

Rohinton Nariman Speaks at Delhi Parsi Anjuman's Centenary



Click the link below to hear the speech:

<https://youtu.be/IQVHanIXwSU>

SC Hears Landmark Challenge to 1908 Ruling on Parsi Identity: A Fight for Gender Equality

In a historic hearing that could reshape the future of the Parsi community in India, the Supreme Court on Tuesday began examining a constitutional challenge to a colonial-era ruling that has long determined who is considered a Parsi—and the discrimination it has baked into community identity for over a century.

Senior Advocate Percival Billimoria didn't mince words, describing the

1908 Bombay High Court judgment in “Dinshaw M. Petit v. Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy” as “a blot on the fair name of an otherwise industrious and loved community” and “blatantly discriminatory to women.” The case, brought by a minor child through his mother (a Parsi woman married to a non-Parsi man), challenges the stark asymmetry that has governed Parsi identity: children of Parsi men married to non-Parsi women are accepted as Parsis, while children of

Parsi women married to non-Parsi men are not.

Appearing before a bench of Justice B.V. Nagarathna and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, Billimoria argued that this distinction isn't rooted in Zoroastrian theology but in a racial construct that treats “Parsi” as an ethnic category rather than a religious one. He pointed to the 1908 judgment's troubling language about inter-racial marriage “diluting and

contaminating" the gene pool—reasoning he bluntly told the court "belongs to an era that produced a holocaust."

The petition argues that this colonial framework, steeped in racial and caste-based thinking, has no place in modern constitutional India, where fundamental rights under Articles 14, 15, 19, 21, and 25 guarantee equality and non-discrimination. The petitioners aren't seeking to unsettle the original trust-law question from 1908, but rather to stop its extrapolation into social and religious

ostracization of Parsi women and their children.

What makes this case particularly significant is its timing and the questions it raises about identity, faith, and gender justice in minority communities. The petition seeks declarations that the 1908 ruling is bad law, that excommunicating Parsi women for interfaith marriage is unconstitutional, and that children raised in the Zoroastrian faith cannot be discriminated against simply because their father isn't considered Parsi.

As Billimoria emphasized, this isn't a theological debate—it's a constitutional one about whether a colonial relic can continue to operate in a democracy committed to equality. The court has scheduled the next hearing for April 7, 2026, and the entire community—indeed, all those watching the intersection of faith and fundamental rights—will be waiting. This could be a watershed moment for gender justice within one of India's smallest but most historically significant communities.

Kersi Randeria & His Son Booked in ₹14 cr SRA Fraud Case

In a troubling development from Ghatkopar, the Mumbai police have registered a case against builder Kersi Jamshed Randeria and his son Astaad Kersi Randeria for allegedly cheating a family out of a whopping Rs 14 crore in connection with two Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) projects. The complainant, chartered accountant Anil Lohia, claims he was persuaded to invest in the Jeevdaya and Saikripa housing societies after Astaad—an old acquaintance of his

lawyer son—promised massive profits and valuable development rights. A joint venture agreement was signed in July 2022, and the Lohia family transferred funds as agreed, but things soon took an ugly turn.

According to the FIR, the Randerias allegedly diverted funds for everything from a luxury wristwatch to cash withdrawals and payments to other firms, all while keeping the investors in the dark about bank

statements and accounts. Even after project buildings were completed, questionable payments continued to flow. The complaint also alleges that Rs 12 crore from the sale of Transferable Development Rights was parked in the wrong accounts and misused. The case has now been transferred to the Economic Offences Wing for a deeper probe. A sobering reminder that even old acquaintances need to be vetted when crores are on the line!

Zarathustra in Goa: A Stunning Artistic Discovery



In a marvelous twist of art history, a previously unknown 1964 painting of Prophet Zarathustra has emerged from the archives of the Xavier Centre of Historical Research in Goa, revealing a beautiful moment of cross-cultural reverence.

