

Parzianā

Chicago Center Inauguration

"The modern one-storey brick and cedar building blends well with the quiet wooded residential neighbourhood," notes a report on the inauguration and dedication of the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr-Zoroastrian Center in the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago newsletter of October 11, 1983. The abridged excerpt continues, "Were it not for the *toran* on the front door and the *chalk* on the doorsteps, it looked like any other suburban church. Inside, the building is furnished in contemporary style. The assembly hall is set up with round banquet tables. At one end of the hall is the stage with the head tables. In front of the stage the area is set up for the Jashan ceremony with an *afargan* flanked by vases overflowing with flowers and silver trays laden with fruits and nuts. In another area is the library and learning center with a wall of unfilled bookcases.

"A separate wing houses the prayer hall, a quiet, dimly lit room with a chandelier. At one end on a raised pedestal is the main *afargan* shipped all the way from Bombay. On the opposite wall is a garlanded picture of Zarathushtra. Across the room are two marble tables one bearing *sukhad* and the other unlit *Diva* glasses.

"This then was the setting on September 3, 1983 at 3:30 P.M., when Zoroastrians from across USA and Canada gathered there for the dedication of the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr-Zoroastrian Center of Chicago. The ladies were dressed in rich colourful saris, *garas* and pretty dresses; the men for the most part were in suits and some

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in traditional *daglas*. The ceremonies began at 4:00 p.m. with Bomi Damkevala, the secretary of ZAC welcoming the guests 'on this momentous occasion in the history of Zoroastrianism on this Continent.' He stated that 'most of us here today are first generation immigrants to this country. We bring with us the energy, the

pragmatism and the courage normally associated with first generation immigrants. However, the ease with which Zoroastrians have adjusted and blended into the American lifestyle has been phenomenal and can only be attributed to the Universal teachings of Zarathushtra.' He concluded his opening remarks with the statement, 'This structure stands as a testimonial that the religion that we will pass on to our children will not be one that is dying and on the verge of extinction. On the contrary, it will be alive and vibrant.'

"He introduced the 17 mobeds who were seated on the floor in their immaculate starched white robes and caps. This was one of the largest groups of priests ever assembled in the Western Hemisphere. Of the 17 priests, seven were from Chicago (Ervad Dr Kersey Antia, Ervad Neriosang Karanjia, Ervad Jamshed Antia, Ervad Pesi Vazifdar, Ervad Bahram Shahzadi, Ervad Behram Daboo and Ervad Bomi Zarolia). The rest had come from all over the USA and Canada for this very joyful occasion. The ceremony was led by Chicago's own High Priest, Kersey Antia. On his right was Dastur Sohrab Kutar, the high priest of Europe and the official representative

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of the WZO. After the jashan, Antia gave his benediction and ceremonial shawls were presented to him by the members of the community.

"Then came the dramatic moment, when the ceremonial procession of mobeds led by Antia and Kutar carried the afargan containing the sacred fire down the aisle to the prayer room, watched by the members of the congregation with hands held together and with heads bowed in prayer, many of them moved to tears. In the prayer room the fire from the jashan was transferred to the main afargan as the priests recited the *Atash Niyayesh*. As they did so Morvarid Khanum Guiv, the Guest of Honor, placed the first piece of sandalwood.

"At this point the Center was officially dedicated. This was the culmination of the dreams of the Zoroastrian community. For eight years the community had toiled and sweated to have a place that they could call their own. Several members had given their time in the evenings and over the weekends, working in 90 degrees + temperatures over the past months. As President Rohinton Rivetna very aptly stated in his inaugural address, 'This is our finest hour. We have tread many miles and suffered many setbacks. With the completion of the Darbe Mehr, one chapter in our history comes to a close.'

"After the guests had lit the divas, offered the sandalwood and filed past the afargan, Damkevala introduced the persons seated at the Head Table—Ms Guiv, Dr. Rostam Sarfeh, Arbab Mehraban Zartoshty, Dr Shari Merabi (all members of the Guiv Trust), Ms Merabi, Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna, ZAC vice-president Kayomars Mehta, the treasurer, Minoo Press, Keikhosrow Mobed, one of ZAC's directors who had served as a liaison with the Guiv Trust and Minu Patel who had donated substantially towards the library learning center.

