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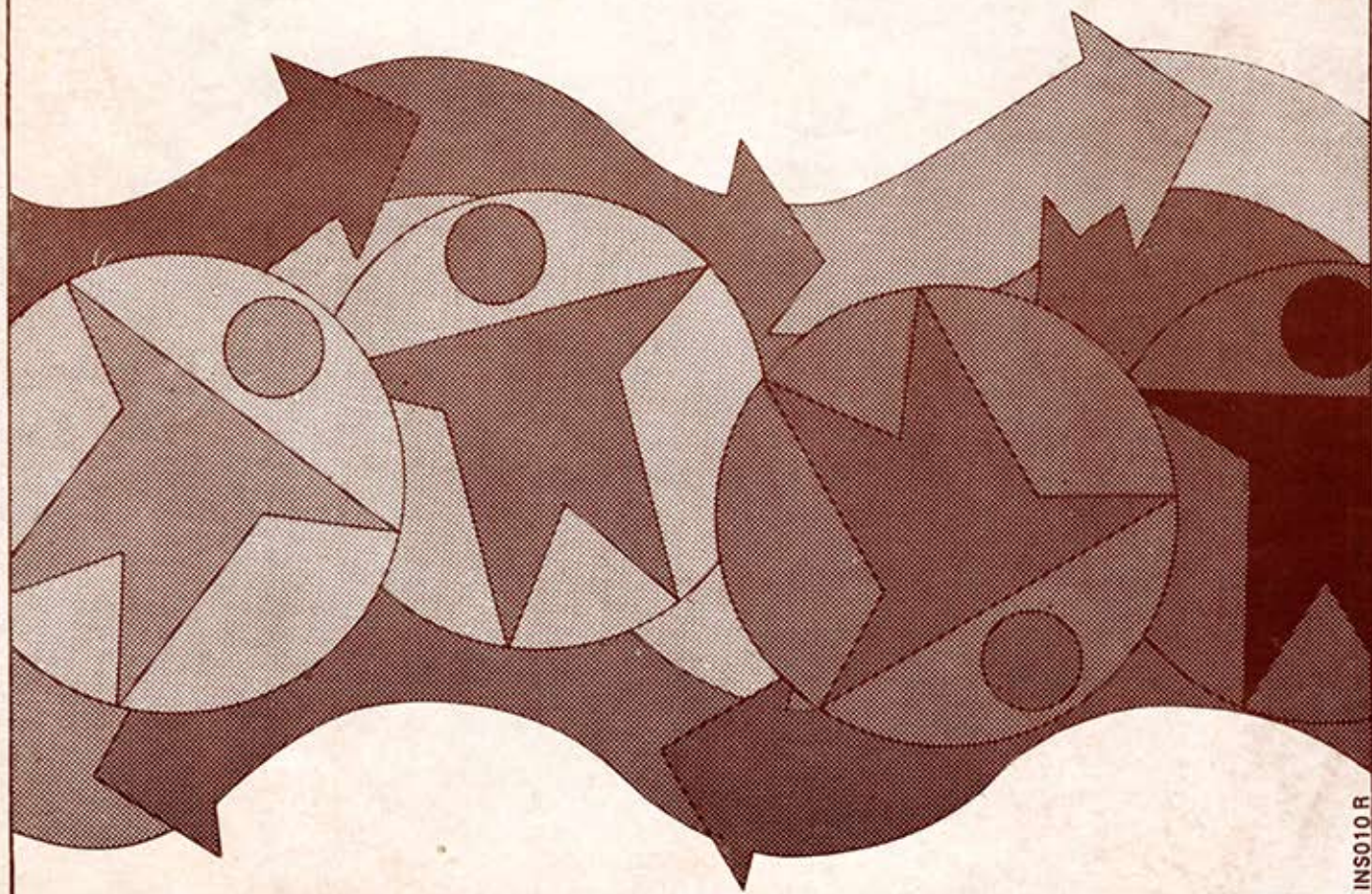
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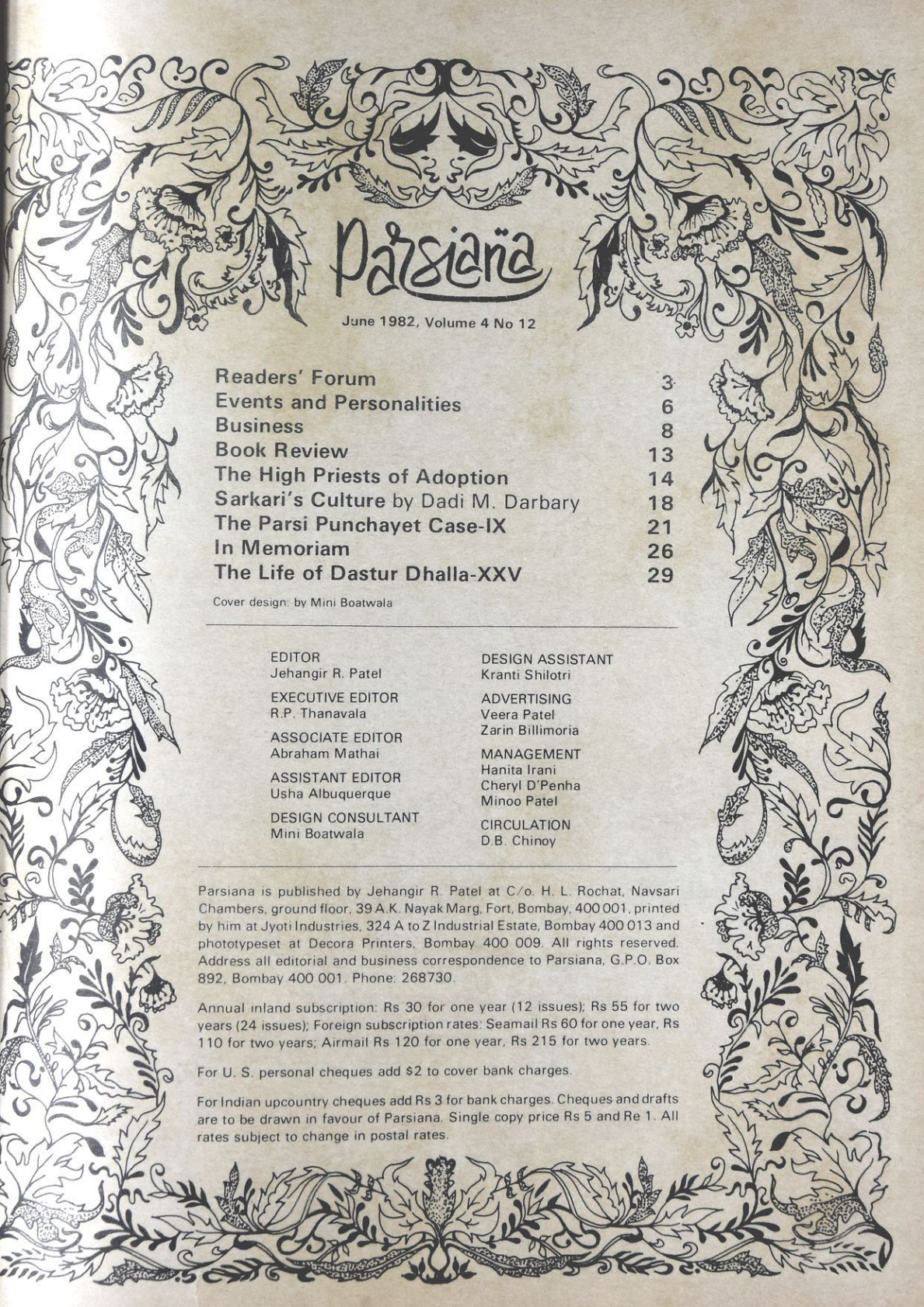
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A detailed black and white line drawing of a floral border surrounds the entire page. It features intricate leaf patterns, small flowers, and a central crest-like motif at the top. The border is symmetrical and fills the margins of the page.

Parsiana

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EDITOR
Jehangir R. Patel

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
R.P. Thanavala

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Abraham Mathai

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Usha Albuquerque

DESIGN CONSULTANT
Mini Boatwala

DESIGN ASSISTANT
Kranti Shilotri

ADVERTISING
Veera Patel
Zarin Billimoria

MANAGEMENT
Hanita Irani
Cheryl D'Penha
Minoo Patel

CIRCULATION
D.B. Chinoy

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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.

"The Politics of Healing"

In an interview with the new president of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet, Dr Aspi F. Golwalla, ("The Politics of Healing," *Parsiana*, March 1982) much importance was given to the housing problem of the Bombay Parsis, and perhaps rightly so.

When Golwalla stated that the declining number of community members was another important subject facing the community he was asked: "Aside from housing are there other reasons for the population decline?" His reply was: "It is mainly housing. There are problems of unemployment, higher standard of living etc. but housing is the biggest problem."

The dual problems of a decline in numbers, and housing, are correlated to a considerable extent. However, there are other reasons for the decline in the number of marriages and in the number of community members.

An excess of deaths over births is one of the causes of the decline. In the May 1976 issue of *Parsiana*, a report (Meet the Press) notes "Sapur Desai, a former joint secretary of the BPP, and author of several publications on demography, presented a report on the declining population. 'Every year there are 300 more deaths than births,' he noted. And if the present trend continued, in another 75 years the community's numbers would dwindle to 40,000 as versus the 1971 census figure of 91,000. In order that the population remain at its present level, each couple should have to produce three children. 'Three is the replacement ratio,' noted Desai."

The figures of deaths over births amongst Bombay Parsis are soaring every year. In 1971, the excess figure was 343. It continued to increase every year reaching the figure of 438 in 1979. In 1980, the figure was 419 (*Statistical Outline*, BPP 1981). Perhaps the percentage is more in places other than Bombay, especially in Gujarat, where

the major portion of the Parsi population is of aged people — mostly over 50 years.

Students from foreign universities have collected facts and figures, interviewed several people, made comparative studies and come to certain conclusions on Parsi demography. Very little attention is paid to their studies by our community. Dr Paul Mark Axelrod, a student of the University of North Carolina conducted a study of the Parsi population problem in his thesis entitled "A Social and Demographic Composition of Parsis, Saraswat Brahmins and Jains in Bombay" (1974). According to him, Parsis because of the influence of western culture have accepted the idea of privacy and married couples would like to have a separate room. They will prefer not to marry till this minimum requirement is satisfied. The most difficult thing in Bombay is to get a room at a fair or moderate rental.

As a result there are no marriages or late marriages, with either one or two children only or no children. According to Axelrod, this western idea of privacy is one of the main reasons for the low number of marriages and consequently the decline of numbers.

Axelrod further concludes that Parsis prefer to live independently which is not so evident in other communities. In sister communities, graduates were found to be in favour of the joint family system. When several people were asked as to how they would like to spend a holiday — with friends or relations, a majority of Parsis said they would prefer to be with their friends, while the answers were quite the contrary from Saraswat Brahmins and Jains. Westernisation has not changed their views as far as family ties are concerned. They still maintain the joint family system.

In a society where the male member firmly believes that it is his own personal liability to maintain his wife and children the percentage of births is bound to be low.

Eckehard Kulke in his book *The Parsis in India* notes, "The number of Parsi marriages in Bombay did, to be sure, increase between 1901 and 1941 from 379 to 463. This increase of 22 per cent must be compared, however, with a population increase of Bombay Parsis of 29 per cent, so that there is actually a decline in the willingness to marry. The number of divorces simultaneously has increased in the last decades. While, in 1881, 75.9 per cent of all adult Parsis were married and only 16.1 per cent were single, the ratio was almost even in 1911 with 47.4 per cent married and 48 per cent unmarried and had become the opposite in 1931 with 41.4 per cent married and 55.9 per cent single."

Dr Malini Karkal (*Marriage among Parsis, Demography - India, 1975*) states: As many as 40 per cent of the 'never married' males had 'low income' as the reason for their being 'single.' An additional 6.4 per cent males in the group found 'lack of accommodation' as the reason, whereas five per cent expressed that 'low income' and 'lack of accommodation' to be the deterrents to their marriage. Five per cent males said that they did not find a partner who was 'suitable' to their tastes.

"The above statements by the 'never married' males may be indicative of the situation that prevails in the community. The Parsis as a community have achieved a high standard of life. Since the community lives in clusters and is a closed one, deviation from the norm is difficult. Under these circumstances both males and females keep on postponing marriage till a certain level of education and income is achieved. This results in higher ages at marriage."

"High age at marriage of Parsi females coupled with an increasing proportion remaining 'single' has resulted in declining fertility in the community. The inadequate data on completed fertility which shows decline in total fertility rate also supports the feeling that there is a high incidence of voluntary control of fertility among the married. The limitation of fertility among the married may be a result of efforts of the married to maintain the desired socio-economic standards. The decline in fertility over past several years has brought about a decline in the number of young persons. This in its turn has influenced the incidence and the trend of marriages in the community."

