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Parsiana

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**Cover: Order of the British Empire medal conferred on Jini Dinshaw
Transparency by Homyar Mistry**

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In Memoriam

Mr Fali Meherji Variava

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Readers' views are welcome on any subject of interest to the community and should be sent to the Editor, Readers' Forum, Parsiana, G.P.O.Box 892, Bombay 400 001. Letters are subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity.

"Obstacles to a navjote"

How often is it said that we are our own worst enemies, that we Parsis are best when fighting amongst ourselves? Now through your columns ("Obstacles to a navjote," *Parsiana*, February 1987) we are allowing outsiders, albeit married to Parsis, to cause deep divisions in our community.

I was greatly upset to read the article which is a not so thinly veiled attempt to malign Ervad Nadirshah Unvalla. Any dar-e-mehr would be lucky to have a panthaky of his caliber. I have had the good fortune to know him for the past several years and a more principled and upright priest I have not met.

As for *rivaj*, when we in Belgaum want an outside priest for a wedding, a

navjote or a sachkar, we always request our panthaky-saheb to formally invite the priest concerned. We think it is not just *rivaj*, it is good manners.

MANECK KAPADIA
Belgaum

As one of the hundreds of admirers of the silent, philosophically-minded and modest Dasturji Minochehr-Homji, I find it most shocking that the Jashan Committee should adopt a reviling attitude towards him. In the last 30 years many have attacked him, but except in one or two cases, he has always maintained a dignified silence. He has continued his research in Zoroastrianism and comparative philosophy. Those who have attended his talks in various parts of the world have benefitted by his learning. He has been taking *Gatha* classes for the last so many years. Besides, he has published prayer books which are in great demand and also tapes of certain prayers.

What can the Bombay Jashan Committee have against such a dedicated, silent and self-effacing High Priest? Moreover, he has kept himself away from controversies as a matter of principle and even when he gives an oral or written rejoinder, it is free from harsh words. All these qualities are very rarely seen in a single scholar, whom they are trying to belittle for performing a navjote, the likes of which have been performed by the dozen in different parts of the world. M. C. MASANI

Considering the plethora of factors connected with the navjote episode, what appears to me as most outrageous is the audacity of the Editor of *The Parsee Voice*, Mr Adi F. Doctor in referring to Dastur N.D. Minochehr-Homji as "Mr!" A layman who is unaware of the difference between a dastur, an ervad, a mobed and himself may be excused if he prefers to use "Mr" for anybody and everybody, but Mr Doctor is an Avesta-Pahlavi scholar, who gives lectures on religion once or twice a week, and so there can be no excuse from his side to cover up the disrespectful way of referring to a Dastur saheb. Differences in views and interpretations can be tolerated, but not

the brashness shown towards a very senior High Priest.

KHORSHED J. MARKER

"Not fire worshippers"

I would like to add my protest to those of Dr Rustom Sarfeh and Dr Homi Dhalla against those who accuse Zoroastrians of being fire worshippers (*Parsiana*, February 1987). We Parsis are partly to blame for this misunderstanding. Perin Bharucha writes a lively novel under the misnomer, *The Fire Worshippers* (1968), while the orthodox Peshotan Peer, in an article, "Stray thoughts on fire as the object of adoration," printed in the collection of seminar papers, *The Sugar in the Milk* (1986), concludes: "After observing carefully and understanding the significance of fire worship, one can say without hesitation that the worship of fire is the worship of God."

My own approach is based on the texts of our scriptures. To quote from our beautiful *Atash Nyaish*, our hymn to fire, (para 7): "Fire offers to teach the sacred doctrine (*Sasna*) to all who approach, he the Fire of Ahura Mazda, to all for whom he cooks the evening meal and the morning meal..." The ancient Iranians were not plain stupid. They were perfectly aware that the physical fire was incapable of teaching a doctrine. Then what fire is being referred to?

The answer is given in a Gathic verse quoted towards the end of the *Nyaish*: "Therefore, O Lord of Life, we long for Thy Fire, all-powerful, mighty through Truth (*Asha*). This enduring, blazing flame brings clear guidance and joy to the true believers, but as for the destruction-loving, this quickening flame overcomes their evil with a 'turn of the hand'" (Yasna 34.4).

To understand this verse, we must turn to the Gathic view of the creation: "The first thought that was ever thought blazed into myriads of sparks of light and filled the blessed expanses with joy" (Yasna 31.7). This conception of the creation is again emphasized in the *Ahura Mazda Yasht* where Ahura Mazda states: "Through *Khratu* (my Divine Intelligence) and *Chisti*

(my illumined Ray of Wisdom), life first came into being, and so shall human existence continue till the end of time" (para 26).

In the *Haptan Yasht*, the role of fire is further clarified: "Through your Fire, *Atar*, we first of all reach up to you, O Mazda Ahura, to you, Spirit most holy. If impurity clings to a man, Fire immediately removes that impurity.

"Such a man is verily overjoyed by this (manifestation of power). O Fire of Ahura Mazda, come to us through the joy of all joys in the heart of man, through the yearning of all yearnings in his prayer, for the enactment of the most glorious of all deeds.

"O Fire, you are a sign of Ahura Mazda, a sign of that most holy Spirit. Among the names you bear, one is called *Vazishta* (lightning). By that (lightning penetration) may we reach up to you, O Mazda Ahura" (Yasna 36.1-3).

Two points strike one from the quotations given. The purifying fire of thought, emanating from an illumined mind, forges a pathway to Ahura Mazda. Secondly, physical fire is but a "sign," an emblem of that fire of thought which illumines the mind of

man. Ahura Mazda is life (*Ahu*), and He is Wisdom (*Mazdam*). Wisdom comes from a fully conscious and enlightened mind. That mind expresses itself in the fire of thought, which, in turn, is embodied in words leading to action. That is why fire is repeatedly described as "*majista yazata*" the highest yazata or angelic being, who can give "clear guidance and joy to the true believers" which is what the physical fire could never do.

As an emblem or "sign" of Ahura Mazda, the physical fire is venerated in our fire-temples, being fed with sweet-smelling incense and sandalwood, and also in our homes. At every ceremony, fire has to be present and is honored by being given a symbolic throne by the priest who arranges four pieces of sandalwood in a square. On this throne sits the "king," *Atash Padshah*. The physical fire thus becomes the focal point for concentration and meditation on Ahura Mazda Himself. It is never identified with Ahura Mazda.

I do not think our protest will have any effect upon the Vatican or on the western Press, but protest we must. For centuries it has been dinned into

western minds that Zoroastrians are fire worshippers. Ingrained prejudices die hard. What would be more effective is the suggestion made by Dr Sarfeh that Iranians and Parsi Zoroastrians, well versed in our religious texts, should write full-length articles in leading western newspapers and journals so that the common man may have a chance to judge for himself, on the authority of the Zoroastrian scriptures, whether the believers in this religion are fire worshippers or not.

PILOO N. JUNGALWALLA
New Delhi

Dr Dhalla clarifies that at Assisi, he only stated that fire, to us Zoroastrians, is the symbol of divine light, that the symbol serves to remind us of Ahura Mazda whom alone we worship ("Not fire worshippers," *Parsiana*, February 1987).

The Prophet's *Gatha* is non-symbolic and the one and only reality of his *Gatha* is Ahura Mazda. Zoroaster is heard to say in the *Gatha*, "I know nothing and nobody other than Thou (Ahura Mazda). I only know Thee, all others I dismiss from my mind." Zoroaster's only fight was

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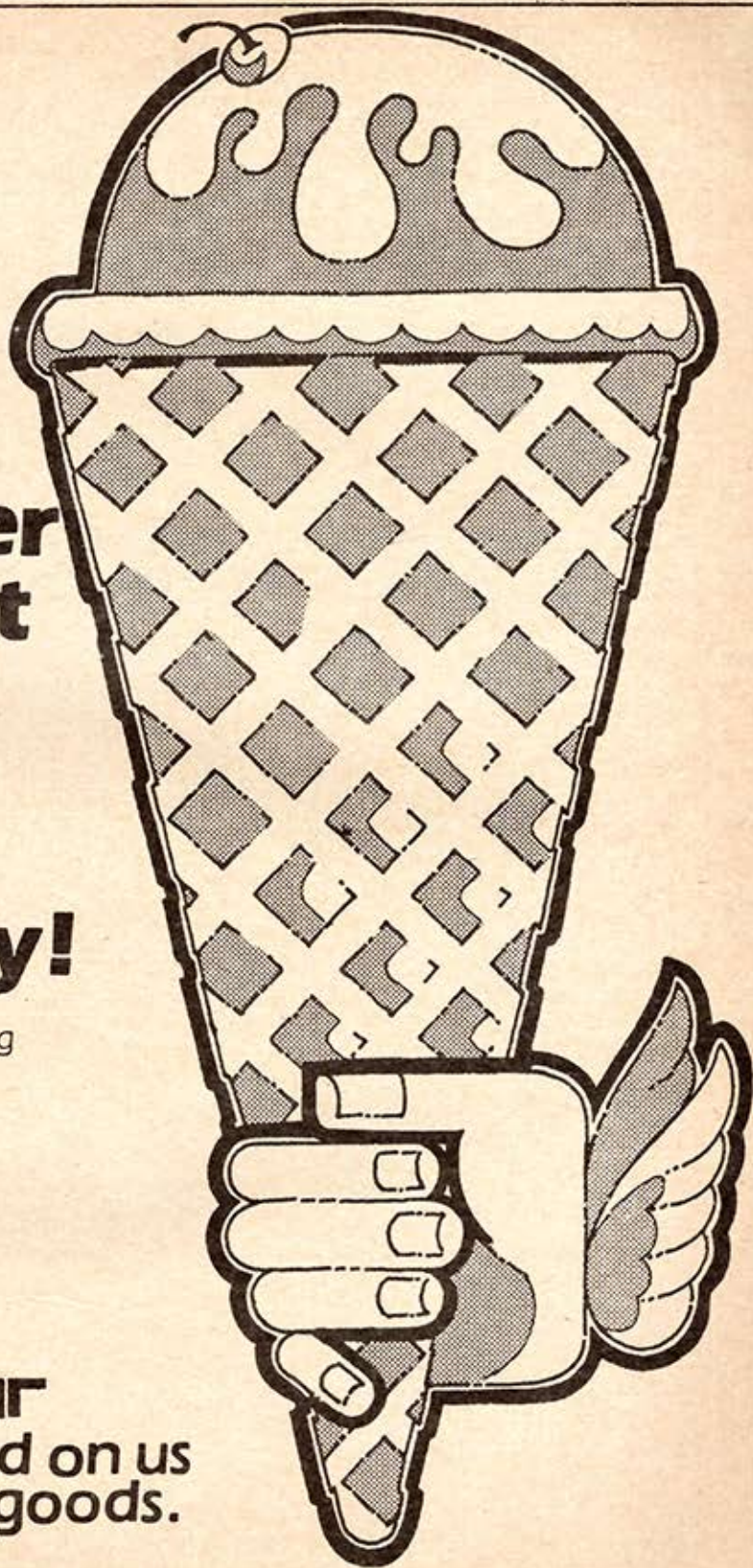
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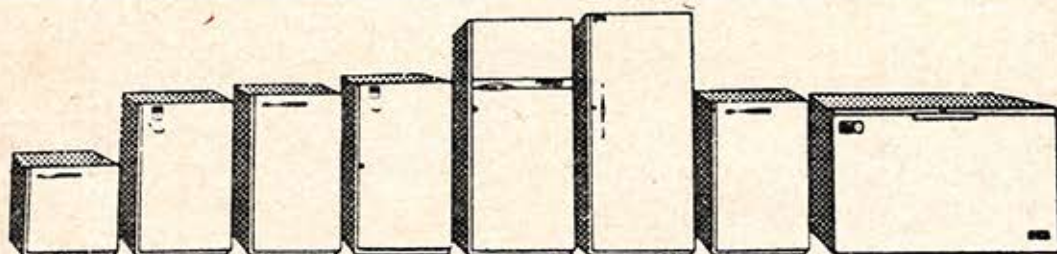
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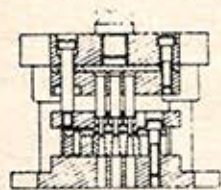
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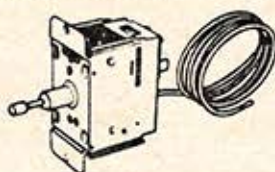
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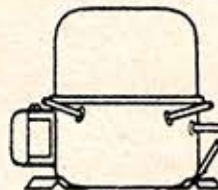
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against worship by symbols – idolatry.

In the later *Avesta*, it is clear to see that fire is a useful element in the service of humanity, to cook man's food for his health, to burn away rubbish for his hygiene and to run industries for his prosperity. For this, fire may be revered, not worshipped. DARA CAMA

Electoral scheme amended

In 1981, the Committee for Electoral Rights (CER) won with a thumping majority in the E Register and the Committee of United Zoroastrians (CUZ) received a crushing defeat. Mr B.K. Mistry had then advised that the F Register could be inflated by donating Rs 5,000 simply to purchase a vote.

The result was that the F Register rose from 300 to 700 and odd within a period of six years. Of course, F Register voters became a controlling power for the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trusteeship elections.

In the revised scheme, endorsed by the High Court, these F Register voters have lost their purchasing power. Only the present donors of Rs 50,000 and more (whose number is hardly 20 at present, according to the CER version) have a direct vote. The mushroom voters of Rs 5,000 are the real sufferers as they will have to elect their representatives (100, less those who have donated above Rs 50,000) on the F Register. Hence, one may expect mudslinging, street campaigns and bitter controversy in the near future.

Same is the case with the E Register. This will also consist of 100 members. Hence, we may expect in future CER, CUZ, Council of Vigilant Parsis (COVP), Ilme-Kshnumists, Pundolites, Independents, etc.

Any way, this new system is a blessing in disguise. This shows that *Khuda-ni darbarma der che parantoo andher nathi* (God's justice is slow but sure)."

A. K. KATHAWALLA

"The 11 days' controversy"

I have read Mr Darius Sethna's letter ("The 11 days' controversy," *Parsiana*, January, 1987). To me it seems that Mr Sethna has revealed lack of knowledge of the religion of Zarathushtra. Also, it seems that Mr Sethna is prone to making untrue statements, as for example his statement concerning the late Dasturji Sohrab Kutar. (Sethna had said that barring Dasturs Kutar

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Events and Personalities

Help Vyara Agiary

The president and trustees of the Vyara-Songadh Parsi Zarthosti Anjuman at Vyara, Gujarat have appealed to Zoroastrians all over the world for donations to help rebuild the Vyara Agiary. Vyara, a small town located in the eastern corner of the jungle area of Gujarat, opened an agiary and a hall for festive occasions on November 20, 1895, notes their appeal. Today, however, the wooden pillars have rotted and are sinking slowly. In spite of being repaired four times in the past 10 years, the building is deteriorating and is, they say, in danger of collapsing.

Experts have advised the board of trustees to raze the building to the ground and rebuild it. However, reconstruction of the Agiary will cost about eight to 10 lakhs of rupees, a sum the local Parsis are unable to raise as they belong mainly to the lower middle class, notes the appeal. In spite of the contributions of the members of the Anjuman, the amount collected is far behind the target.

Contributions will be acknowledged by the Anjuman's official stamped receipt. Cheques or drafts may be made out in favor of the "Vyara-Songadh

Parsi Zarthosti Anjuman" and forwarded to the president, Dr B.P.Jokhi, Prem Sagar, Mahadev Street, Vyara, District Surat, 394650.

Cancer detection center

A cancer detection center for Parsi women has recently been started at the Lady Jehangir Health Unit in Gamadia Colony, Tardeo, noted a report in *The Bombay Samachar* of April 19. The higher incidence of cancer of the breast, uterus and ovaries among Parsi women compared to women from other communities may perhaps be due to late marriage, infrequent breastfeeding and low fertility, states the report.

Preventive treatment is not possible due to the lack of knowledge about the exact cause of cancer, but the disease is said to be completely curable if detected in the early stages. Since cancer starts with very minor symptoms, a yearly checkup by a gynecologist is an important precaution, especially for women over 40, adds the report.

