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Parsiana

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ASSOCIATE EDITOR Abraham Mathai
ASSISTANT EDITORS Hutokshi D. Doctor,
Gouri Wagadarikar
DESIGN CONSULTANT Mini Boatwala
DESIGN ASSISTANTS Kranti Shilotri,
Yasmin Irani
MARKETING DIRECTOR Veera Patel
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Hanita Irani
CHIEF EXECUTIVE R.P. Thanavala
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-
- 3 Readers' Forum
-
- 6 Events and Personalities
-
- 9 News from the Media
-
- 12 Business
-
- 15 Old Couple Murdered
-
- 18 Cotton comes to Bombay by Dr. M.D. David
-
- 19 The ecstasy of Khshnoom
-
- 21 The Life of Dastur Dhalla - XXVIII
-
- 26 The Flame and the Ember by Russi M. Lala
-
- 29 The Parsi Punchayet Case - XIII
-
- 32 In Memoriam
-

Cover: Nineteenth century etching of Parsi and Hindu cotton merchants

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In Memoriam

Mr. Fali Meherji Variava,

Director

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

High Priests of Adoption

I read the extracts from the statement submitted by the respected High Priests to the Minority Commission, calling for total exemption of Parsis from the provisions of the Adoption of Children Bill (*Parsiana*, June 1982).

At the outset, I may state that I do not hold any brief for the reformists who advocate conversion or proselytisation into the Zoroastrian faith. I must, however, admit to a growing feeling of dismay as I read through the extracts published.

A number of statements from the extracts, with the greatest of respect to the revered priests who submitted the same, appear to be irrational and devoid of logic. It is possible, however, that the close reasoning and logic which may have appeared in the original statement suffered in the course of editing and the

extracts thereby appear to be disjointed.

I, however, base the following comments purely on the extracts published.

The initial portion of the statement showing the interwoven social and religious structure of the Parsi Zoroastrian community appears to be a true reflection of the present conditions. I, however, could not understand the conclusion that because of the said 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." The statement further stated that "the two are one" on the authority of the Holy Scriptures, the tradition and the customs.

Whereas I can quite understand the authority of tradition and custom which in itself has a considerable force and which has also stood the test of time, it would have been enlightening if quotations from the early Zoroastrian scriptures were set out which provide that no conversion is ordained or allowed or enjoined by the Zoroastrian religion. Similarly, it would have been helpful if clear scriptural evidence as referred to in the statement from the Gathas supporting the fact that the Zoroastrian religion cannot preach conversion, was also set out. Such an important injunction would, I am sure, be most explicitly set out.

I refer to a further statement that "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." A number of major religions of the world like Christianity or Islam commenced with the preachings of the respective Prophets and the revelation of the divine truth to the Prophets. Each of these religions of necessity owe adherents to conversion, at some point of time, because before the births of their respective Prophets, there could not possibly have been Christians or Mohammedans. In the light of such recorded history, the statement that any conversion from one to another is against the Divine Plan and therefore, a sin, not only cannot stand, but would possibly amount to an insult to other religions.

The desire to preserve the "racial gene" runs close to the Nazi philosophy. Further, the statements relating to

wavelengths, their disturbance or their being embedded in genes does not appear to have been supported by any of the early Zoroastrian scriptural writings; nor is the same supported by experimental evidence or rational reasoning. The grafting of such an unsubstantiated wavelength theory to the scientifically established concept of genes is not even fair argument.

Similarly, comparing the doctrine of wavelengths with ESP (extra-sensory perception) is an argument open to question. One has only to turn to the learned articles in various science journals to realise that ESP itself is far from being an established fact.

Referring to the comment on Dr. Dhalla's statement to the effect that "Dinkart sanctions even the use of force for conversion of the aliens," I am sure that Dr. Dhalla did not advocate the use of force for conversion and it was merely a statement of a historical fact. It is interesting that Professor Mary Boyce in her book *Zoroastrians, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (which incidentally carries the photograph of Dastoor Dr. Kotwal on its jacket) also refers to conversion to Zoroastrianism at various periods of time.

I may admit that I was unable to understand what was meant by the statement that what Justice Daver has stated in *Petit vs Jeejeebhoy* was not binding on the Parsi community.

Coming to the Adoption Bill, which gave rise to the statement, I would submit that such an Adoption Bill merely gives a right of succession to an adopted child in the event of the demise of his adoptive parents without making a will. The exclusion relating to the religious rights as proposed by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet would certainly meet all the arguments for preserving racial purity.

Finally, may I submit that the Parsi community in India has obviously prospered by following a closed-door policy against conversion and proselytisation. It has also earned for itself an enviable reputation for honesty, integrity and hard work. It is possibly also correct that an open-door policy advocating indiscriminate proselytisation and conversion may soon lead to extinction of highly valued social and religious traits and customs of the Parsis. Any debate, however, on this question should be based upon rationality and logic, with the weight of tradition and custom

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against conversion. The argument of the type mentioned in the statement submitted by the respected high priests is easily refutable and is likely to have the opposite effect of driving persons with an open mind on the subject into the ultra reformist camp.

E.P. BHARUCHA

Dissenting Opinion

There can be no two opinions that the Parsi community, which has so far no law of adoption, requires such a law, so that children adopted by Parsis may have a proper legal status in the adopted family. The Adoption of Children Bill therefore must be welcomed by the community as a necessary and beneficial measure.

However, we cannot subscribe to the view that an adopted child, if born of non-Parsi parents or born of a non-Parsi mother, cannot and should not be allowed to follow the religious faith of the adopting Parsi parents. If adoption of a child is to be meaningful, and the child and the foster parents are to assimilate in their hearth and home as if they were a natural family, we simply cannot conceive of an adopted child being forbidden to associate itself with the parents' or rest of the family's religious beliefs and practises.

It is to our minds inhuman and cruel to segregate the child in such an intimate part of the family's life, and to brand the child unworthy of the parents' religion or that of the other children of the family.

This cardinal human factor seems to have been lost sight of by those who support an amendment along the lines suggested by the Parsi Panchayat.

Some parties have voiced the need to safeguard the adopted child from being legally compelled to subscribe to the beliefs of the foster parents. With respect, this is not the issue at all. A child, particularly of tender age, is hardly likely to consider it a compulsion if he or she is to take to the foster parents' religion, any more than a natural child will feel compelled if he or she takes to the religion of his or her parents.

The real problem is of preventing an adopted child, intended to be brought up in every respect as a natural child, from having the religion of his or her foster father and mother and that of the rest of the family, and making the child follow some other religion, with which he or she will most likely have little or no

association, or compelling the child to have no religion at all. This to our minds, is inconceivable, if adoption has to be meaningful.

We do not propose at present to enter into the highly controversial subject of whether a child born of non-Parsi parents can legally take to the practice and faith of Zoroastrianism. Suffice it to say that it is by no means clear that the law on the subject is as claimed by the proponents of the amendment to the Bill.

TEHMTAN R. ANDHYARUJINA
DARA R. ZAIWALLA

Extracts from note of dissent submitted to the Federation Adoption Committee.

Boyewalla Defined

It was rather disappointing to read the "meaning" given to the word "Boyewalla"—(ZCDI Newsletter, *Parsiana* June 1982) and much more so when the same refers to a young, learned athornan Ervad, Dr. Rooyinton Peshoton Peer.

Amongst our priestly class an "Atash-behram Boyewalla" is considered to be a full-fledged Navar-Maratab priest, conversant with the mode and method of all the higher religious ceremonies like *Yazashna-vandidad*, *Nirangdin* etc. Your "definition" of 'Boyewalla' (a priest who feeds wood to the fire) lowers the high status of a Boyewalla to the category of a Parsi cook or to be more precise a "daroonwala" priest.

IS. KUKA

"Happy Birthday to You!"

The above subject appeared in *Parsiana* (May 1982). Late though it is I cannot help but give my ideas on the celebration of birthdays of Parsis, specially children. True it is that we have adopted customs either from the Hindus or from the British after leaving Iran. A birthday cake with candles lighted on it is no doubt a happy sight. However, blowing off the candles is against the Zoroastrian tenet, so why not let the candles keep burning till they come to the end? The Jews do not blow off the candles from the cake till they extinguish themselves.

Or better still, why can't we Zoroastrians keep a lamp lighted on the table where the cake is placed. Explain to the children before singing "Happy Birthday" that Light is Life and it brings luck according to our religion so we must not blow it off.

FRENY DALAL

Pure Parsis

We are all taught right from school days that all religions come from the same one supreme source and ultimately all religions teach the same thing.

All religions are true. Only that particular types of religions are meant for particular types of persons. According to your Karma a person is born in a certain "Din" and it is his most sacred duty to remain in and for the "Din" (and not turn a Juddin) as is the fashion of today.

As per your past Karma you have to further progress in this life. But by what means? Well, you might need to progress by way of 'Love thy neighbour', so you are born a Christian. Perhaps, you need further purification by fastings etc., so you enter Hinduism (as fasting is not for Zoroastrians at all). Perhaps you are entitled to progress upwards by means of powerful prayers, so you may enter Zoroastrianism.

You are born with that genetic constitution and electromagnetic field around you where Zoroastrian prayers can be efficacious to you. A Muslim prayer is par-excellence for a Muslim but futile for a Hindu, because for his constitution and electromagnetic fields, only Hindu hymn vibrations can be effective. So a Hindu prayer is very good for a Hindu. A Christian hymn is excellent for a Christian but for any other it is a waste of time and energy.

Go around amidst our so-called Mazdiazni Zoroastrians and they will fast on Monday and Thursday and run from one Baba to one Devi, little knowing that it is a sheer waste of time and energy. What is not for them—how can it be efficacious? A camel eats cactus; can a sheep eat it too? Awake friends, learn to have faith in any of the world's great religions you are born in and learn to preserve yourself in it—purely.

N.H. DADRAWALA

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Events and Personalities

Aerial Navigation

The formidable task of piloting the mammoth national airlines, Indian Airlines, has been taken over by **Rustam Poncha Billimoria**, appointed part-time chairman of Indian Airlines in July 1982.

Presently chairman of the Public Enterprises Selection Board, which recommends to the government all board level appointments for public sector enterprises, and chairman of several government boards and committees,

sector enterprises, states his bio-data, and was appointed chairman of the Steel Authority of India in 1976.

