

Parzianā

Tithal sale stalled

Charity Commissioner yet to give sanction

Arnavaz S. Mama

The proposed lease to a Jain trust of the 13-acre Tithal Sanatorium land in Gujarat which caused an uproar in the community, is still awaiting the permission of the Charity Commissioner of Maharashtra. Before the Charity Commissioner decides to give permission, he has agreed to hear Ms Benafshay Merwan Irani and others representing the community who contend that the lease was detrimental to the community for whose benefit the Sanatorium was created.

Of the Sanatorium's original 15 acres of land, two acres were acquired by the Gujarat Government about two years ago. The trustees had entered into an agreement with Vipin Shah, a land developer representing "a Jain association of persons" on or about December 10, 1985, says Irani's advocate Kaikhushroo Dastoor. According to the terms of agreement, as spelt out by Dastoor, the Sanatorium's 13 acres of land were to be leased for 99 years to the Jain association on an annual rent of Rs 1,51,111. (The market price of land in the area was said to be about eight lakh rupees per acre in early 1986.) The Jain association agreed to build eight blocks of 450 square feet

each on one acre of land, to house the Sanatorium. The cost of these blocks, stated as Rs 7,75,000, was to be deducted from the annual lease rent in installments. The deal was subject to the Charity Commissioner's sanction being obtained within six months from December 10, 1985.

The Sanatorium's trustees, who include ophthalmologist Dr Rustom Patel, Jehangir Bamji and Ms Shirin Narielwala (former Bombay Parsi Punchayet chairman, B.K. Boman-Behram who had dominated the board, died in January 1986), applied to the Charity Commissioner for permission to proceed with the deal in September 1986, notes Dastoor.

When Ms Irani applied to the Charity Commissioner for permission to intervene in the proceedings in March 1987, contending that the proposed lease was in violation of the objects of the trust and the rights of the beneficiaries, the trustees and Shah raised a preliminary point that she had no locus standi and could not be heard at such a late stage.

After hearing the advocates of the parties the Charity Commissioner, by his order of April 21, has allowed the

opponents to intervene and make their submissions on their paying Rs 250 each as costs to the trustees and Mr Shah. The case has been adjourned to May 21, 1987.

Prominent Parsis obtained donations for the purpose of establishing a sanatorium at Tithal in 1906-07. In 1911 a declaration of trust was made, providing that the land and buildings were to be used as a convalescent home for the Parsi poor and middle class sick who were practising Zoroastrians. The trustees were empowered to permit any Parsi or Parsis to build additional blocks on the premises. It was also provided that if a sanatorium became unfeasible, the property be used for relief of the poor and sick of the Parsi community.

In 1983, the property consisted of 15 acres of land with four buildings and a few wells, all in dilapidated condition. "Today, in 1987, there are no buildings on the land. A large amount of immovables including furniture, utensils, electrical fittings, garden tools and motor pumps, originally provided in the buildings, and the wells, have disappeared. The property now consists of barren land," says Dastoor.

The beginning of the end

Niloofer J. Madon

A dokhma lying vacant, acres and acres of adjacent land unclaimed, unkempt and encroached upon, a handful of elderly Parsis living alone, and this very scene repeated over and over again throughout the length and breadth of India, makes one wonder where the Parsis have gone, leaving behind them this quiet decay.

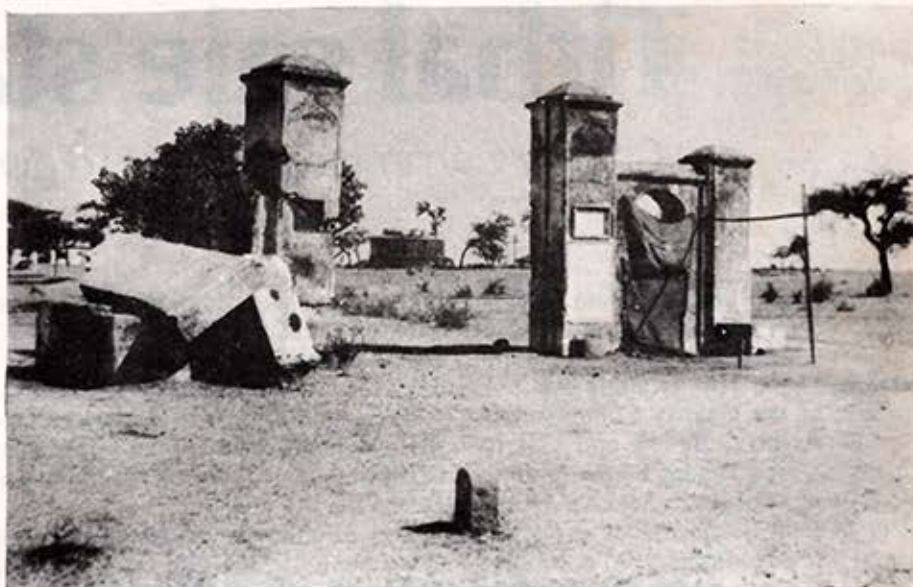
Census figures show that in 1971 the population of Parsis in India was 91,266 which dropped to 71,630 in 1981 – a loss of 20,000 in 10 years. *Parsiana* asked 13 representatives of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India at New Delhi in December, what they felt about this decline, and in view of these diminishing numbers what the priorities of the community should be and in particular for their anjuman itself. What situation would their anjuman be in, in the next 25 years?

As if to point out the enormity of the problem of declining population, Erach Gai, representing Ahmednagar, noted: "In six months we had five deaths and in two years we had one birth. The last birth before that was five years back." Ahmednagar has a Parsi population of about 70 people, approximately 40 percent of whom are

at present," notes Marker adding, "Correct information on the assets is not available with us but we know that an aramgah, a dadgah and a house belonging to the anjuman did exist once. Value of the assets could be around five lakh rupees...The aramgah is already in possession of trespassers since long."

In Lucknow, according to Boman Khodaiji, there has been a decline of

of around 15 people and in Yadgir, another nearby village, there exists a solitary 26-year-old Parsi boy, informs Zubin Irani of Wadi who was representing the Shahabad Parsi Anjuman (Shahabad, Wadi and Yadgir) in place of his aunt Ms Daulat Irani. "Everyone is self-sufficient and there are no poor Parsis," notes Irani adding that Wadi's industry consists of stone mines which the Iranis own and a factory of



The population of
Parsis in India has
dropped by 20,000
from 1971 to 1981

above 60 years of age.

"The Parsi population in Mhow has decreased from around 800 heads, 20 to 25 years ago, to 125 heads now. Most are elderly, some are affluent, majority are middle-class and a few need help," says Group Captain Dhunjishaw Marker of Mhow.

Situated 118 kilometers from Mhow is Khandwa, an already defunct anjuman, where "not a single Parsi is living

82 Parsis in the last 25 years and there exists a sizable elderly population.

"In Andhra Pradesh, Zoroastrians resided only in the old Nizam's dominions because the Nizam favored Parsis," noted Bejon Dittia, representing Hyderabad and Secunderabad. Today, Nizamabad is a defunct anjuman wherein part of the aramgah has been encroached upon and used for cultivation purposes. In Hyderabad and Secunderabad, informs Dittia, there are three agiaries and two dokhmas and the population which was 1,200, has further declined.

In the small village of Wadi, a four-hour drive from Secunderabad, there are only six Parsi families totalling a maximum of 20 persons. In neighboring Shahabad there are three families

the Associated Cement Companies where most persons are employed. The local priest too is employed there. The rest of the people are agriculturists.

In Wadi, informs Irani, Mehernosh Kheshvala (who had accompanied him to the Federation meet in Delhi) and himself are the only two youngsters around, and apart from his mother who is 57, the rest are above 60 years of age. In Shahabad there is only one 22-year-old youth. Wadi offers no worthwhile educational facilities and for navjotes, weddings and death ceremonies the Parsis have perforce to make the four-hour trip to Secunderabad.

Converse to this generally declining population, Allahabad's Captain

Representatives of small anjumans talk about the declining population in their areas



Homi Dandiwalla had "good news" to offer. "Last year from 45 (persons) we have jumped to 47 with the birth of one boy and one girl." Interestingly, the ratio of men to women in Allaha-bad is almost equal — there are 23 women and 24 men — but over 25 per-cent of the population is over 50 and there is one lady resident who is 93 years old.

Similarly, in Navsari, with the con-struction of the residential colony Avan Baug by Hong Kong philan-thropist Shapoorji Jokhi, according to Dastur Meherji Meherjirana, Navsar-i's Parsi population must have in-creased by 1,000 bringing the total number to about 2,500 persons. In fact, according to the Dastur, this spurt has created problems of unem-ployment.

However, informs Meherjirana, there are two textile mills in Navsari and the Tata Strip Mills for iron manu-facture; there is a Parsi-owned drug store and of course the famous Navsari Kolah icecream and pickle shop which completed 100 years in 1986. The rest of the Parsis are into the transport business owning tempos, trucks or autorickshaws.

Poona too is becoming an in-

creasingly popular residential city for many Parsis who are migrating there in large numbers, says Poona's Minoo Irani, who puts the Poona Parsi population figure at around 3,500 and fast increasing.

Why the decline?

The reason for the declining Parsi population in the villages of Gujarat boils down to "a continuous drought situation there," notes Sohrab Kat-pitia, chief executive of the Surat Parsi Punchayet (SPP). Agriculture being the main occupation, Parsi farmers tried "their level best to apply to all charitable trusts and many raised loans from cooperative banks (which they) could not repay in time. A couple of years back, with the cooperation of the SPP and the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) some defaulters were helped and their land freed from mortgage..."

Because of these deteriorating agri-cultural conditions people migrated to nearby cities where they were able to find employment, while some others tried to dispose of their agricultural holdings in haste, making it impossible for them to fetch even reasonable prices for their land, informs Katpitia. Increasing insecurity in the villages — since the Parsis became an extreme minority there — and "political consciousness of tribals (working for Parsi landlords) who are now aware of gov-ernment legislation regarding the 'right of land to the tiller,'" are also according to Katpitia, causes to which the declining village population of Par-sis may be attributed.

Also, agricultural holdings which are equally divided amongst the chil-dren, tend to break up such land, mak-ing it unfeasible to rely on agriculture as a main source of income — commer-cial farming is reduced to subsistence farming, notes Katpitia, and is no longer economically viable.

