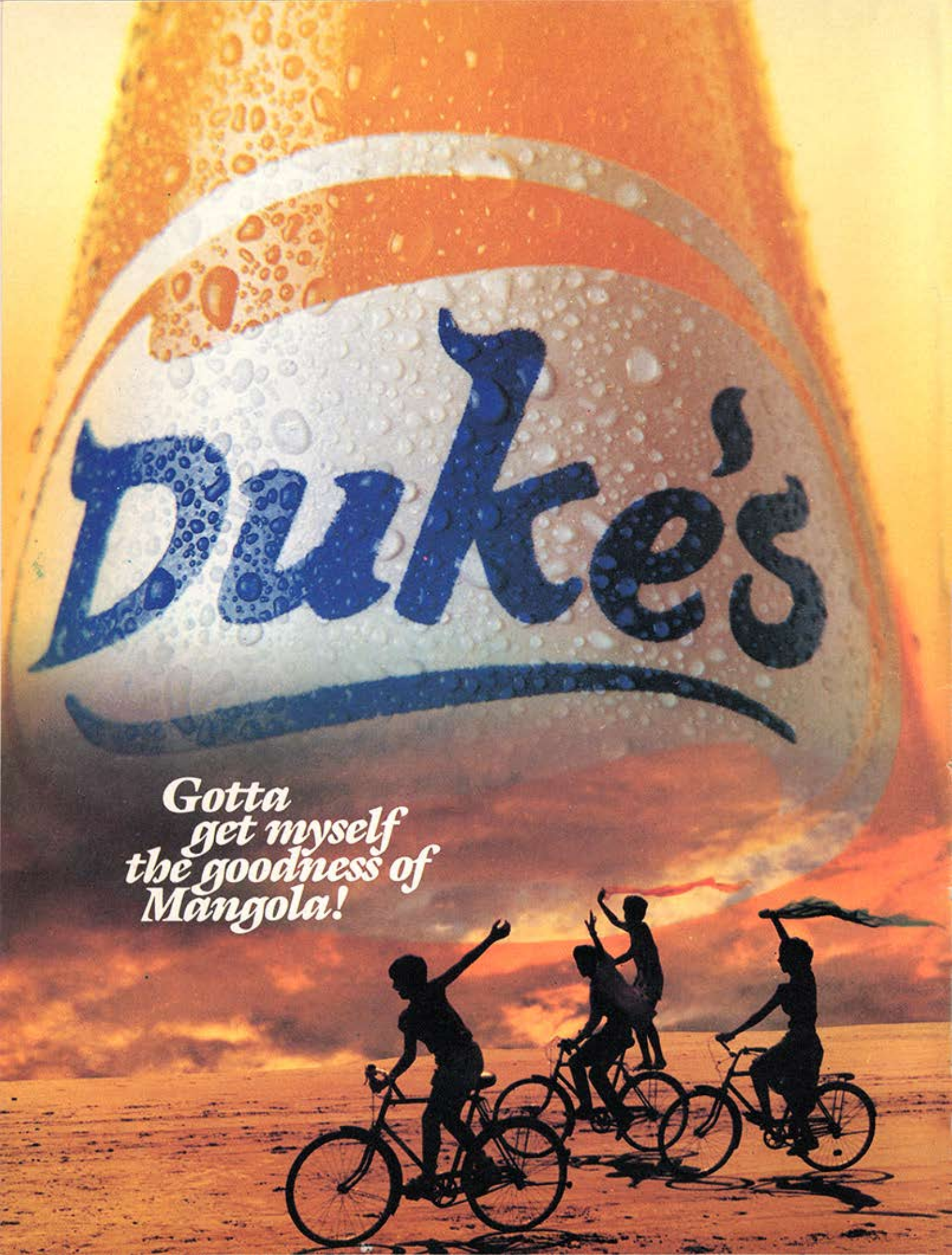


Prasiddh

SEPTEMBER 1990 Rs 8



**Dastur Firoze Kotwal
on the offensive**

A large, condensation-covered glass bottle of Duke's beer dominates the upper half of the image. A vibrant rainbow arches over the bottle. The word "Duke's" is written in a large, blue, stylized script across the middle of the bottle. The background is a warm, orange-hued sky with clouds, suggesting a sunset or sunrise.

Duke's

*Gotta
get myself
the goodness of
Mangola!*



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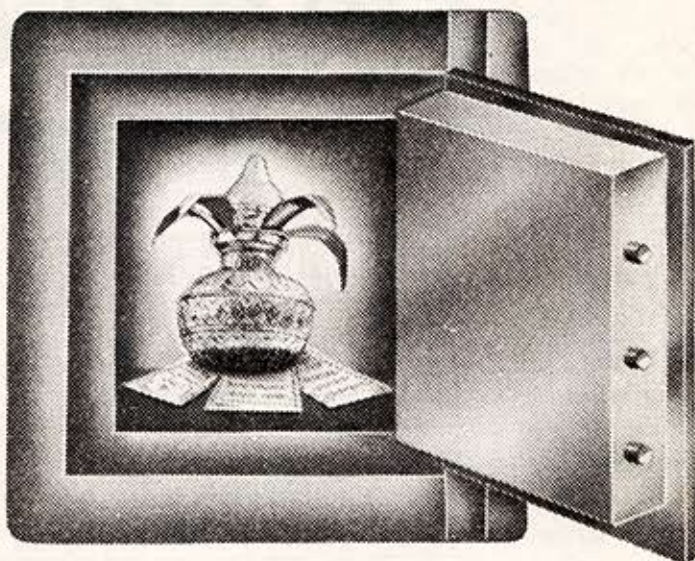
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Cover: Kotwal addressing a meeting

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Whither good thoughts, words and deeds?

'Religious laws' must be viewed
in the overall context of the Prophet's message

The tragic death of Roxan Shah and the controversy that surrounded the denial of her right to be interred in the towers of silence forms an unfortunate chapter in the history of the Parsis in India. But in its wake it has opened another more bitter and divisive embroglio following a frontal attack by a Bombay High Priest on Parsi women and men married to non-Parsis. Dastur (Dr) Firoze M. Kotwal, High Priest of the H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram has said, "a union between a Mazdayasni and non-Mazdayasni...hurts and distresses Ahura Mazda" and has labelled all children of intercommunity unions "illegitimate in the Zoroastrian religion."

Whatever may be Kotwal's feelings and beliefs, keeping in mind his position as religious leader, he should have been more circumspect. We have seen what havoc mullah rule has created in Iran and other countries that follow 'religious laws.' These messiahs claim the laws are made by God and they are carrying out His 'orders.' In fact the laws are man-made (mullah-made, so to say) and they are executed by whim and fancy. The only difference between a Khomeini and a Saddam Hussein is the beard and robe.

Dastur Kotwal puts his case forward as a lawyer. He states what he wishes to be known. 'Religious' laws cannot be applied by only quoting chapter and verse of various scriptures. They have to be viewed in the overall content and message of the prophet and his disciples.

Zoroastrianism stresses good thoughts, good words and good deeds. Zoroastrianism says fight on the side of

the right against evil. Zoroastrianism stresses that of all the virtues, righteousness is the most desirable. The *Ashem Vohu* and the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*, the first prayers any Parsi or Zoroastrian child learns, talk of following righteousness.

Yet where is the emphasis on righteousness in Dr Kotwal's letter? Where does he state that whatever may be stated in any book or scripture must stand the test of morality, of justice, of right and wrong?

Zoroastrianism emphasizes charity. But where does charity figure in the High Priest's analysis?

To him Zoroastrianism is what is written in selective sentences, verses, perhaps even chapters of certain scriptures.

Does he mention that in ancient Iran, Zoroastrianism enjoined conversion? That people were rewarded if they brought non-believers into the faith? Would Kotwal welcome such converts? Would he exhort a man or woman marrying a non-Zoroastrian to convert their spouse-to-be into Zoroastrianism? Or would he then label such a marriage 'adulterous?'

The greatest danger of religious laws when applied to a civil state is that they are arbitrary, whimsical, cruel, unjust and unreasonable. One can argue that even our civil laws are so. But then a person in India or Britain or in the U.S. stands a better chance of a fair trial than his hapless counterpart in Iran, Iraq or Pakistan.

Kotwal cites several customs and traditions that relegate women to a lowly position in the Zoroastrian tradition to bolster his argument. While he casti-

gates both men and women who marry out of the faith, he particularly states that "such women do great damage to the Zoroastrian religion." Such men, we presume, do not.

The discrimination is carried further by the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet by demanding that 'such women' give in writing that they are Parsi Zoroastrian and have not married under other religious rites such as may deem them to have converted to another religion. Why has such an undertaking not been demanded of men who have married out? They too could have been married under Hindu or Muslim laws, amongst others?

And why demand an undertaking only from those who have married out? Why not ask it of all Parsi Zoroastrians who pray and worship at the shrines, temples, churches and ashrams of other faiths? Why not ask it of all those who do not wear a sudreh/kusti or who smoke a cigarette or who go about bareheaded? Why not ask all the bereaved families if the departed souls were not sinners, gamblers, drug addicts or thieves — all the wrong doings that would 'hurt and distress Ahura Mazda.'

Why not transpose the Chinwad Bridge to doongerwadi and let the trustees, guided by the high priests, sit in judgment on each soul and determine if they were Zoroastrians?

If such criteria were applied, only the bodies of the very young and a saint or two would rest on the weather-beaten stone of the dokhma. For there are many Parsis in our community but very few Zoroastrians.



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 400001. Letters are subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity. Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"Dorabjee Trust land..."

The article "Dorabjee Trust land(ing) in dispute" (*Parsiana*, June 1990) has given a shock to all concerned to know how charity funds are swallowed up. It is also very shocking to know that the champion and custodian of charities viz. the joint charity commissioner permitted the sale of such property.

The niggardly sum of Rs 9.75 lakhs was fixed by the joint charity commissioner for a most centrally situated property worth over one crore rupees. The amount of Rs 41 lakhs illegally obtained should be deposited in Court and the investment interest distributed to the poor Parsis of Surat and Pune instead of the wrongdoer taking the benefit and frittering away the amount.

Kudos to Mr Gustasp Irani for bringing out this scandal wherein the trustees themselves want to enjoy the charity instead of poor Parsis.

I would request you and Mr Irani to correct an error regarding the relationship of certain parties mentioned in the report. Ms Thrity Poonavala is no longer the daughter-in-law of Savak Patell. After the demise of Mr Burjor Savak Patell she married her brother-in-law, one Mr Poonavala, and has a daughter.

Mr Savak Patell is very much alive, and mentally and physically fit. Apart from his late son Burjor he has two surviving, married daughters. They are his family and not a remarried widow.

KERSI FARAMJI DALAL

Ahmedabad

"The Well Placed..."

In "The Well Placed Anjuman" (*Parsiana*, April 1990) the president of the Nilgiris Zarthosti Anjuman has denigrated our religious practices, dokhmas, dasturs, agiaries, and even the holy fire. He has labeled all these as "dogmatic pressures."

Since the above views are published as part of the Nilgiris Anjuman story, I, as a member of this Anjuman, would like to express my disappointment towards the Anjuman trustees and the president, Mr Noshir Vajifdar.

In the Nilgiris we have a very small Parsi community. Like in many other such small places, it is neither justifiable nor practical to have mobeds and agiaries. The Anjuman has been providing excellent service to the local Parsi community during all kinds of occasions. But nevertheless, it is rather distasteful when the president, on behalf of this Anjuman, starts preaching alterations in our religion for the sake of convenience.

I have been residing in the UK for over 25 years and along with the Nilgiris Anjuman, I also belong to the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE), London. The great majority of Parsis settled in the West do respect and try to preserve our religion in its original form. We encourage our children to respect mobeds and visiting dastur sahebs from India. Recently the ZTFE has successfully completed a series of enlightening lectures on the significance of our religious practices and prayers. These lectures were given by various scholars, some of whom were Zoroastrians from Iran.

Two years ago, Prof John Hinnells of the Department of Comparative Religions, Manchester University, and Dr

(Ms) Rashna Writer had carried out an indepth research on the future of the Zoroastrian race worldwide. For the race to survive, the research findings gave prime importance to preserving our precepts and religious practices. Sadly this very thing Mr Noshir Vajifdar of Ooty wants us to condemn.

After all, Ooty is in India and we are Indians. Why should we anglicize our religion? Why should we allow spiritual apathy of some people to dilute our sacred trust?

F. J. DESAI

Coonoor, Nilgiris

I refer to "The Well Placed Anjuman" (*Parsiana*, April 1990) wherein some views which I have expressed have raised a few eye-brows. In particular, some have declared that the absence of a dokhma, agiary and a permanent mobed in the Nilgiris being considered fortunate is a sacrilegious statement and shows the Nilgiris Parsis in a bad light. I therefore want to make it clear that the views expressed in that article are my own personal views and not the views of the Nilgiris Anjuman as a whole or of its trustees. My views are based largely on practical considerations and on the basis of the position of dokhmas and agiaries prevailing today in many parts of our country, and the difficulties the community is facing in finding mobeds.

I am not an irreligious person: if I was, I would not be spending my time, energy and money in writing books on our religion. I was brought up in a Parsi school in Karachi (where every student wore a Parsi cap) and have been influenced by personal contacts with scholars of eminence like Dastur (Dr) M. N. Dhalla, Manek Pithawalla and later, Dr Iruch Taraporewala (in Calcutta).

I have received requests from some of your readers for copies of my books, and I am happy to state that I hope to arrange for my two books: *Let Us Pray — to Ahura Mazda* and *Teach Me To Pray* to be sold at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute very shortly. *Teach Me To Pray* was in short supply and I have just had a second edition printed locally, with a few additions and changes. These books are not being sold with a view to profit — their only purpose is to spread the true spirit of our religion among both Parsis and non-Parsis.

N. H. VAJIFDAR

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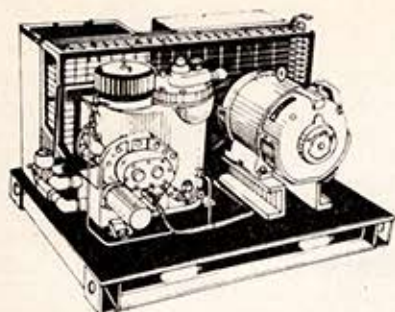
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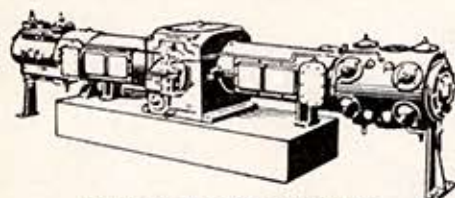
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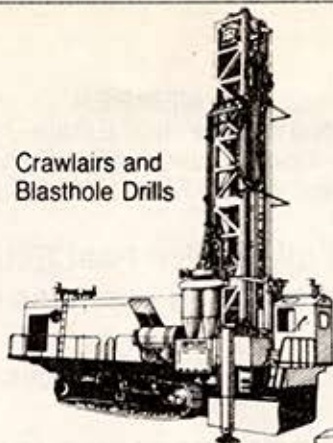


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"The correct position?"

M. S. Petit has asked for information on some questions that puzzle him ("The correct position?" Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, April 1990). What is the connection, he asks, between Darius of Pontus in the first century BC and Darius the Great of the sixth century BC? Who were kings Faridun, Farokhzat and Kersasp of Azarbaijan? I shall try to enlighten him.

The Achaemenian Empire stretched from India to the Mediterranean Sea. It was divided into provinces ruled by satraps. After Alexander defeated the Persians in 331 BC, many of the satraps and governors of the outlying provinces set up their own kingdoms. One of these was Pontus, south of the Black Sea, in modern Turkey. (The ancient Greek name of the Black Sea was the Pontic Sea). The kings were Zoroastrians and so were many of the high officials and some of the Iranian settlers, but the mass of the population were indigenous, following their local religion. The most famous of the Pontic kings was Mithridates VI Eupator (c 121-63 BC); the last of the line was Darius (39-37?).

Many of these rulers, of Pontus, Cappadocia, Commagene, claimed descent from the Achaemenians. Darius is a fairly common name in the Achaemenian dynasty. We have Darius the Great (522-486 BC), Darius Ochus (424-405 BC), Darius Codomannus (336-331 BC).

A similar situation prevailed after the Arab victory at Nihavand in 641 AD. Some of the governors of the provinces, specially in Trans-Caucasia, Gilan, Dailam (the scene of the recent devastating earthquake in Iran) and Tabaristan, set up their own kingdoms. The court and the officials as well as most of the population of these states were Zoroastrians and all were Iranians. Over the next three to four generations, first the masses and then the rulers and the nobles converted to Islam but they still retained their Iranian names.

