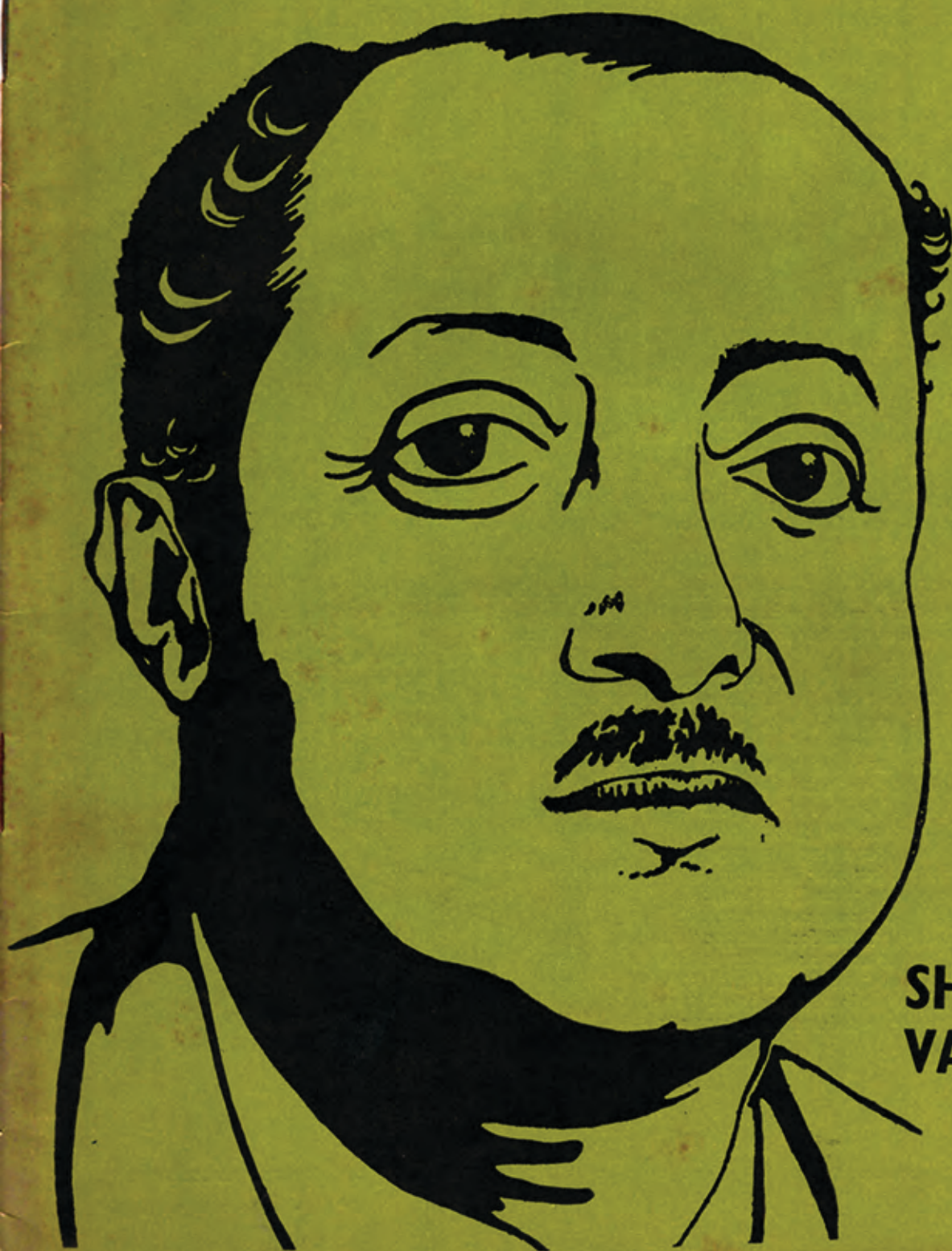


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Parsiāna

November 1973

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PARSIANA COVER by Manjula Padmanabhan

editor's column

Discussions on the Parsi community, after they have run the gamut of conversion, intermarriage, disposal of the dead, the state of the priests, the Parsi Panchayat, housing, dwindling numbers and food, invariably end up with some one's plaintive question: "What is to be done?" A hushed silence follows the query, feet nervously shuffle and people tend to look away from each other. A more extroverted member of the group may comment on the late hour and everyone will prepare to depart. The solutions, it is decided, must be thrashed out the next time. And so tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creeps in this petty pace...

To somehow bring the tomorrows a little closer *Parsiana* focuses this month on a man who seems to have his fingers on the faltering pulse of the community. The controversy over Shiavax R. Vakil's disclosures on the state of the Towers of Silence has all but overshadowed his qualifications, know-how and legal acumen that make him the right man on the right spot to tackle the many obstacles facing the community. In a freewheeling, 90 minute interview, Vakil touched upon all the major issues related to Parsis. By talking to the press he becomes one of the few trustees to take the public into confidence. His attitude thereby stands in sharp contrast to that of his associate trustees, such as Dr. Aspi Golwalla who when asked to comment on his trips with Vakil into the Towers of Silence, stated, "I do not give interviews."

It is also distressing to note that while Vakil's article in the last issue of *Parsiana* provoked a host of letters pro and con, our August cover story on the high Parsi divorce rate inspired a solitary letter, that of Major S. R. Bamji. Parsis are more concerned about the dead than the living.

For those of our critics who contend we put Shiavax on the cover because he finally bought a copy of *Parsiana*, we want to say it's not true. It's because he subscribed.

Our feature on the *sudreh* and *kusti* won us much notoriety, to

our surprise. We thought people would be no end pleased to find that out of seven people, six wore the garments. We also felt by explaining the meaning of the *sudreh* and *kusti* lay Parsis would learn about their religion. But no, Dr. Homi Bana wrote in complaining about "your fads and your paper's anti-religious ideas" and rumours ran rife that people wanted to burn copies of *Parsiana* but the fear of polluting fire prevented them. Those who wish to know if the editor wears the *sudreh* and *kusti* are referred to the sketch on this page.



Dyed-in-the-wool Parsis will be pleased to know that of a survey of 693 Parsi homes taken out of a total of 1,500 by Paul Axelrod of North Carolina University for his doctoral thesis on Parsee demography, 98.5 per cent wore the *sudreh* and *kusti*; 29 per cent said they recited the *kusti* prayers several times in a day; 67 per cent recited it once or twice; 0.7 per cent recited it occasionally; 1.7 per cent said they never recited the *kusti* prayers and 0.7 per cent said they didn't wear the *sudreh* and *kusti*. From a sample of 25 Irani homes it was found that four per cent said their *kusti* prayers several times, 80 per cent once or twice, eight per cent occasionally and eight per cent never.

On taking a census of the *Parsiana* staff we found that every-

one with the exception of our Art Editor, Manjula Padmanabhan and our Clerk, Pravin, wore the *sudreh* and *kusti*. Both their salaries have been cut, and a committee consisting of two former Supreme Court judges, three doctors, four psychologists, one astrologer and five trustees of the Parsi Panchayat has been commissioned to investigate the shortcomings on the part of the two erring staffers. The report will be out in six months.

Axelrod's surveys also show that out of 693 homes 77.2 per cent were against a non-Parsi converting to the Zoroastrian community, 21.6 per cent were in favour, and one per cent expressed no opinion. As regards the Towers of Silence 84 per cent were in favour of this system for disposal and 40.7 per cent were against it. Seventy-five per cent of the people interviewed were women. The interviews were conducted at home during office hours. If a survey was done of working Parsis, the statistics could vary. Axelrod's findings put the Parsi Marriage age at around 33 years.

Parsiana fans (there are some) will be pleased to learn that our little tussle with the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute has a happy ending. Mr. D. A. Merchant of Hasmin Industries donated a subscription to the Institute and very kindly offered to do the same for any other six Parsi educational institutions. So if any library or school, college etc. wishes to avail of this offer, they should write in. The Cama Institute celebrated this month the 143rd birth anniversary of Mr. K. R. Cama. It was with great trepidation I entered the hall only to be met by the gracious smiles of the office-bearers. They are, after all, good friends and though professionally we may sometimes differ, it should not cloud the fact that both the Cama Institute and *Parsiana* are institutions with a common goal: the education of our community. So if we have been unduly harsh with them, we apologize... till next year when it's time to renew the subscription.

Whenever one speaks of allowing converts, Parsis traditionally picture hoards of people flocking to the faith. "Where do you draw the line," they ask, "do you want

mochis (cobblers) and *bhangis* in our fire temples?" To find out exactly what it is that people have against *mochis* and their brethren I sat down next to one near Sir Phirozshah Mehta Road to have the heel of my shoe repaired. It had worn out. He observed that the shoes were English—they were my father's—and therefore needed English soles as the Indian ones would wear out in no time. A healthy respect for the English, I noted—one of the most essential criteria for admission to the Parsi fold. He then worked away, attended to a few stray customers, spoke of his trade, the spiralling price of leather and how he made anywhere between 10 to 15 rupees a day. A pair of slippers would earn him 10 rupees for his labour, he noted. There was another *mochi* who sat about seven feet away who wasn't doing much business. My *mochi* pointed out that his work wasn't very good and that legally the other fellow was obliged to sit 10 yards away but he didn't object. Benevolent fellow. The finish to my heels was a little uneven but I overlooked it because at my age you become philosophical about things like the appearance of the soles of your shoes. But a day or two later, a squeak developed and the English heels seemed to wear off pretty fast. Maybe we shouldn't accept converts....

While the debate as to who should be accepted into the fold continues, I feel some thought should be given as to who should be turned out. About two years ago while waiting at the Nana Chowk traffic light a BEST bus swiped my car and drove off. I gave chase, cornered the bus at the next stop and gave the driver a piece of my mind. A complaint to the BEST prompted an inquiry and a reply several months later stating the driver was not at fault. The fault was mine for stopping at a red light! Last month at the same spot, where once again I had made the mistake of stopping for a red traffic light, a white Ford or imported Fiat driven by a well-to-do Parsi in his late 50s or early 60s swiped my fender, stopped for a split second and then drove off. When I caught up with him at the next traffic light his attitude was precisely that of the bus driver. He

shrugged, said he didn't know what I was talking of and looked away. I also gave him a piece of my mind (people often wonder if I have any left) and stormed away. The Prophet had a word for such people: *vaepaya* (See "A Sort of Curse" *Parsiana* August issue).

A trip I made to Bangalore earlier this month to spy on Parsis there coincided with the visit another eminent personality also made to this "Indian Geneva": Ms. Indira Gandhi. Since we both had rather busy schedules it was not possible for us to meet but at a civic reception for "Our Beloved Prime Minister" at the Sri Kanteerava Stadium we caught a glimpse of each other. She wore dark glasses and a shell pink saree with a black border. I had on a white striped shirt, brown trousers and contact lenses. There was some confusion in our section of the stadium as to whether we were supposed to stand or sit. In the din of deciding this matter, the reading of the Kannada version of Ms. Gandhi's speech was completed. Then She spoke. In a rambling absentminded manner she talked about celebrating Id in Kerala a day before and in Mysore this day. "It has been a double festival for me." She went on to tell us that "poverty has to go by our own efforts," and "that advancement brings its own problems," and while Bangalore had its urban problems, so did "Singapore, Japan, America", and several other non-communist countries. Ms. Gandhi felt that the women of Bangalore are more colourful than the women of the North because they have "beautiful silk" saris. After leaving the stadium with visions of double festivals and beautiful silk saris our driver told us that there was no rice in Bangalore, no place to sleep and that all politicians are..

For those who feel Parsi enterprise is on the wane, there is heartening news. Mani Meher-Homji, who wears the *kusti* (see last issue of *Parsiana*) joined hands with Celia D'Mello, who does not wear the *sudra* or *kusti* and held a sale of knick-knacks at the Bosco Club Hall in St. Andrew's Church at Bandra. Geeta Doctor who inaugurated the function, debated whether to start off her speech noting "how splendid it was that two young women should liberate

themselves by selling pickles and posters, and also make a few profound remarks on the state of the Indian economy and the need to encourage free enterprise." But a half hour delay caused by the disappearance of the ceremonial ribbon, prompted the organizers to cancel all speeches. "The rest was easy," recalls Geeta, "with judicious smiles in the direction of the photographer, the ribbon was cut, while a dainty little creature advanced, bearing a large bouquet of flowers. I carefully avoided picking up the girl and kissing the bouquet, in my nervousness, and was about to heave a sigh of relief when a little boy also started trotting out in my direction holding a large *pedha* which he shot into my wide open mouth as though we were playing a game of marbles. I had scarcely started recovering from the effects of this when the proud Father of the child, camera in hand, came and inquired whether I would mind repeating the performance since in the excitement, he had forgotten to record the moment for posterity."



IN MEMORIUM

The loss of eminent men and women is always greatly felt, especially in a community as small as ours. In the course of the last few months we have bid a very reluctant farewell to Mithubehn Petit, Pestonji Hansotia, Jehangir Chiniwalla, Naval Vakil, Dr. Soli Nallaseth (pictured above) and others.

On behalf of all those who hold these outstanding individuals in esteem, *Parsiana* offers its deepest sympathies to the bereaved families.



Towers of Silence

There is absolutely no truth in Vakil's statement that vultures at Doongerwadi are becoming scarce. On the contrary, when we the undersigned visited the *Dokhmas* on a number of occasions, we observed 100 to 120 vultures in the vicinity of the tower in which the body was to be consigned. Moreover it has been officially ascertained by the Panchayet that the total number of vultures in the area varies from 250 to 300.

Vakil claims "substantial portions of the body remain untouched". That this is a myth, is easily apparent when one refers to the opinions of the world famous Ornithologists who have unanimously confirmed that vultures consume dead bodies to the bone. Even the *Nasesalars* when asked categorically confirmed that the bodies are completely devoured by the vultures.

Vakil further states that the bodies remain in the Towers "for months, rotting and stinking in the process of decomposition." The Towers of Silence have been in existence for the last 300 years, but neither has it ever been recorded that a foul smell has emanated from the *Dokhmas*, nor of any form of epidemic having prevailed there. This in itself conclusively proves that the dead bodies are devoured which would never have been the case if what Vakil states is correct.

In his circular Vakil states that he was once accompanied by his co-trustee Dr Golwalla when he visited the *Dokhmas*, but when this gentleman was asked by us about

this matter, he stated that he did not find anything repulsive inside the *Dokhmas*.

The Society of Helping Hands asked Vakil to deliver a lecture on *Dokhmenashini* and truthfully express his views on this subject so that many members of the electorate who had doubts about his beliefs could get them clarified. At this lecture, held on 12th November 1972, Vakil compared the four methods of disposal of the dead; the disadvantages of the three methods, viz, burial, cremation, consignment to the sea, and stated: "*due to burial the earth is polluted and the decomposed corpse breeds billions of micro-organisms. Cremation pollutes the sacred fire, and crematorium can never be installed on Doongerwadi Grounds. In the present times, our age old method of Dokhmenashini is the best, the cheapest and the most scientific method of disposal of the dead. I am definitely in favour of Dokhmenashini and the propaganda carried out against me is entirely false*". At this lecture he also stated that it was his wish that after his death his body be consigned to the Towers of Silence. This entire lecture has been tape-recorded and part of it has been published in papers.