With the current trend of Parsi women marrying outside the community, mixed marriages may turn out to be

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an additional cause for the decline in numbers of the Parsi community.

In short, several factors are responsible for the decrease in numbers. The religion propagated by the holy prophet Zoroaster preaches that people should marry and have children so that the universe continues to function. It is surprising that though there are so many sermons on religion and Zoroastrianism, this point is hardly ever stressed.

Ratan R. Marshall
Special Officer
Parsi Punchayet Board, Surat

An appeal to Athornans

Over the last 30 years the number of able Yozdathregar mobeds in our community has been dwindling. There are not enough mobeds to look after our agiaries and atash behrams.

It has also been observed that even after receiving the full training from the Cama Athornan Institute, young mobeds practising mobedi do not earn enough for their maintenance and as such get disheartened and take up service or join other professions.

Realising the frustration of the young mobeds, the trustees and managing committee of the M.F. Cama Athornan Institute have introduced, since July 1977, an attractive scheme for the amelioration of Parsi priests so that more and more young athornans may follow the profession.

As per the new scheme, as soon as a fresh student enters the Institute, the trustees deposit every month Rs 100 in a Recurring Deposit Account in the Union Bank of India for a period of seven years. When a student completes the laid down course of seven years and is ordained navar and maratab from the Institute, and thereafter if he serves in any agiary or atash behram as a full-time mobed for 15 years, then at the end of the said period he will receive a sum of Rs 54,000 at the present rate of interest. In the event of the student discontinuing the Mobedi profession within the 15 years period the accumulated amount will revert to the trustees. In case, however, he is incapacitated or dies within 15 years, the accumulated amount will be paid to the mobed or to his nominee. There is no doubt that the above scheme will be of great financial help to our mobeds.

Some of the students of the Institute have been ordained navar and maratab and have received the full training of a Yozdathregar mobed. Recently one of

the students joined as a full Yozdathregar mobed in one of the atash behrams in Bombay and it is expected that many more will follow suit. In this way, new mobeds will benefit from the above scheme and, in addition, they will also receive subsidies every month.

We also need educated mobeds to maintain the high tradition and tenets of our religion. With this end in view the Institute is going to re-introduce the S.S.C. Course from June 1982, so that the intelligent youth of our priestly class may not be debarred from higher education. Fresh students will be admitted between the ages of six and eight. The Institute will arrange to get admission of the boys for their academic studies in Seth Madhavdas High School at Andheri. The teachers at the Institute will help the students in their studies. Those students who do not wish to go in for the S.S.C. Course will be trained in religious and ritual studies at the Institute. In this way, the Institute will ensure that the community is not starved of well trained and educated mobeds in future. Those students who, after passing the S.S.C. wish to undertake further studies with Avesta and Paharvi as special subjects, will be encouraged and helped



Meal time at Cama Madressa

financially in their college studies by the Institute.

Students who are initiated in the mobedi profession need financial aid. For this purpose the Institute has a separate project. It is arranging to collect large funds and fresh mobeds will be helped from these funds.

As a first step towards the amelioration of Yozdathregar mobeds, the Institute has been giving a subsidy of Rs 150 per month to each of 23 Yozdathregars performing religious ceremonies in Bombay, Navsari, Udvada and Surat. The total subsidy in the year 1980 given to Yozdathregar mobeds amounted to Rs 44,550.

The Zoroastrian culture, religion, rit-

uals and literature has been preserved for thousands of years by the religious heads and savants. When the Institute has devised a scheme for the better education of the athornan boys, it is the bounden duty of all athornans to send at least one son to the M.F. Cama Athornan Institute for being trained as a full-fledged, educated mobed.

For detailed information please contact the Principal, The M.F. Cama Athornan Institute, Cama Road, Andheri (West), Bombay 400 057.

Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy
President

The M.F. Cama Athornan Institute

Deaf Swimming Champ

National Swimming Champion Minoo Anklesaria, though deaf and dumb since birth, has effectively represented Maharashtra State in seven National Swimming Championships, winning in all, nine gold medals, eight silver medals and one bronze medal for the period from 1972 to 1977.

In 1975 he was selected to represent India at the Junior Asian Games at Seoul. He was selected twice for the World Sea Race at Rome in 1979 and in



Anklesaria: no handicap

1981. He was selected for the World Sea Race at Syria in 1981, for swimming the English Channel in 1981 and for the Silent Olympics in West Germany in 1981.

By winning laurels in swimming, Minoo has demonstrated he is not the one to be daunted by his handicap. Till today he has never entered the Handicap Competitions. Even more praiseworthy is that Minoo is an amateur swimmer and not a professional. He is 23 years old and employed as an Inspector in the Quality Control Division at TELCO. This promising young sportsman should be given all possible encouragement and assistance.

Adi J. Patel

Sporting Chance

Three young women cyclists from Maharashtra who required Rs 20,000 each to participate in the World Championships from 23 August to 4 September at Leicester in England, have found sponsors. **Armin Arethna**, **Avan Antia** and **Rakhshin Patel**, have been selected to represent the country at this international event, where Indian cyclists will be participating for the first time in 20 years.

With women's cycling a relatively new



Avan Antia: first woman for state cycling award.

competitive event on the national scene, the girls had to find the funds for coaching and training as well as the return fare to England.

The Maharashtra Cycling Association affiliated to the Cycling Federation of India had also made an appeal for "a sporting gesture" from sports patrons. Cyclists are now allowed to race and train under the sponsor's banner and display the sponsor's name and logo on their clothing and equipment. Prospective sponsors stand to gain considerable publicity.

Avan, 20, the first woman awardee for the Shiv Chatrapati State Award in cycling, is a final year B.Sc (Bachelor of Science) student of St. Xavier's College, Bombay. The winner of several gold and silver medals in the national and state cycling events, she is training under a former national champion, Bapu Malcolm. Rakhshin, 20, also has a

string of national and state wins under her belt including the Junior and Senior National championships for Road Racing. A final year B. Com (Bachelor of Commerce) student of R.A. Podar College of Commerce, Bombay, she has been training with Firdaus Irani, a former state champion.

The youngest of the group, Arethna, 17, is the junior state and national champion, and a student of Std. XII at the Mithibai College of Arts, Bombay. In April this year she rode off with the silver medal at the Asian Cycling Championship in Bangkok, Thailand.

Practicing for almost three to four hours every day, the girls are furiously



Rakhshin Patel: national road-racing champion.

Armin Arethna: national junior cycling champ.



training for the international event. "Unfortunately there is no proper course for us to practice on, here in Bombay, so we ride on the road early mornings and late evenings," says Rakhshin. They hope to leave for England a few weeks in advance of the event for a vigorous coaching programme, to acclimatize themselves to the roads and weather conditions. Moreover cycle parts and accessories for their imported bicycles may also have to be bought.

Expressing happiness about finding the necessary funds, Armin, Avan and Rakhshin feel that their participation in this international event would be a great confidence building experience for them, and an opportunity to witness, meet and learn from the best in the world.

Student-Teacher Association

"To promote a religious and cultural renaissance among students and to bring out their latent talents through competitions and contests" is the goal of the two year old Zoroastrian Student-Teacher Association (ZOSTA), notes a press release issued by ZOSTA president, Ms. D. Doongaji.

Founded by the principals and teachers of some Parsi managed





Activity students' performance of Zoroaster's life.

schools, the association has organized lectures and competitions based on Zoroastrian themes. Last year an art and essay competition was held for students of the various affiliated schools.

At the first scholarship and prize giving function held on 12 March this year, a variety entertainment programme was staged by the participating schools, notes a press release. The programme consisted of songs and dances by the Pandey, Gamadia and Bengalee Girls High Schools, a chair drill by the Avabai F. Petit School, a Yoga demonstration by the Bengalee Girls School, a gymnastics display by the Byramjee Jeebhoy Institution and a historical playlet on the life of Zoroaster presented by the Activity High School.

ZCDI Newsletter

Asthavani, meaning faith, the faith that "a studied, professional, institutionalized approach to community problems is ... essential for a solution", is the spirit behind the newly launched newsletter of the Zoroastrian Community Development Institute. The four-paged, printed, quarterly will keep readers informed of the developments at the Institute, as well as generate ideas, suggestions and comments.

The ZCDI, a project of the Havrash-

tra Foundation launched by Dr Jamshed Modi and others, is involved in several projects including conducting research on the community, compiling a directory of Parsi trusts, microfilming rare and old books and other documents and involving professionals in community affairs.

The first issue of *Asthavani* comments on the Directory of Zoroastrian Trusts (DIZOT) project, a compilation of information on the 1170 trusts in Maharashtra. "DIZOT emerges as the most up-to-date and comprehensive directory of our community resources" comments *Asthavani*, adding, that with this information now on computer, it is hoped that "action groups may emerge to focus on specific programmes for better utilization of community resources".

In an article titled "Some Promising Ideas" suggestions made by readers are published. These include the creation of a medical/engineering college where Zoroastrian youth would have priority in admission, and a Zoroastrian Housing Development Corporation or Bank to make funds available for individual house buyers and for housing on a large scale.

Asthavani also announces the appointment of Ervad Dr Rooyinton Peshotan Peer, 28, as a religious scholar, who will be working part-time on the Encyclopaedia Zoroastrianna pro-

ject for bringing out a "fairly comprehensive reference book on upwards of a thousand terms and concepts in Zoroastrian religion, history and culture." Dr Peer, a Ph.D in Avesta Paharvi from Bombay University is currently a Boyewalla (a priest who feeds wood to the fire) at the Wadiji Atash-Behram in Bombay.

The Institute has also undertaken to 'microfilm' rare and unique books on Zoroastrian religion, history and culture, by means of a specially developed 35mm camera notes the newsletter. Noshir Homi Dadrawalla, 20, project manager assigned to this project, personally undertakes the technical part of filming, with a small committee of scholars to advise him on the project. Several books have been microfilmed by this method, and are available at the Institute office for reference.

Jussawalla's Nature Cure

"Nature Cure", a health book written by Dr. J.M. Jussawalla, a veteran nature cure practitioner, and president of The Nature Cure Practitioner's Guild was released on 3rd May at K.C. College in



Jussawalla: drugless methods.

Bombay. Jussawalla was also felicitated by the Guild on the occasion.

A fellow of the Naturopathic Forest University, Dr Jussawalla is a director and president of the Indian Chapter of the International Federation of Scientific Research Society for the prevention of diseases by drugless methods.

He was appointed a member of the Planning Commission, Government of India, on the health panel, and was honorary director and lecturer at the Physiotherapy Centre for the blind in Bombay. Member and representative of several nature cure organizations, Jussawalla is the author of various publications on nature cure, health and diet.

Steelage: **safe** **and** **sound**



Mr and Mrs K.H. Erani: safe products

"I was young and rash then, and I decided to strike out on my own."

The Bank of Oman, Middle East and the Indian Bank, Madras, have one thing in common: an almost impenetrable security system made by Steelage Industries Ltd., Bombay. The safe deposit vaults, safes, vault doors and currency chests, all bear the 'Steelage' mark. With its P & L account showing a turnover of Rs. 7.5 crores, Steelage entered its golden jubilee this year. For the company, there is a double cause for celebration since over the years it has managed to secure a significant place in the security systems market.

But **K. H. Erani**, the rather reclusive executive chairman and managing director of Steelage doesn't believe much in fanfare. He shuns publicity. For 50 years he has been involved in what he calls "the fight for quality. Top quality is the base of everything," he says. And Steelage products are backed by the technology of those master locksmiths, Chubb and Sons Lock and Safe Company Limited, U.K.

STRIKING OUT

An electrical engineer from the VJTI (Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute), Bombay, Erani, joined Godrej & Boyce Mfg. Co. in 1928. Working for a year as personal assistant to A.B. Godrej, Erani's keen mind spotted the market potential for steel furniture and security equipment. "I was young and rash then," he recalls, "and I decided to strike out on my own."

With a capital base of Rs. 11,000 ("all borrowed") the modest factory of the Allwyn Steel Equipment Company (as Steelage was then called) was set up in Mazgaon in 1932. Initially the product range was limited to office furniture—steel cabinets, almirahs, shelving racks, filing cabinets and desks. A few safes were manufactured and Erani slowly started getting better versed in the technology of security equipment. His previous experience at Godrej had already given him a good grounding in the technology.

In 1933, Steelage supplied safe deposit locker cabinets to the Bombay Bullion Exchange. The concept of collective security was quite new at that time. That same year, they fitted in a strongroom door in a bank at Saharanpur.