"We are just there because we have to be there," noted Irani of Wadi ex-plaining that various businesses keep people in the village, even though



Above (from left) Gai, Ichhaporia, Mehta and Meherjirana

Left column: Katpitia, Nowsherwanji, Dittia and Marker.

Right column: Khodaiji, Dandiwalla, Clubwala and Minoo Irani

Facing page: defunct dokhma in Gujarat.

there is nothing else that attracts them to it. Educational facilities and basic entertainment being unavailable, the youngsters prefer to make their homes elsewhere preferably in the nearby twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, or Bombay, notes Irani.

According to Gai of Ahmednagar, there are "more girls in the community than boys... There is no motivation to get married at all," he notes and then, pointing to the other two young Ahmednagar trustees Mehernosh Mehta and Nozar Ichhaporia, he adds, "We are all bachelors, not having issue... ultimately leading to decline of community."

According to Dandiwalla, and corroborated by Meherjirana, motivation to get married is lacking because of the lack of housing facilities, while Ms Mani Clubwala, coopted member from the South Zone disagreed: "Everyone says (the reason for the decline in population) is the lack of housing facilities, but basically I feel it is a personal choice - whether people want children or not... People are going to the western world for better opportunity... I think they are doing very well there."

Apart from the usual reasons like late marriages and Parsi women marrying outside the community, Khodaiji pointed out that Parsis have an artificially high standard of living which discourages couples from having more children.

Marker included family planning - "Parsis are more conscious of it than any other community" - genetic defects caused by inbreeding (or marrying within the family) and the toll that breast cancer takes on Parsi women, as additional causes for the declining population.

Parsi girls, being more educated than the boys, have greater aspirations and thus marry outside the community, according to Dittia who puts the blame squarely on the shoulders of parents who "don't discourage this because they themselves don't have a strong cultural root."

Setting priorities

Echoing the feelings of the Poona and Navsari representatives, Dandiwalla noted: "The most important priority is housing, so that we can give our boys and girls a place to live in and produce children which I think the BPP is not

taking seriously. Our Parsi boys are not earning that much (so as) to have flats of their own and they don't have the capacity to pay lump sum." Dandiwalla was all for rental accommodation.

He also gave importance to involving the youth in anjuman affairs so that "later on, when there is no one to look after the properties, they can handle matters." At present Allahaabad does not have a mobed to look after its agiary and Dandiwalla was one of the first anjuman representatives to agree to train as a paramobed.

Ahmednagar is another anjuman without a priest and according to Mehta, "the first priority is that we should have more priests." Noting that "the faith is there but guidance is not there," Gai suggests that there should be "someone guiding you - like a missionary type of priest - in micro-interiors," and gives the example of his own anjuman where, within the week, only 10 people visit the agiary and the priest himself is like a prisoner who has merely to perform the boi ceremony five times a day in return for a paltry income. "*Ekhlu bhi rehvanu in a small city tau time pass bhi nai thai*

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(living alone in a small city leads to boredom)."

Noting that "education is the best legacy we can give our children," Clubwala is of the opinion that youngsters should be more involved in business while Khodaiji is unhappy that the Parsi youth don't take advantage of the many benefits of scholarships and loans offered to them by the Uttar Pradesh minorities commission and talks of initiating more awareness campaigns.

Dittia mooted more youth get-togethers to increase the rate of marriage, and Marker talked of greater industrialization in the mofussil areas to facilitate population growth there and prevent urban migration. He noted: "One of the biggest industrial complexes in Asia and one that is going to be the future Detroit of India is coming up at Pithampur at a distance of 10 kilometers from Mhow. It would be worthwhile for our *sethias* (businessmen) to think of setting up industries of our own in this area to help employment of our youth. Adjacent to Mhow, there is ample scope to build (housing) colonies for the community. We are also thinking of building some

flats from within our anjuman resources."

In Wadi, "There is no (anjuman) office, no agiary, no burial place, no nothing," notes Irani, whose 92-year-old grandfather has built his own burial ground. "We don't get together as an anjuman." At present there is no activity because no one is interested. Says Irani, with the passing away of the older residents of Wadi, there will be no more Parsis there, with the land most probably being sold off by the relatives. He himself does not wish to remain there all his life.

In twenty-five years

Confident that their anjuman's assets will rise in the next 25 years, the Ahmednagar representatives however feel equally sure that its population will decline. Conversely, Navsari and Poona, facing a sharp increase in numbers, are confident of flourishing 25 years hence but have to work fast on providing residential accommodation and jobs for the migrants. Zal Nowsherwanji of Delhi too was confident that, being the capital, Delhi will continue to attract Parsis from all over India, and that it need never fear becom-

ing defunct. Wadi, Irani is positive, will have no Parsi population 25 years hence or even sooner! As for Allahabad, notes Dandiwalla, "Two lakh anjuman funds have been well invested and where finance is concerned we will not go down. But money is not everything; there must be some active members in the anjuman." Dandiwalla cautions, "If we don't act fast enough, the government may acquire the (community) land and at the speed the Federation is working today we will lose the property."

Marker noted that if the Pithampur scheme goes through and if housing and employment is provided in the Mhow area, the next 25 years "will and should" show an increase in the Parsi population. Though "we have been complacent for long," Marker is pleased to see that "we are now getting more and more aware of the dangerous trend (of declining population) and that in itself is a good sign. This awareness should be made to infiltrate in each and every Parsi home through the various media at our disposal. Let every Parsi, young and old, be convinced that our religion and community must survive."

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Katrak's crusade

Arnavaz S. Mama

The Sethna Agiary Hall at the corner of Tardeo Road and Forjett Street was the venue of an unusual meeting on March 31, 1987. For the first time in its 77-year life span the Anjuman Committee which elects trustees had been summoned by four individual members for the express purpose of censoring the chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet's (BPP) board of trustees, Dr Aspi Golwala. A draft resolution, accusing Golwala of "misuse and mismanagement of the funds and properties of the trusts" and seeking his removal from the board of trustees, had been circulated to the Anjuman Committee's more than 1,000 members, signed by Ardeshir Katrak, Dinshaw Merchant, Dinyar Panthaki and Rustom Bharucha.

The community grapevine had been humming with the prospect of such a meeting since November '86 but a suitable venue was proving difficult to find. Complimenting the trustees of the Sethna Agiary as "men who honor their word," octogenarian advocate Katrak noted that an unspoken threat of last minute cancellation of arrangements had deterred him from holding the meeting at other places. Indeed, until March 19 when a friend informed him that the advertisement had appeared in *The Daily*, Katrak was not certain that his notice, cosigned by Merchant, Panthaki and Bharucha, calling for the meeting on March 31, would appear in time. *The Bombay Samachar* and *Jam-e-Jamshed* had declined to publish the notice.

"We don't understand why BPP trustees prefer to work in a vacuum. Why do they leave it to the community to learn through grapevines and gossip?" questioned Merchant while introducing Katrak at the meeting. Describing him as the "undoubted leader of the Small Causes Court, who enjoys the respect of the bar and the judges," Merchant noted that Katrak had no desire for trusteeship of the Punchayet

and had been raising points for a number of years; but the "queries and appeals fall on deaf ears."

Katrak prefaced the reading of the resolution by recalling the 305-year history of BPP and the moral stature of past trustees, adding, "The whole thing has changed in the past 20 years." Attributing the actions of present day trustees to arrogance of power, Katrak noted, "something unusual should be done...which can only be accomplished by members of the Anjuman Committee...If E and F register members want such a corrupt person to continue, it is not only the misfortune of the E and F registers but of the community."

The resolution alleged, amongst other things, that Golwala had not denied an allegation of accepting two lakh rupees for tenancy transfer at Ness Baug; had illegally transferred a dispensary in Jer Baug; had tried to silence Noshir Dadrawalla, a former employee of the Zoroastrian Com-

munity Development Institute (ZCDI) who has criticized the BPP in the *Jam-e-Jamshed*; and had placed locks on flats immediately after the death of a tenant. Golwala had refuted the allegations in print on March 29, 1987 and Golwala's co-trustees published a unanimous statement affirming "full confidence in the chairman" in *Jam-e-Jamshed* on March 27.

"We have to resolve legally," Katrak told the assembled audience. Not all of the approximately 150 persons present were Anjuman Committee members though 122 of them had signed the attendance muster. "What I say today will be produced in court," he added and challenged the trustees' unanimous resolution on the ground that it bore no date and two of the trustees were out of station.

Seconding the resolution, Panthaki noted, "Golwala has not vindicated his honor by filing a defence suit or stay order against this meeting. The charges are unchallenged and there-

Four members of the Anjuman Committee seek to impeach the chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet



(From left) Panthaki, Merchant, Katrak and Bharucha: "something unusual should be done"

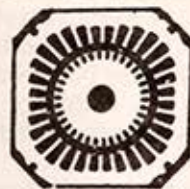
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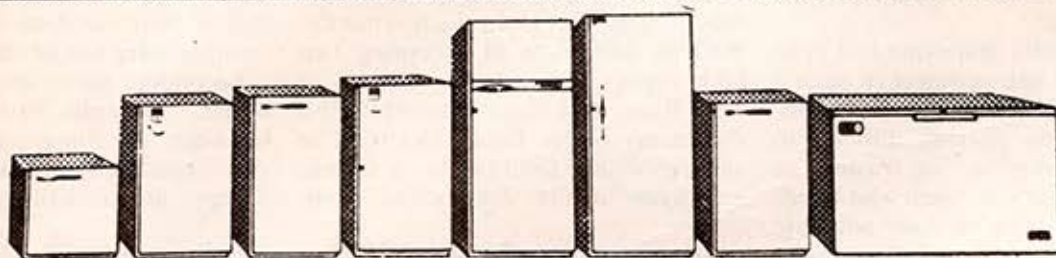
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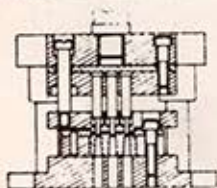
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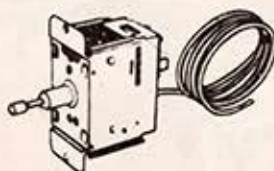
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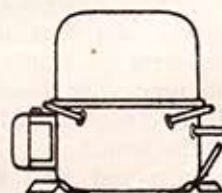
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Katrak was unhappy at what seemed to be only lukewarm support from the Committee for Economic Revival (CER) during his nearly three-year battle to expose "corrupt practices," but welcomed the resolution from its managing committee published on March 29. The CER appeal, signed by Dadi Engineer, Fali Poncha, Kersi

"Why do BPP trustees leave the community to learn through grapevines and gossip?"

