

Parsiānā

The Resurgence of the Federation

Gouri Wagadarikar

"I will heave a sigh of relief when I transfer the onerous responsibility to (Bombay Parsi Punchayet chairman) Dr Golwalla," said Shiavax D. Nargolwala, president of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman, who for the last five years has been the mainstay of the Federation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India. On the second day of the two-day meeting of the reconstituted Federation, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet was "unanimously requested not only to rejoin, but to head the Federation."

Addressing the representatives on May 29 at Bombay's Fariyas Hotel, Golwalla noted, "In rejoining we had problems, but we have joined after much thought, consultation and deliberation with other anjumans."

The BPP had left the Federation barely two weeks after the successful hosting of the Third World Zoroastrian Congress in January 1978 at which Nargolwala had criticized the BPP's electoral scheme. On March 11 this year by four votes to three the BPP decided to rejoin. The three dissenting BPP trustees, Dr Nelie Noble, Maneck Hodiwalla and Jal Vimadlal did not attend the May meet.

In his welcome address, Nargolwala noted, "The Federation has passed through difficult times, we have been making strenuous efforts to unite (all an-

jumans). The Parsi Punchayet (Bombay) has a conciliatory attitude and a sort of understanding has been arrived at and embodied as a resolution." He credited Golwalla and his colleagues for the "honourable settlement" arrived at.

Nargolwala described the need for a body like the Federation as "obvious" and stated that good work had been done by the Federation during its existence, the Third World Zoroastrian Congress being a feather in its cap. He now hoped for a "powerful and united Federation" and looked forward to the BPP in the role of leader and guide. Golwalla reiterated that everybody was happy and that "we are meeting as friends."

Golwalla later stated that he had made his decision to rejoin mainly for the sake of unity and for "the happiness not only of our children but our grandchildren also... you can count on the Bombay Parsi Punchayet to help you... With (Nargolwala's) leadership, dynamism and intelligence we will continue to look to him for help and guidance."

Following the BPP, several anjumans gave their assent to rejoining the Federation, some withdrew their resignation and a few stated they would formally rejoin after discussion in the next General Body meeting of their anjuman.

The Executive Council meeting first

resolved to retain the rules and regulations of the Federation as they existed on January 25, 1978, the date on which the BPP withdrew. Another important resolution passed was to consider and accept the resignation of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman and the application for membership of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman Registered Trust, in its place.

The reason for the change came about because the Delhi Parsi Anjuman accepts non-Parsi spouses as members albeit with certain limitations. The orthodox groups claimed this was a violation of the Federation's constitution which required anjumans and punchayets to have only Parsi-Zoroastrian members.

B.K. Mistry, a member of the orthodox Council of Vigilant Parsis which vigorously opposed the BPP rejoining the Federation largely because of the DPA's liberal policies, even attempted to obtain an injunction to prevent the BPP from rejoining.

Earlier Mistry had, through his solicitors, sent a notice to the BPP saying that they should not rejoin the Federation without the opinion of senior counsel. The BPP consulted noted lawyer Fali Nariman, who "analysed the legal aspects in a 30-page opinion" and said that the BPP is more than a mere trust: it is a lodestar, an institution for the good of the community. It was decided

THE THERMAX GROUP

**THERMAX PRIVATE LIMITED
TULSI FINE CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES**

Offer equipment and systems for—
**EFFICIENT HEAT GENERATION
DISTRIBUTION AND HEAT RECOVERY
ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION CONTROL
WATER TREATMENT
POST-HARVEST PROCESSING**

... IN PROCESS HEATING

WATER TUBE STEAM BOILERS

100 kg to 100 tonnes steam/hr. Pressures up to 185 kg/cm². Multifuel : coal, husk, woodchips, bagasse, oil or gas.

MECHANICAL STOKERS

Reciprocating Grate and Travagrate Stokers for coal-fired boilers of 1-6 tonnes steam/hr. Dumping Grate and Spreader Grate Stokers for coal-fired boilers over 10 tonnes steam/hr.

WASTE HEAT BOILERS AND RECUPERATORS

10-100 tonnes of steam/hr. at pressures up to 70 kg/cm².

HOT WATER AND HOT AIR GENERATORS MOBILE INDUSTRIAL STEAM CLEANERS

THERMIC FLUID HEATERS

1,00,000 to 1,500,000 kcal/hr. Higher capacities on request. Fuels : oil, gas or coal.

... IN AGRICULTURE

Seed/grain drying, processing and storage equipment and systems.

... IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION CONTROL AND WATER TREATMENT AIR POLLUTION CONTROL SYSTEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Mechanical dust collectors, baghouse filters, venturi and wet scrubbers.

SOLID WASTE & WASTE HEAT RECOVERY INCINERATORS

Burns industrial, municipal and biological waste as fuel to provide hot water or steam.

EFFLUENT TREATMENT EQUIPMENT

Primary and secondary clarifiers, surface aerators, sludge thickeners and digestors, neutralising equipment, trickle filters, activated sludge treating plant, strainers, etc.

WATER TREATMENT RESINS, EQUIPMENT AND SYSTEMS

Cation and anion, polystyrene and acrylic based resins, gel type and macroporous resins.

Water treatment softeners, demineralisers, deaerators, degassers, pressure filters, chemical dosing equipment.



