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Parsiana

October 1984
Volume 7 Number 4

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Cover: Indian Government Service designed by Manjula Padmanabhan

Parsiana is published by Jehangir R Patel for Parsiana Publications at C/o H L Rochat, Navsari Chambers, ground floor, 39 A K Nayak Marg, Fort, Bombay 400 001, printed by him at Kaiser-E-Hind, 300 Perin Nariman Street, Bombay 400 001 and phototypeset at The Typesetters, Bombay 400 023. All rights reserved. Address all editorial and business correspondence to Parsiana, GPO Box 892, Bombay 400 001. Phone: 268730.

Annual inland subscription: Rs 40 for one year (12 issues); Rs 75 for two years (24 issues). Foreign subscription rates: Seemail Rs 80 for one year, Rs 150 for two years; Airmail Rs 160 for one year, Rs 290 for two years. For US cheques add \$ 4 to cover bank charges.

For Indian upcountry cheques add Rs 3 for bank charges. Cheques and drafts are to be drawn in favour of Parsiana and posted to GPO Box 892, Bombay-400 001 or C/o H L Rochat, Navsari Chambers, ground floor, 39 A K Nayak Marg, Fort, Bombay 400 001.



In Memoriam

Mr. Fali Meherji Variava,

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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.

Russell's religion

An article entitled "Russell's Religion" by Arnavaz S Mama (*Parsiana*, March, 1984) contains references to ZAGNY (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York) which I, and some members of ZAGNY, find quite surprising. There is a statement in quotations ascribed to Prof James Russell, part of which runs as follows:

"The people at ZAGNY (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York) didn't know what the doctrines are, they're barely aware of the Zoroastrian doctrine. There is no basic consensus on basic doctrine, no community structure: some accept, some don't. This problem will take at least a generation to solve. All other problems must be solved first before the community is healthy enough to accept new members. Until then conversion would be merely disruptive."

ZAGNY in the last seven years has

had nine conferences and seminars, and many lectures by visiting dasturs and ervads, on Zoroastrian doctrines, rituals, practices, philosophy and history, in some of which, incidentally, Prof Russell participated. There are regular organized discussions on religious topics, texts and concepts, every month except July and August. There are regular religious classes for the children of the community at four different levels, taught by members of the congregation, including some of our local priests. Of course, not every member of the Association has an understanding of the doctrines of the faith in any part of the world. But from the activities of ZAGNY I have just described, to say, that the people of the Association are barely aware of Zoroastrian doctrines, borders on the absurd.

Not only has the Association provided opportunity for thought and discussion, it is the base for the religious and social activities of the community. There are official gatherings for Navroz and Pateti, and jashans for ghambars and other occasions where large number of members of the community come together. The development of a reasonably effective community setting was an important reason for establishing ZAGNY. To say that there is no community structure seems very odd indeed.

Some time back when there were differences of opinion on the question of who could become a Zoroastrian, a subject very actively discussed in Bombay in the early years of this century and sporadically thereafter, a Religious Advisory Committee was established by ZAGNY. It held many meetings and on two occasions met the entire congregation. It circulated diverse opinions including those of respected priests of India and Iran, past and present. It formulated a report which was brought before the Association at an open meeting, where it was extensively discussed, and after some alterations, supported by over 85 percent of those present. We attempt to solve our problems rationally and openly, without dogmatism or bigotry. We do not leave them for the next generation.

There are other aspects of ZAGNY on which I could report, but I believe I have said enough to show that the views reported to be Prof Russell's, seriously

misrepresent the state of ZAGNY.

It may be that in the article Prof Russell's comments suffered distortion, for I find it hard to believe that Prof Russell was uninformed of the situation in ZAGNY when he expressed the views ascribed to him. I find it even harder to believe that having known the situation, Prof Russell would choose to heap gratuitous insults upon ZAGNY.

The reason for this letter is not just our desire to have some false impressions corrected; but also the conviction that one must respond to publications, distorted or otherwise, which by misinformation sow seeds of confusion, distrust and division in our religious community. Unfortunately, in our community the eagerness to find fault and denigrate, outstrips the desire to understand and unite.

IVY F GANDHI
President, ZAGNY

...

When I was in Bombay in January 1984, I gave an interview to your reporter. The published version, in your March issue, was not sent to me, nor was I asked to check the final version, so I have seen it only today. I am very distressed by the title of the piece, "Russell's Religion." Whatever can this mean? I have not invented a religion, nor do I arrogate one to myself.



Russell: 'distressed by the title'

As a student of Zoroastrianism, all I can do is to formulate what I hope are intelligent reflections upon what the texts say and the traditions are.

Perhaps because of the odd tone struck at the outset, some Zoroastrians here have read my remarks as somehow derogatory or combative. Nothing could be further from my mind than to

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approach any Zoroastrian, anywhere, with hostility. In decrying ignorance of doctrine and a lack of community structure oriented towards new proselytes, I mentioned the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) only because the Peterson navjote took place there, but the problem is a worldwide one. I think, simply, that the mechanisms to educate converts and to insure their acceptance do not exist. One must begin to create them now, but to rush, or to ignore the great weaknesses in religious knowledge of the existing community, would be disastrous.

Let it be said for the record, at least, that ZAGNY (of which I remain a faithful member) and other organizations perform many very admirable services. In calling attention to shortcomings and dangers, I do not deny all that there is to appreciate. Would I feel such affection for Zoroastrianism if it were otherwise? But we must face problems bravely.

Since returning here from India I have kept up academic contacts with Parsi students in Bombay; I am now trying to create a plan to have them do an M A in Religion at Columbia, if funds can be found. One of my students

travelled to India this summer on a Columbia College grant to study Parsi purity rituals, and his work seems most promising. In this modest way I hope to serve Ahura Mazda's religion.

JAMES R. RUSSELL
Columbia University, New York

The Federation's fifty

May I draw your attention to remarks attributed to me in "The Federation's fifty" (*Parsiana*, June 1984). What I meant to express was that there are two places belonging to the Diu Parsi Anjuman: one, the Parsi dokhma land and second, the Atash Adaran Building in Diu town which also has a large compound with two cisterns for catching rain water.

These two places can be sold out and the money utilized for a good purpose. In the case of the dokhma, the land belonged to the Parsi Anjuman of Diu and was registered up to 1956 in the name of the "Parsi Administrator," my father, Ardeshir Hormusji Divecha. In the case of the Atash Adaran, the building and the surrounding lands belonged to my family, but the building was built jointly by the trustees of the Wadiaji Atash Bahram, my family and

the contribution of the Diu Parsi Anjuman. Since Diu had an Atash Adaran, two dokhmas and four mobeds from Udvada, it is obvious a large number of Parsis resided in Diu at one time.

The dokhma land has been encroached upon. The building and compound, was handed over to the "Portuguese Government" by my late mother Maneckbai Ardeshir Divecha and representatives of the Wadiaji's Trust. The Atash Padshah was shifted to Rajkot. Thus one of the oldest Atash Adarans was closed in 1956.

The Portuguese Government turned the Agiary into a "Nunnery" for Christian women — but did not remove the plaque of "Parsi Agiary", its date of establishment, etc. Unfortunately after the liberation of Diu in 1960, the Indian Government took over the property and the plaque "Parsi Agiary" was removed and replaced by "Old People's House."

Diu is administered by an Indian Administrative Service officer called the "Civil Administrator." I am sure if enough pressure is brought we can get a good sum of money for the community.

I had tried at the Diu Civil Adminis-

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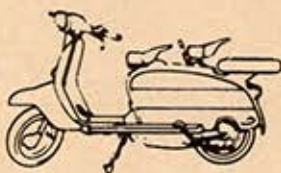
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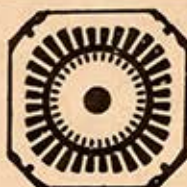
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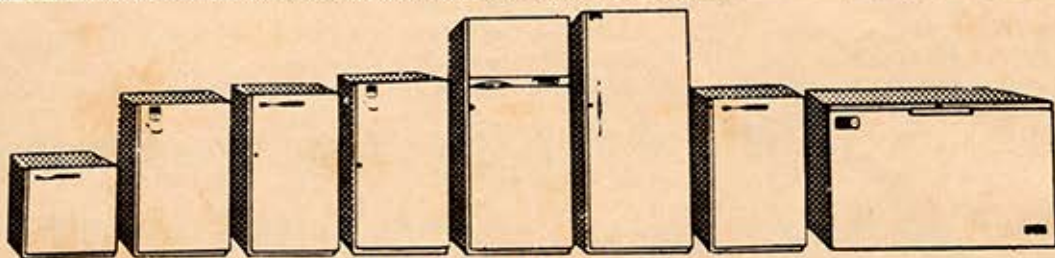
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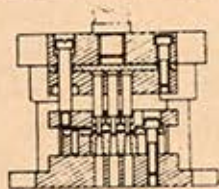
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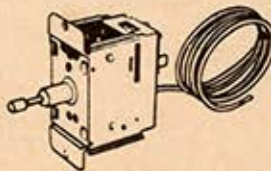
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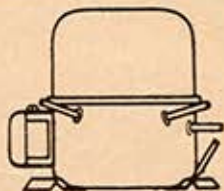
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trator level but with no result. I am the last Parsi and only representative of the Parsi Anjuman of Diu.

TEHMURASP A DIVECHA

WZO reply

Our attention was drawn to the article (*Parsiana*, March, 1984) concerning the meeting of the WZO delegates with the sub-committee of the Federation in Calcutta in February of this year. We have the following comments to make:

In your article on page 24, you state "The Zoroastrians in London for years pressured the London Association to form a world body." This is not true. Throughout our talks in India and elsewhere, we have stated categorically that the pressure to form a world body emanated from all parts of the world and specially from India.

We were totally surprised to read the statement purported to have been made by J N Guzder at the end of the meeting in Calcutta stated under caption "Briefing the Executive Committee." Suffice it to say that the WZO delegation were specifically asked not to stay for this part of the meeting and the reason for this is now so obvious.

S F CAPTAIN
Vice-President, WZO London

Bana was a delegate to some of the sessions of the All-India Oriental Conference. He had played an important part in organizing the historic meeting held at the C J Hall on April 1, 1970 under the auspices of various Parsi Anjumans and Associations.

Habitually jovial and informal in his mode of expression, he was never inclined to dilute certain truths with a view to spare so-and-so's feelings. Some of his interesting letters and articles will be remembered by readers of *Jame* and *Parsi Awaz*.

For about ten years Bana was the president of the Dadar Jashan Committee. In him the community has lost a simple and dedicated worker in whose mind religion and tradition were uppermost.

FARIBOURZ NARIMAN

Wadia Shipbuilders

I enjoyed the article on my ancestors, the Wadias (*Parsiana*, March 1984). One point needs correction. One glance at a map will show that Charleston, West Virginia, is landlocked. Hence, the *Minden* could not have fired on it.

Wadia coat of arms



Perhaps the author was thinking of the port city of Charleston, South Carolina, where the first clash of the American Civil War occurred on April 12, 1861, at Fort Sumter. However, Francis Scott Key wrote the *Star-spangled Banner* at another time, in another place, during another war. It was written on a ship in the harbour of Baltimore, Maryland, on September 13-14, 1814, during the defence of Fort Mchenry against the British. It is indeed intriguing that it was a Wadia ship, particularly since the Wadias have had trade connections with the US.

I am interested in the Wadia coat of arms, especially at the American spelling of "honour." Can Mr Allen, or any of your readers enlighten me regarding the origins of the coat of arms and the spelling? I cannot readily find a reference to the subject in Rutonjee Ardesir Wadia's *Scions of Lowjee Wadia*, Godrej Memorial Printing Press, Bombay, 1964.

ABANNE WATERS
Florida, USA

Worshipping elsewhere

We see Sai Baba photos and other deities in several Parsi houses, even in the room of khandhias and nassalars at Doongerwadi. It is very sad that several Parsi tour conductors give advertisements of tours to Sai Baba's shrines and other religious places. It is most unfortunate that such advertisements, large and small, appear in Parsi papers.

The saddest thing is that tours to Shirdi, etc are advertised side by side with the tours to Udvarda. When due publicity is given to such tours, Parsis flock there in large numbers week after week and month after month.

I give below two illustrations to show how people belonging to other religions desist from attending places of worship other than their own.

A Parsi couple with three children went on a tour of Shirdi accompanied by a Christian maidservant. The servant refused to enter the Sai Baba temple. She said she would not enter it as it did not pertain to her religion. She refused to step into it even when threatened with dismissal.

The other example is of a Christian lady executive who was in great difficulties. Everyone in the office tried their best to assist her. Once, after lunch, a Parsi executive advised her to ask Sai Baba to bring her out of her difficulties. The Christian lady said,

Dr Homi Bana

Homi Rattanshah Bana, who passed away on August 2, 1984 was a crusader. In his early youth he had opted for science. His doctoral thesis was on geology. He was also a gemologist and he used to instruct young aspirants in this field. Many are not aware that he was a keen student of our scriptures and that he had studied Avesta-Pahlavi under a scholar like Behramgore Anklesaria. Zoroastrianism and the Parsis had a special place in Bana's heart and time and again he fought for a worthy cause related to the former or the latter or both.

He was an active member of the Society for the Promotion of Researches in the Zoroastrian religion and was its joint secretary for many years. As joint honorary secretaries, Bana and Maneck Kanga had published an important work entitled *Essays on Iranian Subjects* by Ervad B N Dhabhar. The last two articles in this work — *Use of Wine in Zoroastrian Rituals* and *Questionnaire of Parsi Federal Council*, both in Gujarati and English — are of special interest to the layman.

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I have visited homes of Parsis as well as non-Parsis. One thing I have observed is that in non-Parsi houses one will find photos and statues of their own religion. I have never come across a non-Parsi house where photos of alien religious deities are hung. On the other hand in most of the Parsi houses one will find photos of deities of other religions, statues of Ganapatis and Hindu gods. Even in banks, I have found large photos of other deities and Sai Baba below the glass-tops of Parsi executives.