"As the inaugural address by Rivetna was announced, the crowd burst into spontaneous applause and gave a standing ovation to the man who was in the main responsible for the Center. He had conceived and designed the building and nurtured it through the many crises during the construction.

"Keikhosrow Mobed presented a tribute to the late Arbab Rustam Guiv, the great philanthropist to whom the community owes a debt of gratitude for having donated a large chunk of the con-

struction costs, and to his wife Morvarid. Zenobia Rivetna and Shahriar Mobed presented Ms Guiv with a garland and a bouquet of flowers in the midst of a standing ovation and thunderous applause.

"Minoo Press thanked all the other donors including Mehraban and Faridoon Zartoshty, Dr and Ms Abou Mazdai, Mehroo and Minu Patel and Mr and Ms Zubin Mehta, other individuals and associations around the world who had contributed funds for the center.

"Kayomars Mehta, mentioned the efforts of Dr Bahram Farhadieh, past president of ZAC in getting us going and those of Noshir Daruwalla the ex-treasurer who through his careful investment of funds built up our finances. Of course, no one could dispute the job done by Roshan Rivetna alongside her husband, Rohinton. She was there to assist him every step of the way.

"Interspersed among the program was a pitch by Dara Rivetna to raise funds for building up the Building Perpetuation Fund. A target of collecting pledges worth \$10,000 that evening was set up and by the generosity of the people gathered there we were able to reach that goal.

"Chicago's own caterer, Soli Fanibanda with the help of his wife Bakhtawar, had prepared a feast comprising Tandoori Chicken, Pullav-Dal, Sali-Gos, Naan, Sev and Kachuber followed by *mithai*—jalebi, penda and barfi. Dinner was followed by entertainment. Prof. James Whitehurst of Illinois Wesleyan University, an accomplished magician in

his spare time, performed magic tricks to the delight of the young and old alike. Dancing to an Iranian band followed as the Zoroastrians wine and dined and rejoiced at the dedication of their new Darbe Mehr.

"Sunday's program was compered by Dr Rouyentan Farhadieh, a ZAC board member. The morning's program comprised a speakers forum chaired by Kayomars Mehta where speakers representing Zoroastrian Associations in the Western World offered their messages as well as lectures from scholars of Zoroastrianism. Rivetna gave the opening remarks after which Fred Morris (board member, Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York), Ms Dolly Dastoor (President, Zoroastrian Association of Quebec), Dr Jehan Bagli (Editor, *Gavashni*), Dhun Bhaya (President, Zoroastrian Society of Ontario), Mehraban Khodavandi (Zoroastrian Association of California), Kutar, Kersey Antia (World Zoroastrian Organization, Chicago representative), Dr Rostam Sarfeh, Shahpur Irani (Indianapolis), Singpurwala (Philadelphia), Professor Gernot Windfuhr (University of Michigan), Professor H. Michael Simmons (Center for Zoroastrian Studies, Bloomington, Indiana), Dr Ali Jaffarey (California), and Professor Kaikhosrow Irani (New York) addressed the gathering.

"After lunch there was a cultural program of Iranian dances performed by children and directed by Ms Mahnaz Farhadieh along with a Parsi Gujarati natak. The natak *Ghermo Ghambar* was

From left: Sarfeh, Antia, Ms Guiv, Rivetna and Ms Rivetna



a farcical comedy written by Homi Tavadia and adapted for Chicago audiences under the direction of Roshan Patel, starring members of the Chicago Zoroastrian community. Before the closing benediction *Chaiye Hame Zarhosti* was sung led by Roshan Engineer.

"The entire two day ceremony has been videotaped. Copies will be available at cost in the near future. (Write Zoroastrian Association of Chicago, 624 West 56th Street, Hinsdale, Illinois 60521 USA).

"In the words of Professor Whitehurst, 'For a community that scholars were beginning to treat as almost extinct (less than 1,30,000 worldwide), Zoroastrians are proving themselves to be far from a historical fossil. The community can still produce its surprises, as shown by this new Center at Hinsdale. Christian and Jewish scholars who realize their historical indebtedness to the faith of Zoroaster can rejoice with this community in its latest achievement and be grateful that the flickering flame has been fanned ablaze once more.'