Now, in his statement, Vakil says that in 1970 he had complained to the Trustees of the Parsi Panchayet asking them to consider "an alternative mode for the disposal of the dead". Why did he not disclose this very important fact to the voters who, relying on the statements and assurances given by him in his speech, voted for him?

We have an abiding faith in our community and we are sure that propagandists like Shiavax Vakil will go to oblivion as those before him have gone.

Dr. Nelie R. Noble,
(Prof.) Khurshed C. Sheriar,
Kobad R. Noble,
Rohinton R. Noble,
Jehangir F. Shroff,
Nadir E. Turel,
Homi B. Dhalla,
Burjor F. Pavri.

The *dokhma* system may have been suitable in its own day in ancient Iran, when arable land was (and still is) scarce and fire-wood was difficult to procure. Every square-foot of land was precious to those pastoral people whose cattle was their main wealth. Filling large tracts of land with graveyards would have been an economic folly. Gas, electricity, oil and other means of producing heat and light were then unknown, and in a land of vast deserts, fire-wood was scarce. Moreover, fire held a most revered position in the Middle East even before the era of Zarathushtra. And thus, leaving dead bodies on hill-tops, exposed to the elements and to wild beasts and birds, came into vogue as the precursor of the *dokhma* system. But that was a few thousand years ago.

In today's over-populated world, land is getting scarce and nations are fighting tooth and nail to preserve their borders. Large cities with millions of inhabitants have sprung up everywhere and in no city in India, Pakistan or Burma are any of our *dokhmas* situated in a quiet and secluded spot. Growing cities have engulfed these *dokhmas* with masses of houses and streets and the *dokhmas* are treated by other communities as mere objects of curiosity.

It is a sad commentary of our indifference if, as Shiavax Vakil says, every dead body is consigned to the well (*Bhandar*) of the *dokhma* after 24 hours, to pile up atop other similar decaying and stinking ones. The first and foremost need of the hour is to have these bodies reduced to dust or ashes through the use of some chemicals for both hygienic and aesthetic considerations. The idea of domesticating or encouraging vultures in today's sky-lined cities is as feasible as having a garden with coconut palms in every flat in Bombay. The next need is to allow every Parsi (or his close relative) to decide for himself how his body is to be disposed off after his death. There should be no bar against any method of disposal whatsoever. There may be some objection to offering *nasso* (dead or decaying matter) to the holy fire but we are

today far removed from the days of black magic and sorcery, and have to see this offering in a different light. The fire is indeed holy to our way of thinking, being an emblem representing the Creator himself, and even described in our prayers as the Son of God. What better offering can we make to it than to give our very bodies which encased our souls during this sojourn on Earth! Fire is the greatest purifier in creation and to have our earthly remains "purified" by fire would be the highest blessing one could desire. When it comes to making use of crematoriums, this objection of defiling the holy fire disappears, as crematoriums reduce dead bodies to ashes by the action of heat. They are also more desirable from the aesthetic point of view as the body is encased in a sort of large oven and is barred from the vulgar gaze of onlookers.

Cemeteries are good in their own way and there are a number of Parsi cemeteries dotted all over our sub-continent. Some of them are very well-maintained and a picture of serenity, like the ones in Peshawar, Lahore, Delhi, New Delhi, Madras and Ootacamund. But several are also in a neglected state, for want of funds or due to the exodus of Zoroastrians, like those in Rajasthan and Rangoon. Moreover, cemeteries get filled up with the passage of time and fresh land for the purpose is not easy to come by. Maintenance is also expensive.

I cannot say much about consigning dead bodies to the sea but I daresay that this would be quite an expensive proposition, if it is to be effective, and beyond the means of the common man. All said and done, the crematorium seems to be the best way out in the existing circumstances, even if it has to be subsidised for use by the Parsi Pan-chayat. If one is built in pleasant surroundings with trees and a garden, in an architecturally attractive design and with ample provision for privacy, there is no reason why anyone should object to one or more of them being built at our present site on Malabar Hill. If *dokhmas* must continue

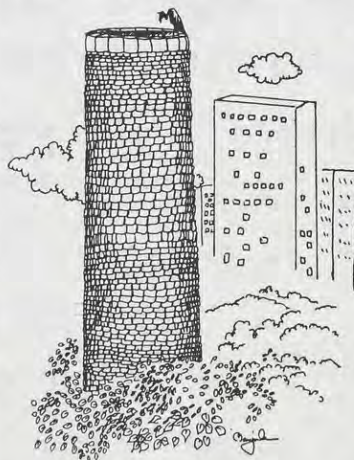
for a while for the orthodox, then the two systems could operate side by side, until the outmoded method is finally discarded by the coming generations.

Reform moves at a snail's pace and often merely assents to changes that have already taken place. It seldom takes the lead for fear of arousing public wrath. This applies to several of our other Parsi systems, such as inter-marriage, conversion, presence of non-Zoroastrians at religious ceremonies or in fire-temples, prayers in modern languages, a plethora of religious rites, etc. The most serious for the survival of the community, to my mind, is the exclusion of children of mixed marriages with Parsi mothers from the Zoroastrian religion. This is a fanatical luxury which a diminishing community like ours can hardly afford.

Noshir Vajifdar

As a matter of policy to respect all religions and religious houses or institutions, our government normally never enforces the shifting of religious trusts' property, if objected to by the beneficiaries.

Even in case birds are scared



off, even if a dozen skyscrapers surround our *dokhmas*, we can resort to *Khurshed Negirasi* as an alternative means of disposal. We can even build *dokhmas* towering higher than the skyscrapers.

We, who have unflinching faith

in the method of *dokhmenashini* as practised since ages, have built so many *dokhmas* after we came to India, can build new *dokhmas* in the extreme circumstances.

Dr. H. R. Bana

I have been to the Towers of Silence regularly for over the past twenty-five years and I have particularly noted the diminishing quantity of birds in the vicinity. On occasions when I have been there in the mornings undisposed carcasses were apparent in the Towers.

Though I myself am in favour of the present method of disposal, I feel very embarrassed and disgusted with the attitude of our priestly class when they resort to intimidation to prevent funeral ceremonies for Parsis who wish their bodies disposed in another manner. Why should a man who has been leading a good life, who works for the welfare of others, does not gamble or smoke, but has an apathy towards being devoured by vultures and wishes to get his carcass disposed in another manner be deprived of his last rites? Is it fair in the eyes of God and man when the same priestly class for a few paltry rupees would willingly perform the rites on any person who just happens to wear the *sudra-kusti* and does not object to being disposed of in the Towers of Silence even though he might be highly debauched, a thief or even a committed murderer?

The funeral ceremonies are performed for people who may be lost at sea or burnt to death in a fire. What then are the religious grounds for depriving the person of his last rites if by choice he wishes his body to be buried, cremated or put to sea?

Pheroze Bookbinder

I find that the yearly rate of Rs 20 is a little too high and hence I want to discontinue the magazine. Besides, the articles are not that noteworthy that you feel like paying Rs 20 for the same.

Hope you will excuse me for being so frank, but this is my opinion of your *Parsiana*.

Jal D. Bengalli

I would like the members of my community to know that in ancient Persia, our ancestors the Persians never exposed the corpses according to the custom of *Dokhmenashini*, until the conquest of the Medes by Cyrus the Great. The Medes, who were the ancestors of the modern Mobeds, were the constant antagonists of the Persians, and they used to observe this custom, and it was only after having come in constant contact with the Medes over a very long period of time after the said conquest that our ancestors the Persians also gradually adopted this Medeian custom, along with the other foreign Nature-Worshipping rituals of the Medes due to the long association with them and such other consequent causes. History also has recorded that the Persians who adopted this foreign custom of the Medes, initially did so in a very stealthy manner, lest they offend the sensibilities of the other neighbouring Persians, until gradually, the custom was generally adopted by all Persians. It is also interest-

ing to know that eminent scholars are doubtful of the origin of the Medes, some even claiming that they were not even Aryans, whilst it is a well established fact that the Persians were authentically Aryans, and very proud of the fact.

I would also like to expose the shallowness of the observers of *Dokhmenashini* and other orthodox ritualists. During the last few years, I have constantly come in contact with both the opposing groups of orthodox and reformists, with both of whom I am on equally cordial terms. One of the staunchest supporters of the orthodox group, who has several times informed me in explicit terms: "We know the reformists are quite correct. We also know that it will all be as they desire within the next twenty-five years or so. But we are determined to fight them to the end!—That is all!" I am afraid I have no answer to that—but then, does it really require any?

Mahyar Byramji Patel

Survival

I am very much interested in the Parsi population problem. I am a Hindu and not a Parsi but I have many Parsi friends. When I studied in the Sorabji J. J. High School at Surat, about one fourth of the students consisted of Parsis. My late father told me that when he was a student of that school, 35 years before me, more than three fourths of the students there were Parsis and my father was the only one Hindu in the High School eleven (cricket) which was otherwise wholly Parsi.

I wrote an article last year on the Hindu population in *Milan Mandir Deepotsavi* wherein I stated that the mighty Zoroaster was a very, very great teacher but the Parsis are almost on the road to extinction! A very sorrowful position! The great, noble, generous intelligent, large-hearted, jolly Parsi community *must remain* in the World!

Professor M. J. Pathakji
Surat.

—All Religions must be tolerated...
for...every man must get to Heaven
his own way.

—FREDERICK THE GREAT—
In re Catholic Schools.

From: TATA CHEMICALS

FUTURE SHOCK

Questions and Answers PARSIANA & Mr. VAKIL Photographs of Shiavax R. Vakil by Farokh Reporter

Parsiana: The first article you chose to write after being a trustee for a year concerned the Towers of Silence. Why did you choose this subject above all others?

Vakil: Because I had certain information and facts that I felt should be put before the community.

Parsiana: What are these facts?

Vakil: They will come to light in due course. The point I have put in the forefront is that there are months when there are hardly any vultures and there are months when there is no paucity of vultures. For instance from now upto next May 15th there will be enough vultures. I have no doubt on that issue. But from May again will come a time which will last for four to five months that is May, June, July, August and September when there will be hardly

any. On one occasion when I went along with others we saw only one vulture, one kite and two crows devouring a body which was consigned at nine in the morning. We went at twelve noon.

Parsiana: How many times did you go into the Towers of Silence?

Vakil: More than eight to nine times.

Parsiana: You were appointed trustee in charge of the Doongerwadi estate?

Vakil: Yes, I was in charge along with Dr. Golwala who was my senior trustee. I felt it was his duty to bring out certain facts. As a doctor I thought he should. I do not know why he has not done so.

Parsiana: Who manages Doongerwadi?

Vakil: It is today at the mercy of the *nassessalars* and *khandhias*.

'Manages' means what? Who visits it regularly? During all these years who had gone inside? Has it pleased me to go inside? You won't believe it, but I have literally been suffering from mental anguish. And to some extent I feel it has affected my health also. The things which I have seen are not pleasing to one's eyes. And for whose benefit have I done it and what interest have I in destroying an ancient system? I stated in a lecture I delivered a month before this that I would prefer to die in Surat where vultures are in plenty. I would not have stated that if I did not believe in this system. I am more orthodox than most of these so-called orthodox people. I say this with pride. But orthodoxy as I understand it is different from the way in which it is practised by these people.

Parsiana: You were appointed in charge of Doongerwadi by your fellow trustees?

Vakil: Yes along with Dr. Golwalla. In fact Mr. Boman Behram was to take charge. For reasons best known to himself he did not. I have always felt that I should do justice to a particular thing. I felt I should not be a traitor to the community. I have done my part of the job. My colleagues' grievance may be that at the earliest opportunity I should have taken them into confidence. What would they have done? They would have asked me to resign, first, that's all. My conscience is very clear, I have not the slightest regret for bringing to the notice of the community what I have seen with my own eyes. All else is illusion according to me. What I have seen is the truth unless I was hypnotized by the *khandhias* and *nassesalars* of Doongerwadi. When the future shock comes to the community, it will be for the six dissenting trustees to decide the course of action.

Parsiana: While you were a trustee at Doongerwadi, what attempts did you make to reform the system?

Vakil: It was impossible for me to do anything for the precise reason that even when I asked the Head *Kamdar* why he was not putting the dead bodies on the outside *pavis* he just would not answer. Dr. Golwalla asked the same question. He said we cannot put the bodies during these months. My grievance was that these bodies should have been kept on the outside *pavis* and not dumped inside immediately. In fact I am quite convinced that these bodies are being dumped. On no single day, did I see the body which was consigned the day before. On no single visit which I made could I see those bodies there. They were all lying in the *bhandar*. In fact the first visit was necessitated by a report from the Grand Paradi building people that in the morning the *khandhias* were dumping bodies inside. Throughout the days that I checked, I never found a single body consigned of yesterday, today.

Parsiana: You were not able to bring about any reform?

Vakil: It was impossible. I felt that Dr. Golwalla was ultimately a senior trustee. I felt it



If there are 250 to 300 vultures at Doongerwadi and if three to four bodies are consigned per day, they would live literally at a starvation level. Do you expect vultures to survive on human carcasses?

was his duty. He is a pathologist. He is a doctor. On one occasion when we went inside the stink was so terrible, that he came out in less than a minute. I watched the time. I was inside for four to five minutes. In fact the *Kamdar* asked this very question, '*Vakil saheb, tamara thi vaas khamase ke?*' (will you be able to bear the smell). What is the point of saying there is no stink. It is a natural thing. I am not complaining about the stench, but with more buildings coming up, and with the wind changing directions this stench is going to be carried.

Parsiana: What about the idea of pouring acid to consume the bodies?

Vakil: My feeling is that with lapse of time and with more and more buildings coming up, more sky-scrapers coming up, the vultures will gradually disappear. With the disappearance of vultures, putting acid on these bodies—knowing the way in which Doongerwadi is managed at present—it will not be effective. I'm afraid there will be an epidemic some day.

Parsiana: When did you resign from the Doongerwadi trust?

Vakil: I gave up my portfolio on the 25th of September. On the same day Mr. Boman Behram and Dr. Golwalla were appointed trustees in charge of Doongerwadi. On the next day, the 26th or 27th, Mr. Boman Behram constituted a committee to look after Doongerwadi which committee consists *inter alia* of five signatories who have signed a hand bill against me and which hand bill is being circulated: namely Dr. Nelie Noble, Mr. Kobad Noble, Mr. Nadir Turel, Mr. Homi Dhalla and Mr. Khurshed C. Sheriar. These people, who are members of a committee constituted by a trustee, are attacking another trustee ruthlessly. I gave an opportunity to Dr. Nelie Noble three months ago, before September, to enter the Towers. The only thing she said is, 'Why do we not breed vultures?'

I felt it was not a proposition worth considering. Nevertheless, when one Mrs. Billimoria came to me with a proposed donation of four thousand rupees I requested her to give the donation for breeding of vultures. Now this would not be the case with a person who is against the system. Of course, let me tell you even now I would not have approved of the idea of wasting money on the breeding of vultures. I feel it is hopeless. Let us consider. A vulture normally eats, according to the books which I also have studied, a diet which is practically equivalent to its own weight if not more. If there are 250 to 300 vultures at Doongerwadi and if three to four bodies are consigned per day, they would live literally at a starvation level. Do you expect vultures survive on human carcasses? Certainly not.