I have observed some Parsis kneeling before non-Parsi deities and placing flowers, aggarbatties etc. before them. I have even observed very large photos of Sai Baba hung up on walls and offerings kept on the table below them. In another corner you will find a photo of Lord Zarathushtra. One athornan told me that he performed the jashan ceremony in a Parsi house. It was a small family function and the athornan performed the ceremony as a friend of the family. To his great dismay he noticed,

after the ceremony, a large photo of an alien deity hung in one corner of the room.

The most important question now before us is why is it that the members of our community are leaning towards other religions? We have to go deep into the cause of this.

R D R WADIA

Priestly plight

In your issue of July 1984, the plight of priests and their non-availability is discussed. Ms Huzan Kharas has done commendable work in researching this issue. But I feel the real problem is not tackled, nor could those well placed ever realize what causes the exodus of the progenies of practising priests to pastures new.

When a person like Mr Kanga who is also a son of a mobed, says basically the problem is "economic," we are way off the mark. Then another says some agiaries offered Rs 1,500 and some one asks why don't they go? Would any of these worthies — if they were in the shoes of a mobed — go! Of course the problem is left at that because no one is really interested to find out what is bas-

ically wrong. And of course, P Nargolwala is conjecturing about their income saying they must be earning more than Rs 800 per month by now and concludes "probably in the vicinity of Rs 900 to Rs 1,000." A peon's salary in any establishment today exceeds Rs 1,200 per month. You cannot go to heaven so cheap. Where every one is going wrong is when they base the premise of depletion of strength of mobeds only on an economic issue. Every one needs self-respect and not humiliation.

Coming from the illustrious family of Naryosang bin Dhaval to whom all Parsis owe their existence as Parsi Zoroastrians today in India, stark poverty drove many like me to abandon their homes at a tender age to seek pastures new in other professions. Do you think that after going through hell I will send my three sons to the profession which is looked down upon and degraded. No, never. This is the thinking of all those who left the priestly profession a long long time ago. I left my home at Udvada at a tender age of 13 years in the early thirties and along with me many others did. It was tough going without any money but we all made it in



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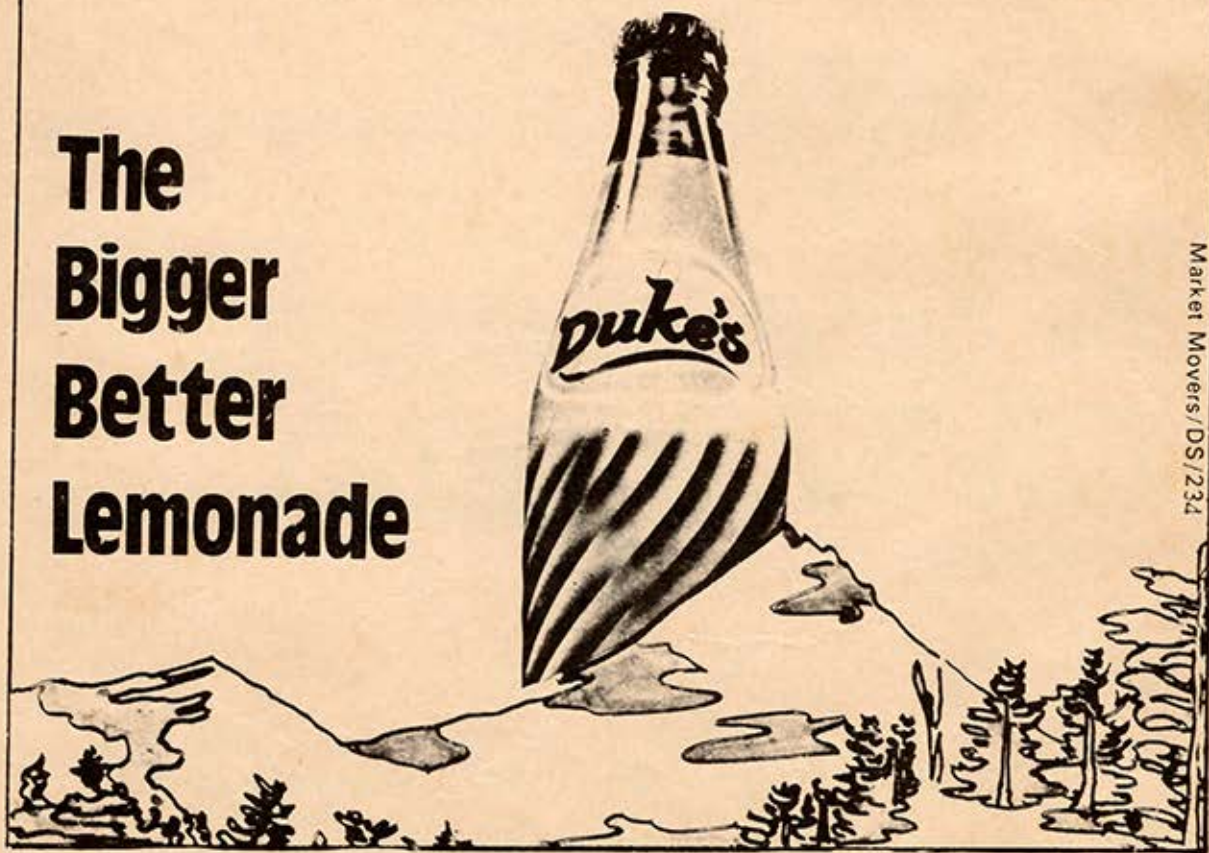
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It is stated that "Today, the condition of our priests is both pathetic and shameful." It has been bad since the last more than 50 years but it seems realization is dawning now not because the condition is "pathetic" but because you do not find priests to pray and send you to heaven or pray for you to bless you with better life. He is an intermediary of God and you need him badly.

To quote only one instance: A prosperous man, who visits Iranshah every month because he believes his prosperity is due to his devotion to Iranshah and knowing that I am from Udvada, barged into my office and asked me to do something about the poor condition of priests at Udvada. So I asked him what he had done for them? He said he gave "ashodad" to those present and to those who prayed for him. If I had not left Udvada and had become a priest, he would also have asked me to pray for him and given me a rupee or two "ashodad" and he would have felt his duty done to priests. He kept looking at me dumb-struck for a while and left without a word. Apparently he had not done a thing and does not intend to do anything either.

Unless you change the present commercialized way of praying, there is not going to be any change in the attitude of those who left the mobedi profession in the last 50 years to send their sons back to this profession.

Those who have remained in this profession until today but live a pathetic life of want and misery, are not likely to send their sons to this profession, nor will those sons, who see their fathers' pitiable condition and stark poverty, accept mobedi as their profession, incentives notwithstanding. There is a lot of bitterness amongst them.

The Cama Athornan think they are doing a great job offering money baits. How humiliating! Have you been able to find out why no priest students are attracted by this money bait?

The immediate step in the right direction would be to ameliorate the condition of present day priests, with old age security so that at least their sons may be encouraged to take up the profession by precept and not by baiting.

Let us also make a radical change in preaching practice with no money exchanged between priests and laity and

with a corpus created on the lines of the Christian priesthood; above all let this corpus be controlled by the priests only. Members of the laity may be only ex-officio members to collect funds but will not control them so that they do not dominate and humiliate the priests, as is being done by some trusts today.

R J KATILA

How hygienic?

Fire is meant to serve humanity and we are not here to serve fire, to cajole or to pamper it like the Hindus do their stone gods, least of all to worship it. We have to put fire to its proper use. Fire is a benevolent agency in service of mankind, to cook man's food for his health, to turn industrial wheels for his prosperity and to burn away rubbish (*rimoni*) for his health and hygiene. According to the Avesta, anyone who employs fire for the welfare of mankind, goes to heaven. And don't we roast flesh, fowl and fish upon fire? Before the advent of cooking gas did we not use cow dung cakes to obtain fire?

We Zoroastrians may revere fire. His creation, but bow in worship only to Him. Otherwise what is the difference between Hindu *murti puja* and Parsi fire *puja*? The dead are dead and gone. The question is how best we may dispose them of without endangering the health of the living.

In an electric crematorium no fire is involved, but dead bodies are burnt through excessive heat in the furnaces.

The late Dasturji Dabu wrote in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of July 17, 1967 that the *vatavaran* (surrounding aura) of our dokhmas is foul, for which reason they are built far away from agiaries on the outskirts of the towns.

The exposed decomposing bodies placed on the pavis contaminate the sun rays (the parent fire). The rain water splashing on the exposed dead bodies which ultimately flows into the earth also gets contaminated and the air blowing over the putrefying bodies is fouled. If anything, by this primitive system, fire, water, earth and air are defiled.

The mobeds and dasturs who perform the rites on the dead do not accompany them inside the dokhmas. It is deplorable that we make the nas-salars do the dirty work, and for that, give them no place in society. They cannot even enter our atash bahrams.

DARA J CAMA

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Events and Personalities

N P Godrej to contest

In a surprise development, noted industrialist Naoroji Pirojsha Godrej is to contest the Bombay Parsi Punchayet trusteeship election in January 1985. The seat is currently held by noted businessman Jamshed N Guzder.

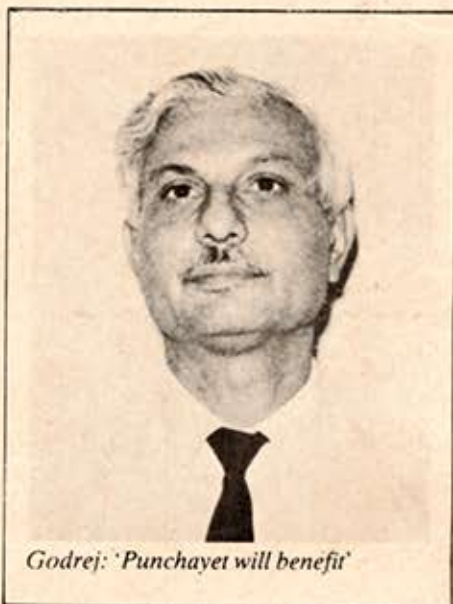
The news was first published in the Bombay newspaper, *The Daily*, of November 20, 1984, which noted, "If Godrej who is the managing director of Godrej and Boyce Mfg Co Pvt Ltd gets elected to trusteeship, the Punchayet will benefit immensely by his able and astute stewardship."

At a meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India in Hyderabad on October 27 and 28, 1984, Guzder had noted that he would be standing for re-election. If that is the case, the election will be keenly contested as both candidates wield considerable influence in the community.

Zoroastrian Bank expansion

Of the three applications made for opening branches of the Zoroastrian Cooperative Credit Bank Ltd at Dadar, Colaba and Tardeo, permission has been granted to open a Tardeo branch office, stated Rustom A Gagrath, president of the Bank at the 57th annual general meeting held on October 19 at the K R Cama Oriental Institute Library Hall in Bombay. The Bank has also introduced a re-investment deposit certificate scheme and intends to provide safe deposit lockers on lease at the Fort head office, informed Gagrath.

"As informed to you in my speech last year, the Bank is on the threshold of expanding its activities to meet the growing competition from other large urban cooperative banks," said Gagrath. Changes in the bye-laws of the bank to facilitate the expansion have



Godrej: 'Punchayet will benefit'

been approved by the deputy registrar of Cooperative Societies. "I have every hope that the introduction of the revised bye-laws of the Bank will help the speedy development of business of the Bank which has stagnated in the past due to the restricted operations under the existing bye-laws," said Gagrath.

Deposits have increased from Rs. 1,57,62,000 to Rs. 1,83,99,000 while fixed deposits have increased by over Rs 16 lakhs. But loans and overdrafts decreased from Rs 20,62,000 in the previous year to Rs 16,64,000 in the year in review. The net profit increased from Rs 5,53,432 to Rs 5 56,896.

"The Bank continues to be a 'Small Man's Bank' as it advances portfolio forms lending mainly to individual Parsi Zoroastrians to meet their needs for various purposes like business, self-employment, industry, trade, religious ceremonies, consumer articles, education, acquisition of residential premises or their repairs and other domestic needs," said Gagrath.

Limji C Mistry, a noted banker who

held senior positions in the Union Bank of India, joined the ZCCP as secretary and chief executive from December 1983. "We are confident that the Bank will be able to progress under his leadership," said Gagrath. Noted real estate developer and architect S F Engineer joined the Bank's managing committee. "The Bank will benefit considerably from his vast connections and experience in the building line particularly when the Bank is proposing to expand its activities by opening branches at important centres in Greater Bombay," said Gagrath.

The bank's managing committee consists of: Rustom A Gagrath, Noshir S Pochkhanawala, Nanabhoy B Jeejeebhoy, Cowasjee N Dinshaw, Jehangir F Shroff, Jehanbux J Gandevia, Homa D Petit, Tehmtan R Andhyarujina, Homi P Ranina, Bomi S Bulsara and Soli F Engineer.

World Congress fees

Rates for the different categories of membership for the fourth World Zoroastrian Congress to be held in Bombay from January 10 to 13, 1985 have been fixed, notes a press release from BPP trustee Jamshed N Guzder, chairman of the Congress.

The categories and rates are: patron Rs 1,500 inclusive of spouse; vice-patron Rs 750 inclusive of spouse; member of reception committee: Rs 500 inclusive of spouse; Rs 350 exclusive of spouse; delegate (local and overseas) Rs 75; delegate's spouse Rs 50; student (school, college and post graduate) Rs 15; and full-time practising mobed: free.

Though the subjects and the names of the speakers have yet to be finalized, a list of the likely subjects to be discussed are: review of local conditions and situations prevailing in different parts of the world; how to improve com-

munications between Zoroastrians living in different parts of the world; how Zoroastrians living in different parts of the world could be of use to one another; promotion of research and scholarship for study of modern problems from a Zoroastrian angle; preservation of Zoroastrian culture and tradition; ramifications of population shifts on a global scale; genetics; the future of Udvada, etc.

In response to invitations sent out to various Zoroastrian associations, "the Teheran Association has replied stating that they expect about 70 delegates to attend and have sent us a long list of names for whom they want the visas to be obtained," notes Guzder.

