

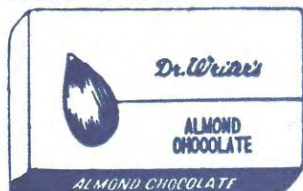
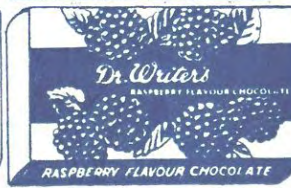
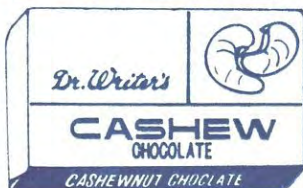
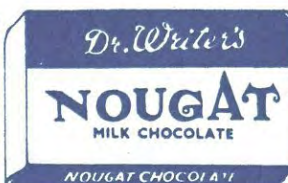
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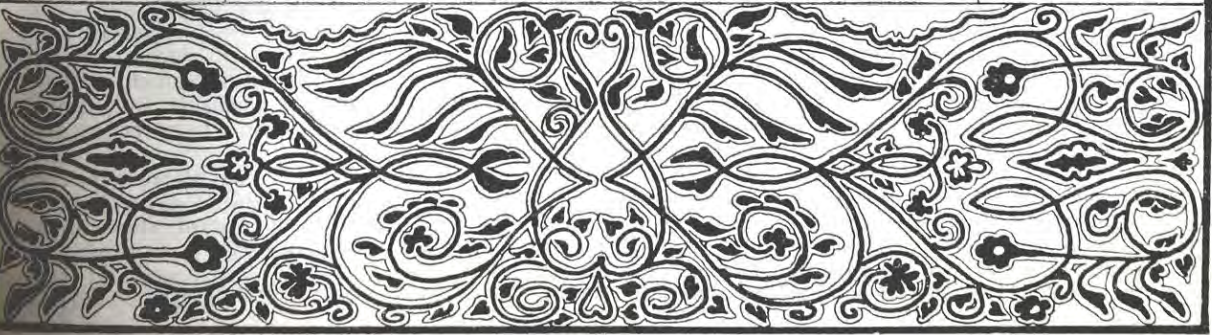
Parsiana

October–November 1974

CONTENTS

	<i>Page No.</i>
EDITOR'S COLUMN	2
LETTERS	7
HIGH NOON AT THE PANCHAYAT	10
A DESCENDANT OF THE SUN by A. D. Gorwala	14
JEAN STORY by Manjula Padmanabhan	18
FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD	20
THE WHEEL TURNS FULL CIRCLE by Pervin Mahoney	23
OF COMMERCE AND TRUSTS	25
ARE PARSIS RICH? by Feroza Paymaster	26
HELLO INSPECTOR	31
A MYSTIC FOG by Geeta Doctor	32
IN MEMORIAM	35

Parsiana Cover depicting the three wise men (one of them a Persian priest) bearing gifts for the infant Christ by Manjula Padmanabhan.



editor's column

Sitting in that dark dungeon of despair, the *Parsiana* office, many thoughts cross your Editor's mind (or the closest thing to it) as he tries to write his column. Just the various possible opening lines he bangs out on his faithful, portable Underwood (legally imported) in the wee hours of the night could fill the entire column. Below he lists two which show him in the best literary and intellectual light:

"The gaudy string of coloured lights went off and in their stead a neon light bearing the number 1975 flashed across the moonlit, midnight, December sky. We gazed at the electronic masthead as people in a desert do a mirage. Every broken-down nerve within us strained to say: 1975 will be a good year. Mainly because 1974 was such a bad year. Not that it was the poor Year's fault. We must not be too critical of Time for it is our final judge. Let us instead place the blame elsewhere, preferably on others. After all it is their bad influence which corrupts us."

This opening was rejected on various grounds, the main one being, that I had opened two of my columns in the past twelve months by referring to the New Year namely Jamshedi Navroz and Pateti. Somehow I overlooked Diwali. The other opening concerned the controversies relating to the deaths of Dr. Rustom Jal Vakil and earlier, Dr. Adarbad Irani:

"Every time an eminent doctor dies, there is a crisis in the Panchayat."

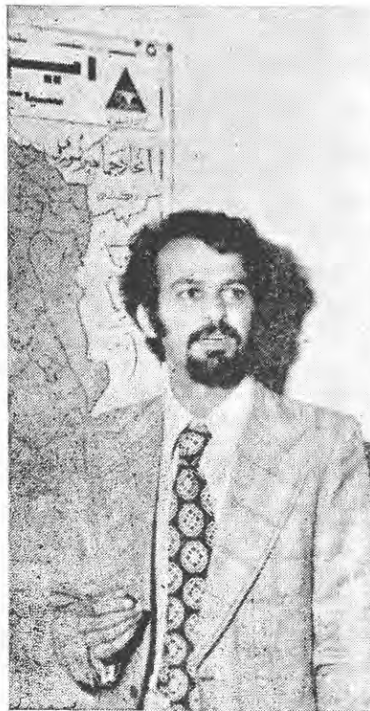
This beginning was sacrificed because I couldn't think of a suitable second line. Readers who feel they can do a better job of this column are welcome to give it a try.

After searching for a beginning for several hours, I hit upon a great second paragraph but couldn't decide what the first should be. The incident in the second paragraph takes place in a courtroom where a trustee of the Panchayat has been charged with criminal assault on doongerwadi, the most heinous crime in the book. The defendant has

pleaded not guilty. The prosecutor, a tall man with a shrill voice and streaks of grey in his hair has risen to address the hushed courtroom.

Prosecution: Your Honour, the defendant has maligned an ancient, and time honoured system for the disposal of the dead and thereby caused the custom grievous harm.

Defense: I object, Milord. My client has been critical of the said system but he has not caused it injury. Time alone has done that. The damage is a result of people crowding into the city over the



Sohrabi: 'Quietly knowledgeable'

(Pic.: F. Reporter)

years, by the tall buildings—I get vertigo when I go up them—by the lack of vultures, by....

Prosecution: Nonsense, your Honour. It is solely the defendants fault. Everything was going smoothly till he became a trustee of the august, the supercalifragilisticexpialidocious Panchayat (applause. Judge issues first warning.) It was the accused, who by entering the Towers of Silence, opened, as they say in literary circles, Pandora's Box (Editor's note: Pandora's box was actually opened by Pirojbai Boxopenwalla, but

Greek historians, with their proverbial bad spellings, Hellenized the name to Pandora.)

Defense: How now, how now, the learned lawyer is mistaking the events for the cause. I do not wish to enter into a legal discourse on the landmark case of *Pandora vs. Public*, suffice it to say the evidence was circumstantial and in no way proved any relationship between the opening of the box and the presence of evil in the world (murmurs of disbelief in the crowded galleries. Judge bangs gavel: *thump!*) The six plaintiffs allege that the method of disposal is functioning well enough, yet one of them approached a renowned institute of fundamental research and asked the landscape specialist how best to increase the foliage at doongerwadi. Does this not confirm our suspicions that things are not as rosy as they are made out to be?

Prosecution: (rising slowly) What a poor opinion my colleague must have of the jurors and you my Lord to present such a fatuous and fallacious argument.

Judge: Never mind about me. (It may be noted here that in the notorious case of *Oscar Wilde vs. His or Her Majesty*, Wilde when questioned about his drinking habits commented that he drank a particular alcoholic beverage with ice "very much against my doctor's orders." The prosecutor snapped back "never mind your doctor's orders." To which Wilde replied, "I never do." Back to the case).

Prosecution: Your Honour will be pleased to know there is plenty of vegetation at the said Malabar Hill. Why in 1890 a noted ornithologist pointed out there were numerous vultures present and if I may be so bold as to note that in these hallowed halls of justice, pigeons flutter from ledge to ledge (points to bird droppings in secluded corner to prove point). I ask you Milord, if pigeons can survive without vegetation, *why* not vultures? (applause from gallery on the right. Judge orders eviction).

Defense: Your Honour, the community is dwindling in numbers, the trend toward crematoriums and cemeteries is increasing, on what will the vultures feed themselves? The said doongerwadi

estate is running at a deficit of thirty thousand rupees a year, how long can it survive? Is it my client's fault that the community is shrinking or that it is approaching economic bankruptcy? No your Honour, he is being made a scapegoat for all the ills afflicting this crumbling institution of the dead, an institution that *Time* (not the magazine) is destroying (gestures with hand towards *Parsi* calendar on wall. Editor's note: No calendar printed this year due to shortage of funds. Apologies). Your Honour what we are witnessing today is a fight between two individuals, a clash of personalities, if you please. One of the plaintiffs has a personal tiff with my client and is using—I should say abusing—this disposal issue to slander him. (Murmurs of disapproval. Judge glances with critical eye at crowd. Silence follows.) Your Lordship, like the honourable prosecutor, I too am well versed in literary works. If I may be permitted to quote Shakespeare: 'Two stars in one orbit cannot keep.' For those of a nationalistic bend I would like to quote from our own Kabir Das: 'Two swords cannot co-exist in one scabbard.' And for those who are Latin lovers I have the saying "Dulce et decorum.... Judge: I think you have made

your point adequately enough.

Defense: My apologies, your Honour, I get carried away. My only weakness is a fondness for rhetoric. My mother once told me, "Son....

Prosecution: Keep your mother out of this. You are trying to get the sympathy of the jury by all this talk about your mother. Talk about your client and his heinous crimes instead. Let him be punished for corrupting our society. Let the punishment fit the crime. (Cries of "Yes, yes" from the crowd. Judge orders court cleared. Pandemonium prevails for a few minutes. Jury leave to deliberate and return after visiting cafeteria) Judge: Gentlemen of the Jury, have you reached a verdict?

Jury: What a question!

Judge: Well?

Jury: (in unison) Guilty!

Judge: (after pontificating on the order of the universe the need for understanding and brotherhood, requests defendant to rise. Cap is placed on Judge's head). In light of the Jury's verdict I pronounce the most severe punishment any judge has ever handed to any defendant. You are sentenced to be a trustee on the Panchayat for life!

The rest is history. The poor defendant appealed to the highest court, to the Judge of all judges

but was told due to the huge backlog of cases, his appeal could not be considered in his lifetime. After two years, however, he was put on probation from the Panchayat for good behaviour. The jury system was abolished shortly after the landmark case.

My English teacher in school (yes, I am educated) Ms Amy Billimoria once asked it jest if I wrote my column by myself. I replied aside from the beginning and the end and most of the humour in between not to mention the spelling and grammar, the column was "all my own work" as *Busybee* always says. So readers, now you know what agony your Editor goes through for your sakes' why not write in with suggestions, little anecdotes, true life confessions, tear jerkers, anything that's fit to print.

While researching a paper on university autonomy, our Executive Editor Geeta Doctor came across this interesting bit of information: the first woman to graduate from Bombay University was a Parsi, Ms Cornelia Sorabji. She passed her B.A. examination in 1888 with a first class and was also the first woman to appear for the bar examination.

In the cultural world, Ms Doctor interviews Bahram Sohrabi, the current director of the Iran Culture

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House and reviews a Bharat Natyam dance recital by Khurshid S. Irani for the Column:

"I am always being asked about my name," said Sohrabi, who often finds people giving his name a Parsi accent by adding a "ji" at the end of it. Though he has been in Bombay only for the last nine months, Sohrabi is not a stranger to India. He has been working on a doctorate from Delhi University for the last few years, after receiving a fellowship from UNESCO.

"I was always young for my job," confesses Sohrabi, who is twenty-nine, and who makes no secret of his fondness for the quiet charms of an academic life. Ever since he finished his M.A. in Sociology, however, he has been involved in a number of assignments which, like his present one, have meant a very active life. Within the marshmallow pink walls of the Iran Culture House lavishly adorned with photographs of the Iranian Royal Family, Sohrabi presides over a number of activities such as cultural evenings with lectures and film shows, photographic exhibitions showing the spectacular progress Iran has made in recent years and, most important of all, Persian classes. Indeed there is so much interest in the activities of the Iran Culture House that Sohrabi hopes to move to a bigger, more convenient place soon. He finds that the Persian classes are the most popular and hopes that they will provide a new impetus for the study of Persian which is part of India's many-splendoured heritage. "Persian was the court language in India for so many centuries. How can you forget it?" he asks. "To abolish this would be to miss an important portion of your civilization. In any country's history there are sad and happy memories. Persian is like a network... if you neglect it or forget it, it would be like pulling out a thread from the whole fabric of the past." In spite of these routine tasks Sohrabi manages to keep up his research for his Ph.D. and has also found time to compile a short thesis about Bombay and its inhabitants.

Sohrabi believes firmly in the value of what he calls an "orientological" point of view when look-

ing at problems arising in countries of the Asian continent and deplores the "western civilization mania" that is more prevalent today. In his own country he notes, "Iran has witnessed fast technological changes. This has also meant a change in our values. There have been many improvements, in the facilities for everyday life, in food habits, accommodation, and the abolition of social restrictions. "But he also feels



Khurshid : Smiling grace

that such wide-ranging changes could bring difficulties of human adjustment." In his capacity as an urban sociologist, it was, remarked Sohrabi, of great interest to observe the development of a city like Bombay with its 6 million inhabitants. He was of course too polite to add that when (if ever) a master plan for Bombay had been made nobody had thought of providing accommodation for

one solitary male, for his unfortunate experience is that until a month ago he had not been able to find a suitable home for himself.

The only complaint that Sohrabi had to make was about Indian food, which he felt was too spicy. Perhaps as a remedy against this he keeps a hoard of pistachio nuts which he hides in a number of pockets all over his tall lanky frame and produces at unexpected moments. He says that he is constantly amazed to find how "quietly knowledgeable" Indians are and to discover the deep layer of philosophy that he believes sustains the Indian people. "From the sociological point of view differentiations in customs and beliefs have all of them some point of faith. All traditions and beliefs are valuable. All religions believe in humanity. I think each religion in its own way has tried to make us as human as possible. To be kind, to be helpful is to create an atmosphere of humanity. If we want to be friendly, there must first of all be understanding." Sohrabi has made it his task to initiate this era of understanding.

A smiling grace distinguished the Bharatha Natyam recital of Kumari Khurshid, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. S. B. Irani. As noted by Noshirwan Irani, President of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman, it was truly commendable that a girl coming from a Zoroastrian family had been able to devote herself so creditably to such a rigidly traditional art form.

