

Parsiana

Chicago representative's paper for Fourth Congress rejected.

Dr Kersey Antia, the head priest of the Chicago Zoroastrians who participated in the navjote of Joseph Peterson, was selected by the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago to speak at the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress to be held in Bombay from January 10 to 13. The invitations to the overseas associations to nominate representatives and paper readers was issued by the Congress. Antia's paper however was rejected. In a letter to Antia, Congress chairman Jamshed N. Guzder stated:

"When we had sent out letters in the first week of October 1984, for inviting papers and speakers, we had made it very clear that in the event of there being too many speakers on a given topic, the Subjects Committee will have to use their discretion and not accept certain papers, if the limit of the number of papers submitted is exceeded.

"As far as this Topic No. III is concerned, we have received very many requests and papers including two from U.S.A., namely one from Mr K. Irani of New York and the other from Tehamp-ton Aresh of California.

"As it would not be desirable to have a concentration of speakers from a particular country, as we have already two speakers from the U.S.A., and also

a large number of speakers are expected, we regretfully cannot accept your paper. I do hope you will understand."

For the benefit of readers *Parsiana* publishes Antia's paper entitled "The need for a generally accepted definition of Zoroastrianism and for a permanent religious body to resolve religious issues."

■ ■ ■

Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrians have survived since time immemorial thanks mainly to the fact that Zoroastrians faithfully followed their ancient traditions till the twentieth century. It was not the might of our empires or the greatness of our ancient civilization that was responsible for the continuation of Zoroastrianism throughout millennia. Rather, the main reason for its survival is the beauty and uniqueness of its philosophy that sets it apart from other religious systems, even though as generally acknowledged by scholars today, it has probably had more influence on other religions, directly or indirectly, than any other single faith.

However, the advent of modernity has led to dissensions and disagreement among us as to what Zoroastrianism means to different groups of Zoroastrians. As Sir Jivanji Mody noted in his

biography of the pioneering Parsi reformist, K.R. Cama, there were no reformists in the Parsi community when Cama grew up as a young man in the 19th century. All Parsis till then were uniformly orthodox. But the westernization of the community has changed that peaceful scenario not only in India but also in Iran. What Professor James E. Whitehurst observes in this regard ("The Zoroastrian Response to Westernization: A Case Study of the Parsis of Bombay" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 1969, 37(3), pp. 231-6) is worth noting: "Perhaps the greatest threat to the Parsi community comes in the form of a frontal attack on much that Parsis have considered sacrosanct. Parsis may manage to stem the population decline, but if the religious bond that has given them identity as a people crumbles, it is meaningless to talk about their survival as a historical community"

The advent of western education sowed the seeds of skepticism and radical questioning. . . . However much indebted the Parsis may be to the process of Westernization, industrialization and technology for their rise to prominence, they have become, in other respects, victims of that process. . . . *The full force of its disruptive power is perhaps*

Our community has made its mark in almost every field known to humanity but failed in studying its own religious heritage.



more dramatically revealed in this tiny community than anywhere else in the world."

Ever since modernity has cut deeply into our community, there has hardly been any unanimity in our understanding and definition of Zoroastrianism which has led many a Zoroastrian to emphasize their cultural heritage rather than their great religious heritage, thus regarding themselves as "cultural Zoroastrians" only. While the rank of cultural Zoroastrians is swelling, that of practising Zoroastrians is thinning to such an extent that a modern Zoroastrian is often a Zoroastrian in name and very little in practice. The grip of modernity is so strong on our ancient religion that even those that remain true to the tradition would have been found wanting in their dedication and adherence by our forefathers just a century ago. This is not to suggest at all that our traditions need not be followed, etc. Rather, those who do follow them deserve our respect and admiration.

But what befalls those Zoroastrians who drift away for various reasons from the strongholds of Zoroastrianism and find adherence to various religious practices almost impossible in their new environment? Do they therefore cease to be Zoroastrians? Since more and more Zoroastrians even in the old Zoroastrian strongholds turn out to be no more than cultural Zoroastrians, the question of who is a practising Zoroastrian demands our immediate attention if we are to remain a viable unit. (In order to avoid any unnecessary controversy and focus utmost attention on this burning issue facing us today, let me clarify here that in this context, by Zoroastrians, I only mean those that are Zoroastrians by birth.) What does a Zoroastrian in India, Iran or Pakistan have in common with Zoroastrians in Europe, Australia, Japan or North America? What is the common denominator or parameter of values, traditions or practices among these different groups of Zoroastrians in this world? What will the children of Zoroastrians settled abroad find in common with Zoroastrians

elsewhere? Will they participate in the world Zoroastrian bodies and events? Could we come to terms as to who is a practising Zoroastrian and what are the minimal expectations or indicators of being a Zoroastrian?