A fellow of the Institute of Personnel Management, Great Britain, the Indian Institute of Personnel Management and other management associations, Billimoria with several publications to his credit, has presented papers on personnel management and labour policy at various international forums.

Ripon Redone

With two years to go before its centenary celebrations, the Ripon Club, situated in the heart of the city's commercial area at Mahatma Gandhi Road, has acquired a new look, been spruced up, re-painted, and re-upholstered, and its trophies polished and displayed, because the club is reportedly in a "very comfortable position monetarily."

The club's annual report and balance sheet for the year ending December 1980, describes the years since 1978 as "momentous ones in the club's history." With the accumulated pre-1978 losses having been wiped out, the club now boasts a positive balance of Rs. 38,288, plus entrance fees of Rs. 22,500 which would mean a total balance of Rs. 60,788, and a record membership of 466.

Established by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta for the community, the club retains its old world charm, and in addition to the existing facilities made available for a monthly subscription of Rs. 25, has recently applied for a beer and hard liquor license to run a full bar.

Youth Exchange Programme

A group of young Zoroastrians left Bombay for North America and Can-

ada in the last week of August, as part of a six-week Committee for Electoral Rights youth exchange programme, planned to help unite the fragmented Zoroastrian community, according to a report in the July-August issue of *The Zoroastrian*.

Selected youngsters, who were to undergo an orientation course which would enable them to discuss knowledgeably the activities and developments in the community in India, were to stay with Zoroastrian families in major cities of the U.S.A. and Canada, the report adds.

This initial visit is expected to be the forerunner of several joint projects in the future, and a reciprocal visit by Zoroastrians abroad to India.

Flat Funds

An appeal for funds to construct around 20 flats at a cost of approximately nine lakh rupees has been issued by the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and Hyderabad.

"The Anjuman will put in a sum of Rs one lakh from its own resources and a philanthropic lady has donated a princely sum of Rs 80,000. We now appeal to all Trusts and Institutions and generous minded Zoroastrians to extend their helping hand in this venture. "The Anjuman would be prepared to name a block in memory of your dear one on receipt of a donation of Rs 40,000," notes the appeal signed by the Anjuman's honorary secretary, E.J. Tarapore.

The necessity to build is attributed to the "sky-rocketing" rents in the twin cities which, coupled with a shortage of housing has affected "not only poor families but even the middle class," notes Tarapore.

"We are prepared to accept any amount given as loan to be repaid by instalments in ten years, two years after the receipt of the amount," states the



Billimoria: Indian Airlines chief

Billimoria, 58, an expert in management science, is also chairman and managing director of Billimoria Consultants, notes his bio-data.

Starting at the age of 20 as a worker in the steel melting shop of Tata Iron & Steel Co. (TISCO), in 20 years Billimoria soared to the position of director of personnel in 1964. Specializing in coordination of personnel and production functions in British industry, he became the first Indian to be awarded the Nuffield Fellowship at Birmingham University in 1951.

Billimoria with his background in personnel management later served as director of personnel in several public

appeal. Cheques are to be made in the name of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and Hyderabad, and sent to 125, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Secunderabad 500 003.

Ajmer Committee

The Shri Ajmer Jarthosti Anjuman, Ajmer, elected **Nariman E. Mehta** president of the Executive Committee of the Anjuman at a meeting held recently, notes a release from the Anjuman. Other office bearers elected are: Firoze N. Doctor, honorary secretary, Jal S. Bodhanwala, honorary treasurer; Ratan K. Tavadia, joint secretary and assistant treasurer; and Sorabji G. Sopariwala, Eric R. Gandevia and Ms Gulnar N. Marfatia, members of the committee.

The committee will serve the Anjuman for three years from 1st August 1982, writes Doctor

Of Value

The professional designation of "senior certified valuer" of immovable properties has been awarded by the International Institute of Valuers, Switzerland, to **Jamshed Burjor Aga**, of the well-known firm of architects, Shapoorjee N. Chandabhoy and Co., notes a newspaper report.

A chartered architect, valuer, surveyor and fire loss assessor, Aga, 66, is a fourth descendent of Shapoorjee N. Chandabhoy and a senior partner in the firm, whose origins date back 114 years according to his bio-data. A registered architect in India and the United King-

Aga: Fourth descendent



dom, Aga is also an Estate Duty and Wealth Tax Valuer on the panel of the Government of India, a member, Board of Advisors for Sir J.J. College of Architecture, University of Bombay and the president of the Parsee Engineers and Architects Union.

Aga has served as president of the Indian Institute of Architects, the Institute of Insurance Surveyors and Adjustors, the Institution of Surveyors, New Delhi and is a fellow of several professional bodies both in India and abroad.

Art Head

For the tenth consecutive year, **Homi N. Dallas**, a noted Bombay chartered architect has been elected President of the Art Society of India, notes a report from the Society's Joint Honorary Secretary.

The first President of the Indian Institute of Architects, and a member of the General Council of the Lalit Kala Akademi at Delhi, Dallas is on the Board of Governors of the Delhi School of Planning and Architecture, notes the report.

Major Chairman

Dr. Mehru M. Major of Nagpur was unanimously elected chairman of the Board of Studies in Other Foreign Languages (German, French, Russian and English) of the Nagpur University, notes a report in a local Nagpur newspaper sent by P.A. Sigamporia, Editor of *Dharma Prakash*, a Nagpur based publication.

The Board which met on 3 July to elect Major, frames courses of subjects under its jurisdiction, prescribes books for studies, and rules and regulations for its conduct during the year, appoints examiners and takes all academic decisions regarding the policy of these courses.

A post graduate in English from the U.K. where she was the recipient of the British Council Bursary in 1969-70, Major has been teaching English and Linguistics in the department of Linguistics, Foreign and Indian Languages at Nagpur University since 1970. She obtained her Ph.D. on the Comparative and Contrastive Study of the Phonetics and Phonology of Parsee-Gujarati and English, an interdisciplinary topic.

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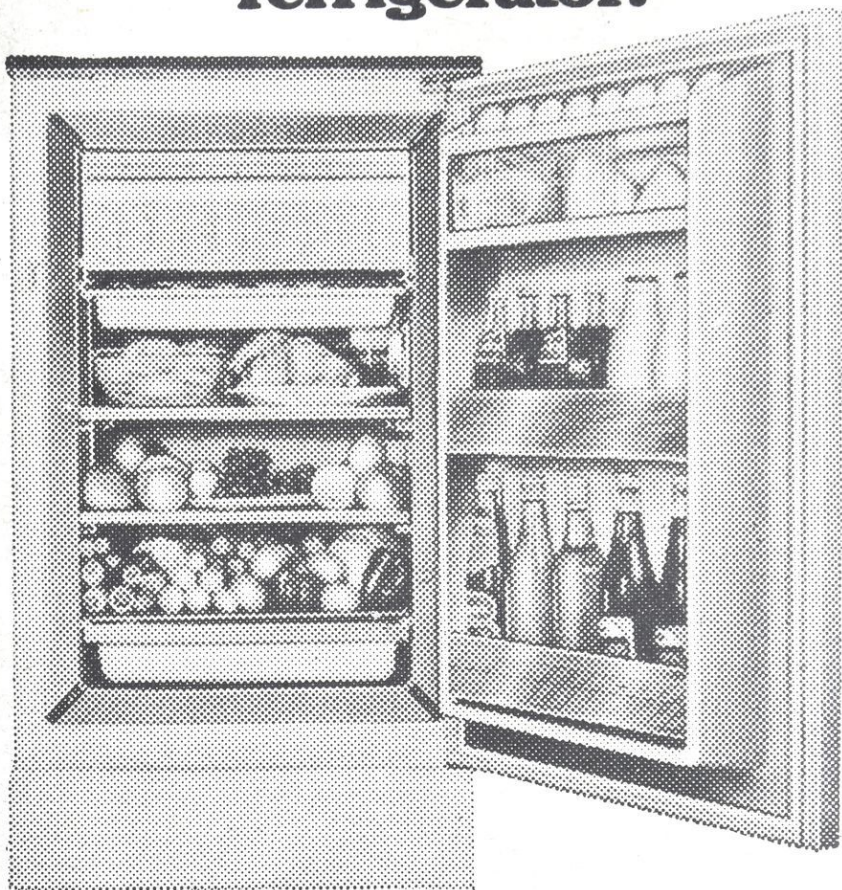
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India's Parsis Threatened by Their Success

Affluence Has Led to Growing Apathy and a Declining Birthrate

By Tyler Marshall

Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

BOMBAY, India—There are barely 90,000 of them, in a country of 700 million, yet India's Parsis have made their mark.

These talented and agreeable people, who believe that fire is sacred, who follow a prophet born centuries before Christ, have come to view success as their birthright.

In recent years, they have given India its greatest scientist (Homi Bhabha, father of India's nuclear program), its most successful entrepreneurial family (the Tatas) and one of its premier musicians, Zubin Mehta, conductor of the New York Philharmonic.

They have been so successful in business that, in a nation where poverty is commonplace, the word *Parsi* is synonymous with wealth.

But India's Parsis, descendants of people who came here more than 1,000 years ago to flee religious persecution by Muslims in Persia, have paid a high price for their material success. In fact, success may prove to be their undoing, for it has distracted the tiny community, eroded its values and threatened its very existence.

The desire to retain high living standards and ensure their children the benefits of a better life has led directly to late marriage, low fertility and a declining birthrate.

In the last four decades, the Parsi population has diminished by an average of one percent a year. In the last decade, deaths have outnumbered births by nearly two to one and some social scientists predict that the community will virtually disappear within a few generations.

The decline in numbers coincides with what some Parsis call a crisis of apathy about Parsi history and religion.

A survey in the mid-1960s found that less than one percent of the community prayed or read religious literature with any frequency, although nearly 75 percent regularly went to the movies.

Fears for Younger Generation

"Parsis fear that the younger generation knows little about their religion and cares less," wrote John Hinnels, a lecturer in comparative religion at Britain's Manchester University and a respected authority on the Parsis.

Philanthropy, once a Parsi hallmark, is also in decline. A survey last year of 700 Parsi trusts showed that many were defunct and that most of those still in existence earned only a meager three percent to four percent interest.