Birth bi-centenary

Political and business leaders of the country showered praise on the first baronet of India, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, who in the words of the Vice-President of India, M Hidayatullah, "lived well, earned well and spent well for the cause of the common man." Speaking at a function organized by the Indian Merchants' Chamber in Bombay on August 20 to commemorate Jejeebhoy, Hidayatullah said he came to Bombay because he could not "resist the temptation."

Recalling the good work done by the first baronet of India, the president of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Ramakrishna Bajaj described Jejeebhoy as a "legend in his lifetime." Pranlal Bhogilal, president of the IMC, praised Jejeebhoy for

being "great as a Parsi, greater as an Indian, and the greatest as a human being."

Maharashtra's chief minister Vasant-rao Patil spoke about Jejeebhoy's integrity and called upon businessmen and industrialists to emulate his example.

Among the others who paid tribute to Jejeebhoy on the occasion were: D M Sukthankar, Bombay's municipal administrator, BPP Chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla, Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy - seventh baronet, descendant of the first baronet, and B K Boman-Behram, former chairman of the BPP.

It was due to Jejeebhoy's foresight that the Mahim Causeway in Bombay was constructed. Pioneering women's education in India, fighting an incessant battle against orthodoxy and for the political rights of Indians, and helping improve the public health of the residents were Jejeebhoy's notable contributions for the Indians, they said.

Boman-Behram suggested that Jejeebhoy's statue which is presently lodged at the edge of a slope at Bombay's Hanging Gardens be shifted to a safer location lest a landslide destroy it.

Hilla Khursedji Trust

A four-page folder with a photograph of the late pianist Hilla Khursedji on the cover, announces the formation of a memorial trust, "to help needy and deserving applicants... by way of musical education, scholarships, etc."

Chaired by eminent jurist Nani Palkhivala, the Hilla Khursedji Memorial Trust appeals to the public "to contri-

bute liberally to this fund."

Khursedji, who died in London on May 5 1983, was a "talented and outstanding pianist, who regaled the public for more than 25 years," notes the brochure.

Donations, which are tax exempt under section 80G of the Income Tax Act, should be made out and sent to "The Hilla Khursedji Memorial Trust," C/o Godrej & Boyce Mfg Co Pvt Ltd, Show room (Sales), Yusuf Building, Nariman Road, Bombay 400 001 or to Ms Nariman Khursedji, 724, Dinshaw Master Road, Mancherji Joshi Colony, Dadar, Bombay 400 014.

Gandevi Agiary appeal

"As the financial resources of the Gandevi Anjuman are limited.... it has been decided to raise a '150 years Jubilee Fund' to provide the resources for carrying out the essential repairs and renovations of the Anjuman's properties," states an appeal for the Gandevi Agiary signed by trustees Jamshed Guzder (chairman), Homi Katrak, Phiroze Gandevi and Phiroze Katrak.

Due to leakage of rain water into the agiary building, and the dilapidated condition of the dharamshala and the building at the Doongerwadi, the Anjuman has been "advised to carry out certain major repairs," especially since no major repair work has been carried out on the agiary building for the last 50 years. As mentioned in the appeal, when the agiary was established at Gandevi in 1834, there was a

At Jejeebhoy bi-centenary function: (from left) B K Boman-Behram, Ramakrishna Bajaj, FICCI president, H Hidayatullah, vice-president of India, Pranlal Bhogilal, IMC president, Vasantrao Patil, chief minister of Maharashtra, J Jejeebhoy, seventh baronet, D M Sukthankar, municipal administrator, Aspi Golwalla, BPP president. (Photo: The Daily)



large Parsi population there, but with the subsequent urbanization, the numbers started declining.

The trustees of the Gandevi Anjuman, the late Seth Hormusji Burjorji Captain Trust and the managers of the Anjuman at Gandevi have appealed to the Parsis of Gandevi, the descendants of the original Parsi residents of Gandevi, the trustees of the Parsi charitable trusts in Bombay, Navsari, Surat and other places, and the entire Parsi community in India and abroad to make substantial contributions for carrying out the necessary repairs and renovations of the Anjuman's properties which is already in progress. Donations in the name of "150 years' jubilee of the agiary account" may be sent to Phiroze B Gandevia, 13, A1-A2, New Buildings, Khareghat Colony, Babulnath Road, Bombay 400 007 or Ardeshtir S Katrak, Gandevi Parsi Anjuman Office, Agiary Street, Gandevi 396 360.

Motashaw Renal Unit

A physician and a staff member of Bombay's King Edward VII Memorial (KEM) Hospital, the late Dr M D Motashaw's dream of setting up a renal transplant unit at the Hospital was realized in July when the Dr M D Motashaw Memorial Renal Transplantation and Research Unit and the Aditya Textile Industries Renal Research Laboratory and Intensive Care Unit were inaugurated by Bombay's municipal administrator, D M Sukthankar.

The new unit located on the terrace of the old building at the KEM Hospital is fully air-conditioned and consists of 10 beds, a research laboratory, a seminar hall and a kidney museum. Generous donations were received from noted gynaecologist Dr Nargesh Motashaw and Samji Parekh of the Aditya Textile Industries to meet the overall cost of the project estimated at Rs 55 lakhs. Speaking on the occasion, Bombay's Municipal Administrator D M Sukthankar hoped that the department would "now be in the forefront of research and treatment in renal diseases and show the way to such units in other hospitals in the city and elsewhere in the country."

After the death of Dr M D Motashaw of renal failure in 1971, the Dr M D Motashaw Memorial Fund was established in 1973-74 with a donation of Rs 26,000 from his sister Dr Nargesh Motashaw.

World dental consultant

Nominated as a consultant to the World Body on Dental Education and Dental Practice, Dr Keki M Mistry represented India as its chief delegate at a World Dental Congress held at Helsinki in August '84. Mistry who is the orthodontic consultant of the Indian armed forces and medical services, also serves as consultant to the World Health Organization.

Earlier in June 1984, Mistry as president of the Indian Dental Association was instrumental in organizing a national workshop in Bombay on 'Oral health goals for India and strategies to achieve them by the year 2000 AD.'

At that meet, Mehta quoted a report which stated that "for the first time in the history of the world more people in the developing world were victims of toothaches and dental diseases than those in the developed world.... This represents a sharp reversal of trends from two decades ago and is attributed to preventive programs carried out by the developed countries, which programs in large part are neglected by developing countries."

Best woman journalist

She has shown "an out of the ordinary capacity for painstaking investigation covering a wide variety of social concerns..... She has strengthened a dimension of contemporary journalism in India by making such topics news and mobilizing opinion for constructive change." So noted the citation presented to Ms Shahnaz Anklesaria, feature writer and main legal correspondent of *The Statesman*, who was awarded the Media Foundation 1983 Chameli Devi Award for an outstanding woman journalist.

The citation signed by the chairman of the Foundation, B G Verghese further stated: "Anklesaria has delved deep into the realities of numerous institutions that we have given ourselves and jolted us out of our complacency by portraying their ugliness or utility as much as their larger potential."

In reply to a request from *Parsiana*, 32-year-old Anklesaria who obtained a Master's degree in Political Science from Bombay University, wrote about herself and her views:

"I began journalism, working with an English public affairs magazine called *Himmat*. That was from 1977 to 1982

— in which year I was its Editor. I was attracted to the magazine because I appreciated the gutsy stand it took during the Emergency, when it defied press censorship and a series of other repressive measures by the Government and refused to publish distorted versions of the truth. I joined it as its features writer.

"The magazine closed at the end of 1982 because it ran into financial difficulties. After some months of travel abroad, I decided to work with *The Statesman* in Delhi as its features writer and am presently its main legal correspondent.

"However, I write on subjects other than law too — issues of human rights, the environment and particularly issues concerning women. I do a fortnightly column for the paper called *Woman and the Law* — which examines the



Anklesaria: 'painstaking investigation'

biases of various laws and the entire law enforcing machinery with which women, at different stages in their lives, may collide. I have quite no hesitation in calling myself a feminist — feminism, to me, is an alternative ideology to patriarchy — and the values it upholds.

"I do believe that Parsi law as it stands is anti-woman — particularly the law relating to divorce and inheritance. And there is nothing worth commenting on the ridiculous custom which lays down that the child of a Parsi mother, married to a non-Parsi has no right to belong to the religion of his mother. Something so patently sexist must be challenged."

Arsiwalla's administration

The new vice-president, administration and commercial, of Tata Burroughs Limited is Dinshaw K Arsiwalla, a

chartered accountant by profession who has also qualified in management accounting, states a press release from the Company.

Prior to joining Tata Burroughs, a Company dealing in computers, Arsiwalla held senior positions in finance and general management in Voltas, Greaves Foseco and Tata Consultancy Services.

Police Medal for Kermani

Among the awardees of the President's Police Medal for meritorious and outstanding service for the year 1984, is 56-year-old deputy commissioner of police Namdar F Kermani.

Kermani, who joined the police force as a sub-inspector in 1947, was awarded the medal which is given after taking into consideration a person's achievements and work during his entire service. Kermani is known to have successfully handled difficult law and order situations in Bombay, investigated several murder cases and scores of housebreaking, robberies and other important theft cases. He was also delegated security assignments during the visits of VVIPs to the area under his control, notes the press release.

In 1958, Kermani was responsible for investigating the international passport racket which had ramifications not only in the states of Gujarat and Punjab but also in Pakistan and the United Kingdom, states a write-up on Kermani. It was only after he took over as officer-in-charge of the Jogeshwari Sub-Police Station that the area, plagued by riots, was brought under control, according to the press release.

The Carona Sahu rioting and murder case was investigated in 1970 by Kermani who was successful in getting the 27 accused convicted to different terms of imprisonment by the Sessions Court and getting the sentences confirmed against 19 of them by the High Court.

After a spate of incidents of the



Kermani: 'meritorious service'

hijacking of airlines, when the Sky Marshal Training was initiated, Kermani was among those selected who successfully completed the course.

Arjuna awardee Persis

Swimmer Persis Madon received the Arjuna Award from the President of India at New Delhi on June 20, 1984. "To be eligible for the Arjuna Award, a sportsman or sportswoman should have given good performances for the previous three years at national and international events, with excellence for the year for which the award is given. He/she should also have qualities of leadership, sportsmanship and a sense of discipline" notes the brochure entitled *Arjuna Awards 1981 and 1982* released by the department of sports. Though the award is for the year 1981-82, it was presented only this year.

After representing India at the XIIth Commonwealth Games held at Brisbane, Australia, in the same year Madan also represented India at the IXth Asian Games held in Delhi where she qualified for the finals in all the six



Madon: disciplined swimmer

events in which she participated. For this achievement she was adjudged the best swimmer of the Indian team. In recognition of her performance in the year 1981-82, she was conferred with the Shri Chhatrapati Shivaji Award, the highest sports award granted by the Maharashtra State Government.

At the recently concluded South Asian Federation Games held at Kathmandu, 20-year-old Madan bagged the highest number of medals — four gold and one silver in the women's swimming events.

Bank on...

As recently appointed manager, India merchant banking division of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, Zarir J Cama supervises off-shore market operations, funding projects, giving corporate finance advice and meeting a wide spectrum of people at different levels. The most fascinating aspect is seeing what "money does to and for people," says Cama.

One of the few Indians who had earlier been deputed to the Bank's Head Office in Hong Kong, Cama joined the Bank as a trainee in 1968 and since then travelled extensively in India and was the manager of the Delhi branch and accountant of the Bombay area.

As a student of St Paul's School in Darjeeling and St Stephen's College in Delhi, Cama joined Citibank for a year prior to joining the Hong Kong Bank.

(Left) Cama: advising, supervising, funding. (Centre) Arsiwalla: vice-president, Tata Burroughs. (Far Left) Mistry: 'oral health goals.'



The life of Firdousi

"Fifty to 60 years back, the *Shahnama* was read in every house and we knew something about our culture and heritage," writes Dr Sarosh Wadia in the preface to his 12-page booklet titled *Iran's Immortal Poet Firdousi Toosi and his Shahnama*. "My idea of writing this book is to revive interest in our younger generation (and help them) understand the glories of the past," states the noted Bombay homeopath.

The book gives a brief life sketch of Firdousi whose name at birth was Abul Quasim Mansur and who is said to have "belonged to a hard and pure Dehqan (farmer) family in Khorasan.

"From early childhood, he had a taste for poetry, reading and writing," notes Wadia. His work attracted public attention and he was presented before the court of Sultan Mahmud who was so pleased with his writing that he remarked, "You have converted my court into Firdaus (Paradise)."

The Sultan ordered him to write the history of Old Iran in poetic form. Firdousi finished his great epic of 60,000 couplets but subsequently got involved in court intrigue and had to flee.

When Firdousi died he was buried in a small garden at the back of his house as the local Mulla (priest) labelled the poet a heretic and refused permission to bury his body in the local graveyard. "His tomb was in a miserable condition for all these years till the late His Imperial Majesty Reza Shah Pahlvi built it in a grand style," writes Wadia.

The last couplet the poet is said to have written states, "Whoever has wit and faith and judgment will shower benedictions upon me after I am gone. But I shall not die; henceforth I am alive forever, since I have scattered far and wide the seeds of speech."

Like father, like...

Behram and Dossu, sons of Dastur Dr Firoze M Kotwal, high priest of the H B Wadia Atash Bahram, were formally initiated into the priesthood on May 27. The conclusion of the nawar ceremony coincided with their sister Silloo's navjote.

Managing trustee H B Wadia of the H B Wadia Atash Bahram Trust presented shawls to the young initiates, to Dr Kotwal and to the four other high priests who graced the occasion — Dastur K M JamaspAsa, Dastur H K Mirza, Dastur N D Minochehr-Homji and Dastur N M Dastur of Surat.



Right: Kotwal performing navjote of daughter Silloo. Above: H B Wadia presenting shawls to Behram and Dossu Kotwal.

Dastur Kotwal replied by presenting shawls to all the trustees present — H B Wadia, H R Wadia and Ms Mary C P Wadia. He spoke about the nawar ceremony and thanked the hall full of people who had responded to his invitation.

A very well attended traditional dinner in the evening at Albless Baug concluded the celebration.