The answers to these questions become all the more important as unlike in other faiths we do not have a central religious body to deliberate on these questions and come up with an answer. The question of what a Zoroastrian stands for is as ancient as Zoroastrianism itself. Attempts seem to have been made to answer this question soon after Asho Zarathushtra established his new faith. The Avestan word *Fravarane*, which literally means "I profess," represents such an attempt. The entire chapter 12 of our Yasna addresses itself to this question, and so does the prayer of *Jasa Me Awanghahe Mazda*, itself a part of Yasna 12, which every Zoroastrian prays after tying his Kusti. When our forefathers turned up on the shores of Sanjan after leaving Iran in quest of religious freedom, King Jadirana asked them the same question: Who are Zoroastrians? Presumably, the King received the reply from our pilgrim fathers in 16 Sanskrit slokas of *Aka Andhyani*, which are still extant. However, it is doubtful that our pilgrim fathers could start conversing in Sanskrit the moment they arrived in Sanjan. Perhaps these slokas were written later on in response to the need of defining and explaining Zoroastrianism in a unified way when we multiplied and spread to other places in Gujarat. However, the same question invariably turns up today when Zoroastrians migrate to far off places and therefore we need to answer this fundamental question as precisely and effectively as we can in the context of our own times. This problem, however, is very difficult to solve today because we lost the knowledge of our ancient scriptures and languages after the loss of our empire until the European scholars started studying them in the nineteenth century. Even a scholar such as Dr Mary Boyce admits in the opening sentence of her book, *Zoroastrians* (p. xiii), that "Zoro-

astrianism is the most difficult of living faiths to study, because of its antiquity, the vicissitudes which it has undergone, and the loss, through them, of many of its holy texts." Even to this day, western scholars have not been able to unravel all the problems in this regard and we are so much dependent upon their understanding (or misunderstanding) of our ancient faith. For example, even to this day they are not in agreement about the most fundamental questions facing us, e.g., whether Zoroastrianism is monotheistic or dualistic or henotheistic, whether the later scriptures and traditions are in agreement or disagreement with the real teachings of our prophet Zarathushtra, whether he lived 600 B.C. or 2000 B.C., whether our later literature, rituals and practices are rooted in the Gathas or are rather incompatible with the spirit of the Gathas, etc., etc.

Such being the case, it behoves us to study our religion ourselves as best as we can in order to come to some agreement amongst us about the basic tenets of Zoroastrianism and determine how we can continue to be good Zoroastrians while living either in Asia, Europe, Australia, Africa or North America as well as how we can meet the challenge of our times by laying down what is the least expected of one who is a practising Zoroastrian. Such a basic knowledge of our faith should inspire loyalty among our present as well as future generations. It seems so strange that our community has made its mark in almost every field known to humanity despite its unbelievably small size, but by and large has woefully failed in studying its own religious heritage for which it is still pathetically dependent on the western savants. One of the main reasons for our apathy to our rich religious heritage therefore is our ignorance about it. If we dispel this ignorance by dissemination of appropriate information about our religion and lay down guidelines for everyone to follow, we may very well witness a surge in their devotion to Zoroastrianism for the modern Zoroastrians have hardly had an

opportunity to satisfy their religious hunger. As Professor William Oxtoby of the University of Toronto observed at a symposium held in Chicago on April 29, 1984, the principles of Zoroastrianism are so beautiful that one cannot help but like them if one gets to know them. Let us not deprive our youth any more of such a glorious religious heritage. Let us not fail to give at least an opportunity to the "cultural Zoroastrians" to become "ideological Zoroastrians" by practising the principles of Zoroastrianism in their daily lives.

Neville Wadia's observations on the occasion of the Cusrow Baug Golden Jubilee acquire special significance in this context. "Have you really stopped to think ... what God did for you that was so important?" Wadia asked. His answer: "I firmly believe it is the Zoroastrian religion with its very positive approach to life instilled in you since childhood which is the basis of your good fortune. It is this which has given you the faith that you can achieve what you set out to do ... Let me confess openly that I am greatly attracted by the wonderful teachings of Zoroaster. His philosophy, his insight, his wisdom all appeal to my sense of logic ... I know that if it had been left to me I would have chosen to follow the shining truth of Zoroaster ... Now you might ask why am I harping on religion. Not only do I believe that it has been a great source of strength in the past but that it will be even more important in the future. With the rapid erosion of all moral values in this country and for that matter abroad, the Parsi community will be hard put to maintain its standards of integrity and honesty in such a world ... Only with moral strength based on the indestructible foundation of your religious beliefs can this community survive this very difficult era. ... Without that inner strength a little community like ours could well disintegrate" (*Parsiana*, May 1984, p. 21).

As we all know, and as one of the most prominent scholars of our religion, Boyce, too has not failed to note, "It is ruefully said nowadays by Zoroastrians themselves that where three of them are gathered together, there will be three different interpretations of their faith" (*A History of Zoroastrianism*, p. XIII). There is therefore no better way to resolve this problem than to urge this Congress to appoint a permanent religious body of Zoroastrian scholars, priests and concerned laymen of

every persuasion and every continent to study these problems, and present its recommendations at the next Congress. Such an action will be nothing new in our history but will really be in keeping with an ancient tradition started by the Parthian King Valakhsh (Vologesis) in the first century A.D. when, according to the *Dinkard*, he tried to collect whatever Avestan scriptures had survived after Alexander's conquest of Persia (Madon's *Dinkard*, 412.5-11, ZZZ 8). The first Sassanian King, Ardashir Papekan, gathered all scattered Zoroastrian teachings and traditions in the second century A.D. and with the help of his high priest Tansar, "selected one tradition and left the rest out of the canon."

A modern Zoroastrian is often a Zoroastrian in name and very little in practice.

