

Parsiana

The 11 days' controversy

A newly introduced resolution by the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe bars non-Zoroastrian spouses from attending the muktad and Farvardian jashan prayers.

Parinaz Toddywalla

'Non-Zoroastrians should be requested to refrain from attending the muktad and Farvardian jashan,' noted a resolution, passed by the present committee of The Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE), which has divided the London-based association into two rival factions. This resolution, according to Darius Sethna, one of the priests who regularly officiates at the religious ceremonies in the UK and a member of the managing committee, 'protects the rights and beliefs of the Zoroastrian people... Seven were in favor of accepting the resolution, one against and two abstained' when the issue, tabled by Sethna (after being requisitioned by 200 signatories), was put to vote in the committee, soon after the 1985 annual general meeting on November 3. Those committee members who opposed the resolution reportedly resigned and their resignations were accepted, 'showing clearly the feelings

of the majority at that time,' continued Sethna. Among those said to have resigned are Shahpur Captain, then president of the ZTFE and Dr Shirinbanoo Kutar, committee member and one-time president.

But this decision has raised a fresh crop of questions from the liberal end: Why have the non-Zoroastrians been denied the right of worship after 30 years? Why was this resolution introduced only after the demise of Dastur Dr Sohrab Kutar (High Priest of UK) in April 1984? Why did not the orthodox priests raise any objection from 1966 to 1985 during which period they accompanied Dastur Kutar in the prayers? Why has no member of the community ever raised any objection on this issue to the managing committee before 1985? Is there any documentary evidence from the religious scriptures which forbids non-Zoroastrians from praying before the 'atash' at the muktad and Farvardian

jashan? Raising such queries was Noshirwan Cowasjee, a life member of the ZTFE since 1950.

'While we respect the loyalty of non-Zoroastrians to their deceased (Zoroastrian) spouses, they should not oppose the majority sentiment. The structure of the Zoroastrian community in the UK has now changed. While formerly the community comprised the Bombay and Karachi Parsis (the latter group is labelled 'reformist'), today the majority is from Mombassa, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and Aden. They are all very conservative-minded and are used to following their religious practices and customs in a foreign land which they don't want to be deprived of,' Sethna spoke on behalf of the conservative lobby to *Parsiana* on November 19, 1986, while on a visit to Bombay.

'We are trying to be reasonable and only requesting the non-Zoroastrians to abstain from attending the muktad

prayers for 10 days and the Farvardian jashan. On all other occasions of *khushali* – lagans, navjotes, gambhars – they are welcome. The after-death ceremonies usually involve an abbreviated version of the *geh sarna*. So we don't mind non-Parsis. We are trying to preserve... *jetlu chhe tetlu tau saachaviye*," he continued. Among the present practicing priests in the UK are five members from the Sethna family: Darius, his son Farhad, his brother Zal (who is also the treasurer of the ZTFE) and nephews Sam and Marazban.

Admitting that barely three to five non-Zoroastrian spouses out of a total of almost 50 would regularly pray at the Zoroastrian House, Sethna then referred to minor incidents which created resentment among the staunch Zoroastrians... "A similar resolution was proposed by me in 1977...Sohrabji Kutar was such a lovely person that out of respect for him many didn't oppose. But since it was smoldering within, it (the outburst) came out strongly," briefed Sethna.

"We found Khojeste Mistree's visits to be very successful and useful. With

the information he provides, our children start taking interest, start thinking about our religion and following it," noted Sethna, pleased with the active participation of the youth there whose strength is over 200.

Giving the background information on this subject, Cowasjee writes in his letter dated November 10, 1986 to the members of the ZTFE: In 1861 was formed the "Parsi Association." Thereafter its name was changed a couple of times before it got its present name, ZTFE. The majority of Zoroastrians have settled in the UK in this century "for their personal freedom. This country has given its blood and life for freedom. We should follow its example and preserve freedom within our Association," he noted.

In 1954, the muktad ceremonies were commenced by Dr Kutar and in 1957 the practice of performing the Farvardian jashan was started. All these years, non-Zoroastrian ladies married to Zoroastrian gentlemen were allowed to pray on these occasions. In 1969 the Zoroastrian House was opened in London, wherein is situated a special room for the offering

of prayers. A small enclosure has been constructed within the prayer room to house the 'atash' which is lit on different occasions, as "we do not have full-time priests to look after the 'atash,'" continues Cowasjee...

"On very special occasions the 'atash' is lit by our priests and laity... for the rest of the year, the 'atash' can be lit by any gentleman or lady (including non-Zoroastrian ladies married to Zoroastrian gentlemen) when they come to pray on their own. The entire Zoroastrian House... is cleaned by a faithful non-Zoroastrian lady." Even the burial ground and the chapel are cleaned by non-Zoroastrian staff.

At the after-death ceremonies, non-Zoroastrians are allowed to offer sandalwood and loban in the *afarganiun* in the chapel. "According to the present committee's resolution, non-Zoroastrians married to Zoroastrians can pray before the 'atash' for 354 days of the year and the 'atash' is not polluted (but if they pray) for 11 days of muktad and Farvardian, the 'atash' is polluted..."

"The present committee... succeeded in 'forcing' part of the old com-

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mittee members who strongly believed in freedom and conscience to resign, thereby making the present committee... pass all the resolutions desired by them," Cowasjee emphasized.

The funds of the ZTFE are controlled by a three-member trust board nominated by the managing committee and the executive responsibilities are discharged by a 12-member managing committee elected by the general body, explained Sethna. For the first half of the year, Shahpur Captain continued as president but when he tried to overrule the committee and insisted on his name being recommended as trustee (of the ZTFE)...his resignation was immediately accepted by the committee on June 1, 1986," Sethna informed. His resignation was followed by four more: Shirinbanoo Kutar (wife of the late Dastur Kutar), Godafrey Irani, Rummy Sethna and Prochi Colabawala. As per the Association's constitution, at the request of 15 signatories a special general meeting can be convened. One such meeting was held on September 14, 1986 to discuss the reasons for the resignation of Captain and Ms Kutar. "Their argument that the non-Zoroastrians should be protected was totally opposed by the majority of the community," noted Sethna.

Though the next annual general meeting (AGM) is scheduled for November 30, 1986, already a request for a special general meeting to be convened on January 18, 1987 has been received, according to Sethna. Captain's group is reportedly expected to try and regain control of the managing committee at the meeting. Confident of his support Sethna stated, "All these things they are welcome to do

because the AGM is an open body where they could achieve what they want to."

While normally the attendance at their annual general meetings "averages 85," in the last year the strength "has increased to 200 and even 400" showing that "the community is taking a deep interest in their own welfare," notes Sethna. Since Captain's resignation, the strength of the Association which was approximately 600 has increased to over a thousand out of a total community strength of 5,000 to 6,000 Zoroastrians, claims Sethna.

Even the World Zoroastrian Organisation which has its base in London has come under attack from Sethna, a founding member who submitted his resignation three years back: "No doubt the need for a world Zoroastrian body is very essential; but the point is, should it operate from UK with people like this or should the Indian people think afresh? They (WZO) should be questioned on what grounds they pretend to represent the World Zoroastrians? What is its membership? What are its funds? At the last AGM I believe there were 33 members present and 20 proxies were received.

"The WZO as a body does not show any funds. The nucleus of the money, £ 200,000, is kept separately in the World Zarthushtrian Trust Funds under the control of three trustees Captain, Ms Kutar and Shahrokh Shahrokh...It is a *gher no gambhar*...all yes-men. Why is it that Dadi Mistry, the vice-president of the WZO and the Indian representative has not presented the accounts for the last three years?

"Though the motto is 'Zoroastrian unity worldwide,' wherever they have

gone (Canada, USA, especially California), they have split the community into Parsis and Iranis."

"The first WZO conference in UK three years back had invited Kersey Antia as a speaker. He misrepresented certain meanings from the passages of the *Guthas* and inevitably annoyed many. The tone of the conference was on intercaste marriages and acceptance of half-breed children within our fold. At the jashan at the end of the conference, barring Dastur Kutar, Dastur Navrooz Minochehr-Homji and Ervad Jamshed Magol, seven of our priests (five of whom were the Sethnas) refused to pray with Antia. Eventually Antia left."

Sethna's letter "Reform Zoroastrian bodies" (*Parsiana*, December 1985) which had similarly alleged that the WZO was reformist, had evoked a response from its joint honorary secretaries Shahrokh and Ruby Contractor: "We have to state that the contents of that letter are so totally inaccurate and unfounded that they merit no reply." Another response was from a T.Kapadia of Middlesex who wrote, "It is the uneducated mobbed class that has brought the community into the state it finds itself in at present."

But despite the widening rift, both groups voiced a concern for the betterment of the community. Sethna said, "If this decay is not stopped, what will happen to our children and our children's children?" While Cowasjee noted, "The sole intention of every member should be to build this Association into a greater and better place for our 'future generation.'" But whether either group will be able to ensure that future, is still to be seen.



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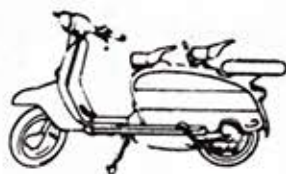
Poona elections

The seven successful candidates of the Poona Parsee Panchayat trusteeship elections, held on November 27, 1986, at Pudumjee Hall, Poona, are: Meher Anklesaria, Dinshaw Anklesaria, Kershasp Irani, Minoo Irani, Marzban Kaikobad, Ms Khurshid Jeejeebhoy and Pervez Avari. A detailed report follows in the December issue of *Parsiana*.

