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Readers' views are welcome on any subject of interest to the community and should be sent to the Editor, Readers' Forum, Parsiana, G.P.O. Box 892, Bombay 400001. Letters are subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity. Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"Whither good...?"

I am deeply grieved and disappointed like many in our Zoroastrian community to read the Editorial Viewpoint "Whither good thoughts, words and deeds?" (*Parsiana*, September 1990).

One would not have expected such a biased, prejudicial and misleading viewpoint from the editorial pundits of once such an honorable and fair publication which was considered to be the ears and voice of the Parsi Zoroastrian community.

Firstly, for a Parsi Zoroastrian magazine like yours to insult the priesthood and wrongly condemn a high priest and a scholar of your own Parsi Zoroastrian faith cannot be justified.

Revered Dastur (Dr) Firoze M. Kotwal, when asked for his opinion by the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet on the issue of the late Ms Roxan Shah, showed great courage of

conviction by giving the right and proper viewpoint according to the doctrines, practices, time-honored Zoroastrian beliefs and the Zoroastrian religious tenets. This viewpoint has been further endorsed and certified by all the other six learned and revered vada dasturji sahebs. So, when your editorial pundits quote that "Whatever may be Kotwal's feelings and beliefs," they must have the intellect to understand that it is not Kotwal's personal feelings or beliefs but the feelings and beliefs of the entire Zoroastrian community who are not yet trapped in the unfortunate predicament of intermarriage.

Bunyard pasbani (preservation of the hereditary seed) was a motto which our forefathers cherished and strictly adhered to — perhaps the very reason why we all do not look like the Vasda prodigy created by the late (Dastur) Dr Framroze Bode. Right up to the first quarter of the current century intermarriages were unheard of until some rich and benevolent Zoroastrian families defaulted by marrying outside their own race, thereby jeopardizing the entire heritage of the Parsi Zoroastrian race of people.

Our religious laws of purity are very simple and clear. We, as practising Zoroastrians, are forbidden to contaminate or to pollute any single element of nature — namely *aab*, *hava*, *atash* or *zameen* (water, air, fire or earth) — and hence, our thousands of years old custom of disposing of our dead by consigning the bodies to our consecrated dokhmas and the very sacred and scientific ritual of dokhmenashini.

The most paramount crime of all against Nature, according to our Zoroastrian philosophy and beliefs is that of mixing spiritual and physical genetics which, as we all know, hardly any other creature in nature ever commits. Even in the sacred scriptures of Islam called *The Ahad Nameh* the holy Prophet Muhammad states, "I made the (inheritable) property of those belonging to the Zoroastrian creed, but themselves of mixed birth, to pass to the religions head of your community (because) I heard the Apostle of God saying: 'The people descending from parents of two religions do not inherit'" (Page 11 — *The Ahad Nameh* by Cowasjee Nusserwanji Dinshaw).

One does not need to be a profound religious scholar or an intellectual genius

to understand that people, especially Zoroastrians, who default on the basic tenets of their religion by marrying outside the community, have deemed to have denounced their Zoroastrian faith — hence are not entitled to any communal or religious rights.

Your editorial pundits are totally wrong and presumptuous when they state, "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?" There is not a shred of evidence in history of any form of conversion in ancient Iran and the only 'non-believers' as it may seem, are the writers of this ill-conceived Editorial Viewpoint.

Your editorial pundits further note, "The greatest danger of religious laws when applied to a civil state is that they are arbitrary, whimsical, cruel, unjust and unreasonable." Please permit me to enlighten them that any law, whether religious, civil or criminal, is "arbitrary, whimsical, cruel, unjust and unreasonable" to those who break it and therefore bear the consequences of their actions.

On the point of 'discrimination' by the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, I fully agree with your Editorial and would ask the following questions:

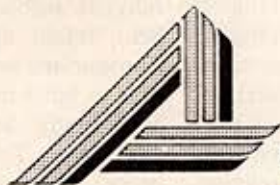
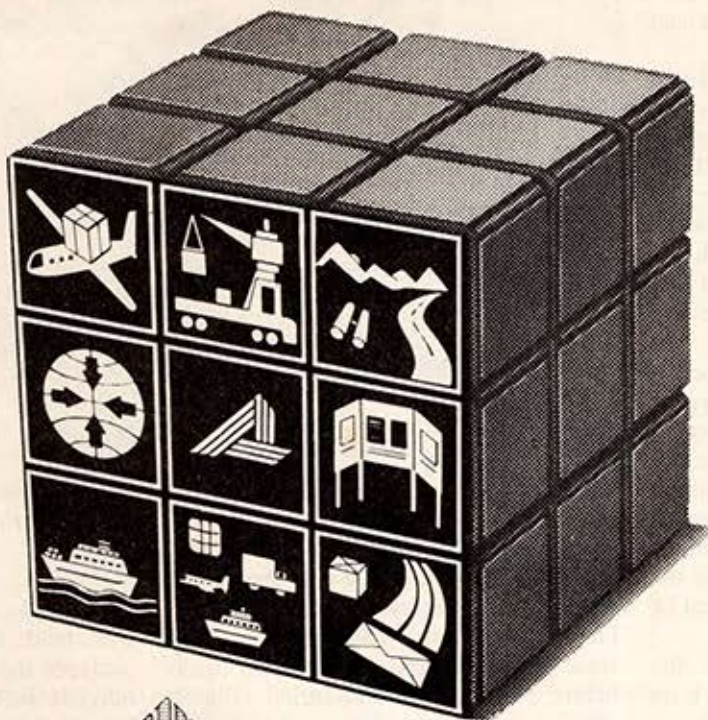
- Who has given any right or authority to the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet to decide on matters of Parsi Zoroastrian religious practices and customs?
- Which court of law or act of parliament has sanctioned this affidavit (the BPP has placed affidavit forms at doongerwadi for the use of Zoroastrian women married outside the community) as a legal document to act against Zoroastrian religious tenets?
- How can such a document authorize anyone — leave alone the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet — to desecrate and defile our consecrated and sacrosanct places of worship?

Remember, there is no race without religion and there is no religion without priesthood. So before casting stones at your own race, religion and priesthood — please think twice. Ervad DARIUS N. SETHNA

The Editor replies

Contrary to what Ervad Sethna states, the objective of the editorial was not to ma-

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lign the priesthood or any particular priest but instead to request them to view present customs and traditions in light of the overall message of Zoroaster and Zoroastrianism.

Ervad Sethna erroneously states that "there is not a shred of evidence in history of any form of conversion in ancient Iran and the only 'non-believers' as it may seem, are the writers of this ill-conceived Editorial Viewpoint."

For the information of Ervad Sethna and others who hold this point of view, we quote from the judgement of Justices Daver and Beaman in the famous Parsi Punchayet Case of 1906 (Sir Dinshaw Manockji Petit and others vs Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy and others) wherein both the plaintiffs and the defendants agreed that the Zoroastrian religion not only permits but enjoins conversion.

The case dealt with the election scheme of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet as well as the issue of "whether a person born in another faith and subsequently converted to Zoroastrianism and admitted into that religion is entitled to the benefit of the religious institutions and funds mentioned in the plaint and now in the possession and under the management of the defendants."

The case in point pertained to the French wife of Mr R. D. Tata whose navjote ceremony was performed in Bombay by the Shehenshahi High Priest Dastur Kaikhooshroo Jamaspji.

Daver's Judgement

"When the controversy consequent on the navjote ceremony of the French lady arose, there was intense excitement amongst the Parsi community. Meetings were held, committees were appointed, and learned men from the community were selected as experts to report on the various religious controversial questions that arose. The committee of experts made their report. On this report, Mr Lowndes, for the plaintiffs, has placed great reliance. This report says that not only is there nothing in the sacred books to prohibit persons professing other religions from being admitted into the Zoroastrian religion, but that the Zoroastrian religion enjoins such conversions." (Page 50)

Beaman's Judgement

"These trusts are public religious endowments and charities. They were founded not for racial or tribal, but for religious purposes. The founders *ex hypothesi* intended them — since they are



not only public religious establishments of the Parsis — for the benefit of all professing that faith. Who then profess that faith? Can it be said that only those who are born in it profess it? Certainly not. For we can easily prove (and this had since been admitted over and over again before us) that the Zoroastrian religion was originally a proselytizing religion; that its tenets not only permit but energetically enjoin the making of converts.

It, therefore, follows that where a religion notoriously enjoins conversion, and where devout members of that religion found public places of worship and burial for the use of those who profess that religion, they must have contemplated — they must be deemed to have contemplated — converts to the religion participating in the benefits of such endowments. Any other view leads at once to this practical absurdity, that you have a great religion ordering conversion and yet refusing to allow converts any lot or part in its public religious communion... (Page IX to X)

"The defendants admit that their religion enjoins the making of converts. But they say that since the Parsi emigration from Persia some 1,200 years ago, the Indian Zoroastrians, commonly known as Parsis, have never carried out that religious precept. And they rely on the absence of all conversions, in the proper sense of the word, to prove a custom abrogating one of the fundamentals of their religion. In this connection, reference will probably be made to a case decided

White bearded Dastur Kaikobad, son of Dastur Meherjirana, at the court of Akbar

by Scott J. some years ago, in which it was held that long-established usage overrode the canon law. The Zoroastrian religion forbade, as the learned Judge held, infant marriage. But the Indian Zoroastrians were shown to his satisfaction to have uniformly practised it. He accordingly decided in favor of infant marriage. That no doubt was a very proper and just decision in the circumstances of the case. But how does it bear on this question? I do not think it has any bearing at all. There is a perfectly plain and intelligible distinction between a positive or affirmative, and a so-called merely negative custom or usage. The latter is not, in strictness, a usage or custom at all. It is, as soon as the proposition is fairly stated, clearly absurd to reason from mere non-use to the contrary affirmation. The Zoroastrian religion enjoins making converts. But for many years we have not made converts. Therefore, although we still profess that religion and revere all its essentials, we rely on a custom of not making converts, to abrogate the positive commands of our religion. That is what the defendants would say on this point, and it only needs to be stated to be set aside as absurd. There cannot be a custom of not doing a thing. Circumstances may have combined to render it undesirable or impossible, and so a practice may have fallen

"They will admit all the illegitimate children of Parsi parents, begotten of prostitutes or kept mistresses, but they will not admit the noblest, most exemplary foreigner"

into desuetude. But as long as the cardinal dogmas of the religion itself have remained unchanged, their efficacy, where, as here, it is freely admitted, cannot be impaired, much less destroyed, by inability or unwillingness to obey them. It is as much the duty of every pious Zoroastrian today to make converts as it was in the remote past. As a general abstract proposition, I think that is self-evident... (Page XI to XII)

"Not only, as I have said, a widely-spread tradition, popular ballads extolling the achievement as the crowning glory of the Bombay Parsis, but Mr (Jivanji Jamshedji) Modi himself — the most bitter, uncompromising opponent of conversion, the root and branch representative of orthodoxy — even he writes an elaborate treatise, or, one might say, almost a book, to prove that the priests of Navsari are fairly entitled to the credit of having converted the Emperor Akbar... (Page XVII)

"Again we have the Ravayats or *Responsa prudentum*. These are answers sent by the heads of the Zoroastrian community in Persia, to questions put to them on points of religious dogma, ritual, and so forth by Bombay Parsis. Both questions and answers show, with unmistakable clearness, that the question of making converts — both in the abstract, as a general question, and, more concretely, as to who were fit and proper to be made converts and how they ought to be made — was very much alive over the whole period to which we need confine our investigations. It is true that the Ravayats may not command much respect. That is not the point. The point is that questions were put by pious men about conversion, and answers were received from the heads of the official hierarchy in Persia, which most certainly did not deny that conversions could or ought to be made. As to the qualifications, I am not now concerned with them. Nothing in what I may call the official or expert part of the case creates a very high opinion of the intelligence of the good, devout gentlemen who had to some extent the consciences of the Zoroastrian community in their keeping. But it is undeniable that, rightly or wrongly, they, as well as the recipients of the Ravayats, were fully alive to the possibility of con-



Lady Tata: controversy following navjote

versions; and, with certain reservations of a secular rather than a religious kind, were quite ready to sanction and approve them. In the face of all this evidence, it is idle for the defendants to contend today that the idea of conversion, although an integral part of their revealed and accepted religion, had fallen so completely into disuse, that no member of the Bombay Parsi Zoroastrian community could ever have dreamed of regarding it as a practical and living question... (Page XVIII)

"I am quite ready to start with the assumption that the plaintiffs make, namely, that when the Zoroastrian exiles fled from the Mussulman persecution, they brought with them to India, as their common bond — their ancient religion. I will go further and add that, at that remote time, they would probably have not only approved but welcomed converts if — to use the phrase that has so often since been repeated — those converts would do no harm to the good religion. They needed help, they needed countenance, they needed, above all things, powerful allies. And no allies were likely to be better disposed to them than such as had been converted to their own faith. They were not then a dominant, but a servient, timid and scattered people, the mere remnant and straggling fugitives of an

overturned kingdom. They were in a strange land, surrounded by strange peoples, professing an unknown religion. In these circumstances, it is easy to understand that while they dared not proselytize, they would have been only too glad to welcome influential converts from Hinduism and Mahomedanism. And this, I have no doubt, is the real explanation of the Pandits and the Akbar story... (Page XIX)

"The defendants, expressing as we now know the orthodox Parsi view, are prepared to overlook immorality, bastardy — anything but alienage. They are ready to admit any and every Irani Zoroastrian about whose antecedents they cannot possibly know anything. But they will not admit the purest, most blameless foreigner, of whose character and conduct they may have the completest assurance. They will admit all the illegitimate children of Parsi parents, begotten of prostitutes or kept mistresses, but they will not admit the noblest, most exemplary foreigner. Why? Because a foreigner is outside the caste, and caste is an institution into which you must be born. Of the modern Parsi they say emphatically *nasatur non fit*. This is not religion, it has nothing to do with religion: it is essentially distinctly irreligious; but it is pure, unadulterated oriental caste... (Page XX)

"Either admission can be obtained to the Parsi community by conversion, or it cannot. It is simply puerile to pretend, for instance, that the admission of such a refined and cultured lady as Mrs Tata would do harm to a religion which opens its doors to all sorts and conditions of bastard children. It is still stupider to resist her claims on the ground that she was not duly admitted. She was publicly admitted by a person corresponding in our religion, let us say, to the Archbishop of York. Everyone knew of it: leading citizens, English as well as Parsis, were invited to be present at the ceremony. The priest who ought to know says that she was fully and regularly admitted. I really had no patience with the quibblings of the learned men who spoke for the defendants, and, while evading the plain direct points, spent hours of our time in trying to reconcile their own absurdly irreconcilable inconsistencies.

The real, the plain point was simply this, that notwithstanding anything in their sacred writings, notwithstanding their own published utterances to the contrary, notwithstanding the Ravayats, notwithstanding everything, they took their stand not on religion but on caste, and when it came to a practical test, denied that anyone could become a member of the Parsi community except by birth... (Page XXII)

"We were told, amongst other things, that one reason why the conversion of aliens to the holy Zoroastrian faith was no longer permissible in Bombay, if it ever had been, was that unscrupulous European women would pretend to be converts, in order to marry eligible Parsi young men, and so there would not be enough husbands to go round. The Parsi maidens we were told would be deserted; and one high priest even assured us that, owing to this lamentable tendency, he knew of a Parsi virgin of 40 still looking out in vain for a husband. This is the merest absurdity... (Page XXV)

"The religion — originally the principal, if not the only social and tribal bond — had long since been converted also into a distinctive caste badge. Being a member of the good religion, it was doubtless at that time synonymous with being a member of what we may now, I think, fairly call the Parsi caste. The subject of conversion was unquestionably, as a theoretical dogma, recurrently in the air, but was growing constantly to be more and more imperatively conditioned by purely caste considerations. As I have said, I think it likely that had these founders of the trusts been asked whether they were prepared to accept converts, they would have replied that they would not object to duly-accredited and approved converts. And what they would have had in mind was a regular convocation of elders on each case as it arose, to decide whether the person proposed was

eligible and desirable, much as members are admitted into an exclusive club. Had they been further told that this would be impossible, that they must choose between accepting any convert or (none) — that accepting any meant accepting all converts indiscriminately; and had it been further pointed out to them that the probabilities were immensely in favor of hundreds of the most undesirable people, for every single desirable person, offering themselves for conversion; looking to the constitution of the society, its attitude towards Dubras, its attitude towards the surrounding inferior Hindu castes, I cannot doubt for a moment that they would have unhesitatingly said that, whatever might be the abstract religious dogma, they meant their benefactions for their own people, the members of the Indian Zoroastrian community, that is to say, those who, as in the case of every other close caste, were born into it... No English Christian would think of regarding a place of worship desecrated because a genuine believer happened to have come from a base trade; still less would he deny to such an one rites of Christian burial in a Christian cemetery. But in the Zoroastrian community, the conditions are widely different. There, while the religion and its ritual purity are still the mainspring of the communal life, they are so intimately bound up with the exclusiveness and the purity of the tribe or caste, that they have become practically identical; and there is only this difference, that a modern orthodox Parsi would shrink with infinitely greater loathing and horror from admitting to his temples and towers a person whose presence was a social contamination, than he would from admitting him to his table and the freedom of his family circle. No respectable Parsi would dream of eating with, say, a Bhungi. It would seem to him utterly impossible to do so; it would defile him in what is really an essential

caste sentiment. But that defilement would be definitely worse — more irreparable and far-reaching — if it touched the sacred sources of the whole communal and caste existence — the ancient places of pure religious worship..." (Page XXVI to XXVII)

Roxan's accidental death and the equally tragic controversy, arising out of Bombay Parsi Punchayet chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla's refusal to let Roxan's family avail of the tower of silence for interring Roxan's remains, have all led, inevitably, to a sharp division among the Parsis. The September 1990 issue of *Parsiana* — with the orthodox viewpoint of Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal's learned article "The divine laws of God must prevail," and the opposite, liberal view in the editorial, "Whither good thoughts, words and deeds?" — as well as some feverish behind-the-scenes activity by both lobbies, must widen the gulf between the orthodox and the heretics, the liberals.