And he issued this decree: The interpretation of all the teachings of the Mazdan-worshipping religion is our responsibility, for now there is no lack of certain knowledge concerning them" (Madon's *Dinkard*, 412.11-17, ZZZ 8). Such attempts were also made by various high priests in Iran after we lost our empire. But nothing has been done in this regard ever since. Time has come when we cannot afford to defer this important task any longer. As a matter of fact, we need to establish a permanent body to study and resolve various religious issues. Even the western scholars who have contributed to our problem in this regard have not failed to notice this problem. Thus, it is not surprising that Boyce concludes her scholarly book, *Zoroastrians*, by emphasizing nothing else but the seriousness of this problem (p. 255). While I do not agree with all her conclusions, I greatly admire her devotion to the study of our religion and fervently wish our community will soon produce a Mary Boyce of our own. After careful gleaning, I quote her following remarks as they strongly support my thesis: "Clearly whatever the doctrines were which their prophet taught over 3000 years ago, these need to be re-interpreted for his contemporary followers, as do the teachings of all other prophets for their own communities. What is unusual in

the case of Zoroastrianism is the wide diversity of opinion as to what their prophet originally taught, let alone how this should be understood today; and the blame for this confusion lies largely with the West, and the ruthless self-confidence of nineteenth-century scholars and missionaries ... Matters have now been further complicated with the reversal by Western scholars of nineteenth-century assumptions. [I may add that the next century may very well witness the reversal of the assumptions of the present-day Western scholars, including Boyce's. Insler, for example, has already countered Boyce's interpretation of the Gathas and vice versa. Since this is the very stuff on which the western academia thrives, we cannot expect anything otherwise.] So the West has now destroyed the basis which it originally provided for Parsi reformists, although this has yet to be realized within the community itself. A few of the orthodox continue serenely untroubled by all this; but many Zoroastrians, in a literate age, long for a simple, noble, lucid scripture on which to base a unified faith, and this is a longing which seems doomed to remain unfulfilled, because of the immense antiquity of their tradition" (*Zoroastrians*, p. 225).

This Congress has on its agenda many pressing socioeconomic problems, but perhaps there is no other problem facing our community that ultimately threatens its very existence as the one of determining what our future generations should be expected to believe and practice as good Zoroastrians and in keeping with the spirit of the Pahlavi tradition of *Shayast La Shayast* (that is, what is possible (to observe) and what is not) or the *Zeitgeist*, what are the most fundamental characteristics and beliefs that bind us all as Zoroastrians, despite modernity making it impossible for us to observe all those practices that once made up Zoroastrianism. Our great prophet was the first one in the world to emphasize *Vohu Mana*, good mind and the power of the mind. As Descartes reminds us, "Cogito ergo Sum," — "I think; therefore I exist." If we cease to think as Zoroastrians, therefore, we will cease to exist as Zoroastrians. If we let our thinking and psyche be guided by the eternally inspiring philosophy and religion of Asho Zarathushtra, we will never cease to be Zoroastrian and Zoroastrianism will never cease to exist.

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"The right input"

BPP trusteeship
election manifesto of
Naoroji Pirojsha Godrej



I have great pleasure in announcing my candidature for the trusteeship of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet. Jamshed Guzder's 10-year term of trusteeship will expire on February 25, 1985, and I have decided to stand to fill the vacancy so created.

The sole motive in offering my candidature is to do whatever is possible for the good of the community. My father was at great pains to instil in his sons a sense of duty for the upliftment of the community and the people at large. The fact that my family name is known for its indelible mark on Indian industry and Parsi philanthropy is not enough for me. I would personally like to do whatever I can for my community, and I feel that the Parsi Punchayet could be revitalized to meet the aspirations of the members of the community. There is no doubt that a lot has already been done by the present and past trustees of the Parsi Punchayet, but surely a lot more could be done with the right input of managerial skills.

While one would not expect the Punchayet to perform miracles, given the constraint on its resources, the revamping of its management, and administration would go a long way in raising the Punchayet to its apex status, which this great and ancient institution is destined for.

Background

Born on December 3, 1916, I joined my father, the late Pirojsha Burjorji Godrej in August 1933 in Godrej & Boyce Mfg Co Pvt Ltd, which can today claim to be one of the finest companies in India. Since those days,

the Company has grown significantly, and today employs more than 14,000 people. When the Godrej organization purchased lands at Vikhroli in the early forties, Vikhroli was just a dense and marshy jungle. Along with my late and illustrious father, we have built an industrial complex at Vikhroli, providing every form of infrastructure, namely factories, residential quarters, schools, medical centres, sports facilities, etc., etc., for a township where more than 15,000 people reside today. Godrej presently gives employment to more than 1,100 Parsis.

More than 30 percent of the profits of Godrej & Boyce Mfg Co Pvt Ltd today go towards the various charities which have been founded by the Godrej family. Prominent among these charities are the Pirojsha Godrej Foundation which disburses scholarships to deserving students, gives grants for setting up educational institutions, provides medical assistance, constructs housing for the needy, etc., etc. Vast tracts of land have also been donated to the Soonabai Pirojsha Godrej Foundation, a cosmopolitan trust, which is endeavouring at present for the construction of thousands of tenements for the lower and middle income groups of people. Godrejs have also donated lands at Vikhroli to the Sir Ratan Tata Trust for setting up a home for infirm and aged Parsis. Another tract of land at Vikhroli has been donated to the trustees of the B.N. Gama-dia Parsi Hunnarshala for constructing dwelling units for the weaker sections of the Parsi community. The Godrej Memorial Trust in Delhi has been found-

ed to give free medical aid to the poor, in Delhi. We are also being associated with the Foundation of a Technical Institution at Golvad for imparting technical education to school drop-outs. The Pirojsha Godrej Memorial Wing has been set up at the Breach Candy Hospital, Bombay, for the poor. Substantial sums have also been donated to the B.D. Petit Parsee General Hospital. I may venture to add that the knowledge and expertise gleaned by me over the years from the large disbursements made by the Godrej Charities will stand me in good stead to assist the Parsi Punchayet for a more effective utilization of their funds.