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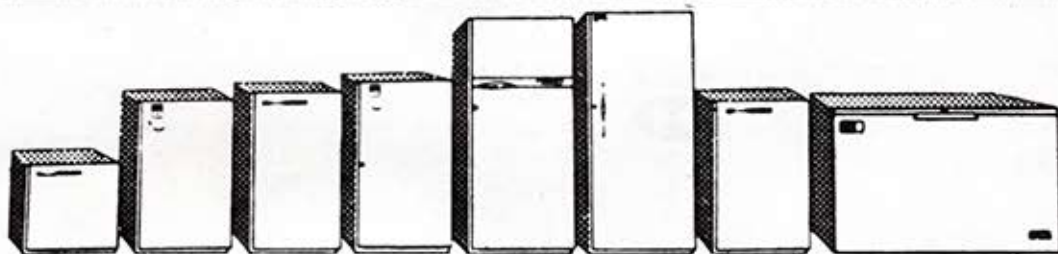
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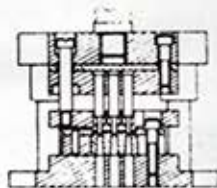
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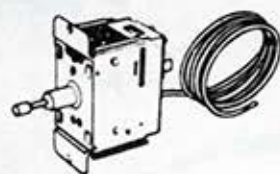
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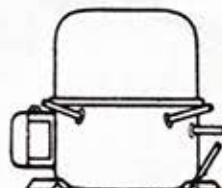
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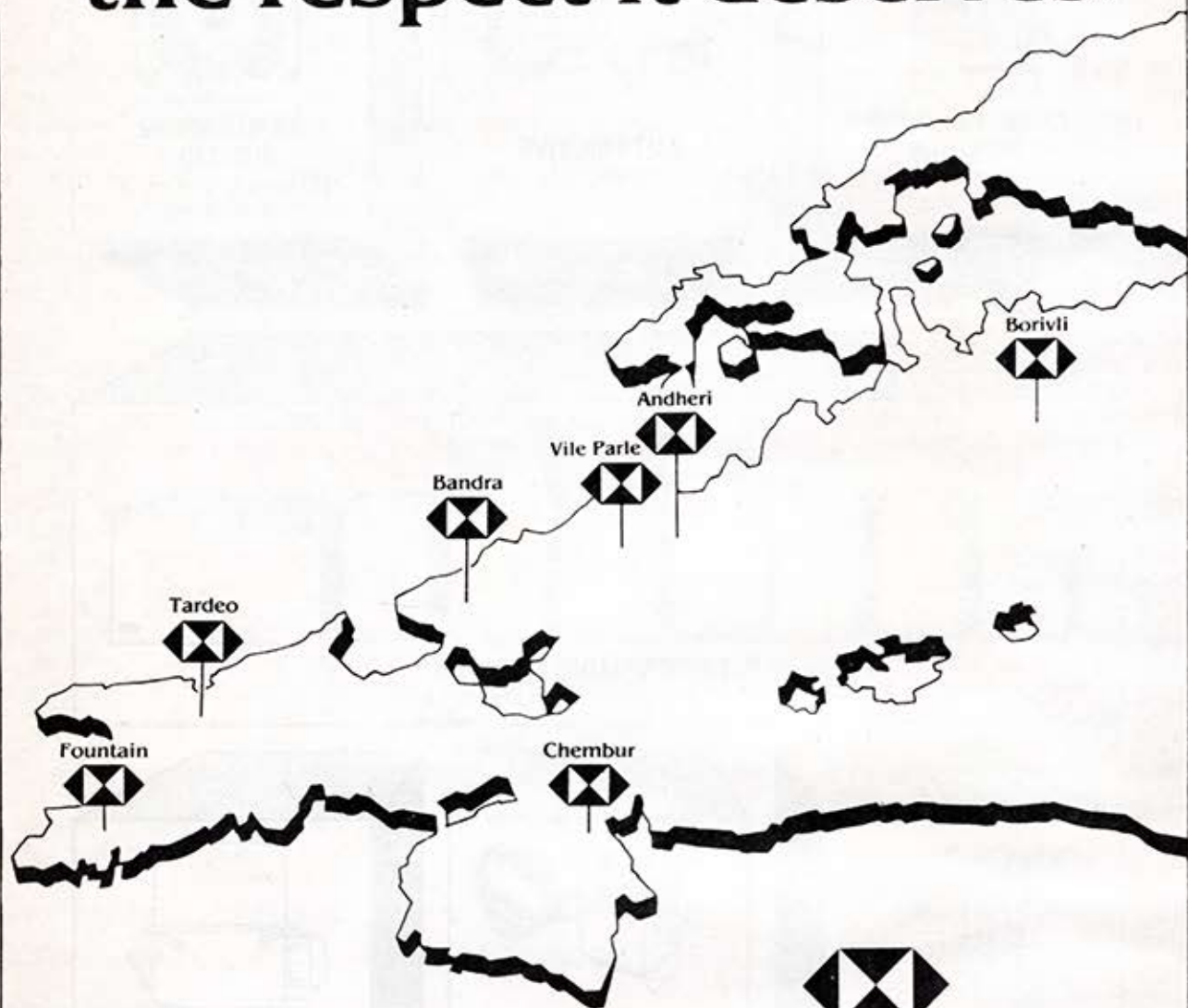
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Construction under criticism

The Punchayet's plans for residential buildings as well as the Godrej Baug agiary still face obstacles.

Arnavaz S. Mama

The site for an agiary has been cleared at Godrej Baug although the plan to shift the two fires from the Langrana and the Godavara Agiaries in the Fort area has been stymied by a group of Parsis who have petitioned the charity commissioner to prevent the move. While municipal permission for the agiary has been received "without affecting the floor space index (FSI) for housing," as noted Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustee Jamsheed Kanga at a press conference held in the BPP boardroom on October 11, 1986 and other mofussil fires could be enthroned there if necessary, as suggested by BPP trustee Homi Ranina, the project costs, estimated at 35 to 40 lakh rupees, remain uncovered.

Originally, monies generated from the sale of the Langrana Agiary property were expected to be siphoned into the construction of the new agiary which would benefit an estimated 2,000 Zoroastrians in Godrej Baug as against the five or six such edifices each serving groups of 15 to 20 votaries in the Fort area.

The building of ownership flats at Gibbs Road - the main money-spinner for the BPP's construction projects elsewhere - will be ready for occupation by December 31, 1987, "no doubt about it," noted BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla. Although currently all flats are booked, there may be a few dropouts once the time limit for payments is enforced, Golwalla noted.

With the shifting out of the last few tenants from the old fever hospital building at Khareghat Colony, plans for its demolition are now under way. It will be replaced by a new building of ownership flats utilizing the 12,000

square at of FSI available there.

Criticism of the Punchayet's allotment of a dispensary at Jer Baug to a non-Zoroastrian, which has received substantial coverage in the Parsi Press, was carried to the boardroom by a battery of questions, xeroxed and circulated at the press conference by Dinshaw Mehta who edits the Committee for Economic Revival's (CER) newsletter *The Zoroastrian*. Disposing of the questionnaire tersely, the chairman noted, "There was no vacancy as the premises were not in our possession." Golwalla explained that the clinic passed from its original tenant to the new incumbent Dr Bhonsale and never reverted to the BPP or the Wadia Baug committee of management of which the three senior BPP trustees are members. Moreover, "Bhonsale was the only applicant," said Golwalla.

The religious front

Reporting on the work of the BPP's mobed amelioration subcommittee, its chairman, BPP trustee Eruch Desai, noted that the Punchayet had appealed to various community trusts but the response was very poor. "More than 12 cosmopolitan trusts founded by Parsis have used their cosmopolitan basis as an excuse," he added. The committee is currently going through the appeals it has received for its monthly subsidy of Rs 100 to needy mobeds. In the meantime, two mobeds who were recently married were given Rs 5,000 each.

Four full-time mobeds have been allotted flats under the five percent reserved category provided by the merit rating scheme. However, a plot speci-

fically earmarked for flats for mobeds at Godrej Baug is awaiting development for want of funds. The CER-HOME (House Our Mobeds Endeavour), a special committee created by the BPP in affiliation with the CER to raise funds for the project, is organizing a gala ball on December 31, 1986 at the Turf Club which will hopefully get the project under way.

Meanwhile Golwalla reported that two mobeds from Nagpur have been selected by Dinshaw Avari of Karachi to serve at Rs 2,500 per month plus other assorted benefits. When it was mentioned that mofussil anjumans in India could not get mobeds despite the offer of higher wages plus other benefits, as compared to Bombay, Khojeste Mistree, representing Zoroastrian Studies' newsletter *Ushta*, emphasized that dedicated mobeds do not want to take up a responsibility they are aware they cannot discharge because in effect it is "two persons' work...there is no backup system and if they're not there for 365 days in the year, what would happen?" Mistree also noted that not only do mobeds in the mofussil have to clean the place and do without a *chasniwalla*, but they are made to feel ostracized as the community does not make them socially welcome and there are no other mobeds with whom they can socialize.

The BPP's foray into religious publications has met with limited success. While the two-cassette sets of recited prayers by Ervad Dr Peshotan Peer went into a second edition, the offtake of the three volume books, *Zoroastrianism*, authored by Ervad R.R. Motafram has been less, even though the subsidized set is sold at a meager

Rs 30. Mistree described the books as "not attractive to youth" and suggested a policy of making religious education attractive to children. Kanga acceded graciously, "We're working on the belief that we're not the brains trust of the community," ("on religious matters," qualified Desai) and offered to "examine and finance schemes if others have them."

Laying bricks...dropping bricks

The BPP's proposed housing project at Sanjan comprising ownership and tenancy flats has received a fillip with Mazda Industries and Leasing's factories coming up in the neighborhood, noted Ranina who is Mazda's chairman. The 500/600-square-foot flats, expected to cost one and a half to two lakh rupees, will be ideal for those currently occupying company staff quarters he said, adding, Parsis "were the first settlers in Bombay and hence occupy very old and decrepit buildings." Kanga added that it was in "the community's long-term interest" to fan out and away from Bombay.

Though five buildings are currently under construction at Godrej Baug there have been frequent letters in the Press demanding to know why no tenders were invited before the construction work there was allotted to the Godrej Foundation. In response to CER's Dinshaw Mehta alluding to the controversy, Ranina explained that the Foundation merely acts as the BPP's agent, as all bills for cement, steel, labor, etc are paid directly by the BPP. The architectural, engineering and supervisory expertise are provided by the Foundation free of cost, as also the use of machinery from Vikhroli. The Foundation's contribution is computed by the BPP as the difference between cost of construction at the Gibbs Road scheme which has been contracted to the Talib Construction Company (whose rate is considered as the market rate) and the actual costs incurred by the BPP at Godrej Baug. In lieu of their contribution, the Godrej Foundation has the right to allot three flats of every 20 constructed (15 percent). When it was pointed out that the Gibbs Road project was meant to be prestigious construction for the affluent while the Godrej Baug buildings comprised rented charity flats, the trustees noted that the Foundation had maintained equivalent construction standards at the Baug.