Spenta Snack Bar

The shop "has an uncluttered look. A pair of small formica-topped tables fixed to the walls and about half-a-dozen or more cane stools strewn around is all the furniture. The lighting is... bright so that you know exactly what you are eating" states *Newstime*, a daily from Hyderabad referring to the Spenta Snack Bar started by the Zoroastrian Stree Mandal of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The self-help project, meant to assist Parsi women of limited means to earn a livelihood, was inaugurated by Ms Sarojini Devi Pulla Reddy, former minister of municipal administration, government of Andhra Pradesh.

The Stree Mandal is a women's wing of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and Hyderabad (PZASH) located at 125 M Gandhi Road wherein Spenta is housed.



In other news from the twin cities, the Parsis celebrated the New Year and Khordadshah by holding jashans and dinners on the two occasions which were well-attended despite the political situation in Hyderabad and Secunderabad, informs Naval B Vakeel of PZASH. For the occasion, greetings were received from the late Prime Minister, Ms Indira Gandhi.

Chiron for chics

The Chiron beauty parlour run by Ms Zarine Edekar at the Hotel Centaur has secured laudatory recognition from the prestigious cosmetics company, Max Factor. Chiron was described as the beauty parlour with "the best facial treatment on an all-India basis" by Max Factor's beauty consultant Elizabeth Hall who pronounced the judgment after completing a survey of beauty parlours all over the country.

Chiron is noted for the highly personalized attention given by owner Zarine (a Parsi married to a Maharashtrian) who has been associated with the five-star hotel since its inception and has been asked to manage a second parlour at the Delhi Centaur. Her clients include musician Shankar, tennis-player Vijay Amritraj and actor Shashi Kapoor.

Reprinted from The Daily, August 7, 1984.

Food for fire

"Fire in a fire-temple" noted the photo caption in *The Daily* of August 19, 1984 referring to a fire that broke out in the Ashberna Agiary on August 18. Photographer Rashid Bamanbehram narrated the following account:

"According to the panthaky of the Ashberna Agiary, Dinshaw Sidhwa, four ladies were working in the kitchen and preparing *stum* food for the *muk-tad* prayers.... when all of a sudden the cylinder caught fire. As the man from the gas service who came to replace the cylinder had no washer to connect, Dastur Sidhwa lent him the washer. But the gas company man was unable to do the job properly and due to the leakage, the fire took place.

"The ladies in the kitchen tried to run out but Ms Homai Sidhwa and Ms Dolly Irani got injured as they fell down. Luckily no one was killed.

"Two fire engines, one water tanker and one ambulance rushed to the spot and put off the fire under the supervision of station officer Sharad Dalvi. The kitchen and the *stum* prayer food were badly damaged."

Home in Rome

Ambassador designate to Italy Homi J H Taleyarkhan packed several video cassettes of the 'progressive' kind with him when he left for Rome in August, 1984.

The audio-visuals are presentations of India's cultural attributes and the strides she has made in the economic and industrial spheres. Taleyarkhan will be projecting them for diverse audiences throughout Italy. The screenings will be part of his master plan to generate enough interest in the Taj Mahal, temples and villages to augment the Italian tourist traffic as also to build up bilateral cooperation inspired by the economic vitality of India.

It is due to this profound concern for the economic sector, that Taleyarkhan seems keen on improving India's commercial ties with Italy with whom India has no political bones to pick. "This economic orientation will be decisive in formulating my diplomacy there," he says.

Taleyarkhan should have no problem in establishing a rapport with the people who matter in Rome. His fund of experience as minister in Maharashtra, his stint as envoy in Libya and

eventually his gubernatorial post in Sikkim should give an edge to both his diplomatic and political traits. It will be up to him to ensure which of the two gains a firmer foothold during his tenure.

Taleyarkhan is not the type of envoy who measures his success on the basis of his popularity on the cocktail circuit. Cocktail or no cocktail (he is said to be a teetotaler), he knows how to make his presence felt on all occasions.

"No country has so much stamina (or) unity," he wrote in a departing brief, "as our country has shown in spite of certain aberrations from which we currently suffer and in spite of so many communities, languages, religions."

He has had an eventful but controversial tenure as Governor of Sikkim during which he was reportedly instrumental in having the Congress(I) chief minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari replaced by a compatriot. In Italy — where recently-elected Socialist Premier Bettino Craxi reportedly made a turn to the right even before he took power — he might initially face a language problem. But this is unlikely to deter him from developing "fraternal links" with the media there. He knows how to communicate and get his message across.

Reprinted from Indian Express, August 20, 1984.

Overcoming handicaps

Phiroze Rustomjee Karkaria is 53 years old, and all of three feet and ten-and-a-half-inches tall — which makes him a dwarf. Phiroze is also blind and deaf. But he has made his presence felt. He

has been working in the folding department of Tata Mills for almost the past quarter century now, that's till the strike took over.

Living in the M N Banajee Industrial Home for the Blind in Bombay's Jogeshwari area he makes a small income weaving cane chairs, making belts or items in wire and cane. Residing in the Home since 1957 he is also the recipient of the interest from the Parsi Boys Maintenance Fund which is managed by the Home authorities.

Phiroze's growth became stunted when his body had to be wrapped in heavy plaster due to an accident. Because of the pressure his eardrums also burst. He was staying in Pune at that time with his parents, two brothers and a sister Jasmine who works as a nurse at the Breach Candy Hospital. Phiroze studied till standard II at St Helena's in Pune till the next tragedy struck. He became partially blind after a cataract operation, then totally blind a little later.

"Then I studied in the Pune Blind School for one year where I learnt to make cane chairs and also learnt braille from two English ladies who were also blind," says Phiroze.

He is a cheerful man with a sunny disposition, something which he is obviously working very hard at maintaining. Can it be anything else when one has to be led around, assisted at every unfamiliar step? Yet Phiroze takes it all in his own gigantic stride. Including the good-natured ribbing of his colleagues.

Reprinted from Mid-Day, July 21, 1984.

Ashberna Agiary kitchen after fire (Photo: Rashid Bamanbehram)



In search of the Go

A report on the Zoroastrian immigrants settled in Chicago.

Ruzbeh Antia

The 1960s and early 70s were the peak period of Zoroastrians' immigration to the United States. A project examining in some detail the Zoroastrian community in Chicago was presented by Ms Ruzbeh Antia in partial requirement for her degree in journalism from the Marquette University. With this issue *Parsiana* reproduces extracts from Antia's thesis 'Keeping the fire of faith alive: Zoroastrians in Chicago'.

An Old Religion in the new world

The unpretentious, modern one-storey building blends quite easily with the well-kept lawns and shady streets of the fashionable Chicago suburb of Hinsdale. Its function, however, is hardly typical of suburban American life. This building is the local home of one of the oldest religions in the world — Zoroastrianism.

To the approximately 450 Zoroastrians settled in and around Chicago, the Zoroastrian Center and Darb-e-mehr (prayer-room) is a symbol of the coming of age of their community in the New World.

"We have always wanted a place of our own to worship in, to perform our ceremonies, to meet and where our children can learn about the religion and our heritage," said Rohinton Rivetna, president of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC). The Association was responsible for planning and constructing the Center, which will consist of a large meeting-hall, a smaller prayer-room and a library on Zoroastrianism.

The community also hopes that the Zoroastrian Center will help to perpetuate the religion and its traditions in the United States.

"We are hoping that the opening of

the Center will bring us some attention from the general public and the press in particular. We must make Americans more aware of our religion and our heritage," said Roshan Rivetna, wife of Rohinton Rivetna.

So far, media attention has been restricted to brief accounts in suburban newspapers, focusing mainly on the "exotic" nature of the "sect" and the "antiquity of its origins." However, there is nothing especially exotic about the Zoroastrians living in Chicago and other American cities or about the lives they lead.

The Rivetnas are a fairly typical Zoroastrian family. Rohinton is an environmental engineer at the National Can Company and Roshan is a computer scientist at Bell Laboratories. They came to the United States in 1966, initially for a year of job-training, but decided to stay on because of better economic and professional prospects. They now live in a well-appointed home in Hinsdale and have three teen-aged children. Besides being involved with the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago, they also take an active interest in the neighborhood and in their children's schools.

Like the Rivetnas, most Zoroastrians in North America are highly educated and are financially well-off. Many are accountants, engineers, doctors, university professors and other professionals. Most of them speak fluent English, wear Western dress and are Caucasian looking, thus blending with upwardly mobile, middle class America, unlike other, more visible immigrant groups.

While Zoroastrians are justly proud of the success that they have had in the 20 or 30 years that most of them have lived in North America, they worry



about the possible cost of that success. Perhaps this will be nothing less than assimilation into the American melting-pot and the disintegration of a rich and ancient heritage.

"We are a tiny island in a vast Judeo-Christian sea," says Keki Bhote, one of the first Zoroastrians to settle in Chicago. "It is hardly surprising that we should feel threatened."

Throughout North America there are only about 5,000 Zoroastrians, according to community estimates. Most live in major cities like New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Toronto and Montreal.

Smallness of numbers, however, is not just typical of the North American Zoroastrian community. Worldwide, there are only about 120,000 Zoroas-

od Life

☆☆☆
Unlike many immigrants
who had to go through
a period of struggle and hardship,
the good life has
come quickly and easily
for most Zoroastrians.



rians. By far the largest number, 90,000, live in India, mainly in the city of Bombay, according to the 1971 Indian census. There are smaller concentrations in Iran, Pakistan, Australia, Great Britain and a few other areas.

This microscopic community, however, has shown remarkable tenacity in surviving and flourishing for so many centuries and Zoroastrians in North America appear determined to continue this tradition.

So far, no fire-temples have been established in any North American city. "We cannot have fire-temples here because consecration is a long and complex process. Maintaining a consecrated fire is a full-time job for two or three priests. We do not even have any full-time priests," explains Royenton Farhadieh who came to the United States from Iran. "There can be no short cuts; everything must be done properly."

In North America, some Zoroastrians are questioning the continued relevance of some of the ancient rituals and observances. Others believe that all traditions should be steadfastly maintained. Feelings often run high on this issue and threaten to create a schism between the "orthodox" and "liberal" sections of the community.

"We must recognize that the taboo against conversion came about because of historical reasons and not from anything in the religion," said Kersey Antia, head priest of the Chicago Zoroastrian community. "In Iran and India, Zoroastrians lived in such conditions that it would have been dangerous to convert. Later on, Parsis worried that people would want to enter the religion because of the charitable funds that rich Parsis were creating," he explains.

Antia favours conversion but makes it clear that "there is no question of turning Zoroastrianism into a proselytizing religion like Christianity." These views, however, have earned the short and unassuming priest vociferous opposition from "orthodox" Zoroastrians, some of whom have even called for his excommunication.

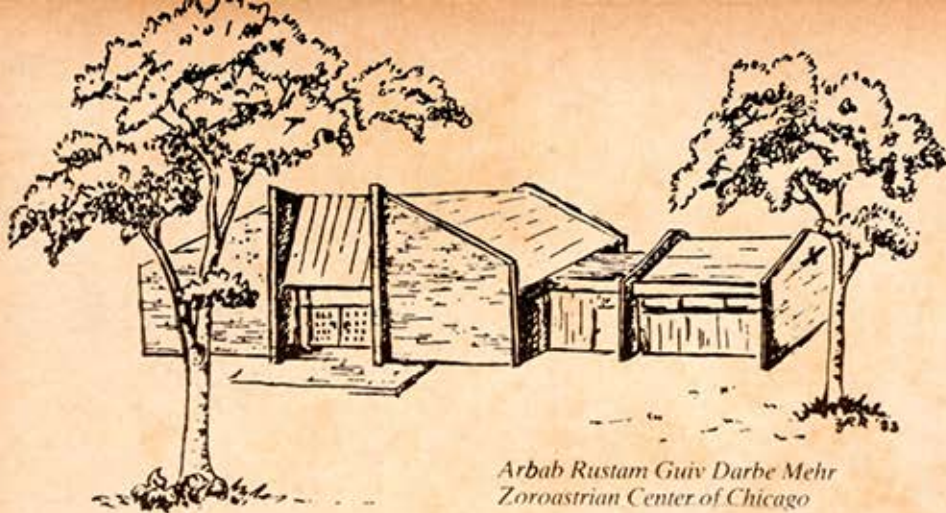
"Zoroastrianism is a very relaxed and very loose religion," said Dhun Batlivala, an unmarried Zoroastrian woman living in Chicago. "There are few laws and rituals that are absolutely binding. These are things that keep a

community together. Our religion, on the other hand, is very individualistic."

Batlivala feels that these characteristics make Zoroastrians more vulnerable to the assimilation pressures that beset all minority groups in the States. Some Zoroastrians here feel that they are replaying, in a different setting, the saga of the early Parsis in India. Few are prepared to predict what the ending is likely to be.

In the articles that follow, we focus on the small Zoroastrian community in metropolitan Chicago. The articles examine the lives these Zoroastrians





*Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr
Zoroastrian Center of Chicago*

have built for themselves and the problems they face as individuals and as a community in a new environment. They will also look at the crucial question of ethnic and religious identity.

For this series I interviewed Zoroastrians settled in Chicago and attended meetings of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago. I also conducted a survey which concentrated mainly on ethnic and religious identification and participation but also collected some basic demographic and socioeconomic data on the community. The survey questionnaire was mailed to every Zoroastrian household in the Chicago area that was listed in the directory maintained by the Association. Out of the 120 questionnaires mailed out, 44 were returned for a response rate of about 37 percent.

In search of the good life — I

It was probably the prospect of gold that drew the first Zoroastrian settler to these western shores. He was a man named Pestonji Framji Daver and he settled in San Francisco in 1892, according to Jamshed Pavri, the only chronicler of Zoroastrian history in the New World. Pavri does not say if this pioneering Parsi struck gold but apparently, Daver and his son both became millionaires.

A few more Zoroastrians continued to trickle in through the first two decades of this century. Following a time-honoured Parsi tradition, many of them became prosperous entrepreneurs. One became an important art collector, another the owner of an oil company and a third, one of the founders of the Vanadium Steel Corporation in Pittsburgh.

