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3 Readers' Forum

17 Events and Personalities

33 The Munificent Prince by M.D. David

39 Fire Sale by Hutokshi D. Doctor

43 Tasteful Living by Bhicoo J. Manekshaw

49 The Acceptance and non-Acceptance of Joseph Peterson

53 A Mandate for Disunity by Khojeste Mistree

59 Do they have a place?

63 Conversion Condemned

67 A Myth Exploded by H. Mirza, K. JamaspAsa, F. Kotwal

75 Chicago's Concern

77 Antia's Answer

79 Religious Boycott

80 Pulling his Strings by Sarosh Bana

84 Sports

89 In Memoriam

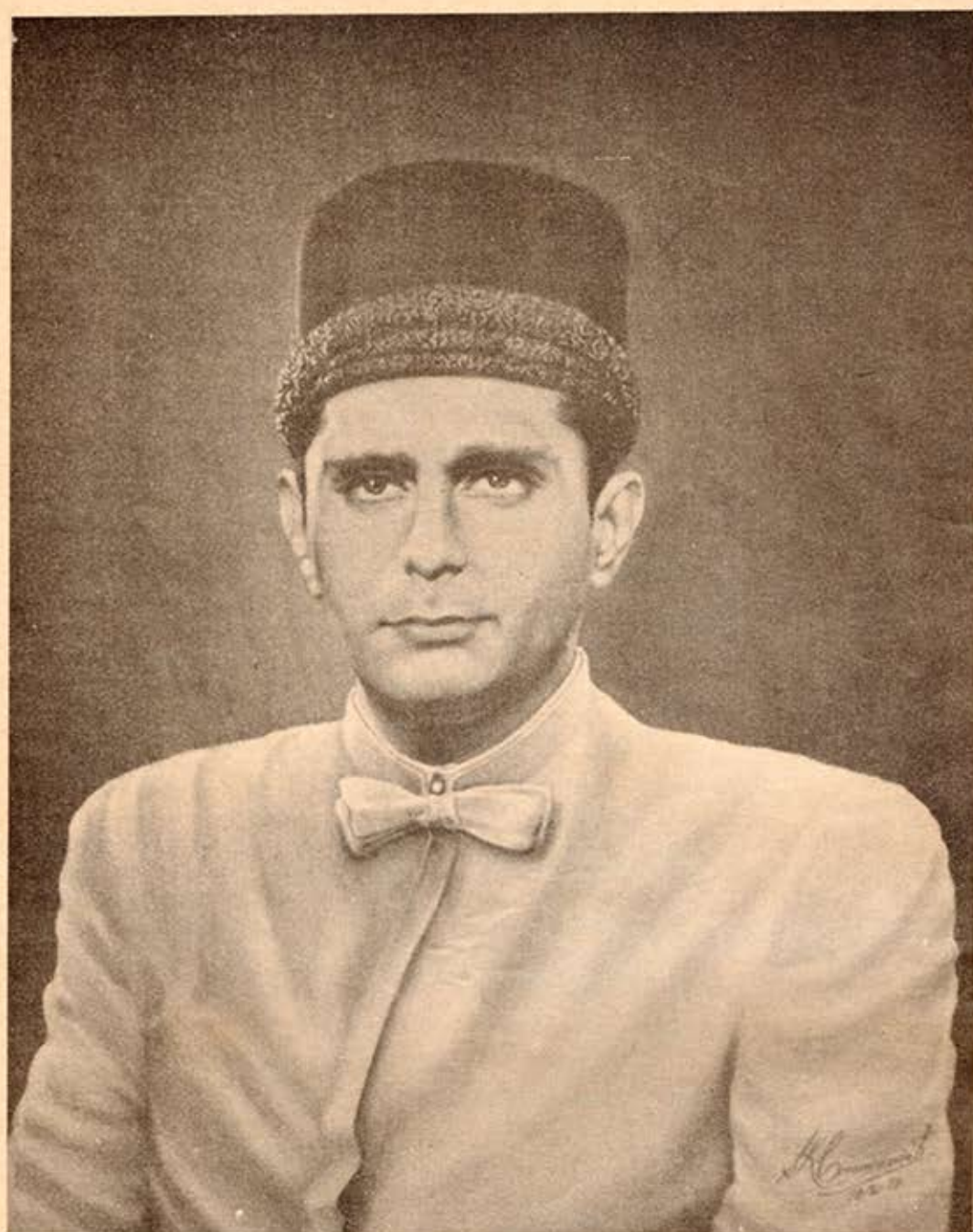
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In Memoriam

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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.

The Navjote of Joseph Peterson

In recent months we have read in *Parsiana* several letters from readers expressing concern, sorrow and indignation at what they believe is happening or about to happen in North America, i.e. conversion of North Americans into the Zoroastrian religion. I am writing to present the sequence of events and to allay the premature fears of your readers.

On April 10 and 11, 1982, the Fourth North American Zoroastrian Congress was held in Montreal. The theme of the congress was 'The Zoroastrian Challenge in North America'. A paper was presented by Adi Davar, President, Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, entitled 'Non-Zoroastrians in Zoroastrian Precepts'. A lively and animated discussion took

place, as in all previous congresses, the difference being that in the closing session, the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec (Z.A.Q.), the host association, was given the mandate to survey the opinion of Zoroastrians on the North American continent on the following questions:

*Should a child of a marriage where either parent is a Zoroastrian, be initiated into the religion as a Zoroastrian, if both parents so desire?

*Should a non-Zoroastrian, married to or wishing to marry a Zoroastrian, exercising freedom of moral choice to follow the doctrine of Ahura Mazda, be allowed to be initiated into the faith?

*If a non-Zoroastrian wishes to marry you or your child and does not want to become a Zoroastrian, but the couple still wants to have the marriage ceremony with Zarathustra's prayers, should it be allowed?

*If a non-Zoroastrian wants to enter into your faith by exercising freedom of choice and shows his willingness to be initiated, should the genuineness of that person's beliefs be tested out and, if satisfied, should that person be allowed to become a part of the Zoroastrian fold?

*Should a child, irrespective of caste, colour or creed, adopted by Zoroastrian parents, be allowed to be initiated into the Zoroastrian faith?

However, to make the survey meaningful, the Z.A.Q. realized that the community should be presented with both "traditional" and "liberal" points of view to be able to form an educated opinion. These same questions have been circulated to our learned dasturjis and scholars in India and abroad, requesting them for their scholarly and doctrinal arguments which would rise, we hope, above emotions and dogged adherence to history. Replies and comments will then be presented in a report to the next congress. Essays and opinions received of whatever viewpoint are published in our quarterly newsletter *Gavashni*. If any readers wish to comment, we will be pleased to receive their views. However, we do not wish to enter into a dialogue, which unfortunately always degenerates into mud-slinging.

We are, at the present time, in a fact-finding stage. We are researching, trying to learn, whereby we can evolve a democratic opinion. If, in the meantime, some individual or individuals in North

America take unilateral action, by their own initiative, that is their responsibility. Such irresponsible actions of isolated individuals need not be misconstrued as the sentiments of the entire North American community. The whole community should not be chastised and maligned for their acts. We are very much aware of our responsibility and burden of maintaining our religion for the sake of future generations.

To summarize, the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec is not mandated in any way to take any decision on this issue. Our function is only to collect and collate the opinions of learned individuals around the world and disseminate it to associations/organizations of North America.

Copies of the proceedings of the Fourth North American Zoroastrian Congress are available from Z.A.C., P.O. Box 654, Station Tour de la Bourse, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H4Z 1J9, at a cost of \$8.00.

DOLLY P. DASTOOR
President, Zoroastrian
Association of Quebec,
U.S.A.

In connection with the articles appearing in *Parsiana* (March and April 1983), about the navjote of Joseph Peterson, and the various opinions they have elicited, we would like to quote the following passage from *Zoroastrians — Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* by Mary Boyce.

"The Parsis had come to be regarded more or less as a caste within Hindu society, and this, together with their pride in their Iranian lineage, led them to regard religion as a hereditary matter. To be a Zoroastrian one must be born of Iranian blood. This way of thinking was as we have seen, a tendency in the whole Zoroastrian community from early times, but it had never been made a rigid principle; and when the Parsis consulted the Iranis as to whether, for example, they should allow their Hindu servants who wished to enter the religion, they received the answer that if servant boys and girls have faith in the good religion, then it is proper that they should tie the *kusti*, and when they become instructed, attentive to religion, and steadfast, the *bareshtnom* should be administered to them (Dhabhar, 276)."

Therefore, we are surprised that there should be such an uproar over the nav-

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jote of Joseph Peterson, when so many people of alien origin must have been converted quietly. Otherwise there was no reason for the Parsis of yore to have made the above inquiry mentioned by Dhabhar.

Will Parsis never accept the facts of life? They must be clear in their minds as to whether they wish to preserve the good religion by accepting those who are convinced and wish to join us, or cling to an antiquated caste system which ultimately may end in disaster.

FREANY G. GODIWALLA
G.S. GODIWALLA
Bombay

With reference to the article 'The Navjote of Joseph Peterson', (*Parsiana*, April 1983), I was disgusted with the attitude of the Parsis. The Iranian Zoroastrians have more sense and more humanity. Some of the Parsis who objected are probably married to non-Parsis. Is this not going against the religion? Even if they are married to Parsis, who will their children marry, if not non-Parsis? Thus our whole Parsi community in the New World is doomed to extinction. We should be happy and pleased that someone wants to become a Zarthosti. Don't the Parsis of the U.S. and Canada sometimes say to native-borns that they are better citizens since they chose to become U.S. and Canadian citizens, and were not born by chance here?

Further, how did anybody in ancient Iran ever become a Zarthosti if they did not convert? Without conversion there would have been no Zarthostis in the first place. After all, the original doctrine of non-conversion stemmed from a promise to the Raja who allowed Parsis to land in his small kingdom. That promise is not applicable to foreign countries like the U.S.A., Canada, or even other parts of India.

Incidentally, I do not understand why you use the Greek name 'Zoroaster' when the Iranian form is 'Zarathustra'. Even the Germans, composer Richard Strauss and philosopher Nietzsche for example, call him Zarathustra.

Finally, I suggest that the Parsis write a congratulatory letter to Joe Peterson to welcome him into our fold.

DINSHAW GHARDA
California

The article 'After the Navjote' (*Parsiana*, May 1983) raises ludicrous suggestions. We the Zoroastrians of North America are approaching the acceptance/conversion question more demo-

cratically and intelligently. Following upon the Fourth North American Zoroastrian Congress held in Montreal, we are circulating learned views on the subject from diverse points of view and holding discussion groups and symposia in all Zoroastrian Associations in order to seek their views. These will be consolidated and brought before the Fifth Congress for a decision by consensus. Subject to a favourable decision, acceptance and/or conversion may be carried out in future by stages in selective categories, including adoption and a suitable screening procedure.

Fortunately the tyranny of orthodoxy as prevalent in Bombay has little bearing on the way of life in North America and will bear little influence on our deci-



Peterson: focus of attention

sion. The practising mobeds of North America also mean to have their own seminar to discuss several ceremonial questions and to arrive at a common pattern of prayers etc. By these actions we hope to show leadership and a sense of direction to our more learned but less active brethren in the sub-continent. Note that in North America, the racial or ethnic label of 'Parsis' has little relevance. We are all Zoroastrians whether originating from India, Iran, Pakistan or Africa. The label 'Parsi' only tends to create a schism with our brothers from Iran and hopefully will soon be out of use. So if our dasturs and orthodoxy disapprove of our liberal actions, if any, will they then consider excommunicating all the Zoroastrians and mobeds in North America?

Unfortunately, Peterson's navjote has jumped the gun, and the reasons are amply explained by ZAGNY in Faroke Gandhi's letter (*Parsiana*, May 1983). But when some people, knowledgeable or otherwise, scream excommunication

of the performing mobeds from priesthood, one can only infer that they have not imbibed the true spirit of our religion as regards conversion or have been victims of highly inspired 'new' translations of our scriptures and similar home-made traditions of a later age. It is a sign of their weakness to have to seek refuge from a conservative paper like *Jam-e-Jamshed* which will support anything the orthodoxy has to say. With much trepidation and humility, I would also challenge the views of the president of the M.F. Cama Athornan Institute. Could he support from our original Avestan scriptures, his view that the *sudreh* and *kusti* could only be invested to a Parsi/Zoroastrian so born and not to a non-Parsi.

I for one would like to see the community of North American Zoroastrians bestow a gold medal on mobeds Kersi Antia and Hormazdiyar and their associates for the show of exemplary courage of their convictions and for establishing the first notably significant landmark towards freeing our pristine pure religion from the trammels of later tradition. They have shown by action that our noble religion was created by Holy Zarathustra for the benefit of all mankind inhabiting the seven regions. No sir! Over here there will be no social boycotts. My conviction is that the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago will soon endorse the action of their mobeds and so will the Fifth Congress of North American Zoroastrians, by consensus. No doubt we too have our orthodoxes and our reformists over here; but we listen to each other and do not rush into the medieval witch-hunting of excommunication.

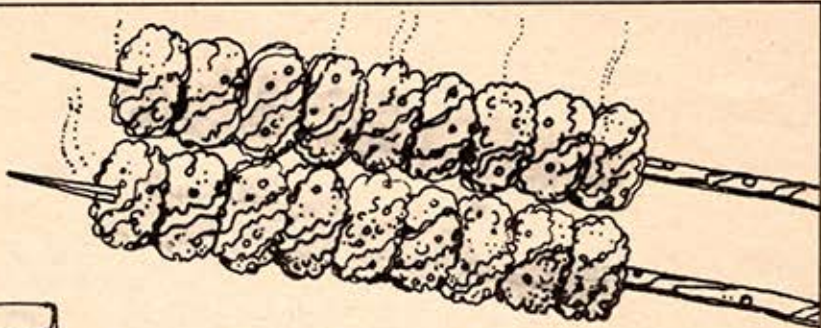
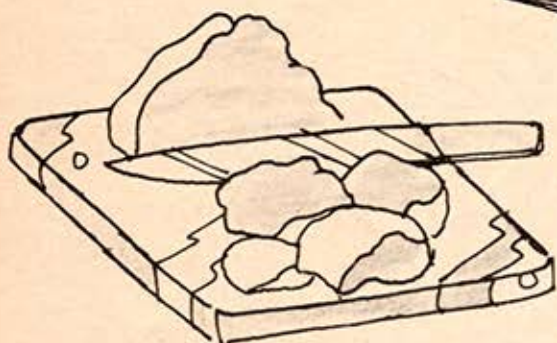
HOMI B. MINOCHER HOMJI
Canada

How did Zoroaster get the religion initially going if not by converting the local Iranians to his philosophy? Surely they were not all born into the faith?

Secondly, the law pertaining to conversion in India is not a Zoroastrian law, but one which was enacted by Parsis in India for economic reasons, and which also was one of the conditions under which we were allowed to stay in this country. Religion does not enter into this picture at all.

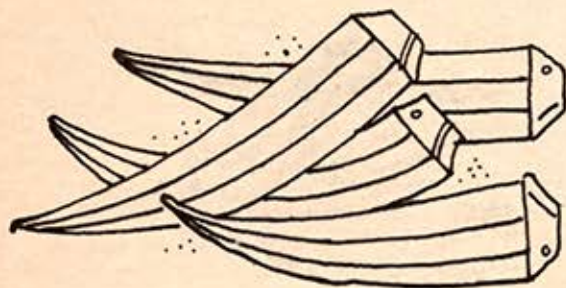
Thirdly, Joseph Peterson, who may not be a Parsi but who is more well versed in the teachings of the Zoroastrian religion than most of us, and who follows the tenets of the faith more than

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most of us do would surely be an asset to our fold, if he wishes to join?

On the subject of mixed marriages, how could a handful of Iranian Zoroastrians (mostly males), proliferate into the present strength of Parsis in India, if not by mixed marriages at some stage? After 1300 years are we still of pure Aryan stock?

Secondly, medical statistics in India show that the percentage of genetic diseases is highest amongst the Parsi community, due to inbreeding. Again, the ban on inter-marriage is a local one imposed on the Parsis for economic reasons — the Zoroastrian religion does not bar this.

In conclusion, I believe that most of our misgivings appear to be a mix-up of the real tenets of the Zoroastrian faith with the socio-economic laws of the Indian Parsis. The two are not synonymous.

BRIG. N.B. GRANT (RETD)
Pune.

About a score of Bombay Parsis have been saying time and again that our religion is in danger. Let us assure our orthodox Zoroastrians that because of our misconception and narrow thoughts, the number of Parsi Zoroas-

trians has been shrinking and if radical steps are not adopted, within a short period there shall be an insignificant number of true Parsis.

Zoroaster's religion is not the exclusive prerogative of the few ultra-orthodox but all those who preach and practise the faith. Parsis are of the opinion that if the flood-gates of Zoroastrianism are opened to non-Parsis, many with corrupt and selfish motives will pretend to adopt Zoroaster's faith.

I agree with such a contention to a limited extent. But there are means to an end. First of all, we must arrange to have a central register of all those whose navjote ceremony has been performed. If any non-Zoroastrian desires to convert, a committee of experts must take such a person's thorough test, examining what has actuated the would-be applicant to adopt the Zoroastrian faith, and whether the person has grasped a thorough knowledge of Zoroastrian culture, rituals and all the ancillary codes of conduct. If the committee is satisfied that the applicant is fully qualified, then by all means his or her navjote ceremony may be performed. Many of our present-day youngsters who decide to marry non-Zoroastrian spouses reluc-

tantly discard the Zoroastrian faith and marry under the ceremony of their spouses and as such the community loses such members.

If our orthodox brethren have any regard for the future welfare and happiness of our community, they must stop shouting of religion being in danger and take radical and concrete steps for the upliftment of the Parsi population.

R.N. RUSTOMJI
Bombay

On August 2, 1903 our Parsi Punchayet had arranged a meeting at Albless Baug under the auspices of the Zarthosti Anjuman who formed a committee to invite opinions of some renowned dasturjis and religious scholars on conversion, and whether it is obligatory or objectionable, and how to enforce conversion if it was mandatory.

A sub-committee was formed to probe into the matter, which met on September 3, 1903 at the Sir Jejeebhoy Benevolent Institute Building. This committee invited opinions from 11 scholars of whom 10 said that Zoroastrianism was a missionary religion and that Zoroaster himself sought converts. The Iranian kings, even after the death of Zoroaster tried to spread Zoroastri-

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anism and sought converts from even outside Iran. The Avesta, Pahlavi, Pazend and Farsi literature all says that the Zoroastrian religion was practised as a missionary-universal religion even after the death of Zoroaster.

Quoting Professor Max Mueller, the committee stated, "The Parsi (like the Brahmin and Jew), does not wish for converts to his religion: he is proud of his faith and of his blood, and though he believes in the final victory of truth and light and though he says to every man, 'Be bright as the sun, pure as the moon', he himself does very little to drive away spiritual darkness from the face of the earth, by letting the light that is within him shine before the world."

Further quoting Max Mueller the committee said "The religion of Zoroaster is now professed by only 1,00,000 (Parsi) souls—that is a ten thousandth part of the inhabitants of the world. During the last two centuries their number has steadily decreased from four to one hundred thousand, and another century will probably exhaust what is still left of these worshippers of the Wise Spirit, Ahura Mazda."

If to see it as shown by Prof. Mueller is to believe it, allow me to ask the traditionalists why we Parsis must monopolise and hold back God's grace — the prophet's revealed religion, for only ourselves and thus reduce Zoroaster to the stature of a mere sectarian saint from his exalted status of being the world-teacher and prophet.

The committee recommends the conversion of sincere and respectable joodins on whom Parsi mobeds may put on the *sudreh-kusti* as on Joseph Peterson. As long as Peterson's sincerity and respectability is not questionable, the performing mobeds have done the right thing.

Even as Zoroastrians we Parsis are a separate group and we can hold our separate identity. A convert can become a Zoroastrian but never a Parsi who must be sired only by a Parsi father.

Just as a club has a selection committee, we may form a community forum to screen the intending converts as to their respectability before accepting one into the fold. We can also ascertain the sincerity behind his desire to become a Zoroastrian and adopt some such other ways to so keep Zoroastrianism alive and growing even after the last Parsi is no more. Let Parsis think, and not be led away emotionally.

DARA J. CAMA
Bombay

'BPP Rejoins the Federation'

The decision of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet to rejoin the Federation (*Parsi-ana*, March 1983) is a step in the right direction.

The super-imposed rider, however, that the "Federation will not discuss any controversial matters... which may create dissension or hurt the feelings of the community" emasculates the reconstituted Federation at the inception. This appears to be a sop to the rather vocal opposition from the so-called orthodox minority.

In this regard, BPP trustee Dr Nelie Noble's criticism that "it would not be possible for the Federation to function if it is prevented from dealing with any matter of controversial nature" is entirely justified.

It is now time for the vast majority of the community, as also other bodies like the Committee for Electoral Rights to make their views known, so that the BPP trustees may jettison a precondition calculated to deprive the Federation of all utility.

E.P. BHARUCHA
Bombay

An Inquest on the 'Quest'

The article by Dasturs Hormazdyar Mirza, Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa and Firoze Kotwal (*Parsi-ana*, March 1983) gives one the impression that the dasturjis have some reservations about the motivation for the film 'Quest for Zarathustra' by Cyrus Bharucha in that it tends to relegate Zarathustra to being a mere thinker or a philosopher and not a prophet.

However, in the same issue, Bharucha in his interview with *Parsi-ana* says — "We say it in the script; (Zarathustra is) the world's first prophet and thinker—the world's first rational man. It's a tremendous compliment to anyone. The man lived around the Bronze Age and for him to come out with what he did was quite extraordinary." This forthright statement from Bharucha should clear the misgivings the dasturjis have about Bharucha's motivation.

A well-known scholar of Zoroastrianism once wondered: "What would have been human thought had Zarathustra not existed?" To preach the dualistic concept of good and evil, and his total abhorrence of escapism from work and worldly pleasures indicated a high level of mature thinking in a pagan society. A man becomes a thinker and philosopher

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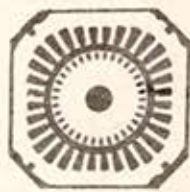
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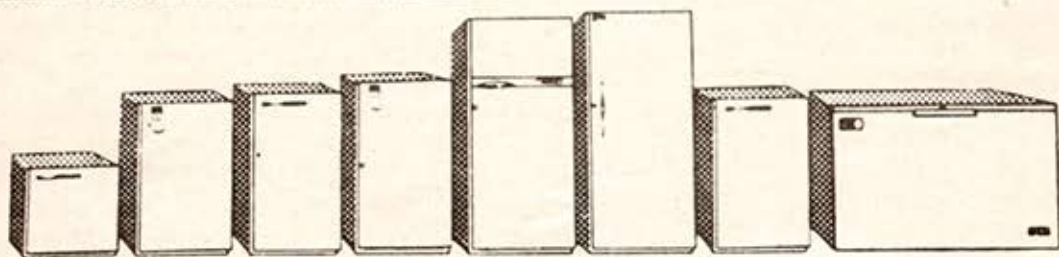
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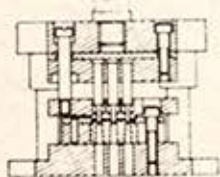
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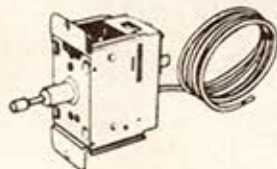
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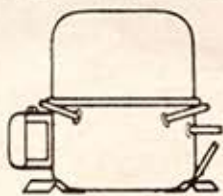
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first; he becomes a prophet later, when he has followers worshipping his doctrine. The episode about Zarathustra treating King Vishtasp's horse with herbal remedies does not drag down Zarathustra to the role of a horse-doctor. The idea probably is that the mere chanting of 'mantras' or Sanskrit 'slokas' is not enough to designate a person a prophet. These so-called miracle cures by mystics or faith healers of which there are quite a few these days, will not convince any educated person in this scientific age. It is evident that Bharucha is averse to casting Zarathustra in the role of a mystic healer effecting cures by chanting 'mantras'; the man was a profound scholar of many parts, the one under context being veterinary medicine. The picture aimed to be projected is that we are the followers of the world's first great thinker, scholar, philosopher and prophet.