Khurshid showed remarkable poise and confidence for a newcomer and the items that she danced were both varied and unusual, allowing her to display her expertise in the different facets of this dance form. In this she received excellent support from the orchestra which was of a high calibre and performed exceedingly well throughout the evening.

Having said this much, it must also be pointed out that Khurshid's performance was only a beginning, and if she showed grace she lacked the strength which is a vital part of Bharatha Natyam. Her hand movements, though they improved towards the latter part of the performance, lacked crispness and her *abhinaya* though adequate,

did not always carry conviction. A note on Khurshid in the programme mentioned that she was also proficient in ballet. One cannot help but wonder whether it is this which has contributed a certain lack of focus to her Bharatha Natyam, for there is no doubt that the two forms are completely antithetical to one another; while ballet soars off the ground, Bharatha Natyam derives its strength from the ground. By her very obvious dedication to the art, Khurshid has shown her willingness to submit to the demands of Bharatha Natyam, but if she is to excel, she will have to sacrifice herself even more totally, for the art is not only a jealous, but an all absorbing, one.

Like mother like son, and so Ms Doctor's seven-year-old son, Vikram has also caught the journalistic bug. For the past few months he has been producing a typewritten magazine entitled *Five Star* which eventually he hopes will put the *Illustrated Weekly* out of business (*Parsiiana* probably having folded long before). To get a flavour of Vikram's interviewing technique we carry an excerpt from *Five Star* in which neighbour

Sarosh Nayar is grilled as to his reading habits.

Editor: Master Sarosh, I believe you are very fond of reading comics?

Master S.: Yah.

Ed.: What are your favourite comics?

M.S.: I like Jack and Jill and Disneyland.

Ed.: Why do you like Jack and Jill?

M.S.: Because it has got more nicer pictures and more nicer stories. At the back of the comic there are more stories. I like Tiger Tim, Bruin Boys and Gulliver Guinea-pig.

Ed.: Between Tarzan and Phantom whom do you like?

M.S.: Tarzan. But I read Phantom most of the time because it comes in a magazine.

Ed.: Do you read Laurel and Hardy?

M.S.: Yah.

Ed.: Why?

M.S.: Its funny that's why. On one story they go for a swim and a robber comes and takes their clothes away. So they go to a shop which is a Lady's shop because that is the first shop and when they come out they are wearing dresses.

Ed.: What other comics have you read?

M.S.: I've seen Superman on television and I like him because he can go flying up in the air...

Ed.: Allright that's enough.

And for those of you who wish to start the New Year right, how about sending all those pretty greeting cards you received to Ms Jerbanoo B. Deboo. With her band of devoted social workers, Ms Deboo will reincarnate the cards and sell them; the proceeds of the sale will be distributed among the needy. The cards may be deposited at Leach Weborney Washing Co. at Hamam Street in the Fort area or at Ms Deboo's residence in Tata Mills Housing Society, Building No. 3, Flat No. 5. Parel, Bombay 12.

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Delighted

I read with interest your Editor's Column in the last issue of *Parsiana*. What a delight that Mrs Dolly Advani is planning to have the Navjote ceremony of her two children performed and that her husband favours the idea. Her children should come into the Zoroastrian fold through conviction, and after the Navjote they should get guidance and knowledge of the faith and their mother should continue to wear the *sudra* and *kusti*, otherwise there is no sense in just performing the Navjote for the sake of it.

There are certain rituals which can only be performed by priests of great learning but relatives can recite prayers such as *satoom-nokardo* (invocation to the *Fravashis* and the departed souls), *Farvakhshi* (*Farvardin Yast*), *Aafrins*, *Patet Ravani* etc. But how many relatives generally care? Nobody wants to take the trouble. Almost all want hired rituals. In olden days Parsis used to call priests to their homes to perform the rituals and relatives themselves used to make the arrangements, mainly preparing fire, fruits, flowers, water and *divo* etc. needed for the occasion. But those days are gone and the present generation is lazy, under the pretext that there is no time. The *behdhins* have forced the *mobeds* to become caterers as well as priests and then people grumble that our rituals are expensive. Let the *behdhins* do this primary work and see for themselves.

The trustees of the Parsi Pan-chayat, although educated and

LETTERS

well placed, are afraid of any reforms, just because orthodoxy prevails. We should not blame our priests who dare not open their mouths when the trustees themselves are not bold enough to initiate reforms.

FRAMROZE F. MULLAN
Udvada

Window Shopping

What amazes me is that Parsis study Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc. very seriously, but when it comes to our own religion, there is either blind faith or just a blank. And for this state of affairs, we are all to blame.

There are no regular catechism classes amongst us. The priests are only called in to teach the *kusti* prayers to our children at the tender age of seven or so, and, unless parents keep their interest in the religion alive, the children soon forget what little the priests have taught them. What is more, the entire ritual of the *kusti* is dismissed as mumbo-jumbo, and the symbols of our faith, the *sudra* and *kusti*, laid aside to be put on only at the time of marriage or death!

As we have not troubled to know the basic concepts of our religion, we can seldom defend ourselves adequately. It is this indifference to our faith which, in my opinion, is the major factor eroding our identity and making us clutch at every straw that blows in the wind. We become either narrow and bigoted, or drift into what one writer described as "spiritual window shopping."

MS PILOO N. JUNGALWALLA
New Delhi

Young Entrepreneurs

The Parsi Press is full of unproductive controversies. Hardly any lead is given by the Parsi press for the economic upliftment of the community.

Last week, I attended a lecture sponsored by the National Alliance of Young Entrepreneurs by Professor Gould of Lehigh University of U.S.A. In that gathering, I saw a lonely Parsi, Mr. S. H. Commasariat, who is the office bearer of that body.

Next day, I met him at his office. We had a frank talk. He regretted the absence of proper economic links in the community. In the end, he promised to coach our young in certain technical lines, if I would find young, hard-working Parsi apprentices.

I was delighted to read the letters of Dadi E. Mistry of New Delhi and Hector H. Mehta under the title Young Entrepreneurs in your last issue. It is high time interested parties met and chalked out ways and means to help our young entrepreneurs.

DINSHAW B. IRANI

Shyness

Some time back the Young Collegians' Zoroastrian Association (Y.C.Z.A) organised as one of its manifold activities a documentary film-show-cum-discussion on 'Shyness' which was conducted by the Indian Council for Mental Hygiene and was sponsored by the Marriage Education & Counseling Bureau. The discussion ranged from general shyness to the kinds of shyness which our Parsi youth possess.

It was generally agreed that Parsi boys are shyer than Parsi girls. One member felt the reason for this was the lack of opportunities for adolescent boys to mix with girls.

Some women members felt Parsi

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boys have no manners, are crude and unpolished, lack initiative and drive, and can barely converse intelligently with girls. Boys, they claimed, usually join a bank after completing the S.S.C. examination because they consider it to be a 'cushy' job. They are not prepared for hard work. After joining they do little to improve their status by either applying or working for a higher grade in the banks, it was felt.

Some members felt that compared to their counterparts in other communities, Parsi boys are lazy and lack ambition. On the other hand, Parsi girls, they believe, are ambitious and hard-working.

Though partially agreeing with the girls' views, the boys felt that Parsi girls are known to be flighty and pleasure-loving compared with their sisters from other communities. They are less inhibited and coy and thus unfortunately labelled 'easy game' by those who find social contact with young girls from their own communities difficult.

Paul Axelrod of North Carolina University who did his Ph.D. thesis on Parsi demography maintained that the average marriage age for Parsis was around 33 years—a much later age than that of our fellow Indians, and this was partly due to the fact that Parsi boys did not earn well enough to cater to the standards of Parsi girls.

Some of our boys also felt that non-Parsi boys were able to come up in life because of push and pull. In the Parsi community, people occupying high posts seldom give encouragement or help to deserving Parsi boys, they claimed, with the result that Parsi boys get frustrated when their ambitions are not realised and end up as bank clerks.

It was also felt that rich Parsis tend to look down on middle and lower-middle class Parsis. The rich Parsis move in their own social milieu and do not try and mix with people who are not socially on par with them.

But on second thoughts, one wonders if the crux of the matter is not plain lack of contact. Some of the Y.C.Z.A. organisers themselves had helped launch a small

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group known as the 'Ring Club' some years ago. It was meant for those who wished to get married but did not have the opportunity to meet likely partners. It started with around two dozen members. Within two years the club was closed down because as one member put it "no one comes to the Ring Club for we have all got either engaged or married." It was true. From our Y.C.Z.A. members we could cite numerous marriages over the 20 odd years of its existence.

There have been instances when members were asked to bring along their friends to our functions, they replied "But we don't have any Parsi friends. In fact, we never had any Parsi friends until we joined the association." What then are the elders of our community doing to bring together our young and to preserve our community, apart from making suggestions? And what do the parents of our children do except complain that youngsters marry outside the community, that they get no help from those of higher status, and that our community is going to the dogs?

A well-placed executive in the Shipping Corporation relates how when interviewing applicants for jobs, he came across a boy whom he would have liked to engage as he was a Parsi; but at a *viva voce* (oral) test he had been unable to answer any questions with much intelligence. Hoping to make things easier for him, the executive asked, "Can you name me some types of vessels?" There was no reply. To help the applicant along, he said, "Have you ever heard of a 'barge'?" Recognition dawned on the boy's face. "Oh yes" he replied, "It is some sort of Parsi religious ceremony!" Needless to say, he did not get the job.

Who was to blame? Who is responsible for instilling qualities like truthfulness of word and deed, perseverance, cheerfulness in the face of disaster, a desire for knowledge and helpfulness towards our less fortunate brethren? It is in the very homes of each one of us that we are carelessly sowing the seeds of disintegration.

HOMAI N. MODY

The Dwindling Parsis?

It will not surprise anybody who studies statistics that the Zoroastrian population is increasing. Recently, that is last year, sixteen families in Iran came into the Zoroastrian fold and counting four persons per family on an average, sixty-four persons became Zoroastrians. This year thirty-five persons became Zoroastrians. The number will grow in future.

I have received a publication *Information Please* from America (Planned and supervised by Dan Ganpaul Associates, 444 Madison Avenue, New York City 22 N.Y.), wherein the figures of population of all the religions are given continentwise. The figure of Zoroastrians in Asia is given as 1,26,000 which includes 26,000 in Iran. The population in Europe is given as 12,000. The figures of U.S.A. and Canada are not given.

Even the population of Parsis of Akhand Hindustan is increasing. Dr. Hormazdiar Dastur of Udwada has written in the introduction of *Zarathustra*, a comic published by the India Book House Educational Trust: "The Population of Parsis may be estimated at 101,000 in India and about 6,000 in Pakistan." The latest census figures for Parsis in India is 91,600. Add to it the number of Parsis in Pakistan and we will arrive at one lakh. This was also the population of the Zoroastrians before Independence. Hence the figure has remained constant.

PHIROZSHAH SHAWAKSHAH
BHIWANDIWALA

Suburban Drift

In years gone by Parsis were housed all over Bombay in colonies so that they could always be near to their place of work. But when Independence was ushered in the fortunes of the community began to decline. There was a slump in trade and business. Faced by hardships and partial poverty, the working Parsis deserted their abodes for cheap housing in the distant suburbs leaving their old homes and selling their property.

Sir, could these Parsis not be grouped together and brought back

(Continued on page 38 col. 1)

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Police van and jeeps in front of the Panchayat building on Dadabhoy Naoroji Road (Pic. by Farokh Reporter)

High Noon at the Panchayat

On the day Dr. Rustom Jal Vakil died I received a phone call at 10 p.m. His relatives were roaming from agiary to agiary in search of two priests to perform the funeral ceremonies. No one was coming forth because Dr. Vakil wished to be cremated instead of being placed in the Towers of Silence. The priests were afraid of being persecuted by the Trustees in charge of Doongerwadi. His body was lying at his house.

When I arrived there forty-five minutes later, one priest was present, not a professional mobed but an office-going lad. Being a priest myself I sat on the ground and started to recite the Sarosh Yast in a loud tone. . . .

With the enactment of this deed and the telling of it before a packed audience at the K. R. Cama Hall six days thereafter, Shrivastav R. Vakil triggered off a chain of events that climaxed in the fortnightly meeting of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat Trustees being held under heavy police *bandobast* and a threatened *morchha* failing to mate-

rialize. It was the first time in recent history that the trustees had met under such auspices and an angry B. K. Boman-Behram voiced a strong protest at the presence of the police and at Vakil's having called them. In a stormy one-hour meeting he labelled the maverick trustee "a disgrace to the Panchayat," and Vakil in turn charged that Boman-Behram and Ms Nelie Noble had reduced the charitable trust meeting to a political *tamasha*.

By Christmas matters came to such a pass that Vakil offered to resign from the Panchayat trusteeship if Jamshed N. Guzder were elected in his place. Guzder, a prominent entrepreneur and director of several companies, had been proposed and rejected by the Independent Orthodox party for the seat vacated by Nadir Mulla earlier this year. The Independent Orthodox are led by Boman-Behram and Ms Noble, and control the crucial "E" Register block of voters who along with the donors elect the trustees of the Parsi Panchayat.

Boman-Behram favoured Vakil's offer and cleared the matter with the Panchayat Chairwoman Lady Hirabai Jehangir. A two-hour meeting in Boman-Behram's mayoral office followed where Guzder was grilled by members of the Independent Orthodox including Ms Noble, Jer Dhondy and Homi Dhallal. While Guzder was acceptable to most, Ms Noble voiced her reservations. She is expected to consult her spiritual leader, Mystic Minocher Pundole, and his followers before deciding on the matter. In the meantime she has demanded a letter of resignation from Vakil. Vakil has refused to give such a letter to anyone other than Guzder. To ensure that Guzder is elected to the trusteeship after him, Vakil has demanded that at least 170 out of the 189 "E" Register voters sign a statement to that effect. In the meantime the disaffected trustee has refused to sign any cheques on behalf of the Panchayat to show his offer is in earnest. Matters came to a standstill by month's end, however,

as Boman-Behram suffered two heart attacks and was confined to the intensive care unit of the Parsi General Hospital.

The Panchayat drama began in the third week of November when Vakil broke a one year vow of silence following his disclosure on the plight of the *dokhmas* last October and delivered the first of a two part critique on the Panchayat and the community at the K. R. Cama Hall under the auspices of the Youth's Own Union. After delivering a discourse on the religion, and an attack on the "so-called orthodox" members of the community, he pointed out the large material wealth of the community that was lying unexploited because people did not subordinate their egos to the common good. The first talk was held on November 18 and the second was scheduled for November 25.