Guzder, Ms Mani Dalal, Ms Silloo Kavarana, Berjis Desai, Edul Bharucha, Dinshaw Mehta, Homi Kanga, Nariman Mehta, Ms Arni Sethna and Zal Contractor noted, "such a meeting of the Anjuman Committee for recall of an elected trustee is being done for the first time in the history of the BPP...While the CER does not wish to go, at this stage, into the veracity or otherwise of the aforesaid charges, the various episodes certainly questions the quality of our leadership." The CER requested Golwalla "in his own interest and that of the community, to clarify the entire position."

Launching a blistering attack on Golwalla's rejoinder to the allegation of having accepted a two lakh rupee bribe for a transfer of tenancy at Ness Baug, Katrak noted that if premises are used for immoral purposes - Golwalla alleged that a nurses' bureau was a front - the tenant can be evicted under the Rent Act. "Reading between the lines, one flat was taken by (the BPP) and one flat retained by the woman," alleged Katrak. "Where is the reply to the accusation of taking two lakhs?"

The Jer Baug dispensary, according to Katrak, was transferred to Dr Bhonsale, son of an ex-chief minister of Maharashtra, by Golwalla and industrialist Nusli Wadia - the only two people present at the meeting of the Committee of Management. Though there is a provision for the Punchayet's board of trustees to endorse the decision before the transfer is effected,

Katrak alleged that co-trustees were informed four months after the transfer had been effected. He also charged Golwalla with suppressing a letter addressed to him by the Jer Baug Association, requesting that the dispensary be transferred to resident Dr Pervez Iranpur who is known to aid the residents during emergencies, especially at night.

To substantiate his charge that the BPP harasses the heirs of deceased tenants, Katrak claimed that he had taken Golwalla to the High Court in a case of appropriating a tenement by force and the court's verdict had gone against Golwalla.

When the motion was put to the house, Anjuman Committee member Peshotan Daver enquired about the financial liability of supporting the resolution. Answered Katrak, "If I suffer, I suffer alone. Just remain honest in your endeavor to get the Punchayet house in order."

The meeting which had been quite orderly hitherto became noisy when F.K. Daver, who introduced himself as an ex-BPP employee of 11 years, sought to defend Golwalla. Stating that in every organization there are bound to be differences, Daver asked, "Is it only in Golwalla's time that (private) locks (on Punchayet flats) are being broken? It happened also at the time of former BPP chairpersons Lady Hirabai Jehangir, Eruch Nadirshaw and B.K. Boman-Behram." Though interrupted by howls of protest, Daver continued, "Any responsible person will be called corrupt."

Katrak intervened at the commotion in the hall, urging the audience to listen to truth and not be frightened. "We expected some people to come with the intention of breaking the meeting."

Someone from the rear shouted, "If the gentleman had been planted, the meeting would have been disturbed earlier. It's only fair that the resolution be discussed."

The uproar continued and Merchant, leaning over from the podium from behind Katrak, requested Daver to return to his seat. Daver thanked the chair and returned to his seat, his message obviously incomplete, but Katrak, who was unaware of Merchant's request to Daver, believed that the latter had had his say, and despite repeated requests would not allow Daver to take the floor again. The

pandemonium increased. Firoze Amroliwalla got up in his seat, challenging Katrak to prove that Golwalla had accepted two lakhs under the table. "You will not have people coming forward to become trustees if you blame them at the drop of a hat." It was Amroliwalla's contention that the trustees were collectively responsible and the chairman deserved respect for his service to the community until proved to be malafide.

Tongue in cheek Katrak replied, "When Golwalla bucks up, the courage to sue me for libel, I'll get the details from his own mouth."

Dara Marfatia suggested that a judge of the High Court be requested to go into the question and Peshotan Daver noted, "When a man like (former BPP trustee and noted industrialist) Naoroji Godrej leaves the Punchayet, you must come to some conclusion. It is very unfair to ask Katrak to play all his cards here."

The demand to allow F.K. Daver to conclude his statement was taken up by Jal Vakil of the Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha, and Katrak relented.

Back at the mike, Daver referred to himself as an impartial person and noted that stories about trustees were often libelous and mischievous and

"If I suffer, I suffer alone. Just remain honest in your endeavor to get the Punchayet house in order"

said that "the BPP puts locks to safeguard the contents of flats."

When the uproar that this comment produced died down, Katrak noted, "This man has spoken of oral accusations. Has he cited a single instance of an accusation in writing? (Katrak paused for Daver's response, but there was none) I have put down in writing."

Dadrawalla who had entered the hall mid-way through the meeting, then took the mike to attest that ZCDI director Dr Mody had informed him of Golwalla's ire at the criticism contained in his report of the BPP's September press conference published in the *Jam-e-Jamshed*. According to

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Dadrawalla, Golwalla had told Mody, "It appears that the ZCDI is biting the hand that feeds it." Dadrawalla noted that after the interview he received a letter from Mody instructing him to stop writing for the Press, and to stop attending BPP and Federation meetings.

Dadrawalla, who after leaving the ZCDI has joined the B.D. Petit Parsee General Hospital, noted that he had been instructed by his new employers that same afternoon not to attend Katrak's meeting, but he came, he said, to "uphold the truth at whatever cost."

When Dadrawalla finished, Katrak asked pointedly, "Mr Daver, do you want to say anything?" Daver had nothing to add. The resolution was put to a hand vote. Those against, registered only two: Daver and a friend. *

A triumphant Katrak, who is credited with having legally ejected the chairman of the Bombay Zoroastrian Mutual Death Benefit Fund [later converted to a cooperative life-insurance society which, in time, merged with the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)] for graft in 1947, planned to institute legal proceedings against Golwalla if the latter, as he expected, failed to honor the resolution.

Charges and counter charges

Imputing "illegal, corrupt and absolutely unjustifiable actions" to Golwalla, the draft resolution charged that Golwalla

- had not denied the allegation of accepting two lakh rupees for a transfer of tenancy at Ness Baug made by

Katrak in *Jam-e-Jamshed* and *The Bombay Samachar* in May 1984;

- had illegally transferred the tenancy of the Jer Baug dispensary to the son of an ex chief minister of Maharashtra, ignoring the claims of a Parsi doctor;
- had threatened to stop BPP grants to the value of Rs 62,000 to the ZCDI if its directors failed to stop Noshir Dadrawalla, a ZCDI employee, from criticizing the actions of BPP trustees in the *Jam-e-Jamshed*;
- was guilty of nepotism in the allotment of flats in different colonies;
- had harassed the heirs of tenants living alone, replacing their locks with Punchayet padlocks as soon as the deceased tenant had been removed to the Doongerwadi;
- was seeking exemption of trust properties from the purview of certain provisions of the Rent Act which would deprive the tenants of their right to redress, if wronged;
- was guilty of not transferring the tenancies of Punchayet flats to heirs or family members of the deceased unless they signed a 'slave bond,' and paying for defensive legal action from Punchayet funds even though "practically in all such litigations the Punchayet

suffers humiliating defeats;"

- was seeking to liquidate the property of the Parsi Lying-in Hospital;
- had besmirched the fair name of the Punchayet in various other cases.

Replying point by point, Golwalla alleged that under the guise of a nurses' bureau, two flats at Ness Baug were being used for immoral purposes. The tenant had bequeathed them to a woman and instead of costly litigation, the Wadia Committee of Management had negotiated the matter and secured the release of one flat which was allotted in the normal course to one Mr Amroliwalla. "No sum or donation for this purpose has been received from Amroliwalla," noted the rejoinder.

The allotment of the Jer Baug dispensary to a non-Parsi when a Parsi doctor Pervez Iranpur was denied, had been repeatedly contested by Katrak and the CER in the Parsi Press since early 1986. In defence Golwalla noted that Iranpur, an anesthetist and not a physician, sought residential accommodation in a letter addressed to Nusli Wadia. The request for transfer of the dispensary came from Dr Zunwerkar, its incumbent of 32 years, and Dr Bhonsale and the transfer was



Above (from left) Amroliwalla, F.K. Daver, Dadrawalla: discussing the resolution.

Alongside: "The chairman deserves respect until proved mala fide" (Photos: Homiyar Mistry)



duly endorsed by the Wadia Committee of Management, Golwalla noted. Iranpur's letter to Wadia was published alongside as also an earlier letter addressed to *The Bombay Samachar* by the secretary of the Wadia Trust explaining that there was "no vacancy whatsoever in respect of the premises in question...(whereby) the committee could be free to allot the premises to any person of its choice."

To clear himself of the accusation of seeking to silence Dadrawalla, a letter from Dr Jamshed Mody of the ZCDI to Ardeshir Katrak was published alongside. Mody denied any arm-twisting by Golwalla.

Noting that a committee comprising all seven trustees of the BPP allocates flats in accordance with the merit rating scheme, Golwalla stated that "the charges that allotment is made in contravention of the rules and regulations is irregular and untrue. The charge of nepotism is therefore frivolous."

The rejoinder noted that unauthorised persons had to be prevented from breaking open locks and trespassing on trust properties. Golwalla released an old letter from Katrak threatening, on behalf of his client, to break open the Punchayet's lock and adopt all proceedings against the trustees, both civil and criminal.

The Punchayet's appeal to the Maharashtra government to exempt it from certain provisions of the Rent Act, signed by all seven BPP trustees, was simultaneously published. The letter shores up the trustees' contention that relatives and even strangers

sought to lay claims to Punchayet flats although they had valid accommodation of their own elsewhere, thereby preventing the Punchayet from allocating the flats to those whose need was greater.