Taking the eleventh century AD as an example: A ruler of Arran was named Anushirvan b. al-Lashkari. In Tabaristan one of the governors was Manuchihr b. Qubus who was a strict Sunni. Manuchihr's brother was named Dara and his son was Anushirvan Sharaf al-Ma'al-i. The rulers of Sharvan had names like Anushirvan and Manuchihr but were descended from Yazid b. Mazyad, a chief of the Arab tribe of Shaiban. This shows the extent to which the Arabs had

become Persianized. A minister of one of the Ghaznavid rulers was Bahram b. Maftinna. One of the Buyid princes was Fana-Khusrau, son of Majd al-Daula. A Kakuyid prince was named Faramurz b. 'Ala' al-Daula. This Persianising trend continued down the centuries; in the sixteenth century the second king of the Safavid dynasty was named Tahmasp.

The Iranian names borne by the princes and nobles of the eleventh century and after merely show the Persian origin of the men; they say nothing about their religion. In fact, all these men were fervent Muslims. Even today it is by no means unusual for Muslim Iranians to have names like Shapur and Feridun. The last prime minister under the Shah was Shapur Bakhtiar.

As for Faridun, Farokhzat and Kersasp, mentioned by Mr Petit, I have not come across their names in my scanty reading of Azarbaijan history. They were probably local rulers in that region and, in the eleventh and twelfth century, would have been Muslims.

Mr Petit says that in the eighth century *most of the Zoroastrians* in Persia (my italics) migrated to India. I must correct this statement. The largest number of migrants I have seen mentioned in Parsi tradition is 18,000 who are said to have come in five ships. This figure is suspect as it would require each ship to carry 3,600 persons! Another tradition says that about 450 families came to India, which will mean about 2,000 persons — a more reasonable number.

H. E. EDULJEE
Ootacamund

WZO and the Congress

The proceedings of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India meeting held at Madras during the last quarter of 1989 have been reported in great detail in "The plight of the elderly" (*Parsiana*, February 1990).

I was surprised to read in it the comments made by Mr. Jamshed N. Guzder, namely, that he/they do not recognize the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) and therefore had not sent an invitation to the WZO to attend the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress (5WZC) which was held in January of this year. When some of the delegates protested at this situation, Mr Guzder went on to say that invitations had been sent to the chairperson of WZO, Dr (Ms) Shirinbanoo S. Kutar and the president of WZO Mr Shahpur F. Captain in their individual capacities. Further, Mr Jamsheed Kanga

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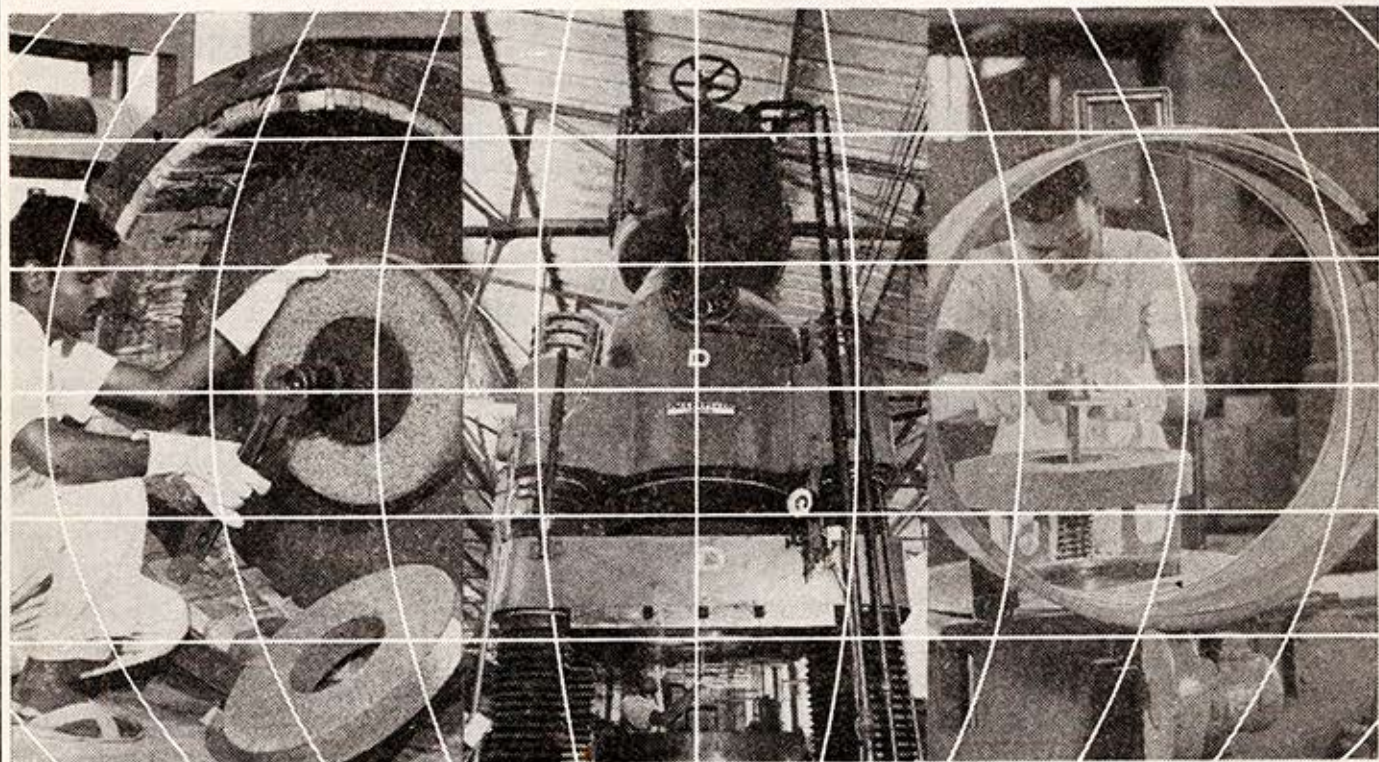
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stated that the Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP)/Federation was not treating the "WZO as a pariah" and that they cooperated with the WZO in matters of finance.

Sir, to say the least, I find these statements and the thinking behind it to be amazing. The WZO has not been functioning very successfully since the last 10 years (sic) and to mention that this body is not recognized tantamounts to not recognizing reality as it exists.

Will Mr Jamshed Guzder, or Mr Jamshed Kanga or any other trustee of the BPP or official of the Federation please reply to the following points:

- Is the World Zoroastrian Congress meant for all Zoroastrians or not?
- If it is for Zoroastrians, then how could the BPP/Federation refuse to invite the WZO?
- Are we to assume, by some strange quirk of imagination, that WZO is not a Zoroastrian organization? (We all know that WZO is a Zoroastrian organization of eminence).
- On the one hand, Mr Guzder states that he does not recognize the WZO and on the other hand Mr Jamshed Kanga recognizes its existence so far as financial assistance is concerned. Why this dichotomy?

I recall that at the opening ceremony of the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress, the chairman of the BPP, Dr Aspi Golwalla and Mr Guzder, a trustee of the BPP had openly congratulated Mr Shahpur F. Captain for the formation of the WZO and expressed delight at his presence that evening. Is this not recognition?

Do I detect tinges of jealousy and politics?

Ms B. J. PITHAWALLA

Dr Aspi F. Golwalla, president of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, replies

The organizational structure and

constitution of the WZO Ltd, which is a company limited by guarantee registered in the UK, have been outlined in its memorandum of association and articles of association. These are not in consonance with the Federation's concept of a truly representative world body of Zoroastrians and therefore the Federation does not recognize WZO Ltd as such a truly representative world body. However, such non-recognition of its truly representative character should not and does not come in the way of the Federation joining hands with such a body in a spirit of cooperation and goodwill in implementing any projects meant for the welfare of Zoroastrians.

As regards the invitation to the 5WZC, we would state that FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Anjumans of North America), Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, Zoroastrian Anjuman of Tehran, Iran, Karachi Parsi Anjuman, Pakistan and the Australian Zoroastrian Association of New South Wales were requested to nominate panelists for the plenary sessions and participants for the two workshops. These request letters were issued by Mr J. N. Guzder in his capacity as chairman of the 5WZC at the request of the subjects committee which had decided that participants in the workshops and panelists from each country should be chosen by its national federation or by the major representative anjumans/association if the national federation was yet to be formed.

ZAGNY's assistance

The Udwada anjuman has received a donation of Rs 46,760 from the members of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) and other fellow Zoroastrians. This amount is to be used for the Kathi Fund of Iranshah and for helping poor mobeds, nassessalars and behdins.

Every year ZAGNY holds a luncheon get-together in honor of the Udwada Atash Bahram when Zoroastrians make their generous donations. Our Udwada anjuman is grateful to our fellow Zoroastrians of America.

KAIKOBAD PHIROZEJI DASTOOR
High Priest, Iranshah, Udwada

The Surat Parsi Panchayat received a donation of Rs 46,760 from the members of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) and other fellow Zoroastrians. The amount is to be utilized for building up the kathi fund of holy places, for helping the athornans and for giving assistance to nassessalars, deserving Parsis, etc.

Accordingly, Rs 14,400 have been distributed to 45 Parsi priests, Rs 16,450 to 164 poor Parsis, nassessalars, etc, Rs 5,000 to five holy places for kathi, Rs 5,000 towards helping deserving Parsi peasants and Rs 5,000 towards the betterment of athornan families. During the muktad days, 180 families were given food grains, staples and necessities.

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We admit children from the age of five and give them education right up to college level. Many have passed out as arts, commerce and science graduates and postgraduates, becoming self-supporting with dignity, earning their livelihood and status in society, and helping their parents in their old age when they need help the most. Many have married into respectable families. One of our girls, Ms Naznin Pesi Kasad, has excelled in sports.

Even as we approach our silver jubilee, the efflux of time and the rising cost of living and of engaging special teachers for tuitions, make it increasingly difficult to maintain the institution's educational standard and to provide substantial nourishing food to the girls from the limited funds at our disposal. Our monthly

expenditure on the Home ranges between Rs 8,000 and Rs 9,000 — overshooting the trust's income by over Rs 3,000.

Donations from philanthropic individuals and institutions would help our work continue in the years ahead. Account payee cheques may be drawn in favor of N. B. Choksi Charities and addressed to Hormuzdiar D. Choksi, 2, Marine Chambers, 2nd Floor, New Marine Lines, Bombay, 400020 (Tel 291218, 316921) or Darab J. H. Bajina, 310, Varma Chambers, Next to Union Press, Horniman Circle, Bombay, 400001 (Tel 2860674) or Dr Navroze S. Kotwal, 704, Everest Chambers, Mount Pleasant Road, Bombay, 400006 (Tel 8127026 Res, 4943397 Clinic).

HORMUZZIAR D. CHOKSI

Boyce Agiary needs help

The Boyce Dhana Patel Agiary at Tardeo, founded by the late Nussarwanji N. Boyce and the late Rustomji Nanabhoy Boyce in the year 1940 has recently completed 50 years.

The sacred fire-temple building and the priests' quarters adjacent thereto are in danger of collapsing and need major repairs, estimated to cost nearly 10 lakh rupees.

We appeal to all members of the Zoroastrian community and charitable institutions/trusts to donate generously to this worthy cause. Cheques should be drawn in favor of "Boyce Dhana Patel Fire-temple Repair Fund" and sent to the Manager, Boyce Dhana Patel Fire-

temple, 236-A, Tardeo, Bombay, 400007.

JIMMY P. F. SHROFF
Hon Secretary, Boyce Trust

"Searching for..."

I would like to point out a misleading statement in the article "Searching for togetherness" (*Parsiana*, January 1990). Arnavaaz Mama quotes Darius Captain as saying that in the San Francisco area 75 percent of Zoroastrians are married to non-Zoroastrians. In reviewing the Zoroastrian directory published by the Zarthosti Anjuman of Northern California (ZANC), which covers the San Francisco Bay area and its vicinity, I counted 47 instances of inter-caste marriages out of a total 230 address listings. This amounts to 20.4 percent. If we take out 48 singles from the total, we get 25.82 percent. If we count the number of Zoroastrians living at each address (app. three per family) the percentage goes down to 7.9 percent.

Inter-marriages may not be irreligious (according to the *Gathas*), but they are a potential threat to the survival of our identity as Persian Zoroastrians. If we had a large population numbering in the millions, a certain percentage of inter-marriages would not pose such a danger to our community. But, with our small numbers, fewer children per family, and a permissive society, we face a serious challenge to the survival of our identity.

In the past, our ancestors have faced many challenges and managed to keep us going as a community. They suffered



Sprinter Kasad (above) and other inmates at the Choksi Rural Girls' Home



many hardships, left their homeland, and even sacrificed their lives. We face different kinds of challenges today, but there is no need to throw up our hands. If each one of us cares to maintain our identity, we can surely succeed. Our religion teaches us to be optimistic. Misleading statistics often exaggerate the problems and make our condition look much worse than what it actually is.

All Parsi parents should educate their young children about our religion and history, explain the importance of identity and of marrying within the community, arrange for socializing them with young Parsis, and keep track of their activities outside the home. Children and adults should have a habit of saying daily prayers. All Parsi families should make it a habit to go to their nearby fire-temple to pray every Sunday. Learned Parsi priests could give lectures on Sundays at each fire-temple. Growing up in a lower middle-class family in Bombay, I went to the Banaji Atash Bahram every Sunday morning and found peace and inspiration in my life.

Having read several articles regarding conversion of people from other faiths to Zoroastrianism, I feel that we are wasting our energies by arguing about this issue. Let those who want to follow our religion form their own groups and temples, read the *Gathas* and prayers, and lead a good life according to Zarathushtra's teachings. They don't have to be formally initiated, and they don't have to force themselves into Parsi temples. Have we not heard of Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Armenian, Chinese, and Korean Christian churches in the U.S.A.? Why risk conflict and competition with other faiths by holding formal conversions?

Even though we may have different opinions regarding the best course for the future of our community, we should realize that we all wish a better future and continued survival of our faith. Let us therefore emphasize our common goal, communicate with each other, promote religious education, and work together towards our common goal, even if it means pursuing slightly different roads.

MANECK N. BHUJWALA

Past President, Zarthosti Anjuman of Northern California

Arnavaz Mama replies

According to the ZANC directory of 1987, 75 percent of the marriages contracted by Parsis in the San Francisco area (as against those who were married

prior to their arrival there) are to non-Zoroastrians. It is probable that I may have missed Mr Captain's qualifying phrase while jotting my notes that evening.

Navjote in Secunderabad

On Kadmi new year day, July 25, 1990, Darius, grandson of Khorshed and Dr Bahman S. Surti (of *Shah Namah* fame) and son of Rati and Frederico Puz Surti of Switzerland, was initiated into the Zoroastrian faith at the Surti residence at 37, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad. The ceremony was conducted by Ervad



Pavri invests Darius Puz Surti with the sudreh and kusti

Burjor Pavri of Bombay. It was witnessed by several of their friends and relations from the twin cities, their Parsi friends from Canada and a distinguished member of the managing committee of the Parsi Association of Secunderabad and Hyderabad.

Ms ROSHAN D. CHINYOY
Secunderabad

Tribute to a stalwart

The moving finger wrote October 7, 1940 and Mr Erachshaw Rustomji Heerjibehedin, our beloved father, was no more.

With brilliant wit and incisive mind, without fear or favor he exposed orthodoxy, hypocrisy, injustice and exploitation in his well-known column in the *Kaiser-E-Hind* under the pen-name of "Chalni Rupyao," which became a



Heerjibehedin: incisive journalist

household word in every Parsi home. His plain honest words meant exactly what he said, with malice to none.

He was a born leader and took bold initiative in many enterprises and reforms. He exuded vitality and warmth, endearing qualities which made people follow him.

My father hailed from a humble and respectable Parsi family of Baroda. He came to Bombay to seek new pastures and expand his horizon. He carried on as a struggling reporter in a Parsi Press on a monthly pay of Rs 25. Every set-back was to him a stepping stone towards his goal.

His dream was fulfilled when, his enterprising, generous father-in-law Mr Nusserwanji E. Daruwalla, seeing Erachshaw's great potential as a journalist, helped him to buy the *Kaiser-E-Hind* Press from Mr Framji Mehta in 1915.

With this great opportunity my father advanced from strength to strength and proved his worth.

The rich heritage of love and labor he left behind, was taken over by his son Jal who mobilized youth and initiated new ideas. Soli, the younger son took over the managerial side. Both worked with tenacity and enthusiasm but, alas, the time came in 1981 when, due to compelling circumstances, they had to sell the nearly 100-year-old *Kaiser-E-Hind*. On his fiftieth death anniversary my heart and mind glow with a thousand happy treasured memories of my loving father.

