist, butcher, fishmonger, eggvendor, wine merchant, toddywalla, sandalwood seller, draper, cobbler and black-smith for the purchases made on account of a death at a client's home. Such losses sometimes run into hundreds and over. The ink has not yet run dry in penning these lines while a good punthaky has come along with his tale of woe that there is hardly any hope of recovering Rs. 2,000 which he has spent on behalf of his behdin client.

"Such events are of frequent occurrence and we can sympathize with the punthakies. But it should be borne in

mind that in big business, a firm having a 100 clients, is sure to have one or two bad debts which have to be written off at the end of the year. In spite of that the overall excessive annual profits wipe off these minor losses. A major punthaky's condition does not, in any way, differ from that of a businessman.

"As a punthaky's clientele increases, it becomes necessary for him to invite assistance. These paid assistants shoulder the responsibility of all the work. Formerly such mobed-aids earned a monthly salary of Rs.10 to Rs.12 from the punthaky, plus meals. In return for his income these helpers are bound to perform all the prayers and ceremonies of the behdin families that are under the punthaky's control. Besides personal tips he gets nothing, but the punthaky has the right to receive payment for whatever ceremonies the paid mobed may have performed at the homes of his clientele. Similarly the salaried priest has no right over any of the articles or foodstuff or clothing utilized in those ceremonies."

"At present, when there is a shortage of mobeds and there is a world-wide complaint of the good old times having gone and expensive days being round the corner, these paid mobeds earn Rs.30 to

Rs.40 per month plus meals. At some places conditions are slightly better. Yet the aggregate income of such paid priests, including income, expenses for meals, gratuity, etc. does not exceed Rs.75 to Rs.100 per month. These mobeds who take upon themselves all the punthaky's work are skilled and professional priests qualified to perform all the major ceremonies. Night and day they pray at the expense of their health, perform various ceremonies, go from home to home on foot, endure untold hardships and earn the above-mentioned meagre income.

"In the economic parlance of this industrial age it can be said that the punthaky is the 'capitalist' of the religious class and the paid mobed is the representative of its 'labour' party. In the field of industry it is well-known that the person who controls the finance has the lion's share of the profits, while the worker receives the left-overs. This system on which our priestly fold runs seems virtually like an industrial concern.

"A very large majority of paid Mobeds go through life on this method of more work and less pay, but a few fortunate ones witness more favourable circumstances. These few rise from the

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state of labourers to the status of the punthakies. We know that as our priest hood is hereditary the punthakies are careful to keep their clientele under their control during their own life-time and see to it that after their death it is handed down to their heirs. At times it happens that this arrangement fails due to certain natural circumstances. It may happen that a punthaky dies without leaving a male issue. Under such circumstances, the punthaky's widow carries on the work personally with the assistance of the paid mobeds who were under her husband's control. The widow continues to employ the priests and manages to keep her late husband's punthak in partnership with the paid mobed or she takes a 'goodwill' sum from him and sells the business to him and frees herself of all responsibility.

"It may even happen that a mobed having a large clientele expires. His son may have studied English and works as a clerk in some office or does some sort of business. He has maintained no contact with the priestly practice. Yet, should his father's punthak be fetching a good return he is anxious not to lose such a lucrative business. He arrives at an understanding of a percentage of partnership with his trusted and expe-

If mere finance were the impediment to solving the priestly problem, the community would immediately shower thousands and find a solution.

rienced salaried mobed and manages to safeguard the income occurring from the family punthak. But this office-going punthaky is naturally unable to keep in constant contact with the behdin clientele, whereas his paid mobed goes daily into the behdin families for prayers and ceremonies and builds up a firm relationship with them. Thus, as time passes, they become more friendly and ultimately the mobed prevails upon the behdin to pass on the business to him and he becomes the punthaky.

"We have seen that there is an understanding and unwritten law between mobeds regarding their respective flocks and each feels it is his bounden duty to abstain from trespassing upon

his brother's jurisdiction. Under ordinary circumstances this sort of arrangement is faithfully adhered to, but when the bonds of cooperation weaken or some confusion sets in, then all codes are set aside and 'might is right'. Some behdin may be displeased with his punthaky and is anxious to change him. At such a time a client-less punthaky gets an opportunity of building up a clientele. If a working mobed is honest and noble, he wins the favour of a behdin family and becomes its punthaky.

"On the other hand a paid priest may be crafty and loquacious and may continue to encroach upon his boss's business and make it his own. At times the layman may have entered into an argument with his punthaky over a bill. He wishes to pay less than the stipulated amount while the punthaky demands more. At that juncture a third party offers to work at a lower rate and manages to snatch away the punthak. The bartering that constantly goes on in business and industry is reflected here. But it may be repeated that it is unwise to blame our priests on this score. Customs and conventions are responsible for such irregularities and malpractices. Wherever priesthood is hereditary, such scenes are of common occurrence.

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SPORTS

Long Jump Champ

An unassuming, tiny and timid lad — Rayomand Elavia of St. Mary's S.S.C. became the first to write his name in the record books of the 88th Annual Athletic Meet of the Bombay High Schools, when he leaped to a new mark in the first final of the day — the long jump — for boys midgets at the Bra-bourne Stadium on January 14.

Rayomand, the St. Mary's midgets champion, was a picture of calm and confidence as he took off for his jumps. With correct stepping from the board, he made sure of his record-winning leap of 4.31 metres, to improve upon Savio D'Gama Rose's 1978 record of 4.27 metres.

Indeed, it was a good day for Rayomand, as he finished with the best timing in the 100 metres heats.

Free Press Journal, 16 January 1982

Daroga's double

Cochin, Jan 21 (PTI) Vispi K. Daroga today won the gold and set two new national records - 132.5 kg in snatch and 287.5 kg in total in the 90 kg weight (middle heavy) category at the 34th National Weight-Lifting Championships held in January in Cochin.

The existing records set by Daroga himself in this category were 128.5 kg snatch and 285 kg in total.

In the Inter State event in this category Russi Daroga took the second position, lifting 245 kg.

The Daily, January 22, 1982

Discus Deewani Dodhy

Binaisha Dodhy of St. Agnes shattered the discus mark in the intermediate girls event on the opening day of the 89th Bombay High



Schools Athletic meet at the Brabourne Stadium on January 5.

Binaisha flung the disc to a new distance of 32.18 metres and bettered the meet record by 8.8 metres and the National mark by a metre.

Kashmira honoured

Table tennis player, Kashmira Patel, is among the 34 winners of the Maharashtra Government's Shiv Chhatrapati award for 1979-80 for excellence in various games and athletics.

The Daily, 20 February 1982

Ace Adille

Kozhikode, Jan. 31: Maharashtra's 23-year-old Adille Sumariwalla reaffirmed his class as the ace sprinter in the country here today.

Making the most of a good start, he pegged back the spirited challenge of Kerala's K. Premachandran, who was bidding for a treble today, the last day of the Inter-State Athletic Championship here.

Adille's triumph was doubly satisfying to him because he had also equalled the meet record of 10.4 seconds, which was set by Tamil Nadu's R. Gnanasekharan in 1977 at Madras.

The Daily, February 1, 1982

Bakhtawar's Best

Maharashtra's strong woman Bakhtawar Khambatta completed a grand double with a record shattering effort in the shot putt event at the 20th Inter-State Athletics Championship held in Kozhikode in January.

Khambatta won the discus event and in the shot putt she improved her own meet and National mark, with an effort of 13.62 metres, which bettered her previous mark of 13.59 metres set in October last in the Open Championship.

United News of India

Anita, Persis set records

Maharashtra women swimmers continued to dominate and their star performers Anita



Bakhtawar Khambatta

Sood and Persis Madan shattered two more National records to place their team on top with 104 points in the 38th National Aquatics Championship on the penultimate day here today.