P.D. SUNAVALA
Bombay

Surat's Quest for Zarathustra

Just when the Parsis are going through a heated discussion on the film 'Quest for Zarathustra', Yezdi Karanjia of the Group of Dramatics, Surat has already launched a project on the life of Zarathustra and the message of Ahura Mazda on a small scale lasting for about 80 minutes.

A very laudable effort on the part of the Group, the idea is the brain wave of Rohin Karanjia, whose wife Dinaz has produced it. It is an audio-visual presentation of about 125 slides most of which are beautifully painted with a Persian background by artist Arun Jardosh. The audio part of it is presented by different artists most of whom are associated closely with the Group. There is still scope for improvement on this side. The accompanying music adds depth to the project.

It is the effort of several months on the part of Rohin and his colleagues to put before us the life of Zarathustra and through it the message of Ahura Mazda, as generally accepted by the community, and leaving aside the controversial aspects of Zoroaster's marriage, children etc. Accompanying prayers, beautifully sung by the priests are an added feature.

The message is presented in Gujarati rather too pure for the Parsis. To spread it outside Gujarat, where most of the Parsis reside, and to places far away



Scenes from the audio-visual on Zarathustra. Left, King Gustasp's dream; right, Zarathustra praying before the fire.

where the Parsis are interested to know about Zarathustra, his life and message, it is very desirable that it should be presented in English as well.

Also, there are many more subjects, historical and social, which can be put before the Parsi public, to make them conversant with the life and works of people who have contributed to the glorious history of this microscopic community.

FRENY MARSHALL
Surat

'Head for Australia'

While I would be most happy to see the Zoroastrian population in Australia multiplying, the issue is not as easy as Kurush Bilimoria makes it appear in his letter (*Parsiana*, January 1983). The latest policy statement on immigration clearly states that the total number of immigrants to Australia is to be trimmed. The emphasis will be on family reunion and refugee cases and job-oriented immigration will be reduced from 25,000 last year to 2,500 in the next year. There are about 21 job categories which are still 'open' but according to the Minister of Immigration's recent press statement there is only a minor shortage in these categories.

The purpose of writing this letter is to put matters in the correct perspective. Bilimoria (perhaps inadvertently) gives the impression in his letter that jobs are easy in Australia. The situation currently is quite the opposite. Bilimoria lists a number "of professions that are currently in demand" and has included "accountants" in this list. There are two fully qualified chartered accountants who have arrived recently who are still without a job — one of them since the last six months.

We welcome more Zoroastrians in

Australia but please remember that like all other parts of the western world, Australia too is passing through a recession. Fortunately almost all the Zoroastrians in Australia are very well settled but the recent newcomers are finding it tough.

NOSHIR D. IRANI
President, Australian Zoroastrian Association.

Due to the current economic depression facing western countries (including Australia), immigration in 1983/84 is to be restricted, with more importance given to family reunion and refugees. I would suggest to all those in the medical profession in our community to try and grab this opportunity, if they possibly can, to enter Australia since by the end of this year "the Federal Government would be asked to relax immigration restrictions on overseas practitioners."

Such an opportunity may not come again for a long time. Applications should immediately be forwarded to the Immigration Department before the quota is filled. This is my suggestion.

KURUSH N. BILIMORIA
Victoria, Australia

'Calcutta Parsis'

Gautam Ghose, in 'Calcutta Parsis: A Rich Heritage', (*Parsiana*, June 1983), has not got his facts quite right. There seems to be a correction regarding Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, first Parsi baronet. He was never "a Calcuttani!" He was from Navsari, born on July 15, 1783. He had been to Calcutta but was not from Calcutta.

Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy was mostly concerned with Bombay and western India and by his lofty business integrity, he put the name of Bombay on the merchant map of the world.

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PERIN M.R.B. JEEJEEBHAY
Bombay

Borivli Agiary Plan'

Bandra is near Borivli. Here there are two adarans, one at Pali Hill Road, and one on Turner Road. Both the roads are on the main Bombay/Borivli Road and 10 to 15 minutes from the railway and bus stations in Bandra. Then why go to Bombay? ('Borivli Agiary Plan', *Parsi-ana*, March, 1983).

Most of the Zoroastrians have left Navsari, Surat and Udvada where there are many adarans. Before, Rs 100 worth of sandalwood was offered daily. Today not even Re 1 is offered; where 12 athornans were praying, one is seen in a corner. There is no fund even for *kathi*.

Today it is very difficult and costly to build an adaran. If the adaran from Aden was shifted to Lonavla, then why not shift one from the suburbs and consecrate it at Borivli? There are many Zoroastrians who can supply free transport for the *Padsha*.

Also, 'agiary' is a colloquial word. It is

neither Pazend nor Persian and should be removed from all our books, calendars and speeches and the word 'adaran' used instead.

NARIMAN S. BAXTER
Pune



Tithal Sanatorium

A few years back, I used to visit the Valsad Municipal Homeopathic Dispensary every month and often used to go to the Tithal seashore. The sanatorium is situated in ideal surroundings with a big compound, two wells and

plentiful coconut trees, but there is none except a mali.

The owner was Dr Dhanjibhai Patel, an aristocratic doctor who had his own quarters there. Today, a mere skeleton stands to his memory.

I contacted one Parsi gentleman, a trustee staying at Valsad, also the president as well as a very prominent member of the Surat Parsi Punchayet. *The Bombay Samachar* supported me in the cause of a take-over of this dilapidated sanatorium or of buying it outright, but it seems the trustees are unable to come to terms.

If this remains for a long time as a wasteland, the Government of Gujarat may step in and take over this beautiful piece of land.

Before it is too late, I appeal to the trustees of the Bombay and Surat Parsi Punchayets to initiate some action immediately. This place cannot only accommodate those in dire need of housing but will be an ideal place for a change of climate for sick and old people living in nearby Bombay or Surat. Disunity among our community leaders is a root cause of this trouble.

DR. S.R. WADIA
Bombay

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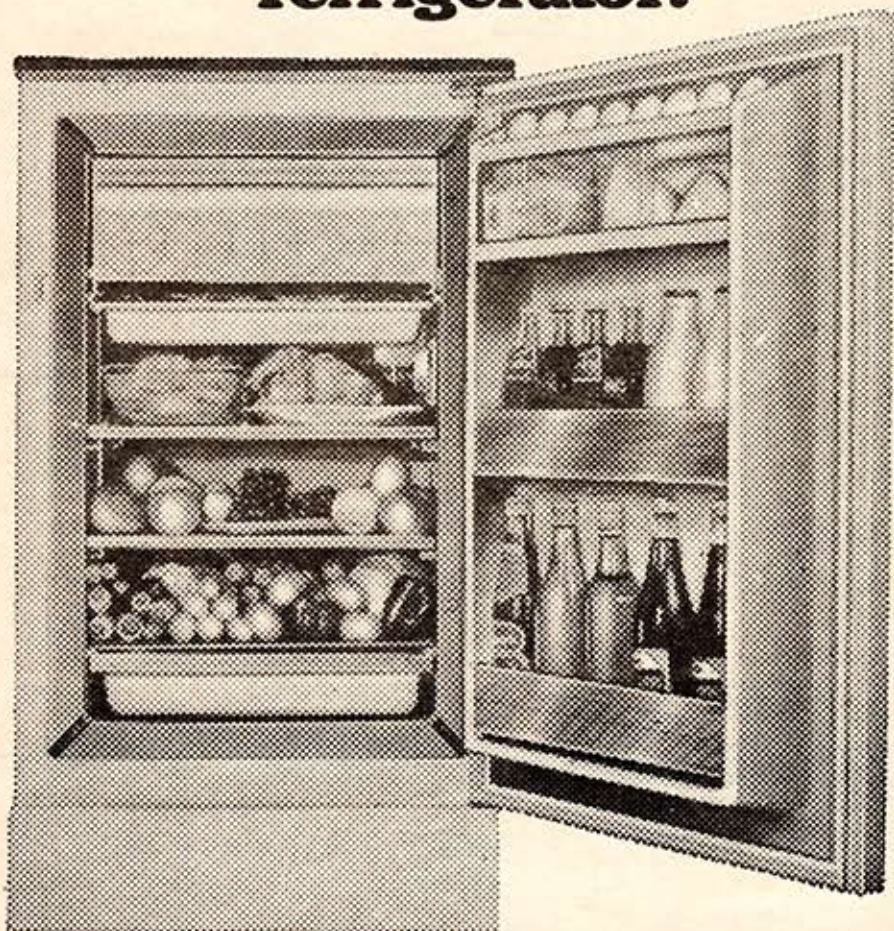


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'Wings for a Nation'

R.M. Lala in the article, 'Wings for a Nation' (*Parsiana*, December 1982) writes, "Aspy Engineer was admitted into the Indian Air Force... where he rose to be its first Indian Air Chief of Staff."

In fact, the first Indian chief was Air Marshall B. K. Mukherjee.

FLT. LT. DHUN MEHTA
Bombay

Wasted

I was disappointed to read 'Savaksa' and the other reprints in the Art & Music section in *Parsiana*, May 1983. They read more like advertisements or publicity. Much of the valuable space in the magazine is wasted on these items.

A.F. TARAPOREWALA
Madras

Burial

The Parsis of Jamshedpur have adopted the method of burial. They also do not object to showing the faces of dead Parsis to non-Parsis for paying homage to a departed soul after the *geh-sarna* ceremony.

On the question of adopting the burial method, our late chairman of the association, Phiroze Kutar did consult the late Dastur K. Dabu, the high priest and respected religious scholar of Bombay. The question therefore arises: In order to march along with time, have we committed a sin by adopting the burial method? Well, it is anybody's guess.

However, the fact cannot be denied that Zarathustra gives man freedom of thought and freedom of choice in the matter of religion. The learned writer Nani A. Palkhivala quotes from the *Rig Veda*, "Let noble thoughts come to us from every side." He further states, "A blind obedience to authority is the surest prescription for spiritual paralysis."

"In our community the word 'reform' has become distasteful and unpalatable. According to our religious literature, the greatest reformist was Zarathustra himself. His religion was a religion of reform," said the late Dr Dastur Maneck Dhalla.

Let us not forget his teaching — "Wisdom is the discerning exercise of knowledge. Neither deep learning nor profound knowledge is Wisdom. Judicious use of knowledge makes for Wisdom." (*Thus Spake Zarathushtra*, Dr B.S. Surti).

RUSI B. PASTAKIA
Jamshedpur

No Re-incarnation

The controversy whether Zarathustra preached the doctrine of re-incarnation or otherwise, has been a matter of dispute amongst many scholars.

It is difficult to have the 'last word' on this subject. But still, an unbiased study of our scriptures leads us to answer the question of re-incarnation in the negative, specially for the following reasons:

Firstly, Zoroastrianism teaches the doctrine of resurrection with which the belief in re-incarnation is wholly incompatible.

Secondly, there is really no reference to the doctrine of re-incarnation in the *Gathas*. Even the much quoted *Yasna* 49.11 has been proved erroneous and misleading by Parsi savants of the calibre of the late Ervad Bamanji Dhabhar, the late Behramgore Anklesaria and Dastur Dr Hormazdyar K. Mirza. Further, neither the Pahlavi dasturs of Sassanian and post-Sassanian times, nor Neryosangh Dhaval have alluded to this doctrine in their Pahlavi and Sanskrit translations of the *Avesta*, or in their voluminous Pahlavi works.

In Zoroastrian literature written in Avesta, Pahlavi, Pazend and modern Persian, there is no word for re-incarnation. This is definite proof of the absence of such a doctrine in the Zoroastrian religion.

According to J.M. Unvala, re-incarnation is a foreign and un-Zoroastrian doctrine propagated by Parsi theosophists and neither western scholars nor Parsi dasturs, nor serious Parsi students of our religious scriptures ever taught this doctrine.

N.H. DADRAWALA
Bombay

Community Singing

At an anniversary function of the Cama Baug agiary, the principal speaker Kirtankar Ervad Parvez Katrak presented a very interesting musical discourse on *Atashni setayesh*, *monajats* and other religious songs rendered with an unusual combination of devotion, musical skill and audience participation.

It was a somewhat unusual experience to find 300 to 400 Parsis of all ages sufficiently "taken up" by the speaker to join him in mass singing of religious songs which reminded one that as with a family so with a community — the one that prays together, stays together.

We have seen singing Christian padres and singing Hindu pandits but Katrak appears to be the only singing

athornan in our community.

His record of 400 free kirtan programmes in 10 years at all major cities of India and Pakistan, given to various charities speaks volumes for his sincerity of purpose and selfless socio-religious services. Such kirtans hark back to an old communal tradition which would be worth reviving.

Community and congregational singing programmes of this type can do some good to our community and more and more such programmes could usefully be organized elsewhere by interested persons.

N.A. MODI
Bombay

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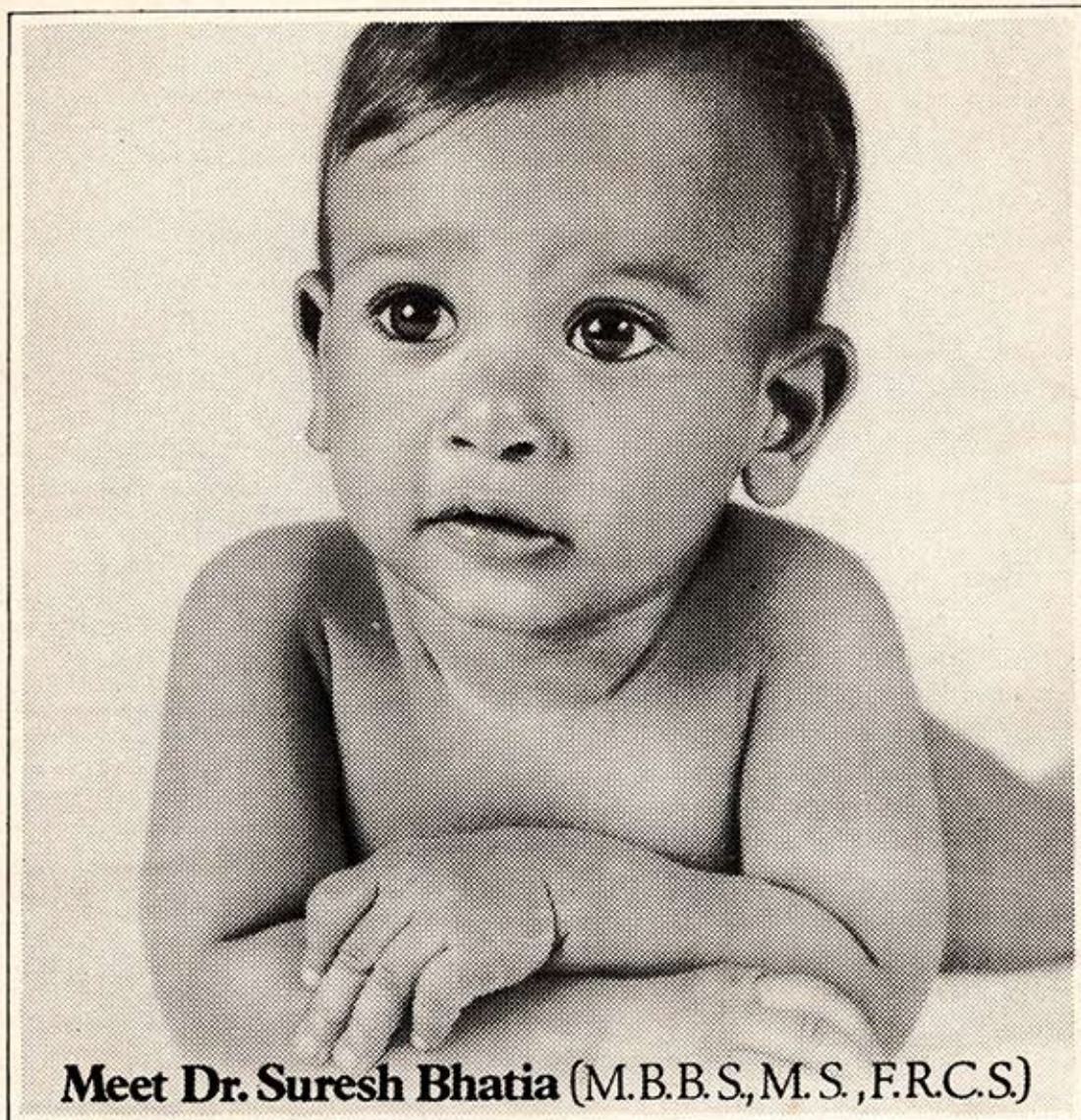
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Events and Personalities

Justice felicitated

"My Lord, you are the second Parsi to occupy the highest seat of justice (after Sir Dinshaw Mulla), and the first Parsi to adorn the Bench of the Supreme Court of India since independence," reads the scroll of honour presented to Justice **Dinshah P. Madon** at the felicitation organized in his honour by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet on July 4.

Madon, who has recently been elevated to the Bench of the Supreme Court said in reply to the presentation of the scroll and a silver salver, "Offices and appointments a man may achieve have no value in themselves but in the opportunity they offer to serve their fellowmen and prove themselves worthy of the opportunity." Madon spoke briefly, being unwell that evening, and his speech was read out by his wife, Dr Khorshed Madon, who is also an advocate of the Supreme Court and the Bombay High Court.

Several noted members of the legal profession including Justice B. Lentin, advocate F.S. Nariman, D.B. Engineer and T. Andhiyarujina spoke at Patkar Hall that evening, referring to Madon's phenomenal knowledge and memory, his humanity and sense of humour. "They say it is difficult to have regard for someone one has known for over 30 years," said Justice Lentin. "I have known Madon for over 30 years and I have no such difficulty."

Madon's "fiercely independent" stand during the Emergency in India was lauded and described by Nariman as his "outstanding moment." "He dealt one of the first blows to the Emergency when he ruled that the censorship order was unconstitutional and in fact forced this judgement to be published," continued Nariman. "Justice Madon was at his best when the going was rough."

Appointed to the Bench of the Bombay High Court in 1967, Madon "dis-

charged his function with dedication, integrity and fierce independence," said Lentin. In 1970 he was appointed as a one-man commission of inquiry into the communal disturbances in Bhiwandi, Maharashtra, and his recommendations were accepted by the government. Author of *Principles and Practise of Sales Tax*, Madon has made a significant contribution to the codification of the principles of the sales tax in Maharashtra.

With "a number of firsts to his credit," Madon was also the first chief justice of Goa, Daman and Diu, commented Engineer. He also noted that Madon recently swore in K.T. Satarawala as Lieutenant Governor of Goa, Daman and Diu, and jocularly added that it was one of those rare occasions when one Parsi swore in another instead of swearing at another.

Several anecdotes about Madon as a teacher, colleague and judge livened up the meeting and revealed the many facets of his personality. "Madon will

recollect what has been stated by the counsel six months ago and remind the counsel," said Andhiyarujina, referring to Madon's keen memory. He also recalled an incident in court when the pitiful argument of one advocate was being laughed at by his adversary. When the lawyer in question objected to this unfair laughter, Madon turned a grave face towards the offending laughter and agreed, "You should not laugh at such arguments, you should weep at them."

Justice Jal Vimadlal, BPP trustee, noted that Madon was a *navar marteb* and had started his career in the chambers of the late Homi D. Banaji, a former BPP trustee.

"After he lays down his office, perhaps he could spare a little time for the problems of the Parsi community," said Engineer. BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwala in his welcome speech appealed to Madon to find ways to consider the cases of charitable trusts and thus prevent delays and impediments in their functioning. Golwala said there were

Madon (left) accepting salver from Golwala (Photograph Rashid D. Bamanbehram)

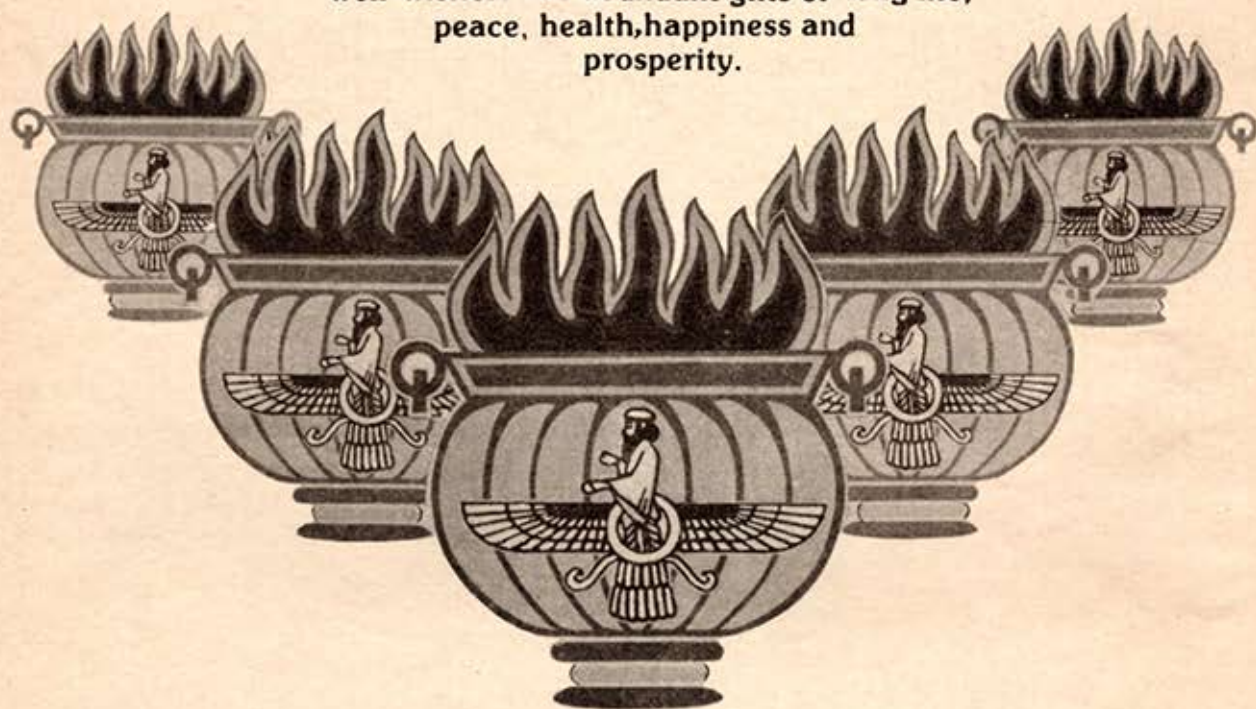


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about 200 cases, connected with the BPP, pending in various courts.

