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Parsiana

March 1985
Volume 7 Number 9

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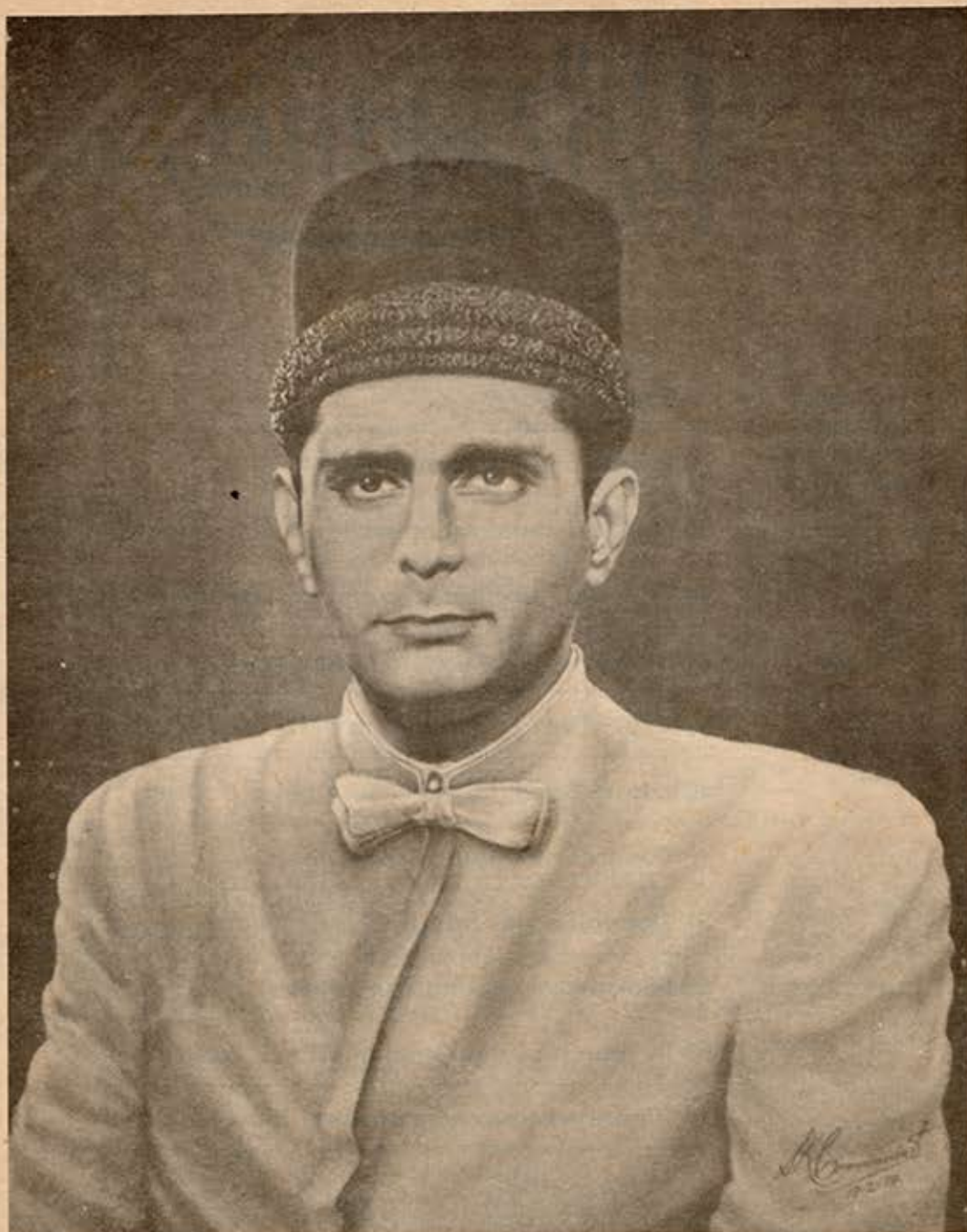
Cover: Transparencies of Congress inauguration by Homiyar Mistry

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In Memoriam

Mr. Fali Meherji Variava,

Director

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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.

On government service

I read with mixed interest the article by R.K. Anklesaria IAS (Retd) on the subject of Parsis shying away from government services without considering the benefits, in *Parsiana*, October 1984.

Anklesaria did not enumerate the benefits one gets in joining government services. However, in contrast, he mentions that salary levels in the services are not adequately remunerative to match the rising cost of living. He further mentions that they should be assisted by punchayets and anjumans by way of subsidized rents, assistance towards education of children etc, to preserve standards of integrity and honesty, and wherever possible such officers should be given the facility of the Parsi dharamshalas or guest house

accommodation on a nominal or token rent basis.

I am unable to comprehend this idea of getting into government service and then looking up to punchayets and anjumans for charity to be able to survive so that we can claim that we have so many Parsis in government service. Why do we want to support the public exchequer which cannot adequately support its employees, through our punchayet and anjuman resources? How can a Parsi call himself an officer, and at the same time be on charity to support himself with "honesty and integrity?" Who will provide the funds and what will be the sources of income? I am sorry I am unable to comprehend the *raison d'être* of this idea.

Let us be frank on this issue of joining government services. Apart from inadequate remunerations which I do not consider as the main factor, there are the other aspects to be considered, which have made inroads since Independence.

Selection stage: It is impossible to stand on your own merit. One can buy a first class anywhere in India for any educational qualification. One must have influence and pull in the right place. To cite an instance: Once I was the secretary of the Selection Board for Services. I received a phone call from the chief secretary of that State to see that his nephew who was appearing for the selection was favourably considered. I gave him a reply which displeased him. His nephew did not pass the test and was not selected. After a while, I was eased out of my post, because I saw to it that only merit counted and not influence. This happened about 22 years ago. So I am not surprised if not one Parsi out of 250 is selected.

Service conditions: A well-qualified Parsi lad was serving as non-commissioned officer and came to me for advice whether he should apply for short service commission. My advice was to finish his tenure as NCO and join a private company where he could earn easily three times the army salary. Contrary to my advice, he applied for and was selected. He was a very honest person and could not survive as he could not do hanky panky as he was ordered to do. He left the service which was

fortunately only a short service commission.

Honesty and integrity: I personally had some bitter experiences when I was in the army since 1942 as well as after—I was selected for Indian Civil Service (ICS). Whenever I refused to toe the line of superiors in hanky panky business I was put on adverse report. Even efforts were made to implicate me. Less said the better.

In summing up, I can only say that if you have political or official pull and influence, if you can buy your way through, if you can overlook misdeeds, corruption, misappropriation which I personally could not, by all means join the government services. Though salaries are inadequate, there is enough grass in the pasture to graze, if you are not very particular about your scruples. Why depend on Parsi charity to survive in government service?

If any one comes to me for advice, I will definitely tell him not to join any government service.

R.J. KATILA

Worshipping elsewhere

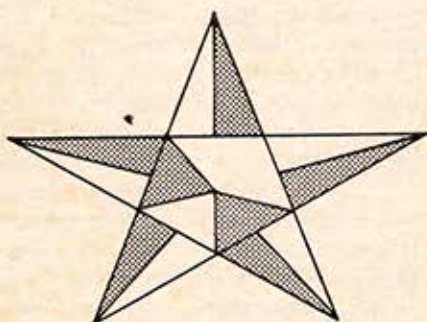
R.D.R. Wadia's enquiry in his letter published in *Parsiana*, October '84, as to why the members of our community are leaning towards other religions, has been asked by several others in the past, but so far no one has come up with a reply. I would like to attempt an answer.

To begin with, it must be appreciated that, if some of the Parsis (and their numbers are rapidly increasing) are veering round to and finding solace in other cults, it is because they have lost faith in our own religion. Let's face it. Over the ages, somewhere down the line, our elders have failed to imbibe in our youth, the Zoroastrian way of life and the tenets of this religion.

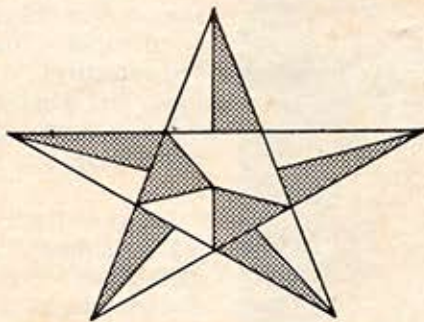
But then where can our youth find enlightenment within the community? They cannot go to their parents, as most of them do not know enough themselves nor have the inclination to help, and perhaps are themselves followers of some baba. They cannot turn to many priests but only a few, as most of them are uneducated, and do not have the kind of understanding or capacity to impart knowledge, nor do they com-

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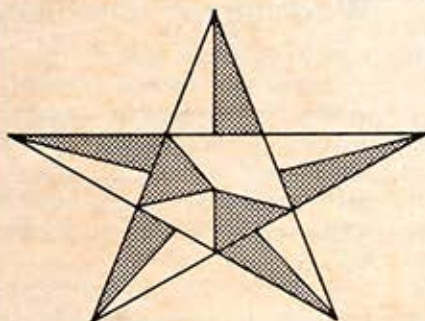
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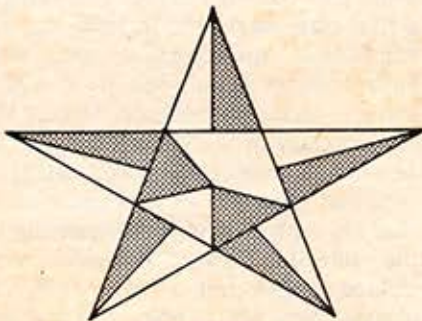
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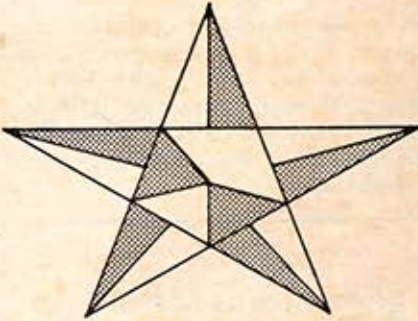
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mand the kind of respect in the community as the Christian priests do; if anything, our priests are the butt of ridicule in the community. They cannot seek advice from the Parsi punchayets or anjumans, as they also are not theologically knowledgeable, their main occupation being politicking and infighting.

I tried to pose this problem at the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress, but was told that no such controversial issues can be entertained. Only such airy-fairy subjects like, 'review of prevailing conditions of Zoroastrians in different parts of the world,' and 'how to improve communication between Zoroastrians in different parts of the world' etc, could be included in the Congress agenda. Mundane matters like why Zoroastrian youth are veering round in ever-increasing numbers to the baba cult, is not the concern of the Congress, which has got more important world matters to ponder on.



N.B. GRANI
Pune

In *Parsiana*, October 1984, I read 'Worshipping elsewhere' by R.D.R. Wadia. Lately such undesirable worship is on the increase. Photographs of *Mushkil-assan* and *Dastoorji Kookadaru* adorn many Parsi houses. Not getting results, the Parsis resort to babas, pir-fakirs and their deities to try their luck in vain.

Our youngsters need to know that the one and only Zoroastrian Yazada worthy of worship, is Ahura Mazda, the creator, who has no coequals alongside him nor any rivals in opposition; that there are no demons to be afraid of and no angels to be cajoled; that work is worship—"Those only who will diligently plough their fields and till the soil, will reap a proper harvest;" that there are no shortcuts to bliss; that there is no vicarious salvation; that *manashni*, *gavashni* are incomplete and in vain unless they culminate in *kunashni*.

DARA J.D. CAMA

Unwarranted accusations

Some time ago we had come across in the Parsi Gujarati Press, some uncalled for and biased views expressed on the World Zoroastrian Congress held at Bombay in January 1985, wherein some unwanted accusations and statements were made against Jamshed Guzder who had kindly consented to

be the chairman of the executive committee of this World Zoroastrian Congress at the request of the Federation.

We would like to stress the fact that at the executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India held in Bombay on May 19 and 20, 1984, it was unanimously decided by all the anjumans that the task of heading the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress be entrusted to Guzder, who was the best suited to undertake to organize this important meeting. It would be wrong and mischievous to state that Guzder had manipulated this with a view to enhance his chances at the trusteeship election of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet.

Again, at the executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, held on October 27 and 28, 1984, at Secunderabad, there was unanimous appreciation of the efficient manner in which Guzder had started organizing and conducting the Congress. Tremendous responsibilities were entrusted to Guzder who had the experience and organizational ability to make a great success of this Congress as he did at the last World Zoroastrian Congress.

This letter is therefore written with an appeal to our community members not to be misled by false propaganda, but to appreciate the good and efficient work done for the welfare of our community, not only by Guzder, but also by all member anjumans in the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India.

N.F. NAGARWALA
Honorary Secretary
Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and
Hyderabad

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Apart from that, on his own merits he richly deserves to be a trustee, and in electing him the community will not only honour itself, but will also reap the manifold benefits of his unselfish service.

HOSHANG D. DOONGAJI

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A visiting instructor after office or factory hours, between 6.30 to 8.30 in the evening, would also be welcome. The selected candidate will be given a good emolument.

In spite of various advertisements, I have not succeeded in getting the right person.

S.R. SANJANA
Secretary

The Behramji Nowroji Gamadia Parsi Hunnarshala
Hunnarshala Building, Gamadia Colony, Bombay-7.

Tithal sanatorium

In January 1985 when I went to Tithal, near Bulsar, I met one Kutchi Hindu friend from whom I heard many funny stories about the trustees of the Parsi sanatorium, built by Seth Dhanjibhai Hirjibhai Patel on about nine acres of land near the seashore.

On visiting the site, I found four large one-storeyed buildings, one residential bungalow (for donor), about six clean water wells, and long large outhouses with a kitchen and servants quarters, lying in a dilapidated state. I found it had such a haunted look, that one does not dare to enter the residential places.

I would like to bring to the notice of the present trustees of Bombay and Bulsar, specially Ms Shirinbai Narealwala of Bombay, that I have found wooden frames of the doors and windows, and bricks surreptitiously removed and sold out with the help of the caretaker, to the villagers of that area. Materials like wooden furniture and utensils have also been sold out to persons who could be located.

If the present trustees cannot manage the sanatorium and, as I understand

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Graphic A-181

from reliable sources from Bulsar, if the trustees are on the verge of disposing it to a non-Parsi, it will not be fair on their part if they do so. I feel this ought to be brought to the notice of the charity commissioners of Gujarat and Maharashtra.

The trustees of the Tithal Sanatorium should read the history of the Tithal Sanatorium, written by N.H. Dadrawala which is really praiseworthy. I wish the present trustees will wake up before the condition of the sanatorium gets worse, and think of entrusting the entire property to the trustees of the Bulsar Parsi Anjuman who would be the right persons to manage the show.

J.F. DRIVER

Taraporewala's Songs

My late father, Dr Irach J.S. Taraporewala had published during his lifetime in 1951, his monumental work entitled *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra* after a labour of about 20 years. This work of about 1150 to 1200 pages is regarded by scholars and critics as a standard work and a source book, and as being one of the best translations of the Gathas of Zarathushtra.

The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra has been out of print for a number of

years now and a need is felt for its re-publication. I needed about US \$10,000 for the project of publishing an edition of 1000 copies of *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*. During my visit to the United States of America and Canada in the autumn of 1984, I went to several cities, and met and spoke to office bearers of various Zoroastrian associations and other individuals about my project. My proposal was considered favourably by some associations and individuals, and I was able to get a part of the target amount needed for the project. In the second week of December 1984, I received a letter from Canada stating that two Zoroastrian brothers residing abroad were willing to donate the balance of the requisite target amount to bring to fruition the proposal of re-publication of *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra* and to distribute several copies of the book to various universities and scholars in memory of their late parents.

Out of the funds generated by the proposed publication of *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra* it is my intention to publish other standard works of educational and cultural value. I intend to distribute copies of *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra* at a price ranging between Rs 175 to Rs 200 per copy

plus postage and handling charges in India, and at U.S. \$20 per copy plus postage and handling charges abroad. I shall be obliged if you could let me know if you intend to purchase copies of the proposed publication *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*, so that I can have an idea of the number of copies to be printed for the proposed edition.

BARZO IRACH TARAPOREWALA

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The argument that the nassessalars are doing dirty work and have no place in society is misleading. The scavengers and sweepers (the harijans) in our cities also do the dirty work but they are all a part of our society.

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Events and Personalities

Parsee Gymkhana centenary

The Parsee Gymkhana, one of the oldest sports institutions in the country and among the first to introduce cricket to India, celebrates its centenary this year.

The celebrations which included a carnival, gala ball and dinner, were inaugurated by Vijay Merchant who is an honorary life member of the gymkhana, on February 15. The main function was held on February 25, the actual day of the centenary, with Nani A. Palkivala as the chief guest. Earlier on the same day, there was a thanksgiving ceremony by high priests from Udwada, Navsari and Bombay.

The idea of a club for Parsi gentlemen to obtain recreation germinated at the Ripon Club, which was founded just a year before. The first patrons had such illustrious names as Sir Jamsetjee Tata and his son Sir Dorab Tata and J.B. Marzban, founder of one of the oldest Gujarati newspapers, *Jam-e-Jamshed*, who drafted the rules of the gymkhana.

The first sports played here were lawn tennis and cricket. The gymkhana sent the first all-Parsi teams to England in 1886 and 1888. By 1895, the gymkhana was participating in the annual Presidency matches with European, Bombay and Poona gymkhanas, which later culminated in the Pentanglers.

Apart from being the cradle of cricket, the gymkhana has sponsored open lawn tennis tournaments. The first woman tennis player was sponsored by the gymkhana, though she was not a member since women members were not admitted. The gymkhana also occupies a special place in Bombay's hockey history, since the Bombay Provincial Hockey Association's original headquarters were here and the first



game of hockey was played on its grounds.

In 1963, the gymkhana admitted non-Parsi members, the first one being Purshottam Rungta, then president of the Cricket Board.

At present, its honorary members include Wilson Jones, Michael Ferreira, Polly Umrigar and Sunil Gavaskar.

Reprinted from The Daily, February 7, 1985.

Tabla doctorate

Noted musician Aban E. Mistry has recently been conferred a doctorate degree in musicology by the Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, Miraj, for her research volume "*Pakhawaj aur Tabla ke gharane avem paramparaye*." This two-volume book deals with the traditions of harmonium and tabla. There are three more books to follow which will explain further the essence and real nature of the various aspects stated in this book.



The centenary celebration function at the Parsee Gymkhana grounds.

Chief guest Nani Palkhivala presenting a medallion to gymkhana president, Meherji Vakil.

(Photo: Homyar Mistry)

(Facing page) Mistry: musical traditions

Pandit Keki S. Jijina, Mistry's guru, expresses confidence that the book will guide many aspiring young artistes to achieve greater heights without having to undergo the troubles that Mistry has gone through. "What is so striking and of utmost importance is that being a woman, in an otherwise male-dominated field, has never crushed her infinite spirit. In her dedication to Indian classical music, she has broken the shackles Indian society often binds a woman with" he informs.

Mistry is the founder patron of Swar Sadhna Samiti, an institution promoting classical music for the past 24 years. She is also an examiner of Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, Miraj. She has performed at numerous music conferences and concerts in India and has extensively toured European, Gulf and African countries giving solo recitals on the tabla and enrapturing the audiences.

'Settling the Afghan War'

At the invitation of the Institute of International Studies, Columbia, USA, Dr Aspy Phiroze Rana, professor and head, department of Political Science and dean of the Arts faculty at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, will present a paper on "Settling the Afghan War: an Indian perspective," notes a press release. The international conference on "The Soviet presence in Afghanistan and its implications for South Asia," at which the



Goiporia:
Baroda Bank
chairman
(Far left)
Rana:
academic
exchange

paper was presented, was scheduled to be held in February 1985, according to the press release.

The press release further states that Rana has also been invited to explore possibilities of mutual Indo-US academic exchange of students and staff between specialized centres of international studies in the US and India. The department of Political Science of the M.S. University, Baroda, receives special funding in international studies by the University Grants Commission of India.

Irano-Hind chairman

The chairman and managing director of the State-owned Shipping Corporation of India (SCI), Vice-Admiral R.K.S. Ghandhi, has become the chairman of Irano-Hind Shipping Company, a joint venture of SCI and Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines. Vice-Admiral Ghandhi is the first Indian to hold the office of the chairman of Irano-Hind.

Unlike most shipping companies the world over, Irano-Hind has maintained its record of profitability in 1983-84, when it made a net profit of \$11.47 million and announced a 20 percent dividend.

Reprinted from Financial Express, January 8, 1985.

Goiporia's new chair

Bank of Baroda's newly appointed chairman is 52-year-old Maneck Nadirshaw Goiporia, who was previously chairman and managing director of Dena Bank (for six and a half years) since 1978. Goiporia took over the new office from February 5, 1985.

Earlier, the noted banker was with the Union Bank of India for nearly 25 years in various capacities and was sent on assignment with the National Westminster Bank Ltd. London.

Goiporia is director on the board of Agricultural Finance Corporation Limited, deputy chairman of the Indian Banks' Association, a member of the governing board of the National Institute of Bank Management and the Council of the Indian Institute of Bankers. He is on the placement committee of the National Association for the Blind.

Homi Bhabha fellowship

The Homi Bhabha fellowships have been permanently established, on the nineteenth death anniversary of Dr Homi Bhabha, by the Tata Trusts, and the Ford Foundations of the United States with donations of Rs 50 lakhs and \$2.5 lakhs respectively, according to *The Daily* of January 25, 1985.

Established on January 24, 1967, the fellowships are awarded to young persons between 25 and 38 years of age to assist them in developing their abilities in any chosen field, notes *The Daily* report. The fellowship has facilities for research abroad.