In the 400 metres freestyle, Anita had a cakewalk victory when timing 4:54.3 secs and bettering her own 1980 National record of 4:58.9 secs.

Anita has already bagged six golds and set five National records while her team mate Persis has collected two golds and broken two records.

Today Persis won the 400 metres butterfly event with a timing of 2:40.7 secs and improved upon her 1980 record of 2:45.4 secs.

United News of India, 16 November 1981

Cricketer Meher-Homji

K.R. Meher-Homji, former test wicket-keeper-batsman, 71, died on February 10 in Bombay. A contemporary of D.D. Hindlekar, Meher-Homji was Hindlekar's deputy during the 1936 tour to England and played in one test.

At the age of 19 he took three catches to enable fast bowler L. Ramji, brother of Amar Singh, to get a hat-trick. He also played for the Parsees in the Quadrangular from 1934 onwards and in Ranji Trophy matches.

Press Trust of India

The noted, former test cricketer and sports commentator, Vijay Merchant in his weekly radio broadcast of 28th February paid tribute to Meher-Homji both as a wicket keeper and "a very attacking batsman...one particular year, he was in such fine batting form that his Captain used to send him in the opening, for the Parsi Gymkhana. In the Match against the Islam Gymkhana, he would flog A.A. Hakim for fours and sixes. Coincidentally, the Parsis faced the Muslims in the first round of the Pentangular Tournament of that particular year.

"Finally, when we went to England in 1936, he had an injured hand during the later part of the tour. Major Britten-Jones, the manager, asked him to get himself operated upon in England, but Meher-Homji would not hear of it, saying that he would prefer to be operated upon by his own doctors in Bombay, and not by some foreigners in England. The manager was very angry with him and told him that, while people in India went all the way to England to have certain delicate operations performed, Meher-Homji wanted to do exactly the reverse.

"That was Meher-Homji, a fine cricketer, an excellent stroke-maker, and a flashing wicket-keeper."

Courtesy: Thackersey Group of Mills

Umrigar Honoured

Veteran Test cricketer and chairman of the Board selection committee, Polly Umrigar,

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has been made an honorary life member of the P.J. Hindu Gymkhana.

Polly joins distinguished sportsmen Wil-son Jones, Michael Ferreira, Prakash Padu-kone, Sunil Gavaskar and Cricket Board president S.K. Wankhede, who were the only ones to receive this honour earlier.

Presiding over the function, another veteran cricketer, Vijay Merchant, just recovered from a third heart-attack, said Polly was one of the few cricketers who retired at their peak.

Umrigar expressed his gratitude to his wife Dinoo for having tolerated his outbursts at home after a failure on the field.

The Daily, 1 December, 1981

City Cricketer Contractor

Homi Contractor's battle against death for about two months, ended on December 6th.

Apparently not many had heard of the demise of the 80-year-old sportsman and great administrator, for the sporting frater-

nity was poorly represented and among the few, who were present to pay their last respects, were Vijay Merchant, secretary of the Kanga library, S.V. Kadam, Cricket Club of India secretary Keki Tarapor and veteran statistician Anandji Dossa.

Though Contractor was more known for his deep involvement with the Kanga Library, of which he was the trustee after being the secretary-cum-treasurer from the inception for 27 continuous years (1951 to 1977), he was one of the finest sportsmen of the city.

Humble and honest, Homi as he was known to the faithful, captained Bombay in the inaugural year of the Ranji Trophy and his appointment came under very peculiar circumstances. The late Homi Vajifdar, who was chosen to lead the side, could not play. Contractor was amongst the reserves and to the pleasant surprise of all he was elevated to lead the side, which eventually won the national title.

Though in the early years he was known for his batting, very few know that he was an efficient badminton player. With the late Casmiro Gomms he proved to be one of the powerful doubles combinations in the city.

A bachelor, Homi was wedded to sport. Few can claim to have given back to the game as much as he had done and his administrative ability was recognised. He was the Bombay Cricket Association secretary, a Bombay and Indian selector and even the manager of the India team.

When the Bombay Provincial Hockey Association was formed, he was invited to serve on the committee and he could claim credit for the rise of Bombay billiards. His service to badminton, tennis and table tennis associations brought praise from all quarters.

Unlike many, he had no sinecure motives. Between 1946 and 1956 he was the secretary of the Cricket Club of India and refused payment. As a disciplinarian he had few equals and badminton players of yesteryear still talk of his role as the tournament referee.

For his services to sport, he was the first administrator to receive the colours of the Sports Journalists' Association of Bombay. Four years back his portrait was unveiled at the Kanga Library. The only general body meeting that he missed was the last one on September 14, 1981.

The Times of India, 8 December, 1981.



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Cricketer Palia

I. P. E. Palia, who played in Tests for India in England in 1932 and 1936 died on September 9 in Bangalore at the age of 71. He was suffering from cancer.

A dedicated cricketer, Palia captained the Parsis in the quadrangular and pentagonal tournaments in Bombay. He also captained Mysore, U.P. and Bengal in Ranji Trophy matches.

son, Bapoo and daughter, Shirin.

Bapoo, followed into his father's footsteps and has earned laurels for Bombay. Shirin, too, was popular in the same sport.

The Daily, 21st January 1982

'King of the Road'

Bombay, Jan. 31: Homi Bhatena (Maharashtra) won the gruelling 170 km. road race to establish himself as the 'king of the road' on the last day of the 8 day National Cycling Championships here this morning.

The 18-year-old local collegian, who had earlier won the inaugural Baroda-Bombay road race, thus enabled the hosts to finish on a winning note.

Mekernosh Hakim (Maharashtra) finished third.

Of the 88 participants from 109 entries, 20 completed the 10 laps, each of approximately 17 km. Homi clocked 4 hours, 49 minutes and 49.91 seconds.

The field was led by the pace setter Pandurang Gaikwad till the seventh lap. However, with powerful downward thrusts, Homi pedalled furiously to wrest the lead and went on widening it as he raced up the Walkeshwar Road and the Malabar Hill climb and then back to the starting point at Oberoi Towers.

Amar Singh managed to stay close to Homi but could not overtake Homi who rode in majestically to claim his second individual gold. He had earlier won the 30 km point race. Homi, besides, was a member of the Maharashtra team, which won the 100 km road time trial.

The Daily, 1 February 1982

Cycling's Malabarwalla

Cycling lost one of its most selfless workers in the death of Jimmy Malabarwalla, who succumbed to a heart attack after a month-long struggle at a city hospital on October 28, 1981.

Malabarwalla arrived on the scene after the bifurcation of the Bombay Provincial Olympic Association in the early fifties when cycling was given autonomy and the Maharashtra State Cycling Association came into being and exercised absolute control of the sport in Maharashtra. He took over as secretary of the M.S.C.A. and stayed in office for almost two decades. Under his stewardship Bombay were able to success-

fully stage several long distance races, including the Bombay-Pune challenging events.

Jimmy, as he was popularly known, was a stickler for discipline and it was this that got him into problems with officials and cyclists. He relinquished his control of the various cycling bodies, but from behind the scenes kept encouraging the promising ones. Most of his charges reached national class and the news of his sad demise cast a gloom over cycling circles.

Jimmy, who was 54, suffered an attack earlier while on duty in the personnel department of Messrs. Bennett Coleman and Co. in which he served for over three decades.

The Times of India October 30, 1981.

Gold & Silver

Bombay, Jan. 27 Maharashtra continued to dominate the women's section of the National Cycling Championships.

At the Vallabhnbhai Patel Stadium on the fourth day, today, Armin Arethna and Avan Anita bagged the gold and silver, respectively, with record timings in the 1000 metres individual pursuit event for women.

But it was Maharashtra's Homi Bhatena who cornered the day's glory. In the most exciting event of the day, the 30 km points race, Homi did his state proud when he struck gold.

It was not the gold he achieved that drew a standing ovation from the stands but the manner in which he won it.