Impatient to expand his capital base, Erani shifted shop to Hyderabad in

1942. "There was no income tax applicable in Hyderabad and the government was quite enthusiastic about encouraging the small entrepreneur." The Allwyn Steel Company was established with 50% financial participation from the state and with Erani as managing director. The claustrophobia of working under someone crept on to him and a chastened but wiser Erani returned to his old base, Bombay, in 1948.

He started almost afresh with a new name Steelage Industries Limited—in his old factory depending on his old contacts. Till the Chubb collaboration in 1951, this 'me-too' found it tough going. The market was dominated by Godrej and bankers shooed Erani away when he approached them.

Today all steelage products except those meant for export carry the Chubb brand name," explains **J. S. Jamshedji**,

"A modern safe can have up to 100 million combinations, and the chance of finding the correct combination through trial and error is remote."

joint managing director. In 1951, Erani attended an industrial exhibition in London where he happened to visit the Chubb Stall. This chance encounter led to a fruitful collaboration which has lasted three decades.

ESTABLISHED NAME

This technological piggyback arrangement changed the fortunes of the company which was till then selling Rs. 5 lakhs worth of products annually. Within five years the turnover has spiralled to Rs 60 lakhs. The banks which had earlier refused to even grant an audience to Erani started recognising the existence of his small unit. Today Steelage is an established name as far as the banking industry is concerned, and the customer list includes the Chartered Bank, Grindlays Bank, State Bank of India, Indian Bank, UCO Bank, and even the Reserve Bank of India.

The company has changed its product-mix over the years. Steel furni-

ture forms only a very small part of its output. Now Steelage offers a total security package. This consists of two sections—the physical security division (different kinds of safes—fire and bur-



Jamshedji: creating security consciousness

glary resistant, torch and drill resistant—vault doors and strongroom doors, four types of safe deposit lockers, and small safes and cash boxes); and the fire security division (portable fire extinguishers, fire alarm systems, burglar alarms). The sales ratio is a steady 60:40 for these two divisions.

The Minimax fire equipment division was established in 1971 when Chubb and Sons, UK, diversified into the fire security business and bought over Minimax (UK). As pioneers in the field, Minimax had been supplying fire extinguishers to the Indian market since 1903. When Steelage took over the Minimax operations in India, the company had a limited product range (gun metal fire fighting accessories in addition to extinguishers). The Minimax factory at Ambattur in Madras currently produces a much wider range of fire fighting equipment. Their automatic fire alarm systems and smoke detectors have passed even the rigorous requirements of the Indian Space Research Organisation in Thumba.

HARD NUT TO CRACK

"A modern safe can have up to 100 million combinations, and the chance of finding the correct combination through trial and error is remote. The only way to crack such a safe would be to use an oxy-acetylene flame or explosives," according to J. S. Jamshedji, who took over as joint managing director of his father-in-law's business in 1971

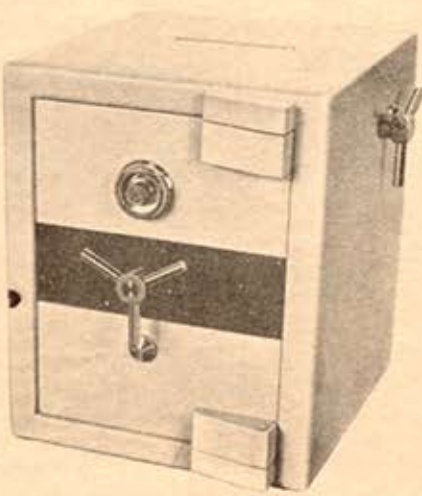
Steelage security is tough to crack. But as Erani admits, "There is no safe in the world that cannot be broken open with the right materials and given sufficient time." Steelage safes are manufactured with the thinner body on the outside and the thicker body inside. The logic being that when a safe is broken open, the going becomes progressively more difficult.

The manufacturing process involves shearing, forming, machining, welding and assembly of steel plates, sheets and structurals. All products are cleaned by the shot blasting process and painted immediately thereafter.

The safes are subjected to strenuous tests to ensure that they really are fail-safe. Jamshedji gives the example of their firesafe record cabinet which has passed a stringent test at the Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee. The cabinet was filled with documents and files and kept in a furnace at 800°C. It was then raised and immediately dropped on a brick rubble bed. Thereafter it was returned to the furnace in an upside down position and subjected to 1,029°C for two hours. At the end of it all, when the cabinet was opened, it was found that the papers had merely turned a little brownish.

Steelage has also developed another tough nut—the only genuine "jewellers" safe in India. Called the torch and drill resisting safe, it can withstand even the 3000°C flame of oxyacetylene cutting equipment. "But professional safe breakers in the west are always one step ahead; they have developed a thermic lance which has a flame of 3500°C. We are lucky that in India, our burglars are amateurish," Jamshedji says with a smile.

Steelage's safeguards



A security system is an expensive affair and could cost up to Rs. 50,000. "The bulk of our clientele consists of banks and large institutions," according to Jamshedji.

SERVICE CONSCIOUS

Today they enjoy the security of a comfortable order book position. But as Jamshedji puts it, "we are in a business where quality control and after sales service is vital." While the normal after sales service is handled by a force of trained mechanics, senior service engineers take care of emergencies.

In this aspect, Steelage follows the pattern of its service conscious collaborator. There is a story of a Chubb executive who was called in by a lady who was unable to open her safe. The code was based on her age. The executive had to ask only a single question before hitting upon the right answer. The lady had apparently forgotten to adjust the combination to take into account her last birthday!

"Quite often the answer may not be so

"We are not selling a product, we are selling security."

simple," comments Jamshedji. The company once received an SOS from a client in the Middle East. That situation required strong arm tactics and the safe had to be broken. Another problem arises when a strong room or vault door gets stuck. In this case the specially built emergency door has to be opened.

While retaining its character of an old fashioned family business, Steelage has also moved with the times. Most of its key executives (administration, manufacturing, marketing, sales and finance) are professionals. But the tenor of the business remains conservative. "We do not believe in overstretching ourselves," Jamshedji says modestly. The employees number over a thousand and they have six branch offices in the four metro cities, and Bangalore and Kanpur and over 70 dealers in a country wide network.

In 1971 Steelage entered the export market exporting security equipment to the Middle East and Africa. Exports do not carry the associate brand name Chubb. The market overseas has been growing steadily to encompass even the most security conscious country—USA,

EFFORTLESS



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where they sell special safes that conform to the highest international standards. In 1974 Steelage installed 89 heavy vault doors in the Rafidian Bank, Iran for a price of £82,575. The current export turnover is Rs. 50 lakhs. "And we hope to double it by 1983," Jamshedji says confidently.

With the customer base expanded to include hotels, offices, and private households in addition to banks, the marketing strategy has been suitably altered. Low key advertising in the general press and by direct mail continues. Recently they have launched a TES (technical evaluation service) campaign. This involves free technical evaluation to people who own safes made before 1940. "Most of these old safes can be cracked open like sardine cans," says Jamshedji quoting his advertisement. "And in an effort to boost sales we are trying to make people more security conscious." The service includes devising the right security system to meet the needs of the organisation. As F.R. Iraqi account controller of Dattaram Advertising Pvt. Ltd., the advertising agency handling the Steelage account, explains, "We are not selling a product, we are selling security."

Backed as it is by the technical excellence of Chubb this is a security, which even old Scrooge would be more than satisfied with.

SUBRATA ROY and NAAZNEEN KARMALI

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November 9-22, 1981

The Tata Heir

"In pursuance of an agreed plan to make way for the younger generation," **Ratan N. Tata**, 44, was elected chairman of the board of Tata Industries in succession to J.R.D. Tata who resigned from this post.

Tata Industries and the apex body, Tata Sons, are private holding and investment companies closely held by the Tata family and public charitable trusts floated by them, and matters of consequence to the Tata industrial units are traditionally decided by the directors of these two companies. Though JRD remains chairman of Tata Sons and several major Tata companies, senior members of the Tata group believe that in all probability Ratan Tata will eventually succeed him as head of the entire group of companies.

Ratan Tata, eldest son of Naval Tata,

and great-grand son of the pioneer, Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, is a bachelor who studied architecture and structural engineering at Cornell University, USA. Following a six year spell at TISCO and then at TELCO, Ratan has been director-in-charge of National Radio and Electronics Corporation (NELCO) and for a while was given charge of the century-old Central India Spinning, Weaving and Manufacturing Mills.

In an interview with *India Today*, a leading national newsmagazine, Ratan Tata spoke of "a strategic plan for the Tatas in the coming years." He would like to see the group expand with the employment of new techniques and new



Ratan Tata: high technology growth

technology. "By and large one would like to see the Tatas get into the higher technology areas, and make greater investments in those areas than they have today." Plans for the future could include growth in areas "such as usage of steel, applications of steel... in vehicles, steel and possibly power and allied industries... I see ourselves growing possibly in processing of foods, in fertilizers and in chemicals."

The man Ratan succeeds, Jehangir Ratanji Dadabhoi Tata, 77, aviator, adventurer, romanticist, businessman and an ardent patron of the arts, heads a Rs 2,000 crore empire which includes power generation, steel, chemicals, computers, textiles and transport. Moreover, taking advantage of the recent shift in Government policy the Tatas plan to expand into core and infrastructural areas, with a massive modernization, diversification and expansion leap that could double the group's present size over the next five years.

Ratan, who could become the fourth generation Tata to head this empire, sees his recent appointment as a chal-

lenge "...it undoubtedly has to be seen that way," he told *India Today*. "It is a challenge. There's a great deal that can be done if one looks at the future."

Livestock Feeds Chairman

RE-ELECTED as chairman of the Compound Livestock Feeds Manufacturers' Association of India, for 1982-83, is **Nadir Burjorji Godrej**, 31, a director of Godrej Soaps and other Godrej enterprises.

A graduate in chemical engineering



Godrej: re-elected

from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the U.S.A., Godrej holds a post-graduate degree from Stanford University in California, and a Master of Business Administration degree from the Harvard Business School in Massachusetts, U.S.A.

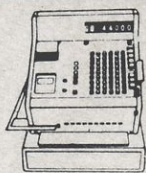
Co-operative's Crore

For the first time the Zoroastrian Co-operative Credit Bank's deposits have crossed the one crore rupee (Rs 1,00,00,000) mark, noted the bank's president Rustom A. Gagrati, at the bank's 54th annual general meeting held in October 1981.

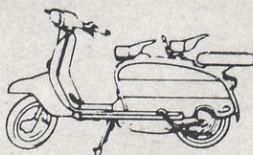
"This performance itself should be considered encouraging in view of the fact that attractive schemes and rates of interest on deposits were offered by non-banking institutions." The profit for the accounts year ending June 1981 is Rs 5,41,911 as against Rs 3,81,160 the previous year, noted Gagrati.

"The Bank plans to enlarge not only

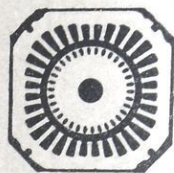
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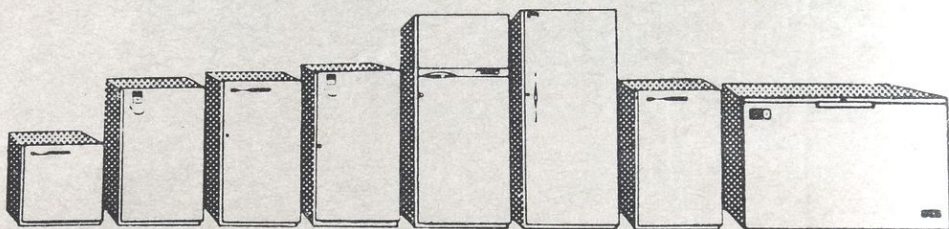
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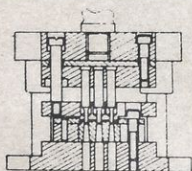
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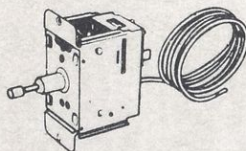
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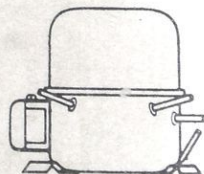
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the volume of business but also to enlarge the scope of its activities," said Gagrati. "The Bank also plans to assist members in various banking facilities and undertake banking operations carried out by other co-operative banks of a like nature."

At present due to various restrictions, the bank's functioning is hampered, noted Gagrati. "On the one hand the Reserve Bank of India has been asking the Bank to enlarge the scope and area of its activities by giving loans, the Registrar of Co-operative Societies has been rejecting the Bank's proposals for diversification of funds and enlarging of business activities...."