The rejoinder cited 37 cases of

"Decisions on major policies are taken with the full knowledge, consent and approval of all or majority of the trustees"

transfer of rent receipts to legal heirs in 1986 and noted, "It is only when the surviving heirs become difficult" that status quo is maintained. "There is no question of a slave bond but rules and regulations which are adopted from time to time are followed as advised by the solicitors and lawyers."

Rebutting Katrak's contention that

Golwalla is trying to liquidate the property of the Parsi Lying-in Hospital, the doctor noted, "I am not the head of the Parsi Lying-in Hospital, but only the honorary secretary. The Committee of Management, chaired by solicitor Mr Jamshed Pochkhanawalla, has unanimously decided to recommend to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustees their scheme for development of the property. For this, a subcommittee has been appointed. I am not even a member of this subcommittee for development of the property because of paucity of funds. It may be mentioned that the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet have filed a suit in the year 1978 for eviction against 'Hope Fulls' for occupying a part of the ground floor of the Hospital, for change of user of the said premises given to them for 'Baby Care' Centre and nursery, and inducing unauthorised and illegal occupants in the said premises."

To substantiate his charge, Golwalla referred to an article in the *Indian Express* dated March 27, 1987 in which it was stated, "Round the side of the building, approached through an airy well-lit courtyard is located the office

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of the only other surviving Parsi newspaper other than *Jam-e-Jamshed*, the *Parsiana*." "Mr Katrak is the advocate for the defendant," wrote Golwalla.

Rebutting the umbrella accusation of besmirching the fair name of the Punchayet, Golwalla challenged Katrak to cite a specific instance. It was Golwalla's contention that Katrak was pursuing a personal vendetta against him. The resolution of the board of trustees had noted, "The board of trustees of the Parsi Punchayet Bombay, unanimously notes with regret the purported move on the part of four members of the erstwhile E and F registers of the Anjuman Committee, purporting to call a meeting of all the members enrolled on the said erstwhile E and F registers of the Anjuman Committee on March 31, 1987 at the Sethna Agiary Hall, Tardeo, Bombay, for the alleged purpose of passing a resolution against Dr A.F. Golwalla, chairman of the board of trustees.

"The board affirms its full confidence in the chairman and wishes to clarify that decisions in respect of all major policies and the like are taken

by the board of trustees with the full knowledge, consent and approval of all or majority of the trustees.

"As far as major matters of policy and the like concerning the N.N. and the R.N. Wadia Trusts go, decisions

**"You will not have
people coming
forward to become
trustees if you blame
them at the drop of a
hat"**

are also taken by all or majority of the members of the managing committee of the said Wadia Trusts on which three of the senior trustees of the Parsi Punchayet are members.

"The Trustees strongly deprecate this move on the part of some of the members of the said erstwhile E and F registers in tarnishing the fair name of an esteemed member of the board and, consequently, of the prestigious

institution of the Parsi Punchayet, Bombay."

Golwalla mentioned that Katrak's cousin had filed a criminal case against him (Golwalla) in the Metropolitan Magistrate's Court. Golwalla said that the cousin had desired a flat at Cusrow Baug for which Katrak and another social worker had phoned him on one or more occasions. But the flat was allocated by the trustees to someone else and Katrak's actions therefore stemmed from personal pique. Golwalla also alleged that Dinshaw Merchant had attempted "to get inducted unauthorisedly and to take possession of a large flat of about 1,750 square feet at Khareghat Colony in 1978/79."

(Merchant had stated in the meeting, "I have seven flats in Bombay - for my children, for myself and two for investment. If I tried to occupy your flat, you would try to throw me out, write to me." Merchant challenged Golwalla to produce a single line in evidence to prove the allegation.)

Neither Golwalla's rejoinder nor any of the letters published to substantiate his claims, bore a date.

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"Obstacles to a navjote"

Our forefathers planned migration to the west coast of India for the purpose of maintaining the independent identity of the Zoroastrian religion and the race. The all-round prosperity enjoyed by the Parsis till recently is due to strict adherence to this lofty ideal.

The Bangalore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman (BPZA) has all along refused to perform navjotes of children born of a Zoroastrian father and non-Zoroastrian mother. Bangalore Panthaky Nadirshah Unvalla therefore rightly refused to supply nirang etc required by (Dastur Navrooz) Minochehr-Homji on May 18, 1986 for the *nahan* of two daughters of a Zoroastrian father, Shenoy Soonavala and his Christian wife. Unvalla strongly objected to any outsider acting against the tenets and traditions of

Zoroastrianism. Consequently BPZA passed a resolution in August 1986 which specifically lays down the rule that outside priests should be invited by the local panthaky for performing navjote and wedding ceremonies.

Sharukh Mistry and his non-Zoroastrian wife Renu approached Unvalla to invite Minochehr-Homji to perform the navjote of their two children in December 1986. Since the BPZA resolution was not meant for such juddin navjotes, there was absolutely no point in seeking his permission. Yet Minochehr-Homji made a false show of observing the *rivaj* as is evident from the fact that he brought along with him the nirang, etc to Bangalore as requested by Renu Mistry and performed juddin navjotes for the second time in six months within the jurisdiction of the BPZA, contrary to the long-standing traditions observed at that place. Instead of justifying his actions on religious grounds, he took refuge under a legal opinion.

If some of the keepers of our faith try to undermine the very foundations of the lofty ideal for which our forefathers planned migration to this country, then it is the duty of all those who cherish these values, irrespective of their status, to fight for upholding the tenets and long-standing traditions of our religion. The Mistris must thank themselves for facing obstacles to the navjote since they insisted on getting the navjotes performed within the jurisdiction of BPZA - with due knowledge of Panthaky Unvalla - though knowing fully well that he was always against such navjotes.

SOHRAB NAVALSHAW PATWA

The article "Obstacles to a navjote" (*Parsiana*, February 1987) saddened me and was a reminder of this flair we Zoroastrians have in engaging in bitter and avoidable controversies.

One respects the "time-tested *rivaj*." Ervad Nadirshah Unvalla can very well stand by his own convictions regarding the desirability or undesirability of performing navjotes of children of mixed parentage; but I see no excuse for Ervad Unvalla not rendering any assistance to Dastur Navrooz Minochehr-Homji.

I am glad that Dastur Minochehr-

Homji took the steps he took. One should admire and encourage couples like the Mistris who are genuinely interested in bringing up their children as true Zoroastrians. And as was rightly said in the concluding line of the article - what impression would the young ones have, who are about to enter the Zoroastrian religion, when some of our priests act so?

TEHMASP H. PAREKH

I have read the report "Obstacles to a navjote" (*Parsiana*, February '87). It runs parallel to Peterson's navjote performed by Ervad Kersey Antia in America.

Dasturji Minochehr-Homji knows Zoroastrianism and understands his duty as a Zoroastrian priest. Zoroaster has not preached casteism, groupism or sectism and, according to him, the best gift we can give to another is religion. By Gatha 46.12 and his testament, he exhorts us to convert and receive into our fold all competent people of alien faiths, even Turanians. It may here be said that many Zoroastrian rulers had taken alien brides from many different faiths and countries (see Dastur M.N Dhalla's *History of Zoroastrianism*, chapter 35), and Zoroaster himself converted the Greek savant Tianur and the Indian savant Sankaracharya to Zoroastrianism.

The *Gathas* do not prescribe any ceremony such as the navjote, and the Zoroastrian religion of 'be good' is meant for the whole of humanity. A Parsi child is made to wear a sudreh to remind him to walk on the right path (*sad-rah*) of *humata, hukhata, huv-rashta*. Why hold it back from others? If everybody wore it, this world would be a heaven to live in.

Kudos to Dasturji Minochehr-Homji, Ervad Antia and the Mistris. Let the initiated Mistry children live and grow outside of priestly prejudice in love of God and His revealed religion.

If right is not right, then alone may we seek to blame the dasturs who perform the navjotes of children of alien faiths. When your mind is trained to live righteously, you need to wear no sudreh-kusti. All virtuous men are Zoroastrians.

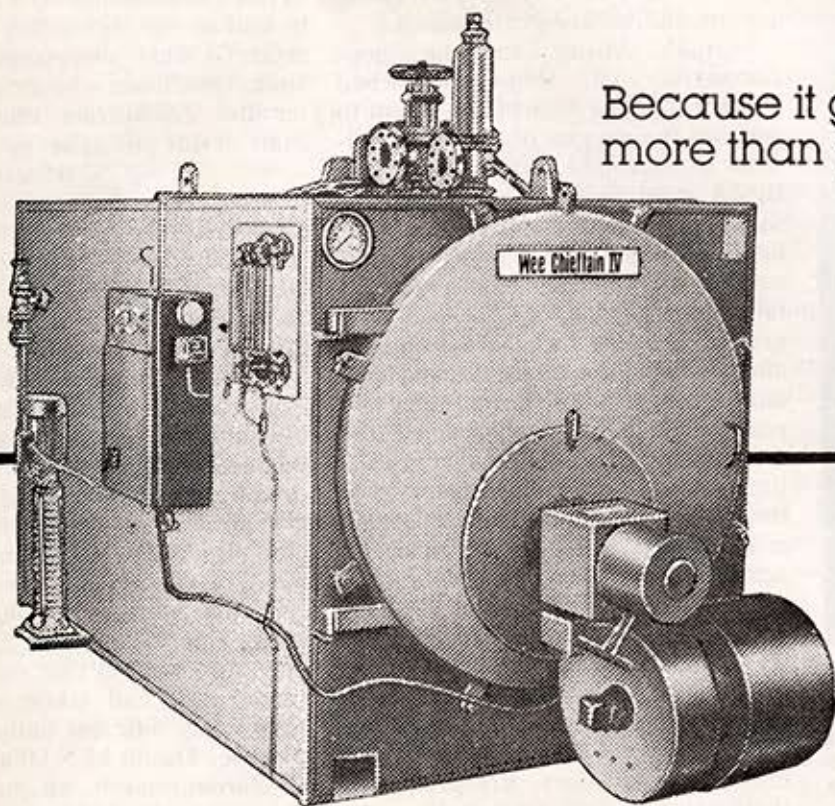
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"Not fire worshippers"

Being a behdin I do not claim to be very knowledgeable in affairs pertaining to our Zoroastrian religion and I was therefore hoping that some of our revered dasturs would give their opinion on this "controversial" subject when the American Press labelled us as 'fire worshippers' (*Parsiana*, February '87). This would have carried more weight than the opinions of laymen.