The event, consisting of 65 rounds of the velodrome, was introduced for the first time at the National level. Homi suffered an early setback when in the very first round his rear tyre gave way. Joining the bunch a round later, after changing his cycle, Homi continued his pursuit for the gold.

During the early stages of the race, Maharashtra skipper Bapoo Malcolm rode with excellent speed to occupy the second place for the first three sprint laps behind Bihar's Ravinder Singh.

Then came Homi in the 10th lap. With a brilliant burst he came from behind to overtake the lot at the bend and bag the second place in the fourth sprint lap.

Then in the 13th lap with vigorous piston-like movements, Homi broke away from the group and maintained a blistering pace. This feat Homi performed to lead the field of 14 by three laps.

Homi also bagged the double points awarded to the leading cyclist in the 33rd and final lap. He won the event totalling 3 laps and 82 points.

The Daily, 28 January 1982.

Cycling Legend

It is the Parsis, more than the others, who put Bombay, nay India, on the world cycling map. People from this community gained prominence in this sport because they not only loved cycling, but also cared for their machines, many of whom could boast of imported ones, as they would care for their wife or children.

ESKAY in the Free Press Journal, 23 January 1982.

Olympian Malcom B. Malcolm, the popular Bombay cyclist of yesteryears died on January 19, at the age of 69.

Malcolm first shot into the limelight way back in 1933 and dominated the scene in a large measure for a long spell of 27 years.

During this triumphant trial, Malcolm not only shone on the track but unselfishly contributed towards the betterment of the sport in the country. He was the brain behind the introduction of novel events such as Team pursuit, Devil Takes the Hindmost and Madison Cycle Race.

In 1935, his notable win came in the 3000 metres Scratch grass track race of the Bombay Presidency Olympic Association inaugural meet.

Malcolm also cornered the glory in the same event of the All-India Olympic meet and won the 15 miles race, his pet event, in the Amateur Athletic Association Championship for nine years in a row.

His perseverance fetched him international fame when he claimed the honours in the Road Race around the Oval, Bombay, in which he got the better of E.V. Mills and J. Bradick, both representatives of England at the 1938 British Empire Games in Australia.

The same year Malcolm was sent to England and Europe.

In the All-India Olympic Games, held every two years, Malcolm won all the events from 1938 to 1960.

It was in 1948 that Malcolm represented India in the Olympic Games at London and in the '54 Berlin-Warsaw-Prague race before calling it a day early in the sixties.

Malcolm is survived by his wife, Pilloo,

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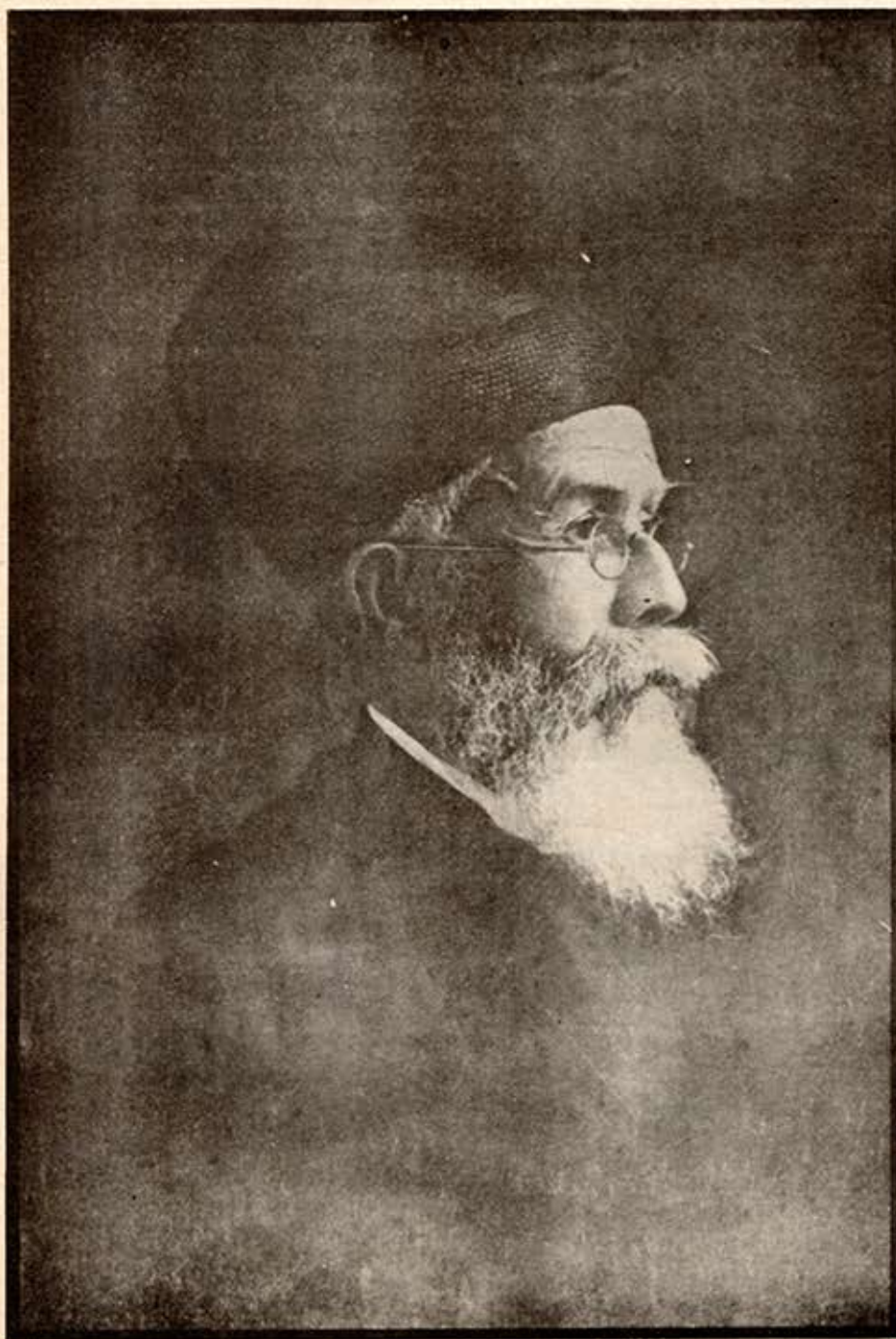
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Britain's black MPs

How they confronted British racism

Britain's three Black MPs, Naoroji (1892-95), Bhowndree (1895-1905), Saklatvala (1922-23 and 1924-29), had to face racial hostility, religious prejudice and political bias of the British society. The racial and cultural barriers they encountered then remain relevant to the problem of minority representation today. *Zareer Masani*, an Indian author and journalist settled in the UK, recapitulates some of Naoroji's experiences.



IN ITS RECENT survey of the 1979 general election, the Commission for Racial Equality, while pointing out that black minorities hold the balance of votes in several marginal, inner-city constituencies, lamented the absence of any black representation in Parliament during the last half-century. Ironically, the only three black MPs ever to have sat in the House of Commons were Indians elected in a distant age of empire by an exclusively white British electorate. The racial and cultural barriers they encountered then remain relevant to the problem of minority representation today.

D. Naoroji (Liberal, Central Finsbury, 1892-95), Sir M. Bhowndree (Conservative, Bethnal Green, 1895-1905) and S. Saklatvala (Labour/Communist, North Battersea, 1922-23 and 1924-29), were all Bombay-born Parsis, members of India's smallest ethnic Group. Despite widely divergent political affiliations, all three claimed to represent, not merely their inner-London constituents, but the Indian people, then denied representation at either Westminster or Delhi.

