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AUGUST 1973



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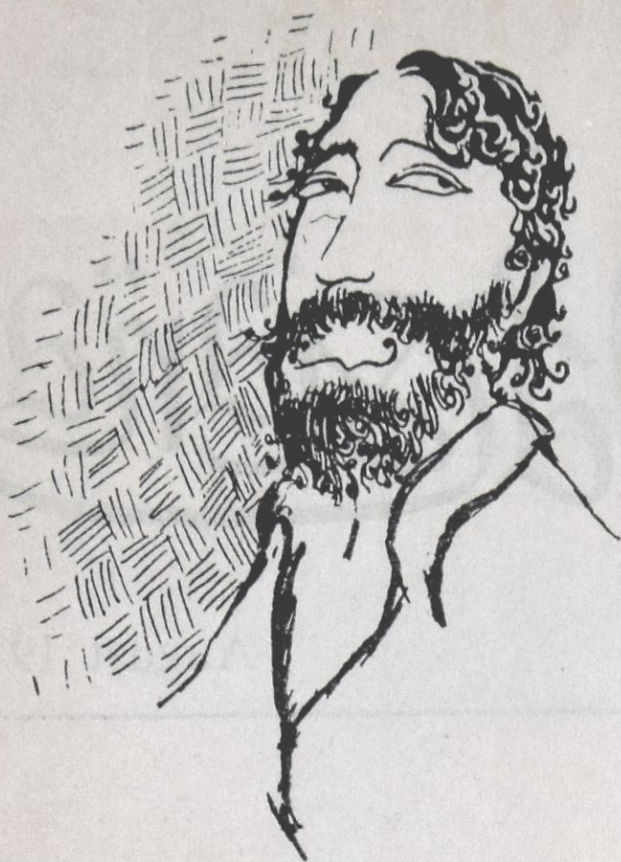
Parsiānā

August 1973

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Bringing out a magazine every month is like having a baby—every month. The first is the most difficult. Thus the August issue had more than its share of birth pangs but we are pleased to announce both parent and offspring are progressing (in which direction has still to be determined). People keep telling us that magazines live a hand-to-mouth existence and that journalists invariably starve. Time and time again when in response to a question I state I am a journalist people ask, “What else do you do?” or “Why don’t you go in for printing?” or “There’s a lot of money in advertising.” One man who was so persistent that only when I leaned forward and told him in confidential tones “You can make a fortune in journalism,” he nodded his assent. No doubt he then started a paper and filed for bankruptcy six months later.

“Bad manners,” said Oscar Wilde, “make a journalist.” So while everyone else in the room is in tears over an event, the journalist is wondering how newsworthy the occurrence is, how it will look on paper, the photo possibilities and so on. We wanted to avoid this pitfall in the August issue by having a good news cover story. But given the state of the community, good news is hard to come by.

The lead story is the outgrowth of a chance remark that Parsis have a high divorce rate. With figures from the Parsee Panchayat and the kind permission of Justice Jal Vimadlal to study divorce complaints filed with the court, we were able to focus on the problem. In the course of interviewing people for the article,

one lawyer, Ms. Freny Ponda offered to do *kaj* (matchmaking) for us. Kersi Khambata, who seems to share his father’s reluctance to giving interviews and photographs, enlightened us to the nuances of the law. Ms. Ponda and Ms. Katy Baam, another lawyer, both felt the economic and social emancipation of women was an important factor in the increase of divorces but as we at *Parsiana* are all gung-ho on women’s liberation we gave that insight short shrift. (Please note the use of Ms. in place of Miss or Mrs.)

Sitting in the Parsee Matrimonial Court is a sobering experience. Every couple that wishes to get married should be made to attend a session. “Love is presumably the basis for marriage but the mutual cessation of love is not a legal ground for divorce,” says Sociologist Bert Adams in his *The American Family*. The only love exhibited in the court is by the pigeons that flutter about, their behaviour verging on the contemptuous.

We tried to interview Savak Vakil and P. P. Khambata for the August issue as they are the newest additions to the Bombay Parsee Panchayat, but with little luck. Savak promised an interview later and P.P. was dubious as to what purpose an interview would serve. So instead we have carried their election manifestoes issued at the time of their respective elections minus photos as they both suffer from modesty.

Covering Prof. Minovi’s talk on the *Shahnameh* was enjoyable because of his keen sense of humour. He is an imposing figure with long silvery hair and bears a resemblance to Peter Sellers. The talks held at the K. R. Cama Institute are often worth attending if one could be spared the introductory and concluding speakers. From half to three quarters of an hour is lost on banalities, inflated rhetoric, repetitious statements, emotionalism, etc.

Dosu Karaka once asked me if I could cook. While I dwelt on the ramifications of this question, and mumbled a modest ‘yes’ he inquired “as well as your mother or aunts?” I nodded a no. And

then levelling his gaze somewhere between my head and the ceiling went on to say “What Indian journalism needs is home cooking.” A sort of *dhansak*, a mixture of this and that. It was well put. But then Karaka has a knack for getting his point of view across. This has not always endeared him to those in power. When a few political hotheads maliciously had him jailed in the last Indo-Pak war, nearly all our prolific editors found the ink in their pens dried up. Geeta Doctor writes of her verbal dual with The Seer.

“Funerals,” wrote the American humorist Don Herold, “are a lost art in the big cities.” Sanobar Chinoy reports from Hyderabad on the *dokhma* dilemma there. We had been advised not to touch the Towers of Silence controversy for “at least three years.” Avoid *all* controversies, they said. But a controversy is a symptom of a greater malady and to ignore it is to fail in our journalistic duty. As for our views on the disposal of the dead, we agree with Mr. A. D. Gorwala, editor of the respected and influential weekly *Opinion*, that it makes no difference what is done to our bodies after we die.

Our magazine is dedicated to all the good people who supported and encouraged us along with a helping hand, a kind word or a smile, especially to our respective families and friends; to Dr. Pesi Warden who parted with *Parsiana* for one rupee in the manner of a father warily giving away his only daughter; to Dinshaw H. Petit, who with the patience of Job and his mutual friendship with Dr. Warden and ourselves, guided us through the intricate legal manoeuvres regarding the transfer; to Ms. Minne M. Boatwala who spent and still spends countless hours enlightening us to the finer points of bringing out a magazine; to Kaikobad and Khushroo Byramjee for guidance on how best to distribute a magazine; to Rusi D. Davar for explaining the difference between credit and debit (also which side of a camera to point at the subject); and finally to the staff and management of the San Francisco *Examiner* and the Hartford *Times* in general and Lyn Ludlow, Alan Cline, Don White and Judy Vik in particular.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE

A. D. GORWALA

One evening in Simla many years ago when Prof. D. R. Gadgil and I were walking down from the temporary office of the Commodities Prices Board in Gorton Castle to his residence near Clarke's Hotel, the conversation turned on caste. Gadgil spoke at length on the evil effect of caste on the Hindus and of how desirable it was from the point of view of national welfare and unity that differences of caste should disappear completely, all castes being merged in one great whole. As he came to the end of his argument, a question arose in my mind, and as was usual between us I put it to him without hesitation of prelude. 'I suppose then' I said 'you would say that we Parsis too ought in the national interest to give up our separate identity and get merged in the great Hindu whole? After all we are only a little above a hundred thousand'. Gadgil stopped, gazed for a long moment at the green tree-studded valley spread out below us, then slowly answered, "No, I wouldn't say that. You are not a caste, a fraction of a whole. You are an independent religion, a whole in itself. To preserve that religion, which gives you your particular identity, your ancestors left their native land and came to us. Here over twelve hundred years you have preserved it, in full amity and concord with us and as a living part of our nation. No, I would be loathe to see you disappear".

On our walk next evening he referred to the subject again saying "I reflected a good deal on the point you raised yesterday, and I feel certain the answer I gave you was right. The national interest, it seems to me, does not demand your disappearance. On the contrary, the country would lose by it. Your total circumstances, religion, ethics, upbringing etc. have nurtured people who have been useful to the country. Such people after independence may well prove even more useful, and the likelihood of that type appearing in other circumstances I would not rate too high. You have heard

of the saying 'Not this or that but this and that.' Well the very large majority of us are of this mentality. Many of you on the other hand cannot help being either 'this or that'. Both ways of thinking have their merits. The first leads to compromise, arrangement, adjustment, consideration for opposed views etc. The second is more rigid but makes for staunchness in the cause of principle and stout opposition to wrong. You see the merit of having a leaven of the second in the large mass of the first, don't you? So I say, for that reason and several others, including the unlikelihood of a person like you appearing in any other circumstances: No don't merge, maintain your identity as a part of our nation and continue to be even more useful to it as a whole than you have been in the past".

Who was Prof. Gadgil, some of the young may ask? Briefly the greatest and most practical scholar, the wisest man and teacher, the most learned and humane economist of our times in India. I have heard him described by very eminent foreign scholars and authors as 'a savant of extraordinary profundity and brilliance, who illuminated whatever he touched.'

Such then was Prof. Gadgil's opinion, and I have no doubt that in general it would be approved by the vast majority of the knowledgeable of the major Indian Community. A combination of the characteristic liberal tolerance of that community and the helpful deeds of many Parsis of the past and even of the present has resulted in the fortunate situation that not only is there no animosity against the Parsi as such, but there is a willing recognition of him as a full and proper Indian, a member of a valuable section of the country's population. The Indian people do not desire the extinction of this species, they do not wish its destruction. Whether it will live or die thus depends entirely on itself, on the men, women and children who constitute it at present.



'Fighting the good fight.'

The battle for life, as for peace, is often won or lost in the minds of men and women. What then is the state of mind of the Parsis today in regard to their survival, not just as individuals but as units of the community? Of many, the mind is just blank on this subject. They take it for granted that the community having been there so long will continue to be forever. They regard it almost as a law of nature, something the ordinary person does not need to think or trouble about; some, among them a number of intellectuals and of what might be termed the top elite wealthy, well-placed, fashionable, question the necessity of the continuance of the community. Why bother about it, does it really matter at all, we're all Indians aren't we, surely that's quite enough. They sometimes go further and say that by the mere fact of a Parsi thinking of himself as a Parsi, he is militating in a way against Indian Nationhood. This last point is important and needs to be clearly thought out.

Is there any conflict of loyalties in being both a Parsee and an Indian? To examine this, we must consider the Parsee religion. The whole community, except for a very few converts, is Zarthosti by faith. Now this is a very simple faith.

Its essentials come to just this: There is an ever-lasting conflict in the universe between good and evil, and the Zarthosti is born into the world to throw himself into this struggle on the side of good. The method for doing this is good thoughts, good words, good deeds, the term good in each of these phrases meaning helpful to one's fellow beings, to those who share one's belief and to those who do not. The true Zarthosti is in fact the Happy Warrior, fighting the good fight as a matter of course without fanfare or fuss, doing the right without caring whether anyone notices it or not. "My deeds (what I have done) are my possessions (are with me)", says his Gujarati proverb, and he craves for nothing else. Four-square he stands to all the winds that blow, knowing the provision for his journey through life is within him, that external circumstances, man's favour or hate can make but little difference to the essential he, ever engaged in or ready for the battle against evil.

Some readers may say "Oh, but this is an idealised picture. Such Zarthostis are rarely if ever to be found". I am now seventy-two and a half, I confess my work has not lain mostly among Parsees, and most of my closest friends belong to other faiths, my brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces of other faiths indeed far outnumber those of my own. My goings and comings too are much more with them and among them than with and among Parsis. Yet in these seventy-two years, many and many a true Zarthosti in the above sense have I found among the Parsis, often simple men in ordinary walks of life, sometimes men of great position and wealth. Always the concern of these was with right-doing, their final argument, oh but it would/would not be right. Can men nurtured in such a religion, even those among them who do not practice it fully, be undesirable citizens of their country? Is it in the least likely that such men would ever let it down, let sectional considerations detract from its real welfare? On the contrary, it would seem that the better a Parsi a Parsi is, the better an Indian he is bound to be. A well-known Congress Politician of the forties and fifties once

said within my hearing to a group of about twenty Indians, who had been discussing the country's problems, "Well, I don't like to say this, but sometimes I have to confess to myself that the only true Indians, those who think of India as a whole and want its true good, are the Parsees". There is thus no conflict of loyalty between a Parsee's role as a Parsee and as an Indian. In fact, the less lukewarm a Parsee is in being a Parsee, the more and better an Indian he is. He could well say to his Parsidom in Lovelace's words, "I could not love thee, dear, so much loved I not India more".

Let us consider next the earlier point made by some of the intellectual and other elite. Does it really matter if the community disappears, what after all would be lost? The first thing that would happen would be the virtual extinction of one of the world's oldest and most valuable religions, a religion that with its living code of ethics has had in it so strong a vitality that its inspiration has upheld for over 1300 years the spirit of an extremely small group, surrounded by the pressures of other cultures in a new land. "Men are we" said Wordsworth "And needs must weep/when even the shade of that which once/was great doth pass away". Here what is sought to be made to disappear is not a shade, but rather a living, breathing, active faith of the greatest significance to the human spirit. A great disaster, surely.

There would also be lost the Zarthosti spirit which during this century has played no small part in the building up of Indian Nationhood and of beneficial activities generally. The idea of self-government for India itself emanated from it, and the word for it too, "Swaraj", was originated by it. The competence, trustworthiness and character of the Zarthosti in many fields, has contributed significantly to the formation of the image of the independent, straightforward, self-reliant Indian, which has achieved respect in many parts of the world. Living quietly within the national structure and as a harmonious part of it, this very small group, without friction and without self-glorification, has played upto now a valuable and

worthy part in the national life. On the whole, it may perhaps be said, that it has fulfilled the prime requisite of good citizenship—to give more to the nation than you take from it.

Another characteristic of the Zarthosti spirit, which would also be lost with the community, is a sturdy independence, not a particularly strong feature of the current Indian scene. More often than not, the Zarthosti does not hesitate to make the sharp choice between right and wrong, and to be outspoken about it. What most of his countrymen will not say, and even those who say will generally only hint, he is apt to stress firmly, regardless of whom he offends or pleases. Also would be lost the gaiety of disposition that on the whole the Parsee displays. It degenerates sometimes into a frivolous outlook that attempts to solve serious issues by making jokes and occasioning laughter, and is then quite irritating. Nonetheless, in the intensely serious atmosphere of our country, it is quite valuable to be able to laugh, and especially to be able to laugh at oneself.

Thus good Parsee high-ups of the cultural and fashionable worlds, sophisticated and cosmopolitan as you may think yourselves to be, shuddering at the very thought of being lumped with the run-of-the-mill Parsis, whom you from your high pedestals, look down upon as unrefined, and so crude as even to talk of eminent Parsis as "Our", putting "*Apro*" before their names, note that something of very great value, of considerable importance, would be lost to both the human spirit and India, were the community to disappear. Note also, that however much you may try to lose the Parsee label, being always very careful to avoid appearing Parsee by your airs, your pursuits, your opinions, your associates, our country men of whatever community, will always describe and designate you as a Parsee. You may change your faith, you may marry outside it, still hardly anyone will think and talk of you as anything but Parsee. Would it not be better by far then to pay due regard to Parsee virtues and values to help to the extent you can in the maintenance and continuity of the community?

Another section of some size, seems to have arisen among the Parsis, which does not want the community to disappear, but thinks it very likely that it will. "*Ichabod*", its cry is "The glory is gone". Regression in every sphere it sees, and is greatly saddened. The Parsee according to it has become a back-number, competition being too stiff for him. And so backward, backward, he goes. Inevitably falling living standards, frustration, the will broken to hold oneself up and to fight life's distresses, unwillingness to work hard, to study devotedly, increase in disintegration, especially when change of faith and joining in with the majority can bring to the intelligent very handsome rewards. There is something in some of the points made and yet surely we need not despair. Who is the first soldier in India? A Parsee. Who are among some of the highest Naval or Air Force officers? Parsis. Who are the best, or among the best lawyers in India? Parsis. Who are the best, or among the best surgeons in India? Parsis. Who are the best, or among the best physicians in India? Parsis. And so too about eye-doctors, Chartered Accountants, company executives, teachers at the college and school levels, engineers, etc. Quality and skill would not seem to have passed the Parsis by still, and so far as one can make out there is no reason why they should in future. You do produce able men, and not just able but also good men, compassionate, helpful to mankind, ready to take their part in the good fight, and so you can go on doing, provided you as parents set an example, care more for your children than for your pleasures.

Realise yourselves and make them realise that the most important period in their lives, that which will determine their whole future, is that between five and nineteen, that habits of honesty, hard work, decent behaviour, courageous conduct, acquired then will serve them for the rest of their lives, and with just a little luck, bring them to the top of their professions. If, however, having fallen victim to dancing or cards or parties, parents have very little time for their children, give them only the most cursory attention, never

bothering even to know where they are or what they are doing, all the evils mentioned above may well occur.