Open on Wednesdays from 2 to 3 pm and on Saturdays from 8.30 to 10 am, the center offers a full medical examination by a lady gynecologist as well as blood sugar, urine, blood count

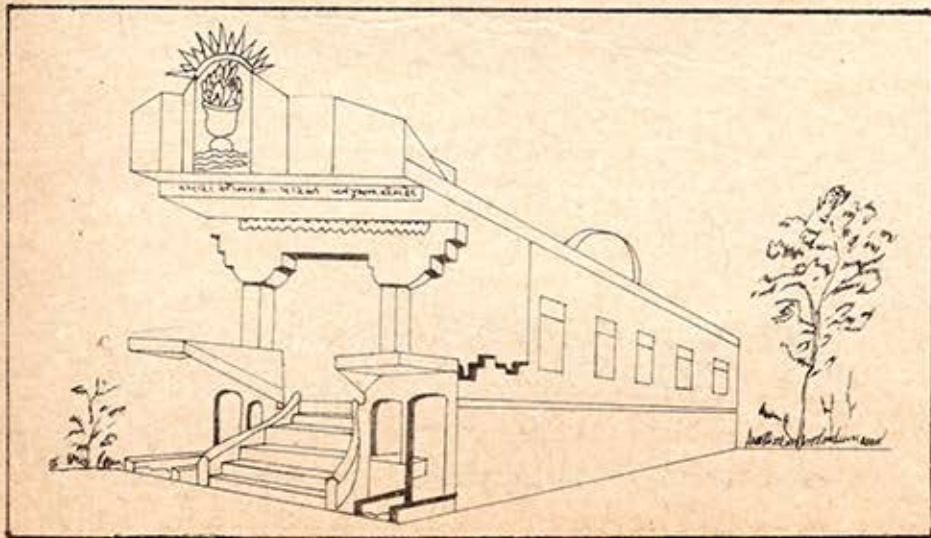
and pap smear tests. The center is expected to maintain full confidentiality and give each patient a complete record of the results. The data will be computerized every year to note and update information on the incidence of cancer among Parsi women.

New wing at Boys' Town

A new technical wing at the Boys' Town Public School, Nasik was inaugurated on March 29 by Pune industrialist J.N.Marshall, whose donation had made the building possible, states a press release from the School. The J.N.Marshall Technical Wing offers students training as fitters and wiremen. Students will now be able to



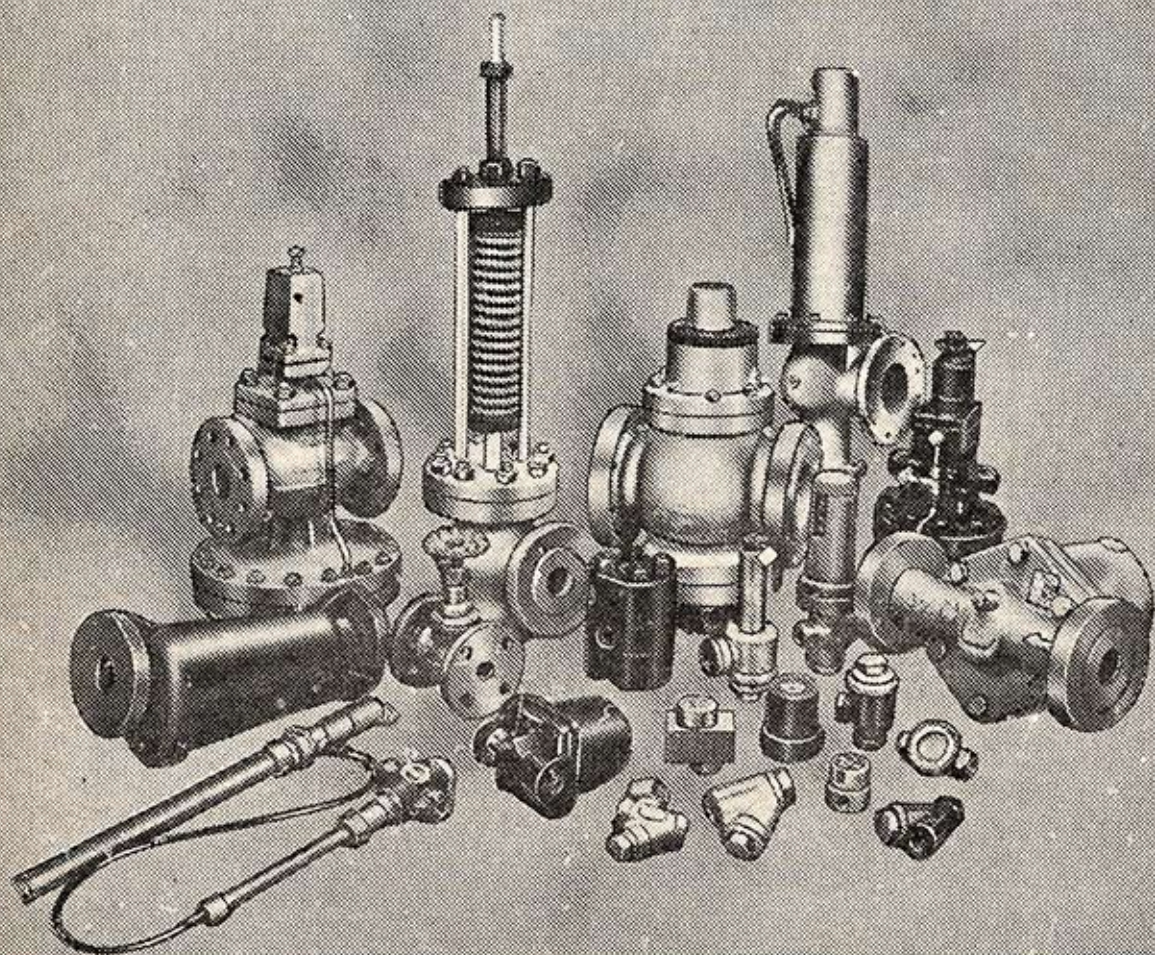
Above: At Boys' Town School (from left) Marshall, Behram Mehta and Desai
Left: Blueprint of Vyara Agiary



offer these additional optional subjects at the SSC level and will be given priority for admission into technical institutions, adds the release. Formerly, at the School's P.N.Mehta Vocational Craft Centre, hobby classes in technology used to acquaint students with the fitter's course, electrical maintenance, woodwork technology, plumbing and engineering drawing.

Marshall and his family, and chief guests Vinay Pathak, chief executive officer of the Zilla Parishad, Nasik, and his wife were welcomed by repre-

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representatives of the School and the P.N.Mehta Trust: principal Bejon Desai, trustee Behram P. Mehta and educational advisor to the Trust, Soli Pavri. Declaring open the new wing, Marshall urged the students to take advantage of this opportunity to study technical subjects.

Patuck's golden jubilee

The Patuck Technical High School celebrated its golden jubilee at a function held on February 28, 1987 at Bombay's Dinanath Mangeshkar Natyagrih, according to a press release. Dr (Ms) Mehroo Bengalee, vice-chancellor of the University of Bombay was the guest of honor and Dr V. Subramaniam, Maharashtra's minister for housing, was the chief guest.

Tracing the growth and development of the institution, Prof Rustam Mody, director and secretary of the Patuck Polytechnic Trust said that the history of the school was the history of the development of vocational and technical education in India.

Believing that only technical skills and vocational training could give the children of the poor a living wage and self-respect, the founder of the School, the late Rustomba Hormusji Patuck, in 1932 put his life savings of eight lakhs of rupees into a trust for the promotion of technical education. The School originally gave specialized training in spinning, weaving and handicrafts, notes a press release.

Today the Patuck Polytechnic Trust runs the Patuck Polytechnic High School (estd 1936), the Patuck Industrial Training Institute (estd 1983) and the Patuck Junior College — Vocational (estd 1986). Having moved from its old premises at Kandivli and Andheri to its own campus in Santacruz East, the School has a well-equipped workshop, comprising carpentry, smithy, moulding, fitting, machine-shop and welding sections as well as two science laboratories and a technical library, notes the release. It is, reportedly, the only full-fledged technical high school catering to the western suburbs between Bandra and Dahisar.

Dr R.B.M.Colah, chairman of the organizing board of the Patuck Polytechnic Trust, who drew parallels between Patuck's and Mahatma Gandhi's ideas on vocational education, self-sufficiency and dignity of labor,



At the Patuck School's golden jubilee (from left) Subramaniam, Malegamvala, and Adil J. Patuck, member of the organizing board (Above right) Shroff

and Dinshah Malegamvala, director of the J.N.Tata Endowment, also spoke on the occasion.

Shroff's fifth film

USA-based filmmaker Ms Beheroze Shroff's fifth film, which is based on the novel *Two Virgins* by Ms Kamla Markandya, is likely to be shot in India, noted Ms Menka Shivdasani in *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier (ADC)* of April 15. Shroff and her American colleague Ms Lindy Laub are hoping to site it in Karnataka, where the book is set, with thespians like Ms Shabana Azmi, Ms Deepti Naval, Naseeruddin Shah and Amol Palekar on their talent-shopping list.

Shroff's four previous films have focused on Indians and Indian themes. Her first, *Expectations*, made as part of her course in critical studies in filmmaking, explored her feelings about how she was perceived as an Asian woman in Los Angeles — meek, shy, submissive, gentle — and her own stereotyped impressions of the USA.

Her second film, *Sweet Jail: The Sikhs of Yuba City*, dealt with the 8,000 member Sikh fruit farming community in Northern California. "I was fascinated by the fact that while most Indians abroad are technocrats, this group consists of farmers, and some speak only Punjabi though they've lived in the US all their lives — and they get by," says Shroff.

Later Shroff made a short documentary on a Gujarati woman who runs a motel in the Los Angeles area, and then an experimental film on dowry murders — *A Mother's Lament*. Since she makes films outside the Hollywood mainstream, she has had to struggle "for money and fame like other independent filmmakers. I'm



aware that the audience for the kind of films I make is limited, but that's fine with me," notes Shroff.

Shroff's involvement in filmmaking began at the University of California, Los Angeles, where she had gone in 1975 to study English literature on a J.N.Tata Endowment Fellowship. After four years of studying English literature, doubts about its practical use made her switch courses: from literature to teaching English as a second language, and then to critical studies in filmmaking. While this course too was completely academic, it required each student to make a film to understand the nature of the medium. "When I made the film (*Expectations*), I knew there was no turning back."

Shroff's return to India has made her nostalgic. "I'd love to come back to work here," she says, "and *Two Virgins*, I hope, will be a beginning."

Essayists encouraged

Girls stood first in all the four age-groups at the Rathestar Mandal-organized essay competition on *Shah Namah* characters Zal and Rodabeh which was held on February 7 at Lady Jehangir High School, Tardeo, according to a press release. The winners were Sherzadi Jamshed Khambatta, Nilofer Minoo Irani, Parizad Tehmuras Sidhwa and Nazneen Jamshed Hodiwalla.

In addition to cash prizes, the three best in each age-group were presented with Sir Hormusji Cowasjee Adenwalla Proficiency Medals of Firdausi Tusi. Consolation prizes were given to all the participants. Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustee and Bombay University vice-chancellor Dr (Ms) Mehroo Bengalee gave away the prizes at the annual function on March 1, at which



From left: Niloufer Billimoria, Soonawalla and Panthaki

Cowasjee Dinshaw presided.

Founded in Bombay in 1911 by Khurshedji J.B.Wadia, Boman S. Banaji, Burjorji Framji Bharucha and Jehanbux Bomanshaw Vatcha, "the aim of the Mandal is general amelioration of the Parsi community and service of the Motherland." The Mandal tries to do this through "the celebration of the birth and death anniversaries" of Zarathushtra, "the popularization of Persian and other epics," and gives prizes to encourage Parsi boys and girls.

Billimoria strikes gold

Cawas Billimoria, bronze medalist in judo at the 1986 Asian Games, won his first international gold medal at the five-nation South Asia Judo Championship held on March 2 and 3 at Kathmandu, Nepal, notes a press release from the Judo Federation of India. Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were the five countries that participated.

Billimoria, one of the seven members of the Indian judo team which won the Championship with two gold and one bronze medal, won all his bouts in the openweight category with 'Ippons,' i.e. the highest possible score. Khurshed Pastakia, leader of the Indian team, became the first Indian, along with Ravindra Patil, to referee an international judo tournament. Yet another Parsi, Kerfegur Doctor, accompanied the team as an official, adds the release.

Obero's PR manager

The new public relations manager of Oberoi Hotels, Bombay is Ms Niloufer Billimoria, states a press release. Her current post will involve liaising with the local, domestic and international Press, and keeping in touch with the

Hotel's regular guests and its corporate clientele in the city.

Prior to this appointment Billimoria headed the Hotels' department of advertising and publicity. Having joined Oberoi Hotels' guest relations department in 1981, Billimoria was later transferred to sales and specialized in advertising and publicity.

Veteran athlete

Among the 45 athletes representing India at the International Veterans Athletic Championships in Singapore, slated for April, was Maki Panthaki, a 47-year-old Bangalore housewife and mother of three, noted a report in *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of April 8. The Indian team, one of the 12 to participate in the Championships, was led by 95-year-old Baba Prithvi Singh Azad, who has won seven golds in the two previous World Championships held at Puerto Rico (1983) and Rome (1985).

One of the criteria for qualification is a minimum age of 35 for female participants and 40 for male participants.

While preparing for the Singapore meet, Panthaki ran more than nine kilometers every day. She was careful about her diet too: "I've realized that when I take off weight, I do better."

Panthaki won two bronze medals in the 1985 Asian meet in Singapore, and four gold medals in the Veterans' Nationals in Bangalore in February last, states the report.

A good sportswoman in school and college, she has represented Bombay State and Bombay University in hockey tournaments. After her marriage to Jimi Panthaki, "a good swimmer," she shifted to Bangalore, reared three children and continued playing for local clubs.

If she is selected for the world meet

in Melbourne at the end of this year, she will have to pay her fare herself. Calling for government support, Panthaki explains, "The government wants results (before encouraging) any sport and we veterans are doing much better than the youngsters. At least 50 to 60 percent of us get gold medals in international meets. We should be given support."

Young achiever

Zahir Fardoon Soonawalla, who won all the eight prizes and scholarships of the Bombay University including the Fenelon Bossuet Godhino Gold Medal for the first year MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery) examination, has been included in the prestigious *International Youth in Achievement*, published by the International Biographical Centre in Cambridge, England, notes a press release. This is a biographical reference work publicizing the academic and professional successes of young people from all over the world.

Son of eminent surgeon Fardoon Phiroze Soonawalla, Zahir also bagged five prizes of the G.S.Medical College and K.E.M.Hospital, and a National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) Scholarship of the Government of India for his performance at the All-India National Talent Search Examination. An all-rounder, Zahir has represented the Cathedral and John Connon High School, Jai Hind College and the G.S.Medical College in a variety of sports events including boxing, gymnastics, swimming, hockey, cricket and football.