Parsiana: Your critics say you attacked the system?

Vakil: I have not attacked the system. Let my article be read by half a dozen well-known priests or scholars. If they say that I have attacked the system, I will have nothing to say. I have not attacked the system. I have brought certain facts to the notice of the community. My article is in two parts. One part related to facts, the other part related to views. I have made it very clear that this is not an article intended for the Trustees of the Parsi Panchayat. It was

intended for my community. It has been misunderstood and misconstrued completely. The first part which relates to facts has not been contradicted so far. I have not written against *dokhma nashini*. A grave injustice is being done to me by the community. I have not written anything against it. Kindly read my article again and again. I have advocated that Parsis should put their heads together and decide upon an alternative method of disposal of the dead as a reserve. I have made it very clear. Now 'for a reserve' is something they are blind to. I am strongly advocating that the Parsi community of Bombay and the Parsi Panchayat of Bombay should guide the mofussil anjumans where conditions are so bad that the *dokhmas* are stinking. I have original letters with me just now. They ask, what shall we do? The bodies are lying for years together. We can't enter inside. They are in a horrible condition.

Parsiana: In Karachi you say the vultures have been eradicated completely?

Vakil: They were shot down. The bodies in the *dokhma* there

are rotting. The worst is Calcutta, today. People from Calcutta came to see me. They talked to me. But what can you do? What I really do not like is this kind of passiveness and indifference on the part of our Bombay leaders in not giving adequate guidance. If they don't want to give guidance they should say 'alright do whatever your particular anjuman wants to do.' One thing which has to an extent I believe upset the community, is a grim co-incidence. On the day my article was published, the Dehnu Anjuman, by a brute majority decided to have an *Aram Garh* because vultures were not forthcoming and they relied on that article. That is the report in the press. Now this was a pure co-incidence. In fact I felt that the time was over-due for our community to sit together and find a practical solution for a problem which is facing us and which will face Bombay I am quite sure within a few years. I feel that the solution of a problem of this nature even in Bombay, would take four, five or seven years to solve. That is why I have brought it out. If you lie low on it, God bless you.

Parsiana: What reform can be implemented to improve the lot of the *khandhias* and *nassesalars*?

Vakil: It is only in Bombay that we have professional *khandhias* and *nassesalars*. You do not have them elsewhere. Literally you are at their mercy today. They are people for whom I have very great sympathy. Day in and day out, what is their job? One of the *khandhias* has a daughter who sings so melodiously. Who is going to look after her? This is pathetic. We treat them as harijans, untouchables. They do not go to functions. They cannot go to fire-temples without going through *nahan*. This is our tradition, custom, whatever you choose to call it. I visit their places. Sit on their beds and chairs. I talk to them. I think they deserve human treatment but at the same time, day in and day out dealing with corpses, their hearts become hearts of stone and once the doors are closed they sometimes empty the bodies straight with the clothes on. That was a sight which I saw and which was reported. It is on the record of the Parsi Panchayat. Is this the



most ancient, civilized and scientific system? My colleague was an eye-witness. He saw this and there is a third person also whom I took with me. Somehow or other I believed I should take someone with me because physically I felt I may faint there, or something may happen to me. It is a gruesome sight, frankly, and I am not a sadist, whatever else I may be. I have not done this with a view to please myself or please anyone. People are accusing me of being an associate with Dara Cama and Dhunjishaw Joshi. I have never met Cama in my life, I have never seen him, I have never talked to him. Joshi I have seen once or twice. It was a question of employment of somebody.

Parsiana: Do you think the community will sit together to find a solution or will the disposal issue divide the community even further?

Vakil: I do not think that our community will be divided further but if we do not sit together there will be a gradual disintegration. Of course there will be people who will criticize everything and everyone. Destructive criticism is the bane of our community. Unfortunately a kind of insane jealousy prevails. People make false ambulance calls, write anonymous letters, abuse on the telephone. These are some of the traits we have developed.

Parsiana: You said that you would not write a single paper on Parsi problems from now on.

Vakil: I don't propose to. Because I feel that anything which I write is liable to be misconstrued and misunderstood. A deliberate twist is given to everything I say, and I unfortunately am sensitive.

Parsiana: How are you going to enlighten the community?

Vakil: I am now leaving it to nature. I am quite confident that within two to three years the community will realize—something. I am quite confident about that. I have only given the community the initial shock. The future shock which they will receive they will have to now solve themselves. Why should I bother. My conscience is clear. I have done my part of the job.

Parsiana: When you printed your article, what was the reaction of the other trustees to it?

Vakil: I don't know the reaction, but they were not happy.

Parsiana: Before the Grand Paradi Apartments were built was there any offer made to sell the land to the Panchayat?

Vakil: That is totally incorrect. Let me assume for the moment there was an offer. The Parsi Panchayat has no funds. They could have never taken this land. The price is fantastic and it is a notorious fact that nobody today sells at the official price.

Parsiana: There was talk of a wall being built to shield one of the towers from the buildings?

Vakil: Yes that was the first occasion on which I went inside that tower to determine the range. I and Dr. Golwala went there in the presence of four other trustees. In their presence we entered the tower, that is, Sethna's Tower.

Parsiana: Was that wall built?

Vakil: That wall has not yet been built. I do not know what is happening. Does the building of a wall take that much time?

Parsiana: There was talk of building houses on Doongerwadi land?

Vakil: On lands that are appurtenant. Apparently that has been lagging. Unfortunately no decision is taken immediately, quickly ...



Day in and day out, what is their job? One of the *khandhis* has a daughter who sings so melodiously, who is going to look after her? This is pathetic. We treat them as *harijans*, untouchables.

Parsiana: Would the Doongerwadi trust deed permit housing on Doongerwadi lands?

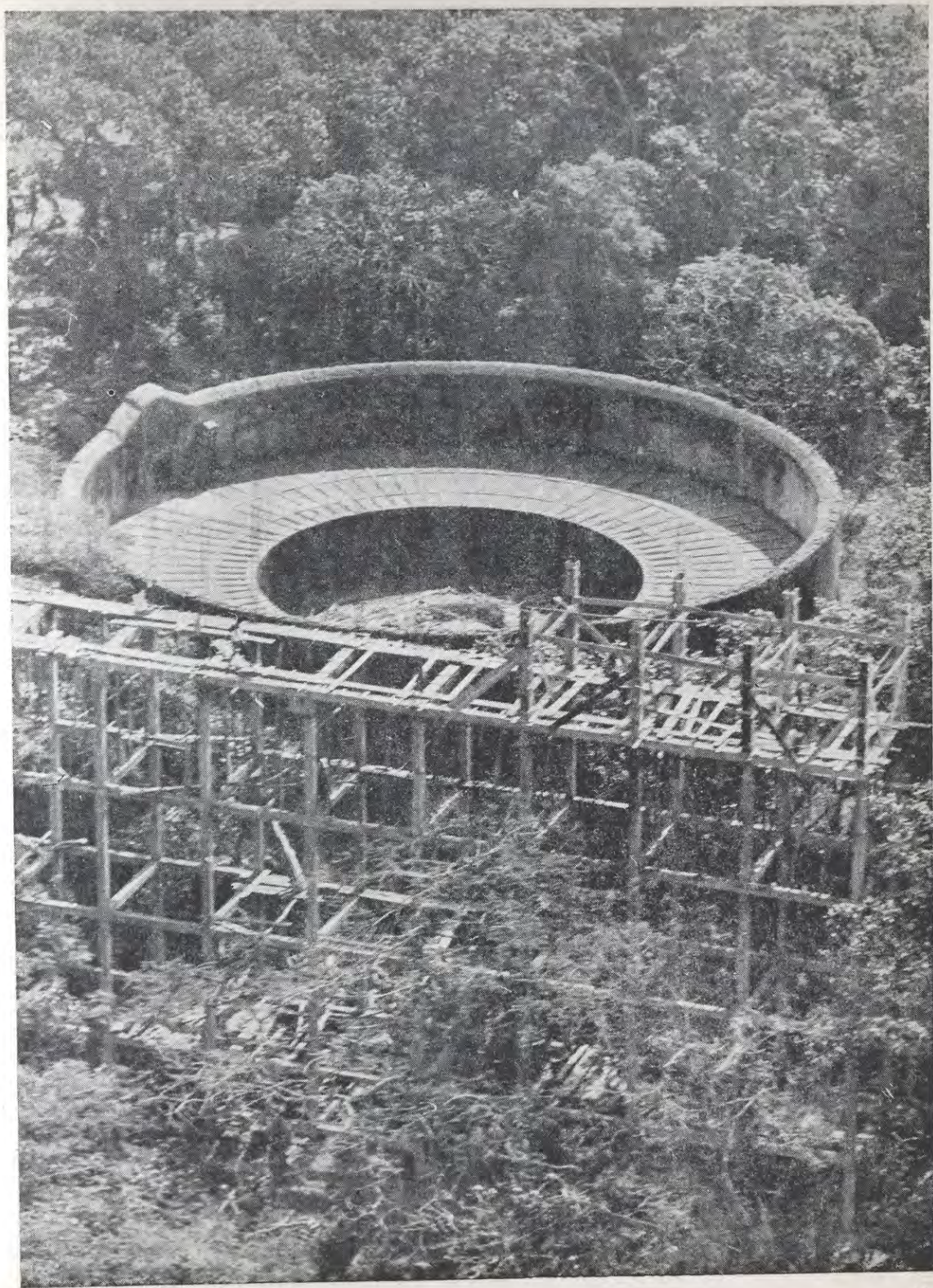
Vakil: I am going to assume for the moment that even if it does not allow housing, it is open to the trustees to go to the Charity Commissioner in respect of lands which are not literally Doongerwadi lands but which are away from the actual towers and at a greater distance than the Grand Paradi apartments, where houses can be built. If it comes to that we should follow a policy of give and take. Give some land to the Government—free even—what does it matter? What is the point of keeping lands idle? You shouldn't forget that times today are different from what they were a 100 years ago. You cannot today rely on quotations 100 years old to find out what type of climate Malabar Hill has. We all know what climate Malabar Hill has. These quotations, which have been relied upon by my co-trustees, were made by a visitor who went there in 1874. I have the quotation. It is taken from the *History of the Parsi Community* by Dossabhoy Framji Karaka, Volume One. What is the idea of relying on quotations that are a 100 years old? Let us look at facts as they are today. Let us look at what is going on in the country today. This country is undergoing a silent revolution.

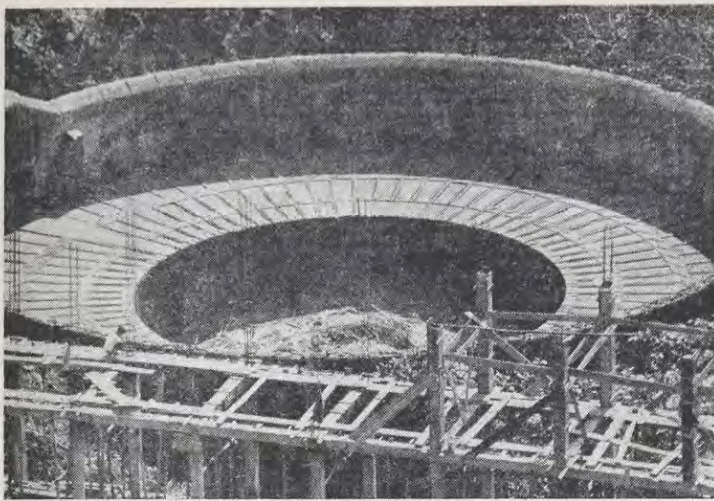
Parsiana: Would you want to use the Doongerwadi Lands for disposal of the dead or for some other purpose?

Vakil: I would certainly love to continue its use for disposal of the dead as long as it is humanly possible.

Parsiana: Even in the form of a burial ground or a crematorium?

Vakil: A burial ground I have suggested for the simple reason that the lands are marked for a cemetery. Now as regards a crematorium, naturally the Parsis are highly emotional as they consider fire sacred. So it would be impossible to establish a crematorium. I have been against it, frankly. Right from the beginning all my notes are very clear that you cannot have a crematorium at Doongerwadi. But nothing prevents Parsis, if they are so minded, from establishing a crematorium elsewhere. What prevents them?





Parsiana: What would be the cost?

Vakil: It would cost at least two million rupees today, land apart. If there are two bodies and only one furnace then each body will take two hours to consume—minimum. I have been to the electric crematorium in Bombay. I know it was built on the munificence of a Parsi gentleman Mr. Bahadurji, an advocate, who contributed then five lakhs of rupees, and five lakhs Manu Subedar donated. The rest was given by the municipality. A part of it required imported instruments and apparatus. Now of course you can obtain it in India through Larsen and Toubro or Killicks.

Parsiana: What do you feel about the ban on priests performing funeral ceremonies for Parsis who choose forms of disposal other than the Towers of Silence?

Vakil: I have always felt it is an unjust ban for the simple reason that it is cruel and it has no logic. I cannot understand it. You cannot have *gher sarvana* and *uthamna* but you can have all the other ceremonies after that. Now take the case of a man who expires outside the country and who is against *dokhme nashini*. If he was buried outside the country his *uthamna* could be performed at Doongerwadi. Now where is the logic behind it? Suppose he had died at, say, Mysore where there is no *dokhma* and if he had been buried there or suppose he had died at Mahableshwar and he had been

buried there, he could have his *uthamna* ceremony here. Is there any logic behind it? A number of our priests are starving. They will do whatever you ask them to do. Why don't we give them proper guidance?

Parsiana: Who prevents the priests from performing the ceremonies?

Vakil: It is very simple, who prevents them. There was a resolution passed by certain priests and approved by the trustees. My personal view is that trustees are only custodians of property. They are not the conscience-keepers of the Zoroastrian religion. They have nothing to do with religion. If you look at the trust deed and related documents you will see they have nothing whatsoever to do with it. They are the self-appointed conscience-keepers of the community. Trustees only manage properties on behalf of the community. What have they to do with religion? Religion is a matter of one's own conscience. In questions of religion it's for our Dasturs to guide us, not the Trustees of the Parsi Panchayat. I would like to know which one of the trustees, including myself, has made a study of religion?

Parsiana: Why is religious leadership not coming from the priests?

Vakil: For the simple reason that among our priests there is no unity—only insane jealousy. Every priest runs down the other priest.

I myself am a priest so I know it. No two priests think on the same level. Look at the recent controversy about *muktad*—whether the duration should be 10 or 18 days. When Dasturji Dabu suggested ten days he did so both on religious as well as economic grounds and look at the way in which he was abused. A suit was filed against him. Certain priests came forward against him. Affidavits were made in court. He was made a defendant. Now is it fair? Is it proper? I consider him to be one of the most sincere Dasturs, and I don't know whether the future generation will ever believe that such a high priest existed in the community in the 20th century. His spirit of self-sacrifice, the amount which he has given to the community by way of charity—all the amounts which he has received during the last 25 years as *ashodad*—he has given away in the name of those donors—not even in his own name. You hardly find such a man, and that man is being today abused. His philosophy is branded 'Dabooism.' There's a limit to this.

Parsiana: What prompted you to run as a trustee of the Parsi Panchayat?