Dr Kotwal's long letter cannot be objected to by anyone, including the liberals — which incidentally includes the writer. Dr Kotwal has consistently referred to his own personal views, duly endorsed by his colleagues in the Athornan Mandal. He refers also to rites and customs, the *Vendidad* and presumably other authorities. Dr Kotwal's scholarship cannot be doubted.

The confusion, however, between human customs and the absolutes of a religion — which has extra-terrestrial sanction — does exist in Dr Kotwal's mind. Custom is a part of sociology, and hence of current social mores which includes, in a constantly evolving civilization, voices of individuals making up the population, and hence politics, ultimately leading to legislation. Thus, custom cannot be invoked in support of religious absolutes.

The orthodox view covers the subordinate position, in society and in religion, of women. This is why there is the pseudobiological view about the Zoroastrian egg and the non-Zoroastrian sperm implied in Dr Kotwal's thesis. It also explains why navjotes of children of mixed marriages is performed without a murmur, provided the father is Zoroastrian.

Several fallacies arise here. However, the guiding principles of the religion put a premium on honesty, and that, presumably, covers intellectual honesty.

Until the fait accompli by Dastur (Dr) Framroze Bode in the mid-1930s, no

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navjote could be performed on any child of a mixed marriage. After some years, this custom changed and many Parsi Zoroastrian fathers, who have had acquired wives born into other religions, have had their children initiated into Zoroastrianism all over the globe. Now, with a very few exceptions which occur on the sly in the richer segments of the Parsi community, a Zoroastrian mother with an understanding or indifferent-to-religion, non-Zoroastrian father, is prevented from following the mid-1930's example of Dastur Bode.

Has the custom changed or is it the religion? This writer's favorite cartoon, from a 1930's *Punch*, is of two pious European ladies discussing the new-fangled modes of travel, and the clear-headed lady saying that air travel is sinful, and that she will continue to travel by train as the good Lord had ordained! Poor Jains are still restricted by their orthodox peers from covering long distances by any mode other than walking on the surface. The laudable attempt by two female priests recently to acquaint the younger generations of Jains, who are born and brought up in the USA, with Jainism, drew nothing but condemnation from

their own Popes in India.

Thus, as with parallels throughout history and in the case also of well-intentioned priests as guardians and interpreters of the faith, the comfort of an established social custom has been totally confused with the fundamental tenets of religion only because the individual has confused what he has been used to with what has been written in the Book. Customs, of course, change ever so slowly but steadily. Even so, customs and social habits would have changed dozens or hundreds of times in the few thousand years that the absolute Book has been handed down by prophets to human followers of the faith.

In almost all cases, the physical universe of spokesmen of God (in all but the last 30 or 40 years) has been particularly small, rarely exceeding perhaps a radius of a few hundred miles. Moreover, the guardians of the Word, the priests, were the only link in communicating the Word to later generations. We have already seen some distortions and confusion taking place at that level in the present century.

Almost certainly, then, errors in communications would have got multiplied a hundred times in the one hundred or so generations which have passed from the year the Word was first handed down through the Prophet.

Perhaps each individual, even a most pious and ardent follower of our faith, should pause and think before following to the letter the divine Word. Zoroastrians have been directed in our Book to fight evil at any level, even at the level of the ruler. In our complex industrial society, however, freedom of belief and expression and action on the part of any individual — as long as it does not harm another citizen's legitimate interest — is a fundamental right. There must be some special divine support for this particular freedom because societies of all hues and origin are rapidly converging on this ideal free state.

This is why we Parsis abhor strife and violence in, say, Northern Ireland, Tiananmen Square, Punjab, Kashmir, Ayodhya and hundreds of places everywhere where one section of society imposes its will on another through violence and not through the institutions of modern civilized society.

On the other hand we, as Zoroastrians following the Word, are asked to fight evil with courage, presumably even unto death as is written in the Book. Now, Dr Kotwal will agree, as good Zoroastrians

we have to understand the spirit and not the letter of the Book, and modify our action in the context of our present society. Thus, evil can be fought courageously in the High Court as Minoo Masani, Piloo Mody and others did during the Emergency, and not by hiring a Kalashnikov and gunning down those whom we perceive to be the errant members of the government.

Do we then talk about the absolute as Dr Kotwal does or do we say that as society evolves and changes so will rites and practices of the community?

The late '50s, with oestrogen and stilboestrol, as also availability even to factory workers of extensive motive power, changed once and for all the position of women in modern society. Gender thus became almost irrelevant except for social purposes. Urbanization of India has changed substantially the role and social behavior of Parsis. In the past 30 years cheap airtravel and travel and emigration to the First World (Western Europe, North America and Australia) has further changed the total social environment for all Parsis of either sex. Does the Athor-nan Mandal condemn, as perhaps it does, any sexual relationship before marriage on the part of two consenting Parsi adults? If so, is it to be condemned more, to the extent of excommunicating the person, if it is between a Parsi and a non-Parsi? And is that partially condoned if the Parsi is male, and is the condemnation greater if the Parsi is a female? And if both Parsis in such a relationship are of the same sex, what is the degree of condemnation on a scale of 1 to 10? Likewise, what is the reading on the scale if both are male? And if both are female? An extension of this puzzle is, what does a childless Parsi couple do about in-vitro fertilization? What happens here if the "seed" of the anonymous donor is not of Zoroastrian origin? What machinery does the Panchayet and the Mandal have for verifying these data in the few hours available before the body is interred at the tower of silence?

Or do we have a typically oriental answer based on expediency? Such as: as long as a person conducts his personal life privately and not openly for there to be hard core evidence, no questions will be asked; but that if someone has the temerity to get married, after putting up the banns, under the Special Marriage Act, then the verdict will be given on the basis of the *Vendidad* and similar impeccable authorities.

The truth lies elsewhere. Even Solo-

Athletic and Cycling Meet

The 11th All Parsis Annual Athletic Meet will be held at the University Stadium, Marine Lines, Bombay on February 16 and 17, 1991, 1 p.m. onwards. The cycling events will be held on February 10, 2 p.m. onwards.

This year non-Parsis too may participate in open events in each age-group. Entry forms will be available at:
 * The Nowroze Baug Play Centre, E-18, Nowroze Baug, Lalbaug, Bombay 400012
 * Naval S. Pithawalla, 584-85, Lady Jehangir Road, Matunga, Bombay 400019
 * Secretary, Cusrow Baug Sports Pavilion, Colaba, Bombay 400039

The last date for submission of entries is February 3, 1991.

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mon, or indeed our Prophet himself as a single individual, would find it impossible to decide a myriad complex issues which emerge regularly in a very complex society. This is why an individual's wisdom has had to give way in human history to collective wisdom, which in turn has a wonderful, truly divine sanction, the support of the broadest possible electoral college. This collective wisdom is then exercised through constantly evolving institutions which in turn reflect views and aspirations of a majority of the electoral college members. The operative words here are 'evolving,' 'broadest base' and 'majority.' That is what most of the enlightened world has discovered as being a solution which gets steadily closer to the ultimate truth than any other solution.

And that is why prevailing legislation, legal verdicts, prevailing social mores are all relevant, notwithstanding Dr Kotwal's stand, to the lives of all persons, pious as well as non-believers.

Thus poor Roxan may yet pave the way for Parsis and the Parsi Punchayet entering the twentyfirst century with some pride and relevance. Otherwise we shall follow the dodo very fast.

VINCI J. WADIA

"An injustice at..."

To the true followers of the Zoroastrian faith, the liberals have already advocated dikhmenashini as a barbaric, outmoded and uncivilized way of disposal of the dead. But when a non-Parsi or a Parsi married to a non-Parsi wants to practise these "barbaric" practices, these same liberals move heaven and earth and go all out to fulfill their barbaric wishes ("An injustice at doongerwadi," *Parsiana*, August 1990).

A Parsi girl's intimate relations with a non-Parsi is enough to disqualify her from practising Zoroastrian rituals and avail of Zoroastrian institutions. It is immaterial whether it is marriage under a specific act or whether it is an illicit relationship. After such a relationship a Parsi girl cannot and must not practise the Zoroastrian faith, as its effects become null and void or may even prove harmful to her.

It is the duty of the parents of such a girl to make it very clear to their child that marriage to a non-Parsi is one-way traffic from where there would be no way back to the fold.

Courts can in no way decide the fate of our religion. The final verdict on religious and related issues would rest with the high priests of our religion and the voice of the community at large.

If a politician has a right to speak on politics and a lawyer to speak on law, why should a scholarly priest not have the right to give his opinion on Zoroastrian religion? The Bombay Parsi Punchayet and Dastur Kotwal were justified in taking this stand on this issue. It is high time the priests of our community put their foot down and prevent undue freedom to the followers of this faith.

I appreciate that once at least a priest had the courage to speak out and let me assure you, that I and the community will firmly stand behind him.

Ms FARIDA ANTIA
Patiala

A Parsi male does not lose his identity or religion after his marriage with a girl outside his community. Such a Parsi male is accepted at every place of worship and ceremony while he lives and after he is dead; but a Parsi female is denied these rights!

As per Justice Sawant of the Bombay High Court (now of the Supreme Court), it has been decided that a Parsi girl marrying outside the fold under the civil marriage act does not cease to be a Parsi even after such a marriage. Then, why this unauthorized prohibition accorded to our daughters?

Zoroastrian religion is the first and the foremost religion on earth to have propounded the idea of peace, amity and friendship with the people of the world. Our scriptures repeatedly express a keen desire in almost all our *nyaishes*, that are enjoined to be prayed daily (*rojindi bandagi*), to have "the knowledge and fame of the excellent Mazdayasni religion spread over all the seven regions of the world (*hapta keshwar zamin*) as in the final passages of *Khorshed*, *Meher*, *Mah*, *Ava* and *Atash Nyaishes* and the *Hormazd Yasht*.

Nowhere do we exclude non-Zoroastrians in our prayers. We extol the whole universe. "I worship Ahura-Mazda... Immortal forgiver of sins and one who showers love on the entire creation ... I bow in reverence and worship to God...and the entire creation, present as well as future. (*Dibache* — preface: *Khorshed Nyaish*)"

In all our daily prayers like *nyaishes*,

gehs and *yashts* we recite "*Namaz dadare gehan daman*" meaning: "I worship the creator of the entire universe... Grant me progeny which is self-supporting and which would be a blessing to all around; progeny which would not ever desire to harm anybody in this world" (*Ava Ard-wisur Nyaish*, para 12).

The Lord Ahura Mazda acquaints us with his power of creation in *Hormazd Yasht* (para 7) thus "...Twelfthly, I am the Creator of all life, thirteenthly, I am the Lord Benefactor and fourteenthly, one who bears enmity to none." In para thirteenth of the same *Yasht* the Lord tells us: "I am One who looks after everybody."

In our *Satumno Kardo* the opening para and other paras tell us to worship the *fravashis* of every holy being of the world. One such paragraph in the beginning of this *Kardo* notes, "For the worship and glorification of the noble Lord Ahura Mazda, of the Ameshaspentas, and of all the brave *fravashis* of the pure, of those who lived in the pre-Zarathushtrian era as well as born in the faith of Zarathushtra, may the *Zaota* (chief-priest) recite '*Yatha Ahu Vairyo*' and may his associate (*Rathvi*) recite '*Atha ratush ashat chit hacha*.'"

I wish again to emphasize the universal relationship mentioned so clearly in our scriptures, where no one is barred or prevented or obstructed to associate with us.

I quote *Haptan Yasht*: *karda* 8 (para six) which runs thus: "We praise the return of our *athornans* (Zoroastrian priests)... *athornans* who go farthest away to the countries with the righteous desire (to increase piety)."

The *Haptan Yasht* is the oldest of the *yashts* — rather considered next after some years of the composition of four *Gathas*.

Where is any scriptural evidence other than quoted above that could make us behave in such an insolent manner? Who has/have given authority to keep our people away from maintaining amity and concord with the people of the world?

For the highly affluent people, some of these so-called prohibitory rules are relaxed thoroughly! This relaxation is seen on very many occasions when the trustees of the Parsi Punchayet also remain present... as if these rules do not exist for the bigwigs! Why then do we

have such double standards? BEJON DESAI

Nasik

Did it never occur to the liberals or the orthodox, lined up on either side in large numbers including legal luminaries and religious head priests, that some day an incident like that of poor Roxan would happen? Should not these stalwarts of both sides have taken suitable steps, during this long period of 16 years, since May 28, 1974 — the date of the resolution which BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla cited as the reason for his refusal to accept Roxan Shah's mortal remains at doongerwadi — to have arrived at an understanding among themselves as to what should be done to avoid a controversy in our beloved community?

Did it not occur to any of the board of seven trustees, either in the past or the present, to take suitable steps in conjunction with the changing "reformist" tendencies of the present generation?

At the same time, was it not the duty also of the legal stalwarts and/or other "reformist" Parsis to have similarly anticipated some trouble — similar to that of poor Roxan — during this long period of 16 years, and taken up the cudgels

with the BPP.

Look to the well-being of our community and pray that there should be love, peace and harmony among all of us. To that end we must start a dialogue among our leaders. It is imperative that a happy solution be arrived at in the interest of our dear community.

JAL OLLIA

"The divine laws of God..."

In his letter ("The divine laws of God must prevail," *Parsiana*, September 1990) Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal has rightly observed that the court of law cannot rule on issues of faith. We Parsis are governed mostly by the principles of Common Law of England. We do not have our own code and hence when the law courts are faced with such issues they have no alternative but to apply the principles of justice, equity and good conscience.

But then Almighty God has given us conscience which elevates us above His other creatures and this is our sole guide on the path towards God. Mazda has revealed to us his message through Zarathushtra, which constantly guides and directs our conscience. Even in case of the divine laws of God, the mere text

has no meaning if it is not blended with our own just thinking.

I remember when I was small my Hindu friend had come to spend a day with me. In the afternoon our dasturji brought *bajrojgar chasni* (consecrated fruits) and, seeing an apple, my little friend asked for it. My mother, being orthodox, saw no alternative and refused to give the fruit. This incident hurts me even today.

On the day of my wedding, after taking the *nahn*, I was forbidden to touch any non-Parsi. Thus I could not meet my old ayah who wanted to embrace me.

Do we have to treat non-Parsis as non-believers or infidels?

Is the message of Zarathushtra limited only to Parsis? (The Jews also thought the same and they believe their messenger is yet to come.)

Is there no scope for just, reasonable and fair thinking in Zoroastrian theology?

One great thinker has defined religion as 'anything that elevates our soul.' Is going to dargahs, mandirs, etc anti-religious?

DINYAR NAVROZ JALNAWALLA

Jalna

Edited by Amavaz S. Mama

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Events and Personalities

KRCOI's platinum jubilee

To make Bombay's harried citizenry more conscious of the intellectual heritage that their predecessors so carefully nurtured, the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute (KRCOI), in its platinum jubilee year, has planned a series of functions — averaging two per month — over the ensuing 12 months. The Firdausi Festival, to commemorate 1,000 years since the penning of the epic *Shah Nameh*, is scheduled for February 8, 1991 at the Jeejeebhoy Dadabhoy Agiary, Colaba, where talks by scholars, interspersed by scenes enacted by students of several participating schools, will culminate in a grand contributory dinner.

An even more elaborate project is an exhibition entitled *The Zoroastrian Story* depicting 13 centuries of Zoroastrian contribution to Indian thought and culture. Spanning approximately two weeks beginning March 21, 1991 the exhibition, to be held in the Coomaraswamy Hall of the Prince of Wales Museum, is being coproduced by the KRCOI and the Museum with its director Dr S. A. Gorakshkar and Ms Roshan Kalapesi co-

chairing the project and more than a score of Zoroastrian professionals delving into old books and magazines to unearth little known facts. Calls have gone out to all — both within the community and without — to provide stories with support material on the contribution or character of Parsi Zoroastrians, as well as articles of personal wear like period dresses, jewelry, shawls, old textiles, period furniture, artefacts, books, manuscripts and other memorabilia for the display that aims to create a better understanding of the de-

pleting Zoroastrian community among the host population.