This year's fellowships were awarded to Dr Zarine Cooper and Dr Subhankar Ray, by the fellowships council, for their respective projects 'Archeological and Ethnographic Investigations in Andaman Islands' and 'Understanding the biological role of methylglyoxal with special reference to cancer' notes *The Daily*, January 8, 1985.

Police Medal for Irani

The citation which qualified Minoo Faredoon Irani, 54, for receiving the President's Police Medal for distinguished service states "Irani has done outstanding work in all types of police duties, not only in the detection of crime but also in the executive field.



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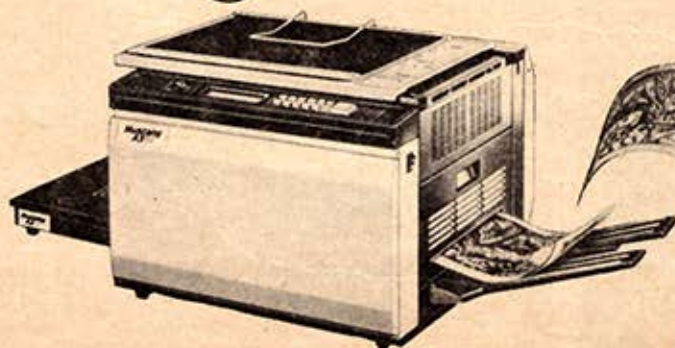
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His ability to handle communal and riotous mobs and maintain law and order in difficult situations has been of the highest order. In every aspect of his work, he has proved to be a distinguished police officer of the highest merit..." The medal was awarded to Irani on January 26, 1985. He is also a recipient of the Police Medal for meritorious service, 1978.

Irani was responsible for successfully investigating the Parsi fire temple murder case of 1980 when Homi Kharas was murdered in a fire temple at Fort, and his body thrown in a well. Irani effectively controlled strikes at Larson & Toubro, the Chandivali quarries, the Reserve Bank of India, Bombay Dyeing, Voltas, the Free Press Journal and the 1983-84 BEST strike, states the citation.

The citation further says that in 1981-82, while attached to D.N. Nagar police station as Senior Inspector, Irani was instrumental in arresting a gang of highway dacoits and recovering stolen property worth Rs 1.50 lakhs.

In the communal riots of May-June 1984, Irani's ability to efficiently handle the situation, prevented loss of life and any major riot from taking place in Andheri West. Irani's 34-year career in the police force also includes service at the Detection of Crime Branch, C.I.D., Bombay, according to the citation.



Above:

R.N. Engineer, managing director of Industrial Boilers Pvt Ltd, received the A.R. Bhat entrepreneur award from R. Venkataraman, Vice-President of India, at the Silver Jubilee celebration of the Federation of Associations of Small Industries of India.

Left:

Irani: handling riotous mobs



Homi's abstracts

"Each composition, which has no specific theme or subject, is a subtle blend of hues, the technique and treatment used to enhance the value of a composition coming solely through colour, the overall effect being that of serenity and harmony," noted an art review in *The Daily*, January 26, 1985, of Homi Patel's 19 abstract paintings on exhibit at the Chemould Art Gallery.

A veteran of great repute and a diploma holder from the J.J. School of Art, Patel has held several solo shows at home besides having participated in various group shows in Vienna, Zurich, Tokyo, Montreal, Freinsheim (W. Germany) and Teheran. Patel has displayed his works at the International Culture Centre, New Delhi as well as at the '71 International Triennale and the Jammu and Kashmir Artists Camp, notes *The Daily*.

The report continues "With every show he seems to have gained added

admiration and appreciation in art circles, and has bagged fellowships from the Ministry of Education, Government of India, four times.

"During an experimental period some years ago, Patel tried his hand at paper collages and water colour but found they did not interest him. He returned to his first love, abstracts, even though it would be difficult to categorize his works to a particular 'ism.'"

In Harvard's ten

In just the three months that he has been at Harvard, Darius Pandole has made it to the first team of ten players of Harvard University, which has produced the leading amateurs in American squash. "It is not so demanding physically as the squash played in the rest of the world, but a different tech-

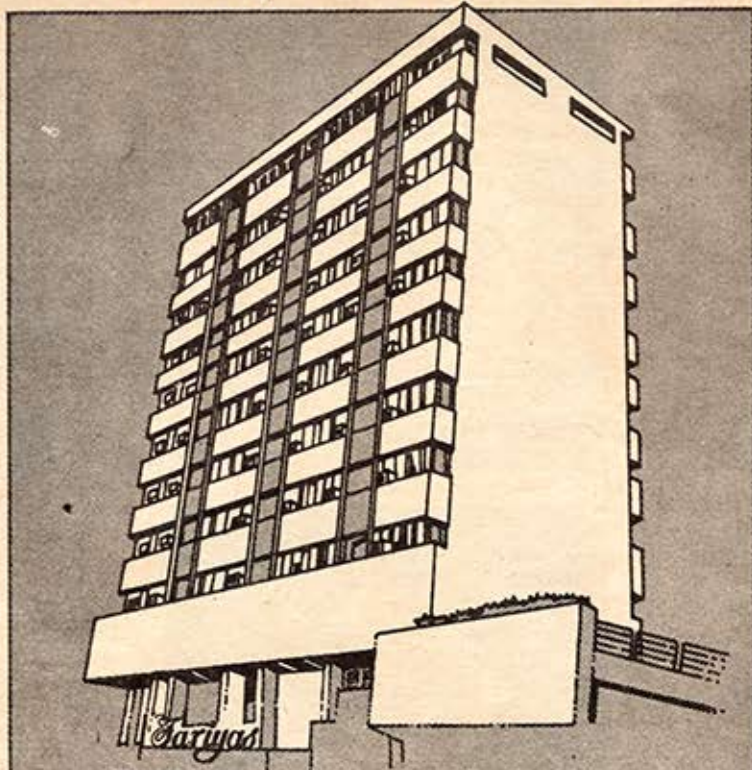
nique is called for as the game is played with a hard ball and on narrower and longer courts," said Darius, when in Bombay for his Christmas vacation.

Darius Pandole, who has been India's national junior champion for three years in a row from 1981 and was unable to take part this year as he was away at Harvard, recently participated in the Chivas Regal Championship in which 1,200 players were divided into 21 divisions and which was conducted at 11 different clubs in New York. He made the quarter-final round of the men's "A" amateur division, a group below the professionals.

Aware that Darius Pandole could assist the Indian team in the Asian Junior Championships (under 19), Harvard University agreed to permit Darius to do his first semester exams in Hong Kong, the day after the championships were over, but Darius declined the invitation of the Squash Rackets Federation of India to join the team as the preparation for the event would interfere with his studies.

Reprinted from The Times of India, December 28, 1984.

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South Pacific tales

The story goes that residents of the capital used to have this favourite riddle some years ago. "Who travels more" they used to ask, "Ms Indira Gandhi or K. Natwar Singh (former secretary in the ministry of external affairs)?" The answer, as it turned out, was "neither," the distinction for being the most widely-travelled Indian going to Ms Meher Heroyce Moos.

The irrepressible Moos has done it again, turning her adventurous sights on the exotic South Pacific this time, a place which most of us experience vicariously, mainly courtesy Rodgers and Hammerstein. She spent six exciting weeks touring New Zealand, Tahiti, Cook Island, American and Western Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Vanuata and New Caledonia, having settled on that unusual itinerary only when her earlier plans — to go on a husky-dog expedition of Greenland's remote trading posts — fell through.

"It was largely weather conditions that helped me to decide," says Moos. "When plans for visiting Greenland in spring last year fell through because the ice melted. I had to use up my leave by the end of the year. That being winter in Europe and the Northern hemisphere, I had to look southwards." Having visited South America, South Africa and even the South Pole, the South Pacific was the only "uncharted" area for Moos. "I'd always wanted to visit the South Pacific," she admits, "but never got round to it because I felt all the places worth visiting were too scattered. But this time, since I was going all the way to New Zealand, I decided to go through with it."

"I had read about and been fascinated by Michener's *Tales of the South Pacific*, I wanted to see the house in which Gauguin had spent his life, I wanted to visit R.L. Stevenson's grave and all the places Somerset Maugham wrote about in his short stories," she adds.

And so, whether by ski plane or sea plane or boat, Meher Moos "discovered" the South Pacific, traversing scores of islands that literally dot the International Dateline. She visited people and places, came away with a morbid fascination for graveyards — "these were fascinating places, some graves covered with broken beer bottles to keep scavenging pigs at bay, others positioned at the very entrance to a

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home;" saw for herself that Polynesian women were every bit as beautiful as Gauguin had painted them; dined on everything from flying foxes cooked in French wine to giant-sized snails, mussels, shearwater birds, venison and coconut crabs. The last item surely qualifies as a gourmet's delight. The coconut crab, she says, carries a coconut on its back and climbs up a tall tree. From a suitable height, it drops its burden, which breaks as it falls to the ground, and the crab scurries to ground-level to gnaw at its delicious contents. "When he is caught, he often has coconut in him, and is then cooked with coconut cream to make a scrumptious meal," says Moos.

About halfway through her tour came the news of Ms Gandhi's assassination. "Everywhere I went, the minute people learned that I was an Indian, they came forward to offer their condolences and to ask if I knew any more details. It speaks volumes for Ms Gandhi's universality that everyone on those islands — from coconut men to fisherfolk — knew of her and expressed their concern."

But global disasters notwithstanding Meher Moos went on her enterprising way, being entertained by tribal chieftains — "they gave me a grass skirt and I gave them a box of powder, with which they were absolutely thrilled;" had a "photo session" with a specially captured and subsequently freed shark, and even managed to escape a bomb scare unscathed. It appears that on a New Caledonia flight, Tchibaou, leader of the rebel Kanaky movement, was on board with his righthand man, and their flight was called back and explosives unearthed. This is the only "hair-raising experience" Moos admits to. Even standing at the rim of a simmering volcano in Vanuata and getting covered with ash didn't unnerve her.

After all, that's precisely the sort of thing that makes a Meher Moos holiday an extraordinary event, and almost always an experience to write about.

Delshad Karanjia

Reprinted from The Evening News, January 29, 1985.

Hilla Khursedji Trophy

A trophy and a cup were donated by the Hilla Khursedji Memorial Trust to the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, London, to perpetuate the memory of Hilla Khursedji, a noted pianist.

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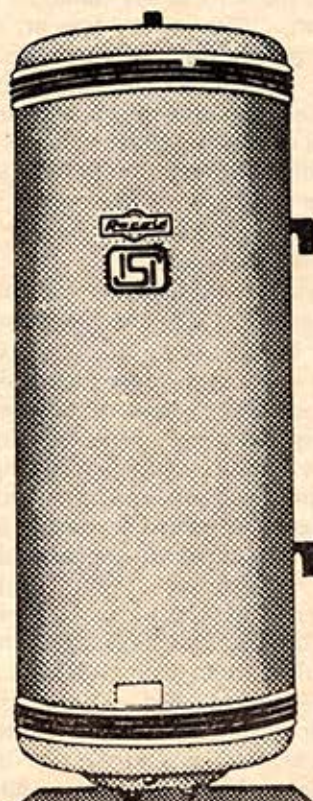
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A graduate from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, Khursedji stood first in the 1975 Royal Overseas League Music Festival and was nominated 'Young musician of the Year 1977-'78' by the Greater London Arts Association. Khursedji's last performance was at the Tata Theatre in Bombay.

The Hilla Khursedji Memorial Trophy for 1984 was won by Ms Deborah Menezes, student of Harold Joseph of the Delhi School of Music, for being the most promising Indian in the grade five to Licentiate in the Royal School of Music, London, category.

Queen's Scout

Venture Scout Bomi Daruwalla, was presented with the Queen's Scout award "the highest accolade the movement offers... for two years' intensive work on social projects, adventure training and youth leadership," notes a report in the *Press Group* publication of November 22, 1984.

The district commissioner for Finchley, Friern Barnet and Golders Green, Peter Davis, handed Daruwalla the coveted Queen's Scout insignia in November 1984, notes the report. Twenty-year-old Daruwalla lives on Lincoln Road, North Finchley, and is a member of the 16th Finchley Scout Group and the 1st Finchley Venture Unit.



Daruwalla receiving the Queen's Scout award from Davis

The theme of Renuka Dhanrajgir-Batlivala's eighth solo exhibition was 'Horses.' The Bombay based artist who has held exhibitions in Bombay, Hyderabad, Switzerland and Mauritius, exhibited her paintings at Bombay's Aakar Art Gallery from January 28 to February 3. (Photo: The Daily)



Zeenia Lawyer of Associated Breweries and Distilleries receiving the IMM Cinni Fan Award for the best woman entrepreneur from Vice-President of India, R. Venkataraman at the inauguration of the 1985 Asia Pacific Marketing Congress in New Delhi on January 4, 1985.



Eye that sees

The intricacies of modern art at times escape the best of us. When prints of Husain's triptych, which he has painted for the film *A Quest for Zarathu-*

shtra, were being printed at the Tata Press, a supervisor walked up to the associate producer and asked if they were prize-winning entries of a children's art competition.

Reprinted from The Daily, November 20, 1984.

"A 'milestone' round our necks"

Cusrow Baug residents vote against Karani Agiary extension.

Arnavaz S. Mama

The Cusrow Baug pavilion witnessed high drama as residents scotched, by 244 to 122 votes (six were invalid) the combined plan of the Karani Agiary Trust and the Dastur Kookadaru Trust, to build an extension to the Karani Agiary. Being Behram *roj*, Shehrevat *mah*, the day (February 10) marked the golden jubilee of the Karani Agiary in its present sanctum. It also marked the inroads of democracy and secularism in ecclesiastical matters by way of a referendum held under the Wadia management auspices.

Due to the presently restricted area of the Karani Agiary, the trustees of the Dastur Kookadaru Trust are said to have offered a sum of Rs 4.5 lakhs to the Karani Agiary Trust with a view to extend the precincts of the agiary—a proposal agreeable to the trustees of the Karani Agiary. Accordingly plans were drawn up with a proposed Kookadaru Hall (20 × 85 feet) on the south side and a smaller (19.3 × 17.3 feet) enclosure on the north side, meant as a rest and change room for mobeds employed at the agiary. "After the extension, it will still leave 12 feet of vacant area on either side where we will have a garden," Homi Ranina, Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustee and member of the trust boards of the Karani Agiary and the Kookadaru Trust had noted a few days prior to the referendum.

Activities at the Karani Agiary include religious lectures on Hormuzd *roj* and Behram *roj*, religious classes held by the panthaky, Ervad Nadersha Aibara every Saturday, and an increasing number of *uthamnas* and the four-day after death ceremonies. A printed letter to the residents of the baug from the trustees of the Dastur Kookadaru Trust dated February 2, noted, "In 1984, in the case of about 45 persons who died, the ceremonies were performed in the agiary itself. The mukta-

tables have gone up from 28 in 1979 to 60 in 1984. It is not possible for the Agiary to have any more tables in the Guzder Hall, having regard to the facilities presently available. In fact, Ervad Aibara, the panthaky, had to refuse and will continue to refuse to have more than 60 tables in view of the limited area in Guzder Hall."

The Dastur Kookadaru trustees in their letter further note, "We believe that some of the residents of M and P Blocks are objecting to the extension of the agiary purely for selfish reasons as it may slightly obstruct their view. A false and malicious propaganda is being carried out that the trustees propose to raise one or two floors on the agiary building. This is absolutely untrue..."

"The plans have been drawn up and are exhibited at the agiary. You are most welcome to come and satisfy yourself that we have taken every measure not only to preserve the aesthetic beauty but also to enhance it. After the extensions are complete, it is proposed to have a garden around the agiary."

Thirty to 40 militant tenants formed the 'Save Karani Agiary Committee,' whose cyclostyled handout noted: "The proposed changes would mar forever, not only the elegant and stately structure of the agiary building which is a perfect blend of modern and Persian architecture, but the beauty of the whole baug also. Our agiary as it stands today, more than adequately meets the needs of the tenants of Cusrow Baug as it has proved in the past 50 years and God willing, it will for generations to come..."

"It is one thing to blindly support a new venture that may at the start sound not only plausible and interesting, but even essential. It is quite another to find in the ultimate analysis, that we have built a milestone (millstone)



round our necks."

The appeal to aesthetics notwithstanding, what emerged from interviews with some members of the Save Karani Agiary Committee was a certain venom against Aibara. Ruby Mody, a committee member and resident of P Block who noted that she became aware of the extension plans "when the trees around the agiary began to be cleared," says, "Aibara's prayers (the cyclostyled sheets, to receive which people often have to wait for two to three hours) have been investigated by scholars and found wanting in Avestan content." Bomi Kapadia of P Block, who is said to be the moving force behind the opposition to the building extension, alleged two Bombay high priests as having said Aibara is a very dangerous man and should be removed. (One of them on being contacted by *Parsiana*, denied having made such a statement.) Asks Kapadia, "Can a priest say 'there's a saint within me and he speaks, not I?'" Mody, on her part, noting that "he might have clairvoyant qualities," adds, "When we look at our religion it does not accept miracles." She also claims that there's a year-old notice in

the Karani Agiary, signed by Aibara, which states that more muktad tables cannot be accepted because there are no mobeds for the prayers.

Eye specialist Dr Rustom Patel, vice-president of the Cusrow Baug United Sports and Welfare League and resident of M Block said, "To mar the beauty of the agiary would be a sacrilege." He noted that "for the past 50 years the agiary has been managing quite well... They claim they need larger space for lectures, but so far there has been no overflow. They want quarters for dasturjis, but upstairs there is a big room for dasturjis (where Aibara currently resides with his wife and two grown-up sons)... If you increase the area you have to consider the maintenance costs."

Bapsy and Adil Daruwalla, also P Block tenants, were obviously caught in the cross-fire. "Our only protest is that it will change the shape of the agiary and the beauty will be spoilt. We have nothing against the dasturji. I attend his classes every Saturday," said Bapsy.

Maneck Engineer, joint manager for civil construction at Godrej and Boyce, and a resident of P Block expressed the same objection graphically: "Suppose you have a painting, an old masterpiece, and it was a little small in size. If you asked a modern painter to enlarge it to fit into your hall, how would it look?" While Engineer claimed that "the perfect proportions of vertical to horizontal would be spoilt" by this extension, Ranina was equally emphatic that the aesthetic appeal of the edifice, would not merely be preserved but even enhanced on completion of the said extension.

It all began about six years ago when mobed Nadersha Aibara accepted the Cusrow Baug panthak. A clairvoyant with a substantial following within the community and without, Aibara's arrival at the Karani Agiary resulted in a vast increase in the number of devotees flocking to the dar-e-meher from all over Bombay and elsewhere. Cusrow Baug residents have been said to look askance at this patronage from beyond the baug. Scoffers notwithstanding,

Only 372 Parsis considered the issue vital enough to spend on it a few minutes on a Sunday morning.



(Above) Gama-dia (left) and Ranina: auspicious day

(Left) Karani Agiary: 'elegant and stately structure'

(Photos: Homiyar Mistry)



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Aibara has been holding his morning sessions where troubled persons receive advice, a cyclostyled sheet of prayer and photographs of Dastur Kookadar, Shah Faredun, Shah Jamshed etc, free. The two injunctions are that they pay homage to the *atash padshah* before taking their place in the queue and that they desist from putting anything more than 25 paise in the *boi*. Aibara does not normally permit any of his votaries from beyond the Colaba area to hold jashans, fareshtas or other religious ceremonies at the Karani Agiary.

Aibara believes the source of his inspiration is the venerable dastur of the late nineteenth century, Jamshed Kookadar. In 1981 Aibara announced his intention of starting a fund to create a *dadgah* in Dastur Kookadar's memory. Accordingly, the Dasturji J.S. Kookadar Memorial Agiary Trust was founded, Jehangir Shroff, Homi Ranina, Nadersha Aibara, Hirjee Albless, Erachshaw Major and Bomi Hansotia being the present trustees. The trust, to date, has collected nearly four and a half lakhs of rupees.

The referendum and its results raised some disturbing questions, noted observers:

From a total electorate of 559, only 372 Parsis considered the issue vital enough to spend on it a few minutes on a Sunday morning. Were the other 187 (one third of the community) who kept away from the ballot box registering a boycott of a secular democratic practice in matters religious? Or was their non-participation an indication that to one-third of this community sample, religious matters do not matter?

Secondly, what was the contribution of the Save Karani Agiary Committee (or the individuals who comprised it) when the Agiary underwent much needed repairs in 1982?

In April 1984 Ranina had noted in an interview with *Parsiana* that an appeal for funds to Cusrow Baug residents (about 2,500 people reside in 559 flats) netted only Rs 26,000 (ie a little more than Rs 10 per person).

The third factor was stated with some anguish by Dr Dinyar Gamadia, president of the Cusrow Baug United Sports and Welfare League: "This will be a precedent for Cusrow Baug... It's a very sorry day, though an auspicious day. (This) breaking of a small community (is) a bitter pill to swallow. For 50 years such a thing has not happened. I hope and pray in future problems there should be no referendum."