Vakil: I felt that I could do some service. I have enough other charitable institutions to work for. I am a trustee of the Hirabai Tata Trust. I am a trustee of a number of other trusts. They come to me for advice and guidance which I give them gratuitously. Muslim trusts come to me. The Guru Nanak trust comes. I settled, last month, the Hare Krishna group's dispute about the temple at Juhu. Swamiji wanted to see me in New York. I requested him to come to Bombay and I settled that matter within a week, by God's grace. The dispute, if it had been left to the solicitors would have lasted for years together. What we need is humanity more than anything else today.

Parsiana: Do you feel your year as a trustee has been a successful one?

Vakil: I don't think I have been successful, to be quite frank. But it is too short a period. If I feel after two or three years latest by 1977 that I am not able to achieve anything I will voluntarily resign. I have no attachment to this chair.

But I will not resign on the issue of *dokhma nashini*. That is definite. I will leave whenever I find cannot do justice to this position. But I do not want to oblige my reviling critics at this stage.

Parsiana: What has prevented you from realizing your goals during this year? What were the handicaps?

Vakil: We are today managing this trust in the same way as it used to be managed forty years ago. Decisions are not taken quickly. We require radical changes which will not be forthcoming immediately.

Parsiana: You say the Parsi Panchayat has no funds. Everybody says it has crores of rupees.

Vakil: If you evaluate say, Doongerwadi, on what basis will you do so? On the basis of a burial ground it has no value. But on the basis of a property which can be developed it has tremendous potential.

Parsiana: Take for instance the



Now as regards a crematorium naturally the Parsis are highly emotional, as they consider fire sacred, that it would be impossible to establish a crematorium. I have been against it.

Godrej Memorial Press. Why can't that press be run on a profit?

Vakil: This is not a press which the trustees have inherited. They started it. In my opinion trustees of a charitable trust should not carry on any business without obtaining appropriate orders and without having adequate safeguards. Neither are there appropriate orders nor are there adequate safeguards. The result, therefore, is that if there is a profit, nobody gives them credit. But if there is a loss the day may come when they will have to make good that loss personally because they are required to carry on this business as reasonable and prudent men. None of the trustees has either the time or the experience to run a printing press. Printing is a very competitive line. I also know how other presses are run. This is a line in which secret commissions are given. Paper has to be bought from unofficial sources and stored. All this is not possible for trustees of a charitable trust. Unless you have an extremely competent staff to run the business, as a business, it is not possible to make a profit. You cannot employ handicapped people to run a business efficiently. Either you run it as a charity or you run it as a business organisation. You cannot have it both ways. One exception is the Industrial Institute of Sir Ratan Tata. But there is no analogy between the two.

Parsiana: But now if you say that the Panchayat is not the conscience-keeper of the community, if it is not to deal in business, then what exactly is its role?

Vakil: Its function is only to manage and administer the properties which are in its trust, and as and when the Panchayat receives donations, to make use thereof. They have to manage the trusts and nothing more. People have given an unnecessary halo to the trustees of the Parsi Panchayat.

Parsiana: But now what should be done with the Godrej Memorial Press?

Vakil: My personal view is, they should close it, and the earlier it is closed, the better.

Parsiana: Should they try to sell it?

Vakil: If we get a good offer we will certainly sell it lock, stock and barrel. If we get a good per-



Trustees are only custodians of property. They are not the conscience keepers of the Zoroastrian religion.

son to run it, we would certainly allow it to be run. This is my view and I have expressed it in no uncertain terms.

Parsiana: Suppose the manager of a large mill was aging and wanted to leave the mill for the good of the community. Should he donate it to the Parsi Panchayat or should he not?

Vakil: I will not be able to give my judgement on this issue, but as far as possible avoid donating any business to the trustees of a religious or charitable trust because our laws are now so strict that it is very difficult for trustees to run a business themselves. They will have to necessarily delegate this power to others and once you delegate power, unless you have extremely honest and efficient people, it is very difficult to run the concern. Today none of the trustees have either the experience, knowledge or know-how for running a business.

Parsiana: Then how do you raise money for the community?

Vakil: This money comes by way of donations from people—if people feel the trustees are managing the trust properly. Look at the Surat Parsi Panchayat. How well it is organized and how well it is managed. There is no dissension among the trustees. All decisions are taken unanimously and the manner in which donations are flowing at Surat should set an example as to how a trust is to be run.

Parsiana: Would you set up a



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small group of economists to guide and establish young Parsis in small scale industries?

Vakil: In regard to small scale industries my experience with Parsi boys is unfortunately not very happy. Parsi boys are not very hardworking in this field. They are more interested in white collar jobs. They are not interested to go even to Vikhroli for instance. They are not interested in going to a place like Madras if there is a good job for them. I am against the concentration of the Parsi population in Bombay. Totally against it. I consider it to be the decline of the Parsi civilization if our entire population is concentrated in Bombay.

Parsiana: But isn't this a contradiction when you say our young people are not hardworking and yet they are the only hope for the community?

Vakil: No, no. For small scale industries you need a particular kind of person. We have found that our boys somehow or other are not very well inclined to go in for this line. A normally qualified Parsi would much prefer, I do not know why, to be a white collar

worker, today. Now as far as small scale industries are concerned, there also it is not the function of charities to set them up. They cannot do it. Unless they have earmarked funds for them. And our experience so far both in Surat and Bombay is not very happy.

Parsiana: But do you find a breed of entrepreneurs coming up as in the old days? Are Parsis venturing into business today?

Vakil: There are, oh yes! Quite a number of them. To name a very few of them, Palia Brothers, Garda of Garda Chemicals. These are only in Bombay. In a place like Madras there are the Taraporewalla's for instance. I think there are one or two in Hyderabad also. Parsis are coming up, no doubt about it.

Parsiana: The average age of the trustees is 70 or more years. How can you lower it?

Vakil: The only way in which you can bring it down is by having the scheme altered. To provide that the maximum age of a trustee should be, say, 70. After a particular age a trustee should voluntarily retire as a trustee and become an advisor.

Parsiana: Are any steps being taken to implement these reforms?

Vakil: I do not think that any steps will ever be taken. It is for the community to take them, not for the trustees. The next election is coming for the 'E' register. See that your voters are there. It is very simple. If you get five rupee voters to vote for people who should be your elected representatives then these very elected representatives can start a movement for having the scheme rectified. It was one of the recommendations I advocated in 1972. I stated that in my small pamphlet. In the method of election I don't favour the present method nor do I favour adult suffrage because we Parsis are so emotional that if there is adult suffrage in Bombay, there may be riots. With 50,000 people eligible to vote, there will be several cases of impersonation and the like. I do not favour adult suffrage. At the same time you can have certain qualifications. Every tax payer shall be a voter. Every graduate shall be a voter.

Parsiana: Do you see the Panchayat as a body giving leadership to the community?

Vakil: It's for the community to judge. I don't see in which aspect the Panchayat has given leadership of any kind. I have not seen it frankly.

Parsiana: If a person wanted to institute a reform today, whom should he go to? What should he do?

Vakil: I still have tremendous faith in the younger generation if they are properly guided and properly led. As far as the old people are concerned, leave them alone now because it is impossible to reform them or to tell them that during the last 25 years the world has progressed far more than what it progressed during the last 2,500 years. It is impossible to bring these hard facts home to people whose minds are fossilized.

Parsiana: But do you feel the present arrangement of seven trustees is adequate or should there be one person in charge?

Vakil: Let there be seven trustees—that is all right—but there should be expert boards of advisers for each portfolio.

Parsiana: Dr. Warden in the August issue of *Parsiana* recommended certain reforms. That we should have a committee of a hundred to supervise and work in co-ordination with the trustees.

Vakil: No. That is out of the question. It will be unmanageable.



There are surplus lands on which we can have two buildings. Do you seriously suggest that at Albless Baug you cannot have two buildings? At Cama Baug you cannot have one building?

Parsiana: What can the community turn to the Panchayat for today?

Vakil: Housing the homeless. I'm quite sure it can be done if the trustees of other public charitable trusts of Bombay—Parsi Public Charitable Trusts—make a united effort with the Trustees of the Parsi Panchayat. To begin with let us take a defined area like Colaba. At Colaba we have Jeejeebhoy Dadabhoj's Agiary—where you can construct two buildings of at least 10 storeys each on an ownership basis for affluent Parsis. From the lease rent which is received you can construct buildings for Parsis who are less affluent. Come next to Panday Sanatorium. It may interest you to note that the court receiver has been appointed for this sanatorium. Five lakhs of rupees is the tax demanded for non-application of income within a particular period as required by law. I feel that this most valuable asset of the community, after Doongerwadi, will be lost because of the internal fight between the trustees. Come next to Cusrow Baug. There is a plot still vacant which should forthwith be developed.

Parsiana: But where would the funds for constructing these buildings come from?

Vakil: These funds for building can be generated if you have surplus land. Lease them out and from the ground rent which you receive you can build. Take the instance of the Hirabai Tata Trust. They had a corner plot which we had reserved as a cinema site. Tenders were invited and a cinema was built. The trust receives two lakhs of rupees as ground rent. So every two years four lakhs of rupees will be available to put up one building. Another instance of a trust, which is a very small one is the Cooper Trust. They had a printing press. It was sold as it was making regular losses. The trust received five and a half lakhs of rupees for the machinery etcetera. The trustees appealed to the landlord to sell the building. He sold the building at three and a half lakhs of rupees. It was let to the Bank of India who give the trust one and a half lakh rupees per annum. The result is that the building will be free within three to four years. This money will be diverted for educational

purposes, which is the primary purpose of the trust. To an extent you must have a little bit of business acumen and forward thinking. You will then definitely be able to generate wealth.

Parsiana: An agiary or baug trust may specify the property be used for that purpose only.

Vakil: I agree entirely with you. But you will have, therefore, to tell the trustees to go to a court and say that we are not diverting the purpose. We are not taking away the baug. There are surplus lands on which we can have two buildings. Do you seriously suggest that at Albless Baug you cannot have two buildings? At Cama Baug you cannot have one building? Why can you not have a com-



People have given an unnecessary halo to the trustees of the Parsi Panchayat.

mercial building there? I have never understood it.

Parsiana: People fear that if you build housing on the Doongerwadi lands the Government will start taxing the grounds for all the years we have used the land.

Vakil: It is absurd and ridiculous to say that government will start retrospective taxation on that land. Whatever one may say, our government is not so inhuman—yet, and will not be, I am quite confident, so long as we follow a policy of give and take and don't claim to be descending from a higher stratum.

So long as we talk to them on an equal footing, there will be no difficulty.

Parsiana: Do you feel there are too many agiaries in Bombay?

Vakil: Yes, I feel that 44 agiaries are too many. And I would very strongly advocate the reduction to 20. For three reasons: the paucity of priests, the extremely high cost of firewood and sandalwood and because there are agiaries which are literally starving. How long are they going to rely upon charities? How long will they get these funds? There are agiaries in Bombay whose visitors average per annum 20 to 30 only. If such agiaries are amalgamated with other agiaries, I am quite sure that the lands of these agiaries will fetch a fabulous amount. Now the trustees of these agiaries have a sentimental attachment to them. Unless these trustees are willing to part with these agiaries in the interest of the community, it will not be possible to implement any scheme. An instance in point is Sahier's Agiary at Warden Road. At Tardeo today there are five agiaries. There is one agiary at Khetwadi 12th lane called Ashburner's Agiary to which you have to keep on donating every year. There is one agiary at the corner of Grant Road known as Ranji's Agiary. There is an agiary at Charni Road known as Mehla Patel's Agiary. Then there is of course Cama Baug which is very well patronised and Aslaji's which is also very well patronised. At Mazgaon for instance, there are two agiaries—one is *Kadmi* and one is *Shahenshai*. Now I do not see why there should be two agiaries but Parsis insist.

Parsiana: Can you change the trust deeds?

Vakil: There is no question of changing the trust deeds. An agiary has to be amalgamated with another agiary. You just make that an *Atash Dadga*. There have been agiaries in Bombay that have been closed. Cawasji Jehangir's Agiary at Mazgaon has been closed and that building was sold at 65 thousand rupees some years ago. There was one Readymoney's Agiary at Walkeshwar where there is also a private Tower of Silence. Not only has the agiary been sold but the lands—everything. The whole building is with non-Parsis. We do not know what has happen-

ed to the trust. We don't know what has happened to the trustees. We don't know what has happened to the trust amounts.

Parsiana: There is no one to keep a watch on these matters?

Vakil: I don't know. These are the facts which I am narrating to you because these are facts which I know. I have visited every agiary in Bombay, and I make it a point to visit every agiary at least once a year.

Parsiana: What do you attribute the paucity of priests to?

Vakil: That is due to several reasons. One is the extremely low income. Another is that we push into the priestly profession those who have nothing else to do or who cannot do anything else, so, alright, make him a priest. We have also a dislike for priests. Who gives his daughter in marriage to a priest today? I know because I belong to the priestly class. Once I came out with a white turban and a lady went inside because she considered it to be a bad omen to face a Parsi priest. I do not put it on because I don't deserve to put it on, just now being in this profession. It's a great honour to wear it. Sir Jamshedji Kanga used to wear it when practising.

Parsiana: Do you feel that steps should be taken to increase the number of priests?

Vakil: No. On the contrary I suggest that we should try to train our priests on the same method as Christian priests. Give them adequate remuneration, provide educational facilities for their children. If priests are well provided, the second and third generation will continue to be priests. The instance in point is Behram Kamdin's family at Banaji's *Atashbehram*. Similarly at Dadyseth's *Atashbehram*.

Parsiana: What about the Athornan Institute at Andheri?

Vakil: Arthornan Madressa at Andheri and Dadar Madressa—I do not know, but how many people have they turned out in all up to now? Statistically, very few and far between. We should try to attract a younger generation of priests. Educate them well. Provide them with adequate facilities. They don't have pension. They don't have bonus. They don't

have anything compared to what an industrial worker has. The result, therefore, is that they are discouraged from becoming priests.

Parsiana: Would you recommend the priests form a union?

Vakil: I don't see why there cannot be a union of the younger generation of priests, but at the same time what is most essential is that we should revolutionize the running of our agiaries. This can only be done if the trustees adopt a radically different attitude from what is in existence today. The trustees could run the agiaries on a co-operative basis by stating: whatever income comes out of the agiary, one-third we will keep and two-thirds we will divide amongst you, the priests, on a proper, rational basis. We will provide you with medical facilities, pension etcetera. This scheme can work very satisfactorily.

Parsiana: Do most of the agiaries make a profit?

Vakil: It is difficult for me to say because if the agiaries are managed by the Panthaky then the Panthakys take the profit. But I do not know frankly, and I have not looked into that matter. It will not be possible for me to answer that question.

Parsiana: Do you feel priests should be restricted only to those who are born in the priestly class?

Vakil: If I tell you that you could convert a *behdhin* into

an *athornan* then naturally a storm will arise. But one of the most orthodox—so-called orthodox men—Dr. Homi Bana, advocated that our ladies, after menopause, should be taken into the fold of priesthood and they should be allowed to perform the religious ceremonies. I have got that cutting with me. That to my mind is ridiculous but the idea has been suggested by a so-called orthodox scholar.

Parsiana: Is it possible for a person who is not born in the priestly class to become a priest?