The Zarthosti parent has always regarded parenthood as a pleasurable duty. To lead, to influence, to love, to toughen one's children to meet life's shocks and blows, to see that they acquire the characteristic Zarthosti virtues, truth-telling, promise-keeping, compassion, right-doing, industry, courage, facing misfortune or adversity with a smile—the parents of my time and even of later periods, felt were very rewarding. Their duty was their joy and many of their children fully repaid the care they had bestowed on them by their progress and conduct in life. If indeed today's young display in their youth quite uncharacteristic, un-Zarthostic behaviour, let the parents repent, and remedy their own conduct. The depression they feel about their children and the future is due mostly to their own folly and failure to see and perform their duty. Not by spoiling one's children, letting them have their own way in everything, does one show one's love for them. Let the parents reform themselves, become once again in the true sense Zarthosti parents and the children will follow suit, at least most of them will. Then on this account, the community will not disappear.

The real danger to the community, one which might well cause its disappearance is the decline in numbers. The population of every other section of the Indian people increases; that of the Parsis decreases. From 1,20,000 some years ago, I am told it has now fallen to 85,000. Defects of training, of nutrition, even of character can be remedied, but if the bodies themselves are not there, what can you improve? For this fall in numbers too it is the Parsis themselves who are responsible. You cannot have children unless you have parents. For people to become parents there must be marriages. And it is here that the snag comes in. The number of Parsi males of twenty-two to forty who are not married is very high. For this there are generally two reasons, the notion of romantic love and the desire for a very comfortable life. The young man thinks he has fallen in love

with some particular girl. He feels he cannot ask her to share his three or five hundred a month, he must wait until he earns more. She may not want him at all and he may just keep dangling on after her, feeling since he is in love with her, marrying anyone else is out of the question. By the time she's married someone else or he has realised she won't anyhow marry him, he's got accustomed to living alone and spending all his earnings on himself, and the idea of marriage itself becomes irksome. A few years of this frame of mind, and a good father who could well have brought up say three fine children, adding materially to the community's welfare, is lost forever. Young women, too, contribute substantially to this loss. What did for their mothers will not do for them. Their idea of proper standards of living has risen considerably; it includes not just simple food and clothing, but also fripperies of all kinds. The normal Indian young couple of the lower middle-class will live contentedly, if not happily, in one room, spreading mats on the floor at night, eating simple food cooked by the wife, and bring up well two or three children. This to the young Parsee couple of these days seems unthinkable.

Another idea that has taken firm root and is detrimental to the maintenance and increase of number, is that marriage, parenthood, are entirely individual matters and do not concern anyone except the parties. There is accordingly no pressure or persuasion of any kind in favour of marriage. No one points out that in current conditions, for the young Parsee not to get married and have children is to be anti-social, to fall in duty to both the community and the country. Someone at this stage will undoubtedly bring up birth-control, the need to hold the Indian population, and bring down the birth rate. True, very true in general, but certainly not true in the particular Parsee case, where a tremendous decline has already taken place. Here quite obviously for the very life of the community, births must rise substantially. The married couple which does not bring at least three children, fails in its duty in our circumstances,

(Continued on page 20, col. 2)

'THE CULTURAL ALTERNATIVE'

After the glitter of a baug wedding, one out of every ten Parsee marriages comes to a legal end in an impressive room on the second floor of the Bombay High Court. For most of the couples gathered in the wood paneled, skylit courtroom, love honour and obedience long before gave way to disinterest, distrust and disobedience. The trip to the lawyers transformed husband and wife into plaintiff and defendant and involved them in a process almost as lengthy, tiresome and expensive as the wedding itself.

The couples that comprise the 10 per cent divorce rate, probably the highest in India, come from all walks of life: young, old, rich, poor, the man whose wife left for the Gulf states and found somebody new, the person who could not consummate his marriage, the boxer who used his martial skills "mercilessly upon the plaintiff," the dowdy woman in a print dress whose husband "drove (her) out of the house," the man whose wife called him a "mother's boy" and many others whose once upon a time did not work out happily ever after.

For close to ninety per cent of them, their day in court will consist of a fifteen to twenty minute stint in the witness box from where they will have to answer personal and intimate questions regarding their married life. The jurors or delegates will then decide if the facts presented are correct and the judge will pass the decision *ex parte*. It is only in the handful of cases that are contested that a virtual blow by blow account of domestic differences are related for public consumption.

In the June session this year presided over by Justice Jal Vimalal, 26 divorce suits were filed. A random sampling of about 20 complaints showed the majority of couples belonging to the middle and lower income groups. In six cases the woman was the plaintiff, in seven the male and in seven both had filed claims. Desertion

was the most popular grounds for divorce with 14 suits filed, non-consummation was next with four and cruelty last with two. The years in which the couples were married ranged from 1937 to 1971. Six couples were married in their early twenties, in nine marriages the man was in his late twenties or early thirties while the woman was younger to him by five to ten years, two couples married in their late thirties. Of the 20, ten couples had children, seven having only one child, and the others having two, three and five. Custody of the children, the amount of alimony to be granted, if any, and division of property are decided by the judge.

The table of marriages and divorces (compiled from statistics from the Parsi Panchayat and the Parsi Matrimonial Court) shows the percentage of marriages to divorces filed in 1961 as 7.1 per cent approximately. Ten years later in 1971 the figure was 12 per cent. While this may seem alarming, it should be noted that the divorce rate has hovered around nine per cent for the most part, with the 1961 and 1971 figures being at the extremes. In 1971, 58 divorce suits were filed, while in 1972 the number was 31. Also the number of divorce suits filed in a year do not necessarily indicate the number of divorces actually granted that year. Some are rejected,

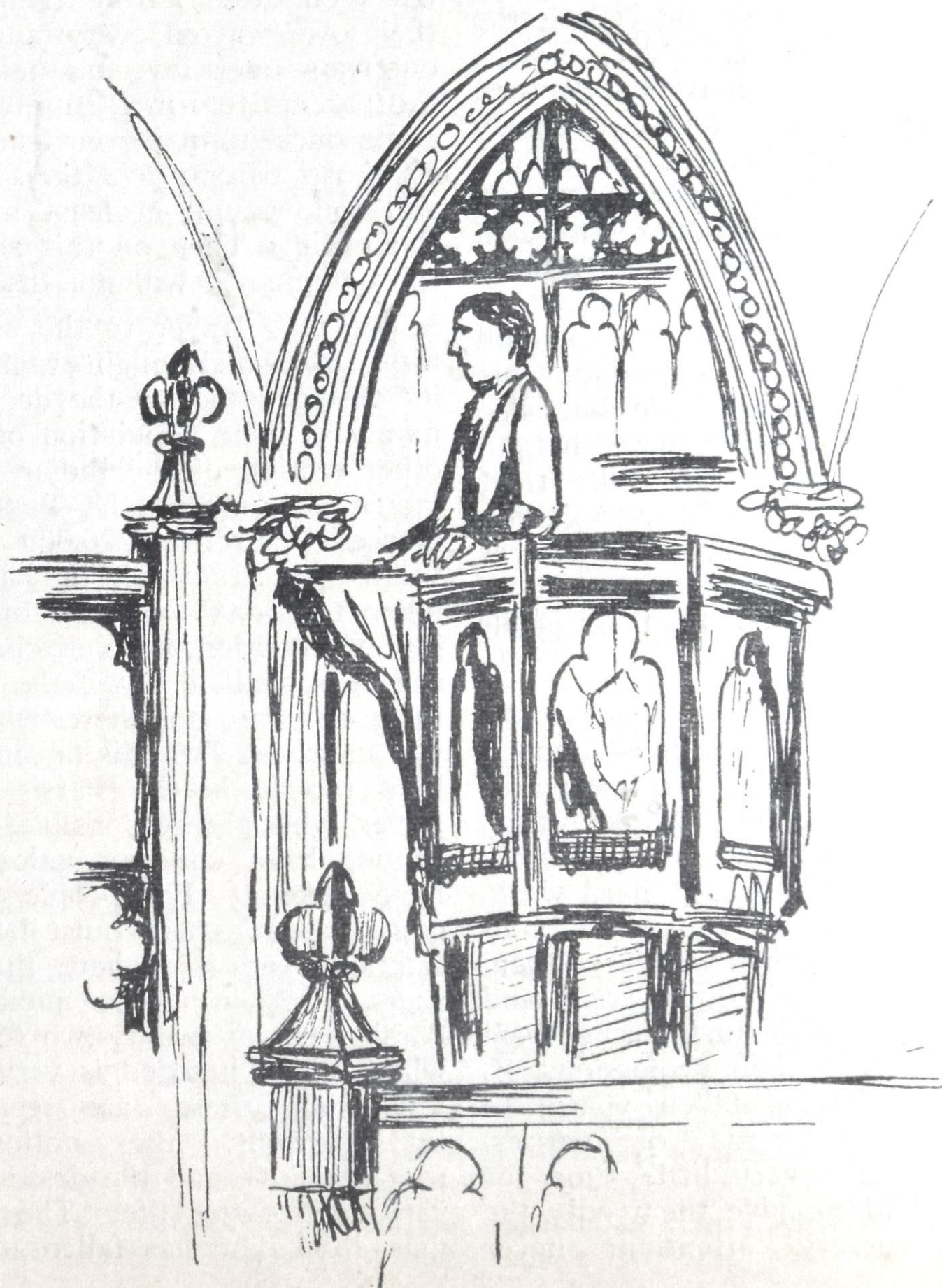


Table of Parsi Marriages and Divorces

	Marriages	Divorces	Per cent
1961	505	36	7.1
1962	497	40	8.2
1963	508	36	7.1
1964	450	47	9.7
1965	523	47	8.8
1966	436	40	9.1
1967	527	49	9.3
1968	419	47	11.0
1969	487	42	9.0
1970	411	36	9.0
1971	466	58	12.0

Figures from the Parsee Panchayat.

(This year's Encyclopedia Americana shows a 25 per cent divorce rate for Americans.)

others are withdrawn, and several are adjourned to the next session which is usually six months away.

A high divorce rate can be viewed either as a sign of decadence, permissiveness, disregard for traditional values or a "more law abiding population," an "increasing desire to be happily married," a promotion of "public morality" and so on. The latter opinion is being expressed by a growing school of sociologists and psychologists who view divorce as a "cultural alternative", a socially acceptable manner of rectifying an unworkable relationship.

It was perhaps with the realization that people could make mistakes in choosing their mates, that the Parsi Marriage laws incorporated reforms over the years. Before 1869, the Panchayat decided on divorces. The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act of 1865 put divorce in the jurisdiction of the courts. Looking back over the years, Homi Banaji, one of the doyens of the Parsi divorce court, recalled in 1929 adultery had to be proven to get a divorce. "Sometime later a bill was brought in the English Parliament which proposed that three years desertion should also be grounds for divorce in England. Taking the cue from that bill, a committee of lawyers and social workers was formed in Bombay to amend the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act of 1865. I was a member of that committee. We suggested that three years desertion should be grounds for divorce. The amended act came into force in 1936. It is somewhat curious to say that in England the divorce law was amended some

months after." In the wake of the amendment, "60 cases were filed seeking divorce on this new ground. Several couples who had been living apart for years sought relief. An old man of 73 for whom I appeared sought a divorce from his wife on grounds of desertion and I remember when Justice B. J. Wadia asked the delegates whether they wanted to put any questions to the plaintiff, the foreman, the late Mr. Kaikobad Adenwalla got up and asked, 'Mr. you are 73 years old. One foot is in the grave. Why do you want a divorce now?' Prompt came the reply 'Saheb you don't know but it is my keen desire that this woman's name should not be joined as my wife in the funeral prayers.'"

From the religious point of view the marriage vows state "We unite till the end of our lives," says Dastur Jal A. Bajan, "there is no facility for divorce." Dastur K. S. Dabu feels divorce is contrary to religion, "the very law (of divorce) is against the spirit of marriage." When the divorce law was passed he notes regrettably "no objection was taken" by the priests. Bajan has served as a delegate to the court since 1939. He views it as a 'communal service.' Delegates are elected by the community whenever a vacancy arises. There are 30 delegates in all of which a minimum of five are needed to comprise the jury. "The delegates give judgement on the facts ... only law points are decided by the judge," says Bajan. Though the jury system has been abolished in India, it still continues at the Parsi Matrimonial Court (Parsis also have the distinction of having their divorce cases heard in the

High Court, all the other divorce cases being handled by the low courts). "The bar is very much against this delegate system," says Bajan, "but I personally would like to see it continue. Though it has no value, it has some status." The changing of the laws is "in the hands of the community, not the government," notes Bajan. "We have to call a general meeting, discuss, question and send the proposed amendments to the government." He feels the present laws are "lenient." The reason for the increase in divorce, says the priest, is the "liberty given to youngsters. They know the law and wish to take disadvantage of it ... even the elders advise them: Go to court."

"In ancient Iran," notes Homi Dhallal a student of Iranian studies, "both the husband and wife were entitled to sue for divorce if valid reasons could be given for doing so. In certain cases when both the partners wanted to separate but were not able to give sufficiently cogent reasons for doing so, divorce was not granted to them by the court (*Matigan-i-hazar Datistan*—a ninth to tenth century Pahlavi text which enumerates the different facets of Iranian law).

"When a couple was divorced the wife retained a right on her dowry. Property, which might have been given to the wife by the husband, had to be returned to the husband at the time of the divorce. The parents were the rightful guardians of the girl till she married. At marriage this right passed on to the husband. His guardianship would, however, pass on to her next husband in case she remarried. She would be under the guardianship of her parents if she did not choose to remarry. In some cases a special guardian could be appointed over a married woman. It is further stated that when a man has confirmed on his wife the right of being a guardian over her own self according to the privileged condition, and she is not under the guardianship of any other man, and if when she is given a divorce she chooses to remarry, then the first husband has no right over the children born of her second marriage, although spiritually she still belongs to him. If the husband

Per wife are partners in some crest or transaction, the wife retains all her rights after divorce, and property belonging to her could be given to anyone she desires.

William O'Neill in his book *Divorce in the Progressive Era* notes the prevalence of divorce when the joint family systems of yesteryear gave way to the individual, nuclear families of today: "When families are large and loose, arouse few expectations, and make few demands, there is no need for divorce. But when families become the center of social organization, their intimacy can become suffocating, their demands unbearable, and their expectations too high to be easily realizable. Divorce then becomes the safety valve that makes the system workable. Those who are frustrated or oppressed can escape their families, and those who fail at what is regarded as the most important human activity can gain a second chance. Divorce is, therefore, not an anomaly or a flaw in the system, but an essential feature of it. When the modern family came to dominate society in the nineteenth century, divorce became common."

The first five years of a marriage are most crucial. "Quite a number get a divorce within the first year," says Ms. Freny Ponda, a lawyer who has handled matrimonial cases over the past 21 years. "They rush to court too early. They come in the first flush of anger and indignation. If they made an attempt they could sort out their differences intelligently. In a number of divorce cases I have handled, the couple have taken a divorce, got re-married and invited me to the wedding. Too many people divorce in haste to repent at leisure." Ms. Ponda feels the Parsee divorce laws are "very flexible and very easy. You can file for a divorce in February, have a hearing in April, get married ninety days later, and have a child by February. In the course of a year your name and status can change completely.

"Unless there are very serious differences that go to the core of the marriage and if there are children, I am very much against divorce. Very rarely have I found that the children of the divorced

parents have not been affected in some way or the other. The child needs the united company of both its parents. After divorce, one parent has custody and the other access. The child ends up like a badminton shuttlecock being turned from one court to the other. The parents often project bitterness which is likely to be infectious. The children grow up making a wrong choice of marriage partners or are dead-set against marriage. After getting a divorce, the man and woman should at least learn to get on gracefully together."

Kersi P. Khambatta, a counsel who handled several cases in the last divorce session and whose father P. P. Khambata is one of the leading lawyers in the matrimonial court, says that desertion is the "most popular grounds for divorce." Desertion does not necessarily mean that the couple must live apart. Desertion may constitute living "in the same room but without marital relations for a period of three years prior

to the date of filing the suit," he notes. A suit for divorce is usually coupled with an alternative for judicial separation on the grounds of cruelty. "If we fail in one, we can succeed in the other," says Khambatta. Judicial separation requires the couple not to have marital intercourse for three years or more after which the plaintiff can file for divorce. "Cruelty," says Khambatta, "is in the legal sense either mental or physical cruelty. It is a systematic course of cruel conduct by one spouse against the other making it impossible for the other to stay with him or her. It is not the ordinary wear and tear of married life."

Depending on whether a couple has a civil or religious marriage first, they come under the Special Marriage Act or the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act. If a couple comes under the jurisdiction of the Special Marriage Act they can apply for divorce by "mutual consent." Khambatta would like to see "mutual consent" incorporated into the Parsi laws. He, however, is not in favour of non-compatibility

(Continued on page 10)



ANATOMY OF A DIVORCE

"It was very much a love marriage," said Pheroza smiling. Tall and graceful with a wide, sensitive mouth, she stared in front of her in a pensive manner, as she recalled how for her the 'love marriage' had ended after seven years in a divorce.