THERMAX PRIVATE LIMITED

THERMAX HOUSE, 4 BOMBAY POONA ROAD
SHIVAJINAGAR, PUNE 411 005, INDIA
TELEX : 0145-545 TMXS IN
CABLE : THERMAX HO TEL : (0212) 51125

THERMAX—conserving Energy ... preserving the Environment

that BPP trustee Erach Desai should draft a "forceful resolution" on behalf of all the anjumans to reiterate their willingness to rejoin the Federation. Each Punchayet would also equip themselves with an authorisation to back the BPP and make their stand clear in court, if required.

The first day of the two-day Federation meet comprised an Executive Council meeting followed by a workshop to discuss the main problems facing the community.

The second day commenced with a General Body meeting and selection of office bearers: Four vice-presidents (one from each zone), Shiavax D. Nargolwala (North), A.K. Batlivala (East), Maneck J.R. Gheyara (West) and J.D. Italia (South); two honorary secretaries, Keki J. Gandhi and Erach Desai; two honorary treasurers, Jamshed Guzder and Pesi Nargolwala; and four co-opted members, Rustom E. Daroga (North), Bejan Dittia (South), Dr R.D. Anklesaria (East) and Pesi Nargolwala (West).

The Workshop

The workshop, which served to put in perspective the socio-economic problems facing the community and to outline measures to be taken for solving them, discussed education in schools and colleges, the implementation of the proposed marriage bureau, housing, amelioration of priests, defunct anjumans, creation of a data bank, the Adoption Bill and its implications, and whether the WZO should be recognized as the world body it claims to be.

Professor Noshir F. Kaikobad, a sociologist and presently the president of the Maharashtra Council of Social Work, was the opening spokesman of the workshop. "So far the community has been past-oriented, this is the beginning of being future-oriented," he said optimistically. He was all for "giving up narrow anjuman-mindedness, and adopting a wholistic approach. It is not enough that the Surat Parsi Punchayet works effectively or that the BPP is organized. What is important is that they are able to relate... and work in collaboration."

For effective collaboration, he recounted the sociological prerequisites: "The conviction that our effectiveness will depend on that of others; the widening of vision from 'my anjuman' to 'my community'; willingness to give up one part of your unrestricted freedom to accept freedom to work in co-ordination

with others; and acceptance of leadership of many and not a few." He saw the Federation as a common platform for tackling problems, with sufficient resources in the form of money and manpower. Emphasizing that the Federation should not be a "gappa sabha," Kaikobad proposed that a plan of action should be formulated on scientific lines after a study of various facts. Every plan of action should be subjected to a probation period to confirm its effectiveness.

Kaikobad then proceeded to take up one problem after another and suggested a plan of action in each case. In combination with the marriage bureau the BPP had proposed, he suggested a counselling service, a service for "crisis intervention before the crisis reaches the court," which could be supplemented by a family counselling bureau. Based on scientific lines, the counselling service should include sessions, discussions, case-studies and adult education programmes. Ignoring the threat of mixed marriages would be like "trying to cover a spark of fire by putting a handkerchief over it," he said.

In the field of education Kaikobad stressed that the quality of education was of importance and not the number of schools and children or even the free meals. A crisis in the family would leave a permanent scar on the child, he said, which made counselling in schools essential.

Commenting on the fact that the community was frequently dubbed the com-

"Matters of religion and conscience must be left to individual choice and not to dictation by others belonging to the same community."

munity of ageing people, he despaired of the facilities provided for old people. "We don't have facilities for old people (to allow them) to maintain their autonomy and independence," he said and suggested a voluntary bureau to serve these people on a one-to-one level.

In all the areas of collaboration, however, he warned of pitfalls that would put an end to all the good work: a tussle for the power of prerogative, personality clashes, prejudices and politick-

ing leading to frustration and short-lived victory.

Nargolwala then suggested that a beginning could be made if Kaikobad would draw up a moderate programme of counselling which could be applied to a small area.

Agreeing with Kaikobad about first identifying the problem and then tackling it, BPP trustee Jamsheed Kanga remarked that most people were not aware of the enormity of the problem of poverty. "That the Parsi is affluent is a myth," he said, "the poverty is so much, the state of the community so bad that the people have lost their self-respect. They are not prepared to work for a living and so they stay there and rot." He hoped the crores of rupees lying in trusts would be utilized to solve this problem.

Housing Scheme

Kanga spoke on the crisis of housing, especially in Bombay where the land/man ratio is very poor. Two reasons why the pressure on land was so great was that firstly, Parsis were reluctant to move out of Bombay, there was almost a "ghetto mentality," he said, and secondly, most people early in their career put in an application for accommodation with the BPP and sit back waiting for a house. To rectify the situation, the BPP has devised an objective merit rating system which allots points to certain categories (*Parsiana*, April 1983). Only those people eligible for housing according to this scheme would be considered, others "will be told to look elsewhere," Kanga said. The BPP, he added, planned to construct 1000-2000 flats in the next five years. He requested the other anjumans "to construct more houses if they have land," to ease the pressure on Bombay.

Meanwhile, there have been threats from disgruntled applicants. "We get a girl coming in and saying that if you don't give me a house in one year I'll get married to a Hindu," recounted BPP trustee Jamshed Guzder. "Another girl called up to say, 'I'll report to the Governor that you are all crooks, you take money but don't give us a house, (and ask him to) investigate into the working of the Parsi Punchayet'."

Education

Regarding education, "One thing our forefathers made a mistake about is in the establishment of institutions of higher learning... we have colleges endowed by Parsis but not a Parsi college," Kanga pointed out. "The Sindhis

Here's how to resist a persistent flame in 3 easy steps...