Complimenting the Foundation's Maneck Engineer for his devotion to the Godrej Baug job, Kanga narrated how the Godrej Foundation had effectively secured permissions and sanctions and moved the entire municipal underground water mains, fabricating special pipes, etc at rates which were "much lower than the municipal rates." Noting that the BPP is not equipped to build on such a large scale, Kanga added that the Foundation's work was "definitely an advantage to us. We might have got a contractor at a lower rate, but there would have been endless headaches (to avoid substandard work)."

One thousand square feet from Godrej Baug have been ceded for the construction of toilets for the adjoining zopadpatti dwellers. For the zopadpatti toilet block of ground plus one floor with special, larger than normal, sewage lines "we'll be spending more money than we'll get as reimbursement (from the municipality)," noted Kanga. But the Punchayet's largesse has enabled the Baug to acquire approach roads and parking space without encroachments on its FSI.

While 20 flats are nearing comple-

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tion at Bharucha Baug, Andheri, the slow pace is attributed to a few adamant tenants who have rejected the Punchayet's offer of larger accommodation on ownership or a shift to Godrej Baug located at Malabar Hill. They insist on tenancy flats in the same building, said Ranina.

This tale - and others of non-bona-fide occupants of Punchayet flats, including the four families granted the use of emergency transit accommodation for six months who, Golwalla said, are now refusing to move out - inspired a couple of unconventional ideas among the trustees: Kanga wondered semi-seriously if K.N. Dastur and others, who have sought the char-

ity commissioner's intervention against the shifting of the Langrana Agiary fire, would use their influence with the community to help the Punchayet regain the flats that are illegally occupied; Desai, tongue in cheek, enquired if muscle men could solve the Punchayet's problem in regaining occupancy of disputed flats!

At Panthaky Baug and Dadar, no substantial advance has been registered.

Golwalla parried the CER's persistent questioning whether the BPP has applied to the charity commissioner for permission to use part of the proceeds from the sale of the Jyoti Studio property, at Nana Chowk, for repairs to the various Wadia Baugs, with the comment that the Punchayet spends eight to nine lakhs on repairs every year. The Navroze Baug roads will be repaired after the building repairs are completed, he added.

Tying knots

On the basis of reports from individuals, Mistree noted that the prospect of an initial interview for the Matrimonial Bureau at the Punchayet office intimidated and embarrassed young people who "feel they're being brought to a cattle farm." Mistree suggested that these preliminary interviews be conducted privately and urged the Punchayet to think in terms of using video facilities for the purpose. Mistree's suggestion sparked off an interesting story from BPP trustee Jamshed Guzder of a wedding, generated by the Congress video tapes that went abroad: A determined young man saw a face he liked and used the Congress machinery to track it down!

The Bureau's matchmaking (Guzder and ex-BPP trustee Naoroji Godrej have also been playing cupid by entertaining the Bureau's members at their facilities at Marve and Vikhroli) has resulted in 12 marriages so far.

Bridging breaches

Dr (Ms) Ketayun Madon, a qualified vocational guidance counsellor and wife of a naval commander, is the new part-time director of the BPP's project for training Parsi youth for defence and all-India administration services. Aimed at providing free guidance and coaching for youth interested in and capable of making a career in defence or national administration, Madon noted that 10 boys were being readied

for the entrance examination to the National Defence Academy while two students had been successful at the preliminaries of the all-India administrative services and were studying for the main examination.

Referring to Major General Ardeshir Minwalla's offer to the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India in February 1986 to organize training in Poona of young Parsi boys wishing to make a career in defence, BPP chief executive Rustom Anklesaria requested permission to invite Minwalla for consultation to Bombay. He also urged Guzder, who is a trustee of the J.N. Petit Institute in Poona, to arrange for residential accommodation there for 10 to 20 boys to enable them to avail of Minwalla's offer. Guzder, agreed to speak to his fellow trustees on the Petit board.

The BPP trustees were of the opinion that Parsi youth is not fully aware of the opportunities and facilities available to them — a lacuna that Madon is trying to bridge by addressing budding adults at Parsi schools.

Two family counselling centers have

been started at Dadar Parsi Colony and at the Lady Jehangir Health Unit at Gamadia Colony attended by social worker cum counsellor Ms Roda Pardiwalla who works under the guidance of consultant Ms Kety Gandevia, notes the BPP press release. The centers are aimed at providing confidential guidance to those with marital and family problems.

The BPP's school counselling service is contemplating sensitivity training for school teachers to help develop an insight into their role in child development. Using art as a medium of personality development, teachers with the necessary orientation could help children by discussing their feelings and attitudes in a direct friendly way, notes the BPP press release. Bombay businessman Khushroo Byramjee has volunteered to contribute 50 percent of the project cost of Rs 12,000.

Potpourri

• According to a new law, no boy over 12 years old is allowed to leave Iran, informed Khojeste Mistree who be-

lieves that the problem of Iranian refugees is likely to be accentuated. Noting that the "dharamshala in Quetta (Pakistan) is full of Zoroastrian refugees," Mistree urged the BPP to provide a central cell to help them in this new environment. Responding on behalf of the board, Kanga noted, "These are legal problems which we can (only) tackle in a legal manner."

• For the first time, the BPP's invitation to *Parsiana* to attend the press conference stipulated that only two representatives could attend. A similar situation had arisen originally at the Federation meeting last August.

The Punchayet was represented by trustees Dr Aspi Golwalla, Eruch Desai, Jamsheed Kanga, Homi Ranina, Jamsheed Guzder and Minoo Shroff, chief executive Rustom Anklesaria and joint secretaries Hormusji Kapadia and Gool Tata. The Press was represented by *The Bombay Samachar*, *Jam-e-Jamshed*, CER's *The Zoroastrian*, *ZS' Ushta*, and *Parsiana*, though the Editors of *The Samachar*, *Jame* and *Parsiana*, who normally make it a point to attend, were absent.

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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.

"Requiem for..."

On reading the quotes attributed to me in "Requiem for a patriarch" (*Parsiana*, September 1986) I hasten to firmly deny my ever having expressed any hurtful personal opinions about the late Shiavax Nargolwala – and also to emphasize how strongly I decry their wrongful insertion, especially in an article which rightfully sums up his wholehearted stalwart contribution towards liberalizing our religion in the right direction.

I certainly, however, did mention the pain caused to me and my family when my daughter was not permitted to attend her dead father's prayer ceremonies, then being performed in an agiary in Pune. I also felt that such an unfortunate occurrence would nev-

er have happened in a Parsi anjuman under Shiavax's able stewardship.

MS PERIN J. SATARAVALA
Pune

Arnavaz Mama replies

Ms Sataravala may recall our meeting at a party on the night of November 9, 1985. I had spent the day covering a Federation meeting at Sir Mancherji Khareghat Hall followed by a dinner for the Federation delegates at the Ripon Club, where Shiavax Nargolwala had contributed, as usual, to the proceedings. The reason why Ms Sataravala's remark lingered in my memory was not only the sincerity of the tribute from one who made no claims to being a Nargolwala fan, but her objectivity and fairness in thus assessing Nargolwala's worth.

"Reviving the Cama..."

With reference to the article "Reviving the Cama Madressa" (*Parsiana*, August 1986) the information given by me that Prof K.C. Sheriar, Ervad Nader Turel and Dr Homi Dhalla were present at the meeting of the managing committee of the M.F. Cama Athor-nan Institute and M.M. Cama Education Fund, when the decision to scrap the SSC course was taken, is wrong. In fact the above mentioned gentlemen were elected to the managing committee only after a decision to scrap the SSC course was taken.

M.J. CAMA

"Parsi dharamshalas"

In the short article on "Parsi dharamshalas" (*Parsiana*, August 1986), I would like to inform you that mention of Surat's second dharamshala has not been made. Besides, the correct address of Sheth Pestonji Ukedji Sheth's Dharamshala and Baug is Opp. I.P. Mission High School, Mugli-sara, Surat 395003.

The second dharamshala in Surat is the Sheth Cawasji Rustomji Tamna Dharamshala, Kotval Moholla, Nan-pura, Surat 395001. This Dharamshala for the present is not open to pas-sengers. It is only rented out for wed-dings, navjotes and such functions.

DAVAR KAVASJI T. MODI
Surat

"A compromise film"

My attention has been drawn to a reference to me in the article, "A compromise film" (*Parsiana*, August 1986). The statement: "There were two Parsis on the Board when it originally passed the film as predominantly educational – poet Adil Jussawalla and Ms Coomi Chinoy," is incorrect.

I was retired from the advisory panel of the Central Board of Film Certification along with my batch after completing a term of four and a half years in April 1986. *On Wings of Fire* was seen by the Censor Board's examining committee comprising one Parsi, three non-Parsis and the examining officer on May 7, 1986.

However, Mr Homi Wadia, a film producer, and I were invited by the Board to see the film as "specialists" and give our opinion after the screening. We were then requested to withdraw while the examining committee deliberated and gave its verdict. This is the Board's normal practice in the case of specialized or controversial films.

For the record, I had cautioned the examining officer to have the script shown to some knowledgeable persons before giving the film a certificate.

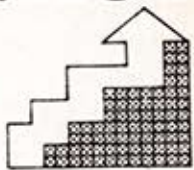
MS COOMI B. CHINYOY

Some five or six people who were opposing the film *On Wings of Fire* right from the beginning, have been doing so, we are told, in the name of orthodoxy, but Dasturji Firoze Kotwal, who was the main adviser, is a staunch orthodox and can never be accused of doing anything to harm orthodoxy. And secondly, through his several monographs and talks, Khojeste Mistree has also been stressing the need to adhere to tradition and orthodoxy. Even Faribourz Nariman, who is an orthodox scholar, has condemned the opposition.

The crux of the matter is that the opposition was motivated not against the film as such, but against the personalities involved with it, for two reasons: to deny these personalities the credit which is their due; and in doing so, to appear before the community as "protectors" of Zoroastrianism and the Parsis! Perhaps the most

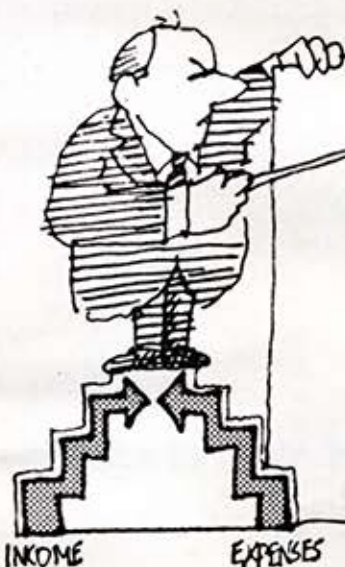
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undesirable part of the entire episode was the decision taken by the Athor-nan Mandal and the Bombay Jashan Committee to help the few anti-film people.