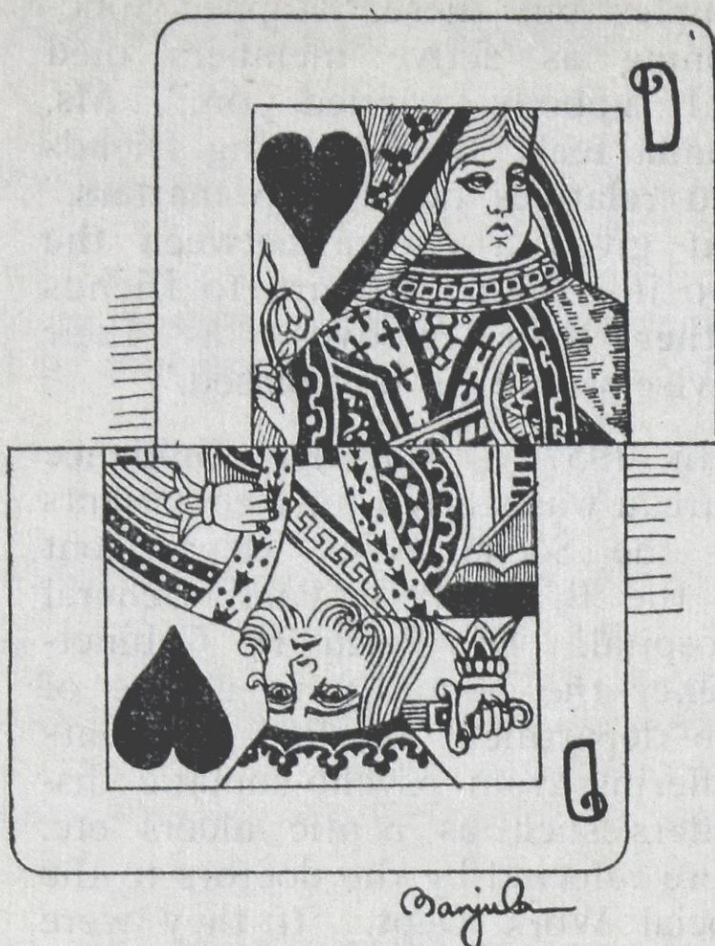
"I was in my early twenties when I got married, so it was not just a teenage romance. We were so much in love with each other we did not believe what people said. He was actually a distant relation of mine but because of some enmity between the two families they did not get on well. We felt that by loving each other we could manage to bring the two families together. My parents did not stop me from getting married, I suppose they felt that if two people had decided to get married there was no stopping them. They felt that if it meant my happiness they wouldn't stand in my way."

"I sometimes wonder why my mother-in-law allowed us to get married, why she didn't raise any serious objections at that time, when in her mind she had decided never to accept me? Her one desire was to see that we remained apart."

"I had no problem with my Father-in-law, he was a generous man. But this other person.... she created endless misunderstanding between us. She was against me from the very beginning. After awhile we realised that there was no use going on. Between us there was no fight or quarrel. We both went and saw the lawyer and said that we wanted a divorce. It was an amicable settlement, an uncontested divorce."

"If someone had asked me about divorce in the first two years of marriage I would have laughed. We were so attached to each other in the beginning it was unthinkable that you could go through life without your partner."

"We had to live with our in-laws. We both had jobs and it was just not possible to get a separate flat. The rents are so high. My husband's work kept taking him out of town and when he got back there would be a long list of com-



plaints waiting—about me. It was all so gradual and seems so futile now but after a point you feel you just can't take it."

"The first six months after the divorce were hell. I moved back to my parents home. They were completely opposed to the idea of a divorce. They felt it would be regarded as a disgrace in the community to have a daughter who was, well, rejected. In a small community people talk and we are very conservative in these things. They would rather have seen their daughter humiliated and unhappy than to have a divorce. They felt that having made my choice I should somehow stick it out."

"I was alone when I went to court. My husband was there. By this time we were quite detached and only curious to see the whole machinery in action. The plaintiff, in this case it was me, has to stand in the witness box while the plaint is read out. It took only about ten minutes. They say the judges are more lenient towards women. But it was such a humiliating experience,"—and here Pheroza's voice shook as she recalled the ordeal. "I can't describe how horribly embarrassing it is to stand out there while the whole court is listening to your case. There should be a change in the system. Why can't they arrange a separate chamber where the judge, the jurors, and all those concerned, can meet alone and settle the

divorce in private. Everything is so open here. There were about fifty odd couples all waiting for their turn and they all had to sit and listen to the case whether they like it or not. Anybody can come and watch the 'fun'."

"I was quite calm until the plaint was read out. At that moment you feel so terribly hurt."

"Afterwards you have to go and face the gossip. People say such hurtful things. My husband left town almost immediately but I had to stay behind. The women don't spare you. They seem to resent, or at least be suspicious, of an unattached woman. They make up all kinds of allegations. They say for example that the husband got rid of the wife because she was misbehaving or that she was having an affair with someone, or that it was because she couldn't have any children. The men on the other hand pay too much attention. They feel that after a divorce a woman is bound to be at loose ends and that she will be an 'easy prey' for them."

"I filled my time with work. My job was a great source of confidence to me. For one thing it made it much easier for me to make up my mind. At first I used to stay late at the office and work. Even now I dislike holidays. I don't know what to do with them."

"Of course I go out with my friends, usually my married friends. But essentially I am not a very social type, which is fortunate perhaps. Some friends I don't meet of course, those who were in my husband's circle and some friends who knew my in-laws. Sometimes at parties, I even come across my husband. But it is not at all awkward. Since we parted so amicably we can meet as friends."

"I can't offer any advice," said Pheroza. "After listening to all the advice I received from my parents I think I should know better. Nor do I have any regrets. I am against the idea of divorce but if there is no alternative I can see no point in two people living together and making each other miserable."

"You do have your moments of happiness though, doesn't everyone? And I can't forget them."

Pa grounds for divorce as it would be "too progressive for the community at this stage. Divorces would shoot up."



Freny Ponda.

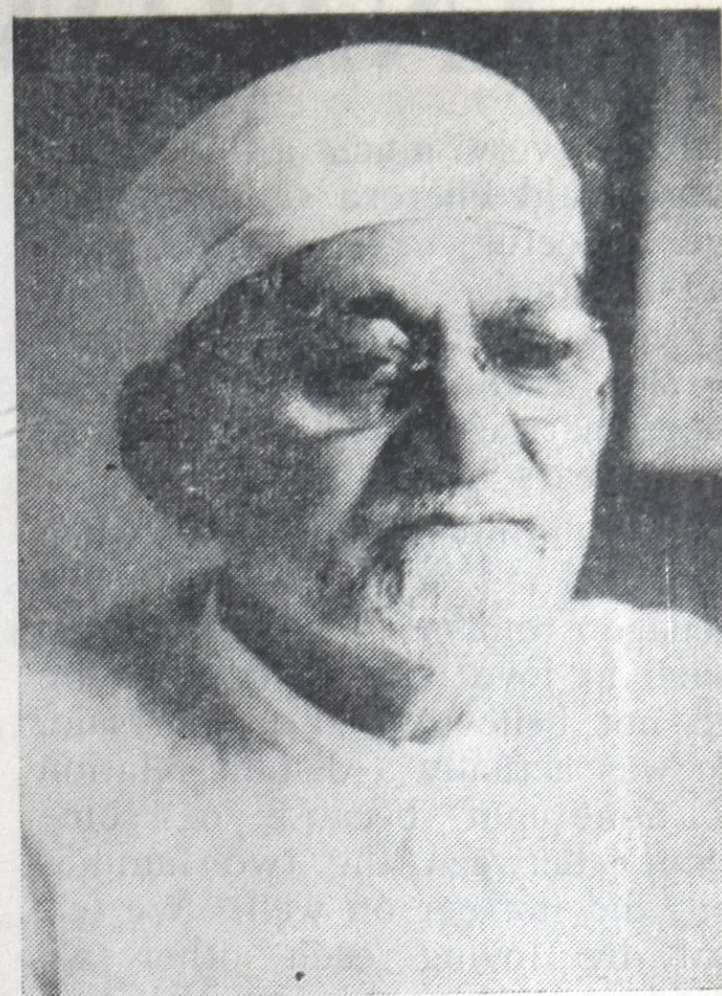
Ms. Katy Baam, an advocate, notes that though lawyers try to dissuade the couple from going in for a divorce "by the time they come to you they have reached the end of their tether." When handling divorce cases "you do get upset," she notes, "You are dealing with human problems. We don't know who is right or wrong. It is even more disturbing when children are used as a tool."

If a couple wished to avail of marriage counselling services they would not know where to turn. Inquiries made by *Parsiana* proved futile in locating a professional marriage counselling service for Parsees. Dastur Bajan noted there

were one or two associations in the past, such as the Parsi League of Honour, that helped to reconcile couples but these "stopped functioning as active members died and nobody carried on." Ms. Ponda feels "well-meaning friends and relatives don't help matters." But given a choice between the two it is better to turn to friends rather than relatives "as their advice would be less biased."

In 1957 a Marriage Guidance Bureau was started for free patients by the Social Work Department of the B. D. Petit Parsi General Hospital. Dr. Perin H. Cabinet-maker the honorary in charge of the department recalled, "patients suffering from psycho-somatic disorders such as peptic ulcers etc. were referred by the doctors to the Social Work Dept. If they were found to be unhappily married or had difficulty in getting along with their spouses, they were referred to the Bureau. During the three years of its existence the bureau was able to prevent many a couple from heading for the law courts. For want of personnel it had to be discontinued. But its need was very much felt. After about six months of its existence patients came for advice of their own accord and they were not always the free patients. The hospital realized its worth because invariably the patients reacted very favourably to the counselling given. Their health improved. The duration of their stay in the hospital was shortened. The hospital thus had to spend less on their treatment."

"The Bureau came into existence due to a patient who had been treated thrice for peptic ulcers. On



Dastur Jal A. Bajan.

each occasion he had a fairly prolonged stay of two months as an in-patient. It was during his third visit as an in-patient that the Hon. Physician, the late Dr. Marzban Motashah, referred him to the social worker. He was full of anxiety about his wife and the heavy debts in which he was deeply involved. The Pathans from whom he had taken loans from time to time threatened to go to his employer unless he paid up the interest. The balance of the salary after deducting interest left very little for the house. He was employed in a private firm as a clerk. His salary was about Rs. 250. He had three children, all sons. They were in a semi-free Parsi school. The children had their lunch in school, while he preferred to have a light snack in his office. The rent was Rs. 25 for one room and kitchen. The wife was thus left with plenty of time on hand as she had to prepare only the evening meal. She utilised her time visiting friends, neighbours and relatives. She had no idea whatsoever of home management. She had the most extravagant habits and tastes. For a family of five she would prepare a meal which could serve a dozen. The poor man, who was obviously very fond of her—theirs was a love marriage—was driven to distraction. After a good deal of resistance in the beginning the wife began to accept the social worker's advice and even trusted her with the whole salary. Within

THE PRIVILEGE OF DIVORCE

In the first year of the reign of King Julief, two thousand married couples were separated, by the magistrates, with their own consent. The emperor was so indignant, on learning these particulars, that he abolished the privilege of divorce. In the course of the following year, the number of marriages in Agra was less than before by three thousand; the number of adulteries was greater by seven thousand; three hundred women were burned alive for

poisoning their husbands; seventy-five men were burned for the murder of their wives; and the quantity of furniture broken and destroyed, in the interior of private families, amounted to the value of three millions of rupees. The emperor re-established the privilege of divorce.

—28 *Niles Register* 229 quoted in *The Road to Reno* by Nelson M. Blake and *The American Family* by Bert Adams.

PARSI MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

32. **GROUND FOR DIVORCE** – Any married person may sue for divorce on any one or more of the following grounds, namely :

- (a) that the marriage has not been consummated within one year after its solemnisation owing to the wilful refusal of the defendant to consummate it ;
- (b) that the defendant at the time of the marriage was of unsound mind and has been habitual so up to the date of the suit :

Provided that divorce shall not be granted on this ground, unless the plaintiff

- (i) was ignorant of the fact at the time of the marriage, and
- (ii) has filed the suit within three years from the date of the marriage ;

- (c) that the defendant was at the time of the marriage pregnant by some person other than the plaintiff :
Provided that divorce shall not be granted on this ground, unless

- (i) the plaintiff was at the time of the marriage ignorant of the fact alleged,
- (ii) the suit has been filed within two years of the date of marriage, and
- (iii) marital intercourse has not taken place after the plaintiff came to know of the fact ;

- (d) that the defendant has since the marriage committed adultery or fornication or bigamy or rape or an unnatural offence :

Provided that divorce shall not be granted on this ground, if the suit has been filed more than two years after the plaintiff came to know of the fact ;

- (e) that the defendant has since the marriage voluntarily caused grievous hurt to the plaintiff or has infected the plaintiff with venereal disease or, where the defendant is the husband, has compelled the wife to submit herself to prostitution :

Provided that divorce shall not be granted on this ground if the suit has been filed more than two years

- (i) after the infliction of the grievous hurt, or
- (ii) after the plaintiff came to know of the infection, or
- (iii) after the last act of compulsory prostitution ;

- (f) that the defendant is undergoing a sentence of imprisonment for seven years or more for an offence as defined in the Indian Penal Code XLV of 1860:

Provided that divorce shall not be granted on this ground, unless the defendant has prior to the filing of the suit undergone at least one year's imprisonment out of the said period ;

- (g) that the defendant has deserted the plaintiff for at least three years ;

- (h) that a decree or order for judicial separation has been passed against the defendant, or an order has been passed against the defendant by a Magistrate awarding separate maintenance to the plaintiff, and the parties have not had marital intercourse for three years or more since such decree or order;

- (i) that the defendant has failed to comply with a decree for restitution of conjugal rights for a year or more; and

- (j) that the defendant has ceased to be a Parsi :

Provided that divorce shall not be granted on this ground if the suit has been filed more than two years after the plaintiff came to know of the fact.



Katy Baam

a year the couple was reconciled. Luckily, with help from kind-hearted people the debts were paid and the family, especially the patient, was freed from anxiety. Compared to the more complicated problems that came to the Bureau later on this couple presented little difficulty because both husband and wife were fond of one another. It was because of her affection for her husband that the wife was willing to confide in and seek help from the social worker, who was a total stranger.

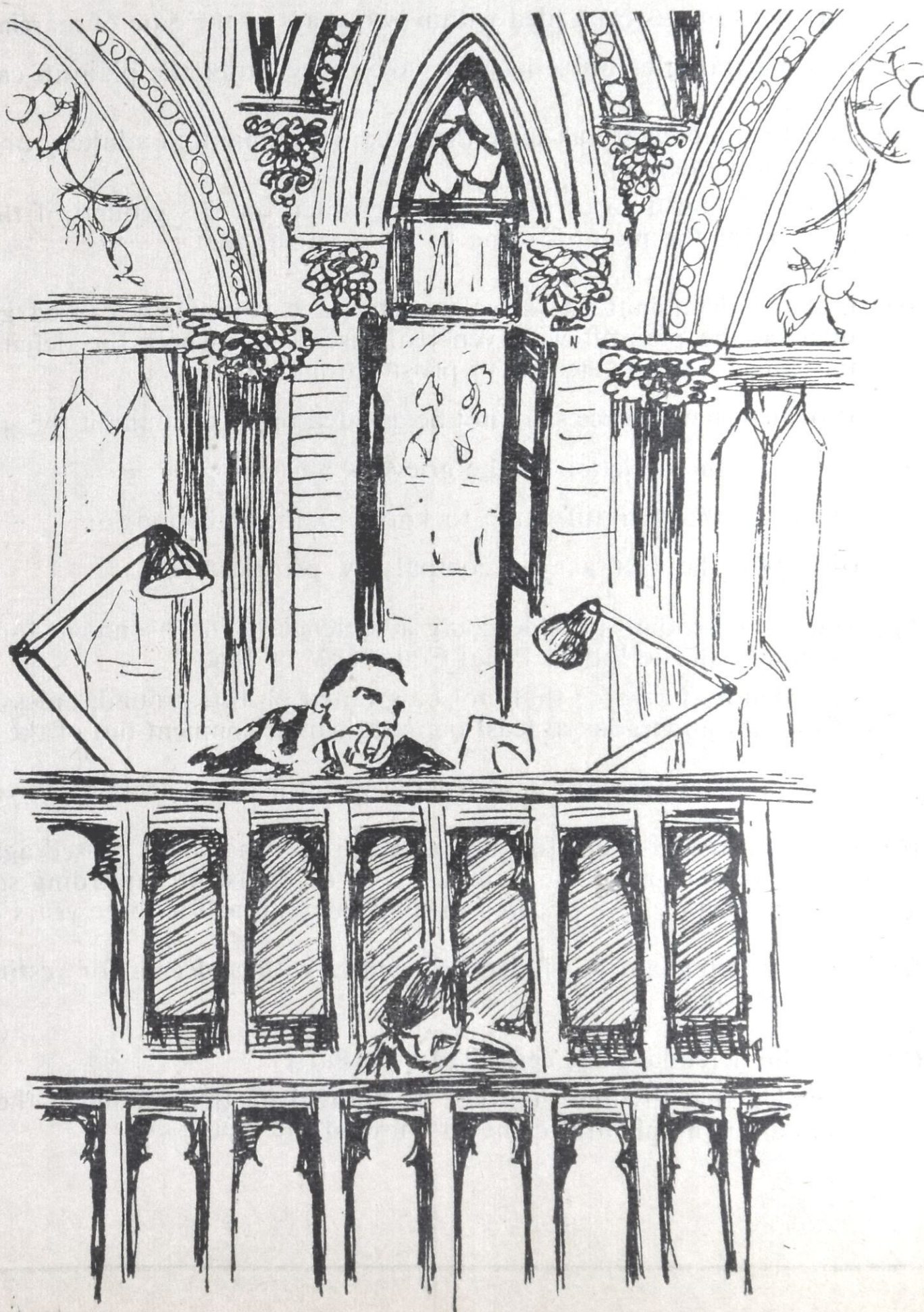
"Most couples, however, were found to be at first most reluctant to divulge the real cause. At times they themselves, could not quite understand what went wrong with their marriage. The Hon. Psychiatrist, Dr. K. R. Masani, now practising in London, helped the couple, to gain an insight into their problems. It was usually either the wife or the husband, who came regularly to the Bureau. The social worker had to keep in touch with the other spouse."