Commenting on the significant contribution of the Parsi community, Madon said, "I have been asked why the Parsi community is so distinctive...the answer lies in the ethical thinking of our religion." But, he said, "It is no use resting on our laurels or on the glories of the past. If we continue acting on the precepts of our religion, the religion will survive."

Adoption Deadlock

The exclusion of any community from the purview of the Adoption of Children Bill has been declared unconstitutional by the Minorities Commission. The Commission recently considered recommendations from Parsis both for and against their inclusion under this bill, note press reports.

In the Commission's view, according to law minister Jagannath Kaushal, those who feel that their religion or scriptures forbid adoption, are free not only to refrain from the practice, but to convey their ideas to others belonging to their community, notes the *Indian Express*, May 11, 1983. Kaushal reportedly viewed this as the extent of the freedom allowed to the antagonists of the Adoption Bill.

The Bill, which "seeks to equate, as far as possible, the status, rights and obligations of an adopted child with that of a child born in lawful wedlock," according to N. Vasuki Rao in the *Indian Express*, April 20, has been opposed by one section of Parsis who "were worried over its implications about induction into the religion and inheritance rights of the adopted child."

Introduced in 1972, the Adoption Bill, successfully blocked since then by the minorities, is the first proposed general law of adoption in the country, although the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956, provides for adoption by persons other than the Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Jews.

The recommendation of the Minority Commission, Vasuki Rao notes, "far from settling the controversy, is likely to rake it up afresh."

Pyre for Parsis

"There (is) an increasing tendency among non-Hindus, particularly the Parsi community, to cremate bodies," stated D.M. Sukhthankar, Bombay's

municipal commissioner, while announcing that a separate funeral pyre for the cremation of non-Hindus is to be constructed at the Hindu cemetery on Haines Road, near Mahalaxmi.

The decision for the new construction was taken by the public health committee, and was "to be placed before the general body meeting of the corporation soon," notes a report in *The Times of India*, May 4, 1983.

"Cremation of the dead of all religions is allowed at the electric crematoria at Chandanwadi and Sion. However, when these crematoria are not working, there is no facility for non-Hindus for cremation at any other municipal cemetery," stated the report.

Marshall's Contribution

For his significant contribution to Gujarati literature and drama, Dr **Ratan Rustomji Marshall**, social worker and



Marshall receiving shawl from Surat mayor

scholar, was felicitated by the Surat Municipal Corporation and presented a shawl, a sandalwood casket and a *samanpaitra*, by mayor Swarupchand Jariwala, notes a report.

"The first Parsi and the first student of Gujarat to obtain the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Gujarati literature," Marshall's doctoral thesis, a chronological history of Gujarati journalism, was the first of its kind, the report states. When published, the thesis became a standard textbook for students of journalism in Gujarat and won a state prize as an outstanding historical work.

A student and lecturer on Parsi history, Marshall's study on Parsi population is described as "perhaps the only reliable work on Parsi demography in the Gujarati language." The report was

published by the Surat Parsi Punchayet, with which Marshall is actively associated. Recently, at the age of 70, an age when most men are thinking of retirement, Marshall completed his studies in law.

Boots for Jimmy

Prominent Bombay businessman and trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, **Jamshed N. Guzder** was appointed chairman of the board of directors of Boots and Company (India) in February.

Chairman of Herdillia Chemicals and Bakelite Hylam, Guzder is also "the past-president of the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay and the immediate past-president of the Indian National Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce." He is, according to his bio-data, "the only Parsi who is currently on the Committee of FICCI, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry."



Guzder: Boots chairman

Donation for Deaf

For the improvement of teaching techniques at the Education, Audiology and Research (EAR) Centre's school for the deaf in Bombay, a donation of one lakh rupees was presented by general manager J.D.F. Lam on behalf of the Taj Mahal Hotel to the founder chairman of the Centre, Ms Meher Vakeel.

At the presentation held in March, Ms Vakeel was quoted as saying that only 5 percent of the 25 million deaf in India are totally deaf. The majority have useful residual hearing which can be developed through amplification and training.

The EAR society which has its school on Nepean Sea Road has been beset by problems of space. It plans however to buy a plot with the help of the Save

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Ms Vakeel (left) with Lam (Photograph courtesy *The Taj Magazine*)

Breach Candy Committee, Ms Vakeel is reported to have said. EAR was recently lauded for its activities by Ms Shalinitai Patil, wife of Maharashtra chief minister Vasant Rao Patil, while inaugurating a speech programme held in July.

Nani's Annual Address

That Nani Palkhivala's lively analysis of

the annual budget is a yearly event eagerly looked forward to, cannot be denied. After all, look at the way the crowds keep increasing each year.

To think that he began way back in 1957, addressing a small gathering at Green's Hotel, now the Taj Mahal Intercontinental. Last year the budget speech was held at CCI in the east lawn, normally reserved for wedding receptions and this year, triumphantly, in the stadium proper where more than 6,000 people attended.

All this in spite of the fact that of late a new generation of budget analysts has arisen. But there is absolutely no one to beat the irrepressible and irreplaceable Palkhivala. He truly combines all the qualities of a good speaker—personality, clarity of language, deep learning, humour, a critical mind and a most forthright approach.

Throughout his speech, which runs to 80 minutes or more, his audience listens in pin-drop silence. Palkhivala stands erect, chest out like an army colonel, his hands occasionally in trouser pocket, figures and anecdotes clearly in mind, no need to refer to any piece of paper.

Every point in the budget is honed to razor sharpness, clarified for the common man to whom it is like a giant crossword puzzle.

Palkhivala never attacks individuals and parties, but his speech is always a scathing indictment of a short-sighted government. This year he made it a point to emphasize that the government was introducing new laws when other countries were reducing them.

There must be something about the event that raises all participants to heights of eloquence, for many in the audience thoroughly enjoyed Vijay Merchant's introduction of the speaker. "My speech will be as short as Gavaskar's innings." (at Guaracara Park), he promises amid laughter.

And then a bit later, "There are thousands of people here and I am sure they have not been brought in trucks." And everyone agreed wholeheartedly when he said, "What you will see in the Bra-bourne Stadium today is much more interesting than Test matches that were long-drawn-out boring five-day fixtures."

Courtesy *Sunday Mid-Day*, March 6, 1983.

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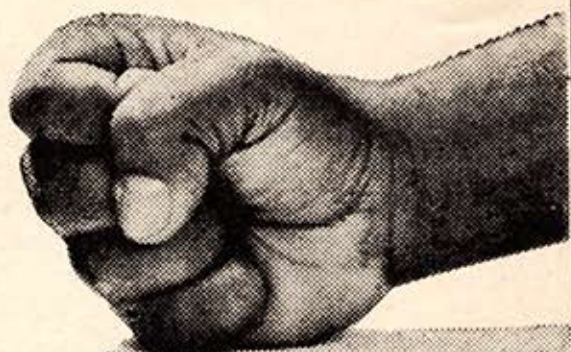


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Left to Right: Khambatta receiving scroll from ex-chairman of IDBI, N.N. Pai, and Vijay Merchant

the last three decades, Ms **Piloo Dorab Khambatta** was awarded the N.D. Diwan Memorial Award for 1982, instituted by the National Society for Equal Opportunities for the Handicapped.

As honorary secretary of the finance raising, public relations and employment and placement committees of the National Association of the Blind in the past, Khambatta has helped in "raising much needed funds for promoting the Cause of the Blind" and for arousing "interest and much needed awareness in the community on problems of the Blind," notes the NSEOH citation presented in March.

In 1981, Khambatta won the NAB's Rustom Merwanji Alpawalla Memorial Award for her services to the blind.

"She started her Blind Welfare career, with assisting the N.S.D. Industrial Home for the Blind, by organizing concerts, etc. to augment its funds," notes an NAB write-up.

"In 1964, Ms Khambatta became actively interested in the placement of the blind...She works round the clock, attending to the new Employment and Placement (Administration) Office daily and has been over-all in charge of the Placement Department. She has guided the Placement Officers working in Bombay and in other states."

Tragic Death

A BEST single-decker bus veered off the road and dashed into the wall of the Wadiji Atash-Behram, crushing to

death an 18-year-old pedestrian Persis Dara Bhagwagar.

The June 21 accident at the Princess Street junction smashed part of the wall and gate of the Atash-Behram.

Persis, a resident of Balram Street and a former student of the Avabai Petit School in Bandra, had just joined the Siddharth College, noted press reports.

The driver of the bus sustained minor injuries and was reportedly "arrested by the L.T. Marg police on a charge of rash and negligent driving."

Hotelier Honoured

A fellowship of the British Institute of Management, London, has been conferred on **Minoo D. Katpitia**, general manager of Bombay's star-studded 5-star Sun-n-Sand hotel, and freelance hotel consultant and advisor.



Katpitia: British Fellowship

Holder of the Highbury Technical College (Portsmouth) diploma in hotel management and administration, Katpitia's "meritorious services to the hotel institutions" have earned him interna-

Bus and damaged wall of Wadiji Atash-Behram (Photograph Rashid D. Bamanbehram)



tional recognition, notes the press release. He is already a Fellow of the Hotel Catering and Institutional Management Association and the Cookery and Foods Association, and an affiliate of the Royal Society of Health, London.

Welfare Workers Lauded

Two ladies who have promoted the welfare of Ahmedabad's women for several decades, Ms **Minnie Rustom Cama**, managing director of Cama Hotels Ltd., and Ms **Meherbai N. Ginwala**, were felicitated by the Zoroastrian Ladies Co-operative Society Ltd., and the Dhunbai Dalal Zarthushti Stree Mandal at the Ahmedabad Parsi Gymkhana last March.

Ms Cama, founder member and president of the ZLI Society since the last 25 years and a trustee of the Stree Mandal, "has been the guiding light" of the society since its inception with the issue of shares worth Rs 10 in 1944, notes a report. The society has grown since, and conducts stitching and embroidery classes, today attended by 100 women belonging to different communities, a kitchen department employing poor Parsi women, established with an initial donation of Rs 25,000 from Naval Tata, and most recently, a nursery school.

During the presidency of Ms Ginwala, the ZLI Society's members were "requested to keep one share and donate the extra ones they possessed to the society towards building funds," notes the felicitation address, "and today...we have a big building of our own standing on a prominent site."

Both Ginwala and Cama, managing trustee and trustee of the Stree Mandal respectively, have helped augment the

Ms Ginwala (extreme left), Gujarat state minister Vyas, Zerrin Cambatta, Ms Cama (standing)



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funds of the Stree Mandal which provides "monetary assistance to the poor and needy of our community...and distributes grains to them on such days as Navroz and Mukta," note the felicitation scrolls.

Chief guest Kokilaben Vyas, minister of tourism, health and family welfare, reportedly lauded the social service of both Cama and Ginwala.

Crusade for Conservation.

The sheriff **Soli P. Godrej**, a fanatic crusader in the campaign to conserve the environment and preserve trees, once had a not-so-savoury experience with a Maharashtra minister who lived next door.

The minister wanted to hack down a tree in his courtyard in order to level the ground to grow a vegetable patch for a fresh supply of greens for the kitchen.

Godrej had waited for an opportunity to meet the minister and even instructed his children to seize the first chance to convince the minister of the need for saving trees which were then fast dwindling in the Malabar Hill area and giving rise to a concrete jungle. The opportunity never came.

The sheriff was constrained finally to meet the minister in his chamber in Mantralaya to persuade him to give up his pet plan to cut down the tree. As a good neighbour, Godrej even offered to supply the minister with fresh vegetables for his table every morning.

The plea fell on deaf ears and the tree was hacked down to give place to a vegetable patch.

Courtesy The Times of India, April 4, 1983.

Armed Forces Consultant

The noted Bombay orthodontist Dr **Keki M. Mistry** was appointed honorary consultant in orthodontia to the Armed Forces Medical Services in April.

Mistry is honorary consultant to the Governor of Maharashtra and to several reputed hospitals in Bombay including the Parsee General Hospital, where "he helped set up the first department of orthodontia," notes his bio-data.

• The founder member and first elected president of the Indian Orthodontic

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Society, Mistry is also "the president-elect of the Indian Dental Association, and president of the Maharashtra State Dental Council," according to a press report.

Author of *Dental Health in India* and *Guidelines to Healthy Living*, he graduated in dental surgery from Bombay University and secured his MS in orthodontia from Illinois University, U.S.A.

Rustomji's plum contracts

It is true that some people find the books of **M.K. Rustomji** on management and other subjects either overly simplistic or too superficial. No matter that he writes in tandem with C. Northcote Parkinson of Parkinson's Law fame.

It is also equally true, however, that thousands of others find them fascinating enough to have them translated into languages ranging from Chinese to Hebrew!

Recently the authors have signed a package contract with Federal Publications of Singapore for publishing no less than nine of their management books in Chinese. Not a moment too soon



Mistry: Armed to the teeth

either, for with the present policy of promoting rapid industrialization the authorities in Beijing are bound to find these little books with their attractive and amusing illustrations very useful. And with the Chinese population having crossed the billion mark, there should be huge returns for India in the form of foreign exchange.

Besides, a Bulgarian firm, Narodna Prosveta, has shown interest in the books and Emmery Associates of Pakistan have signed a contract for four books in their country.



Dordi: State League chief

But the plummiest contract, in terms of prestige, must be that signed by Oram of Tel Aviv, to bring out six of the management books in Hebrew. After all, Israel can choose from the best management books published in the US and Europe.

Courtesy Mid-Day, May 31, 1983.

Heading the League

Former Air Commodore **Jamshed B. Dordi** was elected president of the Maharashtra Ex-Services League in April.

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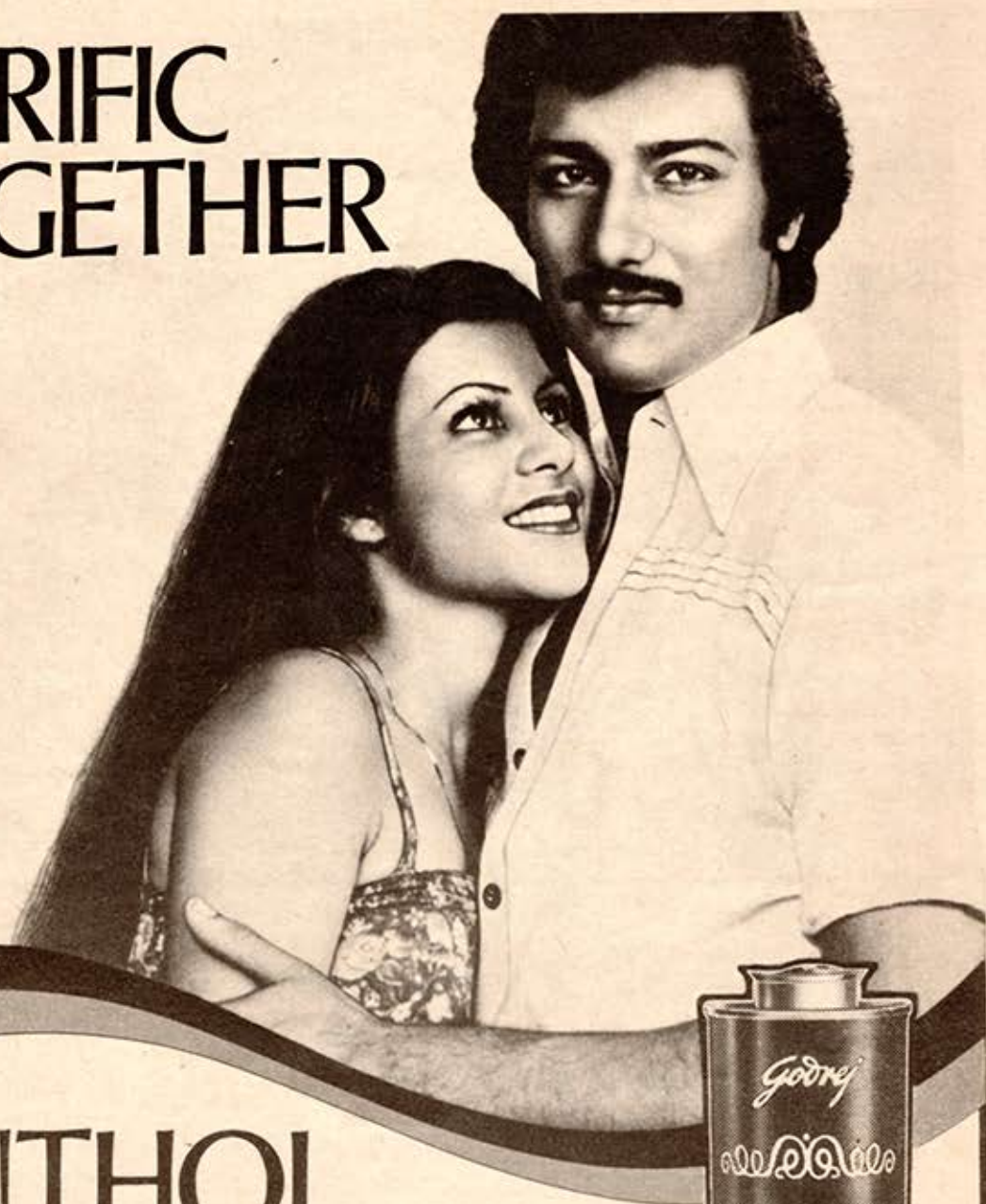
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In the course of his career Dordi was head of both the Navigation Section and Air Intelligence at the Air Headquarters in New Delhi and was also appointed to the Cabinet Secretariat with the Joint Planning and Joint Intelligence Committees and to the Indian High Commis-

sion in the UK. He was "awarded a 'Mentioned in Dispatches' during the first Pakistan war in Kashmir," and was also "responsible for charting out the flight plan and navigating the first I.A.F. flight service to UK," his bio-data notes.

A graduate of St. Xavier's College, Bombay, and the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, and a specialist in navigation from the Royal Air Force College in England, Dordi is currently with the Godrej and Boyce Manufacturing Company.



Designer Dolly Sahiar receiving an award in the art book design category from President Zail Singh in May this year. This constitutes her 14th consecutive National Award. At present Sahiar is advising *Time-Life* of the USA on their forthcoming book entitled 'Treasures of India'. She is also a consultant designer to the National Museum, Publication Division and the Madhya Pradesh Government. (Photograph courtesy Blitz)

Children of the Ranina Day Nursery, a unit of the Parsi Welfare Centre at Dadar, receiving their diplomas at a mini-graduation ceremony on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the institution's founder, the late Kaikhusroo Ranina. Handing over the diplomas is Ms Mohini Mathur, vice-president of the Maharashtra State Women's Council, and behind her is Ms Marina Rocha, principal of the school.



SPOTLIGHT

Hormusji M. Seervai, eminent advocate and expert in constitutional law, was elected president of the Bombay unit of the People's Union for Civil Liberties at the annual general meeting held in Bombay in March.

For the second consecutive year, **Rumy Shroff**, a Bombay architect, won the trophy in the commercial or office interior category at the interior designing competition organized in March by the Indian Institute of Interior Designers.

Nawshir D. Khurody was appointed president of Merck Sharp and Dohme, one of India's leading multi-national pharmaceutical companies, in June this year.

A graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, Khurody "has a long and distinguished career in the Tata organization," said Ken Coleman on behalf of the board of directors of Merck Sharp and



Khurody heads Merck

Dohme, welcoming Khurody into the firm, a subsidiary of the prestigious Merck Sharp and Dohme of New Jersey, America.

For the last six years Khurody has been working in Qatar for a large business house.

Civic engineer **Minoo Homi Batlivala**



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was appointed chief engineer (common services) in the water supply and sewerage department of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. A graduate of Poona University, Batlivala was deputy chief engineer having joined the civic services in 1952 as a sub-engineer. (*The Daily*, May 6, 1983)

Vice-president of Blue Star Ltd., **R.J. Khambatta**, has been appointed president of the Bombay Management Association. Earlier, he was the vice-president and chairman of the BMA's educational committee.

Khambatta is actively associated with the Bombay Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Institute of International Auditors, and the Institute of Company Secretaries. (*The Times of India*, March 18, 1983)

H.P. Kanga, general manager (central purchase department) of Peico Electronics and Electricals Ltd., has been elected national president of the Indian Association of Materials Management for the current year.

Kanga is an active founder member of the Committee for Electoral Rights.

Dr Boms Wadia was elected president of the Amateur Bodybuilders' Association of Maharashtra at their annual general meeting held on February 16, notes a press report.



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The Munificent Prince

M.D. David

Nobody ever dreamt that a 16-year-old orphan who came to live with his uncle who sold empty bottles in Bombay Fort would one day rise to be the merchant prince of this metropolis. Few men born in destitution have acquired such wealth due to their own Midas touch, business acumen and spirit of adventure. One such person was Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy.

Born in Bombay 200 years ago on July 15, 1783, Jamsetjee, the youngest child of a poor Parsi weaver, spent his boyhood at Navsari, but later returned to Bombay. While helping his uncle Framji Batliwala in selling empty bottles, the boy developed an inexorable urge to prosper. So he embarked on a China trip as an employee of a Parsi firm and made a small profit of Rs 60 on his maiden voyage.

Gifted with a sharp business sense he borrowed Rs 45,000 and launched his enterprise on the second of his 10 voyages to China in the eight years between 1800 and 1808. The great fire of Bombay on February 17, 1803, soon after Jamsetjee's second voyage to China, destroyed his merchandise. Twelve days after the fire, Jamsetjee, then 20, was married to 10-year-old Avabai. Of their seven sons and three daughters only three sons and one daughter survived infancy.

Though most of his voyages were filled with adventurous events like naval battles and storms, the most thrilling of all was his fourth voyage to China. Jamsetjee himself has left a vivid description of it. After the onset of the monsoons, on June 30, 1805, he sailed from Bombay to China in an



Fort House: the luxurious home where Jamsetjee lived and died, recently destroyed in a fire



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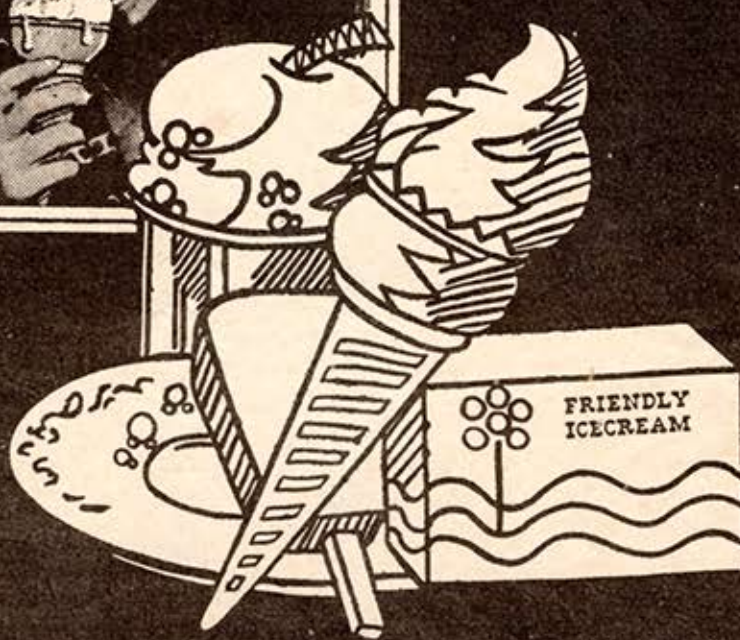


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English man-of-war named *Brunswick* with rich merchandise, hoping to return with his pockets lined with gold.