That all three were fair-skinned and anglicised Parsis was not coincidental. Adherents of Zoroastrianism, the world's first monotheistic religion, the Parsis migrated to India from Persia in the 8th century after the Arab conquest. Traditionally traders and artisans, they were the first community in British India to adapt to the introduction of western education. The Parsi community, though numbering under 100,000, was soon leading in every sector of colonial life, from politics and administration to the professions and industry. Initially a loyal buffer-class collaborating with the Raj, the Parsis gradually emerged as competitors with British capital and founders of India's nationalist movement.

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Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917) epitomised both the pioneering spirit of Indian modernisation and its ambivalence towards British rule. Born into an impoverished and semi-literate priestly family and educated on charitable grants, he was one of the first graduates of Bombay's Elphinstone College. While still in his 20s, he became Bombay University's first Indian Professor of Mathematics, founder-editor of a local newspaper and leader of movements for female education, school expansion and religious reform.

He first visited England in 1855, aged 30, and stayed on to set up a cotton-trading firm in London. His business collapsed in the cotton crash of 1881; but by then Naoroji was entirely absorbed in imperial politics, travelling back and forth between Britain and India.

In retrospect, his nationalism was strictly constitutionalist and moderate. His complaint against British rule in India was not that it was foreign, but that it was 'un-British', due to the ignorance of British public opinion about the autocratic bureaucracy that governed India. His famous 'drain theory' blamed Britain for the impoverishment of India through an adverse balance of trade and unjust revenue demands. But his own solution was Home Rule within the Empire, not independence. His immediate demands were for greater Indianisation of the Indian Civil Service, equitable adjustment of imperial finance and gradual introduction of representative government in India. Thus reformed, the empire could, he believed, benefit both countries.

His role in Britain was to lobby Parliament for Indian reforms. Through the 1860s and 1870s, he campaigned vigorously to publicise Indian grievances. 'We Indian people believe,' he told British audiences, 'that although John Bull is a little thick-headed, once we can penetrate through his head into his brain that a certain thing is right and proper to be done, you may be quite sure that it will be done.' His campaign won co-operation from radical MPs like Charles Bradlaugh, John Bright, Henry Fawcett and W.S. Caine, from Irish nationalists whom he supported on Home Rule, and from the famous British Marxist H.M. Hyndman. But it also involved him in a public refutation of the ethnologist John Crawford's crudely geneticist thesis on the inferiority of 'Asiatics'.

Indian lobby at Westminster

Naoroji's decision to enter Parliament

followed from his efforts to build a progressive India lobby at Westminster and from his role in India as a founder-leader of the Indian National Congress. Armed with the Congress mandate, he returned to England in 1886 in search of a parliamentary constituency. But his approaches to the Liberal Party produced a patronising and evasive response. One Liberal politician supported him because 'the Parsi was a very good element between the English and the Natives, knowing both and reconciling both, possessing much common-sense and exercising moderation'. Another strongly recommended my



'I doubt if we have yet got to that point of view where a British constituency would elect a black man.'

changing the (Parsi) headdress to an English hat. Better to appear altogether like an Englishman.' Yet another suggestion was that he should find a Scottish constituency because the Scots were 'far more liberal than the Liberals of England'.

Nine days before polling, Naoroji was suddenly offered the Liberal nomination for Holborn, a safe Tory seat, in the 1886 general election. That Sidney Webb, then Secretary to the Holborn Liberal Committee, shared Naoroji's radical views on imperial finance may have contributed to his nomination. With the tide strongly against Glad-

stone's Home Rule Bill and the Liberals themselves split on the issue, Naoroji's chances as a committed Home Ruler were hopeless. But he put up an impressive fight, appealing particularly to newly-enfranchised working-class voters, whom he addressed from a mobile cart-van.

Puzzle for British electors

Though he was defeated, his campaign attracted public curiosity. Now dressed in western attire, Naoroji was a cultural enigma in Victorian London. 'If Mr Naoroji had changed his name to Mr Brown or Mr Jones,' said one press report, 'no one would know him to be a Parsi. But Naoroji... a puzzle for the British elector... has the appearance and the manner of a cultivated English gentleman, his face a shade or two off-colour... but certainly not darker than many Australian, tanned from long exposure to tropical suns.' With his impressive, salt-and-pepper whiskers, 'his bright eyes' twinkling over gold-rimmed spectacles, a 'keen sense of fun' and a perfectly fitted frock-coat, Naoroji cut an excellent platform figure, 'an admirable speaker, with a strong voice, capable of many inflections; from the deeply earnest to the piping playful, with command over the indignant and ironical, and his mastery of our language is marvellous.'

After presiding over the second session of the Indian Congress, Naoroji returned to the electoral fray in 1887, seeking the Liberal nomination for Central Finsbury, a marginal Tory seat. Anticipating racial prejudice against him, Liberal headquarters reassured its local branch: 'Though bearing so strongly Indian a name, Mr Naoroji is to all intents and purposes an Englishman as well as an English subject. His long residence in this country, and his thorough mastery of our tongue, added to his English appearance, take away any objection which might occur... to his not being an Englishman.'

Nevertheless, the four-year nomination dispute that followed indicated overt and latent racial hostility to Naoroji's candidature. In August 1888, he was elected the official candidate of the local Liberal Association. But two weeks later, a requisitioned meeting reversed the choice and selected Richard Eve, runner-up in the previous vote. Naoroji dismissed this reversal as unconstitutional and refused to stand down — 'They have thus thrown the gauntlet to me and I have picked it up'. Liberal headquarters at first

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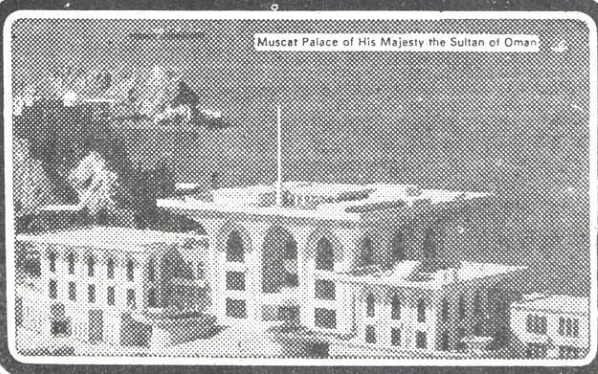
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encouraged him to stand firm. Schnadhorst, the chief organising officer of the National Liberal Federation, wrote at the time: 'Although a Parsi is much handicapped in an English constituency, Naoroji is not only the better man and politician of the two, but is more likely to win. Naoroji will be more liked the better he is known — Eve just the opposite.'

Later, alarmed by a split in the local party, Liberal headquarters suddenly changed its tune and asked Naoroji to accept arbitration. Seeing this as a breach of faith, he refused to submit, even after the party leadership transferred its support to his rival. 'I must go on for the sake of India herself, besides my honour,' he maintained, 'be the result what it may. I cannot allow it to be said that bullying and persecution can easily drive away an Indian from his resolution.' Rejecting an offer from Lord Ripon, ex-Viceroy of India, of a safe seat elsewhere, he appealed instead to the voters of Central Finsbury, whom he had canvassed assiduously throughout the prolonged inner-party wrangle.