Dr. Vakil died on the 20th and Vakil sat up at night reciting the prayers. On the morning of the 21st, before the body was removed to the Chandanwadi Electric Crematorium, Vakil sang the *Ahun Vaiti Gatha* along with the priests. In anticipation of the outcry that would be raised, Industrialist Naval Tata appeared with Vakil at the second talk in a token of support for his friend. The meeting took place without any incident. Tata spoke for around 25 minutes on the economic plight



Boman-Behram: "I protest strongly"

of the community, the lack of new entrepreneurs, and suggested the Panchayat should concentrate on economic uplift, leaving religious matters to the priests.

Vakil then resumed the discourse, most of it relating to the controversy surrounding Dr. Vakil's death and the recent Panchayat resolution permitting burial of *varasias*, the bull whose urine is used for religious ceremonies, on the Doongerwadi grounds with full funeral rites, a

privilege denied to Parsis. "I once told Dr. Vakil 'If you had been born a bull your *geh sarnu* ceremony would have been allowed by the Trustees of the Parsi Panchayat and you could have been buried at Doongerwadi'." Vakil further noted "Two *varasias* have been buried at Doongerwadi after full religious ceremonies had been performed... after my protests there has been a resolution that there shall not be a ceremony but that we shall continue to bury these *varasias*... I have presented to the press certain correspondence which I had with my colleagues in connection with this burial, which according to me is not only illegal, in violation of the precepts, in violation of the trust reposed by the various Trusts, but also in violation of the law." The correspondence shows Boman-Behram in favour of the custom as the *varasia* is "not an ordinary bull" while Trustee P. P. Khambata opposed the practice as it could "give a hold in the future to people that burial could be allowed in the Doongerwadi grounds." Boman-Behram considered this argument "far-fetched" but Vakil who has threatened to go to court on the issue notes in his proposed suit "that in the event of the honourable court coming to the conclusion that the lands can be used for burying animals like the *varasia*, the honourable court may make an appropriate declaration that every Parsi professing the Zoroastrian religion has equal rights for using the said lands for burying the dead bodies of



Vakil (at right): A bond severed (Photo: Farokh Reporter)

Parsis." The resolution, which was passed by a vote of three to four with Vakil, Khambata and Erach Nadirshah in opposition and Lady Jehangir, Ms Noble, Boman-Behram and Dr. Aspi Golwalla in favour, will in light of the threatened legal action probably be rescinded.

Vakil, who is the legal advisor to the House of Tatas and is often consulted by the Government of India on legal matters, noted that all the important Panchayat portfolios had been denied him. Instead he had been assigned the portfolios pertaining to the distribution of wool to *kusti* makers, the Gamadia Technical School (which is to be closed down shortly), the Golvad Home and the litigation relating to eviction of tenants and licensees. In disgust, he remained absent from the trustee meeting the following evening.

On the day of the next trustee meeting, December 10th, Vakil said he received phone calls from well-wishers warning him of a proposed morcha and threats of physical assault before the Panchayat building on Dadabhoy Naoroji Road. He informed the police and an inspector visited the Panchayat office to make inquiries and stated that only the trustees would be permitted to enter the building that evening. Upon



Homi Banaji and Naval Tata: A token of support

learning of the planned police *bando-bast*, Boman-Behram reportedly phoned Lady Jehangir, who had been vacationing in Poona for some weeks, to inform her of the events.

On arriving for the meeting, Boman-Behram snapped at a photographer who took his picture, asking

him why he was there and stating "nothing is going to happen. You are wasting your time." With the large posse of police present, the threatened procession never materialized. Ms Noble turned up for the meeting a half hour late. The meeting lasted around an hour. Boman-Behram was the first to leave, telling the newsmen present that he had strongly protested against the presence of the police and noting they were called at Vakil's and not the Panchayat's behest. A defiant Vakil on emerging asserted that henceforth there would be no more morchas against him.

But the show of strength severed the slim bond between him and the other trustees. Aware of a growing sense of isolation—brought home by the fact that none of the senior trustees defended him at the meeting though in private they claimed to be sympathetic to him, and realizing his continued presence on the Panchayat served little purpose other than to exacerbate matters, Vakil made his offer to step down in favour of Guzder. The sporting gesture will now force the Independent Orthodox to choose between giving the Panchayat a fresh lease on life or prolonging an old dispute for the sake of pride.

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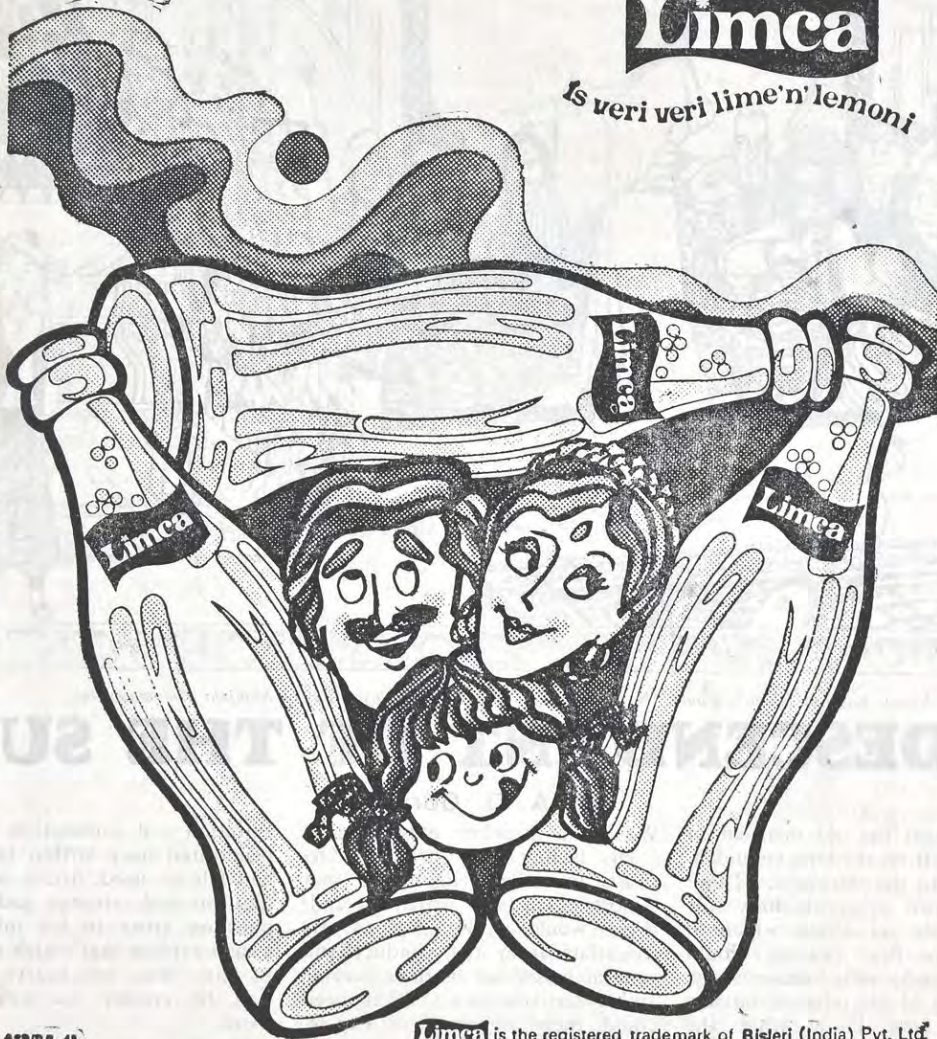
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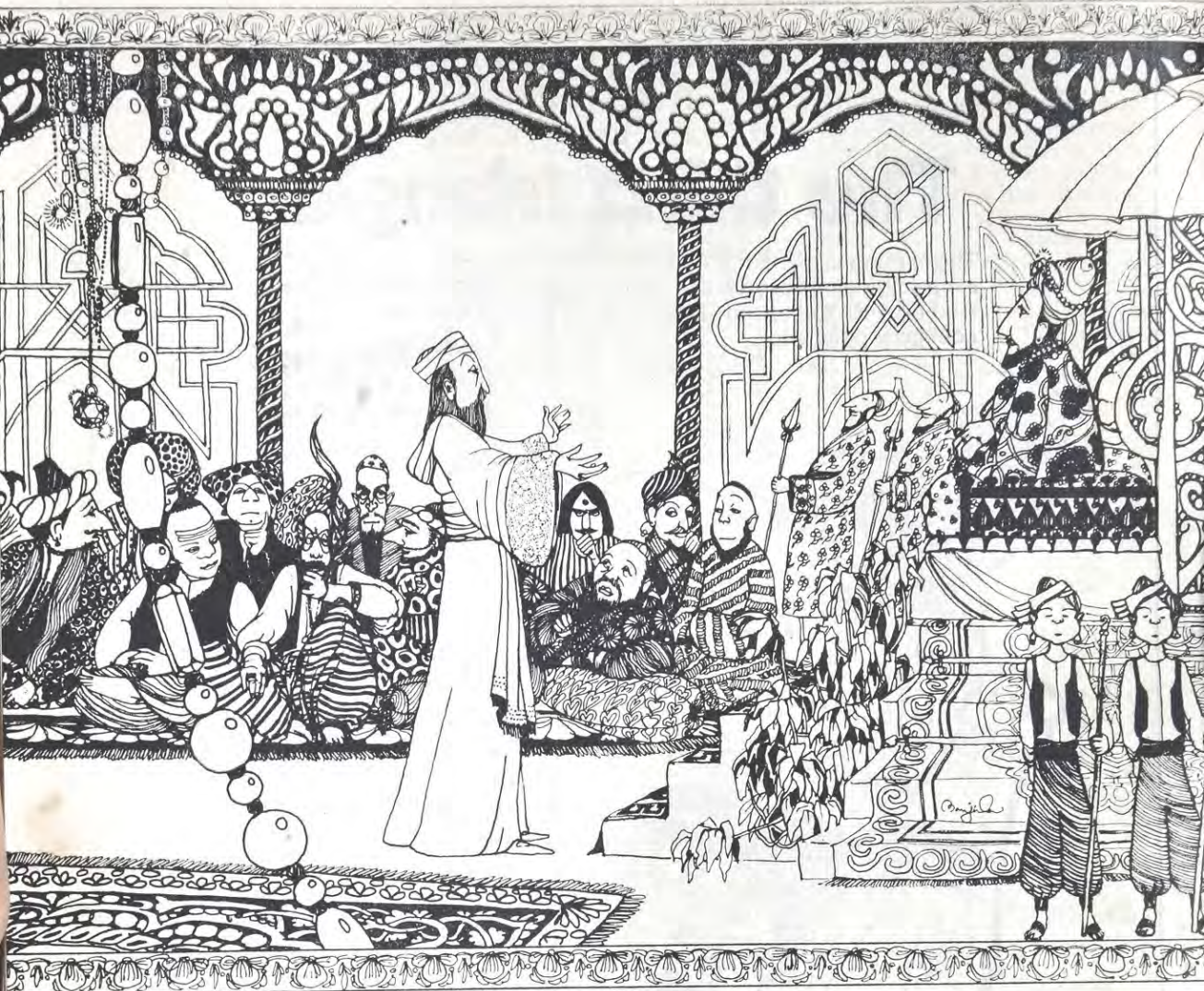
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Meherji Rana at Akbar's Court: 'No belief in any interceders' (Illustration by Manjula Padmanabhan)

A DESCENDANT OF THE SUN

By A. D. Gorwala

Late at night the old man sat in his easychair on the long verandah, looking into the darkness. There was a frown upon his brow for he had been set a task which to him before that evening would have seemed quite unnecessary. The young of his religion, he was told, did not know what the religion was. They knew a great deal about other religions, about Christianity, about Islam, about Hinduism. But about their own religion, they, Zarthostis, children of Zarthosti parents, were at best very vague.

Would he therefore explain it?

His feeling was, the true Zarthosti lives his religion, so that almost by osmosis Zarthosti children would have grasped its essentials from the conduct and general behaviour of their parents and older relatives. What need could there be then of exposition? In any case, he was no scholar of the ancient languages; he could give no guidance on points of interpretation. His Zarthosti faith was very work-a-day. It had been throughout his long life the source both of in-

spiration and consolation. It had penetrated deep within him. He had felt no need, firmly settled in that, to seek strange gods. The question arose in his mind, can a man explain that which is nearer to him than his heart's blood? Can he convey its meaning in words?

He cast around for precedents. Who in the past, he wondered, had been obliged to explain the basic tenets of the faith to an unknowing, perhaps a hostile, audience? His mind came to rest on one name, Dastur Meherji, he

whom the anonymous versifier of the time had characterised thus:

Meherji Rana

Extremely wise

Pearl beyond price

Called by Akbar Badshah

To his hall of discourse

He spoke so well and truly,

So simply and pointedly

None could confuse him,

None could confute him.

Would that the great Dastur, the Dasture Dasturan, were here now, he wished fervently, and with a sigh, relaxed in his chair.

When next he stirred and his eyes opened, instead of the dark night, he saw before him a well-lighted square marble hall of moderate size, along three sides of which were ranged learned divines and theological leaders of the various religions of the world, while along the fourth, on a raised seat covered by a silk cushion, sat the Emperor, with below him on the right and left the statesmen, commanders and artists known commonly as his nine jewels. The discussion following on a speech had just ended for there was a hum of conversation in the air.

Suddenly the Emperor raised his hand and all fell silent. Said Akbar with his characteristic winning smile, "Greatly have we been enlightened about the nature of the religions all of you who come in delegations of three or more represent. Now I would hear from the one who comes by himself, yes, you sir, dressed all in white without a speck of colour in your garments. I have observed you for some days listening most attentively. Now your turn has come to speak."

Rose Meherji in his place, and having made deep obeisance, said, "Protector of the poor, I hear and obey, I come not with a train but by myself for the religion to which I have the high honour and privilege of belonging is now followed only by some thousands, mostly agriculturists. When your command came, summoning me to attend in this distant place, there was much discussion among us, should I come as would have become the representative of a faith, among whose millions of followers but a few hundred years ago, were numbered the rulers of half the world, or of one that the

**"Say not that they
are fire-worshippers,
say rather that they
are worshippers of
the one pure God."**

vicissitudes of time had shrunk to its present low magnitude. The conclusion, freely reached by the whole anjuman, was that an attempt at a pretence was contrary to our principles; that as we were, so should we appear before the greatest monarch of the time. Here then I am, and truly what I have to say is as simple as my appearance.