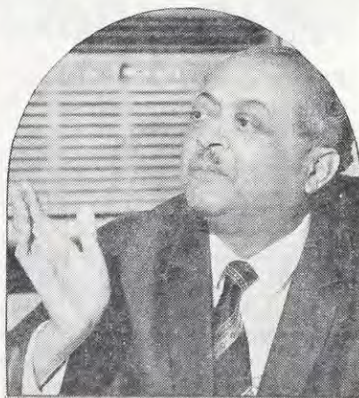
Vakil: I do not know if there is a religious ban. We have practically adopted after coming into India, the Hindu system, that the son of a Brahmin is a Brahmin and we combine *Ratchesthar*, *Vastriyofayosh* and *Hutokshes* into one class and call them *Behdhins*. Hindus still have *Kshatriyas*, *Vai-shyas* and *Sudras*. We have just combined them together, that is all.

Parsiana: If a Parsi man marries out his children can come into the community but if a woman marries out they can't come. Legally is there any ban to prevent people coming in?

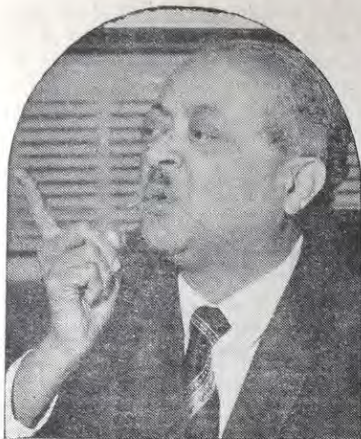
Vakil: This is based on the judgement of Justice Daver and Justice Beamen given as far back as 1909. The judgement lays down the principle that if a Parsi has a kept mistress, even if she is a *dubree*—that part of the judgement is not reported—the illegitimate children can be taken into the Parsi fold. But if a Parsi is married to the most noble alien woman, that right is barred to her. That is the judgement of 1909. The judgement concedes that conversion was not unknown in Iran, but after we came to India probably we gave our word of honour or whatever it may be that we would not compel anyone to convert into our fold. The result therefore is that we do not allow conversion.

Parsiana: But then why do we allow the man's children to come in and not the woman's?

Vakil: This they have based on some custom maybe what they call '*boon*', in Persian it means the seed. The father's seed comes to the son, the mother's does not. But I consider it to be illogical. This is my view. Of course this is not the view of the orthodox people. But in my view if you



We have also a dislike for priests. Who gives his daughter in marriage to a priest today? I know because I belong to the priestly class.



I would like to know which one of the trustees, including myself, has made a study of religion.

allow a man's children to be brought up as Parsis, at their own wish and their own will, I don't see why a woman's children if they wish to be brought up as Parsis should not be allowed.

Parsiana: The judgement of 1909 says that people not born of Parsi parents or a Parsi father cannot avail of Parsi trust benefits?

Vakil: That was the basis on which the judgement was passed but who today is asking for trust benefits? What is the benefit that they are going to ask for? To be consigned to the Towers of Silence? What other benefits are you conferring? What are they going to claim from the community? Let us understand it. This is all a misapprehension and a totally unfounded fear according to me.

Parsiana: But if somebody, say a person who is a Hindu, goes to court and says, 'A mobed has performed my Navjote ceremony,' is he legally a Parsi?

Vakil: No there he will not succeed as long as that judgement stands. Because by custom conversion is not allowed in this country. Unless you change your laws which is not possible in the present frame of mind of the Parsi community. If you talk of conversion then they will feel you are totally anti-Parsi and your talk absolutely un-Zoroastrian—A Zarthoste. And where do you get the law that a Parsi priest should

perform the Navjote ceremony? A *behddin* can also perform the ceremony of initiation of another Parsi. I have known of Hindus who recite *Kemna Mazda, Yatha Ahu Vairyo, Ashem Vohu*. I have known of Hindus who offer sandalwood at agiaris everyday. I have seen them doing so.

Parsiana: But the trust deeds of the agiaris prohibit non-Parsis from entering?

Vakil: Yes. Entry is permitted only to Parsis professing the Zoroastrian faith. A man may become a Zoroastrian without becoming a Parsi.

Parsiana: How is that possible?

Vakil: There are persons abroad in America who profess to follow the tenets of Zoroaster but who are not Parsis. The *Mazdyasni* movement is an instance in point.

Parsiana: And if tomorrow I started a fire-temple where this clause is not in the trust deed?

Vakil: Tomorrow if you started a fire-temple in which you allow everyone to enter, nobody can stop you. It is after all a *mandir* in which fire is worshipped. We forget that in Hinduism there is a Brahmin cult called *Agnihotri* who worship fire round the clock. I have seen those priests. I have seen those sadhus. They won't allow anyone to smoke a cigar within a distance of about 200 feet. They are worshippers of fire.

Parsiana: People have pointed out that the Parsi community is dwindling in numbers. What do you see as the remedy for this?

Vakil: I don't see any remedy frankly, and I don't see why we should bother about dwindling numbers? The Parsi community has never been too high and what we are concerned with is quality rather than quantity. What does it matter as long as there is one atomic scientist like Homi Bhabha, one industrialist like J. R. D. Tata and one lawyer like Nani Palkhiwalla, if there are 10,000 more taking advantage of the Parsi Panchayat doles or not? Will that be a criterion for our increase in number? I consider Neville Wadia, though he outwardly professes the Christian faith, a greater Zoroastrian in thoughts, words and action than most of us. I think we should concentrate on the quality of Parsis rather than the quantity because

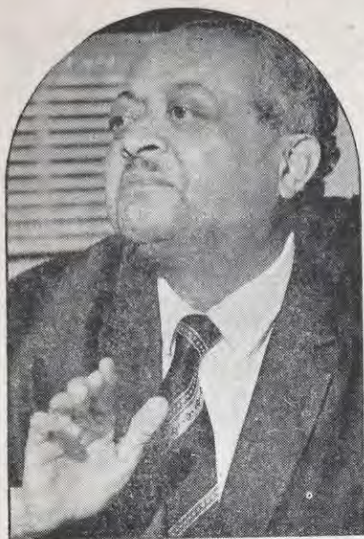
we will never be in a majority as long as our laws and customs are what they are.

Parsiana: A lot of our bright young people go overseas, and marry out of the community. Should we make any effort to keep them in the fold or should we let them go?

Vakil: Let them go. Because in Bombay according to official statistics every week one Parsi marries a non-Parsi. This was the average of 1971. Now every sixth day a Parsi boy or girl marries out of the community. Remember, these are only figures of reported cases. There are many unreported cases in the mofussil and other areas. Of these about 20 per cent represent boys or girls from Parsi colonies which are under the Panchayat. If the boys go overseas or not, or girls go overseas or not is totally immaterial. I have known Parsi boys going to London settling there and returning to marry Parsi girls. So their marrying out is not dependent on their going abroad. Let them spread out anywhere they



What does it matter as long as there is one atomic scientist like Homi Bhabha, one industrialist like J.R.D. Tata and one lawyer like Nani Palkhiwala, if there are 10,000 more taking advantage of the Parsi Panchayat doles or not?



There is nothing like middle-class left for the community. There are the poor and others are just well-to-do.

want. If they are elsewhere, they are going to marry out. If they are here, they will also marry out —you cannot stop the flow.

Parsiana: Do you feel the community should continue to exist?

Vakil: Of course it should exist. And it should exist as a separate unit. I do not say no to that. But it must to some extent change some of its concepts . . . it will have to change. Times will compel it to change, otherwise it will be wiped out.

Parsiana: But among these changes, you don't feel conversion, permitting for example non-Parsi spouses to convert, is essential?

Vakil: If I talk of conversion today they will immediately say: 'First you resign as a trustee of the Parsi Panchayat.'

Parsiana: How often does the Panchayat meet?

Vakil: Twice a month.

Parsiana: And what is the business discussed?

Vakil: Some matters are there, minutes are there.

Parsiana: How long would a meeting last?

Vakil: Sometimes two hours, sometimes three hours, sometimes more.

Parsiana: Should these meetings be open to the press?

Vakil: No. Not all these meetings. Sometimes we discuss matters like allotments of flats, nuisance caused by a monkey at a colony and whether a she-monkey should be brought or not. These are the types of matters for which we don't want the press to be present.

Parsiana: But then how else would you make the public aware of goings-on in the Panchayat?

Vakil: They must have a good P.R.O. and they must publish a report every three months. Today the position is that we don't have reports of '71 and '72 even.

Parsiana: What about the beggars in the community? Is the Panchayat capable of doing anything about them?

Vakil: They are increasing every day.

Parsiana: What number would you say beg in the community?

Vakil: In a civilized manner 15 to 20 per cent of the community. In an uncivilized manner, I have seen in Bombay more than 150 beggars.

Parsiana: Is there nothing the Panchayat can do?

Vakil: What does the Panchayat do except offer doles to them or a dharamsala? Beggars are on the increase.

Parsiana: Do you see any sort of remedy for this?

Vakil: What remedy would you suggest? These are people who are not prepared to work, who are not prepared to go to an infirmary. I have so often taken these people to infirmaries but they have run away from there.

Parsiana: Would you say we should stop their dole?

Vakil: They are begging from outside. So long as we are charitably minded we will pay and I am paying. In spite of my saying all this, there is not single day when I am not paying. Not a single day without exaggeration. What is to be done? These are people who are really beggars. Who cannot help it. Who have nothing to do and whom you cannot help in any other manner except by giving them some money. In the last two and a half years our community has lost over two crores of rupees—middle

class people have lost it in the failure of Devkarani Nanji, Mateson Engineering Company, Wadia Movietone and one other company. Two crores of rupees of our community have been lost.

Parsiana: Have trusts or individuals lost the money?

Vakil: Individuals. I have been fighting for them. It's a lone battle. The community is poorer by two crores of rupees as a result of an open day-light swindle perpetrated on them. We Parsis are very gullible.

Parsiana: People say the Parsi community is an affluent, well-to-do community? Do you agree?

Vakil: My personal view is that there is nothing like middle-class left in the community. There are the poor and others are just well-to-do. Many of the people who are staying in colonies are genuinely poor, genuinely honest, genuinely hard working. But as I stated we are very gullible and most of us cannot think rationally or independently.

Parsiana: Was your upbringing an orthodox one?

Vakil: Extremely orthodox. I still claim to be orthodox.

Parsiana: Was your father a priest?

Vakil: No, my father was not a priest. He was a lawyer.

Parsiana: And when you had your ceremony was it your intention to become a practising priest?

Vakil: Certainly not. I was studying in the 6th standard. I became a *Navar*, in memory of my mother. My mother left me when I was young. My father taught me *Izasni* and other prayers.

Parsiana: Where were you born?

Vakil: I was born in Africa, but was educated in Surat. Till I passed my L.L.B. I was there. I came to Bombay just like that when there was a zone ticket, with eight rupees and a trunk. I took a job in the Central Bank of India on a salary of 65 rupees. The first day, I am so proud, I got four rupees and one anna as my salary. I have not surrendered that pass-book still. I always keep it because one should never be ashamed to admit that one had such a

beginning. They have so often asked me to surrender this pass-book but I will never surrender it. For two months and one day I served as a clerk in the Central Bank. Then after two months I signed articles. I had no money for signing articles. I had to borrow 2,000 rupees at interest and 1,000 was given by Tatas to me. I never dreamt then that I would be occupying my present position as a legal advisor and director to them. I did my articles for three and a half years in Crawford Bailey. That period was the worst in my life because I was earning only 50 to 75 rupees a month. And due to malnutrition and other troubles I contracted tuberculosis of both the lungs. I was sent to a sanatorium in Panchgani—and then to Dharampur-Simla Hills. I went there and returned to Bombay for my examinations. After my exams I had my own firm with Naval Vakil for a year. They were the worst days. A slump prevailed and a solicitor earned 125 rupees maximum. After a year I joined Mulla and Mulla and I was with them till 1969—then I joined Tatas.

Parsiana: When did you get married?

Vakil: Oh I got married in '47 or '48, I'm not sure.

Parsiana: How many children do you have?

Vakil: Two sons.

Parsiana: Do you insist that your sons wear the *sudra* and *kusti* and marry within the community?

Vakil: There are only two articles of faith for the Parsi Community. One is unflinching faith in *Iranshah* Fire and the other is the *sudra-kusti*. Only for the reason that it is an emblem of our community. I would like as far as possible that my children should be married in the community, certainly.

Parsiana: But you would not insist on it?

Vakil: I cannot force it. I believe in the principle of democracy completely. I mean if anybody calls me a reformist then I pity him that is all I can say. I'm a realist by nature and if you face reality, if that is a sign of being a reformist, I have nothing more to say.

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Generations of Parsis contributed their mite to make our country and our community great. To commemorate these illustrious men, Parsiana has chosen as the subject of its 1974 calendar twelve statues of famous Parsis located in Bombay. To be printed with dates in English and the names of the rojs in Gujarati and English, the calendar is the ideal way to enlighten young and old of our heritage.

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ROSES FOR MS CLUBWALLA JADHAV



“Ganesh was about five years old and Rani was about six. Ganesh with his arms around his little sister stood before me and I said I would take Ganesh but I did not have a girl’s home for Rani. So I would open a girl’s home for Rani. . . .”

The music was playing in the glittering ballroom of the Governor’s palace but everyone had stopped dancing. They all stared at the young Indian girl who whirled around the floor with her husband. “At first we did not know why they were staring,” said Ms Clubwalla Jadhav “and then we realised that we were the only Indian couple on the floor. You can imagine how surprised they were when for the next dance I calmly went on the floor with an Englishman.” That was more than two decades ago.

Madras has changed unrecognisably since. The steamy splendour of the British Raj has evaporated and given way to the turbulent aspirations of a new generation of Indians. There is no more dancing at the Governor’s house, but frequently one of the numerous social service groups will organise a gala evening of dance and music and inevitably the focus will once again be on the now familiar figure of Mary Clubwalla Jadhav. There appears to be no charity ball, fund raising programme or other such activity, which can take place without her presence. “She just wills people into doing things,” says an admirer.

Ms Clubwalla Jadhav was recovering from a bout of serious illness when we met in the cool seclusion of her house which is also the headquarters of the numerous social service activities she directs. A well-wisher, one of the leading industrialists in the city, had sent her an outsize bouquet of red roses. They lay before her filling the verandah with their fragrance.

“We were always interested in helping the less fortunate,” she said. “It must have been my mother’s influence. She encouraged us to go out and help the needy even when we were quite young so that we never felt that we were doing anything special.” Her mother had been educated in England for many years before she got married and settled down in the Nilgiris. There is a charming portrait of her at the Madras Museum painted by the famous Ravi Varma, which according to Ms Clubwalla Jadhav, caused a mild stir as it was in the days

when it was still not considered quite proper for a young girl to be seen by the public at large. Unlike Ravi Varma’s customary women, however, with their barely hidden charms and Rembrandtian skin tones, Ms Clubwalla Jadhav’s mother appears a shy young girl, in a red sari, with a demure white blouse, preparing as the title says, to go out for a walk.