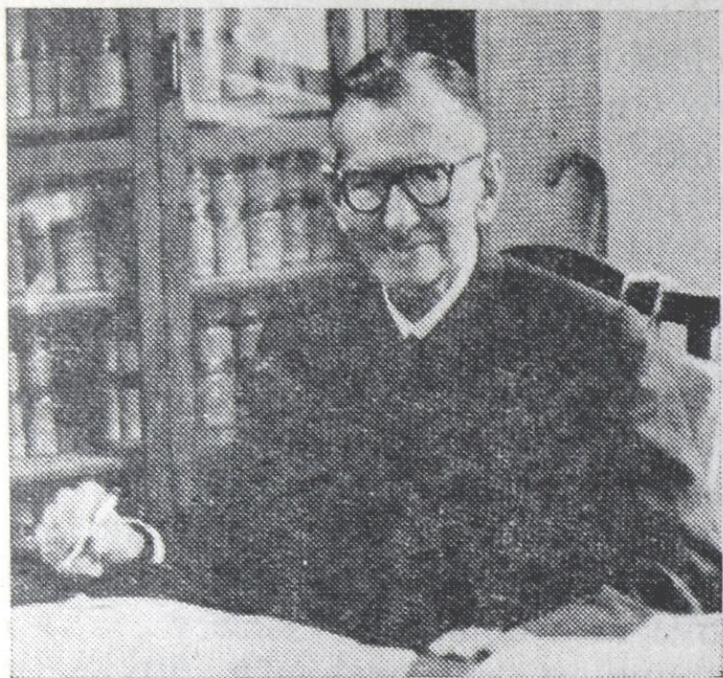
Dr. Cabinetmaker feels the need for marriage counselling "cannot be underestimated. Before a suit is filed for divorce, the couple should have the benefit of advice from not only a lawyer or a doctor but a trained social worker and in quite a few cases a psychiatrist."

The cost of a marriage counselling service is negligible com-

pared to the economic cost of a divorce which varies between Rs. 500 to Rs. 3,000 depending on the lawyers, for an *uncontested* case. While a counsellor's main purpose is to help the couples resolve their differences, the counsellor can also advise the couple to go in for a divorce if a continuation of the marriage would be detrimental to all parties concerned. In a study comparing adjustment of children from *broken* homes and in unhappy, *unbroken* homes, Sociologist F. Ivan Nye finds "in the areas of psychosomatic illness, delinquent behaviour and parent child adjustment ... children show

better adjustment in broken homes." In his book *When Parents Divorce*, Bernard Steinzor notes, "unhappily married people can hardly avoid using their child as a focus for their disputes ... if all of us, including divorced parents could overcome this notion that divorce is harmful to children, all, especially children would benefit." When differences between the couple are irreconcilable a counsellor can help prepare the couple for the stresses involved in obtaining a divorce and the emotionally turbulent aftermath which Sociologist Morton H. Hunt describes in his study *Help Wanted: Divorce*





Homi Banaji

Counsellor: "the excruciating loneliness—even in those who longed to escape—the waves of indefinite hostility, the recurrent sense of being lost, the upsurge of desire to rush back at whatever cost, into the bad marriage ... sleeplessness, lack of appetite, tremor of the hands, skin eruptions, inability to concentrate and so on." Hunt notes that "low income families are about twice as prone to legal divorce as those of average or above average income." The *Encyclopedia American* states in countries where attitudes and laws concerning divorce are restrictive only the upper classes have enough money and influence to obtain a divorce, in countries where legislation and public opinion are more permissive, divorce is more common in the lower classes." The *Encyclopedia* goes on to note "high divorce rates do not signal the decline of family life but a change in emphasis, usually toward greater expectations of satisfaction from the husband-wife relationship." That divorce is an integral part of life today may be little consolation to the wife who in the autumn years of her life finds her husband forsaking her for a younger woman, or a husband whose wife leaves him for a more well-to-do man. There are always those who abuse the law but there are many who genuinely benefit by the same law. The tragedy of divorce among Parsis is the absence of professional counselling that could lessen the suffering.

WANTED



MARRIAGE-DIVORCE COUNSELLOR

A qualified and experienced social worker to work full-time counselling couples in the community.

Write giving full particulars of training, experience, educational qualifications, age, present position and salary and salary expected to:

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DIALOGUE OVER THE DEAD

SANOBER CHINYOY

On the rocky deccan plateau that Hyderabad and Secunderabad are built on, stand two Towers of Silence. The first and older of the two is situated within the city limits, while the second is located without, on a rocky hill near the Osmania University Campus. People prefer the old *dokhma* as it is closer, but its proximity to the hustle and bustle of urban life deters the vultures. Bodies, some say, have lain there unconsumed "since the beginning of the year".

Sheriar Kaoosji, secretary of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Hyderabad and Secunderabad seated in his office in the Agiary grounds expounded: "Even if the vultures are there, the *dokhma* is too narrow to allow them to enter. No vulture is willing to commit suicide to eat." Kaoosji is a leader of the Zoroastrian Youth Forum which is spearheading a drive to permit the *dokhma* lands to be used for burial grounds. The Youth Forum, at a meeting held on April 8th addressed a letter to the Honorary Secretary of the Anjuman, Keki Dalal to: "convene a special general body meeting of the Anjuman" as "This problem of disposal is causing a lot of anxiety to many Parsi individuals and families in the Twin Cities."

The letter noted: "Regarding the disposal by *Dokhma Nashini*, it was felt that in theory it may be good for the quick disposal of the dead body, but under the prevalent circumstances when both the towers of silence have been surrounded by thick habitation, the lack of birds, etc., have made this mode rather revolting to the human sentiments.

"However it was felt that a change is highly necessary and under the present circumstances it should be brought in by the community itself before the authorities, requested by the people dwelling around the *dokhma*, take steps to close them down.

"Two alternatives were proposed. Either cremation or burial. Regarding the former many members

felt that scientific cremation should be resorted to instead of open fire cremation. Some members advocated simple burial and wanted the *Dokhma* grounds to be turned into grave-yards.

"The meeting however held a tolerated view and it was felt that such of the Parsis who, inspite of everything else, would still like to adhere to the system of *Dokhma Nashini*, may do so. But such of those who preferred to be buried should be provided with space for graves within the *Dokhma* Grounds.

"The three Panthaki Sahebs were of the opinion that all this would depend upon the decision of the Anjuman General Body and assured the members present that they would continue their work in the performance of the ceremonies whatever method of disposal is resorted to by the individual under sanction of the Anjuman."

The letter also stated that "there is a large scope for reform in these ceremonies, particularly such parts which exclude non-Parsis from having a last view of the departed before the body is carried away."

In response to the letter the Anjuman decided to hold a meeting on 15th July "to consider alternatives to *Dokhma Nashini* and for reforms in certain ceremonies and customs connected with funerals."

On the appointed day three hundred solemn-faced Parsees who spoke in hushed whispers took their seats in the Bai Pirojbai Chinoy Hall.

J. D. Italia acting President of the Zoroastrian Anjuman opened the meeting with a prayer. He noted that the *dokhma* grounds were held in trust and the "Anjuman has no right" to take a decision on the matter. He, however, requested the gathering to express their views and noted: "The managing committee will go into the outcome of the views."

Keki Mehta, a twin city resident, said that Hyderabad and Secunderabad with a population of 2,000 Parsees should "follow the Pan-

chayat of Bombay and all India" to which they look for "patronage and guidance ... we must not express our views until the others express it."

Kaoosji reiterated his views noting that the *dokhma* system "no longer appeals to modern sentiment" and proposed burial as an alternative method. With regard to only Parsees being allowed to view the dead, Kaoosji said "We live in a composite society ... rub shoulders and exchange gifts with Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others ... Can they impurity the body by just looking?" He felt this was a personal matter; "leave it to the families" to decide. As Italia had stated the Anjuman's "hands were tied" in utilizing the trust land for burial, Kaoosji noted "We will have to collect funds, find a plot and go there."

The next speaker, one of the Panthakis, outlined the growth of the *dokhma* system and stressed that an alternative method of disposal could only be considered if the *dokhmas* did not exist. He pointed out the difficulty of finding labour and finances to open a new grave each time a person died. He also felt the decision on alternative methods of disposal should come from the Bombay Panchayat. As regards non-Parsees not being allowed to look at the dead, the priest said the ritual originated as an act of self-defence against the invaders of ancient Iran who, he claimed, insulted the dead bodies. He requested the gathering to leave the priests out of the controversy. Italia noted that in Madras non-Parsees were present at funeral ceremonies.

Letters from eminent Parsees were read out at the meeting. One from N. S. Chenoy, president of the local Anjuman, voiced his "strong objection" to "burying Parsees within the *dokhma* grounds." Dastur K. S. Dabu of Bombay and Dastur Hormazdiar of Poona recommended that the committee take a non-committal approach to the subject. Hormazdiar also noted that where *dokhmas*

(Continued on page 20, col. 1)

ALL THAT RHYMES

For generation of Parsees weaned on the spellbinding stories of the Shahnameh here is some hard to digest news: the verses are adulterated. All that rhymes is not Firdausi. According to Prof. Mojteba Minovi, head of the Shahnameh Foundation of the Ministry of Culture and Arts, Iran, and Professor of Iranology at the University of Teheran, Firdausi's epic "is the collection of the work of a 1,000 minor poets."

"For centuries from the time these verses were written, a 1,000 years, a 1,000 unknown poets, poetasters, versifiers, story-tellers, men who really knew nothing about poetry and the art of poetry making and the stories made by Firdausi, came and generation after generation when copying (the Shahnameh) they altered it, interpolated, wrote on the margins... it is the peculiarity of the Persians: they all think they are poets. They cannot copy without changing." The professor who heads a team of 20 scholars, spoke before a gathering at the K. R. Cama Institute in Bombay under the joint auspices of the India-Iran Cultural Society and the Iran Cultural House while on a brief visit to the country earlier this year in search of manuscripts of the Shahnameh and relevant material.

"The only thing we know is that Firdausi lived in the 10th century and wrote the Shahnameh," said Minovi. "The rest has to be proved."

Manuscripts of the Shahnameh vary in direct proportion to the number of poets who tampered with it. Details of Firdausi's life are scanty and contradictory. His age is given as 58, 60, 63, 66, 67 and so on, Minovi noted. The exact number of rhyming couplets has also to be determined. Even Firdausi's stating in the Shahnameh the figure of 60,000 couplets is "doubtful," the professor said. This is more likely a round figure. If a manuscript consists of precisely 60,000 couplets, it is disregarded by most scholars, Minovi said.

The story of Rustom and Sohrab is told in 1040 couplets in one



Prof. Minovi having a word with Ms Mehra Shroff; Dr. S. M. Gharavi, director of The Iran Culture House is in the centre.

version, 1130 in another, 1250 in the next, 1460 in yet another, on to 1676 and finally 1700.

"Where did those 660 lines come from?" asked the scholar. From those 1,000 unknown poets. For example Minovi noted, when Sohrab is slain by Rustom, Firdausi is quiet on the mother's reaction. To fill this lacuna some versifier added how she lit a huge bonfire, put all of Sohrab's belongings in it, plucked out her eyes from their sockets, hurled them in the fire and died a year later. Another story not in the original is about Sohrab wanting a horse and all the horses breaking down because they could not carry his weight.

The credibility of some of the incidents is also questioned. Thus when Sohrab sets out in search of his father he does not on meeting say "I'm son of Rustom" and Rustom does not say he is Rustom, the professor noted. "An animal who sees his child knows him but Rustom does not know Sohrab," Minovi added. And after the story of Rustom and Sohrab what should logically follow than the story of the Son of Sohrab. As told in the Burjor Nameh, Sohrab, aside from being exceedingly powerful

and strong is also extremely virile for a boy of 12 or 14. He is supposed to have fathered a son before his departure who in his turn promises to avenge his father's death. The Gujarati translation of this epic runs into 19 volumes, the professor said he had been told.

Even the time honoured story of the king who commissioned Firdausi to write the Shahnameh and then reneged at having to pay is false, said Minovi.

"This is the kind of problem we are facing today. We have not got an authentic manuscript, a manuscript we can rely on," he noted. The Russians spent 35 years and over 20 million roubles—(around \$20 million)—on an exhaustive nine volume study of the Shahnameh which is the best to date "but not sufficient," Minovi said. "I would have been the first to call the work done if it had been done. Quite a few original lines have been taken as spurious and unauthentic... one thing is certain they didn't know their Persian well..."

After globe-trotting in search of an authentic manuscript, Minovi

(Continued on page 20, col. 3)

THE QUINTESSENCE OF KARAKA

GEETA DOCTOR

Mary, Queen of Scots, snuggled her pet dog in the folds of her skirt when she climbed up the scaffold. Conrad in a more practical vein took a ham sandwich when he went to the moon, while I, in a whirl of indecision, wondered what I should do when I went to meet Dosu Karaka. It was not easy. There is something solid and dependable about a scaffold. At least one knows what to expect. But what can one make of a multi-faceted personality such as Karaka? A man who not only projects, but provokes a myriad impressions, a man who has revealed intimate glimpses of himself in a series of auto-biographical books, only to prove that the process is inexhaustible and that the next book will disclose yet another Karaka.

Was I going to meet Karaka, the Crusader fighting a lone battle against the Powers that be, or would I get a glimpse of Karaka, the Charmer under whose spell even strange, unknown women have been known to fall. Was he going to be the Mystic of his latest book and stare hypnotically at some spot behind my chair or was he going to be the megalomaniac his critics describe him as being? After a careful consideration of these factors I decided that the best thing would be to fortify myself with a strong infusion of Guerlain's Mitsouko. It is a perfume for which, judging by the number of times he calls our attention to it in his narratives, he has a particular fondness, and which would, I calculated with unerring feminine logic, make an impact no matter which facet of his personality I had to face.

So it was that I found myself waiting at the small but neat entrance to his office. I stared at the two framed offerings on the wall, one a sunset in oil, done in the scrambled eggs on toast style, the other a quotation from Abraham Lincoln which read, "As I would not be a slave so I would not be a master." No symptoms of megalomania here, I thought to myself feeling a little reassured.

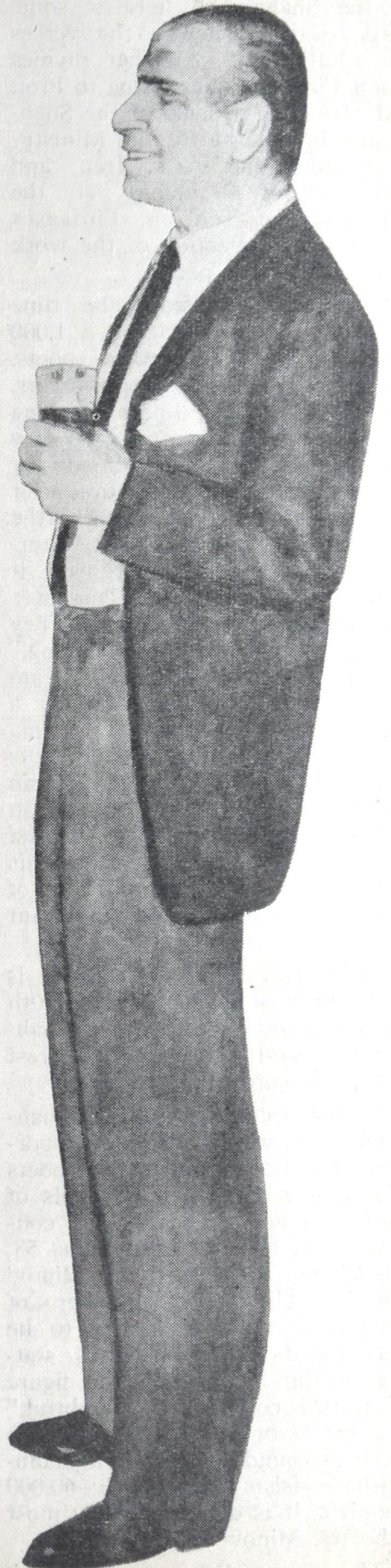
Mr. Karaka looked up as I entered. He started speaking almost immediately, pinning me neatly into the chair in front of him with a casual volley of questions. "Who are you? What are you doing? Do you write? How well do you write?" I stared in fascination and dismay. The interview had been taken over by a grand-master in the game.