My action plan

I am confident that the support of the present trustees of the Punchayet would be forthcoming in ample measure, as they are all well-meaning persons who have the interest of the community at heart. I, therefore, intend to actively assist the Punchayet in the following goals:

The twin facets of housing — new construction and repairs — would be engaging my urgent attention because I feel that this is the most pressing problem which the community is facing at present. I am aware of the fact that not only are there about 2,500 applicants on the waiting list of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, but that many more are joining the queue every year in view of dilapidated houses which are on the verge of collapse.

It was with this in mind that the Pirojsha Godrej Foundation decided to contribute the seed capital for the Godrej Baug at Napean Sea Road, where the Punchayet has extensive lands on which about 500 flats could be constructed. With the help of the Godrej Foundation the initial buildings on the said land have been constructed departmentally, with a view to bring down the cost of construction to the bare minimum, so that maximum number of flats could be constructed at the lowest possible cost, without sacrificing quality and workmanship. I hope to carry on this work with all the assistance and expertise available.

I believe that the best manner of helping one's fellowmen, is not merely to give out regular doles but to make them self-supporting. The creation of employment opportunities for our people has been the cherished goal of

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my family. I would like to impart education to our young boys and girls which would enable them to acquire the required skills to be self-sufficient so that they would not only be able to ensure comfortable living standards for themselves and the community, but also contribute to the growth of the nation.

Our community reached eminence in the past because they were in the forefront of business and industry. I would like to see a resurgence of the spirit of enterprise in our community as in the past. I would like to initiate schemes for imparting technical skills by reviving technical institutes which our community already possesses.

With the dwindling population of our mobs, it appears to me that the very survival of our ancient and noble religion is at stake. The Parsi Punchayet is at present actively considering setting up of houses for the priestly class and a central fund for their amelioration. My assistance in every possible way would be extended in ample measure for this worthy cause.

I firmly believe that religion should best be left to our dasturs and scholars, and it would be my endeavour to set up a body of experts to deal with these matters and guide the community, so that controversies are minimized and differences are ironed out.

Conclusion

I would now like to end, as I have always been a man of few words, and I believe that goals can only be achieved by hard work and determined action. With more than fifty years of experience behind me, I offer to work for the Punchayet, so that whatever I have achieved during these years could be fruitfully used for the benefit of the community. I have no personal ambitions and I am solely motivated by the need to make the Bombay Parsi Punchayet an effective charitable institution for the upliftment of the community.

I now seek your blessings and goodwill to enable me to fulfil my goal.

December 3, 1984.

PARSIANA

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Chicago Zoroastrians

The second instalment of "In search of the Good Life" by Ruzbeh Antia which was scheduled for the November issue will be carried in the December issue due to exigencies of space.

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Events and Personalities

Kanga commissioner

The awesome responsibility of coping with Bombay's myriad problems has fallen on Jamsheed G Kanga who in November became the Bombay Municipal Corporation's new administrator and commissioner. Kanga, a trustee of



Kanga: welcomed by city leaders

the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and founder president of the Committee for Electoral Rights was the industries' secretary in the Maharashtra Government prior to his new appointment.

The 50-year-old civil servant's appointment was welcomed by city leaders, though controversy surrounded the removal of the former commissioner D.M. Sukthankar who was known to have taken a strong stand on irregularities in the building industry.

A graduate of economics and laws from the Nagpur University, Kanga has a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Harvard University in the USA.

Starting as assistant collector in Pune District in 1956, Kanga was later made controller of rationing in Bombay during the difficult days of food shortage from 1965 to 1967, notes the press release. He was the managing director of two important public sector companies, the

Maharashtra Agro Industries Development Corporation and the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation and later served as the State's commissioner of cooperative societies and helped reorganize the cooperative banking sector in the country.

Subsequently Kanga was appointed secretary to the Government of Maharashtra in departments like social welfare, tourism and agriculture, according to the press release. Whilst he was with the Government of India in the department of Atomic Energy for five years, he was made director of Government corporations like the Electronics Corporation of India Ltd, the Indian Rare Earths Ltd and the Uranium Corporation of India.

Kanga's wife Firoza is the vice-president of the IAS Officers' Wives' Association. His elder daughter Shireen is a student of first year B.Com and his younger daughter Farida is in school.

Creation of resources

Three paintings on glass by the noted artist Maqbul Fida Husain depicting The Story of Creation according to a Zoroastrian text, *The Bundahishn*, were unveiled in Bombay on November 13, 1984 by industrialist and former sheriff of Bombay, Sohrab P Godrej. The proceeds from the sale of the prints, priced at Rs 1500 a set, will be donated to The Oriental Heritage Trust who are funding the 90 minutes docu-drama *A Quest for Zarathushtra*, directed by Cyrus Bharrucha and featuring noted philharmonic conductor Zubin Mehta.

The paintings, done on three separate glass sheets three feet by four feet each, are considered Husain's most important work since his series on Mother Teresa. From the triptych, 500 prints, 17" by 23" in size, have been prepared for sale. The originals will be donated by the artist to the Nehru Centre which is under construction at Bombay's Worli area.