'Muktad' in Ontario

Anjumans and punchayets who complain about a shortage of professional priests may do well to learn from the example set by members of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario. The September ZSO newsletter carried the following report by Ervad Bomon Kotwal on the *Farvardgan/Muktad* days observed between August 21 and 25 at the Mehraban Guiv Darbe Mehr:

"Once again the *Farvardgan/Muktad* days were traditionally observed at the M.G.D.M. with purity and cleanliness. The *Dadgah* room was cleaned and washed and all utensils were

also cleaned and polished including the large *Afarganiya* by volunteers on Saturday, August 20.

"Three *Satums* and *Afringan-Faroxi* ceremonies were performed by volunteer mobeds and the food for the *Satum*



Jashan ceremony

prayers was cooked daily by volunteer ladies thus preserving cleanliness and purity at the M.G.D.M.

"On the first day of the *Gathas*, *Ahunavaiti*, *Afringan* and *Faroxi* ceremonies were performed by eight mobeds: Yezdi Antia, Minoo Kanga, Kobad Zarolia, Firdosh Bulsara, Bomon Kotwal, Nozer Kotwal, Jal Panthaki and Khushnood Panthaki who recently received his priesthood in India. Nearly 200 names of deceased members of our community were remembered in these prayers. A large number of Zoroastrians were present, and lunch (curry rice, *kachuber* and *chasni*) was served to all,

free of any charge.

"All these five days, volunteer ladies and mobeds slept overnight at the M.G.D.M. and the fire in the *Dadgah* room was kept burning until the day before the New Year.

"Bomon Kotwal wishes to sincerely thank specially Ervad Nozer Kotwal who slept for five days at the M.G.D.M. and helped in setting up the flowers, Ms Putli Mirza for organizing the lady volunteers to cook the food, Ms Coomi Bhathena, Ms Khorshedbanoo Wadia, Ms Najamai Karkaria, Ms Villy Baria and Homi Damkewala for assisting in preparing food and offering so willingly any other service as needed during the five days.

"On August 26, *Roj Hormazd, Mah Farvardin*, the *Jashan* ceremony was performed by seven mobeds at the M.G.D.M. in the presence of over 300 Zarhostis and after that *Chaiye Hame Zarhosti* was played on the piano by Ms Kety Jamshedji from Bombay and sung by all those present. Dinner—*dhan-dar*, *chhamnana patio*, and *chasni*—was then served, again free of any charge.

"All services were voluntarily given and were very well supported by the community with generous donations. Bomon Kotwal once again thanks all the volunteers and the whole Zoroastrian community for their help, participation and generous donations to make this occasion memorable."

The French Connection

A Zoroastrian Association of France has been formed, writes M. N. Bharucha of Bombay who happened to be in Paris recently. The "founders of the Association, have invited Zoroastrians residing in Paris to join them. The first joint meeting was held on May 25, 1983 and the second on June 25, 1983, both at the residence Avenue Victor Hugo of Madame Meherzoon Sasanfar, President of the Association. There were about 40 Zoroastrians who attended these meetings-cum-social gatherings. A working committee was appointed with Madame Sasanfar as President. Other members include Jehangir Bhowmagiri, Freney Bhowmagiri, Mani Bharucha, Eddie Marazbani, Kasra Vafadari, and Jehangir Irani.

"The objectives laid down are mainly to look after and assist all Zoroastrians in France, to cooperate with other Zoroastrians of the world, to provide a link with our co-religionists by keeping alive our religious ideals through lectures by eminent Zoroastrians and scholars," writes Bharucha.



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Premises for Parsis

Hutokshi Doctor

Dozens of Parsis have been streaming in to the office of M/s S.F.Engineer in response to an advertisement prominently placed in the Bombay news media. Titled "Premises for Parsis" the advertisement noted "we are negotiating with the Bombay Parsi Punchayet for a choice piece of land on Gibbs Road on Leasehold terms for construction of a Building for sale of premises on ownership basis to prospective members of a Co-operative Society for Parsi Zoroastrians only."

The advertisements have brought in about 1,000 enquiries, while 80 to 100 applicants for the 48 two-bedroom ownership flats have been registered, notes Soli Engineer who has undertaken the construction of the project on a no-profit no-loss basis. M/s S.F.Engineer, builders and realtors since 1942, will scrutinize the applications jointly with the BPP. But "the Parsi Punchayet will be making the final selection themselves," notes a letter to the applicants, on the basis of the norms for allotment recently adopted by the Punchayet. "The first preference will be given to young couples waiting to be married," said Engineer, "and to those living in dilapidated houses."