"We believe in one divine power whom we most often call Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom. In the world, there are both good and evil, and the conflict between them makes itself apparent in almost all human transactions and affairs. The Zarthosti's duty is to strive against the evil. He may succeed or he may not. If the latter, he must try again and again, remembering that the first of our prayers says 'That is the highest virtue which is virtue for the sake of virtue alone.' To be disheartened, to give up, to abandon the fight for the good, we consider a sin, something to repent of and not to repeat. We serve the Good best by serving our fellow human beings, people of our own faith and people of other faiths. We consider cruelty a vice, consideration for others and charity great virtues. Truth-telling, forswearing the lie, is to us an essential element in the fight for Good and against Evil. From which it follows that a Zarthosti's word is sacred, not to be broken, however difficult the new circumstances. What we promise we do. A Zarthosti cannot have recourse to duplicity, double-dealing, cheating, fraud of any nature, deceit. He must be honest, straightforward, frank, prepared to speak out and act against wrong-doing, whoever the doer. Justice and courage we count among the first weapons in the fight against evil. Industry, hard work are to

us good, idleness, intemperance, greed, vices for which payment will have to be made at the final accounting. After death comes judgement, when a man's deeds speak for themselves, and lead him to salvation or otherwise. This then is the essence of my religion, Oh King of Kings, the Religion of the Good, that is one in which the good is the motivating principle, or the Good Religion, as some have termed it.

"I have been brief, considering the pressure on your Majesty's time, and I may in the process of compression have represented the religion as a stern, a joyless faith. Stern it certainly is in that as you do, so shall you be requited. But far is it from being joyless. Gaiety and laughter are part of being good, fighting for the good, and there are no fears inbuilt in it. The Zarthosti faces the world cheerfully, knowing his duty, and knowing if he does it, he need be afraid of nobody and nothing. We worship God, Great King, and fear no man. No spirit, no devil distresses us; we face it boldly if it appears, and soon, unable to trouble us, it departs."

After a few moments' silence the learned Abul Fazl looked at the Emperor and on his nodding, said, "You and your people are the same the deeds of whose ancestors the noble Firdausi recounts in the *Shahnameh*, are you not?" And on Meherji saying, "Yes, Greatness," asked, "Then are you not fire-worshippers? You made no mention of that."

"Your Excellency's excellent memory will recall that Firdausi, the king of poets, dealt with that point himself. His verse runs 'Say not that they are fire-worshippers, say rather that they are worshippers of the one pure God.' However, since this is a charge often urged against us, let me explain. We honour the sun and fire, both light, as the most formidable and beneficent manifestations of Almighty God's bounty. Without them what was life? What would it be without them? In both cases short, dark and brutish. Man came into his own, was able to face the jungle of huge frightening animals and slithering serpents, the forest of his own mental fears and of the

The computer to select my husband?

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many spirits and devils that he thought were lying in wait for him in the dark, when God sent light to his aid. We recognise this most friendly influence. Therefore, it is that we turn to light when we pray to God, we concentrate our minds upon the sun or the flame the better to get rid of all dross from our thoughts while thanking or making submission to Him. It is not that we worship the sun or fire as the creator. They too we understand to be Ahura Mazda's creations, but worthy of a special status because of the power and usefulness he has bestowed upon them. I beg your Majesty's pardon for having taken so long on this simple point."

"I am glad you did, Dastur, you have made it understandable now," said the Emperor.

"I have heard," said Raja Todarmal, "that you neither burn nor bury your dead. You follow the gruesome practice of leaving them exposed in high places to be got rid of by birds and animals of prey. Is this correct and if so, what is your rationale for it? You omitted this in your description of your religion, I noticed."

"Great Minister," said Meherji, "I omitted this because to my way of thinking, the method of disposing of the corpse is no part of my religion. Once the spirit has fled, what is the body, even of the greatest? A piece of steadily deteriorating flesh. Its disposal does not affect the further progress of the spirit that has left it. That will be judged on its deeds while alive, not on how its corpse is dealt with. Whether the flesh is consumed by fire, eaten by worms after burial, or by birds and animals on exposure, or just

rots under the ravages of the elements, makes no real difference. We have followed an old custom of our ancestors in our former land, and that is all. I have heard it argued, for what it is worth, that feeding wild birds and animals with our dead is also a form of the charity so strongly enjoined upon us by our religion, but I make no point of it."

"Truly, a liberal mind," said the musician Tansen. "I like his frankness. Tell me, oh Dastur Meherji Rana—I call you Rana for all that you need to look a perfect descendant of the sun is a curved sword by your side—you have talked about your religion without mentioning prophet or miracles, great penances and high austerities. Surely there is something wrong here. If not, a very unusual religion, yours!"

"Master of music and winner of hearts, know that I did not mention the Prophet in my short resume of the religion, because my emphasis was on what he taught, rather than on him personally. Truth to tell, too, we know very little with certainty about him, beyond the fact that he was a truly great man, that he spent some years in contemplation in the wilderness, that he preached the religion of the good life and turned the people away from bad practices. Consider the position of our ancestors, on the morrow of the shattering of our empire, a few hundred people leaving helter-skelter in a few vessels they found by chance off the coast of Pars, no time for preparations, no time to get even the extant scripture together, no time for anything except to leave if they would be free and not bow their heads to the conqueror. Knowing little, therefore, I said nothing about that revered figure. He lives in the good lives of the people who practise his highly moral faith. As to miracles, I have none to offer you, unless it be that you consider our few continuing here among friends for so many centuries, a miracle in itself. That certainly cannot compare with the vivid miracles we have heard about in the last few days. Their absence in my religion no doubt renders it less picturesque, which I agree must seem to your artistic nature, a

"Ours is a land most fruitful in superstitions; ours are a people full of belief in, or longing for, miracles, the short-cut to all desirable ends, national and personal."

great loss," ended Meherji.

"Shrewdly said, a palpable hit," remarked Akbar. "What I find missing in your description of your religion is dogma. Are not its followers bound to believe this, that or the other? Are only acts, deeds important?"

"It is very much as your gracious Majesty sees it, a small percentage of faith and the rest works, what we call good thoughts, good words, good deeds. There must be belief in the divine power, in Ahura Mazda, and beyond that his service in action. No belief in any interceders is called for, prayer is for one's own mental satisfaction and spiritual comfort, but a person's salvation is not dependent on it. So, too, with the ritual, which accumulates wherever people come together in society; some of it is good and helps identification, some does no harm, some is irksome to the free spirit," said Meherji.

"An admirable religion for the man of reason with an awareness of consequences," said the Persian prince, Akbar's cousin from Shiraz. "Do you accept converts?"

"We have not upto now, sir," said Meherji. "You see we are bound by a promise we made to the ruler of the territory who allowed us to stay and gave us land. We promised we would not take into our faith His people."

"Any other promises?" asked the learned Faizee.

"Yes, Highness," said Meherji,

(Continued on page 39)

"Here there is austere simplicity, decent conduct and its reward, no titillation of the senses, no stimulation of the passions."

When Bomi Gamat and his wife Lalita, returned to India after a career-hopping stint abroad, they didn't know anything about jeans except that they were comfortable. Two years later they are the proud parents of a growing empire of jeans, with centres in Delhi, Indore, and recently, Bombay. And plans are already under way to open more Jean Junctions, as their enterprise is known, in Calcutta and Madras. "We hope to have little Jean Junctions all over India," says Bomi.

The Bombay centre, the first jean shop in the city, is cradled under the Kemp's Corner flyover at the confluence of four major roads. Here, below the thunder of traffic overhead, an air of informality reigns as plump teen-aged customers rifle industriously through the racks of vari-coloured jeans. Drowning out the hum of the air-conditioner and price quotations, is the pervasive throb of music. "We want it to be more than a jean shop," explains Bomi, "a place where people can meet and listen to music and maybe buy some jeans. For instance, someone came over from Simla asking us to supply them with 500 jeans. I had the jeans and I needed the money but they weren't willing to sell them with the music so we turned down the deal. Unlike Van Sobers, we don't want our jeans to be sold in any manner." And in all their centres, young people are left in sole charge. "We're very youth oriented," notes Bomi.

All the jeans are designed by the couple, "from what we dream at night," says Lalita. Despite the great demand for foreign jeans and patterns, Bomi says, "we try to forget trends and do our own thing. When someone comes in and asks, 'Where can I buy American jeans?' we tell them, 'In America'". Some of their designs are completely innovative, explains Bomi, "Like we designed the first really reversible pair of jeans." Indicating a somewhat bulky looking pair, he turned them inside out to demonstrate that one side was printed while the other



JEAN STORY

by Manjula Padmanabhan

From top: Bomi Gamat, Rita Gora, Lalita Gamat and Cyrus Driver
(Pic. by Farokh Reporter).

was plain. Closer analysis revealed that not only were there two sets of pockets and hems, but two rows of buttons on either side as well, ingeniously overlapped so as to make the inversion quite complete. "People like to wear heavy denim," continues Bomi, "because it falls well. But heavy denim is too hot to wear in India so—" picking up a pair lying handy, "we brought in air-conditioning." In neat rows, what look like ornamental flaps turn out to be air-vents. "There are twenty-seven on each pair of jeans to allow the air to circulate." Among other attractions, there is a short vest-like garment in denim onto which can be fitted an assortment of "extras", such as a fancy collar, or puffed sleeves or long sleeves "in case you want to go out at night and it's cold." There are denim belts and jackets and buttons and even denim shoes, for those whose horizons are tinted in shades of faded blue.

"We started with two young tailors and now we have eight," says Bomi, adding that they were all Muslims and that they "make very good artisans, or tailors at least." Nevertheless, he notes wryly, "it took us from February-March until July to make that first pair of jeans. We made a lot of mistakes. The tailors could not understand what we wanted and watching them go wrong we decided we'd do it ourselves." In the beginning, "every button Lalita put down came off." They finalised a basic design, traced the pattern out on paper and proceeded to cut the cloth themselves, though, says Lalita, "we couldn't even cut in a straight line!" Then they got a tailor to stitch it up and that formed the blue-print for their later efforts. "We still supervise them very carefully," says Lalita. "If even one line of double-stitching is crooked we make them open it out and do it again." Production started at the end of July 1973, and in October they were ready to open their shop in Delhi. "It was a room rather than a shop," Bomi maintains, which they were able to get in Connaught

Place, one of Delhi's main shopping centres, through an agency.

Tracing back to the earliest beginnings of Jean Junction, Bomi says, "I lived ten years in London, doing all sorts of things. The idea had been to study in Luton Tech., but I dropped that. I worked as a factory hand, salesman, financial advisor, did some business in stationery and even considered selling property in Majorca." While in Delhi for a short spell, he met Lalita, who had returned from Hong Kong to see her parents. Two years later in 1967 they met again in Delhi and shortly after were married in London. Bomi had no qualms about marrying out of the community. "I'm an internationalist. Whether I was a Hindu or a Muslim or a Catholic, it's all the same to me. The fact that I'm a Parsi is good enough. Being a human being means everything to me." Lalita is Punjabi though her corn-blond hair and grey-green eyes establish her mother's German nationality. Their daughter Shena was born in London, and they stayed on until they "had had enough." It was a toss-up between Canada and India, and they chose India after four days of deliberation. "We weren't sure what we wanted to do—something more exciting than a secretarial job," he remembers. "Lalita had this idea to start a small jean shop and we thought it would come to only 5,000 rupees but in the end it cost a lot more." They could not afford to pay the *pugree* for a proper shop and workplace, nor for advertising. "We used ourselves as models," says Bomi looking round at the large posters of jeans-clad torsos. They got publicity in the press through editorials and features written in several journals, such as *Femina*, *Junior Statesman* and *Debonair* so that they "did not have to pay a penny."

The Jean Junction agency in Bombay belongs to Cyrus Driver, an intercommerce student at Sydenham College. Cyrus recalls that he was first attracted to Jean Junction in Delhi by the percussive sound of music, "I was walk-

ing around buying shoes, when I heard this music so I went into this shop and it was great." He was so enthused by the shop and its owners that when Bomi expressed an interest in opening a shop in Bombay, he "got talking" with his father, Phiroze J. Driver. "He said, 'Jeans!' when I first told him, but then Zake (as Bomi is known) showed him some articles and assured him that it wouldn't just be a few pairs of jeans, but a whole environment. My father became the main financier—without him nothing would have been possible." The shop is situated where there had once been only Manizé, a beauty parlour owned by and named for Cyrus' aunt, Ms Manizé Kharas. "The Municipality wanted to break down the place and as compensation, we got this place." On account of all the legal wrangles with the Government, says Cyrus, "my aunt was fed up. So we agreed to divide up the place and give a certain amount of square feet for Jean Junction and the rest would go for a hair-dressing saloon." Though the partnership deeds were drawn up, it was some time before it could be opened owing to a "lot of legal matters. It was a tense four months from March to July, as Bomi had already set in motion his plans to open the shop, designing the interior and building up stock, but all went well eventually.

About the inevitable export enquiries which the Gamats have received, Bomi notes, "We're not equipped for it yet and besides, we enjoy selling the jeans ourselves." If it seems unusual to find a flourishing business in these times of economic depression, Bomi retorts optimistically, "Everyone says *dal* prices and *ghee* prices are going up, but I've always been able to manage somehow. We don't let the 'recession' hit us." Bomi feels the jeans, selling at within a 50 to 60 rupee range, "are not within everyone's pocket and when someone asks us where they can get cheaper varieties, we

(Continued on page 31, col. 3)

FAR FROM THE M

One of the drawbacks of urban living is the lack of open spaces in which to rear children. Schools are housed in multi-storeyed buildings with asphalt covered driveways serving as playgrounds. And to these congested institutions of learning, parents anxiously queue to enrol their off-spring. It is the price one pays for living in a city and the Parsis, being largely an urban community, pay dearly.