To our readers

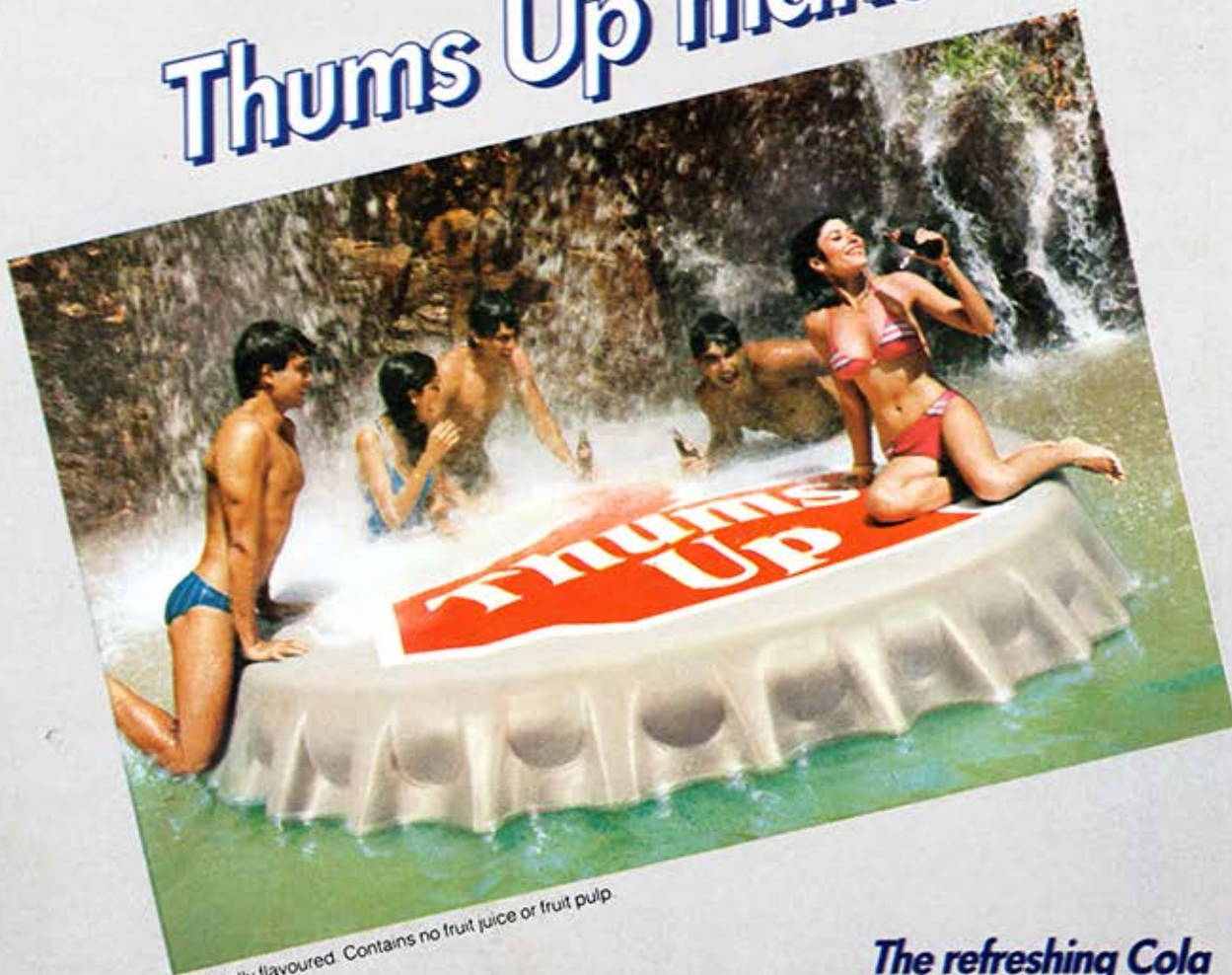
In response to the consistent demand from our readers and advertisers to bring out all issues of *Parsiana* in the color cover format, *Parsiana* will do so effective July.

As additional reader service, for which there have been regular requests, a column on births, marriages and deaths will also be introduced in the July issue.

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Ownership update

The Rustam Guiv Foundation has fired a fresh salvo in its continuing tussle with the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) for ownership of the New York Darbe Mehr at La Rochelle. An undated letter from the Foundation's president Dr Rostam Sarfeh, addressed to the community at large, noting that the late Arbab Rustam Guiv had released funds for the purchase of the property under certain specific terms, was received by *Parsiana* on April 10, 1987. To shore up the claim of the Foundation, Sarfeh annexed a copy of a letter dated September 11, 1976 from Rustam Guiv to Erach Munshi, then president of ZAGNY, stating eight conditions to his donation.

The most relevant clause notes, "The property must not be subject to any liens or claims against the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York Incorp." Two other conditions noted, "If ZAGNY becomes inactive or is dissolved, the proceeds from the sale of the property should be transferred to the donor, i.e. the Rustam Guiv Foundation in Tehran, to be used either for other charitable purposes or the purchase of another piece of property for the use of ZAGNY or for any Zoroastrian association in the US, so far as the same does not conflict with the Religious Corporation Law of the State of New York;" and "The donor has the right to appoint a representative who will be a member of the controlling body of the property to see that the association carries out its activities according to the wishes of the donor." The rest of the conditions dealt with required fixtures in the Darbe Mehr hall and the prohibition of gambling and political activity on the premises.

Sarfeh notes, "When the Arbab was invited to the USA to be present at the inauguration ceremony, the undersigned (Sarfeh) being unaware of the certificate of incorporation signed by the three ZAGNY officers, mentioned to Arbab that probably it is to his advantage to donate the property to ZAGNY with the only condition that ZAGNY should keep the name of

Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr permanently on the property. At this suggestion Arbab got very much upset and told me adamantly, 'No!' He explained that (for) any big donation of this size in any part of the world, he has donated the use of the property by the local communities and not the ownership. The ownership he would keep for the Foundation of Rustam Guiv which was under his personal direction while he lives and it will be under the supervision of the trustees of the Foundation after he is deceased."

The ownership of the Darbe Mehr currently vests with the Arbab Rustam Guiv (ARG) Trust which was established in 1976 under the legal and tax requirements of New York.

As per its constitution and bylaws, the Trust has three representatives from the Foundation and three from ZAGNY – the president being always from the Foundation, empowered with the casting vote in case of ties, notes Sarfeh. The original trustees were Rustam Guiv, Rostam Sarfeh, Erach Munshi, Ervad Pervaz Patel, Lovji Cama and Framroze Patel. Wrote Sarfeh, "This procedure worked smoothly until the Arbab's decease in October 1980 (throughout which no questions were posed). Thereafter, rumors started as to the true ownership of the property..." He further alleges, "continuous and numerous meetings have been held with ZAGNY's past officers, (and) its members at large, and although at times, some of the original signatories have agreed to sign for the correction of ownership documents, they have reneged on their promise."

ZAGNY's contention, that the Darbe Mehr actually belongs to the Zoroastrian community of New York and that the transfer of ownership could take place only if agreed to by members of the Zoroastrian community of New York, was spelt out in their earlier newsletters. However, no intimation of ZAGNY's current position has reached *Parsiana*.

ZAGNY's October 1985 newsletter stipulated six conditions for negotiating the transfer. They are: ZAGNY get a new five-year lease on the Darbe Mehr property, with successive op-

tions to renew for five years at a time; all taxes levied on the property be paid by the Guiv Foundation (hitherto the property, being owned by a religious organization, had been tax exempt); a written agreement from the Guiv Foundation guaranteeing that \$5,000 per year will be paid to ZAGNY for maintenance and repair of the property; ZAGNY to have appropriate representation on the Trust which will own the property; the attorney general of the State of New York approves the transfer; and all the necessary documents are signed simultaneously.

At a general meeting of the Zoroastrian community of New York on December 15, 1985 the transfer proposal was "overwhelmingly" rejected and instead it was resolved to form a sub-committee to look into the matter. In the meanwhile, the Guiv Foundation had agreed partially to the ZAGNY conditions except those of having the attorney general approve the transfer and of signing all documents simultaneously.

The individuals who had been involved in the purchase of the Darbe Mehr and who were present for the meeting were of the opinion that the Arbab had intended to donate the property to the Zoroastrians of New York. Others present felt that the transfer was necessary in view of the other Zoroastrian organization – the Iranian Zoroastrian Organization – being formed which, as per the current situation, is unable to use the Darbe Mehr hall unless it pays a stipulated fee for its hire. According to yet another point of view, if the property no longer belongs to ZAGNY then it is not feasible for ZAGNY to spend the \$10,000 to 12,000 annually on its repairs as against the \$5,000 given by the Guiv Foundation.

Yes to the Federation

The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) has decided to join the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) as a founder member and pay the annual fee of \$500 (approximately Rs 6,435), notes a report on the proceedings of the extraordinary general meeting of the Association held on January 10,

1987, in ZSO's March newsletter.

Furthermore, on the request of the Iranians at the meeting, the board has decided to purchase "a plot of land for scattering of ashes and burial of bodies of Zoroastrians, their spouses, and their children," notes the newsletter. Accordingly, the executive committee through its religious subcommittee has been entrusted with the task of negotiating for the land and will present a report on its findings at a future meeting, states the news item.

WZO office-bearers

Twenty-eight office-bearers were elected at the September 7, 1986 annual general meeting of the World Zoroastrian Organisation, notes *Hamazor*, the newsletter of the India Committee of the Organisation. They are: chairman Dr(Ms) Shirinbanoo Kutar; president Shahpur Captain; vice-president Dadi Mistry; joint honorary secretaries Ms Ruby Contractor and Shahrokh Shahrokh; honorary treasurer Dinyar Modi; India representatives Homi Taleyarkhan, Ms Roda Mistry, Nani Palkhivala, Burjor Aga, Dadi Engineer and Dinshaw

Tamboli; Pakistan representative Dhan Ghadiyali; Iran representative Rustom Yeganagi; UK representatives Bailey Irani, Meherwan Sepoy, Burjor Magol, Jamshid Falahati, Dinyar Hakhamaneshi and Ms Mani Bhamgara; USA representatives Dr Rostam Sarfeh, Prof Kaikhosrov Irani and Dr Kersey Antia; Canada representatives Meheraban Zarhosti, Meherabab Farhangi and Dr Russi Balsara; Singapore representative Dadi Balsara and Australian representative Noshir Irani.

Fund-raising concert

In aid of their building fund the Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA) of New South Wales organized a concert by noted Bombay pianist Ms Zenobia Vakil-Patel and singer Ms Carmel Ferlisi on March 7, 1987, notes *Manashni*, the newsletter of the Association.

The artistes having performed free of charge, the Association collected \$588.10 (approximately Rs 5,252) after expenses, adds the report.

In the meanwhile members have been invited to make use of the AZA

House "for free, to spend a night with friends/families or as a camp over the weekend, or even a second honeymoon," assuring them "complete privacy!"

Topical released

The first issue of *The Topical*, the Zoroastrian community magazine of the United Kingdom was published on March 21, 1987 as planned. The 17-page issue, which contains five pages of advertisements, covers such diverse topics as recent events, a true-life experience, a fashion section, a tale from Zoroastrian mythology, money matters, a readers' forum, a feature on Zoroastrian festivals, a history column analysing the difference between Iranians and Parsis, and serialized fiction - a story called *Ladykiller*, starring Jamshed Bondvala in the lead (presumably the Zoroastrian James Bond).

Costing £1.50 (about Rs 31) per issue, the magazine, edited by Jimmy Vapiwala and Vispi Jamooji, is printed on art paper and sports a cover featuring the London skyline overlooked by a portrait of Zarathushtra.

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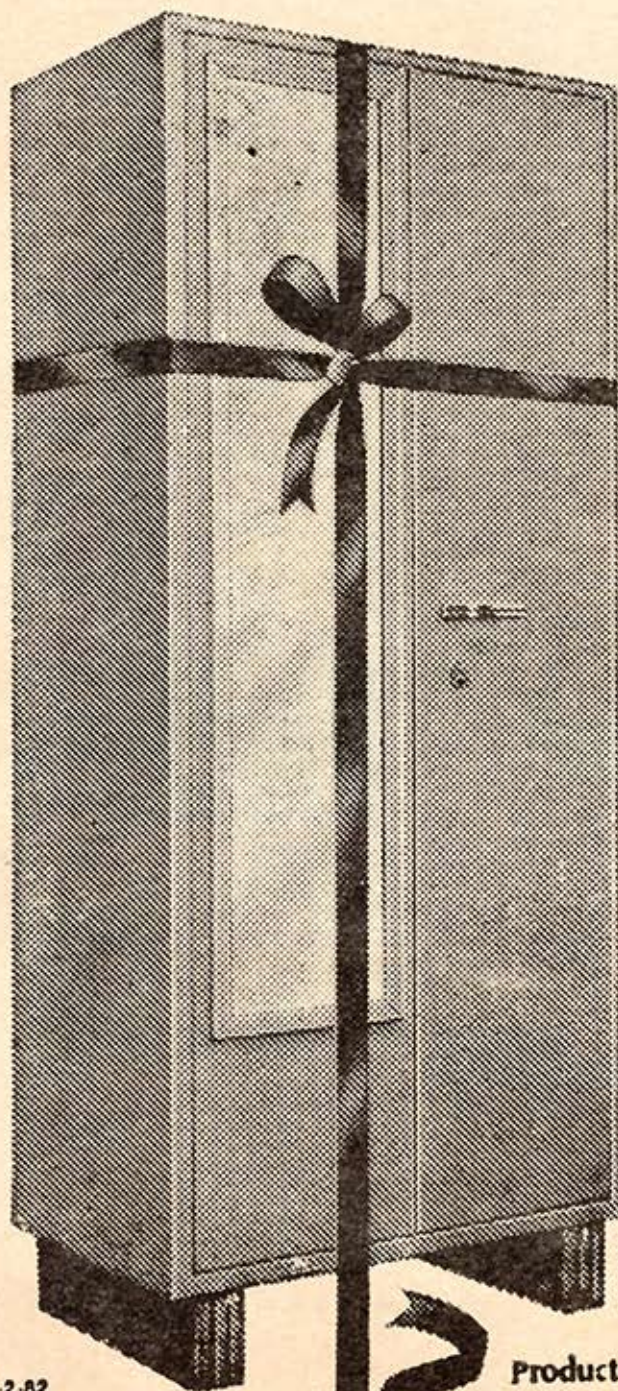
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Beyond the boundaries of growth

Fifth World Congress in offing

World meet tentatively scheduled for end 1988/early 1989

Parinaz Toddywalla

The Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress may be held in the last quarter of 1988 or the beginning of 1989. The impromptu, informal announcement was made by Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustee Jamshed Guzder at the executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India at Oliaji's Duke's Hotel in Devka on March 28, 1987. Guzder was chairman of the Third and the Fourth World Congress. Follow-up measures on what was "resolved, partially resolved and unresolved" at the end of each of the five business sessions (deliberating on the condition of Zoroastrian settlements, bettering communication, relevance of Zoroastrianism, findings of modern research and formation of a world body) at the Fourth Congress will be tackled and implemented by core committees.

Sponsors have been found for all the nine awards instituted by the Federation to recognize excellence in different fields of endeavor. The annual awards will be presented to the winners for the first time at a special function in Bombay in early September which will coincide with the executive committee meeting of the Federation, informed Federation's east zone vice-president Homi Bodhanwalla.

In addition to the nine awards of Rs 10,000 each, Federation's joint honorary secretary Keki Gandhi clarified that just as trustee of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman Rusi Engineer had sponsored a second award (at a cost of Rs 5,000) in the small scale entrep-

reneurship category, so also would second place awards be offered to other willing financiers.

The Federation and BPP sponsored day-care center will initially operate from two flats at Dadar. Working parents should now be able to leave their children in the hands of trained personnel.

A new subcommittee is to be formed under the chairmanship of Guzder to work on the paramobeds scheme. Laity, volunteering to work on an honorary or paid basis, will now be trained in the performance of certain permissible rituals.

The Federation's monthly English newsletter's continuity for another year is assured with several delegates promising to sponsor or to find sponsors on behalf of their anjuman.

The Delhi Parsi Anjuman will host an all-India youth seminar during the Dassera/Diwali holidays in October to involve the youth in community affairs and seek to discuss issues concerning religion, administration, employment, and marriage of Parsi youth.

"There seems to be a record attendance at this Federation meeting," remarked BPP chairman and Federation president Dr Aspi Golwalla after surveying the venue of the meeting — the courtyard adjoining the rooms at Koover Bagh at Hotel Duke's. At the two main tables, spread with burgundy red table cloths, the delegates sat facing each other while the central aisle provided a free passageway. Behind the main tables were parallel rows of

chairs to accommodate the invitees, guests and friends of the local Daman Anjuman. Brightly colored streamers hanging from the projecting eaves lent a festive air to the proceedings.