All the 48 flats in the six-storey building will be of the same size, approximately 1,000 sq. feet, and the price has been fixed at Rs 800 per square foot. Payments, to be made by cheque only, will be on the basis of 20 percent on allotment, 20 percent on completion of the foundation, and then on the raising of each slab, Engineer explained.

The vacant plot, situated above Khareghat Colony, on which construction should begin by the end of this year, has been offered by the BPP on leasehold terms with the land value subsidized, according to Jamshed Mody, Engineer's colleague, who is supervising the project.

The flats have been designed simply and with a view to maximum utilization of space. The plans have just been approved by the BMC, notes the letter. The flats, with two bedrooms, two baths, a living cum dining room, kitchen, and servants room with an attached toilet



From left: Mody, Engineer and P.D. Colabawala (Photo: Ayesha Soni)

and a separate entrance, should be completed within the next two-and-a-half years, said Mody. There are four lifts to each floor and the number of storeys has been limited to six.

"These same flats, offered to non-Parsis, would fetch an astronomical figure," said Engineer. The conditions for re-sale of these flats, which are for Parsi Zoroastrians only, have not yet been finalized.

"This project is one stepping stone to develop other vacant plots from the corpus," said Engineer. "We'll be collecting a sizeable amount—over two crores, which we will plough back," for lower-cost ownership houses in areas like Andheri, Mahim and Dadar, or for flats on rental basis. "The BPP has very large pieces of land and the trustees thought wisely that something has to be done," said Engineer. Projects like this one, he feels, can be used to generate funds which can then be employed for housing, education or medical facilities. He pointed out that there are several trusts which fail to develop their valuable assets or to maintain their properties. Engineer emphasized, "I'm not making anything out of this project." He also offered to work, for no profit, for any Parsi trust.

Two years ago M/s S.F.Engineer had negotiated with a Parsi trust for the construction of flats on a deposit cum rent basis in Andheri, but the project did not materialize. All those who had been interested in this project have now been sent a circular, informing them of the new scheme and of the possibility of future projects. To all these people Mody recommends planning now "towards procuring finance and savings for your future housing needs." He commented on the 'loan linked deposit

scheme' of the Housing Development Finance Corporation Ltd, which demands a lower rate of interest on housing loans than that charged by banks. "It may be worth your while to have a deposit account with them so that you may enjoy a certain priority in sanction of housing loans by them, if so required," notes his letter.

Mody, who has personally been meeting Zoroastrians who come to the office, showing them the plans, giving them the application forms and replying to scores of letters said, "I'm so sorry and so sad about our Parsi community." This project, he said, has caused him to meet nervous youngsters, agitated old ladies and resigned men, all with the same problem—housing.

There are many Parsis who need accommodation but cannot even contemplate applying for a flat that costs Rs 8 lakhs. The price of the apartments was not mentioned in the initial advertisement for the Gibbs Road project, but was stated in a letter sent out in response to all enquiries. "If you are unable to afford these premises," the letter added, "kindly send us a letter stating the same and also state in that letter your specific housing problem. Let us have an idea as to what you can afford and where, as we may be planning future projects for less affluent people, in which case we may be sending you a circular first to notify you about the same." All replies will be kept on file, said Mody, and will represent a kind of market survey of the community's housing needs. "It's all very well to speculate what rentals/purchase price...for more subsidized, more affordable housing schemes for Parsis should be...but you don't really know till you ask them," said Mody.

Events and Personalities

The Orthodox Voice

A new fortnightly *The Parsee Voice* that will attempt to "view things in the right perspective" has been launched by former Bombay Parsi Punchayet chairman B.K. Boman-Behram, some members of the Council of Orthodox Parsis (COVP) and "dedicated workers with the interest of the Community Members at heart."

Edited and published by Ardeshir Furrokh Doctor, a public relations officer in a bank, the four page, printed *Voice's* first issue is dated October 16 to 30, 1983.

The first three pages are in English and include an editorial, as well as a column titled "Of Cabbages and Kings" on Parsi politics. The last page is in Gujarati and contains translations of some of the English items as well as a short piece on the state of the Bombay fire-temples.

"In the absence of any leadership, the only thing an average Parsee can lean on for guidance and information, is a Parsee newspaper," notes the front page editorial. "But when even Parsee newspapers and journals lose their bearings and either talk at variance or pull in different directions or give one-sided, biased views, what is the poor Parsee reader to do?"