Step 1:

Take a Borosil carafe. Pour in water or your favourite beverage. Place directly on the stove. Bring to a boil.



Step 2:

Place the carafe on a tray. Serve with your most winning smile.



Step 3:

Now it's ready for cold storage, so put it in the fridge and forget about it... till you get the urge again!



Borosil takes the heat on
without a blemish or a blush.
At temperatures that would
make an ordinary kettle
whistle in sheer admiration!

BOROSIL®

(An Associate of Corning Glass Works, U.S.A.)

Manufactured by: BOROSIL GLASS
WORKS LIMITED, Bombay 400 018.



Wonder glass. A sparkling range of services.

came after Partition but in Churchgate itself they have three colleges. The benefit of this (Parsi colleges) is that priority can be given to Parsis." To step up the number of Parsi students in colleges Kanga proposed talent development and vocational guidance by professionals. Also, the existing institutes like the Gamadia Institute should be transformed to technical institutes where courses tailored to the needs of industry could be conducted.

The younger generation is not aware of the various trusts and schemes, Erach Desai pointed out and added that a data bank to provide information should be established.

Nargolwala informed the delegates of the recommendation made to the Minority Commission for preference to Parsis in educational institutions, defence services and the railways by way of reservation of seats. The report of the Commission has, however, yet to be presented in Parliament. K.S. Pavri from Ahmedabad suggested that local anjumans could follow it up with their respective state governments. Desai recommended that a resolution on behalf of the Federation should be sent to the Government regarding the seat reservation.

The Adoption Bill

The mention of the Minority Commission triggered off several related issues. The most controversial topic was the Adoption Bill. The community itself is divided on the issue; one section objected to the Bill saying "they were worried (about) its implications about induction into the religion and the inheritance rights of the adopted child," noted a report in the *Indian Express* newspaper on May 17, 1983. "The Minority Commission feels that matters of religion and conscience must be left to individual choice and not to dictation by others belonging to the same community." To ensure this, the chairman of the Commission, Justice M.H. Beg in the form of an amendment made it mandatory for the adopting parent to "make a declaration in writing in prescribed form that there is no religious prohibition against adoption accepted as binding upon him or her by the declarant."

The anjuman representatives all agreed that the civil aspect of the Bill would be acceptable to the community but that the religious aspect, "the entering of agiaries (and participation in other religious rituals) should be up to the trustees and the (dasturjis)," as Nargolwala put it.

Desai remarked, "We (as the reconstituted Federation representing anjumans all over India) can now take a stand as a united front (and) make an appeal to the Government." Kanga, however, thought an appeal to the government at this stage would be premature and confusing. He insisted that the Federation should wait until the report is made public, analyse its implications and only if it is not acceptable should the Federation make a new appeal. "We will lose our credibility otherwise," he said.

To a suggestion made about restricting adoption to Parsi children only,

"Our effectiveness will depend on that of others, the widening of vision from 'my anjuman' to 'my community'."

Maneck Gheyara, the president of the Surat Punchayet responded that his experience of this was unfavourable. In Surat, even poor parents were not willing to offer their child for adoption. Kanga took another approach, "Why do you want to take away the child? Give him the money" to provide for his education and other expenses.

The proposal by Delhi's Keki Gandhi, one of the Federation's most indefatigable workers, for making up a list of prospective employers to be circulated among Parsi boys and girls with the Federation serving as the liaison between them was welcomed. With recommendations coming in from various anjumans, the Federation could also publish a periodical with news regarding employment, he added.

The WZO Controversy

In response to the question as to whether the Federation should join the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) or not, two conclusions emerged: 1) that the WZO in its present form could not be considered a true world body and 2) the Federation's concept of a world body was the apex of a pyramidal structure, with anjumans and not individuals as members forming the base. It was proposed that this concept should be conveyed to the WZO so that a true world body representative of Zoroastrians all over the world could be created.

"A group of people set themselves up as the world body and ask to be recogniz-

ed (as such)," commented Kanga and added that it was "presumptuous" on the WZO's part to claim the status of a world body with a membership of a mere 600. To the concept of a pyramidal structure, Kanga said that the WZO delegates responded: "We believe in democracy, we want individual members." Kanga remarked disapprovingly, "We do not want to convert it (a world body) into a (kind of) YMCA with individuals."

"It would create practical differences. There might be a conflict of opinion between anjumans and individuals and it would be impossible to unite," was Desai's opinion. Guzder, who traced the birth of the WZO from the Third World Zoroastrian Congress when a committee was appointed to establish a world body with representatives from each continent, reiterated "I will have nothing to do with a body of individual members. I feel the constitution of the WZO as conceived by the present body is not acceptable."

But there were some members who thought that it was wrong to cut away entirely from the WZO, as "it will put us on the world map," and Ms Mani Clubwalla from Madras said, "As Zoroastrians we should give some support to the WZO."

Eventually it was decided that the secretary should draft a model of the Federation's concept of a world body which would be discussed at the next Executive Council meeting tentatively scheduled for September in Delhi.

Unused Land

Before Independence there existed a number of wealthy Parsi landowners who managed vast tracts of land in various parts of India. "Parsis prospered under British patronage," related SPP president Gheyara; it was only after Independence that maintenance of land became difficult because of various legislations like the Land Acquisition Act, Land Ceiling Act, Town Planning Act, Income Tax Act, and others. The agiaries, dharamshalas and dokhmas which were well maintained before, suffered neglect. "Under Nusserwanji Vakil we (the SPP) sold some (surplus) land," said Gheyara, "(which was) a bold step. We got a good price for it and (in return) we give free service for the disposal of the dead."