Ms ZENOBIA SIDHWA

Fund raising ball

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet has commissioned the CER-HOME (Committee for Economic Revival's House-Our-Mobeds-Endeavour) to raise funds for a prestigious housing project for mobeds. As one of the fund raising activities, a grand New Year's Eve Ball is being organized from which the committee proposes to net five lakh rupees. The Ball will be held at the Royal Western India Turf Club and an attractive souvenir will also be published on that day. For further details, please contact our honorary general secretaries Mr Nariman Mehta or Mr Kersi Gazdar at the BPP office, 209 Dr Dadabhoy Naoroji Road, Bombay 400001.

KERSI J. LIMATHWALLA
Chairman, CER-HOME

Zoroastrians in USSR?

Dr D.A. Scott has made a significant discovery in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1984, No 2, pp 217-228) by asserting that Zoroastrians survived until 1896 around Amu Darya, a river boundary between Russia and Afghanistan in what could be called Bactria (Balkh) of old. The evidence indicating the existence of a tower of silence, fire rituals, Aryan affection for dogs despite Islamic dislike for dogs, Zoroastrian creation myths, etc, says Dr Scott, "make sense realistically only as Zoroastrian remnants surviving in an Islamic milieu."

An unknown Indian surveyor, sent out to this region by a British expedition (1870), referred to these people specifically as "the Zardushtis or fire worshipers." Olufsen also called them Zoroastrians on the basis of his extensive trips in 1896 to this region known as Wakhan. However, Wakhan became a subject of Anglo-Russian negotiations when Wakhan was handed over to the ruler of Kabul "as a corridor to separate Russian and British territory." Scott adds, "Consequently in 1896 the Emir's army entered and crushed Kafiristan—strict Muslim allegiance was enforced. However, pockets of similar archaic beliefs have maintained themselves to the present among the Dards, by vir-

tue of their being just over the other side of the border in what was formerly British India (now north-west Pakistan)."

Scott cites Russian researchers who reveal that the modern inhabitants of this region considered their forefathers to have been fire worshipers, with "the name of Zoroaster still known to them." Unfortunately, they were removed to a different cotton-growing region after 1945, "where such isolated Zoroastrian elements were disrupted," and Scott concludes: "For the future it would be of the greatest interest to have field work conducted in the Wakhan, especially to see how much, if any, of the Zoroastrian elements have survived."

Although Dr Scott does not seem to be aware of it, Sir Harold Bailey has found the language of Wakhan as "the nearest Iranian dialect to the Khotan-Saka" which has words "at times in a more archaic form of Iranian than in the Avestan texts" (*Indo-Scythian Studies*, Vol VIII, 1985, p viii). The studies of Sanskrit and Avesta too, therefore, will gain immensely by research on this rare people who may antedate the bifurcation of Aryans.

Zoroastrians of India and Pakistan owe it to themselves to visit this region and prevail upon their Russian and Pakistani embassies to help them find more information about this lost tribe and culture who, being Aryan, should be of great interest to Indian historians also. Since some historians believe that the Aryans entered India and Iran through Bactria, Indian historians can dig up a wealth of information about the common Aryan heritage, beliefs, etc, by doing research on these people, even at this late date, as a joint Indo-Russian project.

I also wonder if the Parsis then had any inkling of what was happening to their co-religionists. If so, they certainly would not have kept quiet considering the fact that long before 1898 they had sent Maneckji Limji Hatara to Iran as their emissary for the amelioration of Iranian Zoroastrians and Dadabhai Naoroji had even conferred with the then Shah of Iran for the same during his visit to London. However, if anyone can ferret out any information in this regard, he/she will be making a tremendous contribution to Zoroastrian history.

DR KERSEY H. ANTIA
Chicago, USA

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Events and Personalities

Sumptuous summation

"At the end of the three days, after a Brahmaputra of words, congested with a flotsam of papers like so much hyacinth in that river, whatever else one may accuse them of, one could not accuse them of being inarticulate," was management consultant Aspi Moddie's graphic description of the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress proceedings convened in Bombay from January 10 to 13, 1985. Moddie was commenting on the meet in the preface to *Summation: Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress*, an attractively designed souvenir released in August '86, highlighting the important papers and events that featured on the WZC agenda.

"No summation of a congress may be expected to be a best-seller. What followed at the three-day Congress is briefly attempted in the next 30 pages, which try to speak to readers who came and those who could not, in five readable accounts of the five sessions. The main facts demand cogent narration. The bare bones of conference

proceedings call to be clothed with a touch of imagination from the community's past history and its changing consciousness in a changing world..." notes Moddie.

Illustrated with color photographs, *Summation* carries a foreword by Dr Aspi Golwalla, chairman of the BPP and president of the Fourth WZC who writes, "It was remarkable to note that the audience consisted of varying ages, from those in their teens to those in their eighties. The interest shown...made me feel that there was some sort of a mental, social and spiritual hunger which prompted them to come, listen and participate."

A detailed resume of the business sessions follows, where the papers presented under each of the five topics of discussion are given in brief. The topics were: Review of the prevailing conditions in Zoroastrian communities in different parts of the world; How to improve communication and other links among the Zoroastrian community in different parts of the world; The relevance of Zoroastrianism in the modern world; Findings of modern re-

search regarding the Zoroastrian community and identifying the areas for further research; and The concept of an appropriately constituted world body which will be truly representative of Zoroastrians residing in different parts of the world.

"Topics had been framed...to explore what means to employ to maintain an on-going rapport, communication and connection between the Zoroastrians in India and abroad," states Jamshed Guzder, chairman of the Congress in the conclusion of *Summation*. "Many interesting observations were made, both from the stage by the speakers and from the floor by the delegates. One must appreciate that just as the world has changed, the pattern of life has changed. Moral values and mores have changed," he notes.

K.R. Cama's 1986 journal

Lectures delivered by Prof Kaikhosrov Irani of City College, New York in 1981 and by Dr James Russell of Columbia University in 1984 comprise the total reading matter in the 1986 volume of the *Journal* of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute.

Prof Irani's series of four lectures entitled "Philosophy of Religion and Zoroastrian Thought" deal "with the evolution of religious beliefs in the maturer faiths with special reference to Zoroastrianism...Prof Irani's style is lucid and precise following a logical sequence, making interesting reading," notes Jehangir Shroff, president of the Institute, in the preface to the book.

Dr Russell's discourses on "Zoroas-

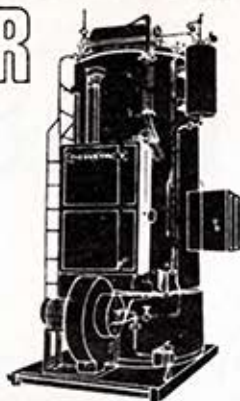
At the Congress (from left) Jamsheed Kanga, Begum Bilkees Latif, Guzder, Idris Latif, Golwalla, Shiavax Nargolwala and Dastur Navrooz Minochehr-Homji



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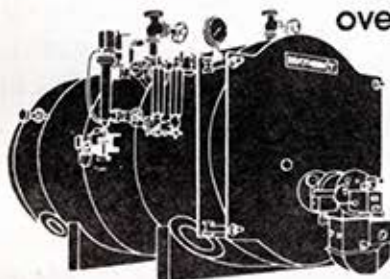
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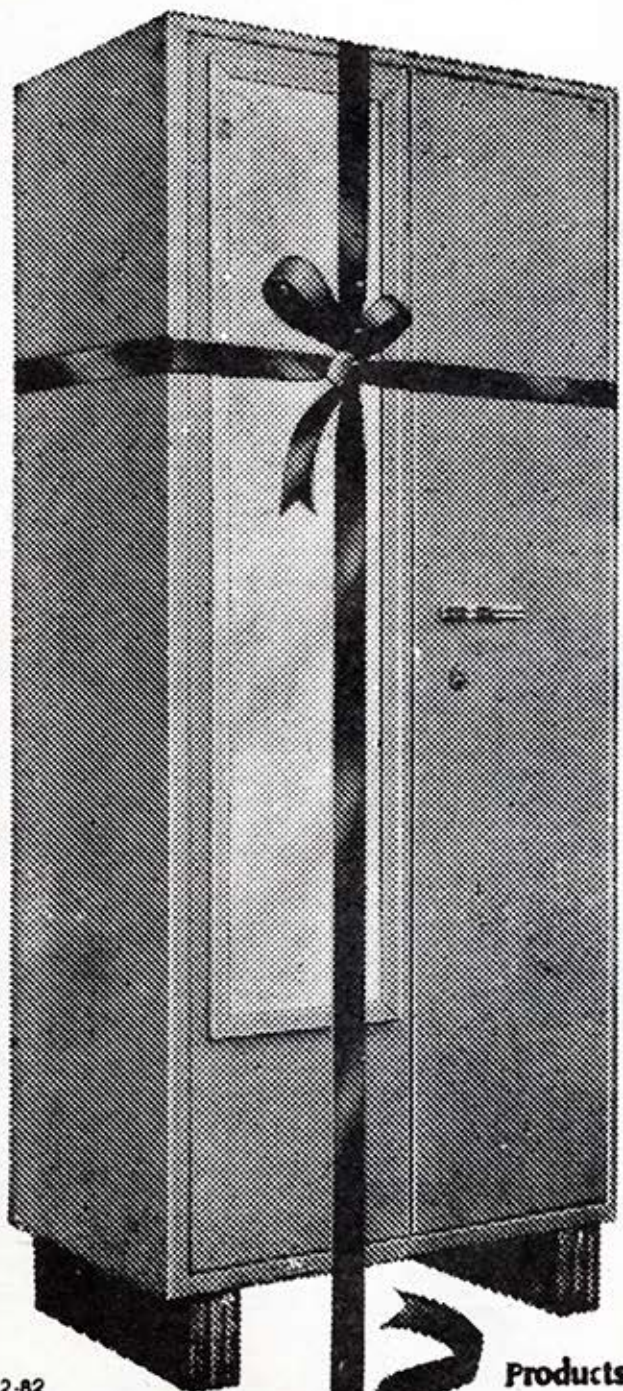
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trianism as the State Religion of Ancient Iran" encapsulates the various dynasties of ancient Iran, from the reign of Yima Kshaeta, popularly known as Jamshid, to the downfall of the Sasanian Empire. "The subject matter has been dealt with in a historical, comparative and analytic manner, with a critical evaluation of older sources that have proved to be the basis for many unfounded allegations against the various Persian empires," notes Shroff.