"At the Annual General Meeting of the Bank held on 14th October, 1977 we amended the Bye-laws for authorising the Bank to grant loans on security of ownership flats as housing has been a difficult problem for the members of the community and the Bank wanted to help those who were in need of accommodation by giving loans to enable them to purchase flats on ownership basis. The Bye-law was amended subject to the permission of the Registrar of Co-operative Societies. I am sorry to say that the Registrar rejected the amendment in consequence of which the Bank has filed an appeal with the Divisional Joint Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Bombay, and the appeal has not yet been heard and disposed of now for 1½ years notwithstanding various efforts on our part to request the Registrar to expedite the disposal of the appeal."

In the light of the bank's proposed expansion, larger premises are being sought and a separate reserve fund with an initial deposit of two lakh rupees has been created.

The bank's managing committee comprises: Gagrati, Noshir S. Pochkhanawala, Nanabhoy B. Jeejeebhoy, Cowasjee N. Dinshaw, Jehangir F. Shroff, J.J. Gandevia, Homa D. Petit, T.R. Andhyarujina, Homi P. Ranina, B.S. Bulsara and Limji C. Mistry.

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A Liberal Speaks

Firdaus Kanga

Let Parsis Think by Dara Cama, published by the author, Bombay, Price Re 1, pages 45.

Many Parsis today are torn between two sharply differing philosophical trends. Their westernised upbringing has taught them the supremacy of reason. The recent religious revival preaches the importance of faith and the value of mysticism. So the choice before Parsis today appears to be one between abandoning reason and forsaking their religion.

Dara Cama's booklet is important because it provides for a reconciliation between these two conflicting trends. Cama, who is a successful businessman, is the author of three controversial pub-



lications: *Righteousness, We Parsis* and *The Flame*. He is a protestant and an iconoclast, who defines Zoroastrianism as a system of ethics rather than a theology. The problem it deals with is not God but the unethical man. Cama recognizes the "gathas" as the only scripture and rejects all rituals that were not directly preached by Zarathushtra. He refuses to accept prayers and rituals as paths to God. He believes that prayers are educative sermons addressed to men who can achieve happiness by leading the good life preached. Rituals, according to Cama, are almost totally borrowed from the Hindus or from the ancient Indo-Iranian tradition.

Cama's views are radical and are bound to stir up fierce opposition. He calls for the abolition of the "dokhamas" and for the transformation of fire temples into housing colonies. He feels that ceremonies for the dead are useless since a man's acts determine his happiness in life and after death.

"Let Parsis Think" is not a professionally written work.

The language sometimes borders on the pejorative (fire temples are "supermarkets for soul saving devices in demise"), but Cama's perception and rationality make it easy to forget his literary shortcomings. The author detests mental slavery and the surrender of intellectual freedom. His assertion that reason alone can lead to the religion of good living is a philosophical statement that should make every Parsi stop and think.

The review *Bridging the Gap* (Parsiana, May 1982) on the B.P.P. Quarterly Review was by Firdaus Kanga.

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The High Priests of Adoption

"A glorious chapter in India's history repeated itself when Parsi High Priests from Navsari, Udwada and Bombay air-trekked to Delhi to meet the Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi and pleaded their community's case for total exemption from the Adoption of Children Bill 1980, on religious grounds," so notes a press release issued by the president of the Bombay Zoroastrian Jashan Committee, Cowasjee Nusserwanji Dinshaw.

The release goes on to note, "It was 403 years ago in 1578 that a holy Parsi priest Meherjirana by name was invited to the court or 'Durbar' of Emperor Akbar the Great. On 9th February 1982, a scion of the Meherjirana family, the 15th descendant, appeared along with other high priests at the Delhi Durbar of the Prime Minister of modern India, Mrs Indira Gandhi to stand for the protection of the Parsi community which appeared to be in danger of survival due to the Adoption Bill.

"The Priestly deputation comprising of Vuda Dasturji Meherji K. Meherjirana, Dasturji Dr Hormuzdyar K. Mirza, Dasturji Dr Firoze Kotwal,

all the legal issues at great length. The commission appeared to be greatly impressed by the arguments put forward, both religious and legal. A written statement was also handed over to the Commission."

Extracts from the statement:

Dasturjis' Reasons For Praying For Total Exemption From The Adoption Bill:

The priests — Dastoor and Mobeds — of the Parsi community and a large majority of its members are opposed to the application of Adoption Bill to the community and pray for total exclusion for reasons hereinafter appearing.

For a Parsi, the social life is not different from the religious life. The two are interwoven into one inextricable pattern. Social duties and obligations are, for a Parsi, religious duties and obligations, flowing from the commands of the Prophet Zarathushtra. For instance, marriage is a religious sacrament, not a mere legal contract. It is a 'tarikāt', a path towards spiritual perfection. Every Parsi is required to wear, by religious command, the white garment and girdle, called Sudreh and Kushti, throughout his life, wherever he is and whatever he does. This Sudreh-Kushti is not a mere symbol but a spiritual 'Alaat', an instrument of yoga and advancement. Every Parsi is required by religious command to get the ceremonies of his deceased relatives performed. This not only helps the soul of the deceased to advance in his journey in the next world but also helps the living relatives spiritually.

A Parsi is socially and religiously commended to lead an active and truthful married life in the service of his or her family, community, society, country and humanity. The religious tenets and commands are the prescriptions which liberate in him or her the spiritual energy and strength to discharge these duties.

Because of this interwoven social and religious structure, there cannot be a Parsi who is not a Zoroastrian and there cannot be a Zoroastrian who is not a Parsi. Parsi means Parsi Zoroastrian.

There cannot be a person who is not a Parsi by race but is a Zoroastrian by religion. The two are one. And that position flows from the Holy Scriptures, the tradition and the custom. Therefore, there cannot be a convert Zoroastrian, and no conversion is ordained or allowed or enjoined in the Zoroastrian religion.

Scriptures Against Conversion

There is scriptural evidence from the Gathas in support of the truth that Zoroastrian Religion does not and cannot preach conversion.

When Ahura himself has ordained different religions, each should follow the religion of his birth. Any conversion from one to another is against the Divine Plan and therefore, a sin. Not only the prescriptions and yogas of different religions are different but also their devotions (Daenao Vasao; Shyothnao - in Ha 31-11). Each human has a certain wave-length of devotion towards his own Prophet and Religion; and that wave-length is embedded in his gene. This wave-length should not be disturbed either by conversion or a mar-

It is a spiritual truth that because of different wave-lengths in a non-Parsi, a disturbance is caused in the atmosphere.

riage mix-up. That is why Parsis are anxious to preserve their racial gene, which has the religious germ of Zarathushtra embedded in it.

Traditional Evidence For The Concept Of Racial Purity:

The Zoroastrian Religion lays stress on its spiritual institutions and 'tarikāt's. The sacred fire in a fire temple is specially made and consecrated after a long drawn procedure; so also the Dokhma—the sacred Tower for the dead Parsis. These are regarded as the

There cannot be a convert Zoroastrian, and no conversion is ordained or allowed or enjoined in the Zoroastrian religion.

Mobed Framroze Antia and Erwad Kaikhushru N. Dastoor, was received with great respect by the Prime Minister who listened to their memorandum with patience and sympathy. After the discussions, a prayer of blessings was recited by Mobed Framroze Antia. The delegation thanked the Prime Minister for giving them an opportunity to place the religious point of view before her, on the subject.

"The high Priests and Erwad Kaikhushru N. Dastoor, also met the Minority Commission twice and thrashed out



From left: Meherjirana, Mirza, Kotwal, Aloo Chibber, Ms Gandhi, Antia and Dastoor: opting for total exclusion.

places of greatest sanctity. No non-Parsi is allowed to enter them. This does not arise out of any disrespect for a non-Parsi, but is based on a spiritual truth that because of different wave-lengths in a non-Parsi a disturbance is caused in the atmosphere. In the most modern times when ESP is an established fact, when psychotronic generators are at work, when the individual constitution of the experimenter is found to enter into and affect his experiment, the fact of the wave disturbance by a non-Parsi cannot be ruled out.

Only a Parsi born of both Parsi parents is allowed entry in these sacred places; and in the interior room where the sacred Fire burns or where ceremonies are performed, only the Mobed-priest has entry and none else, though a Parsi. Any conversion or any genetic mix-up is, therefore, entirely inconsistent with these religious sanctions, commands, traditions and customs.

The alleged evidence for conversion from religious writings, relied on by some Parsis, is highly twisted and tortured. When Zarathushtra calls upon his disciples to fight evil, these evidence-twisters read fighting to convert! When

Zarathushtra commands to convert evil into good they read conversion of a Mohammedan to a Parsi! For instance, Dr. Dhalla, in his *Zoroastrian Theology*, "The Dinkart sanctions even the use of force for the conversion of the aliens". Thank God, Parsis in India never dreamt of conversion, or use of force for conversion!!

We submit that advocating conversion is a kind of fanaticism. A Christian trying to convert a Hindu will have to say, "My religion is better than yours" or "Christ is superior to Krishna". A Parsi cannot say that, because he is taught by his Prophet that all religions

there can never be a communal riot!

Judgements At Courts

Justice Davar has, in his Judgement in 1901 stated that Zoroastrian religion enjoins conversion. We submit (i) that this is not a correct statement and (ii) that it is not binding on the Parsi Community.

Davar J. has recorded in his Judgement: "That the Parsi Community of Bombay at a public meeting held on 16th April 1905 expressed its disapproval of any conversion being allowed, and are strongly opposed to any such conversion in the present times, and resolved henceforth not to admit even the children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers."

And that Resolution has been followed by several other resolutions from time to time wherein the Community has gone on expressing its disapproval towards conversion and any genetic mix up, whether through a Parsi father or a Parsi mother, by a non Parsi spouse. Such Resolutions were passed in 1942, 1947, 1977, 1978. They are on record of the Institutions under whose auspices they were passed in public meetings. The Parsi Community has never encourage

We do hope that the
Government of India will
not become a party to
our extinction.

emanate from Ahura's Divine Plan and for every man the religion of his birth is prescribed as a path to his salvation. If this truth is appreciated in our country,

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conversion or any genetic mix-up. And we submit on religious authority that there is no distinction between the child of a Parsi mother and non-Parsi father and that of a Parsi father and non-Parsi mother. Both are not Parsis.

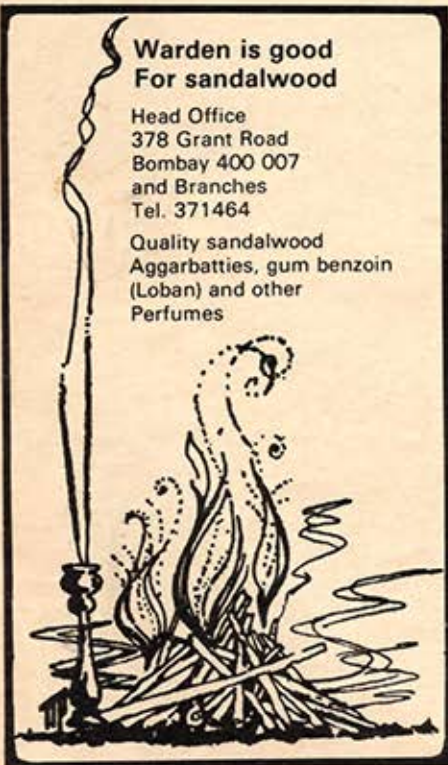
We are firmly of the view that conversion and genetic mix up will lead our community to complete extinction; and adoption will be an active ingredient for such dissolution. This is a grave and serious threat to our very existence. It is a survival problem. We, the Indian Parsis, have rendered meritorious service to the country—right from fighting for its independence to fighting in the battle fields. We do hope that the Government of India will not become a party to our extinction. A community and a religion survives not by mere numbers. External stamping of large numbers as Parsi Zoroastrians without the inherent fire and the in-born racial characteristics would never lead to survival. It would only accelerate a complete mix-up and therefore total wiping off. Our strength has never been in number. Our spiritual and religious equipment is the only source of all our energies and services and the only secret of our survival for 12 centuries in this our great country.

We also submit that any amendment to the Adoption Bill purporting to preserve religious rights would only lead to litigations and all the uncertainties attached to them. We, therefore, pray for total exemption.

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Tehmurasp Sarkari and the Culture of Physiques

Dadi M. Darbary



Physical culture homes instituted from donations by Parsi and Irani trusts and individuals, were a common feature in Bombay between the late twenties and the middle of this century. They were put to advantage by Zoroastrian youths aspiring for the Body Beautiful titles. Among the surviving 'Cultures' is the Sarkari Health Home situated on the second floor of an old structure in the Batliwala compound at Sleater Road.

The lights turn on there, every morning at five, when the first batch of young men starts coming in for a workout. The gymnasium is a hall, a combination of two adjacent rooms of the flat with a coir carpet in one section (to absorb the sound and protect the flooring from bar bells and steel plates).