At the age of eighteen Ms Clubwalla Jadhav left her quiet Nilgiris girlhood to become part of one of the most well-to-do and well respected Parsi families in Madras. The history of the Parsi community in Madras is closely linked with the progress of this family. Her father-in-law was a well-known philanthropist who took an active interest in the affairs of the community and is remembered for donating the major part of the funds for the Parsi Fire Temple in Madras, which is called the “Jal Phiroz Clubwalla *Dar-e-Meher*.” It is in the commemorative volume of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the fire temple, that we get a brief description of the wedding of Nogi Phiroz Clubwalla and Mary Rustomji Patel. “There were rejoicings for days together and the entire Parsi community were feasted for four days,” reads the record. After this the happenings of the next nine years pass all too quickly. These were the years when the couple enjoyed great popularity and the young Mary found herself raising eyebrows at the Governor’s Ball. Then on a trip to Europe Nogi Clubwalla suddenly died of a heart attack. “It was a sad day for the Madras *Anjuman*,” notes the record, “as its most promising and beloved member, Nogi Phiroz Clubwalla died at the young age of 31 on his way to Europe.”

“I was all alone when he died,” said Ms Clubwalla Jadhav, “I came back to India and it was after this that I started devoting myself to social work in earnest.”

She admits that it was not always easy for a woman to leave her home and go out doing social work. “In my case my mother-in-law was at home to look after my son even though she did not always approve of my going out alone.”

by Geeta Doctor

"I had always wanted to be a lawyer," she recalled. She had this ambition fulfilled by various legal appointments. She was nominated to the Legislative Council in 1946, a post she held till last year. She was also one of the first lady Magistrates in the city and also the first lady Sheriff of Madras.

In 1935 when she was appointed Honorary Presidency Magistrate, while sitting at the Juvenile Court she had the idea of doing something for the stream of children who were brought up before her. The first home was started in 1950 with nine boys and now has two hundred. Soon after it was started, two other children stood before her. As Ms Clubwalla describes it, "Ganesh was about five years old and Rani was about six. Ganesh with his arms around his little sister stood before me and I said I would take Ganesh but I did not have a Girl's home for Rani. So I would open a Girl's home for Rani..." And thus to keep a promise to a small frightened boy, the Girl's Home was started. This has

now developed into the complex known as Aachen House, which today has three hundred girls and epitomizes the happy, friendly, self-supporting spirit that Ms Clubwalla Jadhav has sought to bring into the lives of abandoned children.

The girls live, work and play in the large airy buildings bordering a bend in the elbow of the river Coomb. There is none of the dreary monotony that one associates with orphanages. Everyone is at work, in the school, or at the Bakery unit which caters food on order, or in the Sewing department, or at the printing press. There is also a section known as "Nutrition on Wheels" which provides food for about four thousand children in the slums every day. Care is taken to see that the food served is fresh and hot, for their young charges are said to be vociferous in their complaints if the food is not up to the mark. Certainly to see the grey porridge-like substance being dished out in great quantities is not likely to whet the appetite, though

Ms Clubwalla has sought to introduce a little variety by having it cooked alternately sweet and spicy. But even this food is running out due to shortage of supplies from abroad and the store rooms looked pathetically bared. Ms Clubwalla Jadhav did not seem unduly worried, however, "We will learn how to manage," she said.

Learning how to manage has been the motivating force for the reverse side of Ms Clubwalla Jadhav's activities, her capacity to raise funds to support the various projects she has started. Though there is a continuous drive to collect funds through the year, the most spectacular event is the International Evening which has come to be one of the main social events of the year at Madras. With the support of the Governor and his wife, government officials, the diplomatic corps and the leading industrialists in the City, the evening is not only a success socially, but financially as well.

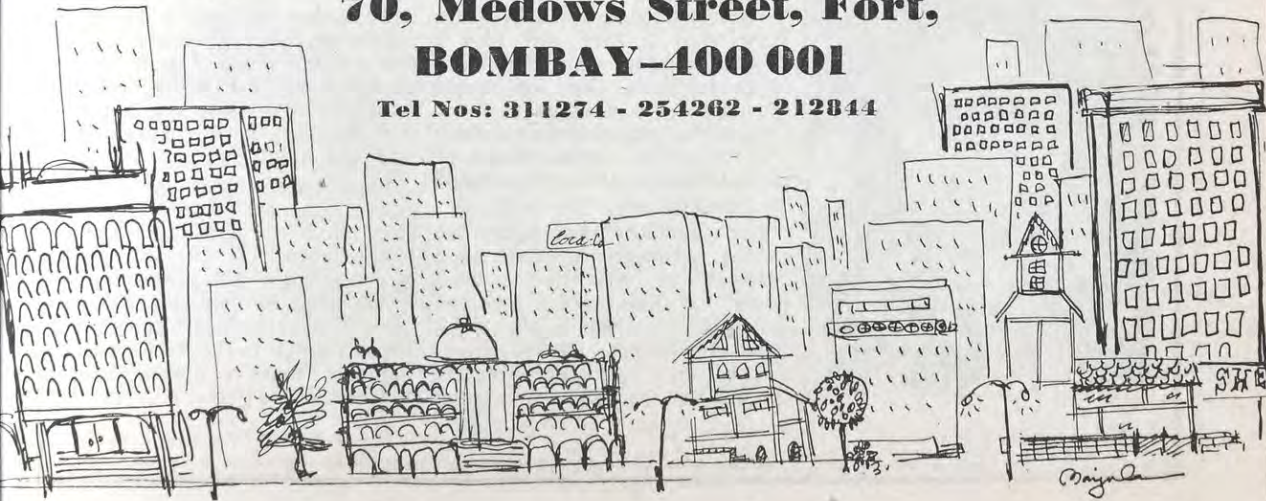
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MORE OF A PARSI?

Interviews by
Feroza Paymaster

As the battle for equality of the sexes progresses, more and more of our ancient laws and traditions are called into question. Among these rules is the one that states that a child born of the union of a Parsi father with an alien mother is considered a Parsi but the off-spring of a Parsi mother with an alien father is not. The law comes further under fire when it is noted that an illegitimate child of a Parsi male with an alien woman is also considered a Parsi. Among Jews, however, the custom is the reverse. A child is considered Jewish only if the mother is a Jew.

We asked the following seven people their views on the subject. They are not a random sampling and, therefore, what per cent of the community is for or against this tradition cannot be deduced from the results. However, of a survey of 693 Parsi homes, out of a total of 1,500 conducted by Paul Axelrod, 77.8 per cent were opposed to

changing the present law, 21.1 per cent were in favour of admitting the woman's child and 0.7 per cent had no opinion on the subject. Most of these interviews were taken at home, while the working partner was out of the house. Of the 693 interviews, Axelrod estimates 75 per cent were women. In our survey, six of the seven are either employed or studying; four are women and three are men. Among the questions we asked were: Does the father or mother impart religious knowledge to the children? Do you feel the man or the woman transmits more of the genetic or physical traits of Parsi-ness to the child? Do both have it equally? In short is the child of a Parsi male and non-Parsi female physically more Parsi or a better Zoroastrian than the child of a Parsi female and a non-Parsi male? (A study of genetics reveals that both parents are equally responsible for the child's make-up. No one sex dominates).



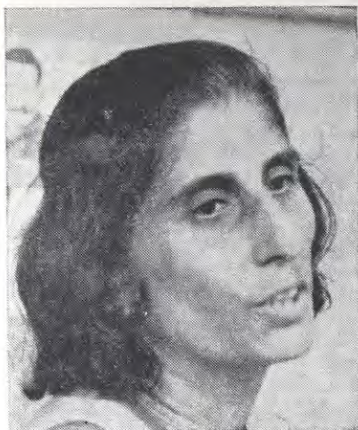
Vera M. Bhiwandiwalla, 33, Davar's College of Commerce Secretary

"I certainly don't think it's fair. Very often a Parsi girl who is devout, would want her children to be Zoroastrians. Religion should encourage not discourage them. Ours is the only community which does this. The option should be the individual's. The custom should be changed."

The possibility of children becoming Zoroastrians, Vera says, "depends on how devout each parent is. Sometimes a man can be more religious-minded, sometimes the woman. Both parents may impart religious knowledge to the children, though very often it

is the mother who teaches the children prayers." Vera does not believe that the man contains more of the genetic traits of Parsis. "Lots of girls married outside the community also have Parsi-looking children," she notes.

When asked about the Jewish custom she said "Really, I didn't know that. I guess it's because Jewish women are extra conscious of the religion." Regarding illegitimate children becoming Zoroastrians Vera said "Yes, I know that. Terribly unfair to the Parsi women. But they should be allowed. Anybody should be allowed."



Freny K. Pochkhanawalla, 44, Housewife

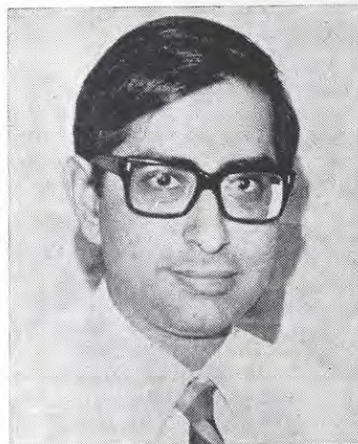
"The custom is right. Since generations it has been going on. A child should be brought up in the religion of his father, for it is the woman who takes up the religion of the man, and the children should too. The woman is marrying into the man's family and she and the children should adopt his religion."

"Although the father has a say too, it's the mother who guides the child and teaches the religion," says Ms. Pochkhanawalla. However, she strongly feels that the man's children would be better Zoroastrians. "The children of a Parsi father would be brought up in the Parsi atmosphere of the rest of the family. If the mother is a non-Parsi, she can read books and

impart Zoroastrian concepts to the children or she can ask the in-laws to teach him."

Regarding the physical traits of Parsiness, she says "It depends. Sometimes even the influence of the country in which the child lives can be seen, for example, chinky eyes in Parsi children brought up in Tibet or Burma."

Regarding the Jewish custom she says, "I don't agree. History tells us that most children are brought up in the father's religion." As for illegitimate children, Freny feels, "Since the child has been brought into the world, either one of the parents should take him into their religion. He can't be thrown away like that."



Jimmy Behlihomji, 27, Consultant, A. F. Ferguson

"It's a lot of humbug. Prevents people from becoming Zoroastrians. It's also inequitable and in modern day context should be changed. At the same time I also feel that the atmosphere in the home should be considered. Whether it is predominantly Parsi or non-Parsi. If it is the latter, and the children are brought up as Zoroastrians, they wouldn't fit in."

"I think that imparting religious knowledge should be a dual responsibility. However, it is usually the mother who is closer to the children, and has more time to do so, therefore, the Parsi woman's children would tend to be better Zoroastrians. The woman would

be more concerned with the instillation of spiritual concepts than the man. But, the children of the male would probably look more like Parsis," says Jimmy.

"The Jews probably have this custom to prevent male Jews from marrying out. Females are allowed, in order to get more into the community. However, there should be no prohibition on the male or the female," he says.

As for illegitimate children, Jimmy feels "the woman's children should have the priority to become Zoroastrians, over illegitimate children, and until the female's children are allowed, the illegitimate children should not be."



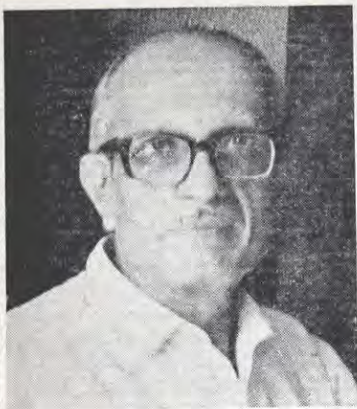
Zarine Khambatta, 20, Student of Sociology

"It's absolutely ridiculous, since the child is more with the mother. Besides, both ways the child is half-Parsi. If the children themselves want to become Zoroastrians I don't see why anyone should stop them. Religion is a personal thing. Definitely the custom should be changed. We are living in the 1970's not 1890's." As the mother imparts religious knowledge to the children, Zarine feels, "the possibility of the children becoming Zoroastrians is greater if the mother is one."

Zarine does not feel that the man contains more of the genetic

traits of Parsis: "It's just an old fallacy."

The Jewish custom is "very, very sensible." As for illegitimate children Zarine asks "why should they have our religion when legally born children (of the woman) are not accepted? I think it's really unfair. There's no way to prove that these children have been fathered by a Parsi. Our laws are broad-minded enough to recognize and accept illegitimate children but not those born of a Parsi woman in wedlock."



Ruttonshaw D. Mistry, 62, Accountant at Ripon Club,

"It is correct. Eminent men must have decided on it; why I don't know; however, since the child is given his name from the father, I feel the custom is quite right and should not be changed." While granting that children are mostly in the care of the mother, and it is she who imparts religious knowledge and impresses her views on the children—the father having no time to do so—Mistry feels the possibility of the children becoming Zoroastrians does not depend on the father or mother but "on the child, which religion he or she wants to take up. However, if the

father is a Parsi, the child would be more of a Parsi in looks, traits and behaviour."

Mistry said he was unaware of the Jewish custom "but even if that is so I have no remarks to make." As for illegitimate children becoming Zoroastrians he says, "I didn't know this. I feel that these children should be given the benefit of a father. It's not the child's fault that it was born in an illegitimate way. If children born to Parsi males in wedlock can be taken into the religion, without marriage too it should be possible."



Maharukh Irani, 22, Assistant in Sales and Marketing, Taj Mahal Hotel.

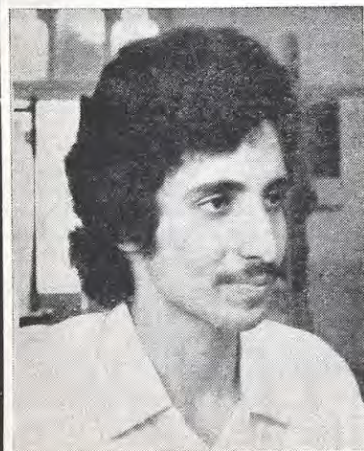
"I think it's very wrong, since the only religion the child learns is what he's taught on his mother's knee. Legally it is sound, since the child is named after his father but in practice it doesn't work. The custom should be very much relaxed. Don't curb the individuality of women by such customs. It is the mother who imparts religious knowledge. If the father tries he won't succeed since the child's always closer to the mother." The possibility of children becoming Zoroastrians however, "depends on the inclinations of the family. The father or the mother, depending on who is more devout, would influence the children. However, the

woman's children would tend to be better Zoroastrians."

Maharukh feels that the man's children would look more like Parsis. "The man has more of the genetic traits of Parsiness. However so far I haven't known any Parsi women married outside, so I can't say."

Regarding the Jewish custom she says, "No, I didn't know that. I think that's much more sensible. I'm not saying it's perfect though."

Maharukh said she "was not aware" that illegitimate children of Parsi males could become Zoroastrians and said "why not let them come into the religion, since it was no fault of theirs."



Jamshed Doctor, 19, Student, Khalsa College

"This is a little absurd. It gives the male superiority and that is wrong. Overemphasizes the male's importance in society. The woman should also have the right to bring up the children as Zoroastrians if the husband doesn't mind. The custom should be changed, because everybody has the right to believe in their concept of God.

"I guess it's the mother who's near the child, takes care of him and imparts religious knowledge to him," says Jamshed. "The father's the busy man in the family. It is the woman's child who will be a better Zoroastrian. Since the mother's always with the child,

her influence is greater. A non-Parsi mother would not believe in or be enthusiastic about Zoroastrianism and would not be able to impart it."