The racist immigration laws adopted by the United States in 1924, barring all immigrants from Asia, helped to restrict the number of Zoroastrians in the country. "When I first came to Chicago in the 1940s there was only one Parsi gentleman settled here," recalled Keki Bhote, now Director of Quality and Value Assurance at Motorola Corporation. "He was married to an American and had been in Chicago for a long time."

During the 1940s and 1950s the center of Zoroastrian immigration shifted to Canada where, as subjects of the British crown, they found immigration much easier. Today Toronto has the largest Zoroastrian population of any city in North America — approximately 1,000. Other Canadian cities together account for another 1,000 Zoroastrians.

The 1960s and early 1970s were the peak period of Zoroastrian immigra-

tion to the United States. Immigration laws were loosened in 1964 and the economy was booming. The 1960s also saw Zoroastrian Associations sprouting in many cities. Contacts between Zoroastrians in different parts of the continent increased and the first directories of Zoroastrians were compiled.

Chicago had its first Zoroastrian Association in 1965 with 35 or 40 members. This association, which had no connection to the present one, folded up in the early 1970s because of petty bickering and general apathy, according to its founder-president, Keki Bhote.

"What we were trying to do was to lay down lines of communication bet-



"We must recognize
that the taboo against conversion
came about
because of historical reasons
and not from anything
in the religion."

ween Zoroastrians in different parts of North America," Bhote explained. "It was really an ad hoc umbrella organization. Numbers were so small that there was no real possibility of forming local organizations as there is now."

Of the 44 Chicago Zoroastrians responding to the survey, two-thirds came to the United States between 1965 and 1975, while roughly one quarter came later. Only 5 percent came before 1965.

Most of the early Zoroastrian immigrants came from India. In our survey, all those who came before 1965 and almost 80 percent of those who came between 1965 and 1975 were from India. After 1975, there appears to be a



Above: A jashan precedes the use of the Darbe Mehr premises.

Left: Dr Sarfeh, Dr Kersey Antia (standing in rear), Ms Guiv, Rohinton Rivetna and wife Roshan at inauguration.

Top left: Clearing the Darbe Mehr grounds.

sharp rise in Zoroastrians immigrating from other countries. About a third of these newer immigrants (16 percent) came from Iran and another quarter from a medley of countries including Pakistan (5 percent), Great Britain (5 percent), Canada (2.5 percent) and Tanzania (2.5 percent).

The political turmoil in Iran is undoubtedly a major reason for the rise in immigration from Iran. The pheno-

menon of second time migration has also contributed to the growing diversity of the countries of origin of Zoroastrian immigrants. For instance, Zoroastrians previously settled in East Africa, Aden, Canada, Great Britain and other such places, left them for the United States. For some, the reason for leaving were political, while others sought economic or professional opportunities.

Unlike their ancestors who were fleeing from persecution and sought religious freedom, most recent Zoroastrian immigrants have crossed the seas in search of more prosperity, a better education and greater opportunities to excel in their chosen fields.

"I came to the United States because

there was far greater scope here in my field," said Minu Patel, a professor of biostatistics at the University of Illinois. Patel, who wore a round, close-fitting, black Parsi cap while we spoke, came from England in 1964. "The recession was already beginning in England in the sixties but over here the economy was booming. That was obviously a factor," he added.

"My only reason for coming was to give my daughters a good education," said Roshan Patel, widowed mother of two girls. "It was a very difficult step to take, coming here all alone. People told me I was crazy but it all worked out."

Some others, mainly women, had even more practical reasons for immigration. "I came because I married Bomi," said Bachi Damkevala, wife of the secretary of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago. Bomi Damkevala had been living in the United States for some time before he married Bachi in Bombay about 9 years ago.

A few Iranian Zoroastrians came under less propitious conditions. They were fleeing "the political turmoil and instability in Iran," as one of the respondents to our survey wrote.

"Conditions in Iran are really terrible for minorities," claimed Royenton Farhadieh, who left Iran 20 years ago in search of better prospects, but still has parents living there. Farhadieh believes that some Iranian Zoroastrians may be living illegally in the United States. "They came on tourist visas and just stayed on. We should be lobbying to let them stay legally," he said, thumping the dining table in his Clarendon Hills home.

Data collected in our survey of Chicago Zoroastrians reflects all these reasons for immigration. Over half of those responding picked "better economic and professional opportunities"

as their chief reason for settling in the United States, while a quarter, almost exclusively women, picked "marriage to a permanent resident or American citizen." Under 10 percent said that they came in search of "greater political and social freedom" and not surprisingly, most of them were from Iran.

About 40 percent of the survey group, mainly men, also indicated that they originally came to the United States as students but later decided to become immigrants.

Like many other immigrant groups, Zoroastrians were drawn to the United States by the perception of greater opportunities awaiting them and their children. However, unlike many immigrants who had to go through a period of struggle and hardship before these perceptions became reality, the good life has come quickly and easily for most Zoroastrians.

"Most Zoroastrians enjoy a standard of living above the national average," asserts Rohinton Rivetna. "As far as I am aware no (Zoroastrian in Chicago) lacks necessities, everyone has sufficient means and most are very well off."

Although no accurate statistics are available, the data on occupations, income and house-ownership collected in the survey provide an outline of the socioeconomic status of Chicago Zoroastrians.

About two thirds of the respondents and their spouses are in high-prestige and largely high-paying occupations such as engineering, medicine, accounting, business administration and academics. On the other hand, none surveyed were manual laborers, mechanics, operatives or industrial workers.

The "other" category included such occupations as writer, beautician,

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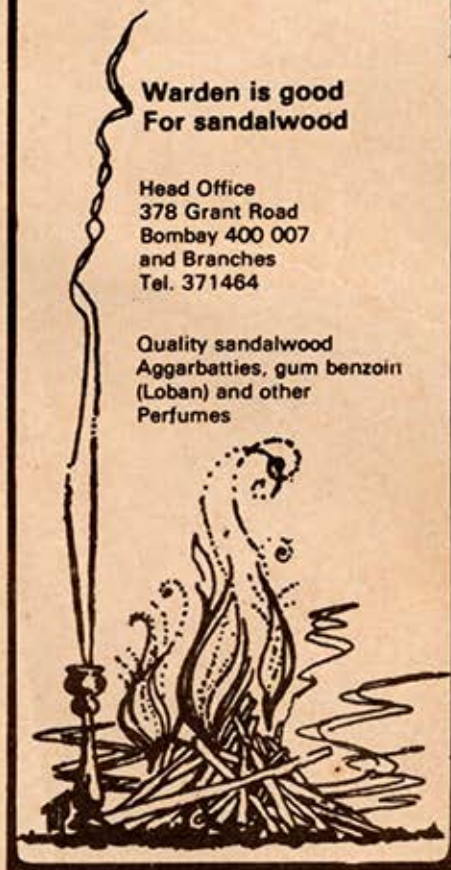
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While over half of the women in the survey work outside the home, most of them are in traditionally "female" roles as secretaries, office clerks, beauticians, and social workers. These figures, however, do not represent women who may have temporarily shelved their careers to raise a family.

"My husband is not too pleased about the idea of my working when the children are small," explained Bachi Damkevala, a mother of three young daughters. She worked as a legal secretary for a few years after she came to the United States but quit upon the birth of her second child.

Income data collected in the survey tells the same story. One third of those responding reported an annual family income of over \$60,000 and nearly a quarter indicated that they earned between \$40,000 and \$60,000 a year. Another third fell in the \$20,000 to \$40,000 a year category. Only 9 percent reported an annual family income of under \$20,000, three quarters of them being unmarried.

Three fourths of our survey group indicated that they owned their own homes — one of the chief indicators of the American dream. The directory of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago reveals that most people live in affluent suburbs such as Downers Grove, Hinsdale and Glenview.

"I would never have been able to afford an apartment or a car of my own in Calcutta," said soft-spoken Dhun Batlivala who works as a secretary. "Materially it is a much better life here though I miss the camaraderie and the sense of closeness that we had in Calcutta. You give up something but you get a lot in return."

Many other Zoroastrians agree with her assessment. It is not surprising, then, that none of the immigrants who settled in the Chicago area have returned to their home countries, according to Roshan Rivetna. "They're too spoiled. They can't go back after living the good life here," she jokes.

"I couldn't go back to the hardships and shortages of Bombay now," reflects Bachi Damkevala, echoing these sentiments. "Over there, sugar is in short supply one day and something else the next," she added, popping some fish into her microwave oven. "I just want to visit there, not live there."

The second instalment will appear in the November issue.

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My dear Fali Uncle

A nephew writes to explain
why he performed Peterson's navjote.

Noshir Hormazdiyar



Much has been written about the controversial navjote of the American engineer, Joseph Peterson in New York on March 5, 1983. But few pieces have so clearly and concisely stated the position of those favouring the navjote as the following letter dated January 2, 1984 written by Noshir Hormazdiyar, one of the priests who performed Peterson's navjote, to his uncle, Fram F Mullan of Udvada:

I am writing this letter with one purpose, to explain my position to perform the navjote of Joseph Peterson. Probably by now you must have read a lot from different sources, but no one really knows what happened.

Joe is an extremely intelligent human being. He is a self-made Zoroastrian, without being influenced or pressured by anyone. He was inspired by a book at the age of 14 and since then it has become an obsession with him to learn about the religion. He learned the Avesta script through Prof Jackson's book from a library; wrote all the prayers by hand (in Avesta); made his own *Khordeh Avesta*; made his own *sudreh kusti*. He is 29 now — a chemical engineer by profession. When he called me first, he was in the process of computerizing the Avesta on a word processor. He knew his *kusti* prayers much before he met me.

I met him in Minnesota one fine day in summer. He came to visit me with his wife. He made a request to be initiated. I listened to him with an open mind. He was aware of the Tata case (Petit vs Jeejeebhoy) in 1903. He pointed out a comment by a Dastur that a person who wished to join the religion with his own free will can do so, after being properly initiated, (navjote performed). Then he should take a *Bareshnum* and the navjote should be performed a second time. He is a sincere person and meant well. He has no ulterior motives in join-

ing the religion. Therefore I agreed to perform his navjote.

Then came some very well-meaning people from ZAGNY (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York) and the Arbab Guiv Trust. They requested that the navjote ceremony be performed openly. Ultimately we all agreed that it should be done publicly and my colleague and ex-classmate from the Cama Institute, Dr Kersey Antia agreed to join me.

Dr Kersey Antia is a pukka *Yozdathregar*. He finished his training at the Cama Athornan Institute — won the 'best boy' medal, a scholarship in Avesta-Pahlavi and became a psychologist. He came to the States and is presently in Chicago. Another classmate of mine from the Cama Institute is Dr Firoze Kotwal of the Wadiji Atash Bahram. Destiny has brought us all on different sides of the issue!

You may have seen a letter by 12 Ervads condemning me and Dr Antia

As to the navjote
causing damage to
the religion of
Zarathushtra, that
seems to us utterly
inconceivable.

and vowing not to sit with us in prayers. Please note that five out of the 12 are *unknown*. They have never participated in any ceremony at ZAGNY. Out of seven, four are in Philadelphia which is 300 miles from New York. That leaves three, and out of three only two participate in ceremonies, one of them being regular i.e. Pervaz Patel (from Udvada) and the other being a supportive Ervad. Last March, after Peter-

son's navjote, I was the only priest in the tri-state area (as Pervaz was in India). During that period of one month, there was one death, three jashans, one navjote, etc. It all fell to my responsibility. Since Peterson's navjote, I have performed 35 ceremonies. I am in more demand than I have ever been before.

For your information: Out of the 40 or so navjotes that I have performed, 20 were of Zoroastrian children with both parents Zoroastrians, 16 of mixed marriages where mother or father could be a Zoroastrian; four of non-Zoroastrian spouses who wished to join the religion before their marriage to a Zoroastrian partner, and one of Peterson. It is also a common occurrence for elder Iranian Zoroastrians to ask me to give them the *sudreh kusti* as it has never been given to them. I have performed several (at least 10) such navjotes on elder Zoroastrians from Iran, at their request. This includes a neuro-surgeon and his wife from Iran.

Mixed marriages are very common. Every three or four out of five, is a mixed marriage. Every year I perform about six to eight such weddings. I, for one, sincerely believe that our religion is a universal religion. I intend to serve mankind. During every ceremony I first explain in English what the ritual means. The majority of the crowd in every ceremony comprises of non-Zoroastrians. Last April, when death rites had to be performed, during the *Sarosh Karda* in the evening, 90 percent were non-Zoroastrians. You cannot imagine this in India.

No one has given any *scriptural evidence* why I should not perform these rituals for everyone. The Iranian community backs me up all the way. Many Parsis do, but most are sitting on the fence. I have repeatedly pointed out *yasna* 30.2 of the *Gathas* — which talks about the freedom of choice and that

man for man, each for each, will have to make his own choice in this world.

I have stood my ground. Basically I have avoided any arguments. Marion (my wife) stood by me in all this. She wrote to the *Jam-e-Jamshed* in response to Sarosh Khambatta's letter. They never published it. The facts were wrong. Marion spoke in an open forum which was held in October '83 and got the maximum applause. ZAGNY passed a resolution to accept people of other faiths if they qualify to join the religion and our organization. There were many hot debates. Homai Bode, wife of Framroze Bode, sent letters

written by scholars like J J Modi, K R Cama, Sheriar Bharucha etc. in favour of acceptance, which were distributed. It was supported by more evidence from the *Rivayats*. The Guiv Trust distributed these as they saw the need to educate the community. A month ago they have nominated me a trustee of the New York Guiv Trust.

I hope this may explain my position in short. There is much to write but the point I want to make is that Peterson is a worthy candidate and I believe that what I did is the right thing which will help the religion in the long run.

NOSHIR HORMAZDIYAR

Respecting rights

A letter by IOI Zoroastrians supports the Peterson navjote priests.