Class in glass

"It's the first time I stood in front of a mirror and looked at the mirror so closely and not myself as I used to do till today," noted one of the appreciative comments which filled the visitors' book at the Bajaj Art Gallery, where Rusi Rutnagar displayed his mirror paintings for a two-week duration in September.

Aptly entitled "Through the looking glass," the exhibition had on display such diverse subjects as a Japanese couple; Sai Baba; a weebegone Charlie Chaplin, by far the most expressive painting on display; a different-looking self portrait (he's recently had a transforming hair cut); sensuous nudes; a tiger; and beautifully entangled geometric designs. Because they are painted on mirrors, every painting has the look of sharpness and newness giving it a lovely hue and glow.

The one-time interior designer patiently explained the laborious and time-consuming process involved in the paintings. A mirror is first chosen (not an Indian one because it has the tendency of "spotting out") and a sketch made on the back of it, in fine lines with an etching needle, a very ordinary looking pointed instrument.

The sketch outline is then etched out carefully so as not to scratch the mirror in front. "It's dicey," notes Rutnagar. "You make a mistake and it shows." However, the etching also removes the sketch outline and the artist has perforce to rely on his mind's eye to later recollect the original sketch. Rutnagar notes gravely, "Only I know about the concentration needed." The etched part is then filled in with the desired oil paint. Though Rutnagar has been painting now for two years, each painting takes him at least a month to execute and this exhibition is his first.

Asked about the response to his



Rutnagar: painting on mirrors creates a sense of participation

work, Rutnagar notes that though many people have come to view the exhibition, not many pieces have been sold, maybe because "people do not know what they are about to buy." Another reason may be the steep price averaging Rs 6,000, though Rutnagar tells a visitor that the mirrors themselves cost around two thousand and the work involved needs concentration and is time-consuming. But, notes the artist confidently, "I've tried to depict the real thing. I don't think I've been very much off the mark." Moreover, notes Rutnagar on a lighter note, his work serves a "double purpose." It decorates a wall and people can look at themselves in the mirror and "comb their hair! Why should I mind?" he adds matter-of-factly.

"I hope to make it a profession," says Rutnagar and adds cautiously, "I just hope I can make a living out of this." Not knowing of any other person who paints as he does, Rutnagar is of the opinion, that "it will take a lot of perseverance for another person to do this without scratching the glass... (However) once a lot of people come in, I think it will be time to move on to portraits."

Rutnagar's work may be best summed up by a quote on the exhibition wall: "I hope my work makes you stand so close to the event that you feel a sense of participation, rather than one of being a distant observer."

And now to Milan

Ms Meher Heroyce Moos of Air-India, presently in-charge of promotion of adventure travel and Hima-

layan tourism in New Delhi, has been appointed manager of the Government of India Tourism Office for the Mediterranean region covering Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Malta, notes a press release. Moos was to take charge from November 9, 1986 at the office in Milan, Italy.

"Prior to her departure, Doordarshan has recorded several of her exotic expeditions to the inaccessible regions of the world" which will be relayed on the national network in the next few months, adds the press release.



Moos: selling India to the Mediterranean

Moos has been listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the most widely travelled woman having visited 130 countries, including both Polar regions, notes a report in the *Mid-Day* of October 9, 1986.

Drafting FEZANA

A draft constitution for the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) has been circulated to the various Zoroastrian associations of Canada and the USA under a covering letter dated August 11, 1986, by Rohinton Rivetna of Chicago, requesting them to make one of three choices: accept it, suggest minor changes or reject it. The letter has been published by the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) in their newsletter of September 13, 1986. Complimenting those who worked with him in preparing the draft, Rivetna writes of their "spirit of camaraderie, cooperation and personal commitment to reach consensus."

FEZANA is the result of a decision reached at the Fifth North American Zoroastrian Congress held in California in 1985; the new organization supplants the earlier federal body, United Zoroastrian Associations of North America (UZANA) which was itself in a nascent stage.

Member associations are expected to vote as a whole on issues arising at Federation meetings which will be carried by a simple percentage (two-third or three-fourth) of all qualifying votes, notes the summary of the constitution. Voting rights will depend upon the number of voting members (over 18 years) in each association: associations of 10 to 50 voting members will have one vote, those with 51 to 150, two, those with 151 to 300, three, those with 301 to 500, four, and those with more than 500, five, notes an addition to Attachment I to Rivetna's letter. By way of dues, each association having more than 100 members will pay \$50, plus one dollar per adult member.

The Federation's objectives will be realized through the work of nine committees. Individual associations which have already registered their intention to serve on most of them, have been requested to formulate and submit, by March 21, 1987, respective committee charters to include scope (purpose, aims and objectives of the committee), operation (how the committee will function, including its specific tasks) and effectiveness (mode of assessing

its work according to pre-set milestones)

Ontario has opted for 'Coordination and planning,' Houston for 'Zoroastrian unity and welfare,' Washington for 'Funds and finance,' The Zoroastrian Center of California (ZCC) for 'Census and survey,' the ZCC and the Zarthoshti Anjuman of Northern California (ZANC) for 'Youth,' New York and Manitoba for 'Education, conference and scholarship,' Houston and Ontario for 'North American Zoroastrian Congress' and Chicago, Pennsylvania, Ontario, New York and Montreal for 'Information receiving and dissemination, and journal.' Dr Jehan Bagli and Ms Dolly Dastoor, editor and publisher respectively of *Gavashni*, the newsletter of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec "that has served the North American Zoroastrian community admirably for 12 years...have offered to stop the publication of *Gavashni* and pool their resources into the new Federation publication instead," notes Attachment III to Rivetna's letter. The committee 'To serve small groups of North American Zoroastrians' has no takers so far.

Accept in toto

After duly reviewing the draft of the constitution of the proposed Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America, board members of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago have resolved "to recommend to the members of the ZAC that it be accepted in toto." Rohinton Rivetna, immediate past president of the ZAC had been authorized at the Fifth North American Zoroastrian Congress to work on a draft of the Federation's constitution.

A full size painted portrait of Zarathushtra, measuring four feet by seven will be donated to the ZAC, by Dinshaw Merchant, a Bombay businessman active in community affairs, whose daughter is a member of ZAC. The painting by veteran painter Shiavax Chavda of Bombay is to be installed in the prayer room of ZAC's Darbe Mehr.

Fali S. Chotia of Olney, Maryland, has authored *Getting to know the Zoroas-*

trians, a 10-page booklet that tells of the accomplishments of the community, and outlines the teachings of the Zoroastrian religion. The booklet, priced at \$2.50 (Rs 32 plus postage) is available from Chotia at 18213 Queen Elizabeth Drive, Olney, MD 20832 (Phone 301-774-6521).

New home for ZSO?

"Since the capacity of the Mehraban Guiv Darbe Mehr is now not adequate for our growing community," the executive committee of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) has authorized Minoo Treasurywalla "to chair and form a committee to look into the possibility of selling our present property and acquiring other suitable premises," notes ZSO's October newsletter. The findings of the committee will later "be put before the community for voting," adds the newsletter.

A lecture cum slide demonstration on "The God Mithra in Roman Times" was slated for November 9, 1986. Organized by the ZSO, the lecture on this religion, its god and its followers was to be delivered by Professor Roger Beck, vice-principal (academic) at Erindale College, University of Toronto, who is currently writing a book on Mithraism. The Mithra cult, which originated in Iran, spread to the Roman Empire in the first century where it became entrenched for the next two centuries, informs the newsletter.

"Authentic Parsi recipes adapted for the western kitchen" have been compiled into a cook book titled *Parsi Classics*. The book, compiled by the ladies of the Zoroastrian Association of Alberta, costs five dollars (Rs 64) and is available from Ms Zerin Sahai (Tel 294-7055), notes the newsletter.

North California center

"Finally we will have a Zoroastrian center in Northern California...in San Jose, and we are awaiting the final 'nod' from the local authorities," notes *Yatha*, the newly named newsletter of the Zarthoshti Anjuman of Northern California. The Rustam Guiv Foundation and Ms Morvarid Guiv, wife of the late Arbab, are to give a munifi-

cent donation of \$ 520,000 towards the establishment of the Dar-e-Meher, notes the Anjuman's newsletter.

The California Zoroastrian Center, an association for Zoroastrians in South California, had, on March 23, 1986, inaugurated the Rustam Guiv Dar-e Mehr in Westminster, South California.

Katrak lectures on tape

"Although the 1986 Katrak lectures will not be published until the autumn of 1987, Oxford University taped the lectures and copies are available on cassette for cost," notes the June *Bulletin of The Center for Zoroastrian Research*.

Under the generic head "An Ancient Religion in Modern Exile," the seven-lecture series, delivered by Professor John Hinnells of the University of Manchester, include, Introduction: Zoroastrianism enters the twentieth century; Zoroastrians in independent Hindu India; Zoroastrians under Muslim rule: Karachi Parsis since partition; Zoroastrians in the Chinese setting: Hong Kong Parsis since the Pacific War; Zoroastrians in "Christian" Britain since World War

II; Zoroastrians in "the New World;" American and Canadian communities since 1964; Conclusion: the experience of exile.

Though the lectures comprise a unity and one lecture may refer to points in another, individual cassettes, each costing two pound sterling, may be ordered from Prof J. R. Hinnells, Department of Comparative Religion, The University, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, UK. Cheques are payable to "Katrak Lectures Tape Fund."

Australia's new board

The new management committee for The Australian Zoroastrian Association of New South Wales (AZA of NSW) include: president Purviz Kolsawalla, vice-president Kersi Meher-Homji, secretary Piroozi Desai, treasurer Tim Desai, and committee members Bijan Abadi, Vispy Mehta and Kiomars Ezzati, notes the October issue of *Manashni*, the AZA newsletter.