"The efforts to rope in the busy and eccentric painter were worth the result. Originally the brainchild of Chemould's Kekoo Gandhi, it took over a year to pin the elusive, barefooted master down. He then perused the text, suggested glass and acrylic paints as the medium and, on a wet July afternoon, completed three wonderfully diverse paintings," notes the Bombay-based *The Daily*, October 29, 1984. "It was really staggering to watch a white screen come to life as Husain's brush built up these extraordinary images. We found ourselves in awe of the creation of 'The Creation,'" said the film's director, Bharrucha.

"The film's almost complete though it needs a final financial thrust from each one of us — however large or small — to help us complete this important project. It will give the producers and the trustees a good opportunity to present the world premier of



this film in Bombay for the World Zo-roastrian Congress which is to be held in January, 1985," notes the Oriental Heritage Trust appeal. The chairman of the Trust is noted jurist Nani Palkhivala, vice-chairman is S.P. Godrej, and the trustees are Minoo H. Mody of Tatas, lawyer Jehangir R Gagrati and industrialist Sanat Mehta.

Secretaries at stake

Even though many Parsi ladies continue to become personal secretaries, the general standard of the profession seems to have deteriorated, according to Ms Homai Mehta, faculty and administrative co-ordinator, Sir J.J. College of Commerce, who gave an interview to a Bombay daily, *Mid-Day*, which was published on August 21, 1984.

"I have wondered why the best classes do not take to becoming personal secretaries the way they did earlier," says Mehta. She recalls that formerly the personal secretary profession attracted a lot of arts graduates whereas today there are more personal secretaries with commerce backgrounds.

"Mehta can be considered an authority on the subject not only because she is, in effect, the principal of the 30-year-old college since the past 13 years but also because she is the president of the National Institute of Personal Sec-



Mehta: 'a professional attitude'

retaries (NIPS) and president of the Association of Secretaries in Asia (ASA)," to quote *Mid-Day*, August 21, 1984.

Since its inception in 1970, The National Institute of Personal Secretaries — the first and only professional organization of lady personal secretaries in India — hosted for the first time in India the sixth Congress of Secretaries in Asia from September 30 to October 5 at Bombay.

"As far as loyalties go, girls would be more apt for a job as a personal secretary," opines Mehta who feels that girls are better suited than men to becoming secretaries.

Mehta worked with Tatas for eight years as a personal secretary prior to taking up her present assignment. Her daughter, Niloufer, an F.Y. Arts student at Bombay's St. Xavier's College, has no plans for becoming a personal secretary. "It's not because she doesn't think it worth it. It's just that she's taken to psychology very much. She'll probably go in for counselling or maybe she'll prefer to be a housewife." The Mehtas also have a son, Hushedar, who is schooling. Homai's husband Homi is the managing director of Mazda Leasing.

On the question of lady secretaries being sexually harassed at work, Mehta asserts, "I'm not inclined to believe that sexual harassment is much to be found in the line of a personal secretary's job. It could happen to a girl in any other profession. A professional attitude is what counts. I don't think you'll find such femme fatales (shown in cartoons) as secretaries in large organizations."

Unveiling of Husain's Story of Creation: Godrej and Mody

Holding reins

The week before on an afternoon when the sun was on holiday and it was drizzling I met petite, pretty and chirpy, Ayesha Captain, the first woman rider of the country to jostle her way through the so far "men only" open racing as a pukka professional.

The sun reappeared as she smiled, dimpled, and told me, without the usual feminine trait of fluttering eyelids, that soon after school she made up her mind to ride, which she is doing with absolute devotion and only one thought in mind, to do her best.

Yet, she added, her only desire at this early stage in her career was to win a good race for aged, pious Aziz Mahmoud, the veteran trainer and her racing 'guru' who was the first to show her the ropes and teach her the tricks of the trade, for which she is very grateful.

Encouraged by her parents, Laila and Soli, both top-flight amateur riders in their time, Ayesha has proved to be a 'natural,' one for whom horses 'go.'

Though Ayesha Captain looks frail and delicate she has all the necessary requisites. A good seat, excellent balance on the horse and a strong, safe pair of hands.

After having started grooming, schooling and generally looking after expensive thoroughbreds in Western India, she spent a year, and acquired the final finishing touch and polish in Bangalore in Rashid Byramji's yard. After this she was sure she had acquired the confidence to ride competitive races with full-fledged jockeys.

Of course, she has had her share of falls and minor injuries, but the wilful, determined girl, instead of dancing her way through life, her second love, chose the more arduous, tough life of a jockey — bumps, bruises, falls mixed with occasional ecstasy and top-of-the-world feeling.

At the time of writing, she has yet to lead in beaming, and patting her ride as the winner, but this is a mere matter of time. As it is she has earned several 'places' in her first handful of rides in the 'open.'

Strange, but modest Ayesha is not after big time fame. She loves horses and is more than happy working and exercising as many as 10 horses every morning at the crack of dawn which no doubt helps improve her stamina.

Aziz Currimbhoy

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SIMOE/SBGW/7/81

The Ahmedabad correspondence

Ahmedabad refutes charges of infighting and
Federation chairman blames Press for "misreporting."