Not long after he left Bombay his ship was captured by the French and taken to Colombo, Madagascar and then to the Cape of Good Hope. The English and the French were the bitterest enemies at this time as England was the only country that defied Napoleon's bid for supremacy over Europe. On the way, the French who had taken control of the *Brunswick* ill-treated Jamsetjee and the other passengers. At the Cape of Good Hope he was robbed of all his belongings including his valuable merchandise, except his clothes, and then set free.

Fortunately for him a Danish ship was at the Cape on its way to Bengal. The English captain of the *Brunswick* arranged with the captain of the Danish ship to carry Jamsetjee and the other Indian merchants to Calcutta. Jamsetjee had to give a bill of exchange for 800 sikka rupees on himself, payable at Calcutta, for the despicable berth he was offered on the Danish vessel. For three months, i.e., until they reached Calcutta, they were served with only one biscuit in the morning and some boiled rice in the afternoon.

Undaunted by this traumatic experience this man of destiny left on his China voyage again—for the fifth time. So strong was the lure of Cathay.

Business empire

He had established good ties with his agents, Jardine Matheson & Co, who had their offices in Hong Kong and Canton, and earned crores of rupees in a couple of decades by exporting thousands of chests of opium from Bombay, which were sold in China at enormous profits by these agents. Cotton was added as another item to his lucrative trade with China and England.

Jamsetjee's entire commercial empire was centred around the China trade and by 1821 Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy & Co had acquired a monopoly over China's import trade. Twenty-three years later when his sons joined him as partners, the firm was renamed Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy & Sons. To save on the increasing freight charges he bought a fleet of seven ships, but his trade had grown so enormous that he had to hire additional vessels.

Princely heart

Business misfortunes ruined even



Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Hospital
(From an old water-colour painting by Higgins)

millionaires like Sir Roger de Faria, a Bombay-based Goan businessman and a contemporary of Jamsetjee. Jamsetjee who himself had suffered such losses and had withstood the worst, gave a helping hand to his friend Faria and offered a loan of £ 10,000 that was responsible for restoring Faria to his trade.

Jamsetjee along with his wife Avabai, paid a visit to Navsari where he had spent his childhood in want. The Maharaja of Baroda whose territory included Navsari was his close friend. When he heard of Jamsetjee's visit the Maharaja ordered the commandant of the *suba* to accord a rousing welcome with military honours to the merchant prince of Bombay. On his arrival at Navsari with royal fanfare, his first act was to visit his childhood house and the kind-hearted woman who had so thoughtfully given him a little food tied up in a red bandana handkerchief, for his journey from Navsari to Bombay nearly 60 years ago. A grateful Jamsetjee showered upon the old benefactress unbelievably rich gifts. Every citizen of Navsari was a beneficiary of Jamsetjee's munificence. Charity flowed like water until every home was touched with Jamsetjee's prosperity. He spent more than five lakhs of rupees in Navsari in a few weeks, even showering handfuls of silver coins from his palanquin on his way to and from the fire temple.

The philanthropy of this fabulous merchant knew no barriers and Bom-

bay benefitted the most from his charity. The first Civil Hospital and Maternity Home known as the J.J. Hospital and the Grant Medical College built in 1845 at a cost of two lakh rupees was the first of his memorable deeds. For 140 years it has been a haven for the sick. Its new 460-bed building was constructed by his successors in 1958.

The Mahim Causeway across the Bandra Creek was built at a cost of Rs 1,55,000 and the avenue connecting the causeway was named after his illustrious wife Lady Avabai Jamsetjee. The J.J. School of Art, the first of its kind in India, was set up in 1857 under his patronage. The Parsi Punchayet and the Parsi community received his encouraging support in myriad ways. The Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Parsi Benevolent Institute which runs 11 schools in and outside Bombay was created with a donation of Rs 3 lakhs.

Even Surat, Poona and Navsari benefitted from this generosity. He built the Jamsetjee Bund and Waterworks in 1850 in Poona at a cost of Rs 1,75,000 to solve the problem of water scarcity in that city.

Jamsetjee was a pioneer in many respects. Rejecting the purdah system, in March 1840 he brought his wife and three daughters-in-law in public amongst men of different communities at a banquet he gave to celebrate the marriage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. He introduced Lady Jamsetjee and his daughters-in-law to the guests of honour, the Governor and Lady Carnac, Lord Keane—the hero of

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Kabul and others. This made him unpopular among the orthodox section of his community. He was also the first to introduce ice and ice confectionary in 1834 at one of his banquets and two of his friends who consumed too much ice became seriously ill soon after the party.

In recognition of his versatility, the Governor nominated him one of the five founder Fellows of the University of Bombay in 1857. He was also the first Indian member of the Bank of Bombay and the Bombay Port Trust.

The British government too showered honours on him by making him the first Indian knight, the first baronet and the first Indian to be conferred with the Freedom of the City of London. The citizens of Bombay also paid their tribute to his generosity by installing a bronze statue at the Asiatic Society Library in 1859, just before he passed away.

His opulence can be gauged by the Arabian Night style banquets he hosted to entertain the governors and maharajas at his three residences viz. Fort House, Mazagaon Castle and Mahalakshmi Mahal.

No honour was considered greater by a socialite in Bombay, than to be invited as a guest at one of Jamsetjee's prestigious banquets held in his luxurious home—Fort House, (the recently burnt Handloom House).

When he gave a farewell banquet in honour of the Governor, the Earl of Clare in 1835, multihued shamianas were erected in front of Fort House to accommodate 300 guests, the most honoured citizens of Bombay. They were treated to a gala gold dinner service to the accompaniment of pleasing music. The diffused light shed on the guests by a row of glittering chandeliers and candelabras gave an enchanting look. The entire area around Fort House along the present Mahatma Gandhi Road decorated with flags, festoons and colourful Chinese lanterns appeared like a wonderland. On another occasion when he threw a banquet in 1849 in honour of the Governor and Lady Falkland at Mazagaon Castle, the road leading to his bungalow was colourfully lit with Chinese lanterns for half a mile.

Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, the Parsi knight and the first baronet, is indeed one of the striking examples of commercial success to be found in the history of any country. The great traditions of benevolence and charity laid



Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Bart

down by the first baronet have been continued by his successors.

Palkhivala's Tribute

Jamsetjee is remembered not because of the fortune he amassed—many lesser men than he have done the same, both before and after him. He is remembered because he knew how to distribute his wealth and spend it for the benefit of the less fortunate. Long before Mahatma Gandhi, Jamsetjee acted upon the philosophy of trusteeship: a rich man owns his wealth as a trustee for his fellowmen and must use it for their benefit. In England there is a tombstone on which are inscribed the words—"What I gave, I have; What I spent, I had; What I left, I lost." These lines admirably sum up Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy's attitude to his wealth.

His philanthropy passed into history in his own lifetime. His munificence knew no bounds. Most significantly, his charities were for all communities, regardless of region or religion, caste or creed.

Justice Frankfurter of the U.S. Supreme Court observed that the highest office in a democracy is not that of the president or the prime minister but that of a citizen. Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy was a citizen par excellence.

He came to the succour of victims of fire, flood and famine, anywhere and everywhere—he remembered how much he himself had suffered from the

fire of Bombay in 1803. When Surat had a great fire in 1837, Jamsetjee sent a chartered ship to Surat with a cargo of food, clothes and coins. To ensure an adequate supply of water to the citizens of Pune, he financed the J. J. Bund and Waterworks which were completed in 1850. Not only did disasters in India evoke his instant response but also similar misfortunes in foreign countries. When there were floods in France, he sent a handsome donation, although he had suffered at the hands of his French captors on board the *Brunswick*. He helped the Irish people during the great famine of 1822.

His vision was as large as his generosity. Today the World Bank and renowned economists are talking of "human investment." But Jamsetjee realized the vital importance of "human investment" before that phrase was born. He was the greatest benefactor of the cause of education and public health. Though he never received any formal education himself, he founded schools so that others may have the blessing which had been denied to him. He was a great patron of literature and of the arts.

His benevolence benefitted the nation in countless ways. He endowed dharamshalas and public baus, he sank wells and built bridges. His hand was always ready to alleviate the sufferings of the widow and the orphan, the unfortunate and the destitute. He gave generously to the Panjrapole which was founded by his friend and partner Motichand Amichand.

At a time when discrimination against women was even more rampant than it is now and when society did not believe in female education, he built schools for girls. His own daughter was among the first Indian women to be educated in English.

In the resolution conferring the Freedom of the City, the London Council said that it was a testimonial of the high esteem in which he was held by the City of London and of the "respect for his justly renowned character as a princely benefactor of his country and mankind—a noble example of blameless private life and public worth as a citizen of Bombay, and of spotless commercial integrity..."

Excerpts from a broadcast by Nani A. Palkhivala over All India Radio on July 15, 1983, the bicentennial of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy.

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"The Langrana Agiary is practically deserted and hardly anyone attends for worship."

FIRE SALE

Hutokshi D. Doctor

Small, dark and devoid of all but the bare necessities, the Langrana Agiary, which has stood for 135 years on Gola Lane in Bombay's Fort area, faces an uncertain future. As the devotees who lived in this vicinity moved to the residential suburbs, the attendance and useage of the agiary declined, and today only the occasional Zoroastrian enters to worship at the *aadaryan* or light a *batti* at the miniature well in the courtyard beyond, where the *kathi* lies stacked against one wall.

In this once flourishing agiary, one of nine fire temples in the same locality, only the panthaki and one assistant mobed tend the *adaran* fire and the *dadgah* fire that smoulders in an adjoining room. While the corpus of the trust fund remains the same, the income is inadequate to keep the agiary well maintained, and the trustees are reportedly contemplating the sale of the property.

The panthaki, Ervad Bhikhaji Manchershah Katrak has voiced his opposition to the proposed sale and possible extinction of the *Atash* which has been tended by the Katrak family since its consecration. Sitting in a huge black armchair, Katrak points to portraits of the agiary's benefactors which hang on the damp walls alongside photographs of his own forefathers, and to a time-worn article from the *Jam-e-Jamshed* published on the 101st anniversary of the agiary and framed on the wall, proud testimony to the continuing *panthak* of the Katraks.

In support of Katrak's stand, 47



residents of Fort and Bombay signed and despatched a petition to the Indian Prime Minister, strongly objecting to the removal of the panthaki and the proposed sale. "Our religious feelings will be hurt if this panthaki is removed and we will not under any circumstances tolerate it," they wrote.

The controversy over the Langrana Agiary was brought into the public eye when the *Jam-e-Jamshed*, February 1, 1983, carried an article entitled 'Langrana Agiary—Is its existence in danger?' by Hormazdyar S. Dalal, project manager of the Zoroastrian Community Development Institute. He stated that the total expenses towards the agiary were not more than Rs 4000 per year, which is not even the entire annual return on the trust funds. Of

this amount, Rs 3,600 go towards the maintenance of the additional mobed, which accounts for only half the mobed's monthly salary of Rs 600. The other half is paid by Katrak, as are the other maintenance costs of the agiary. "To my mind it is a sort of deliberate neglect of the agiary," said Dalal. "In other places the panthakis are offered a salary, accommodation, medical and educational benefits. In this area of Bombay the *panthaks* are given on bargain," with the panthaki paying the trustees of the agiaries a fixed sum of money, and maintaining the agiary only from the income generated through the sale of sandalwood, *chamach* offerings, *rojgar* ceremonies and the donations of devotees.

"(Will the trustees) sell the property

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without determining the place for shifting the *Atash*? Would they build new structures for the agiary and the panthaki?...Have the present trustees a moral right to sell this property and to shift the *Atash*?" asked Dalal. While the trustees, Rustomji Papa and Ms Perinbanu Papa who reside in Bandra, refused to discuss the issue for publication in *Parsiiana*, Dalal said that three agiaries were approached for the temporary transfer of the *Atash*. But negotiations with the Tata Agiary in Bandra, the Wadia Agiary in Jogeshwari Baug and the agiary at Godrej Nagar in Vikhroli have proved unsuccessful, mainly because the trustees have not stipulated the duration of this temporary transfer, when they will remove the *Atash*, or what alternative arrangements they propose to make for the permanent housing of the *Atash*.

"I am the fourth generation of Katrak here," said Katrak, who took over as panthaki only after his father's death a year ago, although he has been working at the agiary since he became a *Navar* in 1935. "There must be no older panthaki in the whole of India," he declares with pride. Recalling the days when the agiary was flourishing, he said, "Even in my father's time we used to keep 20-25 tables of the *muktad* here....If I have kept this agiary it is only because of my father's wish—never sell off this agiary, he said to me."

Built in 1848 by Sheth Mancherji Kharshedji Langrana in memory of his son Kaikhushru, the agiary is owned and managed by a trust registered in the Directory of Public Trusts (1979) as the Pestonji Nusserwanji Godiwalla Agiary Trust, with a corpus of Rs 63,836, and an annual income of Rs 5,570. The dilapidation of the agiary 40 years later caused the municipality to issue orders for the demolition of the building. It was Pestonji Nusserwanji Godiwalla, maternal grandfather of the present trustees, who financed the reconstruction of the agiary, and the *Atash* was reconsecrated after eight years. The agiary has also been known since as the Godiwalla Agiary.

"I will never leave the agiary unless they sell to the Parsi Punchayet," Katrak continues, "I have no desire to earn anything. This profession is such that as long as your hands and legs work it is alright, after that you have nothing. It's a business without profit, as they say."

"I am the fourth generation of Katrak here... There must be no older panthaki in the whole of India."



Noted lawyer and former BPP trustee Shrivastav R. Vakil wrote in to the *Jame* on February 5 saying, "The Langrana Agiary is practically deserted and hardly anyone attends for worship...I have at least on three occasions found the same locked."

To determine whether the Langrana Agiary still plays a meaningful and worthwhile role in the religious life of Zoroastrians in this vicinity, the ZCDI has undertaken a comparative survey of three agiaries: Godavara Agiary, Vacha Agiary and Langrana Agiary, which are all smaller than the flourishing Banaji or Dadysett agiaries nearby. The number of persons visiting these agiaries as well as the number of religious ceremonies performed everyday was recorded by independent surveyors during a period extending over a month. While the number of religious ceremonies have yet to be tabulated, the study revealed that an average of 16.2 devotees visited the Langrana Agiary daily while the Godavara and Vacha agiaries recorded an average of 14 and 89 devotees per day.

Dalal commented that this poor attendance was "because there is no de-

cent atmosphere. Make the agiary a place of religious activities like lectures that would attract people. And one mobed is not enough to perform all the ceremonies—a minimum of two mobeds is necessary."

Vakil's solution to the problem was that the *Atash* could be temporarily removed to the Cama Baug Agiary or permanently housed at the Tata Housing Colony in Parel "where there is a site for a fire temple and the inhabitants of the colony will have easy access to this fire temple." He also added, "If the agiary premises are sold with vacant possession, a substantial amount could be realized from the income whereof the fire temple could be maintained... No useful purpose will be served by asking philanthropists to contribute their hard-earned wealth for maintenance of this Fire Temple when income can be generated if the Trustees are a bit imaginative and dynamic."

Similarly, the Widows Chawl at Mazagaon, owned and managed by the Godiwalla Trust, which houses only five widows at a nominal rent could, Vakil noted, "be pulled down and a multi-storeyed structure put up for middle-class Parsis with the provision that the widows will be accommodated. This will bring in a substantial income to the Trust."

On the other hand, lawyer Ardesher Katrak wrote in the *Jame*, February 17 1983, "I also know as to how the last panthaki had tried his utmost to keep the Holy Fire burning spending from his own pocket, and it is indeed a shame to suggest to change the place of worship from one place to another simply with a view to make mundane profit out of the same."

The ZCDI which sparked off the controversy, describes its interest in this case as "purely professional" and an offshoot of their recent study and tabulation of Zoroastrian trusts. "I took up the Langrana Agiary case because we want to revitalize our trust funds," said Dalal. "Our effort is in that direction."

"We are neither adamant that (the agiary) should be preserved nor adamant that it should be sold off," notes *Astavani*, the ZCDI's newsletter. "If it is ultimately decided by due process that the property should be disposed off, the consecrated fire should be treated with customary honour and procedure, and proceeds of the disposal (all of them) used for some good of the community."

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Tasteful Living

Bhicoo J. Manekshaw

Reminiscing on the life and mores of a bygone generation, Bhicoo J. Manekshaw, catering consultant to the Hotel Corporation of India and a holder of a certificate in catering from the prestigious Cordon Bleu Institute, writes about her mother who lived in an era of graciousness. She also sends in recipes of some of her family's favourite dishes.

From the quiet gaslit streets, the clapping of horse carriages, and gentle living, to harsh electricity, speeding motor cars, polluted air and noise — she accepted it all. She was an extremely staunch Parsi with a very strict upbringing, yet she took in her stride all the aspects of modern life.

All our traditions were strictly practised but never made a burden for the younger generation. I will never forget her first visit to my home after my marriage. I had a dinner party in Poona. My cook bought roosters (forbidden eating for Parsis as it hails the dawn). I did not know what to do as Koregaon Park was far away from the bazaar and in those days the cook had to cycle there early in the morning to buy everything. There were no broilers in those days. She came into the kitchen and advised the cook to cut the roosters before they croaked!

On another occasion, when my niece decided to marry out of the community, I promised my sister-in-law to break the news to her. At dinner that night when there was a lull in the conversation I said, "Honey is going to marry Ravi." There was dead silence on the table. Then she said, "*Parsi na chokra ne kevo ke nak kapi ne tokree ma nakhe.*" (Tell Parsi boys to cut off their noses and throw them in the waste-paper basket). Even when my daughter decided to marry out of the community she had no objection and telegraphed her blessings to them. She gave her consent freely as she realized that the happiness of her loved ones was more important than old-fashioned conventions.

It was strange living in an era which had this wonderful combination of east

and west. Nothing was looked down upon except untruth, sloth and dishonesty which were always but always strongly censured.

Cooking, that is everyday cooking, was not her forte, yet no one could make tomato and mango chutney like she did. Friends would come from far and wide just to taste her Willingdon Chicken. I once made it for my son-in-



This was an era with a wonderful combination of east and west.

law and the verdict was: "Sorry, Bhicoo, but it is not as good as Mamai's." Her strawberry jam, marmalade and raspberry jelly were superlative. She censured me strongly once for an article I had written on the Parsis some time ago. I was indignantly asked, "With *dhansak* and *kababs*, where was the *dodhi ma gosht* (white pumpkin cooked with meat), and *methianoo achar* (a special mango pickle with a strong flavour of fenugreek)?" I could not make her understand that to have two meat dishes at one meal was more than enough in this day and age.

We had a delightful Goan cook called John. His speciality was pickled cold hump. Saturdays were always racing days in the winter and usually there would be juicy crumbed oysters with fried bacon, tabasco sauce and thin rolls of brown bread and butter as accompaniments followed by the family's favourite chicken curry and rice. Sunday lunches were always at my paternal grandparents' home where my aunts would cook the most superlative *papeta ma marghee*. No other Parsi house has cooked that dish as it was made then. I consider it one of the best ways of serving chicken and my first demonstration at the Cordon Bleu was of this chicken dish.

John used to make a soup for us children. It was always the same. We never tired of it. It was called 'Goucho' soup by my elder brother. It was cooked with pieces of mutton, a bit of ginger, potatoes, carrots, a few black peppercorns, a few French beans and a bit of celery. My brother had seen a picture called 'Goucho'. The meat pieces were 'Goucho' and the rest was the 'enemy'. The vegetables were eaten first and only when the enemy was destroyed, was the meat consumed. The family's *badam pastani* curry is beyond an honest man's pocket today, especially with the prices as they are. The best French fried potatoes were made by John under my father's instructions. Those were the days of Goan and Magh cooks when every meal was like poetry ...

BADAM PASTANI CURRY

This curry was made on very special occasions.

Ingredients

2 large 'churidar' chickens, jointed and parboiled with a sliced onion, 1" piece of ginger, a few black peppercorns, 1 bay leaf and a little salt. Milk of one large coconut (about 3 cups), 30 gm tamarind soaked in 1 cup of hot water, 2 large finely sliced onions, 5-6 large potatoes, 40 gm ghee.

Masalo (finely ground)

¼ kg blanched almonds, 100 gm pistachio, 2 tablespoons peeled roasted gram, 2 tablespoons each of coriander seeds and poppy seeds, ½ tablespoon cumin seeds, 6-10 Goa chillies, 1 whole large garlic, 1½" piece ginger, 1 finely grated coconut, 1 large onion, dry roasted, then peeled and chopped, freshly pounded ½" cinnamon piece, 4-6 cloves, and 5-6 peeled cardamoms; 1 teaspoon turmeric powder.

Method

Keep the broth from the boiled chicken. Heat ghee, add sliced onions and brown well on a medium fire. (A fast fire will cause the onions to remain leathery). Add 2 tablespoons of hot water and cook till the water has dried and the onions are a mash. Add the ground masalo and fry well, but not for too long; (the ghee should bubble up from the masalo). Now add the peeled and quartered potatoes and after about 5 minutes add the chicken, broth, coconut milk and salt to taste. Simmer on a low fire till the chicken and the potatoes are done. Add the tamarind water, strained. Simmer for about 5 minutes and remove from fire. Serve with rice (jeera sai rice is the best with this curry), and plain papads fried. Serves eight to ten.

Note

If you soak the chillies for about half an hour in hot water they will be easier to grind.

BHOOJELO MACHI NO SAS

Ingredients

2 pomfrets, filleted or sliced with bone, 2 tablespoons ghee, 2 large finely minced onions, ½ cup thick coconut milk, 4 eggs, separated, ½ cup vinegar, salt.

Masalo

4 Goa chillies, 1½ teaspoons cumin seeds, 2 teaspoons coriander seeds, 6 cloves garlic.

Method

The masalo must be finely ground, not too wet and firm enough to roll into a ball and fry without breaking. Heat

ghee and fry onions till a golden brown, remove from ghee and keep aside. Fry the masala ball well in the same ghee and drain the ghee which should be red in colour, into another bowl. Now break the ball of masala, add fried onions, coconut milk, salt and fish. Simmer till the fish is just done. Remove from fire. Beat the egg yolks and whites separately. The whites must be stiff. Mix them together and add to vinegar. Fold into sas without breaking the fish. Pour into an oven-proof dish, pour the red ghee over the sas and bake in a medium oven for about 10-15 minutes. When ready garnish with coriander leaves. Serves four.

Note

If desired one need not bake this sas but thicken it over the fire carefully, making sure it does not curdle. You can make it more decorative by keeping some of the beaten eggs aside before mixing it with vinegar, spreading it over the top of the dish, sprinkling the ghee and then baking it.