He lamented the wastage of surplus land around dokhmas which was in danger of being illegally occupied by *zopadpatti* dwellers or alternately, being



Steam takes on unusual confours.

The girl in the picture for example.

The Asiad pool she's about to dive into uses an efficient steam system to keep the water temperature just right.

The bikini she's wearing, the things she eats, drinks and uses have all passed through manufacturing processes that have at some stage utilised process steam.

That's why with steam so universal in application and fuel so scarce, steam efficiency has assumed a critical importance.

And that's why the most

eminent name in steam efficiency, J N Marshall, was involved in this prestigious games event.

Our skilled team of engineers studied the situation. And solved it. Right from detailed designing to imaginative installation of the complete heating system.

So, with the world's eyes on them, the last thing swimmers have to bother about is the temperature of the water.

If you'd like to know how we control temperatures in line with exacting international standards, write in to us.

J N Marshall's multi-benefit steam efficiency and process control systems.

You can measure our contribution by your benefits.



J N Marshall Pvt. Ltd.

Bombay-Pune Road, Kassarwadi, Pune 411 034



□ Fuel Efficiency Division □ Industrial Instrument Systems Division □ Scientific Instrument Systems Division □ Medical Instruments Division

taken away by the Government. Even the practice of appointing watchmen to guard aramgah land was declared unsatisfactory by Gheyara, as the watchmen tended to shirk their responsibility in the absence of supervision.

"Where there are (few) or no Parsis, we should sell this land," was Gheyara's opinion. Ms Clubwalla recommended selling land that can be sold (some land cannot be sold, it is on perpetual lease from the government) to Parsis for construction purposes with a proviso to ensure that in future the land is passed on to Parsis only.

There were two sides to the debate, the first being, "We should live with the changing times... use the land for constructive purposes" and the second, "It is a very touchy subject... we may be accused of desecrating our dead." Guzder stated he "would rather spend money on the living than on the dead... we must teach our young respect for the dead, but is duty to a 70-year-old dead body more than that to a living person?"

Eventually no definite conclusion was arrived at and further discussion was postponed.

At this point a discussion arose as to whether the money left over from the Third World Zoroastrian Congress should be diverted to housing or to building a Federation office. It was finally decided that a cell of specialised people be formed to put these funds to effective use.

Help for the mobeds

"I have been questioned, 'Do they (the mobeds) need amelioration? Are they a neglected class?' There is evidence right here that they are neglected," said Pesi Nargolwala, who was appointed honorary treasurer only that morning. Commenting on the suggested formation of a 'Mobed Union', Nargolwala said jocularly, "I'll hand over the mobeds to (militant trade union leader) Datta Samant, and then you handle them!"

Pesi Nargolwala who has been involved in implementing schemes to help mobeds for the past few years, stated that about 80 years ago there were upto 1200 mobeds, now the community is unable to maintain even 500. This is because society supported the mobeds then but a recent attempt to enlist the support of residents of a local Parsi colony for the maintenance of mobeds met with failure.

As far as training facilities are concerned, he said, the Cama Athornan Institute and Dadar's Athornan Madressa

did produce trained mobeds, (Bombay being the main centre for "mobed production") but only 25 percent of them actually became full-time mobeds. The yearly demand was about 12 mobeds but the numbers fell short of this requirement. There were about 200 full-time and as many part-time mobeds in Bombay taking care of 42 agiaries and four atash-behrams, he estimated. Nargolwala, with Jal Irani and two practising mobeds formed a working group to help the mobeds. Since forming a new trust is not feasible, (because of tax problems), "we have to resort to existing organisations and channelize (their) help." He added that they had raised a sum of Rs 10,000 the first year and

The WZO in its present form could not be considered a true world body.

Rs 40,000 the next and restricted the financial assistance only to full-time mobeds.

"The mobeds have responded very well," said Nargolwala. "Only when they need help they ask for it. You have to go out of your way to ask them to apply." To prevent misuse of funds, "we investigate each case before we give assistance," he added. With the help of Ervad Rustom Panthaki, principal of the Dadar Madressa, "we tried to convince the boys (to become) full-time mobeds," promising to open an account of Rs 100 per month for those who did and raise this to Rs 250 a month for those who opted for a B.A. with Avesta Pahlavi. But they could enlist only seven potential mobeds because the parents were not convinced. "There is a terrific aversion to (this profession) among parents," he stated, and this constitutes the "major bottleneck." Parents prefer to be free from any compulsion and want their boys to decide their own future when they grow up.

Paramobeds

To fulfil the need for mobeds, Nargolwala outlined a plan. Like the 'paramedics' of China alias 'barefoot doctors' "who go around doling out common remedies," he envisaged the training of 'paramobeds'. For this role, he suggested that behdins could be trained and would be qualified to run dharamshalas, and conduct a few

ceremonies, but not weddings or navjotes. In addition to a salary of Rs 800, the paramobed would be provided with free accommodation, electricity and water.

Summarizing the proposals, Nargolwala listed ways to ameliorate the condition of the mobeds: by providing free education for their children, free medical aid, priority in housing, fixing the charges for religious ceremonies, a scheme for gratuity and pension and the training of paramobeds.