Besides the usual apparatus such as



Weight training most effective.

the parallel bars, "chin-up" bar, bar bells, dumb-bells and mirrors, one sees a steam bath, vibration machines for massage, a stationary bike and various other gadgets.

The walls are covered with photographs and pictures of muscle men—Sandow, Mc Fadden, Samartino and Sarkari himself.

For added inspiration, some poems and proverbs adorn the walls. "Weakness is a Crime" says one of them. There are four book cases, filled with books and magazines on health and diet. Some twisted remains of thick steel bars and other objects, bear evidence of a variety of feats of strength.

At a table near the entrance, sits Sarkari watching the young men "at work"



The Sarkaris: a business of fitness.

and occasionally calling out "*Chalo have! Vato bandh karo* (come on now, stop the talk) - Get on with your exercises."

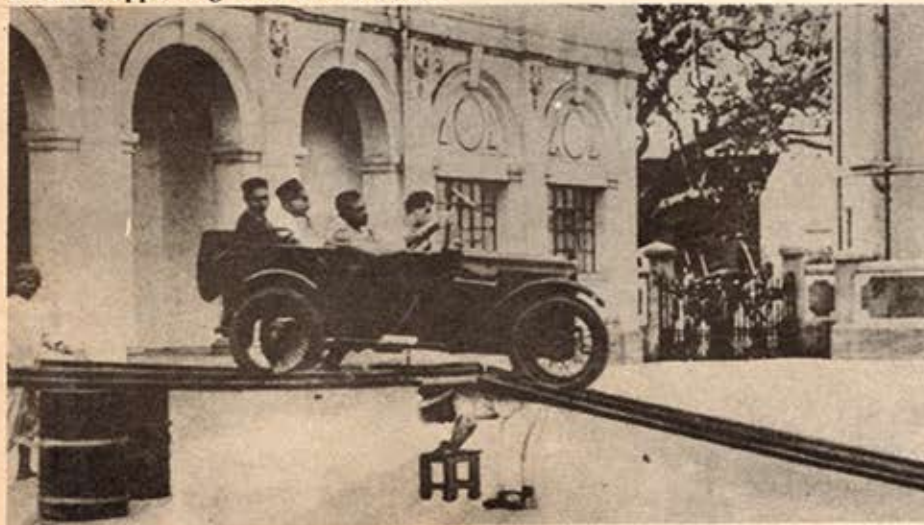
Tehmurasp Hormusji Sarkari who was born at Nargol, will complete 85 years on 3rd September 1982. His wife Jer, who conducts the ladies batches at the gymnasium, also hails from Nargol.

Sarkari's interest in physical culture was first kindled when, as he recalls, he was "declared in school life as possessed of unsound physique and a weak heart."

Following his college education in Bombay, he was appointed in 1924 Principal of the Jeejeebhoy Dadabhoy School, then situated at Lamington Road.

Sarkari's Health Home was first started in 1924 at Patuck House on

Sarkari supporting a car on his back.



Lamington Road. From the beginning, the Sarkaris kept their institution open to all castes and religions. The fees were Rs 3 per month.

During the years 1930 to 1941, there were no less than 400 boys and 50 girls on the rolls of the Health Home. Today, Sarkari's pupils number about 35 boys and 10 women. The fees are Rs 10 per month with an entrance fee of Rs 2. There are extra fees for the use of special apparatus. There are separate sessions, for men and women, spaced from 5.30 a.m. to 12.00 noon and from 4.00 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

The Sarkaris were much in demand for staging physical displays both in and outside Bombay. Their troupe was the first to perform on the stage of the newly opened Eros Theatre, in a special benefit show in aid of the Red Cross, recall the Sarkaris. The troupe also visited Surat and Navsari.

At a show in Poona sometime in the late forties, I first came to know of Tehmurasp Sarkari. There were at least 50 participants in the show, which featured all aspects of physical fitness, from gymnastics and acrobatics to feats of strength. Sarkari's commentary was colourful and fluent. To prove that physical fitness does not decline with age (he had already entered his fifties) he calmly bent some bars around his neck, opened out the links of a thick chain and handed them out to the audience.

Whilst other 'cultures' were founded on funds and donations from trusts and philanthropists, the Sarkaris have all along worked on their own steam. Even

the physical culture shows staged by them, were mainly in aid of charities and deserving institutions. A programme at Panchgani in 1944 fetched a handsome amount of Rs. 11,000 which was donated to the Batha Girls School Fund.

An Englishman who witnessed this show, insisted that a repeat performance be given by the Sarkari troupe the very next day in Poona. Overnight arrangements and preparations were made and tickets were sold out within a matter of hours.

According to Sarkari, the weight training method is the most effective for building the body, but it is always best to follow what is most suited to the individual's constitution, age and other factors.

A self taught physical culturist, Sarkari proudly lists his *chelas* — Nani Palkhiwala, Zubin Mehta, the present Sir Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy, to name a few. A personal friend was Emil Zaiya, the Hungarian wrestler, better known as 'King Kong' who Sarkari remembers as a thorough gentleman.

In Sarkari's opinion, Eugen Sandow was the pioneer of modern physical culture. Among the interesting 'relics' in his 'museum' is the bar bell used by Sandow himself. Another prominent exhibit is a four-foot statue of Sarkari's balanced physique at forty.

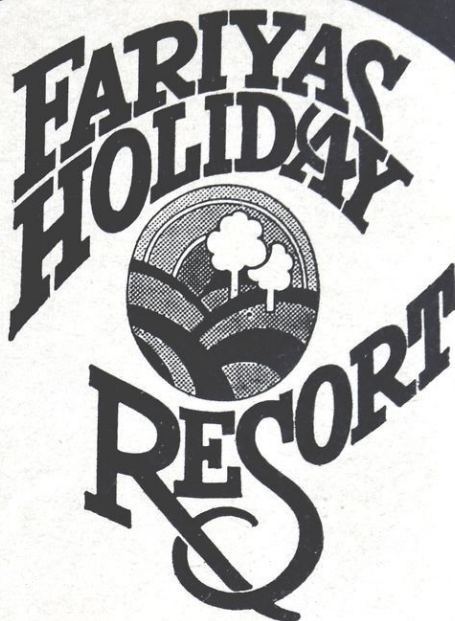
A photograph on the wall shows Sarkari lifting a car on his back. Sarkari explained, "the photo was taken just a moment before the car (with its four occupants) tipped over and fell on the ground due to a slight error in judgement on the part of Odhu, the driver." Fortunately the injuries to the occupants were of a minor nature. Sarkari got a jerk in his back, but was able to perform the feat again seven days later!

Still sought after to judge "Body Beautiful" contests and wrestling bouts, both in and out of Bombay, Sarkari's running commentaries at these events are always a treat.

He believes that it is lack of exercise that brings on heart disease, hernia and digestion problems and adds, "It is never too late to exercise."

Dadi M. Darbary, a personal friend and admirer of T. H. Sarkari, and a 'regular' at the gymnasium, is an architect and an amateur photographer.

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The Parsi Punchayet Case

Petit vs Jeejeebhoy IX

Exclusion of Converts

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 religion 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 Beaman and Justice 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 Manockji 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 have been allowed to come into their fold by the performance of the Navjote ceremony."

Daver in his part of the judgement stated that while Zoroastrianism permitted and enjoined conversion, not a single case of conversion in India was proved before the court.

In the last instalment he specified the difference between a Parsi and a Zoroastrian.

I have not the smallest doubt that, if the contingency of an alien being ever admitted into the religion had been present to the mind of the founders as being even most remotely possible, they would have made special provisions to exclude them. The conditions made by Bisni, when handing over his Tower of the Anjuman, are typical of the feelings entertained by religiously-inclined Parsis of those days. It was only such Parsis as were most religiously-inclined and were devout followers of the tenets of the religion as they understood them then, that would found and endow such Institutions as those the Court is dealing with now.

And if they objected to even a Parsi corpse touched by Durvands being disposed of in the Towers of Silence—if they considered that the corpse of a Parsi was polluted by having a *post-mortem* performed on it, or by even an inquest held on it, or by being brought from up-country through Durvand Agency—how could they be expected to have contemplated a Durvand's body being disposed of in the Towers; for, no matter what five or ten thousand years ago the Zoroastrian religion laid down as to proselytization, their ideas since their advent into India had crystalized into the belief that a Durvand's touch, or even his gaze, was enough to defile a Parsi corpse, and if such a corpse in not allowed to be carried to the Towers for disposal and is placed on a Chotra or an unused Tower, how could they be supposed to have contemplated the possibility of a Durvand corpse being carried to the Towers so zealously guarded from even the approach of a Durvand? A Durvand Zoroastrian was a being who never entered their thoughts.

To my mind, the language is clear and unambiguous. The Plaintiffs, however, argue that the language is capable of including, and does include, Juddin Converts. If the interpretation sought to be put by the Plaintiffs was to prevail,

the Plaintiffs would succeed in encompassing the disintegration and ruin of the whole Parsi community. We were told by the learned Counsel for the Defendants that the Parsis were proud of the fact that there were no street beggars and professional prostitutes amongst the Parsi Community and the Community took care of its own paupers and cripples. If the Plaintiffs' contentions prevailed, the Community would very soon have no reason to boast of these characteristics of their race, and the Parsis would soon cease to exist as a Community by reason of the rapid invasion of all pauper Sweepers and Dubras of Gujerat, who would, no doubt, be attracted to the *Holy Mazdasi religion* by reason of the 53 lacs of rupees in the possession of the Defendants, and the other advantages of belonging to the Anjuman of the Holy Zoroastrians of Bombay.

It must be remembered that the question must not be judged from the standpoint that, in the present instance, the Plaintiffs are fighting for the admission of an educated and cultured lady, belonging to one of the most civilized nations of Europe. That is a mere accident. If the Court had to take into consideration "cogent reasons of convenience," it would necessarily have to consider what would be the immediate and natural result of reading the documents in a way which would throw open the door to general and promiscuous admissions of converts.

As, however, I have said before, there is no necessity, so far as I am concerned, for departing from the ordinary rules of construction. As Mr. Jiwangi Mody pointed out in his evidence, the Parsis of India constitute distinct communities at the various places where they have settled down. We have the Parsi Anjuman of Bombay, the Parsi Anjuman of Surat, the Parsi Anjuman of Navsari, the Parsi Anjuman of Calcutta, of Madras, and even of such places as Cambay and Ootacamund, where there are only



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When a male of the Zoroastrian Community
is seen with any female
of alien creed, then excommunicate him.

a very, very limited number of Parsis. When establishing Charitable Institutions, or endowing Funds for religious or charitable objects, the ruling idea appears always to be that it is for the benefit of the Community of the place where the Institution is founded or the Fund is endowed.

Wherever Parsis settle down in a place in sufficient numbers to feel the want of a Tower or an Agiary or Fund for maintaining an establishment of corpse-bearers, they founded these Institutions either by general subscriptions amongst themselves, or some wealthy charitably-inclined Parsi founded them at his own expense. The Institutions and Funds are for the use and benefit of the Community of that place. New comers, who settle permanently in the place, contribute towards the upkeep of the Institutions and add to the Funds according to their means on all auspicious and un auspicious occasions. When some co-religionist visits the place, he is, as a matter of course, allowed to use the Agiary of the place, and if he should die in the place, he would be carried to the Tower of Silence of that place; but unless he has settled down in the place he is not a member of the Anjuman of that place.

Supposing a party of Parsis was travelling in Gujerat, they would all be allowed, without question, to go into the Atash Behram or Agiary of the places they visit, to say their prayers, to make their obeisance to the Sacred Fire, and present sandalwood to the Fire Temple, and make money presents to the priests attached to the Institutions. If some one of the party died, his corpse would be carried to, and disposed of in, the nearest available Tower. The mere extension of those privileges do not make them the members of a particular anjuman of a particular place. The Institutions and Funds that are the subject-matter of contention in this suit were all of them endowed and founded for the *Parsi Community of Bombay*,

and every expression used conveys but one meaning, viz., that they are for the use and benefit of the members of that Community.

On this subject, it is important to remember that we are not asked to construe formal documents founding the Institutions. They are more or less informal documents, relating in some way to the Institutions, none formally founding any one of them, such as a Deed of Conveyance or a Declaration of Trust.

It is also of importance to remember that, in many instances, there are no documents at all. For instance, there are no documents relating to three of the most ancient Towers out of five; there are no documents relating to one of the Sagdis; there are no documents relating to the Fort Nasakhana and the Sagdiwalla's house; and the only document relating to the Baharkote Nasakhana is a release passed by the Executors of the Founders years after the death of the Founder.