Dwindling numbers and neglect have forced Parsi hospitals and schools either to admit non-Parsis or to close down.

Other institutions are also dying. For example, the traditional Parsi turban, the puggree, is rarely worn now. The last puggree maker died last year; a few years ago, he had offered to teach his art to a younger Parsi but there were no takers.

"They all say they'd like to learn, but they never come," he said at the time.

When Jehangir Patel, a Yale University graduate, took over a Parsi community magazine nine years ago, he estimated that 3,000 copies would satisfy initial demand. He received 12 subscriptions.

The magazine survives, subsidized by more commercial publishing ventures, and now has a circulation of about 2,000.

Community neglect has also penetrated the once-proud Parsi priestly families, whose sons for centuries have studied the teachings of the Parsi prophet Zoroaster (known also as Zarathustra) and other sacred texts, presided over community ceremonies and tended sacred temple fires.

Today, fewer than 100 Parsi priests are said to know the complex rituals required to tend the temple fires. The number declines annually. When asked how many initiates had begun service this year, a veteran priest replied by slowly moving his hand, forefinger extended, in a zero.

"Parents don't want their children going into the priesthood," he said. "It's hard work, low pay and no perks. Life's easier in a bank."

Parsis take their name from a region known as Pars in that part of the Persian Empire now called Iran. Although considered an ethnic group, they are also custodians of Zoroastrianism, a religion that interprets life as a battle between good and evil and urges man to side with the forces of good.

'Good Words, Good Deeds'

"Good thoughts, good words, good deeds" that is every Parsi's fundamental tenet. Fire, as a symbol of ultimate light and truth, is present at every Zoroastrian ceremony.

Parsis are sometimes called "fire worshippers," and they object to it. They

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revere fire, not worship it, they say, and they maintain that for them fire is a religious symbol, as the cross is a symbol for Christians.

The Persians followed Zoroaster's teachings for nearly 1,000 years before being swept aside by the advance of Islam in the 7th century. The religious persecution that came with Islam caused the Parsis to flee to India, where all but about 35,000 of them live today, mostly in and around Bombay.

The names of streets, buildings and businesses reflect the community's influence despite its small size.

'Spirit of Immigrants'

"We've had the spirit of immigrants" said Jamshed A. Modi, an American-educated Parsi scientist. "Much like the Mayflower people, we tend to be hard-working and honest. The results show."

But more than for their colorful heritage and recent affluence, Parsis are known for their unusual death rites.

In the belief that cremation pollutes fire and burial pollutes the earth, Parsis place their dead in what they call towers of silence, and vultures do the rest.

Despite the community's growing problems, Parsi elders tend to minimize them.

"Our numbers are declining, but that

doesn't mean we're dying out," said Aspi Golwalla, chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayat, a committee of elders that administers about \$30 million in community trust money for housing, educational, occupational and welfare programs.

Golwalla, like many other Parsis, blames the decline on Bombay's critical housing shortage, which he believes prevents many couples from marrying early and having larger families.

Golwalla says he knows of three instances (involving) Parsi girls who abandoned their fiances after abnormally long waits for housing and then married outside the community.

"Housing is problem No. 1," he said.

Although the committee of elders hopes to build 1,000 new apartments in Bombay over the next five years to ease the crush, government red tape and a lack of community cooperation have made progress painfully slow.

It took two years for one proposal to get government permission. Another, involving the upward expansion of a Parsi community apartment complex in downtown Bombay, was abandoned after the residents refused to put up with the inconvenience.

Elders also say that a "brain drain" has accelerated the community's

decline. Nearly half of the young people sent abroad to study at American and European universities on committee-of-elders scholarships do not come back, Golwalla said.

Of these, about 40 percent marry outside the community and are lost forever," he said.

But to many Parsis, these problems are minor compared to conversion an emotional issue that has deeply divided the community for years.

Although some small Parsi communities outside Bombay have accepted such converts as equals, the conservative majority here has so far blocked moves that would permit them to enter the temples and take part in important ceremonies.

While there is little evidence to suggest any immediate community revitalization, some innovative Parsis are thinking about unusual solutions.

Scientist Modi, for example, hopes to put the name of everyone in the Parsi community into a computer, conduct an attitudinal survey, then develop a program to reshape Parsi thinking to make large families and earlier marriage desirable.

Courtesy Los Angeles Times
19 August 1982

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Banking on the Community

After maintaining a low profile in the community's financial activities, the Zoroastrian Co-operative Credit Bank is expanding its activities.

Additional adjoining premises have been acquired in the Zoroastrian Association Building where the bank is located, notes Rustam A. Gagrut, president of the bank, in his speech delivered at the bank's 55th annual general meeting held on 29 September.

"The trustees of the Zoroastrian Association...have agreed to allot... space on very reasonable terms," said Gagrut. "This will help us to expand the activities of the bank."

The bank has also recruited a new secretary, Baji H. Avari who, "besides possessing high academic qualifications, carries with him practical experience of banking... (he) takes considerable interest in the work of the

Unless the number of shareholders increased to over 10,000, the bank's growth would be restricted.

Bank and...I have every hope that the Bank will be able to make more satisfactory progress in its activities," said Gagrut.

Amongst the activities was a "Seminar on Parsee Banking" sponsored by the Youths' Own Union on 13 September at the K.R. Cama Institute hall.

Gagrut reportedly told the gathering that just as the Muslims had supported The Bombay Mercantile Co-operative Credit Bank in its infancy, the Parsis should deposit their surplus funds in the Zoroastrian Co-operative Bank. Bank Committee Member Jehangir F. Shroff noted that in the two years from June 1980 to June 1982, the number of the bank's shareholders had increased by only 97 from 3,687 to 3,784. Unless the number increased to over 10,000, the bank's growth would be restricted, he said. The price of a share is Rs 25.

The bank's deposits have increased by around nine lakhs this year from 1,07,43,997 to Rs 1,16,79,107, according



Gagrut addressing seminar : seated (left to right) Avari Y.O.U. President, Jal Tata and Shroff.

to the 55th annual report. Total advances for the year amount to Rs 5,32,000 while the overall profit was Rs 5,33,586.74, down around Rs 8,000 from last year.

The bank gives advances against Unit Trusts, gold ornaments, government securities and Life Insurance policies at interest rates varying from 12½ percent to 15 percent, notes Avari. Queries may be directed to him at the Zoroastrian Co-operative Credit Bank office on the first floor of the Zoroastrian Association Building, 16 Horniman Circle, Fort, Bombay 400 023.

The members of the bank's all-male committee are: Gagrut, N.B. Jeejeebhoy, C.N. Dinshaw, Shroff, J.J. Gandevia, Homa D. Petit, T.R. Andhyarujina, H.P. Ranina, B.S. Bulsara and L.C. Mistry.

Promised Prize

"Pride, justifiable pride, and happiness about our research and development, which is completely indigenous, without any outside help at all," is what A.R. Balsara, chairman and managing director of Balsara Hygiene Products Ltd, manufacturers of the popular Promise toothpaste, Odomos and other items, said he felt, on receiving the Monde Selection's Gold Medal with Palm Leaves (1982) for Prize Toothpaste, the first product of Besta Cosmetics, a sister concern of Balsara.

This award is presented to the product which scores the highest points among all cosmetics and toiletries entered by companies from all over the world, notes the press release issued at a press conference on October 13. The award is even more commendable, taking into account the fact that Besta Cosmetics is less than a year old, and that it

is a small-scale unit, competing with giant multinationals in the field.

Balsara, who was in London in the third week of September to receive the award feels, "This award gives us additional confidence to face the future. We hope to win many more awards and acquire the foreign exchange our country so desperately needs."

"My own feeling is that Prize will even overtake our own Promise," smiled Balsara, although Promise, which was introduced only recently, has already established itself as the Number Two brand in India, and is in great demand in Eastern Europe and Russia, he says. Both, Balsara's Promise toothpaste and toothpowder have won the Monde Selection gold medal this year, the toothpaste for the second year in succession. Promise toothpowder is reportedly the first and only toothpowder from India to receive the award.

Besides Prize Toothpaste, Besta Cosmetics, with its factory at Vapi in Gujarat, will produce for export cosmetics, toiletries and a range of ayurvedic cosmetics for the European market. Though originally created for export, Prize will also be launched in the domestic market.

"Besta and Balsara prove that small-scale units are capable of manufacturing and marketing quality products of international standards," notes the press release issued at the conference. "Although the government has restricted toothpaste manufacture for the small-scale industry, large organisations go on controlling the toothpaste market. It is our desire that the Government will soon put controls on the manufacture of the multi-national organisations, so that Indian companies like ours can grow with the help of our loyal customers," adds the press release.

"Productivity is the power to produce, not the power to destroy," said B. Pandit, Manager of Besta Cosmetics and with the civic strike, the textile strike, and the BEST strike, "Balsara's is

Balsara receiving Monde award



the glimmer of hope at the end of the dark tunnel," he added.

"Quality and innovation remain the main ingredients of our success," said N.S. Rajadhyax, marketing director: "Teamwork is the secret of our success," said Pandit.

The audio-visual on Balsara's products and achievements says that 'Hygiene is to a home what perfume is to a flower', describes Prize toothpaste as "a superlative achievement" and Promise toothpaste as "A promise well made, a promise well kept."

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Old Couple Murdered



The first-floor flat of the Engineer couple (marked by arrow) at Dhobi Talao. Alongside, the room in which the couple were found murdered. Photographs by Mukesh Parpiani; courtesy *The Daily*

By A Staff Reporter

BOMBAY, October 24.

An aged couple were found murdered in their room in a building at Dhobi Talao early today.

The bodies of Bamanshah Jehangir Engineer (79) and his wife Dina (69) were discovered at 6.30 a.m. The police suspect robbery as the motive.

Bamanshah was stabbed eight times with a small, sharp instrument. The police believe it could have been a pen-knife. Dina was gagged to death—her face was covered with strips of cloth and a pillow-case had been stuffed in her mouth. Her hands and legs had also been tied up with cloth.

The bodies were found on separate four-poster beds in a room on the first floor of Engineer building in Dadi Sun-took lane. The building has been under repairs for over a year and the couple's three-bedroom flat was in an utterly dilapidated condition.