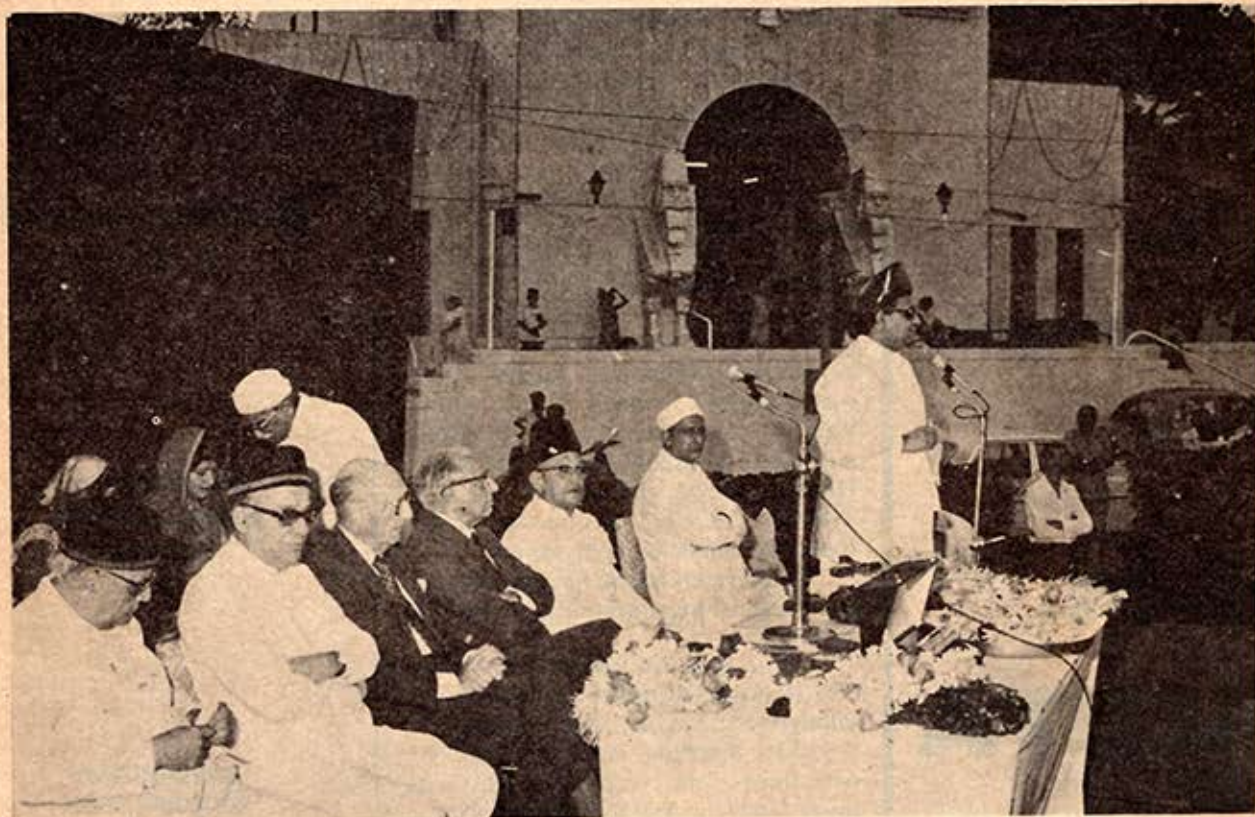
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"The holy fire has brought prosperity..."



The Karani Agiary building in Cusrow Baug is 50 years old.

Arnavaz S. Mama

"We, the trustees of the Nusserwanji Hirji Karani Dar-e-Meher... have gathered before this distinguished gathering to pay our tribute and to express our deep sense of gratitude to you and to the noble and worthy departed members of your illustrious family," noted the address to Neville Wadia Esqr read by Jehangir Shroff, joint managing trustee, on the occasion of the Dar-e-Meher's golden jubilee at its present site at Cusrow Baug.

The function to honour Wadia, held on the main lawn of Cusrow Baug, started after a brief delay as Naval Tata, the evening's president and chairman of the Karani Agiary trust had arrived that very day from Geneva and, in Wadia's appreciative words, "insisted on keeping the appointment." Though none of the main speakers

made any reference to the morning's referendum (a proposed extension to the Karani Agiary was put to vote among the baug's tenants) or its results, they did make some telling remarks about the state of the community, with special reference to the priesthood. Of special significance to baug residents was Wadia's announcement regarding the receipt of Jyoti Studio sale proceeds of Rs 72 lakhs from N.L. Mehta with interest payment to follow by the end of March. "With your support on a 50-50 basis, we will soon have your homes in the condition as they were originally," assured Wadia.

"We are grateful to this one and only family which has created all the colonies," noted Tata in his welcome address. "What can be a greater pleasure

or privilege than that on the fiftieth year we echo the gratitude for allowing us to put up this Dar-e-Meher here."

Conceding that "we never had meetings or consultations with trustees and (co-trustee of Karani Agiary, Jamshed) Guzder was annoyed," Tata noted that "no previous consultation was necessary between trustees when (there was) a spontaneous desire to honour a scion of the founding family."

"It pains me to think there is so much emphasis on ritual and so little on religion," said Tata. Referring to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet's tricentennial roll of honour which included J.R.D. Tata and himself, Tata noted,

(L to R) Panthaky, Golwala, Wadia, Tata, Shroff, Aibara and Ranina (at the mike): "ancient fires have been burning"



Wadia: "agiary focal point"

"I got a very unkind letter from someone who did not think we deserved the honour because we were not Parsis (Zoroastrians)..."

"One day it will be appreciated that this was the only microscopic community who told the government that we do not want special privileges. We are grateful to the governing (Gandhi) family for the appreciation they have shown."

Then, reverting to community politics, Tata noted, "I heard rumours and hope it's not true that there was an effort to delink (the Wadia) family from the management (of the baugs). I've spoken to the BPP trustees including Gudder and they've assured me it's not true."

The fire of the Karani Agiary is itself 138 years old, having been originally consecrated at Nullbazar on March 16, 1847. Then, when communal riots led to a decline in the Parsi population in that area, it was shifted temporarily to the Sodawaterwalla Agiary at Marine Lines and thence, in the ninetieth year of its consecration, enthroned at the present site. When the idea of erecting Cusrow Baug on land bought off the railways was conceived by the Wadias, the then trustees of the Karani Dar-e-Meher approached them with a request for some land within the baug where the Karani Agiary could be re-established. Sir Ness and Sir Cusrow, Neville Wadia's father and uncle res-

pectively, readily gave 1400 square yards for the purpose on a token rent of one rupee a year, noted the address to Neville Wadia. "The fire temple was constructed under the supervision of famous architects, Gregson Batley and King, on the style of Iranian, Syrian and Babylonian architecture, which has since become a great tourist attrac-

"Consider that many peons make Rs 1200 a month. What we are offering the mobeds is acutely inadequate."

tion in south Bombay," read Shroff.

The address further noted, "On completion of this structure and before the shifting of the holy fire into this magnificent edifice, your late father Sir Ness invited H.E. the then Governor of Bombay Presidency, the late Lord Brabourne, to visit the Dar-e-Meher building. He, along with Lady Brabourne visited on February 18, 1935 when the trustees of the R.N. Wadia Trust, including your good self as a young man, were present." Interrupting himself, Shroff produced a framed photograph and remarked, "Perhaps this picture will remind you how handsome you were at that time." Audience and dignitaries joined in the mirth as Wadia examined the photo with great interest.

"We appreciate what your noble, departed family members have done and what you, Sir, are doing, assisted

by your worthy son Nusli who has also started taking keen interest in the welfare of the trusts," read Shroff and added "Nusli has, unfortunately, sent his apologies as he is out of Bombay."

A red shawl, the address enclosed in an engraved silver casket and a garland of red roses were presented to Neville Wadia by Tata on behalf of the Karani Agiary trustees. Garlands were also presented to Tata, BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwala, Shroff, BPP trustee Homi Ranina and Sohrab Panthaki whose wife and managing trustee, Roda Karani is the scion of the founding family of the agiary but is currently said to be ill and in hospital.

Appreciating "the cordial and happy relations between their trust and our N.N. Wadia Trust," Neville Wadia said, "This agiary is the focal point of Cusrow Baug. It is most inspiring and lends dignity to Cusrow Baug. I was delighted to be able to plant two trees which the next generation will be able to enjoy." Wadia then devoted his speech to the past, present and future of Parsi priests. "I hope you will not think me presumptuous," began Wadia as he proceeded to briefly trace the history of Parsi tradition in India: "...the understanding that we'd be allowed to practice our religion... (developed) a close knit and separate society (which) lived by its strict code. It gave us a distinctive character among the people of India. The priests of our community played a prominent role in our fortunes and were widely acclaimed. Now their status and position have declined. If this trend is not reversed, the situation will become critical." We must ensure for them adequate pay and security, noted Wadia, so that they



Gambhar lunch: "responding to a worthy cause" (Photos: Homiyar Mistry)

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may be "free of economic and social privations. (We must ensure) that the social status of the clergy is not diminished by our parsimonious treatment of the servants of God."

Referring to certain BPP schemes now on the anvil, Wadia noted, "Consider that many peons make Rs 1,200 a month. What we are offering the mobeds is acutely inadequate. If we are to attract suitable candidates, they must receive a broad education in Gujarati and English and college education to help them merge into the society whose spiritual heads they are to become. They must be equipped to play their special role in the future...."

"A Parsi rarely fails to respond to a worthy cause," declared Wadia. "I do not feel the community will fail in the worthy cause of the Zoroastrian priesthood. May I urge that all efforts be coordinated... suggest that a committee be formed to get the community's support and participation. It should include respected dasturs...."

Referring to the enormous foresight of Lady Jerbai Wadia, Ranina noted that the baugs were built "not only to provide a roof over the poor and needy. Her main vision was that the population of Parsis should increase. Ninety percent of marriages in the community are between the people in the baugs."

Noting that "the holy fire has brought prosperity to all you wonderful residents," Ranina spoke about the need to relocate certain agiaries so that they may be sustained, and mentioned that the Mevawalla Agiary could be moved to Rustom Baug or Jer Baug. Reiterating his plea for a one crore rupees amelioration fund for mobeds, Ranina noted the need of mofussil agiaries where mobeds are required to tend "ancient fires (that) have been burning for 200 to 300 years. If any of our fires are allowed to die out, we will have to pay a tremendous price. We will, each one, have to bear our share of the guilt. For 1,400 years our forefathers have practised our religion. We in the twentieth century would be destroying this history. We would then not be progressive but regressive."

Noting that our traditions embody centuries of wisdom, "we cannot allow it to be dissipated," Ranina referred to the current secularism and said, "Our forefathers were also secular. Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy spent lakhs for secular causes, but he did not neglect the com-

munity. Secularism does not mean you ignore your community and allow it to die. May I request you to emulate the vision of the Wadias, the Tatas, the Godrejs. Let us make our future as glorious as our past."

A film show by Ervad Jal Tata was followed by a contributory dinner attended by 225 people. The day had also witnessed two jashans at the agiary. A free gambhar lunch for the underprivileged of the community was hosted by Ranina.

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High Priests' assent to ceremonies by laity

Ahmednagar Anjuman presents priests' letters at Federation meeting.

Arnavaz S. Mama

In reply to a query from the Ahmednagar Parsi Anjuman, four Bombay High Priests have stated that behdins can perform certain religious rites and ceremonies in the absence of mobeds. The letters from the priests, Dasturs Hormuzdyar Mirza, Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa, Firoze Kotwal and Nowrooz Minochehr-Homji were presented by the Ahmednagar Anjuman representative, Mehernosh Mehta, at the January 14 executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India held at the Sir Mancherji Khareghat Hall at Bombay's Khareghat Colony.

A suggestion to publish the priests' opinions in the Federation newsletter, for the benefit of other anjumans, was however turned down by the council for fear of offending some of the priests' associations. "Too much publicity might hurt," cautioned Federation treasurer Peshotan Nargolwala, who appears to be the Federation's unofficial resident authority on the subject. Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustee and Federation joint secretary Eruch Desai who has been increasingly voicing the orthodox line, added, "let us not rush in where angels fear to tread. Let us try and bring about change through cooperation and advice."

Shiavax Nargolwala, the Delhi Parsi Anjuman president and Federation vice-president noted that the Federation was not taking any decision on the subject: "The Federation is only a conduit. The decisions will be up to the individual anjumans;" a stand supported by the Federation's joint secretary Keki Gandhi: "We are only communicating the information."

The stand reflected a reassessment of the Federation's functioning. Finding itself unable to cope with the various tasks on hand, due to the limited monetary and personnel resources, the Federation is beginning to rely more and more on individual anjumans to undertake projects at the local level.

Chances of both the WZO and the Federation coming together appear dim.

Perhaps the first such major instance was the school counselling program to be financed by the BPP and implemented in Bombay and Poona. Next, finance for the Federation's newsletter was raised from individual anjumans and/or their representatives promising to secure sponsors for each issue.

Moves are afoot to encourage anjumans to form local chapters of the Federation sub-committees such as the Jobs and Career Opportunities Panel which has not met since December 1983. Even the effort to safeguard the assets of defunct anjumans is being shifted to the closest neighbouring anjuman. Another committee to encourage young Parsis to join government service has not met to date.

Realizing that the workload was increasing, the executive council has reduced the frequency of the council meetings and instead of holding a meeting every four months as in the past, the period for the next meeting has been extended to six months.

In other Federation news, the executive council appointed BPP trustee Jamshed N. Guzder, convener of the Youth Congress scheduled towards the end of this year in Bombay (at that point Guzder was still considering seeking reelection to his BPP trusteeship seat sought by Naoroji Godrej).

Another hurdle to fund collecting was removed with the Federation receiving an exemption certificate from the Income Tax department that permits donors to claim a 50 percent tax deduction on donations given to the Federation's fund for women and children.

A four-page Gujarati edition of the Federation newsletter was sanctioned with individual anjumans and representatives offering to find sponsors.

Discussion with the World Zoroastrian Organization were, and are still, in progress, though chances of both the WZO and the Federation coming together appear dim.

A tendency amongst delegates to chat amongst themselves while the meeting was in progress, caused Federation and BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwala to reprimand individual members, especially the delegates from Surat, for their conduct.

Golwala suggested the community adopt a universally acceptable form of greeting on the lines of the Jewish *shalom*. *Tandurasti*, *ushata te*, *Mazada-ni-meher* were some of the salutations suggested by Golwala, which the community could adopt on a universal basis. The need for such a greeting arose because some priests complained to Golwala that when they greeted youngsters with the word *sahabji*, the youth responded with a breezy 'hi!'

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Mobeds

The four Bombay High Priests have responded favourably to the query of the Ahmednagar Anjuman as to whether behdins could perform necessary ceremonies in the absence of mobeds. Federation members, however, felt that the body should not associate itself with the issue until the scheme for paramobeds (behdins who can perform certain priestly duties) is cleared by the Athornan Mandal and the Jashan Committee—two Bombay organizations concerned with priests.

The division of opinion surfaced on the question of publishing the High Priests' response in the Federation newsletter. Peshotan Nargolwala pointed out that the "paramobed question (had been) raised as a point against the holding of the (Fourth World Zoroastrian) Congress." Nargolwala's opinion was supported by Eruch Desai who noted "Let us try to convince them (and) avoid a rupture. The Federation might lose their (Athornan Mandal's) goodwill. Seek their advice and cooperate. (There are already) troubled waters at Doongerwadi," he said referring to a recent occasion when mobeds practising at

Doongerwadi made additional demands at a critical juncture.

In deference to the opinion of members worried over the issue, Gandhi conceded, "Let Ahmednagar publish it in their newsletter and we will republish it when we sum up information from anjuman newsletters." "Each anjuman has to decide on the

A four-page monthly Gujarati edition of the Federation newsletter is to be published.

requirements of local conditions. No permission is required on what has to be done as a matter of necessity. Write to the Athornan Mandal just as you had written to the Dasturs," Desai advised. The statement endorsed the drift towards individual action by the anjumans.

The definition of 'paramobed'—the term to which a large section of the Athornan Committee is said to be 'al-

lergic' according to Peshotan Nargolwala—came under fire as Nargolwala, who claimed to have coined the term, insisted that it referred to "behdins who can do everything mobeds do." Gandhi gave it a more restricted connotation of behdins who are trained to perform the restricted ceremonies for which a mobed is not required, thereby excepting the higher liturgical ceremonies as well as navjotes and lagans.

The delegates also demanded to know what action had been taken regarding amelioration of mobeds and the BPP scheme said to be under the purview of BPP trustee Jal Vimadala. The scheme had been repeatedly noted as being under formulation, review, discussion etc. "Why has the Federation not received a copy of the report?" queried Shiavax Nargolwala. Gandhi noted that "the Federation as a body has not asked officially for Vimadala's report. In May '84 it was decided that it would be more important for the seven trustees of the BPP to discuss the matter among themselves. At the Hyderabad executive council meeting of the Federation, the discussion went further but hardly touched on Vimadala's report."

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S. Nargolwala stated "I've changed my opinion in the matter... the main thing is not money but respect," he noted, echoing sentiments voiced by Dastur Nowrooz Minochehr-Homji at the Congress. Castigating the panthakis who work the mobeds "like slaves," Nargolwala suggested that pressure be brought on trustees of various agiaries to force the panthakis to look after their priests or to sack the panthaky system. However, it was explained that all full-time practising priests do not get the same amount of work because all were neither equally qualified nor equally devoted.

While Katie Seervai of Madras advocated refresher courses for mobeds, Gandhi recommended all anjumans put some amount in a special fund for investment in money multiplying schemes and earmark it for retirement benefits for their mobeds and staff. Boman Khodaiji, a retired IAS officer from Lucknow, suggested initiating an insurance scheme for mobeds, similar to the one for the police in some states. He informed the council that a nominal Rs 5 per month buys insurance cover of Rs 5000. Nargolwala described the scheme operated by the Delhi anjuman for its two young mobeds which includes a month's salary as gratuity and provident fund each, plus one month's paid leave. Since the salary is Rs 1000, each year Rs 2000 plus interest accumulates, he said. The priests also receive an annual increment of Rs 75, food, accommodation, medical and leave travel expenses and warm clothing, said Nargolwala.

Golwalla noted that there were more schemes for the upliftment of mobeds, than funds. "Delays are mainly due to lack of funds as people are not willing to donate." BPP chief executive Russy Anklesaria and Peshotan Nargolwala urged that the BPP take up "one or two elements of the scheme and make a start," as in Surat's Davar K.T. Modi's words, "priests cannot live on respect alone."

Defunct anjumans

Added to all the legal and technical problems of salvaging the properties of defunct anjumans is the convincing of non-coöperative trustees. Referring to the trustees of the Neemuch anjuman where, as Nargolwala alleged, one family had monopolized the running of the Neemuch trust, Gandhi noted he got a rude shock when in "answer to

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my pleading letters (they replied) not to bother them as my letters will be returned unanswered or consigned to the wastebasket." Gandhi enquired if there are "any provisions in the Trust Laws to compel trustees to do their duty."

Desai contended that "there is no bar to that but data must be available. Before proceeding to court, vice-presidents of the area must contact those families and use persuasion before legal force."

Noting that this is not a legal problem despite the community's tendency to view it that way, but a problem of man management, Kanga felt that the real requirement was the ability to bring about reconciliation. "Vice-presidents must go round and work for the welfare of small anjumans. Only such people who can do it, or have people round them who would, should accept responsibility of being office bearers," he said. "I'm a little hesitant about indulging in this art of persuasion after (the) Ahmedabad (incident)," noted Golwalla ryely. Golwalla had stated at an earlier Federation meeting that there was some infighting at Ahmedabad which resulted in a howl of rage and a strong denial of such infighting

by the Ahmedabad anjuman president.

Mehta of Ahmednagar who reported old trustees as saying that no title deeds to properties are available, was advised to seek among the municipal records in the office of the Ahmednagar commissioner or the charity commissioner or the registrar of waqfs. Khodaiji noted that charity commissioners were an institution only found in Gujarat and Maharashtra. Elsewhere there were improvement trusts and, in Uttar Pradesh, the Wazul Department.

One result of the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress was the establishment of contacts between mofussil anjumans, reported Shrivax Nargolwala, adding that as a consequence the Delhi anjuman will take on more projects. Delhi, he noted, had invited Noshir Dadrawala, project manager of the Zoroastrian Community Development Institute, to come to Delhi and make a study of the problem of defunct anjumans in the area. Prof John Hinnells of Manchester University, who was on a prolonged study tour of India in preparation for the Katrak lectures (in depth studies on Zoroastrianism) scheduled to be delivered at Oxford University next year, was also expected to go into the records of defunct anju-

mans in the Delhi area noted Nargolwala.

In the meanwhile Parsi trust properties lying unused and illkempt continue to pose as sitting ducks for poachers, encroachers and acquisitionists. They represent much communal wealth which could be used to advantage, it was noted. The trustees of the Tithal sanatorium property near Bulsar, were said to be contemplating a sale offer of Rs 80,000 per acre from a Jain trust. Land values in the region are now said to average five lakh rupees an acre.

The question of building a Parsi dharamsala on cantonment land in Srinagar which Behram Pestonji, the only Parsi resident in Kashmir, was said to have offered, remained in limbo as Guzder, the prime mover in the project, was understandably involved with the World Zoroastrian Congress.

Newsletters

A four page Gujarati newsletter will shortly be launched with advertisers sponsoring each issue at a cost of Rs 600. The decision was preceded by a debate with BPP trustee Jamsheed Kanga, Surat Anjuman president and Federation vice-president Maneck Gheyara and Modi questioning the need for a newsletter in Gujarati.