"It is because of these reasons that we felt that there is a woeful vacuum, an unfortunate void in our community. There is no publication devoted solely to Parsee affairs and happenings which purveys news and views in an objective, dispassionate manner.

"We humbly believe and hope that this little fortnightly, *The Parsee Voice* will help fill the void in a small way.

"Our credo will be to uphold and defend with all our might our glorious religious tenets and traditions, to take up every genuine, legitimate cause of the community, to question any wrongdoing by those who hold the reins of Parsee trusts, funds and properties. In short, we shall stand up for a comely lady with a pair of scales in one hand and a sword in the other."

The *Voice* welcomes "letters, articles, subscriptions, donations, advertisements

etc." All editorial correspondence should be addressed to No.4, 803 C. Dr. B. Ambedkar Road, Dadar, Bombay 400014 and other letters to 33, M. Karve Road, Bombay 400004.

"We need a united voice to keep abreast of the day to day, factually correct, unbiased viewpoints and problems facing the Community," notes a piece signed by Perviz F. Dotivala.

After the 1981 BPP Anjuman Committee election rout, the orthodox section of the community was both dispirited and disorganized. The formation of the COVP and the launching of the *Voice* are the first signs of a new orthodox grouping. Despite the internal differences in the COVP which saw the departure of founding members Russi Wadia and Faribourz Nariman, the new alliance between Boman-Behram and his workers and Adi Doctor, B.K. Mistry and others, holds the promise of giving the middle-of-the-road Committee of Electoral Rights a contest in the 1988 Anjuman Committee elections.

Federation Photographs

It is not always easy to obtain photographs for *Parsiana* on time as the honorary secretary of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, Keki J Gandhi, discovered. His story is best said in a letter he wrote to *Parsiana*:

"On receipt of (*Parsiana's*) telex, Farida (Variava, a trustee of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman) and I went to (the photographer's) shop and refused to move until the photographs were given to us. Three hours later we got the black and white photographs at 3.00 p.m. with a promise to deliver the coloured ones at Farida's residence at 8.30 p.m. The promise was not kept and once again we went straight from a funeral around 1.30 p.m. to his shop. He turned up at 2.15 p.m., looked at us and said please wait for five minutes and disappeared. After waiting for 55 minutes we were told that he had gone to his residence 30 kilometers away to bring the photographs. I

told them to keep the photographs in the shop and phone me immediately so that I could send my driver and forward the photographs through a passenger leaving for Bombay on the 5.00 p.m. flight. At 4.00 p.m. I phoned again and was told that the photographer had carried the photographs to deliver them to Farida's house. Hopefully we will get them in a day or two."

The photographs finally arrived in time to be used in the October issue.

Madras seminar

A 'study seminar on Zoroastrianism' organized by the Madras Parsi Zarthosti Anjuman in collaboration with the Institute for Development Education, Madras, was to be held in Madras' Connamara Hotel on November 12 and 13.

"Two high priests from Bombay and several eminent Parsis from various other places have accepted the invitation to participate in the seminar and read papers," notes a letter from R.P. Ginwalla, honorary secretary of the Anjuman.

Speakers include Dr Ram Singh, director of the institute (Subject: "Human Need for God"), MPZA President M.K. Belgamvala (welcome address), Dastur H.K. Mirza ("The Fundamentals and Customs and Traditions of Zoroastrian Faith"), Dastur N.D. Minochehr-Homji ("Ethnic Origin, Ceremonies and Rituals of the Parsis"), Dr Freddie Mehta ("The Role of Parsis in the Socio-economic Development of India"), former BPP Chairman B.K. Boman-Behram ("Relationship of Parsi Community with other Communities"), authoress Ms Piloo Jungewalla ("Role of Parsi Women in the Emancipation of Indian Women"), Alpawalla Museum curator, Ms Nivedita Mehta ("Parsi Contribution to Art and Cultural Life of India") and Ervad Furrokh S. Bamji (vote of thanks).

BPP Trustee Roll Call

During the months of April, May and June, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet board of trustees held eight meetings of which four were attended by all seven trustees, notes the BPP *Quarterly Review* April-June 1983. Six of the trustees attended three meetings and five attended one. The total number of items on the agenda were 198 which works out to an average of around 25 items per meeting.