Ms Perin Cabinetmaker, a social scientist and special invitee to the meeting, suggested that retired women and men could recite many prayers and would be willing to tend the fire. "We should encourage them, invite them and appreciate (their services)," she said.

A representative from Poona said that in Poona money is collected through donations, and during Navroz and Pateti mobeds are given gifts in the form of consumer items and money. In the St Ann, St Vincent and Dastur schools an appointed mobed teaches the children about the religion after school hours. Students who do well in the final exam are awarded prizes and books. In addition there is a big cup awarded as a floating prize to a school.

To counter the problem of the reduced number of Parsi children in Parsi schools and the lack of "a Parsi atmosphere" in these schools, Cabinetmaker recommended religious education for Parsi parents as well.

E.J. Tarapore from Hyderabad-Secunderabad stated that in addition to the facilities provided by the Poona anjuman, the twin city anjuman insured an employed mobed for Rs 25,000 and when a panthaki died his widow was given Rs 25,000 and a sum of Rs 5,000 for hospital expenses incurred.

To a proposal of dividing the charges of a ceremony in a 60-40 ratio between the panthaki and the mobed, Gandhi said that "the panthaki is an entrepreneur. He has his own interest and runs (the agiary) on business lines." It was not the panthaki who needed amelioration, they were the cause of the poverty of the mobeds, commented Shavax Nargolwala. Several representatives were against the panthaki system and the general view was summed up by Tarapore who said that it would be better to do away with the panthaki system and employ only mobeds. If the system was continued, the trustees should exercise control and ensure that the mobeds are treated well and are adequately paid.

The discussion was rounded off by Shiavax Nargolwala who announced that since his brother Pesi had already done the spadework, he could provide data about mobeds in different parts of India, their religious education, and methods to improve their condition. Since education was to be given priority, the secretaries of the Federation should contact Meher Master-Moos and Khojeste Mistree, both lecturers and authors on Zoroastrianism, and make a note of their teaching methods. Also, Ms Piloo Jungalwala's books on the religion could be distributed for study.

To be effective, it was decided that the Executive Council should meet three to four times a year and the office-bearers should keep in touch with each other to follow up on the decisions and schemes proposed by the executive. Also, the Federation should raise funds to help implement the schemes and, instead of getting bogged down by the execution of each plan, should be the driving force.

The members of the Federation appeared determined not to be accused of lethargy again and their enthusiastic response seemed an indication of their resolve to be "action oriented." Even though most of the major problems facing the community were discussed,

analysed and a plan of action decided upon, the Federation steered clear of the most ominous one: Peterson's navjote. There was only a passing reference to conversion. Whether the omission was deliberate or in keeping with the BPP's condition made prior to rejoining

About 80 years ago there were upto 1200 mobeds, now the community is unable to maintain even 500.

which stated that "the Federation will not discuss any controversial matters or propose any change in religious customs... which may create dissension or hurt the feelings of the community," is not clear.

What is clear, however, is that in spite of the opposition of the orthodox section of the community and the opinion of another section which felt that the BPP had been beguiled into joining, the majority of the members appeared to be optimistic about the reconstituted Federation with the BPP at the helm. For, with the revival of the Federation the com-

munity once again has an all-India forum to meet, discuss and tackle issues.

Those attending the meeting included Hoshang Debara, Agra; Keki S. Pavri, Ahmedabad; Dr Ratan H. Sagar, Allahabad; Boman Cama, Baroda; Savak Patel (Shri Parsi Punchayet, Vedodra); Dr A.F. Golwalla, J.N. Guzder, E.B. Desai, J.G. Kanga, R.K. Anklesaria, Ms Gool J. Tata, B.H. Tarapore, Pesi D. Nargolwala (Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman), Bombay; Dr R.D. Anklesaria, Calcutta; Soli Hatteria, Coimbatore; Shiavax D. Nargolwala, Keki J. Gandhi, Ms F.S. Variava, Rustom E. Daroga, Delhi; E.J. Tarapore, B.F. Dittia, Hyderabad/Secunderabad; Lt. Col. A.M.K. Maneck, Jabalpur; Ms Mani Clubwalla, R.P. Ginwala, Madras; Dinshaw Bapuna, Keki Bala, Nagpur; Bajoo R. Jilla, Nanded; Minoo Irani, Dinshaw Anklesaria, Marzban Kekobad, Poona; Maneck J.R. Gheyara, Dr Sam Bhacca, B.F. Chacha, Surat; and Ms Perin Cabinetmaker and Professor N.F. Kaikobad were invited to speak.

The press was represented by *The Bombay Samachar*, the *Jam-e-Jamshed*, and *Parsiana*.

LET'S BUILD THEM TOGETHER!

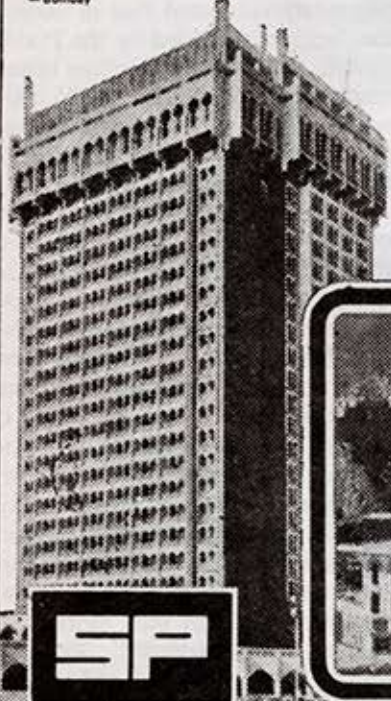
Whether it's a five-star hotel, a Sultan's Palace, a hospital, a chemical factory, a fertiliser plant or a housing project—we have the expertise and experience—to handle any turn-key construction project anywhere in the world.