Ms RUTTY R. PAVRI

Edited by Arnavaz S. Mama

A MISSION MAKES A COMPANY

Knowing a market and its needs and utilising one's resources to fulfil those needs in a reasonably optimal way and ending up with a surplus, is the normal role of business. But understanding the market in depth, stretching it to the fullest potential, creating new unfulfilled needs, putting all of one's talents and that of the entire team in clear focus, being obsessed in the process, and emerging as a leader — this is living a Mission. This is the role and the heritage of a value-added society. It is exciting, it is rewarding and it is never ending...

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Events and Personalities

Parsis on British film

The Last House in Bombay commissioned for BBC's (British Broadcasting Corporation) Channel 4 have four Parsis actively collaborating on it. Faroukh Dhondy of BBC's Channel 4 commissioned the 65-minute docu-drama. This Indo-British film, co-produced by director of SBI Impressario Sohrab Irani, is photographed by the Bangalore-based cameraman Navroze Contractor with Noshirwan Dubash helping out on sound recording, according to the *Blitz* of June 17, 1989.

The film is a portrayal of director Luke Jennings' stay with an Indian family in Bombay. "It captures a slice of life in the megapolis and brings home to British audiences the day-to-day life of an Indian family, its vicissitudes, joys and struggles to make a decent living," according to the paper. Fifty percent of the film's cost will be financed by Irani, notes *Blitz*.

In addition to screening the film in UK, it is expected to be shown in India too. Jane Balfour, the distributor of *Salaam Bombay* (yet another heart-rending film on growing up on the streets of the city), was interested in this documentary, according to a report in *Mid-Day*.

Rustomji Patel Road

The former District Superintendent of Police (DSP), the late Rustomji Patel is reportedly the first police officer in



Patel: over 20 years of meritorious service

Gujarat to have a road named after him, notes *The Times of India* of June 5, 1990. The stretch of road from Alkapuri to

Arunodaya Circle was named after Patel as per the decision taken by the Baroda Municipal Corporation at its general board meeting. The mayor, municipal commissioner and other councillors were present at the road naming ceremony, his son Dr Minoo Patel provides the details.

For two decades Patel had served the city as home inspector and subsequently as DSP. His tenure of service in the police force was in fact extended by three years in recognition of his meritorious service.

After his retirement he was appointed chief of security at the Gujarat State Fertilizers Company and the Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertilizers Company where he continued until his death in 1982, informs a family source.

Dharamshala's face-lift

A lick of paint and the S. J. Sodawater-wala Dharamshala is transformed. The once dilapidated looking building, located close by the station, a few meters before one enters Udawa village proper, has been glowing since January 1990 when the entire structure, both external and internal, was painted. The thickly wooded setting that earlier added to the air of desolation and gloom that clung to the old building, now adds to the charm of the newly painted structure. Chikoo and mango trees are home to a number of birds that greet the rising sun in a chorus of twitters.

"The entire paint job was made possible through donations by individuals," says Jehangir M. Irani, manager of the Dharamshala, adding, "The donations were made in liters of paint. Twenty liters from X, 20 liters from Y. For instance Ms Naju Daver (who is famous for her embroidered garas) donated 60 liters." Labor and other raw material costs like *lanpi* (undercoat), were borne by the Udawa Anjuman which runs the establishment. The damages? A modest Rs 15,000, plus another Rs 500 to replace all

the broken glass window panes, says Irani.

The paint job, according to Irani, is the culmination of the renovation that has been taking place at the Dharamshala ever since he took over as manager 10 years ago. First, new toilets were built within the main structure. Earlier one had to trudge through the thicket to reach them; a distressing journey, especially at night. The new toilets, three on each of the two floors of the building, were made possible by the charity of Pesi P. Dastur, with assistance from his cousin Keki H. Dastur, both sons of Udawa now settled in Bombay.

The next important improvement, according to Irani, was the building of attached bathing areas in each of the rooms and providing a 24-hour water supply. Then came new fans in each of the units. As always, donations from individuals defrayed the costs. "Our regular guests have always appreciated our facilities." Now, after the painting, "others have started to notice us," says Irani.

The Dharamshala has nine rooms — three on the ground floor and six on the first floor; three beds per room. "All the rooms are very airy. Even if there is no electricity (power failure is not uncommon in Udawa) you do not feel the heat," claims Irani. Guests are charged Rs 70 per head per day; the rate includes board: three meals and morning and evening tea. For visitors who wish to use the facilities only for a bath, a meal, a few winks and check out the same day, the charges are Rs 35 per head. The meals are wholesome both in quantity and quality, claims Irani, who adds: "I personally do all the marketing." Also a matter of pride is the 'sweet water' that comes from the Dharamshala's well.

The charges include a fresh new sheet and pillow case for each guest. Covering sheets and towels, however, are not provided. In winter Irani has a few blankets which he rents out to guests at Re 1 per

blanket per night. If the Dharamshala is packed to capacity, there may not be enough blankets for all.

According to Irani, the origin of the present Dharamshala building goes back 80 years. Then the structure housed Prince Hotel which later changed hands and also its name to Reza Shah Hotel. At that time, the original Sodawaterwala Dharamshala, located near the station, had been donated by the founder to the Udawa Anjuman. Around 1955, the Government of Bombay purchased the property under one of its development schemes — Morarji Desai was chief minister then — and the Udawa Anjuman used the proceeds from the transaction to buy over the floundering Reza Shah Hotel property and relocate the Sodawaterwala Dharamshala there.

For years the Dharamshala provided food and shelter for visiting Zoroastrian devotees. There was a time, however, when due to neglect the establishment went to seed before it was nursed back to health. Now Irani proudly claims: "We are probably the best Dharamshala in dwada."

Gustasp Irani

The Little Farohars

"One little boy, not yet two years old, stood right in front of the group, clapped his hands and swayed his body as he sang the *monajat* (intimate conversation with God) at the top of his voice!" He was one of the members of The Little Farohars who had regaled the Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) on the occasion of Jamshedi Navroze, writes Farrokh Rustomji, honorary secretary of the DPA. *Monajats* in Gujarati, composed by the late Rustom Saklath of Calcutta, were sung by the children aged two to 11 years with musical accompaniment provided by one of the mothers.

The Little Farohars are a group of about 20 children who are being taught to revere and understand the Zoroastrian prayers from an early age, informs Rustomji. This religious class for children, conceived by the DPA, meets every alternate Saturday at the Anjuman premises under the guidance of Dr (Ms) Sabar Havewala of Nehru University and author Ms Piloo Jungalwalla. They are taught prayers, told stories from the *Shah Namah*, are encouraged to talk on the life of Zarathushtra and are also urged to ask questions. The name, The Little Farohars, was conceived by Ms Dhun Bagli, manageress of the Mengusi Parsi Dharamshala.

Among the future activities planned for the children are sessions explaining the significance of the jashan ceremony where through active participation and ritual gestures the children will learn to understand the message of the ceremony. They will also be encouraged to depict Zoroastrian themes through art, informs Rustomji.

Parsi snookers meet

In the first all-Parsi snooker tournament organized by the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations for Welfare and Culture (FOZAWAC) 60 players from West India participated, notes a press release sent by Dara K. Parakh, general secretary of FOZAWAC. The tournament was conducted by the enthusiastic Percy Wadia. In the final round at Bombay's Parsee Gymkhana on June 7, 1990 young Marzdi Kalyaniwala emerged the winner.

Earlier, in the month of May, FOZAWAC organized the Second Athletic Coaching Camp where about 170 athletes participated. The trainees benefited from the coaching given by Dara Doomasia and Adille Sumariwala. The Iranis of Wibs presented T-shirts to all the participants. Further, 20 promising athletes were chosen to receive year-round training and, additionally, gifted track suits and shoes. Among the prize winners Ms Arnaz Irani was adjudged the best junior trainee.

On the last day of the camp Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustee Jamshed Guzder and sports enthusiast Dinyar Jamshedji acknowledged the contribution of FOZAWAC in promoting sports, and supported their efforts in training Parsi youngsters to compete at meets not only at the state level but also at the national level, further reads the release.

Limathwalla feted

The Eisenhower Centennial 1890-1990 Special Recognition Award will be presented to Kersi Limathwalla, former

Limathwalla (left) and Balsara



president of the People To People International's (PTPI) Bombay Chapter, on October 14, 1990 in Washington, notes a press release from the Bombay chapter.

The function will coincide with the birth anniversary of President Dwight Eisenhower who had set up PTPI after the Second World War to promote world peace through international understanding. US president George Bush as honorary chairman of this organization is expected to present this award, informs the release.

The international headquarters decided to confer this award on Limathwalla who, for nearly 10 years, has been associated with PTPI on its global and local projects. He was also chairman of the drug abuse committee which organized REACH '89, it is further reported.

Ad Club's new president

The newly elected president of the Advertising Club, Bombay is Sam Balsara, chief executive and managing partner of Madison Advertising Limited, notes *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* dated June 27, 1990. During his association with the Club spanning more than 10 years, Balsara has served as vice president, honorary treasurer and honorary secretary in addition to editing the Club's publication *Solus*.

He is a regular speaker at advertising seminars and forums and a contributor to business journals. One of the seminars he organized was on "Advertising Works" where through case studies the effectiveness of advertising was proved. As member of the Doordarshan Committee of the Advertising Agencies Associations of India he looked into the problems relating to the industry.

His advertising agency, Madison, is credited with handling campaigns for some of the country's largest business houses like Tata, Godrej, Blue Star and Longines of Switzerland. Prior to that he was with Mudra Communications from where he resigned as vice president after contributing substantially to Mudra's financial growth, notes a press release.

Before entering the advertising field the 39-year-old executive was in marketing. He postgraduated in management from the Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies, and before that had studied at Bangalore's Bishop Cotton Boys' School and St Joseph's College of Commerce. He was first with Sarabhai before he moved on to Cadbury as general manager, further notes the release.

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For the lost cause

Experienced insurance executive Adarbad Maneksha Wadia took over as managing director of the Loss Prevention Association of India Limited (LPA) this year, notes *The Economic Times* of June 30, 1990. During his tenure he will focus on the Association's main objectives: To publicize the causes and the magnitude of losses and to create an awareness of the need for loss prevention; to provide education and training; to provide consultancy and advisory services; and to build and maintain a data bank on loss prevention.

A non-profit organization, the LPA was set up 12 years ago. Ideally they



Wadia (left) and Patel

would like to prevent all losses, whether of insured property or otherwise, and if that is not possible to minimize the impact of such losses. The LPA's activities mainly concern losses due to fire, damages to cargo and road accidents, notes an information brochure. This Association is sponsored by the General Insurance Corporation of India, National Insurance Company Limited, The New India Assurance Company Limited, The Oriental Insurance Company Limited and the United India Insurance Company Limited.

Prior to joining LPA, Wadia was associated with the Oriental Insurance Company and the General Insurance Corporation from 1951 to '89 serving in various senior positions. He started his career with the then Oriental Fire and General Insurance Company. The 57-year-old executive has also served as deputy chairman of the Bombay regional committee of the Tariff Advisory Committee (General Insurance). He is presently on the directorial board of Lakshmi Starch Limited, notes a press release from the LPA.

Doctor felicitated

The Parsis of Nasik, Nasik Road and Deolali organized a special felicitation function at the Neterwalla Hall on July 1, 1990 to honor Dr Rumi Dhun Patel who

had passed the MD (Doctor of Medicine) examination in January 1990 with distinction. Patel, who hails from Nasik, was lauded by the group with a silver salver and a citation in recognition of his outstanding performance in his medical exam, standing second in the University of Bombay, notes a press release. At the felicitation function, outstanding dignitaries of Nasik and Patel's former teachers and associates recollected the achiever's distinctive academic career.

At present, the 26-year-old doctor is a teaching registrar in obstetrics and gynecology at the Lokmanya Tilak Municipal Medical College which is affiliated to the Medical Council of India and the University of Bombay. A member of the Bombay Obstetric and Gynaecological Society, Patel has presented several papers on gynecological subjects which have been published in scientific journals, mentions his bio data. His plans for the future include building of a hospital in Nasik.

Navaz, rallying abroad

Upcoming Indian woman rallyist Navaz Bhathena enjoys the distinction of being invited to participate in the prestigious Hunsruck Rally in Germany, notes *The Sunday Observer* of June 17, 1990. The Rally, ranked among the best in the world, is a part of the European Championship circuit where the competitors have to drive on asphalt roads.

At the Rally held in Trier about 150 km from Frankfurt, Bhathena and her navigator from India Anita Nanjapa were given a Mitsubishi Starion supposed to be a dream car known for its speed and reliability. During the event, the pair were also provided with a service car and two mechanics for maintenance.

They went to Germany a few days in advance to prepare themselves for the new racing conditions and to undergo a safety training course. Though Bhathena's only aim was "to finish the event," realizing that the experience would be totally new to them, they could not succeed, notes a family source. They had every intention of offering competition to the women participants. However they had to give up mid way after meeting with an accident where fortunately they escaped unhurt. Yet just participating in the meet they considered "an achievement."

Invited to Germany by Henning Wunsch, one of the organizers of the Hunsruck Rally who had reportedly been impressed by Bhathena's performance at

the last Himalayan Rally, on reaching Germany they were hosted by the organizers A. M. Motorsport. Part of their travel expenses were sponsored by Vijay Mallya, chairman of the Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India, further adds *The Observer*.

Welfare Centre's 50

The Dadar Parsi Welfare Centre (DPWC) which is in its golden jubilee year organized a ball, a fashion show, a boat cruise and a dinner-and-dance to raise funds for its future projects, notes a press release.

The additional FSI (floor space index) that they reportedly have at their premises at Munsif Building from where they conduct their different activities is proposed to be used by constructing two additional floors. The DPWC intends utilizing the space by starting a creche for infants of working mothers, a hostel for working girls and students, and commercial and computer classes to rehabilitate and educate the deserving, notes the release.

The Centre is presently concentrating on running its Ranina Day Nursery where 120 children from different communities from two-and-a-half to five years of age are, through education and recreational activities, kept occupied during the day. Additionally, the Mother's Club involves the parents in the activities of the institution. The industrial section runs the tailoring and embroidery classes, cooking and music classes.

Founded in 1940 by Kaikhushroo Nanabhoy Ranina, the DPWC had as its aims the promotion of physical, mental and moral education of the less affluent members of the community. Some of its activities like the running of the clinic were transferred to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) and other projects delegated to enthusiastic workers.

To conduct its proposed activities, the Centre hopes to collect by way of donations a target sum of thirty lakh rupees. Those desirous of donating can send in their contributions to The Dadar Parsi Welfare Centre, Imperial Mahal, Khodadad Circle, Dadar, Bombay 400014.

SPOTLIGHT

R. K. Daruwalla and Y. H. Malegam have been renominated public representatives on the governing board of the Bombay Stock Exchange for the year 1990-91, continued on page 29

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KARACHI

The cross-cultural bind

Operating within an Islamic milieu,
some Parsis in Karachi are adjusting to the environmental
demands while others are opting for migration

Parinaz Gandhi

"Have you reported to the police?" Friends, well-wishers, and even first-time acquaintances accost you with this question. Their intention is not to make you feel like a criminal but to remind you that you are now in Pakistan and, as per the rules applicable to visitors from neighboring India, within 24 hours of landing in Pakistan you are supposed to intimate the police of your arrival.

Try telling your well-meaning guardians that you will undertake this mission the first thing next morning and their immediate concern is to arrange an escort and vehicle for your conveyance. You soon realize that there are not many public conveyance options available to an individual in Karachi. In the days of the tram, the conditions were different, but today a visitor is forewarned: don't try to step into a bus; never take a cab if you are alone, and especially if a female; if you sit in an autorickshaw be very alert. It is not surprising that most Parsi families there own at least one car.

Very rarely does one see a Parsi walk down a street unless it's a shopping arcade. In fact, if a resident of Parsi Colony wants to drop in on another resident from the same Colony, he will use the car. But this year, ever since a Parsi lady was compelled to surrender her car at gunpoint in broad daylight, they no longer feel safe even within the confines

of their car. And every family seems to have a different car model; the variety lends color and dimension to the wide, well-laid-out Karachi roads. Even the residential colonies for the Parsis are so designed that there are rows of independent bungalows occasionally interspersed with a few squat apartment blocks as in the case of the Parsi Colony or the Cyrus Minwalla Colony. Further, a colony may have its own park/garden, reading room/library, multi-purpose hall for community events. And since each housing colony is thus well-equipped to hold its own independent functions, there may be five parallel functions on an occasion like Jamshedi Navroze dividing the loyalties of the 2,800-3,000 strong community in Karachi. The population statistics are provided by Byram Avari, trustee of the Karachi Parsi Anjuman Trust Fund (KPATF).