Mr. Karaka's room was of the kind that carried the impress of the occupant so completely that it was difficult to be aware of anything else but the person concerned. Behind Mr. Karaka a sombre flower study by "Ara" glowed in discreet colours, while from various vantage points on the table, family photographs gazed up affectionately at him. Mr. Karaka looked slighter than he appears in photographs, but very fresh and vigorous. He had a habit of moving his head up sideways when emphasizing a point and it was impossible not to stare at the distinctive cleft on his chin with three deep ravines cutting into it. It was a gesture which gave him a curious air of being vulnerable and pugnacious at the same time.

It was sometime before we could start discussing his recent work, "Then came Hazrat Ali" for which Mr. Karaka has all the unabashed enthusiasm of a parent for his latest offspring. "It's the best thing I've written!" he said and to prove the point read out some highly flattering reviews.

"But isn't there something *deja vu* about it," "I asked referring to his tendency to repeat episodes which he has already dealt with in his earlier books. Would his second re-telling of the same story be able to compete with the freshness and spontaneity of the first?"

"What do you mean *deja vu*" he asked bristling slightly. "Have you read the review by Ajit Bhattacharjea in the Times, December 31st 1972?" I had to admit that I had not whereupon he immediately picked it up from a pile next to him and read, "He relives episodes from the past but is able



Karaka by M. Padmanabhan

to round them off in the perspective of later experience."

"Has your question been answered?" asked Mr. Karaka. I nodded my head in assent.

The conversation then took a devious turn when I repeated a remark another person had made that a somewhat imaginative colouring had been added to certain episodes in the book. Mr. Karaka did not even attempt to answer this question but calling his sister as the main witness proceeded in the best traditions of a prosecuting attorney to question the witness and systematically dismiss the charges against him. It was all done with a quiet thoroughness that belied the triumphant gleam in his eye when he had finished.

Then, taking advantage of my discomfiture, he remarked pityingly, "You haven't lived at all. Do you know I have been to Paris fifty-two times? You can't even imagine what Paris was like in those days. Paris is not the same anymore. Can you write a note to Balmain or Patou?"

I replied that I could not nor cared to do so and feeling somewhat belligerent by then rashly ventured to ask him, "Aren't you just being a snob Mr. Karaka?" and to justify the question enumerated the Guerlain perfumes that the women in his books inevitably use, the Antiquary that washes down the throats of his ancestors and all the other fashionable labels that he uses.

He took it very calmly. "I don't like coconut oil," he replied, "and I say so. Just like I wouldn't look at a woman who reeks of garlic even if she were the most beautiful woman in the world." It was, he went on, not so much a question of being a snob but of being a man of taste, and the fact that he liked a particular brand of perfume had nothing to do with it.

I then asked him about the change in attitude towards his own community. In "I Go West" he had been scathing in his contempt. "I am a Parsee. That does not mean very much. It is a com-

mon failing with a great many of my race to refer to our connection with old Persia in order to distinguish ourselves from the Indian people—a distinction as absurd as it is unnecessary." Yet in Hazrat Ali he does not mind starting his book with a reference to the oft repeated saga of the old Persians landing on the Indian coast bearing their urns of sacred fire, and establishing the Parsi community. In fact from the manner in which Karaka portrays the cultured grace of the typical Parsi family to which he belongs, one would definitely conclude that he is proud of his people. He did not however admit that he had had any reason to change his opinion, though he conceded that "the old needling has stopped." Besides as Mr. Karaka pointed out, when he wrote "I Go West", he was twenty-six and now the figures had been reversed. He was sixty-two. It would be foolish not to expect a slight change in sentiment.

Steering away from controversial subjects we discussed his unique experience, the appearance of Hazrat Ali in his life. How could he, as a rationalist, explain this phenomenon? Mr. Karaka moved his head up closing his eyes as though utterly tired of questions to which there were no answers. "It's like this," he said and taking a pencil drew two lines down the page. "You're walking along and suddenly a woman crosses your path." He briskly cut a line across. "Finished. After that you forget everything else."

In a way this could be a rough sketch of the book's progress also. At a certain point in the book Karaka discusses the qualities of good journalism and observes that, "Its essence is to absorb a story and relate it without allowing the personality of the writer to intrude on it." In the major portion of "Hazrat Ali" it is D. F. Karaka, the successful journalist writing, suave, detached, relating in a certain wry, reflective manner the adventures of a high spirited reckless young man, who first tasted freedom in the heady ferment of Oxford life, travelling erratically, but surely, towards an-

other far different concept of freedom. It is a period of almost two decades and Karaka uses this well, evoking in his readers, nostalgia and wonder, grief and admiration for all that has now passed away into the dusty reaches of history; the porcelain beauty of Madame Chiang Kai-shek, Paris in the springtime of her fame, the horror of Belsen, the emaciated spectres of the Bengal famine. The range and the diversity of Mr. Karaka's experiences are endless and he presents them to their best advantage by the use of three powerful weapons at his command—his newspaperman's instinct for what will sell, his writer's eye for detail, his humorist's ear for the ridiculous, which enables him to detect minute variations in speech patterns and pronunciations and reproduce them to devastating effect.

However, and perhaps inevitably, at the most crucial point of the book, Mr. Karaka's journalistic detachment deserts him. These are the portions of the book dealing with the incident after which the book is named, the appearance of Hazrat Ali. This is clearly a mystic experience and the author is unable to be either rational or detached about it, though he does make an attempt to describe the dream in which he saw the vision, and his subsequent pilgrimage to the shrine of Hazrat Ali as clearly and lucidly as possible. With the coming of Hazrat Ali, Mr. Karaka passes into a world, where, in spite of all his skill for accurate reporting, the reader is unable to follow him. It is perhaps not the task of a journalist but that of a mystic, and that Mr. Karaka is not, at least in this book.

"Then Came Hazrat Ali" is, however, just the beginning, a prelude to another book which Mr. Karaka said would be entirely about Hazrat Ali. He was in fact engaged in writing three books. Which makes it somewhat premature perhaps to discuss the quintessence of Karaka. After "Hazrat Ali" the best may yet be coming!



AKHAND PARSA

BY DR. P. B. WARDEN

Founder Editor of Parsiana

The term *Akhand* indicates a consolidated state of any subject or object as can be gleaned from such expressions as the *Akhand Bharat* move of Kanhyalal Munshi, *Akhand Anand*, a Gujarati monthly, *Akhand Panch*, a compact body of five (more or less) for arbitration and such other things. *Akhand Parsa* is not in its original meaning a consolidated body of Parsis, but it is given this meaning here as appropriate to our purpose. Years back Seth Sorabji Jeejeebhoy had written a book and named it *Baagh-e-Parsa*, wherein *Parsa* meant men and women of good mind and that is what we need most today.

"A race of altruists unconcerned about self is a race of slaves. A race of healthy minded people concerned about their personal and collective individuality is a race of egoists." An election is a voluntary subordination of the ego without which we can neither understand nor enjoy what moderation God secretly intended for us. Our mundane objectives cannot be attained without some moderating medium to sober our senses and make us understand people around us. Popular election is one such medium. Edmund Burke labelled this a mighty evil that brings us all on an open campaign. Campaign originally meant an open ground and now means a field occupied by an army and its intended purpose. Every cause must needs have its campaign for its political or social objective; to discover or evolve principles which might integrate the dissenting factors into a working unity.

All along we have been a loosely integrated Community. We have been uncritically accepting an undefined unity of quantity which is qualitatively blank. This evokes no inspiring vision. We have for long missed that point and cannot afford to leave this issue unexamined. Now we have to think loud and talk loud about *Akhand Parsa* as a process for evolving a consolidated Parsi group.

Based upon my contact with Parsis of all economic strata and all denominations of religious beliefs a common strain runs through them all. There is a vague discontent. There is a mild urge. There is a plain outlook but there is no clear move. An average educated Parsi feels an undefined void in his life and likes to fill it with the concept of comradeship, which he can secure only through a more broad-based franchise. The one desire expressed by everybody is "make a move and we shall join you in numbers." Their complaint: "I am in but out," someone completely detached, knowing not what to do, knowing not what others do. A cohesive element is the essence of gregariousness. This is missing in our Community because it has no voice in its own affairs.

There are two principal registers in the Parsi Panchayat election system: Register "F" and Register "E". Register "F" has about 165 members and Register "E" has about 170 members. The grand total number of votes is 335. These represent the 75,000 Parsis of Bombay. Such an election is known as an indirect election.

"F" register voters are a lot who have earned the voting right for life on a payment of Rs. 5,000 to the Panchayat. This is so whether or not each of its individual members has retained his sense of discrimination or lost it by dint of age, illness or accidents of life. All its members are not those who have themselves earned and made payments but have lived with voting rights secured for them by some ancestor. Several of such entrepreneurs have contributed, say, Rs. 50,000 under ten names of their sons, daughters and grandchildren. In the natural order of things some are of high intellectual calibre and the rest may be of lesser. The emptiness of this election system is so apparent that several enlightened members of this very "F" group recommend change to eliminate its defects. "F"

register members are there and will stay there. The only way out for the Community to escape this strangulation is to create wider franchise. We are not sitting on judgement over the elected ones; we are simply presenting the instrumentality of pull. It destroys the spontaneity of free election.

Merit is nobody's monopoly and may be discovered under unimpressive exteriors. Scrap the scheme in which the majority goes unrepresented and unrewarded.

The "E" Register is more complex. Formerly it was known as the "*So-nu-Mandal*," a coterie of the select hundred and small sections representing graduates and small donors with different alphabets to categorize them. All are now combined in "E" and the number has risen from 100 to 150 since the last three elections.

Out of 150, 20 seats are reserved for graduates, and 20 more seats come from people who donate Rs. 500 and elect 20 members out of their own lot. Such donors are about 40 in all. Most people are not willing to fork out Rs. 500 for they see no sense in spending the money when they are not sure of their say in the final indirect election.

The 130 that remain are selected by or from a list of about 4,500 members each paying Rs. 5 for registering his right to vote to select the *So-nu-Mandal*. Most people do not know this. Thus the majority of the Parsis really go unregistered as penalty for non-payment of Rs. 5 per head—a fee imposed by the Parsi Panchayat on Parsis to be recognised as Parsis. The real spirit of a true election rests on every voter's feeling that the future depends upon his single vote. Our elections are a complete negation of this spirit. Our controller election is really a pre-dated selection to be declared an election on an appointed day. Most people do not know when a new Electoral College is elected and very few may know when the

(Continued on page 22, col. 1)

PARSI PANCHAYAT TRUSTEE'S ELECTION

Dear Voters,

I seek election as a Trustee of the Funds and Immovable Properties of the Parsi Panchayat of Bombay, in the resulting vacancy on expiry of the term of office of my friend Mr. P. C. Hansotia, and I appeal to you for your valuable support.

2. I belong to the Orthodox priestly Class having been initiated Naver at the age of 13. I have risen from poverty and am therefore fully aware of the pangs of poverty. Notwithstanding my other engagements I am in a position to devote a part of my time with a view to solve some of the gravest problems facing the community. I am particularly interested in :

(a) housing the homeless ;

(b) formulation of schemes of amalgamation and utilisation of idle trust funds ;

(c) formation of schemes for amalgamation of Agiaries which are starving or in the process of deterioration ;

(d) scheme for having our civil laws consolidated and re-enacted ;

(e) schemes for providing for proper and adequate education to the children of Parsi priests, adequate housing for them and compensation commensurate with their dignity, by creating a society amongst the priests like the Society of Servants of Jesus.

3. I am a B.A.LL.B., of the University of Bombay and a Solicitor of Bombay High Court and Advocate of the Supreme Court of India.

4. After having practised actively as a Solicitor for over 25 years and holding responsible positions in the Government of Bombay and Government of India for a number of years, I joined the 'House of Tata' as their Solicitor on 2nd April 1969.

5. Besides being connected as their Solicitor I am a Director of a number of public companies, including the Associated Cement Companies Ltd., Bombay Dyeing & Manufacturing Co. Ltd., Tata Mills Ltd., and Tata Power Co. Ltd. I am Chairman of the Board of Advisers of the Bank of America.

6. Besides my professional activities, I am a student of comparative religions and am deeply interested in the welfare and uplift of my community. I am a Trustee of several trusts including Bai Hirabai Tata Trust, Surat Parsi Panchayat Charities, Cama Baug Agiary, Kappawalla Agiary and Dastur Daremeher of Poona.

7. May I appeal to you for your valuable support ?

Yours gratefully

SHIAVAX R. VAKIL

Dear Voter,

A vacancy having arisen on the Board of Trustees of the Parsi Panchayat, I am persuaded by friends and well-wishers to offer myself as a candidate.

The question naturally arises as to what my qualifications are for the job. For very many years I have had the pleasure of being associated with the Panchayat in their legal problems, both in Courts and outside. In the process I have acquired considerable experience of the type of work and the problems, legal as well as human, that the premier Parsi Institution is called to deal with.

I have equally had the good fortune to work with several Parsi Charities in their matters both legal and non-legal, and can legitimately claim to be well acquainted with the complex questions our Community has to face, especially among the middle and poorer classes.

I belong to no party, group or faction and have no affiliations with any particular school of thought among the Parsis.

As an ordinary orthodox Zoroastrian I believe I shall be able to bring to bear on the deliberations of our Panchayat the ordinary man's point of view, his aspirations, his problems and difficulties.

In my opinion two vital questions touching our community require solution as soon as possible. The first is the acute shortage of houses for the community ; the second, our young Parsi girls marrying outside the fold. I know that both these questions are difficult, but they are not beyond solution and I do believe that my experience as Counsel of long standing, acquainted with the problems of the Parsi Panchayat and other charitable institutions, may help towards their solution.

The problem of our girls marrying outside the community as also marital problems in general can be solved in some measure at least by providing cheap rental houses and changing the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act. I have often found young couples rushing to the Court for divorce when there is no-one to guide them. A council of elders of the community will not be out of place to guide and direct those unfortunate youngsters in need of advice in the solution of their problems.

I am an orthodox Zoroastrian and a firm believer in the creed and tenets of the Zoroastrian faith. To uphold this faith some steps are necessary for the improvement of our priestly class - *Yozdethregar* mobeds - who are today in none too prosperous a condition and are diminishing in number.

In the solution of the many problems that face the community, I may be able to contribute my mite, with the training and experience acquired in matters of human relations, housing, industry, employment and higher education and impelled above all by a desire and a duty to serve my fellow Zoroastrian.

Yours sincerely,

P. P. KHAMBATTA

DIALOGUE (Continued from page 14)

exist there can be no cremation and if no vultures are present burials could be allowed but with no tombs over the graves. He stated he was in favour of continuing the practice of barring non-Parsees from being present at the funeral ceremonies. Other letters objecting to burial on *dokhma* grounds were then read.

The next speaker Burjor Batliwalla asked "Is this the right time to take a decision? Is the problem cogent? Sixty birds are necessary for the disposal of the bodies and the birds *are there*.... The time (for change) is not now but 20 years later." He felt if this burial system comes into existence on the *dokhma* grounds it would mean the "beginning of a parallel Anjuman ... the question is not what to do with our bodies but with our souls. We cannot vouchsafe for our bodies.... The grave is not forever." He noted that burial desecrated the earth. "Cremation perhaps is a progressive method" but it does not altogether dispose of the body. The bones remain, he added. This last statement was disputed by another speaker.

Ms. Manijee Kaoosji, a reformist, said she "stood opposed to the *dokhma nashim*... *Dokhma* had their significance sometime ago... Vultures do *not* exist now, only a few crows.... *Dokhma Nashini* is a custom... drop it when it doesn't suit you... death is not for the dead but for the living, therefore the feelings of the living are to be considered.

Dr. B. Surti asked "If electric cremation were available to Zarathushtra would he have abandoned it for the *dokhma*?... We must have the choice to do what we want with our bodies."

Italia ventured that if a referendum were taken 80 per cent would be for *dokhma nashini*. This statement caused an uproar. Members of the audience demanded a vote, which, Italia said, could not be taken then.