PAPETA MA MURGEE

Ingredients

1 kg chicken (preferably a country chicken), 7 cloves garlic, 1½" piece ginger, 4 large peeled potatoes cut into half lengthwise, 6 green chillies, 1 teaspoon turmeric powder, salt, 2 tablespoons ghee.

Method

Joint the chicken. Grind ginger, garlic and 2 green chillies together. Mix the ground masalo and turmeric then rub it on the chicken. Heat ghee in a large shallow pan and add the chicken. Saute for 3-5 minutes. Add about ½ cup water and simmer, covered with lid. Pour a little water on the lid, cook till

the water evaporates in the pan, then add the water from the lid. Continue to do this until the chicken is half done, then add the potatoes and the remaining green chillies, slit, with about ½ cup water and salt to taste. Cover, with water on the lid and finish cooking, until the chicken and potatoes are done. The gravy in the dish should be thick and not watery. Serve with soft *ghaune rolli* or *chokha ne rolli*.

GOUCHO SOUP

This is a nourishing soup and one can make a meal of it.

Ingredients

½ kg mutton (neck) cut into pieces with the bones, 1" piece ginger, 4-6 black peppercorns, 2 large potatoes, cubed, 2 medium sized carrots, cubed, 1 large onion, chopped, 50 gm french beans, sliced finely, 50 gm shelled green peas, 1 stick celery, chopped.

Method

Always wash meat before it is cut, so as not to lose the protein-filled fluid when cut. This fluid must be added to the dish. Cut meat, place in a pan, add sliced ginger and black peppercorns. Cover with 5 cups of water, put on the fire and bring to the boil. Skim and then simmer, skimming all the time. When the meat is ¾ done add all the vegetables. Cook till the vegetables are just done and the meat is tender. Remove the bones and serve the soup with all the vegetables and meat.

WILLINGDON CHICKEN

Ingredients

1 chicken, boiled with 1 onion, 1 stalk of celery, 1" piece of ginger, 1 small stick of cinnamon, 2 cloves, 2 cardamoms, and a pinch of salt. 6 slices



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bacon, fried, 3 tablespoons butter, ½
cup flour, 2 cups flavoured milk, 1 cup
chicken stock from boiled chicken, 2
eggs, 3 tablespoons grated cheese, 1
cup sliced mushrooms.

Method

Remove boiled chicken from stock.
Strain stock and keep 1 cup aside. Slice
the breast of chicken lengthways, and
rearrange with slices of bacon between
the chicken slices. Secure with
toothpicks. In a pan large enough to
make the sauce, melt butter, add flour,
mix well and remove from fire. Then
gradually add strained flavoured hot
milk, mixing well all the time. When no
lumps remain, add the stock. Don't
panic if there are lumps — strain the
lot and press down with a wooden
spoon. Bring the mixture to the boil,
stirring all the time. Remove from fire
and add grated cheese, leaving one
tablespoon aside. Beat the eggs and
gradually add to the sauce. The sauce
must be thick. Add mushrooms and
mix well, then add salt, pepper and a
pinch of mustard. Place chicken on an
ovenproof platter, spoon the sauce
over it, completely covering the
chicken, sprinkle with rest of cheese
and bake in a medium oven till nicely
browned. Remove the toothpicks,
serve and carve on the table. Serve with
roast potatoes and buttered garden
vegetables. Serves four.

MANGO CHUTNEY

Ingredients

50 large half-ripe mangoes, 500 gm
ginger — peeled and finely sliced, 6½
kg sugar, 6 tablespoons chilli powder,
400 gm sultanas, 1½ tablespoons salt,
3-3½ pints vinegar (preferably *gam no
surko* or malt vinegar), 300 gm garlic
ground in a little vinegar.

Method

Peel and grate mangoes. Mix with salt
and cook with 2½ pints of vinegar in a
large pan on a slow fire. When
mangoes are completely soft add
sugar, chilli powder, ginger and garlic.
Cook slowly, stirring constantly, till
the mixture thickens a little. Remove
from fire and add the sultanas washed
in a little vinegar. Cook for about 15
minutes more. Cool and store.

Note

If desired add thin needle shreds of
orange peel (fresh). Add more vinegar
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cook to the consistency of jam. This
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The Acceptance and non-Acceptance of Joseph Peterson

While the Zoroastrians in the west are attempting to come to terms with the issues of conversion and acceptance, in the east opposition to the navjote of 27-year-old American engineer Joseph Peterson is increasing.

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet passed a resolution on June 14 stating that "the Board of Trustees... view with disfavour the Navjote Ceremony recently performed in New York on March 5, 1983 of one Joseph Peterson."

"Needless to say that Joseph Peterson and persons in similar situations whose navjotes are so performed, will not be entitled to the benefits of the Trusts Funds and/or Religious Institutions under the control of the Trustees."

The BPP resolution came in the wake of public outcry against the navjote. Three Bombay High Priests, Hormazdyar K. Mirza, Kaikhusroo M. JamaspAsa and Firoze M. Kotwal in a joint statement denounced the navjote as a "farcical rite... a flippant dramatic action on the part of Mr. Peterson, the irresponsible performers at the initiation and their advocates."

In another dramatic development, twelve priests residing in the north-eastern states of America stated they would not "participate and/or associate themselves in the performance of any Zoroastrian ceremony... either individually or jointly with" the priests, Dr Kersi Antia and Noshirwan Hormazdiyar who performed Peterson's navjote. "These two individuals... have taken the law into their own hands and hurt our feelings, and those of a very large number of people practising our ancient religion."

The orthodox Council of Vigilant Parsis (COVP) organized a public meeting on June 10 at the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute where speaker after speaker condemned the navjote and the persons behind it especially the Zoroastrians from Iran settled in North America. The COVP also attacked the BPP for keeping silent on

the navjote.

BPP Chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla criticized the navjote on several occasions in Bombay and elsewhere. In an interview with the fortnightly *Bombay* magazine, Golwalla was quoted as saying "If Peterson were to enter an Atash-Behram in Bombay, we would drive him out. If someone were to perform a navjote ceremony on a non-Parsi here I am sure that city Parsis would resort to violence. The Bombay Parsi community will never split up."

Khojeste Mistree, founder of Zoroastrian Studies, author and lecturer, was quoted in an article in *India Today* to have said "The only solution is for a split in the community. Let those who advocate these reforms set up their own temple and go their own way." He is reported to have also quoted some individuals as saying that Peterson and the priests who had performed the ceremony would be "bashed up" if they attempted to come to Bombay and enter the fire temples.

The Zoroastrian Studies newsletter editorial for May further stated: "What indeed do these radical priests expect, except the wrath of the community, if, for ill-gotten fame or reasons of expediency, they are attempting to bulldoze in a reform without the overall consensus of the community."

As Peterson is a Zoroastrian but not a Parsi—he is not born of a Parsi father—he is not entitled as the law stands today to enter a fire temple or avail of trust benefits that have been specified for use by Parsi Zoroastrians.

The orthodox Gujarati daily, the *Jam-e-Jamshed* which editorially denounced the navjote asked, "Is not Kersi Antia and his mob taking on the role of being self-appointed mullahs, taking the law into their own hands?"

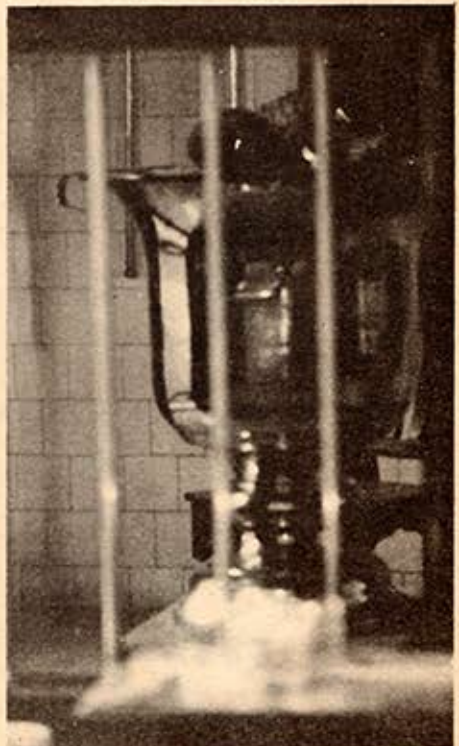
Antia's reply to the *Jame* attack, which the paper surprisingly published, noted, "Your editorial denouncing this navjote... is in essence a denunciation of an irreversible survival attempt by a growing number of Zoroastrians here who have done a lot of thinking and reading on this subject long before the

Peterson Navjote. This movement is led, not by priests but by the laity who recommended at the Fourth North American Symposium that if mobeds will not go along with them, then laymen can perform their duty as Justices of Peace."

"New challenges are rising for the Zoroastrians not only in India but in other countries and you cannot meet them by sticking to old customs and practices."

Perhaps the only voices of moderation in Bombay came from *The Bombay Samachar*, the liberal Gujarati daily which noted, "Joseph Peterson (and) the Mobed(s) who performed this navjote have not done anything wrong, according to their convictions. They have simply followed the mandate of Lord Zarathushtra;" and *The Zoroastrian* published by members of the Committee for Electoral Rights (CER) whose editorial stated, "The rift is inevitable... we will have to accept with grace (the) fundamental differences between the orthodox and the reformists, especially the extremes of both. There is no other alternative."

A week later in the *Samachar* noted lawyer and former BPP trustee Shiavax Vakil referring to the navjote as the "tip of the iceberg... the harbinger of what is to follow in the future," noted "If we do not adapt ourselves to the times and unite



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together to bring about certain much needed reforms which are long overdue, we shall be destroyed."

Bergis Desai, a young lawyer and former journalist who writes regularly in the *Samachar* went one step further and hailed the navjote noting that "Joseph Peterson may have done more for Zoroastrianism in the 20th century than a 1,00,000 Parsis."

From the west, Rohinton M. Rivetna, president of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago whose high priest, Kersi Antia was one of the mobeds who performed Peterson's

North America take unilateral action, by their own initiative, that is their responsibility. Such irresponsible actions of isolated individuals need not be misconstrued as the sentiments of the entire North American community."

The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario whose constitution and by-laws define a Zoroastrian as "a person who is a follower of the religion as propounded by the Prophet Zoroaster and who has been initiated into the Zoroastrian faith" held a symposium on May 1 to discuss 'Non-Zoroastrians in Zoroastrian Precepts: Do they have a place?'

The consensus of the panel was that "the currently prevailing practice of not accepting non-Zoroastrians into the faith is a social, and not a religious barrier" and that "to us, and to our children born and growing in North America, being Parsee will be less meaningful than being Zoroastrians. The question of acceptance should, therefore, be viewed in terms of Zoroastrians and not Parsees."

The consensus of the members present indicated that "change is inevitable" and "should perhaps be brought about in phases..."

"Changing a tradition established over 1,300 years and more should be so done that the majority of the community members, wherever they may be, do not feel that their wishes have been ignored."

The main forum for and against conversion/acceptance has been *Gavashni*, the quarterly journal of the Quebec association edited by Dr Jehan Bagli. In the June 1983 issue Bagli noted "the use of the term 'conversion' had muddled the issue for the past eight decades. It has alienated the feelings of some, it has caused others to misconstrue and confuse the issue. The term has incredible emotive potential to cause people to lose sight of the real objective, namely 'the Question of Formal Acceptance'."

But while North America debates acceptance as well as the norms to govern it, in Bombay and most parts of India, the door has been shut on even the subject of conversion, not to mention acceptance.

Unless a dialogue is started and a public forum provided for intelligent discussion on the issue, the navjote of Joseph Peterson will continue to confuse, irritate and upset a large section of the community.

"The only solution is for a split in the community. Let those who advocate these reforms set up their own temple and go their own way."

navjote, presented a letter to the association's monthly general body meeting on April 10 supporting Antia and the ZAC priests. "Ninety percent of the people present...spontaneously signed" the letter observed Rivetna.

The letter noted: "(The priests) have over the years given freely of their time and energies whenever called upon to perform ceremonies and to provide religious education. Moreover, they have always turned over all remunerations to charity...(Antia's) decision (to perform the navjote) was not a flippant publicity stunt, but a decision arrived at after deep thought, intense deliberations and a careful review of the circumstances...It was based on a study of religious literature...and his own inner convictions...In an effort to keep ZAC out of this controversy, Dr Antia first handed in his resignation which was however not accepted by the Board of Directors."

Dolly Dastoor, president of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec which was given the function of "surveying the opinion of Zoroastrians on the North American continent" on conversion, acceptance and related subjects, addressed a letter to the press "to allay premature fears of your readers" and to invite readers' comments. "We are researching, trying to learn, whereby we can evolve a democratic opinion. If in the meantime, some individual or individuals in

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CONVERSION

A Mandate for Disunity

Khojeste Mistree



During the Fourth North American Zoroastrian Congress, all the invited speakers on this subject, without exception, offered a point of view in favour of conversion reflecting a lack of objective and detailed knowledge of the issue. In my comments I shall seek, therefore, to redress this imbalance so that Zoroastrians in North America may have the opportunity to consider another aspect of the question, in order to achieve a clear and balanced understanding of conversion and its potential effects.

In considering the advantages and problems of conversion, it is necessary first to establish basic questions which must remain in one's mind throughout the discussion of the issue: What is conversion? Will conversion cause a permanent schism within the community? What would happen to the Zoroastrian religion and community in the long term, if conversion were to be permitted? If it is established that Zoroastrianism is not a religion which has generally proselytized, is there substantial demand amongst the majority of Zoroastrians to alter their faith in this basic way? Does the Zoroastrian community possess the resources—including schools of religious instruction, the priests, the lay teachers of religion, universally accepted textbooks, committees competent to decide on the merits and needs of converts, and other allied facilities—to implement conversion in an intelligent and consistent manner?

Conversion in general and accepted usage means that a person is allowed to embrace a faith other than his own, and is accepted into the community of that faith according to its laws and rituals as a *full* member of the fold. In Zoroastrianism, this would mean allowing any adult to exercise this choice and to be initiated into the faith, whilst in the case of a child, the choice would have to be made by the parents for the navjote ceremony to be duly

performed. (In all cases, it is emphasized that conversion would apply equally to both sexes). Conversion to Zoroastrianism therefore means that the convert would participate actively in the religious life of the community which, in turn, would be required to accept the new initiate wholeheartedly. The latter factor is particularly crucial in order for the act of conversion to be meaningful within the Zoroastrian context.

A number game

The main argument in favour of conversion seems to be one founded upon a fear of the rapid diminution of our numbers, and therefore the dwindling of our race. In order to understand the word 'race', it is important to consider its definition so that it may be used correctly in reference to the issue of conversion. According to the Webster Dictionary, 'race' is defined as "...a tribe, people or nation belonging to the same

Today the issue of conversion looms large in the minds of many Zoroastrians, and understandably so. It is an emotive issue that has already provoked great controversy and, therefore, must be treated with clarity and foresight based upon scholarship and understanding. If a solution is to be found which is acceptable, it must be within the spirit and letter of the Zoroastrian tradition. The question of conversion clearly involves complex issues. Any solution in favour of it will bring in its wake a train of irreversible effects. An answer to a question of such importance, therefore, must be sought from a group of international experts drawn from the fields of Iranian studies, theology, sociology, anthropology and other disciplines, rather than by uninformed if well-intentioned amateurs. Thereafter, the whole community, by way of a substantial majority, should be asked to decide about the course of action to be taken.

Do we want a generation of neo-Zoroastrians who are not accepted by the majority of the community because they are not born of Iranian lineage?

stock unified by community of interests, habits or characteristics... that are transmissible by descent and sufficient to characterize it as a distinct human type." Therefore if it is the race, and through that the religion, that we wish to safeguard and increase, then conversion of people of other ethnic backgrounds is *not* the answer. To increase the race, that is the number of Parsi and Irani Zoroastrians, we need to encourage more of our youngsters to marry within the fold and thereafter give them the facilities

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and economic incentives to raise more children. Through these means, over a generation, the number of Parsi and Irani Zoroastrians would undoubtedly increase. However, many of the pro-conversion lobbyists seem to argue this issue in a rather inconsistent way. They want conversion to be permitted in order to stem the decline of a dying race and thereafter the religion, yet they claim that the race should not determine the criteria for entry into the religion which they believe is universal. Why then, has the religion remained inseparable and in fact confined to a single ethnic family for thousands of years?

I sincerely believe that the "number game" of a dying race is of an emotive nature and should not be the major criterion upon which the issue of conversion should be decided. Our efforts should be directed first towards preserving the quality of Zoroastrian community life rather than relying upon quantity as a convenient palliative. I do not see the point of increasing our numbers with uninformed "paper Zoroastrians," when the present educational, priestly and institutional resources of the religion are very weak, and even these are not easily available to those born into the fold. An increase in non-ethnic numbers at this stage, given the unsatisfactory facilities we possess, does not promise to solve the problems of our religion, nor can it be argued that conversion will improve

Beware, lest the future generation of Zoroastrians castigates the present one for bungling such a major issue.

the quality of its adherents in any way. Common sense and prudent business practice would indicate that a programme of expansion should be undertaken only when one's own business is in sound order. I do not believe that our house—as a religious community—here or elsewhere in the world, is in order, and hence I would urge you to exercise caution in opting so for the radical change as advocated by the partisans of conversion.

Second-class neo-Zoroastrians

Inter-marriage appears to be another

factor which makes the conversion issue a poignant one. In the world we live in, it is inevitable that a certain percentage of our co-religionists will choose to marry out of the community. However, it does strike me as being short-sighted and unjustifiably selfish that some of those who marry out of the faith should foist upon the community, for their sake and their children's, the easy, automatic expedient of conversion. Why should the community change its laws and traditions to suit the personal interests of a vociferous minority? Furthermore, if we allowed this minority opinion to prevail, would we not be opening the door of inter-marriage even wider, by giving license to many more of our younger generation to marry out of the faith? Our identity and community traditions need to be safeguarded and indeed reinforced through a sense of strong community feeling founded upon a better system of religious education. Cultural cross-breeding through inter-marriage seems an unlikely means to accomplish these goals. Do we want a generation of neo-Zoroastrians who are not accepted by the majority of the community because they are not born of Iranian lineage? I believe that we should not, for purposes of expediency or convenience, traumatize a future generation of youngsters by introducing a kind of second-class Zoroastrian; that is, one considered a Zoroastrian in North America, but forbidden to take part in all the major religious rites or to enjoy the privileges of being Zoroastrian in another area of the world. For instance, such a convert would be unable to enter our sacred places, or to witness the high inner rituals of the Zoroastrian faith in the very countries which have, for centuries, been the bastion of the religion. They would also be barred from becoming priests as would their descendants. Will not this inevitable ostracism result in the unpleasant anomaly of one being considered a Zoroastrian in one place, but stigmatized as a second-class neo-Zoroastrian in another?

Renegade Priests

Sadly, renegade priests have exacerbated this situation by performing the sacred navjote ceremony for non-Iranian children and adults. By taking the law into their own hands and by breaking millennia of tradition, they do not seem to realize, or in some cases

care, as to the long-term implications of their action. In no way can they be furthering the ideal of a united Zoroastrian community when, at the end of the day, such neo-Zoroastrians will not in a total sense be accepted by the majority of the Parsi as well as Irani Zoroastrians anywhere in the world. Is it fair, then, to initiate the process of conversion if full acceptance and admission to the rites and rituals of the religion is denied to the convert? Instead, would it not be preferable for a non-Iranian with leanings towards Zoroastrianism to follow the teachings of the faith in a meaningful *personal* way? Indeed, certain individuals follow this path and may be contributing to the faith in ways which have not been seen before in history,

The need of the hour is for those already born into the fold to become, as it were, "born again" Zoroastrians.

and which may in the future emerge as the genuine and powerful innovation in Zoroastrianism of this era. Such devoted people would scarcely wish to insist upon any ritual and communal initiation which may result in the division and weakening of the faith, culture and tradition they so cherish! Or are we going to witness a proliferation of eclectic quasi-Zoroastrian cults and associations of a dubious nature in North America?

Zoroastrians born again

Furthermore, I believe, for conversion to be effective, there must exist the necessary infrastructure by way of teachers, books, priests, places of worship, community centres and other ancillary facilities to cope with such a change. If currently these facilities do not exist, then what additional benefits are we giving the adult or child to become a non-ethnic Zoroastrian within the North American context? It would seem that the act of conversion is a hollow, meaningless exercise, perpetuated by non-conformist priests upon confused members of a gullible laity. Surely the need of the hour is for those already born into the fold to become, as it were, "born again" Zoroastrians through the study and practise of our traditions, than for the



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doors to be opened to "selective acceptance" as some call it.

Historically, our religion appears to have been strongly and exclusively linked to the cultural milieu of those closely connected to pre-Islamic Iran. Perhaps because the living practices of the religion as experienced through the inner and outer rituals may not be assimilable or congenial to those whose heritage lies outside the complex framework of a pre-Islamic Iranian cultural and spiritual tradition. I think this deserves careful pondering as it seems to be more than a mere coincidence of history. Historical evidence in support of conversion seems slender at the best of times and therefore a very shaky historical case emerges. Documentation on conversion is sparse, and yet exception is used by some to prove the rule.

I strongly believe that for conversion to be substantial, psychological and spiritual sustenance must be provided to those initiated into the faith. The oral tradition helps those who have an Iranian ethnic background to follow some of the basic principles of the faith. What essential facilities can we offer potential neo-Zoroastrians in North America with no cultural or historical connection in the traditions of the faith? Beware, lest the future generation of Zoroastrians castigates the present one for bungling such a major issue by succumbing to the blandishments of a minority who demand ill-founded and untimely change.

Salvation by scholars

If some Zoroastrians in North America wish to go their own isolated way by being religiously independent from the majority who live in India and Iran, then I think very important changes need to be implemented into the religious fabric of this community. A strongly supported and democratically elected federated leadership of respected elders, professionals, priests and experts in the fields of religion and sociology, needs to emerge first, in order to guide and direct the religious and socio-economic activities and institutions of the Zoroastrian community here. This leadership should work to develop the necessary infrastructure of a Zoroastrian community, with all the various institutions that other older Zoroastrian settlements have enjoyed: houses of worship, priestly and lay academics, formulated programmes of religious

education, community benevolent funds, endowed chairs at recognized institutions of higher learning, scholarships for needy students, and organized support for those active in community life. Above all, I believe that it is vital to encourage and fund a new cadre of scholars, both Zoroastrian and those outside the faith but sympathetic to it, so that those trained experts may help to seek within the sources of tradition, solutions pertaining to the specific needs of Zoroastrianism in North America. By the grace of Ahura Mazda, the financial resources are there for this dream to be realized; however, the will to give and make the due sacrifice is lacking on the part of Zoroastrians today. Change for the sake of change strikes me as being meaningless and indeed harmful, if the more important programmes to sustain the desired change are not implemented first. In other words, a lot more homework needs to be done before the North American community can make an informed decision on this issue; and hence an "aye" on conversion as things stand, may not be the best answer to the hurriedly formulated Montreal mandate.

The "number game" of a dying race... should not be the major criterion upon which the issue of conversion should be decided.