Among the more recent residential colonies, Jamshed Baugh may not have as many amenities for its residents in the three-storeyed buildings. Conversely the Dinshaw Avari residential complex under construction on the Doongerwadi grounds has grandiose plans for a swimming pool, cafeteria, airconditioned auditorium and sports facilities. The going rate for the 46 99-year lease plots was Rs 1,80,000 for 600 sq yds and Rs 4,00,000 for 1,000 sq yds, informs Avari.

The Rs 20,00,000 expected to be netted from this housing project will go towards the corpus of the Anjuman. "The Anjuman is rich in property but has always been poor where its cash resources are concerned," mentions the first Review/Newsletter of the KPATF of 1988. "What has happened in the case of old buildings managed by the Punchayet is that some tenants who can afford to pay more, refuse to accept even a measly rent hike of Rs 25," observes Cyrus Cowasjee who was a contender at the last trusteeship elections in 1989. This attitude on the part of the old residents is believed to be frustrating the intentions of the trustees to allot flats to young couples waiting to get married.

Most of the Anjuman's resources are being expended "on the maintenance of buildings," informs Major Gustad Nanavati, trustee of the KPATF. Funds are being utilized for repairs, improving the water situation in Punchayet buildings, etc — things that were not attended to for nearly 30 years, he adds. Among the renovation work undertaken by the Anjuman was the repair of the Sezdegah Ravan, the Noshirwan Naman, buildings at Jamshed Baugh and the Lodhanwalla Home at Anjuman Bagh. There are still more areas that need to be looked into like the tarmac road for Anjuman Baug and the repair of

Khajerina Building at Garikhatha.

The KPATF has enough money to keep everyone clothed, it is maintained. In Cowasjee's estimate, the majority of the community falls in the middle-income bracket and there are barely 50-60 families which would classify as poor. Organizations like the Karachi Zarhosti Banoo Mandal help create self-employment for women. As a whole, the Karachi Parsis perceive themselves as being "more *khaanaar-peenaar* and *majaa karnaar* (eaters, drinkers and merry-makers) than the Bombaywallas." So reputed are they as merry-makers that Justice Rustom Sidhwa, recently appointed judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, noted in the course of his address at a felicitation function organized in his honor by the KPATF, "Remember, the community will not be able to survive on whisky and soda, or even *salamaties* (ceremonial toasts) or New Year eve dances..." Barring socializing and partying there are not many avenues for recreation or entertainment in the evenings. Unless accompanied by a large group, a video at home is preferred to a cinema house and the unruly crowds. After sunset, women are never comfortable travelling alone, irrespective of whether they own a car.

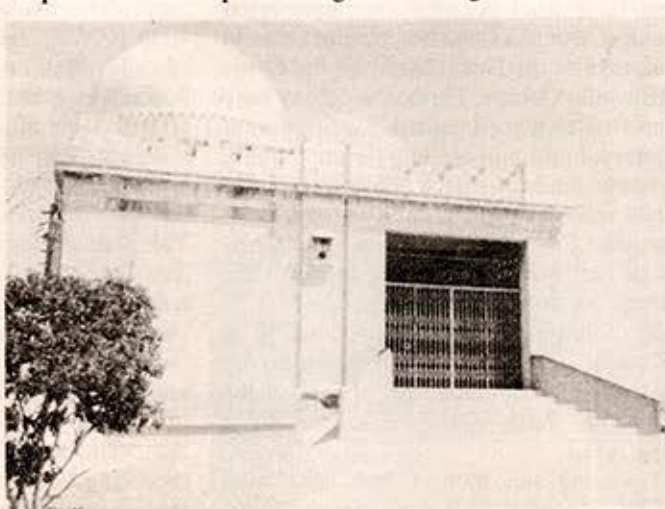
In terms of dress, the Parsis are as modernized or westernized as their counterparts anywhere else in the world. Never have they been compelled to don burkhas! They may be in dresses, pants, salwars or saris. But come wedding time, a trip to Bombay is a must to purchase trousseau saris from the all-time favorites. A recent fad is to include in their collection a gara from Naju Daver's even if it means booking months in advance. And while in Bombay, they love to purchase *khaaraa bor* (brown, berry-like fruit, salted), *targola* (palmyra fruit), *titori* (sprouted beans with distinctive bitter taste) and cashew nuts. Dry fruits at reasonable rates are available aplenty in Karachi, yet they miss the cashewnuts and they enjoy sitting in on a traditional wedding repast served on plantain leaves in *paats* (long tables set out in rows).

Their own functions are almost invariably held at hotels: Metropole, if you are



D. M. Wadia Dar-e-Meher at Garikhatha
Below: The sagri at the Farvardian

a supporter of the Minwallas and the Cowasjees; and Beach Luxury or Avari Towers if you favor the Avaris. Meals are always buffet style with alcoholic drinks taboo under the Islamic rule. When it comes to observation of rituals however, they are not willing to take any shortcuts. They know exactly which song is to be sung when the bride-to-be is to be presented gifts or brought to her in-laws'



house, and sing it they will at length. They even have an audio cassette with wedding songs by Ms Perveen Dastur on one side and religious prayers by Ervad Pessi Magol on the other, to fall back on. Flowers being so prohibitively expensive in Karachi, their floral decorations are not as elaborate. In fact, coconuts, a must for every occasion, are very expensive even though Karachi is on the coast; yet on this

point they will not economize — after all the cracking of a coconut at the first attempt is an auspicious omen!

While in their early 20s, or even before, many youths seem to have selected their life partners although they may be in no hurry to get married, preferring to complete their education or to get migration clearance. "In the last 20 years, at least 600-700 young people have migrated abroad. If they have a chance to live in a freer world where knowledge and enterprise give better results, why shouldn't they?" believes Cowasjee. That community funds should be directed towards scholarships for foreign education, is the opinion of several who would like to see better prospects for the youth. One-third of the community in Karachi is supposed to be under 21 years of age, informs Avari. Advocating "utilization of Anjuman resources for youths..." was young Anita Sethna who had topped the graduation batch in home economics.

The younger generation are well acculturated to the Muslim life-style: they have a good command over Urdu and can even relate to the Muslim psyche — they had no sympathy for Salman Rushdie after reading his book and felt the Muslims were justified in condemning him. Yet, openings in the West beckon them.

"Unfortunately by default we have been relegated to second class citizenship (in Pakistan)," declares Avari, representing the minorities on the Pakistan National Assembly. The white stripe against the green background on the Pakistan national flag is meant to denote the minori-

"Unfortunately, the community as a whole is not interested in its own welfare"

ties who had been assured equal recognition in the eyes of a predominantly Muslim rule, Avari continues. "It is difficult for microscopic minorities like ours to get the required exposure unless assistance...is made available by the government," maintains Avari who could not understand why the originally five seats reserved for Parsis at the N. E. Dinshaw Engineering College have been reduced to one.

In Parsi-founded and Parsi-managed schools, the medium of instruction was compulsorily changed to Urdu until Pakistan's erstwhile Prime Minister Ms Benazir Bhutto restored English, mentions Avari. Further, Zoroastrian children could not be taught their own religion in the two Parsi schools, Bai Virbaiji Sopariwala Parsi High School for Boys and the Mama Parsi Girls' High School, where the only option offered was Islamiyat or civics. Even the law of evidence is so framed that the testimony of a single Muslim carries more weight than the statement of 100 Zoroas-



trians, Avari elaborates.

When religion could not be taught in schools, different Zoroastrian associations took it upon themselves to impart religious instruction. Ms Arnavaz Dinshaw started the Friday School where youngsters were taught the essentials of the religion using the Montessori method, informs Ms Gool Talati of the Zoroastrian Association of Pakistan. The Friday School is a variation of the Sunday School for in Pakistan, like all Islamic states, Friday and not Sunday is the



weekly holiday. With a similar aim of promoting knowledge and understanding of the Zoroastrian religion, the Informal Religious Meetings made its debut in 1975.

The thirst for spiritual knowledge has been activated since many decades. In 1910 was founded the Young Men's Zoroastrian Association with the intention of spreading religious knowledge, instilling morals and promoting friendship. The Association's Literary Union interests college students. Scholar-authors of eminence who made waves on the international scene are the late Dastur (Dr)

Above: H. J. Behrana Fire-Temple at Saddar

Left (top): Buildings at Anjuman Bagh

Left (below): Karachi Zarthosti Banoo Mandal premises at Parsi Colony

Maneckji Nusservanji Dhalla, the late Tehmurasp Sethna and Faredun Dadachanji.

Even today there are men of learning like Ervad Godrej Sidhwa but the present problem is finding a regular supply of priests whether from Lahore or India to attend to the two agiaries there: the Hirjibhai Jamshedji Behrana Fire-Temple in the Saddar locality and the Seth Dosabhai Merwanji Wadia Dar-e-Meher in the Garikhatha locality. The faithfuls may have their reasons for frequenting one fire-temple more than the other, but largely they are satisfied with both. An occasional murmur of discontent: "There is never a *maachi* going spare on Behram *roj* in this particular agiary even 12 months hence!"

There is no striking difference of architecture or elevation between the agiaries in India and Karachi except that

the ones in Karachi display notices in English, Gujarati and even Urdu announcing that non-Parsis will not be permitted entry to the fire-temple. And if there is a death in the community, a board posted outside provides the details to passers-by.

Just as there are few opting for full-time mobedi, khandhias are also hard to come by. When the two dokhmas had to be cleaned after 15 years and the local community's own efforts were met with scepticism, khandhias were requested for from Bombay. "For the first time cranes were put into operation to clear the dokhmas" and to transfer the remains of dead bodies to the *astodans* (pits), reports Avari. Recommending cremation as a mode of disposal on practical and financial grounds instead of fearing it will pollute the fire, Cowasjee questions,

"Where are the khandhias to be imported from?" Assuming that khandhias can be imported, where are the vultures to be imported from? Reportedly since 1963, there have been no vultures in the area.

The two dokhmas on the hillock are positioned just across from each other and while on one side of the drop lies the Cyrus Minwalla Colony, on the other side are acres of vacant land where will spring up the Dinshaw Avari Colony. The shutters of the *sagri* at the Farvardian are drawn; there is no full-time attendant there.

Fortunately for Karachi, there is very scanty rainfall. Except on a rare occasion



Jamshed Baugh: one of the residential colonies

B. Minocher-Homji Parsi General Hospital (below)

when there is a heavy downpour, when, of course, life in the city is paralysed, on other occasions the sun's scorching rays are sufficient to dry up the bodies. A vaguely unpleasant odor can be discerned in the atmosphere. A strong lobby favored the setting up of a burial ground adjacent to the dokhmas but since that was not permissible as per the municipal laws, the Karachi Development Authority was persuaded to sanction a two-acre plot of land for those in the community who may wish to opt for burial, Avari provides the background information.

The dokhmas that caused a major rift in the community (see "Burial ground for Karachi?" *Parsiana*, December 1988) have been in existence since the last century. The Ghadialy Dokhma was consecrated in 1847 and the larger Anjuman Dokhma came up in 1875. We are informed by Sidhwa that the Parsis have been in Karachi from the early nineteenth century. The census of 1881 showed a total population of 73,000 in Karachi of whom nearly 1,000 were Parsis. The Behrana Fire-Temple was consecrated in

1849 and the Wadia Dar-e-Meher came up 11 years later. By 1859 the Sopariwalla Boys' School had been established and 1925 saw the setting up of the Mama Girls' School.

Officially, the KPATF came into existence in 1918 when its constitution got the sanction of the court in response to an application made by some members of the community who felt that instead of managing separate movable and immovable properties, they should be "consolidated into one trust with a common scheme for its management and control, and of proper rules... for the election of trustees," as mentions the constitution. Different trust properties whether for the maintenance of the dokhma, homes for the aged, housing schemes, priests' welfare and research fund were consolidated. There were different trustees in charge of these trusts, albeit some being common. Seven of them offered to relinquish their trusteeship rights and entrust the management to the five — F. E. Punthakey, Jamshedji Sopariwalla, Khan Bahadur Nusserwanji Mehta, Nadirshah Dinshaw, and Khan Bahadur K. H. Katrak — who constituted the first board of trustees of the Anjuman.

Though the earlier set of trustees may have voluntarily relinquished their trusteeship, of late, each successive election has spawned conflict with increasing animosity between the supporters of the two influential rival families of Karachi — the Avaris and the Cowasjees. On the present board of trustees, in addition to Avari and Nanavati, are chairman Dr Burjor Anklesaria, Dhunjishaw Ghadialli and Rustom Sethna. Recent changes to the constitution accepted by the community in Kara-

chi were recognition of the secret ballot and prevention of voting by proxy on the ground that the two concepts were incongruous. The matter continued in court for years before reaching this compromise. There is no place on the archaic KPATF constitution for a woman trustee, informs Maneck Wania who has been relentlessly struggling to improve the constitution, working out a model format on democratic lines.

The electorate as a whole became disenchanted with the electioneering process when donations were used to pad the Donors' Register and in the process outnumber those on the other registers of the Anjuman Committee: in Karachi, the rules permit donors gifting beyond the minimum qualificatory Rs 5,000 to nominate members to the Donors' Register. Thus, when significant donations of Rs 25 lakhs from the KPATF trustee Dr Burjor Anklesaria and Rs 18 lakhs from Dr (Ms) Soonamai Sethna were made towards the Punchayet's housing projects, entitling them to nominate nearly 800 members, it threw the electoral registers totally out of balance.

In the past too the community had benefited from the munificence of benefactors like Jehangir Kothari who is said to have named every member of his family in his will but ultimately left his estate to the "orphans of the world" which entitled the Parsis to claim a share. The promenade in the affluent Clifton locality of Karachi bears Kothari's name, thanks to his contribution to Karachi. Edulji Dinshaw, who arrived penniless in the nineteenth century and made a fortune through military contracts and real estate, is supposed to have been one of the most





Parsi founded schools: Mama Parsi Girls' High School (left) and Bai Virbaiji Sopariwala Parsi High School for Boys



outstanding merchants who "made money and gave money." At the time of Independence over half of Karachi was, or had been, owned by his family, it is reported. Edulji, as also his son Nadirshah, are believed to have donated lakhs, helping build homes for the homeless, educational institutions, hospitals and dispensaries. The Parsi General Hospital in Karachi, founded in 1941, is named after Bomanshaw Minocher-Homji. Its size may be one-tenth the size of the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital in Bombay but the Parsi medicos who have passed through its portals have a special loyalty to it as evinced by noted ophthalmic surgeon Dr Jamshed Wania, an international celebrity, who is persistent that a visitor should not leave Karachi without seeing the Hospital.

There have been several others whose commitment to the growth of Karachi has extended beyond community loyalties. Pestonji Ghadiali, among the first arrivals in Karachi, was a successful banker and landlord who is known to have made a notable contribution to the development of the Saddar area. The maker of modern Karachi, as Jamshed Nusserwanji Mehta came to be called, had served as mayor of Karachi for 11 consecutive years during which time he transformed the city into a modern well-planned and well-endowed metropolis. Active in the freedom struggle was Rustom Sidhwa who subsequently became a senior member of the Sind Provincial Congress Committee, municipal corporator and, eventually, mayor of Karachi before he left for India.

In the field of sports too, Parsis have achieved distinction. Mino Mavalwala

held the national billiard's title for several years. In the '30s it was Meher Dubash who ranked among the top Indian tennis players. In yachting it is Byram Avari, his wife Gospi and Rustom Sethna who have won international events. The Karachi Parsi Institute has been active in promoting sports among the enthusiastically participating Parsis.

As ship-chandlers and stevedores Cowasjee and Sons came to be recognized as one of the largest in the private sector with Rustom Cowasjee named chairman of the Pakistan Shipping Corporation.

One strand that is an essential part of the Karachi Parsi fabric is the *Parsi Sansar* and *Loke Sevak*, the only community

"If they have a chance to live in a freer world, why shouldn't they?"

newspaper from Karachi. Of its 1,000 subscribers, 30 percent are non-Parsis, says its editor Meherji Dastur. The English and Gujarati bilingual may not have a wide readership base in Karachi but many ex-Pakistanis, now settled abroad, avidly look forward to receiving authentic Parsi news from this bi-monthly. Running at a monthly loss of Rs 3,000, the only time the publication gets advertisements is when there is a war in the community, he states candidly. Otherwise people couldn't be bothered, that is unless they need a maid or require to advertise *gher nu bhonu* (home catering service) in which case they find *Parsi Sansar* good enough!

This lethargy is referred to by Cowasjee too: "Unfortunately the community as a whole is not interested in its own welfare." When his father Rustom was the chairman of the Anjuman, he had offered the community the right to vote for trustee on payment of Rs 5. The community rejected the suggestion, saying it was very costly. "A cinema ticket then cost Rs 3.12," he informs. "It is not the money part but the interest of the community which is reflected. One must be willing to pay to have a say in the management of a trust fund whose property is (valued at) 10-12 crores..."