In the absence of any comments in the Press from any of the revered dasturs I looked up some of the religious books available with me.

In the *Khordeh Avesta*, transliterated and translated into Gujarati by Ervad Kavasji Edulji Kanga, the translation of *Atash Nyaish* begins with "*Kshnaothra Ahureh Mazda*" (May there be rejoicing through God, Ahura Mazda).

In the Gujarati translation of *Atash Nyaish* running into about 14 pages, I did not find any indication that we are fire worshippers. Ervad Kanga's translation of "*Tav atash puthra Ahureh Mazda*" interprets the Avesta word *putra* as purifier and therefore the translation is: "The fire that purifies

(all things) from you Ahura Mazda."

Ms Gool K. S. Shavaksha has written a beautiful book in English and in her description of *Atash Nyaish*, she writes, "Oh God! through Thy fire, symbol of purity, cleanse my mind and soul by giving me truth, *asha* and faith, *aramaiti*. She goes on to write, "This dedication (at the) start (of) all the five *nyaishes* is often mistaken by non-Zoroastrians as worship of the sun, moon, rays and fire not realizing that these are just symbols for Zoroastrians, just as the cross is a symbol for Christians. Zoroastrians light the fire. All other religions light a candle or oil light. To all, it is a dedication, a sacrifice or a thank you."

Mahatma Gandhi, addressing the Asian Conference in New Delhi in 1946, said all religions enjoin the worship of one God who is all pervasive. It is slanderous to call the Parsis 'fire worshippers' or 'sun worshippers.' The Parsi hymns correspond to the *Gayatri Mantra* of the Hindus. It is nothing but the pure, unalloyed worship of God Himself.

Ms Meher Master-Moos in her book *What my mother taught me* has a different version of *atash*. She writes, "The

term *atash* really means a form of vibrational energy. It does not mean fire, which is what it has been usually mis-translated as, in the English language."

Mr Noshir H. Vajifdar in his book *Let us pray* writes: "Fire is the visible sign of Thee that art invisible, the flaming form of Thee that art formless. It is the physical manifestation of Thy spirituality, the emblem that clothes Thy divinity, the finest representation of Thy supreme purity and the most perfect symbol of Thy light and power..." He continues, "Let me, dear Ahura Mazda, similarly raise an altar unto Thy divine fire burning in my heart and make it Thy sanctuary. My own *athra* will I be and I will tend the holy fire within me, O Ahura Mazda, with my own goodness and my love for Thee."

JAL J. OLLIA

Zoroastrian faithfuls

Navjote ceremonies are a mere farce. Before initiation and performance of navjote ceremonies, children are hardly given any knowledge about the sanctity of our religion, and the mode and method of a navjote ceremony. In

continued on page 31



The Old & the new

Many old landmarks in India draw appreciative remarks from visitors. Like the gracious Bombay Central Station; the Nasik Security Press; the stately old Reserve Bank building and many more—all built by Shapoorji Pallonji & Co. Pvt. Ltd., over the last 120 years.

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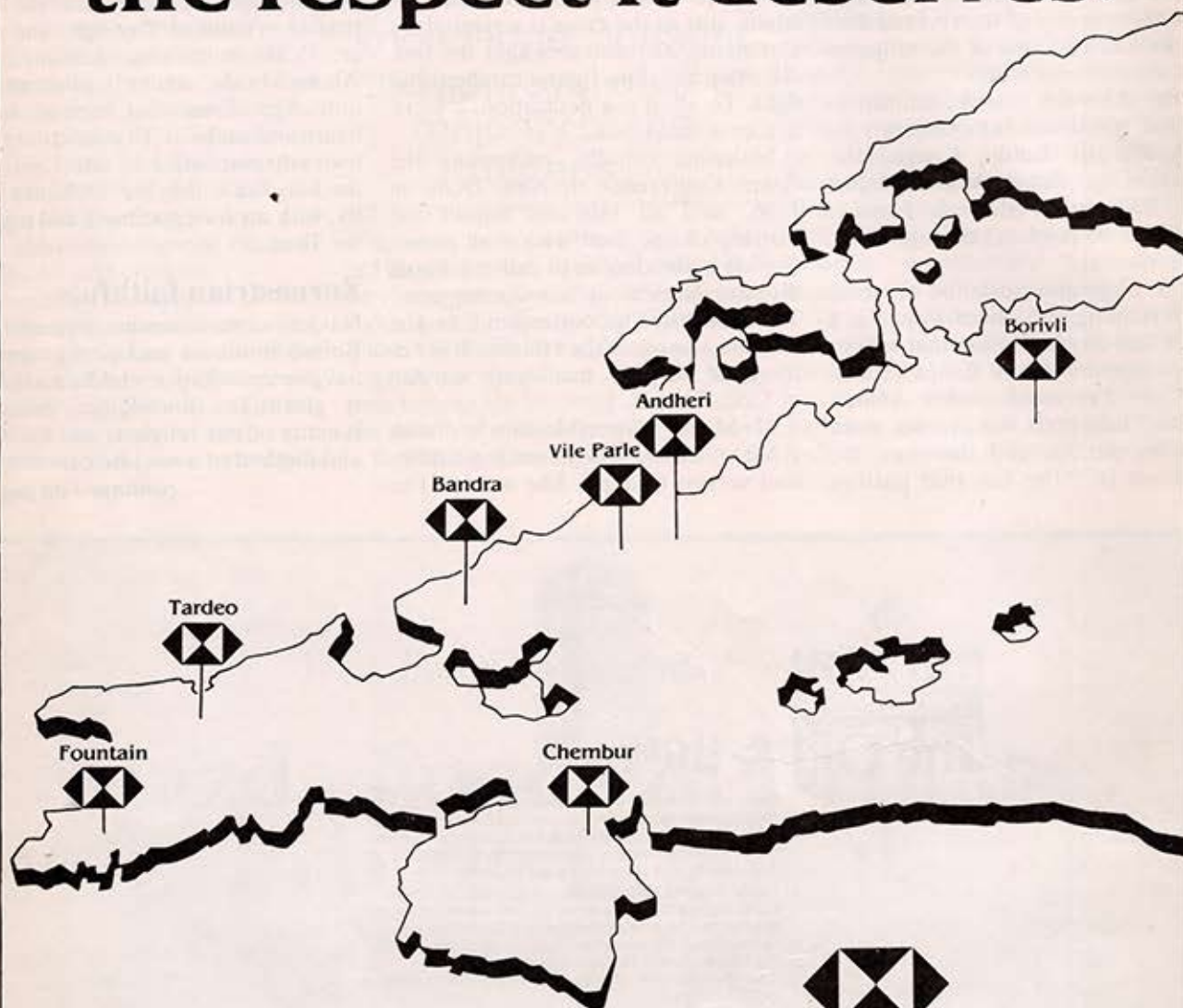
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Events and Personalities

Mazda's mobile resources

To announce the launching of their new fixed deposit schemes and to familiarize the brokers with Mazda Industries and Leasing's present position in the share market and future prospects, a press conference was convened at the Ballroom of the Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay on February 4, 1987.

Recalling that India has the highest savings rate in the world which is in the region of 23 percent, Mazda Industries' chairman Homi Ranina explained the two optional plans in their fixed deposit scheme. Both the plans accept minimum deposits of Rs 3,000 and thereafter in multiples of 1,000. Under Plan A (cumulative deposit scheme) deposits may be accepted for one/two/three years and the interest will be compounded monthly at 15 percent per annum and paid on maturity. Under Plan B (quarterly interest schemes) the period of deposit varies from six months to three years with the quarterly interest ranging from 11 percent to 15 percent.

"To provide a certain amount of liquidity," explained Ranina, "a depositor or his family member would be given the necessary funds" if he wished to buy a product on a lease or a hire-purchase agreement. To induce people in the rural and semi-rural areas to subscribe to these deposits, field staff will be deployed.

Besides the chairman, four of the Company's nine directors - managing director Homi Mehta, Burjor Antia, Kersi Limathwalla and Manoj Trivedi - were present on the occasion. "We have already mobilized six crore eleven lakh rupees from our fixed deposits, which would be considered the highest in India among leasing companies," emphasized Ranina. In the year ending June '86, Mazda Indus-

tries made a profit of Rs 1,27,19,000 and declared a dividend of 22.5 percent on enlarged capital. In the six months ending December '86, 97 percent of the preceding year's profits had been attained. "The more resources we can raise through fixed deposits, the more profits we can mobilize," said the chairman.

Since the investing market may not be willing to "put all their eggs in one basket," The Mazdalease Group is diversifying into industry. An audiovisual presentation by Raka Advertising provided a perspective on the Company's diverse projects. Under the banner of the Mazdalease Group are included four companies: Mazda Industries and Leasing with its seven divisions; Mazda Eastland Industries and Leasing, due to commence leasing operations from Calcutta, is expected to launch a public issue on May 6, 1987; Mazda Packaging in collaboration with Reifenhauer (planned as a six-crore rupee project with an equity base of 2.5 crores, the rest being loans) manufacturing packaging films which will enhance the shelf life of packaged foods; and Aviquipo of India (recently bought over by the Group), a supplier of airline instruments.

Mazda Industries and Leasing's seven divisions are: Mazda Leasing; Mazda Merbanco (merchant banking); Mazda Deuspa Hydraulics (its hydraulic factory is expected to be ready by June); Mazda Marketing; Mazda Project Consultancy; Mazda Realstate Developers; and Mazda Polyurethane.

"Lighting the vision into the future," Mazdalease plans to manufacture concrete sleepers for the Indian railways (the fourth largest network in the world), and also launch another division, Mazda Hotels and Leisure Resorts for which negotiations for prime sites are already under way.

Homes for mobeds

The CER-HOME (Committee for Economic Revival - House Our Mobeds Endeavour) has collected approximately six lakhs of rupees in donations and approximately two lakhs from a premiere of the movie *Desperately Seeking Susan* on March 5, 1987 at the Sterling Theatre, says Ms Silloo Kavarana, its joint honorary treasurer. The special committee commissioned by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, has set itself a target of 20 lakh rupees.