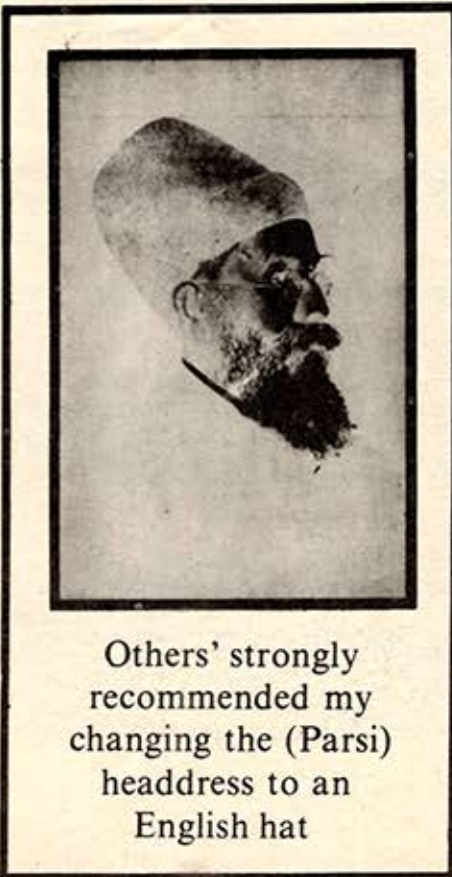
Naoroji's struggle for the Liberal nomination received aid from an unexpected quarter when Lord Salisbury, the Tory Prime Minister, commented publicly on Naoroji's defeat at Holborn: *'I doubt if we have yet got to that point of view where a British constituency would elect a black man... I imagine the colour is not exactly black, but, at all events, he was a man of another race.'* Overnight 'Lord Salisbury's Black man' became the hero of the Liberal press. While Indian public opinion was outraged, the Liberals made political capital of the Prime Minister's gaffe. At a public meeting in London, Gladstone warned of the great offence caused by Salisbury to millions of Indians and demanded an apology. Naoroji was flooded with letters and invitations from well-wishers all over Britain. Queen Victoria herself was reported to have reprimanded her Prime Minister for this insult to one of her Indian subjects. 'Her Majesty,' said a press report, '... appreciates very highly the Indian servants whom she now possesses, and they are most of them much darker than Mr Naoroji.' The National Liberal Club replied to Salisbury with a banquet in Naoroji's honour, with Lord Ripon presiding.

Christian prejudice

Having thus lionised Naoroji, the Liberal leadership could hardly jettison him in Finsbury. His local rival withdrew, and Naoroji fought the 1892 gen-

eral election as the official Liberal candidate. The seat was hotly contested, especially since his manifesto included the entire Liberal reform programme. Inevitably, he also encountered racial prejudice, as Tory propaganda whipped up Christian sentiment by portraying him as a pagan fireworshipper, fire being a sacred symbol for Parsis, much like the cross for Christians.

When Naoroji's supporters approached Lord Carlisle for assistance, his wife exclaimed: 'How can you expect Christians to help a man who worships fire?' A retired army officer wrote indignantly to the papers that Naoroji was an



alien, belonging to 'a race of mere traders, none of whom ever drew a sword or pulled a trigger either for or against us...'

Against such bigotry, Naoroji received valuable support from Labour leaders like Keir Hardie and John Burns, who canvassed for him, while his advocacy of women's rights won him the backing of prominent women like Florence Nightingale. Most decisive, however, was the material aid he got from the Maharaja of Baroda, one of India's leading princes. His Tory opponent, an influential local landlord, had a vast fleet of carriages put at his disposal

by Salisbury and other Tory peers. But the Maharaja of Baroda came to Naoroji's rescue on polling day, lending him twenty carriages to bring voters to the polls.

Naoroji's victory, by a majority of three votes, solved the problem that many voters had in pronouncing his name. Henceforth, he was known affectionately as 'Mr Narrow-Majority'. A crowd of several thousands outside the National Liberal Club welcomed the news of his success with thunderous applause, audible 'at St Paul's on one side and Chelsea Hospital on the other,' while the 'half-benignant' tone in which the *Times* greeted his election suggested that 'the echoes... had penetrated Printing House Square'. The next day, Gladstone publicly announced his 'great satisfaction' at the return of 'what Lord Salisbury called a black man'.

The reaction of the Tory press was predictably hostile. 'If the electors of Central Finsbury,' the *Spectator* complained, 'like to be represented by a fire-worshipping Asiatic, that is their affair... but Mr Naoroji will pose as the Native Member for India. That is not a just pretension.' *St Stephen's Review* was more outspoken. Giving thanks that Naoroji at least belonged to a 'civilised' Indian community and was not 'a Bengali Babu', it declared that 'Central Finsbury should be ashamed of itself at having publicly confessed that there was not in the whole of the Division an Englishman, a Scotchman, a Welshman, or an Irishman as worthy of their votes as this fire-worshipper from Bombay.'

Having at last arrived at Westminster, Naoroji was one of the most active private members in the Commons, campaigning relentlessly for Indian reforms. His efforts were partially successful when a resolution was adopted in favour of holding the Indian Civil Service examination in India as well as in London, and again when a Royal Commission was appointed in 1894, with Naoroji as a member, to enquire into British Indian finance. In 1893, Naoroji also found time to visit India, where he received a hero's welcome and presided over the annual Congress session.

Though he was renominated Liberal candidate for Central Finsbury in the 1895 general election, this time the odds against him were insuperable. Threatened by Liberal policies on death duties, land tax, labour legislation, temperance, Church disestablishment, reform of the House of Lords and uni-



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versal suffrage, 'the parson, the peer, the publican and property,' Naoroji observed, 'were fighting a life-and-death struggle against the coming doom'. Despite the backing of Labour and the Irish National League, he was defeated by a Tory alliance of Anglicans and publicans.

Though now in his 70s, Naoroji continued to attempt a parliamentary comeback. In 1901, he accepted a unanimous invitation from the North Lambeth Liberal Association to be its candidate. But there followed a sordid replay of the old Finsbury dispute, as the party switched its backing to a local bedsteadmaker, 'with a long, civic record and an even longer purse,' arguing that Naoroji's preoccupation with India would be detrimental to his local constituents. As before, Naoroji refused to accept arbitration or withdraw; but this time his tenacity did not pay off, and he was the victim of a smear-campaign which included allegations of corruption. Standing as a Labour-backed independent against the official Liberal candidate, he was routed in the 1905 general election.

Naoroji returned to India for good in 1907, finally disillusioned with British politics. Rejecting knighthood, he preferred the unofficial Congress title of 'Grand Old Man of India'. The remaining ten years of his life were spent in dignified semi-retirement in Bombay as the venerated patriarch of India's growing Congress movement.

Courtesy: The Asian, London September, 1980.

**STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP AND
OTHER PARTICULARS ABOUT
PARSIANA Form IV (See Rule 3)**

Place of publication: Bombay

Periodicity of publication: Monthly

Printer, Publisher, Editor and Proprietor:

Jehangir R. Patel

Nationality: Indian

Address: 285 J. Dadaji Marg,
Bombay 400 007

I, Jehangir R. Patel, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sd. (Jehangir R. Patel)

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Company Guide

The administration of Indian business and industry has been progressively complicated by the plethora of rules and regulations, guidelines and controls which the business executive is compelled to keep abreast with, to ensure that his actions and procedures are in keeping with the requirements of the law.

The situation is further worsened when an important piece of legislation like the Indian Companies Act which embraces a vast section of Indian business, is so formulated that "the sections which should logically go together are placed far apart... This book is an effort to combine in one place a simple exposition of those provisions of the Companies Act, 1956," notes Ms. Javeri.

The book begins with the incorporation of a company and ends with its winding up. The intermediate chapters set out in detail company practices and procedures, that should be followed in respect to each aspect of the working of the company and in doing so the author explains the law with reference to decided cases wherever relevant.

Ms. Javeri was the first lady to be admitted in the Tata Administrative Service and was until recently the secretary of the Tata Iron and Steel Company Limited (TISCO). She is a fellow member of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India, has her own legal practice and is a retained counsel to several leading companies, notes her bio-data.

J.R.D. Tata, in his forward to the book, notes that the complexities of the Indian Companies Act and the need to keep abreast of the law has placed a heavy burden on the administration of Indian business and industry.

"There has been a need for a comprehensive hand book or manual that would in clear but simple terms elucidate the law... Ms. Javeri is eminently qualified to write this book."

The Company Secretary's Handbook - A Concise Guide to Company Law for Managers and Executives by Ms K. R. Javeri, published by N. M. Tripathi Private Limited, Bombay; 190 pages, price Rs. 55.