It was partly to remedy these shortcomings that the late mill magnate Pirojsha N. Mehta chose the outskirts of Nasik, a four-hour drive from Bombay, to found Boys' Town Public School. Located in lush countryside which undulates gently all the way to the twisted weird grandeur of the ghats on the horizon is the 21 acre school which houses over 300 students. Started primarily for Parsis of limited economic means, the 30 year-old school is today among the leading institutions of its kind, notes Keki P. Mehta, the managing trustee of Boys' Town. Aside from the standard pre-primary to S.S.C. academic subjects, the school offers courses in radio technology, woodwork and typewriting and runs a model farm where the boys grow their own vegetables. Religious instruction in the various faiths also is given.

Parsiana Associate Editor Pervin Mahoney visited Boys' Town and filed the following report: A busy air of perennial improvement

seems to hover everywhere. The dining hall and kitchens have recently been rebuilt and modernized; in each dormitory sparkling white tiled bathrooms with rows of showers were being installed. Though slightly Spartan, the dormitories were spacious and airy, furnished with double-decker bunks, mosquito nets and colourful bedspreads.

Each dormitory contains a cross-section of boys of all ages, with a resident house-master who has his own living quarters. The master in charge of Wadia House, Mr. Patankar noted he spent half an hour each day "chatting with the boys and getting to know their problems. That way I know if they are feeling upset about something. For instance, every June we have to deal with the problem of homesickness with new boys. If we don't pay any attention to it they might try and run away. But we forestall that by our involvement and companionship.

"We accept all boys, even 'problem children' who might have come from broken homes or boys with learning problems. Apart from building up a good relationship between teachers and pupils, the older boys look after the younger ones, play with them and guide them."

At 7.30 the dinner bell sounded through the dusk, galvanizing into hungry action the group of boys who were lounging on the lawns

separating the cluster of bungalows which make up Boys' Town. Principal Bejon Desai was showing us to our rooms in the school's modern guesthouse when there was a knock on the door and a servant bore in a *thali* of food. "Taste it," Desai urged and as we nodded appreciation at every spoonful, he explained he tasted the boys food every day "to see that it's well cooked."

The same detailed attention to the boys' well-being was evident when we went round the dormitories later that night. At the primary-school dormitory we witnessed 50 deceptively angelic-looking five to nine year-olds of varying heights, breadths and depths of sleepiness trooping in a circle round their house teachers. Looking like cherubs who had outgrown their pyjamas, each chanted "Good night auntie, sweet dreams auntie, God bless you auntie" energetically, affectionately or mechanically; then they kissed the house teachers, trooped over to include us for good measure, and climbed into their bunks.

After Lights Out we spoke to the matron in charge, Ms Dhabar, a round jolly woman who looks like everybody's aunt. Systematically demolishing a huge pile of mending, she explained how the problems she encountered were quite different from those of the other house teachers who dealt with the older boys: "I always



MADDING CROWD

check around midnight and around 5 a.m. that everyone is sleeping properly. But there was one boy who was always falling out of bed. At midnight everything would be in order, but at 5 a.m. I would sometimes find an empty bed. *Haath-pug dhooji aawe.* Then I would find him fast asleep on the floor."

In a large hall decorated with paintings of different prophets and symbols of different religions—'The Aryan Master,' 'The Nazarene' and 'The Bodhisattva' were painted alongside a fire, a cross, a lotus, a crescent and a star of David—short prayers from different religions are chanted. We heard some Zoroastrian prayers (especially written in the Devanagari script so that everyone could read them out), a passage from the Koran, a short English prayer ('I Believe') and a sensitively sung bhajan. After the prayers, one of the boys reads out a five-minute paper written on any subject of his choice.

The morning assembly is conducted by the boys, five of whom are elected as office bearers every year. Candidates read out manifestoes stating their achievements and expectations; then a proper voting session is held, complete with ballot papers and ink marks stamped on the voters' hands after they have cast their vote. But in spite of these precautions, six extra ballot papers were cast this year—

obviously real politicians start young.

A sugar-coated lesson in practical responsibility is provided by a brightly painted pagoda-like structure in the center of the grounds: the tuck shop. Previously run by an outsider, the shop is now managed by the boys themselves. The school loans the tuck shop money with which to buy sweets and snacks; when the food is sold, any profit is ploughed back into the school's trust fund which subsidizes the low income students. Other amenities are a post office—with its own franking machine—and a bank. After their pocket money is deposited in the bank at the beginning of every term, the boys can write out their own cheques to withdraw money. "I want all the boys to know about all subjects," explained Principal Desai, "but there is just no time. The older boys are now asking me, 'When shall we find time to bathe?'"

But despite all the amenities the school offers, not enough Parsis attend Boys' Town. Out of the 310 boarders, around 100 are from the community, only eight of whom pay the full fees of Rs. 230 per month; 64 Parsi boarders pay less than Rs. 100 per month.

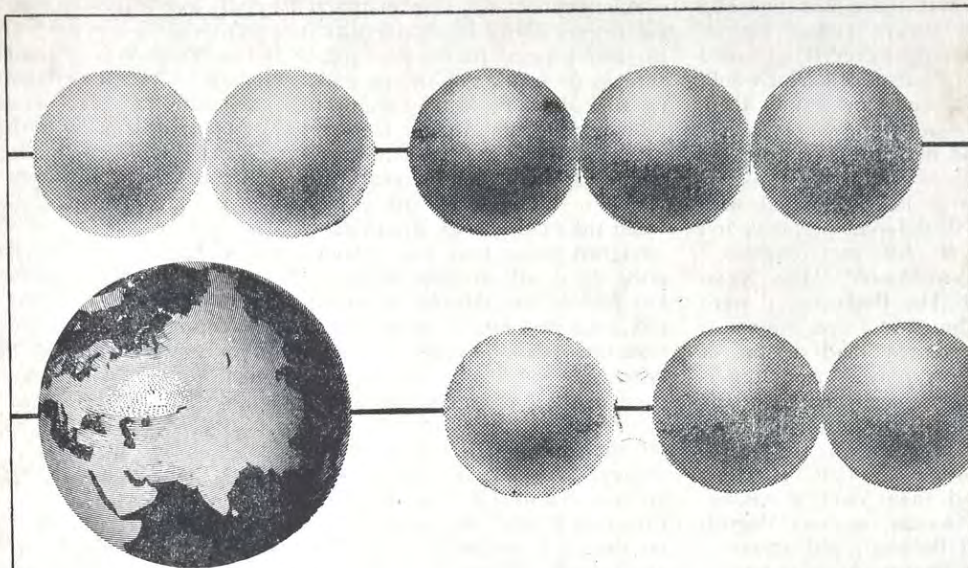
"Perhaps poor Parsis think they will have to shell out 80 to a 100 rupees per month, whereas if the boy lives at home they think it will work out cheaper. Many poor Parsis are enamoured of prestige

schools or convent schools, whereas ours is equally good. Academically our result at the S.S.C. this year was 93 per cent with 12 first classes and one distinction. Recently one of our ex-students got the Vir Chakra, Lt. Purvez Jamasji, and another received the Mahavir Chakra, Lt. Commander Bahadur Kavina. Any other school would have tom-tommed these facts to the public... but we don't want more boys as such; we have a good number already. However, we are a Parsi endowment, and we would welcome more Parsi boys. And not only do we have fewer Parsi pupils than we would like, but we have hardly any Parsi teachers. Recently we advertised for the post of assistant principal. Only one Parsi applied and he was on the verge of retirement," noted Mehta and Desai.

As we walked through the grounds talking of how the school could attract more Parsi students, Desai took us past the school's model farm, to his cacti collection, and showed us a unique plant whose leaf, after it drops off puts forth a new bud. "This is where I bring my boys," he smiled. On the way back we passed a suggestion box. I asked whether any serious suggestion has been received but the most shattering criticism so far had been "There was too much salt in today's *dal*." It showed a certain satisfaction with life in Boys' Town.

Photos by: Sean Mahoney





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The Wheel Turns Full Circle

In the age of aeronautics, travelling mainly entails obtaining a visa and fastening a seat belt. But it wasn't always that way. In 1923, five Parsis set out to see the world by bike. Pervin Mahoney tells of what it meant being a Zoroastrian abroad 40 years ago.



The police stop us—preparing for the desert journey—onions in hats—617 miles of sandy stretch—the tramp through the desert—135°—tube joints melt at 142°—the scourge of the desert—the whirlwind—we bade one another goodbye—buried in sand—without food and water—saved by Bedouins—cigarettes work wonders—we reach Rakka—again without food and water—saved by Legion *Etrangers*—Aleppo—Damascus—the parting of ways

It sounds like the synopsis of a story written by an inebriated Boy Scout, but it—and much more—all happened to five Parsi youths who decided to bicycle round the world. Our heroes were Jal P. Bapasola, Rustom B. Bhumgara, Adi G. Hakim, Keki D. Pochkhanawalla and Gustad D. Hathiram. Starting in 1923 their journey covered 44,000 miles, lasted four years and five months, and is recaptured in a delightful book *With Cyclists Round the World*. Part travelogue, part memoir, it recounts in detail their intricate preparations and bring to life the countries they travelled through.

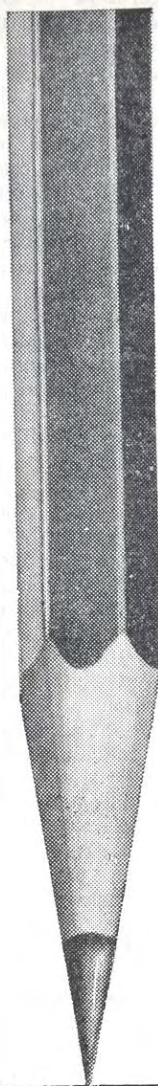
It evokes in the reader the sense of the sheer art of travel at a time when you travelled not because you were well-off and bored, but because you were adventurous and had plenty of stamina. And sometimes it recounts incidents which top the tallest story one could dream up.

The travellers alternated between being fêted with feasts and starving in the desert. In some towns they were guests of governors and received banquets and citations galore—and once “the governor so much appreciated our enterprise that he accompanied us on horse-back for 19 miles.”

Among the celebrities they met were Archduke Prince Joseph of Hungary, the Shah of Iran (while he was still Minister of War), Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India, and of course, scores of “prominent citizens.” At the same time they had to contend with a whole list of troubles: illnesses (at the outset all the labels had fallen off their medicine bottles), eye-disease, lice, punctures, broken axles, Bedouin robbers, whirlwinds and sandstorms (every few minutes they had to unearth themselves and their bicycles from the sand in order not to be buried alive). Different countries reacted differently to the quintet. In Italy they were imprisoned as German spies, to be let off only when they produced Mussolini's autograph from out their pockets. In the Alexandrian YMCA they were told there was nothing special about them: the whole place was infested with globe-trotters. And in Japan they stayed with a Mr. Nakamura who had bicycled round the world in 1901. As for China, they found it positively “vibrating with an irresistible and indestructible idea for national self-consciousness”; idols in temples were being replaced by benches for school-boys. But they also found that the regulations in Indo-China forbade shelter being offered to foreigners.

Initially fund-raising proved troublesome, but ultimately the cyclists were successful in finding generous patrons, although they had to earn much of their funds en route. Freney Pochkhanawalla, the daughter of one of the travellers, recalled some of the ways in which her father and his companions had to earn their keep. “They gave lectures, sold photographs of themselves, received donations when they toured foreign factories, and gave performances of physical feats such as bar-bending, fencing, boxing and judo” At one such performance in Shiraz “one of us heaved a stone on his chest and had it broken with big hammers. Rustom Bhamgara proved to the audience the strength of his powerful jaws by dragging an Overland car, with five passengers in it, with a rope held with his teeth. The Shirazis quite held their breath when he

(Continued on page 37, col. 2)



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OF COMMERCE & TRUSTS

Trusts bestow a mixed blessing on the institutions they create. While they help to provide the capital, the trustees often lack the expertise to manage the institutions. Thus while a few such bodies flourish, most flounder. The Sir J. J. College of Commerce is among the small number that has thrived. But whether it will continue to do so will depend largely on the support it receives from other Parsi trusts. Whether that help is forthcoming or not will determine to a large extent how responsive the archaic institution of the Trust is to the multiple and complex demands of the community today.

"Destiny appears to be frowning on the college," says Homi D. Mehta, honorary director of the Sir J. J. College of Commerce. "A stage is coming when it will become impossible to continue in this old building. Already there is so much pressure on it."

The 21 year-old college, among the three leading institutions of its kind in Bombay, is at present housed in the aged four-storied Dhun Building on Nanabhoy Lane in the city's bustling business centre. The brainchild of the Parsi Panchayat, the College offers a wide array of courses in the secretarial, commercial and business management fields. But its mushrooming activities are hindered by the limitations of space and the huge expenses incurred in maintenance and repairs. "There are problems with sanitation, water... still we are pulling on," says Mehta. "Every year I mention in the annual report that if nothing is done, it will mean an end to all our activities."

"We have requested Parsi trusts to give us some other place in the Fort area. There are so many institutions in the neighbourhood where utilization is not very high." An attempt to convert the Parsi Lying-in Hospital on Bastion Road "fizzled out," says Mehta, even though the maternity institution is "running at a deficit." The late Pestonji Hansotia, a trustee of the Panchayat and the hospital, said there was a lot of underutilization

and the late Maneck Mistry, another trustee, wanted to amalgamate the Lying-in-Hospital with some ward in the B. D. Petit Parsi General Hospital, recalls Mehta. "But the other trustees said 'we can't consider the proposal. The hospital must remain.'"

"There are several *agiaries* in the Fort area which are rarely frequented. If their fire could be merged with that of some other fire temple, we could construct a building on the land. There are so many things the community could do if people would come forward—but nothing is happening. Each trust wants to have its own independence and autonomy."

The Sir J. J. College was started in 1953 in the Sir J. J. Parsi Benevolent Institution building, out of the unutilized funds of the Sir J. J. Madressa Trust. The Trustees of the Parsee Panchayat went to court to divert the money for commercial education, says Mehta. "Twelve thousand rupees a year were sanctioned. The institution was started in a small way as a part time morning and evening college for typewriting, shorthand and some commercial subjects." In 1960, when Maneck Mistry was given the portfolio for the College, Dhun Building was donated to the Parsi Panchayat. The first floor was vacant and the typewriting and shorthand classes were shifted there. Courses in Banking and Government Commercial Diplomas and for Company Secretaries were started. In 1964 the college shifted its morning classes to the Bengalee Girls' High School. Gradually the tenants who occupied Dhun Building were moved to alternative places and three-fourths of the building was used by the College. In 1966 the first Personal Secretaries Course was started and The Central Bank of India also sent their clerks to the college for training to qualify for the Associate Examination of the Indian Institute of Bankers. Subsequently the College increased its range of courses. The College is also now recognised by the Indian Merchants' Chamber for their Diploma Course in Business Management,



Mehta: Nothing is happening.

and has an active placement bureau, notes Mehta.