How is the court to ascertain the Trust relating to these Institutions, which are the greater portion of the Institutions in question in the suit? By ascertaining the usage prevailing in the Community and by the tenets of the Founders. The Court must ascertain the intentions of the Founders, by first ascertaining what has been the usage prevailing in the Community and what were the tenets of the Founders of those charities. That is what the learned counsel for the Plaintiffs has himself urged. I entirely concur in this view, and am willing to apply those tests to find out who were the objects intended to be benefited by the Founders of these benefactions.

What has been the usage prevailing amongst the Parsis? They have been in India for over 1200 years. The Plaintiffs' side have spared no expense or labour to prove that it is the usage amongst the Parsis to convert Juddins and admit them to their religion. How have the

efforts of the Plaintiffs succeeded? They had to resort to witnesses like Sorabji Punthakey to prove instances of conversion. In think I am doing no injustice to the Plaintiffs when I say that they realized that their efforts hopelessly broke down. It was stated they had more evidence of the same kind. Why did not they call it? But supposing, for one moment, that the instances the Plaintiffs' witnesses spoke of, inclusive of the two converted Negroes-who, I believe, existed in Sorabji's imagination alone, would that prove usage in a large community spread over many centres of India?

The attempt to prove that it was customary amongst the Parsis to convert Juddins hopelessly broke down, and it appeared to me that it was deliberately, and at the same time most wisely, abandoned. Then, is the usage proved by such instances as the supposed conversion of Akbar to Zoroastrianism at some time of his life, or by the supposed secret conversion of three learned Pandits mentioned in the Dhup Nirang? The Plaintiffs form a powerful combination - powerful in the possession of wealth, influence, and position; and if they so hopelessly failed to establish, to the satisfaction of the Court, one single instance of an authentic conversion of a Juddin to Zoroastrianism, it is not an unfair presumption that they failed - not for want of means to procure evidence, if it existed, and not for want of strenuous efforts: they failed because they attempted to prove a usage that never existed.

Then let us examine what were the tenets of the Founders. There is not the smallest difficulty in ascertaining the tenets of the Founders. Take a letter written to a Parsi at Poona by the whole Anjuman of Bombay on the 17th June, 1824. It is written in the name of the whole Anjuman of Bombay and signed by the then most leading members of the Community. It says:

"Without the permission of the Bombay Punchayet, (you) shall not give per-



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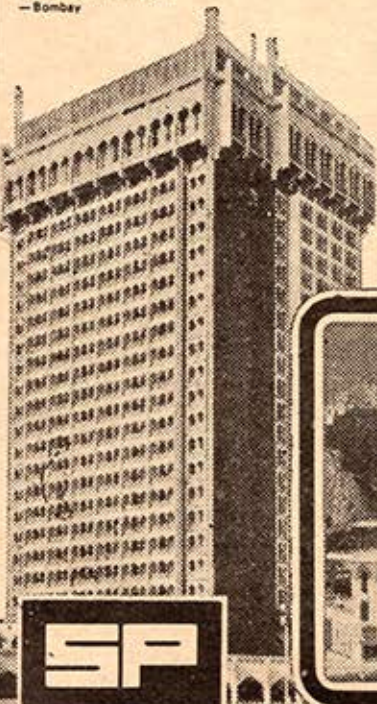
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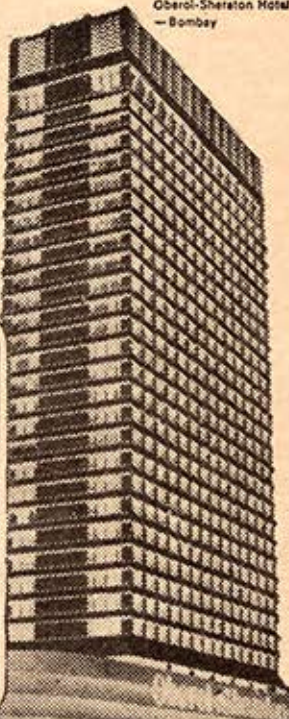
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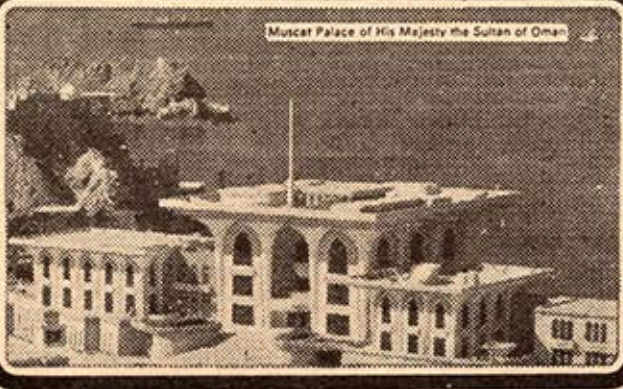
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It appears that in the year 1828
immorality amongst the men
of the Community was on the increase.

mission to any man, whose wife may be living, to marry a second wife; (you) shall not give permission to any woman (whose husband may be living) to marry a second husband; and (you) shall not give permission to invest with the sacred shirt the child by a woman of alien creed."

Take a letter addressed by Cursetji Maneckji, a member of the Punchayet, to his colleagues, on the 10th of August, 1826. It seems that a Parsi gentleman had a Parsi servant, named Navla, who put on a Sudra on a woman of an alien creed and kept her in his house. The master of this man was ordered to "get the Londi's (slave's) Sudra taken off by the hand of the said servant Navla." Mr. Cursetji calls a meeting of his colleagues to consider the conduct of this man, and after reciting the order to take off the Sudra and liberate the Londi, he says:—"We, all the persons sitting in the Punchayet, together shall tell the said Parsi servant Navla what we may think necessary to tell him, so that *no one may do such a thing again.*"

The same letter refers to a boy about whose origin there seemed to be some doubt and suggests inquiries into the matter.

It appears further, that in the year 1828 immorality amongst the men of the Community was on the increase, and the question of what are called "outside children," that is children by alien mothers, was being discussed. In a letter written on the 12th December, 1828, by Wadiaji Nowroji Jamshedji to Framji Cowasji and Jamsedji Jijibhai, he indignantly complains that some people invest such children without the permission of the Punchayet, and when other people ask for permission, it is withheld. He deplores the uncertainty respecting the children born of alien mistresses and says:

"Therefore, in accordance with what was decided by Wadiaji Jamsetji, give public notice to the Community, and whenever there are such children, do not give permission at once to take them (in

the Community), you make a firm *buu-dobust* at once. When a male of the Zoroastrian Community is seen with any female of alien creed, then *excommunicate him, and at his death he should not be put in the Tower of Silence even.* Then they will take care; and if you make such strong *minutes* while sitting in the public, then this matter can be remedied after great trouble."

The agitation against admitting children born of Parsi fathers by alien mothers seems to have continued, and the suggestions in this letter were eventually carried out; for it appears that the whole Parsi Community, "rich and poor, young and old," met at a Fire Temple on the 11th of August, 1830, and passed most drastic Resolutions against the admission of such children. The Resolutions recite that much harm was caused to the religion by taking into it the children by kept-women, and therefore it was definitely decided that thenceforth no such children were to be invested with Sudra and Kusti, and the pains and penalties of excommunication and other punishment are prescribed against the priests who may *stealthily* invest such a child. Any family who harboured such a child is ordered to be also excommunicated. One has to read the Resolutions to realise how intense must have been the feeling in 1830 against the admission of even children by Parsi fathers.

From an account of a meeting of the Punchayet, held on the 29th of July, 1835, it appears that a Parsi brought an infant illegitimate child of his to his relations in Bombay and, representing that it was a Parsi child, got the usual ceremonies performed and had the child carried to the Tower. The account states how the Tower had to be re-purified, how the Burushnum of the officiating priest was taken as broken, and how the whole family of the Parsi was excommunicated, so much so that the priests were prohibited to perform any religious ceremonies in connection with that family.

That the Resolutions passed in 1830 by the Anjuman were not dead letters, but were rigorously enforced, is evident from two instances, where it was proved that illegitimate children of Parsis were invested by priests, the Punchayet, at their meeting held on the 28th of June, 1836, resolved to call a meeting of the Anjuman to have all the priests and the Parsis concerned excommunicated.

It appears that at a meeting of the Punchayet, held on the 20th of July, 1850, it was resolved that certain priests, who invested the illegitimate children of a Parsi by his mistress of another creed, should be punished by being prevented from performing any function in any of the Fire Temples, which practically means deprivation of the means of earning livelihood as priests any longer.

In the earlier part of my judgement, I have referred to an account of a Punchayet meeting, held on the 17th of August, 1818, given in the "Parsi Prakash." It appears that a Parsi brought an illegitimate daughter of his from Thana and begged the permission of the Punchayet to allow the child to be invested with Sudra and Kusti. This permission was given after considerable difficulty, and it was resolved that thenceforward no child of a Parsi by an alien wife was to be invested without the permission of the Punchayet.

The facts to be gathered from these Exhibits appear to be that, in the early part of the last century, Parsi children by alien mothers were allowed to be invested with Sudra and Kusti without much difficulty, but when the evil grew, there was opposition to this practice, and at first such practices were sought to be restricted by making the previous permission of the Punchayet necessary, but later on the feeling against such admissions grew stronger and it was resolved not to admit such children at all, and various pains and penalties were prescribed for those who transgressed the Resolutions passed by the Anjuman.

To be continued

The CAMA CHRONICLE



If there was one story that Muncherji Cama enjoyed relating, it was about the newspaper he loved, *The Bombay Samachar*.

About how as a young businessman, he had sold goods to the paper's management only to find the bills unpaid. The oldest newspaper in Asia had fallen on bad times; even its publication was irregular. Finally he stepped in as a creditor and took over the reins of the bankrupt concern.

Despite having no experience in running a newspaper, Cama and his family slowly turned the company around. At the time of his death on 15 January, 1982, the *Samachar* was one of the most respected publications in the country and among the handful to incorporate the latest printing technology.

The glowing tributes paid to the 86-year-old publisher were well deserved. Resolutions praising his contribution to civic life and the newspaper profession were passed at a Sheriff's meeting held on 14 April at the Tata Auditorium and a Parsi Zarthoshti Anjuman meeting convened by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, on 25 February at the Framjee Cawasjee Institute.

"Muncherji Cama bought a paper and converted it into a national institution," noted eminent jurist, Nani Palkhivala at the Sheriff's meeting. "Muncherji believed that no community could survive unless there is a continuous process of rejuvenation... it was (his) endeavour to ensure that neither his own community, nor the nation stood still."

Under Cama's stewardship, the *Samachar* was in the forefront of social change, especially in the community. Time after time, the paper took up unpopular causes which earned Cama the wrath of numerous groups and individuals claiming to represent the orthodoxy. Even the holding of the Parsi Anjuman meeting was opposed by several religious zealots.

By convening the Anjuman meeting, the BPP, presided over by Dr Aspi Gollwalla, paid Cama great tribute. For it was the *Samachar*, more than any other paper, that battled the BPP over the course of the years. "In his death, the Parsis have lost a leading community member," noted the Anjuman meeting resolution.

Russy K. Karanjia, editor and publisher of *The Daily* and the *Blitz Weekly*, the latter having been printed for several years at Cama's press, said at the Sheriff's meeting, "I can never forget that

fine, splendid figure in white; broad-shouldered, strong, tough, always dressed in the long Parsi coat with his head crowned with a black shining pugree. That was his orthodoxy and, I think, in that orthodoxy lay the values associated with his life and career."

Among the papers that Cama published were *The Bombay Chronicle* and *The Bombay Sentinel*. "It was here that was reared a whole generation of young men... who were nationalists at heart, who knew what the freedom struggle meant, who fought and braved all the onslaughts of the biggest and mightiest Empire in the world," said Karanjia. "And behind them, anonymously, in an atmosphere of total self-effacement stood this giant of a man. His greatest contribution I think, was to keep those papers alive."

Cama's newspapers not only fought for the principles they believed in, but also in times of calamity raised sizable public funds. When disaster struck the Gujarat township of Morvi, the *Samachar* raised 35 lakh rupees for the stricken people.

The *Samachar's* greatest appeal is amongst the merchant Gujarati community in Bombay. "We in the share bazaar respected this paper so much that for us it had become more a habit than a newspaper," said Laldas Jamnadas Vora, president of the Bombay Stock Exchange, the largest and most important in the country. "Till we got *The Bombay Samachar* in our hands, tea had no taste for us... we respected *The Bombay Samachar* for the dependable news it gave."

Born on 25 June 1895 in Bombay to Nusserwanji Muncherji Cama, a lawyer, and Virbaiji, a grand-daughter of the first Sir Dinshaw Petit, Cama was a graduate of Bharda High School and Elphinstone College. Along with two others, Cama founded the firm of Cama, Norton and Company in the early 1920's, the concern that provided printing materials to *The Bombay Samachar* and inadvertently launched Cama into the newspaper business.