AZA's annual general meeting of August 31, held for the first time at their newly acquired community center, now officially named AZA House,

"was certainly different. For once we had no struggle to get a quorum; in fact, it was a full house affair," notes the newsletter.

AZA's Sunday School has organized a Gujarati-thon. This entails the children of varying age-groups to learn 60 words in Gujarati with their corresponding English meanings. A test was slated for October 12, wherein for each correct word, sponsors were to give a cash prize to the students, the total sum of which was to be contributed towards AZA House. "This is their way of showing that they are a part of our Zoroastrian community in this vast and multicultural Australia," adds the newsletter.

"Parsi fashions were brought to life" when Sydney Zoroastrians participated in Carnivale '86, a fashion parade organized by the Indo-Australian Cultural Society to depict different cultures of India, on September 20, notes *Manashni*. Compered by Noshir Irani, the participants included Havovi and Homaxi Irani, Porus Masalawala and Niloufer Canteenwalla, adds the report.

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Making light of

Fronting a telephone board of five lines and 20 extensions can be an exacting duty for anyone; but for Ms Perviz Mirza, telephone operator at the Princess Street branch of the Union Bank of India, the task is rendered more difficult because though she faces the board, she is unable to see it. A victim of retinitis pigmentosa, a hereditary disease progressively leading to blindness because of pigments on the retina, her eyesight has reached a stage where she can perceive light but is unable to recognize forms. Forty-five-year-old Mirza shares this fate with her elder sister Zarin, a music teacher, and younger brother Vispi, who is superintendent at the Maratha Mandir School where he is in charge of four to five blind students.

And yet, in April this year, Perviz was presented a national award by the President of India Giani Zail Singh "in public recognition of her outstanding performance as the most efficient employee in the category of visually handicapped." Availing of a free first class passage offered to the awardee and "a companion," Mirza accepted the invitation by the ministry of welfare to personally attend the award presentation ceremony, memories of which she shares from her photograph album. The criteria on the basis of which the selection of the best employee is made, is unknown to her; she only remembers receiving a telegram at her residence followed by a letter to her Bank announcing that she had qualified for the award.

Perviz has been working with the Union Bank for the last 13 years. Operating a switchboard for the first 10 years was not very difficult for Mirza because then she was able to monitor the calls on the switchboard through signals, both visible and audible. But when the plug board was introduced three years back, she admits to finding the adjustment "very difficult," as a blind person is not provided with any specially designed controls. Though unable to specify how she manages to coordinate the lines, she

alludes to the job requiring "a greater alertness" and the perception of "heat waves emanating from different parts of the board," says Mirza, conversing in Gujarati.

The support and cooperation of most of her Bank staff and management is acknowledged with pleasure and in the few cases where she encounters inconsideration, Mirza accepts it in her stride. "Anyway, I am so busy on the board throughout the day that I get hardly any time to socialize." She takes special pride in mentioning that no concessions are shown to her for being a handicapped employee except for exempting her from night shifts, which duty other operators are obliged to accept as rotation of shifts is considered necessary.

"Every afternoon someone or the other reaches me to my bus-stop and waits with me until my bus comes. The only bus which goes directly to my residential area is 124, and though it takes a round-about route, there is no other option for me." Alert to every curve and periodic halt that the bus takes, Mirza says she knows when she has to alight. "After the bus takes a turn at Tardeo near the Ganga-Jamuna Theatre, I know the second stop from there is my stop. There have been times when I have overshot my stop and mistakenly alighted at Haji Ali in which case I would walk back the distance." When she gets off at the correct stop, she usually has to wait for some passerby to help her cross the road, after which she finds her way to their ground floor residence at Captain Colony.

In the mornings, Perviz does not face any commuting problems because she is among those who avail of a point to point service rendered by the Physical Rehabilitation Center at Haji Ali which reaches handicapped employees to their destinations in the bus donated to them by the Tatas. For the return journey Perviz is unable to avail of this service as their timings do not coincide. Yet she is usually home by 4.30 pm.

When *Parsiana* called on the Mirzas at their residence on October 21, 1986, Perviz and Vispi were at home while Zarin was away at work conducting evening lectures in classical Indian music at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Of medium build and height, Perviz had worn a pastel hued dress, a smile planted on her lips, her round face framed by a bob haircut from where



streaks of grey were seen peeping out. On questions pertaining to her life and adjustments, Mirza was brief and to the point, happy to have the gaps filled in by Vispi, a short and fair figure who had not yet lost his boyish looks and impish grin.

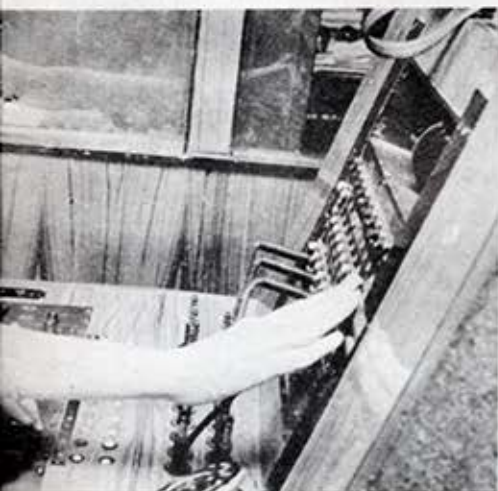
Their two-room kitchen flat was meticulously neat and tidy, every belonging allotted its proper corner, as "Vispi is very particular about that," revealed Perviz. In the kitchen all electrical devices are placed at one end with the gas stove some distance away to ensure maximum safety. The self-igniting stove which has replaced the match box and the gas lighter, has reduced their risk of burns. Each of the provision bottles bears a label in braille.

Vispi, who has done a diploma course in electronics from the States, is constantly devising new gadgets to aid

her handicap

Parinaz Toddywalla

Telephone operator Perviz Mirza won the national award for being the most efficient visually impaired employee.



Left: Mirza operating the plug board
Top: receiving award from Giani Zail Singh
Above: Vispi with his electronic devices
Photos: Homiyar Mistry

the blind. One of Vispi's creations is a light-sensitive device which triggers a sound when brought near a light, thus helping to check whether the stove or the refrigerator light is on. Another creative instrument when placed in a cup, gives a beep sound when the contents reach the brim, thus preventing a spillover. When the Mirzas had difficulty locating their front door, sometimes knocking at the wrong one, Vispi invented a remote control whistle which, when blown, attracts a similar sound if facing their main entrance. The installation of another electronic device serves to sound a warning musical note as soon as the wicket gate on the landing of their main entrance is opened by a visitor.

The household chores are divided among the siblings. Chopping onions, loading and unloading of the cooker is

always left to Vispi while Perviz, the culinary expert, undertakes the regular cooking and the occasional cakes and ice-creams. Liaising with the washerman is "among my duties," informs Vispi. Though there is no check by the Mirzas on the cleanliness and condition of the laundered clothes, records of incoming and outgoing raiment are kept in braille. The talking calculator comes in handy when arriving at the final figures. But come shopping time, their independence is threatened because they have to rely on well-wishers to help them, their maid servant being too old.

Among the family's regular visitors are "Solibhai, a cousin who comes in thrice a week to help us with our routine tasks, and a blind Hindu gentleman who comes daily from Santa Cruz to give us company. In times of

emergency when a letter has to be urgently read or written or some bazaaring has to be done, our Colony neighbors help, but there are no volunteers who can come regularly and read us newspapers or novels.

"Parsis definitely make good social workers, both in number and quality, though exceptions are always there," opines Vispi. The blind Hindu gentleman further elaborates, "A Parsi will help a person of any caste. Even an aged Parsi will offer his seat to a blind person on the bus. On the road, a couple will separate to help a disabled person cross. Even toddlers who may be unsure of their own balance will show us to the right door."

In her spare time, Perviz who has completed her Madhyama Purna in Sitar is seen practicing on the sitar, experimenting with new recipes or reading *Madam* and *Home Help* in Braille, foreign magazines to which she subscribes. If not preoccupied with his electronics, Vispi revises his knowledge on physiotherapy or is found reading the *Reader's Digest* or the *National Geographic* in braille, magazines sent to him by a blind friend in the States who, being a member of The Library of Congress there, receives free copies of all the periodicals in braille. Not very happy with the news coverage on Doordarshan, the Mirzas usually keep tuned to the BBC.

The other members of the Mirza family are sighted. Their father Jehangir was formerly a practicing priest at the Udwarda Atash Bahram, mother Meherbanu is a housewife, brother Cyrus is in America and sister Villi married in Navsari. Coming from a traditional Parsi upbringing which in-

fluences them to this day (a *diva* must be kept burning in the house; every visit to the toilet must be followed by a re-tying of the kusti), Vispi recalls the opposition he had to face when he spoke of leaving Udwada. Though the parents were very insistent that all the children should successfully complete their school education in the conservative Parsi strongholds of Udwada and Navsari, they had not formulated any further plans. "I would only listen to the radio all day long. Everyone kept telling my father that since I was trained to be a navar, I could be usefully employed there. But I went on a fast insisting I wanted to come to Bombay," said Vispi.

"When I came to Bombay, I learnt braille," he continued. "I was the first blind student to graduate from St Xavier's College. I owe my gratitude to Prof Roda Taraporevala of Xavier's for encouraging me. After that I took a diploma course in teaching the blind from Boston University and for some years was teaching at the Victoria Memorial School for the Blind (at a walking distance from their house)."

The Maratha Mandir School, where

he is presently employed, being further away, Vispi is rendered "totally dependent on the public transport system." Relating his experiences, he laments over the fact that "during peak hours, buses don't halt at the regular stops, walking on the pavements becomes impossible because they are constantly dug up, and the public attitude though sometimes very helpful, at others, borders on indifference. There are all sorts of people..." he trails off. He narrated a recent incident when after a lapse of time, on making fresh enquiries, a fellow commuter informed him, "Your bus has just left" after being requested beforehand to inform Vispi of the arrival of the bus.

Last year, while doing his electronics course in the States, Vispi's inventions earned him a radio interview. One of the devices, similar in purpose to a voltmeter, was introduced to the listeners as 'Vispimeter,' much to his delight. Vispi's only grouse is that "while abroad they would encourage such creativity, here everyone gets jealous."