Though the College is cosmopolitan, concessions are given to eligible Parsis, says Mehta. But the number of Parsis is declining in nearly all the courses except the secretarial, where 60 per cent are from the community. Even those Parsis employed in banks are not eager to improve their positions by taking courses "despite all our efforts to encourage them to do so," says Mehta.

In the past, the College was subsidized by the Panchayat. But for the last three to four years, the College has been self-supporting with a surplus accumulating. "We felt we should not have the stigma of being a charitable institution. We should run like any other corporation. We are not dependent on any other sources."

The Parsi Panchayat, however, still has a say in matters, as two of its Trustees are on the College's governing board. Attempts to make the College an autonomous unit are under way. As Mr. B. K. Boman-Behram noted on the Institution's College Day function, in February last year, the child has grown up and now wants to stand on its own two feet. And Prof. F. E. Marchant, a member of the College's governing body, noted on the same occasion that if the Panchayat did not grant the College the autonomy it sought, he would start a foundation, to be named after himself, to accomplish that goal.

Are Parsis Rich?

Interviews by Feroza Paymaster

There are many yardsticks for measuring a community's wealth but the most common measure is its economic riches. By this standard the Parsis have figured prominently. It is the community of the Tatas, Petits, Jeejeebhoyas, Wadias and Godrejs. But over the years as the number of Parsis has dwindled so has their material wealth. The growing dependence on doles, the increasing beggar population—where once there were none, the high rate of suicide, all serve as indicators to a moral, physical and economic deterioration. While to some this is a cause of alarm, there are others who view these aberrations as marginal, a surface ailment common to all communities.

There is no doubt the community has substantial assets. The value of the real estate in its hands could, if properly manipulated, generate enough income to house, clothe and feed every needy Parsi. That this wealth lies fallow indicates a human failing. And as in the final analysis, the riches of any community are determined by the merits of the individuals who comprise it, the Parsis appear to be facing a recession. (Pics. by Farokh Reporter.)



Mehru Edal-Behram, 58, Housewife

"Parsis as a community are no longer rich. In British times, Parsis were the number one community. Now, the English have lost their position as a world power, and we have lost ours as a community. During those times, Parsis had initiative, integrity, grit and go. They were more educated, and enterprising—went out of Bombay and did things. Today, they live on past glory, on their grandfathers' money. Parsi youths want too much entertainment, and an easy life. They want soft jobs. They don't want to work eight hours in a factory. They don't even want professional or administrative posts, only white collar jobs," says Ms Edal-Behram.

She feels they are more interested in visiting cinema houses and restaurants and going to jam sessions than working. "As a result of this, there is no productivity, and the money in the community is being frittered away—there is more expenditure and less productivity.

"Business too is going out of Parsi hands. Large non-Parsi houses are buying them over. Parsis have lost their business sense." Even when Parsis invest in shares, she notes, as most of them do, "they don't change them with the fluctuations in the market. They are just not in touch with the share market."



Kersie Waghmar, 32, Secretary and Controller of Accounts, Imprint

"Yes and no. Yes, because those who are rich are becoming richer. No, because those who are poor live on salaried incomes like their fathers did and have thereby remained at the same level. The money of the rich is concentrated in a few families and is not distributed because they won't marry below their economic station.

"Basically, the work ethic is missing in the present generation. In the past it was not so. There was also less competition. Two annas' labour gave a return of four annas. Today it is less than four annas.

"There is also a lot of pettiness. If a person does well, someone else will try and pull him down.

If a person wants to study or do anything, many people will consider him a snob. Children are forced by parents to go to movies. Sitting at home at 6.30 p.m. is considered a crime even if you can't afford to go out.

"Parsis invest in shares and securities in well-known companies like Tata's. Even if the return is less they don't invest elsewhere. Many Parsis were swindled in the Dena Banking Corporation fraud where a thirty per cent return was promised. With laws restricting dividends, I feel fixed deposits are best. If you want to invest in business you must be prepared to bear a loss of capital. You must have excess capital, which I don't have."

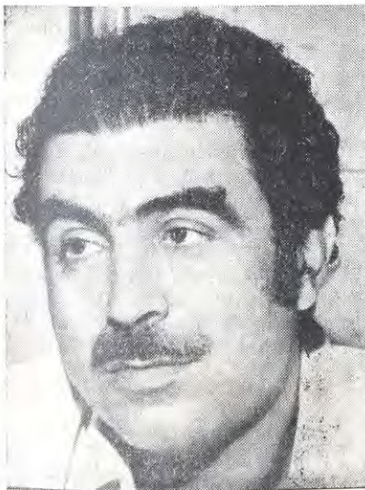


Roshan Khambatta, 26, Secretary, Consulate-General of Italy

"Compared to other communities, Parsis are better off. However, I don't think they are as well off as 30-40 years ago, when we heard names like Sir Pherozshah Mehta and Dadabhoi Naoroji. The present generation does not have the initiative or the urge to do things for themselves, or help others. Our forefathers did a lot for the community and for others, like Jamshedji Tata at Jamshedpur.

"There are educated paupers in our community, people who could come up, but don't because of apathy or laziness. Many families

are living on the interest received on their capital, be it shares or fixed deposits, instead of investing in business. As a result, the wealth will dwindle after some time." However, Roshan feels that on the whole, Parsis are more interested in business than in service. "When I was in college, most Parsi boys were looking after their fathers' business, not studying. Boys whose fathers don't have money, can't afford to go into business, and sheer necessity forces them into white collar jobs." Roshan herself would be interested in investing in a boutique.



Rustom Kushesh, 40, Partner, National Restaurant

"They *were* rich, now they are not. Whatever money there is, is the balance kept from the older generation. Previously Parsis were hard-working and took an interest in business but now they are after pleasure. They don't want to shoulder any responsibilities. They are only interested in having holidays and going to movies. They mainly invest in shares and fixed deposits. Their attitude is '*taiyar aavech to taiyar khaiye*, why should we labour?' Iranis on the other hand invest in business. But they too have changed of late.

However, they are still hard-working." Kushesh would invest his money in whatever business he could control. "If you ask me now, I would say a restaurant or a wine shop.

"Parsis are not getting as many opportunities as before. Previously all the big posts were held by Parsis, but now the sons of the soil have come and the Parsis have been displaced. As a result, some are very poor, and today one finds beggars in the community when previously there were none."



Adar Cama, 66, Secretary, K. R. Cama Oriental Institute

"The community is decently rich. However, our income is gradually getting less. There are not so many in business or industry as before. This could be due to the lack of finance and the desire to work hard. As a result of this, more and more are joining the ranks of the employed." The remedy for this, Cama feels, is for Parsis to leave India and start businesses "like Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy did in China. Here we don't stand a chance with the others, because we are very small in number. We can't do black marketing, we don't specialize in that. If we did, we would get caught in a trap. No Parsi smuggler has been caught, so it appears we are not in that field."

Cama feels close to 80 per cent of Parsis are rich, 10 per cent are middle class and 10 per cent are poor. "The money is well distributed. There are housing colonies for the poor, hospitals, schools and charities which give scholarships. Further distribution would be possible if affluent Parsis started industries and employed fellow Parsis," he adds.

"Parsis invest mainly in shares. They have been cheated of their money in certain cases and millions have been lost, but I wouldn't say it happens often." Cama says he would invest in fixed deposits. He does not want to start a business, "not now after 40 years of service."



Roshan Mistry, 42, Housewife

"Parsis are getting poorer. They can't afford anything these days and they don't seem to have anything saved. Most of them are selling their businesses, because their sons do not have the courage to go in for it. They feel there is too much work and headache involved and would rather sell the business, get the lump sum and invest it in banks and fixed deposits." This money, Ms Mistry feels "only lasts for one generation, and consequently there is less money in the community."

"My cosmopolitan friends say Parsis are rich. Certain individuals are. But the money is concen-

trated among a few, and it could be distributed among the community if Parsis went into business. Opening co-operative stores at baugs and Parsi gyms and clubs would also help," she adds. "Parsi youth should be encouraged to study. They should be provided with accommodation, where they can live and study. Only then will they have better prospects."

Coming from an orthodox family, Ms Mistry feels she would not have been allowed to start a business herself, but if she had children, she and her husband would have invested in one.



Homi Shroff, 24, Merchant

"In what way, monetarily or culturally? Monetarily, a few are rich, the majority are middle class, some are poor. There are too many beggars, though." Parsis were richer before, says Homi. "Their economic status has gone down because there is much more competition today. Parsis are not working hard and keeping up with the times."

"Other communities are coming up, and Parsis are being pushed back," he notes. "There is a lack of great Parsis who could inspire the community and spur them on."

There should be some guiding force. Moreover, the whole nation is passing through an economic crisis, so naturally Parsis would feel the pinch. The only thing one can do under the circumstances is work and pray for the best." Parsis go into business as much as service, according to Homi. "A number of them used to invest in shares and fixed deposits, I don't know if they still do." Where he would invest would depend on the economic situation at the time, but he thinks business would be the best choice.

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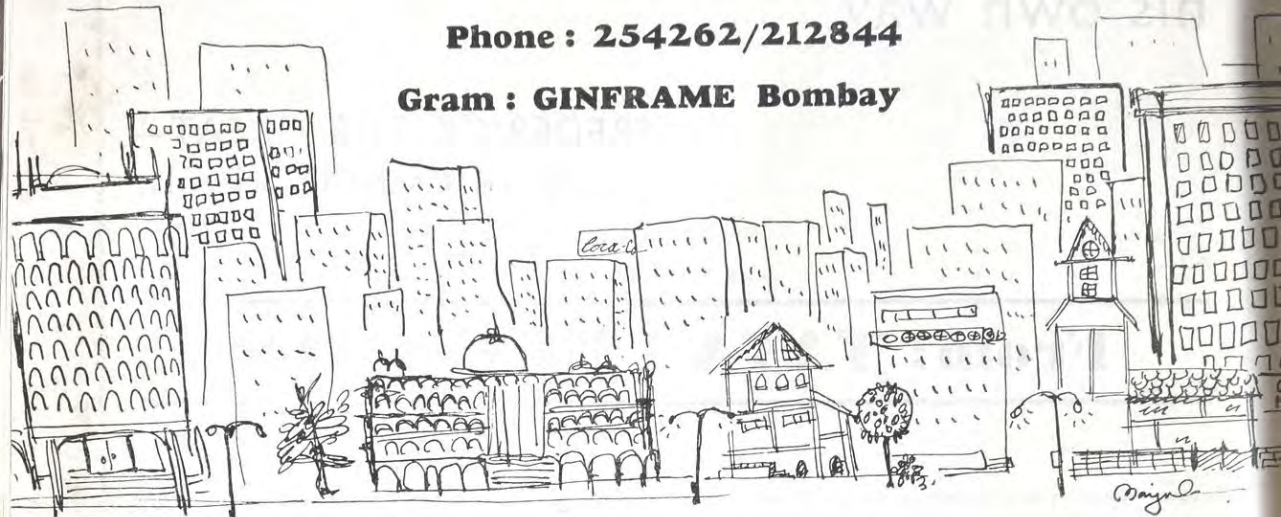
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AND AT ALL LEADING STORES

"Hello Inspector" produced by Burjor Patel and directed by Arvind Thakkar is the kind of play which makes a critic's presence entirely superfluous. For, even after a run of several weeks, it was obviously so popular that I would have made more money in selling my tickets in the "black" than in putting my comments down in black and white. Reviewing it in his breezy style, Busybee comes to the unhesitating conclusion that, "Aban Patel must have the best pair of legs on the stage." Now while this may be saying a great deal about Ms Patel's legs, it does not say much about the play's action, for if a critic's attention is wandering in this irrelevant but no doubt delightful manner, it would appear that the action is not providing the sort of stimulation it should.

More specifically "Hello Inspector" belongs to the whodunit genre of drama and to the extent that it managed to keep the audience guessing till the end, it was most successful. It kept to the classic Hitchcock formula, of fast action leading along carefully laid false trails, ending with an unexpected twist at the climax. In fact the story "adapted from an English original" by Tarak Mehta appeared to have elements from various Hollywood thrillers spiked with a dash of Agatha Christie. There was the neurotic wife (Ruby Patel) who feels that someone is deliberately trying to drive her out of her wits (*Spellbound?* *Dial M for Murder?* *Vertigo?*) Her husband (Noshir Ratnagar) appears to be the long-suffering sort, but with Aban Patel hovering in the background in the role of a not too sympathetic nurse-friend, he gradually begins to look, "definitely suspicious". Various characters are thrown in to provide diversions and allow the other regular members of the cast to do their bit. Among these is Inspector Grant (Burjor Patel), who in the Hitchcock tradition, plays only a

bit role. It is not, however, without importance because it is on him that the murderer is counting for the success of the murder. To reveal anything further would be to destroy the very meaning of a "whodunit" but this is a whodunit with a difference—it shows that it is perfectly feasible to commit a murder and get away with it. One only needs to keep one's wits about.

The production is slick and fast-moving with a set designed to impress, and special effects such as spot lighting to show the Inspector in his office room talking to the terrified wife on the stage, and projected film sequences, which are skillfully employed. There is of course the temptation to over-use these tricks and in the case of a flashback where the heroine relives her past, it becomes unnecessarily long and tiresome. There is also a scene in this film which is not only vulgar but completely implausible, which shows a couple in a car with the man's hand placed all too suggestively under the woman's skirt. The incongruity is in that both of them are supposed to have been involved in a fatal accident, whose impact one can be certain would have made it impossible for the man's hand to remain where it was. These kind of lurid touches as well as the *filmi* clothes worn by the ladies, in particular Ms Ruby Patel, suggest that Hollywood was not the only influence and that it would be easier to trace the "popular" success of the play to its subtle imitation of the standard Hindi film.

Could this also be the reason, one wonders, why the audience, instead of applauding the actors after what must have been for them a long and demanding performance, shuffled out in silence? Were they deluded into thinking that they had witnessed an extension of the film on the stage and thus were not required to make a response? And finally does the fact that they not only did so, but enjoyed



the sensation, make these questions irrelevant? The success of "Hello Inspector" would certainly make it appear so.