In reference to the article "The Federation's Fifty" (*Parsiana*, June 1984), the president of the Ahmedabad Parsi Punchayet, K.S. Pavri sent a letter to the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India and Bombay Parsi Punchayet chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla. Copies of the letter were sent to *Jam-e-Jamshed* and *Parsiana*. In his letter to the *Jam*, Pavri noted, "I send herewith copy of my letter addressed to Dr Aspi Golwalla with reference to his rather presumptuous suggestion based on thin air, to send one or two persons to Ahmedabad to cause peace within the Ahmedabad Punchayet... The matter was brought to our notice rather belatedly but it's not everybody who reads *Parsiana* every day!"

We carry Pavri's letter, Golwalla's reply, *Parsiana's* rejoinder and an extract from an editorial in *The Bombay Samachar*.

Dear Shri Golwalla

In the meeting of the managing committee of the Parsi Punchayet held on October 27, one of our trustees produced an issue of *Parsiana* dated June 1984 pointing out two paragraphs in this issue, which when read out was considered objectionable by the members present, unanimously.

The words in inverted commas that made objectionable reading were purported to be words, used by you as chairman during the meeting of the Federation's executive council on May 19 and 20. These paras run as follows:

"Encouraged by the Federation's growing strength, Federation and Bombay Parsi Punchayet chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla recommended, the body enlarge its activities to include the role of peacemaker. He cited the example of Ahmedabad where, due to the 'infighting' amongst the members of the Anjuman, Ahmedabad went unrepresented on the Federation. 'We should send one or two members to go and make peace,' said Golwalla."

The above para was printed on the very first page (3rd para) of the said issue of *Parsiana*. The objectionable theme proposed by you was again reprinted on page 9 para 4 of the said issue and runs as follows:

"Golwalla referred to the infighting in Ahmedabad and noted that an important function of the Federation was to see how such infighting or lack of co-operation can be minimized and suggested that the Federation should send one or two people as ambassadors of

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peace. However no decision was taken as to who should be sent to Ahmedabad."

Dr Golwalla permit me to say at the very outset that you are rather ill-informed and perhaps misinformed by vested interests or by persons who purport to know the so-called infighting in the Parsi Punchayet at Ahmedabad. In the history of the Parsi Punchayet, no team or panel of 15 office bearers having similar views have been elected uncontested. During the elections of office bearers held on December 18, 1983, all five trustees, two honorary secretaries, two lady members of the managing committee and all six members of the managing committee, belonging to one single panel were elected unanimously and uncontested and subsequent to this there was the election of the president of the Parsi Punchayet and again without any contest the president was elected unanimously.

Under these circumstances can it ever be maintained in May 1984 and still less at the present moment, that the Anjuman or the office bearers are indulging in infighting? And to add salt to injury, you proposed that one or two individuals be sent to Ahmedabad to bring about peace. Not taking any decision as to who should be sent to Ahmedabad, appears the wisest thing that the Federation Council did during the entire meeting on that day. I leave it to you to guess what would have happened if some self-styled peacemakers were unnecessarily foisted on Ahmedabad uninvited by the Ahmedabad Punchayet.

Our trustees and members of the managing committee have been working with unity of purpose viz. uplifting the Zoroastrians at Ahmedabad and to that extent though we do not have the Bombay Parsi Punchayet resources of crores of rupees, with our slender resources we have achieved notable success in the sphere of properly maintaining our Farvandyan, employment of Parsis, education, medical relief, accommodation and last but not the least, helping and encouraging and subsidizing members of the Anjuman to adhere to and fulfil the customs and rituals of our fabulous religion. I do not think it necessary to go into the details of these activities, but suffice it to say that because there is no infighting, because of unity, amongst the 15 office bearers of the Ahmedabad Parsi Punchayet, we are quite confident of achieving even more success. Under these circumstances, your remarks, Dr Golwalla, are not only contrary to facts on record but if I may say with due respect rather presumptuous if not disrespectful to the members of the Parsi Punchayet.

Coming to the point of Ahmedabad not being represented in the Federation, once again your contention is not true to facts on record. During the last two Federation meetings, on one occasion I had to cancel my air ticket at the ele-

venth hour due to a heavy attack of flu and fever and on the other occasion something very urgent cropped up compelling me to cancel my attendance at the Federation meeting. In a way I am glad I was not able to attend the Federation meeting, because we have still not had time to get the verdict of the General Body Meeting whether to join the Federation nor have had the time to ratify our move to join the Federation in anticipation of the sanction of the General Body Meeting.

Please read the headlines in the centre of Page 1 of this very issue of *Parsiana*, which runs: "Invite the high priests to Federation meetings so that they'd know we are not die hard reformists." Rightly or wrongly many of the members of the Anjuman also feel like the high priests that (to) join the Federation would eventually lead to reformists in our religion.

Under the circumstances, it is obviously desirable and also in consonance with democratic norms that we take the verdict of the General Body Meeting

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whether Ahmedabad would like to join the Federation or not, specially in view of the reputation the Federation has earned of being progressive. I would also invite your kind attention to page 2, column 3, para 6 "Nargolwala noted that the Delhi Anjuman has the proviso for takeover of other anjumans' properties but that (Behram) Pestonji (of Srinagar) had told him, 'You in Delhi Anjuman are very progressive. I will not give it to you.'" By quoting the words and feeling of Behramji Pestonji, Shri S. Nargowala has pointed out a feeling which perhaps may be running in the minds of certain people of different anjumans, though the office bearers of the anjumans that have joined the Federation may not have taken the verdict of their General Body Meeting, which would make their joining the Federation null and void.