On behalf of the Surat Parsi Punchayet (SPP) which hosted the meeting in Devka, president Dr Sam Bhacca extended a welcome to all the members. Oliaji's Hotel in Devka represents a blend of the modern and the old world where mental peace and natural beauty is found, emphasized Bhacca, appreciating Dosabhai Oliaji's involvement in the function "as if there has been a wedding in his own family." A special welcome was also extended to Maneck Gheyara, former president of the SPP and the last surviving founder member of the Federation who was recovering from an operation on a fractured leg.

Another dignitary who addressed the Federation delegates was chief minister of Goa, Daman and Diu Pratapsing Raoji Rane, who according to Golwalla had "added luster to the function." Reminding the gathering assembled at the specially erected shamiana on the shores of Devka that they owed their gratitude to the Hindu King Jadav Rana who permitted the Parsis to settle in India, Bhacca referred to the honor of being addressed by another Rane after 1300 years (1000 years is closer — Editor). Inviting Parsis to start their enterprises in Goa, Rane was hopeful that more Parsis will now start taking an interest in politics. "Daman owes much to your enterprise and outlook," said Rane.

The Engineers - Rusi and Homai - who have their Industrial Boilers complex in nearby Vapi had invited Rane, on behalf of the SPP and the Federation, and also arranged for a flypast by the coast guard.

Long to belong

The latest additions to the Federation family are Pardi and Hubli whose membership was accepted subject to their completing certain requisite formalities. The strength of the Federation now stands at 57.

Golwalla, who was gratified to see in Devka the largest ever attendance at a Federation meeting, was "more anxious that anjumans which were once members, like Bangalore and Ahmedabad, should rejoin. "Why aren't the big anjumans coming?" Taking the issue lightly Nariman Balsara of Saronda replied, "Don't ask for reasons. Just persuade them. (It's like) *rajhath*, *strihath* and *balhath* (the obstinacy of the government, the woman and the child which cannot be questioned). If we could melt Navsari (the orthodox anjuman which did not join the Federation for several years), we should be able to do the same with Bangalore."

Gandhi was more wary: "The decision to join the Federation vests with the anjuman. Ours is not a political body, so lobbying for membership would not be considered dignified. The Federation will welcome any and everyone. We do not want to create dissension in any anjuman. If I could get the mailing lists of these anjumans I would post the *Fed Newsletter* to all the members so that the individuals could decide on the utility of the Federation."

The announcement that K.S. Pavri of Ahmedabad would be attending the meeting in Devka as an observer had raised hopes in some quarters that Ahmedabad might be contemplating rejoining the Federation. But Pavri could not finally make it to the Federation meeting.

The Bangalore Anjuman is yet not decided on rejoining the Federation. Since its resignation in 1981 the question of rejoining has been raised time and again but decision deferred each time. A common reason cited by some of the trustees for Bangalore's staying away from the Federation, as reported by Gandhi, was that debating on the worthiness and unworthiness of the



Above: Desai (left) with Gheyara
Right: Rane (at the mike) with Golwalla (left) and Bodhanwalla

Federation invariably led to local issues being deferred unduly.

Nargol (in Gujarat) and Neemach (in Madhya Pradesh) are the Federation's prospective members expected to join the body shortly.

Deciding not to accept membership of Zoroastrian trusts working for the social and economic welfare of Zoroastrians on the Federation's body, it was agreed that Golwalla and Gandhi would be authorized to invite a trust to a Federation meeting if the trust's assistance and involvement warranted it.

The next Federation meeting in Bombay will be followed by one at Jamshedpur in December and the first meeting of 1988 will be hosted by the Vyara - Songadh Anjuman which is celebrating its silver jubilee.

Rallying on religious topics

"Mobeds in Bombay are right now on a very good wicket, that is why we are thinking of paramobeds (to serve outstation anjumans)," declared the Federation's joint honorary treasurer Peshotan Nargolwala who was upset that anjumans which had earlier consented to pay a minimum promised salary of Rs 1,000 to the paramobeds were now refusing to commit themselves. Gandhi explained, "The question of remuneration is dependent on the employer-employee relationship. It is the law of demand and supply. Why ask the anjumans to state a price for a hypothetical product? Besides



the paid paramobeds who will be working full-time for monetary gains, our idea was to train volunteer paramobeds who would serve their anjumans in an honorary capacity or on a part-time paid basis."

Not favoring the idea of unpaid voluntary paramobeds Nargolwala doubted whether anyone would be willing to serve in that capacity.

Gandhi: Homi Dandiwalla (president of the Allahabad Anjuman) is willing. Nargolwala: And I've told him he will not succeed.

Gandhi: That may be your opinion. Nargolwala: And who will bear the cost of training?

Gandhi: It was decided at the last meeting that the Federation, the BPP



Gandhi: Simultaneously voluntary paramobeds could serve the purpose of an anjuman where volunteers are ready. There is no reason why anjuman who are able to depute volunteers should have to wait until the professionals are trained. Besides, the professionals will have a price-tag which the poorer anjumans may not be able to afford.

The Pardi representative T.E. Pardiwalla wanted to highlight that at their agiary there were two aged mobeds but Bulsar and Billimora (in Gujarat) had no mobeds. It is difficult to find mobeds and khandhias when someone dies. Despite being a lawyer, he had often to volunteer to act as a pallbearer. "*Me amna soodhi saath khand maarich* (To date I have had to

serve as a pallbearer 60 times). There are no vultures frequenting our dokhmas, and I've seen bodies just decaying there. Yet our priests refuse to pray if a family opts for a burial. There should be religious reforms." Golwalla did not permit him to digress from the subject: "You can't talk all sorts of things."

BPP trustees Eruch Desai and Minoo Shroff suggested that the modalities of the paramobed project be worked out by the proposed sub-committee which will be formed under Guzder's chairmanship. The responsibility fell on Guzder's shoulders as Golwalla considered him to be the best suited: "He is the most religious among our BPP trustees, going to the fire-temple every day." Guzder,



and the anjuman concerned would share the cost.

Nargolwala: I am more interested in the regular cadre of paid paramobeds. Not those playing cricket on Sundays. Dandiwalla: Why are you against voluntary paramobeds?

Nargolwala: It will not succeed because only a few days back you were in Neemach. What will then happen to the Allahabad fire?

Gandhi: Training of both types of paramobeds should proceed simultaneously. If you have no confidence in the project for voluntary paramobeds then you assume responsibility only for training the paid ones and I will organize the training of volunteer paramobeds.

Nargolwala: Let the paid paramobeds be trained first. The voluntary group can come later. I'm going on record as stating that voluntary paramobeds will not serve the mobedi shortage problem.



Top: Guzder

Above: Bhacca reading a welcome address to Rane

Above left: Oliaji offering a rose

Left: Gandhi (wearing topi) talking to Minocher Contractor

accepting the chairmanship, replied: "I go to the fire-temple because of my association with God and not the mobeds!"

When the smaller anjumans were given an opportunity to voice their concern on issues of importance to their anjuman, several representatives spoke on subjects connected with religion. Rusi Engineer taking up cudgels for the Hubli delegate complained that the larger anjumans (like Madras) with more money power were trying to distract mobeds diligently serving the smaller anjumans and trying to entice them away. Explaining the prevailing situation in the case of the Jal Phiroz Clubwala Dar-e-Meher in Madras, Mani Clubwala was apologetic, "Sorry

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From left: Kavaji Modi, Rusi Engineer and Homai Engineer

if you feel we are snaring away your mobed. We are desperate because ours is an adaran (if there is no priest to tend it, the fire's status would be reduced to that of a dadgah)." Refusing to be placated, Engineer insisted, "You are not trying to take him away but snatch him away."

Summarizing the situation, Gandhi noted, "There is no way you can keep a disgruntled employee in your service. If you prevent him from getting a job with the desired salary, he may leave the mobedi profession."

Davar Kavaji Modi of Surat had another solution, "When there are two to three agiaries in a *mohalla* (locality) and dearth of mobeds, the answer lies in the amalgamation of fires."

Faced with an unprecedented situation where a Zoroastrian lady married to a Christian but wearing a *sudreh-kusti* on her death wanted to be consigned to the *dokhma*, the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and Hyderabad (PZASH) were about to grant permission when they were informed that the lady was buried in a Christian cemetery. While the PZASH trustees have written to the high priests for their counsel, they were perturbed that their priest who was originally willing to perform the *geh sarna* was threatened by a phone call stating "*tari pugree oodaree karsu* (we will defrock you)," as a result of which he backed out of the situation.

According to Gandhi, the priest in question may be owing allegiance to an orthodox mobedi *tola* (group) controlled from Poona. The priests belonging to this *tola*, as per Gandhi's knowledge, are required to abide by certain instructions issued by the head of the *tola* and any breach of such directives could result in the loss of existing or future job prospects.

Not having heard of any such *tola*,

Pervez Avari of Poona said, "There are three agiaries in Poona and all three priests-in-charge have different views on religion."

Guzder then reported a recent incident that is believed to have occurred at the Jejeebhoy Agiary in Poona, where a Zoroastrian lady married to a non-Zoroastrian was not permitted to offer a *maachi* in the anjuman's name. "The people concerned should go and have their heads examined. You must be liberal," Guzder repeated. Avari explained that under the prevailing constitution of the Poona Parsee Panchayat, a Zoroastrian married outside the community ceases to be recognized as a Zoroastrian. Acknowledging the right of individual anjumans to act in conformity with their own views, Gandhi cited the definition of a Parsi Zoroastrian as recognized under the prevailing Parsi law: If a Zoroastrian marrying a non-Zoroastrian under the civil rights continues practising his/her religion, the person would be considered a Zoroastrian. However, if the

marriage ceremony was performed under the customs and scriptures of any other religion which required him/her to embrace that religion, the person would henceforth cease to be recognized as a Zoroastrian.

When Dinshaw Anklesaria of Poona asked Golwalla, "What would you advise?" Golwalla's immediate reply was "Ask the dasturs, not me. But according to *rivaj* (tradition) she would not be considered a Zoroastrian if she has married outside the fold."

Though Desai claimed to be unaware of any such *rivaj*, Golwalla narrated an incident during his trusteeship tenure when after performing the *geh sarna* of a lady, they were informed that she had been married to a Muslim. It was thereafter decided to confine the body to the *chotra* (a four-walled structure open to the sky at *doongerwadi*), used chiefly for casting the bodies of illegitimates, prostitutes, menstruating women and disease torn bodies.

Lest the discussions on religious topics be misconstrued, Gandhi was quick to point out, "We have not broken the code of not discussing controversial religious subjects. When asked (these questions) from the floor of the house, we have only imparted factual information about known customs, and legal provisions and pronouncements."

Plans for prosperity

Approximately 30 Parsi children between three to seven years of age will be provided "safe and healthy custodian care" at the proposed day-care

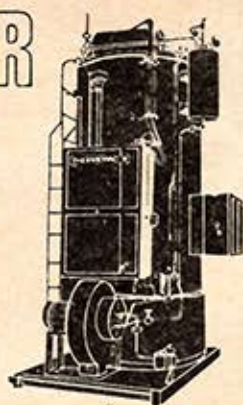
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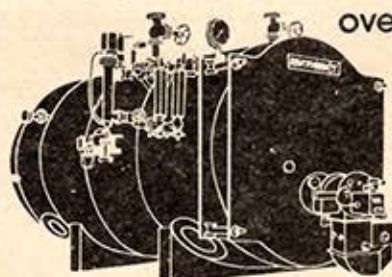
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center while their parents are away at work. Incurring a monthly expenditure of Rs 2,500, the project will be jointly sponsored by the Federation and the BPP, availing temporarily of the BPP accommodation in two flats at the Dadar Parsi Colony. BPP's chief executive Rustom Anklesaria was keen that the BPP should commit itself to later providing alternate accommodation to the center when the Dadar flats would have to be vacated, and that the Federation should assure a continuous flow of donations. Gandhi clarified, "We are rendering this service for the proper development and growth of the child's personality and not as (free) social service. The parents will be charged for this service except in deserving cases" where the committee appointed by the BPP to supervise this project will decide on the genuineness.

Delhi will be hosting an all-India youth seminar during the Dassera/Diwali holidays in October when Parsi youths in the 21 to 35 age-group will exchange ideas and experiences on community affairs and attempt to involve the youth in the service of the community as its future social workers and leaders. Various topics of discussion will be tackled including employment opportunities and preparation for marriage. In the absence of the seminar's key spokesman Rustom Daroga, Delhi's youth trustee Farokh Rustomji invited suggestions and proposals on the convening of the seminar.

Chasing elusive deeds

The defunct anjumans subcommittee has been disbanded and the chief executives of the BPP and the SPP Anklesaria and Sohrab Katpitia have been authorized to work independently and re-

port to the managing committee of the Federation when necessary. Anklesaria had recommended the first step of dispensing with the subcommittee, but on hearing the subsequent decision he was quick with a repartee: "My proposal to have the defunct anjumans subcommittee go defunct is being sabotaged!"

Anklesaria and Katpitia will be assisted by a paid worker J. J. Makwana, a retired revenue officer, who has been engaged to gather data on defunct anjuman properties after these have been brought to the attention of the Federation.

"The defunct anjumans concept as we see it should be changed," advised Katpitia. "We should approach the scene earlier before everyone goes from there and we lose everything," Katpitia replied to Dandiwalla who was wondering why the Neemach Anjuman which has a population of 25 Parsis and is economically independent should be the subject of discussion at the Federation meeting.

The Bhopal Anjuman has got the revenue department to certify that their assets stand in the name of the anjuman. When Gandhi enquired whether in view of the dwindling Parsi population in Bhopal, the anjuman would, as a safeguard, consider adding the name of the Federation as joint owner of the properties, Bhopal Anjuman's president Rustom Bilpodiwalla, whose job is of a transferable nature, said he would consult his colleagues.

The proposed distress sale to the encroachers on the 19,000 square meters of rocky land at Diu has yet not yielded any returns. In the meanwhile it is hoped that the agiary and dokhma adjacent to the rocky land will be declared as national monuments with the help of Rane, chief minister of Goa,

Daman and Diu, who has promised to render his assistance in getting them certified as protected monuments under the Archaeological Survey of India.

The Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman is desperately trying to protect their ownership rights to the property at Palghar. They first faced difficulties in getting the tenants evicted after the expiry of the lease period. Soon thereafter the government claimed rights under the land ceiling act and a compromise was reached with the latter. But Anjuman vice-president Aspi Irani revealed that the Anjuman has now been informed that this settlement cannot be considered bonafide as the Anjuman was not in possession of the land for the requisite number of years.

Casting votes in unison

Zoroastrian associations overseas will now be permitted to enrol as liaison members of the Federation since the annual general body has unanimously ratified the executive council's decision. Paying a minimum annual subscription of US \$20, liaison members will be notified of the Federation's progress and will be entitled to depute their representatives to attend the meetings so as to establish closer ties with Zoroastrian communities throughout the world.

The elected zonal vice-presidents for the next two-year term are Lt Gen Ardeshir Sethna of Delhi for the north zone, Bejon Dittia of Secunderabad for the south zone, Homi Bodhanwalla of Jamshedpur for the east zone, Dinshaw Anklesaria of Poona for west zone A, and Dr Sam Bhacca of Surat for west zone B.

The co-opted members of the Federation will be Rustom Daroga representing north zone; Mani Clubwala,

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south zone; Ardeshir Batlivala (who was able to attend only three of the last 10 meetings), east zone; Peshotan Nargolwala, west zone A; and from west zone B will be the BPP's Rustom Anklesaria, who monitors all the BPP-implemented Federation projects and is the "real *chhupo* Rustom (doing exemplary work behind the scenes)" according to Gandhi, who deserved and was given a standing ovation.

Continuing as office-bearers of the Federation are joint honorary secretaries Keki Gandhi and Eruch Desai, joint honorary treasurers Jamshed Guzder and Peshotan Nargolwala and executive secretary Ms Gool Tata.

Law, letters and lapses

With Dadi Mistry claiming that he had no copy of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) constitution to lend to Gandhi, and the latter stating that he could not therefore study the implications of the amendments to the WZO's articles of association as suggested by noted solicitor of Delhi Jimmy Dadachanji, and accordingly apprise the Federations managing committee, the bridge for a settlement between the Federation and the WZO remained uncrossed. Mistry, a trustee of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman, is the vice-president of the WZO.