GEETA DOCTOR

Jeans (Continued from page 19)

re-direct them. But nearly always they come back because they say, "There's not that much difference anyway." He finds that in Bombay people seem prepared to spend more and buy more of the "fine" materials. "The velveteen jeans for instance, are almost sold out here, but in Delhi they took much longer to move." Looking to the future Bomi visualizes "sixteen Jean Junctions in three years," after which, he says cryptically, "I might diversify."

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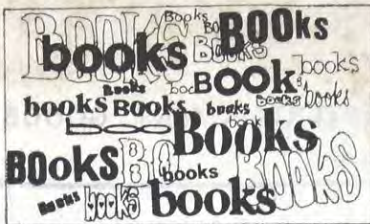
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A Mystic Fog

The booklet on *Zoroastrian Traditions, Customs, and Ceremonials** by H. S. Spencer and Dastur K. S. Dabu comes as yet another reminder that it is easier for Faith to go about moving mountains than for it to produce a good book. The only consolation is, that unlike H. S. Spencer's other productions, as for example, *The Aryan Ecliptic Cycle* where the introduction alone is 100 pages long, the material here is greatly condensed. It is condensed to the point of being fragmentary and one cannot help but wonder for whom the book has been written. It deals with the main points in a manner that is so episodic that unless the layman were to refer to the previous books of H. S. Spencer he would be completely at sea, while a learned man would find that he would simply be wasting his time with such superficialities as "Why should dogs not be allowed near the dead?" and other such problems which are also dealt with in the booklet.

The unfortunate thing is that there is obviously a great need for a book on the subject, since most Zoroastrians admit to a sense of inadequacy about their religion, but unless it is presented in a coherent manner it is doubtful whether it will be of any use to anyone. Spencer makes it a point to extol the virtues of a mystic approach to studying metaphysical truths, over what he refers to as the "dry and obscure light of philosophical punditry". Now, while we would not deny that there are apparently some who can apprehend certain truths through direct spiritual communion, and while this may be the best, and perhaps only,

form of real understanding, the moment one sits down to write a book, the medium demands that one does so in the dry, but clear light of rational inquiry, rather than in the misty fogs of spiritual ambiguities. Either one admits that certain philosophical questions cannot be explained on paper, or one finds a way of doing so; to merely say that because the matter is incomprehensible, it should only be dealt with in an incomprehensible manner, is to invite criticism.

Spencer has written a number of previous books on certain controversial subjects, as *The Aryan Ecliptic Cycle* and *Sequel to the Mysteries of God in the Universe*. The booklet under review is intended to be a condensed version of the latter book. To begin with, one must commend certain aspects of Spencer's intellectual ardour and wide-ranging scholarship. In *The Aryan Ecliptic Cycle* he has marshalled a formidable amount of evidence to support his theory, and provides examples from a varied number of ancient civilizations and religions to illustrate what he has to say. His theory is also interesting, for, by exploring with the help of geographical, astronomical and textual evidence, the origins of the Aryan race, he establishes that the early Indo-Iranians must have once had their abode in the Arctic regions. By his manipulation of complex astronomical data to decipher various references found in the Vedic and Iranian scriptures, he manages to project a fairly consistent picture of the Aryans in their first home in the Arctic, during the time that the early heroes of the *Shahnama*, Keyumars, Hushang, Tehmurasp, and Jamshid were in command. These periods also coincide, according to Spencer, to the Paleolithic, Neolithic and Metal ages in the evolution of the Aryans, and since the various Manus that we come across

*Extracted from *Sequel to the Mysteries of God in the Universe* published by H. P. Vaswani, A/6 Sadhu Vaswani Kunj, 3 Sadhu Vaswani Path, Poona 1. (Also on sale at Union Press, Homji Street, Fort, Bombay 1).

in Hinduism were responsible for the same accomplishments, he concludes that the Manus should be taken to correspond to the personages mentioned by their individual names in the *Shahnama*.

After the reign of Jamshid, also known as Yima (Yama in Hindu mythology) who corresponds, according to Spencer, to the fifth Manu, there followed a period of floods and other natural disasters which are constantly referred to in most mythologies in the form of the flood legends, the most recent version being the well-known story of Noah and his Ark. The Aryans began to move southwards, and eventually with the onset of another Ice Age, they found that their retreat to their original homes was permanently sealed off. This was also the time that the Aryans separated into various branches, which gradually adapted themselves so well to their particular environments, that soon they came to be regarded as separate groups, their common heritage almost lost in the process of adaptation. Spencer re-

veals that these identification marks are not so much lost as hidden, and by his painstaking scrutiny of various ancient civilizations which were either influenced or amalgamated by the Aryans, he traces the similarities which he feels cannot be ascribed to mere coincidence.

If Spencer had only advanced these theories as a probable reconstruction of what might have happened, we would have no quarrel with him; unfortunately, scholastic detachment is not his strong point. He so earnestly believes in what he has to say, that what can at best be regarded as a conjecture, he wishes us to accept as an irrefutable fact, on the basis of which he builds further conjectures which again he would like to accept as "clear" proofs. "Clear" is a particularly favourite adjective of Spencer's. He explains for example that the Sage Narayana found in the *Mahabharata* is really another name for the Prophet Zarathustra because the meaning of Narayana in Sanskrit translates to "the Man of the Path". As the Prophet

Zarathustra was the first Prophet of the Aryan race, he was naturally the man who showed them the path, and so according to Spencer this ought to be clear proof that when the *Mahabharata* speaks of Narayana, it is actually referring to Zarathustra.

We cannot all be so credulous unfortunately, for there are others who have propounded even more astounding stories with an equal amount of scholarship and zest, as for example Erich Von Daniken, who in his book *Chariots of the Gods?*, is firmly convinced that the Gods described in all mythologies must really represent extra-terrestrial beings who visited the earth, at one time, from other planets. He establishes a number of "clear" proofs from the drawings of primitive men, who, not being able to understand the occurrences, translated them into various symbols, which man is only now in a position to decipher with his increasing knowledge of inter-planetary travel. The halo which appears around the heads of most Gods, for example, could very easily be a space helmet. By

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the same analogy the symbol of Ahura Mazda with its outstretched wings and tripod-like arrangement in the centre could be a stylised drawing of a space-craft. The difference between Daniken and Spencer is that the former knows that he is putting forth a bizzare theory and knows that while he has full faith in it, most people will remain skeptical. We may get some fun out of his ideas but we don't have to believe in them for it is obvious that for every scrap of evidence that he marshals in support of his theory, there are others that he chooses to ignore. He realises this and even poses his title in the form of a question. Spencer on the other hand not only says that his conjectures are cold incontrovertible facts, but insists that we accept them as the Gospel truth for the religious beliefs that he holds. In short he expects us to accept his theory as a revelation.

Spencer's most significant revelation is that Spitama Zarathustra, though the first great prophet of mankind, has appeared through successive reincarnations

as Shree Krishna Bhagwan, Jesus Christ and so on. Spencer supplies textual proofs to show that Shree Krishna Bhagwan was also known as Bhrigu which is derived from the Sanskrit root of the word meaning "to fry" hence a "clear" reference to the idea of flame and fire of whose worship the Prophet Zarathustra was the originator. Similarly he demonstrates that the Star of Bethlehem, is the same star that in occult tradition is shown above Zarathustra, hence he deduces that Jesus Christ is a reincarnation of the Prophet. We may or may not accept these proofs, but when he says that we must accept them because he was personally appraised of the fact by the Almighty himself that Zarathustra, Shree Krishna Bhagwan and Jesus Christ are the same, one can only wonder why the Almighty took so long to make the revelation and why He finally did so in such a casual manner.

No doubt the rift between the supporters of Faith and of Reason is a wide one, but there is no need to widen it further by the

sort of arguments that Spencer uses to strengthen his theory. Speaking of those portions of the *Avesta* which have been lost, he says that these will supply all the final proofs he requires and that since, during a seance, a spirit mentioned that these missing portions have been sealed in a mountain somewhere, he has no doubt that the missing portions will be found eventually. However widespread occultism is, there is no indication yet, that it has been accepted as an exact science, so to call in a spirit as the chief defense witness is not acceptable. At other places he cites magazines and papers, such as *Coronet*, *Life*, *The Illustrated Weekly* and the *Sunday Standard* to uphold his theories; while these may all be popular and well-known publications, no one will pretend that they are untapped mines of wisdom, so their support can only be dismissed as weak. On top of this Spencer is able to provide dates of personages living in the past down to the year and day, as for example Shree Krishna Bhagwan, (Continued on page 38, col. 3)

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Dr. Rustom Jal Vakil



Darius S. Jhabvala (Boston Globe Photo)

Died: Dr. Rustom Jal Vakil, 64, the father of Indian Cardiology whose studies on the use of *Rauwolfia Serpentina* relieved the suffering of high blood pressure patients throughout the world; of cardiac arrest in Bombay Hospital on November 20th. He was the first Asian to receive the International Albert Lasker Award for Medical Research in 1957, and was awarded the Padma Bhushan and nominated for the Nobel Prize in 1958.

Often referred to as the 'Heart Man', Dr. Vakil was an elected fellow of over 20 international and national medical and scientific bodies. He was past president of the Cardiological Society of India and recently his name was entered on the American "Register of International Notables." Among the numerous honours and around 40 awards, prizes and medals presented to him were the first Dr. B. C. Roy Award of the Indian Medical Council, the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Award of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and the First Dhanwantri Award for the "most outstanding medical personality of the year in India." The institute of cardiology and research at the KEM Hospital was named after him, an honour bestowed on him by his past students and admirers. Dr. Vakil was the author of over 380 articles, editor of several medical journals, and writer of nine books on cardiology and related subjects.

Dr. Vakil joined the Royal Institute of Science after completing his preliminary studies at the Bharda High School and Elphinstone Col-

lege. He proceeded to London to study medicine and cardiology at St. Thomas' Hospital and obtained his M.R.C.P. at the age of 24 and after that his M.D. degree.

In Bombay he was connected with several hospitals including the KEM, Sir Nanavatty, Sir J. J., Parsi General, J. R. Railway, Bhatia and Bombay Hospital. He lectured in medicine and cardiology in the G. S. Medical College and the Grant Medical College.

He was a witty speaker whose interests ranged beyond the field of medicine to history, music, culture and art. In his writings he has referred to the medical practices of Babylon and Egypt, to archaeological excavations, to the Vedas, Atharvas and Ayurveda and ancient folklore remedies. One of his essays was on "The Physician In Shakespeare." He once wrote of medical men, "they with their newly acquired knowledge of doings, no longer conform to Voltaire's definition of doctors as men who prescribed medicines of which they knew little, to cure diseases of which they knew less, in human beings of whom they knew nothing."

Dr. Vakil's research on *Rauwolfia Serpentina* bears testimony to the store house of knowledge that has been added since those bleak times. Though the small woody plant which takes its name from a 16th century German botanist was apparently known to Indian medicine for around 4,000 years, European doctors who heard of its curative properties were inclined to dismiss it as the native superstitions of an ignorant people. In 1931 Indian

chemists isolated five active alkaloids from *Rauwolfia* plants. Dr. Vakil's clinical studies provided the breakthrough which established the drug as one of the main weapons against hypertension.

He did a prodigious amount of research, including a study of 25,000 personally observed cases of coronary thrombosis in India. He once noted that the ability to do research, like the ability to write verse or compose music, is an inner undefinable quality—some are born with it, some are reared into it, while others acquire it by diligent endeavour. Homi Banaji, an old friend of the Vakil family, recalled that when the to-be-doctor came to him to take French lessons for his matric examination, he did not express any interest in medicine at the time. Dr. Vakil came to specialize in diseases of the heart and blood pressure because his mother and other family members were patients of high blood pressure, notes Ms Katie Vania, his secretary for 22 years.

The man who put India on the world map of cardiology died seven days after suffering a heart attack. He is survived by his wife Jeroo.

Died: Darius S. Jhabvala, 46, Diplomatic Correspondent for *The Boston Globe* and former United Nations Bureau Chief of the old *New York Herald Tribune* and a one-time assistant editor of *Newsweek*; of a heart attack on November 19 in Boston. He was past president of the State Department Correspondents Association and was known among his colleagues and the diplomatic community for

his wit, charm and knowledge of world affairs.

"Darius was Mr. Chips—lovable, fun to tease, but the guy we went to when we needed advice," said Richard Valeriani, NBC diplomatic correspondent. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger valued Mr. Jhabvala as an "outstanding journalist and as a friend." And UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim noted how members of the world body "increasingly appreciated his exceptional gifts as a journalist, especially in the diplomatic field."

A native of Bombay, Mr Jhabvala went to the USA after World War II and worked in the communications section of the United Nations from 1949 to 1954. He attended the Latin American School in Chicago and received a degree in diplomacy.

From 1956 to 1960 he worked as an assistant editor at *Newsweek* in New York. He then covered the United Nations for the old *New York Herald Tribune* until 1965, when he joined the *Globe*.

Mr. K. Jhabvala "grew up" with the United Nations, from working

as a clerk in the organization's early days at Lake Success, N.Y., to recently, when he covered the controversial visit of Palestinian Liberation Organization leader Yassir Arafat.

At the United Nations and at the U.S. State Department where he began to work for the *Globe* in 1970, Mr. Jhabvala's style of work combined long hours and enduring patience. To the most obstinate "no-comment" diplomat, Mr. Jhabvala would return again and again in search of conversation and clarification. In his travels, he would be remembered for his soft British-colonial accent and his propensity for self-parody, calling people "Chappy", from ambassadors to copy boys. At the *Herald Tribune* and at the *Globe*, Mr. Jhabvala's persistence paid off with a continuing series of exclusives involving American participation in the Vietnam war and other world developments. One of Mr. Jhabvala's reports created a sensation and drew attention worldwide. Mr. Jhabvala disclosed in the *Herald Tribune* on August 8, 1965, that Hanoi, almost a year earlier, had accepted

a proposal for unconditional peace talks and the United States had rejected it.

Mr. Jhabvala also was the first reporter in the world to break the story that South Vietnamese troops, with close-in American air support, had invaded Laos in late January 1971. With stories about the invasion by correspondents on the scene blocked by unprecedented US censorship, he pieced an account together from sources here and wrote what was going on days before the invasion was officially acknowledged. In another major exclusive, he reported one month ahead of the official announcement that Canada would establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. Mr. Jhabvala was also the first American correspondent to detail the manoeuvres of the Soviet Navy in the Indian Ocean.