While the other rooms were being repaired, the couple were staying in one room opposite the staircase. Bamanshah was a cripple—his hands and legs were paralysed.

The motive behind the double-murder is believed to be robbery. A wooden side-table had been ransacked and the couple's belongings were scat-

tered all over the room. Dina, the neighbours said, always wore a ring and four gold bangles which were missing.

According to statements given by the neighbours—the building is mostly occupied by Parsi families—they had seen the Engineers at 10.30 last night. This morning at about 6.30 when a domestic help, whose name was given as Sitaram, went as usual to fill water for them, he found no response to his knocks. When the door was pushed open, the bodies were discovered.

The double-murder is believed to have been committed some time between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. Dina was known to open the door whenever anyone knocked, and was apparently taken completely by surprise as the killer or killers made their appearance.

According to the police, the killings could have been done by two persons. However, since the couple were so frail, even one killer could have overpowered them. There was no resistance offered by either Bamanshah or Dina, a police official said, adding, "They were so weak, barely able to walk. So how could they?"

The couple have a son, Minoo, an architect staying at Juhu. He would visit his parents now and then, the neighbours said. Today, the shocked son

claimed the bodies from the police and the funeral rites were conducted.

The Engineers were part-owners of the building they stayed in. It is being repaired by the housing board for over a year, though "very irregularly".

On the first floor, next to the Engineer flat, there is an electrical goods shop. A tiny light-bulb above its door had been removed by the killer/killers so as to plunge the first floor in darkness. Care had even been taken to fuse the street-lamp which used to cast some light into the room where the double-murder took place.

This double-murder comes on the heels of the brutal murder of a 13-year-old boy, Jaswant Singh, whose body was found near the high court on Friday.

So far the police have picked up one suspect, a mason who was working in the building. The police are looking for other suspects.

Bamanshah, a diminutive man, once worked as a municipal supervisor. He retired 30 years ago, the neighbours said, and lived quietly.

The double-murder sent a shock wave through the Dhobi Talao area and several residents recalled the quadruple-murder committed in 1971 by Pheroze Daruwalla in the vicinity of Metro

cinema, just a stone's throw away from the scene of today's double-murder. Courtesy *The Times of India*, October 25, 1982.

Within 72 hours of the tragic murder, police arrested Ramesh Vijay Athawale,

a member of a local criminal gang, and recovered two gold bangles and a gold ring from him, note the latest press reports. Police expected to arrest a few other suspects as well.

Another in gory list

By A Staff Reporter

Aged Parsi couples have been the targets of criminals for many years now. The week-end murder of the Engineer couple at Dhobi Talao is yet another in the gory list.

One of such most sensational murders occurred a decade back, when Feroze Daruwala was alleged to have killed an 85-year-old retired managing clerk, two other Parsis and a servant. The murders occurred at Dhobi Talao itself, not very far from the scene of the present murders.

Dorabshaw Pestonji Sethna was killed along with the other three persons by Feroze, who later stood for the Lok Sabha elections. However, he withdrew his nomination and was arrested and

sentenced. Feroze Vakil, the special public prosecutor obtained four death sentences, a record, in a single case. Daruwala was later hanged. He donated his kidney before the execution.

In the last year or two, two major murders of Parsis occurred. In the first case, two brothers, both bachelors, aged 85 and 80 were murdered at Gamdevi. The man who killed Minochar Vakil and Sam Vakil was later arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment.

But in the second instance, the murder of a spastic at Hughes Road, the killer still remains undetected. No motive was established for the murder of the spastic at his home in broad daylight.

Courtesy *Indian Express*, October 25, 1982.

Riot Victim

As the city of Bombay was rocked by police riots in the third week of August, Burjis Nariman Khurshedji (35), and his wife Linda drove to a friend's place to fetch their son Karl who had been stranded there.

It was around 9 p.m. when a stone crashed through one of the car windows, struck Khurshedji, and sent the car ramming into the wall of the Worli Dairy.

Khurshedji was rushed to KEM Hospital where he was pronounced dead. His wife, who also sustained injuries, was admitted to hospital the next morning in a state of shock.

An electronics industrialist, Khurshedji was the grandson of the late Mancherji Edalji Joshi, founder of the Dada Parsi Colony, and the brother of the famed pianist Hilla Khurshedji, of London. Besides Linda and Karl (7), Khurshedji is survived by his daughter Zarna (5), and his parents.

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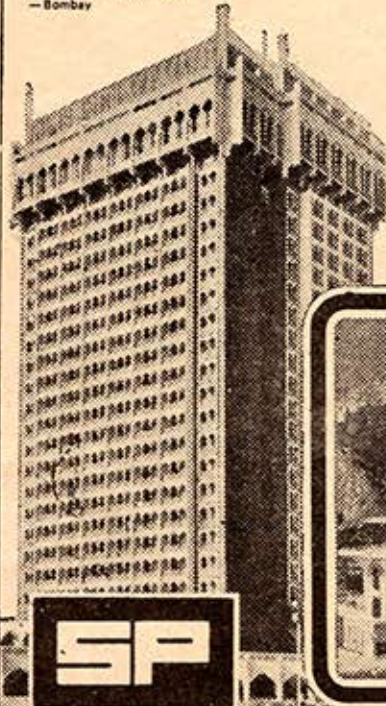
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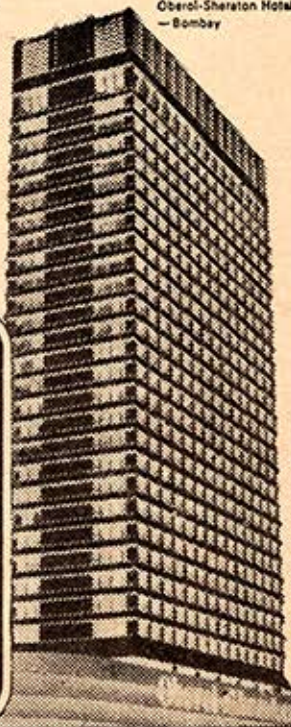
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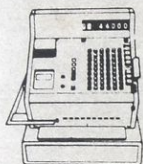


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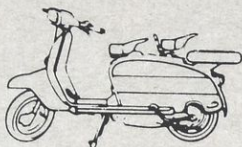
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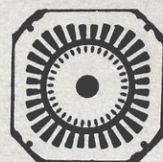
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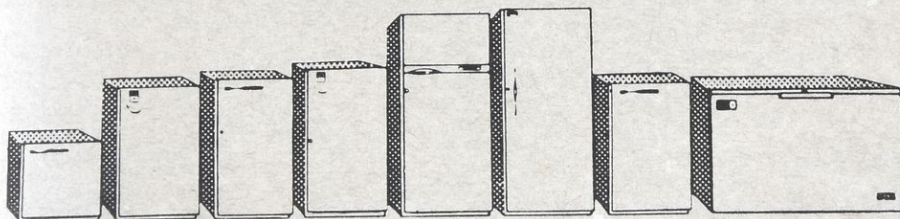
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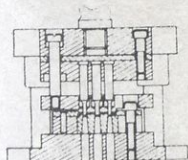
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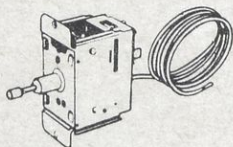
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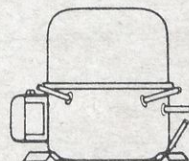
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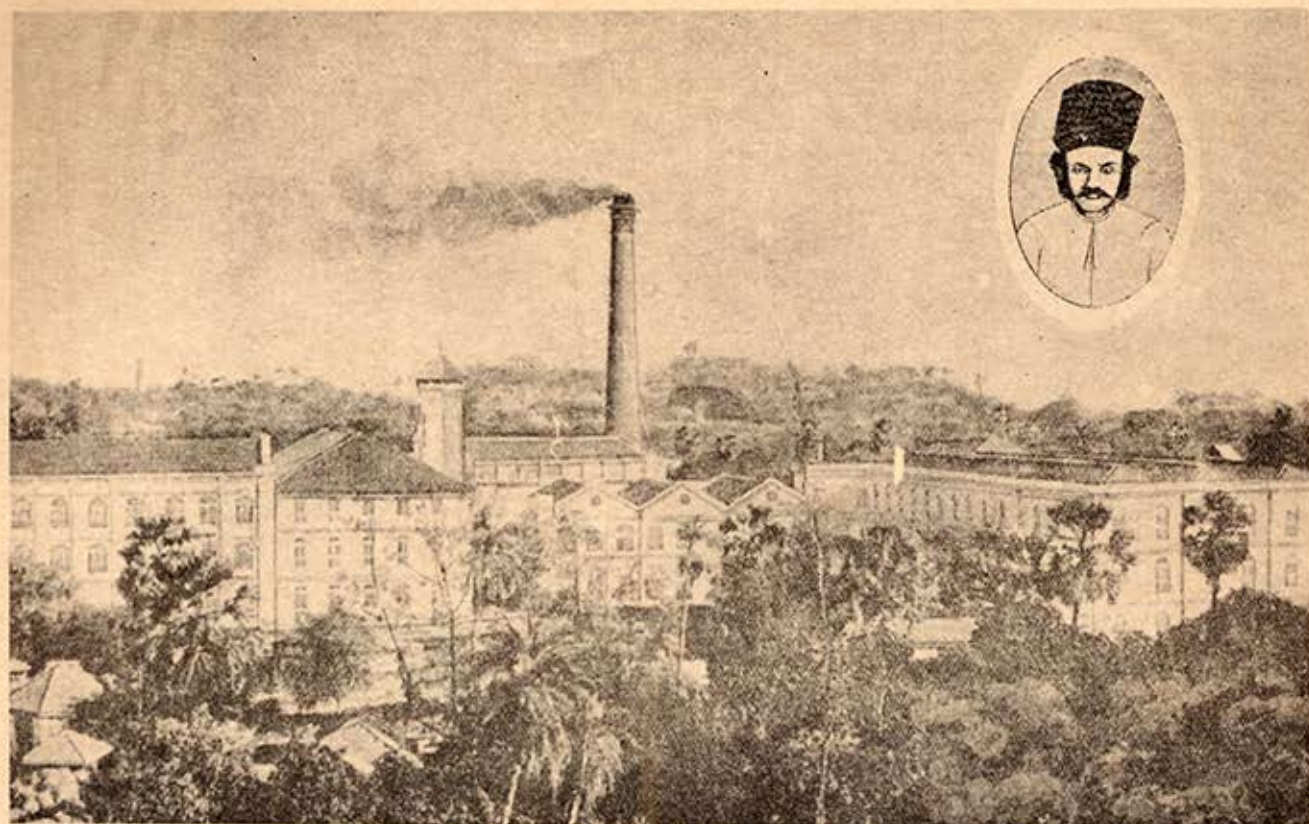


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The site of the Pioneer Cotton Factories in Bombay, 1855-60:
The Bombay Spinning, The Oriental and The Maneckji Petit Mills. (Inset) Daver.