"The entire atmosphere in Karachi is vitiated by people working in opposition," observes Brig Jal Golwala, manager of the KPATF who after 40 years returned to Karachi to take up residence there. In early 1989, soon after the last trusteeship election, the climate in Karachi was such that be it an informal gathering or a celebration, whether the discussions concerned the religious sentiments of the community or the politics of the nation, invariably the topic would veer towards the community's politics and ultimately culminate in a debate between the supporters of the Cowasjees and the Avaris.

Only a few community projects like the rehabilitation work for the Iranian refugees seeking shelter in Karachi escaped criticism. Otherwise, more critics abound than workers. "Those who have the time should get involved in community work," advises KPATF trustee Rustom Sethna who maintains, "Lack of communication is giving rise to misunderstandings. Everyone means well."

The crisis should get resolved. We unconsciously reflect his infectious optimism, in Urdu: "Inshallah!"

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Washington center

The Zoroastrian Center and Darb-e-Mehr project in the Washington DC area has received a shot in the arm with the formation of the Zoroastrian Association and Vandsar Committee. Feraidoon Aidun, Rostam Jahani, Dariush Jahani and Fereshteh Farahmaud have volunteered to run the organization with Khodarahm Shahryari as director and coordinator.

"Lack of a central location for our religious functions shall prove to be fatal to the mazdayasna faith," writes Shahryari in an open letter to Zoroastrians reproduced in *Pake e Mehr*. Referring to the practice of tithing (a set percentage of income being donated monthly or annually) among other religious groups, Shahryari urges the Zoroastrians of North America "who are proud of our 2,500 years of civilization," to do likewise.

The committee's mandate is to find a suitable location and building with the gathered donations, registering it and the darb-e-mehr as a nonprofit organization under US law and then devolving the completed institution over to the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington.

The Rustom Guiv Trust has donated \$2,50,000. The center will be named after Guiv or whoever donates the maximum amount to the project. Along with the letter of appeal, the Vandsar committee has circulated a form wherein individuals may indicate the amounts they would like to contribute in lumpsum or at specified time intervals. A plaque at the Center will record for posterity all donations of \$5,000 and more.

N. A. Mobed Council

The Third North American Mobed Conference was hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) at the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr on April 13 and 14, 1990 when five mobeds from Toronto, two from South Jersey, one each from Pennsylvania, Montreal and Los Angeles joined their eight fellow priests from the Greater New York area to iron out the remaining kinks and accept the North American Mobed Council's (NAMC)

first constitution and bylaws, states the ZAGNY newsletter of May 29, 1990.

The nonprofit organization, registered in Canada, makes its formal debut with Ervad Kobad Zarolia at the helm. The three other office bearers are vice president Ervad Jal Birdy, secretary Ervad Jal Panthaky and treasurer Ervad Nozer Kotwal. Ervad Cawas Desai is member at large, informs the newsletter.

The issue of membership — whether all mobeds could be members or only practicing mobeds — was resolved by a majority decision in favor of all mobeds in North America being acceptable members of the Council, notes a report in the *FEZANA Journal* of September 1990. "Furthermore, a mobed for the purpose of the body is defined as an individual who is duly ordained through the traditional ceremony of nava." As the nava ceremony, as practiced in Iran today, is a modified version of the traditional ritual, the definition may need a corresponding change to accommodate Iranian mobeds, further notes the *Journal*.

A list of mobeds available and willing to officiate at religious ceremonies is being compiled for distribution according to the ZAGNY newsletter.

The ZAGNY board for 1990-92 is led by Astad Clubwala with Ms Ivy F. Gandhi as vice president. Edul Bamji is in charge of funds, and Noshir Langrana and Ratan Vakil share secretarial responsibility. The four members at large are Ms Kamal Davar, Jamshed Ghadiali, Ms Hutoxi Kandawalla and Ms Arnavaz Patel.

The narrowing gap?

Zarhoshti Anjuman of Northern California (ZANC) president Erach Tarapore's letter of April 16, 1990 to Dr Rostam Sarfeh, honorary president and trustee of the Rustom Guiv Trust and Foundation (RGF), as reproduced in *Pake e Mehr*, hints at rapprochement between the Parsi and Irani Zoroastrians of California. Nothing that "the Dar-e Meher (in San Jose) has been completely remodelled to serve as a community center for the entire Zoroastrian community," Tarapore adds that the PZO (Persian Zoroastrian Organization) has single-handedly borne the costs of this renovation. The ZANC

newsletter of June 1990, quoting PZO president Esfandiar Anoushiravani, notes that the PZO has spent \$80,000 so far on the Dar-e Meher, including a monthly outlay of \$1,200 which includes \$500 for the caretaker, Iraj Mobedshahi, \$300-400 for utilities and \$300 for insurance.

Tarapore speaks of the invitation from the PZO to ZANC to join in support of the Dar-e Meher which was acceptable to the latter's members "if a joint committee could be formally set up to manage and maintain the Dar-e Meher." Tarapore's letter urges Sarfeh to endorse the establishment of such a committee which would represent the entire community of Bay Area Zoroastrians, "bring(ing) both communities together and facilitat(ing) fund raising efforts."

Sarfeh's response of May 7, reproduced alongside, refers to the 99-year lease of the Dar-e Meher (whose ownership vests with the RGF) to the PZO: "Since in Orange Country and Bay Area two organizations existed, one with majority Iranis and one with the majority Parsis, it was logical and fair to lease it to the Irani group, not forgetting that the capital had originated from Iran. So we have a lease agreement with them on the condition that all Zoroastrians could use the property for their religious and social needs, provided they follow the rules." Sarfeh advocates a supervisory committee to oversee the management, repair, renovation, expansion, etc of the Dar-e Meher on which ZANC could have a representative participation. "After an agreement with the PZO, the lessee, all Zoroastrians living in the Bay Area can enjoy the place. It really hurts my feelings when I read in your newsletters that ZANC is holding some of your meetings and festivities in non-Zoroastrian establishments while our generous donor has supplied us with such a beautiful mansion."

Sarfeh explains his cautious response in the context of the RGF's confrontation with the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY), whose membership is 95 percent Parsi, as he notes in the letter) over the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr in New York. ZAGNY has opposed the Foundation's

attempts to register ownership of the New York Darbe Mehr which is legally vested in the Zoroastrian community of New York. Sarfeh has denounced the community's ownership as a trick played by ZAGNY's office bearers on the late Guiv and himself.

"Please try to undo the harm done by ZAGNY and let us develop the spirit of fraternity and unity in the community," writes Sarfeh.

A joint operating committee, comprising of the entire executive committees of both organizations, has been mooted according to the ZANC newsletter. An atash kadeh is being planned at an estimated cost of \$ 1,20,000 — PZO has \$ 75,000 available from the cemetery fund given by the Guiv Trust, informs the newsletter. The remaining money may be forthcoming from ZANC, including the \$ 30,000 collected towards a projected Zoroastrian center when the joint operating committee is formally established.

At the joint meeting of the committees of the two organizations on April 25, it was also agreed that proceedings and minutes of the joint operating committee

would be maintained in English with translations as required. A prospective maintenance schedule for the Dar-e Meher, for four to six months, would also be laid out and tasks assigned in advance to the listed volunteers.

The PZO's charges for the use of the Dar-e Meher hall and facilities amounts to \$ 75 per day for groups of up to 50 and \$ 200 for up to 170 people. Reservations need to be made at least a fortnight ahead. A refundable cleaning deposit of \$ 50 must be paid. There is no charge, however, for use of the Dar-e Meher for conducting Sunday School.

Shazad Contractor is vice president of the ZANC executive committee for 1990-91 with Perviz Malbari as secretary and Zareer Bhathena as treasurer. Ms Katy Doctor, Ms Perin Marawala and Ms Parveen Wadia are members at large.

ZAPA House in the offing

The Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania (ZAPA) completed nine years on March 21, 1990. It has a budding library with books and tapes on Zoroastrianism. "It is the dream of most of us in Pitts-

burgh to have a small place, to call it a ZAPA center," writes ZAPA secretary Ms Zarine Balaporia in the Association's newsletter, acknowledging the donation of \$ 1,000 towards the project from Mani and Murli Rao.

Farhad Cama presides over the current (1990-91) board of ZAPA directors. The team includes vice president Behram Kapadia, assistant secretary Ms Rashna Mistry, treasurer Darius Jagus, assistant treasurer Ms Hutoxi Contractor and directors at large Jim Jagus, Jehangir Mistry, Jehangir Morris, Farhad Contractor, Hoshang Pavri and Rushitum Mistry.

Between them they man the Association's five subcommittees. Jehangir Mistry and Ms Zarin Balaporia: the membership and fund raising committee; Jehangir Morris and Hoshang Pavri: the religious subcommittee; Farhad Contractor and Jim Jagus: the program subcommittee; Ms Hutoxi Contractor and Ms Rashna Mistry: the social and hospitality subcommittee. Murli Rao, Jim Jagus and Hoshang Pavri have volunteered to serve on the standing committee of the ZAPA House project.

Compiled by Amavaz S. Mama



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Dastur (Dr) Firoze M. Kotwal

The trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet requested Dastur (Dr) Firoze M. Kotwal, High Priest of the H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram to give his views on the religious issues raised by the controversy surrounding the death of Roxan Shah and the denial of her right to be interred in the towers of silence.

As Dr Kotwal has stated, "I have no objection to my views being made public," Parsiana publishes his letter in toto so that readers may judge for themselves his point of view.

I was very happy to learn that the trustees refused to offer the bungli facilities at doongerwadi to the relatives of the late Ms Roxan Darshan Shah who wanted her body to be consigned to the towers of silence. I must congratulate you on this bold decision.

However, I am concerned to read the letter as published in *The Bombay Samachar* that the trustees have taken a tentative decision to permit the mortal remains of a Parsi lady married to a non-Parsi to be consigned to the towers of silence if she had got married only under the Special Marriage Act and not undergone the nuptial ceremony or rites under other religions. In my opinion, this decision is contrary to the customs and traditions of the Zoroastrian religion which have been prevalent in the past for several centuries.

The Zoroastrian religious tradition has always been that a girl upon her marriage not only takes the name of the husband, but is also deemed to have embraced his religion.

As you are aware, there is a religious custom even amongst Zoroastrians, between those belonging to the priestly class and those belonging to the laity. In our religious prayers and ceremonies, female members of the priestly class are referred to as *osti* and those of the laity are referred to as *behdin*. If a Parsi girl from a priestly family marries a *behdin*, her religious title changes from *osti* to *behdin* and, after her marriage, she is referred to as a *behdin*. Conversely, if a girl from a *behdin* family marries a member of the priestly class, the religious title of the girl changes to *osti* and she is referred to as such. In other words, she ceases to be a *behdin* upon her marriage to a member of the priestly class, viz an *osta*, an *ervad* or a *dastur*. Thereafter, in all religious ceremonies, her name is prefixed by her religious title which essentially has to be the same as the religious title of the husband she marries. It can never be different in the Zoroastrian religion.

You will agree with me that if, according to the Zoroastrian customs, traditions and precepts, a girl takes the religious title of her husband upon marriage within the community itself, surely when

a Zoroastrian girl marries a non-Zoroastrian, the same religious practice has to be logically extended so as to deem her to have embraced the religion of her husband.

The fact that our religion puts great emphasis on the religion of the husband of a married woman, is evident from the fact that, in all religious ceremonies and prayers, the husband's name is always a suffix to the wife's name -- for example, *behdin Mithibai behdin Hormasji*. It is also a very old religious practice never to recite a non-Zoroastrian name in any Zoroastrian prayer. Both these religious practices have been followed from times immemorial.

To marry outside the fold is next to adultery since the marriage is not solemnized according to the rites and customs of the Zoroastrian religion. A girl is given in marriage "in accordance with the law and custom of the Mazda-worshipping religion" (*awar dad o ayin i din i mazdayasni*), so declares the marriage benediction. The *Vendidad*, chapter 18 paragraph 62, prohibits union between a Mazdayasni and a non-Mazdayasni: "Such a union hurts and distresses Ahura Mazda."

A woman who marries outside the Parsi community often claims that she wears the vestments of the Zoroastrian religion, viz sacred shirt and girdle (*sudreh-kusti*), and hence she is still a

Zoroastrian and is entitled to participate in all Zoroastrian ceremonies and to the last rites on her death. We firmly hold that, from the religious point of view, her claim of being a Zoroastrian is hollow, hypocritical and full of pretensions. A woman marrying outside the community cannot observe the rules of purity as laid down by the Zoroastrian religion. She cannot perform ritual ablutions (*padyab-kusti*) and do prayers (*farziyat* and *bandagi*) in a non-Zoroastrian environment. When she bears children of a non-Zoroastrian seed (*tokham*) and participates in Zoroastrian ceremonies, such women do great damage to the Zoroastrian religion.

Another very important point which needs to be highlighted is that when a woman marries a man belonging to another religion, she moves into his household where the religious ceremonies are performed according to the religion of the husband. Therefore, when a Zoroastrian girl marries, say a Hindu, and enters his household, she is considered part of his family and is expected to participate in the poojas and other religious ceremonies which take place in the Hindu household. It may be possible that she may not actually participate, but that does not change the religious position since she is expected to follow the religion of her husband. It is for this reason that her children are also expected to be brought up in the religion of the father, the only exception being under Judaism which follows the matriarchal religious pattern. All other religions are patriarchal and both the wife and the children are expected to follow the religion of the male member of the family.

There is no custom or usage to support marriages between Parsis and non-Parsis. A custom has legal sanctity only when it has been followed and transmitted from times immemorial. It should be definite, widely acknowledged and practised without obstruction from any member of the community. The Parsi community has the right to enact laws for the preservation of its identity and customs which have enabled it to live and flourish so long with distinction.

While I am aware of the provisions of the Special Marriage Act, which permits persons belonging to different religions to have a legally valid marriage, I would like to stress with all the emphasis at my command that such a marriage has no sanctity in our religion. In other words, religiously, a Zoroastrian woman who

marries a non-Zoroastrian is deemed to have embraced the non-Zoroastrian religion and, therefore, religiously she has ceased to be a Zoroastrian. If a Zoroastrian male marries a non-Zoroastrian under the Special Marriage Act, the marriage has no religious sanctity. In the Zoroastrian religion, a marriage can only be solemnized between two Zoroastrians when the ashirwad ceremony is performed. Any other mode of marriage is not recognized in our religion. Hence, a child born in such a situation is considered to be illegitimate in the Zoroastrian

past practice and continue to do the same. If religiously this is not possible, any action taken in the past would have to be ignored because that was not in conformity with religious customs and traditions.

I would, therefore, strongly exhort the honorable trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet to uphold the religious tenets and traditions, irrespective of the legal position emerging after the enactment of the Special Marriage Act. If, according to the Zoroastrian religion, a Zoroastrian woman married to a non-Zoroastrian is



A Zoroastrian woman married to a non-Zoroastrian is deemed to have renounced her religion

religion though, in view of the Special Marriage Act, the child does acquire all the rights as, legally, the marriage is recognized. In the past, there have been controversies regarding the performance of navjote of such illegitimate children. In certain cases, they were performed. However, these controversies have no bearing on the true tenets of the Zoroastrian religion which only recognizes a marriage between two Zoroastrians after the ashirwad ceremony is performed.

It has to be emphasized that the dokhmenashini ceremonies at the towers of silence can only be performed strictly in accordance with Zoroastrian tenets, practices and precepts. The legal position emanating from the Special Marriage Act has no bearing in such a situation. If, according to religious precepts and practices, a Zoroastrian woman ceases to be such when she marries a non-Zoroastrian and is deemed to have embraced the religion of her husband, her mortal remains cannot be consigned to the towers of silence after performing Zoroastrian rites. I am aware of the fact that, in the past, in two or three cases the mortal remains of a Zoroastrian woman married to a non-Zoroastrian were consigned to the *chotra* (a sparsely used spare enclosure where 'doubtful' cases are consigned). In my opinion, this was a wrong act on the part of the trustees looking at it from a purely religious point of view. Therefore, it would not be correct to accept that as a

deemed to have renounced her religion and accepted the religion of her husband, she has to be treated as a non-Zoroastrian from the date of marriage, irrespective of the fact that her marriage may be legally valid under the Special Marriage Act and, legally, she may not be deemed to have renounced the Zoroastrian faith.

I may point out that the dokhmenashini ceremony is based on religion and not on law. Hence, only the religious view has to be taken and the legal view has to be ignored. The religious view demands that a Zoroastrian lady married to a non-Zoroastrian ceases to be a Zoroastrian upon marriage and, therefore, she is not entitled to the after-death ceremonies as per the doctrine of dokhmenashini. Hence, her mortal remains cannot be consigned to the towers of silence.