Grindwell Norton diluting

Grindwell Norton is offering for the first time to the Indian public equity shares. This will bring the alien holdings in the equity capital to 40 percent from the existing level of 50 percent.

Addressing a press conference at Mora, Uran, near Bombay, where its first and major plant is situated, Noshir D. Sidhva, managing director, stated that the company held an industrial licence to manufacture 1,000 tonnes per annum of super refractories. The present installed capacity was 150 tonnes yearly. The company proposed to set up a separate plant for this, costing around Rs 1 crore.

This apart, he added, the company was in an advanced stage of implementing a project for extending its range of coated abrasive products, viz. coated abrasive belts. It had already obtained an industrial licence. This would cost another Rs 1.50 crores. He said this would involve setting up a new plant and equipment for a completely integrated process to make coated abrasive belts. The other proposal was for modernization of the existing plant and facilities and extension of certain product lines at an estimated cost of Rs 50-60 lakhs. Sidhva also stated that the capital expenditure programme for the next two years would be in the region of Rs 5 crores.

About the working results, Sidhva explained that the turnover for the 18-month period ended June 1983 was Rs 34 crores, realising a gross profit of Rs 5.53 crores. The profitability was expected to be much better in the current year according to his reckonings.

With the setting up of its grinding wheel factory at Mora in the early '40s, the company became the first to manufacture industrial abrasives in India. Today, the Mora complex houses two plants for the manufacture of bonded abrasives as also the production lines relating to coated abrasive discs and super refractories. Over 25,000 different types of abrasive products are produced at Mora, supplied to a host of diverse industries and used in a large variety of applications.

In 1967, the company entered into technical collaboration with Norton Company, US, a world leader in abrasives. In 1971 Norton, US, invested in the company's equity and became an equal partner. The US company operates 126 manufacturing facilities in the US alone and 26 other countries and has an annual turnover of over Rs 1,260 crores.

Not satisfied with being a producer of only grinding wheels and other bonded abrasives, the company set up a plant for silicon carbide—a basic abrasive raw material. The silicon carbide plant, which was set up at Bangalore in 1971, was the first of its kind in Asia (outside Japan).

The second plant, located at Tirupati, Andhra, was commissioned in 1979. It has also set up an R and D centre at Bangalore. It spent over Rs 250 lakhs on R and D during the last five years. This, together, with its links to Norton, US, will ensure that the company remains at the forefront of abrasive technology, according to the management.

Abridged from the Financial Express, October 25, 1983.

Expanding the bank

In an effort to expand and improve services, the Zoroastrian Co-operative Credit Bank Limited is revising its bye-laws, notes the Bank President Rustam A. Gagrati in his speech delivered before the annual general meeting of the bank held on October 27 at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute Library Hall in Bombay.

"The Bank has been receiving directives from the Reserve Bank of India to expand its area of activities and not restrict the membership...to only individual Parsi Zoroastrians. At present the Bank can open accounts of non-Parsis with the Bank, receive deposits and pay interest to them thereon but the Bank cannot advance any loan, secured or unsecured, as only individual Parsi Zoroastrians can be members. If a firm has Parsi as well as non-Parsis as partners the Bank cannot make the firm a member of the Bank," stated Gagrati.

"I and my colleagues on the Commit-



Sidhva: at the forefront

Shop floor of Grindwell Norton's Bonded Abrasives Plant



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tee have every hope that without in any way affecting the existing working of the Bank the activities of the Bank will be expanded and will be to the benefit of all the members. (We) look forward to the approval of the existing members of the Bank to the revised Bye-laws when placed before the General Body of the members at a Special Meeting of the members of the Bank which we will convene."

The bank has also requested Limji Mistry, a member of the bank's managing committee and former general manager of the Union Bank of India "to join the Bank as its Chief Executive... By his joining...he will...considerably enhance and expand the activities of the Bank," said Gagrati.

The financial year ending in June 1983 saw the bank's deposits grow from Rs 1,16,79,000 to Rs 1,57,63,000 and profits increase from Rs 5,33,000 to Rs 5,53,000.

"The improvement in the Bank's income," said Gagrati, "has been due to all round increase in activities and operations. It is a matter of satisfaction that an ever-increasing advantage is being taken of the services provided by the Bank."

Top productivity

Industrial Boilers of Gujarat won the first prize for the Best Productivity Performance during the productivity year 1982 awarded by the National Productivity Council, notes a press release.