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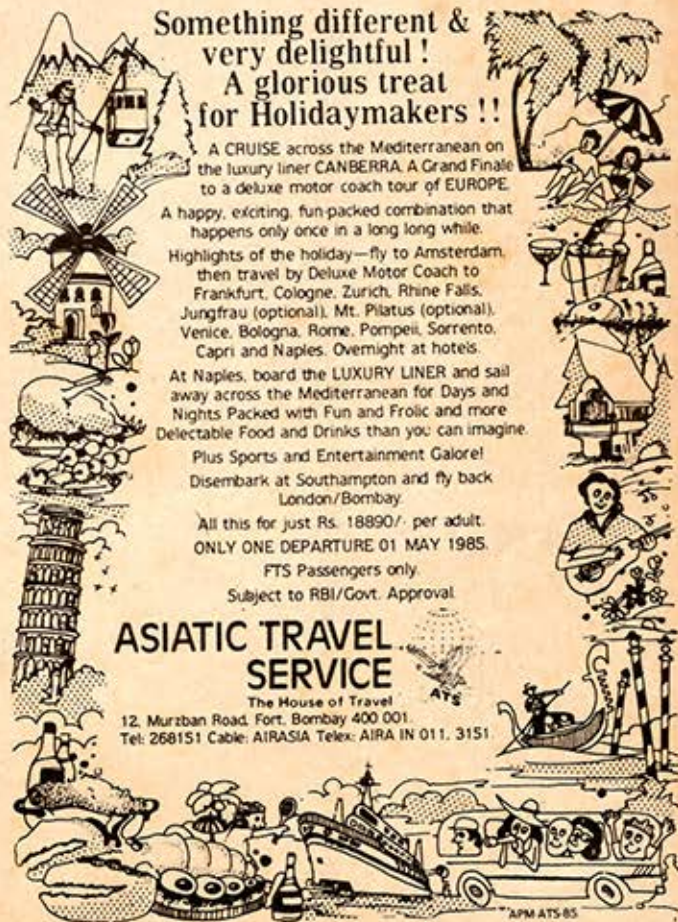
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Gandhi, who noted that he'd been trying to get the Federation newsletter translated into Gujarati, acknowledged the effort of Jal Postwalla, Secretary of the Vizag Zoroastrian Association, who did it for him and paid a handsome compliment to the BPP staff: "I don't know why people complain about BPP service. I asked Russey Anklesaria for the cost of publication in Gujarati and within five minutes I got the information."

Kanga felt that "if more people work to bring out the newsletter than read it, it is not worth the effort. We'd be wasting our time on peripherals." Modi contended that "the newsletter only circulates among trustees and they all know English. Hence it is not important to translate" which caused Gandhi to exclaim, "The general community has to be informed. There was a whole paper on communications at the Congress!" Minochaer Bharucha of Bhavnagar was categorical: "Ninety percent of the Parsi population (in Gujarat) does not know English."

As Gandhi sought financial commitment towards the support of the Gujarati newsletter, Guzder was, as usual, the first to offer financial support, gesticulating to Gandhi to count on him for two issues, which he later increased to three. Poona and Saronda agreed to take care of one apiece; while Bharucha, Pheroze Karanjia of Karanj, Nariman Balsara of Saronda and Gheyara in their personal capacity took one each; Rustom Daroga, trustee, Delhi Anjuman, booked two. Gandhi suggested the four trustees of the BPP help out with three and Anklesaria noting that "the largest Gujarati speaking (Parsi) population is still in Bombay," suggested "Let BPP take two," to which Golwalla agreed.

Regarding the English newsletter, financing of which had been apportioned in Hyderabad, Gandhi reported that Guzder gave towards the cost of two, Delhi one and that he had received confirmation from the others that they're working on it. "Send the typescripts and instructions as soon as possible," he requested.

WZO

Whether anjumans or individuals should dominate the London based World Zoroastrian Organization continued to be the subject of controversy. "Yesterday they said let individuals and anjumans have 50-50 representa-

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tion," Guzder said. He however emphasized, "If anything has to be done, individuals would not be able to do it. Only the BPP or the Federation would have the facilities and the clout to do it."

Bejan Dittia, co-opted member, south zone, suggested the executive committee have 12 members with four from the BPP, four from individuals and four representing anjumans according to geographic areas. Gandhi however registered greater concern with the voting rights in the general body. Dittia's concept would be alright, he said, if the general body (comprising of all the members) has no rights over the executive committee.

According to Nargolwala the organization has 1000 members. "One thousand people cannot dictate to one lakh others (80,000 Indians + 20,000 Iranis)" and took Golwala to task for having announced at the inauguration of the Congress that "we'll not set up another body," which Golwala noted, "was the (Federation's) decision in Hyderabad."

Nargolwala suggested individual members of the WZO have votes in proportion to their ratio to the total world population. Secondly Nargolwala complained that the WZO functioned in a most improper manner as agenda papers and minutes were not reaching him. The opinions and suggestions of those executive committee members who cannot attend the session should be read out and reasons given for their acceptance or nonacceptance, he said. Mrs Farida Variava of Delhi noted in support that she became a member of the WZO some time ago but had not yet received an official receipt for the dues she paid.

Jobs, careers, business

While it was reported that the Job Opportunities Panel has not met since December '83, Dittia suggested the setting up of a Zoroastrian financing agency to help Parsi entrepreneurs find seed capital — the basic amount which the entrepreneur must furnish before funds from Government agencies can be forthcoming. It was also suggested that anjumans can go into business if trust deeds are amended.

Noting that some Parsi employers were reluctant to employ Parsi boys because of their previous unhappy experiences with them Anklesaria recommended the Federation get a few Parsi

employers to participate in a meeting or seminar so that "what employers consider basic requirements" may be better known and understood.

Gandhi suggested that Ms Aloo Chibber, a member of the Minorities Commission, call a press conference and publicize the recommendations and findings of the panel. A restricted reservation system for Parsis — eg in the civil service, finance for housing, seats in the minority commissions of states, easier bank loans etc. — was advocated by Nargolwala. "Perhaps the seed capital requirement (for entrepreneurs) may be waived," he noted.

The special training scheme launched by the BPP to help tutor suitable Parsi candidates for competitive service examinations has sponsored three students for the exams to be held in May '85, said Anklesaria. The initial amount sanctioned is Rs 2,500. While this year's measure may prove too little and too late, the services subcommittee of the BPP is thinking in terms of picking up bright children in schools and colleges to groom them from an earlier age.

Counselling

In some schools fifth standard students do not measure up to the level of the third standard, noted Prof Noshir Kalkobad, convener, school counselling service for Parsi school children, a Federation scheme being funded and implemented by the BPP. Children from four Bombay schools — the A.F. Petit, the Dadar Parsi Youth Assembly, the Cowasji Jehangir High School and the Behramji Jijibhoy Parsi Cha-

In some schools fifth standard students do not measure up to the level of the third standard.

ritable Institute — are currently covered by the project.

The variants that constitute the problem of maladjustment and scholastic backwardness include shortage of staff, multiple levels of culture, the personal characteristics of teachers (some want to know if they will be paid to attend the counselling project), tension at home and wrong attitudes among families, ignorance on the part

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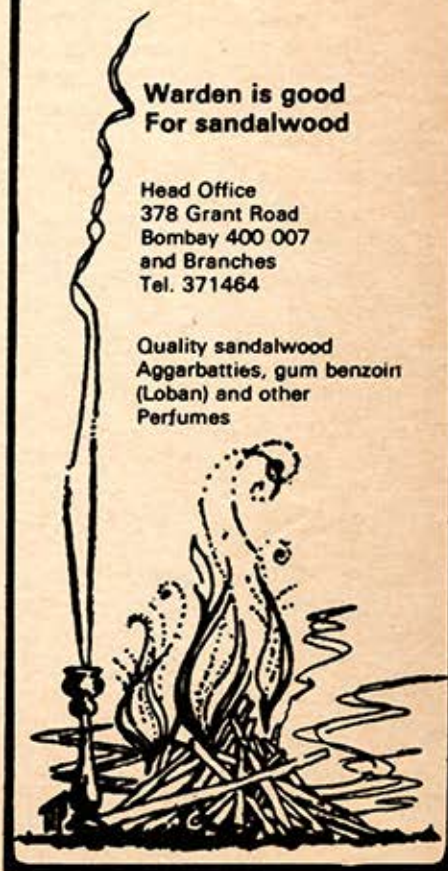
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of parents towards their own contribution to the problem of drug addiction etc. "Considerable harm (is caused by the) interviewing of a small child for nursery admission..." said Kaikobad.

"The BPP has sanctioned this project as an experiment for one year. Will it continue? It requires to be put on a long term basis," Kaikobad added.

In school counselling as in the fight against drug addiction, Kaikobad registered the community's need for para professional volunteers.

Funds, income, membership

Now that the Federation's income is exempt from taxation and donors can also claim exemption under section 80G, the Federation's members and office bearers are gearing themselves for a major fund raising drive. These exemptions were received in record time, noted Desai, paying handsome tribute to Nargolwala's acumen, ability and reputation among government circles that made such an achievement possible. Shrivax Nargolwala is a retired Indian Civil Service officer who held very senior positions in government.

These sanctions however, are not permanent but have a validity span of 3/4 years, warned Nargolwala and must be renewed in good time. He called on the Congress fund raising committee under Desai to raise funds for the Federation. "Also use the Congress surplus for the women and children's fund," he added.

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Federation office bearers requested transfer of Congress surplus funds still vesting with the BPP. Now that the Federation had acquired exemption of income, the fear of the funds being taxed was allayed. "We got the certificate in a hurry to enable this (transfer)," said Nargolwala.

While Guzder noted that a part of the Congress surplus may be required to trigger off the World Youth Zoroastrian Congress in December, Nargolwala suggested that some of the monies be used to implement the fourth Congress' recommendations. Nargolwala then added that as the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress may be held in Teheran or out of India and Indian funds would not be required to set the ball rolling, "a part of this money can be utilized for the building of a dharamsala (in Bombay) where Federation delegates can stay."

Golwalla who is committed to the cause of a dharamsala in Bombay noted, "One building in Khareghat Colony is to be demolished. I don't know what will happen with this site. But if all anjumans contribute, it would help." "In a good cause money is never a problem," reassured Nargolwala.

Ajmer was the latest anjuman to join the Federation as Bharuch's official application for membership was still awaited, although its membership fee had been paid. However a number of anjumans in Gujarat are still out of the Federation fold. Gheyara noted by way of explanation that there was "so much difference of opinion among all the anjumans of Gujarat," it stood in the way of collective action.

While delegates had expected the next meeting to be held in Poona, the Poona delegates regretted their inability to oblige, though no explanation was offered. Then Gandhi suggested

the next meeting be held in Surat, but Gheyara noted that "the atmosphere was not good." As the Madras daremeher will be celebrating its 75th anniversary on July 19, Mani Clubwala of Madras offered to host the executive council meeting in Madras if the anjuman is agreeable.

Those attending the meeting were: Mehernosh Mehta of Ahmednagar, Dr A.E. Contractor of Ajmer, Dr R.H. Sagar of Allahabad, Minochaer B. Bharucha of Bhavnagar, Dr Aspi Golwalla, Eruch Desai, Jamshed Guzder, Jamsheed Kanga, R.K. Anklesaria, Peshotan Nargolwala, Ms Gool Tata, B.H. Tarapore, Noshir Kaikobad and Noshir H. Dadrawala of Bombay, Behram S. Deboo of British Columbia, Shrivax Nargolwala, Keki Gandhi, Rustom E. Daroga, Zal Nowsherwanji, Ms K.Z. Nowsherwanji, Ms Farida Variava, Noshir Captain and Ava Khullar of Delhi, Dawlet B. Irani of Hyderabad & Karnataka, Nariman D. Elavia of Indore, M.N. Dinshaw and Ms G.N. Dinshaw of Jhansi, Pheeroze B. Karanjia of Karanj, Boman Jalejar Khodaiji and Bapsy B. Khodaiji of Lucknow, Katie F. Seervai and Mani J. Clubwala of Madras, Grp Capt D.M. Marker of Mhow, Bejoo Jilla of Nanded, Tehmi Grant, Homai N. Pudumjee and Perin Cabinetmaker of Poona, Rohinton M. Daviervala of Sanjan, Nariman P. Balsara of Saron-da, B.F. Dittia, Naval B. Vakeel, Noshir F. Nagarwala and Ms. P.B. Dittia of Secunderabad and Hyderabad, Mani N. Bharucha of Shahabad, Zarin S. Amaria and M.E. Pithawalla of Sholapur, Maneck J.R. Gheyara, Dr Minocher K. Contractor, Davar Kavasji T. Modi and Dr Sam S. Bhacca of Surat, Ms S.J. Vesuna of Vesu and Capt Jal S. Postwalla of Vizag. The Press was represented by *Parsiana*.



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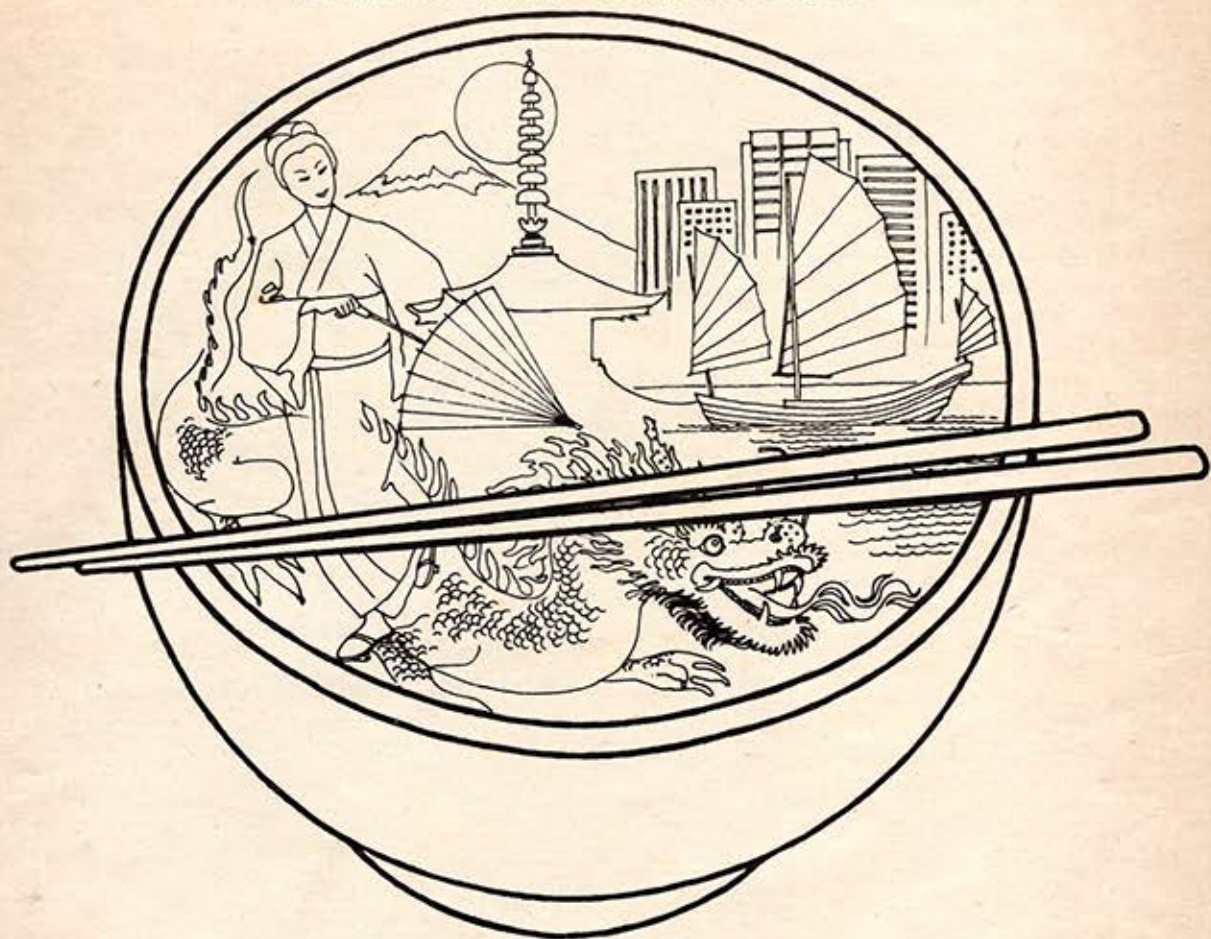
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The Parsi priesthood in India: fa

Arnavaz Chubb

The athornan has lost his exalted status in Zoroastrian society. But the plight of the Parsi priests today is not a recent development. The graph began its descent more than 100 years ago, and much has been written and said about it since then. Attempts have been made to identify the causes and solutions have been offered, but the problem persists.

Secularization, and a growing apathy towards religion have permeated the ranks of the priesthood as well, and young men of priestly families prefer to seek secular occupations.

The early history of the Parsis in India presents a vague and unclear picture. The only sources of information for this early period are manuscript colophons (inscriptions at the end of a book or manuscript, usually with facts relative to its production). Manuscripts were mainly copied by priests, and stray notes and references to events and people have been preserved in them. The *Qissa-i Sanjan*, the poetical record of the arrival of the Parsis in India, was composed about 650 years after their landing. But, even after making allowances for the long passage of time which elapsed and a certain amount of poetic licence, the basic sequence of the narrative seems factual. The subsequent history of the Parsi communities in India can be traced through numerous scattered references in the narratives of European travellers and the Gujarati literature of the Parsis during the last few centuries.

The sudden spurt of religious awareness amongst the Zoroastrian laity in recent years has once again led to the spotlight being focused on the condition of the priesthood.

This series of three articles on the Parsi priesthood in India, attempts to reconstruct briefly from these sources, the history and nature of the Parsi priests from their heyday down to the present.



It would take a very special type of man to travel to the spiritual realms of heaven and hell and back to the material confines of earth, or to have molten metal poured on his chest to vindicate his faith and to emerge from that ordeal unscathed. Zoroastrians have, through the ages, celebrated the memory of these men in their prayers (*Farvardin Yasht*, 13.100) and lore. The first was called Arda Viraf and the second Aturpat Mahrspand. They were both Zoroastrian priests who lived at different times from each other and in a very different time from our

own. Theirs was a time when pious men with prayer and faith worked wonders on account of their spiritual powers; and ours is a time when such incidents are relegated to the realm of myth and fable.

If we find these episodes difficult to comprehend, it is because we are the products of a technological age, when the scientific supercedes the spiritual. Recorded history is scattered with several instances of such a 'miraculous' nature that cannot be substantiated by concrete evidence, and at the same time cannot be disregarded as fantastic fli-

ded glory



Desai Anjuman Atash Bahram at Navsari (Photo: Ashwin Mehta)

Meherjirana: power of prayers

the aid of their Hindu brethren and commenced with the *gah-sarna* prayers. The corpse became unstuck from the pillar at the appropriate time and the relieved Hindus carried the body of the miser away.

Whether the story is true or not, it serves as an example to illustrate the fact that a Zoroastrian priest is a man set apart from ordinary mortals by virtue of his specialized training and spiritual discipline.

As one incredible incident leads you to unearth another, legions of Parsi priests, some known and others unknown, emerge as stalwarts of the Zoroastrian religion, who strove against tremendous odds to preserve the customs and traditions we so often casually reject today. Their zeal mocks our indifference and their efforts mock our complacency.

Popular ballads of Moghul India sing the praises of a Parsi priest from Navsari, the first Dastur Meherjirana, who visited the court of the Emperor Akbar. So impressed were Akbar's courtiers with the knowledge, wisdom and sagacity of Meherjirana that he has been immortalized in the lore of Moghul India. One of the most famous stories attached to Meherjirana tells of how he foiled the attempts of a Hindu sorcerer who attempted to delude an audience by creating two suns. Through the power of prayers, Meherjirana destroyed the illusion of the second sun, proving to the people that they had been deceived by sorcery and the man was in no way spiritually enlightened or powerful.

As doctors, astronomers, scientists and seers, the Zoroastrian priests of yore were indeed a remarkable breed of men. Religion and science were not separate disciplines for them, but were interrelated. Healing and cures were in-

ghts of fancy.

A story, current in the oral tradition of Rustampura in Surat, tells of one such episode. At the turn of the present century, a Hindu goldsmith known to be a miser, died. After the ritual prayers had been performed, to the astonishment of onlookers, the corpse attached itself to a pillar and could not be moved. The distraught Brahmins concluded that as the man had been a miser, his soul refused to be parted from his wealth in death. The services of two neighbourhood Parsi mobeds were desperately sought. They came to

A Zoroastrian priest
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duced through the power of *nirangs* (incantations). A large collection of such *nirangs* exist. They are to be used in the cure of snake bites, headaches, stomach aches, various types of fevers and a host of other illnesses.

Priestly astronomers had long ago charted the course of the planets and stars. The movements of Tishtrya (Sirius), Vanant (identified with either Fomalhaut or Vega), Haptoiring (Ursa Major) and Satavaesa (perhaps Vega) had been worked out and their beneficial influences on mankind noted. Tishtrya and Vanant even have *Yashts* composed in their honour, and their corresponding *nirangs* are deemed to be efficacious in warding off evil.

Amongst the last known of saintly 'miracle-workers' was Dastur Jamshedji Kookadaru (1831-1900). The most celebrated event connected with him, recorded in his biography, relates to the construction of Bombay's Anjuman Atash Bahram. During construction of the Atash Bahram, funds ran short, and Dastur JamaspAsa, who later became the High Priest of the Anjuman Atash Bahram requested Dastur Kookadaru to contribute Rs 10,000. Being a poor man, Kookadaru was perplexed at the request, but nevertheless pondered over the problem. While he was giving the matter deep consideration, Dastur JamaspAsa came along and Dastur Kookadaru told him to collect whatever was in the next room and sell it. To his astonishment, a block of solid gold was found which when weighed was found to be worth exactly Rs 10,000!

In the Persian *Revayats*, 15 characteristics of the priest (herbad) have been enumerated. They are: pure disposition, innate wisdom, restoring or embellishing the religion, remembering God, looking up to the spiritual world, pure in body, sweet of tongue, having the *Nasks* (the 21 divisions of Avestan literature, the only complete one existing today being the *Vendidad*) by heart, reciting correct Avesta, observing cleanliness, knowing the incantations (*nirangs*) well and performing ceremonies with undivided attention and faultlessly. It is strongly recommended that the herbad should practice these virtues so that God and the Amahraspands may be pleased with them and their religious services may be accepted by them.

According to a Pahlavi text, the *Dastan-i Menoy Xrat*, the business of a

priest, is "to maintain the religion properly and to perform the ceremonial and invocation of the sacred beings well and with attention, and (according to the decrees, decisions, customs and control as revealed by the pure, good religion of the Mazda worshippers, to make people aware of the goodness of good works and to show the way to heaven, and the danger and avoidance of hell."