Following Peterson's navjote, 12 priests residing in the USA wrote to the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (See 'Religious Boycott' *Parsiana*, August 1983) stating they would not participate in any religious ceremonies with Ervad Noshir C Hormazdiyar or Ervad Dr Kersey Antia, who along with other mobeds performed Peterson's navjote.

In reply to the priests' letter, a response supporting the priests who performed the navjote was prepared and signed by 101 Zoroastrians including individuals such as Shari Merabi, chairman of the Arbab Guiv Darbe Mehr board of trustees, Prof Kaikhosrov Irani, chairman of the Philosophy Department at the City University of New York and Rohinton Rivetna, president of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago. Their letter states:

It is understandable that there is a difference of opinion among learned and well-intentioned priests as well as members of the laity on doctrinal aspects of the issues regarding the performance of navjotes of persons born of non-Zoroastrian parents.

The Ervads' view of the navjotes of persons born of non-Zoroastrian parents as contrary to Zoroastrian principles and practices is a matter of their consciences and their understanding of the precepts of the religion. We fully respect their right to express their views

and act in accordance with them. We equally respect the right of the priests who hold that the performance of such navjotes is proper and justifiable. It is unfortunate that the Ervads' letter notably fails to manifest this attitude.

Beyond expressing their disagreement with the five priests who officiated at the navjote of Joseph Peterson, they specifically mention Ervads Kersey Antia and Noshirwan Hormazdiyar with whom they have resolved not to co-officiate in any religious ceremony. This is, of course, their privilege as free human beings. They, however, state no reason for their attitude which is probably a manifestation of what they take to be the gravity of their feeling of disagreement.

Unity within the community, resting upon the vision of Zarathushtra, and harmony within the priesthood, seem to us sufficiently important to require clearly formulated doctrinal grounds and statement of specific principles supporting this attitude of divisiveness, rather than a vague reference to "precepts and long-standing tradition" in the letter. We pass no comment upon the opinion of the Ervads which they may hold for whatever reason. It is their attitude of condemnation and their communal decision of non-cooperation that we deplore, an attitude for which we find no support in the message of the prophet Zarathushtra.

Surely it is time for this religious community to recognize that, united in our

dedication to the message of the prophet, there can be difference of opinion on traditions and practices; particularly when the community has moved from a context of views and perspectives developed over centuries of its life in India, or in post-Zoroastrian Iran. With a commitment to reason and good-will, eminently Zoroastrian virtues, we can agree to disagree, and avoid seeking a public display of repudiation emerging from an unreflective disregard of divergent views. All views deserve to be treated with the respect due to sincerely held convictions, whether one agrees with them or not.

The Ervads assert that the navjote of Joseph Peterson has done untold and totally irreversible damage to the community and to our religion. What precisely is the damage to the community? In the Zoroastrian tradition one would be inclined to think that evil words and acts would damage the community, not one's parentage. As to the navjote causing damage to the religion of Zarathushtra, that seems to us utterly inconceivable.

The Ervads further write that the action of the priests who officiated at that navjote has hurt their feelings. This is difficult to understand. One can understand the feelings of a Zoroastrian hurt by someone who reviles the religion of Zarathushtra, or who repudiates it. But this case is one in which a person finds realization of his spiritual aspiration in following the message of Zarathushtra and seeks to be initiated into that spiritual community; and the priests recognizing the authenticity of the conviction perform the navjote as a Zoroastrian priestly act and an obligation of their calling. Why would this hurt the feelings of a Zoroastrian?

With respect for all views, we request the members of the community to reflect upon these events in the light of the vision of the prophet. It will indeed be seen that the divergences and disagreements are pitifully trivial before the conception of a life dedicated to perfecting human existence. And it is with the hope that preoccupation with disagreements do not blur our conception of the Mazdayasni life that this letter is written.

Stimulating seminar

A one-day seminar on 'Faith and Reason' organized in July by the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) was described in their



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September newsletter as "a most stimulating seminar." Dr Farhang Mehr, former vice-chancellor of Shiraz University in Iran spoke on the theme 'Faith and Reason' and Dr Shapoor Shahbazi of Harvard gave an illustrated talk on Persepolis "depicting the roots as well as fascinating evidence of the heritage and a civilization that was ours, highly advanced in social, political, scientific dimensions by present day standards," notes the newsletter.

The success of this seminar initiated by Khodaram Hematti has inspired ZAGNY to hold further similar seminars to "encourage participation and broaden our knowledge not only of our religion, but also our ancestors and a civilization that dominated their time and brought us to our present day," states the newsletter.

"For five days young Zoroastrians between the ages of six and 12 met and worked together in a spirit of camaraderie" during the Third Annual Young Zoroastrians Camp in August, states the September ZAGNY newsletter.

The camp which began on August 15 at the Darbe Mehr, included a chocolate-making session, a variety entertainment program and a sports meet. "Dr Kaikhosrov Irani and Dr Lovji

Cama led very interesting and enlightening work-shops on our rich heritage and the question-and-answer sessions following these showed the sophisticated and creative thinking of young mini-philosophers at work," noted the newsletter.

"We are planning to have Farsi language classes this fall coinciding with our religious classes" announced the September ZAGNY newsletter. Three Iranians, P Ardeshirpour, Ms M Yek-tashenas and Ms M Mehrabipour will conduct these classes and the subjects on the curriculum include religion, Farsi language and Iranian history and culture.

Mavalwala at world meet

Anthropologist Jamshed Mavalwala represented the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) at the IV International Assembly of the WCRP-International (World Conferences on Religions for Peace) held in Nairobi from August 20-30, states the ZSO newsletter of September, '84. WCRP-International, a non-governmental agency of the United Nations, is an organization of religions working together for peace at the international, national and local levels. It is also concerned about issues of social justice."

Mavalwala, a former ZSO president, is the national president of WCRP-Canada and is presently working on the international board of WCRP. Four years ago he had served as the moderator of the Commission on Human Rights and Social Justice during the III International Assembly held at Princeton, USA, notes the newsletter.

Say it with cards

All-purpose greeting cards with Zoroastrian motifs have been designed by the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, notes the September issue of *Gavashni*. The motifs which have been adapted from *The Art of Ancient Iran* are: a nobleman worshipping before an altar; and Fravashi — the guardian spirit of man.

These cards are being sold in packets of 10 (five cards in each of the two designs) against a donation of \$5.00. "A part of the proceeds from this project will be donated to the 'Perpetuation of Zoroastrianism in North America' Fund sponsored by ZAQ in the name of the late Ervad Pervez Kotwal," states the newsletter.

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On Indian Government Service

Parsis shy away from government services without considering the benefits.

Russi K Anklesaria

Barely 30 years ago, members of the Parsi community occupied some of the highest positions in the defence services, all-India and State services, railways, post and telegraphs, etc. In fact, there was hardly any government sector without a senior or a junior Parsi officer, and in many such services, they enjoyed a predominantly high status and strength. Family traditions of service were carried on from father to son.

Since Independence, the structure of the Indian economy and politics has undergone rapid and drastic changes. A businessman's son no longer goes necessarily into his father's business and a doctor's son may not be able to follow his father's footsteps even if he wanted to; similarly, a serviceman's son no longer joins the services if he can find another, better or 'softer' avenue of life. Political and social power has transferred itself into new hands, and severe competition has set in, in all sectors of life, including the services.

Talented Parsi youth has stayed away from government service, and has chosen either to migrate abroad or to enter more lucrative professions. Those who are not as talented or gifted and/or do not have the advantage of a higher education have preferred to go in for "white collar" jobs. In fact, the representation of the Parsi community in the services is not only on the wane, it is almost extinct. Today, there is not a single Parsi officer left in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) in Gujarat (the last one having retired in 1979). The last Parsi officer in the Indian Police Service (IPS) retired this year. There are hardly any Parsi boys from Gujarat left in, or joining, the defence services. The position is no better in Maharashtra where the majority of the Parsi population resides

today. There is known to be only one senior IAS officer and one senior IPS officer left in the services in this State today. Retired Admiral Cursetjee of the Indian Navy has informed the Bombay Parsi Punchayet president Dr A F Golwalla, that the new entry of Parsi youth in the Navy as well as other defence services has gone down alarmingly.

Golwalla, Prof Noshir Kaikobad and other members of the School Counselling Project held a meeting with principals of seven Parsi-sponsored schools on May 5, 1984. Some of the principals observed that Parsi children coming from a rural background, though not in a position to compete in scholastic attainments with other children coming from the elite strata of society, have excellent outdoor interests, and that in regard to talent and creativity, they are really good material.

It was also suggested at this meeting that if a cell is provided to give extra coaching to such children, they would turn out to be better students, and if a polytechnic is provided for the drop-outs from the schools, they would become more useful members of the community. Through systematic and methodical coaching and career planning, some excellent material would be available for joining government service. These jobs require some basic qualities like a certain amount of toughness, fondness for outdoor life and willingness to undergo some hardship.

The need of the hour is to give such extrovert children scientific vocational guidance and aptitude-finding tests, thereafter to "coach them young" and to suitably train them scholastically and physically, to go through open examinations for selection in government and defence services.

At a meeting with Golwalla in December 1983, Soli Pavri, convenor, Parsi Punchayet Vocational Guidance Bureau was requested to help the Parsi Punchayet in picking up talented children who may have an aptitude to join defence and other government services and who could be suitably trained and even financially supported to some extent, if necessary.

Effectiveness of persons in government services and their utility to the community can well be gauged by quoting cases where Parsi officers have helped the community or individuals in the normal course of duty without showing any undue favour.

It is well-known how in the labyrinth of government machinery, works and problems which cannot be solved even at the highest level by a minister or a secretary, are amicably settled or attended to by a lower-status officer like a mamlatdar or a police sub-inspector.

Once such Parsi boys and girls at the high school and college level have been vocationally tested and "caught young" through the assistance of our school-counselling project and the vocational guidance bureau project, it will be for the different Parsi trusts and anjuman to pool their resources together and to see that these boys and girls are put through intensive physical and scholastic training to toughen them up and to prepare them for the open competitive test examinations, the personality tests, interviews, etc. Unfortunately, obtaining a first class in exams in India today has become far too common. It is necessary therefore that these students are coached such that they can stand up to the fierce competition of public examinations.

B F Dittia from the South Zone had pointed out to the Executive Council of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian

Anjumans of India at Calcutta in February 1984 that according to a report prepared by a joint secretary in the Home Ministry, Government of India, 250 Parsis had applied for various posts in the IAS and other all-India services, but not one of them was able to get in. This disappointing fact justifies the dire necessity of proper selection and thorough training and coaching of the candidates before they go through the test of competitive open examinations.

In this age of emancipation of women, a number of non-Parsi ladies have already entered the IAS and even the IPS thereby enriching their own lives whilst serving the nation and helping the community at the same time.

At higher levels the services provide opportunities even after retirement. Some retired persons have become governors, ministers, corporation chairmen, ambassadors, etc. which gives them an extended opportunity to serve the nation and the community even after retirement.

Recommendations

The following incentives are suggested and recommendations are made with a view to help Parsi youth join the defence and the civil services:

Wherever feasible, all the important punchayets or anjumans should locally provide vocational guidance at the school level to Parsi children. Where this is not possible because the Parsi population is limited or because the necessary facilities do not locally exist, potential talent should be spotted locally and the help of the nearest larger anjuman or punchayet where such necessary facilities exist, should be sought and availed of.

Suitable coaching should be given to the selected children who show an aptitude for joining the services with a view to improve their scholastic performance and attainments.

Intensive physical culture training should also be given to such selected children with a view to toughen them up for greater physical endurance, and stresses and strains of service life.

Students who are not academically bright enough to enter the university should be helped through special coaching classes to appear for non-commissioned ranks in the defence services and the subordinate services like PSG, tehsildar, mamlatdar, excise inspector, forester, etc. in the subordinate civil services.

Boys and girls with aptitude should be guided and assisted to join the National Cadet Corp, Shivaji Bhonsale Military School, etc.

Those students who have pursued their university education should be assisted just before their graduation or immediately on graduation to attend coaching classes for the all-India competitive examinations, at the cost of the punchayet or anjuman, wherever such financial support is required. They should be given special training to successfully go through the personality tests and interviews.

Once selected and appointed to



250 Parsis had applied for various posts in the IAS and other all-India services but not one of them was able to get in.

some of these posts, the youngsters should not be left alone to financially fend for themselves. Salary levels in the services, whilst under training and even thereafter are not adequately remunerative to match the rising cost of living. Housing has become the biggest and costliest problem.

Wherever justified, such officers on the threshold of their careers should be assisted by the local punchayet or anjuman by way of subsidization of rents, assistance towards education of children, reimbursement of any unforeseen heavy medical expenditure (only that which may not be reimbursable under the respective services' Medical Reimbursement Scheme), etc. This will help them preserve standards of integrity and honesty. Wherever possible, such officers should be given the facility of the Parsi dharamshala or guest house accommodation on a nominal or token rent basis.

Any award or honour received in the services should be recognized through a public function and reasonable monetary reward by the respective anjuman or punchayet.

Constitute a small committee consisting of senior Parsi serving or retired

civil and defence service officers and others which will:

- Collect necessary detailed data regarding avenues open to Parsi youth at the central and state levels in the government services;
- Disseminate information through the Federation bulletin and *BPP Quarterly Review* regarding recruitments taking place from time to time at different levels of government services;
- Help, organize, monitor and guide the adequacy and quality of vocational guidance, and scholastic and physical endurance training being imparted in different cities;

d) Help and guide in the selection of proper coaching classes for higher level services;

e) Provide guidance to those newly-joined in services in solving their accommodation, children's education and other related problems.

Lastly, the BPP having comparatively better resources should take the lead in formulating selection and training programs, coaching classes, etc. on the above lines, with the help of the above-stated Committee.

The BPP should set apart an amount of Rs 15,000 or so, in the first instance to help the above proposed Committee do the spade work. A Parsi gentleman has offered assistance of Rs 10,000 if the BPP sets up an appropriate machinery and takes some active steps in this direction.

Extracted from an article titled "A note on the subject of planning of 'service' career (in government services) for the Parsi youth" prepared by R K Anklesaria at the behest of the Federation's Panel for Job, Business and Career Opportunities.