Issues of faith and identity of a microscopic community like the Parsis, cannot be settled by court judgments, but by the upholders of religion who are the high priests. Courts have no jurisdiction over the community in matters of religion and its long-cherished customs, traditions and practices. Traditions are as important as religion, and they are duly eulogized as the Law of Zarathushtra and the good Mazdayasni religion in many places in Avestan scriptures.

It is for this reason that the priestly class, as represented by the Athorman Mandal, has rightly taken the view that a Zoroastrian woman married to a non-

Zoroastrian is not entitled to the after-death ceremonies as per the tenets of dokhmenashini and, therefore, no priest should perform such ceremonies. The fact that some priests may surreptitiously perform such ceremonies, as has been done in stray cases in the past, does not mean that what was done is sanctified by the religion.

I would, therefore, humbly request the honorable trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet to reverse their tentative decision which has been communicated through the Press, and to take a bold and courageous view as sanctified by our religious tenets and precepts, namely, the mortal remains of a Zoroastrian lady married to a non-Zoroastrian cannot be consigned to the towers of silence and that the after-death ceremonies in conformity with the tenets of dokhmenashini cannot be performed either at the bunglis or anywhere else.

I may mention that laws made in a country are changed from time to time, sometimes depending on political pressures. Further, judgments may vary and may even be conflicting as different judges may take different views. How-

ever, the laws of the religion are immutable and do not change with the vicissitudes and exigencies of time. The fundamental laws of the Zoroastrian religion cannot be changed merely to serve the pressures of the so-called broad-minded and liberal Parsis of today, nor can they

A child born in such a situation is considered to be illegitimate in the Zoroastrian religion

be changed in view of the Special Marriage Act. If there is a conflict between the legal position and the religious view, the divine laws of God must prevail.

I believe you are taking the legal opinion of an eminent judge. I would request that my views be placed before him so that he is made aware of the practices and conventions of our religion. I have no objection to my views being made public, if you think necessary.

EVENTS AND PERSONALITIES

continued from page 16

notes the *Financial Express* dated July 8, 1990.

Blitz editor **Russy Karanjia** was presented the Lala Jagat Narain Award by the Haryana chief minister B. D. Gupta on July 8, 1990. The presentation to the journalist was at the annual conference of the Haryana Accredited Press Reporters' Union in Kurukshetra, notes *The Daily of* July 9, 1990.

General officer, commanding-in-chief, central army command, **Lt Gen Faridoon Noshir Bilimoria** has been appointed colonel of the Fifth Gorkha Rifles, notes the *Mid-Day* of August 29, 1990.

Ms Maher Dinyar Dhondy of The Allahabad Parsee Zoroastrian Anjuman presented a paper on Zoroastrianism at the Parliament of Religions, notes a press release from the Anjuman. The meet was organized in Allahabad on March 18, 1990.

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"If you want to come ba

"*Baddhi cheej khudaraté karavéli ché* (everything is unfolding according to a divine plan)," believes Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal, High Priest of the H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram. When circumstances reach a crisis, nature provides for its resolution, he maintains.

The statements refer to his own involvement in the current controversy regarding the right of Parsi Zoroastrian women married to non-Zoroastrians but professing Zoroastrianism, to be consigned to the *dokhma*. Kotwal's strident criticism of interfaith marriages contained in a letter to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) applauding the trustees' decision to refuse such interment to the late Roxan Shah (née Nazir) has stung the liberal sections of the community into a barrage of denunciation in the columns of *The Bombay Samachar*.

Speaking to *Parsiana* at his residence on October 10, 1990 Kotwal recounted the events that led him, who "never interferes" in what people do, to frame his letter to the Punchayet. He said he was much disturbed when the trustees' interim decision to permit such future use of the doongerwadi facilities for the interment of Parsi Zoroastrian women married to non-Parsis was published in *The Bombay Samachar* dated August 19, 1990. The tentative decision, based on the proviso that the lady's next of kin furnish the necessary assurance that she had professed and practiced the Zoroastrian faith even after her marriage, was contained in the BPP's letter responding to solicitor Dinsoo Zaiwalla. Kotwal

says he explained his stand to BPP trustee and AET (Athravan Educational Trust) cotrustee Homi Ranina when the latter sought his opinion. Ranina suggested Kotwal send his views to the Punchayet in writing and, since the High Priest was pressed for time in view of his impending departure for North America where he was to attend the Seventh North American Zoroastrian Congress in Houston, provided the secretarial facilities to enable him to do so. Accordingly the letter was typed, signed and despatched barely a day before Kotwal's departure.

Referring to the staunchly liberal stance of *The Bombay Samachar*, Kotwal says, "They talk only in terms of law. But law is such a thing that of five judges, three will see things one way and two, another. When the community's existence is concerned, religion is more important than law... The community has the right to formulate laws for its own preservation under the constitutional right to freedom of religion. Otherwise the community will die... Religious laws are immutable. All our High Priests are of the same opinion... *The Bombay Samachar* calls us fanatics and gives us advice. But when they are stung, they lose patience and use foul language." Kotwal is particularly grieved that the orthodox section of the community has no longer a publication to propagate its own point of view. If they had one, they would have effectively silenced *The Samachar*, he claims.

Kotwal justifies his association of the term "adultery" with marriages under the Special Marriage Act of 1954 in the

sense of "adulteration or corruption," quoting Ben Johnson's "The adulteries of art..." — a secondary usage of the word which *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary* of 1953 dates at around 1673 and labels obsolete. Kotwal says he has used the word in the sense of "religious infidelity." Moreover, he adds, "The *Vendidad*, Chapter 18, para 62, uses the Avestan term *jahi* (adultery) for a union with a non-Zoroastrian male or female by a person professing the Zoroastrian religion. This is understandable when a Zoroastrian male or female, instead of marrying a life partner from within his or her own fold, takes on another from an alien church. This is an act of adultery in a strictly religious sense. In the *Gathas* (*Yasna* chapter 53, para 3) too, Zarathushtra tells his youngest daughter Pouruchisti to choose as her lord a coreligionist who follows the path of Ahura Mazda and who is possessed of the good mind (*Vohu Mana*) and righteousness (*Asha*). Dasturs (Hormazdyar) Mirza, (High Priest of Udwarda) and (Kaikhusrroo) JamaspAsa, (High Priest of the Anjuman Atash Bahram) concur with my opinion and cite the same references in their reply to the trustees of the BPP in 1964."

Unlike the Special Marriage Act, the ashirwad ceremony, says Kotwal, is a solemn contract according to the law and custom of the Mazdayasna religion of Sasanian times. Without its invocation, no Zoroastrian union can be sanctified and that is why high priests do not do the navjotes of children even of Parsi fathers

The Zoroastrian who flouts community traditions to marry out, must remain out, maintains Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal

Arnavaz S. Mama

ck, I want to stop you"

married outside the fold, because from the purely religious viewpoint these children are illegitimate, Kotwal justifies his stand. Kotwal castigates the mobeds who perform such navjotes as "greedy" and derisively labels their association with "rich, liberal-minded behdins" as "a marriage of convenience."

Kotwal says that when the news of Roxan Shah's demise and preference for dokhmenashini was revealed, Ervad Aspi Dadachanji, the panthaky of the Vachaghandhy Agiary at Hughes Road who is the family priest of the Nazirs, rang up to enquire Kotwal's opinion on whether the ceremonies could be performed for her. When he heard Kotwal's strong dissent, he doublechecked with JamaspAsa and reportedly got the same response, informs Kotwal. These opinions were passed on to the priests who officiate at doongerwadi. Thus, when BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla enquired if the priests were willing to perform the necessary ceremonies, their refusal strengthened the Punchayet's stand vis-a-vis the Nazirs, says Kotwal.

"We have no power over agiaries or doongerwadi, but if there is religious abuse and we are asked, I will give my opinion. The BPP should keep a sub-committee of the three Bombay High Priests. It would absolve the trustees from deciding on subjects beyond their ken..."

"Look at all those connected with the liberal line of thinking. There is bound

to be some relative, son or daughter married to a non-Parsi. A married woman's name is coupled to that of her husband. *Chhokri bahar panné tau téni kriya ma shun bolai* (when a girl marries outside the community, how do we take her name



in the ceremonies)? Along with *Behdin John? Behdin Tom?*" The same problem does not arise in the case of a man who has married a non-Zoroastrian because his name is always coupled to the name of his father, informs Kotwal.

Asked why the names of married girls may not be coupled with the names of their fathers, Kotwal cites the instance in

the *Fravardin Yasht* where exceptional women are mentioned, but with their names coupled to those of their husbands.

According to Kotwal, the trustees stumbled onto the right decision in the Roxan Shah case because they had forgotten the earlier occasions when such cases had been accepted at doongerwadi and been consigned to the *chotra*. "What's the use of being consigned to the *chotra*?" he asks. It's still a kind of ostracism, he observes. It is better to go according to the prescription of the husband's community, he adds.

In this context he refers with approval to the decision of the late Naval Tata to be cremated. "He was an extremely nice man. But he was married to a foreigner... But when the BPP trustees called a condolence meeting, I told Ranina, '*Trustees óé akkal nu lilaon kidhu chhé* (the trustees have made fools of themselves).'"

Kotwal does not believe in the demographic projection of the community according to which the Parsis in India will have reached a point of no return by 2021 AD. "It's all foul play, a scheme (to bring in the children of Parsi women by non-Parsi fathers, then the spouses and then other converts) which must be exposed. If two boatloads of people from Iran could lead to the present community, where is the question? Like individuals, communities too have their ups and downs. A great many have emi-

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grated. There is the housing problem. Provide housing to marrying couples and see. In any case, better a small community than one that is wiped out in a few generations... In the second century AD Iranian Zoroastrians went to Afghanistan and the Punjab where they had small kingdoms. All of them were wiped out because of intermarriage. If you open the doors now, in two to three generations there will be nothing left of the community."

According to Kotwal there has been no significant change in circumstances to condone intermarriages: "Jamsetji Tata, Dadabhai Naoroji and others were in the UK for years. They remained with non-Parsis on a fraternal basis. Why do you have to marry?"

Asked what a parent should do when a daughter presents a choice between a very fine individual but a non-Parsi and a Parsi boy of poor moral stature, Kotwal counters, "*Beeja Parsi na chhokra chhè nahi su* (Does the community have no other boys to offer)? The Parsi community is not barren!"

Accepting the "problem of daughters — I have one too," Kotwal counsels that if such a daughter chooses to marry outside the fold, "give love as a father, but as far as the community is concerned, tell her, 'No, you're out.' The Special Marriage Act does not say that they can come and participate in the community's religious practices. I do not want to invade your privacy, but if you want to come back, I want to stop you."

Kotwal refers to the Samast Anjuman Meeting of 1919 when, he says, orthodox and liberal Parsis had joined in endorsing the resolution that girls who marry out of the community must stay out. This resolution does not deal with the men who marry non-Zoroastrians. However, Kotwal concedes, "*Paachlé baarné thi purusho goosi gaéla chhè* the men have reentered the community through the back door," averring that even at that time there were unprincipled scholars and mobbed who accepted such men and their progeny. "Even though there is no confusion in rituals regarding a Parsi man, I fully support that a Zoroastrian man who is united in marriage with a non-Zoroastrian, his religious life is vitiated and therefore he should be kept out."

Does this not vilify some of the finest Parsi families — those to whom the Parsi community is indebted in immense measure: the Tatas, the Wadias, the Pétits...? "*Hun kai éva motta nam thi darto*

nathi (Big names don't frighten me)," replies Kotwal, insisting that rules are rules.

Kotwal justifies his stand on the basis of injunctions in the *Vendidad*. But what do the *Gathas* say on these subjects? "*Gathas* are sacred hymns. They deal with the problems of good and evil. They are the doctrinal source; they contain the metaphysics of the religion. Would you find geometry in a poetry book?" he asks in an attempt at *reductio ad absurdum* (reducing to absurdity) the implication that the spirit of the *Vendidad* is alien to Zarathushtra's message of love and charity.

When the Dastur is reminded that there are other injunctions in the *Vendidad*, other venerated customs that we no longer follow — e.g. Parsis no longer cover their heads at all times as per the religious prescription — Kotwal is unmoved: "You can go round without covering your head, but you can't pray without doing so," he emphasizes.

And if Zoroastrians who have married non-Zoroastrians may no longer be counted among the religious community, what of those who frequent mosques, dargahs, temples, churches? Why should such Zoroastrians, whose loyalties are divided on the religious plane itself, be then allowed to continue as full-fledged members of the community? Responds Kotwal: "At the *uthamna* ceremony we pray that sorcery, sinfulness, wickedness, devil worship, heresy, etc be removed from Zoroastrian lives. If you do not come back (spiritually into the fold) may Meher Yazad come sooner to you to give

you fitting judgement. Here life is imperfect. If not, what is the sense of a spiritual world? This world is incomplete but very essential. Do good deeds here to get a good place there..."

"Whatever customs and traditions are unopposed, have been going on from times immemorial, (have) unobstructed usage, if any such custom or tradition is to be changed, there will be opposition with tenacity. You cannot change such customs. The voice of the people is the voice of God..."

"There are Parsis in the USA who maintain fire on a 24-hour basis. My one-hour lecture in London was heard by 150 to 200 people in pin-drop silence. Under persecution, Iranian Zoroastrians preserved the religion. Now, with freedom, you want to marry out?"

Referring to a public meeting summoned by the Council of Vigilant Parsis (the COVP which, on the issue of the filming of *On Wings of Fire* — the Cyrus Bharucha-Zubin Mehta production on the message of Zarathushtra — had severely and publicly castigated Kotwal) on October 12, 1990 the High Priest says that it was his duty to participate. Now that he has entered this public fray, he "will not let go. I don't want future generations to say that these dasturs permitted the community to wither away... The BPP trustees may be obliged to call a samast anjuman meeting (which they alone can summon, to ascertain the view of the community on this issue). Religion is not the property of a few trustees. It's the property of a whole community."

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TRAVELS IN IRAN: 2

A millennium of misery

Manekji Limji Hataria

Though harassment thinned the ranks of Zoroastrians in Iran, it failed to annihilate their devotion to the faith

This is the second of six instalments of Manekji Limji Hataria's publication, Rishale Ej Har Shiyaate Iran. The Gujarati original, rendered into English by Jamshed M. Bilimoria, has been abridged, edited and recollated by Parsiana (courtesy, K. R. Cama Oriental Institute to whom the translation manuscript was gifted).

The author went to Iran in 1854 at the behest of the Society for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Zoroastrians of Persia (otherwise known as the Amelioration Society), to report the conditions prevailing there at first hand. He returned only once to India, for an 18-month spell, at the end of the first 10 years. The book is largely a publication of the speeches he then made to acquaint the Parsis in India with the wretchedness of their Iranian coreligionists and to seek help to further the cause of Zoroastrian amelioration in Iran. Having devoted the rest of his life to the task, Hataria died in Iran in 1890, mourned to this day by Iranian Zoroastrians who almost worshipped him as their savior (see "The redeeming of a community," Parsiana, May 1990).

In the first instalment Hataria wrote of Iran's ancient glory and described the ruins he witnessed as he criss-crossed the country in pursuit of his goal.

When the country went into the hands of the Muslims, hordes of Arabs, Mongols, Tartars and other barbaric tribes overran the country causing destruction and devastation everywhere. Robbers and dacoits destroyed our ancient temples, pal-

aces and valuable libraries and other important monuments. These hoards were totally illiterate and uncultured and forced Islam upon the people at the point of the sword. They brought nothing but poverty and ruin. The slaughter of thousands of people led to the spread of various contagious diseases. The natural beauty of the country and the healthy atmosphere became things of the past. Under the tyrannical rule of the Muslim Sultans, the number of dacoits and robbers increased; men forgot their human characteristics and behaved like senseless brutes. Family happiness departed and the 'Garden of Paradise' turned into the most veritable hell.

A time came when Zoroastrians in Iran were tyrannized and forbidden to have their own mode of worship. Many had to embrace Islam for life. Women and children lived in fear of the Muslim maulvis (religious heads) who harassed all non-Muslims. All good and learned ministers were slaughtered mercilessly along with many non-Muslims. It was a period of bloodshed and we can well imagine the sorry plight of our co-religionists engulfed by that ruthless administration.