Nevertheless, in Montreal one very important suggestion was made, which was for a team of experts to examine and then prepare a well-researched report on the pros and cons of conversion. Some money was also collected for this purpose with a view that the findings would be made available in time for the next Congress. I strongly believe that a professional study should be encouraged and undertaken. Till then, I think that we should remain united as one world body and address our thoughts and efforts towards spearheading a Zoroastrian re-awakening within ourselves, so that those already born into the fold may know, through personal experience founded on knowledge, the subtleties of the "good religion" as practised by our illustrious forefathers.

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DO THEY HAVE A PLACE?

The Religious Sub-Committee of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario arranged for members of the community to participate in a symposium at the Darbe Meher on May 1, 1983, to discuss the question raised at the Fourth North American Zoroastrian Congress, namely, 'Non-Zoroastrians in Zoroastrian Precepts: Do they have a place?'

The following members of the community, representing a wide cross-section and divergent viewpoints, formed the panel: Homi Homji, Yezdi Antia, Neville Austin, Bapai Batliwala, Jaloo Cooper, Jamshed Mawalwala, Putli Mirza, Gustad Panthaki and Byram Parsi.

The symposium commenced with an invocation by Yezdi Antia. Minoo Treasurywala, acting as the moderator, invited each member of the panel to give an expose on the subject. The following briefly summarizes the salient features put forth by the members.

- * The currently prevailing practice of not accepting non-Zoroastrians into the faith is a social, and not a religious, barrier.

- * One should differentiate between conversion and acceptance: conversion has a connotation that implies some force to change one's religious beliefs; acceptance of a faith suggests a voluntary action on the part of an informed individual. Zoroastrians should consider acceptance of the faith by others if it is voluntary and sincere on the part of an individual and not coercion into conversion.

- * Should we be concerned about our dwindling numbers? Should we not be more concerned with quality, or should we be concerned about both, equally.

- * In the present context of sociological changes, should we still continue to accept into the faith a child of a Zoroastrian father and a non-

Zoroastrian mother and discriminate by restricting if the mother is a Zoroastrian and the father is non-Zoroastrian.

- * The very navjote ceremony is not a conversion but an acceptance of one into the Zoroastrian faith.

- * Rituals are important in understanding and practising the Zoroastrian religion, but is ritual not subsidiary to the religious philosophy?

- * We should consider the question of acceptance in the context of North America only.

- * Coming from different parts of the world, should we still be thinking in terms of our identities as Parsees rather than as Zoroastrians? Unfortunately, if we continue in North America to preserve our identities as Parsees, we will hinder the progress of assimilating with Zoroastrians from Iran. In the context of living in Canada, we should think in terms of our identities as Zoroastrians. To us, and to our children born and growing in North America, being Parsees will be less meaningful than being Zoroastrians. The question of acceptance should, therefore, be viewed in terms of Zoroastrians and not as Parsees.

- * When we call ourselves 'Parsees' we, in fact, imply a social structure. When we call ourselves 'Zoroastrians' we indicate a following of the Mazdayasni Zarthoshti religion. The confusion arises when we view these two terms as compatible and co-terminus. They are not so. All Parsees may be Zoroastrians but all Zoroastrians are not Parsees, e.g. Iranian Zoroastrians.

- * In our daily prayers we recite "May the knowledge, extent and fame of the Commandments of the excellent Mazda worshipping religion ever increase over the world, over all its seven regions," and also "this knowledge vouchsafe unto me that I may spread thy faith."

- * All through history, ever since the holy prophet refined and purified Mazdayasni worship as a distinct monotheistic precept, we have accepted in our religion non-Zoroastrians through conquest, missionary preachers, social and economic incentives, proclamations, marriages and sometimes by force or favour or rewards and punishments.

- * Zoroastrians in Iran have been accepting converts for several centuries.

- * Some of us who have not yet emotionally adjusted to the changed environment of life in North America, are experiencing grief at having had to leave our lands of birth. Under these circumstances, we want to cling on to the traditional, and do not want to recognize and accept change.

- * Issues regarding acceptance of non-Zoroastrians into the faith do not exist to the magnitude as made out by some. There are no line-ups of non-Zoroastrians waiting to be converted.

- * Life is based on *Asha*, which is Order on the physical level, and Truth on the psychological level and the manifestation of these two is Righteousness on the spiritual level. To maintain *Asha* there are rules and regulations. If we deviate from *Asha*, there are consequences. Face your conscience honestly—honesty being the keyword, and decide the issue.

- * Children of non-Zoroastrian mothers and Zoroastrian fathers have no problem but no statistics are available as to how many non-Zoroastrian fathers are going to permit their children to grow up in the mother's Zoroastrian faith.

- * Getting someone initiated into the faith means taking moral and spiritual responsibility for that person. We need to develop a religious infrastructure by providing a new type of priesthood, house of worship, places of learning, etc. to make conversion meaningful.

The currently prevailing practice of not accepting non-Zoroastrians into the faith is a social and not a religious barrier.



Change is inevitable—historically we have changed our traditions to suit the environment and sociological changes.

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* Let us set our priorities straight: first awaken and enlighten Zoroastrians who are asleep; expose the younger generation to the daily Zoroastrian lifestyle and all facets of our religion through educational plans, provide facilities for their activities, give them moral and financial support in our individual capacities, as well as through our organizations. If we all unite and honestly endeavour to do this, we will all be in the midst of a marvellous miracle—our youngsters will marry within the community and the march to *Frasha Kereti* will be a very pleasant one.

* Historically, changes in our traditional rituals and practices have been made from dynasty to dynasty in Iran.

* Our children inherit the background of the parental beliefs. Let us face up to the issue—our children in this day and age, and in the sociological environment in which they grow, will exercise their freedom and marry out of the community. If both the parents agree (where one is a non-Zoroastrian) that the child be brought up in the Zoroastrian faith, the community should accept and welcome this.

* The Zoroastrian religion was given by

Ahura Mazda for all mankind. We have no authority to withhold it from anyone who wants to accept it and live by the Zoroastrian religion.

* We are human beings first and Zoroastrians second. As human beings, let us treat one another without discrimination and show others how to live by the golden rules of *Asha*

* Persons who quote from our scriptures

Should we still be thinking in terms of our identities as Parsees rather than as Zoroastrians?

should not be relying on translations by others but should know Avesta and Pahlavi languages of our scriptures and translate them personally.

The panel responded to the questions of the community members and the consensus of the members could be presented as follows:

* Change is inevitable—historically we have changed our traditions to suit the environment and sociological changes.

* Changing a tradition established over 1,300 years and more should be so done that the majority of the community members, wherever they may be, do not feel that their wishes have been ignored.

* Change should be brought about by persons of different viewpoints, appreciating the others' concerns.

* Change should perhaps be brought about in phases: acceptance of non-Zoroastrians, subject to a general consensus, need not be a one-time, irrevocable, decision; the first stage may be the acceptance of a child of a Zoroastrian mother and a non-Zoroastrian father if both parents so desire; the second stage may be that children adopted by Zoroastrians be accepted into the faith; the third stage may be acceptance of adult non-Zoroastrians who qualify by their study, understanding and practice of the religious teachings.

* Our dwindling numbers should not be the criteria to decide this issue but acceptance only of the worthy individual who really understands and follows our religion should be considered.

Reprinted from the Z.S.O. (Zoroastrian Society of Ontario) newsletter, June 1983.

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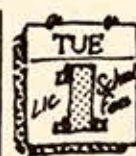
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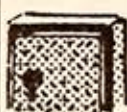
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Conversion Condemned

At a meeting called in Bombay on June 10 to "express and record the protest of religious Parsis against... suicidal activities" currently occurring in the community, the navjote of Joseph Peterson was strongly condemned. Protests were also lodged against Cyrus Bharucha's film 'The Quest for Zarathustra', against the practice of inter-marriage and against those organizations and individuals who support the conversion issue either directly or tacitly.

These suicidal activities will lead to a genetic mix-up and ultimately to the extinction of the community, warned the leaflet issued at the meet, which was organized by the orthodox Council of Vigilant Parsis, the Dini Avaz Committee and the Dadar Jashan Committee. This report on the meeting, held at the Cama Athornan Institute, is based on a recording of the proceedings.

"The Zoroastrian religion does not preach conversion, this is the claim on

which we stand," said Kaikhushroo N. Dastoor a member of the COVP and president of the meet. This stand was repeatedly emphasized by the other COVP speakers, Faribourz Nariman, Adi F. Doctor, B.K. Mistry, and

**If you put a *sudreh* and
kusti on the lampposts
outside will they become
Zarthostis?**

Curset Patel who introduced the speakers.

The BPP trustees were censured for their failure to comment on the navjote, the meeting being held prior to the BPP's resolution that they viewed the navjote "with disfavour." The recent meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India was criticized for bypassing the conversion

issue. "We witnessed the meeting of the Federation," said Mistry. "Speeches were made, *dhansak* was eaten, various problems were discussed, but mind you, not one word was said about the navjote of Joseph Peterson—not one word." Referring to the resolutions against conversion, passed at intervals since 1905, and to the protest messages issued since the Peterson navjote ignited the conversion controversy, Dastoor said, "This meeting reiterates and confirms all the aforesaid resolutions... and wholeheartedly supports the views recently reiterated by the three dasturjis," Kaikhushroo JamaspAsa, Hormazdyar Mirza and Firoze Kotwal (reprinted in this issue of *Parsiana*).

"Only he who is a Zoroastrian by religion and a Parsi by birth may have

Above: From left to right Mistry, Patel (standing), Dastoor, Nariman and Doctor.

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his navjote performed," read the message of Firoze Kotwal, high priest of the Wadiaji Atash-Behram. "An athornan who performs any navjote of a non-Parsi is taking upon himself a serious responsibility... Peterson's so-called navjote is a grave threat to the Zoroastrian religion and community and we declare it null and void."

If you put a *sudreh* and *kusti* on the lampposts outside will they become Zarhostis, asked Adi Doctor sarcastically. He pointed out that Peterson is an adult of 27 years while the *Vandidad*, he says, disallows the navjote of a youth above 15 years. When the priests prayed the *Tan Dorosti*, he questioned, did they pronounce the words "*Behdin Peterson rag*, or *behdin Joseph rag*," and should Peterson want the burial rites performed

"The film 'Quest for Zarathustra' leaves the door open for back-door conversions because they will not give up the idea of freedom of choice."

would they recite the words, "*Nam jethi jinde ravan, behdin Joseph, behdin Peterson*." Much laughter followed a rejoinder, "*jooddin Joseph, jooddin Peterson*."

"You cannot change the divine composition of a person by performing his navjote... You cannot change his entire spiritual composition, neither have you the right to do so," said Dastoor, for Zoroastrianism preaches that each individual needs his own religion for his spiritual progress, though the ultimate truth be the same in each religion. Peterson, he said, should have been persuaded that Christianity was the faith best for him. Instead, "the Christian harms his soul, Zoroastrianism is harmed, Kersi Antia's soul is harmed and our existence is harmed," said Dastoor speaking in Gujarati.

"The fascination of western culture and the anti-orthodox teachings of priests who claimed themselves to be traditional" were cited by Nariman as reasons for the anti-traditional stance of some Zoroastrians, notes a press report. "Scholars in the past who advocated conversion, I can state with courage today, were bought over" by people who used their fortunes to change certain customs in the com-

munity only to suit their own conveniences, he stated, criticizing several people of standing in the community who he claimed had made public statements supporting the navjote as well as those who have published these statements.

"The idea of conversion," said Mistry, the only person who addressed the gathering in English, "was exported from India to America by our intellectuals. These people raised the bogey of diminishing numbers," and encouraged the practice of inter-marriage, a practice that came under heavy fire at the meet. "Whoever heard of the minority becoming bigger by merging with the majority?" he asked. "There will be American Zoroastrians, Muslim Zoroastrians, Hindu Zoroastrians, Christian Zoroastrians, but the Parsi Zoroastrians will fade away, and we'll have to find a new name for the community."

Recounting an incident when he watched a young Christian making the sign of the cross outside the Dadysett Agiary at Fountain, Bombay, Mistry reported the young man as saying, "I've got more from your fire temple than I've got from my church... because you people do not convert, your religion is pure and powerful. Our religion is being sold and commercialized." "If the moneybags in America had half the sense this young man had, this meeting would not have been necessary at all," commented Mistry.

Cyrus Bharucha's film 'The Quest for Zarathustra' was repeatedly termed "the villain of the piece," and Mistry clarified the COVP's stand against the film saying, "If you read Antia's defence of the navjote, he says it has been done through free will and freedom of choice and that is why COVP and all of us are against the 'Quest for Zarathustra'. The film, which "leaves the door open for back-door conversions because they will not give up the idea of freedom of choice," will wreck havoc and lead to countless mixed marriages if shown to the younger generation.

Warning that the events taking place in the community currently will lead to its ultimate extinction, Dastoor said, "Ask yourselves, when you talk about freedom of choice, conversion and mixed marriages, are you not heading towards social suicide?"

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Conversion: A Myth Exploded

Hormazdyar K. Mirza Kaikhusroo M. JamaspAsa Firoze M. Kotwal

We have read with grave concern reports appearing in a certain section of the press regarding some irresponsible members of our priestly class residing in North America having performed the so-called navjote of a 27-year-old American of Christian faith, Joseph Peterson, on Saturday, March 5, 1983, at New York.

The press reports do not say what happened to Peterson's baptism and subsequent confirmation to his ancestral religion, and it is not known whether he renounced it before the navjote.

The so-called navjote of Peterson is against the Zoroastrian religion, tradition, and long-standing customs, manners and practices. In their long and chequered history, even during the days of their empires, the Zoroastrians had never adopted a policy of conversion or proselytism. A lot has been said and written from the Zoroastrian viewpoint against this 'conversion', 'proselytism' or as it is euphemistically called 'acceptance'.

In defence of this so-called navjote, it is claimed that Peterson is a scholar of the Zoroastrian religion, but no details have been given. This claim to scholarship is a mockery of both religion and scholarship and at the most it is only a subterfuge.

During the last two centuries many great non-Zoroastrian scholars of India, Europe and America have studied the Zoroastrian religion, its languages, literature, history, customs and manners; some have devoted their lives to the study of our sacred scriptures and have published and are publishing innumerable books and articles on these subjects, but none of these erudite scholars of international fame have ever thought of discarding his or her ancestral religion and adopting the Zoroastrian faith.

A flippant dramatic action

The so-called navjote is an insult, mockery and a cruel joke perpetrated against both the Zoroastrian and Christian religions. In defence of this so-called navjote, it is argued that 'a sudreh does not make a Zoroastrian', and it is also claimed that Peterson has been practising the Zoroastrian

religion for the last six years! If it is so, where was the necessity of the navjote ceremony? This clearly indicates that the farcical rite was only a flippant dramatic action on the part of Peterson, the irresponsible performers at the initiation and their advocates.

Alleged 'freedom of choice'

The proponents of conversion claim that the Zoroastrian religion grants 'freedom of choice'. In other words, they argue that anyone can be converted to the Zoroastrian religion, and in support thereof they quote *Yasna* 30.2. It has been pointed out often that this is misunderstanding and misconstruing the original Avestan text. In connection therewith we recorded our opinion in our write-up published in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of March 6, 1983, *The Bombay Samachar* of March 13, 1983, and the March issue of *Parsiiana*.

Further, the advocates of conversion quote another Gathic stanza, *Yasna* 31.3, and argue that the Zoroastrian religion favours conversion of 'all living beings'. This again is a wrong interpretation. The said stanza has been explained already in detail (see H.K. Mirza, *Conversion Caucus*, Bombay 1971, 6-10) and should be translated: "Through the Spirit and through the Fire, Thou hast ordained, and through *Asha* Thou hast promised, that reward for the two fighters (*ranoihya*)—that (is) the ordinance for the wise ones—that, O Mazda, teach us to learn through the tongue of Thy mouth, so that I may convince all living ones."

Avesta *ranoihya* in the dual number 'two fighters, rivals, competitors,' used in this and other Gathic stanzas

represents 'two parties'—of good and bad. There is no word for 'faith' or 'religion' and no idea to convey 'conversion' or 'proselytism'.

In this stanza Zarathustra wants to convince his listeners about the 'reward' ordained for the 'two parties'. In other words, to convince them about the principle of Divine Justice—that bliss shall be for the good and punishment for the wicked, as explicitly stated in connection with *ranoihya* 'two fighters', also in *Yasna* 51.9. This Divine Justice will ultimately be administered to all mankind at the time of Renovation. Zarathustra emphasizes this fact and wants to convince 'all living ones', not only the Zoroastrians, about the universal principle of Divine Justice.

From the view-point of basic religious belief and preaching, people professing religions may be divided into two groups: those who preach that man will be judged by God according to the actions performed in this life; and those who preach that man will be judged by God according to the religion professed in this world.

The first group, to which the Zoroastrian religion belongs, lays down the principle of Divine Justice: good for good, bad for bad. On the contrary, the second group believes that whatever a man does here in this life, he will go to heaven if he professed a certain religion.

Naturally and logically, the religions of the first group cannot and do not preach and practise conversion. The very idea of conversion is contrary and repugnant to the principle of Divine Justice. Hence, Zoroastrianism which emphatically inculcates the principle of

Mirza, JamaspAsa and Kotwal: "The navjote is an insult."





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Divine Justice, cannot logically preach conversion and the very idea is foreign to it.

The propagandists of the religions of the second group preach that one can go to heaven simply by adopting a certain religion. They believe and preach that only the followers of that particular religion would and could go to heaven, and those professing any other religion shall have no place in heaven. Such propagandists can preach and practise conversion. Moreover, such propagandists believe that by converting a man of another religion they do an act of great merit, and thereby they can secure a better place in heaven! Through this belief they become fanatic converters and would go to any extreme of believing that to kill a man of an alien religion, or get killed, is an act of merit and a way to secure a better place in heaven! In ancient times such fanatic propagandists willingly accepted so-called martyrdom by such deeds under any pretext. Hence such aggressive religious beliefs had become, in ancient times, a very fruitful source and a very fertile ground for trouble, strife and human misery.

Ancient Aryan heritage

In common with the Zoroastrian religion, the ancient Aryan religion and culture lays down that there are spiritual values of human life, and that man is responsible for his actions. Thus, it also lays down the principle of Divine Justice explained above. This is an important heritage of the ancient

Conversion is preached and practised evidently for ulterior motives.

Aryans. Since this is the main principle, there can never be any idea of conversion.

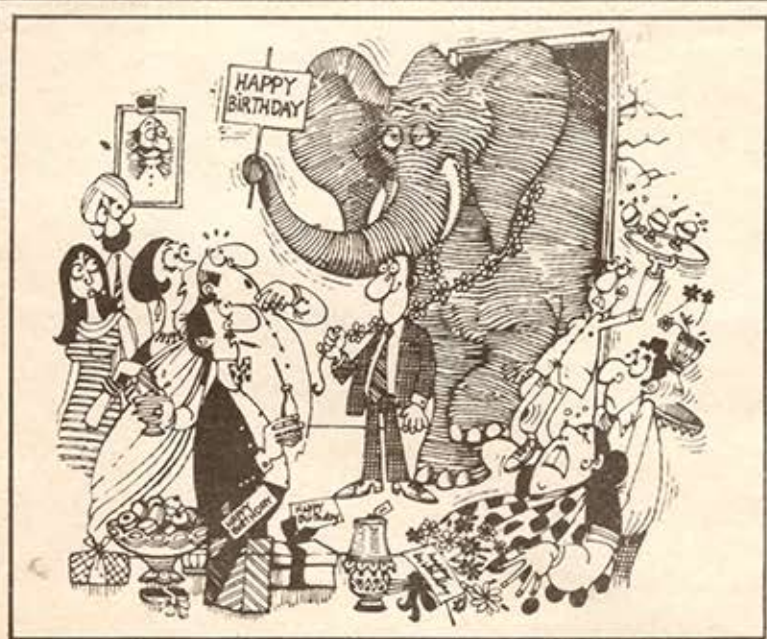
The ancient Aryan words for 'initiation' had no idea of conversion for it was foreign to ancient Hinduism. The Vedic *diksha* indicates a life of 'religious studentship', and it is the ceremony of initiation of a child (particularly of a Brahman) to the religious studies. The Sanskrit word *dvija* 'twice born' is an epithet of the Aryans in general or of Brahmans in particular (see Macdonell, *Vedic Index* I,

Varanasi 1958, 386). The 'twice born' indicates 'a man of any one of the first three classes, any Aryan, (especially) a Brahman, reborn through investiture with the sacred thread' (see Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit Dictionary*, 504). Moreover, the Sanskrit word *upanayana* is 'the act of leading to or near, bringing... in which the boy is invested with the sacred thread... (different for three castes) and thus endowed with second or spiritual birth and qualified to learn the Veda by heart' (ibid., 201).

None of the Aryan words explained above indicate any idea of conversion. The *Bhagavad Gita* expressly states that one should stick to one's religion, and that an alien religion is perilous, (see R.C. Zaehner, *Hindu Scriptures*, London 1977, 265; *The Bhagavad-Gita*, III.35): "Better one's own duty (*dharma*) (to perform)/though void of merit, Than to another's well;/Better to die within (the sphere of) one's own duty:/ Perilous is the duty of other men."

What has been stated above shows that 'conversion' was unknown in India, or it was viewed with utmost

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disfavour. This is further supported by the words used for 'to convert' and 'conversion' in modern Indian languages.

Persian Rivayats Misinterpreted

In *The Persian Rivayats* (see B.N. Dhabhar, Bombay 1932, 275) 'a grave-digger, a corpse-burner and a *darvand*' are mentioned (but nothing has been stated about their religion), and a question is posed whether they can become Zoroastrians. From this it is argued that they were non-Zoroastrians. There is no reason to believe that they belonged to an alien religion. About 300 to 400 years ago, some Parsis, particularly those settled in places away from the centres of Zoroastrianism, had adopted non-Zoroastrian customs, habits and practices. This is indicated from the same source (*Persian Rivayats*, 108, 160, 162), and also from some suggestive Parsi surnames used even at present. In this context, the term *darvand* does not mean a non-Zoroastrian; it implies a Zoroastrian who has discarded Zoroastrian practices (see H.K. Mirza, *Conversion Caucas*, 13). In some cases the Zoroastrians in far-off places were forced to adopt certain professions and to do certain work. Even at present there are Zoroastrians bearing the surname *ghorkhodu*, 'grave-digger'. The ancestors of this family were forced by the Mohammedans to dig graves. In 1670, Ogilby writes about the Zoroastrians (*apud* R. B. Paymaster, *Early history of the Parsees in India*, Bombay 1954, 45): "In course of time, these settlers forgot their origin, their religion, and even their name." This shows the general condition of at least some Parsis, particularly those living in distant places in those ages.