The money collected is meant for the construction of housing facilities for mobeds. "The houses, 20 of them, nearly 550 square feet each, will be homes to 20 full-time practising mobeds and their families," notes a CER-HOME appeal in the form of a color booklet meant for Zoroastrians both in India and abroad.

"He who answers our prayers lives in our hearts. And he who prays for us?" Opening with this question, the booklet has, says Kavarana, already elicited a good response from Zoroastrians living in Canada.

"The priestly class of our community has over the years been grossly neglected," notes an accompanying letter by Kavarana. "It is also true that on account of this, their number has greatly declined."

Energy awards

Annual awards for thermal energy conservation in textile mills - instituted on the recommendation of Rusi Engineer, managing director of Industrial Boilers Private Limited (IBPL) - were launched by Vasant Sathe, union minister for energy, on February 12, 1987 at the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry in New Delhi, according to an IBPL press release.



Launching the IBPL Awards: (from left) K.L. Puri, Engineer, Sathe and Baldawala

Describing the IBPL Energy Conservation Awards - 1986 as a "step in the right direction," Sathe said that the Government was willing to provide fiscal benefits to industry for result-oriented energy conservation programs.

Eight different categories of textile mills and processing houses will be eligible for the first prize (a silver trophy) and the second prize (a bronze plaque). Acclamation awards of Rs 1,001 and commendation awards of Rs 501 will be presented to those persons responsible for achieving the best results in energy conservation, notes the release.

Ms D.B. Baldawala, director of IBPL, will be chairperson of the independent panel of judges drawn from various national organizations. These awards, concludes the release, will be presented in New Delhi in November/December 1987.

"Musical to the core"

Firoz Dastur, noted vocalist, was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award-1986 for his contribution to classical Hindustani music. Dastur, who received his award from the Vice-President of India R. Venkataraman on February 28, 1987 in Bhubaneswar was subsequently felicitated by the music department of the Bombay University on March 22, 1987, states *The Times of India* report of March 24.

The 67-year-old exponent of the Kirana gharana has, says Mohan Nadkarni in the write-up, been associated with the University's music department since its inception in 1969. The function, which was held in the International Students' Hall at the Uni-

versity Club House, attracted a large audience and was presided over by Prof G.M.Rajarshi, registrar of the Bombay University. Prof Rajarshi spoke warmly of Dastur's contributions as a teacher and a performer, and the latter's reply to this felicitation was a musical one.

"One would have to listen to believe how Pandit Firoz Dastur, at 67 and none too good health, could be so musical to the core in his one-hour performance," commented Nadkarni. "No doubt the voice may have lost some of its mobility because of advancing age. But the sweetness of his tone has not declined. It reminded one of his younger days." Recitals by Jal Balaporia, a colleague and Shuchita Dongre, a student of Dastur's, were also part of the program.

At another function, scheduled for April 5 at the Dadar Matunga Cultural Centre, Dastur was to be felicitated by his students.

Zonta Woman of the Year

Acting president of the National Association for the Blind (NAB), Ms Shehera F. Nanavati, was awarded the Woman of the Year trophy by the Zonta Club of Bombay III at their eighth charter anniversary celebrations at the Oberoi Towers on March 14, notes the Club's press release.

Nanavati won this award, which was



(Left) Dastur: attracting musical audiences (Right) Nanavati: serving the blind

instituted in 1984, for her lifelong dedication to the welfare of the blind, notes the release. Serving the NAB in various capacities, Nanavati has been with the organization since its inception in 1956. Her involvement in social work dates back to the 1930s when, as a young girl during the Freedom Movement, she would visit jailed Congress volunteers and teach the illiterate among them.

The Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Tro-

phy for Zontian of the Year was awarded to Ms Mahazaver Dalal and the Personal Involvement Cup to Ms Freny Paghdwala.

President of the Club Ms Pilloo K. Vandrewala referred to the organization's activities and welfare work in assisting children of the slums and handicapped youngsters, while chief guest Dr (Ms) Mehroo Bengalee, vice-chancellor of the Bombay University, stressed the need for involving the youth in social welfare activities.

Lonavla holiday

All 15 blocks of the Bai Bhicaajee Jehangir Mody Parsi Sanatorium Trust at Lonavla are once again available on hire to Parsi families, notes a press release. The blocks, which have been restored to the Trust after a "protracted legal battle" are, it adds, situated in quiet and peaceful surroundings at a 15-minute walking distance from the Lonavla railway station and bazaar.

Each block is a self-contained unit and consists of a verandah, bedroom, dining room, kitchen, bath and English-style toilet with a flushing system, notes the Trust's general information sheet. Recently renovated, each block now has a hot-water geyser and two ceiling fans. In addition to five beds, mattresses and pillows, the Sanatorium will provide kitchen equipment and crockery free of charge. Occupants will, however, have to arrange for their own linen and cutlery.

The Trust's rules and regulations stipulate that a maximum of five people - including children - can stay in the block, overnight occupancy being restricted to Parsis.

The non-refundable hire charges and a refundable deposit against damages must be paid in advance. The rates are Rs 750 per month (April, May, June), Rs 600 per month (off-season) and Rs 30 per day for a minimum of five days (off-season only). Meals will be supplied by the Sanatorium manager and billed separately. Other extras will include charges for water, electricity and cleaning, and for a gas cylinder and stove if desired.

The blocks will be allotted from Bombay. Parsi individuals and families interested in hiring the blocks may apply to: J.C.Mody, Managing Trustee, Bai Bhicaajee Jehangir Mody Parsi Sanatorium Trust, Hampton Court, N. Parekh Marg, Bombay 400005.

It takes guts to be enterprising. But then, no guts, no glory.



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Chicago promotes priests

"To promote the interests and welfare of Zoroastrian priests in the Metropolitan Chicago area," a charter for a Mobed Fund has been drawn up and approved by both the priests as well as the board of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC), notes the March issue of the ZAC newsletter.

The Fund will be used to defray expenses incurred in training a priest willing to serve the Chicago area, towards expenses incurred in higher priestly training of Chicago priests and any other relevant purpose deemed fit by the majority of the Chicago priests. Direct donations to the Fund itself can be made. However, the present collection of funds in ZAC's prayer room will not be used for the Mobed Fund so long as it is needed for the ZAC building maintenance, notes the report adding, that the deposit, investment and disbursement of the Fund will be carried out by the ZAC board in consonance with the Chicago priests themselves.

In the meanwhile, a proposal to build a 2,000 square foot facility adjoining the Chicago Darbe Mehr for a seminary was prepared by past president Rohinton Rivetna and discussed at a special board meeting on February 21, notes the newsletter.

In addition to providing living quarters for the athravans-in-training, the facility is to include several classrooms, storage areas, children's rooms etc. Planned in three phases, phase one "would be aimed at providing for a second generation of Zoroastrian priests by establishing, amongst other things, a Religion Perpetuation Fund (already launched);" phase two would include putting forward the proposal to the Zoroastrians of Chicago to determine what the community wants, backed by contributions to support and maintain the facilities they want; and phase three would include implementing the wishes of the community, once adequate funds have been collected.

With an initial target of \$ 15,000 (Rs 1,96,050), ZAC has already launched a Religion Perpetuation Fund to encourage the children of ZAC priests to become navars and offer all possible

assistance to any other navar, above the age of 18, to migrate and settle down in Chicago and serve the community there for at least three years. As per the recommendation of the Chicago priests, Ervad Sarosh Karanjia has been sponsored for migration to the United States "to serve the community which is growing not only in number but in religious activities," notes the newsletter.

The ZAC board has also approved an annual contribution of \$400 (Rs 5,228) to the Dadar Athornan Madressa for sponsoring a Madressa scholar currently studying for his BA or MA in comparative religion. The scholar is to be further coached by Dastur Navrooz Minochehr-Homji in Avestan scriptures and the Zoroastrian religion "so as to prepare him as an enlightened priest," notes the report. The ultimate goal is to sponsor such a student for migration to the USA provided the community is willing to support a full-time priest with a decent remuneration.

The recently appointed Pakistan ambassador to the US is Jamshed Marker. Though Marker and his wife, were unable to attend the ZAC's Jamshedi Navroze function on March 28, all Zoroastrians were invited by the president of the Pakistan Federation, Hameedullah Khan, to the Pakistan Day celebrations on March 20, to enable them to meet with the ambassador, who was the day's guest of honor.

American youth congress

With a "wish to bring together all Zoroastrian youth, to share ideas and develop understanding," the First North American Zoroastrian Youth Congress is scheduled for September 5 to 7, 1987.

Sponsored by the Zoroastrian Association of California and organized by the youth committees of the Association as well as that of the California Zoroastrian Center, suggestions have been invited for constructive and objective topics for discussion, so that the Congress can be held "in an extremely congenial manner...We sincerely hope that this Congress will be a stepping stone for making new friends and cementing old friendships," notes the invitation, urging all Zoroastrians

to come with family and friends to this "fun-filled weekend."

The executive board of the Congress comprises Meher Dadabhoy Amalsad, chairperson, Saghar Javanshir, secretary, Farhad Arjani, treasurer, Parviz Mazdiyasn, correspondence and printing, Cyrus Italia, travelling and transportation, Feridoon Goshtasbi, cultural and social activities and Rattan Appoo, reception and accommodation.

Any youth wishing to participate in the Congress discussions, may contact Parviz Mazdiyasn, PO Box 52, Hawthorne, CA 90251, USA.

Unacceptable status

"Last year when my son Rich expressed an interest in attending our Navroze dinner, I found, to my surprise, that my first reaction was to discourage him from attending." Ms Dina G. McIntyre, who, along with her husband Richard runs their own law firm McIntyre and McIntyre and who had also helped draft the constitution of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), was explaining the reasons why she had decided not to renew her membership with the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania (ZAPA), in a letter dated February 28, 1987, addressed to ZAPA members.

The letter continued, "I realized that I was afraid some comment might be made by an orthodox ZAPA member which would bring home to him (Rich) the fact that, as a person with a non-Zoroastrian father, he would never be accepted as a full and equal participant by all members of the Zoroastrian community...All my life I have tried to teach my children that it is wrong to discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed or sex. I was ashamed to have my son find out that his own mother's people - the good guys - also discriminate on the basis of race..."