As a public religious and charitable organization enjoying exemption from the application of income-tax, the Federation was further hopeful that it would be excused from filing annual returns and submitting to the process of hearing and assessments every year. The late Shiavax Nargolwala (founder member of the Federation) had planned to make a representation against a purported Government move to rescind the above provision. Dadi Mistry, who had offered to gather data on other trusts which might be facing similar problems, was yet unable to identify such cases, but wished to make one last attempt.

The backing out of three sponsors who had earlier committed to pay Rs 2,500 each towards the cost of publishing three issues of the *Fed Newsletter* compelled Gandhi to fall back on Guzder for an advertisement at the last minute to support the March issue. On being questioned by Clubwala as to the futility of the monthly expenditure, Gandhi emphasized that he was very

pleased with the response and enthusiasm from the readers, and that it was worth the effort. "This is an activity of the Federation, and if extra funds were available I would like to increase the circulation." For the coming issues, Guzder has promised to sponsor three more, BPP two, Mazda Leasing two, Delhi Anjuman one, Mhow Anjuman one, Dadi Mistry one, Irani one, Bodhanwalla promised one sponsor, and Dinshaw Anklesaria consented to sponsor one on behalf of the Poona Parsee Panchayat or to find a sponsor.

Those attending the meeting were: Nozar Ichhaporia and Erach Gai of Ahmednagar; Capt Homi Dandiwalla of Allahabad; Hosang Debara of Agra; Shavak Patel of Baroda; Minochaheer Bharucha of Bhavnagar; Rustom Bilpodiwalla of Bhopal; Dr Aspi Golwalla, Eruch Desai, Jamshed Guzder, Minoo Shroff, Rustom Anklesaria, Ms Gool Tata and Peshotan Nargolwala of Bombay; Erach Kapadia and Dara Mahudawala of Broach; F.D.Vesuna and Firoze Vakil of Dahanu; D.G.Wadia of Daman; Zal Nowsherwanji, Keki Gandhi, Dadi Mistry, Rusi Engineer, Farokh Rustomji and Ava Khullar of Delhi; Nadirsha Engineer of Hubli; Daulat Irani of Hyderabad and Karnataka; Homi Panthaki of Ilav; Aspi Irani of Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman; Homi Bodhanwalla of Jamshedpur; Ronny Dick of Jhansi; Firoze Tampal of Mahuva; Gp Capt Dhunjishaw Marker and Behram Masani of Mhow; Ms Kety Mewawalla of Nanded; T. E. Pardiwalla of Pardi; Dinshaw Anklesaria, Pervez Avari, Ms Khursheed Jeejeebhoy and Meher Anklesaria of Poona; Sapal Tamboli and Faridoon Unvalla of Rajkot; Nariman Balsara and Homi Palsetia of Saronda; Bejon Dittia, Ms Gool Chenoy, N. F. Nagarwala and Naval Vakeel of Secunderabad; Ms Nergis Panthaki of Shahabad; Ms Mani Clubwala co-opted from South zone; Dr Sam Bhacca, Davar Kavasji Modi, Dr Minocher Contractor, Ms Dina Ghadiali, S.J.Hilloowala, M. Lakdawala, Bahadur Patel, Maneck Gheyara and Sohrab Katpitia of Surat; Bejon Baldawala of Vapi; Rusi Parabha, Bahadur Jokhi, Parvez Amaria, Persi Buhariwala and Piloo Dordi of Vyara-Songadh; and Firoze Patel and Homi Mehta of Zai Bordi. The Press was represented by *Parsiana*.

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The Madressa's annexe

The Dadar Athornan Madressa needs 20 lakh rupees more to complete the construction of the new extension

Arnavaz S. Mama

It was lunchtime at the Athornan Mandal's Athornan Boarding Madressa at Dadar. The three-course meal for the 55 young boys had been provided by a Parsi couple in memory of a deceased family member. The afternoon stum was duly completed. A short prayer chanted in unison and led by the seniormost of the boys followed. The boys sat ready at table, awaiting an empty metal basin and a *karasio* (small traditional receptacle) full of water carried around by two of the youngsters to ritually rinse each right hand (the left was banished behind the back!) before the lunch could be touched. Ranging in age from six to 23, these boys may be the community's future priests.

"The idea is not only to train them as priests but to create all-rounders able to meet any situation in life," avers Ervad Rustom Panthaki, the Madressa's principal for the past 20 years. Panthaki's small frame belies his moral stature. To the boys he is a father figure, their love and respect earned by single-minded dedication to the welfare of the institution.

Sharing Panthaki's viewpoint is the Madressa's trustee-in-charge, solicitor Farrok Sidhwa, who says, "The world is advancing. A child must not feel he was not provided facilities because he was at the Madressa."

Woefully short of space for the boys' physical and extracurricular activities, an annexe to the original two-storeyed structure is in the process of construction in the backyard which originally housed the kitchen. The 12,731 sq ft of space that will be forthcoming, is planned to accommodate an 1,800 sq ft assembly hall to be named after Mancherji Joshi, the founder of the Dadar Parsi Colony, a library, dormitory



Annexe under construction to provide space for the Madressa's activities

accommodation for the older, college-going boys plus family accommodation for four or five residential teachers who would not only provide necessary academic support for the boys but also much needed administrative aid to the aging Panthaki and his wife Jalamai. Hitherto, Jalamai's varied duties have included mending, nursing, and generally supervising the tidying up of the premises. "Personal care" has been the Panthakis' credo.

The efforts of Panthaki and Sidhwa have yielded more than 15 lakh rupees towards the cost of the building construction, estimated at 35 lakh rupees. The Bombay Parsi Punchayet, the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of India and the Delhi Parsi Anjuman are among the institutions that have contributed, and Rohinton Rivetna of Chicago and Panthaki's





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brother, Jal Panthaki of Canada, are trying to help collect funds in North America. But the uncovered deficit is worrying the two men. To community individuals donating Rs 25,000 and more the Madressa offers an inscription on a marble plaque and a promise that their names will be mentioned in all ceremonies conducted at the Madressa, says Panthaki, apart from enjoying certain exemptions under section 80G of the Income tax Act. Donations, big or small, may be sent to The Athornan Boarding Madressa, 651-52, Parsi Colony, Dadar, Bombay 400014. Cheques must be drawn in favor of 'Athornan Mandal.'

"The Madressa has no corpus. It is run purely on donations," explains Sidhwa. Yet, board and lodging, stationery, books and school education,

"The idea is not
only to train them
as priests
but to create
all-rounders able
to meet any
situation in life"

everything is provided totally free. The boys receive religious and secular education simultaneously. The one condition that must be fulfilled before a child is admitted is that the boy knows Gujarati.

By the time he has reached the third or fourth standard, the child knows the *Khordeh Avesta* by heart and is ready to begin learning Pazend through Gujarati phonetics – enough to commit 72 chapters of the *Yasna* and 23 chapters of the *Visperad* to memory. "Learning prayers by rote helps to build memory," says Sidhwa, a qualified mobed himself. Every year the boys face a compulsory prayer examination in April conducted by Ervads Pesi Karkaria and/or Aspi Dadachanji. Both mobeds are ex-students of the Madressa and being practising priests conducting the higher liturgical ceremonies, know the difficult passages well and advise the youngsters accordingly, says Panthaki.

As soon as a boy is ready to become

a navar, a sponsor is contacted. The cost of the ceremony is in the region of six to seven thousand rupees. The boy may undergo the ceremony in his own hometown or in Bombay but needs to spend almost a month in an agiary or atash bahram, taking the bareshnum (special purification ceremony spanning nine days and nights, only undergone by priests) twice over. The final ceremony itself stretches over four gruelling days. The visperad, undertaken on the last day, takes three hours on an average, but generally extends to four. The cost of the navar ceremony includes the boy's food, clothing and special utensils as also the fees of the mobeds who pray with him. In return for the sponsor's largesse, the navar will traditionally include the sponsor's name in any ceremony he performs throughout his own life. The maratab ceremony, in contrast, costs about two thousand rupees, and is not quite as trying for the initiate.

Thus qualified, the boys go for



(Above) Karanjia helping younger boys



(Left) Panthaki: a father figure

Photos: Homiyar Mistry

jashan and muktad prayers, often partake in the geh sarna at doongerwadi and are sent to watch the nirangdin ceremony.

Routine

A normal day at the Madressa begins at 4.45 each morning. The daily ablutions include the use of *taro* (consecrated bull's urine) or *rakh* (ash). The prayers, chanted in unison, include the *Havan Gah*, and the *nyaish* or *yasht* appropriate to the day, ending with *tandurasti* and, when required, *stum*. Since the neighboring D.P.Y.A. High School which the boys attend, works in two shifts, those in standards eight to 10 leave at 7.20 after an early breakfast; those in standards one to seven school in the afternoon. Their routine includes prayer lessons conducted by a special teacher coming in at 6 am. Each boy is taught individually, a daily log being maintained. The older boys who attend college or university pray alongside the younger ones, thus keeping their own memories fresh while helping the juniors, says Sidhwa. At 8 o'clock breakfast is served. Special teachers come in to help with school work between 9 and 10.30 am. A 15-minute break is followed by lunch and readying for school.

The older boys who return from school at 1 pm are required to finish their lunch by 1.30 and carry on with school work until 3 pm followed by *bhantar* (prayer) study until it's time for tea and biscuits for everyone at 4 o'clock. At 5.45 pm everyone settles back for school homework again, the

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college-goers helping their younger brethren in small groups till 7 pm.

Between 7 and 7.30 the evening prayers are chanted in chorus, followed by dinner. Thereafter, the older boys settle again for studies, while the youngsters play.

Extracurricular activities, favored by the principal and trustees, include elocution, *Shah Namah* recitations, writing for the Madressa's quarterly publication *Knowledge*, and watching TV. A video set will be on the shopping list in the near future. "We intend to get special courses in English," Sidhwa says.

The Madressa philosophy inculcated by Panthaki is "When we take, we must also give." Sick neighbors receive a special mention in the daily prayers, that their health may be restored. Ramiyar Karanjia, the Madressa's star pupil and a gold medallist graduate, now conducts the *dharma gnyan* (religious study) classes at Dadar where currently 85 Parsi children from the colony attend. He also conducts religious classes at the

D.P.Y.A. High School while Cyrus Sidhwa who edits *Knowledge* and daily puts up an edifying 'thought for the day' on the doorstep of the Madressa which morning walkers of all communities stop to read, has taken over the religious classes that Panthaki had held for over 20 years at Rustom Baug and at the Gamadia Colony.

The Mancherji Joshi Hall and library will not be commercially rented out, says Sidhwa, but it will be available to the community's children to hold educational, social and cultural functions as "Parsi youth, left to fend for itself in the vacations, needs a focal point to meet together." Classes in sudreh stitching and kusti weaving, for the womenfolk of the community including behdins, will be conducted by Jalamai who used to conduct cutting classes in Nargol earlier.

Panthaki is "ready to teach the proper conduct of Zoroastrian religious ceremonies to any behdin who is interested, including ladies," with the exception of the *pav mahal* (higher liturgical) ceremonies. "The stum can

be prayed at home. Also afargan and frokshi. Anyone can sit and pray any Avestan manthras next to the dead. Even a behdin can do a jashan. Only the boi, ijashne and vendidad require mobeds," says Sidhwa, maintaining that this is not a new procedure but a harkening back to a system that was quite common in the old days.

The construction of the annexe, undertaken on behalf of the Madressa by civil contractor Aspi Irani who is also the vice-president of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman, began in February, though the foundation stone had been laid by Udwada High Priest and venerated Avestan scholar Dastur Hormazdyar Mirza in December, after the boys had conducted the jashan. Mirza himself belongs to the first batch of Madressa pupils.

With increased space the Madressa hopes to better its strength. For the past several years, there has been no attempt at advertising the institution, yet the number of students has been rising. The overhead expenses will also increase - the ground rent, staff and servants, plus the maintenance of two buildings. Sidhwa and Panthaki confess to sleepless nights but their basic optimism is ever ready to surface: "We have seen, whenever there's a good cause, Parsis always come forward," says Sidhwa. "Parsi *jigar ne dhan che* (Parsis have hearts of gold)," acknowledges Panthaki, adding, "Unfortunately, dedicated workers *ni jaasti juroor che. Te koi aavtu nuthi* (Our greater need is for dedicated workers, but they are not forthcoming)." The gentlemen, however, appreciate the involvement of ladies, like solicitor Katie Mehta, who take special interest in the older, college-going students from the Madressa, not only providing for their academic requirements, but often inviting them to their homes to inculcate the manners and graces expected by society.

The Madressa boys are brought up to understand and appreciate tolerance: "We don't teach them fanaticism," says Panthaki, and books on other religions, like the *Gita*, *Koran* and the *Bible*, are freely available to them. The institution has often been faulted because many boys go for secular careers. Panthaki is unperturbed and satisfied even if they continue to go for regular prayers part-time, thus serving the community wherever they may be...

Incentives for Madressa mobeds

With the purpose of imparting "sound training in priesthood at the hands of really qualified priests," a new scheme offering fiscal incentives has been introduced by an anonymous Zoroastrian philanthropist, note Ervads Fali Master and Homi Turel. Noting the growing tendency to create semi-qualified mobeds, the scheme intends "to stop this wrong line" and at the same time "attract more priestly class boys to take" up mobedi as a profession.

To be introduced initially at the M. F. Cama Athornan Madressa at Andheri for a three-year trial period, the scheme begins with a Rs 5,000 fixed deposit in the joint names of the boy's guardian and a responsible representative of the organization when the child enters the Cama Madressa. The principal plus interest (an estimated Rs 40,000) would unconditionally revert to the boy on his qualifying as navar and maratab. Additionally, should he continue as a practising mobed for 15 years, he would be entitled to nearly Rs 1,00,000 as an

older scheme would also apply to him.

Once the strength at the Cama Madressa, where the trust bears all expenses of a student - including navjote, navar and maratab ceremonies, school and college education, food and clothing - becomes comparable to the Dadar Madressa's, the scheme will be extended to Dadar also, notes the press release.

Substantial facilities at the Cama Madressa have been going a-begging ever since the trustees of that institution abolished simultaneous secular education leading to the SSC in 1978, thus depriving the young initiates of any option except to become full-time practising priests. Although the mistake was recognized and the SSC course reintroduced in 1980/81, athravans were chary of sending their sons to Andheri until Ervad Nadirsha Aibara of Cusrow Baug's Karani Agiary was appointed the Madressa's joint principal in 1986. There are now approximately 15 students in the institution, says Master, which in its heyday had catered to more than 70.

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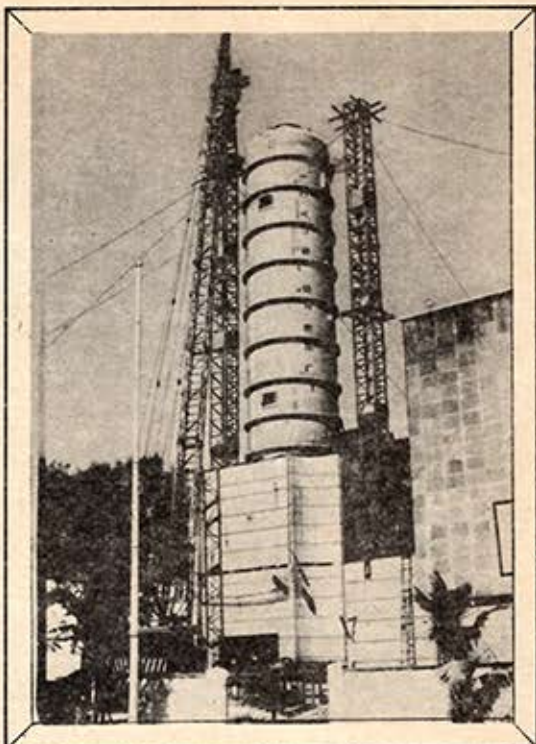
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"Changes always upset people"

Religious reforms, when necessary, should be introduced gradually so that they are not considered a culture shock, opines *Gavashni's* Editor Dr Jehan Bagli

Arnavaz S. Mama

"When you have to write on a subject, you have to understand the subject. I use *Gavashni* to understand the various facets of Zoroastrianism."