Nani Palkhivala

Surely something is basically wrong with our economic philosophy and political ideology if Indians are able to enrich foreign countries but are not allowed to solve the problem of poverty at home.

THOUSANDS have gathered on the spacious grounds of Bombay's Cricket Club of India to hear Nani Palkhivala on the Budget. Half an hour before the meeting, portly Marwaris and lean Parsis have occupied strategic positions. The latter, who belong to Nani's tiny community, do not appear of the kind who have much to worry about in the Budget. Nonetheless they turn up in strength to hear *apro Nani* ('our Nani'). Parsis usually have two or three personalities in a generation to whom they attach the fond prefix *apro*. In the old days Queen Victoria was *apri Rani*. Dadabhai Naoroji and Jamsetji Tata are still called *apro*.

There before an urban audience Nani starts speaking. 'Every budget,' he says, 'contains a cartload of figures in black and white—but the stark figures represent the myriad lights and shades of India's life, the contrasting tones of poverty and wealth, and of bread so dear and flesh and blood so cheap, the deep tints of adventure and enterprise and man's ageless struggle for a brighter morn.'

He reels off facts, figures and statistics—decimal points and all—without any notes. He punctuates his oration with quotations from Shakespeare, Lord Acton, Jawaharlal Nehru and C. Rajagopalachari. The audience cheers him as he assails the 'boneless wonders' and the 'bumbling bureaucrats' of Delhi. At the end of the oration of *apro Nani*, his admirers brace themselves and stride out—fortified to fight another day.

Constitutional lawyer, tax expert, economic developer, diplomat, author, Nani Palkhivala has adorned all that he

has touched in life. He was born on January 16, 1920, in the home of a small businessman. Money was short in the family, but Nani's hopes were high. As a young boy he devoured books. Samuel Smiles' work, *The Secret of Success*, inspired him. From Tutorial High School he went to St. Xavier's College, Bombay. By the time he was 16, he started earning by giving tuitions. At College he read English Literature and won the Chancellor's Medal in his M.A.

From 1943 to 1946 Nani read Law, standing First Class First at the LL.B. and Advocate (OS) examinations. He was soon appointed professor at the Bombay Law College and was honoured with the Tagore Professorship of Law at Calcutta University. He first won distinction by producing an authoritative work on income tax law, in association with his senior, Sir Jamshedji Kanga, in whose chambers he started his career.

The flame of achievement burned in him. He fought case after case of

Princes and impoverished priests felt confident that they could count on his sympathies

national importance. His victories at the Supreme Court were impressive. He fought and won the Bank Nationalisation Case. In 1971 he had struck down the Government's order to take away the Privy Purses of Princes by unconstitutional methods. He argued the famous Fundamental Rights Case (1973), heard by 13 judges of the Supreme Court over a period of five months, in which the Supreme Court ruled that Parliament cannot amend the Constitution as to alter or destroy its basic structure.

He argued successfully for the Fundamental Rights of minorities to administer educational and religious institutions of their choice, and to

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Encounters with the Eminent:

Russi M. Lala



choose the language in which education should be imparted.

Princes and impoverished priests felt confident that they could count on his sympathies. Most cases of public importance he fought without fees. Although he was for many years a vociferous critic of Congress governments, a succession of its Law Ministers invariably honoured him by giving him briefs for India at international tribunals, like the International Court at the Hague.

The foremost practising lawyer of this country at one time, he netted a gross half-million rupees a year, even after foregoing his fees in many cases. Over the last two decades, he has come to the conclusion that he would rather participate in the economic development of the nation than defend litigants in matters like taxation. He came into Tatas as legal adviser to the House, got more involved in industrial development and after some years attained the position of Deputy Chairman of the two largest companies in India—Tata Steel and Telco.

Nani is also Chairman of A.C.C. the cement combine. What is it like to work with him on an industrial Board? Kamaljit Singh, who headed the Indian Oil Corporation (the first in turnover

throughout the country) later joined A.C.C. as Managing Director. He lists Nani's qualities as 'the ability to grasp a problem quickly, and the ability to take quick decisions. In my forty years in industry, I have never encountered an individual who combines the qualities of integrity, compassion and concern for human relations with the ability to take firm and even unpleasant decisions to the same extent as Palkhivala.'

Opportunities in business provide him the space to exercise his qualities of the heart that go way beyond the intellectual gymnastics that Law demands. And to complete the picture, Nani supports movements that enrich the spirit of man, be it of the late Sri Aurobindo's or Satya Sai Baba's. For him life is larger than law, business or politics. It is amazing he finds the time to devote to each of these interests.

Associated with big business he tries to inject into its policies his sense of 'old values and sincerity of purpose' as a colleague puts it. He is not interested in the controversy over public and private sector. 'There are only two sectors,' he says, 'the efficient and the inefficient'.

Though a critic of Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, he accepted her Election Appeal brief in the Supreme Court because he felt she had a good case and that every litigant is entitled to his or her choice of a lawyer. On June 24, 1975, Nani obtained an interim judgement permitting Mrs. Gandhi to remain Prime Minister but not to vote in Parliament. On June 26, the Emergency was announced, and within hours Nani returned Mrs. Gandhi's brief 'consistent with my lifelong convictions and the values I cherish', he told me.

Through most of the Emergency Nani was silent but in December 1975, at the height of the Emergency, when the Government sought to compel the Supreme Court to review its decision in the Fundamental Rights Case, Nani put on his gown and convinced the Supreme Court such a review was unnecessary. Due to strict censorship his victory was little known.

Sometime after the Janata Party assumed office, he was offered the Indian Ambassadorship to the United States. He travelled extensively in that vast country, delivering in less than two years 200 major speeches presenting India before the American public. Universities like Princeton gave him honorary degrees and impressive citations.

The President of the 20,000 strong Associations of Indians in America, said of Nani's term as Ambassador, 'For the first time we got a feeling that Indians were welcome at the Embassy and today we can get our passport in 24 hours and a visa in a couple of hours.'

For Nani himself the American experience was an eyeopener. 'All over the United States - from the Boeing workshop in Seattle to Texas Instruments in Dallas, to the Institute of Technology at Massachusetts - Indian talent is employed and the men in charge expressed to me their gratitude to India for giving them such remarkable human resources. Surely something is basically wrong with our economic philosophy and political ideology if Indians are able to enrich foreign countries but are not allowed to solve the problem of poverty at home.'

He brought with him a list of highly qualified Indian scientists willing to assist in India but, alas, the bureaucracy did not move at his speed to take advantage of their offer.

Nani returned to India before time

**'There are only two sectors:
the efficient and the
inefficient'**

because his heart was in his own country. 'There is so much to do here,' he said. Almost immediately on his arrival the Janata Government fell, and in the ensuing confusion the hopes of many were focussed on Nani entering public life.

The elections of January 1980 gave him the opportunity, but he declined.



He chose instead to support with vigour, men of integrity who were standing for Parliament and who he felt would help to shape the India of his dreams. 'Will anything small or circumscribed ever satisfy the mind of India?' he enquires. He yearns to work with men who can harness the immense economic potential of this land—men who will harness the river waters and employ the 40 million idle hands in productive work. He is impatient with laws and rules that stunt our industry and our nation.

The public expects much from Nani. I accompanied him to the Dr. Ambedkar Law College in Bombay, where students crowded into a lecture hall and waited with eager faces as he entered to address them. 'One thing I would recommend,' Nani told them, 'is poverty in young age. It makes you appreciate human values—like love at home.' When later I

'One thing I would recommend, is poverty in young age. It makes you appreciate human values'

asked him if he did not at times feel over-awed by the hopes people rested on him, he replied, 'Yes, sometimes one does feel inadequate.'

If Nani is asked how he graduated from literature to law, from law to taxation, from taxation to economics, he looks lost. 'There is nothing conscious about it. No human being can plan these things. What are we puny mortals? I believe in a Higher Force.'