"What makes for live and lasting institutions?" The question was posed by management consultant Aspi Moddie at the inaugural function of the platinum jubilee celebrations on December 18, 1990 at the Institute's Jivanji Modi Hall.

In 75 years empires and states and blue chip companies have risen and declined, he added and held up two examples to ponder upon — the Society of Jesus, popularly known as the Jesuits, and Mitsui, the Japanese business house that has a commanding presence in almost every field of commercial activity. As examples of long life they could not be faulted, having been founded in 1540 and 1670 respectively. Furthermore, they are not only surviving, but still playing their role. Referring to "the durability of institutions which are carefully nurtured," Moddie, who chairs the KRCOI Platinum Jubilee Committee, added that if the Institute is to grow, it is more important to breathe new life into it than to celebrate the status quo. In 1969, in its golden jubilee publication, the In-



At the inauguration of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute's platinum jubilee celebrations (Top, from left): Dastur Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa, Khandalawala, Jehangir Shroff, Palkhivala, Moddie, Schumann and Kosambi. (Left): Palkhivala lights inaugural lamp as Desai, Ms Homai Modi and Shroff look on. (Right) Cama: scholar ahead of his time

stitute was described as a cosmopolitan institute of Bombay. "In the next 25 years may it become an institute of national and international reach," Moddie hoped.

"A lot of people are under the impression that the KRCOI was a one-community institution," said Moddie. In fact, he informed, it was founded by public spirited citizens of Bombay of all communities in memory of the late K. R. Cama — an outstanding specimen of the versatile citizenry of Bombay. Noted jurist Nani Palkhivala and lawyer and art historian Karl Khandalawala, chairman of the Prince of Wales Museum — both present as guest speakers at the inaugural function — carried Cama's brand of responsible citizenship to our own times, Moddie added.

"A wit once remarked that wise men live in the present and the not-so-wise men live in the past. I confess to be in the second category, but have no regrets," began Khandalawala. Having been a navigator with the Royal Air Force which contributed to "his high-level view of the world," as noted Moddie in his introduction, Khandalawala spoke on the scope and importance of oriental studies.

Describing it as a "never-ending field on which light has been dawning over centuries," Khandalawala alluded to the links between Achaemenid Persia and Mauryan India. Emphatic that oriental study had to be an integrated discipline

to be truly rewarding — including archaeology, numismatics, history, pottery et al — Khandalawala noted, "We would be poor indeed if we did not know the past of mankind." As an instance, Khandalawala cited the history of Calcutta mint master James Princep whose interest in numismatics had led to the deciphering of the script in which the Asokan pillars were inscribed. Princep noticed that coins of that vintage bore inscriptions in the same script but were also inscribed in Greek. When you read in ancient Roman literature how every housemaid wanted a necklace of pearls, you can explain the Roman gold and coins found in various parts of India, Khandalawala added.

But the expert cautioned against haste, as one overlooked historical fact could undermine an otherwise rational hypothesis. "Whatever theories are put forward, must first be tested on the testing stone of oriental studies and research."

"All religions have a tendency to make their prophets as old as possible," noted German consul general Dr W. H. Schumann who, as guest of honor, addressed the gathering on the thorny subject of Zarathushtra's date of birth. An Indologist whose doctoral thesis was based on Buddhist theology, Schumann had been a lecturer at the Benaras Hindu University prior to joining the German consular service and has several publications on Buddhism to his name.

Schumann based his reckoning on the jottings of Marco Polo and the poems of Firdausi according to whom a cypress tree planted after the conversion of King

senior fellow at the Indian Council of Social Science Research reviewed, with the help of slides, the historical evolution of Bombay where "a mixture of people, specifically invited to settle down here," have created an unparalleled cosmopolitanism. The freedom of thought and tolerance of Bombay led even a Japanese scholar to remark, "What you have in Bombay, you don't have anywhere else!"

"Kharshedji Rustomji Cama had the gift of assimilating whatever he studied... He was not only ahead of his time but he was ahead of our times," said Palkhivala who saw no future for Indians in general or Parsis in particular "until antiquated modes of thought were transmuted" into ideas capable of coping with the problems of today.

In contrast to Cama's emphasis on education, his zeal for social reform, his persuasiveness and tolerance, Palkhivala referred to the current national policy where higher education was budgeted less than one percent of India's GNP and regretted that unless these priorities are altered, we, as a people, will continue to remain creatures of ignorance, murder and brutality. The way to transform society, the way to progress, lies through the heart and mind of the people, he added.

While thanking God for K. R. Cama and for allowing the Institute to survive, KRCOI trustee and joint honorary secretary Capt Homuzdiar Desai noted that the Institute "deserved a better deal from the government and the community at large."

Amavaz S. Mama

Bachelors enjoy a game at the first meet of the Dadar matrimonial bureau



Strike a match

"Seeing the number of young girls and boys marrying outside the community," inspired a perturbed Jimmy Jesia to suggest the setting up of a matrimonial bureau for Zoroastrians. Thereafter his wife Mithoo, community activist and social worker from Dadar, set out in earnest to establish a matrimonial bureau as one of the activities of the Mancherji Edulji Joshi Memorial Trust with which she is associated. Already 158 applicants have registered with the bureau of whom the youngest is 24 years and the eldest, 50.

Those who don't stay in colonies and baugs "have no contact, no opportunity to meet other Parsi youth," mentions Mithoo who, through the bureau, will endeavor to establish links amongst those interested in matrimony.

At the first social get-together organized on November 11, 1990 at The Athor-

Gustasp by Zarathushtra was felled 1,450 years later. Counting back from the year of the felling, Schumann arrived at the year of 588 BC as the date of Gustasp's conversion when Zarathushtra was said to be 42 years old. Hence Zarathushtra, according to Schumann, was born around 630 BC.

Closer to our times, Dr (Ms) Meera Kosambi, a linguist and

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nan Boarding Madressa, 105 participants got a chance to meet others through dances and games organized for the evening. As an outcome of this first function, one couple got engaged and two to three are dating, says the social worker.

"I wanted to make sure that one doesn't come to have a good time and just go out for a few dates. I wanted to know if the girls and boys were from good families because I have a moral responsibility to each and every applicant," says Jesia. Every single applicant, who had filled out a form specifying his/her educational and financial status in life and other relevant details, was interviewed by her. She thus tried to ascertain their genuineness and expectations from their life partners.

Assisting Mithoo on the bureau are 10 ladies: Povru Writer, Roda Khambatta, Nergish Karkaria, Soonu Daver, Silloo Mahava, Tanaz Gazder, Homai Dhondy, Meher Panthaki, Khorshed Sethna and Behroz Dordi.

To maintain continuity, one social function will be organized every month. A picnic and boat cruise have been scheduled for early 1991. Those interested may contact Jesia at 797, Jesia Building, Parsi Colony, Dadar, Bombay 400014 or call 4121571.

Rain games

Over three weekends in July and August 1990, 22 teams participated in the Second Zoroastrian Monsoon Games Festival — 1990. Through regular as well as unusual games like baseball, tug-of-war, cycle rodeo and telegames the organizers sought to provide "the cream of Zoroastrian youth with clean and healthy sports activities and to bring them together in a spirit of friendship and brotherhood."

Partially sponsored by the Tata Oil Mills Company Limited, the rest of the finances came from residents of Bombay's Cusrow Baug, Rustom Baug and the Mancherji Joshi Colony, Dadar which were the venues for the Games. The success of the Games has been credited to the organizers, Mahiyar Dastoor, Daraius Zaiwalla, Hormazd Mistry, Rohinton Dadyburjor, Ms Naznin Khambata, Hosie Deboo, Ms Tinaz Patel, Yezdi Panthaki, Ms Shirin Patel and Kersi Patel.

There was a tie between the Wadia Sports Club and the A team of the Mancherji Edulji Joshi Memorial Trust (MEJMT) for the overall team championship cup in the men's section. In the

women's category, the A team of the MEJMT which won the baseball, tug-of-war and telegames, lifted the team championship trophy. In the men's events, the A team of the MEJMT came first in baseball, the Maniacs pulled through to the first place in the tug-of-war and the Wadia Sports Club won the telegames. The cycle rodeo saw the Homavazir's 11th CBDA Scouts group emerge the winners among the men and the Malcolm Baug Parsee Gym team among the women.

Among the most enjoyed events were the tug-of-war, and the cycle rodeo where the cyclists had to cross challenging obstacles. But it was the telegames that provided the maximum excitement with the participants having to jump off bridge towers, climb vertical ladders, crawl through mud — all under pouring rain.

The masquerade, organized as a finale, that same evening after the telegames, saw the participants dress up in imaginative attires. The boys who had to masquerade as girls had for their themes James Bond with his bevy of beauties (for which the Homavazir's 11th CBDA won the best presentation prize), bikini-clad ladies, and Danger Boys masquerading as punk females ready for a night out (who

were declared the winners). In the women's category, the MEJMT A team, dressed as Frenchmen of the early 40's, were the winners. Representatives of various religious communities (national integration) and Englishmen were some of the other presentations.

Leather and shoe affair

Safety shoes for the crew of The Shipping Corporation of India, industrial shoes for Mahindra and Mahindra, shoes for five-star hotels... Supplying these shoes to different customers are the Bilimoria brothers Jimmy and Neville, proprietors of J. M. B. Industries.

As agents for footwear manufactured by the Tannery and Footwear Corporation of India their sales ranked them among the top five distributors in the western region, says Neville. In 1989 they sold 75,000 pairs of footwear totalling Rs 1,25,00,000, notes Neville. Among their major clients are the Oil and Natural Gas Commission, Associated Cement Companies, the armed forces and the hotel industry, he mentions.

After specializing in the distribution of combat shoes, industrial boots and civilian footwear for three-and-a-half years they will now take to manufacturing of canvas shoes in "fun colors" for which they have already signed a contract with a Japanese designer Yoji Yamamoto, informs Neville.

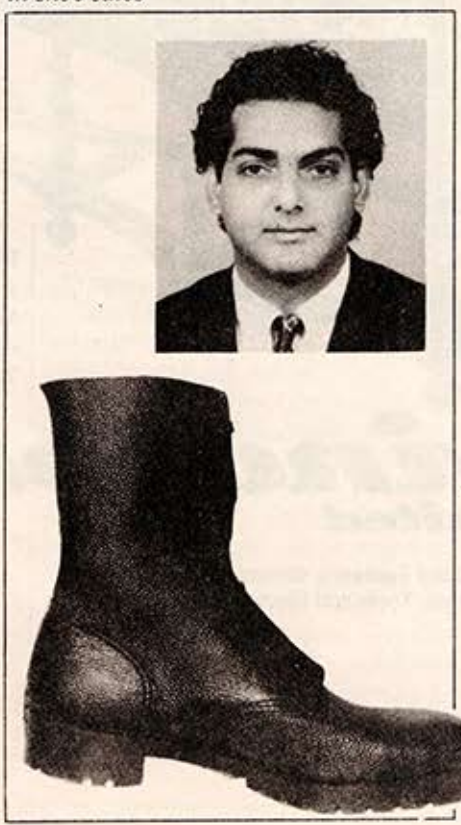
While it is the elder brother Jimmy who looks after the accounts of the firm, Neville looks after the sales and public relations. Prior to entering the shoe business the brothers were manufacturing polypropylene films used in flexible packaging. Competition and labor problems forced them to discontinue the plastic business and take to shoes, explains the younger Bilimoria.

The Mercantile's origin

While the Parsi contribution to Indian banking is well-known, many may not be aware that the Mercantile Bank which was acquired in 1959 by The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, owed its origins to one Cowasjee Nanabhoy. An issue of the Hongkong Bank Group news magazine sent to us by Zarir Cama, a senior executive with the Group now based in Saudi Arabia, carries an article written by Stuart Muirhead, a retired international staff member, who traces the Bank's origins.

"During the first week of October 1853, Cowasjee Nanabhoy, a well-known

Neville Bilimoria specializing in shoe sales



Bombay merchant and broker, visited his friend and business associate Edwin Heycock with the suggestion that the time was right to establish a new bank in the city.

"Heycock, who was also a prominent and highly respected merchant, reacted positively to this suggestion and — as he put it himself a few years later — took a day to consider the subject and on the next an advertisement was issued which led to the formation of the Bank...

"Within hours of the advertisement's publication, one quarter of the proposed

ment Organisation (ARTDO).

With more than 20 years of experience in management consultancy, he is actively involved with a number of bodies like the Confederation of Engineering Industry, Employers' Federation of Southern India and the Madras Management Association.

The trainer holds a master's degree in personnel management from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and a diploma in systems management from the Jamnalal Bajaj Institute, the release further adds.



(Left)
Amroliya:
developing
human
resources.
Bharucha:
sensitive to
people's
problems

Bank's capital of Rs 5,000,000 had been subscribed. The list of subscribers was closed just four days later...

"The Bank's first directors, who gave their services free of charge, were: William Howard, Edwin Heycock, Thomas Stenhouse, Juggonath Sunkersett and Cowasjee Jehangir...

"The originator of Mercantile Bank, Cowasjee Nanabhoy, was not forgotten. He was appointed one of the three trustees of the Bank — in those days an important function relating to certain of the Bank's assets."

Amroliya's new post

Jehanbux Nariman Amroliya has been elected national vice president of the Indian Society for Training and Development (ISTD) which is a human resource development institute, reports *The Economic Times* of August 24, 1990.

General manager, personnel, of Ashok Leyland Limited, through the ISTD Amroliya will make an effort to professionalize training and development functions in the country, notes a press release. With a membership of over 3,000 from diverse fields like politics, industry, education, science and technology, the 20-year-old Society was the founder member of the International Federation of Training and Development Organisation (IFTDO) and the Asian Regional Training and Develop-

Social worker of merit

Her good "conceptual and analytical ability... and sensitivity to people's problems," helped 22-year-old Ms Dilmeher Bharucha excel in the social work course at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), notes a citation from the Institute. She completed her master's degree in social work in the first grade winning the Leela Wadia Prize and Institution Shield for the best student in medical and psychiatric social work. The shield was presented to her at a convocation ceremony on May 10, 1990 where J. J. Bhabha, chairman, governing board of TISS and the Governor of Maharashtra C. Subramaniam were present, notes a press release.

During her training period, Bharucha has worked with the Avabai Petit School Counselling Centre, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Ahmedabad, in the slums of Bombay and other rural areas where she was able to experience the difficulties of the people. She took special interest in Seva Dhan, the counselling/rehabilitation center where she undertook a mini study on the recovered drug addicts and also conducted awareness programs relating to drug abuse and mental health of adolescents.

A first class graduate in science from the Osmania University, Bharucha received her inspiration for pursuing social work from her father Dr Hosang

P. Bharucha of Navsari, further reads the press release.

"Economy of Signs"

"The Parsi comes through in all his complexity, be it in teaching a youngster to tie a turban or staring out through half-parted curtains... or embracing..." noted a review of Ms Sooni Taraporevala's photographs displayed at the exhibition titled "Economy of Signs." According to the report in a Bombay daily, *Mid-Day* of September 9, 1990 10 Indian contemporaries had been chosen to display their color and black and white photographs at the Photographer's Gallery in London this year. Taraporevala's most impressive photograph, believed the reviewer, was the one of Lord Brabourne Restaurant with Rashid Irani, *The Times of India's* English film critic, sitting at the counter.

The avid photographer holds a master's degree in cinema studies from New York University. She has also shot a series of photographs on the Parsi community with the intention of including them in her book on the Parsis.

Additionally, she has tried her hand at scripting. For the film *Salaam Bombay*, directed by Ms Mira Nair, they were able to project a realistic depiction of the travails encountered by street children. This film won the prestigious Camera D'Or award and the Prix Public, the city of Cannes award for the most popular film at the Cannes Film Festival in 1988, it is reported. She has scripted for yet another film — *Mississippi Masala* — which too will be directed by Nair, the *Mid-Day* adds.

Seeking greener pastures

"There was an initial hesitation about making the leap from the Tata group into the void, but in retrospect I have no regrets." Adi Katrak, who resigned as chief of public relations from the Tata Administrative Services (TAS) to become promoter-partner of two firms in the printing and restaurant businesses, is quoted in the *BusinessWorld* of August 1-14, 1990. "Working in TAS requires... intelligent conformism... The excitement of building and creating is much less," observes Katrak.

He set up Karmen Enterprises in 1987 to run a printing press specializing in envelope manufacture and screen printing.

Two years later he entered the hoteliering world with the purchase of the management contract of the 40-year-old Pari-

sian Restaurant in downtown Bombay. Later he set up Arcadia Enterprises which owns the Hotel New Taj and Pavilion Restaurant in Khandala, a hill resort. Katrak has plans to expand the 10-room New Taj to 40 rooms and introduce a bar and discotheque there, writes the *Business-World*. Additionally, Katrak also owns a 15-acre tree plantation near Lonavala.