Jamshed does not feel that the physical traits of Parsis are dependent on the father. "It depends, some children look like their fathers, others like their mothers. I didn't know about the Jewish custom. I feel there shouldn't be a law as such. It should be by mutual consent.

"Illegitimate children are also children of God. They have a right to religion and nobody should stop them."



OF MEN AND MARBLE

BY MANJULA PADMANABHAN

It is most disconcerting to glance casually in the direction of a bush and meet the stony regard of Sir Jamshedji Jejeebhoy. While tracking down the statues of famous Parsis for the 1974 Parsiana calendar, it becomes increasingly obvious that Bombay's statuary suffer from some sort of stage-fright. Peering out from leafy nooks and glowering in dusty corners, they stand in sharp contrast to statues in cities such as Madras, where they all but blot out the scenery. Hence it was with some misgivings that I set out to immortalize twelve great men on paper.

The immediate problem was to locate them. Having distinguished myself by not being able to name one we scoured the public places of Bombay for statues of Parsis. This is not quite as easy as it might sound. Who would dream, for instance, that the imposing chunk of white marble in the University lawns is Cowasji Jehangir? Or that the area directly in front of the American Express is the final resting place of Naoroji's bronzed person? Or that the end of the Oval, already overcrowded with a fountain and Ambedkar's statue, houses that of Bengalee? The prize for modesty, must doubtless be awarded to Sir Jamshedji Jejeebhoy. I had first advanced upon the Asiatic library in the hopes of spending an undisturbed hour drawing him, only to find that the statue we had in mind was actually a massive replica of Jagganath Sunkarseth. The First Baronet was found to reside instead at the Hanging Gardens. Then on a subsequent visit to the Asiatic, while gazing vacantly at what appeared to be an unoccupied landing whom should I find but Jejeebhoy himself, this

time in marble and looking as uncomfortable as ever amidst assorted cobwebs and pigeon droppings.

It might be thought that statues are a fairly indistinguishable species, but nothing can be further from the truth. Each statue bears the stamp of his character and time. There is Sir Phirozshah Mehta in his dramatic stance, with his voluminous cloak billowing out and his hands gesturing eloquently. There is Tata seated sedately enough but with a tall and imposing archangel standing guard over him and on either hand a figure to represent the fruit of his life's labour. There is the 'Ubbo Parsi', (so called for his straight forwardness), who stands serenely upright high above the crowds at Byculla Bridge. From Cowasji Jehangir with his awkwardly folded hands to Adenwalla who poses almost casually with one hand in his pocket, they are portraits of men of great personal stature and individual charm, qualities which endure even in bronze and marble.

One distinct advantage in drawing Parsi statues as against any other statues is that Parsis probably represent the widest range of clothing. Naoroji swathed in the generous folds of formal court attire with a pair of diminutive wire spectacles charmingly askew corresponds well with the inscription, which describes him as a Grand Old Man of India; Petigara wears a dapper suit, his elegant shoes turned out just so; Petit, with his luxuriant moustache affects a more Parsi style in his casually worn *dugli* while Jejeebhoy is unabashedly oriental wearing richly flowing, brocaded robes and shoes with up-turned toes. Notably, there are four lawyers, one Baronet and the

rest are remembered for their philanthropy and good works. Also, notably, there are no women, a rather unusual state of affairs considering that Parsi women are quite as colourful as their men.

A statue is incapable of twitching or fidgeting, making it the ideal model. This and the fact that they are usually carved with their features slightly exaggerated make them a great improvement over their human counterparts. There are some disadvantages, however. Some figures are placed so far above the madding crowds that to draw them from any reasonable distance means one has to look up at them from between their toes; or else sit on the upper deck of a bus and pray for a red traffic light to halt the bus in front of the figure.

Resisting the temptation to include superficialities is more difficult as when confronted with Tata's imposing archange. It is certainly an irresistible angel and it was an awful shame to have to leave it out but one would either have to be satisfied with a portrait of Tata with wings or be forced to attempt a worm's-eye-view projection to get the angel into the picture. Apart from distorting Tata beyond recognition, the latter course would have been quite impossible because the audience would probably have objected to my lying prone on the sidewalk.

Among the twelve personalities only Mulla and Petigara make the slightest attempt to smile though many of the rest compensate for their stern expressions by sporting lavish growths of facial hair. Some statues have an irritating habit of needing to support their hands on

(Continued on page 27, col. 3)

A Tale of Five Trips

(રેજીસ્ટરમાં દાખલ થવા માટેની અરજીનો લેખીત ફોર્મ.)

no

15th November 1973

પારસી પંચાયતના ફરદી સાહેબો-બેંગ.

મુંબઈ,

સાહેબો,

પારસી પંચાયતના ફરદીઓની ચુંટણીની યોજના મુજબના રેજીસ્ટર D માં હું દાખલ થવા માગું છું. તે માટેની રેજીસ્ટ્રેશન ફીના રૂ. 5/4 આ સાથે મોકલ્યા છે.

હું જણાવું છું કે હું જરૂરથી ધર્મ માણનારો પારસી છું. મેં મારી ૨૧ વરસની ઉંમર તમામ કરી છે.

મારું વ્યાખ્યાન નામ—Makki Ruttonjee Patel

મારું રહેવાનું ઠેકાણું 285 J. Dadajee Marg
Bombay 400-007

મારો ધર્મ Education

હવેના રેજીસ્ટરમાં દાખલ થવાની મારી લાયકાત નીચલી* છે—

મારું નામ આ વ્યાખ્યાન કોઈ પણ રેજીસ્ટરમાં દાખલ કરાવ્યું નથી.

મારું નામ આ વ્યાખ્યાન રેજીસ્ટર 'D' માં છે, મારું નામ આ વ્યાખ્યાન રેજીસ્ટર 'E' માં છે ત્યાંથી મારી કરશે.

Makki R. Patel

સહી

*અર્થ: જરૂરી સ્થાનો પીસ, ફેલોશ, ગ્રેજુએટ વિગેરે હોય તે રેજીસ્ટ્રેશન કરી જણાવવું. 'એ' અથવા 'બી' રેજીસ્ટરમાં દાખલ થવા માંગનારા સાહેબોએ રેજીસ્ટ્રેશન કરી પોતા આપેલી રકમ, તેની તારીખ અને કયા ફંડમાં તે આપી છે તે ચાલી જણાવવું.

Application Form

Date:

The Trustees
Parsi Panchayat
Bombay

Sirs,

According to the election rules of the Parsi Panchayat, I desire to enter.....Register. I herewith enclose Rs..... being my registration fees.

I am a Parsi professing the Zoroastrian religion. I have completed 21 years.

Full name

Address.....

Occupation.....

For the registration I possess (any one of the following degrees)*

Prior to this my name is not registered in any register

Prior to this my name is registered in " " register.

Please cancel my name from that register.

Signature

* Justice of Peace, fellows, graduate etc. Persons desirous of entering 'A' or 'F' register must write in this form the amount of donation paid, when and in which fund.

Once every seven years, Parsis get a chance to vote for members of the "E" Register. This register consists of around 150 members who along with members of the "F" Register vote for the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat. To join the "F" Register you have to donate Rs. 5,000 to the Panchayat. If you don't want to do that then you can pay five rupees and try your luck with the "E" Register. The five rupees entitles you to vote for or to stand for election to the "E" Register. Sounds confusing? That's the idea. Our election system is one of the greatest hoaxes played on the gullible Parsis of Bombay. It's a sham and totally undemocratic. But you can change the system. Go to the Panchayat office, get the form—a specimen of which is printed in this magazine with the English translation—pay five rupees and put your name down for Register "D" which entitles you to vote for members of the "E" register. Do it before 31st December as that is the deadline. If you miss you'll have to wait another seven years.

It took me four trips to the Parsi Panchayat office at 209 Dada-bhoj Naoraji Rd. (Phone 267421) to have my name entered in the "D" Register and I will have to make a fifth one to get the receipt. Five trips for what should take no more than one trip and less than five minutes. The first time we sent

Above is a specimen form for registering to vote in the upcoming "E" Register elections of the Parsi Panchayat. On the left is an English translation of the above form. To be eligible to vote the form must be filled and returned before 31st December 1973.

someone the wrong form was given, the one for the Parsi Matrimonial Court election. Then I went and requested the form and only after specifically stating I was not interested in standing for the Matrimonial Court was I given the appropriate form and told to come the next week after filling it out. No directions were given. I didn't think a week was necessary to fill out my name and address so I returned the next day. The man asked me if I wanted to register as a graduate and if so I would have to produce my college certificate. I decided that was too much trouble. I was then given a several page pamphlet regarding the rules and regulations of the election, told to read it and return the next week. "Mister, don't be in a hurry," the man said. I read the pamphlet and returned two days later, five rupees in hand and determined to enter my name in the "D" register. After entering the office I was as usual made to wait a few minutes. I was then beckoned forth, the form checked, my money taken and was told to return next week for the receipt as the office was very busy. I agreed to do so and asked if I could have another form for a friend. I was told I'd have to wait five minutes and was directed to another chair. A few minutes later, a glance was thrown in my direc-

tion, I hurried over only to be asked, "What do you want. I told you to come next week." I explained I wanted another form. A profuse apology was given and the form handed over. Ten days later I went for my receipt. I was as usual made to wait in one chair, then called to another and then told in a very exasperated tone that I would get the receipt next week and why was I worried and in such a hurry and there was no doubt as to my bonafides.

I never stated I was the editor of *Parsiana*—not that it would have made much difference—because it was essential to see what treatment a lay person would receive from the Panchayat. The tale speaks for itself. The moral of the story is, when you go to register—and you *must* go—be firm. Refuse to budge from the office till you receive your form, fill it and return it along with the five rupees. If you are called back at a later date for your receipt, go when called and again do not budge from the office till the receipt is given. Being well-mannered and considerate will cost you five trips and aggravate your ulcers. Unless of course you have nothing better to do and like to spend your time in the Parsi Panchayat office...

Statues (Continued from page 25)
little columns, invariably placed at an angle which makes them impossible to draw.

The most difficult part about drawing statues however, has nothing to do with the statues. It is the people who make it their business to find out what you are doing and, when possible, pass helpful comments. A flock of schoolboys at Tata's statue informed each other in ringing tones that "She's an artist," while at Petigara's statue one boy stationed himself at my elbow to watch, setting an example for a fascinated audience to gather. Some people went out of their way to cross in front of the statue while others jumped over the barriers on the pavement in order to get behind me and assess the results of my labours. The effect of various pairs of eyes boring into the back of one's neck can only be detrimental; I was soon incapable of drawing anything beyond little squiggles and did my best to escape at the earliest opportunity.

Someone remarked that it is a good thing that we in Bombay are spared the sight of statues at every convenient crossroads and that they were just a useless waste of money. After having seen and drawn twelve prominent statues one cannot help disagreeing with such a view. The statues are memorials to great men and some of the most momentous chapters of this country's history. It would be sad to neglect the memory of that era and allow it to fade away in the glare of modern India.



Going to Vote

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ZOROASTRIAN FINANCE CORPORATION

By Dr. P. B. Warden

Founder Editor of *Parsiana*



As a tradition-bound group of people, faulty traditions have hampered our economic growth. We have ceased to grow along many lines of employment because we look down upon them.

Unemployment is a perilous psychological condition for the simple reason that personal deterioration sets in the unemployed after an average of two years of workless days. The capable person slowly degenerates until he becomes unemployable.

From begging as a part time occupation to laziness as full time pleasure degenerate souls discover in parasitism a way of life and stick to it, with sharp practices and formulas for entrapping Good Samaritans.

They are happy in their way and resist any change. A few years back Dr. Perin Cabinetmaker of Bombay University gave a lecture in which she pointed out that our community received no leadership during fast changing times. So we were unable to comprehend the changes. Not only do we lack leaders but also the willingness to seek or accept anyone as a leader (that can however be overcome to some extent, by accepting the lead without following it). She further pointed out that the disparity between our social strata is well-marked, because our lower income group is fertile and our upper income group sterile, fighting their life out in goal of an undefinable objective called the standard of life.

The reason for the downfall of many people is inflation, social injustice, shortages and lack of growth of industrial and commercial aptitudes, parallel with similar advances in other communities. They come from the hard kernel of society, namely, people between 20 and 45 years of age who constitute 50 per cent of the total of 75,000 Parsis in Bombay. Most of them find their own capital or

fit into the big money units as executives of assistants awaiting their turn to be executives. Lest we be here carried away by an idea that stability in life is determinable by the magnitude of investment we must utter a word of caution. The success of a venture depends on proper and honest management. Prof. Colin Clark, a noted economist has said "over-emphasis on investment may, under certain circumstances, cause more damage than good. There is an optimum ratio between utilizable funds and idle funds." In the case of the Parsis we have about 1,250 charity funds with an aggregate total of 35 crores and total yearly income of Rs. 4,00,00,000. They need analysis. How to convert the idle investment to utilizable investment, is the business of the trustees, the Charity Commissioner and the court. But our urgent need is capital, distinct from charity, for revitalising our able bodied persons from between 20 and 45 years of age with zest for improving their own lot.

In a BrainTrust meetings a speaker casually expressed his opinion that our young people do not want to work. Are people really lazy? What made them lazy? Was it the result of too long a period of unemployment? Decay in work means a decay in interest. Once the young people begin to believe that "every activity is a recreation" then there is no stopping them. It is the duty of the senior members of the community to help the youth to develop recreational attitudes to work before fatigue sets in by ennui.

Another speaker of the Brain Trust said that our young people do not want to leave Bombay. It is assumed that leaving Bombay is tantamount to improving prospects. To a person who leaves his home a change of place must be economically profitable, the new atmos-

phere has to be socially congenial and psychologically satisfying. Each community has a distinctly separate thought content of its own. Whenever a majority community member goes he has at least a closely allied environment with some common interests. Parsi youths suddenly find themselves deprived of all these factors. Re-orientation takes a long time. Alienation is disturbing to members of once united and happy families. A Parsi is generally extroverted. Hence his environment has to be congenial to him. An introvert is happy with his own self. Some historians have attributed the expansion of the British Empire to the characteristic British trait of living happily all by themselves away from home and family; for what was then considered the lofty ideal of maintaining or building an Empire. Parsi youths have no such aspiration. Their aspiration is limited to a pay envelope each month.

Mr Jehangir Shroff's idea of a Zoroastrian Finance Corporation may serve as the Blue Print of a new prosperity chart. We do have a Zoroastrian Co-operative Credit Bank. But a bank cannot trade. It can only advance money. Total responsibility remains on borrowers and on guarantors. People have on several occasions in the past suggested that the Parsi Panchayat should buy an industry specifically mentioned was a textile mill—and employ Parsis therein. But our Panchayat is a charity trust and as such cannot trade or run an industry. It must only serve the community. We must now look elsewhere the best alternative being the Zoroastrian Finance Corporation with a capital of 30 to 50 lakhs. Let us discover for our own new avenues, new ideas, new outlets and a new set of able men like Messrs. Jehangir Shroff, Cooverji Bhabha, Shiavax Vakil, Dr. Freddy

(Continued on page 32, col. 3)

The Voice of Orthodoxy

Jehangir Sorabji Chiniwala belonged to one of the families of Surat deeply concerned with their religious well-being. In their early receptive years there came a new guru, Behramshah Nowroji Shroff, who brought with him fresh vitality and a new outlook for Zoroastrianism in explanation of its long forgotten Esoteric Philosophy—*Ilme Kshnum*.