At this stage a young woman got up and said she did not know why the people were not voicing their views. Another man said he felt all the salient arguments for or against had been presented and so they did not wish to repeat them. Others spoke. Then Meheroze

Vatcha almost brought the meeting to a tumultuous end when, after being asked four times to speak, he shouted from the back of the hall "I do not wish to cast pearls before swine." Italia then formally closed the meeting. □

GORWALA (Continued from page 5)

just as much as does the man or woman below forty who, instead of being married, chooses to live by himself or herself. If the community is to save itself, it is most important that this should be realised by all Parsis.

The present situation lays a clear duty too on all older Parsis, whether married or single. They should endeavour to encourage marriage and the having of children, make these seem socially desirable, and to whatever extent may be possible, assist monetarily or otherwise, in bringing these about. When there are young couples lacking say a few thousands to get a roof over their heads before getting married, on all those it becomes incumbent to assist them by grants or loans without interest or on very low rates of interest. If the older persons are single themselves, this may be one way of some reparation for their own failure. That Parsis who have remained single and childless in the last forty or thirty years, have definitely sinned against the light, I, being one of them, acknowledge with deep regret. All I can urge in extenuation is that I was totally unaware of the grievous plight to which the community was being reduced. Had I even at fifty realised the position, I would probably have endeavoured to do my duty and make my contribution towards amending our shrinking numbers. One further point may be noted, in our special circumstances, a couple which can have three or four children and avoids having more than two, because of considerations of comfort or social life or travel, is failing in its duty. Now, demographically, for all married couples, it becomes imperatively a question of from each according to its capability.

Since the disappearance of the community would be a disaster not only for the Parsee, but for the country—this India which is his just as much as it is any other citizen's—clearly the Parsee's endeavour should be to avert it. This

he can do by taking steps to prevent further decline in his number and by building it up again to at least the lakh twenty thousand it used be. He should also remember that in order to retain and increase his usefulness to his country he must avoid a defeatist mentality. Surely, through lack of appreciation of his own values and achievements, he does not wish to commit a kind of casual harakiri and render extinct the stresses and strains of defeat in battle and the pressures of settling in a new land and making it his own for over 1300 years. The Zarthosti's strongest attribute in the past has been his character. Courteous, honest, forthright, keeper of his word, eminently trustworthy, active in mind and body, full of fortitude, honourable, courageous, hard-working, gay of spirit—these are the appellations, fellow citizens of other religions have with justice applied to him. Out of the basic ethic of his faith, the simple observance of its standards, he drew these virtues. By these alone can he stand firm in the eras to come, more arduous than the past, perhaps even more dangerous. It is for him to choose whether he will rise to the highest within him and be true to his tradition or just disappear obscurely into nothing. □

Shahnameh (Continued from page 15)

has found what he believes to be the oldest copy to date of the Shahnameh—a 13th century manuscript lodged in the Cama Institute. Dampness has affected the paper and the pages are out of order but it holds forth great promise. Minovi believes it is worth thousands of rupees. Photographs have been taken for study.

And so the search goes on. But for the mass of Shahnameh fans the study is an exercise in academics. As Ms. Mehra Shroff, in an emotionally charged peroration said in relation to some verses Minovi termed unauthentic, "We will always consider them by Firdausi". And Homi Banaji, a former trustee of the Parsee Panchayat recalled how in the old days Parsis would gather in the evenings near a well and listen to recitations of the Shahnameh. "One man got so excited," said Banaji that "he fell into the well".

A SORT OF CURSE

Given the knowledge most Parsees have of their religious heritage, the words *Vendidad*, *Vipta* and *Vaepaya* would probably be accepted as a Persian rendition of *veni, vidi, vici*. Knowledge of ancient scriptures is the preserve of scholars and priests in which the layman treads gently. But sometimes, within that sequestered tower of ivory the pressure builds until an eruption occurs that litters the streets with scholarly disputes and so begins the education of the masses.

Thus it was one day in January 1971, that Faribourz Nariman, a scholar of Avesta-Pahlavi, read a research paper before the 28th International Congress of Orientalists in Canberra, Australia on "Why are *Vipta* and *Vaepaya* Poignantly Disparaged in the *Vendidad*?" and thereby ended up by doing for ancient Avesta and Pahlavi texts what Bobby Fischer did for chess.

The words *vipta* and *vaepaya* says Nariman refer to the active and passive partners in the act of paederasty—sexual relations between two males, especially when one of them happens to be a young boy. The *Vendidad*, an ancient Avestan text dealing with the code of ritual purification, "condemns both the active and the passive partner in the act of sodomy," the scholar notes.

"The *Vendidad* is replete with injunctions regarding the social or moral behaviour of the Zoroastrians. Most of these injunctions are backed by arguments for or against a particular idea, notion or a way of life. However, in certain cases we find, sometimes to our surprise, a conspicuous absence of an argument."

The *Vendidad* condemnation is puzzling, notes Nariman, given the "universality of paederasty" in ancient times. "We know that in the ancient world sacred men attached to temples frequently acted as homosexual prostitutes. Rites of this kind are referred to in the Old Testament. The ancient Chinese were no strangers to



Nariman 'sticking to his guns.'

homosexuality. The Greeks' attitude, which was one of tolerance and admiration, the Greeks' admission of homosexual love and the religious foundation of the latter merit special attention... Plato observed at one time that the highest form of human existence was *philosophia paiderastias*, 'philosophy combined (with) paederasty.' Phaedrus declared in the *Symposium*, 'I know not any greater blessing to a young man beginning life than a virtuous lover, or to the lover than a beloved youth.' ...

"Indeed," the paper goes on to say, "one might legitimately conclude that no scholar can claim to understand Greece, who has not understood and appreciated the attitude of the Greeks in this connection. As Theoder Daubler remarks in his book on Sparta... 'Anyone who is unable to regard the love of Hellene for boys, or Sappho's inclination for her own sex, as something elevated and sacred, denies it in the face of Greece ... H. Montgomery Hyde who says in his recent work, 'the real crime of the sodomites in the eyes of the Lord was idolatry' and not paederasty. In short, as far as paederasty is concerned one can say with Schopenhauer that 'precisely its complete universality and irradicable character everywhere shows that the thing flows out of human nature itself; only in that way could it persist at all times and everywhere.'"

Then why does the *Vendidad* condemn pederasty? "An attempt is made in this paper to suggest that the answer lies in *Yasna* 51.12," (i.e. the twelfth strophe of the *Vohu Khshthra Gatha*). The *Gathas* (Songs) chronologically precede the *Vendidad* and are attributed directly to the prophet Zarathustra. They are the most ancient of the sacred writings collectively named the *Avesta* (Foundation Text). Nariman notes that the word *vaepaya* in *Yasna* 51.12 is "variously translated (by scholars) as a sodomite; one who commits unnatural sin, trembler," minion (of a prince) and so on. It is only in the translation by Bartholomae Nariman feels that "the background for the condemnation of sodomites or, more precisely, one who plays the passive role in the act" is offered.

The term *vaepaya* crops up when Zarathustra on a cold, winter's night requests a *kavi* (prince) of the district for shelter for himself and his steeds. The request is refused and the term *vaepaya* is used as a "sort of curse."

In a footnote to his paper Nariman observes, "To argue that a prophet is not likely to 'curse' is to ignore the 'human side' of the prophet's existence on this earth. Moreover, the type of 'softness' inherent in such an approach could not have been a feature of a militant religion like that of Zarathustra. It appears that bearing this fact in mind Friedrich Nietzsche rightly declared, "When, however, ye have an enemy, then return him not good for evil... And when ye are cursed, it pleaseth me not that ye should than desire to bless. Rather curse a little also." (*Thus Spake Zarathustra*.) And again, "It is inhuman to bless when one is being cursed." (Beyond Good and Evil).

"I have just suggested if we accept Bartholomae's translation of the portion as correct then it is possible to establish a connection between the poignant disparagement of *vaepaya* and *vipta* in the *Vendidad* and *Yasna* 51.12. It is purely academic. Whether you

agree or disagree, what does it matter?"

His critics don't take such a sanguine view of the matter. When summaries of the various papers presented at the Canberra Congress were published and made available in Bombay recently, they took exception to Nariman's thesis. The summary was published in some of the vernacular Parsee papers and rejoinders were invited. Two rejoinders referred to Erach J. S. Taraporewala's *The Divine Songs of Zarathustra* in which the celebrated scholar notes "in the *Vendidad* this root (*vip*) is definitely used in the sense of 'committing paederasty' and *vaepaya* is found in *Ven.* 832 in the sense of the passive partner of the act," but he goes on to say "most assuredly it would be utterly absurd to drag in the latter meaning of the *Vendidad* into this Gathic verse."

Nariman argues "there is no reason why a word like *vaepaya* should be taken to mean one thing in the *Vendidad* and another in the *Gathas*." He contends his critics have read only his summary and not the entire paper. He has replied to them at greater length.

"People ask me why I'm sticking to my guns. They say I shouldn't have chosen this subject and I ought to state it was a mistake to do so. This is absolutely absurd. If I had to do it again, I would do precisely the same thing," he says. "When I publish this paper I shall publish every word of it."

(Extracts from the paper are printed with the author's permission.)

Warden (Continued from page 18)

election of a new Trustee is to be held and why.

The Electoral College is formed once every seven years and the present one is to end by the close of this year. We must start taking an interest in it. We must demand from the Panchayat to be posted with the necessary information. The present election system can be changed only by applying to the Court. Though Burke has labelled general elections a mighty evil, we have to acknowledge that after all they are mighty and have

put life and blood in the people for the last quarter century.

The normality of any ethnic group depends upon its sense of respectability with its built-in responsibility throughout the entire corpus of the group from its top to its bottom in natural gradations of life. No account of emphasis on the word natural can be an overstatement. Society groups are not natural groups. Economically efficient and deficient groups are not natural groups. Respectability groups are not natural groups, they are popular appraisal groups. Real groupings are God's grouping noticed in life as partly fulfilled in different gradations.

In the absence of healthy interaction from a larger number, deterioration has set in. The top forgoes decorum and the bottom loses dignity. The time has ripened to think loud and talk loud.

Suggestions

- Voting right should be extended widely.
- (a) to all persons of both sexes educated upto matriculation and above the age of 21
- (b) all tax payers
- (c) all members of "F" register ex-officio.
- (d) all persons above the age of 35 years not included in 1(a) and 1(b).
- II Office of Trusteeship should be for five years instead of ten years. All Trustees who have completed five years shall resign but shall be eligible for re-election.
- III All seven Trustees should be elected at the same time in one election and not separately as vacancies arise.
- IV In the event of a vacancy arising in the interval a member may be opted by the sitting Trustees with four persons voting in favour provided the expiry period is not longer than 18 months.
- V At the time of the general election a body of 100 persons should be formed as the Reference Committee. The selection of the sub-

stituting Trustee should be confirmed by a majority of votes of the Reference Committee.

VI The Reference Committee may propose its own Candidate to the sitting Board of Trustees for their opinion.

VII If the period of vacancy be longer than 18 months there should be a general election for the vacancy.

VIII The Reference Committee shall meet once every month. The Reference Committee should be posted with all proceedings of the meetings of the Board of Trustees. This Committee shall also put in their own suggestions on the working of the Panchayat and such suggestions shall not be turned down unnecessarily. Community members shall maintain contact with Trustees through this body.

IX As "E" Register members will be predominating, proposers for any candidate can be anybody and not restricted to any group as at present.

X The Trustees should be responsible to and answerable to the Community and shall readily supply all details of inquiries to the Reference Committee.

XI There is at present no machinery except the machinery of the law of the land for redress of wrong suffered by any member of the Community. The Reference Committee shall have the power to make inquiries and suggest action against any defaulting Trustee responsible. If any point of law be involved the Committee will have the right to opt upto three Parsi lawyers wanting to render voluntary help.

XII No Trustee shall arrogate to himself sole and total control of any department but shall share it with colleagues early enough to ease fixing of joint responsibility.

XIII To incorporate any other reasonable and helpful suggestions.

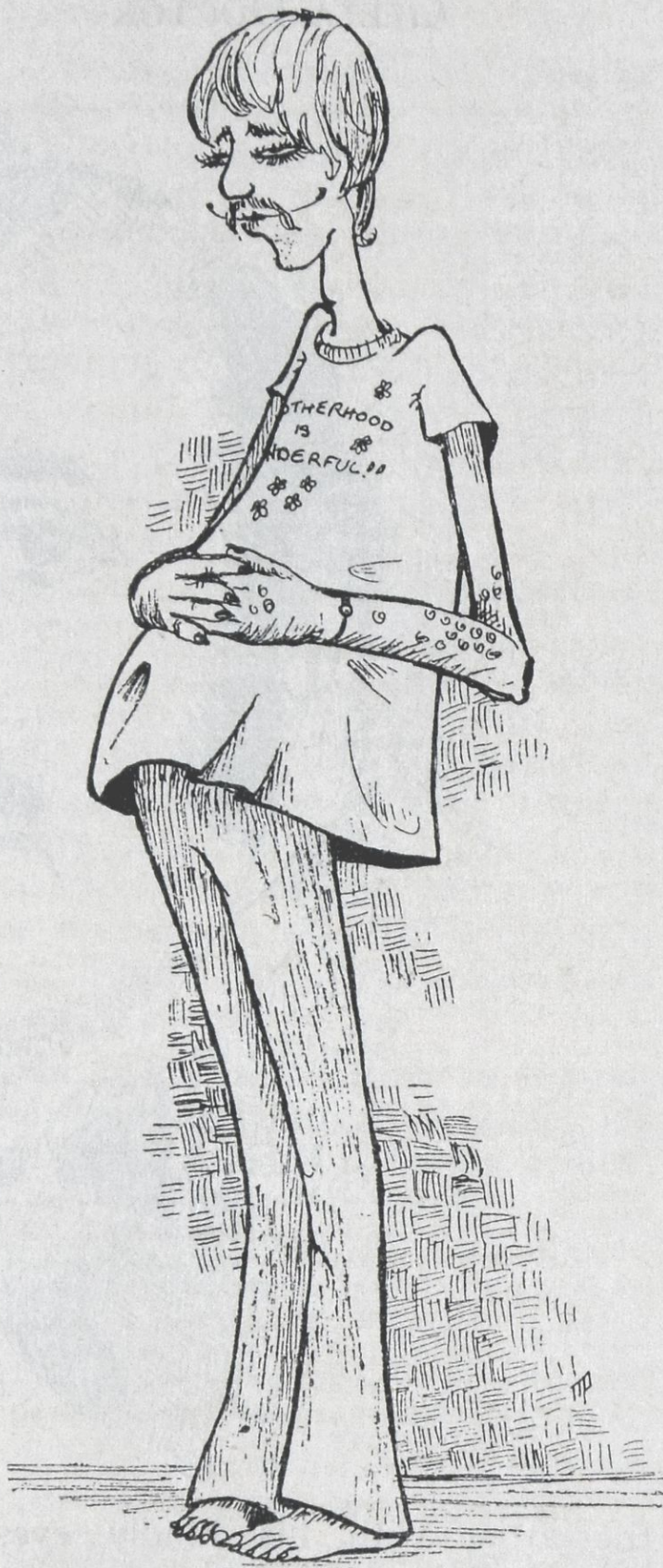
CUCKOO! CUCKOO!

Here Come the Fairies!

To watch a film in which the hero dies of T.B. yodelling away with his last breath, and find yourself laughing when the rest of the audience is sobbing uncontrollably is not an unusual experience. We can accept it with philosophical detachment. When the opposite happens however, we cannot help but react with all the petulance and indignation of a child who has been deprived of his lolly.

Not that I felt like sobbing when I finally went to the 40th "House Full" performance of *Ah Norman!* the "funniest show in town." But I certainly didn't roll down the aisle in merriment and clutch my neighbour and gasp, "How Sweet!" every time the Star of the show, Bomsy Nicholson waved his fingers prettily in the air and cried, "Oh Normie!" in his best girly manner. That the show has been a smashing success there is no doubt. What is worth questioning is how a play which archly describes itself as "a fairy tale for adults" and pretends to be a frank encounter with homosexuality while actually exploiting it, can be such a hit. How can we in short, reconcile the play's popularity with its basic inanity.

Can we lay the credit on the Marzban magic and say that this wizard of the theatre has waved his wand over an ordinary T.V. style drama with its one line jokes and stock situations and transformed it into the "naughtiest show in town"? The play has very little to offer in the way of a plot revolving as it does in the discovery of a Father who finds out that his son Norman is a homosexual. The circumstances that lead to this discovery; the shock, the dismay and the utter disbelief that follow it; the unsuccessful attempts by the Father to lure Norman away from his deflected manhood by introducing him to a prostitute; and throughout, his blustering encounters with Norman's "friend" whom at the end he is forced to accept, are some of the incidents



that arise out of this situation. The Father's life is further complicated by the fact that his wife has just eloped with his brother. Towards the end of the play she lands up at Norman's flat and though she is also shocked at the news she adjusts to it with feminine practicality. In between we get what is supposed to be a fairly comprehensive introduction to homosexuals; starting with Norman who appears to be the "straight" variety to his friend Garson who is the effeminate type, and the real queer brand, as exemplified by the Salesman who provides the distraught Father with books about homosexuality with reassuring information about famous homosexuals in history.