An English literature and French graduate from Cambridge University, Katrak returned to India in '68 to begin his career with Asia Publishing House before joining TAS in 1969. Thereafter he was deputed on several Tata companies like Voltas, Tata Services and Tata Press.

His final stint was at TAS before he set out on his own, further adds the *BusinessWorld* write-up.

A ride for the hungry

The youngsters cycled about 72 miles every day disregarding the rain, blistering heat and the fear of contracting hepatitis. The 47-day rigorous mission was dedicated to the lives of one million children who die of hunger every year, informed Ms Binaifer Jesia, one of the two participants representing India at the Tour de YEH (Youth Ending Hunger). The 19-year-old, along with Zameer Vahanvati, undertook the 3,000-mile long cycle tour of the United States which was meant to create awareness of the persistence of hunger and to call attention to the United Nations World Summit for Children in September 1990.

Youths in the 13 to 22 age-group from different countries like USA, India, Australia, Japan, Great Britain, Canada, Malaysia, Africa and the Soviet Union undertook the cycle tour from June 5 to July 21 this year. Adults too in the age-group of 22 to 55 years joined the youths on this mission.

Though Jesia crashed thrice during the tour, "we kept on because of the team spirit. The stronger boys wouldn't let you give up so easily," she related. Prior to setting out on this tour, Jesia, an Arts student at the Elphinstone College, had to

undertake special training in weights, swimming and cycling.

The YEH with which Jesia is actively involved, is the youth wing of The Hunger Project, a global non-profit organization founded in 1977 to end chronic persistent hunger by the turn of the century. Hunger (insufficient food in terms of quality and quantity) takes the lives of 35,000 people every day, 26,000 of whom are children, Jesia provides the figures. Every year, 13 million to 18 million people die of hunger and hunger-related causes. Actually, famine, caused by floods, droughts and other natural calamities, accounts for only 10 percent of hunger-related deaths, she further added.

Robbed on IA flight

Bank of India executive Ms Zarin Bhasin flying from Calcutta to Bombay by Indian Airlines (IC 176) on October 25, 1990 was allegedly drugged by a fellow passenger, according to a complaint lodged by her with the Santa Cruz police station, notes *The Times of India (The TOI)* of October 30. Travelling with Rs 20,000 that were to meet the medical bills of her ailing mother, she was reportedly robbed of her money too. Though she did not take ill immediately, it was after reaching the Breach Candy Hospital

subsequently identified as Anwar Ahmed Khan, claimed to be a journalist with the *Indian Express*, a statement denied by the newspaper. Bhasin, whose brother Farukh Dhondy is commissioning editor of BBC's (British Broadcasting Corporation) Channel 4, got talking to him.

During the flight, Khan went out of the way to request the purser to bring her a specially prepared cup of coffee when she declined the earlier offers. Thereafter he requested for a blanket and pillow for himself. When the pillow was not supplied to him he got into an argument with the crew which made Bhasin intervene. She suspects that when she got up to check the overhead storage bin, the man must have drugged the coffee, reads *The Times* report.

The loss of money was realized on the car journey later when she opened her purse to give some change to a beggar and found her money envelope and two credit cards missing. During her single visit to the toilet before the plane landed, Bhasin had left her leather handbag behind on the seat.

About 15 days after the event the Santa Cruz airport police station officers managed to nab the alleged jet-setting conman. The Indian Airlines officials were initially very reluctant to pass on any information regarding her fellow commuter to Bhasin, but assured her that they would cooperate with the police. It was Bhasin and another Khan victim who identified the convict during a lineup. A repentant Khan admitted that he could face prosecution in at least 46 cases, adding that circumstances forced him into this criminal line, further adds *The TOI* dated November 22.

SPOTLIGHT

Managing director of Industrial Boilers Limited, Rusi N. Engineer has been elected president of the Indian Boilers Manufacturers' Association, while Nauzer K. Desai, managing partner of Laxmi Boilers will officiate as the Association's vice president, notes a press release.

After six weeks' training in the karate-do style in Okinawa, Japan, Sensei Hosi P. Batliwala was conferred a fourth degree black belt (Yon Dan), notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of October 14, 1990. He is now licenced to teach and grade students in this style of martial arts.



Jesia (left) and Vahanvati: pedalling for a cause Photo: The Daily/Sebastian D'Souza

where her mother was being treated that she passed out, only to recover two days later, mentions the news report.

Her fellow passenger on the executive class, who according to the airline records was Maganlal Marwahwalla but sub-

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

Confronted by Controversies

Parinaz Gandhi

The issues pertaining to intercommunity marriage and adoption dominated the Delhi meet of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India

Three controversial issues rocked the executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India in New Delhi on September 22 and 23, 1990. The first pertained to the denial of admission to young Roxan Shah's body to the towers of silence by the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP). The second, whether adoption should be restricted only to Parsi children, and the third and the most dramatic discussion of all was over the constitution of the Poona Parsee Panchayat (PPP) that forbids membership to Parsi Zoroastrians married to non-Parsis.

An open question and answer session was reportedly originally scheduled with the members of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) but was said to be later scrapped at the behest of the BPP trustees who did not wish to be examined on their controversial decision to bar doongerwadi facilities to Ms Roxan Shah, a Bombay Zoroastrian married to a Hindu, who died in a tragic car accident on the Bombay-Poona Road on July 27, 1990. Aware that the DPA members were more liberal than their Bombay counterparts, BPP chairman and Federation president Dr Aspi Golwalla ensured that except for a few select speakers like former law secretary Rusi Gae and former member of the Rajya Sabha Ms Roda Mistry (who had reportedly intimated in advance that they would like to speak on the Roxan Shah controversy),

the others did not broach the subject. When Federation award winner Ms Ner-gish Irani of Dahanu got up to speak, Golwalla refused her permission, and upon her insisting on her right, he called for an adjournment of the meeting at which point Irani went back to her seat.

The issue of adoption also ended on an inconclusive note while the controversy over the Poona Parsee Panchayat was not recorded as the meeting was adjourned and reconvened after the discussion was over.

This September meeting was hosted by the Delhi Parsi Anjuman which in the words of its president Lt Gen Adi Sethna, is a "small but thinking anjuman." When dealing with controversial issues they neither believe in rushing into hasty decisions nor in indefinite procrastination, preferring instead to inform, educate and then arrive at a rational solution, said Sethna.

A large number of observers, including a substantial representation from the armed forces who were invited to Delhi for the recognition that the community was to bestow on them, made Golwalla notice the absence of member anjumans: "It is no use only paying fees. Member anjumans must take an active interest and attend Federation meetings. We miss you..."

Instead of the two days normally reserved for discussions, this time the pro-

ceedings lasted only one and a half days. Despite all the well-meaning intentions to observe a time limit for each topic, ultimately most present seemed to have their say, whether relevant or not, on the topic on hand.

Besides the morning jashan in honor of the defence personnel on September 22, a special function to salute them was organized at Teen Murti The Cavalry Memorial. As a tribute to the late Lt Col Adi Tarapore who was posthumously awarded the Param Vir Chakra (the nation's highest order for gallantry), dignitaries from the armed forces, anjumans and individuals offered wreaths. An unusual sight was the presence of Parsi officers: while those serving were bemedalled and uniformed, those who had retired had their medals pinned on *daglis*. (A detailed report on this function will be carried in a forthcoming issue of *Parsiana*.)

The deadly decision

"The issue raised is not simple. It is bristling with difficulties from the religious and legal point of view," said Federation joint secretary and BPP trustee Eruch Desai referring to the trustees' decision to bar Roxan Shah's body from being interred at the doongerwadi. "It's always a lawyer (Desai is a senior partner of the legal firm, Mulla and Mulla, Craigie, Blunt and Caroe) who has to

handle a difficult job," he continued when this subject, with the consent of the BPP trustees, was brought up for discussion. When clarifications were sought for the BPP's stand, Desai pointed out, "We are not happy taking the decision in the manner in which we did. But imagine the plight of the trustees who have to decide at the dead of the night when it is humanly impossible to convene a meeting, especially when some of us trustees happened to be away for the weekend... We as trustees are bound to follow the dictates of the trust and the head must rule the heart. The intentions of the settlors must be carried out in spirit." He then read out a statement issued by retired Justice Y. V. Chandrachud whose opinion apparently supported the BPP stand. [As reported in "The Controversy Continues" (*Parsiana*, October 1990) there were two drafts prepared by Chandrachud, the second of which justified the BPP's decision.] "If married under the Hindu Marriage Act, it makes no difference in principle whether the couple was first married under the Special Marriage Act or the Hindu Marriage Act... We are still in a quandary. Religious views have also to be considered but we are coming to the end of the tunnel and expect to see the light very shortly," concluded Desai before clarifying that these views may not reflect his personal opinion.

A woman should not be deemed to have renounced the Zoroastrian religion if she was married under the Special Marriage Act irrespective of whether she goes through a symbolic wedding rite to appease the elders, explained Gae. Such a marriage cannot be considered a Hindu marriage for the condition necessary to be married under the Hindu Marriage Act is that "both parties must be Hindus." He made a plea for the BPP trust deed to be examined to ascertain "whether such a lady would be entitled to a *dokhma/choitra*."

The Secunderabad trustees tided over such a slippery situation in the past, conveyed Bazun Dittia, vice president of the Federation, by telling the relatives of the Zoroastrian girl married to a non-Parsi who were keen to bury the body in the Zoroastrian cemetery that they would not involve themselves with any decision. They however left it open to the relatives to help themselves to the key if they found a priest consenting to say the prayers. Ultimately the lady was buried in a Christian cemetery but the relatives were upset, he narrated.

Poona principles challenged

In Poona there is a further twist to the subject of intercommunity marriages. According to the constitution of the Poona Parsee Panchayat a Zoroastrian male married to a non-Parsi female or having a non-Zoroastrian mistress cannot be a member of the anjuman. There is however no bar to membership if a male with a Zoroastrian mistress opts to be a member, is the interpretation. While in Bombay, it is Zoroastrian ladies married outside the community who are denied certain rights, in Poona, even the men married to non-Parsis are not accepted as members of the anjuman. "This is discrimination against men which is much worse," pointed out PPP trustee Brig Noshir Grant appealing to the Federation to intervene before the issue is taken to court or highlighted in the Press. "You have come to a court which has got no jurisdiction over the matter," replied Federation joint secretary Keki Gandhi before raising a point of order that as per the Federation constitution which prevents it from interfering in the internal affairs of any anjuman, the Poona subject would not be touched unless authorized by the local Panchayat to do so. Of a total population of "7,000 Zoroastrians in Poona, barely 700 are members of the Panchayat. There must be a reason for the others not joining. It's for the Federation to see that this doesn't take place," continued Grant.

Commodore Lovji Mehta, director of the J. N. Petit Institute in Poona and one of the ex-servicemen to be felicitated at Delhi, walked up to the mike: "The person affected by these rules is myself. I can make a laughing stock of the PPP but that will not help the Parsi cause... Are you prepared to settle it?... You perhaps don't know the things going on in the PPP — one trustee trying to throttle another lady trustee. (This allegation was however subsequently denied by one of the PPP trustees who was not present for this Federation meeting.) The Federation is like the United Nations (UN) but the UN uses its influence to call countries to line... Are you going to say I am not my brother's keeper?" Replied Gandhi who informed that he too would be adversely affected were he to stay in Poona: "When I got married I said 'I'll marry the woman I love' even though it would mean having to swim against the tide." He further impressed upon Mehta the need to mobilize public opinion in Poona in his favor for only they had the right to

initiate changes. "Even clubs and gymkhanas have their own rules," reasoned Keki Pavri of Ahmedabad.

But Mehta refused to take 'no' for an answer, insisting that if Roxan Shah's case could be discussed so could the PPP rules. When it was explained that Shah's case was discussed with the permission of the BPP trustees, Desai added, "The Federation is for the larger good of the larger number." Finally Gandhi volunteered to intervene in his individual capacity and added, "The Federation meeting which was adjourned now resumes."

Selective adoption

If non-Parsi children were to be taken up



Clockwise from top left: Mehta, Noshir Grant, Dittia, Nargolwala, Desai and Guzder

for adoption by Parsis, the orthodox faction would "consider this as a backdoor attempt at facilitating conversion," Desai had clarified in his note on the subject of adoption circulated to the members. "The orthodox segment in Bombay (the largest concentration of Zoroastrians in India are in this city) would never forgive the Federation" if it were to authorize adoption of non-Parsi children. "We trustees have to



wear two caps... we are what we are and what the majority thinks we should be," he added.

Keeping in mind the "strong orthodox segment" the BPP trustees decided that they would support an adoption bill for Parsis only if adoption is restricted to a child of Parsi parents "to help the child to have a religion as well as the benefits of the community funds and properties." It was understood however that if after five years they find that Parsi children are not available for adoption, they would reconsider their present decision.

Said Gae, "For the last 10 years this has been lying in cold storage. It was in 1981 that I moved a resolution that Parsis should be entitled to adopt non-Parsi children though the rights to the religion need not be granted to the child. The Samast Anjuman in Bombay supported this. But this was an exercise in futility." Four high priests went up to the then Prime Minister saying they were not in agreement and because of the divided opinion "we are still vacillating." Even in 1981 there were no Parsi boys available for adoption as was borne out by the late Maneck Gheyara who was then the president of the Surat Parsi Punchayet (SPP) which ran the orphanage there, Gae continued. "Gheyara had said people don't want to adopt girls," Gae added. It was recommended that the demand and supply position be ascertained before contemplating any further action which made Minorities Commission member Homi Taleyarkhan comment that the BPP stand was "a delaying process." Similarly Grant expressed his fears, "Even after a wait of five years we will be faced with the same question; so why wait?"

"The incidence of infertility in the community is 10 percent," according to gynecologist Dr Nozer Sheriar who, as a Federation award winner, was attending

as an invitee. "Should we change a major law for such a small segment (say 2,000) or should we spend funds for expensive invitro fertilization? And what about the trauma to the adopted child when the parents' religion is denied to him?" "If the child is not allowed to follow Zoroastrianism, surely we (the community) will lose the parents also and not just the child," rationalized observer Ms Mini Grant from Poona.

When Gae referred to the sentiments of even poor Parsis who consider it "un-

**"It is no use only
paying fees.
Member anjumans
must take an
active interest"**

ethical to give up children for adoption," demographer-sociologist Ms Ava Khullar elaborated that seeing the late marriage trend in the community when many marry after they have passed their prime fertility stage, "It is totally unrealistic to expect children from within the community to be available for adoption." The BPP has offered an assurance to families who give up one child for adoption that the other children remaining with their biological parents will not be wanting for comforts. But then anonymity, which would otherwise be assured under the adoption law, would be lost, causing possible complications at a later stage.

Besides, giving undue weightage to the orthodox opinion was not valid, continued Khullar. "Most of them are in the 60+ age-group who don't want to adopt. Have those in the relevant age-group been

From left: Sethna, Golwalla, Gandhi and Bhacca

consulted? Don't you think ours is the most humanitarian religion? Should we not then take a decision in a humane fashion?" she pleaded.

The difficulties faced by potential Zoroastrian emigrants because there is no law on adoption in the community were recounted by Gandhi. Under the Guardians and Wards Act which applies to Zoroastrians, in certain cases problems have arisen when the adopted child was refused immigration while the rest of the family was accepted, Gandhi explained the need. "To prove their bonafides are the BPP trustees prepared to make a commitment?" Before the next executive council meeting they should decide: whether they would agree to adoption of children of Parsi mothers and non-Parsi fathers; whether they would commit themselves to adoption of children of unknown or non-Parsi parentage if it is found that Parsi children are not available for adoption; whether they would accept a time frame of less than five years to ascertain regarding availability of Parsi children for adoption. Golwalla assured, "We will convey to the other trustees and come back."

In the meanwhile, amendments to the Indian Succession Act as applicable to Parsis have been passed in the Rajya Sabha and the Bill was expected to go through the Lok Sabha this session, as reported by Taleyarkhan. Once it is approved, under the amended Act women will be granted equal rights as men in cases of intestate succession. The only difference is that while a deceased son's widow will be entitled to his share of the ancestral property, a deceased daughter's widower would not be so entitled. The irrational fear is that in the case of Parsi

girls married to non-Parsis, the property would go into the hands of another family, another community.