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

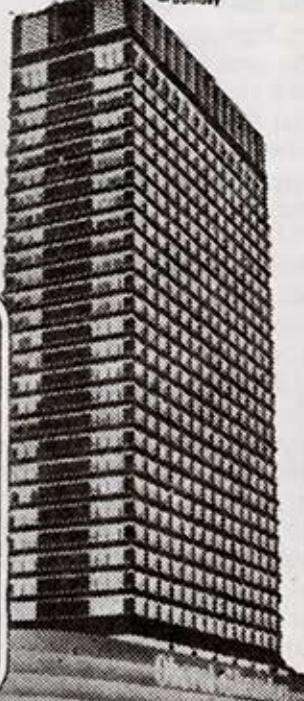
for putting up the imposing Muscat Palace complex of His Majesty the Sultan of Oman—and completed it in time.

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

Taj-Intercontinental Hotel
— Bombay



Oberoi-Sheraton Hotel
— Bombay



SP

SHAPOORJI PALLONJI & CO. (PVT.) LTD.

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

Fraudulent Firm

Pradeep Shinde

Could a firm with three partners take four foreign banks and three nationalised banks for a ride and dupe them of Rs 7 crores?

The answer seems to be in the affirmative if one goes into the manipulations of M/s Maher Corporation. It has duped the Bank of America, the Banque Nationale De Paris, Grindlays Bank, Chartered Bank (all foreign banks), Canara Bank, Central Bank of India and Bank of Baroda (nationalised banks), according to investigations.

The modus operandi came to light when it made an application for a loan of Rs 75 lakhs to the Bank of Baroda, Cawasji Patel Street, Bombay. The firm, with partners named as Kersey Kharas, D. M. Kharas and Ms. P. Kharas (reportedly father, mother and son) gave the office address as 2B, Malabar Mansion, Colaba Causeway, Bombay.



The shuttered office of M/s Maher Corporation

The firm also gave two letters to the Bank of Baroda, Bombay, and stressed the following points:

- * that it was the marketing agent for goods manufactured by Hindustan Lever, Parle Products, ITC, Voltas and Phillips;
- * that it had 18,000 dealers or retailers under its umbrella;
- * that they need a loan of Rs 75 lakhs because of inflationary trends;

- * that the firm had a current deposit account with Bank of India but would close the account and route all business to Bank of Baroda;

- * that the security of Rs 75 lakhs will be hypothecation of stocks in all godowns.

Apart from these statements, Kharas of Maher Corporation also mentioned the tax paid by him as being more than Rs 14 lakhs for the assessment year 1979-80.

Such an application was submitted to the Bank of Baroda, Bombay, on December 31, 1982. How it was done was a mystery, it being a bank holiday.

The application was introduced into the bank by Ms. Kapadia, assistant general manager and secretary to the chairman and managing director. The papers were sponsored in the meeting of the committee of executives (an unprecedented step) on January 12, 1983 by D.J. Kapadia, deputy general manager.

Within five days, the proposal was passed (on January 17) and the amount of Rs 75 lakhs disbursed.

In the Bank of Baroda, such hypothecation loan applications are normally routed through an "opinion department." Divided into sub-groups determined by businesses like construction, theatres, hotels, industry, trade unions, etc, this department is, in effect, an investigative arm of the bank.

Loans for more than one lakh are, as a rule, thoroughly scrutinised and investigated before a green signal is given to the disbursement section. The entire process of cross-checking on the bona fides of loan applications and the credibility of companies normally takes about 20 to 30 days. It takes at least 45 days for the final disbursement of the loan.

In the case of Maher Corporation, all the five basic commandments of credit institutions were allegedly ignored. No visit was made to the office of M/s Maher Corporation. No market reports about the company's status were filed by the opinion department. No enquiries were made with the companies for which M/s Maher Corporation was allegedly the distributor. No inspection of the company's godown was carried out either... in

fact, it was not even established whether such a godown existed.

Enquiries with fellow banks would have revealed that Maher Corporation owed Central Bank (in Delhi and Faridabad) a sum of Rs 84.55 lakhs, that it also owed Grindlays Bank another Rs 17 lakhs.

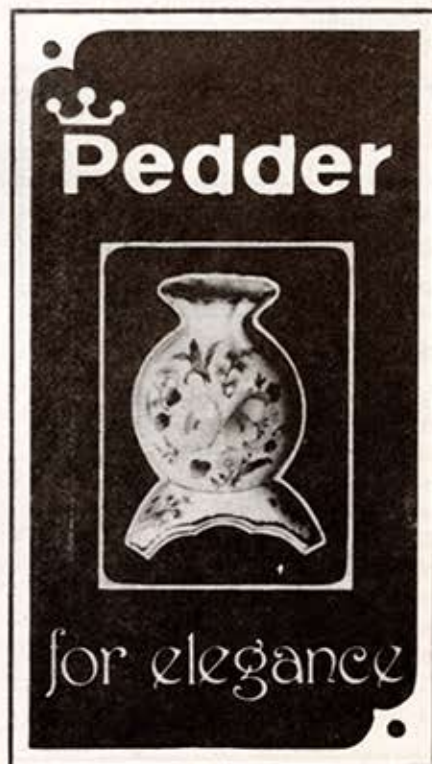
The same partners had, by floating other agencies, also borrowed Rs 3.2 crores from Bank of America in Faridabad. Another Rs 52 lakhs went to two more "agencies" from Central Bank of India. The Banque Nationale De Paris also fell victim to the tune of Rs 60 lakhs.