R K Anklesaria, chief executive of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet has had a distinguished career in the Gujarat cadre of the Indian Administrative Service. The last post he held in the IAS was that of Municipal Commissioner, Ahmedabad.

A gene that tells the Parsi story

The deficiency of the enzyme G6PD recurs in the Parsi population due to inbreeding among the community. J V Undevia

The Parsis and the Iranis have evoked great interest because of the differences they exhibit with respect to various genetic characters as compared to other population groups from both western India, where they now live, and Iran, from where they came. Because of their limited numbers and religious and social constraints, the Parsis married among relatives. Consanguinity (marriage between blood relatives) is high among them. One can safely say that, till not long ago, cousin marriages were the rule in the community.

There are four types of first-cousin marriages. Type 1 represents marriage between the children of two brothers, type 2 represents the marriage of a man with his maternal uncle's daughter, type 3 represents the marriage of a man with his paternal aunt's daughter and type 4 represents marriage between the children of two sisters. All the four types of first cousin marriages are prevalent in both the communities. The rates for parallel (types 1 and 4) and cross (types 2 and 3) cousin marriages are also the same in both the communities. However, there seems to be a greater preference for marriage between the children of two sisters among the Parsis and for the union between a man and his maternal uncle's daughter among the Iranis. The Arab Muslims of Iraq and the Persian Muslims of Iran show high rates of consanguineous marriages but with the four types of first-cousin marriages more or less equally distributed. The same is the case with Indian Muslims.

Consanguineous marriages among the Parsis according to year of marriage (in percent).

Period	Related	No. of marriages
1939-55	9.27	259
1956-60	7.12	534
1961-65	7.34	1,156
1966-72	8.15	1,190

The increase between 1966 and 1972 could probably be due to the fact that any Parsi marrying outside the community was not counted. The Iranis' rate of inbreeding still has not changed. However, there is now a trend of intermarrying between Iranis and Parsis.

There is an interesting case history of three Parsi brothers: One of them had

seven sons, the other two had four and two daughters each respectively. Six of the seven brothers married their cousins. Only one son had to look outside the family for a bride. This only shows how deeply entrenched the custom of cousin marriages was.

I had once asked some old Parsi women of Navsari, Gujarat, how their marriages had been arranged. "Arre dikra," one lady said in highly accented Gujarati, "if a child had a cousin of the opposite sex, whose age matched hers (his), one didn't even think of looking elsewhere. If there was no appropriate match in the family, we went to our neighbours on the same side of the street. If no match was to be found even there, we looked on the other side of the Parsi 'wad' (locality). But if one violated this social practice and directly sought outside matches, a match would be hard to come by because the question would invariably be asked: Why did he or she not marry inside the family? If there are no cousins of matching age, a second or distant cousin would generally be considered."

The rate of consanguineous marriages, it has been found, underwent a drastic reduction between the first two decades and the third decade of this century and continued to show further decrease in the fourth decade but at a slower rate. It has now stabilized itself at between seven and eight percent in the fifth and sixth decades.

Generally, there is a factor called the "marriage radius" which governs the maximum distance from which one could look for a proper matrimonial



Undevia: researching Parsi genes



(Name) M. B. Antia
 am a G6PD Blood Deficient Subject and the following drugs are NOT to be given to me Without Medical Supervision: Aspirin, Phenacetin, Acetanilid, All SULPHA derivatives, Furadantin & all nitrofurantoin derivatives, Quinine, Primaquine, Pamaquine, Mepacrine, Arsenic derivatives, PAS (Para-amino salicylic acid) BAL (Dimercaprol), Benadryl, Antistine, Benemid, Chloramphenicol, Nitrites, Heavy dose of Vitamin C, Chloroquine Vitamin K, Sulphonides (Dapsone).

The card of G6PD-D persons for the information of doctors treating them.

match. Among Hindus, in the old days, the marriage radius was a one-day bullock-cart journey. That is, the bride could be visited (or come home) in one day. The Parsi marriage radius, however, was much smaller, mainly because of their restricted numbers and partly because of their religious restrictions.

What is striking is that though both Parsis and Iranis come from the same region and practise the same religion, the two groups are genetically very different. Can the different times they emigrated from their native land account for it? It might.

The deficiency of the enzyme G6PD (glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase) is quite common among the Parsis. The gene that determines the deficiency is situated on the X-chromosome. Since the deficiency is determined by the X-

chromosome, it manifests itself more in the males. (It manifests only rarely in the females because women have two of the same gene and one is normal.) G6PD deficiency (G6PD-D) causes jaundice in the newborn and severe hemolytic crisis (destruction of red blood cells) in adults when exposed to some drugs. The deficiency also causes favism (acute hemolytic anemia) after eating "fava" beans which grow in West Asia.

Normally, a disadvantageous gene is weeded out by natural selection. Why has it survived in the Parsis? And again, why not in the Iranis?

The geographical distribution of G6PD has led to the suggestion that this gene may confer some protection against malaria caused by *Plasmodium falciparum*. The similarity between the distribution of falciparum malaria and

G6PD-D has been confirmed in a number of studies. Such a correlation has not been demonstrable in all population groups where malaria existed to a sizable extent.

Few reports are available on the distribution of G6PD-D in the Indian population as a whole. The deficiency does exist in several population groups but the incidence is generally very low in caste groups — with few exceptions such as Bhanushalis.

A new genetic variant is always a result of mutation. Genetic traits which are maintained in populations only as a result of mutation are rare. Therefore, it is unlikely that such a high incidence of G6PD-D in Parsis is the result of recurrent mutation.

There is no knowledge or evidence of mixed matings during their initial 700 years of stay. But it cannot be positively ruled out. The frequency of G6PD-D in the population groups of Gujarat is about 1.0 to 2.0 percent, and that too only in caste groups which could not have come into contact with the Parsis because of social and cultural rigidity. Even if there was an introduction of local genes it cannot explain such a high incidence of G6PD-D in the community. Thus the gene flow from the local non-Parsi population has no supportive evidence. It has now been found that the non-Zoroastrian Iranis — the Muslim groups and tribes such as Quashqi Basseri and Mamassani — do possess a high frequency of G6PD-D. So it is likely that the "founder population" of the Parsis brought it with them. There must have been some individuals in the

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is a potential winner.

Some people
are disguised
as losers.

Don't let
their appearances
fool you."

– Kenneth Blanchard
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An effect of inbreeding

In India consanguineous marriages occur with a high frequency among the Hindus of south India but are rare in the north. In western India, Maharashtra is a transitional region with many communities having consanguineous marriages but with lower frequencies than in south India.

Consanguineous marriages are rare in Gujarat where the Parsis first settled in large numbers. In most Hindu groups where consanguineous marriages are allowed, parallel first-cousin marriages are generally not preferred (they are even prohibited) and the most preferred form is the union of a man with his maternal uncle's daughter.

The pattern of consanguineous marriages in the Parsis is thus a clear indication of their isolation from the communities among whom they lived for more than 1,300 years. Inbreeding can increase the total genetic burden (recessive genes) in different popu-

lations. Each of us has a certain number of recessive mutant genes which could give rise to disease in a homozygous condition. That is, if both parents have the same recessive mutant and pass it on simultaneously to their child, the child will be affected. This mutant gene quota is called genetic burden or genetic load. There is a great deal of variation of this burden in the different populations of the world depending upon their past history of inbreeding and its variation in time. A declining rate of inbreeding is a desirable trend to reduce the burden of genetic disease. Inbreeding increases homozygosity, and flaws which would go unnoticed in heterozygous persons get magnified in highly inbred persons. Unfortunately, the dwindling Zoroastrian Irani population in India (and also in Iran) does not show any sign of decline in inbreeding frequency.

J V U

reproductive age who had the deficient gene.

There could be another reason why the gene proliferated only in the Parsis and it makes for an interesting story. When they landed on the shores of India, the refugees found they could be "at home" almost at the point of disembarkation. They took mainly to agriculture. This exposed them to malaria, and we have found that G6PD-D does confer some protection against the disease. Without this protection, the Parsis would have been oversensitive to malaria. Their women were especially susceptible to the disease. The differential susceptibility of the sexes to malaria was responsible for concentrating G6PD-D in the males. The deficient male survived longer by resisting malaria.

The absence of this gene among Iranis can also be explained. When pushed by the Muslim invaders, some Zoroastrians sought refuge in the Great Central Salt Desert of North Iran — in the areas bordering Dashti Lut where human existence and approach were difficult. The area where they lived was at an average height of about 1000 m. The present Zoroastrian popu-

kets in Iran, mostly in the Yazd region, are situated to the southwest end of this salt desert. Looking carefully at the malarial belts of Southern Asia, one finds the Yazd area above this. Malaria existed in Iran over the three peripheral mountain ranges, except in the Central Salt Desert areas situated at 1000 m and above. The malarial influence was clearly out of the picture and so the G6PD-D gene no longer conferred any advantage on its bearer. Now that Parsis and Iranis do intermarry, Iranis are also exposed to the G6PD-D gene. One has to watch the genetic profile of the coming generations to see what happens.

What is the situation now, when malaria has largely been controlled? There have been many important changes in the structure of the Parsi community itself during the last two generations. Their agricultural occupation has changed to trade and professional service. They have shifted from villages to cities. There is a considerable fall in consanguineous marriages and there are rigorous self-imposed restrictions on family size. All these biological, occupational and geographical changes have a negative effect

A declining rate of inbreeding is a desirable trend to reduce the burden of genetic disease.

in maintaining the high incidence of G6PD-D in the Parsis. Some genes, in certain populations, do not vary easily. If the nature of the G6PD-D gene is rapidly variable, then with the relaxation of selection pressure, its frequency in the Parsis must also fall rapidly.

In the absence of malaria, the heterozygous advantage for males no longer exists and, in fact, has turned out to be more disadvantageous. There are a number of drugs which Parsis with G6PD-D cannot take. Nowadays practically everybody takes drugs without consulting his physician and the Parsis are no exception. During the last couple of decades their intake of drugs has increased considerably. Even pregnant women take them. A large number of cases of severe hemolytic crisis in the young and hemolytic disease of the newborn in the G6PD-deficient Parsi males have been steadily coming to our notice and are, in fact on the increase. The mortality of G6PD-deficient newborn males will again tend to decrease the frequency of G6PD in the Parsis. But recent advances in the diagnosis and treatment of hemolytic disease of the newborn due to the G6PD-D will have an opposite effect. The result of this play between nature and the advancement of medical science cannot be predicted.

In general, with less and less inbreeding among the Parsis, the rates of morbidity and mortality in the offspring of consanguineous marriages should be going down. Our study showed that there was some sort of stability and not a continuously decreasing trend due to random mating. But it is believed that the disintegration of the community cannot be prevented because of the women. Many marry outside. The community holds the male in a stronger grip, so there are comparatively fewer chances of men marrying outside it.

Dr Undevia of the Cancer Research Institute, Bombay, has been involved in studying the genetics of Parsis for the past 20 years.

Reprinted from Science Age, September 1984.

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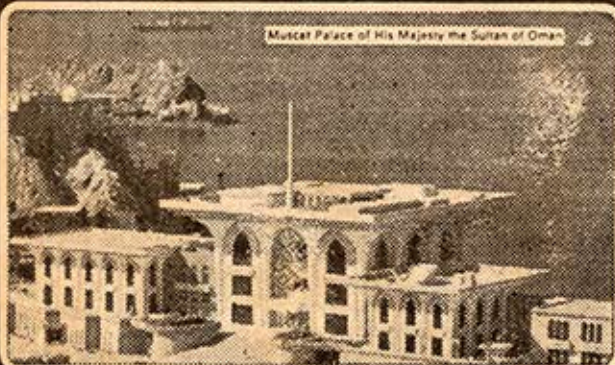
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A doctor in the house?

The Soonawalla family learns to accept that a doctor has to be on duty always.

Prochi Badshah

Every mother who can afford it, would have her child delivered by Dr Rusi Soonawalla, India's No 1 gynaecologist and among the best in the world. I had my child delivered by him and I am proud of it. Because, one wants the best. And it was after this delivery that I got interested in the man behind the surgical mask, his background, family, children, home. One way to know all this was to do an "At Home" with the Soonawallas.

When I suggested it to them, they were not exactly enthusiastic. "But dear, doctor is hardly ever at home!" said Ms Piloo Soonawalla. In any case, she suggested, I should ask the doctor.

Dr Soonawalla was even less enthusiastic. But I had been one of his "mothers," so he could not exactly refuse. "All right," he said, "but only if you can make it in the night." Anytime, I said, not knowing exactly what night meant.

We now move to the night in ques-

tion. The scene: the Soonawalla's Carmichael Road apartment, large, comfortable, snow-white walls, a thick carpet in the living-room, a wall-unit packed with leather-bound books (non-medical, I noticed), a success story, if flats can be indications of success stories.

We made a nice group, waiting for the doctor. The tall, slim, très elegant Ms Soonawalla, in jeans and T-shirt, talking with a wave of her manicured, expressive hands, the hands of a surgeon, or a surgeon's wife. Four handsome children (to be a little naughty — the doctor who has won so much acclaim for his propagation of family planning, evidently does not practise it at home), two boys; two girls; and the two dogs. A made for one another family, no doubt.

Except for the doctor (not) in the house. He had said he would meet in the night and it was going to be night.

We waited for him for two-and-a-

half hours. The family did not seem to mind, it was possibly used to it. "His work comes first," said the very considerate Ms Soonawalla. "One has got used to it. In fact, every time we are invited out and I land up alone my friends always joke.... 'So your husband's holding someone else's hand.'"

So, while Dr Soonawalla was holding somebody else's hand, I acquainted myself with the rest of the family. From left to right, as they say, there was Piloo Soonawalla, patient, considerate, knowing a doctor has to be on call at all hours, an active member of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), regularly visiting the veterinary hospital. The love and care of animals probably accounted for the two dogs who were sniffing me, as dogs invariably do when strangers come to their house late in the night and continue to remain there.