Certainly Mr Adi Marzban's sense of timing is faultless. In a society which has not yet got accustomed to exposures to straightforward sex themes, let alone its variations, he has sprung homosexuality like a jack-in-the-box and evoked the same reactions; the shock, the laughter, and the subsequent acceptance. After *Ah Norman!* people have discovered that its quite fashionable to talk about homosexuality if only to parade their sophistication in these matters. "My dear it was all very naughty," confided a lady over a cup of coffee. "I better not tell you. You might not understand. You see it was about HOMO-SEXUALS!" she concluded in a sibilant whisper. Part of the thrill therefore is provided by the subject itself, being, as it is, a guided tour into hitherto forbidden territory.

Apart from this we cannot detect any extraordinary feat of direction which indeed leaned too much on the side of farce to be considered either subtle or sensitive. We have an example of this tendency to over-emphasize, in the repeated use of the famous Cuckoo refrain which starts off the play. What seems appropriate and amusing at first, ends up becoming boring and silly after constant usage, a repetition of a joke which has ceased to be funny.

Here again I must admit that the very parts which appeared to me grossly exaggerated and in dubious taste were also those at which the audience laughed the most, so that I cannot help but wonder whether the coffee drinking lady was not right after all and whether it was not all too much for my understanding. But surely it was not necessary to portray the Queer Salesman in quite that grotesque manner with his ridiculous waddle and falsetto squeak and dress him up in clothes that a clown might have hesitated to wear. As though this were not bad enough

(Continued on page 28, col. 2)

A Pre-occupation with Butterflies

GEETA DOCTOR

It was somewhat fitting that both Jehangir Sabavala and Pilloo Pochkhanavala should have had their exhibitions at the same time at the Jehangir Art Gallery. Some exhibitions are to be seen and forgotten, some to be enjoyed and some few there are that you may see and not dare dislike. It was in this last category that the two belonged. Both artists have already established their reputations and their work has been seen so often at previous exhibitions, on Christmas cards, during international art get-togethers and of course at prominent public places that they may claim to have established a complete product identity. A "Sabavala" for example is as easily identifiable as a bottle of Coke and while this may be a source of gratification to the artist it is inclined to inhibit the uncommitted viewer from forming his own opinion.

This being the case it was somewhat surprising that Jehangir Sabavala should have felt it necessary to fortify his exhibition with a barrage of ecstatic reviews which inevitably engaged a person's attention just as he was about to enter. Since a majority of the reviews implied that Sabavala's paintings would appeal only to individuals with a highly refined sensibility one entered the exhibition either feeling slightly apprehensive at the thought of not being able to qualify or belligerent at being forced to strike up an attitude even before seeing the paintings. These notions were only intensified after observing the performance of two exquisitely dressed damsels who waltzed round the room in a frenzy of delight and danced up to the artist to trill "Oh Jehangir, the exhibition is simply marvellous!"

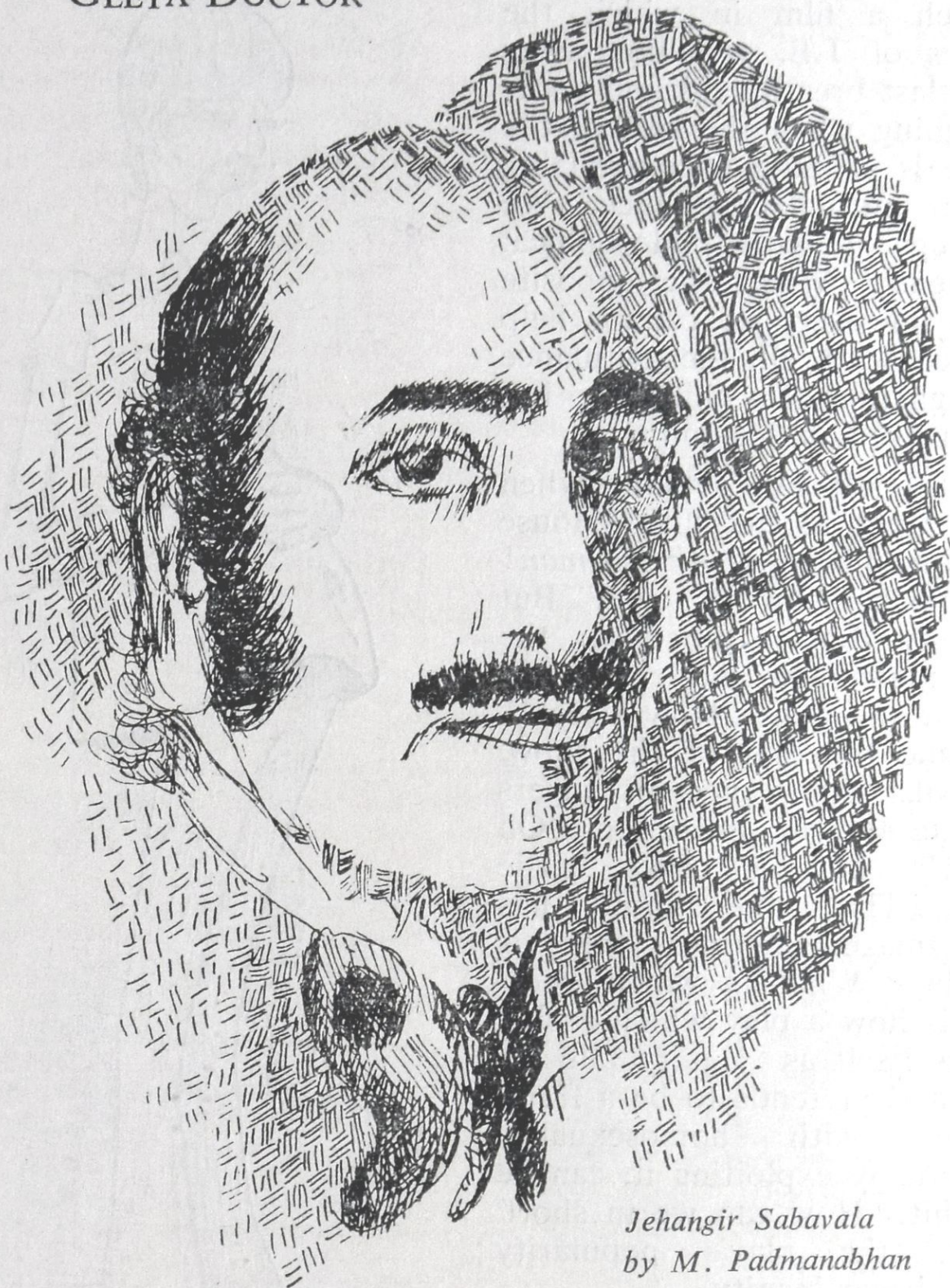
To his credit we must admit that Jehangir Sabavala was exceedingly affable and most courteous towards any member of the public who went up to him with any questions. He was very much

the artist with his kindly eyes behind dark glasses, his sweeping gestures and breathless genteel manner of speaking. "You see that painting there," he explained pointing to one of the more well-known canvases entitled, "Green Thoughts in a Green Shade". It was, he said, inspired by a chance encounter with a nest of butterflies. The moment he approached, they fled, and that fleeting instant was what he had tried to recreate on the canvas. It was a moment of beauty he went on, which had made a deep impression on his mind and since the butterflies could not communicate, he with his artist's vision felt compelled to do so.

The artist seemed to be particularly delighted that more than a thousand people came to his show

daily. Even more remarkable was the fact that being at the Jehangir Art Gallery the exhibition had attracted people from all walks of life. In short even that ubiquitous creature, the common man, had turned up to pay homage.

But alas, what did that creature think? What did that common denominator of the general public feel? It would appear that he felt precisely nothing. Having read the critics and been told that he should find something very profound in Sabavala's work, he stood before his paintings in a reverential stupor. Nor is this in itself surprising or distressing. Nobody will pretend that art requires the approval of the masses for its survival. What is unfortunate is that art should lapse into a mechanical limbo where



Jehangir Sabavala
by M. Padmanabhan

people come to stare and not to see, to praise and not to understand. In such an atmosphere art becomes a mere diversion, or at best an entertainment, asking only for an automatic response from the onlookers. It is then that people expect to be given a 'meaning' for every painting or want to know its price so that they can reduce it to a simple commodity whose worth can be calculated as per the current market rate.

Oddly enough Jehangir Sabavala in his brief artistic manifesto gives us a clue to what we find difficult to explain about his work. Commenting on his method of composition he says that he works like an architect building up bit by bit the idea in his mind into a crystallised whole. This seems to suggest that his approach to his work is more that of a craftsman than an artist. The more we observe his paintings the more this appears to be true for his technique is in fact like that of a craftsman working in meticulous fragments of paint, laying piece upon piece of colour to produce a work of delicate charm, like a muted mosaic, but lacking in the final analysis that spark of life which differentiates even the finest piece of craftsmanship from the genuine work of art.

Most of the critics are quite in accord in heaping praises on Sabavala's technical virtuosity and indeed it is this quality, this sheer refining of his palette, which commands our respect. The shimmering opalescent glimmer of his skies, the parched luminosity of his wastelands meeting in an interlocking pattern of flat triangles are a testimony to this. But why this should make his paintings mystic is somewhat harder to comprehend. On top of this when this so-called mystical quality is related to the Indian ethos and his paintings are hailed as "India in a microcosm" one begins to feel skeptical. I must flatly confess my failure to see anything remarkably "Indian" about his paintings and this naturally leads me to question the metaphysical quality of Sabavala's work. How

much, one wonders, of this exists in the paintings and how much in the glib articulation of the critics.

Coming down to two specific works which have received a fair amount of attention, "And Darkness leaves the Sky" and The Seers I and II, we find that in the first, the composition is so entirely hackneyed as to be embarrassing. There are a clump of palm trees, a vague figure sitting beneath them and staring at the earth and sky beyond, all bathed in a sentimental mauvish light. To be sure we don't know what the figure represents or why it should be contemplating that desolate landscape and to that extent we may talk about the mystical nature of the painting. But by that criterion every stone, stick and tree has a mystic potential and there would be no need to single this out as a significant aspect of Sabavala's work.

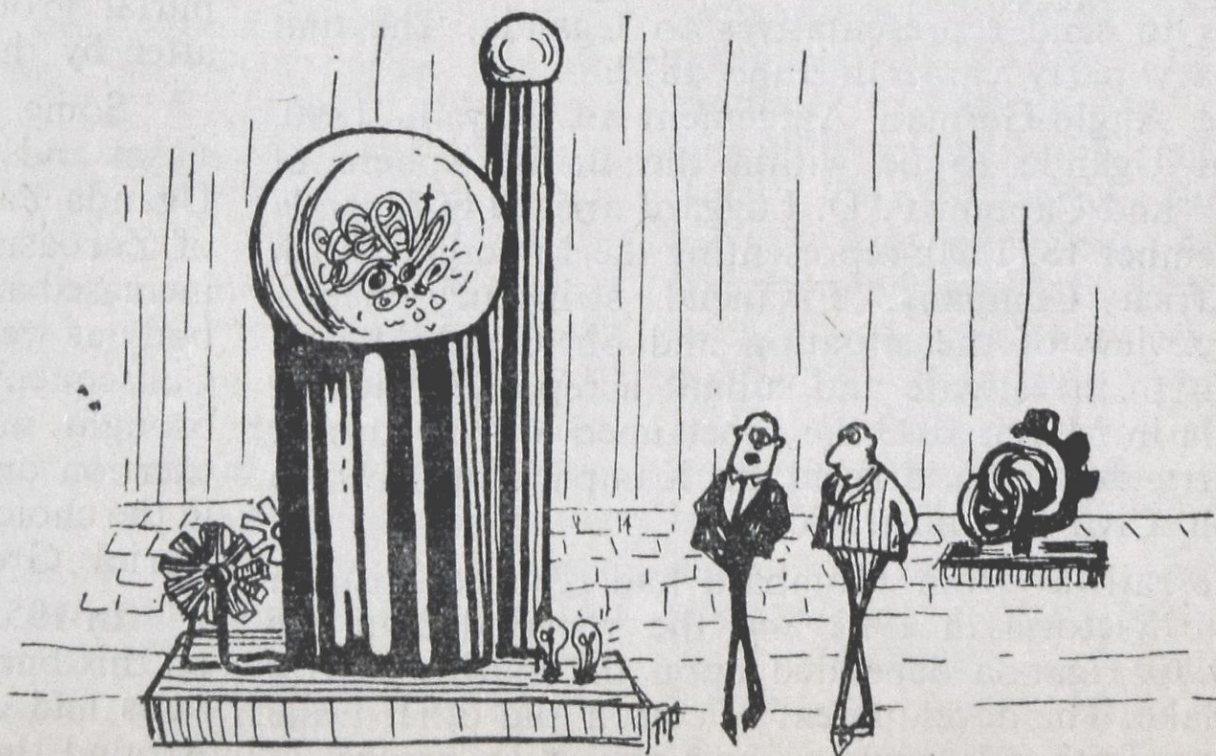
In "The Seers" there is a painful striving to say something meaningful which is hardly achieved in the forced surrealism of the four figures that are juxtaposed with awkwardly placed hands and curious butterfly shapes floating about their faces. As hooded spectres dissolving into the horizon of some of his other paintings they may have had an aura of mystery, but when they are brought into focus and shown to have sharp angular faces of monotonous similarity, we cannot help

but feel disappointed. Apart from the title there is nothing interesting about the painting and to find that the artist has attempted a second one in another pattern of colours, only re-inforces our conviction that the artist is substituting real inspiration with mechanical ingenuity.

To pass from the recurring uncertainties of Sabavala's landscapes into the solid reality of Pilloo Pochkhanavala's thrusting forms was refreshing. There was a no frills-and-fanfare approach about the display which left each person entirely on his own to discover the shifting viewpoints of the exhibits. Pilloo Pochkhanavala herself, sat confidently at the helm of her creations like the figurehead of a ship proudly sailing forth with the armada behind her. Having produced an excellently designed monograph which was being sold at the rather stiff price of Rs. 8 she did not feel inclined to answer any questions, since her views had been strongly and clearly expressed therein.

The most noteworthy feature of the exhibition was the wide range of Ms. Pochkhanavala's sculptures. At times they stressed the restless experimentation of an artist trying to achieve a breakthrough in the challenge of a new material, at other times they showed the artist sensuously unfolding the form and lyricism in an apparently lifeless lump of

(Continued on page 28, col. 1)



The engineering institute suggested issuing a patent...

ZOROASTRIANS OF UGANDA

(The following is an abridged report issued by The Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia at the beginning of the year.

On August 9, 1972, President Idi Amin summoned the High Commissioners of Britain, India, Pakistan and other leaders of the Asian communities. Of the total 17 persons gathered at the Command Post in Kampala, there was a Zoroastrian – Mr. Jalbhai Fakirji Dastur, a 50-year old resident of Uganda, whose involvement and activities made his name a household name in Uganda. Charging that the Asians are undermining the economy of the country, Amin issued the expulsion order, ordering the Asians to leave Uganda within 90 days – November 8, 1972 being the dead-line date.

The number of Zoroastrians in Uganda fluctuated between 108 and 88 as the highest and the lowest figures. There were nearly 64 Zoroastrians there on August 9, 1972 when the expulsion order came. On September 9, 1972, Faredoon and Piroja Amrolia, who have recently come to Vancouver from Uganda, requested the assistance of our Society to enable the Dastur and the Wadia families of Kampala to come to Canada. Promptly, a telegram was sent to the Canadian Immigration Team in Kampala on September 9, 1972 followed by a letter.

Subsequent to this, we learned that there were still some more Zoroastrians in Uganda and a detailed list as prepared by the Amrolia family, was sent to the Canadian Immigration Team in Kampala, urging favourable consideration for all of them. In the case of Mr. Erachshah Mahawa and his family, a telegram was sent to the team in Kampala on September 26, 1972.

History

Whilst the illustrious members of the Talatifamilies were already in Zanzibar, Durban, Cape Town, since 1750 onwards, followed by other adventurous Zoroastrians, almost all settled on the coast for trade and commerce. The first trader to enter Uganda was the Arab Ahmed bin Ibrahim, who went there from Zanzibar in 1844. In 1862, explorers Speke and Grant, discovered the source of the river Nile at Jinja. It was in fact the search for the source of the river Nile that brought Uganda to the notice of the outside world. Henry Stanley, another explorer came in 1875 and impressed by the local inhabitants, appealed the English missionary societies to send representatives to Uganda. The first missionary party came in June 1877.