The artist? Angelo da Fonseca, a pioneering Goan Christian modernist who trained under Tagore in Shantiniketan and dedicated his life to depicting spiritual themes in Indian idioms. His "Spitama Zarathustra" shows the prophet as a young, dynamic figure holding the sacred fire—a detail that art critic Nancy Adajania notes may reflect Fonseca's own Christian consciousness

intertwining with Zoroastrian imagery to create something entirely new and tender.

What makes this discovery so enchanting is its journey: Fonseca's widow preserved his archives for decades, trusting that recognition would come, before donating them to the Jesuit-run research centre. Now, thanks to

scholar-priest Delio de Mendonça's dedicated efforts, this luminous painting finally sees the light of day. It's a rare instance of a non-Parsi artist depicting Zarathustra with such warmth and grace—proof that beauty truly has no borders, and that the divine can be imagined through any loving heart.

Mumbai's Parsi Youth Set to Host the World with a Fresh, Modern Vibe



(Standing left to right) Zenya Pavri, Jennifer Batliwalla, Sanaya Mehta, Burjis Zaveri; (sitting) Viraf Mehta and Pearl Tirandaz.

before! In December 2027, the city will host the 9th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress for the very first time, and it's being spearheaded by a dynamic group of young Parsis who grew up in the very lanes of Dadar, Tardeo, and Khareghat Colony. Meet the spirited co-chairs—Sanaya Mehta, Zenya Pavri, Burjis Zaveri, and Jennifer Batliwalla—who are on a mission to show that their community is so much more than a sepia-tinted postcard. Their message? Tradition and modernity aren't rivals;

Get ready, because Mumbai is about to welcome the global Zoroastrian community like never

they're dance partners. From restoring vintage cars to launching startups, this generation is proving that you can honour your roots while confidently striding into the future.

The congress promises to be anything but stuffy. Think honest, open conversations about identity, mental health, migration, and belonging—topics that have often stayed in the shadows but are now taking centre stage. The organizing style is refreshingly flat and collaborative, with no single figurehead but plenty of passionate voices shaping the dialogue. As mentor Pearl Tirandaz puts it, this isn't about rebellion—it's about continuity with courage. So, expect less lecturing and more real talk, all aimed at building a community that feels inclusive, connected, and ready for tomorrow. It's going to be a celebration of Parsi spirit, past, present, and wonderfully alive!

Dr. Cyrus Poonawalla's ₹10 Crore Donation Boosts Global Zoroastrian Welfare Initiatives



In a magnificent show of generosity, vaccine pioneer Dr. Cyrus Poonawalla has donated ₹10 crore to the Global Council of Zoroastrians Trust (GCZT), marking the

Trust's first major contribution since its formation in December 2020. The substantial gift will help activate community welfare programs that have been in development, with early plans pointing toward free insurance support for vulnerable community members and targeted assistance for mobeds serving Zoroastrian communities across India. It's exactly the kind of practical,

compassionate support that community leaders have long identified as a priority.

The GCZT, chaired by Neville Shroff of Hong Kong, operates with a thoughtful bicameral structure combining a Board of Trustees and a Global Working Group to ensure both strong governance and broad participation across regions. With a distinguished list of trustees including

Sam Balsara, Viraf Mehta, and Malcolm Deboo, and advisors like Rati Godrej and Noshir Dadrawala, the Trust is well-positioned to put these funds to meaningful use. As GCZT moves from planning to implementation, this landmark donation feels like a true vote of confidence in the future of community-led welfare—proof that when vision meets generosity, beautiful things begin to take shape!

Parsi Community Sees Heated Debate Over ZYNG 2026 Calendar: Tradition vs. Modern Expression



A spirited debate has once again emerged within Mumbai's Parsi community following the release of an annual calendar by ZYNG (Zoroastrian Youth for Next Generation), with some members voicing concerns about its depiction of young

Parsis and calling for accountability from the Bombay Parsi Panchayet.

A small group of critics have described the calendar's content as a violation of religious traditions, particularly objecting to images showing young women without the sacred sudreh-kushti. They've also raised questions about the use of community funds and suggested political motives ahead of the 2027 BPP elections.