The award was received by Ms H.R. Engineer on behalf of the company from the Union Minister of Industry, Narayan Dutt Tiwari in New Delhi recently.

The company which manufactures steam boilers "has maintained a steady growth of 40 percent," since it installed its first boiler unit in 1977, noted Ms Dhun B. Baldawala, a director of the company who earlier this year won the 1983 Best Woman Entrepreneur award instituted by the Institute of Marketing Management and Cinni Fans.

Ms Engineer receiving award from the Union Minister of Industry, Narayan Dutt Tiwari



BOOKS

Meherjirana Revisited

Homi J. Rogers

A Guide to the Zoroastrian Religion: A Nineteenth Century Catechism with Modern Commentary. Translated and edited by Firoze M. Kotwal High Priest, H.B. Wadia Atashbahrām and James W. Boyd, professor of philosophy, Colorado State University, Colorado, USA.

A one-volume comprehensive compendium on all aspects of Zoroastrianism, *A Guide to the Zoroastrian Religion* is basically an English translation of a catechism written by one of the most noted priests in the latter half of the 19th century, Dastur Erachji Sohrabji Meherjirana (1826—1900). The translation has been done by James W. Boyd, professor of philosophy at Colorado State University, and Dastur Firoze Kotwal, the current high priest of the Hormasji Bahmanji Wadia Atashbahrām in Bombay, one of the eight major fire temples in India. Kotwal also offers comments (printed in striking italics type) on the questions and answers raised in the text. This provides a contemporary statement on orthodox/conservative Zoroastrian beliefs, and is, to quote from the book's introduction, "an especially valuable addition in light of the great impact modern linguistic and historical studies have brought to this ancient, long lived faith."

Let us take some different examples from the book to elucidate how Kotwal (DK) provides interpretations and comments to Meherjirana (DM):

"Q: What is the advantage of saying prayers in all five gahs?

"DM: Five fireshtes recommend our merited acts and by saying the prayers of these five gahs, five things remain in our heart, namely: good nature, intelligence, friendship, moderation and justice. Cf. the Denkart (Book 6).

"DK: None of these references are connected with the meanings of the words designating the five gahs. Erachji's (DM's) answer enumerates the five virtues which the faithful receive by being pious.

"Q: At what time should the prayer of *Hoshbam* be said?

"DM: The prayer *Hoshbam* should be said at dawn because there are good blessings in it. For this reason when we invest a child with *sudre* and *kusti* we say this prayer also.

"DK: Erachji is saying here that a young person's investiture with *sudre* and *kusti* should properly be performed at dawn. Practice has now shifted to after dawn, i.e. the *Hawan gah*, and even as late as the third *gah* of the day."

In a similar exchange of thoughts, Kotwal, in conforming to modern times, does not think it necessary that only a priest or his wife should weave the *kusti*, as indicated by the Persian Rivayat of Kaus Kamdin. "Nowadays women of the lay class also weave *kusti*." He equally interestingly refutes Meherjirana's argument that eating flesh seems to be improper according to our religion, and hence Zoroastrians do not eat flesh for three days after death. The reasons put forth by Kotwal for this three-day injunction are based totally on principles of science, and not on quotes from

From left: Dr Peshotan Peer, Boyd and Kotwal



religious texts.

This fusion of knowledge of both scholar/priests is responsible for the book being a tour de force on Zoroastrianism. The credentials of the authors are impeccable: Kotwal, an accomplished scholar in Zoroastrian scriptural and commentarial languages, is a Ph. D. in Avestan and Pahlavi studies and has lectured on Zoroastrian ritual at the school



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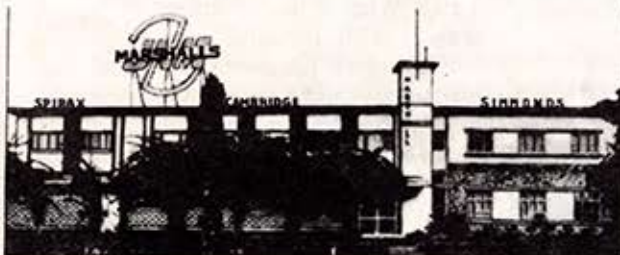
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of Oriental and African Studies in London. Meherjirana, whose treatise he translates, was trained in the traditional languages of Avestan, Pahlavi, Persian and even Pazend. Both the priests share in common a nativity to Navsari and exposure to Western medium of thought, without the discarding of their own traditional roots.