Investigations also revealed that the office in Malabar Mansion, Colaba Causeway, Bombay, has downed shutters. "It's been closed for the past three months," says the neighbouring shop owner.

Meanwhile, Hindustan Lever has stated that M/s Maher Corporation were "our stockists till March 31, 1983... later on we cut off our relations with the firm." Parle Products, another company mentioned in the loan application, has however, disclaimed any knowledge of the firm. Where is this firm anyway?

Reprinted from the *Indian Express*, April 13, 1983.
Photograph by Ayesha Soni.

A report filed by a news agency UNI, in May, which was picked up by leading newspapers, alleged that the



trio had defrauded 10 banks, quoting, in addition to the above, the Punjab National Bank, the Punjab and Sind Bank, and the State Bank of Patiala.

"The three are alleged to have also tried to smuggle more than Rs 1.5 crore in cash out of the country using some small banks," adds UNI.

"The unsuspecting banks, impressed by all the meticulous documents, fell into the trap and allowed the credit and hypothecation facilities." Sources reportedly revealed that the suspects produced balance sheets of their various firms "duly certified" by a firm of Bombay chartered accountants, at whose address a "detection" agency was also being run. Subsequent inspection of the "stores" hypothecated by M/s Maher Corporation revealed that they were almost empty, reports the *Free Press Journal*. "The banks learnt about a month ago that the 'partners' owned several other firms which had credit arrangements with other banks," according to a report in *The Daily*. They had denied ownership of any other concern.

"One theory for the swindle was that it was related to hectic buying of shares of reputed companies in the wake of investment facilities allowed to non-resident Indians" according to the *Free Press Journal*.

The victim banks are said to have filed criminal cases in various courts while some handed over the case to the police and the Central Bureau of Investigation.

No arrests have been made so far.

Reactions of Zoroastrians world-wide to the Navjote of Joseph Peterson will be featured in our August issue.

Old post cards etc./wanted

Advertiser wishes to buy OLD picture postcards, photographs, cigarettes, cards, playing cards, posters, prints, illustrated books, albums and other related material.

Willing to pay top prices for single items or entire collections.

Please send detailed list with expected prices to:

The Advertiser,
(OLD) C/o. Parsiana, G.P.O.
Box 892, Bombay 400 001.

The Agony of Udvada

As an overseas Zoroastrian, returning briefly to India, it is a joy compounded only by the fact that one can visit the Atash-Behrams in Bombay and, in particular Udvada. This is what I set out to do on Sunday, the 27th of February 1983, with the thought of paying my respects and homage to one of our most sacred fires, in spite of the combined miseries of a train journey and a worsening fever. Hardly had I arrived at the rest-house near the Atash-Behram, when a flood of quarrelling people approached me and vied with one another to sell me some sandalwood. Leaving them to their heated discussions, I had a bath and proceeded to the Atash-Behram.

I was shown through a small entrance as the main section of the Atash-Behram is being renovated. Hardly had I completed reciting my *kusti* prayers, when I was besieged with offers regarding the *battis*. A person known to the rest-house owners, who had accompanied me, fended off all the others and took the *battis* on my behalf to a rickety table by the well. On the way there, a few priests in flowing, white beards criss-crossed my path with offers of reciting prayers and, failing that, wanting alms, all in the same breath. Having lit the *battis*, I moved to the building where the *Atash* (fire) is now housed and prepared myself for a session of heartfelt prayer and inner peace.

What I saw was inexcusable and when I eventually left the Atash-Behram, it was with a very heavy heart rather than feeling spiritually energized. Two mobeds were inside the sanctum sanctorum and one of them was tending the holy fire. An old lady, tired as a result

of carrying two bags full of sandalwood, handed them over to the priest. She informed him that someone whose name was unknown to her had sent the sandalwood from Canada as a thanksgiving to the fire. On hearing this, the mobed demanded to know the name of the Canadian donor and when this was not forthcoming, he became extremely rude. In his anger, he tore open the packets and the sandalwood fell noisily on the floor. Picking it up clumsily, the priest heaped it upon the holy fire which, at this point, was feeble and flickering. The second mobed was loudly demanding money for the two *Tan Dorostis* that he had prayed and having received it over the threshold of the sanctum sanctorum, he began reciting the third *Tan Dorosti* prayer like a freshly-wound cuckoo clock.

By this time, the *Atash* was at least three feet high and its size and brightness seemed to delight all those present. But what it said to me was something totally different. Its ragged edges and induced brightness in a sense cried out in protest at its unbecoming surroundings. Its continuous angry crackling made me feel that it was denouncing the manner in which it was being fed. Its simulated brilliance reflected the greed of those who came to ask for boons only, giving it perhaps large quantities of wood but not the love and care that it so richly deserves. Its agony forced me to bow my head and ask for forgiveness for those who had reduced one of our most tranquil and inspiring fires to nothing more than a glorified bonfire.

From a letter by Kaikhushrau Wadia, from Hong Kong, reprinted from *Ushta*, May 1983, a Zoroastrian Studies publication.