Taking pride in her brother's

achievements, Perviz notes, "Had it not been for Vispi, I would never have got out of the house. When I was losing my sight, I was dejected and would just lie in bed for the whole day, getting up only at meal times." It was Vispi who brought her out of her shell and taught her braille by getting her to complete the braille correspondence course from the Hadley School for the Blind, USA. Perviz has also learnt dictaphone typing but regrets it has not been of much use in Bombay because few bosses are willing to tape their dictation on the instrument, which by foot operation can enable the handicapped typist to simultaneously hear and transcribe the message.

While the Mirzas' accomplishments are sufficient to raise their aspirations to settle abroad, they realize they have a duty towards their parents in Udwada whose ill health necessitates frequent visits from their children. But since long spells of stay in Udwada "get boring after a time" and emigration will have to wait "till sponsors can be found," for the present they are willing to await the signals which will sound their future well-being.

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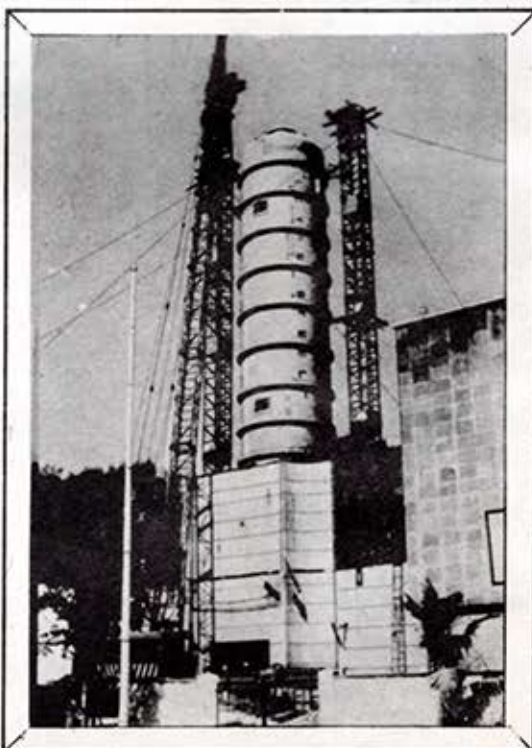


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India's Hambledon Men by Vasant Raiji with a foreword by Dom Moraes. Published by Tyeby Press, Thakkar Estate, 20 C. Bhimji Road, Mazgaon, Bombay 400010, in 1986. Pp 156. Hard cover and jacket. Price Rs 25.

Cricket is now acknowledged as the most popular form of sport in the sub-continent, edging out hockey, especially since the introduction of astro-turf. More people play cricket in their psyches, than on the pitches; but, that's another story. And more money by way of awards and advertisement revenues line cricketers' pockets today, than of other sportsmen. But that's another story as well.

Yet, for all the lure of cricket, there is little lore. Enthusiasts snap up articles and books that narrate dressing room brawls, or boardroom politics, and, courtesy Botham, bedroom antics. Fawning biographies, or more rightly, autobiographies narrated to an obliging scribe, top bestseller lists. But, in the morass of monographs on cricket, there are few that recreate the Indian romance for the willow.

Raiji's *India's Hambledon Men* hence comes as a welcome whiff of air, bringing forth to the reader the lesser-known, and even lesser-written-about history of the genesis of Indian cricket. Despite its esoteric title, which, unfortunately, could put off the not so well versed cricket fan (Hambledon men is an E.V. Lucas term for the first real dedicated cricketers), the book should delight most readers, even those with just a smattering knowledge of the game. The Parsis in particular should find the work of great interest, and it should warm the cockles of every Parsi heart to learn that India's Hambledon men were Parsis who visited England exactly 100 years ago. Raiji's book marks the centenary of the first Indian team – comprising solely of Parsis – to play at Lord's, the Mecca of cricket, on May 27 and 28, 1886, a game which they, incidentally, lost by an innings



and 224 runs. The team 'test'ed themselves on 27 other occasions, playing against Prince Christian Victor's XII at the express desire of Queen Victoria, and the legendary Dr W.G. Grace, who "opened the innings for the home team and scored 65 including two fours, 10 threes, one two and 25 singles," and largely remained unimpressed by the team, which lost 19, drew eight, and won only one match of the 28 played, even though, according to Grace, they played against "second and third-rate clubs."

Raiji's book gives us fascinating details about the early cricket matches played at home and abroad during the years 1886 to 1906. The two Parsi teams' visits to England (in 1886 and

1888) – interestingly, at their own cost led to reciprocal visits by English teams under G.F. Vernon (1889-90) and Lord Hawke (1892-93). Vernon's team lost to the Parsis after being skittled out for a mere 61 runs in their second innings, and Raiji provides an interesting account of this exciting match, which, incidentally, had started with Parsi priests in their white garb, invoking the aid of Asho Farohars to secure victory for the Parsi team.

Divine help, it seems from Raiji's narration, was occasionally sought by the Parsi cricketers. And, Ahura Mazda be praised, granted! In one match played by the second Parsi team in England, the Parsis, when they were in a tight corner, invoked the help of the elements. "Thereafter, a thunderstorm broke out stopping the play for a sufficiently long period of time to enable them to draw the game." Ah, for the efficacies of the *Ahunavar*.

Parsi eccentricities – and who doesn't love the community for them – permeated on the playing field as well as off it. In a match against Lord Hawke's, which the Parsis lost by a narrow margin of seven runs, and "Parsi ladies cried like babies" at this sad result, the Parsis ran into the field each time a four was hit with a bucket of water for the hero to have a drink, and thus provide time for rest. Cricket may be a gentleman's game, but the art of delaying with various shades of subtlety have always existed, right from its "Hambledon" days.

Equally eccentric is the orthodoxy of our Hambledon men, who originally played in the sudreh. "Once," recalls Dr Mehellasha Pavri, India's first great cricketer, "I remember hitting the ball into it (sudreh) and being caught out. Sometimes, too, the handle of the bat (got) caught in it when one was making a drive, which was awkward..."

India's Hambledon Men is a delight-

The winning innings

Homi J. Rogers

India's Hambledon Men recounts the period when Parsis were the pioneers in Indian cricket.

ful cocktail of cricket lore, as indicated by the above examples. The chapters (17 in all) bristle with information, as trivia and statistics mingle with a rare finesse to provide for an interesting read. The Parsi bowling figures, as revealed by the book, would make any Kapil Dev or Lillee envious: 8 for 35 by D.N. Writer against Hawke's Englishmen; or 170 wickets in 31 matches during the second visit to England by Dr Pavri at an average of just 11.66! What's even more enthralling, though surprisingly Raiji doesn't state it in the book, is that there were at least two Parsi bowlers (Dinsha Kanga and Ardeshir Limboovala) who were good wicket-keepers too.

Hambledon Men is, however, handicapped in its reach by the fact that there are no survivors from amongst the old brigade who could tell the story of their times. Raiji has done considerable research in his subject, having read and quoted from over 30 pieces of written material (as indicated in the bibliography), but the lack of oral history definitely shows. For example, while Raiji quotes the names of the early cricketers, their nicknames by which many old-timers yet recall these Hambledon men have not been given. Pestonji Master was more popularly referred to as Pesoo-Chen, just as Sorabji Warden was called Soloo Tol, and his namesake Bejonji was called Soloo Lt.

Similarly, Raiji has overlooked certain names which may not have fea-

tured in the prize matches described in the book, but were, nevertheless, darlings of the crowd and the community in their times. Jehangir Elachidana, to quote just one case of an all-rounder missed by Raiji, created in 1904 the unique record of capturing all 11 wickets of the opponents (and later, in

Warden is also mentioned only for his book on cricket, though his entry to the Hall of Fame rests on many a prowess in the field, including figures of nine for 20, which find no mention in the book under review.

Of course, these are small blemishes which do not alter from the fact that

"I remember hitting the ball into the
sudreh and being caught out.
Sometimes, the handle of the bat got
caught in it too."

1925, at the age of 41, throwing the ball for a record distance of 105 yards) B.D. Gagrut was a champion bat in the '80s and '90s, and though *Cricket Chat's* thumbnail sketch delineates him as a failure, he was, according to many old-timers, the only batsman to make runs by fast drives to cover point and hits to leg. He was also a medium fast underhand leg-break bowler, and is not known to have missed a single catch, making him the best all-rounder of his time, though (like our present day Ashok Mankad) he may have failed in the crucial matches. Jehangir Elavia finds a mention solely on the strength of his record partnership stand with Dr Kanga in a memorable match drawn, and not for his own merit of being an 'overbowled' (to his misfortune) fast left-hand bowler.

India's Hambledon Men is an excellent book, having something new, something interesting to offer on every page as it charts the history of Indian cricket from 1848 when the Parsis formed the first cricket club in Bombay to 1906, by when both the Parsi and Bombay Gymkhana had been established, and the Parsis were a force to be reckoned with, having won 11 matches to 10 by the Europeans in the 26 games (five were drawn) played between 1892 and 1906 as Presidency matches. The book is illustrated with exquisite portraits of many of the Parsi cricketers taken from various collections, and some delightful sketches, which greatly enhance its value. With a 30-page appendix containing brief scores, averages, score cards of the period 1886 to 1906, the book is as complete a statistician's delight as a litterateur's who may find of particular interest three poems of the Raj reproduced in it, besides many other press clippings. The inclusion of an index at the end would have further enhanced the book.

In 1907, India's Hambledon men (the Englishmen in India, and the Parsis) were joined by the Hindus in wielding the willow on a competitive basis. The Presidency matches became a triangular contest, and later, with the entry of the Mohammedans, a quadrangular, so famously etched in the memories of most Parsis even today. But, that is another story. And, we hope, Raiji, either "with the munificence of Murphy India Limited," whose support has enabled this book to be priced at just Rs 25, or without, tells it. It would make a most fitting sequel: a second innings knock on the same nostalgic pitch...





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The Rainbow Colours of Light and Medicina Alternativa by Meher K. Master-Moos. Published under the auspices of Mazdayasnie Monasterie and All India Shah Behram Baug Society (for Scientific and Educational Research), Mustafa Bldg, 2nd floor, Sir P.M. Road, Bombay 400001, in 1985. Pp:76 + illustrations (diagrams and photographs).