There is no vista of Zoroastrian life that has been left out in the frame-work of 30 chapters—including the history of Parsis in Iran and their advent in India, which accounts for the last two chapters. It is further supplemented by a comprehensive glossary, two appendices and an easy-to-scan index. Written in a question-and-answer format in the style of 9th century Pahlavi books, the chapters bristle with information and modern-day interpretation on diverse themes like theology, rituals, mythology, fire and related aspects, ceremonies, code of life, calendar, and even festivals.

The chapter on the life of the Prophet should be of special interest to many readers, embroiled as the community continually is on the miracles of Zoroaster—right from his childhood to his death. The source of all episodes and miracles is mentioned by Meherjirana.

and none is contradicted—by way of source or content—by Kotwal, though some reservations are expressed only in the case of the colourful story of the Prophet flinging the rosary at his assassin, Turbatur.

Probably, one of the most inspiring chapters (and it occupies one-eighth of the book) is on "Zoroastrian morals: the good life man should live." Basically, an expansion of the Zoroastrian credo of *Humata, Hukhata, Huvarashta*, the chapter instils in one the pride of being a Zoroastrian as it proceeds to answer questions on the religion's teachings in matters of charity ("if anyone approaches with the hope of receiving charity it is the duty of the rich to fulfill his wish"), industriousness ("an industrious and hard working man ... is considered one of good faith and everyone loves him"), arrogance ("this is a sign of ruin. Therefore, prudent men do not become arrogant"), vengeance ("may those who remain vengeful be smitten"), honesty ("whoever acts with honesty is a man of good intelligence"), obedience to parents ("this is the equivalent of *bandagi* to God"), to quote just a few subjects.

Yet another commendable aspect of

the book is the rekindling of faith it provides through its direct and distinctive style. How many have shed or simply forgotten with the passage of time and the vicissitudes of life, rituals and values which had been taught like the reciting of the *ashem vohu* ("As soon as we get up we must say *ashem vohu*. Said at this time, it is equivalent to 10,000 *ashem vohus*") or saying grace (*baj*) before meals ("God is the provider of our daily bread and meals, so when we eat we must first be thankful to him for all his gifts...").

It is the blend of ritualism with rationality that accounts for *A Guide to the Zoroastrian Religion* being a most balanced and welcome book on the religion. In 1869 when Dasturji Meherjirana published his Gujarati work, *Rehbar-e Din-e Jarthusti* (A Guide to the Zoroastrian religion) he performed a commendable service for his fellow brethren by informing them of the full breadth of their religion and kindling within them the pride of being Zoroastrians. A century later, the service has once again been performed — through a medium (English) the community, and especially its younger set, understands best.

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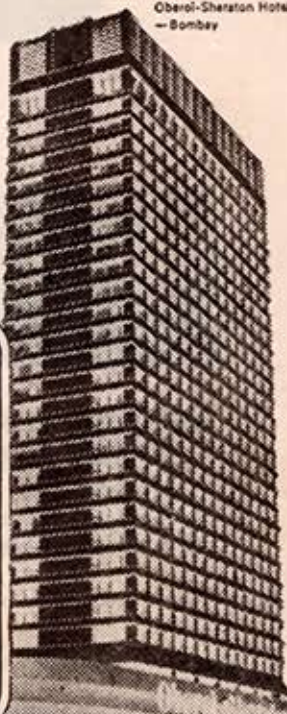
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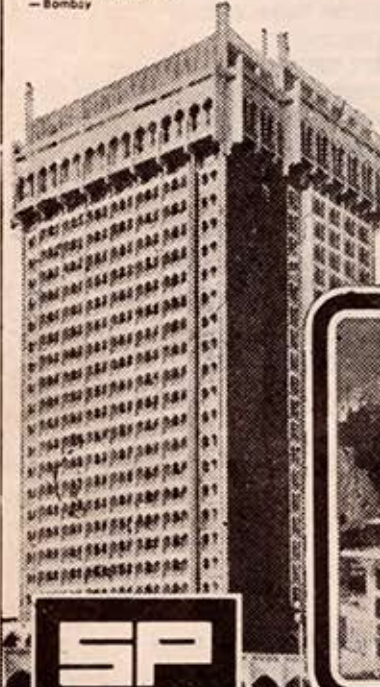


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