'Do you believe in a personal God?' I asked.

'No, but I do believe in a Divine Force,' he replied.

Distinguished men who have influenced him are his senior, Sir Jamshedji Kanga, Rajaji and more recently Jayaprakash Narayan, but if you are looking for the secret of his success you have to look elsewhere. The most important thing for a person—as for a nation—he feels, is productive use of time and energy, and Nani endeavours to fill every moment of his life productively,

whether he is handling a legal case, an industry meeting or an interview. He is a man in a hurry, often quite restless in a private interview but supremely composed while addressing a gathering of 10,000.

The second secret of his success is something he urges his younger friends to attain. There is a difference between learning and knowledge. 'Knowledge comes when you begin to interpret facts, and to do that you have to combine knowledge with imagination.'

Perhaps the ability of India's best-known lawyer lies in his ability to interpret the Constitution, or any law for that matter. He brings to bear upon complicated legal issues his lucid interpretation, but with it comes a spaciousness of mind and a generosity of spirit which lifts the issue way beyond legal niceties. For example, when there were reports that the Nobel Prize of Mother Teresa may be subject to taxation by the Law Ministry, he floored the bureaucrats not only on the issue of law but on the question of their meanness. Promptly the bureaucrats backedpedalled.

He brings to bear upon any task he handles, the qualities of earnestness and perseverance. For example, his tome on the income tax—on which he works with his brother Behram—covers 3,000 pages, enough to deter anyone from carrying it, leave alone reading it.

He works constantly on successive editions or supplements which take a good deal of his time when not engaged at the Tata headquarters at Bombay House. Apart from his incisive powers of criticism, Nani possesses a creative mind and one hopes that he can use it to present to India alternative measures like a new Income Tax Code for the consideration of the authorities. He has got what it takes to write one.

A vigorous sixty, one feels Nani's best years are still ahead. At a time when the nation's confidence is shaken in its political leadership, many look up to him to bring back standards into our public conduct. In a nation that has lost its old giants and awaits the debut of the new, Nani's light shines brightly, waiting for others to light their torch so that a nation may be illumined.

J.R.D. Tata

A CONVOY of cars and buses speeds along a highway in Sweden with motorcycle escorts on either side. A helicopter constantly hovers over it for the cargo is precious. In this convoy are men of finance and industry who between them control billions and who could be held up for vast ransoms. Every six months they meet either in America or in Europe under the aegis of the Chase Manhattan Bank. Among them are Dr. Giovanni Agnelli, President of Fiat; the President of Ford Motors; the biggest ship-builder in the world from Hong Kong; a member of the House of Mitsubishi; David Rockefeller, President of Chase Manhattan; and Dr. Henry Kissinger, Rockefeller's friend and adviser. The most carefree among this select company is J.R.D. Tata from India. He assures his friends: 'Nobody will kidnap me, for nobody will want a ransom in rupees.'

When not on one of his travels in India or abroad, he stays with his wife in a bungalow that has defiantly stood its ground when skyscrapers have soared all around it. The sprawling home is an island of shady trees, a vestige of a bygone era of space and leisure. One room in that home is allocated for a workshop and a gymnasium which J.R.D. proudly shows to his visitors.

He prefers to spend a good deal of his time in his modest library. There is a whole shelf of books on aviation, another shelf of books on military ventures and warfare, another on sports cars and motor racing. He likes to read crime fiction and lighter books like David Niven's *Bring on the Horses*. He has read all the books by Louis Lamour. J.R.D. is not just a collector of books but he is a reader and an enthusiastic one at that. After an interview at his home I returned with three of his favourite books including one by Alexander Woolcott, which J.R.D. was keen I should read.

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Encounters with the Eminent:

Russi M. Lala



J.R.D. Tata is a product of two continents. His father, R.D. (Ratanji Dadabhoy) Tata was a cousin of Jamsetji Tata, who gave India the steel and hydro-electric industries. R.D. Tata, then in his early 40s, had differences with Jamsetji's crown prince, Dorab Tata, and decided to start his own business in Paris dealing in precious stones from the Far East. To equip himself in business in France, R.D. Tata was taking tuitions in French from one Madame Briere. It is to Madame Briere's daughter that R.D. Tata proposed and they were married in 1902. Their marriage created a sensation because R.D. Tata not only married outside his Parsi community but took the revolutionary step of having his European and Christian wife converted to the Zoroastrian faith. Suzanne Briere changed her name to Soonu.

J.R.D. remembers his mother as a very resourceful, intelligent and adaptable lady, who—first with two, then three four and five children—packed up her house in France and came to India to be with her husband and went back again year after year. J.R.D. remembers his grandmother as a very formidable lady.

Her husband was a humorist and after some time with her, says J.R.D., the gentleman 'ran away as anyone would have, had he been married to my grandmother.' Perhaps J.R.D. inherited a sense of humour from his grandfather on the French side.

J.R.D.'s early years were divided between Bombay and France. In France he studied at one of the three top public schools called Janson Besailly. He would study one year there and the other year in Bombay at the Cathedral High School. After the Russian Revolution had taken place in 1917, he recalls that most of his history teachers in France were communists.

As a young boy J.R.D. associated himself more with France than with India, partly because he was not good at English while he had won a prize at French composition. Secondly, as a growing young man, he felt angry that India was not free. After school he was drafted for a year into the French Army and assigned to an Algerian regiment in France.

Bleriot, the first man to fly across the English Channel, had a house on the coast of France near R.D. Tata's house. Bleriot's pilot who used to land the small plane on the beach, once gave J.R.D. a joy ride. It was then that the 15-year-old J.R.D. decided that one day he would fly.

In 1929 J.R.D. passed out with No.1 on his Licence as the first Indian pilot. A year later he competed for the Aga Khan Trophy. It was offered for the first Indian to fly between India and England and India. When he landed at Aboukir in Egypt, he found that Aspy Engineer, the other contender, who was flying from London to Karachi, was stranded for want of a spark plug. J.R.D. sportingly parted with his and they continued their journey in opposite directions. Aspy beat him by a few hours. 'I am glad he won,' says J.R.D., 'because it helped him to get into the Indian Air Force.' Later Aspy was to be the second Indian to be Chief of the Indian Air Force. J.R.D. was to have a few other adven-

tures. In the early 1930s a daring Englishman called Nevill Vintcent came along to India offering joy rides. He suggested to J.R.D. that they start an airline. That was J.R.D.'s dream. But Sir Dorab Tata, then Chairman of the House of Tatas, was not interested. J.R.D.'s mentor, a retired I.C.S. official, persuaded Sir Dorab to agree and

'The fact that you find yourself totally alone in the immensity of space made you very humble and made you see of what little consequence you are.'

so the Tata Airlines was launched as a division of Tata Sons.

One October morning as the sun rose on the eastern horizon, a single-engined Pussmoth plane took off from Karachi with a load of mail for Bombay. As the plane hummed and rose the pilot said a word of prayer. India's first airline was inaugurated with J.R.D. at the controls. 'How did flying in those small planes affect you when you were alone in the plane, without radio, without instruments and without ground aids? Did you feel there was a Creator?

'The fact that you find yourself totally alone in the immensity of space made you very humble and made you see of what little consequence you are. And then you identify God with the immensity of nature. These are the only times when I felt totally alone and was conscious of that loneliness.' He said that he shared the experience of the writer-pilot Saint Exupery which is so well expressed in the book *Night Flight*.