"Over the past several years, I have invested much time and energy in ZAPA, in the hope that it would be a group through which my kids would someday get to know their mother's people, and learn about, and be proud of, the Zoroastrian side of their heritage. I realize now that this is a vain hope."

McIntyre, however, does not wish to stay in the ZAPA and fight for what she thinks is right: "I will not become a negative, divisive force in the community... Nor can I continue with the organization and meekly accept second-class status for me or my husband and children. The only non-destructive, and honorable option that I have left is to withdraw from it..."

"I realize that to many of you this issue is merely a controversial irritant. To me, the pain is very real. You probably won't feel its reality until five, 10 or 15 years from now, when your own children feel about themselves and their families the way I feel about myself and mine. Perhaps we will find the courage to come to grips with it before then, so that your children and their children will be able to enrich their lives by continuing to be part of the Zoroastrian experience, instead of, one by one, tuning out and dropping out."

Provincial Zoroastrians

"Zoroastrians can be found in all corners of North America, from Alaska in the west to Nova Scotia in the east, from the high Arctic in the north (seasonal workers) to Florida in the south. No place is too cold or too warm for this hardy and hard-working group of people," notes editor Jehan Bagli, in his introduction to the Zoroastrians of the Maritime Provinces of Canada -

Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, in the March issue of *Gavashni*, the newsletter of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec.

There are about a dozen Zoroastrian families residing in the Maritime Provinces. Most of them are in Nova Scotia, whose first settlers were Ms Jaloo Jagosh and the late Adi Jagosh. Though there is no formal Zoroastrian Association, the community is bound by a strong love for card playing, notes Bagli, adding, "These card playing sessions take place at least once a month, hosted by different families. Jimmy Jagosh is the resident chef and Roda Godrej is the resident gourmet cook delighting the community with their varied culinary skills. The thirst for a Zoroastrian get-together to exchange jokes is so great that the Davers (Nozer and Kashmira) battle the arduous three and a half hour drive from Mancton (New Brunswick) to join the crazy card party sessions in Halifax."

Born in Johannesburg, South Africa, and educated in London, England, Fi (Firingiz) Dastoor has been living in Nova Scotia for 14 years. A budding Zoroastrian politician, Dastoor is active on the local political scene, as also in the Halifax Women's Network but eventually hopes to be elected to the Provincial and then to the Federal political position and work to better the lot of women in all walks of life. A computer consultant by profession,

Dastoor's text book on computer analysis for universities should be published by 1988, informs Bagli.

In recognition of his services to the Canadian community, Zarir Mehta, business manager of the world famous Montreal Symphony Orchestra has been awarded the Member of the Order of Canada, notes the March *Gavashni*.

Born with a cranial deformity (Crouzon's disease), three-year-old Yazad Mobedji will need heart, brain and skull surgery to arrest the progressing deformity. Surgery had been slated for March end at the Toronto Sick Children's Hospital, notes an appeal in *Gavashni*. The parents will need to stay with Yazad in Toronto for four months and, though the Zoroastrians of Toronto will provide the hospitality, they will need money for medical expenses and incidentals. Yazad's father is a mobed in the Dadyseth Agiary in Bombay, earning Rs 1,100 a month. Donations may be sent to Kersi Bhedwar, C/o Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, PO Box 654, Station Tour de la Bourse, Montreal, PQ, H4Z 1J9.

Hong Kong Directory

The 22-page *Directory of Hong Kong Zoroastrians* (1987-88), has 176 entries and according to Hong Kong-based Jimmy Master, "the total number of Parsis in Hong Kong has remained more or less the same."

The new trustees of the Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton and Macau, as listed in the *Directory*, are: Jal Soli Shroff, president, Erach Mancherji Mehta, secretary, and trustees Keki Fakirji Jokhi, Viraf Keki Parekh and Homi Kaikhushroo Italia. The *Directory* also carries a calendar of events for the year 1987-88 wherein 18 religious meets and social gatherings have been listed.

Research award

Ms Zaver Murzban Bhujwala has recently been awarded "The Young Investigators" award of £500 by the University of London. She had completed her MSc with a first class in radiation biology and is presently working for her PhD thesis, notes the February '87 issue of *The Zoroastrian*, the newsletter of the Committee for Economic Revival (CER).

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Death of a debunker

Arnavaz S. Mama

The twinkling eye was hooded; the familiar nasal drawl silenced forever. It is said that no biography of a living being is ever complete, for death withholds the finishing touch. Adi Marzban - Editor of *Jam-e-Jamshed* and entertainer par excellence - lost his 10-month-long silent battle with lung cancer on February 26, 1987. Pain had blanched the swarthy, beaming face, shrunk the familiar rotund figure and crowned the master of burlesque with the dignity of tragic heroism. On becoming aware of cancer's inroads, 71-year-old Marzban had chosen to bear the suffering with stoic calm, refusing "treatment" that might prolong life at the cost of human dignity.

Tributes poured in from the many directions in which his multifaceted personality had evolved, specifically journalism and drama - stage, radio and TV presentations. "In his death we have lost a veteran journalist and a renowned playwright," said Maharashtra chief minister S. B. Chavan. "The city of Bombay has lost a great son. He lived a purposeful life and served worthy causes to the end of his days. His services will be remembered by this metropolis in general and the journalist and theater community in particular, which have lost a founding father, friend and leader," noted the resolution adopted by the citizens of Bombay at a public meeting convened by Sadruddin Daya, the sheriff of Bombay, on March 27. The Gujarati resolution of the Samast Anjuman meeting, summoned by the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) under the chairmanship of Dr Aspi Golwalla on April 7, recalled how favorably Marzban's public activities had reflected on the community and enumerated his many private interests including photography, astrology, magic, music and painting, in each of which he was considerably adept.

Marzban's "very name brings a smile to one's face and joy to the

Community life-styles were an unending source of comedy for playwright and *Jam-e-Jamshed* Editor Adi Marzban



heart," noted Daya. Actress and TV personality Sabira Merchant referred to Adi's mastery of the sense of timing and *The Bombay Samachar* Editor Jehan Daruwalla, complimenting Adi's profound knowledge, which, "like a pocket watch, only came out when required," noted. "Though personally progressive, Adi saw to it that community institutions were preserved." Daruwalla recalled how *The Samachar* was established by Marzban's forefather Fardoonji in 1822 to serve five communities and the *Jam-e-Jamshed* in 1832 to serve the Parsi community, referring to the latter as a "great historical gift. Without the *Jam-e-Jamshed*, the community would have lost the guidance of so many years... Do we not owe some duty to

the institutions that have served us so well? Are we going to do anything to save that great paper? Due to circumstances that community papers must face, it needs support. We have to see that great institutions do not pass away." Addressing himself to the vice-chancellor of Bombay University Dr (Ms) Mehroo Bengalee who shared the podium with him, Daruwalla suggested a chair in drama be instituted at Bombay University to commemorate Adi Marzban.

Referring to the deceased as a contemporary and a college friend, *Blitz* founder Editor Rusy Karanjia noted, "The giant is gone, but memories remain - sweet, fragrant, evergreen...of the odd-looking figure, a subject of caricature, who rode a three-wheeler, laughing at himself and the world, but with compassion, humanity." Recalling "the magnificent series on flying saucers" that Adi contributed to the *Blitz*' early issues, Karanjia spoke of Marzban's encyclopaedic mind and described him as a renaissance character, wanting to do many things, wishing to be everywhere and suggested: "Adi Marzban deserves a theater to himself." Bombay has no theater for ballet which requires a live orchestra. "Build a real theater, a memorial worthy of his genius."

"A creative artist in the broad, liberal sense...all knowledge was his province...His elephantine memory combined with an amazing degree of modesty and humanity," noted well-known jurist Nani Palkhivala. "The capacity to see yourself as others see you, was among Marzban's characteristics...He was totally unconscious of the amount of his contribution to keep this nation amused," Palkhivala added.

Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee (I) president Murli Deora suggested that Mangalore Street, where the *Jam-e-Jamshed* is located, be renamed after Adi Marzban.

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Lawyer, playwright and comedian Homi Tavadia credited Marzban with "revolutionizing the trend of Gujarati drama in India." The many sets were reduced to one, the songs cut out, performance time curtailed to two or three hours; the prompters who held prominence before were deleted and the natural language introduced in place of the old bombastic style. Tavadia nostalgically recalled his own association with the departed playwright to whom he was "maaro haramkhor bhai (my lazy brother) Homi" in the *Buddhi Dhansak Mandal* – the family farce that continued on All India Radio for decades. Tavadia also recalled how Adi always acknowledged special love and allegiance for two people – his wife Silla and the late Pesi Khandalawalla, a friend and co-producer.

Another old associate, Burjor Patel, *The Statesman's* Bombay representative and co-producer of the popular, long-playing revue *Bottoms Up*, suggested that the scripts of Marzban's radio plays – he was a master of the genre – be collected and published so that future generations may learn what a radio script is. Patel also suggested the institution of a fund to finance Adi

Marzban scholars in drama and the publication of a commemorative volume so that posterity may remember a man called Adi.

The *Jam-e-Jamshed* honored its Editor of 50 years by respecting his desire that "the show must go on" – foregoing the traditional day's closure in memory of the dead. All India Radio paid its tribute on the night Adi died; Doordarshan on the evening of the funeral. Referring to the Doordarshan tribute, *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of March 2 commented, "No playwright could have asked for a better epilogue to his life." Well-known media personality Ms Dolly Thakore gave a brief introduction and then followed the who's who of Bombay theater – Keith Stevenson, Burjor Patel, Alyque Padamsee, Hosi Vasunia, Bomsy Nicholson, Ms Dolly Dotiwalla, Ronnie Screwvalla, Dinshaw Daji, Gujarati actors associated with Adi's plays, the Indian National Theatre's Damu Jhaveri and others. One of them talked about how they always looked for established actors when they cast a play while "Marzban looked for new talent that he could develop and train. That is why Adi Marz-

ban was Mr Theater. That is why they all came to his funeral to honor him," wrote *The Afternoon*.