It's worth noting, however, that this protest represents a handful of voices on an email list and Facebook group—not the broader community sentiment. The BPP has clarified it is no longer involved with the calendar, and ZYNG continues its vital work mentoring youth and organizing the upcoming 9th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress 2027.

The real questions here are: How different is this *moral policing* from that prevalent in certain other communities that most Parsis look down upon? Can a motley group of people impose their “code of decency” on a growing body of Gen-Z that defies it because that code is no longer in tune with their generation? Why has this group never raised the sudreh-kusti issue when a Parsi swimmer or wrestler or body builder is pictured without temporarily wearing those sacred garments? Charles Darwin famously said: “*It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one that is most adaptable to change.*”

BASZA expresses deep gratitude to publications like Parsi Khabar, Jam é Jamshed, Parsi Times, Times of India, FPJ and others, from where we may have condensed the published items and images in this issue with editorial changes.

Behramji Malabari: The Parsi Poet Who Fought for Hindu Widows and Changed Indian Law



Here's a name that deserves a standing ovation—Behramji Malabari! This Parsi journalist and poet from 19th-century India took on the giants of his time to fight for the rights of Hindu women, and his legacy still echoes today. From calling out child marriage as "matrimonial slavery" to championing the cause of young widows, Malabari used his pen as a powerful weapon for social justice. Despite facing fierce opposition from figures like Bal Gangadhar Tilak—who questioned how a Parsi could dare to reform Hindu practices—Malabari never backed down. His passionate writings, including his famous

"Notes on Child Marriage and Widow Remarriage", directly influenced the passage of the Age of Consent Bill in 1891, which raised the legal age for marriage and gave young women like Rukhmbai a fighting chance at justice.

But Malabari's journey to becoming a reformer was anything but easy. Born into poverty in Baroda and orphaned young, he scraped together a living in Mumbai before his poetic talent caught the eye of influential mentors. Though he cherished poetry, he felt a higher calling to serve his country through journalism, transforming a struggling paper called "The Indian Spectator" into one of the most respected voices of its time. His courage to speak up for those who couldn't speak for themselves—Hindu widows and child brides—reminds us that compassion knows no community boundaries. Now that's a hero worth remembering!

Mumbai's Historic Wadia Clock Tower Gets a Glowing Makeover



If you've strolled through Mumbai's Fort area, you've surely noticed the elegant Bomanjee Hormarjee Wadia Clock Tower standing gracefully since 1882. Well, good news—this beloved landmark has just undergone a stunning restoration, and it's shining brighter than ever! Unveiled on February 9, 2026, the tower now boasts strengthened basalt

stonework, meticulously repaired architectural details, a fully functioning clock mechanism, and warm night-time lighting that makes it glow like a jewel. But here's the heartwarming part: this revival was a labour of love powered by an extraordinary collaboration between the Rustomjee Group, the Brihanmumbai Municipal

Corporation, and the Kala Ghoda Association. Talk about community spirit!

What makes this restoration truly special is the philosophy behind it. As Boman Rustom Irani of Rustomjee Group beautifully put it, development today isn't just about building new spaces—it's about

honouring continuity, culture, and community. Leading conservation architect Vikas Dilawari brought his magic touch to preserve every intricate detail, from Persian-inspired winged bulls to the sacred flame motifs that whisper stories of the

city's Parsi heritage. And thanks to project visionary Kayomi Engineer's idea of "legacy guardianship," this clock tower isn't just a pretty face—it's a living monument that will now host heritage tours and educational visits for all Mumbaikars to enjoy. So

next time you're in the Fort area, look up at the tower and give a little nod to the team who proved that when citizens, corporations, and civic bodies join hands, magic happens. The clock is ticking, and Mumbai's heart is beating strong!

Dadar Parsee Zoroastrian Cricket Club Turns 100: A Century of Grassroots Glory!