"Him thou shalt call *Athravan*, O holy Zarathushtra," commands the *Vendidad* (19.1-6), "who throughout the night sits up and demands of the holy wisdom which makes man free from anxiety, with dilated heart and cheerful at the head of the Chinvat Bridge, and which makes him reach that world, that holy world, that excellent world, the world of paradise."

The ninety-eighth subject of the book *Sad Dar* is that "it is necessary for all those of the good religion that they learn the Avesta characters in the presence of priests and teachers, so as



Sasanian coin depicting two priests attending the fire altar.

to read, and that no error may continue in the *Nyaishes* and *Yashts*. And it is still more expedient for priests and teachers, that they teach the Avesta characters to all those of the good religion; and if a priest, while teaching, shows incompetence, it is a great sin for him. For Ohrmazd, the good and propitious, spoke to Zaratusht thus: 'As to every priest and teacher who commits a blunder in teaching those of the good religion, I make him just as far from heaven as the width of the earth.'

Traditionally, the Zoroastrian priesthood has always been hereditary. From the time of the division of society into four classes, supposedly by the le-

gendary King Jamshid, the office of priest has passed from father to son. The *Bundahishn*, the Zoroastrian story of creation, says that all priests descend from the family of Manushchihr, another legendary king of Iran (35a.7).

It appears that after the overthrow of the Persian empire by Alexander, the custom of hereditary priesthood was more honoured in the breach than in the observance. It was during Sasanian times that the custom was again revived and firmly established. History does provide us with certain exceptions, but during the last few centuries particularly in India, only the male member of a priestly family has become a priest. The right can be revived by any male member of a priestly family, though his immediate ancestors might not have been actually ordained as priests.

Since the priesthood can only pass from father to son, it was incumbent upon priests to marry and raise families. Unlike some other faiths that advocate a celibate priesthood, marriage is a positive virtue in Zoroastrianism for both priest and layman alike. Childlessness is a curse and it is a blessing to have sons with the disposition of an *Athravan* (*Yasna* 10.15).

Birth itself does not entitle the son of a priest to become a priest. In order to become a priest, the candidate has to pass through two initiation ceremonies after his navjote—the *navar* and *maratab*. A *navar* is not entitled to perform the higher liturgical ceremonies like the *Yasna*, *Vendidad* and *Baj*, nor can he officiate at the purification rites of *nahn* and *bareshtnum*. In order to do so, he has to undergo the *maratab* ceremony, which makes him a fully qualified priest.

There are three distinct classes of priests. The Persian *Revayats* distinguish them thus: 'A herbad is one who knows the Avesta and who has been initiated *navar*. A *mobed* is he from whose tongue the Zand-Avesta is never at a distance and who does the service of the *Yasna*. A *dastur* is he who knows the Avesta and Zand, that is, he knows the meaning of the Avesta, as to what the creator Ohrmazd has said to the holy Zaratusht; and again he should know the meaning of the Pahlavi writings and at his orders, it is necessary to perform the religious works.'

From the above, we see that the her-

The term dastur then can only be properly applied to a particular type of priest and the loose connotation that it has today, signifying any priest, is incorrect.

bad (Pazand: *ervad*), is one who has undergone the *navar* and knows how to perform the minor rituals like *afrinagan*, *stum*, *farroxshi*, *gah-sarna*, weddings and *navjotes*. Over and above these ceremonies, the herbad is also supposed to be a teacher-priest as his title suggests (Avesta: *aerthra paiti* = master of the priestly school).

A mobed (Avesta: *magavan*, Old Persian: *magav*, Pahlavi: *magupati* magi) is one who has been initiated as *navar* and *maratab* and knows the higher liturgical ceremonies like the *Yasna*, *Visperad* and *Vendidad* and their ritual intricacies.

A dastur (Pahlavi: *dastwar* = authority, priest, minister) as the title suggests is an authority on religious matters, be they rituals or interpretations of the texts. He also supervises the ceremonies that have to be performed, advises and guides the laity in matters religious and secular. The term dastur, then can only be properly applied to a particular type of priest and the loose connotation that it has today, signifying any priest, is incorrect. A dastur is either eligible for the title through hereditary rights or he may be appointed by the trustees of a particular fire temple. In some cases, he may also be chosen by the community in recognition of his contribution to society, as in the case of the first Dastur Meherjirana of Navsari.

From times immemorial, priests have provided a link between men on earth and their gods in heaven. Although a secular man, busy in the modern material world, does not feel the need for propitiating the gods as his forebears did, priests have continued through the ages to play an important role in society. In war or peace, in sickness and in health, the family priest played an important part. They were part and parcel of the army retinue, for the king consulted them on the auspicious time to start a battle or end it. Up to very recent times, the family priest was considered to be an integral part of the family. He listened to family problems and offered advice, and since he was intimately connected with the



Kookadaru: finding funds

Bombay's Anjuman Atash Bahram

family, his prayers for them were as for his own family.

Although the religious role of the Zoroastrian priest has more or less remained the same, the social role has radically altered. No longer is he a family confidante and friend, but a mere paid employee, hired to perform the family's ceremonies. Living in large cosmopolitan cities, the personal touch between priest and layman has been lost. Religion as a whole has ceased to play an important part in modern life and consequently, the role of the priest too has diminished.

James Hope Moulton's conclusions in his book *The Treasure of the Mag* (1917) might have been written for today: "The Parsis themselves being witness, the possession of a high ideal of religion in the Gathas has not availed to make them a religious people... the community has lost its religious earnestness."



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Congregation assembled for Congress (Photos: Homiyar Mistry)

"Who says the Parsis are not a tolerant lot?" asked a jesting Jamsheed Kanga (BPP trustee and Bombay's municipal administrator) at the end of three and a half days of verbal bombardment. The community's 1000 plus delegates had endured an assault on the ears from almost every direction during the three days (January 11-13) of the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress at the Birla Matushri Sabhaghar and the fanfare and pageantry of the evening inaugural on the Cusrow Baug lawns on January 10.

The babble of voices enumerated problems and non-problems: the dwindling numbers, and the calendar

controversy, the need for marriage counselling and the status of non-Parsi spouses, to seek minority protection or not to do so, the need to look facts in the face and the implied censorship of avoiding controversies, the rights of Zoroastrian mothers and the need for an international organization of Zoroastrians. . . . Godrej Dotiwala, speaking from the floor on the first day, noted succinctly, "We are one lakh people, so we have one lakh problems."

The timing of the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress was perhaps most unfortunate. The chairman of the Congress, Jamshed Guzder, was approaching the end of his 10-year-term as

As the delegate from France observed, the Congress motto, 'Bound together unitedly—forever,' is a dream that some day may come true.

Arnavaz S. Mama

trustee of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet. While he sought reelection, the surprise entry of Naoroji Godrej into the contest had queered the pitch for him. Although Guzder and the BPP had worked very hard for the success of the Congress, the fear of controversy bred by the BPP's abrupt exit from the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India after the Third World Zoroastrian Congress in 1978 and the incipient politicking resulting from the proximity to the trusteeship election, had bedevilled the organizers. The resulting ambivalence prevented a clearcut enunciation of priorities and an objective search for solutions to community problems. Thus, the subjects committee refused Dr Kersey Antia's (the high priest of Chicago who had performed Joseph Peterson's navjote) paper and accepted the papers of four representatives from Zoroastrian Studies (ZS) on the subject of the relevance of Zoroastrianism to the modern world. Since they all belonged to a single school of thought, they said the same thing in four different ways. What is more, two of them were allowed to have their say for 20 minutes during the afternoon session which was supposedly devoted to the findings of modern scientific research.

At this same session, the skewed priorities were even more obvious when a speaker from the house who requested five minutes (instead of the customary three) was bawled out of court by the chairman and the mike switched off because her theme did not adhere to the "scientific" subject at hand. The topics she raised: The shortage of bawal kathis (firewood) for the fire temples — a subject of acute con-



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cern to all those responsible for the maintenance of atash bahrams and agaries — and the need to set up a fund under BPP auspices, financial assistance from which would embolden young couples to raise more children in these inflationary times.

Such shortcomings apart, the organizers, especially the BPP staff — “the silent workers, the backroom boys” in Kanga’s words — had put in an enormous effort. Excitement had been generated nearly a year ahead as the Federation, at its executive council meeting in Calcutta in February ’84, prodded the BPP to take on the task. Eventually, the national Press was briefed at a special press conference and photographs of the inaugural were splashed on its front pages. Doordarshan covered the event in their national news bulletins and even the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) had a special talk on Zoroastrianism with reference to the Bombay event.

The original concept had been even grander, with justifiable hope of having the late Indira Gandhi personally inaugurate the Congress. Then, in the aftermath of tragedy, expectations were progressively axed and instead of the rows of national dignitaries, the Governor of Maharashtra alone graced the occasion, as even the chief minister had another appointment to keep.

Cusrow Baug dwellers got a balcony view of the goings-on in their very own “amphitheatre” as dagli-clad BPP trustees in *phetas* and *pagrees* rushed to escort the Governor and his lady to the dais while Jehangir Shroff (chairman of the Athornan Mandal, having retracted from his earlier anti-Congress stance on being assured that the Congress would steer clear of controversies) and his Parsi scouts, in full regalia, presented a guard of honour.

The traditionally rigged audience comprising Bombay Parsis as well as foreign delegates and community bigwigs listened to BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla explain the *raison d'être* of the Congress: “We wished to strengthen the identity of Zoroastrians and foster greater community consciousness.”

Guzder set the community’s main concern — to keep the youth within the fold — squarely before the audience: “Children of Zoroastrians who have emigrated are being born and brought up abroad in a totally different environment...separated by distance and time.

“A lot of our younger generation is not familiar with Zoroastrian customs and traditions. It is with them in mind that we have decided on the topics to be discussed at this Congress.

“For example, we shall discuss the feasibility of helping them find life partners within our community. Many Indians living abroad come down to India when they are of a marriageable age to find a spouse. Our aim is to encourage Zoroastrians to do so, too.”

Addressing the patrons, vice patrons, delegates and guests from other communities, the Governor said: “You, as Zoroastrians, can be proud to



An official translation of Malek Pour’s speech was not forthcoming, having succumbed to BPP censorship.

belong to this community. India, as a nation, is certainly proud to have you as her citizens.”

Perviz Malek Pour, Iran’s only Zoroastrian member of Parliament (the

Iranian Majlis) and a member of the Iranian delegation, read a message in Farsi from the Speaker of the Majlis. Although an official translation was never forthcoming, having succumbed to BPP censorship, it is said that the President of the Majlis had noted that the Parsis should consider Iran their home and feel that they are welcome there.

The excitement of the event cloaked much of the uneven content of the deliberations which marked a few peaks and several troughs. Unnecessary emotion, sometimes bordering on chauvinism, led Prof Kaikhosrov D. Irani of City College, New York, to admonish: “Do we have to be disagreeable to disagree?” while a vituperative attack called forth a stern declaration from Dr Farhang Mehr (ex-chancellor of Shiraz University and professor at Boston University), the session chairman: “I advise the speakers to desist from personal attacks. I will have to stop the speaker despite the respect I may have for him.”

The French delegate — Eddie Marazbani from Paris — admitting “we haven’t reached the sophisticated level discussed here (but we) have lots of fun,” answered the question, “What has the anjuman (in Paris) done?” “It has brought youth back into the fold,” he noted with obvious satisfaction. “Most (of us are) well placed executives in multinational corporations. We help finance the business of our fellow Zoroastrians, find temporary housing, locate jobs...” Then, referring to the Congress motto Marazbani said, “*Ham Band Paivaste* (Bound together unitedly — forever) is a dream — some day it will come true.”

Aspi Moddie, a management consultant, who considered “this entire Congress a communications affair,” declared that the Congress had generated enough material for another *Pride and Prejudice*. “Raise the standard of your debates,” he advised. Then grasping the fear of controversy by the horns, Moddie asked “Where lies the devil in the piece? Fear is not in Zoroastrianism, but fear is in Zoroastrians. Whenever we promote chauvinism, it promotes disunity. The applause (from the house) was for chauvinism. There was no applause for the scientists (while they spoke),” he observed. “How far are we willing and ready to do the things we expect our leaders to do? If we expect more convergence, we

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"Fear is not in
Zoroastrianism, but
fear is in
Zoroastrians."

need to have pragmatism, understanding and a reaching out." Then, addressing himself to the leaders, Moddie noted: "Be more sensitive to the community. You're too remote, too involved with yourselves and your problems."

Noting that "the community must unite or wither away," Moddie said, "We need to research more on ourselves (and we) should not be afraid if some of that data is not to our liking... Decision making (implies) political questions. You cannot involve yourself in community affairs without the politicization that goes with it... the cost of conflict is unavoidable (but) good leadership tries to solve these conflicts — interpersonal and group conflicts — and keep these costs low... emotive questions should be left to bodies of specialists. This will reduce politicization and increase acceptance and rationality." Noting that "we're spending too little on social development," Moddie recommended that the community plan for physical and social sustenance over five years. Then, referring to the position of man in Zoroastrian theology as God's helper, Moddie concluded, "As man grows, God grows."

As Kanga ended the four-day talkathon with graciously worded thanks



(Above) Shroff (right) presenting guard of honour to Governor Latif

(Below) Guzder presenting a rose to Ms Tata. BPP trustee Eruch Desai in the rear.



to the Congress' two secretaries, Homa Mody and Gool Tata, Guzder shed his weariness and gallantly presented each with a rose and a kiss in appreciation of their enormous help, and Kanga quipped lightheartedly, "I'm sorry to disappoint Jimmy, but I'm not going to call all the girls of the BPP."

The most pointed reminder and the most sympathetic advice came from Professor John Hinnells (of Manchester University). With reticence, dignity and the objectivity of a scholar, Hinnells said, "Can I, as an outsider, (advise you) to face your problems with the love for justice, care for the weak and tolerance for all which characterized the practice of your forefathers."

Arnavaz Mama is Parsiana's managing editor.

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Governor I.H. Latif

Your presence here today, in such large numbers, demonstrates the marvellous unifying power of your faith. I am specially glad to see among the audience, representatives of the younger generation. Mankind as a whole benefits when youth treads the path of enlightened thought, word and action.

Concepts and lifestyles increasingly face the onslaught of a shrinking world. But in India, our pride in the country's culture and tradition is based on centuries of shared experience. We stand today, however, at a point of time in our nation's history when the problems that confront us require unified and gigantic efforts on the part of people of all regions, of all linguistic groups, of all religions and of all fields of activity. The World Congress brings together some of the best and most enlightened minds and it is only natural that your deliberations will reach out beyond personal and internal aspects to areas of common interaction and relevance.

It would be unworthy of the occasion to speak to you today within the narrow confines of the problems and prospects of a particular community, problems and prospects with which all of you, in any case, are more familiar.

What opportunities then, what challenges does your community, with the rest of India, see before it? What are the tasks that we must address ourselves to and seek to accomplish and the goals that we must seek to achieve? An extraordinary election has electrified the nation, but in a democracy specially, one's task does not end with the casting of a vote. Every individual, every organization, every community must now determine the role it must play in helping our country to achieve its rightful position amongst the nations of the world.

Today, full integration with the mainstream of national life is obviously of primary importance and calls for every individual and social segment to regard it as a personal duty to contribute to the maximum to the overall well-being of the nation. It is a matter of great pride to all of us that a fine, indeed a stellar example of citizenship has been set by generation after genera-

tion of Parsis in India. But at this juncture in our development, a very special effort I feel is now required, as perhaps never before, by all patriotic citizens to band together and dedicate their energies and talents for promoting an atmosphere of harmony, of productivity, of efficiency and of prosperity in the country at large.

Apart from strengthening national unity there are certain aspects of na-



Latif: 'supplement government efforts'

tional development in which your community could, I feel, make a specially valuable contribution, the first being that of energy. Energy is power and without power, as we all know, there can be little progress. It is also an area in which members of your community have already made a very notable contribution to our country. In the past, however, our attention has been confined primarily to conventional forms of energy; but these, as we all know, have certain obvious disadvantages. Oil exploration has of course opened up new vistas and brought new hope, but the source of power that I have specially in mind is solar energy, a

source which is not only inexhaustible but one which our country has been most generously blessed with. If the genius of your community and its expertise could be brought to bear on the full exploitation of solar energy and, with it, other non-conventional forms of energy, I have no doubt that it could brighten the national horizon in a most significant way.

The second area of importance is education—across the board, but specially primary education. This also happens to be an area in which your community continues to make worthwhile contribution, particularly in certain urban areas. But teaching of young children in their early formative years should not be a task exclusively left to be shouldered by the government, nor should facilities of quality be the exclusive preserve of the affluent alone. A sound and extensive primary education system, available more and more to members of the weaker sections of our society is essential and the more we supplement the efforts of the government the more successful we shall eventually be in all our other endeavors.

Health is the third area that I would like to highlight today, health not only in terms of better and more extensive medical facilities but also the control of pollution and the preservation of our environment, both of which are key elements when health is considered in its wider and proper perspective.

These are, of course, obvious areas and these are areas in which your community has already made an outstanding contribution. But the aspect that I would specially like to suggest for your consideration today is that whilst promoting these activities, our attention and our work has been focused primarily on urban areas. But 70 percent of our population as we all know, lives in the rural areas. It is there, in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, that the heart of India beats. My plea therefore, this evening, to the dynamic and forward looking community that you represent, is to turn your attention, your resources and your expertise to our small towns and our even smaller villages, to those people whose need is the greatest but whose voices are still too weak to be heard.

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Dr Aspi Golwalla

The First World Zoroastrian Congress was held in Tehran, while the next two were organized in Bombay in 1964 and 1978. Though we do not wish to make it a tradition, you will all appreciate that the principal reason for holding the Congress in this metropolis is because a large majority of Parsis live



Golwalla: 'few basic problems'

here and the Bombay Parsi Punchayet continues to play a primary role in the affairs of the community. It also gives an opportunity for our fellow co-religionists to visit their motherland and renew bonds of brotherhood... We wished to strengthen the identity of Zoroastrians and foster greater community consciousness...

We shall find ways of establishing links for the mutual benefit of our co-religionists from East and West. We also believe that Zoroastrianism is relevant in the modern world and we would like to revive the spirit of the three precepts of Zoroastrianism — good thoughts, good words, good deeds. We face a few basic problems such as a dwindling population, a very wide scatter and the lack of social contact among the younger members of our community. These need to be dis-

cussed at some length. And there may be other problems for which a solution should be sought as far as is possible. And lastly, it is felt by many well-wishers that the time is ripe for a truly representative world body of Zoroastrians to function more effectively for the welfare of our clan all over the world...

There are many kinds of affinities, but the nobler one is like ours based on high cultural ties and sympathy of character, following the religion of our enlightened Prophet Zarathushtra, the religion of truth, love and benevolence, a religion as pure and as luminous as the fire which is its symbol.

And let me tell you friends, that wherever you go, it will not be difficult to find a Zoroastrian with whom you will be able to share happy moments, and the grasp of loneliness will not take hold of you when you reach far off shores...

Jamshed Guzder

The Third Congress caused an awakening within our community, which in the past had allowed a lot of important issues to drift along. Since then, more and more people have become increasingly conscious of the community's obligations and responsibilities; and many more, particularly the youth, have involved themselves in the affairs of the community. But we still need to consolidate the gains of the last Congress.

It is appropriate that the venue for the inaugural function of this Congress is Cusrow Baug which stands as a shining monument to the munificence of the Wadia family, particularly, to the benevolence of that great lady Jerbai Wadia, whose vision and foresight originated the concept of providing housing for our community.

This good work was continued by her two sons—Sir Cusrow and Sir Ness—and her grandson Neville whom we are happy to have with us here today.

Now, after a lapse of seven years, the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress meets in India once more... under the theme: *Ham-Band Paivaste*, which translated from Pahlavi, means Bound Together Unitedly—Forever. You will agree that the theme of unity that we have chosen is not relevant merely to one community, but is today, a matter of nationwide concern...

Today, pockets of Zoroastrians are scattered around the world. Because of their adaptability and enterprising spirit, they have made a success of their lives in foreign lands. More than ever before, there is a need now, for our community to keep in touch in order to 'feel' and 'understand' each other... and others.

We plan to enlighten delegates about the prevailing circumstances and the environments in which fellow Zoroastrians live in various parts of the world.

Separately, through the second topic, we shall discuss how better communications and rapport may be established within the Zoroastrian community worldwide.

Thirdly—and this is most important for our young men and women who are not well exposed to our religion and customs—we want to discuss the relevance of Zoroastrianism to our changing times. Zoroastrianism, as a way of



Guzder: 'consolidate gains'

life, has much to offer in terms of both spiritual and moral guidelines, which can never be outdated because they are based on logic, determination, action and free enquiry. In my personal life, I have found that the practise of this philosophy has given me the strength to face up to the stresses and strains of modern living.

The fourth topic that we propose to discuss at this Congress should interest not only the members of our community but also the world at large. It is a fact that we are one of the very few communities in the world which has existed for over a thousand years without

going through an osmosis of various bloodlines. According to the World Health Organization, we have become the subject matter of a study which may well prove to be of immense importance in seeking (remedies) to certain diseases that threaten mankind today.

The fifth and last topic, aims to deal with the question of instituting a World Zoroastrian Organization. The Zoroastrian Association of Europe has already taken the initial step, and I congratulate their enthusiastic efforts.

Now it is for this Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress—and its 1,212 delegates—to strive further to make the Organization truly representative of, and acceptable to, all concerned; so that the community continues to contribute for the children of our children... towards the building of our nations, for a brave new world which remains *Ham Band Paivaste*—Bound Together Unitedly—Forever.

Edited extracts of speeches delivered at the inauguration of the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress.