Rewarding record

This year saw the institution of two new Federation awards for excellence. The Lt Col Adi Tarapore Memorial Award by the DPA for distinction in the military field in memory of the gallant soldier who laid down his life for the nation, and an additional award in the field of sports donated by Singapore businessman Dadi Balsara who hosted the awards distribution function at The Taj Mahal Hotel on September 22 and was also expected to address the Federation meeting the next day but ultimately could not make it. The 19 who were conferred the Federation awards for 1988 and 1989 were: Russi Mody and Dr Farokh Udwadia (professional competence); Jehangir Medhora and Dadi Bhote (small scale entrepreneurship); Dr Sarosh Wadia, Ms Homai Modi and Ms Nergish Irani (social and community service); Dr Ratan Marshall (study of Zoroastrian history, culture and scriptures); Brig Farokh Balsara and Lt Gen Faridoon Bilimoria

"We are bound to follow the dictates of the trust"

(military); Ms Zenia Ayrton, Cyrus Cama and Ms Firoza Batliwala (sports); Dr Nozer Sheriar and Ms Zarine Karanjia (student); Prof Dinyar Pestonjee (education, research, science and technology); Ms Navaz Bhathena (adventure); Pundit Firoz Dastur and Ms Meher Contractor (performing and fine arts).

Taleyarkhan has volunteered to find a sponsor for an award in the technical branch of industry. The suggestion that the Federation awards include a new category for youth was accepted with hesitation for, as explained Gandhi, "We can't institute an award unless it is funded. Whoever suggests should also find sponsors and give guidelines for this award."

Youth gearing for action

"Action please" was the theme of the Fourth All India Youth Festival in Secunderabad, October 26-28, 1990. One of the important subjects to be discussed at the youth meet was the formation of

an all-India Zoroastrian youth body. But since many anjumans do not even have a local youth association constituted, the urgency for organizing such before constituting a federation of youth bodies was stressed.

"The youths shouldn't feel totally independent," Taleyarkhan was wary. "They should maintain continuity with the elders. A youth body should not lead to fissiparous tendencies between the elders and the youngsters."

Since some of the topics scheduled for

the meet were ones over which they would have no decision-making authority, Golwala enquired, "Wouldn't you like to leave these to the elders?" Jehangir Bisney, president of the Twin Cities' Zoroastrian Youth League (Secunderabad and Hyderabad) explained that the purpose of introducing these topics was to dispel the "vague notions that youngsters have on certain subjects" and feed them instead "with detailed information." A panel of speakers from varying age-groups and different fields of

"What ails the community..."

Detecting the "death wish in the community," eminent Bombay physician Dr Farokh Udwadia was concerned:

"We can see the writing on the wall. But what are we planning to do?" When he brought up this issue at the Federation's awards distribution ceremony on September 22 where he was present in his capacity as an award winner, the organizers invited him to address the Federation delegates the next day and discuss his approach.

He emphasized the need for "methodology...strategy...scientific treatment" of the problem. "For an effective methodology we need to know what ails the community. It is so easy to say the need is for more houses. But is there a plan?" he enquired. He volunteered to write a paper dealing with the problem on scientific lines: "wherein you have background, methodology and projected results."

The prevalent attitude, he feared, was almost like that of a hypothetical medical case. "I would compare it, for example, to a patient lying in the ICU and the patient knows he is very ill and says, 'Doctor, I think I am going to die,' and the doctor holds his hand and says, 'Yes, I know you are going to die. I am trying to help.' He goes on saying, 'I am trying to help,' and the patient goes on saying, 'I am going to die,' and willy nilly he will die." The B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital has become geriatric and half the wards on the first floor and the nursing home rooms are going vacant, he pointed out.

"Our objective should be to prevent



Udwadia (left) and Irani

the race from dying," he continued. "The good of the community lies in directing all energies to the child-bearing age-group

without neglecting the aged," he reiterated. A moral obligation to produce children should be imposed on new allottees of Punchayet flats, he advised. "The fact that we are dwindling should be stressed in every home of every Parsi..."

Several delegates and invitees participated in the discussion that followed. But the most spontaneous outburst was from an indignant Ms Nergish Irani, a community activist of Dahanu who as a winner of the Federation award was attending the executive council meeting as an observer. "I don't think we are breeders... cattle or sheep," she countered. "In my personal opinion women in many ways are far superior to men," acknowledged Udwadia to allay her apprehensions before proceeding to emphasize that any action should be based on sufficient facts.

On a related issue Irani expressed, "A woman provides the soil — the womb. A seed is sterile unless it is nurtured." Children of Zoroastrian men married to non-Zoroastrians are ungrudgingly accepted into the faith while not children of Zoroastrian women married outside the community, she regretted. "A woman chooses to marry the man she loves. Though I married a Muslim, I continued to remain a Zoroastrian... And yesterday (when the award was presented to her) I was very proud to be acknowledged as a Zoroastrian... Ritualism does not produce Zoroastrians; it's the values," she emphasized.



quested to give an age-wise distribution of the Zoroastrian community to enable the demographers to have a correct picture on the basis of which they can project accurately.

The Federation's rural welfare subcommittee, which includes two nominees of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) is making steady progress on amelioration of Parsis in rural areas. Those in the villages of Dharampuri, Khambhla, Mandvi and Mangrol have been assisted with improved irrigation facilities, levelling of fields and provision of water pumps and sewing machines so that they are not induced to migrate to the urban areas. Rs 1,40,000 from the collection of Rs 6,75,500 by the rural subcommittee of the Federation has already been expended. A special documentary film at a cost of Rs 17,000 has been produced to give an idea to Zoroastrians overseas of the living condition of Parsis in the rural areas where their circumstances compel them to share their huts with animals. Davar Kavasji Modi of Surat and Dinshaw Tamboli of the WZO were specially lauded for their commitment to this work.

Seeing the trend of "rural areas being taken over by unruly elements" Irani of Dahanu made a plea for the preservation of Udwada as a heritage zone before in-

*Clockwise from top left:
Taleyarkhan, Anklesaria, Katpitia, Roda Mistry, Tamboli, youth delegates Bisney, Debara and Kavarana, Khullar and Gae
Bottom: Bhiwandiwalla Hall, venue of the Federation meeting*

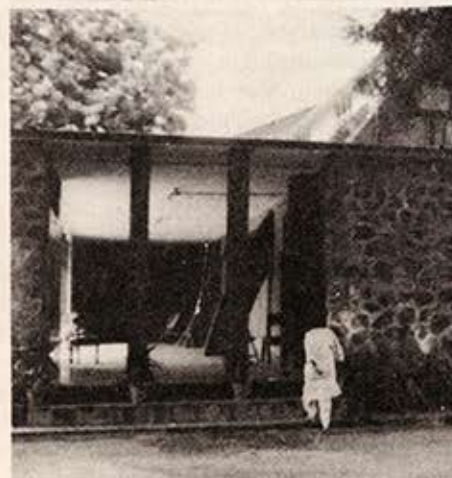
specialization, including a contingent from the Zoroastrian Studies, were to address the youth.

With land or without

Insecurity and fear grips the Zoroastrian tenants in the cantonment areas who are facing eviction notices after years of occupancy. And since land records are not traceable, the problem seems to be compounded. One Parsi tenant in Mhow, reported Gp Capt Dhunjishaw Marker, when asked to vacate after residing in a bungalow for years, got a stay order from the court. Marker suggested that in the interests of all such cases a representation be made to the government. Taleyarkhan offered to take up the matter with the government if he was fed with facts on a collective basis instead of individual cases being cited.

It is not only the residents of cantonment areas who are adversely affected. Under the new provisions of the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, any tenant in a building owned by government organizations, public sector undertakings, etc can be evicted and the tenant would have no right to redressal if the government claims that it needs the premises for its own purposes. On behalf of tenants of government-owned buildings in Bombay, noted advocate H. M. Seervai has taken up this case in court, appealing against the spirit of the new enactment. Such an enactment would adversely affect many Zoroastrians using premises for residential purposes, or as offices for Parsi organizations.

Another area which threatened the community status was when the latest census report of India did not show Zoroastrians as a distinct religious minority but included them in the category of 'others.' Again, it was Taleyarkhan who took up the issue with the director general of census and was assured that Zoroastrians would be listed as a separate community. Federation joint treasurer Peshotan Nargolwala then suggested that the census department be further re-



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dustrialization destroys the natural peace of that territory. "Most Zoroastrian houses are being taken over by non-Parsis," she added.

The Federation succeeded in claiming land titles to properties -- in Junagadh, Surendranagar, Cambay and Nadiad -- owned by Parsis of once thriving but now defunct anjumans. In Nanded and Bhopal, the community would have very possibly lost out on the lands there were it not for the timely intervention of the Federation. And yet, now these anjumans are reluctant to get the Federation's name included on the land records even though the Federation's only intention is to avoid future complications, reported an exasperated Sorab Katpitia, chief executive of the SPP and the key person responsible for protecting community lands in Gujarat and elsewhere.

Since there is already a dispute among the trustees of Boisar, Katpitia did not deem it advisable to intervene and spend the Federation's scarce resources to retrieve property there. Though Hubli and Dharwar were feared to be near-defunct anjumans, preliminary investigations revealed that they were progressing satisfactorily and there was no need for the Federation to intervene. For land disputes in Bina and Hosangabad it is yet to be established whether the Federation's involvement is necessary. The Jhansi Anjuman was asked to help out with the preliminary investigations.

Additionally there are other properties in Gadakh, Gwalior and Amritsar which have been brought to the Federation's notice for necessary action but which the overworked all-India body has not been able to undertake for want of suitable personnel willing to work on a permanent basis. Katpitia felt, "There's a limit to it. If we take up all the issues it would be difficult to concentrate." For retrieving property in Nizamabad it is the Secunderabad Anjuman's help that has been solicited; and for the Khandwa property, the Mhow Anjuman's.

Time to report

The summation of the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress (WZC) will be finalized after each Federation throughout the world evaluates the report prepared by Aspi Moddie who was on the organizing committee of the Congress. Every Federation will be given an opportunity to submit its views, and thereafter the ultimate finalization of the report will be done by the Fed-

eration in India, briefed BPP trustee Jamshed Guzder, chairman of the Congress. When Nargolwala complained that the summation did not carry detailed discussions, Taleyarkhan lamented, "In some cases even the chairman's views have not been included." The final report may also include a summary of every paper presented at the Congress.

Gandhi wanted the representatives to obtain a commitment from their respective anjumans to the following subjects pertaining to the recommendations of the

**"This is
discrimination
against men which is
much worse"**

Fifth WZC that were brought up at the Federation meeting: adoption of a common calendar; introduction of a fun and learn process in religious education; undertaking of a socioeconomic survey; developing a concern for the global community instead of just the local community; appointing a focal member to interact and maintaining communication links with other anjumans and the Federation; and making optimum utilization of trust funds for the betterment of the community.

Instead of the proposed Inter-Regional Zoroastrian Congress Committee (IRZCC) monitoring the progress of the recommendations and implementations of the Congress, the executive committee of the Fifth WZC will coordinate with different associations, it was decided.

While the threat of the IRZCC eclipsing a world body was no longer perceived, the subject of a world body was broached through a letter by Rohinton Rivetna, president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), forwarded to individuals for their response. He suggested a draft constitution for a world body, similar to that of the Indian Federation or FEZANA with a pyramidal structure where the "building blocks are the associations and federations." Regional chapters however have been introduced "to resolve governmental and foreign exchange barriers." The constitution also provides avenues for reconciling with the WZO which, giving equal weightage to individuals and associations, is not considered truly representative. It is only after Rivetna sends a

continued on page 40

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"We, the devout priests..."

Arnavaz S. Mama

A memorandum signed by 130 mobeds
denies any religious right
to Zoroastrian women married to non-Zoroastrians

While steps are still afoot to resolve the differences between the two opposing factions in the Roxan Shah controversy, 130 priests have signed a memorandum supporting the stand taken by Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal condemning intercommunity marriages and barring of religious rights to those who marry out of the community.

"We, the devout priests," starts the memorandum published in Gujarati and translated by Kotwal for *Parsiana*, "show our full sympathy and feelings of cooperation towards the meeting of the samast athman anjuman (the entire priestly assembly)...and declare our full support to the opinions given in 1964 by the learned Dasturji sahebs and scholars to the trustee sahebs of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, to the opinion given by Dasturji (Dr) Firoze M. Kotwal on August 22, 1990 and to the memorandum done unitedly by all high priests of India in the *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly* of November 4, 1990, addressed to the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet. We declare that a Parsi Zoroastrian woman married to an alien man through any rite goes out of the community and religion on her marriage; such women cease to be members of the Parsi community and Zoroastrian religion, and so they cannot make use of any religious institutions like the houses of worship, towers of silence, etc or take advantage of them and no religious rites can be performed in behalf of them.

"It is against the commandment of the Zoroastrian religion to perform the navjote ceremonies of children born of marriages of any sort between Parsi Zoroastrians and persons of alien faiths, or to perform marriage ceremonies of

such persons, or to encourage them directly or indirectly. Such ceremonies are not proper for maintaining the community's interest.

"If the dead bodies of Parsi Zoroastrians are disposed of by any non-Zoroastrian method other than that of dokhmenashini in places where the towers of silence exist, we consider the long-cherished tradition of not performing the necessary death rites as proper..."

The meeting, called by the Athman Mandal on November 17, 1990 at Albless Baug, had been presided over by Dastur Kekobad Dastur of Udwarda and addressed also by Dastur Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa, High Priest of the Anjuman Atash Bahram and by Kotwal.

Draft of the BPP affidavit to be completed on Rs 10 stamp paper and attested by a public notary

I..., residing at..., do hereby solemnly affirm/make oath and say as follows:

1. That I am the husband/brother/ father/mother/next of kin of the deceased (Mrs. X) who expired on...
2. I hereby affirm that the late (Mrs. X) who was a Parsi Zoroastrian, was married to (Mr. X) under the Special Marriage Act, 1954 only.
3. I further say that till her demise the said (Mrs. X) continued to follow the Zoroastrian religion.
4. I further say that all arrangement will be made by us for the priests to perform the funeral and the ceremonies of the deceased at the Tower of Silence.

Signature

The controversy arose when Roxan Darshan Shah, a 26-year-old Parsi girl married to a Hindu, died in a tragic car accident on the Bombay-Poona highway and her parents sought to consign her body to the towers of silence. The chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP), Dr Aspi Golwala, denied use of the towers of silence facilities to the family on the ground that she had married out of the community and was therefore not a practising Zoroastrian (see "An injustice at doongerwadi," *Parsiana*, August 1990). She had however married under the civil marriage act and was professing the Zoroastrian faith, according to her family.

Dastur Kotwal, High Priest of the H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram, had in a controversial letter justified the Punchayet's decision and termed those who had married out of the community as "living next to adultery" and said their children were "illegitimate" according to Zoroastrian scripture.

The Punchayet has already introduced affidavit forms at doongerwadi for use in the case of women who had married under the Special Marriage Act (see "The Controversy Continues," *Parsiana*, October 1990). To be signed by the next of kin of the deceased, the form (see box) needs to be certified by a public notary to attest that the lady continued to profess the Zoroastrian faith even after her exogamous marriage.

The BPP trustees also invited representatives of both shades of opinion for a joint meeting at the Punchayet office. The meeting on November 24 was said to have been attended by approximately 10 representatives of the orthodox groups, including Kotwal, as versus lib-

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eral solicitor Rusy Sethna, Ms Smita Crishna (née Godrej) and Ms Meher Amarsey (nee Tata), the latter two as representatives of the 32 ladies married under the Special Marriage Act who had petitioned the BPP to ensure their right to be interred in the dokhma in the event of their death (see "The Controversy Continues").

Speaking on behalf of the board, trustees Eruch Desai and Jamsheed Kanga were reportedly emphatic that an acceptable solution had to be found and suggested that one of the two dokhmas currently in disuse, be pressed back into service to accept the remains of Zoroastrian women married to non-Zoroastrians. Some of those present are said to have found the suggestion acceptable; others did not. The question of performance of ceremonies remained open as the mobeds felt they should hold another meeting to ascertain the views of the priests.

Even on the liberal side, the offer fell short of expectations. Grand old liberal, solicitor Rustom Gagrati decried it as dis-

criminatory against the concerned women and felt the offer was not much of an improvement over the earlier suggestion of placing dubious bodies on the chotra.

Gagrati has further faulted the BPP on its failure to publish the opinion of Y. V. Chandrachud, retired Chief Justice of India, whom the BPP had consulted on the issue and whose legal opinion is believed to be directly contradictory to the notions of the priests.

To none of these meetings was the Press invited. Particularly grieved was *The Bombay Samachar* which had broken the story in the first place. Although the information filtered out in time, its authenticity as well as the spirit of the suggestions and counter suggestions would have washed brighter all round had a more open approach been accepted.

A fallout of the present imbroglio is the demand for a reexamination of the way obsequial ceremonies at doongerwadi are now being managed by an "agent" under the auspices of the BPP. "Why have our panthakies been eased out of there?" Gagrati wants to know.

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TRAVELS IN IRAN: 5

Support from the *sethias*

Manekji Limji Hataria

The plight of Iranian Zoroastrians moved the Parsi *sethias* to personal commitment to their cause

This is the fifth 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 earlier instalments Hataria described the ruins that attested to Iran's ancient glory, the miserable conditions in which the Zoroastrians survived after the Arab conquest, the spirit in which they celebrated the milestones of their personal lives and the political and economic impact of the intervention of Indian Parsis with the Iranian administration.