Here's a fantastic milestone for Mumbai cricket lovers—the Dadar Parsee Zoroastrian Cricket Club (affectionately known as "Zopdi") is celebrating its 100th birthday this year, and what a glorious innings it's been!

Founded in 1926 by the visionary Jehangir "Masa" Pithawala, this humble club on Dadkar Maidan has been a quiet powerhouse of talent and discipline for a century. With its founding principles of no membership fees, no smoking, no drinking, and zero card-playing, Masa created a space where young

cricketers could thrive on pure passion and hard work. Over the decades, the club has been nurtured by cricket legends like Madhav Mantri and Naren Tamhane, and has produced or hosted stars like Lalchand Rajput, Chandrakant Pandit, and even the great Dilip Vengsarkar for special matches. Talk about a legacy!

What makes this club truly special is the fierce loyalty and warmth it inspires. Take Mangesh Bhalekar, the straight-talking general secretary who's been the heartbeat of Zopdi since 1975, or players like Deepak

Khanolkar who snared over 500 wickets for the club since his schoolboy days. The stories are endless—from Chandrakant Pandit flying in straight from Australia to play a Comrade Shield semifinal, to little Rohan Gavaskar watching matches with his grandfather Manohar. Through wins and losses (they're now in the E division, but who's counting?), the club has stood for something bigger than trophies: camaraderie, discipline, and that old-school Mumbai maidan spirit. Here's to 100 years of Zopdi—may the next century be just as full of heart, history, and glorious cricket!

Farah Madon Honoured with Order of Australia: Designing a More Inclusive World



Here's a truly inspiring story to brighten your day! Farah Madon, an Australian architect of Parsi heritage, has been awarded the prestigious Member of

the Order of Australia (AM) in the 2026 Australia Day Honours—and her work is literally changing how people experience the world. Early in her career,

Madon had a powerful realization: buildings don't just shelter us; they send messages about who belongs. A step here, a narrow doorway there, and suddenly spaces tell people with disabilities, "You're not welcome." That insight transformed her entire approach to architecture. She shifted from simply creating beautiful spaces to designing with dignity, access, and independence at the core.

Madon went on to become the lead author of the National Disability Insurance Scheme's Specialist Disability Accommodation Design Standard, creating guidelines that ensure housing for people with extreme functional impairments isn't just functional but genuinely empowering.

And here's the beautiful part—for over 15 years, she's also volunteered on Penrith City Council's Access

Committee, keeping her feet firmly planted in grassroots reality. "Grassroots work keeps you honest," she says. "It reminds you that design isn't about elegance on paper—it's about being fit for purpose." Receiving this honour, Madon insists it belongs to the many people with lived experience who shared their stories along the way. What a gorgeous reminder that the best designs are the ones that welcome everyone through the door!

Parsi Gayan Uttejak Mandali: The Music Club That Brought Raagas to the Masses



Ever wondered how Hindustani classical music stepped out of royal courts and into the hearts of everyday people? Well, you can thank a pioneering Parsi music club in Mumbai! The Parsi Gayan Uttejak Mandali, founded in 1870 by journalist Kaikhushro Kabrajee, was Mumbai's very first music

club—and it quietly revolutionized Indian classical music. At a time when Parsi opera was all the rage, this visionary group set out to spread the love for sur and tal among the community. But here's the really exciting part: they didn't stop there. The Mandali opened its doors to everyone and became a launchpad for none other than Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande, the music scholar who went on to write the first modern treatise on Hindustani classical music. Talk about being at the right place to make history!

As royal patronage for classical musicians dried up, Mumbai's bustling port city welcomed these artists with open arms, and the Mandali provided them with new stages—classrooms and concerts instead of stuffy durbars. Visionary leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji even served as president, championing the idea that Indian music was every bit as magnificent as its Western counterparts. By the 1950s, this spark had ignited nearly 150 music schools! Sure, access wasn't perfect (some things take time), but the Mandali's legacy is undeniable: they helped a nation find its melody. Now that's a tune worth celebrating!