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Impressions of the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress

Parinaz Toddywalla

At the end of the three-and-a-quarter-day sessions of the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress, many friends enquired "What will be the outcome of this Congress?" The first time this question was posed, I was taken unawares and had to mentally labour for an answer, reminding me of the speakers at the Congress who gave the impression of wanting to say something, but didn't quite know what to say.

Gradually my response developed the finesse like the other speakers, who in the words of S.Nargolwala "were attempting to be miniature Demosthenes with their oratory leading to rhetoric and finally ending with a joke." I knew that negotiations were in progress regarding membership to the World Zoroastrian Organization; that a world

youth congress was to be organized by the end of 1985; and that the Fourth Congress had generated more than a lakh of rupees as income. (The souvenir bears testimony to the last fact, considering that the ratio of reading matter to advertisements is equal.)

The discussion on the WZO membership which seemed to go on endlessly, made many wonder whether there would be any progress from the stage of deliberating over the structure (membership) to debating over the contents (objectives). It was indeed commendable that Dr Farhang Mehr conducted the proceedings with such equanimity. An Indian Zoroastrian might have been unable to maintain the neutral stance all through and to summarize the proceedings so effectively.

While the issue of membership continued to remain unsolved, it was noticed that during and after this session, there was a strong lobby for individual

membership within the audience with membership forms being issued and enrollments being encouraged to increase the list of individual members.

The proposal of hosting a world youth Zoroastrian congress sounds interesting so long as all concerned with the organizational aspect realize that there are youths outside the Zoroastrian Studies' fold who could be invited and who could stress on something other than the duality of Vohuman and Ahriman. When youths are invited to speak, it should be ensured that their speech is relevant to the topic at hand. To an observer, this out-of-context encouragement to youths was totally uncalled for. It was apparent that initially, beyond enrolling in the student category (which was believed to be house-full), no further participation was expected from them.

This last-minute inclusion of young speakers appeared to be unfair to the

Begum Bilkees Latif releasing the souvenir at the inaugural function as Maneck Gheyara (left) and Jamshed Guzder (right) look on.



Except for the
inaugural
function not a single
session started on
time.

other senior speakers who had worked on their papers in advance and had something worth contributing. As one speaker subtly complained, "I had hoped my paper would be a summary of what I'd speak, but now... I'll barely have time to give a summary of my paper."

Another revelation that has come across is that while a certain paper was rejected on the plea of there being too many speakers and too many representatives from a particular association, other speakers were accommodated at the eleventh hour.

Workshops at the end of every session may best be termed 'talkshops.' (At the end of each panel discussion,

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speakers from the floor were invited to participate with explicit instructions not to exceed three minutes.) Speaking on anything that one wanted with total disrespect to the chairman and the topic being discussed, seemed to be the

(Right) At the WZO session: (from left) Mehr, Peshotan Nargolwala, Shahpur Captain, Irani and Behram Deboo

(Below) Refreshment break

(Bottom right) Parsiana stall at the Congress (Photos: Homiyar Mistry)



prevalent norm in the case of these 'three-minute speakers from the floor.' When it was realized that these sessions were defeating their purpose, it should have been ensured that only ideas relevant to the preceding discussion were offered. There should have been a general session towards the end, when speakers who did not fit in the earlier categories could have been given a chance to voice their views on subjects of concern to them.

In the session marked 'Reports from rapporteurs,' the chairmen and representatives of the various panels seemed to view the session as their last chance to voice what was left unsaid by them earlier. In only one case did the summary give the impression of being a report.

Repeated mention was made of record attendances at particular sessions. Also, the audience's preference to move closer to the stage on each successive day might have been an indication of their appreciation for the proceedings but it meant that the Press representatives could not be accommodated in seats reserved for them in the first row.

The general atmosphere prevalent at the Congress suggested informality and camaraderie though there were certain

conflicting undercurrents surfacing when the orthodox and the reformist groups couldn't see eye to eye. Emphasis on tradition and orthodoxy was apparent in the case of some American Zoroastrians when they voiced concern over the fact that orange juice was being substituted for *nirang* at a religious ceremony, or lamenting over the fact that Zoroastrian youths from India were not willing to get married to their fellow Zoroastrians settled abroad. Such grievances could be overheard during lunch and tea breaks.

While the organizers were glowing with the growing attendance at each session, the reception committee had obvious difficulty in quenching the thirst and satiating the hunger of the delegates during tea and lunch time. Since the refreshment breaks went out of gear and the workshops prolonged, all sessions were delayed. Except for the inauguration function not a single session started on time.

There were some disabled persons who made it to the inauguration func-

tion. And there were some very able people who wilfully stayed away. Not that they missed much. The welcome speeches were cordial; the performance by the children of Sir J.J. Benevolent Institute was 'cute,' but nothing beyond. Only the dignity of the Governor and the presence of the overseas delegates lent an international atmosphere to the gathering.

The rigidity and reluctance to hear another point of view was quite noticeable. The common response of applauding speakers who conformed to their thinking and showing indifference to discussions of a scientific nature was apparent. Applauding to cut short a speech was definitely not in good taste, but a chit sent to an aged speaker was embarrassing. The aged delegate merely read out the contents of the chit, "We don't want to listen to old foggies" but it made a non-Zoroastrian invitee remark, "When you show such a mentality it reflects badly on the community."

There were some who attended the Congress because they were interested in the outcome of the deliberations, others attended it as a status symbol and yet others because they had nothing better to do. Referring to the thoughts generated by the Congress, Guzder summarized at the concluding session, "The important thing is how and what we implement, and how long the implementation will remain good."

Parnaz Toddywalla is executive editor of Parsiana.

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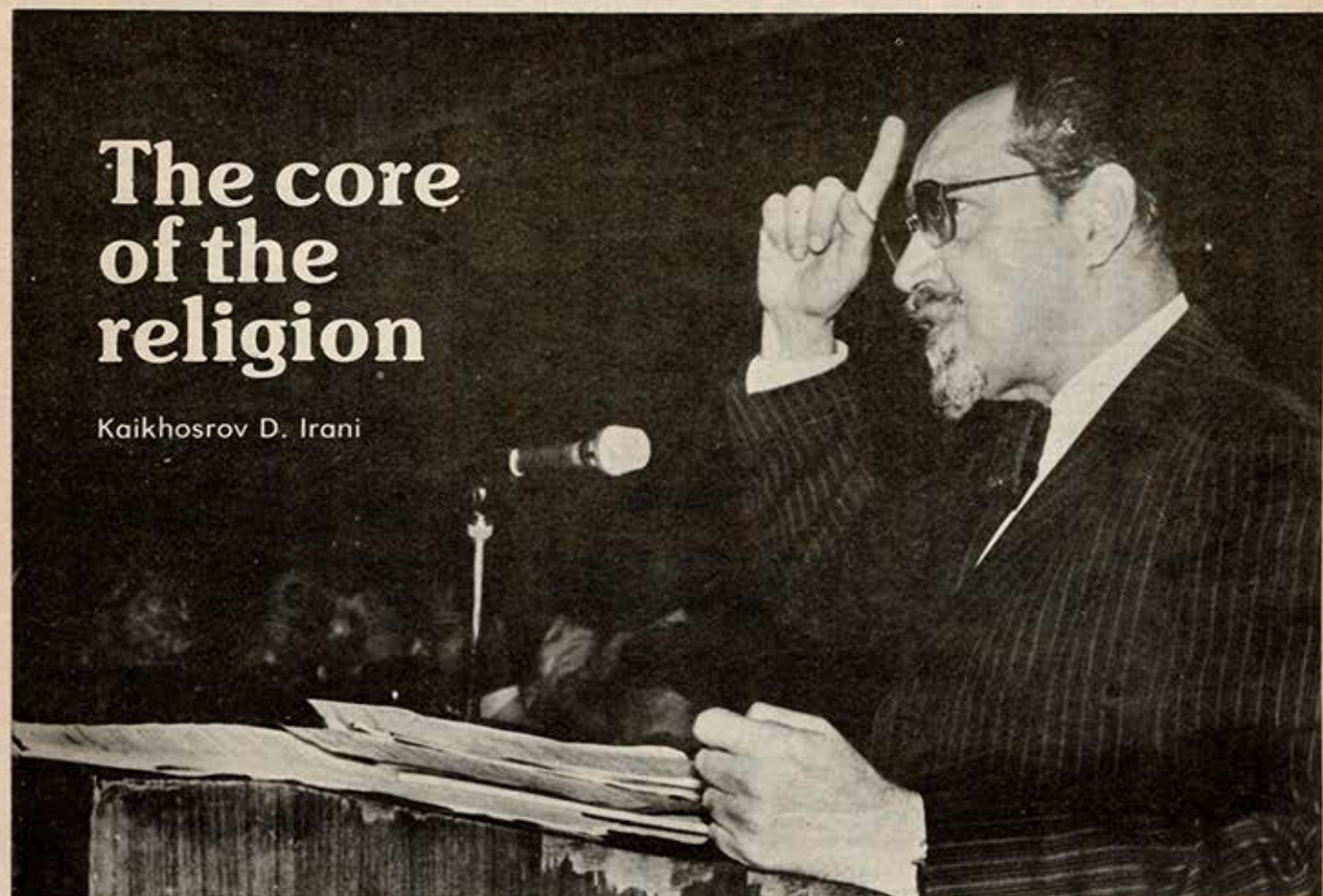
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The core of the religion

Kaikhosrov D. Irani



Edited and abridged from Prof Kaikhosrov D. Irani's paper entitled "Zoroastrian thought and belief in the modern world" presented at the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress under the topic "The relevance of Zoroastrianism in the modern world."

A religious tradition is a combination of doctrine, ritual and social practice. The doctrine is usually a combination of belief and prescription. The belief is a religious view of the world, and the way of life that is prescribed is seen to follow from the view of existence and human life. The tradition, if it extends over a long period of time, changes as ideas and practices are affected by altered physical and social circumstances.

The existence of a historical religion is dependent on two factors. First, the religious belief and commitment must live in the consciousness of the believer. Second, there must exist some traditions of practice which are the ritual manifestations of the faith. If either fails, the religion perishes. If religious

conviction fades from the mind of individual believers so that the religious belief no longer provides significance to their lives, tradition becomes a matter of empty external practices. And if there are no ritual performances, the tradition disappears as a social reality. In both cases, the faith and the ritual must be meaningful to the individuals of the community for the tradition to continue to live from generation to generation. Many ancient religions are now dead because they lost significance to generations, as changed circumstances made the doctrines and rituals meaningless or pointless.

When we consider the position of a religion in the world today, there are two inquiries we must make: First, what is to be taken as the core, i.e., the central commitment, of the religion? Second, is the core of the religion meaningful in the modern world and is it compatible with the ideas and knowledge of the world we live in? I shall proceed to answer these questions with respect to Zoroastrianism.

The core of the religion is the conception, which we find in the Gathas, the hymns composed by the Prophet. It is a complete religious vision, in that it gives us a view of the world, prescribes a way of life, and following it, offers a conception of salvation.

Ahura Mazda created the universe in accordance with the principle of *Asha*, the fundamental Truth. However, the benevolent spirit which strives to fulfil the design of Ahura Mazda is opposed by an evil spirit striving to frustrate it. The Good Mind, which is a divine creation and with which we are endowed, enables us to grasp the Truth, viz. *Asha* and also to recognize the flaws in the world around us. Thus, with this realization and benevolent zeal, viz. Spenta Armaiti, we act to promote the good and dispel evil. The ethical life that is prescribed therefore is the life of good thought, good word and good deed. Such a life brings prosperity and satisfaction to living beings and brings happiness to oneself. Upon death the soul comes to the bridge of the separator, where if the good outweighs the

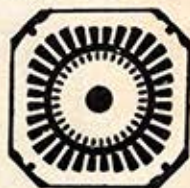
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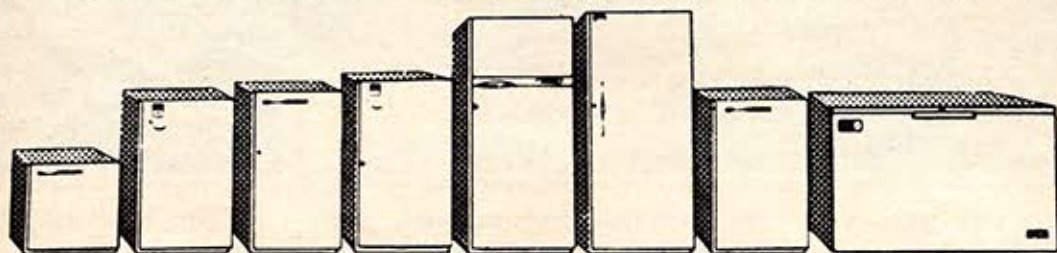
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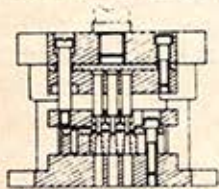
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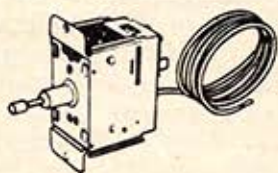
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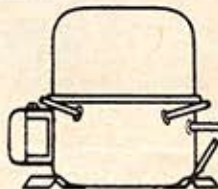
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bad, the soul passes to the abode of bliss. The entire world shall, at end of time, be renovated, when evil shall be totally eliminated. Thus shall existence be perfected.

This belief and way of life characterizes a Zoroastrian. That is what we find in the fundamental scripture of Zoroastrianism. There are, of course, standard rituals in the Zoroastrian tradition. But they cannot be considered as the core of the faith, for no

We have to discover
the singular role
of religious belief
in one's life

performance of ritual by one who does not hold the belief stated above can make one a Zoroastrian.

These remarks should not be taken to imply a repudiation. The rituals are necessary to give identity to the religious community and unite in consciousness the community for one historical moment with those of the past. What we are claiming here is that Zarathushtra propounded a reflective religion, a religion based not upon some form of ritual worship which had some ritual effect, but consisting of a religious vision and an ethical life.

Turning now to the second question, do we find the religious vision of the Zoroastrian faith acceptable in the modern world where we explain phenomena through science and transform the world through technology? The answer is indeed in the affirmative. When we use the mind to understand nature, we have used *Vohu-mana* to grasp the underlying operations of *Asha*. Scientific understanding is a religiously worthy act. And so is the transformation of the world to bring about prosperity and well-being.

One might now be inclined to ask what is the function of religious belief for an enlightened individual in the modern world. Can he not understand the world through science, improve it through technology, and dispense with religious conceptions altogether? What we have to do is to discover the singular role of religious belief in one's life in the modern world.

The religious vision gives meaning to human existence. Science can explain an individual's existence as a body, as a

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physiological object. It cannot answer one who asks: What is the point of my existence? To answer this one must look at the universe in moral terms, in terms which give significance to human thought and action. That answer is what religion provides. And the Zoroastrian conception does that in a way quite compatible with our scientific world-view.

If religious belief
provides no
significance to their
lives, tradition
becomes an empty
external practice

This conception, call it a religious vision, doctrine or creed, is the common and perennial thread of all Zoroastrians, of all generations throughout the world. What about our common rituals? Many are maintained and have become the overt acts of our identity. They also produce in the believer the experience of spiritual upliftment.

But they must necessarily be adjusted to environmental circumstance. Communities in the western world are not equipped to have consecrated fire-temples. Living in a world of strong social interaction, they cannot have exclusionary rules like the ones of the Parsis in India.

Social practices of the religious communities may diverge due to variations in the circumstances in different parts of the world. This is both inevitable and understandable. These variations should not become causes for divisive disputes in the community worldwide.

There is no doubt we are agreed on the core. Can we not on the basis of that common bond in the religious vision of the Prophet himself try to achieve as much ritual commonality in as enlightened a way as possible? And beyond that when we come to social practices which are certainly not part of the religious core, can we not, even when we diverge, respect the considered and seriously held views of our brethren?

With full confidence in the power of our vision and the rectitude of our moral character, may we, in the words of the Prophet, be like those who bring the world toward perfection.

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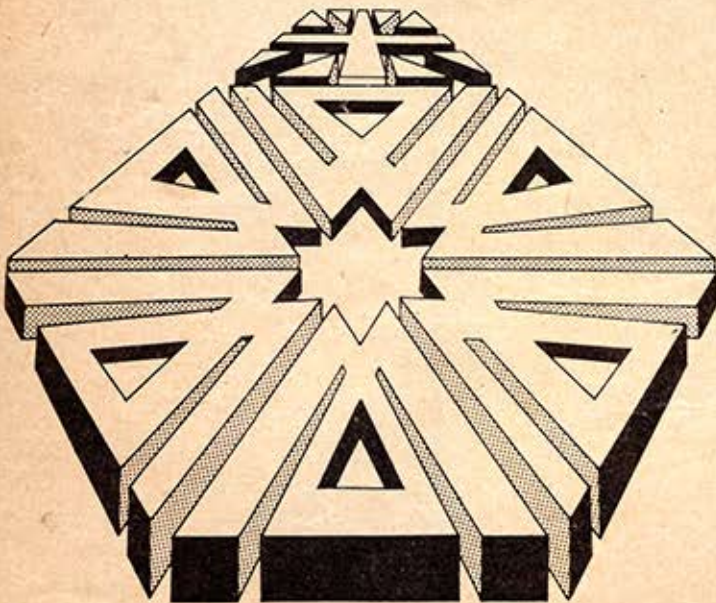
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Cancer lower amongst Parsis

Dr. J. Jussawalla

Edited and abridged from Dr. D.J. Jussawalla's paper entitled "Differences observed in the incidence of cancer among Parsis and other communities in Bombay" presented at the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress under the topic "Findings of modern research regarding Zoroastrian Community and identifying areas for further research."

It is a recognized fact today, that cancer arises in over 75 percent of cases due to certain habits, customs and lifestyle of an individual or a closely knit community.

Our attention was first drawn in the early sixties, to the common occurrence of breast cancer in Parsi women attending our clinics. A scientific analysis of this problem could, however, only be undertaken after the Bombay Cancer Registry was established by the Indian Cancer Society in June 1963. The Registry was the first unit based on a stable population group to be established in our country. It soon provided us with accurate information on the incidence rate of cancer and its mortality amongst the

resident population of Bombay, details about which were obtained from the Census Board and analysed according to age, sex, occupation, community and various other parameters. This data can never be obtained from a hospital record department, referred to often as a hospital registry, as patients attending a hospital, especially in a major urban centre, do not come from a known population pool but are drawn from various parts of the country and even from other countries nearby, so that the correct incidence rate of a disease cannot be calculated because the size of the population from which the patients are drawn, remains unknown.

The Registry staff members personally visit all hospitals, nursing homes and offices of consultants in the region, in order to obtain the necessary information at first hand from all the cancer patients known to be residents of Bombay. To minimise the number of "missed" cases of cancer, viz those who do not report to any hospitals or consultants, the Bombay Municipal Corporation's death register is scrutinized every month.

To compare the true difference in incidence rates of any two or more population groups, it is essential to correct the crude incidence figures obtained from the Registry, by applying what is known as "the age correction factor," whereby the age of any population under study is standardized to a figure arrived at by estimating the average age of the total world population. Such "age adjusted or corrected rates" can then be utilized to adequately compare the occurrence of cancer in any two or more communities or populations.

On detailed analysis of the Bombay Cancer Registry figures, we found to our surprise, that the Parsis, though living in the same geographical environment as the rest of the Bombay population, present striking differences in the relative frequency with which cancer is found in different parts of the body.

A critical appraisal of the situation thus appeared to be warranted, in order to ascertain whether or not these apparent differences could be ascribed to recognizable variations in the habits, customs and socio-economic status of the Parsis, when compared with those



In Parsi men, for some unknown reason, there is a lower incidence of cancer as a disease entity, at all ages.

of the other communities.

To begin with, we found that the age composition of the Parsi population was quite different from that of the other communities, as the majority were found to be in the middle and older age groups. The total population of Bombay on the other hand had much

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larger numbers in the younger age groups. Furthermore, a much higher percentage of the Parsi population was found to be in the age groups beyond 50 in men and 30 in women.

Such age-wise population analysis is called, in statistical parlance, the "age pyramid" of a community. According to our findings, all diseases which are known to occur at the older ages, should be more common in the Parsis.

However, as far as cancer, a disease of the middle and older age groups is concerned, its incidence in the Parsis is surprisingly lower than that seen in the other communities.

Another unusual fact to come to light, was the lower cancer incidence in men as compared to women, up to the age of 65. Only after this age do Parsi males present higher incidence rates than the females. In all other communities in Bombay, as well as in other countries, the incidence of cancer is known to be higher in men.

In Parsi men, for some unknown reason, there is a lower incidence of cancer as a disease entity, at all ages. When we compare specific regions in the body affected by cancer, in different religious groups, we find a remarkable variation. A more or less total site inversion of cancer is seen in the Parsis, when compared with the situation in the other communities.

Thus, the mouth (oral cavity), the throat, the voice-box, the gullet and in women the uterine cervix (mouth of the womb) are much less affected in the Parsis, whereas cancers involving the pancreas, prostate gland, bladder, nervous system, the female breast, body of the womb, ovaries and leukaemia, are more frequently encountered.

The breast is the commonest site affected by cancer in Parsi women, as is the prostate gland in Parsi men, whereas in the other communities the mouth of the womb (known as the cervix) is the commonest site affected by cancer in women, and the mouth cavity and throat in men.

In fact, the age-corrected incidence rates of cancer of the cheek and throat in the Parsis, are more comparable to the British and North European figures. These low rates are perhaps related to the fact, that the Parsis as a community, are less addicted to smoking and tobacco-chewing—habits which are very prevalent in the other communities and which are known to lead to a higher incidence of cancer at these sites.