The ancient Iranians ruled over the country of Persia for thousands of years and the traces of their power are still to be seen in that country. In spite of this many Muslim rulers believed that the past sovereigns of Iran were not Zoroastrians but some other race. They think that those Zoroastrians who reside in Iran even today are the descendants of some uncultured race called Maajus. To this

day some of the Muslims of Iran keep themselves aloof from the Parsis, never touch them or their belongings and refuse to sell them the wares from their shops. It is very difficult for the Parsis to keep their individuality there, as their estates and properties have gone into the hands of the Muslims and for the sake of their personal safety, many have embraced Islam. Recently research scholars have found out that a group of our co-religionists still survive as Zoroastrians and live in distant mountains in Central Asia. They belong to the ancient Kayanian race, possessing Kayani blood; but no precise details are available about their vocation and occupation and how they satisfy their needs and necessities of life, and still maintain their ancient religion taught by prophet Zarathushtra.

The inhabitants of Kerman and Yazd are mostly Zoroastrians and they have suffered much at the hands of the Arabs and Muslims. Their population appears to be dwindling. When the Arabs got their sway over Iran, the Zoroastrians were slaughtered mercilessly, their houses were burnt down and they were robbed of their valuables and other belongings. Rape, arson, fire, house-breaking and all other possible crimes were perpetrated by the Muslims. There was unspeakable cruelty. One can well imagine their sorry plight; yet we have been able to preserve our ancient religion of Zoroaster, and the Muslims have not been able to prevail upon us.

Even the Parsis who left their fatherland, Iran and came into India (Hindustan) were not happy in the beginning.

They suffered much under the Muslim tyrannical rule; but determination to preserve their good religion made them abandon everything — their lands, estates, houses, farms, wealth, etc — and they migrated from their land of birth with tears in their eyes. Their faith in God and determination to preserve their religion granted them relief in the end and they were able to settle down in Hindustan.

At present the Zoroastrian population of Iran is no more than 10,000 and the Muslim population is more than a crore, the ratio being 1:1,000. Those who immigrated into India became safe, particularly under the British regime, but those who were left behind in Iran underwent terrible times and suffered beyond description. The Parsis of India did much in the past to improve the conditions of their co-religionists residing in Iran, but the Muslim maulvis being adamant, no good ever came of the effort. Muslim tyranny did not abate and the Zoroastrians in Iran continued to live in a state of bondage because of their religion (*mahzab*).

In Arab dominated Iran, the condition of the Zoroastrians was pitiable. Their food was simple, consisting of rice,

wheat and pulses which they ate with *naan* (a kind of bread). They often subsisted on vegetables like cabbage, cauliflower, or garlic, onion, etc. Meat and fish was for the more fortunate ones only. Dried fruits (*mevo*) was available but only rich people could afford it.

The houses of the Zoroastrians were built of clay with thatched roofs. They were small and without upper storeys. Most of the houses were in a bad condition. They were closed from all sides with one small door in front. There was always a fear of robbery and burglary: the inhabitants were never safe.

Their main occupation at that time was agriculture; but even in this there was no security. The Arab hordes could pounce upon the fields at any moment and carry away the crops. On their fields they mostly grew wheat and vegetables as these articles made up their staple diet.

The Zoroastrians covered their bodies with khadi-like materials in summer and woollen blankets in winter. They wore *sudreh* and *kusti* which were actually prohibited articles under Arab rule. They dare not expose their *sudreh* and *kusti*. Many a times, when a *kusti* was not available, the Zoroastrians wrapped

round their waists a thick cotton belt which they called *kamarband*. They always kept their heads covered with a thick cotton or woollen handkerchief. They were forbidden to put on any other headgear. They put on high boots made of leather which they called *patawa* or *cupps*. In winter, some people put on woollen socks also.

As time went on, the Zoroastrians took up other occupations also like weaving and carpentry. Some worked as laborers in the fields owned by the Muslims. The beast of transport was the mule.

There were peddlers who carried articles like sewing thread, needles, spices, pieces of cloth, etc in large bags on their shoulders and moved about from place to place selling their wares. Many went into trade, selling wool, woollen clothes, cotton, silk, wheat, oil, dried fruits, nuts, etc and made good business. They started exporting the above articles to other countries of Europe and Asia.

The Arabs and Muslims found the Zoroastrian way of living and working better than their own. Some of them appreciated the Zoroastrian way of living while the more fanatic ones tried to destroy the Zoroastrian tribes in Iran.

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MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides in Bombay — as listed in this issue — ranged between 19 and 25 years, the arithmetic mean (the total of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 22 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 23 and 47 years, averaging at 33 years.

As compared to 16 births in Bombay there were 86 deaths. Twenty-six patients succumbed to heart disease while 16 fell prey to pneumonia and lung disease and eight to old age and general debility. Other killers were brain disease (six), diabetes and cancer (claiming five lives each), hypertension (four), septicemia (three) and kidney failure and gastroenteritis (two each). Liver disease, anemia, bronchitis, senility, suffocation, urinary tract infection, malnutrition, diarrhoea and hydrothorax (an effusion resulting from failing circulation — as in heart disease or lung infection) were the isolated cases registered in August. A three-day-old infant succumbed to brain hemorrhage, another, nine weeks old, succumbed to gastroenteritis. The oldest to die was a 99-year-old woman.

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled from information supplied by various newsletters and anjuman in India and abroad, courts and hospitals. This information is not always complete or consistent. In the breakup of deaths according to illnesses, especially of the elderly, death is often due to a combination of several diseases.

If readers have any births/marriages/deaths they would like published, some proof to ensure the veracity of the report would be required. We are sure our readers would appreciate this requirement and cooperate with us.

BOMBAY

Born

A boy to *Khurshid and Sharookh Satarawalla* on July 31, 1990
A boy to *Hetal (Daisy) and Ajay Chokshi*; August 2

A boy to *Nina and Pheroze Engineer*; August 3

A girl to *Farida and Rohinton Elavia*; August 6

A girl, *Farzana*, to *Jeroo and Adil Olpadwalla*; August 7

A boy to *Behroze and Rumi Mistry*; August 9

A boy to *Lilly and Hoshang Motafram*; August 13

A boy to *Benaifer and Nozer Mistry*; August 14

A girl to *Dinaz and Ravi Parkash*; August 14

A boy to *Rupi and Viraf Chinoy*; August 18

A girl to *Jeeny and Dhiren Desai*; August 18

A boy to *Mehroo and Kersi Appoo*; August 21

A girl, *Mahafreen*, to *Pearl and Homiyar Mistry*; August 21

A boy to *Pearl and Kersi Baria*; August 22

A girl to *Farida and Jehangir Gilder*; August 24

A girl to *Maharukh and Mehernosh Hakim*; August 29

Married

Farida Noshir Bacha and Ratan Phirozsha Avari; August 3

Meherengiz Adi Irani and Adil Keki Hirananeek; August 27

Azita Ardeshtir Frouhar and Aziz Marzban Irani of Thana; August 28

Died

Hilla Jehangir Kolah (87), residing at Empress Court, M. Karve Rd, 400020; July 31

Mani Jamshedji Palkhiwalla (84), 4, Jer Mans, Off Turner Rd, Bandra, 400050; July 31

Daulat Sorab Canteenwalla (75), 5, Cama Bldg, M. F. Cama Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; August 1

Bachoojai Jamsetjee Dorabji (87), B, Yusuf Mans, 204, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; August 1

Maharukh Fali Driver (43), 502, Sinclair Apts, 95, Hill Rd, Bandra, 400050; August 1

Maneksha Sorabji Hodiwalla (86), Wadia Bldg, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; August 1

Parvez Manchershaw Irani (83), 286/D, Irani Hse, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Parel, 400012; August 1

Dinbai Pirojshaw Mandorina (85), 11, Mody Bldg, Gamadia

Clny, Tardeo, 400007; August 1

Minoo Edulji Mohta (65), M/9, Dalal Est Apts, Bombay Central, 400008; August 1

Jerbanoo Sheryarji Govadia (76), 8/7, Tata Blocks, Tardeo, 400034; August 2

Homi Ardishar Driver (77), 12 A/6, Panthaky Baug, Andheri (E), 400069; August 3

Phiroze Jehangirji Balsara (84), 12/3, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; August 4

Fali Burjorji Dastur (76), 12, Malegamwalla Bldg, Mahim, 400016; August 4

Gool Minoo Kutar (60), Sett Hse, 31, Agiary Lane, Fort, 400001; August 4

Behram Kaikaus Rabadi (78), 42/A, Empire Est, 400036; August 4

Rustom Behram Faroodi (66), Room 9, 422/A, Dubhash Bldg, Grant Rd, 400007; August 5

Soli Dossabhai Mehta (64), 16, Dubash Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo Rd, 400007; August 5

Meherji Kaikhushru Mistry (60), 41, Yashodham Enclave, Film City Rd, Goregaon, 400063; August 5

Shilla Faranroz Daver (73), 808, Aimal Manzil, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; August 6

Female baby of Navaz R. Guard (3 days), Pallonji Mans, Cuffe Parade, 400005; August 6

Sarvar Khodadad Nazmi (85), 124, Bara Bglw Rd, Ward Walvan, Lonavala, 410401; August 6

Ratanji Cawasji Vajifdar (81), 625, Nariman Bldg, Dhobitalao, 400002; August 6

Homai Jal Balsara (78), Sayaji Najugi Block, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; August 7

Gohar Framroze Patel (70), 101, Namdar Hse, 89, Hill Rd, Bandra, 400050; August 7

Nadirsha Behramji Writer (90), Ahmed Bldg, Gunpowder Rd, Mazagaon, 400010; August 7

Naoroji Pirojsha Godrej (74), 40/D, Ridge Rd, 400006; August 8

Banoobai Pestonji Lelinwala (89), Sea Breeze, 105, Seven Bglws, Andheri (W), 400058; August 9

Aimai Pirojshah Mistry (90), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; August 9

Alamai Rustomji Balsara (90), B/34, Gool Mhl, Sleater Rd, 400007; August 10

Alamai Darabshah Balsara (82), Gold Coin, 104, Tardeo Rd, 400034; August 11

Najamai Cawasji Mehta (87), King Bldg, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Parel, 400012; August 11

Tehmina Jehanbux Mehta (80), 12/A, Silver Palace, Pali Mala Market, Bandra, 400050; August 11

Dolly Ardeshtar Ravji (65), Shery Hse, Cawasji Patel St, 400001; August 11

Jal Naswanji Tata (84), Puran Niwas, Radio Club, Colaba, 400005; August 11

Ava Aspi Bharucha (9 weeks), Nagardas Nivas, 604/A, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; August 13

Dolly Burjorji Billimoria (51), Q/10, Shapurji Bharucha Clny, Andheri (W), 400058; August 13

Dinamai Cooverji Dotiwala (81), 688, P. A. Hormarjee Bldg, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; August 13

Pirojshaw Dadabhoj Driver (75), Depak Mhl, Maganlal Ngr, Grant Rd, 400007; August 13

Freny Sorabjee Kanthanna (75), F/2, Gul-Dhuna-Abad, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; August 13

Gustad Rattanshaw Dastoor (81), 15, Kohinoor Rd, Dadar, 400014; August 14

Gool Bomanji Mistry (84), 14, Chateau Marine, Marine Drive, 400020; August 14

Dhunjisha Nasserwanji Santok (69), 659, Keki Hse, Wadala, 400031; August 14

Hosang Jamshedjee Mistry (80), 2/1, Varsova-View, Four Bglws, Andheri (W), 400058; August 15

Nasurwanji Navroji Goawalla (89), Goawalla Bldg, Camp Deolali, Dist Nasik, 422001; August 16

Jerbanoo Nawroji Photographer (95), Master Chmbs, Dhobitalao, 400020; August 16

Bejon Eruchshaw Sukhia (69), S/5, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; August 16

Tehmina Ratansha Vazifdar (85), D/15, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; August 17

Shiavax Dhanjibhoj Chavda

(79), Master Chmbs, 1, Cinema Rd, 400020; August 18
Armaity Burjorji Unwalla (80), Khatkhatina Ter, August Kranti Marg, 400036; August 18
Nergish Rustom Amrolia (82), G/14, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; August 19
Naja Keki Billimoria (77), B/11, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; August 19
Mehramai Meherwanji Gazder (86), Reward Bldg, Next to Ganga Jamuna, 400007; August 19
Tehmina Vickaji Meherlhomji (82), Vaswani Mans, BEST Marg, 400039; August 19
Hoshang Dosabhai Batliwalla (65), Kotwal Hse, Sleater Rd, 2, Cross Lane, 400007; August 20
Dinshawji Behramji Palkhiwalla (75), 2/A, Sonawalla Bldg, Tardeo, 400007; August 20
Soli Rusi Patel (75), Room 21, Bhabha Sanatorium, Bandra, 400050; August 20
Tehmina Nadirshaw Peshotan (83), 41, Maneck Abad, 5, Setalwad Rd, Nepean Sea Rd, 400036; August 20
Homai Pestonji Driver (69), 43, Trinity St, Dhobitalao, 400002; August 21
Dina Ardeshtir Ranikhetwalla (74), 21, Shangrilla, Opp Colaba Post Office, Colaba, 400005; August 21
Meherji Jamshedji Vakil (89), Roxana, M. Karve Rd, 400020; August 21
Shera B. Keyamaneh (Irani) (73), Park Darshan, Lallubhai Park, Andheri (W), 400058; August 22
Dara Naserwanji Madon (69), 241, Chandra Mhl, Princess St, 400002; August 22
Ratanbai Meherjibhoy Mehta (83), 17, Tarachand Bldg, Gamadia Clny, 400007; August 22
Perin Nadar Vazifdar (86), 7, Uranwala Mans, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Parel, 400012; August 22
Banoo Eruch Balsara (65), Devdas Bldg, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; August 23
Kaikhushroo Burjorji Jamina (84), 3, Readymoney Bldg, Sir Ratan Tata Rd, Tardeo, 400007; August 23
Ala Jamshed Mama (84), 6/A, Hill Top Apt, Pali Hill, Bandra (W), 400050; August 23
Keki Framroze Pastake (74), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; August 23

Jamshed Burjor Working-boxwalla (85), Baj Bldg, 171, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; August 23
Framroz Dinshawji Dastur (67), 8B/32, Navjeevan Soc, Laming-ton Rd, 400008; August 24
Jamshed Behram Irani (42), 3, Adarbad, Hughes Rd, 400007; August 24
Eruch Behramji Master (71), A/34, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; August 25
Hirabai Dossabohoi Shroff (90), Ahura Apt, Gunpowder Rd, Mazagaon, 400010; August 25
Pestonji Dinshawji Chinoy (75), Shapoorji Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; August 26
Dolly Jamshed Irani (64), Bage Khoda Shenaz, Gholvad, 401702; August 26
Jamshedji Cawasji Katrak (95), Fairy Manor, R. Sidhwa Marg, Fort, 400001; August 26
Godrej Phiroshaw Postwala (65), 81, J. P. Rd, M. A. Patel Bglw, Andheri (W), 400058; August 26
Rati Dady Daruwalla (59), Imperial Mhl, Khodadad Circle, Dadar, 400014; August 27
Phiroze Faranji Hathiram (76), Habib Hse, Grant Rd, 400007; August 28
Framroze Sorabji Italia (79), 641, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; August 28
Dinamai Jamshedji Kapadia (85), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; August 28
Vinnie Dara Bhagwagar (52), Ness Baug, Annexe-3, Nana Chowk, 400007; August 29
Sheherbanoo Manchershah Tara (99), 1, Habib Court, Colaba Causeway, 400039; August 29
Maneckshaw Bomanji Vaid (86), 11/174, Azad Ngr, Jai Prakash Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; August 29
Motibai Dinshawji Engineer (88), 18, Irani Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; August 30
Firoz Jamshed Jilla (61), Navdhan Rahivashi Sangh, Khar, 400051; August 30

CALCUTTA

Born

A boy, Zamyad, to Senober and Cyrus Meherji; July 15

MADRAS

Died

Arjasp Framroze Taraporewala

(88); April 15

POONA

Married

Moushumi J. C. Basu and Zubin R. Kabraji; January 7

Died

Fali Soli Commiseriat (31), Hira Manzil, Navjivan Soc, Gilder Lane, Bombay, 400008; August 30
Kaikhushroo Dhanjishaw (92), 1/7, Guru Prasad, Bund Garden Rd, 411001; August 31

SURAT

Died

Jehangir Pestonji Dhalla (72), Dehla Mohalla, Rustompura, 395002; August 1
Savaksha Darabsha Katpitia (62), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; August 3
Shehroobai Shapoorji Mehta (77), Gam Kim, District Surat, 394110; August 19
Homi (Hormazshaw) Manekshaw Tadiwala (83), Rani Talao, Bharband Wad, 395003; August 22
Sheroo Dinshawji Subedar (65), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; August 26

☆☆☆

CHICAGO

Died

Jehangir Balsara, father of Nauzer; July 10

KARACHI

Born

A boy to Toranj and Behram Irani; June 2

Died

Neryosang Kaikobad Rabadi

(66); June 12

Khorshed Rustom Dalal (68); June 23
Villie Nusserwanji Cooper (60); July 1
Aloo Bhikhaji Kharas (78); July 21
Bhikhu Sohrabji Merchant (76); July 21

LANSING, Michigan

Married

Mahnaz Khosravi and Parviz Soroushian; August 18

LONDON

Married

Ava Meherwan Mehta and Vispi Maneck Jamooji; August 4

MONTREAL, Canada

Married

Jasmin Bhedwar and Neville Vapiwalla of London; July 28

OTTAWA, Canada

Born

A boy, Percy, to Benifer and Anupam Chohan, brother to Devin; May 6

QUEBEC, Canada

Married

Zenobia Mahava and Jehanbakhsh Jusawala of Toronto; June 29

Died

Dolat Balsara, wife of Fali and mother of Adil and Niloufer; May 31

TOTALS (for this issue)

Births: Boys 12, Girls 7
 Marriages: Parsi 7
 Intercommunal 1
 Deaths: 101

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

THE PARSIANA BOOK OF IRANIAN NAMES

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Super scribe AFST

Parinaz Gandhi

His written word could score many a goal. His voice had a powerful delivery which could stump a commentary listener. His racy descriptions could inspire many novices who were new to the horses. Such was Ardeshir Furdoonji Sohrabji Talyarkhan, popularly known as Bobby or by his initials AFST, who was regarded as the pioneer of sports journalism in India.