Born on April 17, 1914 Ardeshir Pherozesha Marzban schooled at the Bharda New High School and graduated in literature from Bombay University in 1933. Editor of the *Jam-e-Jamshed* since 1936, Marzban received the UNESCO scholarship grant in 1953 which enabled him to take an intensive course in production and direction for the stage, radio, cinema and television at the Pasadena Playhouse, a world famous college of theater arts in the United States. He was awarded the Padma Shri by the Government of India in 1964 in recognition of his services to stage and radio, the citation referring to him as "A prolific writer of plays in Gujarati and English, he has remarkable mastery over almost all the media of mass communication – journalism, broadcasting, cinema and the stage." The Sangeet Natak Akademi Award followed in 1970.

Credited with the founding of the St Xavier's College Dramatics Society (from which in due course bloomed the Padamsees' Theatre Group) Marzban has 60 Gujarati and 50 English

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full-length productions to his credit. Notes *The Times of India* in its Current Topics of February 28, "If the French farce took root here and blossomed to such an extent that we forgot its alien origin and came to accept it as the original Parsi theater, the credit goes to you, 'apro Adi.' And the same can be said of your discerning eye which, in one of your frequent moments of inspiration, saw the likeness between the 'revue' so firmly established and popular on the western stage, with 'Bhavai,' one of the Gujarati folk arts. You made the amalgamate so appetising that other language theaters freely and unashamedly borrowed it.

"But it was not always merely fun and frolic. For your apparent frivolity had a strong undercurrent of social reform. You are on record as having said that you were the greatest debunker of the Parsi community. Yet your people loved you because of your compassion for your fellow being. Your theater had universal appeal for it was not oblivious to tradition even while judiciously adapting modern trends."

In its obituary on February 27, *The Times* described Marzban as a man who disliked being idle. As a young man on a motorbike (which was later replaced by a modest car) Adi sped through Bombay from one rehearsal to another. "Mr Marzban's stature was immense. But he was never conscious of it, preferring to be soft-spoken and hiding behind puffs of smoke from his pipe." Incidentally, the last time *Parsiana* met Adi in his *Jame* office, the sweated, ailing Editor could only speak with difficulty, being easily out of breath. But the words were full of concern: "Remember, don't make the same mistake we made. Don't smoke."

Wrote sports commentator A.F.S. Talyarkhan, Adi's compeer and cousin, in *The Column* (*Sunday Mid-Day*, March 1, 1987), "It is certain, Adi Marzban, every time he gazed at his own image, must have noticed the birthmark of a smile on his face and the roguish glint in his eye which led him to believe all reflection shall portray some joy. He brought joyful entertainment to hundreds of thousands of all communities and creeds and anyone who can do this in the complex that is Indian society can never be forgotten."

Marzban is survived by his wife Silla.

India's first Lok Ayukta



Died: Sohrab Peshotan Kotval, 76, former Chief Justice of the High Court of Bombay who also served as acting Governor of Maharashtra and was the first Lok Ayukta appointed in the country, on March 6, 1987 at Bombay's Parsee General Hospital following cardiac arrest.

A full court reference (in the presence of all the sitting judges) was made at the Bombay High Court on March 10 when Chief Justice M. H. Kania, president of the Bombay Bar Association K.S.Cooper, and representatives of the Incorporated Law Society, the Western India Advocates' Association, and the Government Pleader paid tributes to Kotval. Describing Kotval as "a man of total integrity, a man of conscience," Cooper said, "He took his office very seriously but he never took himself seriously. He had a delightful sense of humor..."

One of the leading judgments delivered by Kotval was in 1958 when he was appointed the one-man commission of inquiry into the causes of the police firing in Ahmedabad. The procedure evolved by him for this commission is believed to have been of considerable help to persons appointed to such commissions later. Based largely on his findings, the State of Bombay was split into Maharashtra and Gujarat, notes a press release, and the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru

referred to Kotval as the "father of Maha-Gujarat."

Never one to be weighed down by precedent, "Justice Kotval could cling to an unpopular opinion with tenacity ...because he believed that what was right must be done," wrote one of his colleagues. He has also been described as "a model of sober correctness."

As head of the Bombay judiciary from 1966 to 1972, Kotval was made the acting Governor of Maharashtra for four months until a new nominee was found to fill the vacancy created by the sudden demise of Dr P. V. Chelrian. Being the first Parsi Chief Justice in India, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet wished to gratulate Kotval but he turned down the invitation saying it would not be right to accept communal felicitations, reminisces his wife Rati. A month after his retirement as Chief Justice, Kotval was appointed the Lok Ayukta of Maharashtra - the first Lok Ayukta in the country. On that occasion, Vivian Bose, retired judge of the Supreme Court and chairman of the International Commission of Jurists had written to Kotval, "I am delighted that concrete steps have at last been taken in the appointment of an ombudsman (a government official who investigates reported complaints against public officials) and that they have appointed a man like you - just the sort of man that is required for that office." During his tenure as Lok Ayukta for five years, Kotval tried cases against several ministers, two of whom reportedly had to resign on the submission of his report.

Kotval entered the legal domain as an advocate in the Nagpur High Court, and in the Federal Court until it was demolished. He then became a senior advocate of the Supreme Court of India, enjoying an extensive practice in commercial and company law, especially mining companies, and in constitutional law after Independence, notes his bio data. He was also a lecturer at the University College of Law, Nagpur, his alma mater, and an examiner for LLB and LLM papers and for the Hyderabad Civil Service Examinations. He began his career in the judiciary as permanent judge of the Madhya Pradesh High Court in 1955

and on the reorganization of states, was appointed judge of the Bombay High Court.

Born in Nagpur, Kotval's early education was at St Joseph's Convent, Nagpur after which he went to Billimoria High School, Panchgani from where he matriculated. Before joining Law College, he was at the Morris College (now Nagpur Mahavidyalaya). Excelling in elocution and debate, Kotval was also good in tennis and cricket.

Involving himself in the administra-

tion of the Nagpur University (his father being one of the founders of this institution), Kotval was elected as vice-chancellor in 1961. He was on the governing body of Nagpur's only women's college and a trustee of Tata Girls' High School. He served as a member of the Parsi Anjuman Committee in Nagpur for several years and was later elected president. He was also president of the Vidharbha branches of the Bharat Sevak Samaj and the Indian Cancer Society.

Looking into the welfare of those

who worked under him, he prevailed upon the Government to establish for judicial employees a housing colony in Nagpur, named after him in 1983 as 'Nyayamurti Kotvalnagar.' Keeping in mind the need for a future cadre of qualified judicial officers to succeed his generation, he convinced the Government of the need for a Judicial Officers' Training Institute which was established in Nagpur.

He is survived by his wife Rati, son Peshotan and daughters Jeroo, Silloo and Mehroo.

READERS' FORUM... continued from page 19

many cases, parents are hardly in the know of religious sanctities and they have hardly any interest in giving the right type of religious education to their children. With the object of having a gathering of relatives and friends, money is wasted on a large scale only to collect as much cash and presents as they can and the entire *tamasha* stands closed. Quite naturally, children initiated into the Zoroastrian faith have scant respect for the sanctity of our religion. Many youngsters today have discarded their *sudreh*s and *kusti*s.

In order to bring an awakening amongst the present day Parsis, there are a lot of printed books and magazines, and many well-meaning dasturs and Zoroastrians give sensible lectures at gatherings. But few community members are interested.

The number of Parsis practising Zoroastrianism is falling heavily. If Parsis do not reach a sensible decision, I have reason to believe that during the next quarter of a century, there shall hardly be 10,000 Zoroastrians preaching and practising the Zoroastrian faith.

When Dr Kersey Antia performed the navjote ceremony of a young American named Joseph Peterson in Chicago, there was an unnecessary hue and cry amongst the orthodox Zoroastrians. Religion is not an article which can be seen. It is merely an article of faith. Dr Kersey Antia deserves ample praise for his bold step. We should adopt some system by which we can increase the number of Zoroastrian faithfuls. Non-Zoroastrians desiring to marry Zoroastrians should be encouraged to join our fold provided the non-Zoroastrian spouse is sincere, has studied Zoroastrianism and gets his/her navjote ceremony performed.

Thirty years ago, I met a Zoroastrian at the Miami airport who invited me for a drink in a restaurant and introduced me to his American wife. His surname was Barday (Birdi) and he assured me: "I offer prayers both in the morning as well as at night and my American wife is also taking interest in offering and attending Avesta prayers."

We have around seven highly learned and respectable high priests, some hereditary and others selected on merit. When they are installed as high priests, members and well-wishers adorn them with a large number of shawls but thereafter no one cares for their welfare. One senior high priest told me that in the present inflationary period, his sons were looking after the family expenses. A special fund for the sustenance of these learned dasturs should be created.

Yet, there are hundreds of well-to-do Parsi families who are keen to support needy and deserving Zoroastrians. Those who are getting monthly stipends from well-to-do Parsi charity trusts refuse to work, and yet complain about their monetary difficulties. To extend monetary help without receiving service is a crime and such practice should be discouraged. R.N. RUSTOMJI

Cook book

The Zoroastrian Stree Mandal (ZSM), Secunderabad-Hyderabad, has published the fourth edition of the *ZSM Cook Book* owing to its immense popularity and insistent demand from the public.

This is a recipe book containing 374 gustatory delights, selected with great care from the best Indian and western cuisines. There is also a special section

on traditional Parsi dishes. The book has been compiled alphabetically for quick and easy selection and reference.

The cost of the book is Rs 50 and is available from Ms M.F. Italia, Anand Bhavan, 223-B, West Marredpally, Secunderabad 500026. In Bombay, the book is available from Ms G.K. Karanjia, Adenwalla Baug, Tardeo Road, Tardeo, Bombay 400007.

Dr RASHIDA M. PATELL
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Secunderabad

"Hats off to Parsis"

When two Maharashtrians meet, they
talk in Marathi;
When two Madrasis meet, they talk in
Tamil

Punjabis use Punjabi and Bengalis,
Bengali;
Keralites, Malayalam and Andhraites,
Telugu.

Children all use their mother's
language,
Except Gujaratis who talk in English!

Disowned by own children, Gujarati
like an orphan,
found herself neglected, dishonored,
disliked!

Then came Parsis who became real
children
of Gujarat, and loved her and cared
for her.

Now when two Parsis meet, they talk
in Gujarati.
"Hats off to Parsis," say I, a Gujarati!

C.S. Gharekhan
Dwarka

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