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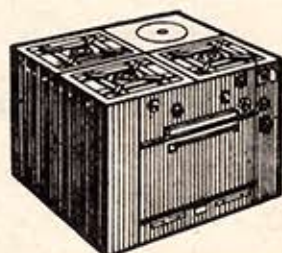
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Priests in the New World

Kobad Zarolia

Edited and abridged from Ervad Kobad Zarolia's paper entitled "A report on the seminar of North American athornans" presented at the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress under the topic "The relevance of Zoroastrianism in the modern world."

The seminar of North American athornans was convened by Ervad Kobad Zarolia in consultation with the athornans of Ontario. It was held on November 26, 1983 at the Meheraban Guiv Darbe Meher, 3590 Bayview Ave. Willowdale, Ontario. M2M. 3S6 (Toronto) under the auspices of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario. All practising mobeds and athornans known to reside in North America (N.A.) were invited. The main items for discussion were:

- Standardization of ceremonies for N.A.
- Mixed-faith marriages or navjotes.
- Training and utilization of priests in future, and leadership by priests in N.A.

Navjote

Preparation: The performing mobed must ensure that the proposed initiate knows the meaning of and is able to recite by memory: *Kemna Mazda*, *Ahuramazda Khodai* and *Jasame Avan-gahae Mazda*.

If possible, he should arrange a meeting with the child a few days before the ceremony to explain its meaning, privileges and responsibilities. The parents should be informed, where so applicable, (in case of children of mixed marriages or adopted children) that the recognition of such navjotes in India cannot be automatically presumed.

Initiation: After a long discussion, the majority present felt that we should break down the possibilities by progression:

- Any child of parents with father being Zoroastrian.
- Any child of parents with mother being Zoroastrian. Here a proper investigation in the family agreement has to

be made. The father should be 100 percent agreeable to this navjote and the dastur should be satisfied that the navjote will be for the good of the child and then he will be brought up as a "Zoroastrian."

- Navjote of a child adopted at a very young age (one or two months old). It is left to the dastur to satisfy himself that this type of navjote merits some consideration.

- Navjote of the non-Zoroastrian spouse. If the spouse wants to follow the Zoroastrian religion.

- Navjote of a non-Zoroastrian.

The above progression has no time



It should be left to the dastur to satisfy himself that the navjote of an adopted child merits some consideration.

limit. It should be made sure that the majority of the North American community (and if possible Indian Zoroastrian community) should be in favour of these changes.

As all the dasturs are voluntary, and our aim is to serve the Zoroastrian community, we should always consider the community feelings before any navjotes are performed.

Except for the first step which is accepted by the North American and Indian Zoroastrian community, all other steps should be taken after discussions by the community. Maybe in the next 100 years we could complete all the steps or at least a few. The fifth Zoroastrian congress in California might give us an insight into the community's feelings and ideas.

Nahan: Whenever possible, the nahan ceremony should be performed at the place of the navjote, in order to avoid commuting after the ceremonial bath. In the absence of nirang, pomegranate or lemon juice may be substituted but wine (alcohol) should be avoided.

People should be encouraged to perform navjote ceremonies in the *Havan Geh*.

Navjote booklet: A good booklet on navjote was submitted by Dr Jehan Bagli.

General: All dasturs, when requested to do any controversial ceremony, should consult their fellow dasturs of the area before agreeing to perform the ceremony. All dasturs should try to abstain from public criticism of each other.

Funeral

Sachkar: The prescribed procedure

should be carried out immediately after the corpse is taken to the funeral home, by any relative or friend, other than the performing mobeds. It was recommended that a few male members of the community, other than performing mobeds, should be trained to perform the *sachkar*, bearing in mind the state or provincial regulations. A stock of sudrehs and kusties must be maintained by the associations and provided to the family on request, on payment. Attention was drawn to the Zoroastrian Supplies, 10511 Brinwood Drive, Houston, Texas 77043 from where supplies could be obtained and stocked. Essential requirements for laying down the body, and for rituals following death should be explained in a booklet, which could be supplied to the family, to guide them. (Ervad Yezdi Antia was entrusted with this responsibility). A eulogy in English after the *uthamna* ceremony is quite appropriate and may be permitted. In case of accidental death, *gah-sarna* without the body is acceptable. Donation of body organs

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to hospitals etc is admissible and should not affect the funeral ceremonies.

Prayers and ceremonies: The use of a dog for *sagdid* is outmoded in the North American context. When only one mobed is available for *gah-sarna*, any athornan or behdin can join the mobed to make a pair. Full ceremonies can be performed for any deceased who may have donated part or all of his or her body for medical or research purposes. For a still-born child, *gah-sarna* and *sarosh-nu-patru* is adequate. These ceremonies should be essentially performed for every deceased Zoroastrian in addition to *uthamna* and at least one *chahrum* should be performed if time and place permit. For subsequent ceremonies, if relatives so desire, the tenth day, first month, sixth month and annual *baj* may be directed. The latter ceremonies including the annual *baj* could be arranged to be performed at the Dadar Madressa in Bombay, if so desired, on payment.

Cremation or burial: Cremation is recommended as the method of disposal of a corpse. If permitted by local and provincial or state governments, a plot should be reserved at the Darbe

Meher or on selected burial grounds, where ashes could be scattered and annual *Farvardegan* prayers offered. In some crematoriums there are walls with sections where an individual could preserve the urn for a fee. Individuals could use that facility if they so desire. Most dasturs present felt that we should discourage people from having any permanent monuments for the deceased person.

General

When a mobed is not available we should encourage behdins to perform ceremonies. Any behdin who is interested should be given some basic training by the available mobed.

We should ask Bombay to allow a behdin's children to become dasturs, as this might help the North American community to have a steady supply of voluntary dasturs.

The North American community does not require any high priests, as all mobeds are voluntary. The dasturs themselves should discourage the move to elevate one priest over the other. All the associations should encourage the formation of a Dasturs Council Body.

Navjote and wedding ceremonies

should be encouraged to be held in *Havan Geh*.

Audience participation should be encouraged in all ceremonies, not only in Avesta but with suitable translations in English. *Hum Bandagi* should become a regular feature whenever Zoroastrians meet.

Calendar controversy should be kept to a minimum and an individual should follow his own conscience and practice.

Agenda for next seminar

Items for consideration should include: alternative but appropriate and uniform set of prayers for jashans; preaching in English to become a part of all ceremonials including housewarming jashans, etc; systematize *Hum Bandagi* prayers; consolidate Iranian and Parsi Zoroastrian ceremonies into a uniform pattern; navjote of non-Zoroastrian spouses and also death ceremonies in the same category; follow-up action of the Montreal survey for 'acceptance' of non-Zoroastrians; need for a uniform practice of *muktad* ceremonies; need for *muktads* in the Fasli Calendar; and disposal of ashes of cremated Zoroastrian bodies.



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In search of the Goo

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.

The first instalment of Antia's thesis "Keeping the fire of faith alive: Zoroastrians in Chicago" described the social and economic condition of the Zoroastrians, the reasons why they emigrated, their assimilation into the American mainstream, and their views on Zoroastrian traditions, rituals and acceptance of converts.

The second instalment focussed on outmarriage among the Zoroastrians, the possibility of second generation Zoroastrians identifying themselves with Zoroastrian culture and religion, and the chances of the community surviving in North America.

The third instalment highlighted the fact that though many North American Zoroastrians are intellectually aware of their religion and heritage, not as many actually perform the accompanying religious rites and ceremonies or participate in Zoroastrian Association of Chicago's activities.

The struggle to survive

Most Zoroastrians seem to have had very few problems managing the process of adjustment. "No problems at all, adjustment-wise," said Rohinton Rivetna.

"I had to make an effort to remember the small things, like there are only elevators in America, no lifts, and sidewalks not pavements," said Dhun Batlivala. "I had no major problems, although the year that I spent living with my sister and brother-in-law may have acted as a protective cushion. It would have been tougher to face it all alone," added Batlivala, who is unmarried.

She said that one of the major adjustments she had to make was living alone, especially after having lived in a large, closely-knit family in Calcutta. "You sometimes get the feeling here that nobody really cares for you. But the anonymity has its advantages too. Basically, I'm a loner and I don't really mind it," she said, leaning back in a comfortable sofa in her suburban Chicago apartment.

In the Chicago survey, about 40 percent said that they experienced no significant problems after immigration. Adapting to American customs and values, in particular, was a problem to very few, 82 percent saying they had no noticeable difficulty managing it. Part of the reason may be that most of the Zoroastrians who came from India had already been exposed to Western lifestyles and ideas.

A greater number of Zoroastrians appear to have faced more practical problems such as difficulties with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and economic difficulties.

Almost all Zoroastrians settled in Chicago, except those who came as wives or close relatives of immigrants already settled here, have had problems with the Service, according to

Rohinton Rivetna. "I'd say it's definitely the biggest hurdle—it was, for me. After that, most other things are plain sailing," he said.

Among the other problems mentioned in the survey were, loneliness, missing family and friends, adaptation to professional registration requirements (cited by an M.D.), and language (this was not included in the list because it appears that for the overwhelming majority, language is not a significant problem; only one immigrant, from Iran, indicated that he experienced it).

A usually reliable indication of how well immigrants have been acculturated is their involvement in the institutions of the larger society, ranging from sports clubs and neighborhood activities to local government and politics. Overall, the survey reveals a modest degree of such involvement among Chicago Zoroastrians. The highest level of participation, predictably for a community with such a large number of professionals, is in professional societies and organizations and in work related activities and societies.

The community has produced some individuals with distinguished records of public service. For instance, Keki Bhote has served as president of his



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☆☆☆

Zoroastrians as an ethnic and cultural group will die out over time in North America, but the religion will survive.

☆☆☆



Cook County township, on United Nations' panels and on the board of trustees of a college. He was also chosen the most outstanding naturalized citizen of Chicago and has received a United Nations Association of the Arts Award.

Although the community is justly proud of its record on acculturation, it has much to fear from assimilation. The survival problem is more acute because the community cannot rely on increased immigration or a higher birth-rate to swell its numbers. Zoroastrian immigration to the United States is already much lower than its peak in the 1960s and 1970s and is likely to fall off considerably in the future if Congress enacts tougher new immigration legislation now under consideration.

The Zoroastrian community has traditionally had a low birth-rate. In the United States, social and economic fac-

tors will probably continue to hold down family size.

"Zoroastrians as Zoroastrians are not going to survive in any number in North America. I give them two generations," predicts Dhun Batlivala.

Some others, including Rohinton Rivetna, believe that they will survive but with a transformed identity.

"I feel that we will maintain our identity as Zoroastrians, but as time goes by it is going to take a different face altogether, perhaps unrecognizable from the present. The community will look different and live differently," said Rivetna.

Yet others feel that Zoroastrians as an ethnic and cultural group will die out over time in North America, but that the religion will survive. Such a theory assumes that at some point there will be a break between religion and ethnicity.

Almost 85 percent of those who res-

ponded to the survey perceived some kind of threat to Zoroastrian survival in North America. However, only 10 percent felt that the threat was "very great no matter what we do." Almost half opted for the slightly more optimistic view that the threat is "very great unless something is done." Twenty-five percent of the respondents thought the threat was "fairly great," while only a few saw no threat at all.

"We do not have the comfort of numbers so we have to take active steps to perpetuate the faith," says Keki Bhote. "This must be the primary function of all Zoroastrian associations in North America."

Perpetuation of the faith has been a recurring theme at the four North American Zoroastrian Congresses, the last one in April 1982 in Montreal. These debates have offered various solutions ranging from non-controversial ones, such as the establishment of a chair of Zoroastrian studies at a prestigious university, to controversial ones, such as permitting conversion.

Broadly, the arguments can be classified under two viewpoints. The orthodox/conservative viewpoint would argue that the only way for the community in North America to survive is to actively resist assimilation by preserving all traditions, customs and rituals intact. This point of view also advocates taking a strong stand against marriages outside the community and attempting to promote unions between Zoroastrians by all possible means. It is also vehemently opposed to conversion.

Khojeste Mistree, a Bombay-based writer and speaker on Zoroastrianism, is one of the best known proponents of these views. "Do not rock the boat. Follow the tradition. Do not chop and change it at will because you have no authority to do so," exhorted the stocky, bearded Mistree at a meeting

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"We will maintain our identity as Zoroastrians, but it is going to take a different face altogether, perhaps unrecognizable from the present."

organized by the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago in October 1982.

The opposing, liberal viewpoint would argue that the only way in which Zoroastrians can survive in North America is by changing and adapting to suit their new environment.

"The name of the game is still survival, but I believe the methods have to change," said Kersey Antia, the head priest of the Chicago community. "I was brought up in a very orthodox atmosphere in India, but this country is so different. You simply cannot be guided by the logic of the old country."

The liberals generally favour conversion as part of this process of change. However, there is much disagreement about exactly who would be let into the religion. Almost all would allow and encourage the children of mixed marriages into the group. Some would accept the non-Zoroastrian spouses of community members into the fold. A few would throw the doors of the religion open to anyone who believed in the message of Zarathushtra.

"Zarathushtra's message is a universal one and we have no right to deny it to people in an arbitrary fashion," says Noshir Hormazdiyar of New York.

Many Zoroastrians in the liberal camp feel that Hormazdiyar's view is too extreme and prefer, for the moment, to adopt the more modest goal of accepting children of mixed marriages and non-Zoroastrian spouses. They argue that this is only practical because discouraging marriages outside the community would not work.

"Everybody says that they would

like their children to marry Zoroastrians but who is going to listen to us?" asked Roshan Patel. "I wouldn't expect my girls to go back to India to find a boy," said Patel, one of whose daughters is married to an American.

This argument is likely to grow more persuasive as more of the second generation grow up and marry. "If my daughters marry outside when they grow up, I don't want to tell them, they or their children aren't welcome in the religion any more. I can't hurt them in that way," said Boman Damkevala, secretary of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago, at a meeting which was debating the issue.

In spite of the demographic evidence, however, the survey shows that almost 40 percent believe there is some possibility of their children marrying Zoroastrians. While only one in seven said that it was very likely to happen, one in four said that it was somewhat likely to happen. One in five admitted that they did not think it at all likely. About a third said that they just didn't know.

The main argument against conversion, offered by conservatives, is that a centuries old tradition is not to be taken lightly. They also fear that permitting conversion may lead to a break between North American Zoroastrians and the mainstream community in India.

A more convincing argument, but not often used, is that conversion could actually hasten the process of assimilation by allowing into the community people who may not have much awareness of the values and customs associated with it.

This last argument touches upon the crucial topic of religion and ethnicity. If conversion were to become much easier and if significant numbers did actually convert, it would most certainly mean a break between the religion and ethnic group. We would then have "Zoroastrians by birth" and "Zoroastrians by choice" with considerable

potential for tensions and even antagonism between them. It could spark a serious identity crisis for Zoroastrians worldwide and create a need for new definitions and perhaps even new terminology.

Most Zoroastrians do not appear to have thought very deeply about such sociological consequences of conversion. "Up to now, there has been no question of differentiating the religious and ethnic parts and I really find it difficult to visualize that," said Rohinton Rivetna. "At this moment I admit that I cannot accept how somebody of a totally different race or ethnic group—Japanese, for instance—can be a Zoroastrian. But that is a mind set and it could change."

A recent study by Dr Egon Mayer, a Brooklyn College sociologist, has examined the effects of conversion on the American Jewish community. Although Judaism traditionally has not accepted converts, in the last thirty years about 100,000 people have been converted into the religion, most being spouses of Jews.

Mayer found that Jews by choice tend to be more religiously observant than those born Jewish. However, in several other tests of attitudes about Judaism, converts married to Jews score lower than those born Jewish.

The converts are more likely to define their Judaism in religious terms than communal-ethnic terms, according to Mayer. "Unless the 'Jews by choice' are socialized to share in the practices of Judaism," he warns, "there is reason to expect that conversion can produce considerable stress within the converts as well as between them and their Jewish-born brethren."

Mayer's study raises some points that Zoroastrians would do well to take into account as the debate over conversion continues. Assuming that Zoroastrian immigration and birth-rate will not increase significantly in the future but that marriages outside the com-

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as losers.

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munity will, conversion appears to be the only way to increase numbers in North America. On the other hand, the sociological implications of conversion cannot be ignored.

In our survey, opinion on conversion appears to be split down the middle. Thirty-three percent said they did not favor it at all as a means of preserving and perpetuating the faith while 20 percent picked it as their most favored means of achieving that goal. The rest favored conversion to a lesser degree.

The two conservative solutions of keeping all traditions intact and discouraging outmarriages appear to be least favored by those surveyed. Not surprisingly, the most favored step is the non-controversial one of forming a continent-wide Zoroastrian organization for unified direction.

Efforts to form such an organization have been going on for several years but without notable success. Neither is there a North American newsletter or magazine.

"It is absolutely essential to weld local organizations into such a body," explains Keki Bhote, who has been campaigning for an "umbrella" orga-

nization for a long time. "Local bodies tend to be very myopic and often lose sight of the larger perspective."

Overall, survey results indicate, the majority of Chicago Zoroastrians

**"Everybody says
that they would like
their children to
marry Zoroastrians
but who is going to
listen to us?"**

think it is essential for the community to change and adapt. However, there seems to be little agreement about the nature and direction of the change.

"We're very definitely in a state of transition," said Rohinton Rivetna. "We're not quite sure where we are going. It's a terrible stage to be in."

Under these circumstances, the need for an organization that will set a future course and for a Zoroastrian

press for informed discussion of the issues is very great. But Rivetna is skeptical about what debate can achieve. "We can talk about these issues till the world comes to an end and we can take sides but we probably won't resolve anything. The solutions will happen by themselves," he said somberly.

Ultimately, history will take its own course but there are a few things that the community can do to influence its direction. There is an urgent need to train priests for the future, for instance, to develop an infrastructure that would allow them to practise the religion without dependence on the community in India. There also remains the task of socializing children into the Zoroastrian ethos and way of life, in addition to teaching them the prayers and religious practices.

The Zoroastrians have come a long way from the remote mountains of Iran and the bustle of Bombay to the comfortable suburbs of North America. But everywhere their struggle has been the same — to preserve their religion, their way of life and their identity.

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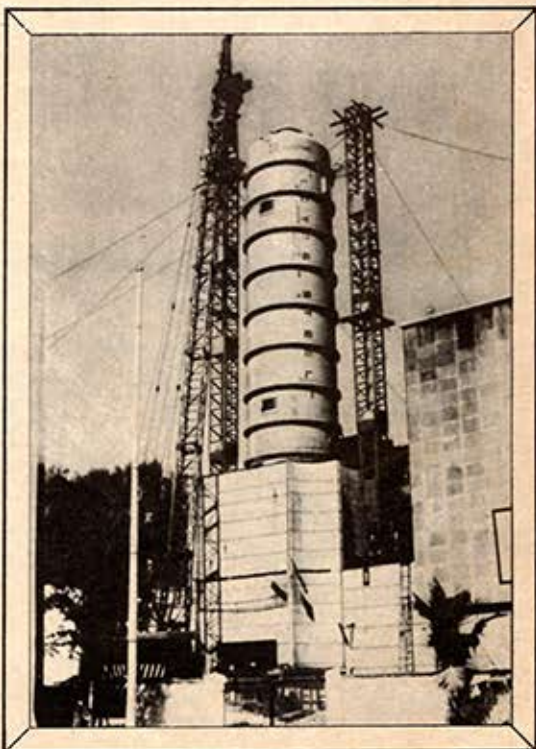
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For four generations of Wadias, from
shipbuilding to textiles,
the rights of succession had to be earned.

Madhu Valluri

One of India's youngest business tycoons started his career with the receipt of a letter that said :

"As you have been found to be medically fit we have appointed you as Junior Officer (Trainee) at the Bombay Dyeing & Mfg Co Ltd's Spring Mills, with effect from August 2, 1962 on a consolidated salary of Rs 185 per month. You will be on a probationary period of six months... If during the period your work or conduct is found to be unsatisfactory in any way, your services will be terminated forthwith, without any notice."

At 40, Nusli N Wadia is at the helm of affairs today. Maybe it was natural for him to take over from his father,

Neville Wadia, as most sons of industrialists are apt to. And they are *expected to*, even if Swraj Paul is busy trying to do away with this tradition. In the case of the Wadias, the tradition is somewhat different. Sons have succeeded fathers alright, but the rights of succession had to be earned. This Parsi family has over the years built itself a reputation as big as the Tatas. It has taken four generations of Wadias to make their empire into one of the largest in India.

But even before the first generation Wadia could launch forth into the textile business, the family, as such, was known for shipbuilding. In fact their surname is the corruption of the

Gujarati word *vadia*, which means 'shipbuilder.' As early as 1736, Lowji Nusserwanji was brought to Bombay from Surat, where he was based, and soon became a 'master shipbuilder.' For about 150 years thereafter, the Wadias, beginning with Lowji, designed and built about 335 ships, including 16 men of war. Abraham Parsons, an English visitor to India in the 18th century said that the Wadia vessels, "far exceeded any in Europe for durability and that it is usual for ships (Wadias) to last 50 to 60 years."

The reputation of their ships was indeed high. *Salsette*, a Wadia frigate withstood nine ice-locked weeks in the north Baltic Sea without a scratch while the rest of the ships in the same voyage were crushed. On board the *Cornwallis*, another Wadia ship, the Chinese signed the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, ceding Hong Kong to the British. *Minden*, a Wadia man of war, fought in the American — Britain War of 1812 and it was on her deck that the American poet, Francis Scott Key, composed *The Star Spangled Banner* which later became the American national anthem.

John Willis, owner of the British clipper, *Cutty Sark*, added two Wadia ships to his fleet, one of which, the *Tweed*, was known as Willis' Wonder. The vessel made the London-Melbourne passage in 83 days, a record that



(Left) Handing over: Nusli Wadia taking over the chairmanship from his father Neville.

(Facing page) Sir Ness: in the driver's seat.