There was Jenai, the eldest daughter, who has completed a postgraduate

Soonawalla with wife Piloo at their Carmichael Road residence.



"Every time I land up alone, my friends always joke, 'So your husband's holding someone else's hand.' "

course is psychology and is working with a psychologist at the Bombay Hospital. "I was keen on taking up medicine, but gave up the idea on seeing how much work my father had to put in. Let us say I was scared off." But that has not stopped her from getting engaged to a doctor — Dr Banajee. And there was Kamal, the second daughter, a student at the Government Law College and in her second year LL.B.

And the two boys, Behram and Feroze, both studying medicine, following in their illustrious father's footsteps. There was a time when Feroze, the younger son and also the youngest in the family, who shares the love for animals with his mother, wanted to be a veterinary surgeon. Then a vet talked him out of it, told him he would starve.

The Soonawalla children have obviously taken over the household chores. Jenai ordered cups of coffee (so that we could keep awake till Dr Soonawalla returned home) and generally played the gracious hostess, Kamal was evidently in charge of the dogs. Feroze taped the Olympic highlights on the video. "He is doing it for his father," said Ms Soonawalla, "Rusi is a sports follower." When does he find the time to watch the video, I wondered... aloud.

"Oh, when he wants to watch something badly, he finds the time," Ms Soonawalla said. "He either gets up early in the morning or sits up late in the night and watches it by himself. He is getting cassettes of the latest advances in medicine and surgery all the time," Jenai said.

Then the doctor walked in and the family was complete. He apologized, profusely, though I am not quite certain whether the apologies were directed to me or the family. "There were some out-of-town patients who had to catch a train or flight, I forget which, back tonight and I just couldn't leave earlier."



Family get-together: (left to right) Dr Burjor Banaji, daughter Jenai, son Feroze, wife Piloo, Dr Soonawalla and daughter Kamal.

The photographer wanted him to wear something comfortable, what he wore around the house. "He comes home so late and leaves so early, that by the time he is here it is time to wear only his pyjama suit," observed Jenai.

The doctor, however, got into a pair of jeans and a blue T-shirt, which evidently was unusual for him. I could notice that from the expressions of amusement on the faces of the rest of the family.

Did he ever feel guilty about keeping the family waiting, I asked. "Of course," he said, "and I feel even more guilty when after coming home late I have to rush off to answer an emergency, and quite often, a false alarm. Take yesterday for instance; we had a party at home and as it is I walked in very, very late. Then the phone rang and one of my patients summoned me, so I rushed off to find there was nothing wrong and the patient could have waited till morning."

"And yet he screams if we so much as try to put the phone off the hook," said Kamal. Dr Soonawalla negated that — "It is not done in a doctor's house."

I have seen the tantrums some impatient mothers throw. How did he manage to keep his cool? "He is a very hot-tempered man," said Ms Soonawalla, "he is patient only with his patients." And how did he react when his patients fell in love with him, as all patients fall in love with their doctors? "Yes, that sort of thing does happen once in a while, but it is a passing phase and it

wears off very fast," he said matter-of-factly.

But I was more interested in the wife's reaction. Did it not make her jealous. I mean having a particularly good-looking husband, always in the company of women (so what if all the women are pregnant) could be quite a risk. Was that the reason why she had taken such care to maintain her figure and continue to look so attractive? Ms Soonawalla laughed: "I was a drill teacher, I taught PT at the St Joseph's Convent in Bandra and later at the English High School in Dadar. I was also a state hockey player and still hold an executive post in the Women's Hockey Federation of India." In fact, both husband and wife used to play hockey before marriage, though not for the same team. They were also neighbours at the Dadar Parsi Colony and had thus grown up together.

And we talked about the children, four children of a doctor who attends international seminars on family planning. "He's very ashamed of that," said Ms Soonawalla. "In fact, when anybody asks him how many children he has, he says 'two' loudly and then adds 'of each sex' under his breath."

There is a story about Dr Soonawalla delivering an address at an international seminar in Korea, when, in the middle of his talk, he received a telegram from home announcing the birth of his fourth child. The delegates wanted to know what the cable was about, the doctor naturally did not tell.

And there is another story which shows that having a famous gynaecologist in the house is not quite so handy. Dr Soonawalla has delivered only one of his four children, his third child and eldest son. The other children were delivered by other doctors. When Kamal, the second daughter, was born, he was in London, studying for his FRCS, and did not see her till a full year-and-a-half later.

What about the time he delivered his son? Was he tense? "No, not at all," said the doctor. "I was only a little nervous about what the child was going to be, since we already had two girls. In those days, there was no way of determining the sex of the child in advance."

Dinner was served at the family dining table. "On the very second day of our marriage Rusi made me promise never to wait for him for dinner," Ms Soonawalla said. "Of course, he is a very easy husband. Unlike some husbands he doesn't fuss about the steaming food and fresh *chapattis*. I just leave his food on the table and he eats it, whatever time he comes home."

Sunday is the only day the Soonawallas have their meals together, though, no doubt, he is on call on Sundays also. But, when there is no emergency, and there are a few Sundays like that, he drives his family to his in-laws' place at Dadar where they lunch together. Then he takes them out for dinner. The only other time the family spends together is when the doctor takes his holidays, which is once in two years and which often extends to once in three and four years.

Bringing other people's children in the world is evidently hard work and occupies all his time. Though proud of his children and their achievements in school and college, he rarely sees their report cards and has not been able to take much interest in their studies. "I have done all that," says Ms Soonawalla. Now it is his turn. He wanted both the boys to be doctors and they are in medical college.

So there will be two more Doctor Soonawallas soon. And, depending on what branch of medicine they take, they may soon be bringing more children into the world. Which is not such a bad thing.... as long as a large family is a happy family and a Soonawalla family.

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In tune with each other

An interview with Farida and ghazal king, Pankaj Udhas

She moves with grace, smiles with her eyes. Her auburn hair cascades down her erect, slim fair shoulders. She is well-read and speaks her mind. Everything about her has a touch of class. Be it her arrival dressed in shimmering swathes of sequins at her husband's ghazal performances or be it her well-kept home at Asha Mahal on Nowroji Gamadia Road. She is Farida Udhas nee Variava, the woman behind ghazal king Pankaj Udhas.

"Perhaps I have contributed in some way to Pankaj's success," says Farida modestly. "I must have been of some help. I think what I've done is provide the moral support. When we met, Pan-

kaj was already singing, only then his first record was not out." When reminded that almost everybody, who know the Udhas', attribute much of Pankaj's success to his wife, including Pankaj himself, Farida smiles and says, "It's nice that he accepts it because it's difficult to do so for men especially after you've become a success. I appreciate his saying it."

Farida Udhas does much more than just providing the moral support. She attends to Pankaj's administrative work, types his letters, sorts out his fan mail which includes passionate letters from ladies, makes sure that his clothes are perfect for each ghazal perfor-

mance right down to a contrasting shawl, accompanies him on many ghazal performances out of Bombay and India even to the recording studios, helps with his publicity which includes putting posters at select outlets, and keeps an eye on the ticket sales.

Farida also helps Pankaj schedule various concerts, makes sure that the floral decorations on the stage are done well at certain concerts, attends to his personal appearance before he appears on stage, oversees that her husband and his musicians get hot tea during the interval, and she reminds him about things that he tends to forget.

Farida is a product of St. Agnes' High School at Clare Road after which she joined H R College of Commerce. "When I was doing my inter, I decided to get a job because I was independent-minded," says Farida. "I joined Japan Airlines' accounting department since I was doing commerce. I was seventeen and a half then. I was with Japan Airlines for seven years and worked in every department there. I learned a lot because the Japanese believe in being perfect. So whatever I did, I did perfectly. Which is why I would like everything about Pankaj to be perfect. He's not particularly bothered about anything except his singing in which he's perfect."

As Farida speaks, Pankaj sits by and passes funny little comments *sotto voce*. Sometimes Farida ignores them, sometimes she rises to the bait. "We fight a lot," says Pankaj with an engaging smile. Theirs is a relationship based on loving, giving, sharing and understanding, a perfect example of how an inter-caste marriage can work beautifully because Pankaj is a Gujarati and Farida a Parsi.

"After Japan Airlines I joined Air India as an air-hostess," says Farida. "Pankaj and I married secretly on February 11, 1982, because I had not finished my four years with Air India. We had met in 1979 at Madan and Feroza Kalra's place. Madan used to teach me maths and Hindi in school and later on our friendship developed because he coached my sister Kashmiri. Pankaj came there as their friend."

"I never used to like Ms Udhas then," says Pankaj. "She was smart, damn frank and always won at cards. She even refused to come out with me on Christmas eve. Later on I discovered that she felt she hadn't been



Farida and Pankaj: 'provide moral support'

asked properly." "I don't like a man taking me for granted," retaliates Farida. That was Christmas eve. Pankaj and Farida saw the New Year of 1980 in together.

"In 1983, I stopped flying," says Farida. "I hated it because I would be out for 15 days, then Pankaj would be out for 15 days for his concerts. When could we meet?" But that meant giving up a career. Didn't that upset her in anyway? "No I keep myself occupied," replies Farida. "I like looking after a home, I don't feel useless doing it. I don't see any harm in looking after a home. Of course, I also help Pankaj. I suppose if I felt really useless I could always help my dad." Farida's father, Cavas Variava is a retired superintendent of police and now owns Securicor, the security agency.

Farida and Pankaj talk about the problems they faced when they decided to get married. "We had a lot of hassles," says Farida. "We had hassles till two days before the marriage because we didn't know if anyone would turn up. But it didn't matter because we didn't care. Maybe my parents objected because he was a ghazal singer, maybe his people objected because I was an air-hostess."

"We had a 45 minutes wedding with Arya Samaj rites at the Jade Room of the Taj," reminisces Pankaj. "Around a hundred people attended, all family. I kept telling the pandit to speed it up so that we could get on with the celebrations."

And what will Farida do once the ghazal craze abates a little? "There will always be something to do because Pankaj will probably go into music direction which I don't think he's too bad at considering that he's been far more successful than other ghazal artistes venturing into the film music direction field. Right now Pankaj has already sung and directed music for *Agni Dah*, *Jawab*, *Kamla*, *Zindagi Jeene Ke Liye Hain*, and an untitled one. Now he's doing the music for a film made by Deepak Duggal with Naseeruddin Shah and the remake of a Tamil film *Uchakattam* produced by Nawani and starring Om Puri."

Farida's favourite ghazal singers "besides my husband" are Mehdi Hassan and Bhupinder. And her favourite ghazals on Pankaj's new double album *Live at Royal Albert* are *Rone Ka To Alam* and *Deewaron Dar Se*.

Reprinted from Mid-Day, August 28, 1984.

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STATE AND COUNTRY

Duke's: The First Tango

Deepa Arora

To venture into the intensely competitive and cutthroat arena of soft drink production and sales these days would seem to require either guts or vision.

The immensely successful launch and take off of Tango, a fruit-based, orange flavoured drink by Duke's, proves that the oldest soft drink manufacturing unit in the country had plenty of both. Of the half dozen new drinks launched in the market in the last couple of years, many have disappeared without a trace, unable to compete with the giant companies for the thirsty public.

"We spent over a year test marketing Tango and carefully planning its launch," says Dinshaw Pundole, scion of the family that owns the company since it was started in 1889. "That's probably why four months after its launch on April 1 this year, our problem has not been sales but stepping up production to meet the tremendous demand in the market," he says proudly.

Known primarily for Mangola and Lemonade, besides the legendary Duke's Soda (probably the oldest in the region), the company also manufactures other drinks like Raspberry, Ginger, and King Cola, none of which have ever been marketed as aggressively as Tango. In fact the company itself has been known as a rather conservative, low profile unit that in all its years of existence has never indulged in the aggressive, promotional tactics that are an intrinsic part of the soft drink industry.

"It was after we set up our new bottling plant in 1981 that we realised we would have to effect a rethinking in our marketing strategy—by concentrating on long term profitability and by trying to acquire a larger share of the market," says Pundole, who along with his younger brother Feroze and father looks after the functioning of the bottling plant in Chembur, Bombay. "The three main flavours in the soft drink market are cola, lemon and orange. Since we already manufacture a cola and there are so many of them, and our Lemonade is very popular, the only option left was orange. But as everybody



makes a carbonated orange, a new one would just not have been noticed in the plethora. A fruit-based drink on the other hand was absolutely virgin territory."

Tango, which derives from the word tangerine, in other words an orange, consists principally of orange juice, mixed with a liberal dash of mango juice to help mask the bitter aftertaste of orange peel. "Even a hint of a bitter taste is anathema in any soft drink. Only a small sophisticated minority might appreciate the bitter aftertaste of real

orange juice but our surveys proved that the larger common denominator that we have to cater to would not accept it," says Pundole, explaining the reasons behind their decision. "And in this field, volume is the name of the game."

That's probably the reason why the Pundoles are making every effort to saturate the market in Bombay, currently the only city where the drink is marketed. More than 75 trucks carry crates to different corners of the metropolis in order to achieve that high point of easy availability and visibility that makes a soft drink popular and saleable. "The consumer must be able to get his favourite drink when and where he wants it. If he doesn't, he'll try another brand. But he definitely won't stay thirsty," says Pundole.

Other cities will have to wait a while before they get their taste of this syrupy drink, for the Pundoles do not intend launching the drink immediately elsewhere unless they can cope with the resultant increase in demand. "It's quite embarrassing to spend all that money (ten lakhs) launching Tango only to find we can't cope with the increased demand," says Pundole, revealing how unprepared they were for the speed with which Tango caught on with the public.

Future plans include an expansion of production facilities at the factory by the addition of another bottling plant to the existing six, making it undisputedly the largest in the country. Later the Pundoles also intend granting franchises to bottlers all over the country. The family also have a canning unit in Poona where mangoes and now oranges are procured and processed into about two lakh tins to be used later in the making of Mangola and Tango.

The success of this drink can also be attributed to the growing popularity of health foods in the West and the stirrings of a similar health conscious move in India. More and more people are shifting away from artificially flavoured foods and drinks to natural products—even if they come chilled in glass bottles!

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