Aside from attending to his own papers, Cama was a founder member of the Indian Audit Bureau of Circulation, a president of The Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society, a member of the International Press Union and leader of the Indian delegation to the Commonwealth Press Union meeting in Canada and New Zealand.

Throughout his life he supported charitable causes. Only a few years prior

મુખ્ય : ૧૫ જુલાઈ ૧૯૮૨

મુંબઈ સમાચાર

THE BOMBAY SAMACHAR

મુજબ : ૧૫ જુલાઈ ૧૯૮૨, રવિવાર, ૧૫ જુલાઈ ૧૯૮૨

ચાલુ રહેલી ધમાલિકા : શ્રીમંતરણા અને ત્રણ સભ્યોના રાજીનામા
કર્ણાટક ઇંદિરા
કોંગ્રેસમાં ભંગાગ

રાજ્યના ચાર માફક પ્રધાનોની
ટેલીફોન બેઠકમાં નમણાપ

મુંબઈ સમાચાર

to his death, he donated a building to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet which the latter sold for 13 lakh rupees, noted Shiva R. Vakil, an erstwhile trustee of the BPP, at the Anjuman meeting. Only a person who truly loved his community would have made such a gift, said Vakil.

Though his age and health did not permit him to work a full day, Cama accompanied by his wife, Avabai (nee Jeejeebhoy), made it a point to attend the red brick, *Samachar* building in Bombay's Fort area. History surrounds the building: in front is Horniman Circle, named after a former Editor of *The Bombay Chronicle*, Benjamin Horniman; the road on which the building stands is named after the Editor of *The Bombay Sentinel*, Syed Abdullah Brelvi; and a little further, one of the main arteries of the business section is named Bombay Samachar Marg.

Though the building and the decor are reminiscent of former times, the latest printing technology has, and is being introduced. With the company safe in the hands of his sons, Nusserwan and Rustom, and in turn their sons active in the concern, Cama and Avabai would pass a pleasant two or three hours at the office inquiring about developments, chatting with visitors, commenting on the day's news. Guests were treated to large cups of tea, sandwiches and biscuits. Cama had a wry sense of humour and enjoyed a good laugh.

His dress and demeanor often belied his keen and perceptive business mind and the considerable influence he was capable of wielding. Bereft of any ostentatious display of wealth or position, his strength derived from his inner conviction and a belief in the righteousness of his cause. It was those qualities that made him and his paper, admired and respected.

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Aek Atmakatha

The Priest And His Parish

The Life of Dastur Dhalla XXV

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 25th 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 concerns was the intellectual, spiritual and financial condition of the priesthood. In the last four issues of Parsiana Dhalla spoke of "the accident of birth creating our dastors and our mobeds," and of the steps taken to create a more enlightened priesthood.

Gool and Behram Rustomji: English translators of Dhalla's autobiography.



We had not been able to visit Bombay for six years since I had lectured there in 1930 on our return from America. On the seventh year, by chance just when I was 61, I had to go to Bombay to lecture. Jehangir Hormusji Cama, the enthusiastic administrator of the Cama Athornan Institute, on behalf of his organization, invited me to deliver a series of eight lectures and I accepted the invitation. He had selected the topics of the talks and had appointed chairmen from the orthodox as well as the reformist sectors. All these arrangements I willingly accepted. Besides these talks I delivered six additional lectures in Gujarati and English under the auspices of other societies.

The lectures were very well received by both factions of the community. Arising from that, all kinds of rumours were afloat. Some believed that my former infidelity had given way to religious wisdom! Others thought that I had at last abandoned the path of pride and had turned my steps to the pathway of truth. Still others said that I had retrenched my footsteps from the reformist camp and had returned to the orthodox way of thinking!

Only once had there been a change of heart in the innermost recesses of my being and that was during 1905-1908 while I was studying in New York. Since that time I have not experienced any reverses. The change of opinion regarding religious thought, prayer, ceremony, conventions and customs that had been effected as a result of my new education, instead of diminishing, had been strengthened and had become firmer with increasing and advanced study. But as an outcome of my long and close association with the controversies of the East and West regarding orthodoxy and liberalism, the mode and manner of presenting those views witnessed a major change. My critics were misled by this altered manner of presentation.

In my youth I believed that I was a reformist, a disputer and a debater of superstitious beliefs. So, through speeches and writings I entered into religious controversies with vigour. The Zoroastrian religion enjoins upon man not to be satisfied by being good himself but to make wicked neighbours good also. It is his duty to turn the footsteps of a mistaken brother to the right path. Therefore, at first I believed that in matters relating to religion, ceremonies, and the practice of conventions and customs, should someone fail to behave according to what seemed valid and cor-

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rect to me or should they preach doctrines contrary to mine, it was my duty to oppose them verbally and in writing.

Carried away by this sentiment, at times my sermons and speeches were tinged with criticism and curtness, irony and derision. Replies and counter-replies had to be printed and distributed free of charge in every home. True scholarship demands peace of mind. Instead, I found that these disputes and despatches hampered my studies. Therefore, I resolved henceforth to keep away from such digressions as far as possible.

Superstition is born of ignorance and knowledge is its sole panacea. Enlightenment eradicates superstitious notions and beliefs. In spite of this many men and women belonging to the most highly educated nations are not able to rid themselves completely of superstition because of their own mental make-up. Superstitions regarding good and bad days, auspicious and inauspicious occasions are found more in the less-educated environment of the East than in the West. Even today auspicious events are not commenced on the New Moon Day or other such supposedly 'difficult' days.

At the inaugural sessions of the

Zoroastrian Conference its convenor had invited 10/12 of its chief members to lunch at his residence. It happened to be the 'Kali Chaudas' day. On entering the portals of our leading reformist friend, much to everyone's amusement, we found the eggs had been broken on every threshold. As late as the last century we sacrificed goats and hens on auspicious and inauspicious occasions. The innocent symbols of those sacrifices linger in the breaking of eggs on such 'difficult days' as also on happy occasions like Navjotes, weddings etc. My wife only feeds us on eggs. She does not felicitate even the in-laws with eggs. Such minor and major superstitions prevail amongst the old-fashioned as well as the so-called fashionable members of our community. Formerly I waged a tirade against such things. Now I ascribe them to human weakness and hoodwink them as far as possible.

Adversity, affliction, calamity and disease harass men and make them desperate and helpless. At such times even the sane and sensible lose their mental balance and the wise grow foolish. A fatal malady befalls a beloved one and no remedy seems to have any effect. The obstinate illness defies medical science and subjugates it.

Those who do not view a neighbour's religion with tolerance in ordinary times, when assailed by a long-standing, incurable malady, without a moment's hesitation willingly accept any genuine or fake hope of a remedy through conversion. A drowning man clings to a straw. Some Zoroastrian invalids, even today, in the airy hope of being rid of their suffering go through life moaning and groaning, wearing amulets and charms and magical strings of beads and crosses of Hindus, Muslims and Christians. What can we do but extend our sympathy and our prayers to those unfortunate beings weighed down by a fatal and unbearable disease, void of all hope and passing their days and nights in sorrow and suffering?

As time passed, I realized that arguments regarding religious beliefs, ceremonials and conventions, such as, whether prayers should be recited in the ancient sacred language or in modern, comprehensible tongues, whether ceremonies performed for the dead reach them or not, whether or not the recitation of the Patet—"the prayer of penance"—by the living can curtail the sins of the deceased, whether the Zoroastrian faith propounds reincarnation or not, whether flesh-eating

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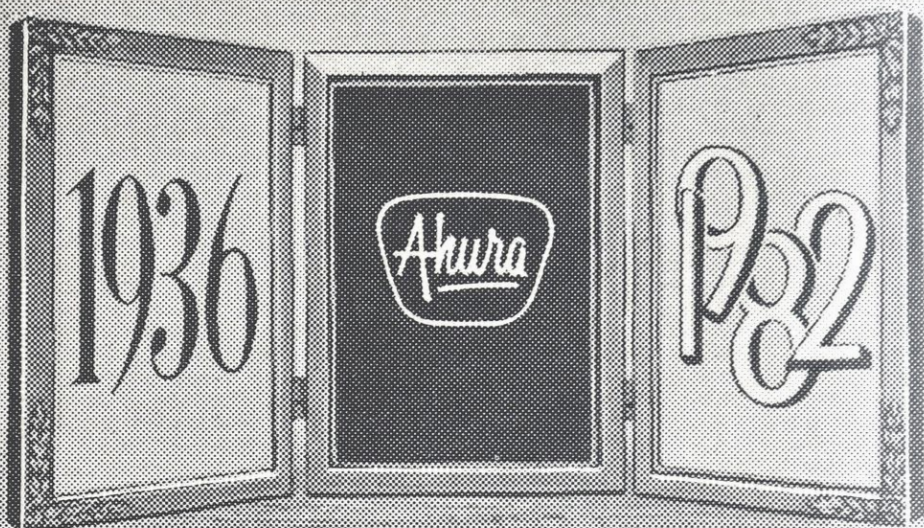
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is permissible or not, do not yield the practical result of altering the opponents' opinions. Each, according to his own mental make-up, believes his own opinion to be true and just and is bent upon proving himself correct by expounding all sorts of true and false theories. The soundest of arguments fall on deaf ears and fail to convince. What suits a particular taste and temperament alone seems to be true and valid—all else is false.

Finally I came to the conclusion that if a certain religious belief, a particular philosophy or the rigid observance of conventions brings peace and solace to a person, is valuable in forming his character and helps him to move onwards on the path of righteousness, it is not necessary to enter into argument with him even if those theories conflict with our own principles.

Lacs of rupees have been ear-marked for ghambar festivals in many towns and cities. I had publicly lectured against it, initially 50 years ago, and continued to oppose it for quite some time. After the closing sessions of the First Zoroastrian Conference, its President and I were given a dinner. About 600 ladies and gentlemen participated in the feast. The fee for the dinner was Rs.5 per head. The following day we were strongly criticized by the opposition papers that 3,000 rupees had been wasted on food. On the one hand a great deal is being said and written against the ghambar feasts, while on the other the inhabitants, industrialists, societies and clubs of various towns and cities collaborate to demand additional ghambar dinners and large sums of money are expended.

Besides, a new custom has found its way into the community, of celebrating Navjotes with dinners as grand and as expensive as those given at weddings. Likewise, besides birthday, engagement, adarni and madavsara dinners, parties, picnics and entertainment are on the increase. Whereas the average ghambar meals cost seven or eight annas per person, the multicoursed dinners at betrothals etc. entail an expenditure of Rs.3 to Rs.7 per head. It is not unusual for larger dinners to cost even Rs.10 to Rs.12 per head. The funds ear-marked for ghambars are easily noticed. But if an unprejudiced account is drawn up of the capital that would be needed to yield an interest to meet with the thousands that are spent on dinners on auspicious occasions annually, it will be evident that the amount will greatly exceed the

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sums that are set aside as ghambar funds.

Gradually I came to the conclusion that if the community wastes wealth like water for the pleasure of aristocrats, how can we blame various Anjumans for spending in good faith, to feed thousands of poor and middle-class people? With such thoughts, I ceased my tirade against ghambar feasts.

For a learned Dastur to satisfy both the orthodox and the reformist party today is as difficult and as impossible as it is to remain a reformist of the Arya Samaj group and to gratify patrons of an extreme orthodox view-point; or, in politics, to remain a radical and please the conservatives. It does not appear as though our community understands this. Neither does the orthodox sect realize it, nor do the reformists. Today the lay congregation of a reformist Dastur comprises of a few reformists and several conservatives. Besides, his co-workers are all orthodox. In spite of that men and women belonging to the reformist group think and believe and desire that even in such an environment a reformist Dastur can scorn all conventions, can proselytise, can cremate the dead and can bring about the most drastic reforms.

The history of religions teaches the infallible lesson that this is impossible. Many of the questions that are discussed from religious platforms are restricted to their own fold. It is not possible to put them into practice without creating new and independent sects. Let us take a simple example of this.

A devout Zoroastrian's day begins with the recitation of 'shakuste shakuste shaitan', words warding off the evil spirit. The bull's urine has a place in his daily life and is the backbone of ceremonies. Just as the former Maharaja of Jaipur took along with him pure drinking water, grain, palm-leaves to serve as plates etc. when he proceeded to England for the King's coronation, some Parsis took a bottleful of 'taro' with them when they went to England in olden days.

A co-religionist of Karachi proceeding to Africa had told me that he had taken a bottle of 'taro' with him to use on board the ship. Some recited prayers once or twice and with pious feelings drank a tiny bowlful of taro, while others took the annual consecration bath, purified the body with 'taro' and, after holding 'baj', drank it in order to purify the mind and heart. Even today this is done by some people.