The Anglo-German Agreement of July 1, 1890, declared Uganda to be within the British sphere of influence and Captain F. D. Lugard arrived in Uganda on December 18, 1890, representing the Imperial British East Africa Company. Financial stringency necessitated review of the situation and Sir Gerald Portal was sent to investigate and submit a report. Reaching Kampala in March 1893, he proclaimed a protectorate. Sir Harry Johnston arrived in Kampala in 1899 to establish Civil administration.

The railway from Mombasa had reached Kisumu on Lake Victoria in 1902 and the remainder of the journey to Uganda depended upon the marine service on the lake. The development of cotton and other trade brought additional trackage and the Nile bridge at Jinja in 1931 connected Kampala and Mombasa with

rail. The whole country was beset with a sleeping sickness epidemic between 1901 and 1907.

It is generally said that the building of the railway brought Asians to Uganda and President Amin himself has said that if the railway was built with African labour, the current problems would not have arisen. Whilst partially true, the bulk of the Asians in Uganda is a by product of the British Indian Empire. The early expeditions to Africa started out from India. Speke and Grant who discovered the source of the Nile were officers of the Indian Army.

Our adventurous ancestors followed the expansion of the British Empire which also brought them to Uganda. According to Mr. Jalbhai Dastur, the first Zoroastrian to go to Uganda was a lawyer, possibly from some other nearby African place in 1904 to fight the case of an African chief. The Uganda order in council of 1902 established a high court and subordinate courts. Accepting a few heads of cattle in settlement of fees, the Zoroastrian lawyer left Uganda when the case was over.

Parsi Prakash, Vol. 4, records Peshotan Framji Dastur was appointed a Treasurer in the Protectorate of Uganda in 1909. The correct name should have been Peshotan Fakirji Dastur. Peshotan Dastur had in fact gone to Uganda in 1908. One Mr. Hormusji Mehta from Surat had also gone to Uganda and whether Peshotan Dastur or Hormusji Mehta would be the first Zoroastrian gone to Uganda for permanent settlement is not known.

In 1923, Mr. Jalbhai Fakirji Dastur came to Kampala when Mr. Hormusji Mehta was alive and still there. Those were the days when there were several tropical diseases. There were no roads, no sanitation, no medical relief and not even proper drinking water. Lions and tigers were sprawlers in the back yards after sundown.

Despite the hardships, there was a steady flow of Zoroastrians and in 1926, Mr. Jehangirji Pardiwalla, a respected gentleman of status and substance and residing at Jinja, felt the necessity of having a burial ground for the Zoroastrian community. Jalbhai Dastur and Jehangir Pardiwalla, invoking the blessings of *Ahura Mazda* with a *Jashan* ceremony, followed by sumptuous feast, attended by the local Zoroastrians, brought about the Uganda Parsi Association. Jehangirji Pardiwalla procured a suitable area for the Zoroastrian burial grounds, the maintenance of which is looked after by the Jinja Municipal Office even to-day.

Some years later, there was decline both in enthusiasm and the number of Zoroastrians in Jinja and the Uganda Parsi Association ceased to exist. The number of Zoroastrians in Kampala had on the other hand increased and it was found necessary to have a communal body as well as a Zoroastrian burial ground at Kampala. Consequently, the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman was brought into existence and with constant effort and exertion on the part of Jalbhai Dastur, a two-acre area in the choicest location was procured for the Zoroastrian Burial Ground.

In 1955, it was decided to build a mortuary (*bungli*) on this burial ground in Kampala and the local Zoroastrians had collected almost Rs. 10,000 for the purpose. Around this time, Mr. Ardeshir Darabshah Shroff had

(Continued on page 28, col. 3)

FROM UGANDA VIA MOSCOW

MANJULA PADMANABHAN

One is misled, when presented with a photograph of Vera into supposing her to be slight and retiring. In fact, though there is definitely an air of delicate insubstantiality conveyed by her close-cropped hair, wide dark eyes and pale complexion, she is confident and forth-right in the manner of someone who is sure of where she stands. A Ugandan refugee, she arrived in Bombay after a six year study stint in Moscow.

Having lived all her life, excepting the last six years, in Uganda, Vera Khurshed Mehta belongs to that group of Ugandan citizens for whom the evacuation would have presented a major uprooting of home and security. Yet, she says, "I didn't really feel it. I suppose if I had been there when it happened I would have been upset." For her the upheaval has been registered more by proxy, through her mother, than through her own personal experience. Though her mother and brother were fortunate in not having been particularly singled out for persecution as in other cases reported from Uganda, they were, in Vera's words "roughed up" and had to leave the major portion of their belongings behind when they came away. This is similar to the fate dealt out to most Ugandans forced to leave. There was no distinction made between the eviction of other Asians and of Parsis since they were all considered one uniform group in the eyes of the Ugandan Government. Vera herself is "not really conscious of being Parsee." In Uganda, rather than live in close communities as in India, there was greater integration among the Indians. Most of her friends were non-Parsis. Her memories of Uganda are happy. She had enjoyed her schooling there, but on account of her six-year stay in Russia, during which she had gone home only once, she had been disassociated with the country long enough not to feel the effects of the departure as strongly as would be expected.

About Idi Amin's expulsion order she feels "It was a very



Vera Khurshed Mehta

dirty trick. I mean, you can understand what he says about the exploitation by the Indians but he could have been more tactful." Unlike other young Ugandans, she does not appear to bear 'Big Daddy' any personal grudges, but she emphatically re-affirms the view that the step had been suicidal from the perspective of the country's economy. Vera found the blacks in Uganda "quite friendly, I knew them mostly through my school. Actually, they were as concerned about the evacuation as the Asians themselves because they realized what was going to happen. They didn't want it either; it was really just a decision acted out by the military. The local people could see that once the Asians left there would be no one to take over." She feels the country has very little future now since the regime has necessitated a reshuffle of all fields of commercial and administrative activity and has re-opened arenas for the inter-tribal conflicts which have always been dormant but nor rampant while the Asians were there.

Vera says she has mostly lost contact with her friends since they too began to scatter well before Amin's unprecedented exorcism of all Asian influence. Most of them as well as other Parsee families on the move, have opted for studying and living abroad, their prime reason being that they had held non-Ugandan citizenship. Those, like herself, who were Ugandan subjects had no recourse

but to return to India and apply for Indian passports.

Clearer than her impressions of Uganda are those of Russia. She lived there for six years, five of which were devoted to her M.A. She majored in Russian and French and was awarded a first class. "People here seem to think it's really difficult there (in Russia). It's not; the people are very friendly once you get to know them, especially with Indians because we seem to represent the Romantic East to them. It's easy-going and you can do what you want." In light of other reports brought back from behind the Iron Curtain her account appears unusual but Vera feels she genuinely gained from her education there. She says she was rarely made aware of Big Brother watching her and that though her friends were initially wary about discussing politics they were not particularly retentive either. As for restrictions on individuals in Russia, Vera believes "People here (in India) are more restricted actually, because of communal and social conventions."

She finds India "disappointing." This is her first visit of any appreciable length in the country and though she does not expect to leave soon, she hopes to go abroad eventually. It seems inexorable that returning Indians must see the dirt and poverty of their country more obviously than those who have seen it all their lives. Figuring largely in her disenchantment is the ponderous machinery that must be set in motion to obtain a passport which will make her eligible to work. In the mean time Vera has to forego various opportunities for employment ideally suited to her qualifications. She knows few people her age in Bombay, and finds, like others in the same predicament, that adjusting to India is not easy, "it gets me down being alone." Vera realizes she has to acknowledge a sense of belonging. "It's inevitable," she notes, "that I will also become more conscious of the community after having stayed here for some time." □

Butterflies (Continued from page 25)
matter. In a piece like the "Steel Nest" for example she seems to direct our attention to the smooth roundness of the stones strangled in a rapacious web of steel, while in others like in the "Quartet" it is more the limpid form that she asks us to contemplate.

What characterises her work are the surging vertical forms best exemplified in a piece entitled "Triple Ascent" where a trilogy of smooth figures with upturned faces are straining towards three central rods. The work has all the delicacy of a burdgeoning flower together with the pent-up energy of a rocket.

Though the artist claims a preference for working in scrap metal, this medium giving her as she says, scope for intense and concentrated creative effort, the most pleasing pieces were those in aluminium, and also one entitled "Counterpoint" which looked like two sweeping movements in wood held in perfect tension by a short, clear cylinder of perspex. While the scrap iron expresses the exuberant vitality of Pilloo Pochkhanavala, the pieces in aluminium have a more restrained, deceptively simple, quality about them. One critic has likened these forms to the monoliths at Stonehenge and indeed it would seem that their appeal lies in the archetypal quality with which they are invested.

Both artists were sufficiently confident of their position in the contemporary artistic landscape to discuss the ultimate value of their contribution and it is interesting to note how each has employed a metaphor related directly to his method of working.

Ms. Pochkhanavala expressed the hope that even if a single spark from her welding burnt a hole in the blank chapter of contemporary Indian sculpture she would be satisfied. Sabavala, in his more flowery manner, remarked that while most art sought to make an immediate impact which for all its brilliance did not last longer than the transitory flight of a butterfly, it was his intention to create a work whose flight would endure.

That Mrs. Pochkhanavala is justified, there seems to be very little

doubt and Sabavala may well rest secure in his fame. And yet, one cannot help wondering whether instead of producing butterflies he has not after all merely created pale moths fluttering their grey wings in the brief instant glare of public adulation.

Norman (Continued from page 23)
towards the end of the play the Star does a take-off of Barbra Streisand's famous pregnant scene in *Funny Girl* which borders on the obscene. While admitting that Bomsy Nicholson by tucking a towel under his T-shirt does a very clever and authentic imitation of La Streisand and though it is this very feat which brings the house down, the whole sequence was so tasteless and pointless that one wonders whether the playwrights could have been so lacking in talent that they should highlight their play with a scene which depends so entirely on whether the audience has seen the original movie or not.

By the 40th performance it was only to be expected that the actors were all comfortably (perhaps too comfortably) set in their roles. It was rather amusing to note that in spite of this, Norman (Darius Shroff) still appeared to be somewhat embarrassed by his predicament, particularly in the beginning when he had to crawl out of bed and prowl around the stage in his shorts. This made his claims to being a perfectly well adjusted homosexual a trifle unconvincing.

The Father (Hosi Vasunia), whose role was perhaps the most difficult, acquitted himself well, particularly during the long telephonic conversations he was expected to have. The wife (Parviz Parakh) also did her part well and more than the others, contrived to sustain her American twang. The tart (Kerban Mistry) who is brought in by the distraught Father as a bait for Norman, was far too glamorous and self-consciously disinterested in the situation around her. One imagines a large bosomy blonde, taking an avid interest in the part she has to play, particularly since at the end, it is her chance intervention that reconciles Norman's estranged parents.

As for Garson, it would be

heresy to criticize the Star of the show. Two girls who sat behind could not think of anything else to say but "How sweet!" in varying tones of extreme delight and affection whenever he came on the stage. It was a sentiment of which Bomsy Nicholson was not entirely unconscious for he seemed to be playing straight to the audience. He has achieved such a reputation as Garson the queer cutie with his a-d-orable false eyelashes and exquisitely feminine ways that he does not have to do anything else. Undoubtedly it is he who makes the show. It is quite likely that in the earlier days his performance did have an inspired comic quality and this alone is enough to carry the play on even though the gestures might have become automatic, and the comic lines, anticipated. The audience is so fully aware that Bomsy Nicholson is going to be excruciatingly funny that sometimes it appears to snigger in advance.

Which brings us ultimately back to the question of the play's success. Is it that *Ah Norman!* is a commercial play that seeks nothing more than to entertain and the fact that it does do this superlatively well is sufficient justification for it or is it just that all the world loves a fairy tale?

Geeta Doctor

Uganda (Continued from page 26)
been to Kampala and upon his return to Bombay, he published an appeal in *Jame-e-Jamshed* for monetary assistance to the Zoroastrains of Uganda.

In the words of Arnold Toynbee—"civilization is manifestly beating a retreat." The British Empire is gone and the Parsi footage in the widespread empire is momentarily off balance. We feel the dislocation of our community members in Africa and especially in Uganda, but the legacy and the traits of our ancestors and the eternal hope of a better tomorrow are visibly noticeable in these displaced Ugandan Zoroastrains who have now come to stay in Canada. Like the Benign Canadian Government, we welcome them in our midst and shall share their joys and sorrows.

CONTEST

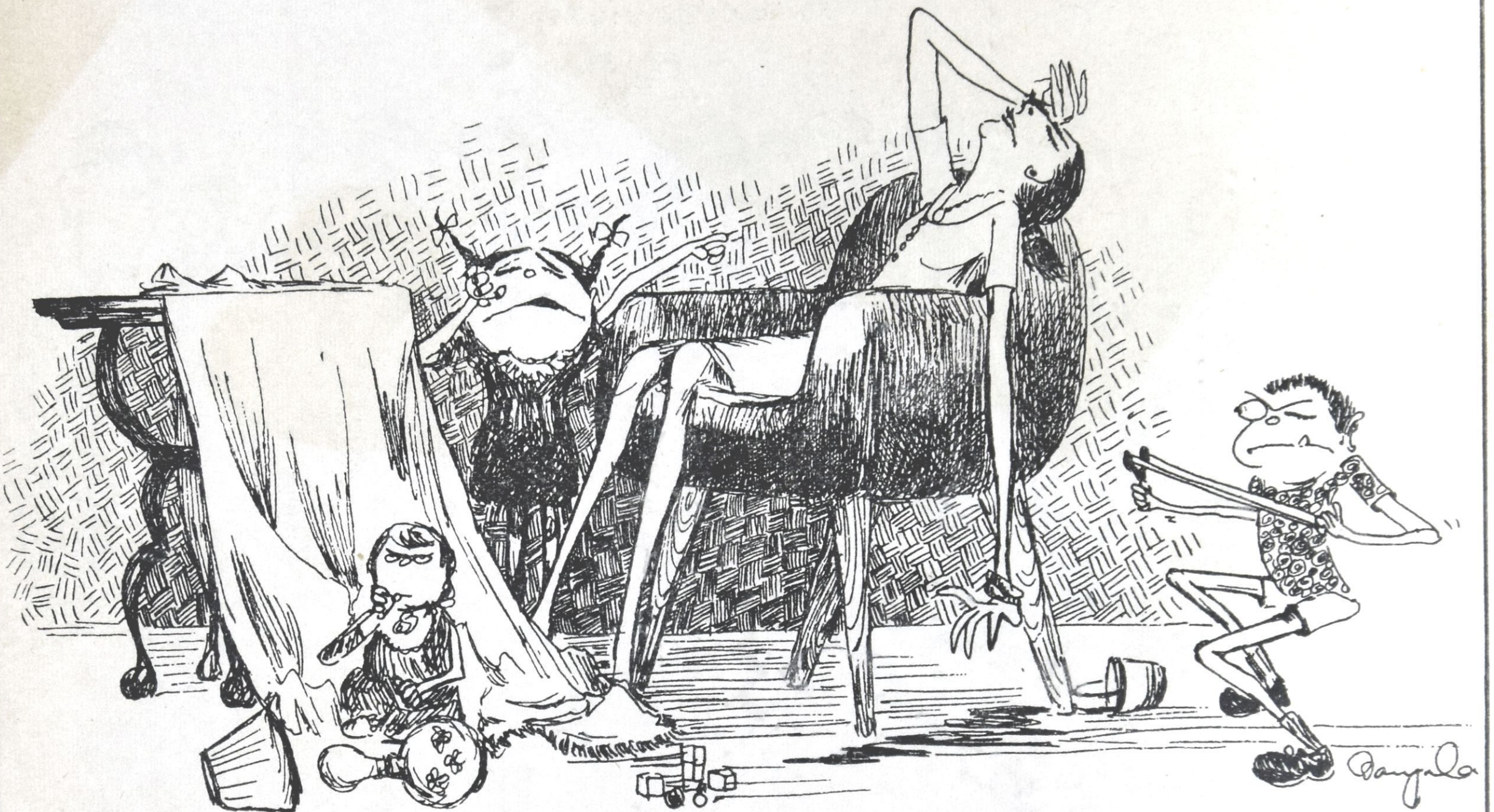
Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?



Remember who last time you were at a wedding or a Navjote and someone uttered in the mike "Food's ready" and the wild stampede that followed? The crush of teeming humanity surging forth flooding the grounds inundating poor little you. Or were you on the other side weathering the storm, clawing your way desperately to a seat only to have someone else grab it before you?

Want to do something about it? Got an idea for a more civilized approach? If you do, write to us. If the plan is practical and offers a solution we will publish it and pay you for the same. Send your suggestions to The Editor, Parsiana, P. O. Box 892, G.P.O. Bombay 400 001.

SPOILT OR SERENE



Morning, noon and night the children are on your hands. Meal-times degenerate into a battle of wits. Putting them to sleep is a nightmare. Keeping them occupied leaves you with your work undone. But these are your children's formative and most important years. Do not waste them. Do not spoil them. Habits, attitudes and ideals imbibed today shape their tomorrows. So make sure your children get the attention and guidance they need.

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