During the meeting of the managing

committee of the Ahmedabad Parsi Punchayet, the matter of contributions towards Federation fees in anticipation of the General Body's sanction was about to be decided when this theme of yours quoted in *Parsiana* to send some people to Ahmedabad to cause peace was read out by one of our trustees. At this juncture it was resolved to first take the verdict of the General Body Meeting before sending the contribution to the Federation. So at least for the time being I am afraid the Ahmedabad Parsi Punchayet will not be represented in the Federation. Not because of any infighting as was wrongly contended before the Press and before the other anjumans, but because of reasons pointed out in the above paras.

People who read newspapers ordinarily believe what they read; you should have therefore, got matters first verified in some manner. But it is most surprising that without making any contact with Ahmedabad Punchayet, it was proposed by you to send one or two people to Ahmedabad to bring about peace. Since this rather slanderous remark against the Parsi Punchayet, Ahmedabad has been spread without verification or without any grounds the least I owe to my Punchayet would be to get the correct picture depicted in the Press through this letter from me to you.

K.S. PAVRI

The Editor

Jam-e-Jamshed

Please refer to the letter of Mr K. Pavri, president Ahmedabad Parsi Punchayet addressed to me, which has appeared in your esteemed daily.

Mr K. Pavri's letter dated October 20, 1984 was received by me on November 5, and I have already given him a reply at some length on November 12. Since Mr Pavri has not waited for a reply from me, as normally expected and has rushed to the Press, I am obliged to release my reply letter dated November 12, addressed to him, to the Press with a view to make full facts of the matter clear, for the information of all concerned. May I request you to see that the same is published in your issue.

DR. A.F. GOLWALLA

Dear Mr Pavri

Please refer to your letter No. PP/524 dated October 29, 1984.

I have noted the contents of your letter carefully. There is apparently some misreporting or misinterpretation

in what has appeared in the *Parsiana*.

A passing reference was made by me at the meeting to Ahmedabad at the time when the question of bringing in cordiality and cooperation in the community in different centres where there was heard to be some discord was discussed in general, but so far as I recollect, the main reference made was to some infighting and litigation going on at Broach to which a reference has been made in the newspapers also.

We are aware, and are glad to have it further confirmed from you, that Ahmedabad Parsi Punchayet is doing very good work in some directions and we

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know that it has been inviting speakers from Bombay and other places to give religious and other discourses to the community. There was no question of my mentioning any infighting amongst the members of the Ahmedabad Parsi Punchayet because I know that there is no such infighting amongst the present Punchayet trustees/members. We had only heard that some differences of opinion had existed with the outgoing Punchayet trustees and when I spoke on the subject in general, what I had in mind was that if and where there are any groups amongst the Parsi community where there is a small or limited population, Federation may think to help establish greater cordiality and unity in the community; this was all that was in mind at the time.

In fact, Mr Anklesaria our chief executive who had been to Ahmedabad sometime in August 1984 last, had met one of your committee members Mr Navroz Kanga who had told Mr Anklesaria that everything was going on very well in Ahmedabad Punchayet and that there was no discord whatsoever prevalent. I was very glad to know this from Mr Anklesaria and hence at the last meeting of the executive council

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is a potential winner.

Some people
are disguised
as losers.

Don't let
their appearances
fool you."

- Kenneth Blanchard
Spencer Johnson

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of the Federation held at Hyderabad-Secunderabad just about a fortnight back, I mentioned this fact to some of our colleague members also.

I would request therefore that you and your committee members may not take amiss something said in general terms in good faith, and I am sure you will try to understand it in the spirit in which the Federation and I as its chairman would like to help Parsis anywhere necessary, by re-establishing greater cordiality amongst all the members of the community so that the image of the community as a whole stands out favourably which has been its tradition in this country all through the centuries. May I assure you once again therefore that even in the passing reference made, the desire was only to be helpful if needed.

The Federation has done nothing against the community and none will be allowed to dominate over the anjumans which will remain autonomous.

and there was no intention whatsoever and can never be to be critical in any way.

I am so happy to read from the contents of your letter that all your activities of the Punchayet are going on cordially and with utmost cooperation from all, and I am sure that they will continue to flourish in future in that same happy atmosphere.

As regards Ahmedabad joining the Federation, I do not think that I had mentioned that either Ahmedabad or any other centre for that matter, was stated to have not been joining the Federation because of any infighting. A punchayet or an anjuman (Bangalore for example) can have many reasons of its own for not being able to join the Federation without some hesitation or for not joining the Federation at all, though, I as the chairman of the Federation and as the chairman of the Parsi Punchayet Bombay which has joined the Federation, would always be very happy to see that as many anjumans of India as is possible, do join the Federation.

In this connection, I would like to invite your kind attention to a meeting held at the Parsi Punchayet office Bombay on Saturday November 27 1982 (before Bombay Parsi Punchayet rejoined the Federation) at which you were present and in the minutes of the discussion of which it has been recorded in the office record of the Parsi Punchayet Bombay that trustees Mr Guzder and Mr Desai had pointed out to the representatives of the anjumans present that once the Parsi Punchayet Bombay and other punchayets/anjumans join the Federation, we should keep out controversial religious issues, that the Bombay Parsi Punchayet has never deviated from the conventional views of the community and that we need not therefore be deterred from or have apprehension in rejoining the Federation because of the somewhat unorthodox views of a paltry number. It was also stated at the meeting that the Federation has done nothing against the interests of the community and that none will be allowed to dominate over the other anjumans which will remain autonomous. At the meeting of the executive council of the Federation held on May 28, 1983 at Fariyas Hotel, Bombay (after Parsi Punchayet Bombay rejoined the Federation) at which also you were present, it was made clear in the discussion that each anjuman will function in its own independent way and that Federation would not interfere in the internal functioning of the anjumans. In view of the clear stand taken by the Parsi Punchayet Bombay and the executive council itself at these meetings, I would suggest that you and your colleagues may not like to be guided by some solitary opinion or feeling of an individual distant anjuman member, here or there, but may instead decide in favour of joining the Federation in the wider interest of the community and in order that we may all jointly ensure that in all important matters concerning the community, the community can, and does, speak with one voice from all over the country, as far as possible.