Those who have acquired modern education have begun to voice their disgust against the use of bull's urine since the middle of the last century. Dadabhai Naoroji and other reformists had started a major campaign against the use of 'taro,' but upto date no one has been able to abolish its use in ceremonials nor will anyone succeed in doing so. It seems that there is no latitude for launching an investigation into the good or evil effects or the advantages and disadvantages of this custom.

The traditional, sanctified 'taro' or 'nirang' has become an essential ingredient in our ceremonials. It has become an integral part of the most sacred rituals. Since such a high premium has been placed upon it, despite the most vehement propaganda of reformists, it will not be removed from Fire Temples and Atashbehrams, unless and until a new sect is formed in which the Varasia and Nirang have no place, and a new Atashkadeh is established, run by new Mobeds.

A new custom has found its way into the community, of celebrating Navjotes with dinners as grand and as expensive as those given at weddings.

From time to time, as a Dastur of the community, people from various cities invite my opinion on a variety of subjects. It is a Dastur's duty to reply to appeals for clarification concerning religious matters. But these days there seems to be no limit to such topics. Very often questions are asked about matters that can easily be solved by applying a bit of common sense. Not stopping at appealing to Dasturs, Ervads and scholars answers are also invited from people who have no scholarly authority to express an opinion. Thus, many printed questionnaires are sent out. No differentiation is made between physicians and quacks.

Formerly, for many years, I tried to give mental solace by replying to all and sundry. But now at times, I find all bounds of question-answers being crossed, so I am obliged to disappoint a few. The number of questions asked range from five to 25 or even more. A kind gentleman living in Karachi sent me a questionnaire containing questions

on matters relating to philosophy and to ceremonials. I informed him, most politely, that some of his questions were such that each demanded two or three written pages of clarification. Life is short and my personal study takes toll of several hours a day, hence I regretted I could not spare time to answer his numerous questions. He wrote to me again that I should send even very brief replies. I did not comply with his request, so he complained about me in the Bombay papers that I had failed to fulfil my obligations as a Dastur whose duty it was to give clarification to his laity on religious matters.

The questions that are asked relate mainly to ceremonies and conventions. While replying to such questions I have to deal in the following manner. Claims that are made in courts of law can be dispensed with only according to rules within the constitution. At times, while passing judgement over a particular case, even if the law-giver feels that the rule in the law-books is faulty, he cannot contradict it and pass a sentence according to his own judgement. At that time he is bound to judge in accordance with the established law. Later, he may draw the attention of the government to the defect and, if his objection appears valid, the legislative council would make the necessary alteration in the law and future judgements would be passed accordingly.

In replying to questions concerning ceremonies and conventions I do not give my personal opinion as a thinking individual or as a humble scholar or as a reformist, because I have no authority to do so. I am the Head Priest of an Anjuman that is 75% conservative and of a performing priest-class that is 99% orthodox. These gentlemen consider the later Pahlavi and Pazend books and Iranian Ravayats as authentic law-books on customs and conventions, hence my replies are perforce based mainly in conformity with their teachings.

Even in matters of prayer and ceremonials, in very few instances have I to attempt to differ slightly from the established method. There is a custom amongst us to make the initiate recite the 'Patet' prayer during the Navjote ceremony. It is the opinion of many that the sins that have been enumerated in this prayer are improper for an innocent child to recite. If this prayer were recited in a comprehensible language the proclamation of some of the sins before the audience would seem impolite. The

Rahnumai Mazdayasnan Society first took up this question in the latter part of the last century. Ervad Sheriarji Bharucha cut out certain objectionable portions and published an abridged edition known as 'Patet-i-Burzigideh.' But the community paid no heed to it.

On attaining the Head-Priestship in 1909 I tackled this problem in two ways. While performing the Navjote of a child of an orthodox family, I recite the Patet

The Zoroastrian religion enjoins upon man not to be satisfied by being good himself but to make wicked neighbours good also.

in undertones and if it is a reformist family, I do not recite the Patet at all. When I pray the Patet silently, my good mobed brethren do like-wise, but at those Navjote ceremonies where I am not present they recite it aloud as usual. With the result that in Karachi two kinds of 'Patet' are prayed during Navjote ceremonies.

To find some kind of a solution to this problem we had three meetings with the Mobeds 25 years ago. My personal opinion is that the Pazend prayer known as 'Hormuzd Khudai' recited while performing the 'Kusti' ceremony, includes a short, innocent 'Patet'. Therein the supplicant prays as follows: "Oh, Ahura Mazda, I repent for all the evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds that may have been in my mind in this world, and for all sins relating to thoughts, words and deeds, either physical or spiritual, either of this world or the next. May I abstain from all evil always". Besides this, the 'Farestuye Humatoibusche' which forms part of the Confirmation of Faith and which is

also recited compulsorily at the time of the Navjote, contains the following declaration: "I admire all noble thoughts, all noble words and all noble deeds through the strength of my good mind, my good speech and my good actions."

The above prayer which is recited by the child at the time of his Navjote should suffice and there is no need for the Patet that is prayed at present. But when Mobeds themselves perform the ceremony, it does not seem possible that they would immediately discontinue to recite the Patet prayer. So we considered reciting a shorter prayer and deriving some satisfaction. The 'Avestan Patet' is the shortest of such prayers. It does not have any resemblance to the original Patet. It contains only the 'Farestuye' of the confirmation, but that already forms part of the essential 'Kusti' prayer. To recite it again as a 'Patet' would be mere mental palliation.

The Mobeds were willing to do this. But on further consideration they arrived at the conclusion that when they themselves were performing the Navjote ceremony, if some Behdins wished to have the customary Patet recited in totality, they could not be refused. There was truth in this argument so no satisfactory solution resulted. Due to this, in Karachi, two types of 'Patets' — the 'silent' and the 'vocal' — continue to be prayed at Navjote ceremonies. Formerly I seldom had the opportunity of performing Navjotes without reciting the Patet — now such Navjotes are on the increase.

In our community only once, and that in 1915, was there a practical possibility to establish a Reformed Zoroastrian Church. Some enthusiastic, progressive and wealthy ladies and gentlemen were considering the question. There was no dearth of finances. Seven lakhs were collected within a short period. Yet, due to certain circumstances and considerations, the matter had to be deferred. A

variety of religious view-points prevails within the self-same religious group and a diversity of our faithful assemble under the roof of a single church. Those who believe that prayers recited in the Avesta alone are acceptable, and those who clamour for prayer in an intelligible language, the ceremonialists and the anti-ceremonialists, the Aslis and the Faslis, the devotional and the conventionalists, the best orthodox and the

Much to everyone's amusement, we found that eggs had been broken on every threshold.

extreme reformists, the faithful and the infidel, conformists and the proselytisers, those who believe in disposing of the dead at the Tower of Silence and those who believe in cremation, all these must congregate at the same place to pray and to worship.

A Dastur may be an orthodox or a reformist by talent, temperament and learning, but as the dual-head of the majority of the community's orthodoxy and the reformist minority, he must equally indulge both parties. Again, he has to work night and day with good Mobeds who excel at performing ceremonies but who have at most attained a general education equivalent to four or five Gujarati standards. If a Dastur is a radical having liberal views and of an independent mentality, his allies and co-workers are completely orthodox. Both exist at opposing and conflicting intellectual levels. This kind of ill-matched partnership of an enlightened and reformist religious leader and a staunch and conservative associate priest-class cannot be found in any nation anywhere in the world.

For 37 years I have been a reformist Dastur of a majority of orthodox Behdins and a united fold of orthodox Mobeds. With Ahura Mazda's blessings and Zarathushtra's guidance I have been driving the chariot of my Dasturship through an environment of rigid orthodoxy, a labyrinth of rituals and a storm of strict conventionalism. Cautious of times and circumstances, I cross hurdles and pass over the quicks with wisdom and foresight along with my heterogenous congregation.

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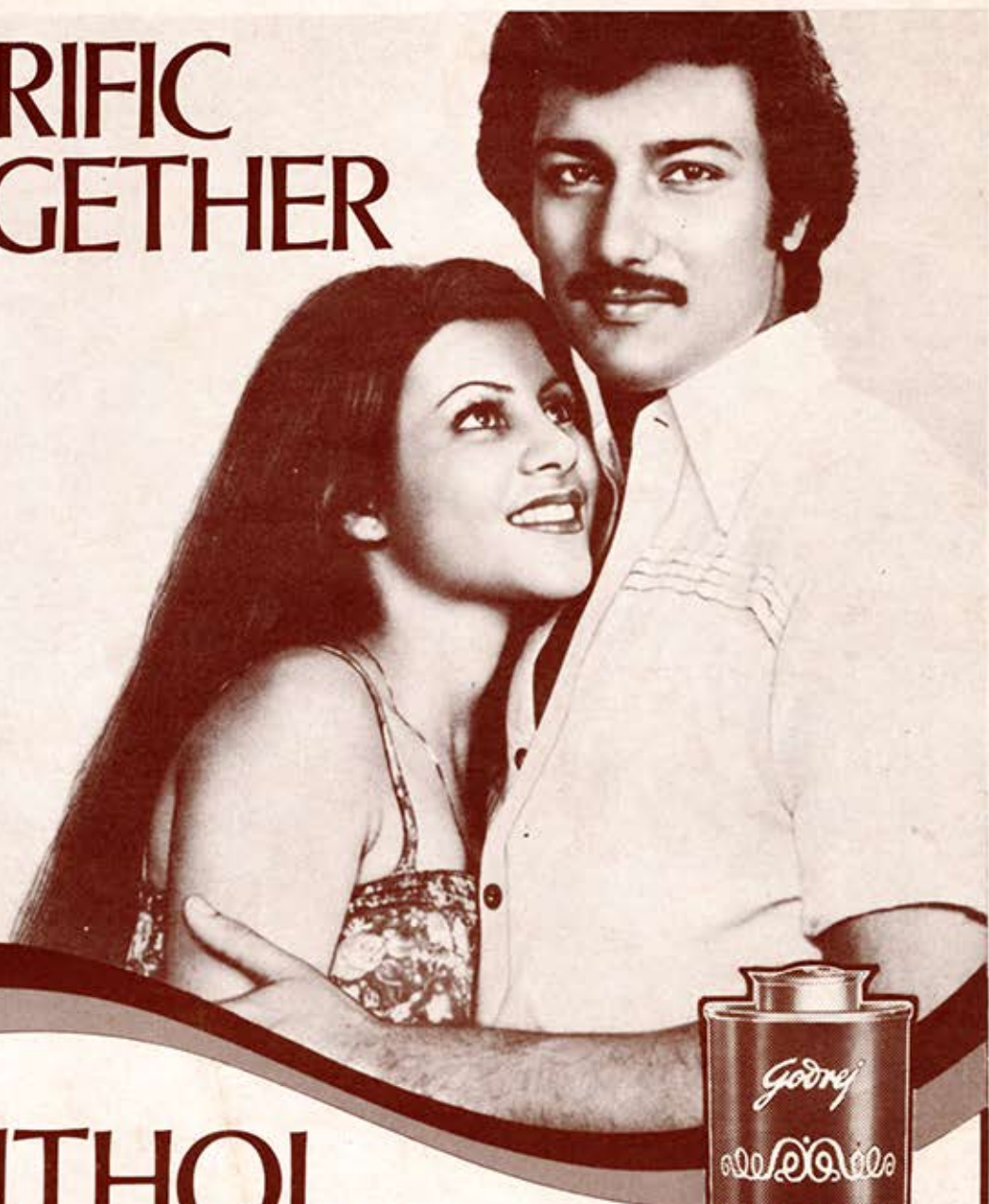
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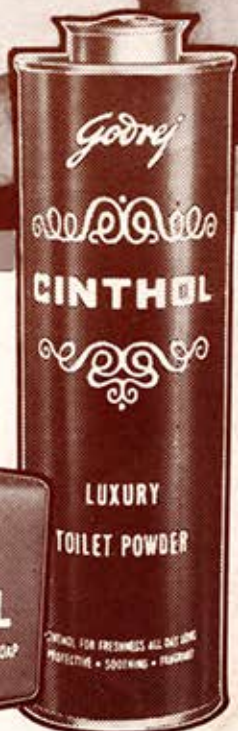
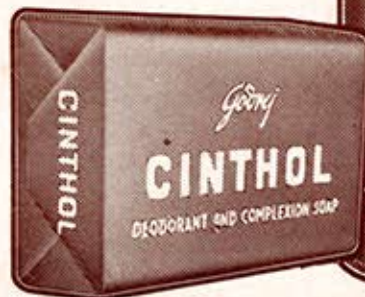
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