At the State Department and on the several trips of Secretary of State Kissinger, Mr. Jhabvala was father confessor to his fellow correspondents, as well as journalistic adviser, travel guide and occasional pharmacist ("Doc Darius")

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TATA ENTERPRISES

had a travelling medicine chest and was a frequent loser in "Liar's poker," (a favoured card game). It was not infrequent after a press conference for other reporters to buzz around, asking "Darius, what's the lead? What's the lead?" He usually told them, and shortly thereafter wire-service tickers and network baritones would echo authoritatively what he said.

On his last ride abroad the Kissinger whirlwind, a 33-day journey to world capitals, Mr Jhabvala returned to his native country after a 27-year absence. As the plane approached New Delhi airport, Kissinger wandered aft to joke with reporters and said, "All right you guys, where is my arrival statement?" (US-Indian relations have not been the most harmonious of late.)

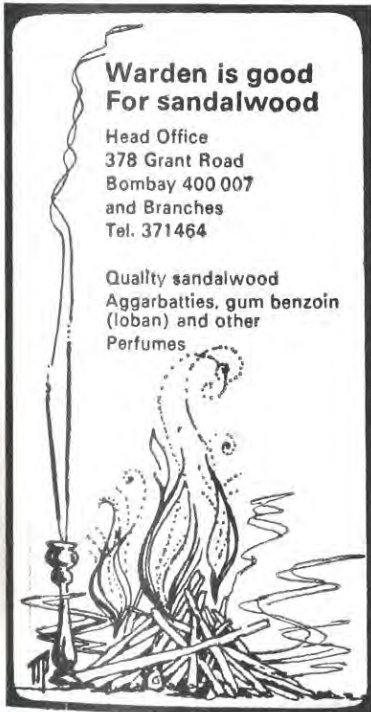
"Mr. Secretary," Darius replied for the group of reporters, "I can't provide you with a statement, but I can provide you with an accent."

Kissinger, like most world diplomats, held a fondness and a respect for Mr. Jhabvala. The Secretary once gave his travelling companion an autographed poster, signed, "To Darius Jhabvala, the real Boston Brahmin. Henry Kissinger." The poster featured a grinning portrait and the caption,

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Mr. Jhabvala was the *Boston Globe's* most travelled reporter, logging a quarter million miles to witness the quest for Vietnam peace at Paris, detente at the Moscow summits and in Peking and the shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East, about which he wrote: "In the absence of adequate diet and sleep, the nagging fatigue is offset by adrenalin. The body can stand a lot of punishment when it makes history or is witness to it being made."

Mr. Jhabvala wrote a weekly editorial page column for the *Boston Globe*, analysing events that had shaped world history.

He was slight and seldom weighed more than 120 pounds, but joshed his heftier colleagues, saying "I bet you can't get your clothes at the boys' section at Brooks Brothers."

He leaves his wife, Sarica, whom he met in 1947 in New York when she worked for the Columbia University student newspapers. He also leaves two sons, Murzban, 23, a graduate of the University of Rhode Island and Northwestern; and Jamasp, 20, a graduate of Antioch College; and two daughters, Tebmura, 18, and Kirman, 15, both students at Woodrow Wilson High School.

Courtesy: The Boston Globe.

Wheel (Continued from page 23)

permitted the same car, fully occupied, to pass over his chest." Ms Pochkhanawalla also recalled "My father quailed at the thought of actually breaking the news to his mother that he was embarking on a trip round the world by bicycle. She only knew that he was going to Poona. After reaching Poona he informed her long-distance." Unfortunately Mr. Pochkhanawalla had to cut his trip short half-way because his mother fell seriously ill. "He didn't have a penny for his return fare, but he managed to get a ticket back by accompanying a doctor bringing home a patient."

Much later, he and his daughter travelled overland to England by car. But, being plentifully equipped with spare parts and manuals, adventure didn't stalk them. It couldn't have been the same. Four wheels aren't the same as two.

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Letters (Continued from page 9)
to their respective colonies, after rebuilding the old houses in Mazagaon Mathar Pakhdy, Ganga-bodi Road, Mazavar Pakhdy Road. The old Mazagaon Castle belonging to Sir Jamsetjee Jijibhoy could be turned into a modern Parsi colony; Doctor Captain Mazagonwala's property could be used for a new housing scheme for Parsis.

Parsi philanthropists rendered great help to the National Government by relinquishing their lands for public road to build Umakhadi, Dongri, Bandra, Mahim, etc. Still there are some plots of lands belonging to Parsis which could be put into use and thereby make the name and culture of the Parsi community as great as before.

GEORGE FULGODO

Mystic Mystery

There are about two thousand persons staying in Mt. Alburz, north of Teheran, Iran. They are more saintly than we over here. They

are following our religion as professed before the advent of the prophet Mohammed, i.e. 600 A.D. approximately.

The village is guarded by four saintly persons who never sleep and keep vigil at the four corners of the village in the mountains and whoever approaches with nefarious thoughts near the village cannot see any people, animals or houses due to our strong mystic prayers. Others, with more open minds, have seen the place. One of these was Behramshah Shroff of Surat. He was taught our religion in detail at the age of 12 by those savants and was guided by them throughout his life later in Surat. He started a stricter type of Zoroastrian Religion as per 600 A.D. standards and called it *Ilm-E-Kshnum*. One of its noteworthy features was that he upheld the disposal of the dead in the Towers of Silence. Thus the link with the past is restored as regards Towers of Silence, and burial, crematorium etc. should be considered as aberrations as far as possible.

K. D. CHARGEMAN

Spencer (Continued from page 34)
said to have been born "the midnight of the 19th (20th) July 3228 B.C. Shree Krishna is said to have lived for 126 years and to have died on 18-2-3102 B.C." He does so by the astronomical methods which he believes to be infallible. We can only murmur one word—Incredible!

To go back to the booklet *On Zoroastrian Tradition, Customs and Ceremonials* with its references to the parallel ideologies of the Avestic *Yast* and the *Rig Veda*, its quick exposition of The Divine Mantra of Existence, its short scientific discourse on the Earth's Magnetism, followed by passages from the *Gathas* which support the doctrine of rebirth in Zoroastrianism, ending with questions and answers to sundry spiritual and technical problems, it has only one positive merit—it has been put together in a manner that is so confusing, that anyone reading it will be driven to seek guidance from some more comprehensive source.

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Sun (Continued from page 17)

"that we would not bear arms against him and his descendants, that we would adopt the local language and dress, that we would not kill the cow, that we would perform our marriages also in Sanskrit."

"How long ago was this?"

"About nine hundred years," said Meherji.

"And you still keep your vows? My congratulations," said Akbar. "Well, Dastur, you have given me much ground for thought. I'll send for you for a private talk. You will be here for some time still." And he rose, dispersing the assembly.

This then is the Zarthosti religion in essence, very largely a practical system of ethical conduct which is well within the

"Gaiety and laughter are part of being good, fighting for the good."

capacity of any Zarthosti who tries to practise it. There is about it nothing meretricious, no adventitious aids does it use. Here there is austere simplicity, decent conduct and its reward, no titillation of the senses, no stimulation of the passions. Instead a purer, ampler, more ethereal air to breathe, in which magic does not intervene, in which man needs no intercessor with God. On this point it has been said:

"Truly in all men there is both the spark of God and the stain of the Devil. No so-called bhagwan or guru can kindle the first in any man into a steady, long-lasting flame or wash from his heart for all time the second. Only the person himself or herself can do either. For the majority of sensible people, then, the general guide should be, 'Be a Lamp unto Thyself.' Know thyself and amend thyself. Seek God's blessings by prayer if you will and request His assistance in those tasks. Often it may be forthcoming to the sincere. Such, however, need no interceders for

themselves. No gurus, sais, babas, pirs, saints etc., of this world, however greatly reputed, before whom they prostrate themselves, and whose miracles they speak of with bated breath, can win them God's grace or His mercy. Let their deeds, following upon their thoughts and words, be such as can, after His strict accounting, be approved, and come the four corners of the worlds, temporal and spiritual, in arms, headed by all the living saints, babas, sais and other so-called spiritual leaders, and they will shock them.

"Ours is a land most fruitful in superstitions; ours are a people full of belief in, or longing for, miracles, the shortcut to all desirable ends, national and personal. Think hard, be honest, rely on facts, examine situations dispassionately—tush, what drudgery! No, no, get that celebrated astrologer's reading of the horoscope, visit this mai, that baba, the other shrine, wear a necklace, a chain, a ring bestowed by the sacred hand or place, and all will be well, in fact all must be well, so let's go ahead with the multiple blessings of all these mighty forces, massed behind us! Alas, God's rule is different. Do what you like, He says, and pay for it. 'Things are as they are, and their consequences will be as they will be; why then desire ye to equivocate?' Admire good works and the doers of good works, by all manner of means, better still, devote your own energies to doing them. But leave it at that."

And if you would like to know the Zarthosti point of view on worldly affairs, listen to this conversation between a Zarthosti father and his Zarthosti son: "A boy of eight in his best clothes was chattering away full of enthusiasm to his father about a party he had been to at the local magnate's house. They had this, they had that, everything was wonderful, eight first-rate horses in the stables, four carriages, countless servants and so on.

"You would like to have all that when you grow up?" asked his father. "That would make you very happy, would it?"

"Oh, yes," said the boy.

"Well, do you know, for once we

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have here a very rich man who is honest, so may he enjoy his riches! But remember usually one cannot be very rich without being quite a rascal, and you would not be happy in rascality whatever its rewards. You hate to tell even conventional white lies. Money is necessary primarily to ensure independence. If you have enough for that, you need no more. We are not rich, we are not even well-off, we just manage, but we are independent. We flatter nobody, we ask nothing from anybody, we never hesitate to call a wrong a wrong and a wrong-doer a wrong-doer, however rich or powerful he is. We are able to do this, because we are content to live within our very moderate means and are obliged to no one for anything. It is possible much wealth, great power, will come to you in an honest way, without your doing anything evil or low for it. If that happens, the important thing for a man is the use he makes of these two, not the enjoyment he gets from having them. If the *salaaming* of a thousand men puff you up, you may be in a great position but you are a small man, and when a small man becomes aware of the real smallness below all the show

he puts on—and sooner or later he can't avoid becoming aware of it—he is indeed a very unhappy man. All the power and wealth of the world cannot keep death away, and when death will come no one can say, though all can be certain the dead can neither take away nor enjoy wealth or power. So you see how silly it is to be envious; I don't say you

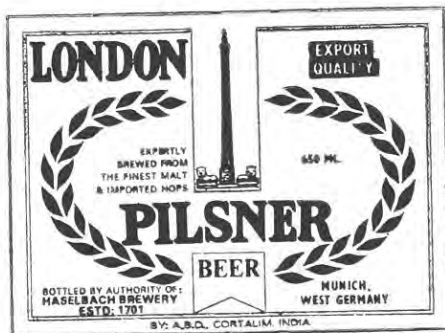
"In all men there is both the spark of God and the stain of the Devil."

are now, but you must never be, for who is man envying? Another creature like himself whom death may take away at any moment from all that he is enjoying, on whom life may at any moment inflict pain, suffering, loss, making living itself worse than death. Happiness a man may have in short spans, it just does not go on forever; but content over a life-time is possible, content while striving one's hardest, doing one's best, always without malice, envy, dishonesty,

lying, cheating. For a man who is a man, for a son of our family for instance, there is only one way of living: do right and don't bother about consequences. From that comes the peace of mind that is worth more in real terms than all the treasures of the world. And if you say how shall I know what is right, the answer is don't worry, you will always know when the time comes if your pre-disposition is towards right. Another thing, never hesitate to look at yourself as you are, don't run away from your faults or pretend they don't exist or are in fact virtues! Even if you can't correct your faults, as happens sometimes, at least be aware of them. Did you follow all I said?' The boy who had been listening most earnestly nodded his head and on his father saying, 'Well, tell me then the main points,' repeated with understanding almost the full text.

'Good,' said the father, 'now what you will become I don't know, but whatever you become, if you follow this you will be a good man. And that is infinitely better from the country's point of view than being just a great man, a ruler or a billionaire who is an indifferent or a bad man.' ●

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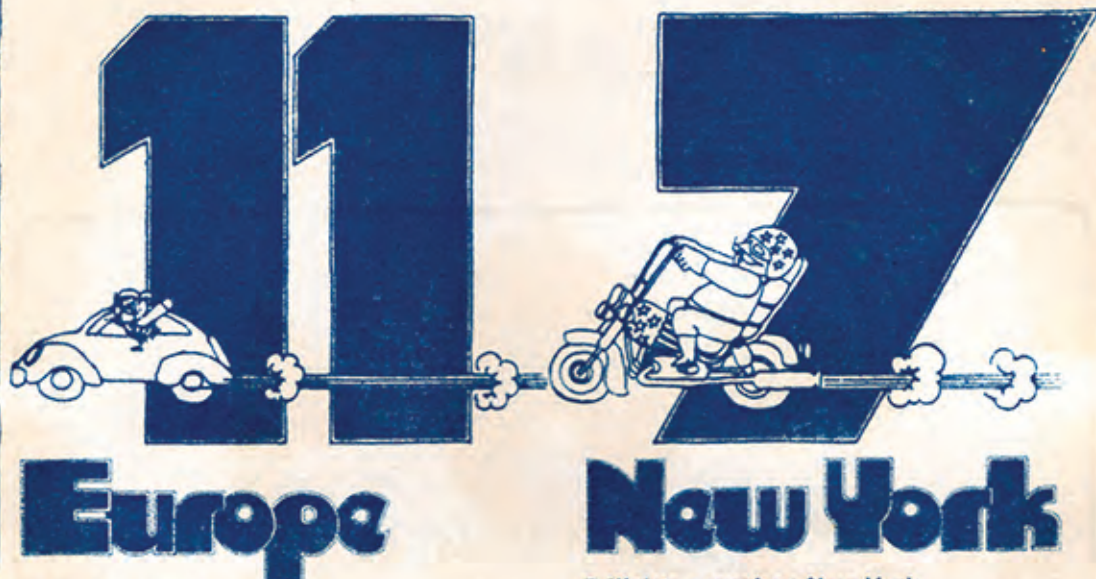
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