A day before he breathed his last on July 13, 1990, at the age of 94 at the Cricket Club of India (CCI) clubhouse where he resided, his regular column appeared in the Bombay afternoon daily, *Mid-Day*. And the day after his cremation (he had wanted no religious last rites, he had earlier specified) his last column appeared in the English section of the Gujarati daily, *The Bombay Samachar*.

"Public awareness shot up...sports writers were finally taken seriously — a specialized brand of journalism had come to stay. His writing also began having a marked influence on the functioning of the autocratic sports federations and organizations of the day... This was the major victory of (Talyarkhan's) lonely column," states a cover story on AFST in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* of May 20, 1990 projecting the doyen's consuming involvement in all sports affairs, be it hockey, cricket, football...

"To Bobby must go the credit of raising the tone of sports writing and the stature of sports journalists for it was Bobby who gave Bombay its first complete

sports page with a team of specialist writers," wrote sports critic K. N. Prabhu. That was when he was with the *Free Press Journal*. Remembers columnist M. V. Kamath who was then a junior reporter, "Around 8.30 p.m. he and his team...would literally march into the office... He wore shorts, socks and shoes, and an open short-sleeved shirt and in his right hand there was a tin of cigarettes. I don't ever remember seeing him walk... I was often reminded of a wrestler moving towards the wrestling pit. That was the sports desk. AFST hardly spoke. The sports desk was a study in concentration..."

"There is not a sporting activity he did not touch. He was interested in automobile sports and was its first promoter. He himself had a sports car in which he would drive up to *The Times of India* every day to personally hand in his sports column," notes *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of July 16 in an article titled "Memories of AFST."

He is known to have written under his name, his initials and various pseudonyms like Willow when he was reporting on cricket and Pinza when it was racing. "We had to handle him with great care, he was touchy about many subjects. But over the years he became friendly, generous, encouraging," notes the write-up in *The Afternoon*. In fact many scribes like Kamath and Dom Moraes credit Talyarkhan for encouraging them during their

early days of writing. He even mooted the formation of the first sports journalists' association in India.

His own columns, he knew, helped boost the sales of the papers to which he contributed. And though AFST never lost a grip of his subject until the end despite failing eyesight, his long-time regular readers felt that "the quality of his writing steadily declined until at times he became almost unreadable... But no one would have dared to correct him. AFST's copy was sacrosanct," observed Kamath.

"It was my writing that took me into broadcasting, not the other way about," Talyarkhan had earlier clarified. In 1934 he created history for the All India Radio (AIR) by broadcasting the first ever ball-by-ball commentary in the match between Parsis and Mohammedans played at the Bombay Gymkhana. He, who was considered the uncrowned king of sports commentators — for being the first to broadcast on hockey in the world, the first to do football commentary in India and for taking cricket to the corners of India by his solo ball-by-ball descriptions — was dropped by the AIR when he refused to share the mike with others. Yet a quarter century later, on the invitation of AIR, he did agree to act as the special comments man for "prophetically the last-ever test at the Brabourne Stadium in 1973." But there too he had stipulated his



Photo: Vivek Sarambalkar
The Illustrated Weekly of India

conditions: he would not do any live commentary, and also he would only accept the mike from the hands of former ace cricketer Vijay Merchant.

Talyarkhan "prided himself on the fact that he was the only one who did not need to have a script for his AIR programs. He fought for autonomy and he was looking forward to the day when... he could come back with his independent views," notes a report in *The Times*.

With the advent of Doordarshan in Bombay, he started his program *Looking Back, Looking Forward*, "telecasting sports talks for about seven continuous years which were as interesting as his radio broadcasts," it was recorded in a communique from the Bombay Parsi Punchayet chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla. Talyarkhan was among the coterie of eminent Parsis felicitated by the Punchayet on the occasion of its tercentenary in 1982 at which function he had remarked that he felt privileged to belong to this microscopic community which had given so much to the country without demanding anything in return.

In the sphere of racing he was the first to introduce 'bend-and-finish' pictures in the Indian Press that helped identify the winner at a glance. His commentaries on racing had become legend and he enjoyed the distinction of having a race named after him — The Talyarkhan Club — an honor reportedly bestowed on only a select few. Invariably he would be invited to conduct the auctions at the annual bloodstock sales.

During his career spanning over 70 years, there were some who noticed that "he trod on many toes...had many a tiff with authorities." On many occasions, like "all self-righteous persons he tended to overstate his case which sometimes proved counter-productive." Others were of the opinion that he was the "most versatile and fearless sports critic and commentator our country has known." Any action that he perceived was a wrong move, spurred him to write. Labelled the "sanitary inspector of sports," Talyarkhan commented in the interview with *The Illustrated Weekly*, "I think it's wrong, therefore I draw attention to it. It's not for nothing that I'm jocularly

known as 'the I specialist'... That's the ego in me — and I have a great deal of it."

He knew the perils of communal cricket and through a campaign on the radio, in the Press, at public meetings, he single-handedly stopped the pentangular matches even though his efforts caused considerable resentment then. Reasoned Talyarkhan, "Mine was a plea for communal sanity in sport. So I fought against those wretched quadrangular and pentangular matches. The very idea of Hindus playing Muslims was anathema to me. So I opposed them with all the strength at my command." He also directed a successful tirade against the Indian team playing

soccer barefoot. And later, not seeing an improvement in their performance, he chided, "The Indian footballer, now properly shod — and for this I may take full marks — seems oblivious of the fact that boots are intended to kick with, not merely trap and pass and push... Our football has gone soft... And we still suffer from the grave disability of not being able to kick with either foot..."

Originally he was very opposed to women playing "the men's game of cricket," but when he saw them practice seriously and regularly, and their standards improving, he revised his opinion, mentions Ms Aaloo Bamji, former president of the Bombay Women's Cricket Association.

In sports circles his initials AFST came to be equated with "Always For Sporting Times," notes a write-up in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of July 22. "For him any Indian winning international honors was the greatest joy of his life. He always had a soft corner for the Anglo-Indians, Christians or Goans as he used to refer, and of course Parsis, all minority communities which produced several outstanding sports celebrities but who hardly gained due recognition at the national level. For them he was a champion fighter as he was for the poor adivasis or the Services sportsmen coming from the lower rungs of society," the write-up elaborated.

While some became his adversaries, there were others who appreciated his worth. Compile his writings into a book for posterity, suggested Nana Chudasama, the sheriff of Bombay. "The richest tribute to him will be to name the commentary box at the Wankhede Stadium (the present venue for international cricket matches in Bombay) as the A. F. S. Talyarkhan Box," proposed Polly Umrigar, former captain of the Indian cricket team.

Sports journalism wasn't a planned career for Talyarkhan. After completing his schooling from Cathedral and John Connon School, he joined St Xavier's College only to leave that institution and join Sydenham College. From there he proceeded abroad to study law, thereafter veterinary science... "Quite possibly that

Photo: P. M. Shirodkar
The Illustrated Weekly of India



sheer love of words, words, words — and never long words, I can assure you — coupled with an intense interest in games eventually caused water to find its own level," Talyarkhan had admitted in the interview with *The Illustrated Weekly*.

The sports doyen was considered "a natty dresser and a stickler for etiquette." Actually, "in his last days AFST had become very touchy about his appearance and was most unwilling to be photographed..." After the death of his wife Jessie May six years ago, it was his friends who regularly dropped by to keep him company. And his sense of humor was active until the end. Barely 10 days before his death, in a cordial letter to M. K. Vajifdar, a fellow-student at Xavier's though one he wasn't acquainted with, he described himself as a person "who always forced his way even where he should not enter..."

When summarizing the landmark developments in his career, AFST remarked, "What else, through my scribbling can I claim to have achieved? There are quite a few things, believe me... but then... well, memory hasn't yet slammed the door on me. I do go on simply because I'm killing time before time kills me."

Chinoy's press(ing) works

Died: Parvez Dossabhoy Chinoy, 79, former partner of Union Press who diversified its printing activities into the publication of Zoroastrian prayer books and calendars, on June 22, 1990 in Bombay, following cardiac arrest.

Chinoy inherited the Union Press, said to be one of the oldest presses in India, from his uncle Pirojshaw Kharshedji Gove-wala. At that time the Press specialized in printing dictionaries, law reports and the daily time-tables set for the judges of the Bombay High Court and the City Civil Court, mentions Chinoy's son Rohinton, presently the proprietor of the 133-year-old Union Press. However, when the courts went on vacation, he found his machines lying idle. So, to make optimum use of his infrastructure, he acted on the advice of Ervad Jal Bajan and commenced printing of prayer books.

But the sales were slow for the Kar-

anis were then already well-established and it was only if their prayer books were out of stock that the Union Press books were sought, Rohinton continues. Feeling they had reached a stage of stagnation with the prayer books, they turned their energies to printing calendars. Briefs



Shehensahi *roj* calendars, there was demand for the Kadmi and Fasli calendars too. And then came the popular utility calendars where the Gregorian calendar was supplemented with *rojs* and *mahs*, almanac details and other features that would interest Parsis.

Remembers Cowasjee Dinshaw in a condolence letter: "From Aden he brought the idea of printing an English calendar with Parsi months and days which till then was not known in India... In Aden he was a member of our ancestral firm Cowasjee Dinshaw and Brothers working in the printing department. There this young and tall man had created a very good impression amongst Europeans, Asians and Africans by his good manners, soft-spoken ways and punctuality."

Before joining the firm in Aden, Chinoy had not had any experience in the printing line. Straight out of Sir J. J. School from where he had completed his matriculation examination, he proceeded to Aden where "*maar khai, gaar khai ne sikhiya* (he learnt the hard way)," states Rohinton. After his stint in Aden, he returned to Bombay and was with Ideal Printers for a while before joining his uncle at the Union Press.

Among the community institutions that he was most keen to promote, in fact even more than his Press, was the Dadar Parsi Grih Udyog, notes an article by social worker Ratan Kakalia in *The Bombay Samachar*. He helped them raise funds, save costs and even create employment opportunities. Besides, he was trustee of the Dadar Parsi Youths Assembly, the Zoroastrian Association, the Mevawalla Agiary and the Readymoney Trust. The

Dadar Parsi Youths Assembly and the other organizations with which he was affiliated got together on June 30, 1990 to pay tribute to Chinoy's commitment to the Press and his other interests.

In addition to editing the fortnightly bulletin of the Bombay Parsi Association, he took a keen interest in sports too. During his youth, it was as a physical culturist and cyclist that he made his mark, says a family source.

In later years, his health problems complicated by angina and a cerebral attack, did not permit him to participate actively in the running of the Press. Even then he enjoyed making a trip to the Press once in a while and reminiscing about bygone days. As the one responsible for the running of the Union Press, the Mumbai Mudrak Sangh had felicitated him some years back, informs Rohinton.

Zoroastrian tenets and rituals Chinoy observed himself and was keen to keep alive these practices. Notes a family source, he would donate towards the cost of organizing prayer recitation and kusti weaving competitions. He was particularly loath to see Parsis turn to dargahs and babas in the hope of having their wishes fulfilled. To inspire faith in the Zoroastrian religion, he printed the booklet *Bhali murado ichwani ejmati nirango* which prescribed different prayers for different difficulties. To perpetuate Chinoy's memory, another edition of this booklet was brought out by the Chinoy family, with the intention of distributing 500 copies free of cost, says Rohinton.

Chinoy is survived by his wife Perin, son Rohinton and daughters Hilla Sabawalla, Villoo Mehta and Bakhtawar Bhagwagar.

P.G.

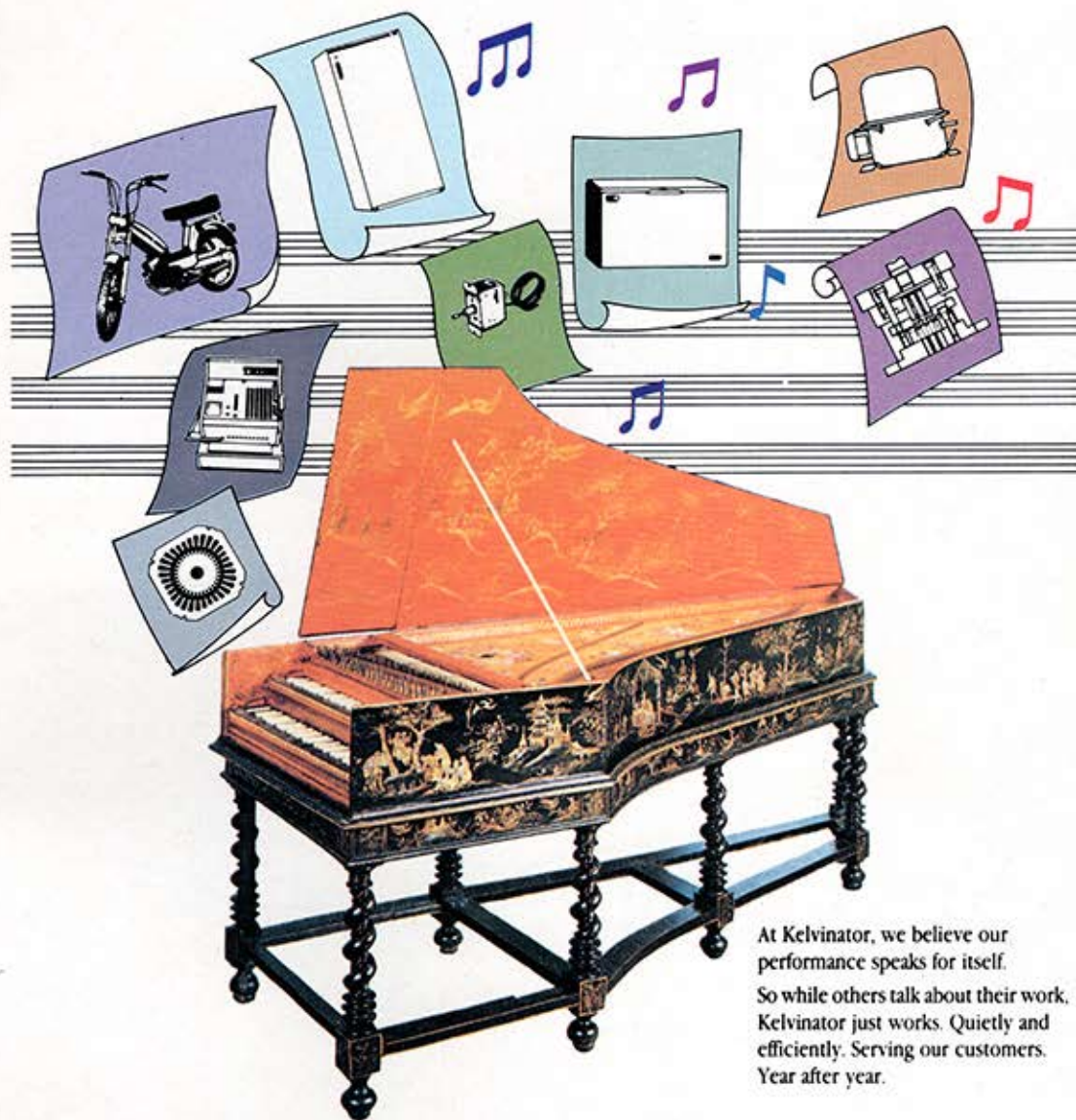
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