Nowrosji Nusserwanji: first thought of dyeing yarn locally.

is unbroken to this day by any ship of her class. The reputation of this ship-building family grew even bigger when Ardeseer Cursetjee Wadia became the first Indian Fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1841. It was Ardeseer who first introduced gas lighting in Bombay and even built a one hp steam engine while still in his teens.

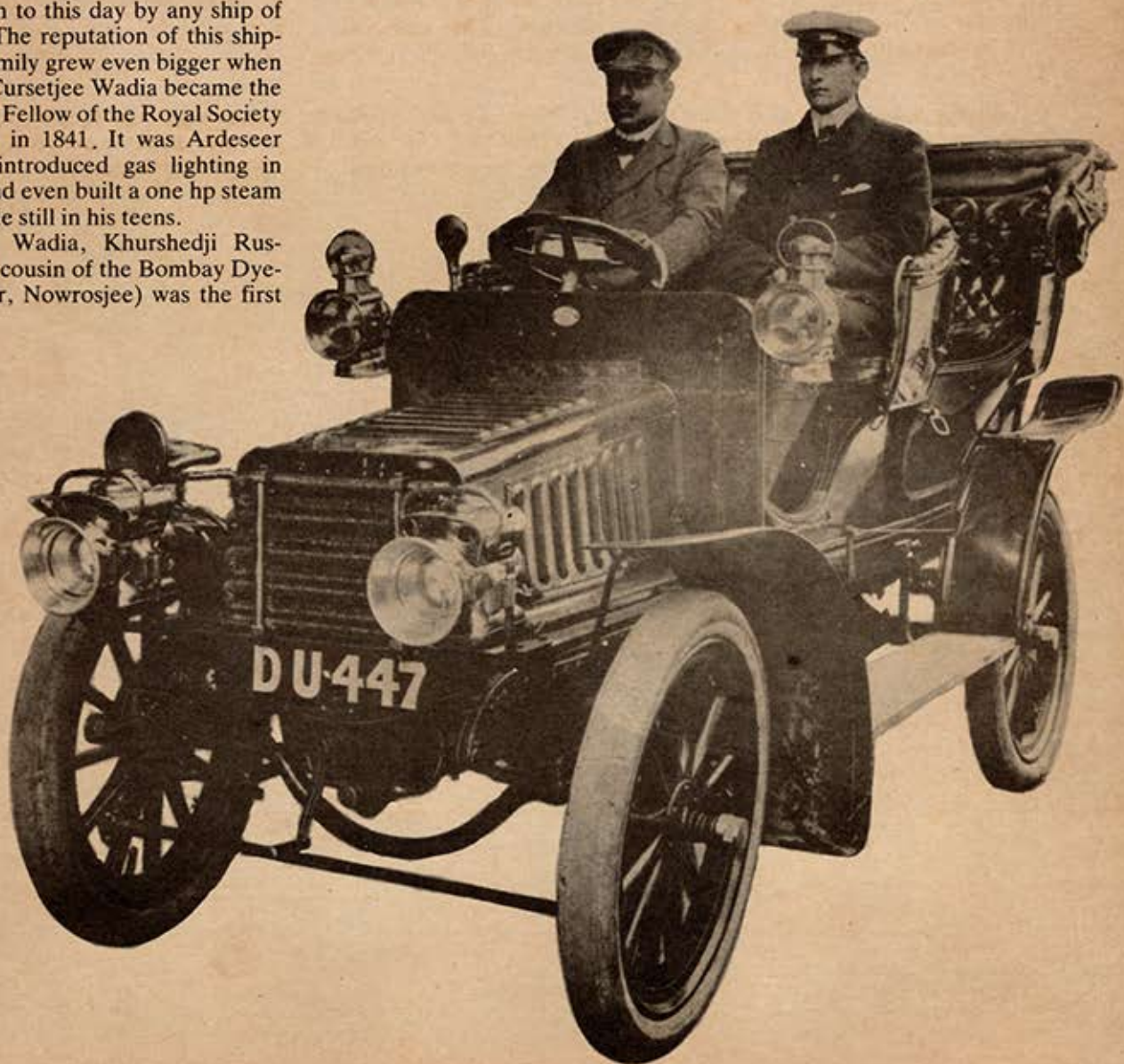
Another Wadia, Khurshedji Rustomji (first cousin of the Bombay Dyeing founder, Nowrosjee) was the first

Indian to be appointed to India's High Court. He consistently refused to award capital punishment that the British forced him to do. Rather than compromise on principles, Khurshedji Rustomji resigned from office. Nowrosjee Nusserwanji Wadia was, however, a different kettle of fish. He wanted to become an engineer. But before he could accept a job in the locomotive department of the Sind and Punjab Railway, he had another task waiting for him at the Petit Mills.

One of the looms had broken down and Sir Dinshaw Petit who happened to know the 25-year-old Nowrosjee, asked him to look into the matter. The machine suffered from over-heating during operation and the problem couldn't be solved even after swaddling it in cakes of ice. The young Wadia,

however managed to set right the loom and in the process kissed his railway job goodbye. He stayed on in the Petit Mills and became its general manager. This was in the 1870s, a particularly rough period for Indian enterprise to survive. One of the problems at Petit Mills was the transporting of cotton yarn all the way to England for dyeing.

There was no dyeing facility in India at that time. Nowrosjee Wadia came up with the suggestion to dye yarn locally. This suggestion was transformed into a reality in August 1879. Backed by an enthusiastic Petit, Nowrosjee Wadia started the Bombay Dyeing & Manufacturing Company Limited. The fledgling company opened in a small red brick shed on the seashore along Mahim in central Bombay with a capital of Rs 100,000, much of it coming



from Sir Petit's own coffers. By 1890, the company began running to full capacity. Seven years later they opened another brand new mill, Century (now under the control of the Birlas), and in a short while acquired a battery of Platt power looms, weaving a wide range of textiles.

The mills' founder died in 1899, rather prematurely at 50, but it had taken him barely two decades to be known as a textile magnate. He had designed and erected more than a dozen mills in his lifetime, consolidated the Wadia assets, and also served as a member of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. He had three sons, Cusrow, Ness and Rustom. While Rustom died young, the first two carried on their father's business. Cusrow Wadia had other interests too. He was chairman and chief steward of the Royal Western India Turf Club at Mahalaxmi and along with his younger brother, endowed the Wadia College in Poona.

Known as a 'chronic philanthropist, Sir Cusrow Wadia sold his Century Mills at market price to Sir Chunilal Mehta, a personal friend, and even

A weaving master, once got such a dressing down from the big boss that the next day he suffered from a nervous breakdown.

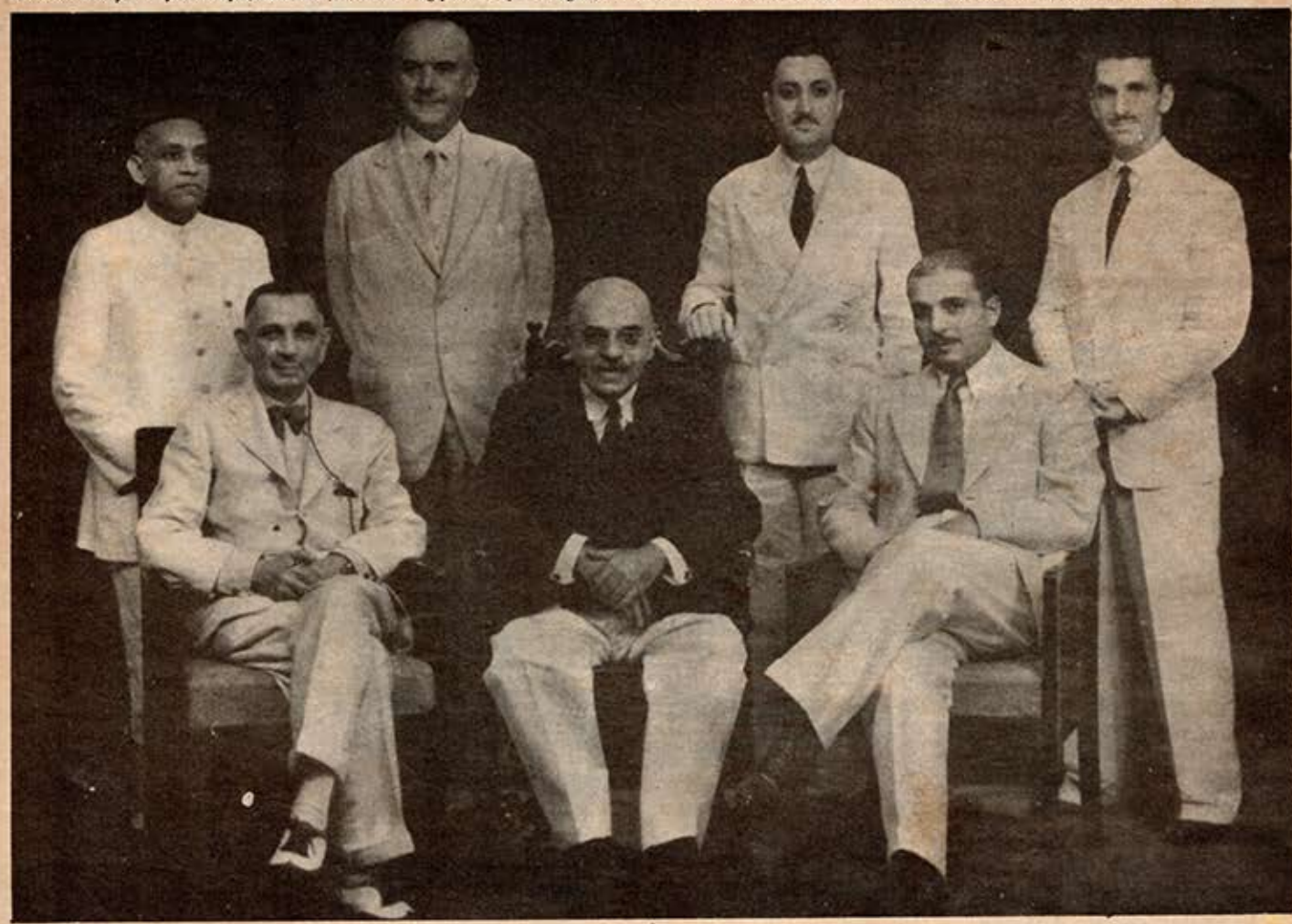
handed over the mills' managing agency, C N Wadia & Co Ltd for free.

When Cusrow Wadia died in Geneva, he left behind Rs 3.8 million in assorted charities. The mills came under the control of the younger

brother Ness, who by nature and upbringing was a formidable person with a sound business sense. When he took over, the company had a working capital of Rs 181,000. This was at the turn of the century. At the time of his death, in 1952, his company had more than Rs 25 million as working capital, a turnover of nearly Rs 70 million and annual profits of Rs 2.6 million.

Sir Ness, by far, is the most colourful of the four Wadias. He was known for two things — temper and humour. A weaving master, once got such a dressing down from the big boss that the next day he suffered from a nervous breakdown. When Ness came to know of his state, he sent him off to Colombo for a holiday at company expense. On another occasion, when he was asked to accept an Honorary Fellowship from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, he told the doctors (with a deadpan face) his own formula for good health: epsom salts for men, love

The Bombay Dyeing Board of Directors in the late '40s : (Sitting from left to right) Sir Cusrow Wadia, Sir Ness Wadia, Sir Jamshetjee Jejeebhoy (6th Bart). (Standing from left to right) Maneklal Premchand, C N Careo, Neville Wadia and J R D Tata



potions for women and castor oil for children !

Though his mills grew to be the largest textile operations in Asia, Ness was also known for other pioneering efforts. In the late 20s he started the India Radio Communications Co Ltd as a public service to his country. In those days, India's only communication connection with England and the rest of the world was by underseas cable. Ness established a wireless service — the forerunner of the modern telephone in this country.

For his services he was awarded the CBE (Commander of the British Empire) in 1918 and later the KBE (Knighthood of the British Empire). He was the first Indian to receive the KBE. When he died at Bella Vista, the Wadia residence on Pedder Road, Bombay, the cotton markets were closed and his mills suspended operations for three days. The body was flown to England and buried alongside his wife Lady Evelyn at a cemetery in Surrey where both his father and his great-grandfather were also laid to rest. Incidentally, Ness Wadia converted himself to Christianity early in life.

Life for Neville, the third generation Wadia, and the current honorary chairman of the company, began on a very adventurous note. He recalls: "There had been a spate of illnesses in the family, and my father decided that we'd all go back to England." In November, 1916 the family set sail for England aboard the *Asia*. While cruising through the Mediterranean, five-year-old Neville was lifted off his chair and thrown across the deck. World War I was on and the Germans had torpedoed his ship. A fierce storm made matters worse for them but luckily a small fishing trawler rescued the passengers and made its way to Malta. Neville contracted pneumonia while Lady Tata, who was also on board, lost all her jewels. They went down into the bottom of the sea along with *Asia*.

The Tata-Wadia association, however, endured over the years. Neville spent most of his Sundays with J R D Tata learning flying at the Bombay Flying Club. He soloed in an old Tiger Moth biplane to earn his wings. Eventually he became a director in Air India, then a Tata enterprise, and was a passenger on the inaugural Bombay-London flight in 1948. When barely 25, he met Dina, the 17-year-old daughter of the leader of the Muslim League and



Board of Directors during the Company's centenary year (1979)

creator of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah and married her in All Saints Church at Malabar Hill in Bombay a few years later.

Neville took over as chairman when Ness Wadia died in 1952, and almost immediately embarked on a modernization drive. He ordered more than a thousand automatic looms which resulted in the largest single order ever placed with a Swiss firm. To the existing factories he added the New Bleach Works, of which he says proudly, "I've designed all the new buildings myself."

Two years before the mills' centenary celebrations, Neville Wadia decided to call it a day. His address to the shareholders in Bombay's Taj Mahal needs to be circulated among all the old fogeys who are still clinging to their chairmanships on various company boards. Said Neville, "I am absolutely certain that this (retirement) is the right thing to do and that this is the right time to do it. I have seen too many people cling to office beyond their usefulness to make the same mistake myself. I have therefore, decided to resign not only as a chairman but also from the Board of Directors." Today he has settled down in the village of Morcote, near Lugano in Switzerland.

Which brings us back to Nusli Wadia. By 30, Nusli Wadia became chairman of Texprocil (Textile Exports Promotion Council) and stressed the need for exports. Insiders at Bombay Dyeing say that he's a rather "low profile" person and likes to operate from his cabin, not the shop floor. Under

him, the company increased profits especially at a time when the textile industry was facing one of the worst recessions. Nusli has his own way of keeping a check on his employees and "somehow gets to know an individual's worth," comments an employee.

Married to Maureen Keelan, a former airhostess, the Wadias live in a newly-done up cottage in Prabhadevi, just besides the looming twin towers that house most of his company's top executives. A few years ago, the Bombay Dyeing employees received one of the rudest shocks in their lives. Rumour had it that the Wadias were winding up operations in India and were shifting out of this country bag and baggage. In fact, there were reports that two Marwari 'parties' were interested in buying up Bombay Dyeing outright. It was the employees who prevailed upon the management, Wadias in particular, to desist from selling off their hundred-year-old company.

By the looks of it the storm has tided over and Nusli Wadia seems to be in full control at Neville House, the company's headquarters in Bombay's Ballard Estate. If the Wadias have prospered here in India in the last hundred years, there's no reason why they shouldn't stay on and become even bigger in the next hundred. Assuming that the Wadia acumen for business is still alive, the future should be smooth sailing. So what if they don't have ships anymore.

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Iranian Anjuman president

Died: Noshirwan Muluk Irani, 61, president of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman and one of the leading beer manufacturers and builders of Bombay on January 30, 1985 at London following a cardiac failure.

"He served the anjuman in one capacity or another for a period extending 14 years. His qualities of head and heart had endeared him among the members of the anjuman," records a resolution passed by the members of the general committee of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman on February 8, 1985. "His ever willing desire to spare time from his business activities for the benefit of the members of the community will long be remembered..."

As settlor and patron of the Scottish Freemasonry Charities, a trust founded in 1982, it was Irani's desire "to start service activities and projects for the upliftment of the deserving poor

and needy of our Indian community, besides Freemasonic charities... Whenever he visited installations of Lodges and also through newsletters, he conveyed the message of service to mankind and promised to contribute his mite towards the worthy cause," noted a resolution passed by the Fund Raising Committee of the Scottish Freemasonry Charities on February 5, 1985. He was the District Grand Master of the District Grand Lodge of Western India (Scottish constitution) for the last nearly eight years.

The brewing industry with which Irani was closely connected, marketed popular brands of beer like London Pilsner, London Premium and London Diet, which are served in all five-star hotels and clubs of India. London Pilsner has won international awards in the World Selection of Beer competitions in 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979 and 1980; and London Diet won the 1984 International Award at Madrid, according to a press release.

As managing director of Bakhtawar Construction Co Pvt Ltd, he has to his credit about 40 constructions in Bombay, including buildings like Gitanjali, Sherman, Meher Apartments, El Cid and a couple of commercial buildings at Nariman Point, notes his life sketch. He also constructed the multi-storeyed Aderbad building for Parsis at Khareghat Colony. A chartered civil engineer, Irani was educated at the Wadia College, Poona, and Engineering College, Karachi, and was a member of various architectural bodies in Britain, America and India, the release adds.

Irani was the owner of about 24 horses, of which 12 are currently racing states the release. His Snow won the 1000 Guineas, and Enterprising the Indian Derby, last year. This year, Eminence won the 1000 Guineas and Revelation won the Oaks as well as the Indian Derby.

Irani is survived by his wife Mehroo, and daughters Zeenia Sorab Lawyer and Bakhtawar Bezan Chenoy.



One of the last races attended by Irani. (From left) Irani, daughters Zeenia and Bakhtawar son-in-law Bezan Chenoy



Desai: 'new dimension to BPP'

'Strenuous innings'

Died: Sapur Faredun Desai, 79, former secretary of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet for about three decades and author of five books on the Parsi community, on October 24, 1984 in Bombay following an attack of cerebral thrombosis.

"Desai with his many splendoured personality, was one of the most popular, versatile and dedicated secretaries

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of the Punchayet, which he had the privilege to serve with conspicuous devotion for nearly four decades," read the resolution passed in his memory at the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet. "On the administrative side, he gave a new dimension to the activities of the Punchayet," the resolution added.

"It was a pleasure to work with Sapur. He was as firm in his opinions as he was soft-voiced in speech," recalled former BPP chairman B.K. Boman-Behram in the Bombay-based *The Daily* of November 13, 1984. "His concept of the Punchayet was not that of a mere eleemosynary institution for giving doles or providing cheap housing... he visualized the Punchayet as the fulcrum of social welfare activities... He had often to contend with his bosses—the trustees, the majority of whom, then as now, were allergic to new ideas or methods..."

After joining the Bombay Parsi Punchayet in 1932, Desai took over the responsibility of secretaryship in 1941. During his tenure in office, Desai, often with the assistance of his wife Tehmina, helped found the Fort Nursery and Infant School for poor Parsis, Sir Cowasjee Jehangir Rural Boys' Home and the Jehangir Rural Girls' Home, Golvad, a Vocational Guidance Bureau, Sir J.J. College of Commerce, B.N. Gamadia Technical Institute and the Godrej Memorial Printing Press.

Desai assisted in the grant of agricultural relief to rural Parsis of Gujarat and the evacuation of Parsi children from Bombay to Navsari during World War II.

In addition to his services to the Parsi community, for his various contributions to society in general, Desai was conferred the honorary titles of Justice of the Peace, Honorary Metropolitan Magistrate-Bombay for over 22 years.

A science graduate from the University of Bombay, Desai's special interests were social biography, demography and anthropology.

A Petit scholar and Ellis Prize holder of the University of Bombay in Avesta-Pahlavi and a gold medalist in the same subjects from Sir CJNZ Madressa, Navsari, Desai authored *Parsis and Eugenics*, *A community at the Cross Road*, *The Trust Secretary*, *B.D. Petit Parsee General Hospital*, and *History of the Parsi Punchayet, 1860-1960*. The last book is considered his magnum opus, "which will greatly benefit

every Parsi who has read or will hereafter read it," states the resolution.

Desai "wore his learning and knowledge lightly" said Jehan Daruwalla, Editor of *The Bombay Samachar*, in his column "Parsi tari arsi" of November 4, 1984. "He was one of the most modest persons one came across and yet when it came to matters of his conviction, he was bold and unwavering... The fact remains that after all the troubles and travails of life, the community today holds him in high esteem."

At a touching farewell given by the staff of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet on August 27, 1970, the valedictory address noted, "By your easy accessibility, genial temperament, unfailing courtesy and sympathetic understanding you have won for yourself the love and esteem of your loyal staff... Parting is always sad, particularly from one who has been virtually wedded to the institution, but it would be wrong on our part if we forget that after such a long and strenuous innings of 38 years you too deserve some rest and relaxation..."

Desai is survived by his wife Tehmina, daughter Armaity and son Xerxes.

Jame trustee

Died: Rustom Phirozeshah Marzban, 73, chairman and managing trustee of the Jam-e-Jamshed Charity Funds on December 20, 1984 in Bombay following a heart attack.

Marzban was appointed special executive magistrate and honorary metropolitan magistrate by the Government of India in recognition of his social activities for the Parsi and other communities. He was a delegate of the Parsi Matrimonial Court.

Being interested in educational activities, he was connected with the Maneckji Cooper Education Trust. Marzban served as treasurer of the B.D. Petit Parsee General Hospital in Bombay.

After graduating from the Elphinstone College, Marzban joined *Jam-e-Jamshed* as director. He was editor of the humour magazine, *Gupsup*.

Marzban, a rotarian, was also interested in freemasonry, music, carpentry, and mechanics. He was chairman of the managing committee of the WIAA Club. During his lifetime he had directed many plays.

He is survived by his wife, Mitha.

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