The founding president of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec (ZAO) and Editor of its quarterly newsletter *Gavashni* since its inception, Dr Jehan Bagli belongs to the first batch of Zoroastrian immigrants to North America, dating back to the early 50s. A chemist by profession, Bagli heads the research division of Ayerst Mackenna and Harrison, a US pharmaceutical company.

The brainchild of Edul Kanga, Homi Daruwala, Freddy Lakdawala, Rohinton Sethna and Bagli, *Gavashni* made its debut in 1974 as "just a paper with news about Quebec," recalls the sinewy scientist at an interview in Bombay in December '86. Today the quarterly has a print order of nearly 350 with subscribers from the US and Canada paying US \$ 8 and C \$ 10 respectively informs Bagli. There never was any interest in profit making and for quite a time the ZAO subsidized the expenses. "Things became significantly organized after Dolly Dastoor (who succeeded Bagli as ZAO president) came on the scene," acknowledges the Editor.

Bagli took on *Gavashni* earnestly about 1976-77. "I have always set the editorial policy myself. I haven't known anybody question anything I did. The basic idea of *Gavashni* is to discuss information on Zoroastrianism through the articles I write and I keep it open to anybody to express their



views. Others' work is edited for language only and we stay away from quibbles and quarrels." Acknowledging a selfish motive that never materialized, Bagli says he looked forward to feedback - any errors being corrected by scholars and high priests. "Perhaps they felt that my views were too diverse for any rapprochement," he shrugged. He is also disappointed that despite the "intention to set up a dialogue with the community," it has not come about. "Perhaps because in North America (the academic aspect of) religion has a low priority in life. After all, people leave India to go to North America to improve their material aspect," he rationalizes.

Bagli and ZAO have had such a long and happy association together that though the Baglis shifted to Princeton, New Jersey, USA in the wake of his company's research facilities being transferred there in 1982/3, he continues to remain *Gavashni's* Editor. The ZAO presented a shawl and bade Jehan and his wife Freny a ceremonial farewell at the time of their de-

parture, but the umbilical cord remained unsevered.

Though *Gavashni* has an established style and reputation that distinguishes it from the other newsletters of North America, Dastoor and Bagli have offered to fold *Gavashni* and place themselves at the disposal of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America's (FEZANA) proposed newsletter, because, according to Bagli, "We felt it would be unwarranted duplication of effort and inefficient use of resources to have more than one such paper." Bagli and his colleagues are now in the process of writing a charter for the information dissemination committee of FEZANA. However, there are others, like the Rivetnas of Chicago and Sabar Balsara of Ontario, who are also interested in participating in the production of FEZANA's newsletter which makes it a "much more complex situation. How this will affect editorial policy, I don't know," says Bagli.

The nascent FEZANA is the second attempt at forming a federation of North American associations. Bagli recalls how at the end of the Second North American Zoroastrian Congress in Chicago, people expressed a desire to initiate such an organization. The ground work responsibility of drafting a constitution was assigned to Bagli. Somehow, the legal help he required from the other associations was not forthcoming, he says. By the Third North American Zoroastrian Congress in New York, Bagli says he had the constitution drafted and decided on the name - United Zoroastrian Associations of North America (UZANA). "However, I felt something was not right. Organizations like Chicago and New York were slow in responding. Although the subscriptions were only about one dollar per member, only Quebec subscribed and Ontario and British Columbia said they'd reserve funds towards it. (The whole project) became slow and almost static. I wanted to transfer it to somebody else. I cannot work when action is not forth-

coming on time. I recommended Lovji Cama of New York to take over...

"New York responded and also British Columbia and Chicago but he never heard from the other organizations. (The project) became totally dormant - nothing ever happened. At the Fourth Congress in Montreal a meeting was held but I could not attend. It was very scrappy and there was no feedback. Before the Fifth Congress, Lovji had written to everyone. Orthodox people felt UZANA was out to make sweeping changes and therefore they did not support it and proposed instead that Rohinton Rivetna (whose views are considered moderate and hence acceptable) look into FEZANA."

There are a lot of differences between the first settlers and now, says Bagli, though the community at large is "beginning to notice that what they've been brought up with is becoming impractical (in the new context)." There is no agiary-going or special prayers on hamkaras, for instance. People are beginning to realize that rituals must necessarily be curtailed, he feels.

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The effort to fill the religious vacuum in which the children are growing, has necessitated special effort on the part of parents which is not put in by parents in Bombay, like taking children to religious classes, jashans, etc. says Bagli. The satisfaction is that "the younger generation is quite conscious of the fact that they belong to the first revealed religion of the world. They perhaps know more about their religion than the Parsi children of Bombay," partly because of the classes organized by the Zoroastrian organizations of New York and Chicago which have made significant impact. "But these classes are held once a month. In between it's what the parents do and their way of thinking within the four walls of the family that is finally most important. Therefore the views vary from family to family: within the younger generation there are groups which think more liberally and less liberally." Referring to the youth panel of the Fifth North American Zoroastrian Congress which met in Los Angeles in 1985, Bagli recalled, "Some youths openly said they didn't want people like Bagli and (Kersey) Antia (who performed the navjote of American engineer Joseph Peterson). Others had quite liberal views and expressed them openly."

Noting that differences and disagreements will go on to the next generation, Bagli observes, "When an incident touches an individual close to the heart, people evaluate their own thinking...when their own child makes a non-Zoroastrian choice of spouse...people realize that all humanity is the creation of Ahura Mazda." Bagli strongly believes that the stress of reality will help to "open up people's thinking...People don't realize that the geography of the country and statistics are totally against them - intermarriages are bound to happen."

Taking a historical perspective, Bagli notes categorically, "Zoroastrianism has changed across thousands of years, anyway...(High priest) Tansar in the time of Ardashir (the Sasanian king) simply took certain texts and rejected others. He established Zoroastrian norms then." But Bagli is equally conscious of the need to preserve religious integrity and the fact that changes always upset people. "That was my objection to the publicity surrounding Peterson's navjote," he adds.

Son of a practising mobed, Bagli

**"When their own
child makes a non-
Zoroastrian choice of
spouse...people
realize that all
humanity is the
creation of Ahura
Mazda."**

grew up within the confines of an andhyaru household. Though put through the paces of navar and maratub as befitted the traditional priestly scion, he says he grew up ignorant of the religion's intellectual message. Like many others of his generation, Bagli pursued his science career with single-minded attention and fled from the intellectual and material limitations of Bombay to the freedom of North America.

As more Zoroastrians settled in that continent, several prospective brides flew in to join their naturalized American spouses and Bagli found himself requested again and again to perform weddings, and jashans for their new homes. The priestly regalia was jetted across the Atlantic together with detailed instructions from his mobed father.

However, Bagli says, he has to date, never officiated at a funeral though he has by now attended three or four. The ZAQ has acquired 12 burial plots at a very reasonable price with the option to buy 12 more at a later date, thanks to the contacts of Jamshed Pavri of Vancouver, says Bagli. However, Bagli finds that cremation is being preferred by Zoroastrians in North America because it is economical, whereas burial works out to \$450-500 per burial.

Referring to the tussle between the conservatives and the liberals in most Zoroastrian associations, largely in the context of accepting the non-Zoroastrian spouses and children of Zoroastrian women, Bagli is emphatic: "It's not a matter of winning or losing. It's not a game. It's the life of human beings and their spiritual and psychological satisfaction of having been a part of a way of life. To talk in terms of battle is stupid and ridiculous."

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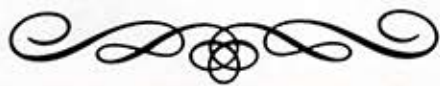
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A resounding success

Jeroo Irani

Co-founder of the Bombay Chamber Orchestra Jini Dinshaw's efforts to promote western classical music in India earned her the honorary membership of the Order of the British Empire



"If a child between the age of one and three listens to music, that child grows up to appreciate it," says Ms Jini Dinshaw, co-leader of the Bombay Chamber Orchestra, quoting Suzuki, a Japanese teacher of the violin. Recently appointed as honorary Member of the Order of the British Empire for her efforts to promote musical education and to give Bombay an orchestra, Dinshaw proved the Japanese master right.

For Dinshaw's family tree does not reveal any inspired musicians. However, as a toddler she had the opportunity to absorb music as a plant absorbs sunlight. "On the first floor of the building where I was born, the late Edward Behr rehearsed the Bombay Orchestra." As the orchestra honed its faltering notes, Ms Behr would take the little girl down to her flat, and music soon became a part of the air that Dinshaw breathed.

Today, the 57-year-old soft-spoken violinist can still communicate that early delight in musical discovery. She never had to be urged, tempted or taught to love music. She took to the tonal art inevitably, irresistibly. At four years, she started to make music herself for the delight in sounds is invariably accompanied by a great desire to produce them. She would play the mandolin by ear and the violin from records bought from her pocket money. The world continued to present itself to her as a complex of aural sensations. And the tempestuous, moody chords of Beethoven's symphonies became as familiar as the austere, noble stateliness of Brahms.

But it was not till 1948, when she was 18, that Dinshaw took formal musical education when she left for England to study music with the late Ms Gladys Noon, Ms Adela Facharri, George Stratton and Antonio Brosa. Her music teaching career began on her return in 1959 when she also co-founded the Bombay Chamber Orchestra (BCO), the society of which she has been trustee and joint honorary secretary since 1962.

Setting up the Bombay Chamber Orchestra was a feat, beset as the project was with numerous problems – lack of finance, good instruments and

trained musicians. Started with six members "the whole string section of the present 55-member orchestra comprises mainly of my own pupils and those of my colleague, Myra Menzie. The wind and brass sections come from the police and navy bands and they are self-taught," she says. Specializing in military band music means that this section had to be retrained - which is done free of cost. For the wind and brass students, the BCO Society has co-sponsored workshops under visiting teachers from the Royal College of Music, London. The orchestra gets free training from visiting conductors and opportunities to play with foreign guest conductors, states Dinshaw.

Considered to be the best in India, the Bombay Chamber Orchestra cannot compare with its international counterparts. "Abroad, orchestras consist of trained musicians from prestigious academies of music." Deploring the fact that there are no academies of music in the city (though Delhi and Calcutta have one each), Dinshaw emphasizes that there is tremendous interest in western classical music in the younger generation. "Bombay is so culturally advanced, there is so much talent here, but no progress can be made unless there is an academy." Of the few teachers of violin in the city, only two or three continue to teach. Due to the lack of cello teachers Dinshaw took cello lessons in Switzerland in order to help cello students.

With the result, when the renowned British company, the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet Company performed the famed ballet *Giselle* in Bombay in 1985, the Bombay Chamber Orchestra, chosen to accompany the ballet, had to work extra hard to attain the expected level of proficiency. "The Royal Ballet brought along eleven wind and brass players to complement the orchestra." A conductor was flown down from the Royal Opera House to take the initial rehearsals of the local orchestra. "After the conductor, Emanuel Young's departure, we worked on our own," explains Dinshaw.

Nearer the time of the performance, he came back to monitor the orches-

tra's progress. "He was very pleased," says Dinshaw. He left before the arrival of the principal conductor, Bramwell Tovey with whom the orchestra had full day rehearsals. However, the musicians rehearsed for just a few hours prior to the show with the ballet group. "We were instructed not to look at the dancers during the per-

"Children would benefit much more if parents took interest in music and made a habit of taking them to concerts"

formance. So we never got the opportunity to see the ballet," she rues.

The enthusiasm and dedication shown by the Bombay Chamber Orchestra has been greatly commended by visiting conductors. "Abroad, the attitude is very professional. The orchestra rehearses for a specific period of time and leaves even if the conductor wishes to continue. We would go on rehearsing and not want to stop." If the price of perfection is heavy striving and cruel pain, the Bombay Orchestra enjoyed it! "In fact, no other orchestra rehearses at such unearthly hours (7 am in the morning) mainly because our members are college and office going people."

Aside from attending arduous rehearsals, Dinshaw teaches violin, viola and cello from 3.30 pm to 8.30 pm every day. She has found to her delight that western classical music has not gone out of fashion, that it has always been round the corner, and has returned with a bang. No longer is it the exclusive province of the Christian and Parsi communities. Deserving students who cannot afford her fees are awarded a "scholarship" by Dinshaw i.e. free tuition and an instrument for their use. "Such students are already in the orchestra," adds Dinshaw.

By way of young Parsi talent she mentions the late pianists, Neville Chinnoy and Hilla Khurshedji, while Fali

Pavri also a pianist, is at the moment doing well in Moscow, she says.

Dinshaw studied in Salzburg the art of teaching music to children through the concept of Orff-Schulwerk which she puts into practice by teaching rhythm and music through games and special instruments. "Children would benefit much more if parents took interest in music and made a habit of taking them to concerts. Moreover, good music should be played at home as well," she adds. This would apply to Indian classical music too, she says.

"However, there is a tendency here to look upon western music as alien," she says. "Culture is culture. Both East and West should experience each other. Why draw a political line as far as music is concerned?"

While Dinshaw is sceptical about recent experiments in East-West synthesis, some of her favorite composers are Brahms, Beethoven, Rachmaninov and Tchaikovsky. She is wary of some ultra modern composers whom she occasionally finds discordant. As for opera, whose relationship to music has been described by some connoisseurs as that of a bawdy house to a cathedral, Dinshaw enjoys a live performance rather than a recorded one. Pop, rock and jazz are idioms that are difficult for her to accept, she admits. "There is a tendency among young people to amplify sound till their ears drop off. Later on, hearing could be impaired," she adds.

What are her future plans? To celebrate the silver jubilee of the Bombay Chamber Orchestra this September, Dinshaw plans to invite other young musicians from different parts of India to form an orchestra of 80 to 85 people, constituting the Indian National Symphony Orchestra. She also hopes to invite an internationally known conductor and artist. The main stumbling block is finance.

It has been rightly said that what makes great music is a combination of emotion, brains and technical virtuosity. Dinshaw seems to have a generous helping of all three. Unmarried, she has dedicated her whole life to music. "It can be a lifelong struggle. You never stop learning either technically or musically," she says.

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Graphic A-181

Guided by the Mazda maxim of converting old Parsi sick units into profitable businesses, the foods division of Mazda Estates and Finance Limited bought over OK Wafers. Seeing many Parsis adept at "spinning yarn(!)" spurred the launching of Mazda Textile Industries. Optimizing on the favorable climate for business expansion in India led to Mazda also venturing into leasing, financial consultancy, properties, foods and drinks, travels, and publications.

Giving the raison d'être of the eight companies incorporated by the directors of Mazda was Yezdi Master who helped promote the Company's very first concern, Mazda Estates and Finance, and since then has been instrumental in implementing different projects initiated by Mazda chairman Dara Deboo.

"We felt the need to serve the growing virgin market for leasing in Gujarat, the second most industrialized state in India," said Master, managing director of Vitta Mazda Ltd, which he believes is Gujarat's second largest leasing company. With a capital base of Rs 345 lakhs, this Mazda associated company showed business transactions worth Rs 409 lakhs in the first 14 months. Rapidly calculating the break-up of these figures, Master (a chartered accountant by profession who was formerly chief accountant of Tata Textiles at Navsari) explained that nearly two-thirds of the total amount was collected from leasing operations (where ownership of assets vested with the leasing company); the source of the remaining one-third being hire-purchase operations (where on paying the final hire instalment, the purchaser would be entitled to ownership of the asset) and immovable property lease. "Vitta Mazda makes good money from lease counselling services," Master added.