Cotton Comes to Bombay

M D David

In 1818 a British firm established the first ever cotton mill in India on the bank of the Hoogly in Calcutta. However, it was Cowasji Davar, a Parsi merchant, who set up the first indigenous mill called the Bombay Spinning and Weaving Co. in 1854, with a capital of only Rs. five lakhs.

Bombay has been the home of the Indian textile industry, the largest among the major industries in the country, employing more than a million workers.

The Bowreah Cotton Mill dating back to the 19th century was the first textile mill to be set up in India in 1818 by a British firm on the west bank of the river Hooghly near Calcutta.

However, the foundations of the industry were truly laid in July 1854, when Cowasji Davar, a rich Parsi merchant of this metropolis floated the Bombay Spinning and Weaving Co. with a capital of Rs.500,000.

Undaunted by the difficulties involved in the import of mill machinery, technical knowhow and managerial skill, Cowasji went ahead with his idea of setting up a textile mill. He was one of the first Indians to show the enterprise and foresight that were responsible for launching India on the industrial path.

Entering the family business at the age of sixteen, Cowasji cooperated with the British in establishing the Commercial Bank of Bombay and the Bombay Steam Navigation Company.

While in the process of establishing

the Bombay Hydraulic Press, a large cotton cleaning enterprise, he conceived the idea of a textile mill in 1851. He began to correspond with Messrs. Platt Brothers of Oldham, Britain, the manufacturers of mill machinery. They readily agreed to appoint him their agent in Bombay and sent machinery and men to set up the first textile mill with 20,000 spindles at Tardeo. It went into production within two years of the floating of the Company. Encouraged by its success he installed the Throstle Mills, in the neighbourhood, two years later.

About the same time similar ventures were launched — one at Broach by one James London and another by Sheth Ranchodlal Chotalal at Ahmedabad.

In Bombay itself another wealthy Parsi, Maneckji Nusservanji Petit, floated the Oriental Spinning and Weaving Co. in August 1854. The thirty thousand spindle mill with its imported machinery went into production four years afterwards.

The success of the Oriental Mills prompted the owners to convert it into a joint stock company and expand its activities by adding another 20,000 spindles and 1,000 looms. Its Board of

Directors was headed by Mr. Cursetji Cama. Mr. Framji Panday was the general manager.

The appointment of Messrs. Merwanji Framji and Co. as its Secretaries, Treasurers and Agents in 1860 led to the development of the Agency system in the management of cotton mills in Bombay, a practice prevalent even today.

The industry began to attract more entrepreneurs. Sir Dinshaw Maneckji Petit, First Baronet, was the next to set up the Maneckji Petit Mills in 1860 with 60,000 spindles and 1,000 looms.

Petit, a well known entrepreneur in many business firms was elected chairman of the Mill Owners' Association which he built up between 1879 and 1892.

Within a decade of the establishment of the first mill, nearly thirteen mills employing more than 8000 people sprang up. Around this time the prospects of employment in the Bombay mills enticed many of the landless labourers from the neighbouring districts of Ratnagiri, Satara, Kolaba and Kolhapur and so began the exodus from the villages into the city of Bombay.

The handsome returns the industry offered to investors encouraged other Indians to take to it in a big way. Wealthy Bhatias ventured into mill building activity with great success.

The textile industry became the hub of Bombay's industrial growth in subsequent years.

By the end of 1875, the year when the Mill Owners Association was founded, there were 28 mills with 7,52,600 spindles and 7,780 looms, employing 13,550 workers which showed a paid up capital of Rs.3,38,58,000.

The Daily, 18 June 1982. Dr. M.D. David, Professor of History at Wilson College, writes a regular column on the history of Bombay for *The Daily* newspaper, magazine section. Reprinted with the author's permission.

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The Ecstasy of Khshnoom

Q. Khshnoom-followers are accused many times of claiming to possess the only right knowledge of the Zoroastrian religion. It is also asked, how is it that in the thousands of years of Zoroastrian history only in the last 70-80 years has a group of Zoroastrians claimed that they are the only custodians of the true knowledge.

J.D., Bombay.

A. This fallacious thinking should be treated with the contempt it deserves. It stems from an ignorance about the history of the Zoroastrian religion. The very word *Khshnoom* is an Avesta word, occurring twice in the Gathas themselves. Like all Avestic technical words, which have nine different interpretations in different contexts, *Khshnoom* (and not *Khasnoom* as many Parsees, lazy on their palates tend to pronounce), too, has nine meanings. However the original meaning is, "the true inner rejoicing or ecstasy arising out of the knowledge of the esoteric side of the holy Mazdayasni Religion." Even in Sanskrit, there is a corresponding word, "Brahmanand Vidya".

Let alone the Zarthoshtis living in ancient Iran, even our ancestors led by *Mubedan Mubed* Nairyosangh Dhaval, an *Ashavan* of a very high order, and his other *Ashavan* colleagues had "*Khshnoom*" with them! These highly advanced, holy souls not only had the original grammar of Avesta, Pahlavi and Pazend (today, we have neither the grammar of Avesta nor of Pahlavi/Pazend. Sanskrit grammar is applied to translate Avesta texts and Persian/Arabic grammar is used for the translation of Pahlavi texts!), but also had the science and knowledge of *Ilm-e-Stot* from which *Manthra* could be composed, and of the *ta'wil* or the inner exposition of the *Manthra*.

Even today we have evidence to prove what has been said above. The Sanskrit *Ashirwad* ceremony is not a result of a mere translation of the Pazend *Ashirwad* ceremony, but is a *Manthra* composition created by the knowledge of *Stot*. We'll take only two words from it.

The famous Avesta word, *Nidaasnaithishem*, is normally translated by philologists as "eschewing of weapons". But the Sanskrit of Nairyosangh has the

word, *Bhavatchhedam*, which would mean, "one who is released from this incarnation". When Ustad Saheb Behramshahji first interpreted the Avesta word *nidaasnaithishem* in this sense, the late Kharshedji R. Cama, the father of Iranian philology in India, immediately exclaimed, in a meeting of scholars, that, "Now, at last, I am able to understand why the Sanskrit word *bhavatchhedam* is used for the Avesta word, *nidaasnaithishem*!"

Similarly for the Avesta word *Upayan* (as in *Dareghanaam Upayanaam...*) the Sanskrit word used is *Shiksha Adrasya Rupini*. Such an interpretation is impossible without the knowledge of *Stot yasna*, because in this technical Avesta word is embedded the meaning of "tradition" (of rituals, practices, etc.), which is clearly reflected in the Sanskrit interpretation.

Unfortunately, the vagaries of time took their toll and the fantastic treasure of *Khshnoom* which Nairyosangh and his *Abeds* had nearly 1200 years ago, began to disappear.

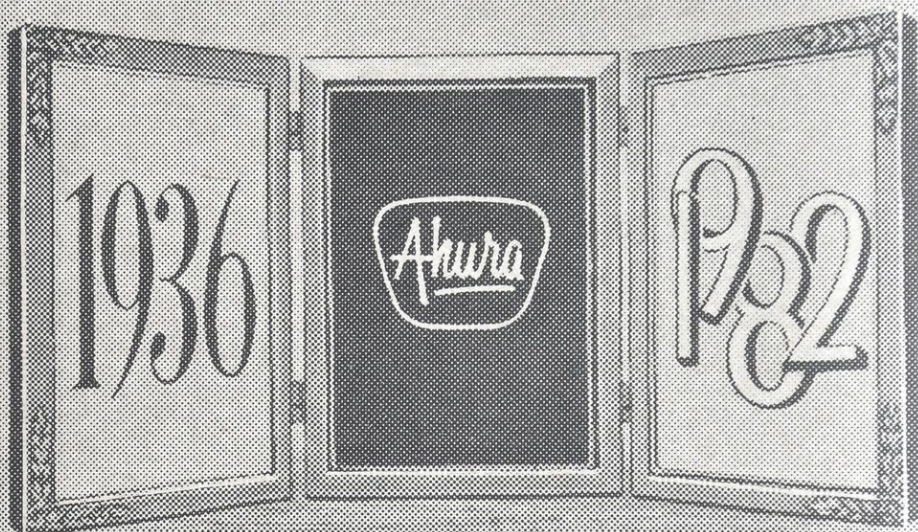
When, in the early part of this century, with the first-ever alien "marriage" in the Parsee community and with the spiritual decline of many of its members enchanted by the superficial glamour of materialistic progress of the West, the unflinching, firm, faith of the Parsees in their religion began to be shaken, the *Saheb-Delans* of Demavand *Koh* decided that it was time the veil of grossness, that had fallen on *Khshnoom* through the centuries, be lifted just a little, so that the wayward Parsees would get an inkling of the glory and splendour of the pristine Zoroastrian Religion.

The only mistake that many *Khshnoom* enthusiasts make is to make it appear that *Ilm-e-Khshnoom* is a school of thought or philosophy of the Zoroastrian Religion. Hence they style themselves, "*Khshnoomists*". This is not so. *Ilm-e-Khshnoom* is that beatific knowledge and wisdom which reveals the esoteric truths and secrets of Nature, which, in turn, is the Zoroastrian Religion itself. Anyone, therefore, who criticises or belittles *Khshnoom*, ridicules the Zoroastrian Religion and insults Prophet Zarthosht himself!

Adi Doctor.

Courtesy Dini-Avaz, July-August 1982

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Converts to Christianity

The Life of Dastur Dhalla XXVIII

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 28th 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.

In the last instalment, Dhalla wrote of the controversies over the disposal of the dead.