Mazdayasni and Mazdayasni Zarthoshti

In the *Avesta*, the first man is called *gaya maretan* (later *gayomard*) 'one having mortal life', the originator of the Iranian peoples. According to the *Fravardin Yasht* (13.87), *Gaya Maretan* was the first to hear the thought and commandments of Ahura Mazda. Hence the religion of pre-Zoroastrian Iranians is termed 'Mazdayasni'. Our revered prophet was a reformer as well as a revealer of God's Will: he reformed the Iranian society and also brought the revelation: *Ahunavar*, *Ashem*, *Yenghe Hatam* and the *Gathas*. Zarathustra received and

preached the new revelation, but the old Mazdayasni religion was not totally discarded. Hence the religion preached by Zarathustra is termed 'Mazdayasni Zarthoshti' and also 'Ahurrian Zarthoshti', and for the sake of brevity it is simply known as 'Zoroastrian' religion. Every Zoroastrian—male or female, priest or layman—solemnly declares during the *kusti* prayers: *mazdayasno ahmi mazdayasno zarathushtrish*: "Mazdayasnian am I, Mazdayasnian Zoroastrian (am I)." This clearly indicates that the pre-Zoroastrian Mazdayasni religion was not completely abandoned. The above quoted article of faith shows that when a child is born of Zoroastrian parents, it is a Mazdayasni (-designate) by birth, and with the *navjote* ceremony it becomes a Mazdayasni Zarthoshti. The said prayer therefore cannot be recited by one born of non-Zoroastrian parents.

King Vishtasp was not converted

It is at times argued that King Vishtasp was converted, but this shows gross ignorance of the situation as depicted in the *Avesta*. In the *Avesta*, Zarathustra prays for a divine boon so that he may cause King Vishtasp to follow "in accordance with the thought, in accordance with the word, in accordance with the deed of the religion." King Vishtasp became the royal 'friend' of Zarathustra and "supporter and helper" of the Zoroastrian religion. The Turanian people, a branch of the Iranians, generally did not accept the Zoroastrian religion, but some of the Turanian families, notably the Friyana family, had accepted the Zoroastrian religion.

Moreover, the activities of Vishtasp as noted in the *Avesta* are also an important pointer in this matter. It is stated in the *Avesta* (Yt.13.99-100): "We revere the *Fravashi* of holy Vishtasp... who sought freedom for *Asha* sideways and forward, who declared freedom for *Asha* sideways and forward, who became arm and support of this religion, which (is) *Ahurrian*, Zoroastrian, who brought her (i.e., the religion, which was) stagnant, bound, out from the *Hunus*; he established her sitting in the centre, highly organized, steady (not shaky), holy, contented with animal and fodder (i.e., prosperity), beloved with animal and fodder."

Zoroastrians never converted

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the Zoroastrians never adopted the policy of conversion of non-Zoroastrians. The Achaemenian kings were well-known for their liberal religious policy. They ruled over diverse peoples professing many religions, and to whom they granted full freedom to practise their respective religions. They even afforded financial help to build their places of worship. For this magnanimity they have secured an honourable place in the history of mankind. Similarly, during the Parthian and Sasanian periods the followers of various religions were living peacefully in Iran, and practising their respective religions within their religious institutions.

As explained above, the practice of conversion started with those peoples who had the mistaken idea of securing a place in heaven through the intervention of a prophet. The Zoroastrians have never had such an idea, neither in Iran nor in India. If one believes in a revealed religion, that man is created by God with a divine purpose, and that there are spiritual values of human life and the principle of Divine Justice,

then one cannot honestly preach and practise conversion. On the other hand, if one believes that religion is man-made, that the birth of man is accidental having no divine purpose, and that there are no spiritual values of human life and no principle of Divine Justice, then there is no spiritual need for a religion, and no question of con-

"Better to die within (the sphere of) one's own duty (dharma): Perilous is the duty of other men."

version arises. Yet, for one reason or the other, conversion is preached and practised evidently for ulterior motives.

Tragic consequences

As noted above, the practice of conversion has brought strife, destruction, devastation and misery on mankind. On account of this practice the Zoroastrians of Iran suffered unimaginable hardships, indignities, misery, persecutions and massacres for

about 12 long centuries. It is tragic that the present generation has forgotten these ghastly events that our ancestors passed through to keep the flame of Zoroastrianism burning.

A dangerous game

We are living in a free country, enjoying freedom in all spheres of life. But we must not forget that there are Zoroastrians living in non-secular countries, ruled by religious heads under religious principles. If it is established that the Zoroastrians are a proselytizing community, then what would be the position of the Zoroastrians living there? Where there is conversion by any method—force, inducement, persuasion—trouble is certain to arise. From all practical viewpoints, conversion would prove to be a dangerous game and a disastrous play with fire for our small community. We therefore earnestly hope that this puerile attempt and anti-Zoroastrian action on the part of a very small band of dissidents will not be tolerated, recognized and accepted by our co-religionists.

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CHICAGO'S CONCERN

(This letter was presented by Rohinton M. Rivetna, President of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC) at the monthly general meeting of the ZAC on April 10, 1983, and was spontaneously signed by over 90 percent of the people present. Some additional signatures were obtained subsequently.)

To whom it may concern:

Many of us from the Chicago area were very disturbed to read a letter written by one of our members, Sarosh Khambatta and published in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of March 14, 1983, condemning Chicago priests for "violating our Zoroastrian laws" and asking for their excommunication. This letter is one of a number of personal attacks on the priests and their families by a handful of Chicago Zoroastrians. Needless to say, this has caused intense suffering and anguish to the entire Chicago community. Much as we dislike to prolong this debate, we think it is our duty as concerned members of the community to write this letter to attempt to redress the ignominies suffered by our priests.

Our Association looks to our priests for leadership. One of the main objectives of the Constitution of the ZAC (Article 1, Section 2) is: "To elevate the status of our Priests and to establish them as leaders and administrators of the community." They are the most valuable asset we possess; rather than criticizing them and stifling their enterprise at every step, it will behoove us to encourage them to pursue their religious studies and to continue to grow in stature and wisdom.

The priests in question, Ervad (Dr) Kersi Antia, high priest of Chicago and Ervad Neriosang K. Karanjia have selflessly served for many years and are revered and respected members of our community. They have, over the years given freely of their time and energies whenever called upon to perform ceremonies and to provide religious education. Moreover, they have always

turned over all remunerations to charity. They (as also all our other priests) have spotless reputations and despite differences of opinion, have always stood firmly for what they believe to be the teachings of Zarathustra.

One of the questions at hand involves the navjote ceremony of Joseph Peterson in New York on March 5, 1983. Dr Kersi Antia participated in this navjote. His decision was not a flippant publicity stunt, but a decision arrived at after deep thought, intense deliberations and a careful review of the circumstances surrounding Peterson's request. It was based on a study of religious literature on the subject and his own inner convictions that this was the right path to follow. In an effort to keep the ZAC out of this controversy, Dr Antia first handed in his resignation which was however not accepted by the Board of Directors.

Ervad Neriosang Karanjia, on the other hand did not participate in any way; neither did he perform the navjote, nor was he present at the ceremony. The reference to Ervad Karanjia in Khambatta's letter has been interpreted by many in Bombay to imply that Ervad Karanjia also participated in the ceremony, and has unnecessarily made him and his family a target of much abuse.

Another matter under criticism is the performance of mixed marriages by our priests. Of course, we strive our utmost to encourage our children to marry within the faith; however the fact remains that an alarming number of men and women are finding non-Zoroastrian partners. Of over 15 marriages in Chicago in recent years, in only two cases were both partners Zoroastrian. Our brethren in India cannot conceive of the calamity that would face us here in North America if we did not adopt a more tolerant approach and accept these marriages. We have no choice but to strive for the survival of our religion on this continent, even if sadly at the expense of the

preservation of our lineage.

Did not our forefathers, when they came to India, make some concessions to their new homeland? Does not everything in nature adapt and mould to its environs in order to survive, improve and grow in stature? The basic teachings of Zarathustra are universal and will remain relevant to all peoples for all time; they are immutable and unchanging and transcend all bounds. But, in matters of social import let us bend a little with the times. To take an absolute and unchanging position may be dangerous.

The ZAC addressed this issue in 1977 with an Amendment to the Constitution of the ZAC by a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote. We quote two relevant paragraphs from Article XIV, Section 5: "The Duties of an Association Priest shall be: vi) Perform Navjote ceremony of children whose parents are either both Zoroastrians by birth, or one of whom is a Zoroastrian by birth. vii) Perform wedding ceremonies of partners both of whom are Zoroastrian by birth, or one of whom is a Zoroastrian by birth."

Nobody can deny that the driving force behind our actions is the desire to preserve and perpetuate our faith and to inculcate Zoroastrian values in our children. Whether we are orthodox or liberal, we are all striving towards that common goal. Surrounded everywhere by strong Christian influences, the small pockets of Zoroastrians are suddenly forced into the realization that unless strong and positive steps are taken within our generation, our second generation could easily be swept into the mainstream of Christian America. The outcry for "something to be done before it is too late" at the Fourth North American Zoroastrian Symposium in Montreal in 1982 is a measure of the sentiments of contemporary North American Zoroastrians.

We stand by the resolution made by the ZAC Board of Directors on February 13, 1983, recognizing and

Unless strong and positive steps are taken within our generation, our second generation could easily be swept into the mainstream of Christian America.

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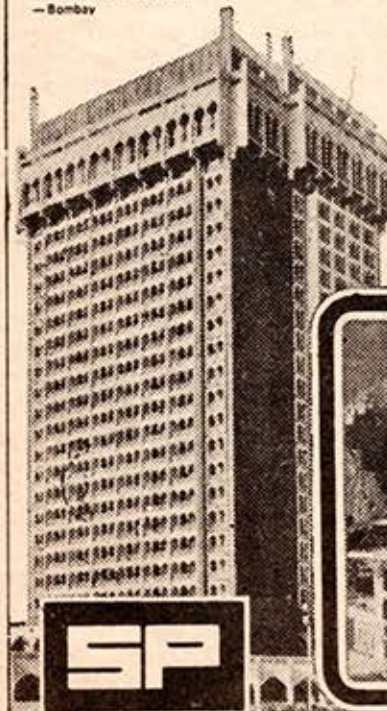
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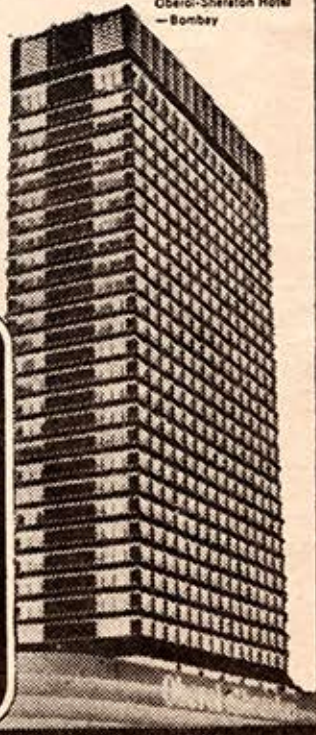
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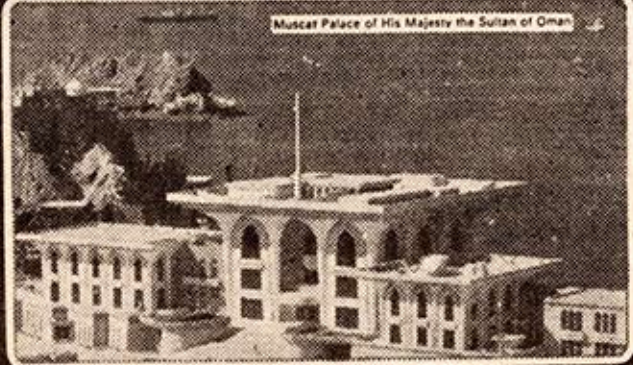
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respecting both liberal and orthodox views on the Peterson navjote and maintaining that on a matter of such grave import that touched the innermost convictions of the people, the ZAC could not take any official stand. The ZAC plans to further discuss the issue of conversion/acceptance at an Open Forum and forward all input to the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec (ZAQ). (At the 1982 Montreal Symposium, the ZAQ was given the mandate to solicit views on this subject and to collate this information).

Each one of us has every right to express his or her views. None of us is so wise and all-knowing that we can afford to close the doors to other viewpoints. Discussions are healthy, they refine solutions and open up new horizons, but when discussions degenerate into arguments and arguments into vindictive and slanderous personal attacks we have to draw the line. We deplore these actions and most vehemently implore those responsible to desist immediately. Such behaviour jeopardises the basic fabric of our society; the spiritual and religious needs of the laity are compromised and the dedicated hard work of the majority is undermined. A community that was painstakingly nurtured into a cohesive, hardworking group is suddenly torn apart.

How much more worthwhile it would be if the time and energy spent in criticizing the actions of others be spent instead in more fruitful and constructive endeavours. There are tremendous tasks ahead. Let us work together to support the ZAQ to fulfil its "Montreal Mandate." Above all, let us continue to work with dedication and devotion for the construction of the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr—Zoroastrian Center of Chicago. This will be a landmark in the history of Zoroastrianism in North America and we need to work harder than ever towards its early inauguration.

In closing, we pray to Ahura Mazda to give us good judgement and wisdom. We appeal to our small Zoroastrian community to respect each other's views and values, to stand behind our priests and to work together towards our common goal—to follow the teachings of Zarathustra and to strive to preserve and perpetuate our great faith for future generations.

ANTIA'S

ANSWER



"We have to face modernity or perish. It will be nice if we could continue without making any changes, but we simply cannot... I see a big generation gap between our generation and our grandchildren's. Our children may fall in-between the crack, but the grandchildren will be the deciding test for the continuation of our heritage. All that we do now should address to their needs. Unfortunately however, your comments seem less to address to their needs and more to our own. For example, how would they continue our traditional dress then? They may have little contact with India then..."

"Even the Dastur's attire will have to be changed, so that we can make it here or bring it more in line with the needs of the future generation. Even the *sudreh* may have to be revised so that our children will find it easier to have and wear them..."

"As a full-fledged priest, it pains me to observe that we will have to change, modernize and shorten our prayers and rituals... What is so sacrosanct about them that we cannot change them to suit our great-grandchildren's needs, so they won't convert to Christianity, etc.? Most of them did not exist in the times of our Lord Zarathustra and

It pains me to observe that we will have to change, modernize and shorten our prayers and rituals.

most of them were made up in later times... So I cannot agree with you, even though I wish I could, when you say—"it is imperative for us to perpetuate this cultural heritage of prayers and rituals to the next generation *unchanged*." If we don't change

them, our children will be less able to do so. By changing our rituals and prayers meaningfully we will make them more appealing to them. If our religion is based on eternal principles, it should be practised in any language or country. It is neither 'unethical' nor 'highly detrimental to the goal of perpetuation of the rich heritage' to change our rituals meaningfully, after proper and careful study. As a matter of fact, this is our most important mission and the time for it is *now*. To leave it to our future generation is tantamount to closing the stable door after the horse is out."

"We should not get hung up on the language of our prayers. After all, only the *Gathas* are in our prophet's original language. The other Avesta prayers are quite different from it... Our prophet's message of the *Gathas* and his insistence on following the Law of *Asha* to attain divinity was greatly sabotaged by the magis who found it in their own interests to introduce ideas and ritualism that our great prophet had come to oppose..."

"However, such a task should be entrusted to a body of scholars well-versed in our religion and culture and should be introduced gently and wisely. Such a task also needs substantial monetary outlay to conduct research writing, lecturing, etc. At the head of such a mission should be a well-versed, knowledgeable, learned priest for all of North America and we don't have one yet... what we do in this area is immensely relevant to the needs of Zoroastrians in the old country. But are we ready to sacrifice time, money and effort and to act in unison to secure this goal?"

Excerpts from Ervad (Dr) Kersi Antia's letter to *Gavashni*, the newsletter of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec. Reprinted from *Gavashni*, June 1983.

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RELIGIOUS BOYCOTT

(This letter dated July 1, 1983, and signed by 12 US priests was sent to the president and board of directors of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York, ZAGNY).

This is to inform you that we, the following priests from New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania area, have decided *not* to participate and/or associate ourselves in the performance of any Zoroastrian ceremony such as *jashan*, *navjote*, wedding, *ghehsarna* (last-rites) etc. either individually or jointly with Noshir C. Hormazdiyar of ZAGNY and Kersi H. Antia of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago.

This decision has been taken by us pursuant to the performance of the *navjote* ceremony of Joseph Peterson, a non-Zoroastrian, by the above two priests who acted against the precepts and long-standing traditions of our religion and also against the wishes of a

vast majority of the members of our community, both in North America as well as in India and the rest of the world. The presence of only half a dozen Parsi Zoroastrian families at the above *navjote* goes to prove how the community felt about this extremely sensitive issue. We cannot in our good-conscience associate ourselves with these individuals who dared to thrust their so-called "convictions" on their fellow colleagues and community members in clear defiance of their feelings and specific requests to discuss this matter to the mutual satisfaction of all concerned.

The *navjote* (by whatever name you may call it) has done untold and totally irreversible damage to the community and to our religion. Only time will tell the effects on our posterity of such a hasty and unthoughtful action on the part of these irresponsible individuals who acted on their own.

We would continue to be of service

to our community as we have always been in the past. However, we will *not* perform either ZAGNY or private ceremonies accompanied by these two individuals who have taken the law into their own hands and hurt our feelings and those of a very large number of people practising our ancient religion.

It would be highly appreciated if this letter is published in the next issue of the ZAGNY newsletter for the knowledge of its readers.

Signed:

Ervad Cawas J Desai
Ervad Shahpur K Doctor
Ervad Noshir C Karanjia
Ervad Sam C Karanjia
Ervad Firoz Madan
Ervad Keki H Mody
Ervad Pervez P Patel
Ervad Rusi H Sidhwa
Ervad Dara Sinor
Ervad Burjor S Tata
Ervad Dr. Hoshang A Unwala
Ervad Adi J Unwala

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Dadi Pudumjee: Pulling his Strings

Sarosh Bana



It all began when six-year-old Dadi Pudumjee was presented a string puppet by one of his relatives. Not content to hang up the gift in the nursery cupboard, the young lad got sufficiently engrossed in it to take up reading books on puppetry. This, his parents assumed, was a passing fancy which the youngster would surely outgrow—they wanted young Pudumjee to grow up to be an engineer.

Imagine their chagrin when, in 1971, their son enrolled instead for a five-year course at Ahmedabad's National Institute of Design (NID). While there he became involved with the puppeteering department of Mrinalini Sarabhai's Darpana dance academy—and proved so adept and ingenious at the art that he won a scholarship to Sweden. A childhood passion developed into a full-time vocation as Pudumjee dropped out of the NID to devote all his energies to children's entertainment.

In Ahmedabad, his unusual talent was spotted by Panna Bharat Ram, wife of industrialist Vinay Bharat Ram. Panna, herself from Ahmedabad, in her capacity as executive chairwoman of the Shri Ram Centre for Arts and Culture in New Delhi, decided that Pudumjee was exactly the person she wanted to start a professional puppet

repertory company. Having grown up in the liberal world of Ahmedabad culture, she felt strongly that there was no decent entertainment for urban children to indulge their fantasies in. Puppetry, widely prevalent in India's rural areas, was an art virtually unknown to the children of Indian cities. Says Panna: "Puppets have been, and remain, the classic mode of education and entertainment in India, beside being an ancient theatre form — the only form that allows for extreme absurdity."

Enthralled Audiences

Panna decided that Pudumjee was her man. Rather than go ahead and start her puppet repertory in his absence — he was on his way to study at the Marionette Institute of Sweden's Vat Theatre on a scholarship — she decided to wait for him to return. When he returned home, Pudumjee first worked with schoolchildren in Bombay, before Panna persuaded him to move to Delhi to start the repertory. And that is how Pudumjee's company called Sutradhar — which means 'narrator' in Hindi — started.

Now 31, the lanky, bespectacled Parsi from Pune has regaled audiences in various parts of India, most recently in Bombay where his group's performances over two evenings enthralled audien-



ces at the Tata Theatre. His eight-member repertory, described as the first professional puppet outfit in the country, performs regularly over week-ends in Delhi in the Shri Ram Centre's basement and travels the rest of the time on invitation. As the company's repertoire grows, so does its reputation. In Bombay, the Sutradhar Theatre put up excerpts from three of their most successful productions.

Romantic Ballad

The first one called *Ek Tha Joota* revolves around a villager who sets forth in search of fortune in the glitter and hustle-bustle of a typical metropolis. *Gatha Dhola Maru* is a ballad which emanates from the rich folklore of Rajasthan. It is a romantic legend, portraying the almost zealous devotion and love between Prince Dhola and the beautiful Princess Maru. An exquisite production by the group, it transcends the limitations of the stage and transports viewers into the very heart of Rajasthani tradition.

The final production, *Motu Ki*



witnessed in puppet performances in the country. Thus in the beginning, the Sutradhar Theatre had some difficulty in attracting crowds which were till then attuned only to conventional puppetry.

Careful Preparation

The Parsi puppeteer himself selects the themes for his plays which are of 45 or 80 minutes duration each. Longer performances, he feels, will not be able to hold the attention of audiences. The group, since its inception in 1980, has produced six such plays — all of them in Hindi or its regional variations like Purbia, with a dash of Rajasthani in tales based on Rajasthani folklore.

It takes the group about two and a half months to produce a 45-minute long play, complete with the script, accompanying music, songs, sets, costumes and masks, with Pudumjee having a hand in each of these departments. His consummate skill is evident from the professional finish of the masks, fashioned by hand either from papier mache, thermocole packing or wicker. The starkly characterized puppets are almost instilled with a life of their own.

Using glove puppets in *Pakhandi Sher* and rod puppets in *Motu Ki Moonch*, Pudumjee's team of puppeteers is made up of professional actors, designers and art students as well as Jagdish Bhatt, a professional itinerant puppeteer from Rajasthan. A wide range of part-time musicians and accompanists come and go with each new performance. Besides the manufacture of

puppets, an intricate craft in itself, the repertory also regularly rehearses speech and physical exercises—to help in mimicking animal and bird sounds and in the dextrous manipulation of the puppets themselves. Says Om Gosain, former stage actor now on the repertory's staff: "The difference between stage acting and puppeteering is that all your acting ability must go into interpreting the puppet you have created."

Pudumjee adds that under no circumstances "must the actor's personality overtake the personality of a puppet." And absurd though the art is, it derives basically from a truthful exaggeration of the most basic human traits. Says Bhatt: "If, for instance, we are designing a very fat man for a puppet show, we really have to observe very fat people in real life to be able to get the nuances of the puppet's movements just right."

From next year, the group intends to perform Hindi translations of plays in foreign languages, beginning with the works of Hans Christian Andersen, the nineteenth century Danish author of fairy tales. There is also a proposal to invite puppeteers from abroad to perform as guest artistes with the group.

The impeccable detail is evident not only in the detailed manner-

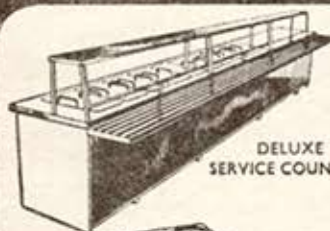
Moonch, utilises the Japanese technique of Banraku where large puppets are manipulated by hand, often by more than one person per figure. The tale pivots around the two central figures of Motu (a thakur) and a tiger, the former representing pride and the latter greed. This poignant presentation demonstrates how these human weaknesses lead to the ultimate fall of the characters concerned.