When asked whether he did any stunt flight he said he did and in one case he was within ten seconds of disaster. His saving grace was that he was respectful enough to go up to six thousand feet before he started descending. His instruc-

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tor 'did a criminal thing in releasing me to fly solo without teaching me how to get out of a spin and how to get into a spin. Fortunately I read about it. When you are in a fast spin with full engines and you want to pull out, your temptation is to draw the joy stick close at you and if you do that, the plane is plunged further into spinning. The thing to do is to centralise the joy stick and then even off.' Fortunately for him, after he had dived from six thousand to one thousand feet he remembered what he had

continued that and kept in his charge those companies where he felt his hand was essential. When asked: 'What has been the most satisfying experience of your life?' J.R.D. replied: 'The flying experience has dominated and no other can equal the excitement of the first solo flight. Next is Air-India where I had the freedom to do what I wanted. In a way it was the really big thing that I started. While Tatas have achieved the reputation they have and success, what reputation they have is not just due to my achievement though I may have had some part in its success.'

He continued, 'What success I may have achieved in business I owe to one man, John Peterson, a burly Scotsman and a retired I.C.S. official. It is from him that I acquired my love for English and my love for poetry. He was remarkable in so far as he would be very polite to Indians and went out of his way to help them but he could be quite rough with his own people. When my father took me to him and asked him to train me as he was the Managing Director of Tata Steel, Peterson put a desk in his room and for the next four or five years every paper that came to him went through me and every paper that went out went through me. He included me on every discussion and interview he had. It is from him that I acquired many qualities.'

Have you trained anyone else as he has trained you?

'You know I have never had a great opinion of my ability, possibly because I am not academically qualified, and I feel I do not have the right to train people; but I have ideas and I have learnt never to take anything for granted.'

J.R.D. mentioned how one day he had invited a certain Bengali gentleman to join the Board of Tata Steel and dictated a letter to him. But when the Secretary gave the letter for signature it was addressed to another man with exactly the same name and a different address. 'Fortunately, I caught it otherwise I would have been in a very embarrassing situation, having invited one man and appointed another! I may have had to have two directors instead of an additional one!'

J.R.D.'s other rule for business suc-

cess is: 'Strive for perfection and you will reach excellence.' I once asked him what the secret of his success in business was. He replied, 'No secret, it is long hours. I used to put in 70 to 75 hours a week of work.' He then added rather mischievously, 'You know something? I do not like work. I like to be interrupted.'

At 76 J.R.D. is erect and well preserved. He is keen on physical fitness and he has taken the trouble to exercise all his life. Till recently he played tennis regularly and plays golf and skis three weeks a year. As a young man he loved fast cars and raced round Bombay in his red Bugatti. If aviation had not claimed him, he would have competed for the Grand Prix, which incidentally he seldom missed seeing.

As a young man too he was hot-headed and felt irked at being ruled by foreign power. This emerged at an encounter he had in January 1930 with the cavalcade of a Governor of Bengal. In those days it was fashionable for fiery Bengali rebels to take a pot-shot at the British Governor or the Police Commissioner. So the authorities had to be pretty careful. On a bitterly cold day, J.R.D. was driving down with his wife from Darjeeling to Siliguri after their honeymoon. For almost an hour the police halted their car. Other cars too lined up on the road in chilly weather.

Mrs. Tata would step in front of the Governor's car while J.R.D. would give His Excellency a piece of his mind.

read, centralised the joy stick, and the plane evened off. When he landed J.R.D. was furious with his instructor for releasing him to fly solo without essential instructions. 'To be a safe pilot you must know how to spin,' remarks J.R.D.

The airline he pioneered blossomed into Air-India and in 1948, in a joint venture with the Indian Government, J.R.D. launched Air-India's first international route to London. The first office of Air-India at the airport at London was in a caravan. For the next 30 years, J.R.D. nursed Air-India and with his flare and efficiency made it one of the world's great airlines. For almost 30 years he spent about half of his day working for Air-India and the other half for the vast industrial enterprises of Tatas. To Air-India he gave his services as a labour of love. Among the Tata companies, closest to his heart is Tata Steel with which he began his career in 1924.

J.R.D. came out to settle in India from France at the age of 20. By the time he was 34, the then Chairman of Tatas died suddenly. All the senior directors met together and turned to young J.R.D. to be the Chairman of the parent Company, Tata Sons. When I asked him why they selected him at such a young age, he replied modestly: 'Perhaps they thought I was hard working.' It was the normal practice of the Tata Chairman to head all the Tata companies. J.R.D. discon-

J.R.D. and his wife decided to register their protest. They planned that when the Governor's car came, Mrs. Tata would step in front of the Governor's car while J.R.D. would give His Excellency a piece of his mind. It worked. Mrs. Tata stepped in front of the Governor's car, while J.R.D. shouted: 'Who the hell do you think you are keeping five hundred people, women and children, in the cold

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for an hour? You damn fool!' Unfortunately Mrs. Tata also wanted to give the Governor a piece of her mind, and rushed to the car window. In the process the Governor's car shot off. Among those shivering in the cold was a British Anglican Priest in his white collar. He came up to J.R.D. and with all the dignity he could command, said: 'Sir, I do not approve of your language but I certainly approve of your sentiments.'

It is instances like these of arrogance that drove J.R.D. even closer to Jawaharlal Nehru and the national movement. Motilal Nehru stayed with R.D. Tata in Bombay. In his younger days J.R.D. was a hero-worshipper of Nehru. He recalls that at Independence, when he was 43, he was much enthused. 'I had tremendous dreams and expectations of cooperation between the private sector and the Government.' But his dreams did not come true.

With more than 50 years of leadership in management, he has developed his own philosophy and method. 'One of the qualities of leadership is to assess what is needed to get the best results for an enterprise. If that demands being a very active executive chairman as I was in Air-India, I did that. On the other hand, in one of our other companies where I know that the managing director likes to be alone and will get the results that way, I argue with myself and decide that it will be stupid for me to come in the way when the other person has a capacity for focusing his genius and producing the results. Often as chairman our main responsibility is to inspire respect.' And then he added: 'Don't forget, I like people.'

Although he never says so publicly, he actually runs Tatas with an inner core of advisors. He respects them as his equals and encourages them to speak out—which some do. When asked how he could get high-powered and strong-willed men like Sir Ardeshir Dalal, Sir Homi Mody and Mr. A.D. Shroff to work together in Tatas, he replied that the thing to do was to give people definite and clearly marked responsibility and then if they ever crossed each other's path, to keep them apart.

Repeatedly Tatas have presented schemes to the Government that would

have benefited India but, because they are large and because J.R.D. will not stoop to certain means, the schemes have been turned down or put in cold storage. The man who has done so much for India is like a Prometheus bound—and frustrated. He mused, 'Even if Nehru (a good friend) had wanted me to join Government 30 years ago, I think I would have been caught and frustrated.' He warned Nehru at Independence that to succeed India must curb its population growth. Nehru was angry. 'Our population,' said Nehru, 'is our strength.' Time has proved J.R.D. right. J.R.D. has been the first public figure to propose as early as 1968, that a presidential system is more suited to India than the parliamentary system.

In office J.R.D. always appears restless. He either fidgets with his pencil or with his spectacles. He loves to press the various telephone switches and will laboriously take the trouble to work out his figures on his little calculator. It was only in his study at home that I found him relaxed. 'Although I appear agitated with my hands,' he explains, 'inside I am relaxed.' This inner peace has taken him through difficult days and allowed him to face great crises and to carry vast responsibilities.

The remarkable quality about J.R.D. is that he has not permitted time, age or habit to dull his sensitivity to human suffering and to the subhuman conditions in which many of his fellow citizens exist, as in the slums of Bombay. He yearns to be a fountain of living water to those less fortunate than himself.

If you look into the steady eyes that gaze behind the questioning brow, you perceive sometimes a touch of mischief, at other times earnestness, and sometimes sadness. His saving grace is: 'I do not take myself too seriously.' Those long lonely flights in the immensity of the Universe have given him a perspective that has lasted him well on *terra firma*. The worldly power and glory that came to him as Chairman of Tatas and of Air-India, he used with sensitivity and care. To many in the House of Tata and outside it, he may be an epic figure but to those who know him, he is all too human.



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