The Zoroastrians of Iran lived under the tyranny of Islamic rule. Many influential and philanthropic Parsis helped the Zoroastrians of Iran in many ways. Houses were constructed for the poor who had no abode; old and dilapidated atash bahrams and agiaries in many cities were repaired. Three dokhmas were constructed in Yazd, Sharifabad and Tehran for the comfort of the departed ones; dharamshalas were constructed in Tehran, Yazd and Khorramshahr for the Zoroastrians of Iran. The poor were helped monetarily; even food, clothing and other useful articles were distributed amongst the needy Zoroastrians of Iran.

The hateful Jazia tax, which was imposed by the Muslims on all non-Muslim residents, was to a great extent reduced for Zoroastrians by the forceful influence of the Bombay Parsis. This Jazia tax amounted to thousands of rupees per head per year. Those who could not afford to pay this tax were obliged to convert to Islam. The Parsi Anjuman of Bombay helped their coreligionists in Iran in every respect. In some cases secret arrangements were made for some Parsis to flee from Iran secretly; such runaways came to Bombay where they could earn a decent living. First, the Jazia tax was reduced in the case of the Zoroastrians of Iran and later it was abolished altogether. All this was due to the efforts of the Zoroastrian *sethias* (rich traders and industrialists) of Bombay, many of whom actually visited Iran several times especially in the days of Shah Naseruddin who was a very considerate king. Under Nas-

eruddin the condition of Zoroastrians in Iran improved to a great extent.

Many charitable and religious works were done by the Bombay Parsis for the betterment of the Zoroastrians in Iran. There were other Parsi *sethias* who did much for the betterment of the Iranian Zoroastrians but their works were not published and manifest. Their charities were boundless but their names were never made known to the public.

The trustees of the Bombay Kadmi Anjuman's ghambar fund arranged to send Rs 600 annually to Iran and ghambars were started in Kerman and Tehran for the Zoroastrians. Sad to say that the trustees later on stopped remitting this amount of Rs 600 and some philanthropic Parsis and Iranis sent the amount out of their own pockets. Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy, first baronet, once sent Rs 500 worth of cotton cloth for the use of poor Zoroastrians there. He also donated Rs 5,000 to be used for defraying the marriage expenses of poor Zoroastrian girls of Iran. Thus 12 poor Zoroastrian girls were helped in their matrimonial affairs. He had even sent a number of books on religious subjects to be distributed free among the Zoroastrians of Iran.

The late Seth Framji Cawasji Banaji had started a fund for the maintenance of the atash bahram of Yazd and he sent large amounts of money every year for sandalwood for that fire-temple.

The late Seth Merwanji Framji Panday and his late wife Hirabai were instrumental in arranging the marriages of a number of poor girls in Iran. They also

provided a house to a blind Parsi woman who had only the road for her abode. At great expense he stopped cow slaughter in Iran. Seth Merwanji Panday's charity in Iran, for the benefit of the Zoroastrians there, was boundless. He had paid school and college fees for many Zoroastrian students of Iran and provided them with necessary books and stationery articles. He had encouraged the Zoroastrians of Iran to continue wearing the sudreh under the Muslim rule when wearing the sudreh was forbidden by the Muslim Sultans of Iran, and often sent sudrehs, kustis and other articles of need for the Zoroastrians of Iran. The Panday family became well-known for their charity both in Iran as well as in India and all their charities were for the good of the Zoroastrian community. Seth Panday spent his entire life in helping the Zoroastrians of Iran and of India.

Another philanthropic well-wisher of our community was Seth Minocherji Hormusji Kama. He obtained permission from the Muslim Sultans to allow the Parsis to perform their marriage ceremonies according to our Zoroastrian rites. He succeeded in all his efforts of helping his coreligionists in Iran.

Seth Minocherji Kama's son, Seth Framji Minocherji Kama followed in the footsteps of his father and continued helping the Zoroastrians of Iran and fulfilled all their needs.

Seth Rustomji Ruttonji Wadia arranged to send sandalwood from Bombay to Iran for the atash bahram of Yazd. He left no stone unturned to see that his coreligionists in Iran continued to live as Zoroastrians and followed the traditions of the ancient Zoroastrians, in spite of Muslim domination in the country.

Seth Behramji Noshirwan Datta was another Parsi Zoroastrian who did much to improve the condition of the Zoroastrians in Iran. His charity was boundless while he himself lived a very simple, frugal life.

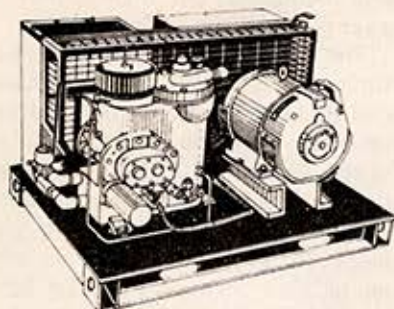
The charities made by the Parsis of India in general and those of the Parsis of Bombay in particular were countless and many charities were secret. Particularly, the repair of atash bahrans and agiaris in the different towns of Iran was done secretly so that the Muslim rulers might not know, but after years their results were manifest. The Zoroastrians who survived in Iran secretly followed their own religion. They prayed and per-

formed all Zoroastrian rites and ceremonies up to the present time. For the betterment of the Zoroastrians of Iran, our Parsi *seth*as of Bombay were mainly responsible, and the Zoroastrians of Iran also deserve praise and congratulations for maintaining their Zoroastrian spirit and continuing to follow the good religion. Thus our good religion was preserved in Iran for hundreds of years after the Arab occupation of the country.

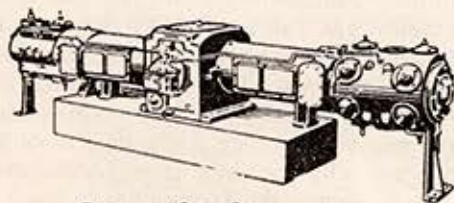
The Parsis of India had done much to improve the living conditions and other matters connected with the life of the Zoroastrian population of Iran. Still, much remains to be done.

The attention of King Naseruddin of Iran was invited to look after the small Zoroastrian population in Iran with a request not to harass them any more, for Naseruddin was a good and considerate ruler. He agreed to allow the Zoroastrians to follow their own religion and did not include them in the Muslim population of Iran.

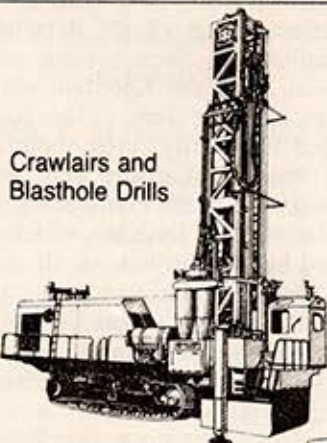
The Parsis of India drew the attention of Queen Victoria of England to the plight of the Zoroastrians in Iran and the British Resident of Iran (Iran was then a subsidiary state under the British order)



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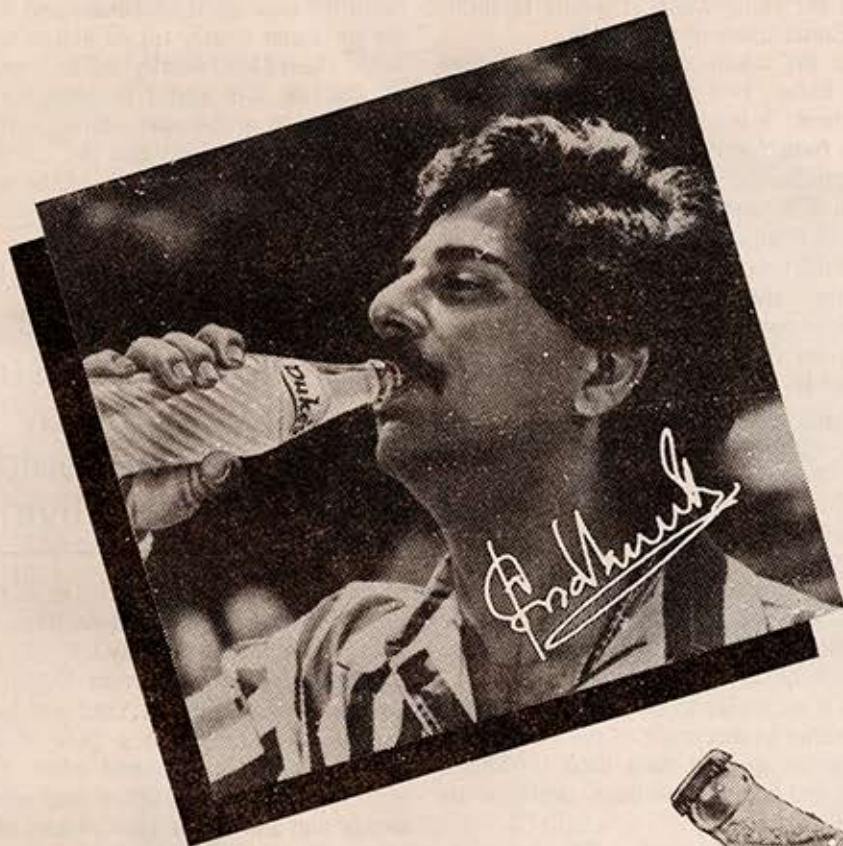
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was also informed by the Parsis of Bombay about Muslim terrorism and requested to look to the safety of the Zoroastrians there. The Zoroastrians got good protection from the British Resident.

Many Parsis from India visited Iran, saw personally the plight of the Zoroastrians there and with the British Resident they tried to improve the prevailing conditions. They promised the British Resident that they would pay all the expenses necessary for improving the conditions of their coreligionists. Some of them were allowed to go out of Iran towards the West, to Armenia and Bulgaria where they could follow their religion uninterrupted.

In the vicinity of the atash bahram of Yazd, the Parsis purchased a plot of land with the intention of building a dharamshala in future. That proposed dharamshala is not yet constructed.

In the vicinity of the atash bahram at Kerman there was a house owned by a Muslim. This has been purchased by the Parsis and is now used as a dharamshala for housing poor Zoroastrians and also for the temporary sojourn of Zoroastrian travellers.

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The old tower of silence at Kerman was in a very dilapidated condition. A fund was raised to construct a new dokhma beside the old, broken one for resting the dead. The tower of silence at Kanatkasoon is of clay walls and the walls give way every now and then. So if a new tower of silence is constructed with the stone walls, it would facilitate the Zoroastrians of that place.

In the whole country of Iran, there are, today, two atash bahrams and 17 adarians. It is imperative to raise a suitable fund for the maintenance of these religious abodes.

In Khorramshahr, there is a vacant plot of land adjoining the adarian. Muslims often collect there for holding their meetings and conferences. If this plot of land is purchased and a public hall is built for the use of the Zoroastrians, it would be a blessing to the large Zoroastrian population of the city.

The problem of availability of mobeds in Iran is very acute. Those who are there are not very enlightened and they are not even well versed with some of our rites and customs. There is a great need to improve the condition of the mobeds there: to educate them properly so that they may be better able to serve the community.

It is necessary to create more facilities in Tehran so that some of the Parsis from India can go and earn their livelihood there and be a help to their coreligionists there.

Many old, disabled and weak people are to be found in Iran among the Zoroastrians. They are totally helpless and they live by begging and die of starvation and helplessness. Some provision must be made to provide them with the necessities of life such as food and clothing.

Many of our religious places were destroyed by the Muslims. By the efforts of the Parsis of India many of them have been rebuilt. But there is a need for hospitals and dispensaries for the Zoroastrians wherever they dwell in Iran.

Lastly, some provision must be made to provide suitable education to the remaining Zoroastrians of Iran: they must be taught some art so that they can come out of their captivity and earn a decent living for the betterment of their families.

A request is made to the Mazdayasn Anjuman to endeavor to preserve the ancient religious monuments like atash bahrams, agiaries and adarians which are

in a ruinous condition. Most of them were destroyed by the Arabs with a view to terminate the Zoroastrian religion; others succumbed to the forces of nature. These are required to be re-built and maintained well.

Long ago, the late Seth Ardeshir Dadiseth sent money and material to re-build the adarian at Mubarak and in order to obtain money for its maintenance, he purchased land nearby and let it on hire so that the rent could be used for the maintenance of the said adarian. Today that said plot of land and the constructions thereon have gone out of the hands

Arrangements were made for some Parsis to flee from Iran to Bombay where they could earn a decent living

of the trustees and the adarian is in a sad plight. If it is not repaired on time, it is likely to collapse some day.

The late Seth Noshirwan Koyaji got an atash bahram built at Yazd and for its maintenance purchased a plot of land named Bag-e-Chinaar and gave it on hire. But the party using the land refused to pay rent and became the owners of the land. Thus the income for the maintenance of the said atash bahram stopped and the atash bahram is now in a sad plight; it requires immediate attention.

The late Seth Khurshedji Cawasji Banaji gave a donation for the construction of a public hall where religious ceremonies could be held and the hall could be used for other social gatherings. But the mobed in charge utilized it for the permanent use of his family members and their descendants and thus no trace even of the name of the donor is to be seen or found. This is a sad story.

The adarian at Khorramshahr which was renovated recently by the efforts of the Parsi Anjuman of Bombay, appears to have been constructed by some philanthropic Parsi of India whose name is not to be found or traced at present. Now it is the joint responsibility and duty of each and every member of our community to try and preserve these ancient religious monuments and edifices in our fatherland, Iran.

An air of mystery

Ranjit Hoskote

Stone to Fruit by Hoshang Merchant. Published in 1989 for Writers Workshop by P. Lal, 162/92, Lake Gardens, Calcutta 700045. Pp: 72. Price: Rs 60 (hardback), Rs 40 (flexiback).

The cumulus of an experience ranging over four decades and three continents informs Hoshang Merchant's first collection of poems, *Stone to Fruit*. The poet's Parsi ancestry, for instance, colors many of the poems; feud-ravaged Iran, where Merchant worked briefly, haunts the volume as a sharp, stinging presence. Considerable parts of the book are also molded by the contours of Hyderabad where the poet now lectures at the University.

Inevitably, as with all cumuli, there are treasures, and there is detritus. The diversity of Merchant's subject matter is unified and imparts a degree of coherence by certain recurrent themes. And yet, it is the indiscriminate inclusion of unevenly conceived poems under each theme which brings the volume, ultimately, to grief.

Chief among the poet's preoccupations is a half-ironic, half-hopeless evocation of homosexual love. Of course, any observation that one might make on this issue is liable to be colored by heterosexual prejudice; but even so, some relatively objective inferences may be drawn. *Holi in Hyderabad* is spun delicately around a moment of self-awareness in the midst of a violent festival. Surrounded by the sound of shared, communal revelry, the poet stumbles upon his own loneliness, his own identity, with all its attendant ambiguities. The poem opens with the frank:

"Walking down the street of
banglesellers
Pleases the woman in me."

Seeing that the god of love holds everyone else in thrall, and ruefully admitting his own exclusion from that blessed band, the poet goes home — only to wake up to the Other within his I, the second self. With this awakening comes a recognition of his particular road to the ecstasy apparently denied him:

"In bed I find my hand through the haze
Dipped as if in red."

The subtlety of the statement is consid-

erable -- whilst the road ahead is suggested, the element of make-believe, the device of rationalization are also alluded to.

On the other hand, the explicitly titled *Gandu Bagicha*, Hyderabad develops into a drum-beating hymn to the left hand (as Auden might have had it), with its stifling imagery of the rump, and of boys as cherished delicacies. The overpowering sense of transience, the pathos and the wistfulness with which the homosexual encounter is treated in, say, the *Satyricon* of Petronius Arbiter, or in the Babari episode of Zahiruddin Babar's *Tuzuk-i-Babari*, is somehow absent here. There does, to be sure, prevail a sense of transience, but it is attended by a furtiveness, and a resignation, sometimes, which partakes neither of pathos nor of irony. After a point, no feeling seems to have been invested in the expressions devoted to this experience, and all that remains is a reiterated litany to "boy-lovers."

The personal past as shaper of the present is extended, elsewhere, into an overshadowing figure. One is forcefully reminded of the passage in Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*: "Men make history, but they do not make it just as they please... the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." More than a hint of Tom Paulin marks *Secunderabad sans Light*, written by Andhraite candlelight — even as Paulin's *The Other Voice* is by Anglican firelight.

Like an album held over from colonial times, the poem catalogues the benchmarks of a vanished culture: "It is a bow to the violin bow
To Haydn and village lamplighters
In whose afterglow this century lives."

Looking over the mild eccentricities of the past, and also its more enduring, abiding qualities, the poet realizes how the age of his grandparents is by no means dead — but continues to exert its influence on the *hic et nunc*. Living in the shadow of his heritage, he is "the modern/my ancestors made."