An interim dividend of 10 percent as against a promised 20 percent final dividend, was declared by Deboo at the Company's extraordinary general meeting at Navsari on April 18, 1987. Referring to their merchant banking division's successful handling of the Saheli Leasing Company's entry in the



here... there... and everywhere

*From estates and finance the
Mazda group of companies has branched
into leasing, consultancy,
textiles, foods, travels and publications*

Parinaz Toddywalla

share market with a public issue of 6,00,000 equity shares of Rs 10 each, Deboo noted at the meeting, "At a time when the market conditions have been generally discouraging, and absolutely adverse for leasing companies particularly, the public issue of Saheli Leasing, with your Company acting as lead manager to the issue, was fully subscribed."

With a 6,000 crore rupee investment coming up in the vicinity of Surat by different concerns like the Gas Authority of India, petrochemicals division of Reliance, Hazira pipeline project and the engineering division of Larsen and Toubro, Master considers the future of leasing in Gujarat very bright. Ninety percent of their transac-

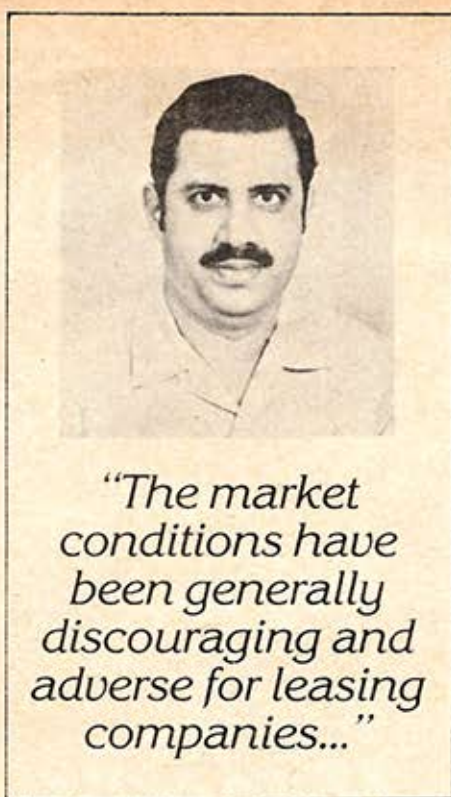
tions are based in Gujarat, the remaining 10 percent comprising hire-purchase agreements in Bombay.

The new government-imposed four percent tax on leasing will never affect the lessee, assures Master. "Because of competition among leasing companies, lease rentals will never be increased. The new tax would affect the leasing companies to the tune of 15 percent of book profits, but that is nothing compared to the corporate tax paid by companies. Hence you cannot grudge the increase. Yet Vitta Mazda has joined hands with other companies who have filed a writ petition demanding that the increased tax be abolished," Master provided the details.

Recalling their humble beginnings

when Mazda Estates and Finance was incorporated in Bombay in 1982 and was operating from a flat at Girdhar Nivas at Colaba. Master, enjoying the momentum of his rotating chair at the Company's new premises at Elphinstone House near Victoria Terminus, admitted, "Now what you see in this office is the prosperity of Gujarat." His cabin, located alongside those of other directors, was on the morning of April 15, 1987 almost converted into a lounge with the constant arrival and departure of several colleagues and frequent telephone calls from clients who all probably wanted to avail of his limited time in Bombay, the expansion activities in Gujarat necessitating his staying away. With a strong, hefty build, his perceptive eyes dominating his facial expressions, Master was willing to answer all queries except when it came to explaining the reason for the parallel existence of two leasing companies: Mazda Leasing (first public limited company floated by Mazda Estates and Finance in 1983 and now part of the Mazdalease Group) and Vitta Mazda, with their sister concerns diversifying into similar enterprises.

Elaborating on Mazda's diversification programs, Master announced that Mazda Textile Industries Limited is likely to announce a public issue in July. Incorporated with non-resident Indian participation from UK, their factory at Kim (26 kms from Surat) will be installed with sophisticated water jet looms and a twisting and texturing unit, as also a unit for weaving art silk fabrics. It was reported that in Surat, fabrics worth Rs 1,000 crores are woven on an estimated 1,50,000 looms every year. Surat also has the largest



"The market conditions have been generally discouraging and adverse for leasing companies..."

congregation of wholesale textile markets in India and consumes 70 percent of the total yarn produced in India.

Mazda Properties, dealing with real estate, land and property development, is expected to come out with a public issue in another three months. Construction work on Transportnagar, their 15 lakh rupee warehousing project comprising 100 warehouses, was expected to commence in May. Mazda Estates and Finance enjoys the sole selling rights to the Drow texturing machine which is the product of an Italian collaboration, and is the sub-canvassing agency for the sale of JCT

(Jagatjit Cotton Textile) yarn in Surat.

Mazda Foods and Drinks will shortly be introducing squashes and syrups in the market. On Mazda Publications' immediate cards was the introduction of a magazine on automobiles, *Car and Bike International*, in the second week of May. They are also planning to bring out three more publications relating to travel and tourism, hoteliering and real estate. Mazda Travels undertakes agency work from its office at Nariman Point.

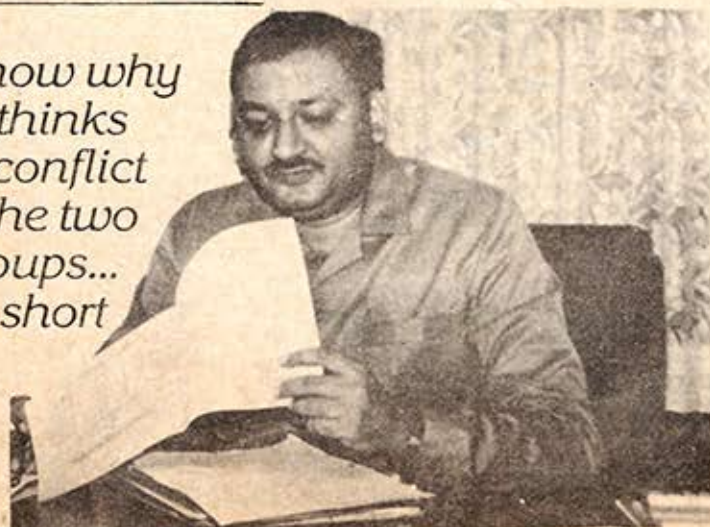
Master candidly admits that he finds it difficult to remember the multiple off-shoots of their Company. As an afterthought he informed that recently they bought over two old sick leather units in Ahmedabad from a closely held group and plan to nurse them back to health.

With an administrative staff of 40 to 45, Master noted in mathematical terms, "you can consider me the lowest common multiple (LCM) or the highest common factor (HCF) of the companies. Our directors are rotated amongst our different concerns. (Others serving as directors of different Mazda subsidiaries are Farrokh J. Sidhwa, Farrokh E.D.Mehta, Kersi K.Deboo, Hoshie Deboo, Pradeep Shukla and D.N.Shukla.) Dara Deboo is the chairman of all the Mazda companies. He continues to be a director of Mazda Leasing. "I don't know why everyone thinks there is a conflict between the two groups (Mazda under the chairmanship of Deboo and Mazdalease under the chairmanship of Homi Ranina...Life is too short for petty quarrels."

Farrokh Mehta, director of several of the Mazda companies, tried to put the situation in a clearer perspective. "There was a clash of personalities. Mazda Leasing being the eldest son wanted to show that he was earning enough and could stand on his own feet. Mazda Leasing's operations were based in Bombay. We wanted to reach the Gujarat market. When the Mazdalease group wished to reach the market in Calcutta, they launched Mazda Eastland. This does not mean that there is a conflict internally. Finally it just works out, *ke ghee dhoru tau bhi khichrima ne khichrima* (any seepage is okay if it percolates within the community)..."

(Top) Deboo: initiating projects
(Left) Master: reaching the Gujarat market

"I don't know why everyone thinks there is a conflict between the two Mazda groups... Life is too short for petty quarrels"



The post made easy

Operating in prime commercial areas, the Mail Order Marketing Service offers postal facilities at the client's doorstep

Jeroo Irani

They sit there mountainously – letters, New Year greetings, Xmas cards to be posted all over India and the world. Dr Behram Badhniwalla, onetime general practitioner turned businessman, who has started a new concern called MOMS (Mail Order Marketing Service) runs a professional eye over the tottering pile of packaged goodwill: "Our mail is a miniscule fraction of the three and a half crore letters per day that are handled by the postal department in India," he says.

A service oriented agency geared to eliminating the bottlenecks that hamper the growth of business organizations, MOMS provides support services to companies with a view to increasing productivity and efficiency. One of the first and unique services offered by MOMS is Mailcare. Every day at a prearranged time, daily office mail is picked up, sorted and despatched via a shorter route, thereby saving time and labor. Badhniwalla also operates his own mini post office at Yari Road, Versova, under special notification from the Government of India, Ministry of Communication, Department of Post.

His Mailcare service, "a bold, pioneering venture," in his words, will revolutionize the despatch departments in his clients' offices. "Mailcare will ensure quick, convenient and efficient movement of daily mail," he states. As we sit in his bamboo colored van stationed opposite Bajaj Bhavan, Nariman Point, Bombay, Badhniwalla explains how he started by serving six offices in the area in October 1986 and as of December 1, he had 40 clients on his roster.

Prior to closing hours, a mail boy

visits the client's office to collect the day's mail which is then checked (for incomplete addresses etc), sorted, categorized and speeded on to the various destinations via the closest postal route related to the mail.

The agency at Versova is licensed to accept almost any type of mail including registered letters and those under certificate of posting. It also sells postal stationery at postal rates. "We are simultaneously easing the load on local post offices and decongesting postal routes while safeguarding postal revenue," explains Badhniwalla.

Why did he set out to streamline the despatch departments of companies?



(Above) Badhniwalla: "pioneering venture"

(Alongside, on right) D'lima helps sort mail

Photos: Abraham Mathai

Badhniwalla states that a survey by his executives revealed that the main bottleneck in the growth of business is communication. Badhniwalla, who looks more like a sheriff in a western film than an entrepreneur, will wave his magic wand over a target group of 250 companies in the commercial areas of Nariman Point, Worli and Cuffe Parade. The target, he hopes, will be achieved in the span of two years by which time he will have to invest in more staff and more vans.

Elaborating from experience on the bottlenecks that can occur, Badhniwalla cites an everyday example: A boss dictates a few letters in the afternoon. They go to the despatch department where they are stamped and on the way home, the peon is supposed to post them at the General Post Office

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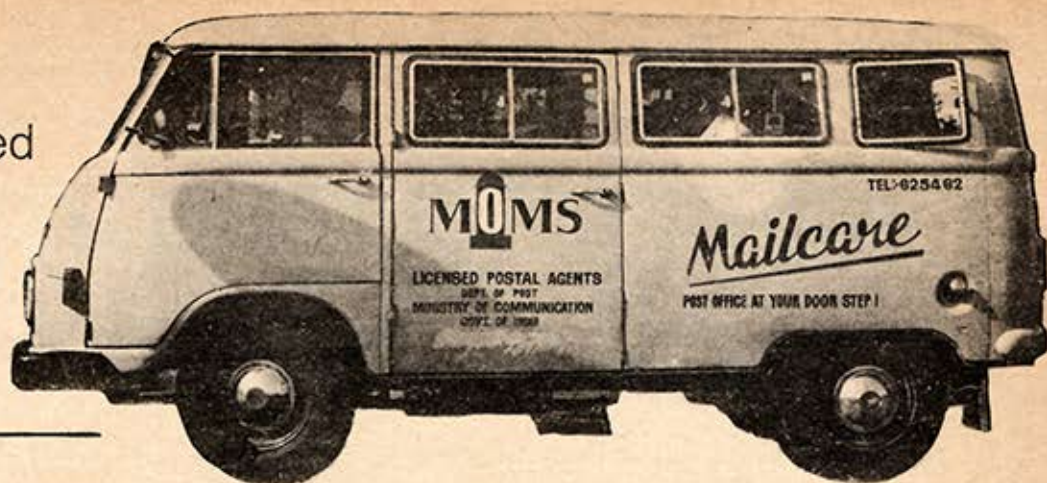
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A survey revealed that the main bottleneck in the growth of business is communication



or at the closest post office. If he misses the post or does not post the letters that day because he wishes to catch the 5.40 train home to Bandra, they will be posted the next day – causing further delays.

The emphasis is not on speed, which is the province of the courier, as much as on minimizing unnecessary delays when posting routine mail and elimination of interminable waits in long queues at the post office for office staff who could be better utilized elsewhere. "Mailcare ensures optimum use of personnel, man-hours and reduces administrative costs," enumerates Ms Carmelita Badhniwalla, the doctor's wife who looks after the administrative side.

"When you put a letter in the post, you are not sure when it will reach," says Cyrus Desai, an executive in charge of sales and marketing. "With us, there are more chances that the letter will reach earlier – locally within 24 hours. Our responsibility ceases once the letters are in the postal system," he adds.

Though the concept is new and the project is in an embryonic stage and the young and enthusiastic staff is still finding its feet, the postal agent has met with a promising response. Clients who started by entrusting Mailcare with a few stray letters, relieve themselves of the full day's load while another client who spent several thousands of rupees sending important documents to Bhilai every week by courier, has now turned to Mailcare, states Badhniwalla.

Flashing a letter of recommendation from the Indian Society for Training and Development praising the project, Badhniwalla says another client has gone so far as to suggest that Mailcare

and MOMS would be case studies for management students. According to Dr Rajan Saxena, faculty head, marketing, Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, "MOMS is the company of the twenty-first century on your doorstep today."

Gerard Pacheco of the Bankers Trust Company, a small representative arm of the New York bank, welcomes Mailcare. "We were one of the first six clients. Mailcare takes care of the running around and a certain amount of time-consuming, administrative work. Our overheads have been reduced as we do not have to hire an additional person which would mean utilization of space. Mailcare is easy on the budget," he says.

Charging Rs 250 per month plus actuals for the service, the fee is not applicable to mass or bulk mailing of say 2,000 to 3,000 annual reports or promotional gifts such as calendars for which a professional fee is levied. "We don't encourage parcels, though if a client wishes to send a telegram or a money order, we do oblige. One client even requested that we pay his children's school fees," says Desai.

As we sit in the van (financed by the New India Cooperative Bank), curious passersby stop to ask questions which are courteously answered by Norman D'lima who looks after the operational side of the concern. Suddenly, a jubilant shout "new client" rips the air and D'lima brandishes a cheque. This calls for another round of tea and sandwiches which are downed in an atmosphere of camaraderie. Soon mail from various offices in the Nariman Point area starts pouring in, waiting to be sorted and categorized.

The other services offered by MOMS are mass mailing of share cer-

tificates, annual reports and dividend warrants; intra-city documents delivery service within 24 to 48 hours with acknowledgement; payment of electricity, telephone, telex, credit card, club bills on the clients' behalf; the whole year's greetings for various festive occasions planned in advance and posted on behalf of the clients; and consultancy and trouble-shooting of postal administration and despatch problems.

Starting his career as a general practitioner, Badhniwalla drifted away from the medical profession after being appointed medical officer for an American company in 1974 in Bombay for their projects in the Middle East. Subsequently, he became human resources consultant for a major American company which was a consultant to the Saudi Arabian Government. "My key strength as a result became personnel management and human resources training programs."

Soon he got involved in the first ever training for air hostesses by a private agency with joint participation by a noted Middle East airline. Other training programs included training for midmanagement level cadre for the hotel and catering industry. His latest venture, MOMS, is based on all the various problems which he personally experienced as a businessman.

"I have always been involved in pioneering projects," states Badhniwalla, also a jazz musician, recalling how his 45-piece jazz band was the Indian entry at the Jazz Yatra 1984 when they gave a novel rendering of jazz and Indian ragas. "Music is his first love," exclaims Ms Badhniwalla. "Talking about love, my company MOMS connotes a motherly touch or mother care," concludes Badhniwalla.

A sporting community

Niloofer J. Madon

"Chalni, jaldi karni (come on, be quick!)" noted an anxious parent, goading his daughter into tying her disobedient shoelace. "The certificates here don't carry weight," wailed a participant. However, "It's better than my school sports," noted another athlete from Navsari. The hot sweltering afternoon sun added a hazy glitter to the kaleidoscope of events as the spacious grounds of the Brabourne Stadium played host to the two-day All Parsis Annual Athletic and Cycling Meet on April 18 and 19.