Jehangirji and his elder brother Dr. Framroze caught the spark. The mission gained converts with the first series of public lectures by Ustad Saheb Behramshah on 12 varieties of fire in Zoroastrianism, something unheard of or little understood prior to these lectures. A general impression was registered on the minds of many religiously inclined Parsis of the day that just ordinary translation of Avestan and Pahlavi books of our religion did not impart the deeper meaning of our prayers for followers to grasp and absorb their essence.

Of the two brothers, Dr. Framroze the elder one, left a land-mark of his personal regeneration in the form of most important and learned works *Nikize Vehedi* and other writings, which are the standard texts, and stand testimony to his profound grasp of the theory, theology and thoroughness of the themes of Behramshah.

What the elder brother did by writing and publishing the basic texts, the younger brother completed as propagandist of the faith by his oratory and knowledge of ancient languages. To continue the mission of his Guru he started a weekly newspaper *Parsi Avaz* (Parsi Voice) and ran it for 27 years almost single-handedly as its Publisher and Editor until his health failed about three months before he expired. To Jehangirji, *Parsi Avaz* was not a choice but a conscious compulsion of duty to fulfil Ustad Saheb's prediction that after him will come a newspaper that will carry on his mission. Ustad Saheb had forecast opposition to his teachings. It was to counter all such movements that Jehangirji established *Avaz* and successfully carried out both the objectives of his Guru, viz., the propagation of



new knowledge and forestalling and checkmating all movements likely to prove detrimental under the guise of reform. He had unflinching faith that his newspaper had the blessings of his Ustad. He bore the brunt of the financial losses by himself. He was much more than a pupil. He was a devotee to the philosophy of his master. He attracted to him a large crowd of believers through the media of his magazine and the rhetoric of his sonorous voice. In all struggles for principles he emerged a triumphant *Rathestar* (warrior) in defence of unchangeable orthodoxy.

He looked upon *Sudreh* and *Kusti* not only as symbols of Parseeism but more as instruments with which Parseeism could be worked up. The Philosophy of *Muktad*, practicality of *Dokhmenashini* and the specific influence of *Mathrawani* as effective vibrations of our prayers, were to him actual and realistic as any concrete objects of choice for one's own good and the good of the community. He explained in lucid terms the minutiae of laws governing the rituals and equally minute collective effects of them on the mind and the soul of believers. With conviction and the guidance of his own *Kundali* (astrological chart) he lived his life. He was a highly respected scholar of comparative religion and astrology, equally at ease as an advocate and

(Continued on page 32, col. 2)

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DHUN'S DISPLAY A STROKE OF BRAVADO



The Taj Art Gallery is not unlike a morgue. There is an atmosphere of hushed silence which compels the visitor to freeze into sombre attention the moment he enters it from the bright tumult of the world outside. The works of art are neatly layed out in cold clinical slabs of light, while eulogic commentaries line the front panel like obituary notices. The artist has the option of mingling among the onlookers in the manner of a discreet undertaker or of sitting mummified in a corner consecrated for the purpose.

Under these circumstances Dhun Sachdev no doubt found that her histrionic abilities greatly assisted her in the performance of her first artistic venture. Sitting elegantly draped in her corner, she looked the part—a serious young artist completely sure of herself and her productions. Was she nervous or excited at the thought of her first exhibition? "Perhaps on the first day," she conceded, "but not anymore". Was she influenced by anyone? "No". Did she prepare a rough sketch before proceeding onto the canvas? "No". Were her use of colours influenced by the work of Paramjit Singh whose choice of colours show a striking similarity to hers? "No." Obvi-

ously this was going to be a performance that did not need much dialogue.

For a first timer Dhun Sachdev makes a surprisingly strong impact by her uninhibited use of colour and bold execution. Tackling fairly large canvases, her repertoire consists of two main themes, one a twilight region of vast mysterious spaces with solid forms and rock-like shapes, the other a wooded landscape verging on the border of surrealism. There is also a determined attempt to have a bash at the cubist credo in two works entitled, "Summer" and "Winter" which with its laboriously executed harlequin pattern is more a tribute to the artist's aspirations than to her realization of them.

Undoubtedly Dhun Sachdev's forte lies in her vibrant use of colour which not only serves to kindle some of the better canvases but helps to disguise the weaknesses of the lesser ones. In Painting No. 5 for example a bright red is used against a brilliant emerald green in a Gauguinesque setting. The composition has all the freshness of spontaneous expression and yet reveals a well controlled sense of colour. In these landscapes one frequently comes across a form which in any other

context would appear weak and insipid—tree shapes in black with tentacular roots and leafless branches—but which, floating against the startling intensity of her vivid backgrounds, acquire a particular relevance and individuality of their own.

Of the rest it would perhaps be unfair to lump them under one category and classify them all as unremarkable. To be sure a painting like the one entitled "Dawn" vaguely reminiscent of past achievements in the same genre, appears to be no more than an arty mingling of greys and blues signifying precisely nothing. In contrast Paintings No. 3 and No. 12 arrest us by a certain boldness in the composition. In Painting No. 3 for example one gets the feeling of great movement, as though atoms of matter or heavenly bodies are hurtling through space and colliding with each other. It is an ambitious work. Yet at some point the artist seems to lose her initial vision and resorts to facile improvisations with colour.

Painting No. 12 entitled, "Sun-scape", strikes a bold stance in the use of form with a spherical orange shape and other astral figures floating against a background of indeterminate hue. Quite apart from the fact that the painting could just as well have been an underwater scene as a representation of the cosmos, the artist has found it necessary to trail a few fragments of white paint here and there like bits of lace, or are they meant to be trailing clouds? Or seaweed? As a decorative device, like the black tree trunks they are no doubt useful but they do detract from the solid realities of the composition. The brushwork here as in some of the other canvases clearly appear to be the work of an amateur.

Painting to Dhun Sachdev does not seem to be more than an elegant diversion. It leads one to wonder in the manner of Kiplings Devil, "It's pretty, but is it art?"

—Geeta Doctor.

NOT FOR MYOPICS



After the hushed and sterile atmosphere of Bombay's better known art galleries, whose timid visitors imagine that aesthetic appreciation can only flow from an oppressive silence, a visit to Artists Centre restores one's faith in the basic connection between art and ordinary living. There is no charming hostess to greet you, no buffets of airconditioned air, only a scruffy liftman motioning you lethargically to the first floor. Many steps along a dark stairway, right around the lift and right again; and there you are. A large hall with chipped paint and a few sofas that have seen better days, in the centre. "Why!" you exclaim: "This is nothing more than the first floor of an old office building at Rampart Row!" Indeed that it is. And for many an aspiring young artist who can scarcely wait two years or pay over a hundred a day, it provides an adequate display space.

As I entered the hall, the pictures appeared no more than black and white blobs. Micky Patel's art is not for myopics. It was only after I had advanced cautiously upto two feet of the

paintings that they resolved themselves into a series of distorted nudes in various positions like so many lumps of wet flour. At that point you had better know your eyes disease well, otherwise you might diagnose yourself as being astigmatic as well.

The smudgy and dotted effect of the pictures, as I was told by a young male attendant, who described himself as a "painter," is achieved by smearing a piece of hardboard or wood with printing ink. The artist then lays a paper on it and with a blunt instrument, presses down on those areas which are to be covered. The pressure forces the reverse of the paper to pick up the ink at the appropriate places and lines. By pressing down on dryer ink, grey tones are achieved.

I thanked him for enlightenment to such a benign layman and edged on to the other sketches. Indeed, for the hall they were too few; some thirty odd, although it must be admitted that a handful of the best were already gone to the usual clients. For a Rs. 40 a day gallery it must have a good mailing list; for as a handwritten notice on the wall said five sales had been made to notable customers like Air-India.

Most of the sketches were nudes, in various attitudes, seated, reclining, doubled over. Gnarled and grotesque, their flesh hung morose and pendulous. In the tradition of Toulouse-Lautrec, the artist seemed to have made an exploratory foray into the aesthetics of ugliness. True, there were a few exceptions, as in a fine portrayal of the bust of a young woman, but even there she was left bald, and her breasts drooping. Many of the subjects had their limbs thalidomide shortened. Micky must take credit for his ability to portray tired flesh, and the inexorable pull of gravity. I wondered about the artist. What sort of a young man was this? Did he not take pleasure

in the female form?

When, I met him later, I was forced to rapidly abandon any visions I might have had for a long haired, existentialist, woman hater. For Micky is a very normal looking, apologetic young man who blinks a lot and who toils in the ordinary calling of a commercial artist with an ad agency in Delhi.

As I visualized him, surrounded by images of those pretty young advertising models imbibing the latest beverage down unsullied lips or applying a new mascara to lately blossomed eyelashes; it was then that a theory popped into place. Micky's spare time art was an escape from the tidy world of his profession with its clean lines and its nubile pretty girl models, where flesh is taut and gravity hath not yet taken its toll.

Returning to the pictures, for a second closer look, a good few of them indeed had a repetitive motif—that of a woman with her hands entwined around her head. Some, which were not nudes had satirical overtones. These showed a stiff military figure, fully dressed with medals except for his bare legs. It was only a few days later I discovered Micky is also an occasional cartoonist for certain magazines.

Smudgy and distorted sketches, as these were, can often be a screen for lack of ability, but Micky's talent is obvious especially in his good compositional sense. If one left the exhibition with a half satisfied feeling it was only because the exhibits were too few and limited in scope.

As you leave Artists Centre and grope your way down the stairway, there is no sudden change of temperature, no culture shock on return to reality outside. There is only the quiet dusk of an after-office-hours Rampart Row, and on the sidewalk tired humanity already asleep in various attitudes, strangely reminiscent of the imagery portrayed above.

Farok Contractor

Clubwalla (Continued from page 21)

"For the International Evening, Ms Clubwalla has more than a 100 ladies working for her. Can any of your Bombay organisations boast of such a number?" challenged one lady. Ms Clubwalla Jadhav has indeed been able to build up a devoted band of workers.

"Ms Clubwalla Jadhav is more interested in working for other communities than her own," commented one outspokenly conservative Parsi lady. It was rather an extraordinary remark to make, for Ms Clubwalla Jadhav's active support and participation in the affairs of the Parsi community are plainly to be seen in the accounts of the Golden Jubilee volume. It is, however, true that her commitment is more to humanity as a whole than to any special part of it, a fact which was recognized by the International Council of Social welfare last year when it chose her as the first recipient of an award for outstanding contributions in the field of social service.

Speaking about herself, Ms Clubwalla Jadhav said, "I have a great love for music for which I unfortunately do not have enough time. I am fond of good company, entertaining well and dressing well." She also described how, after eigh-

teen and a half years as a widow, she married Major Chandrakanth K. Jadhav. It was a very happy marriage though at first some eyebrows were raised at her for marrying out of the community. Early last year Major Jadhav passed away and though Ms Clubwalla Jadhav characteristically filled the void by getting involved with more work, there was a wistful note in her voice as she talked of her only son and her hopes that he would get married. Though she has many children to whom she is more than a mother, she voiced a simple desire: "I long to have a grandchild around me."

Chiniwala (Continued from page 29)

as an honorary worker in various public institutions.

In law his grasp was quick and penetrating. His knowledge of Avesta, Pahlavi Pazand and the Persian languages was thorough and he was an accredited scholar of Firdausi, whose *Shahnameh* he could recite in parts *extempore*.

He was the President of the Indian Astrological Society. When he delivered Presidential and other lectures on this subject he was on firm grounds. But while delivering lectures on *Ilme-Kshnum*

(Esoteric philosophy of Zoroastrianism) he was at his best. He was in his sympathetic vibrations. He shall survive in *Kshnum*.

P. B. Warden

Finance (Continued from page 28)

Mehta, Engineer (P V C), Minoo Polson, Pesi Nargolwala, Jimmy Guzdar, Noble of Noble Paints, Ratan Pochkhanawala, Noshir Pochkhanawala, Jal Heerjibehendin, Naval Godrej, Noshir and Rusi Cama, Jer Jamshedji, Nanabhoy Jeejeebhoy, Noshir Pavri, Dr. R. Daruwala, Karkaria, Mithawala, Keki Dastur, H. Dangor, Dr. Jehangir Cama of Esso and senior representatives from all big cities like Delhi, Ahmedabad, Surat, Navsari, Poona, Nagpur, Lucknow and Calcutta. Such organisations once set up may prove a healthy co-ordinating centre.

We must pick up new tactics and discover new talent.

Let Mr. Shroff start at once. Let Mr. Shrivastav Vakil prepare a draft, let Lady Jehangir help with finance, let Mr. Ratan Pochkhanawala use the expertise he gained in the Bombay Small Scale Industries Finance Corporation. This list is not a tabulation it is a tentative reminder.

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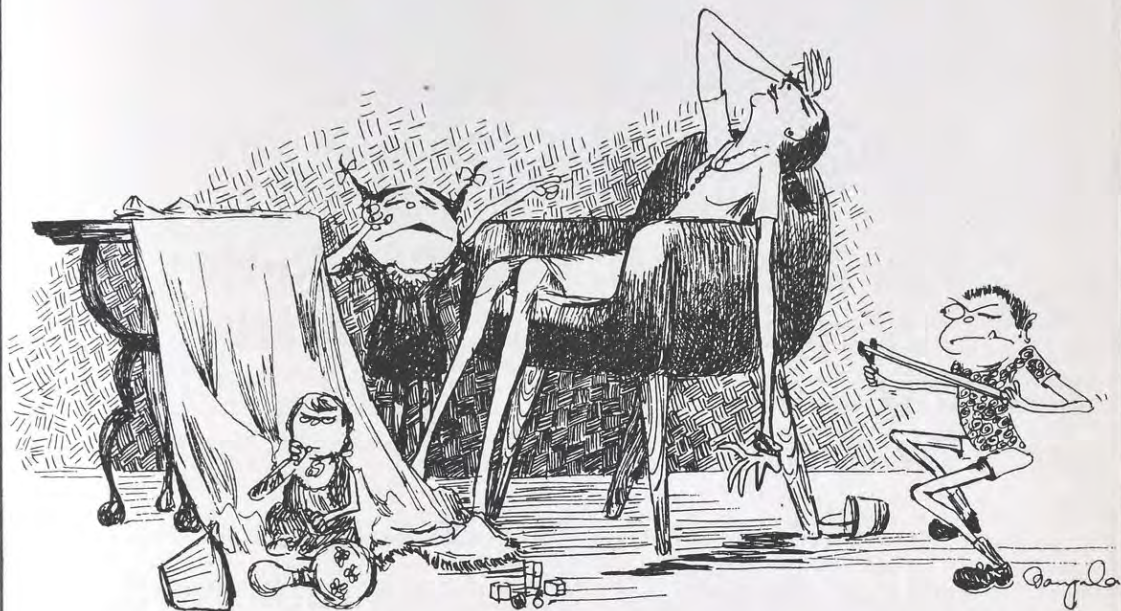
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