Whilst here the reader takes away the impression that the poet is a prisoner of

his forerunners' acts, a new note is struck in *The Parsi Saint Homaji's Memorial Day*. The ethos of saints and miracles ("incense and prayer") is sought to be left behind, as reminiscent of a tormented childhood. The poet's persona has already abandoned the ways of his people and even as the saint's judge outlived him, the secular self outgrows and survives the icons of "the simple."

In this subversion of the traditional, too, a subtle crossplay occurs: to what extent, one is led to wonder, is the rejection of the inherited belief-system a self-willed act? Might not this rejection of more distant ancestors be a gift of the more recent ancestors who have, by the poet's own admission, made him a modern? Such deft half-tones lend Merchant's poems an air of inconclusion and mystery.

Merchant is also preoccupied with that overriding terror of modern times — the monolithic apparatus of the State, and the realm of the political which it personifies. The savage invasion by these of the reticent individual's private domain underpins the political poems of *Stone to Fruit*.

The finest of these is, arguably, *Two Poems*, translated from the original Persian of Saeed Soltanpur who was executed as a subversive in Tehran in 1981. The close, throttling presence of the State stalks every line of the threnody. At first, the wood in which the poet seems to be, is cold, and death is a force acting from a distance. In the second part of the poem, there are actually "soldiers/in the forest," and the poet-revolutionary knows what is about to befall him, as he invites his love to the forest:

"Come
With a lot of tears
With a lot of blood."

One cannot read *Two Poems* without being overcome by a deep and tearful sorrow. Stark and simple, these lines inspire a grief akin to that brought about by the last war poems of Georg Trakl — a grief poured over that entire sacrifice of life which goes into revolution, the waste of life which brands tyranny.

However, political poetry often fails to balance between the poetic and the journalistic; precariously, it hangs between a fiery but orderly expression of overflowing emotion, and the fatal tendency to comment on such dread acts of the State as confirm, from time to time, our hatred of it. The unfortunate desire to strike current affairs while they are hot, can only lead to what one would call the

"editorial in verse."

With the best of intentions, Merchant is unable to lift *What Happens in China* above this level. Witness, for instance, the sententious, even somewhat grammatically awkward:

"It is the shades
of May 68

What is its legacy?"

The poem goes on in the same vein: the acute, almost photographic attention to details which had distinguished *Secunderabad sans Light* becomes an impediment here, highlighting, as it does, the flatness of the poem.

Among the flaws of the volume is the persistent echoing of Eliot: at every turn, practically, one comes upon a marker from one or another of the master's works. *Rabindranath in the Island of Birds* is consummated by a coda which owes its rhythms to *The Hollow Men* and the *Choruses from "The Rock."* Similarly, stray cadences, snatches of dialogue recur across the book, that remind one of *The Waste Land*, *Prufrock*, and some of the smaller sketches.

Merchant's own rhythms tend to be unvarying, often comprising a succession of short, hard lines, alleviated occasionally by the formal device of rhyme. Or else, the lines are relatively longer, but nevertheless monotonously fluid.

Moreover, the poet very often descends into reams of words which, imageless, powerless, degenerate into clichés (as in "memory/which plays tricks", from *The Longest Day in the Year*), or into empty wordplay, as in these lines from the same poem:

"Time never stopped
Nor was it obliterated
The world became god's play
Play of a day..."

There is a certain bathos in the collapse from the rather Upanishadic-Biblical ring of the first two lines, into the rhymesmithy of the next two. This bathos lurks behind many of the poems in *Stone to Fruit*, and to a poet of Merchant's undoubtedly serious concerns, it can only represent a dangerous self-indulgence.

Hoshang Merchant is lecturer in poetry and surrealism at the University of Hyderabad. He completed his MA in Anglo American literature from Occidental College, Los Angeles. The 43-year-old's book on French-born American author Anaïs Nin won him a doctorate from Purdue University (Indiana).



Reprinted with permission from Kaiser-E-Hind, August 1990.

Living with osteo

Madhulika Varma

Trying to Grow by Firdaus Kanga. Published in 1990 by Ravi Dayal Publisher, 51-E, Sujana Singh Park, New Delhi 110003. Pp: 235. Price: Rs 95.

"I didn't just live with my family, I also lived with osteo." This sums up in one brief sentence the theme of Firdaus Kanga's semi-autobiographical first novel, *Trying to Grow*. It tells the story of Daryus 'Brit' Kotwal, a boy born with osteogenesis imperfecta or brittle bones, a debility which stunts his growth, keeps him in constant fear of breaking his bones, and confines him to a wheelchair. It explores his relationships with his family and other people, how he deals with the world around him and, finally, how he comes to terms with his disability.

Growing up for Daryus Kotwal was no easy matter. Though blessed with a wonderfully supportive family and a small circle of understanding friends, he still had to face the unpalatable fact of being dependent on other people for innumerable things we take for granted: being able to reach things on shelves, going to the bathroom, getting a glass of water quickly, etc.

Causing greater anxiety than this dependency, though, is his attitude towards himself, to the fears and insecurities which his infirmity heaps on him. On the one hand he tries to deny his condition, often succeeding in forgetting that he has a problem -- till he passes a mirror. On the other hand he is morbidly sensitive about the reaction of other people. "I was scared of the way handicapped people looked... the hesitant gait and robot-stiff movements of the blind, the lolling heads and strangled speech of the spastics. Whenever I saw them I wondered if I seemed as ugly and pathetic. I'd shudder and turn my mind away."

Kanga is able to, very tellingly, record the minutiae of living with his condition. He has difficulty getting in and out of taxis and cars; a lift stopping four inches

higher than the floor poses an insurmountable barrier for his wheelchair; he is forced to sit all day at the British Council library because his attendant does not come to fetch him. People around him are either indifferent or overly solicitous. "When you can't do some things," Daryus muses, "people feel you can't do anything."

Some of the finest passages in the book describe Daryus's feelings of frustration or pain when confronted with people or events that make him face the fact that he is different. He encounters the thoughtless insensitivity and sometimes downright maliciousness of human beings: "When I say men, I mean -- men. Not someone like you, Brit." Or, the curiosity and blatant rudeness of passers-by when he goes out with a girl, crude remarks and unkind speculations being made in full hearing of the couple.

Daryus's disability also leads to a permanent sense of insecurity, forcing him to constantly evaluate the reactions of even those closest to him, like his mother: "When I said that bit about really loving my son, did I mean it?" That's a question Sera fought all her life... if there's one thing worse than doubting if you love your kid, it's being the kid in question."

But the book is not in the least sentimental or maudlin in tone -- far from it. It has a certain self-deprecating humor which seems almost defiant, irony being used to keep pain at a distance. Daryus, who has been nicknamed 'Brit' (short for brittle) by his sister Dolly, is constantly referring to himself as Osteo Brit, a sardonic defence mechanism. And Kanga has made this ironic, self-mocking tone the cornerstone of his style.

However, this quality of nonchalance and understatement, though it makes the novel extremely readable, is also a limiting factor. Kanga appears to be walking a tightrope between depth and sentimental-



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ity, and in his unexceptionable resolve to avoid the latter, he runs the risk of losing the former. The determined lightness of his tone is at variance with the poignancy of his subject, and while one applauds his intention of avoiding self-pity and making light of his situation, one feels that he has let slip the opportunity for a deeper exploration of human psychology: the hopes, fears, frailties and motivation not only of his protagonist, but of the people around him.

This is all the more sad since Kanga is certainly capable of such depth, a fact which is evident from several beautifully evocative passages of sensitive writing which feature through the novel.

As a corollary, we find that the progression of Daryus as a human being in his effort of trying to grow is not adequate. In spite of the self-realization and self-acceptance, at the end of the novel he remains fundamentally the same. Perhaps this is also due to the episodic nature of the narrative which precludes a systematic development of character.

Stylistically, the novel is light and cleverly constructed; the language flows with a crafted ease that makes for absorbing reading so that the book is difficult to

put down. A definite plus point is Kanga's clever use of words and neat turn of phrase, often for comic or ironic effect.

He makes gentle fun of life around him: the Parsi community from which he comes, the characters he meets: "She wept in words, like someone from a comic strip. 'Boo-hoo,' she sobbed, 'Boo-hoo-hoo.'" There are some unashamedly hilarious incidents such as the one when his aunt Jeroo thought, as a teenager, that she was pregnant and had to have the facts of life explained to her; or the fight between his parents when his father triumphantly brought home a bright red bucket, fondly imagining that it would match their blue bathroom.

For all that, there are certain sections that somehow do not ring true, and most of these have to do with dialogue. There are several instances when Kanga has not caught the rhythm of colloquial speech and his conversations are a trifle stilted. "The Muslims," says Daryus's mother, "are the traditional, nay, the historical enemies of the Parsis. And to give yourself to one of them is a shameful act of betrayal, nay, high treason."

Content-wise it is unusual, to say the least, for children in Indian families (even

well-to-do Parsi ones) to call their parents by their first names, and one is not sure whether family conversations in Indian homes include the uninhibited discussions on sexual matters that we hear in the Kotwal family. Passages like these, as well as some of the descriptions of Udipi restaurants and Parsi fire-temples lead one to suspect that Kanga had his eye on the Western audience, which is perhaps justifiable but which makes the writing that much less authentic for Indian readers.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the book is a moving, honest depiction of a human being struggling to cope with life as it is dealt out to him. On the basis of this most promising first novel, one is sure that Firdaus Kanga will grow from strength to strength as a novelist.

Firdaus Kanga is a freelance writer who uses his handicap to his advantage - writing books on the disabled. After his first novel, the 30-year-old was commissioned by Bloomsbury London to write a second book, titled Heaven on Wheels.



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The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 19 and 49 years, the arithmetic mean — the total of individual ages divided by the total number of brides — being 26 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 25 and 62, averaging at 32 years.

As compared to 28 births in Bombay there were 72 deaths in November. Eighteen patients fell prey to heart disease, while pneumonia and lung disease claimed 13 victims. Old age and general debility took seven lives, septicemia claimed five and brain disease, four. Three victims each succumbed to hypertension, stroke and accidents while liver disease and cancer claimed two lives each. There were isolated cases of uremia, nervous disorder, gastro intestinal bleeding, tuberculosis, diabetes, gastro enteritis, meconium (discharge from the bowels of a new born baby) aspiration, urinary tract infection, tumor, high blood pressure, kidney failure and anemia. A seven-hour-baby succumbed to anencephaly (absence of the brain). Two babies, aged two days and two months

and four youths (aged 20, 24, 28 and 33) were also lost to the community. The oldest to die was a 101-year-old lady.

This month's list of Bombay deaths includes one Jal Umrigar. He was reportedly a pavement dweller who died on the streets on October 30, 1990 and was interred at the Doongerwadi on November 3. A report in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* (November 4, 1990) requested his next of kin, if any, to get in touch with the Doongerwadi's supervisor.

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.

AHMEDNAGAR

Born

A boy, *Nawazish*, to *Dilber* and *Faroukh Master*, brother to *Pheroze*, on September 24, 1990

BOMBAY

Born

A boy, *Riyan*, to *Dilshad* and *Paurushasp Mody*; July 2
A girl to *Aban* and *Aspi Edulkaka*; November 1
A girl to *Pervin* and *Behram Irani*; November 2
A girl, *Ava*, to *Bakhtawar* and *Dhunjii Titina*; November 3
A boy to *Homai* and *Pervez Karanjia*; November 5
A girl to *Binaifer* and *Homiya Mistry*; November 5
A girl to *Parveen* and *Aspi Irani*; November 8
A girl to *Persis* and *Gev Fitter*; November 10
A boy to *Tinaz* and *Farokh Balaporia*; November 12
A boy to *Kashmira* and *Hirji Elavia*; November 13
A girl to *Parizad* and *Adil Mistry*; November 13

A boy to *Nazneen* and *Dinyar Balsara*; November 14
A boy to *Zenobia* and *Dinshaw Golwalla*; November 14
A girl to *Behnaz* and *Bahram Pashutanizadeh*; November 14
A boy, *Perseus*, to *Aban* and *Vistasp Patel*; November 14
A girl to *Kety* and *Dara Palsetia*; November 15
A boy to *Madhvi* and *Rumi Unwalla*; November 16
A boy to *Kashmira* and *Mackie Gamadia*; November 18
A boy to *Yasmin* and *Jinmy Cama*; November 19
A boy to *Maharukh* and *Manek Katpitia*; November 19
A girl to *Paruchisty* and *Hoshang Tavadia*; November 20
A boy to *Khorshed* and *Rohinton Pagdiwala*; November 21
A girl to *Shernaz* and *Dinyar Turel*; November 21
A girl to *Sanobar* and *Adil Bharucha*; November 22
A girl to *Rashna* and *Naozer Baldawala*; November 27
A boy to *Meher* and *Gev Karai*;

November 28
A girl to *Farzana* and *Shahrugh Golwalla*; November 29
A boy to *Homayoun* and *Afsarkeshmiri Dhemeri*; November 30
A boy, *Arzan*, to *Zarin* and *Viraf Godrej*, brother to *Yohan*; November 30
A girl to *Navaz* and *Darayus Marolia*; November 30

Married

Bakhtawar Nariman Patel and *Cyrus Phiroze Shroff*; October 28
Pervin Shapoor Yaktai and *Jehangir Kersi Irani*; November 1
Behroz Jal Rivetna and *Farrokh Jamshed Cooper*; November 2
Hutokshi Marzban Bode and *Kurush Minoo Mehta*; November 2
Hufrish Merwan Falhazada and *Sheriar Khodabux Raisi*; November 4
Navaz Rusi Vakil and *Zarir Rustomji Anklesaria*; November 8
Bakhtawar Yazdi Mistry and *Rumi Burjor Battiwala*; November 8
Nilufer Dhanjishaw Fanibanda and *Vispi Cava Damania*; November 8
Soona Jamshed Mehta and *Rusi Hiraji Patel*; November 9
Roshni Daraius Amaria of *Poona* and *Purvez Maneck Umrigar*; November 9
Jer Jehangir Tamna and *Sorab Nadirshaw Dubash*; November 11
Jeroo Keki Mistry and *Aspi Minoo Forbes*; November 11
Dilnavaz Minoo Katpitia and *Minoo Dorab Mehta*; November 11
Hufriz Keki Elavia and *Rumi Dara Sethna*; November 11
Ereen Firoze Mahableshwarvala and *Mehernooz Minoo Pithawalla*; November 12
Farida Agar Malaowalla and *Khushroo Hoshang Sukhadia*; November 13
Arnaaz Behram Dumasia of *Delhi* and *Vistasp Phiroze Antia*; November 14
Yasmeen Jemi Zaveri of *Vapi* and *Sarosh Jal Medhora* of *Daman*; November 15
Pearl Adil Vadoliwala and *Kaus Peshotan Peer*; November 15
Hutoxi Jehangir Bagli and *Vispi Jamshed Panthaki*;

November 18
Rashna Dinshaw Patel and *Khushroo Hoshie Amroliwalla*; November 23
Teenaz Noshir Colabavala and *Dinyar Dhanjishaw Siganporia*; November 23
Afsaneh Dinyar Salamati and *Cawsi Keki Randeria*; November 24
Mahrookh Soli Sheriar and *Rumi Homi Tangri*; November 24
Navaz Mehar Gimi and *Pesi Adi Bhomisa*; November 27
Farzana Jamshed Irani and *Mervan Rustom Irani* of *Thane*; November 29

Died

Jal Umrigar (56), address unknown; October 30
Farokh Fardoonji Tarapore (77), B/15, Godrej Baug, Off Nepean Sea Rd, 400026; October 31
Khorshed Burjor Dastur (75), Ramesh Bldg, Powalla St, Charni Rd, 400004; November 1
Edi Jamshedji Mahava (69), Boyce-Malegaumwala Bldg, 669, Katrak Rd, Wadala, 400031; November 1
Nergish Bomanshah Mistry (80), 2, Shanker Sagar, Sophia College Rd, 400026; November 1
Sakarbai Rustomji Batliwala (80), M/34, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; November 2
Phirojshah Cawasji Billimoria (81), Indian Surveyor Bldg, P. Demello Rd, Fort, 400001; November 2
Jehangir Sorabjee Ghadiali (83), Mancherji Seth Bldg, 262, Tardeo, 400007; November 2
Gulnar Nariman Irani (78), B, Sunawalla Bldg, Opp Tardeo Police Stn, 400007; November 4
Sorabji Bomanji Irani (79), Zaveri Bldg, Opp Albless Baug, Charni Rd, 400004; November 4
Rusi Pestonji Khambatta (53), N/1, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; November 4
Keki Dinshawji Doctor (86), A/5, Bldg no 11, Govt Qrts, Haji Ali, 400034; November 5
Alamai Khurshedji Wadia (85), 15, Manisha, Kastur Park, Shimpoli, Borivli (W), 400092;