The Friendly Gift Shop for
handicrafts, festive gifts and
Zoroastrian artefacts

Bombay Swadeshi Stores Ltd

Sir P.M. Road, Bombay 400 001

Tel: 253443 & 252730

Christian Science, envisioned and founded in 1879 by Mary Baker Eddy has many Parsi adherents. Emphasizing the healing of physical and emotional disorders, everyday problems and tensions through prayer, Christian Science reportedly expects its followers to give up smoking, alcohol and any form of medical assistance except in cases of extreme emergency.

The movement, which calls for a scientific understanding of the Bible and Eddy's book *Science and Health with a key to the Scriptures* is said to have spread to over 57 countries. In an article on the Christian Science movement in Bombay entitled 'Faith Healing with a difference' (*Indian Express*, October 31, 1982) Ketaki Sheth comments on this phenomenon.

Faith Healing

Ketaki Sheth

I notice that most of the Bombay congregation is made up of Parsis. In fact, regular church services are held in Gujarati and there is even published literature on the Science in Gujarati! Was there something lacking in the Zoroastrian faith, or disillusionment with the medical profession that made you turn to Christian Science, I ask Jer Master, who gave up a lucrative medical practice after 25 years as a successful pediatrician. She is now a registered practitioner — one who gives her full time to the public practice of Christian Science healing — one of the five in the country. She now deals with individuals whose problems range from asthma, to broken homes, to divorces, to failing businesses.

She declines to comment either on her former profession or religion and prefers to discuss what she has gained as an individual. "It has taught me to be hon-

(she has given up wearing glasses) and eczema. How did her medical colleagues react when she took the decision? Her patients? "The general verdict was that I had gone bonkers. Few thought I was courageous. It takes more mental activity now than it did when I prescribed medicines."

Christian Science is marked by its absence of rituals, ceremonies, priests, godheads, symbols and idols. "I was once open to all religions," explains Neera. "I would attend Novenas, light candles, take *prasad*, perform the *arti*. Then I came to a stage where I was questioning these rituals and their meanings. Today, through Science, I'm practising the living of good as Jesus did — not just mouthing it, but proving it."

Services are held twice a week but these are not obligatory. "It's a total approach of looking at things," explains Mrs. Thanawala. "As a young student, I was searching, questioning... I read Aurobindo, the *Bhagvad Gita*, Bertrand Russell. When I read *Science and Health*, everything locked into place. I never questioned it."

No ceremonies

Does the absence of rituals imply the absence of ceremonies on occasions such as births, marriages, deaths? "Why choose a birthday to celebrate?" asks Mrs. Thanawala. "Can't everyday be a celebration?" Marriages are performed by any legal authority — the general practice is a registered marriage. When asked her views on death and life thereafter, one Christian Scientist

explained, "Man is the reflection of god. If god is constant and eternal, man is constant and eternal." Matter is meaningless, it is only the spirit that exists. Pianist Tehmi Gazdar, who is presently a Reader at the church and who played the organ there for 19 years before she became a member, speaks of how she was "healed of her fear of death" when her husband lay dying of cancer.

I ask some members about a recent case in Bombay where a Christian Scientist's son died in his mid-thirties and no doctor was called to diagnose or treat the patient even when his life seemed to be in critical danger. I was told that the son (who was also a Christian Scientist) refused all medical treatment. I hear of another case where a young woman died in the early stages of cancer as she denied all medical assistance.

According to a medical doctor, who was a colleague of a doctor-turned Christian Scientist, the whole approach is impractical. "Only if medicine simply cannot cure an illness like terminal cancer, would I recommend such a healing in the final analysis." Regarding the conflict between medical and Christian Science, one Christian Scientist remarked: "Science is preventive. You are already in a state of preventing medicines. Because you don't need it. The root cause of disease is fear. In Christian Science, we don't experience such fear."

Was there something lacking in the Zoroastrian faith or disillusionment with the medical profession that made you turn to Christian Science?

est not only with others, but with myself. Christian Science says it is not the law of the human mind but that of the Divine Mind which controls the body. "She has been cured of migraine, poor eyesight

Reprinted with permission from the *Express Magazine*, *Indian Express* (Sunday edition), October 31, 1982.

PERFORMANCE PLUS

MIH-BY/S-01 RN. 9474/84

“

Uniform Purity

A leading Pharmaceuticals manufacturer.

“

We just can't do without Ahura quality. It is important to the character of our end products.

Products Manager of a popular National Brand.

“

We have diversified our product range inspite of which Ahura meets all our Process Chemicals specifications.

A Multi-National Chief



AHURA CHEMICAL PRODUCTS PRIVATE LIMITED

82, Mahakali Road, Andheri (East),
Bombay 400 093. Phones: 6328365/66/67
Gram: AHURACHEM Telex: 011-71117

To begin at the beginning, Ahura is 47 years young. All along a force to reckon with in the process chemicals field. With leading end products manufacturers patronising Ahura, the range of process chemicals have been so widened as to fit the specifications to the special character of the end product manufactured.

Ahura believes Performance is the only plus factor that can distinguish one process chemical manufacturer from another. Ahura believes it is just about the best in the field.

Graphic A-181

Published and edited by Jehangir R. Patel at c/o H.L. Rochat, Navsari Chambers, ground floor, 39 A. Nayak Marg, Fort, Bombay 400 001 and printed by him at Jyoti Industries, 324, A to Z Industrial Estate, G. Kadam Marg, Bombay 400 013 and phototypeset at Decora Printers, Bombay 400 009, and Multi Media Aids, Bombay 400 051.