In 1942 and 1943 two Parsi students studying at the Sophia College in Bombay were converted to Christianity with the purpose of renouncing worldly life. The question of their conversion was discussed in the community with intense emotion. Even other communities were distressed and a move to disaffiliate the College from the University and to disrecognize it, gained grave proportions. To add fuel to the fire our forceful, orthodox paper urged Parsi parents to withdraw their daughters from the institution. Not stopping at that, they made an ardent appeal to prevent our girls from attending any high school run by Christians in Bombay and all convents in other cities as well.

As time passed correspondence and editorials airing various views appeared one after another. Under those circumstances we came across a letter written by the social worker, Mr. Burjorji Bharucha. In it he had suggested that I be invited to Bombay to deliver some lectures. After a few days we read a reply penned by Mr. Faramroze Kamdin supporting Mr. Bharucha's request. Not content with merely writing, he made a generous appeal to offer Rs. 700 as expenses so as to give a practical bias to the suggestion. Reading this I felt that it would not be surprising if I were called upon to set aside my creative occupation for a while and go to Bombay. Soon I received a letter from Mr. Pirojshah Mehta, Chairman of the Rahnumai Mazdayasnan Society, inviting me on behalf of the association to deliver a series of eight lectures at Bombay. I

accepted the invitation and at the appointed time went to Bombay with my eldest daughter, Dinbanoo.

From my previous experiences I knew that I would have to accept invitations from other organizations and deliver other talks as well. I therefore prepared the subject matter for 15 lectures. As expected the number of talks increased and ultimately I delivered 17 lectures in all.

The topics were practical as the times and circumstances demanded and such as would throw unbiased and scientific light on the perennial questions that were given a religious colour and which confounded the community. The atmosphere was rife with the question of the Sophia College conversion. Hence the topic of my first lecture was: "Today for the betterment of life or for salvation and emancipation conversion is an anachronism".

As the superstitious would say, the inauguration itself was inauspicious. I was not able to offer to the majority what it desired in the controversy concerning the Sophia College. My opinions were contrary to theirs. It was not possible for me to pamper to their aroused sentiments.

I placed the facts at length before the community and stated that in the field of education mission schools—schools and colleges run by Protestant and Catholic priests and convents run by sisters and nuns—had rendered yeoman service to the country. Recently the Mission School at Surat had celebrated its centenary and besides Surat, the prominent Zoroastrians of various cities had cooperated with pleasure. A gem of the community like Behramji Malbari had graduated from that School.

Carried away by emotion we were demanding that parents should withdraw their daughters from convents throughout the country. This suggestion was impractical and harmful. Parsi High Schools for girls do not exist in every city, hence our daughters are obliged to study in convents. In Karachi the Mama Parsi Girls High School has come into existence since the last two and a half decades. Prior to that, for years, girls of the community passed out from the Karachi Convent. The community has always harboured good feelings for that institution. Khan Bahadur Nusserwanjee Mehta had paved the flooring of the School building with tiles manufactured in his factory free of charge and had contributed a clock for every class-room. During the last 25 years more than one Parsi girl has been a

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boarder at the Simla Convent. In the 60 years' contact of the community in Karachi with these missionary institutions there has not been a single instance of conversion.

At the conclusion of the talk Mr. Burjorji Bharucha questioned me from the second-floor gallery as to whether under the circumstances I would have withdrawn my grand-daughter from the Sophia College had my family been residing in Bombay. I replied in the negative.

Three years have gone by since this event. Sophia College still stands safe and sound under the jurisdiction of the University. Neither have the Parsi parents of Bombay removed their daughters from it nor have guardians prevented their girls from going to convents in different parts of the country. In some stray instance if a girl having a devout and reverential frame of mind and capable of being carried away easily by her feelings succumbs to a nun who transcends the bounds of duty and, prompted by the temptation to win a place in heaven, plays upon the sentiments of a tender mind, it is not appropriate for the community to lose its mental balance and to behave as though the sky were falling.

The economic condition of the community is weakening day by day. In cities like Bombay and Karachi 30 to 40 percent of the families have to be given the benefit of poor welfare funds. To the same extent provision has to be made for the fees of school children, free medical assistance in Parsi hospitals and charitable housing projects. A helping hand is given in a hundred other ways to enable the poor to eke out a miserable existence.

On the other hand, to the most modest estimate, the community is throwing away not thousands but lakhs of rupees

They made an ardent appeal to prevent our girls attending any high school run by Christians.

every year on ceremonials and sandalwood under cover of religion. As though all this were insufficient, from time to time glaring and spectacular advertisements appear in the most widely-circulated leading orthodox, communal paper, dramatising the news regarding the sandalwood that is burnt in almost 200 Atash Kadehs of India and in the temples at Iran and the ceremonies per-

formed in them. Just as we purchase all kinds of articles in the market in the mistaken belief that an admittance into heaven can be attained by buying virtuous deeds cheaply, men and women of the community welcome this commercial project that wears a religious garb and spend lavishly on it.

Threatening news was pouring in from the war-front and, at a time when every heart was bursting with fear, a condoling message was advertised that a huge log of 'Agar' such as had never been offered before was to be offered to the sacred fire at the Udva Atashbehram. The offering was made and incidentally the British forces won a victory over Libya, so a prominent gentleman announced publicly in Udva that this memorable event had taken place as a result of the offering!

Bearing all this in mind, in my next lecture I spoke somewhat bitterly, though honestly about the Parsi Press. I reminded the audience of the memorable contribution made by the Press in the progress of the community during the last 100 years. Thereafter I politely criticized the newsmen who, though complete reformists in their own private lives, became like 'dummies and mummies' and gave the reins of their papers into the hands of irresponsible orthodox propagandists and remained aloof themselves. I also censured them for publishing advertisements that boosted superstition. The annoyance of the orthodoxy was vented upon me in no uncertain terms through the Editor of their newspaper.

We may hold a variety of diverse opinions, but each must respect the views of the opponent. We do not follow that principle. We lay greater stress on sentiment than on serious thought and remain entangled in meaningless dissensions and disputes. Many articles were published criticising me. The sanctimonious delivered many stinging speeches against me. Sheikh Shadi has said: Silence is golden. Thus, disregarding their fury, I remained silent.

At that time I was giving evidence in the Vansda Case (to be published in the next issue of *Parsiiana*-Ed.).

Presently some of our friends brought the tidings that some people were scheming to disrupt our series of lectures. As a precautionary measure they went an hour in advance to the hall on the day of the talk and found that the microphone was dead. That lecture was on: "Education in the era after the Great War" and Divan Bahadur Krishnalal Mohanlal was to preside. From the time

I entered with my daughter Dinbanoo, cries of 'Shame, shame,' reverberated throughout the hall. They grew louder as my lecture commenced and, as the microphone was not working, my daughter placed in my hands a slip of paper informing me that no one could hear what I was saying.

Upon a request from the chairman, Mr. Burjorji Bharucha asked those present whether they wished that I should con-

From the gallery to my right, one after another she pelted three eggs at me.

tinue the talk or end it. Except a few gentlemen in the opposition they all requested that the lecture be continued. The talk re-commenced, but of course no one could hear it. Meanwhile the news reporters who were sitting off the stage were invited to take their seats beside me and a note was handed over to me that I should summarize as though I were speaking to the reporters and conclude the talk. I continued as instructed.

It is the privilege of ladies to ward off evil by breaking eggs. The agitators had engaged a woman to perform this duty. From the gallery to my right, one after another she pelted three eggs at me, but the person concerned must not have practised sufficiently, for not a single egg touched me. The first egg fell on a prominent lady sitting on the stage and her lovely sari was soiled. The second alighted on a well-known gentleman and the third hit the good chairman. Together with the shower she shouted: "Who on earth made you a Dastur?" and advised me to go back to Karachi. My daughter informed her from the stage that I could not hear a single word, but that on reaching home, she would relay the benediction.

A year and nine months had elapsed since this occurrence. I was to lecture in Karachi on the occasion of the death anniversary of the patriot, Dadabhai Naoroji. I had to tie the white turban that day. Making a mental note of the hour, I placed the turban and cap by my side and went on with my writing. In doing so I forgot to wrap the turban and, when I did remember, I was to leave home within three-quarters of an hour. Now, since some of my turbans had shrunk, a ten or twelve inch length of cloth was stitched onto them. While wrapping the turban I had to keep in

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mind to begin from the attached end. In the haste this fact escaped me. The turban was tied and only in the last round did I realize the mistake and found that the seam showed right in the centre of my forehead. This could never be overlooked. There was no way out but to

The community is throwing away not thousands but lakhs of rupees every year on ceremonials and sandalwood under cover of religion.

unwrap the whole turban and to tie it again.

Looking at myself in the mirror it struck me that I had become a Dastur and yet was not aware of how a 'dastur's paghdi' is wrapped. I burst out laughing, recollecting the words of the woman who had showered the benediction of eggs upon me, and suddenly I said aloud: "Who on earth made you a Dastur?" Nargesh, my second daughter-in-law hastened from the adjacent room and gave me a bit of her mind. Eventually I re-tied the

turban and set out.

The topic of one of the lectures of the series was: "The controversy regarding the Navjote Registration Act that has reached dizzy dimensions."

The centuries-old question of accepting the offspring of Zoroastrian fathers and non-Zoroastrian mothers into the fold still threatens the community, despite the resolutions passed at the meetings of the Anjuman against it. With the intention of putting an end to this problem once and for all, the orthodox section of the community started a move to get a law passed in the Legislative Assembly that, like marriages, all Navjotes also should be compulsorily registered in government offices. In other words, just as only a marriage performed by a Zoroastrian priest of a Zoroastrian man and a Zoroastrian woman can be registered, the Navjote of children born of Zoroastrian parents only could be registered. Thus the navjote of the offspring of a union between a non-Zoroastrian mother, whether she be a mistress or united to a Zoroastrian by the Civil Marriage Act cannot be deemed legal and hence could not be registered. The reformist party is against this movement, so the orthodox section is depending upon the strength

of the majority to get this law passed.