"There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." — Shakespeare

Dr (Ms) Meher K. Master-Moos attempts to explain these forces, "unravel some of these Divine Laws" vis-a-vis various aspects and varieties of alternative methods of medicine. *The Rainbow Colours of Light and Medicina Alternativa*, despite its long title and outsize format, is, according to the authoress, a comprehensive guide book to everyday health for persons, based on the knowledge of nature, and of the Divine Laws (as against the man-made laws) that exist in nature. Moos' quest to seek this "true" knowledge through a study and observance of the "Higher Laws," has resulted, as most Zoroastrians in India know, in the setting up of Mazdayasnie Monasterie to share with fellow co-religionists (and others) the scientific knowledge contained in the ancient Zoroastrian religion, and as taught in Gujarati by Ustad Saheb Behramshah Nowroji Shroff. *Medicina Alternativa* is one of the publications brought out by the Monasterie to "benefit humanity" from this knowledge.

Presented as a paper at the International Medical Conference on Acupuncture and Alternative Medicines at Copenhagen in September 1985, *Medicina Alternativa* was the basis for the (UNO) Pax Mundi Society of Alternativa Medicina to confer an honorary PhD degree on Master-

Moos. A lawyer by profession, Master-Moos is an unlikely candidate to lay down guidelines for alternative medical treatment, and be the authoress of a work that would contribute to the medical sciences. Yet, as she humbly puts it in her prologue, "as human beings, we are each striving towards the same goal, the study of 'laws,' awareness of the Natural Laws, and obedience of the Divine Law." It is this grass roots approach, combined with a series of happenings in her own personal life where she experienced the triumph of old schools of thought based on the knowledge of the relationship of nature to modern medicine, that prompted this study. And, the results, to say the least, are startling!

Master-Moos' platform for a study in alternative forms of medicine is the Zoroastrian prayer of *Ardibehest Yasht*, where five methods of curing are indicated: by purity (holiness — through the aura); by dispensing justice to the soul in nature; by surgery (using the knife on the physical body — as pictorially portrayed by Afsune Shah Faridun); by medicines derived from plants (herbs or ayurveda); and by *mantrawani* (the powers of the *Stoat* vibrations of holy Avesta words, which create colors of light in nature).

Medicina Alternativa mainly focuses on the last method, and in the process sets forth reasons for the need to pray in the original *Avesta* form. There are, Master-Moos argues, "powerful words in our prayers arranged in accordance with the Divine Law of *Stoat*. Harmonious colors are produced in the aura (the auric or ethereal body which surrounds the physical body) of the person who recites these *Avesta* prayers properly. These colors

pass through the aura, through the *chakhras* (receiving centers of vibratory energies), and nourish and strengthen the soul. They also pass into the glands, nerve centers and organs and thus get to the root of the disease."

On a more scientific plane, Master-Moos attempts to explain the existence of the Divine Law of *Stoat*, by correlating a Kirlian photograph (a picture of the aura lights emanating from the body) taken of the fingertips of the Head Priest of Udwada when he was reciting the *Ahunavar* (*Yatha Ahu Vairyo*) prayer, the most powerful and potent Zoroastrian prayer, according to Master-Moos, as its 21 words are arranged on the basis of the Law of *Stoat* Yasna, in keeping with the colors of Comet Tohoutet, photographed scientifically by Skylab. The colors (blue, golden yellow and red) emanating from the Dasturji's fingertips by its recitation, being identical to the Comet's colors in the Skylab-taken photograph, leads Master-Moos to conclude that the Divine Law of *Stoat* exists, as "the colors of light are produced by vibratory energies of sound, which are used in cosmogenesis by God Almighty."

While not disputing the existence of Divine Laws, or even of *Stoat*, in the light of Master-Moos' erudition, and innumerable examples of its efficacy in our prayers, one is puzzled as to why Master-Moos, to prove her point scientifically, has compared the colors emanating from a praying Dasturji's fingertips with a comet, and not, for example, with a meteorite, or a sunbeam or any other light-radiating form of nature.

What, however, merits attention, despite such aberrations as above, is the study put forth by Master-Moos of Kirlian photographs, as a form of diagnosis and the re-assertion, by the use of these photographs, of the power in our *Avesta* prayers. Like X-rays, which help to see within the body, Kirlian photographs, Master-Moos informs us, help to look at the aura-lights outside the body, flowing out through the accepted (in acupuncture) meridians of fingertips, feet and toes, which produce certain patterns of light-flares in the aura. Master-Moos has taken innumerable Kirlian photographs as a diagnostic tool for patients undergoing acupuncture treatment, and says these photographs have re-

vealed the true condition of the patient's body organs, astonishing both patient and doctor.

A nagging doubt, however, remains unanswered. If Kirlian photographs can tell so precisely the nature of the ailment, why are they not taken by medical practitioners, who yet opt for X-rays or sonographs? Even the word 'Kirlian' is not mentioned in most encyclopaedias. Is Kirlian photography meant to be restricted only for amateur practitioners of alternative medicine, and members of the International Kirlian Research Association, of which, incidentally, Master-Moos has been a member since 1979?

Medicina Alternativa lists many other methods of cure, which are also derived from the knowledge of our scriptures. Of particular mention is a system of treatment called Spectrochrome-metry, discovered by a Parsi, Dr (Col) Dinsha P. Ghadiali, and currently stated to be practiced by Dr Dara K. Hakim. Under this system, a patient can reportedly receive relief through radiation of a particular color. Dr Ghadiali is said to have scientifically ascertained what effect each color had on the various organs, and parts of the body, and which color could be used for treatment of various diseases.

The 'light therapy' has been summarized, and *Medicina Alternativa* gives a chart indicating the color to be used to combat particular illnesses. The concept, Master-Moos informs, is also used in homeopathy, which has medicines based on color radiation. A chart devised by Dr Bhattacharya, a homeopath from Calcutta, who radiates his patients with the appropriate color medicine, is reproduced.

Other methods of alternative medicine discussed include magnet therapy, outlining the use of gold, silver ("use of silver-water keeps one young in looks"), copper, iron ("it cures nearly 80 different diseases") and other metals; ayurveda; yoga; diet; music therapy; and even astrology! Though the last is subject to a fair amount of scepticism, in the final analysis one must concede that if the time and place of one's birth are ordained by the Forces above, there must be a divine purpose in the same. *Medicina Alternativa* commingles religion with science.

In the early part of this century, there have been books (not mentioned in the bibliography) in Gujarati that have explored the avenues of healing by scriptures and metals. I have in my family collection a 1902 edition of an *Avesta* edited by Dinbai Sorabji En-

gineer, which quotes alternative medicine to overcome pains, difficulties, stomach aches, fever, eye diseases, ways of starting mother's milk and stopping it, health for the aged, success in work or in new assignments, etc.

Medicina Alternativa raises a harvest of questions, while providing a sheaf-full of answers. Were our forefathers really so well versed in curing diseases, totally numbering 99,999, as thought of by Master-Moos? Can the simple recitation of *Ya Bishternah Tarobish Yazamaiday* help for keeping generally good health? Do the *Esms* or *Nirangs* prescribed by Ervad Nadirsha Aibara – who has on several occasions come in for a lot of flak – really cure? Were the *Gathas* so composed by our prophet in accordance with the Cosmic Laws, that if they were sung to the correct musical key and notation (which have been lost to us), they would keep the reciter healthy? The Cosmos will always continue to bewitch Man. And beguile him. Answers have to be experienced by self; a book can only serve as a guide. And until such time, let the wisdom of an old adage sustain us: "More things are wrought by prayer than the world dreams of."

Homi J. Rogers

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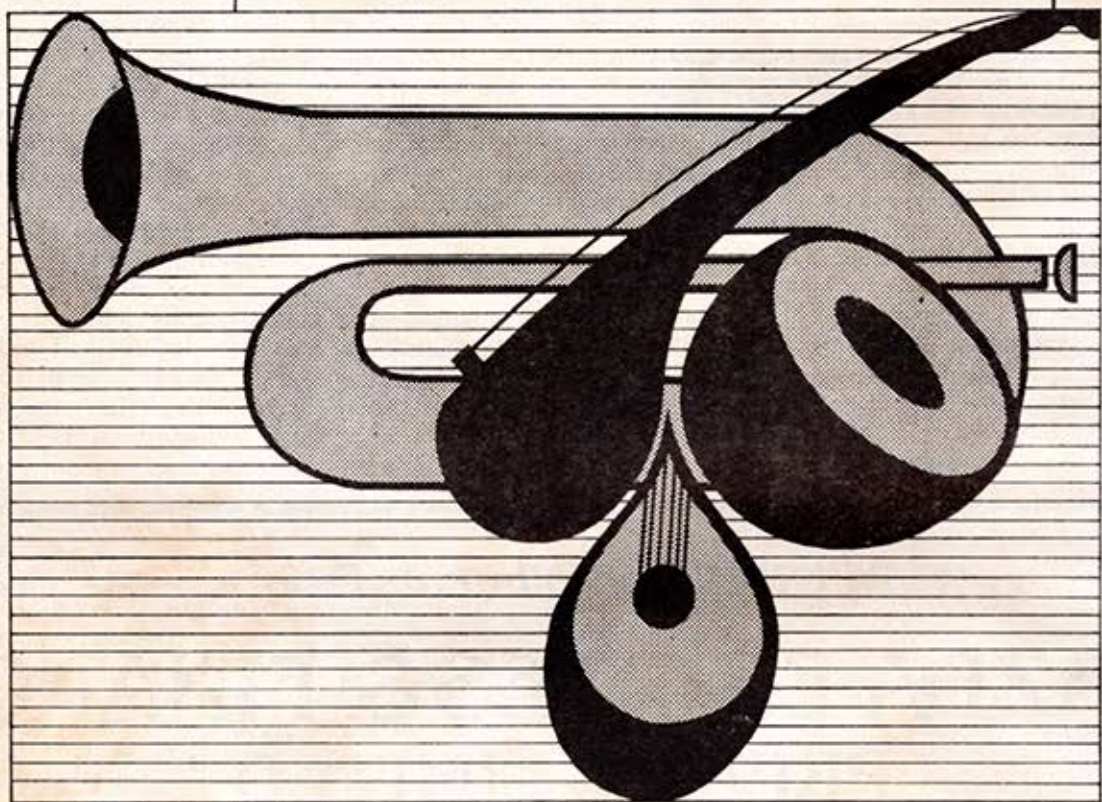
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