"While Sutradhar Puppet Theatre aims at entertaining people it also makes them aware of the rich traditions being continued in our village," emphasizes Pudumjee and adds: "It's not necessary that each and every production of ours has a moral behind it. After we staged *Motu Ki Moonch* for the first time, we had several members of the audience asking us what the moral of the story was. People have become so goal-oriented."

Initially, when the group started its activities, the audience also had difficulty in accepting the idea of live narrators on stage—something hitherto not

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isms of the characters of puppets, but also in the verve and vivacity of the stories they make up. Pudumjee says it is not his intention to get unnecessarily didactic but nevertheless there is a message in all his stories; sometimes children are expected to make up their minds and the endings are left open.

At other times audiences are invited to actively participate in the show. This is achieved through simple devices of alienation like having a human narrator talk in turn to the puppets and the children, or turning the simple black screen around, so that the puppeteers can come and sing and dance before the children. Frequently the children are taken inside the workshop itself so that they overcome their fear of the seemingly terrifying animals.

In January next year, a much-awaited production of the Sutradhar Theatre shall introduce the Czech 'black theatre' technique which makes use of ultra-violet light, into Indian puppetry. The troupe will perform with all kinds of puppets in this production: the hand-held variety, cut-outs and glove puppets. The performers will be dressed in black, merging into the darkness on stage, while the puppets, suffused with the fluorescent light, will stand out and flit around like objects possessed.

Their art will be given a new impetus when Sutradhar shifts very shortly into the Shri Ram Centre's new annexe adjacent to the present building. Here they will have a 1,700-square-foot workshop at their disposal where they will start a three months' course in contemporary puppet technique. There are plans to

diversify with simple open-air performances in parks and other informal surroundings, and the Sutradhar Puppet Theatre group has achieved all this without pulling any strings!

Reprinted with permission from *Bombay*, November 22-December 6, 1982. Photographs courtesy Sarosh Bana.

Doomasia Trains Abroad



Current inter-school athletic champion Viraf Doomasia has recently returned from Malaysia where he was sent for training. The trip was sponsored by the J.K. Sports Foundation, according to press reports.

Winner of the Junior Boys' Individual Trophy and the Best Boy Athlete J.K. Sports Foundation Trophy, Doomasia rewrote three records in the 90th School Athletic Championships, sponsored by the J.K. Sports Foundation and held earlier this year. The versatile 15-year-old St. Mary's star, who earned his school a spectacular victory has "gained impressive recognition only in the last one year" reports a sports columnist.

"Superb stamina, perfect bicycle movements of the legs and well co-ordinated pumping of the arms are his assets," and have stood him to good stead in the four-day athletic meet where he leaped to a new height—1.64 metres in the high jump for junior boys.

Doomasia, termed a dark horse, was a popular name at the meet, breaking "a record every day and that too with consummate ease," notes a report in the *Free Press Journal*.

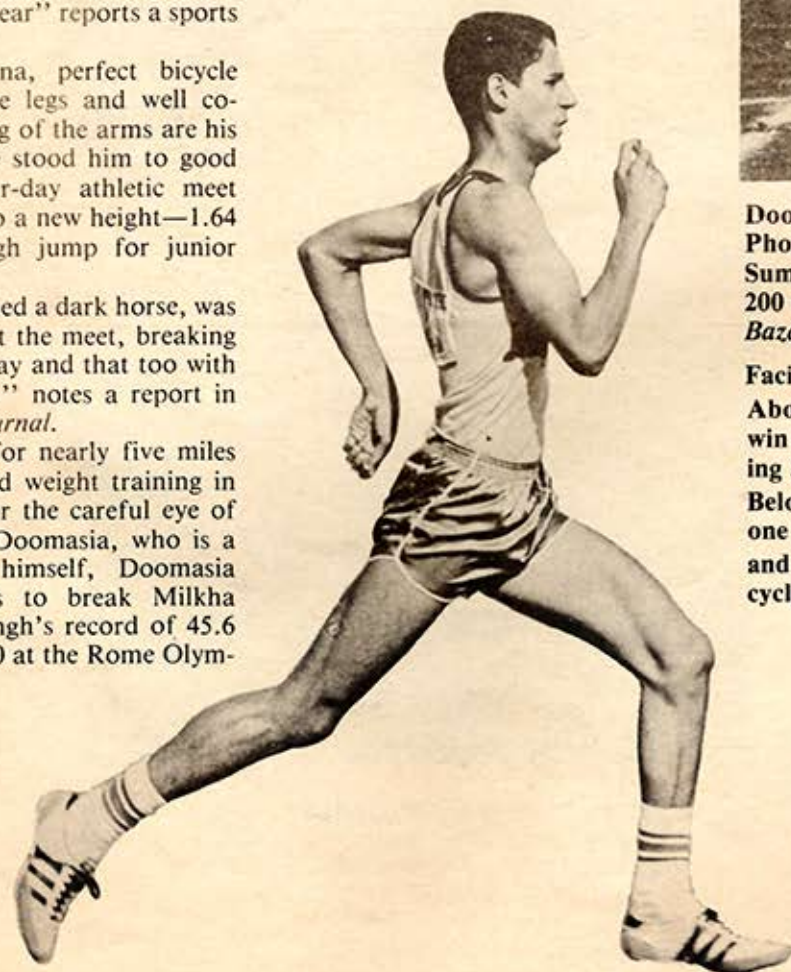
Road running for nearly five miles every morning and weight training in the evenings under the careful eye of his father, Dara Doomasia, who is a qualified coach himself, Doomasia reportedly aspires to break Milkha "Flying Sikh" Singh's record of 45.6 seconds set in 1960 at the Rome Olympics.

Adille's Athletic Achievements

India's representative at the Moscow Olympics and the Ninth Asian Games, athlete Adille Sumariwalla, 25, left for West Germany recently to undertake training in his forte, the 100 metre and 200 metre sprints, notes his bio-data.

At the international level, Sumariwalla, who has twice represented India in the Asian Track and Field Athletics at Tokyo (1979 and 1981), has earned himself an impressive tally of three gold, two silver and four bronze medals. He has also claimed his fifth consecutive title in the 100 metre sprint, at the five-day 21st Inter-State National Athletic Championships held in Calcutta early this year which constitutes an "All time record."

A commerce graduate, Sumariwalla has been working in the accounts department of the Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company since 1979.



Doomasia (left): versatile athlete. Photo courtesy *The Daily Sumariwalla* (above): victorious in the 200 m dash. Photo courtesy *Ananda Bazar Patrika*

Facing page:

Above (left) Khambatta: pedalling to win (right) Bilimoria: successful sailing season

Below (left) Nariman: playing "like one possessed" and (right) Havewalla: fastest state cyclist

"Young Hopeful"

Promising badminton star Hufrish Nariman, 24, ranked second in the ladies singles at the National Badminton Championships held at Gandhinagar earlier this year. Describing her as a "young hopeful," Rajendra Bowrie of *The Times of India*, goes on to say, "One day she plays like one possessed and the very next day her game goes to pieces—luckily for her it does not happen so frequently now-a-days."

A bronze medalist at the 1982 IX Asiad, Nariman was the All Bombay Schools Champion for three consecutive years (1973-1976), bagged the 'India No 2' title in 1975 and 1976 and again in 1979-80 and was the

Maharashtra State Champion for 1977 and 1981. She is a recipient of the Frene Talyarkhan trophy for the most sporting woman player of Maharashtra state for '76-'77, and the Maharashtra Shiv Chhatrapati Award in 1979 for "excellence in sports and games for the year 1977-78."

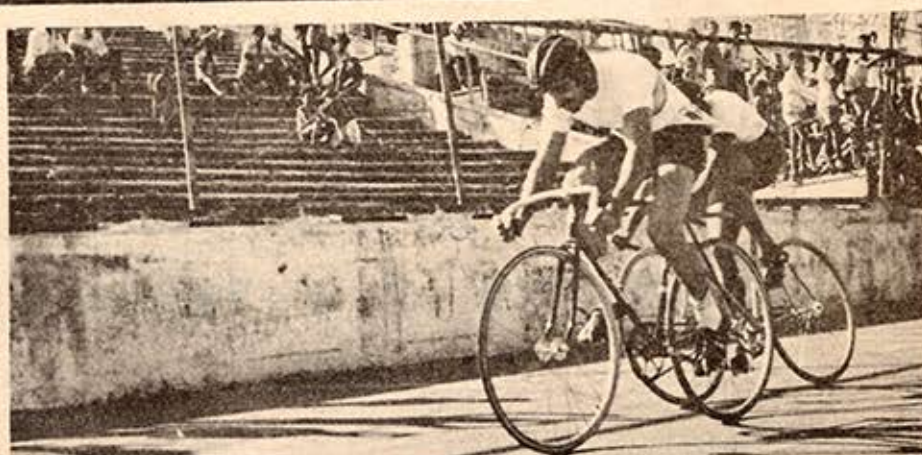
She has represented India on several occasions including the All England Badminton Championships held at Wembley (London) in March 1980 and the Uber Cup Australian Zone in Jakarta in November the same year, notes her bio-data.

Nariman, a Sydenham College commerce graduate, is at present working at the Bank of India as a probationary officer.

arriving first in Khandala.

Beginning the year by claiming the Maharashtra Cycling Championship, Khambatta has followed it up with several victories including the All Parsis Annual Cycling Championship, notes his bio-data. "His dream of representing India seemed to take shape... when he was invited... for the Asiad trials in New Delhi," states a press report. However, according to the report Khambatta skidded while sprinting in the 30 km points race. This resulted in injury and ruled him out for the Asiad.

A student of Khalsa College, Khambatta has just returned from the international races in Rome (Italy) where he captained the Indian team in the Grand Primo Delle Liberization race and was



Khambatta — King of the Ghats

Maharashtra state champion cyclist Yazdi Khambatta, 22, emerged the winner in the 135 km Pune-Lonavla-Pune open cycle race held early this year. The race was a prelude to the Bombay-Pune open road event held a week later in which Khambatta finished third and earned the title 'King of the Ghats' by

gifted with a Colnago bicycle in appreciation of his good performance.

Tenth Time Champ

For the tenth consecutive year Rustom Havewalla, 29, has won the title of Fastest Cyclist in Maharashtra, according to a press report. He finished first in the 1000 metre sprint on the concluding day of the state track meet, organized early this year by the

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Maharashtra Cycling Association; Yazdi Khambatta came second.

Havewalla, an accounts assistant at the Tata Iron & Steel Co., earned the national title of the Fastest Cyclist in India, three times in the last decade. "My only regret in the sport is that I have never had the good fortune of donning our country's colours at an international meet," notes Havewalla.

Smooth Sailing

Helming his Seabird yacht the 'Dab-chick', Kurush Bilimoria claimed the Raja Maharaja Singh Rolling Trophy in the Harbour Yachting Races held in April. The event was organized by the Bombay Sailing Association.

This season Bilimoria won the Yachting Association of India (Y.A.I.) Pennants race in the Seabird class and the prestigious Coastal Trophy, a race involving 40 hours of sailing in the open sea. He was accompanied by veteran yachtsman Lt. Col Divecha who, according to Bilimoria, "initiated, taught, and always encouraged (him) in the sport," and along with whom he has won several trophies.

Bilimoria, a 24-year-old commerce graduate, has appeared for the final chartered accountants examination.

Yachting in Europe

Three ace Bombay yachtsmen, Pesi Unwalla, Fali Unwalla, winner of the Asiad '82 silver medal and Farokh Tarapore, Asiad '82 gold medalist, represented India in various international regattas in Europe this summer, as part of a four-member Indian team, note press reports. They sailed the 470 class yacht, a high powered Olympic racing dinghy.

The team, having participated in the Weymouth Championships in England and the Kiel Regatta in West Germany and scheduled for the Swedish International, "will be gaining valuable experience prior to the qualification rounds for the Los Angeles Olympics," notes a report in the *Indian Express* May 31, 1983.

The Indian team is reportedly awaiting further assistance from the Indian government to sail in the most significant yachting event—the Pre-Olympic Championships at Los Angeles from July 26 to August 6.

In the trials for the team selections held in May, the Unwalla brothers, Pesi and Fali, won four races against three won by Tarapore.

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'The Unfinished Symphony'

From the day she first sat, perky and bright-eyed, legs dangling, at the piano, to the successful solo recitals, broadcasts and chamber music concerts in India, Sri Lanka, Europe and the US, music was the keynote of Hilla Khursedji's life.

Her death, following a fall from Bakers Store in Kensington, London, on May 5, was a grave loss to the musical fraternity world-wide, and laid waste a promising future. The Zoroastrian community has lost a distinguished musician, nine years after the death of the equally talented pianist Neville Chinoy.

Hilla, 32, the first Indian to study at the famed Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, USA, was acclaimed by her audiences and critics for her expressive and original renditions of several concerti and other major works for the piano which comprised her large repertoire. Hers was the unique privilege of playing Ravel's concerto in G major at the Ravel Festival in France in 1973, at the end of which she walked onstage, clad as always in a sari, to receive five thunderous curtain calls. At the Royal Overseas League competition held at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London in 1975, Hilla stood first in the semi-finals among 300 entrants from 13 countries, winning a prize in the final round and attending an "at-home" hosted by Princess Alexandra for the winners.

Critics acclaimed her "natural musicianship and sensitivity of touch," her "suppleness and (extraordinary) fluidity," when she made her debut at London's Wigmore Hall in 1976 as part of the 'Young Musicians Series'. She was chosen Young Musician of the Year (1977-78) by the Greater London Arts Association.

At her first Bombay concert in 1970, Hilla was described as a "finished artist, (with) poise, assurance and a keen musical sense." She last played for Bombay's music lovers in 1982. "At this recital she gave a marvellous rendition of Chopin's Third Piano Sonata, an interpretation that clearly revealed her musical maturity...Hilla seemed well on the way to becoming an artiste of even greater promise," wrote Roy Wadia in *The Daily*.

Hilla's innate talent for music was

matched by her dedication. "Music is a medium through which I communicate my emotions, my ideas, my feelings," she once said. "I love music so much it would be silly not to sacrifice other things for it."

"Sure hit"

Pianist Benno Moisevitch took her delicate five-year-old hands in his and asked, "What are you going to play for me, my little Mozart?" while Claudio Arrau, another famed musician, foresaw "a musical future that will be undoubtedly brilliant." "A sure hit," predicted Mehli Mehta, founder of the Bombay Symphony Orchestra and father of the celebrated music conduc-

tor Zubin Mehta, when he first heard Hilla play.

The judgement of these world renowned musicians proved unerring. At five, Hilla was playing her own compositions with poise and aplomb. At 12, she made her debut with the Bombay Chamber Orchestra, playing Bach's D minor concerto. Hilla's talent quickly unfolded under the guidance of first her mother, Ms Jeroo Khursedji, herself a qualified piano teacher, and then Madame Olga Craen, one of India's foremost piano teachers.

Before she left for the Curtis Institute in 1968, Hilla had already gained a distinction in the London Royal School of Music's diploma examination. Con-



Above (left): Hilla and Burjis playing a duet on the eve of her departure for the US

Above: "poise, assurance and a keen musical sense"

Left: Hilla aged four—"Little Mozart"



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trary to custom, she was coached by Rudolf Serkin, director of the Institute, right from her first day. Besides a Bachelor of Music degree, Hilla also qualified for a post-graduate certificate from the Institute, and as she continued her studies with Peter Feuchtwanger in London, the laurels amassed.

Though she will be remembered as a brilliant pianist, the tributes from her innumerable friends and admirers suggest that she was loved equally for her warmth, vitality and gentleness. Those who knew her, and those who wrote about her successes described her as a "complete person." She stood first in Cathedral School in the Senior Cambridge examination, and her varied accomplishments included a study of philosophy, Russian literature and American history during her years at Curtis, according to her parents, and a love of yoga which she practised for a complete co-ordination of body and mind.

With an abiding faith in religion, Hilla never abandoned her *sudreh* and *kusti*, her mother said. Before each recital she would pray; "I always said (a prayer), even as a girl, before anything important," she said. The gold *Asho Farohar* which she always wore on a chain around her neck was found lying on the piano at home soon after her death.

Grief at the death of her brother Burjis, in the Bombay police riots on August 18 last year, together with other pressures made her life in London appear grey and lonely. "Like all artistes she was intense, emotional and temperamental, whether it be about her music, or her husband or family," said her mother, and an inability to cope with a combination of personal problems drove her to a tragic end.

Hilla's body was brought back to Bombay by her father, and the large turn-out at the Tower of Silence was, as one press report described it, "the last, truest curtain call for a fine artist, from a silent, grieving audience."

"In Sympathy"

Photographs of Hilla and Burjis dominate the Khursedjis' home in the Dadar Parsi Colony, and one of a triumphant Hilla on graduation day, in cap and gown, clutching her degree, today stands on the piano stool. A tall, brass vase of tube-roses stands beside the stool on which are strewn several cards. Most of them carry the words, "In Sympathy."

"Her life was like a fairy tale, so col-

ourful, so exciting," said Ms Khursedji, slowly turning the pages of a photograph album which records every step in Hilla's career, a career that her parents encouraged and watched with pride. "She made me so proud," she continued, reading aloud in low, trembling tones the tributes that have been paid to the memory of their daughter.

They have accepted the loss of both their children, within the space of a year, with stoical submission. They have rationalized the loss with a belief in fate, a belief that, as Nariman Khursedji puts it, "There's nothing we can do. It is all destiny. You have to accept it."

Finding solace in their memories of the past, recreating the lives of their children through their photographs, the invitations, souvenirs and reviews of Hilla's recitals, through the pages of their autograph books, the couple say, "This is all we have left." They wistfully recall the day a tiny Hilla darted up to the piano soon after her brother's recital at a school social, drawing appreciative applause from the boys. They smile at the image of the entire school marching to Hilla's tune as she played the march at morning assembly. They recall Burjis, equally gifted, but never as hard-working as Hilla, preceding her onstage to fix the special stool and pedals which his father devised for Hilla's dangling feet, and later, recording all her concerts backstage. There was a deep rapport between the two.

"She was always so modest and so

shy," said Khursedji. "I used to play the viola with the Bombay Symphony Orchestra, and I used to take her to my rehearsals and she'd sit alone and keep listening... At the age of three or four I realized she had an absolute pitch, already she could discern each note in a chord or dischord I played." Hilla's maternal grandfather, Mancherji Edalji Joshi, founder of the Dadar Parsi Colony had once said of Hilla, "This girl will bring out our family's name."

And there are memories of Burjis' marriage to Linda, of Hilla's marriage to Rohinton Mazda, and of the sound of Hilla's childhood compositions, 'The Train', 'Raindrops' and 'Indian Boy', played by her time and again for a clamouring niece Zerna (5), and nephew Karl (8).

Khursedji, who was to retire before the death of Burjis, now has the responsibility of managing the family business of hospital equipment together with Linda. And Ms Khursedji says, "Someday maybe I'll teach my grandchildren to play the piano. But not now. Now I just don't have the heart."

Hutokshi D. Doctor

Fighting Spirit

He was "Mr Boxing" in India and was responsible for bringing the manly sport to its present fairly high level, in the ring and organizationally. He was Khurshed P. Kuka, India's world-renowned referee/judge and official, who died in Bombay

Kuka with Muhammed Ali (Photo courtesy Mid-Day)



harness on May 5, 1983, at the age of 63.

Kuka was a boxer himself in his school and college days. He gave it up in the fifties and took up coaching, setting up the famous Iron Club which in the next 25 years staged hundreds of boxing competitions in Bombay.

Kuka's love for boxing was amply rewarded when in 1956 he became India's first international referee/judge and the same year officiated at the Melbourne Olympics to become to date the only one from India to officiate in the Olympics. That was just the start of a career which made him famous in the boxing ring in India as well as abroad. He earned the reputation of being one of the toughest men in the ring, a man who stood no nonsense and followed the rules strictly. It was commendable for a man who stood hardly 5 feet 3 inches with a frail frame to command respect in the ring from one and all.

The International Amateur Boxing Association (IABA) appointed him to officiate in five successive Olympics till the Montreal Olympics in 1976—an honour bestowed on only one person throughout the world. And when he retired from international officiating after 1976, the IABA made him "Honorary Life International Referee and Judge," a rare honour.

His exploits in the ring as an official were innumerable, but they included: India vs Pakistan (1953); vs Burma (1953-54); vs Japan (1953); vs Thailand (1973); vs West Berlin (1973) and so on...

Kuka used to tell with nostalgic memories of his officiating in the Olympic events. At the 1960 Rome Olympics he was in the ring and raised the hand of Cassius Clay (now Muhammed Ali) as the gold medal winner in the heavyweight class. He also officiated in the Asian Games and Asian Boxing Confederation Championships and managed the Indian team to the 1970 Edinburgh Commonwealth Games.

After having founded and nursed the State Amateur Association, and contributed immensely to the national body, Kuka broke off with them in 1980 to form a professional boxing association with a view to give Indian boxers monetary rewards for their skills. He became the executive secretary of the Indian Boxing Council and vice-president of the World Boxing Council.

After joining professional ranks he was able to renew his association with Muhammed Ali. He refereed Ali's pro fights in Bombay and Dubai and staged the first Joe Louis night for professional

boxers in Bombay last year.

When he died, he was working on the second Joe Louis night to celebrate World Boxing Day. Two days earlier, he had sent out invitations for a press conference to be held a day after his death.

As an official, he belonged to that rare breed who coupled ability with integrity. He was totally dedicated to boxing and the welfare of his boxers. Many a time he would dip into his own pockets to pay a boxer an extra allowance.

Never one to suffer fools gladly, Kuka was quick to point out breaches in the rules and was outspoken when he saw injustice being perpetrated, especially when it concerned boxers. He detested officials who lived off the fat of the boxers and because he was one to speak his mind always, no matter whom it hurt in the process, he was not very popular with that class of officials. But the tributes and condolence messages that poured in from all over the world bear enough testimony to the great respect in which he was held in world boxing circles.

It would be in the fitness of things if the MABA and the IABA perpetuated his memory by holding an annual championship named after him. It would be a fitting tribute to a man who lived, breathed and loved boxing.

He leaves behind his wife Roshen, to whom we offer our heartfelt sympathies.

Fredun de Vitre

Courtesy Mid-Day, May 20, 1983

Well Scored

Died: Darabshah Hormusjee Talati, 78, official scorer for the Cricket Club of India, in Bombay on April 10, 1983, following a heart attack.



Talati: official scorer (Photo courtesy Mid-Day)

A familiar figure at the Brabourne and Wankhede Stadiums, Talati operated the electric score-board and was in charge of the Press box since the inception of the Cricket Club of India in 1938, note press reports. He was "held in high esteem" by the cricketers at the CCI, and after his retirement in 1974, having "served the institution without a complaint or murmur," as the *Mid-Day* wrote, Talati was placed in charge of the Press box at the Wankhede Stadium by the Bombay Cricket Association. He was present at the recent Ranji Trophy quarter-finals at the stadium but his illness kept him from the finals.

Secretary of one of Bombay's oldest clubs, the Wellington Cricket Club for over 30 years, Talati reportedly managed its affairs almost single-handed and even played for the club in his younger days.

Talati is survived by his wife Mitha, daughter Freni and sons Jangoo, Noshir and Boman.

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