If *Parsiana* has reproduced something which was discussed in a different light from what was actually discussed, we may not take it amiss and be guided by such material which may not fully or correctly reflect what was in the mind of those who had deliberated, or what was exactly meant.

Having regard to the above, I am

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sorry if your feelings have been hurt and I am sure you would like to inform your colleagues appropriately and to yourself attend our future executive council meetings as you did earlier, and will try your best to prevail over the General Body of your Punchayet to decide to join the Federation at an early date.

DR. A.F. GOLWALLA

The Editor
Jam-e-Jamshed
Dear Sir

In Dr Aspi Golwalla's letter of November 12 to Mr K.S. Pavri of Ahmedabad which appeared in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* on November 16, Dr Golwalla states, "There is apparently some misreporting or misinterpretation in what has appeared in the *Parsiana*." Dr Golwalla further states, "If *Parsiana* has reproduced something which was discussed in a different light from what was actually discussed we may not take it amiss and be guided by such material which may not fully or correctly reflect what was in the mind of those who had deliberated or what was exactly meant."

The Managing Editor of *Parsiana*, Ms Arnavaz Mama, our Executive Editor, Ms Parinaz Toddywalla, and myself were present at the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India executive council meeting held in Bombay on May 19 and 20. We make it a point to have more than one reporter present so that the possibility of error is minimal. All our notes very clearly show a reference, to, "infighting in Ahmedabad" made by Dr Golwalla on the morning of the first day's deliberations. Golwalla also stated that, "where differences arose in anjumans, we should send one or two members to go and make peace."

At the end of the second day's session, Bombay Parsi Punchayet chief

executive Mr R.K. Anklesaria, who served as a municipal commissioner in Ahmedabad prior to his retirement from the Indian Administrative Service, noted that Ahmedabad has "very good persons," but they have "wide differences." Anklesaria also suggested a delegation be sent to Ahmedabad.

At the next meeting of the executive council in Hyderabad-Secunderabad on October 27 and 28, Dr Golwalla informed the delegates that Mr Anklesaria had visited Ahmedabad and had reported the Punchayet had patched up their differences. "I am happy to state that there are no more quarrels." No delegate from Bombay or elsewhere raised any objection to *Parsiana's* reportage of the Bombay meeting.

If there is any doubt to what *Parsiana* has stated it can be verified as the entire proceedings were tape recorded by the BPP and a transcript typed. However, the intention of writing this letter is not to prove who is right or wrong. Dr Golwalla's remarks were made in good faith and out of genuine concern for the concerned Punchayet. That his remarks have been regarded as a slur, is

unfortunate. But this should not be reason to make *Parsiana* a scapegoat.

JEHANGIR R. PATEL

The Bombay Samachar of Sunday, December 2, 1984 "Parsi tari arsi" column by Editor Jehan Daruwala referring to the exchanges in correspondence noted, "It is sad as well as surprising that the office bearers of the Federation have so far not shown any anxiety or eagerness to state where the truth lies. If this is

the shabby way in which the Press is being treated, how can the Parsi institutions expect to enlist its cooperation?

"In the Parsi institutions there are men of honour and character. As human beings they may commit mistakes sometimes. The honorable way is to acknowledge the mistakes. Our regard and respect for them will be enhanced by this act of grace and justice. It is deplorable that there is a tendency to take the Press for granted."



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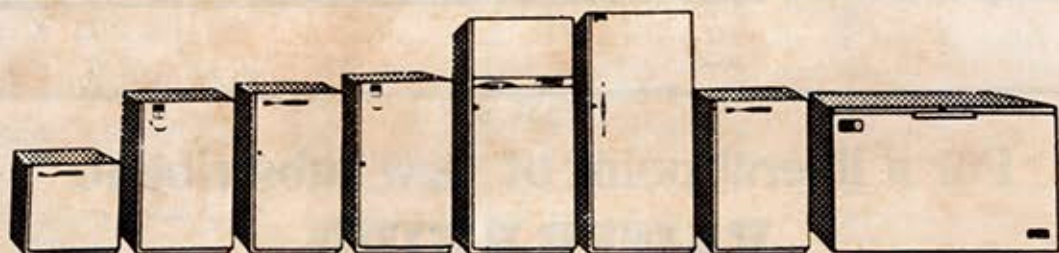
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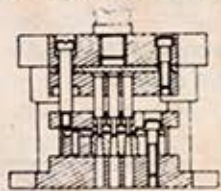
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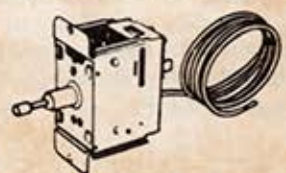
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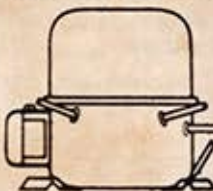
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