November 5
Homi Shapurji Mehta (90), 127, Cumballa Hill, Kemps Corner, 400036; November 6
Adi Rustomji Mody (65), Haji Mohammed Bldg, A. K. Marg, 400036; November 6
Khorshedbanoo Horroshi Shroff (96), 3, Marine Chmbs, Marine Lines, 400020; November 6
Ardeshir Naoroji Vatcha (86), 19, Shanti Niketan, L. J. Rd, Mahim, 400016; November 6
Pirojhai Burjorji Karanjia (101), N/23, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; November 7
Fali Manecksha Khambhatta (75), 162, Mistry Bldg, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; November 7
Khorshed Jehangir Mistry (84), Meherally Mans, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculla, 400027; November 7
Homi Pestonji Sethna (78), X-101/15, Godrej Staff Qrs, Vikhroli, 400079; November 7
Roda Dhunjisha Bamji (77), Laemeraade, 14th Rd, Khar, 400052; November 8
Keki Framroze Randeria (71), R. C. Sethna Bldg, Parel Tank Rd, 400012; November 8
Nariman Pestonji Davierwalla (61), Victoria Bldg, Bazar Gate St, Fort, 400001; November 9
Cawasji Jehangir Batliboi (84), Pleasant Park, 48, Ridge Rd, Malabar Hill, 400006; November 10
Fali Homi Dalal (43), D-8, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; November 10
Shirin Jehangirji Vimadala (91), Kismat, 122/A, S. B. Singh Rd, 400005; November 10
Freny Gustadji Anklesaria (64), Ratan Tata Hostel, Hughes Rd, 400007; November 11
Rustom Fardunji Desai (89), Rock View, Raghavji Rd, 400036; November 11
Cyrus Pesi Gubba (24), 1/1, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; November 11
Nargish Dhanjisha Waghchhipawala (28), 10/B, Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; November 11
Firoze Rusi Kuka (33), Vevai Villa, 686, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 12
Pesi Nusserwanji Mohta (61), B/2, Shirin Mans, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; November 12
Tehmi Minoo Pastakia (63),

6/1, Khan Est, Mahim Stn Rd, 400016; November 12
Nadirshaw Fardoonji Bhujwala (69), Camp Bhuj, Kutch, 370001; November 13
Soli Jehangirji Fitter (54), Room No 12, 127, RPF Clny, Mahalaxmi, 400013; November 13
Minocher Bomanji Ichaporia (79), Windmere, Cuffe Parade, 400005; November 13
Ruzbeh Adi Kapadia (20), 654, Firdoshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 13
Mani Phirozshaw Daruwalla (75), 28/12, Phirozshaw Ngr, Vikhroli, 400079; November 14
Mehera Sorabji Chothia (87), 3/3, Jehangir Mans, Anandilal Podar Marg, 400020; November 15
Coomi Gustadji Mistry (79), Patel Charity Bldg, Forjett St, Gowalia Tank, 400036; November 15
Manchersha Navroji Daruwalla (75), Sidhva Bldg, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; November 16
Nariman Hormasji Gandhi (89), 17/A, Anand Ngr, Forjett St, 400036; November 16
Jalejar Cawasji Umrigar (86), 166/1, Maqbool Bldg, Hill Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; November 17
Piroza Framroze Mistry (80), Sethna Bldg, 689, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 18
Jahangir Pestonjee Pathan (89), C/o C. J. Majai, 44, Pali Hill, Bandra, 400050; November 18
Parvez Kaikhshru Sakalat (50), 603, Jatan Apts, Malad (E), 400097; November 18
Freny Pirojshah Palkhiwalla (70), C/4, Bldg No 7, Tata Blocks, Sir C. J. Clny, Tardeo, 400034; November 19
Kali Nawroji Pundole (65), Ratan Manzil, Fazul Rd, Colaba, 400005; November 20
Burjorji Manchersha Nariman (75), 11, Hill Rd, Rajaram Wadi, Bandra (W), 400050; November 21
Dinshaw Hormusji Petit (87), Ram Mans, Nepean Sea Rd, 400006; November 21
Ruzbe Jiju Sachinwala (2 mths), 14, Abbasi Bldg, Opp Falkland Post Office, 400008; November 21
Dara Dadabhoy Batliwalla (66), G/9, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; November 22
Sheriar Behram Jamshedian (76), 2, Lalchand Bldg, Oliver

Rd, Colaba, 400039; November 22
Hormusji Nusserwanji Todiwalla (90), D/10, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; November 22
Ardeshir Byramji Wadia (73), 554/C, Kanaiya Bhuvan, Chira Bazar, 400002; November 22
Eruch Bapooji Arya (91), R/4, Motlibai Wadia Block No 1, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; November 23
Gaimai Phiroze Bharucha (85), 4, Rocky Hill Flats, N. Dabholkar Rd, 400006; November 24
Hormusji Cawasji Kudianawala (86), A/2, Sterling Apts, Peddar Rd, 400026; November 24
Minoo Fardoonji Zavery (61), 5/1, Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; November 24
Baby girl of Sanobar Adil Bharucha (2 days), 9, Patel Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; November 25
Baby of Patricia F. Pithawalla (7 hrs), 42, H/57, Indian Airlines Clny, Kalina, Santacruz, 400050; November 25
Virbaiji Nawroji Adenwalla (89), 85, Old Petit Mans, Sleater Rd, 400007; November 26
Soonamai Rustomji Billimoria (76), E, Bhiwandiwala Ter, Dhobitalao, 400020; November 26
Jahanbux Burjorji Bhathena (47), Mottibai Wadia Bldg, Zoroastrian Clny, Chikalwadi, 400007; November 27
Homai Rustamji Irani (70), 749, Mithoo Villa, Rd No 6, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 27
Shireen Nawroji Nariawalla (88), Jasmine Lodge, 82, Nepean Sea Rd, 400006; November 27
Shavakshaw Erachshaw Cooper (76), Talaty Bldg, 194, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; November 28
Godrej Kaikhusharoo Sahukar (75), Palkhiwala Hse, Dhobitalao, 400002; November 28
Jerbai Dinshaw Bokdawalla (82), Keki Hse, 659, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 29
Nowrojee Cawasjee Hormusjee (84), Band View, 665, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 29
Fareedoon Behramsha Kerawalla (80), B/16, Alka, Caesar Rd, Amboli, Andheri (W), 400058;

November 29
Chandan Pestonji Warden (88), B/33, Pipewala Bldg, S. B. Rd, Colaba, 400005; November 29
Mitha Bomanshaw Surtee (80), 51, Hill Rd, Opp Bandra Ice Factory, Bandra (W), 400050, November 30

KANPUR

Died
Roshan Adi Merchant;
 September 1

NAGPUR

Died
Piroja Sohrab Masina;
 September 16

SURAT

Died
Bamanshaw Hormusji Mehernosh (72), Bibini Wadi, Saiyedpura, 395003; October 30
Minocher Edulji Bhesania (75), Pundole Block, Shahpore, 395003; November 3
Sorabji Rustomji Bhamgara (80), Maachli Pith, 395003; November 7
Rodabeh Sorab Sanga (83), Mohta Mohalla, Rustompura, 395002; November 8
Jal Jamshedji Elavia (63), Kharva Mohalla, Nanpura, 395001; November 13
Phirozshaw Kaikhushru Dastooi (74), Pushpa Apt, Maachli Pith, 395003; November 16
Kashmira Aspi Sumadia (12), Man Sahel Hse, Bhavnagri Mohalla, 395003; November 17

★ ★ ★

BRENTWOOD, USA

Married
Van Anh Nguyen and Nariman Minu Dastur; August 18

SAN RAMON, CALIFORNIA

Died
Keki Mistry, husband of Nergish and father of Niloufer Vania and Kersi; July 1

VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

Born
 A boy, Zuben, to Nilufer and Hormaz Rustomjee;
 September 14

TOTALS (for this issue)

Births: Boys 17, Girls 15
 Marriages: Parsi 26
 Intercommunal 1
 Deaths: 84

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

Marshalling men and machines



"The sky is the limit," was one of the phrases oft repeated by Jeejeebhoy Nanabhoy Marshall, the founder and chairman of the Rs 15 crore Marshall Group of Companies as he set about establishing his chain of industries. Today the 15 companies that fall under the JNM banner are a testimony to the founder's "will, dedication and firm resolve never to accept second best," noted an editorial in the October '90 issue of *JNM Topics*, the house journal of the Company. Almost until his demise on July 19, 1990 following cancer, the 94-year-old chairman continued to keep a fatherly eye over his industrial enterprises even though towards the end he preferred to concentrate his energies on the Marshall Charitable Foundation that he had established and his poultry farm in Deolali.

Initially starting with a small corpus of three and a half lakh rupees, presently the Marshall Charitable Foundation has about Rs 36.5 lakhs in its coffers, according to a Company spokesman. Since its inception in 1976, the Foundation has been receiving stipulated monthly donations from Marshall companies like J. N. Marshall, Spirax Marshall, Simmonds Marshall and Cambridge Instruments.

Marshall himself would personally study the applications and grant aid to those whom he felt were deserving, his son Shiamak speaks of his father's charitable disposition. He was rather keen to donate towards solving the housing problem of the Parsi community. But since the terms for the donation were not mutually acceptable to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and the family, he was sorry that this dream of his could not take shape, informs Shiamak who manages the company's steel department and Simmonds Marshall Ltd from his base in Bombay.

"The grand old pioneer of poultry farming in India" was how *The Poultry Times* described Marshall who had founded the 75,000 egg layer unit in Deolali. Experimenting with chicken was just his hobby in his early days which later took the shape of a full-fledged business catering to the egg needs of five-star hotels in Bombay, clubs and restaurants, mentions a press release from the Company.

Poultry was a subject that preoccupied him even when he had crossed the 90-year milestone. However, the reins of his industrial concerns he had willingly

handed over to different members of his family. "Considering that he had built up the business himself, he was remarkably uninterfering," mentions Shiamak. "His tactic was to throw you to the wolves so that the responsibility was all yours."

Under the leadership of JN, as the founder was respectfully referred to, the Company came to be recognized as a leading manufacturer and supplier of engineering products, energy management systems and other high technology electronic instrumentation.

"Many look back to their early days under Mr J. N. Marshall as the period which made the greatest contribution to their careers," noted a condolence resolution passed by the board of directors of the Marshall Group.

The perceptive industrialist "always got his way through winning and influencing people," remembers his son-in-law Darius Forbes who, based in Poona, looked after JNM's Spirax division and Cambridge Industries. JN had a reputation for befriending all whom he met and was most comfortable when he had people around him. "We often found him having supper at home with a total stranger, someone he had encountered on

his walk that evening," recounts Forbes.

His interest in travelling enabled him to promote his business connections with his collaborators overseas. For 30 years without a break, he regularly visited his principals — Spirax in the UK and SKODA in Czechoslovakia. JN first acted as their distributor before he took to manufacturing equipment indigenously.

Product diversity gives one greater flexibility, he believed, as he set about supplying wheels and axles to the Indian Railways, acting as agents of plywood companies, providing pickers to textile mills all over the country, manufacturing diamond tools or specialized nylon self-locking nuts for the automobile industry. "JN's decisions seemed abrupt, but the quickness was born out of his years of ability in decision-making," wrote educationist Bejon Desai in his biography of JN. A "realist as well as an idealist," summarized legal luminary S. R. Vakil, when referring to JN's approach in life, in his foreword to Desai's biography.

Coal and lubricating oil were the first

media in which JN started trading. On completing his graduation in economics and history from Wilson College, JN and his brother Maneckji were given Rs 10,000 each by their father to establish themselves as partners in business. They got good business orders but later JN preferred to speculate in the stock market at Bombay and closed down their Ahmedabad office. A fall in the stock market made JN take to business again with his newly constituted firm, J. N. Marshall and Company, transacting with his principals AEG India Electric Co Ltd, SKODA and many other international and national firms.

Since his school days, he was first at the Proprietary High School and later at the New High School (subsequently renamed Bharda School), JN was interested in sports. He excelled in bridge and billiards and was good at tennis and chess too. His bridge bidding was considered so confounding that when anyone asked him which convention he played, he would confidently answer, "The Marshall convention, of course," recalls

his grandson Naushad Forbes. In fact, he claimed that for three years he supported his family, in style, on his daily bridge winnings at the Willingdon Club, Naushad added.

He was a regular frequenter at the Reform Club in Ahmedabad, the Parsi Gymkhana in Mahabaleshwar, the Bombay Gymkhana and also the Ripon Club. As chairman of the Ripon Club in its centenary year, he donated Rs 25,000 towards the Club's activities.

JN liked to dress well and be seen in the best circles. Equally conscious was he of his responsibility towards the poor. Just as he strove to get maximum returns from his industrial pursuits, he saw to it that his well-earned money was used effectively. States his daughter Maharookh, "He will be one to be remembered for his...business acumen, coupled with compassion and a readiness to help anyone in distress or in need."

The industrialist is survived by Maharookh and Shiamak.

Written by Parinaz Gandhi

CONFRONTED BY CONTROVERSIES

reconsidered draft officially to the Federation that the matter will be taken up for discussion.

After a stalemate for several years, the WZO has verbally made a fresh proposal: the formation of a council of anjuman within the WZO. This will be taken up for discussion after a detailed written proposal is received by the Federation. In 1986, the WZO's proposition of a bi-cameral system had been rejected by the Federation.

Shortage of social workers

The main problem for the BPP at present is finding qualified social workers to implement their different schemes. "To enthrone Parsi youngsters to take to social work, the trustees were considering subsidizing a three-year degree course at TISS (Tata Institute of Social Sciences) for a student who signed a three-year work bond, mentioned Rustom Anklesaria, chief executive of the BPP. While the preference would be for Parsi social workers, they were willing to employ even non-Parsis.

Helping the drug victims in the community is a long-standing project of the BPP on which they have spent lakhs but successfully treated only four of the 20

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addicts.

A new scheme is on to induce couples to produce more children by contributing towards the costs incurred on leaving the child at a day-care center. Though the BPP's original stipulation was to give monthly help of Rs 175 to families whose monthly income is less than Rs 4,500, Gandhi suggested that this gift should not be considered a relief, but reward or recognition to be shown irrespective of the family income. Meanwhile, the findings of the BPP survey correlating housing with fertility are expected by February '91.

It was left to Desai "as the last remnant of the BPP (his co-trustees had left earlier)" to wind up the discussions, and thank the DPA for making excellent provisions for the delegates. Recommending that the delegates should be "constructive in their approach, tolerant..." Desai summed up, "We may air our differences, there may be interludes of unhappiness but the common goal should be the well-being of the community."

Those attending the Federation meeting were: Ms Dolat Debara and Porus Debara from Agra; Keki Pavri and Porus Karanjawalla from Ahmedabad; Firoze Doc-

tor and Adarbad Motafram from Ajmer; Capt Homi Dandiwalla from Allahabad; Dhanjisha Dumasia from Bardoli; Dr Aspi Golwalla, Eruch Desai, Jamshed Guzder, Rustom Anklesaria and Peshotan Nargolwala from Bombay; Marzban Batlivala and Yezdi Batlivala from Calcutta; Lt Gen Adi Sethna, Zal Nowsherwanji, Keki Gandhi, Dadi Mistry, Noshir Captain, Farrokh Rustomji and Homi Taleyarkhan from Delhi; Eruch Dumasia and Kerman Dumasia from Dumas; Aspi Irani and Pervez Irani from the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman; N. A. Batlivala and Kerman Batlivala from Jabalpur; B. Balsara from Jamshedpur; Ronny Dick, Ms Dinaz Bhagat and Neville Dick from Jhansi; Dr Meherji M. Cooper from Madras; Capt Dhunjishaw Marker from Mhow; Jamshed Cassad from Nagpur; Brig Noshir Grant from Pune; Dr Sam Bhacca, Sorab Katpitia, Percy Variava, Cyrus Turel, Freddy Mistry, Nevil Patel, Firoz Amaria and Nevil Chothia from Surat; Bazun Dittia and Jehangir Bisney from Secunderabad and Hyderabad; Jal Postwalla from Visakhapatnam; Boman Cama and Ms Roxanne Kavarana from Vadodara; and Dinshaw Tamboly from the WZO. The Press was represented by Parsiana.

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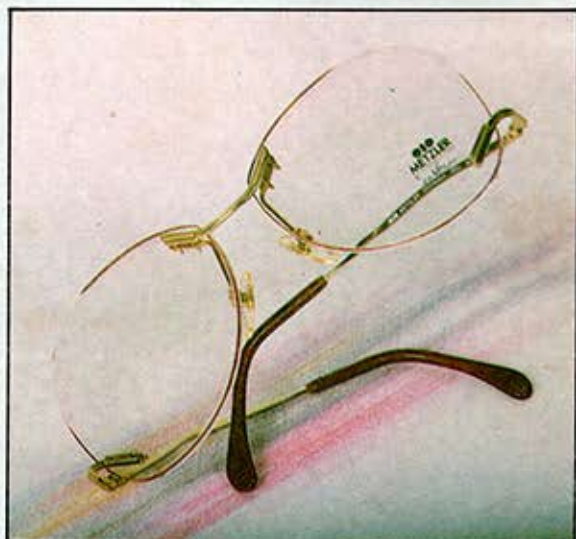
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