No other community in the world is as tormented about the 'Jooddin' problem as the Parsi community. Nations believing in proselytizing either keep their doors wide open for all or submitting to changed times, conditions and

The orthodox started a move to pass a law in the Legislative Assembly that all Navjotes should be registered in government offices.

circumstances, close their gates against all forever. Ours is the only community that has behaved in completely another manner since the last 1,200 years. Since the seventh century from the time we lost our empire, we have had to lower the banner of conversion from the flagstaff. Yet, since 1,200 years we have continued to accept children of mistresses of Zoroastrian men and, since a century, those of Zoroastrian fathers and non-Zoroastrian mothers united according to the Civil Marriage Act.

To be continued



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The Flame and the Ember



A silver drachma showing Ardeshir I, founder of the Sasanian empire (left) and (right) a fire altar on the reverse



Highlights of Parsi History by P.P. Balsara; Published by The Y.C.Z.A. Educational and Charitable Fund; Price Rs 12

P.P. Balsara's book *Highlights of Parsi History* begins with a bang and ends with a whimper.

The canvas opens with the grandeur of Cyrus and Darius, the decline of the Achaemenians, the rise of the Sassanians. Then comes the low-water mark under Khushru and again the sea-faring ventures of the sixth century, when Persian ships plied up to China. In his *Discovery of India*, Nehru dwells at greater length on this Persian venture than Balsara does. On these Persian ships, wrote Nehru, the Chinese pilgrims and travellers to India voyaged.

The first chapters of the book move with a march, enlivened by various quotations from authorities on Zoroastrianism and on Persian history. In fact, Balsara's foot-notes with quotations, and his tit-bits, are at least as interesting as the text in the early chapters.

It is when the Parsis come to India that the pace visibly slackens and the narration becomes pedestrian. The author deals with the prosperity of Surat, the arrival of Parsis in Bombay, and gives brief life-sketches of leading Parsis. All this is done in a bitty manner. It would have been better if he had stuck to a few highlights in depth rather than try to cover history in a breezy manner. There is no attempt at a conclusion, nor a look at the future. The book ends tamely with the contribution of Khabardar to Gujarati literature.

The first chapters of the book are

ennobling and the author deserves credit for his study and his contribution. In a book on the Parsis, Pilo Nana-vutty touches very briefly on these orig-

The vitality of the early Persian empire was inextricably linked with the faith that motivated its rulers and the ruled.

ins of the Parsis, while Kulke in his masterpiece devotes hardly ten pages to the origin of the Parsis and their religion—although Kulke's book is a modern masterpiece. Balsara dwells longer on the early years.

The vitality of the early Persian

empire was inextricably linked with the faith that motivated its rulers and the ruled. Its spaciousness came from the faith of Zarathushtra, who, said Tagore, was the first Prophet to emancipate "religion from the exclusive narrowness of the tribal God, the God of a chosen people, and offered it the Universal man". This is the prophet we have narrowed down with our exclusiveness today.

The Prophet stands out as a historical personality who, in the words of Sir Percy Sykes, "must excite profound reverence when we bear in mind how deep was the darkness around him." And the lessons Zarathushtra taught were of pure morality, of the struggle between good and evil, and through it all a positive and joyful approach to life, so different from the negative approach that was

Cylindrical seal of Darius the Great hunting (c 500 B.C.)



preached by some other religions to follow.

It is this generosity and joyfulness of the faith that perhaps launched Persian Emperors on feats of magnanimity or justice that have been unparalleled in ancient or medieval history — like Cyrus returning the Jews to Jerusalem, their city, taking with them all the vessels that their Babylonian conquerors had captured from them. Lesser known is the feat of Artaxerxes II, who on learning from his Jewish consort Esther about Premier Haman's plot to kill all the Jews, hanged Haman and saved the Jews. The Festival of Purim commemorates



Shapur II hunting lions, a scene from a bowl of the fourth century A.D.

rating this deliverance has been celebrated by the Jews for 23 centuries.

Apart from the generosity of spirit, it needed organisational power of a high order to administer an empire from Egypt to the Indus, and it is Darius who organised the taxes, the coinage, and the first postal service in the world to communicate with his Satraps. The Persians first demonstrated that it was possible to administer and govern on so vast a scale, and later the Romans benefitted from the organisational set-up of the Persians.

The author also quotes from a work on Persepolis to show that unlike the grandeur of the Pyramids or of the Babylonian Gardens, the Palace of Persepolis was the result of neither forced nor slave labour. He also touches on the fact that Ashoka's bell-shaped capital with the four lions surmounted on it, the emblem of India, is of Persepolitan origin.

The later Achaemenian Kings were

demoralised by luxury and ease, their courts riddled with intrigues, their faith, once vibrant, smothered by rituals imposed by priests who worshipped the form rather than the spirit, and the decline came.

The flame which had become an ember flared again with vigour under the Sassanians from 220 A.D. with Emperor Ardeshar Babegan inflicting a severe defeat upon the Roman Emperor Alexander Severus. It was followed by Shapur I defeating and capturing the Roman Emperor Valerian, and Shapur II, the Great, and Khushru I (Noshirwan the Blessed) who also carried on the war with Rome and obtained its tribute.

Persian history seems to move in waves of grandeur and pettiness. And pettiness reached its depth when Khushru II marched on Jerusalem and carried away the relic of the Holy Cross, which was reclaimed not long after by Emperor Heraclius. The constant wars with Rome and the lack of tolerance on the part of later Sassanian kings, the enervating power of rituals and basically, the lack of any inspiring purpose, led to the decline of the Sassanians. And a day came when the Arab invader, inflamed by a desert faith, rode with his horses over the mountains and plains of Iran. Resistance was feeble and Persia fell. And with it fell the standing of a great faith that had sadly restricted itself — perhaps out of its liberality — to the boundaries of Iran and had not sought to extend its power elsewhere.

As Rome conquered Greece physically, but Greece conquered Rome culturally, so also when the Muslim expansionists planted their standard, they were followed by Persian artists and administrators. Unable to wield the

sword they wielded the pen and Arabian medicine, scientific knowledge and even the grammar of the Arab language was influenced by Iranian traditions. One wishes that this early drama so well brought out by Balsara, could be enlarged with due illustrations.

Balsara is in possession of a host of interesting facts but he has packed them with telegraphic terseness perhaps depriving the Zoroastrian reader of the pride which can stir his heart.

He rightly notes that Zoroastrian fire-temples were established not only in India but in China and that the Zoroastrians there appear to have been absorbed by the vast Chinese multitude. In India alone, outside of Iran, has the

Persian history seems to move in waves of grandeur and pettiness.

community survived and flourished. The saga of the Parsis lends itself to a great novel along the line of *Exodus*, but the novelist is yet to portray the romance, the grandeur and the struggles of the community.

It is a pity that books like Balsara's do not find a commercial publisher to promote them. Even a greater pity that Bombay, the capital city of the Parsis, does not have a single book-shop specializing in books on the community and its faith.

There is a stirring among the young people and a hunger for greater knowledge of the community and the faith, which was not visible even 20 years ago. Are these the signs of new life? If so, can it be fanned, and how?

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The Parsi Punchayet Case

Petit vs Jeejeebhoy XIII

Tribal Mentality

THE JUDGEMENT SO FAR

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

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

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

The plaintiffs (Sir Dinshaw Maneckji Petit; Tata and others) contended Zoroastrianism enjoins and practises 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 admitted into their fold by the performance of the Navjote ceremony.

Daver in his part of the judgement discredited the evidence, past and present, of conversion in India.

Beaman in the last instalment spoke of the community's tribal or caste sentiment superseding the religious bond.

Before going on further, I may as well clear away some possible confusion. When we were engaged upon the evidence offered to prove that Converts were frequently made, some discussion arose as to what constituted a Convert, or, in other words, whether any specific ceremonies were necessary. As the case went on, it became more and more clear to my mind that too much attention was being bestowed upon this point. When it was first suggested, the Defendants at once uncompromisingly refused to go on with it. They told us, in the plainest language, that their case was Converts or no Converts. They did not care to go into distinctions between the making of this or that Convert. Conceding that a Convert was made in the most approved and perfect manner, they still denied that he was entitled to the benefits of their funds.

For my part, I at once, and finally, accept that position. It is simple and reasonable, and it shuts the door on what might have been long enquiries into ancient ritual that appeared to me likely to lead to no good result. It cannot, however, be conceded that, while everyone admits that, theoretically, the Zoroastrian religion enjoins the making of Converts, the leading "expert" for the Defendants, from the time of the Select Committee's report, have endeavoured very strenuously to introduce certain qualifications. The most general of these has, strictly speaking, nothing to do with this point, though it is apt to be confused with it—I mean the condition upon which all these religious leaders insist, that such conversions should not do harm to the good religion. That is an opportunist gloss upon sound religious doctrine which, I think, a sound Churchman would find it hard to defend upon any but the plainest secular grounds of expediency. The fact that it has gained and held the prominence it has throughout this case, is a convincing

proof, if any were needed, of how completely the pure religious sentiment has been subordinated to the caste or tribal sentiment of the present day community.

Further than this, however, strenuous efforts were made at various stages of the case to convince us, that no conversion could be a real effectual conversion, unless the Convert went through certain ancient, ceremonial, and purificatory rites. Now, I do not propose to go into that question at all. We have here a very simple issue. The Defendants say, let your Convert be converted and admitted in any way you please; impose upon him the strictest ordeals known to your ritual; and we still say that he is not entitled to share in the benefits of our Trusts.

That being the Defendants' position, it is superfluous to go into the question what constitutes a valid, from the reli-

Conceding that a Convert was made in the most approved and perfect manner, they still denied that he was entitled to the benefits of their funds.

gious standpoint, conversion. But I cannot refrain from making one observation. The extreme orthodox party, who are most jealous of the prestige and exclusiveness of their community, appear to think that were this a question for us to decide, we ought to lay it down that what is called the nine nights' Burushnum ceremony is indispensable. And in adopting this line, I have not the slightest doubt they are honestly actuated by zeal for their religion and the desire to keep it as select and unpolluted as possible.

But, surely, they must see that they

The pure religious sentiment has been subordinated to
the caste or tribal sentiment of the present day community.

are taking a mistaken course. If that were an indispensable condition precedent of conversion, the only practical result would be to throw the door open to the lowest, least refined, least desirable class of Converts, while shutting that in the face of all reputable persons who, out of sincere conviction, desired admission to the Holy Zoroastrian faith. I find it difficult to believe that any cultured adult foreigner could bring himself to submit to this extremely primitive ceremony of initiation, while certainly no grown cultured woman, who wished to join the Zoroastrian faith, could conceivably be asked to do so.