Held under the joint auspices of the Nowroze Baug Play Centre, the Zoroastrian Physical Culture and Health League (ZPCHL), the Cusrow Baug United Sports and Welfare League and Dadar's Mancherji Edalji Joshi Memorial Trust, the Meet aims to revive the once held All-Parsi Zoroastrian Sports Meet organized by the ZPCHL.

Sixty officials from the Bombay Athletics Association and 20 honorary workers toiled under the burning April sun to ensure the smooth running of the games, shepherding 425 boys and girls through the 87 events which spanned the two days. The events included the 100, 200, 400, 800, 1,500 and 3,000 meter run, the 110 meter hurdles, high jump, long jump, triple jump, shot put, discus throw, javelin throw and the relays (100x4 and 400x4 meters) and the 1,000, 1,600 and 4,000 meter cycling events. Throughout, the Stadium grounds seemed to be dotted with participants scurrying here and there for their events or practising on the center field.

The organizers having advertised in the newspapers and having sent invitations to various schools, baugs and athletic associations both in Bombay and the nearby cities, the response was "50 to 60 more participants than last year, which hopefully should increase to 500 and 550 in the coming years."

notes Sohrab Shastri, past honorary secretary of the Play Centre who has subsequently settled in Pune but was nonetheless present for the Meet. The participants included 13 persons from Pune and 12 from Navsari. The Navsari team had travelled the same morning by train to be present for the occasion, and were provided free lodging and boarding at the Nowroze Baug hall. Qualified officials from the Bombay Athletics Association who were officiating at the Meet deserved kudos, according to well-known coach Jal Pardiwala who noted that they "did not take a single pai" from the organizers and had travelled great distances to be there on the weekend.

Though the total cost of holding such a meet is Rs 26,000 (the medals and certificates themselves cost Rs 7,000, according to Homi Ustad, joint honorary secretary of the Nowroze Baug Play Centre and of the Meet), it

was largely defrayed this year by the ten thousand rupee donation by industrialist Dinshaw A. Merchant and other sponsors like Parle (Exports) Private Limited, and Associated Breweries and Distilleries, the makers of London Pilsner. A 38-page souvenir brought out on the occasion also brought in money by way of advertisements.

Yet, for all the organization, there were problems and complaints too: "They don't check your birth certificate," noted one participant pointing to a boy who had competed in the under-16 category but was obviously older. "The ones who are taking names should check certificates. They take anyone in any age-group and then

Right and below: Sprinting and cycling events under way at the Zoroastrian Sports Meet

(Facing page)

At the Brabourne Stadium (from left) Bakhtaver Merchant, Gamadia, Dinshaw Merchant and Pardiwala (Center) Ustad and (right) Shastri



The two-day All Parsis Annual Athletic and Cycling Meet showered recognition on young Zoroastrian talent



there is no fun!" Another complained of the lack of professionalism among the competitors and suggested that a short training camp be held before a meet to teach participants the very basics of athletics. Moreover, the finishing line string was too high for the younger competitors with the result that they were moving around the Stadium with mercurchrome-covered cuts round their necks, a fact brought quickly to the notice of the organizers by their parents. And while one complained that there was hardly any competition at the games (though national champions Jasmin Arethna, Porus Jassawalla, Kerman Framna, Hirjee Nagarwalla, Zenia Ayrton and Bakhtar Madon were also competing),

lodged, while another complained about the transport to and from the Stadium.

Countering the charge that a sports meet should not be held in the summer heat, Ustad noted that stadiums in Bombay were not easily available and had to be booked eight months in advance yet without the guarantee that they would be made available on the promised day. Summer being the off season the ground was more readily available. Furthermore, due to strained finances the aquatic meet could not be held for the past two years which they wish to remedy by holding one during the monsoons at the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) which is more central

wanted to invite other Parsis to participate in the athletic meet and asked Jal Pardivala to guide them in the matter. Pardivala suggested that the Centre revive the annual All-Parsi Zoroastrian Meet organized by the Zoroastrian Physical Culture and Health League started in 1920, but which died out due to lack of organizational interest. Eight beautiful silver trophies worth many thousands of rupees, he said, were still available with the ZPCHL Trust.

The Centre decided to take on the challenge and got in touch with the Cusrow Baug United Sports and Welfare League which agreed to help in the organization and "three years back Mancherji Edalji Joshi Memorial Trust joined us and they gave a donation of Rs 5,000 per annum," noted Ustad.

The eagerly awaited prize distribution, held on the evening of the last day, was accompanied by much noise, jubilation, association songs and bugle playing while the silver trophies sat proudly on the table reflecting the gleam of the sun. President of the Cusrow Baug United Sports and Welfare League, Dr Dinyar Gamadia, who chaired the Meet, thanked Merchant, the event's guest of honor and other sponsors, as well as Pardivala, for its success. Pardivala himself talked about the story behind Merchant's generous donation and of the Rs 6,000 donated anonymously.

Noted Merchant in his speech: "Today, athletics and sports have become very competitive and remunerative. In my days when Dadi Havewalla scored 5,050 runs in a (cricket) match no one gave him even Rs 5,050. Today...cricketers are laden with gifts and become millionaires overnight...Time was when the first two cricket teams to England had all Parsi players. Today there is no one in the race. Isn't it a shame?" he asked and proceeded



another felt that "since its inception in 1981-82 it is improving as the years go by." (The April Meet was the seventh in the series.)

The outstation participants from Navsari (under their manager Feroze Jokhi) and Pune (under Eruch Irani) complained about the inadequate "bathroom and toilet facilities" at the Nowroze Baug hall where they were



than the Mahatma Gandhi Pool at Dadar, which has been generally hired before.

Talking of the problem of checking birth certificates, Ustad pointed out that "there is a clause in the entry rules that all juniors have to show their birth certificates with every entry form. It is up to the secretaries of associations and people in charge who should see that this is done. It is not possible to check each and every entry form." However, he assures, he has taken up the matter of the particular case with the person in charge, noting that last year "we had disqualified six participants due to the (listing of) wrong age."

It all began in 1980 with the silver jubilee celebrations of the Nowroze Baug Play Centre. The organizers

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to tell the story of two frogs in a well, one of whom, an optimist, survived, because he would never give up. He then went on to praise Pardiwalla's untiring efforts for community sports and unexpectedly instated a Rs 5,000 Jal Pardiwalla Trophy for the best athlete of the Meet as adjudged by the organizers, amongst many protests by its namesake, who was totally overruled by all present.

The speeches were followed by "the best part of the Meet," when it was time to distribute the gleaming trophies sitting patiently on the table. Hirjee Nagarwalla was adjudged the Fastest Man of the Meet, while Zenia Ayrton was the Fastest Woman. The FKS Foundation Trophy for the Best Boy and Best Girl went to Kaiyumars Contractor and Farzin Kasad respectively, while the trophies for the Fastest Man on Wheels and for the one mile cycle race went to Porus Jassawalla. The Dr S.K. Nariman Sassanian Challenge Shield for the 3,000 meter race went to Adil Mogrelia and the Kaikho Ratan Trophy for javelin throw was received by Salamat Irani of Pune. The team championships for both men and women went to the Mancherji Edalji Joshi Memorial Trust.

The organizers took the opportunity to felicitate 13 sportspersons "who had made their presence felt at the national and Asian levels." They were Farokh Tarapore (yachting), Cawas Billimoria (judo), Meherwan Daruvala and Farokh Pundole (squash), Jasmin Arethna, Kerman Framna and Porus Jassawalla (cycling), Adille Sumariwalla, Hirjee Nagarwalla and Zenia Ayrton (athletics), Neville Daroga (weightlifting), and Hufrish Nariman (badminton), all from Bombay, and Navsari's Maneck Deboo (body building). The awards were presented by Ms Bakhtaver Dinshaw Merchant.

As for the continuation of sports in the community, Allan Roberts, secretary of the Maharashtra State Athletics Officials Association and manager of the Meet noted, "Now that other communities are taking an interest, naturally the Parsi victories are going to be curtailed." Pardiwalla would have none of it: "The Parsi community as a whole is a micro community in the world. Yet in the last Asian Games, the Indians who made their presence felt - Tarapore, Billimoria, Nagarwalla, etc were all Parsis. What man can say that Parsi sports is going down?"

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continued from page 7

and Navrooz Minochehr-Homji, all the other priests had refused to join Ervad Kersey Antia in a jashan at the World Zoroastrian Organisation conference. Antia had earlier performed Joseph Peterson's navjote.)

B. GHADIALLY
Herts, UK

Youth seminar in Delhi

Though originally it was planned to hold a youth seminar in Delhi from May 29 to 31, 1987, we wish to inform you that our board of trustees have decided to host this event during the Diwali/Dassera holidays in October '87, as it will be very hot in Delhi during the month of May.

F. RUSTOMJI
Youth Trustee, Delhi Parsi Anjuman

Problem of sudreh-kusti

In these days of spiralling prices of all commodities, why single out kusti ("Problem of kusti," *Parsiana*, December 1986) and sudreh ("Problem of sudreh," *Parsiana*, February 1987)? This attitude, I am afraid, will rather tempt more Parsis to discard kusti and sudreh.

LT COL D. S. SETHNA
Jhansi

The German Mazdasnans

There is a legend that, with the advent of Muslim persecution in Persia, groups of Zoroastrians fled - one

group landed at Sanjan in India, other groups are said to have fled to Germany. The latter groups got assimilated in the respective cultures and only the group which came to India kept its identity. Yet there are still traces of Zoroastrian teachings and influence to be found in Germany among the Mazdasnans which initially made me believe that there is a distinct cult or stock of ancient Persian Zoroastrians who fled from Persia to Germany.

During our recent visit to Germany my colleague, Mr Homi P. Ranina and I decided to visit the Mazdasnan headquarters in Germany. The center, known as *Neuzeitliche Diat-Und Lebenschule* is located in Edertal Espere in Bringhausen, an idyllic spot about 200 kilometers from Frankfurt near Kessel. We were given a warm reception as visiting Zoroastrians from India. Fortunately, during that weekend there was a meeting of the Mazdasnan council and we had an occasion to meet the president and other council members.

Our first interface revealed a totally different experience. The Mazdasnan group had nothing to do with the ancient Zoroastrian cult or culture. It was a movement started by a German medical practitioner, Dr Otto Zardost Ha'nish who, at the turn of the cen-

tury, made a study of Zarathushtra's teachings and philosophy and started the Mazdasnan movement. The word Mazdasnan was derived by him from the word *Zend*, meaning 'master thought' or the 'thought that masters all things for good.' In fact, Dr Ha'nish considered Zarathushtra as his father - hence the middle name Zardost.

The Mazdasnan philosophy as propounded by Dr Ha'nish lays great importance on positive thinking, diet, exercise, breathing and music. The center at Bringhausen demonstrates these facets in a live form. The Mazdasnans are strict vegetarians; alcohol and smoking are totally discarded. Multiple physical exercises are advocated and good breathing is manifested through songs and music. The weekend experience at Bringhausen gave us a personal insight into their philosophy and way of life.

The Mazdasnans were very keen to know about Zoroastrians in India, their customs and rituals. We gave them an overview. Excerpts of the *Avesta* prayers have been translated by Dr Ha'nish into German and they were chanted to beautiful music. The group asked us to pray *Yatha ahu vairyō* and *Ashem vohu* in *Avesta* and was greatly thrilled to hear it.

Surprisingly, there was no photograph of Zarathushtra in the building nor were there any Zoroastrian artifacts. We offered to send these to the headquarters for display. Our gesture was deeply appreciated.

The Mazdasnan movement is spreading worldwide. There are Mazdasnan associations in Great Britain, USA, France and Canada. There is a great desire on the part of the Mazdasnan members to visit India and meet Zoroastrians of Parsi stock whose ancestors fled from Iran. We, on behalf of the Mazdalease Group, have assured them of our help to organize planned visits to India and to set up a small center at Sanjan for interchange of views and experiences.

To Zoroastrians visiting Europe, it would be of interest, if they have time and are mobile, to drop in at Bringhausen and meet the Mazdasnans. The address is: *Neuzeitliche Diat-Und Lebenschule e.V.*, Kurstrasse 4, 3593 Edertal - Bringhausen, Bad Wildungen, West Germany. Herr G. Bohm (Tel 05623/4025) is the director of the organization.

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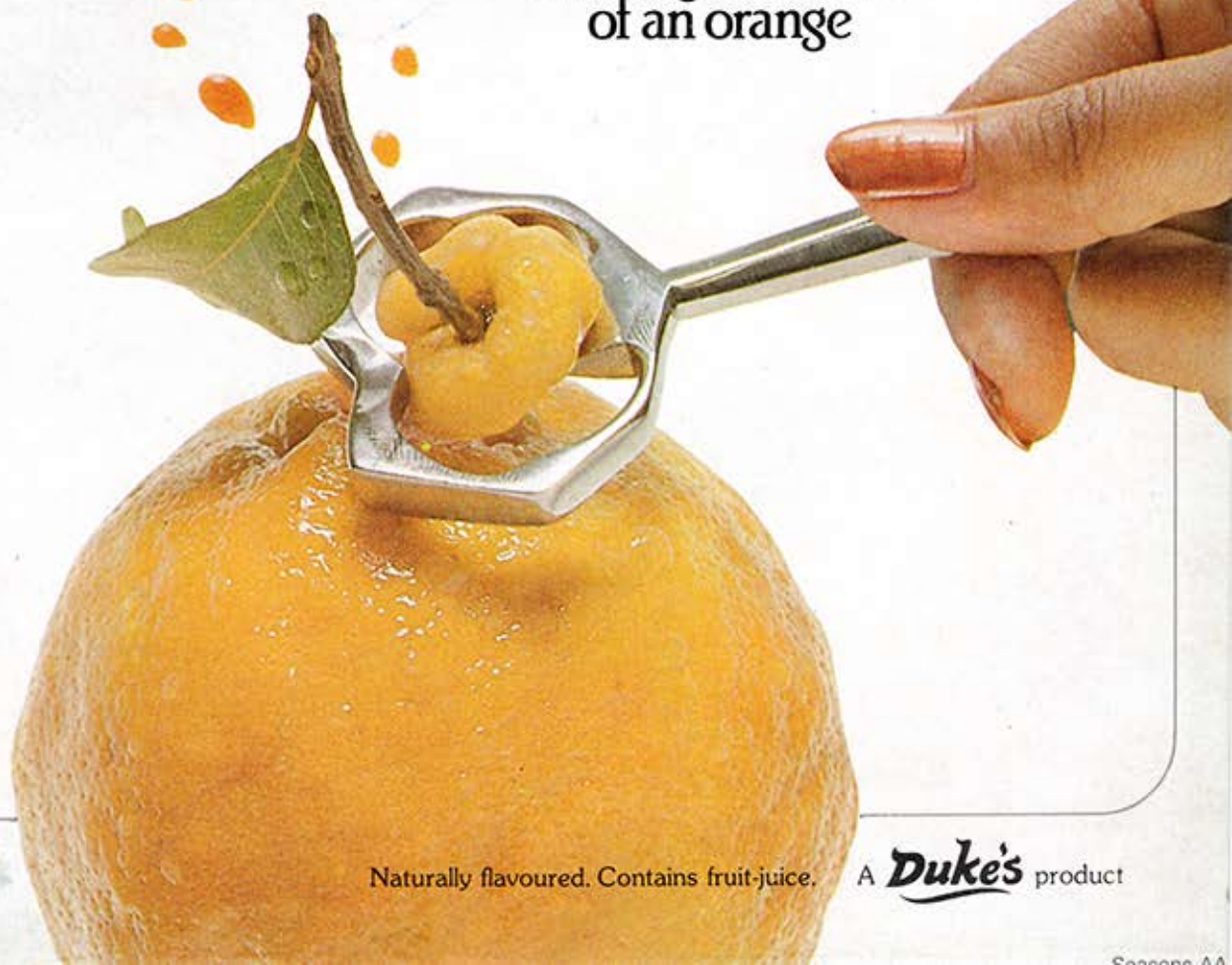
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