It is only people in the lowest stages of development who could be at all likely to consent to go through such an initiation, and those are precisely the kind of Converts zealous Zoroastrians do not wish to make. Everything, therefore, in the record which deals with degrees, if I may so style it, of conversion—every question and answer about what ceremonies are necessary and what ceremonies are unnecessary—seem to me now to be wholly irrelevant. I shall not say another word about them.

I have now to make one or two remarks upon the documentary evidence relating to conversions in the past. We have three leading instances: (1) the Pandits, (2) Akbar, and (3) the Mazagon Converts. The first is, more or less, mythical. I do not think I can go quite so far as my learned brother in disposing of it. He attaches more weight than I am able to do to the learning and researches of Mr. Jivanji Modi. I can only say for myself that such additional researches as he made, while the case was in progress, served no other purpose than to convince me that his mind was so obsessed by the cause he had at heart, that he was utterly incapable of reasoning or even thinking correctly.

Of course, it is possible, as my learned brother suggests, that these Pandits

were Parsis; or that, if they were not Parsis, they were good men who had helped the early settlers, and were therefore remembered in their prayers. Those are quite possible explanations. But taking the evidence about them as it stands, I should have been inclined to say that it did show that these Pandits became Zoroastrians. But the time is so remote that the point has little practical importance. It may amuse the curious, it may interest the scholar, but it does not, I think, throw much light on the question we have to answer.

I find it difficult to believe
that any cultured adult
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ceremony of initiation.

There seems to be a pretty deeply-rooted and widely-spread tradition among the Parsis that some of the Navsari priests went to Akbar's Court and converted him. Whether he really was converted or not has, of course, only a secondary and comparatively unimportant bearing on the present case. But there is a good deal in this connection which does directly bear upon it and is not unimportant. We have to bear in mind that the Defendants' case is, that conversions in India, since the Parsi immigration, are altogether unknown.

None, they say, have occurred. We have never tried to make any. And the practice, enjoined by the Founder of our religion, has fallen into total desuetude. That is one thing, and as a reply to it, the fact that Akbar was converted, if he was, would be a telling reply. But we have to carry this line of opposition further, as I have already indicated, when we come to consider, after preparing the way

carefully, the cardinal question: "What had the Founders in their minds when they created these Trusts?" It would help the Defendants greatly to be able to say—as, indeed, they do say with dogged insistence—that not only were no conversions ever made, but that the idea of making converts never occurred to any of the Indian Zoroastrian Community, and it is in answer to this that the evidence about Akbar is so important.

For what do we find? Not only, as I have said, a widely-spread tradition, popular ballads extolling the achievement as the crowning glory of the Bombay Parsis, but Mr. Modi himself—the most bitter uncompromising opponent of conversion, the root and branch representative of orthodoxy—even he writes an elaborate treatise, or, one might say, almost a book, to prove that the priests of Navsari are fairly entitled to the credit of having converted the Emperor Akbar. After making all possible allowances for priestly *esprit de corps* and for the exuberances of learned authorship, I cannot help thinking that this leaves Mr. Modi in a delicate position.

When, from time to time, in the course of his cross-examination, he was confronted with his own written and published opinions, I think he must have bitterly regretted that he ever set up to be a learned author. Not only in this instance, but in many others—right up to the time when the storm broke, Mr. Modi, with guileless indiscretion, went on committing himself to opinion after opinion, from all of which he had of a sudden to resile with almost startling agility and vehemence! That is one of the many misfortunes of being a popular author.

Of course, when Mr. Modi was writing these books and expressions as a recognized sacerdotal authority—these opinions—he allowed himself to be car-

There seems to be a pretty deeply-rooted
and widely-spread tradition among the Parsis that some
of the Navsari priests went to Akbar's Court
and converted him.

ried away by the impulse of the moment. Engrossed in the fascinating task of flattering the vanity of his co-religionists, he expends his learning and talents in a brochure proving that certain godly priests of Navsari converted Akbar, or, at any rate, if they did not quite convert him, certainly no one else did, and they, at any rate, were entitled to all the glory and credit of the attempt. I will not say that Mr. Mody had not the honesty—because like many other worthy fanatics he is probably as honest as he is perverse on his particular hobby, but I will say that Mr. Modi had not the wit—to take the only possible course which could have extricated himself from the embarrassing consequences of his too exuberant authorship with dignity and credit. Instead of telling the simple truth, that he had taken up these subjects without the least idea that they would ever have more than a scholarly and academic interest, and committed himself to opinions which, when brought to the test of a shattering concrete case, he could no longer maintain, he made the most pitiable efforts to show that he was perfectly consistent with himself, and that his “Yes” of to-day was his “Nay” of yesterday. I suppose few witnesses of equal eminence, character, and, I hope I may add, sincere honesty, have made a more deplorable exhibition of themselves in the witness-box than Mr. Mody.

But the point of all this is, not whether Akbar was or was not converted a century or two ago, but that right up to the present time one of the leading scholars and ecclesiastical lawyers of the Parsi Community of Bombay, so far from saying that such a conversion was contrary to the tenets—or, for that matter, the practice of the community—set himself elaborately to appropriate the merit of, let us say, the attempt to convert Akbar to his own co-religionists. Two most important facts emerge: (1) that the idea of converting aliens had not

become extinct; and (2) that some, at least, of the religious leaders of the community regarded it favourably within a very short time of this controversy breaking out.

The case of the Mazagon Converts is useful for the same purposes. It is, in my opinion, quite immaterial to enquire whether they were converted, or, for that matter, whether they were capable, in the broad general sense, of becoming Converts. It may be that they were all illegitimate children of Parsi fathers. What is important and material is, that in their case, in quite recent times, two eminent Parsi Divines engaged in a heated controversy as to what ceremonies were, and what were not, essential to conversion. This shows, again, with convincing clearness, that conversion—in the abstract at any rate, and as a theoretical religious tenet—was perfectly familiar to the Parsi Community, not only in the remote past but in our own time.

Scattered about the voluminous papers which have been laid before us, there is plenty of evidence to support this

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view. In the case of one alleged disreputable Convert, we find the leaders of the Community objecting, not on the broad ground that no conversions could or ought to be made, but on the much narrower ground that his conversion had not been notified to the Anjuman, or that the proper ceremonies had not been performed.

Again we have the Ravayats or

Responsa prudentum. These are answers sent by the heads of the Zoroastrian Community in Persia, to questions put to them on points of religious dogma, ritual, and so forth by Bombay Parsis. Both questions and answers show, with unmistakeable clearness, that the question of making Converts,—both in the abstract, as a general question, and, more concretely, as to who were fit and proper to be made Converts and how they ought to be made—was very much alive over the whole period to which we need confine our investigations. It is true that the Ravayats may not command much respect. That is not the point. The point is that questions were put by pious men about conversion, and answers were received from the heads of the Official Hierarchy in Persia, which most certainly did not deny that conversions could or ought to be made.

As to the qualifications, I am not now concerned with them. Nothing in what I may call the official or expert part of the case creates a very high opinion of the intelligence of the good, devout gentlemen who had to some extent the consciences of the Zoroastrian Community in their keeping. But it is undeniable that, rightly or wrongly, they, as well as the recipients of the Ravayats, were fully alive to the possibility of conversions; and, with certain reservations of a secular rather than a religious kind, were quite ready to sanction and approve them. In the face of all this evidence, it is idle for the Defendants to contend to-day that the idea of conversion, although an integral part of their revealed and accepted religion, had fallen so completely into disuse, that no member of the Bombay Parsi or Zoroastrian Community could ever have dreamed of regarding it as a practical and living question.

To be continued

IN MEMORIAM

The Last Post

Died: **Kekhashru Dhunjisha Billimoria**, 80, retired Inspector General of Police, Maharashtra, on 8 June, 1982, following a heart attack.

Well remembered by the police force, Billimoria was given a ceremonial funeral at Bombay's Doongarwadi with a guard of honour, the firing of 42 shots and the bugle sounds of the last post, notes R.F. Mirza, a friend of the family.

Billimoria, whose father retired as deputy superintendent of police, joined



the police force in 1923. He became the first Indian Assistant Inspector General of Police in 1945 and after Independence became the first Indian Deputy Inspector General of Police, southern range, based at Belgaum, notes his biographer. He was called upon to head the police action party to integrate Hyderabad, under orders of Sardar Vallabhai Patel, and later as I.G.P. Rajasthan, was entrusted with the task of curbing dacoits.

With a 6'2" well-built frame, Billimoria became a familiar figure in Bombay as commissioner in 1955 and then as Inspector General of Police, Maharashtra until his retirement in 1957, states Mirza. He is survived by his wife Dhun, a son Russi, two daughters Frainy and Jeroo, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Powerful Projects

Died: **Tehmuras Framroze Pardiwala**, 57, Project Director of the Narora Atomic Power Project in Uttar Pradesh,



of a heart attack, in Lucknow on February 18, 1982.

Pardiwala had the distinction of having guided the destiny of the first of the series of India's Pressurised Heavy water Reactor type nuclear power stations, notes the write-up by Dr. R.D. Asana, of Valsad, Pardiwala's hometown. He was the Chief Project Engineer for the Rajasthan Atomic Power Project as well.

Pardiwala joined the Bhabha Atomic Power Project at Trombay (Maharashtra) in 1960 and was sent to UK for training in nuclear power engineering. In 1964 he joined the Rajasthan Atomic Power Project as an Electrical Superintendent and was promoted to the position of Chief Project Engineer in 1972. Pardiwala's involvement in RAPP encompassed construction, commissioning and commercial operations, notes the write-up.

Born on 1st July 1925 at Ahmedabad, he studied in the Dastur Boys High School, Poona, and graduated in electrical engineering from St. Xavier's College, Bombay, in 1945. After a five-year course in engineering from the University of London, he worked for Atul Products Ltd., Valsad (Gujarat) before joining the Tata Hydro Electric Power Co.

Besides his professional work, Pardiwala was keenly interested in gardening, music and social welfare of the colonies of the project, according to the write-up.

He is survived by his wife Homai and son Homi.

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