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Parsiana

December - February 1976

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editor's column

A letter appeared in *The Bombay Samachar* recently exhorting the community to felicitate "our beloved" Prime Minister Ms Indira Gandhi's ten "historical" years in office (also known as the 'Decade of Progress'). The writer while calling for a celebration to be held "in a big way," lamented the community's "sheer ignorance of the march of time" and noted it was "really high time" that someone led us "on the path of patriotism and nationalism."

Let anyone say that we at *Parsiiana* have not done our bit, I would like it known that we have always stoutly defended the Emergency and the suspension of all fundamental rights, precensorship, preventive detention, and various amendments to the constitution to make it more 'responsive' to the 'needs' of the 'people.' Every morning before starting 'hard' work (the only magic), we have a collective reading of the PM's 20-Point programme followed by a communal singing of "India is Indira" (which if sung correctly is supposed to have vibratory effects. Kshnumists please note). I then give a brief talk on the need for unity and discipline and then each staff member either quotes a few passages from the writings of contemporary Congress ministers or brings to attention any 'failings' on the part of other staffers. Corrective measures are then initiated.

As a result there has been an all-round improvement in *Parsiiana's* performance. However, the internal and external forces of disruption that threatened to undermine the unity of the magazine are still active and, therefore, dear readers, donations are necessary.

On a more personal note, I have broken off all relations with my American friends since I was told they had 'misinterpreted' the 'revolution' that was taking place in our country and that anyway they all belonged to the CIA. In keeping with "the march of time" I am now trying to revive the ancient links between the Russians and the Parsis and am pleased to report that there is strong

evidence to prove that we came to India via Stalingrad, that the Bolshoi Ballet troupe derived its name from Boman Ballettalla that my original name was Jehangir Patelovich, and as *Parsiiana* is always in the red, we can be considered communists. So Comrades, let us on to other subject.

The Zoroastrian Association of Montreal (ZAM) is collecting funds to construct a Zoroastrian House. "The chief object of the proposed building is to keep a separate hall for prayer and to establish a library containing religious books," notes a press release distributed by Rustom Panthaki, Principal of the Athornan Madressa in Dadar. The Association welcomes any aid that can be extended to it either in the form of money, books, sandalwood and loban. Donation may be sent to Panthaki at the Madressa on Firdosi Road, Parsi Colony, Dadar, Bombay 400 014.

The ZAM also held a fashion cum dance show in November which was attended by over 400 people. Organized by Ms Freny Bagli and Ms Roshan Lakdawalla, the show comprised various Indian dresses modelled by 13 Parsi women followed by Indian dances and most importantly, an Indian dinner.

Zoroastrian Associations in both Toronto and New York are pursuing the possibility of acquiring premises.

In reply to our plea to readers to send in interesting episodes pertaining to Parsis, Dhun Mehta informs us that a Parsi astrologer, Ardeshtir Khabardar, wrote to Mahatma Gandhi advising him not to leave his residence on 30th January and to arrange for special security at home. Mehta suggests the letter should be preserved for its "historic and national importance."

And K. D. Chargeman informs us that Dr. K. N. Dastur performed the first open heart operation in India in 1961; that the Parsi owned Bharda New High School in Bombay has produced more test cricketers than any other in India, among the sportsmen being Polly Umrigar, Vijay Merchant, Rusi Surti, Nari Contractor etc; that wicket-keeper Meher-

Honji's name is entered in the *Wisden's Cricket Manual* for making three successive catches while playing the Mohindollah Gold Cup match.

Any other items from readers are welcome.

* * *

The Bombay Parsi community at last paid its tribute to Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw. At a function at Fariyas Hotel and another at Cusrow Baug, the soldier was hosted and toasted and greatly admired. The event was organized by 14 different associations, minus the Parsi Panchayat, which still has a casket it was going to present him after the Bangladesh war and before he fell out of grace with the governing party. Perhaps to compensate, the Panchayat is holding a grand function on 29th March to felicitate Chief Minister S. B. Chavan on completing one year in office. Such is life.

* * *

Several of those excellent photographs you saw in the last issue of *Parsiiana* were taken by Noshir Marker and we apologize for having omitted his credit line. The shot of Dastur Bode was taken by Farokh Reporter, whose photographs have since adorned the covers of several publications including *Eve's Weekly*, *Debonair* and *Beautiful*.

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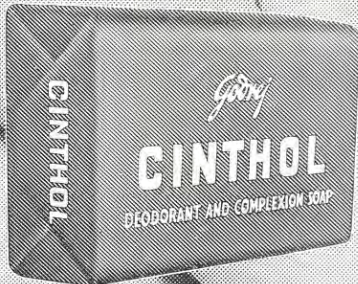
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The Right to Rites

I would like to clarify some of the points made in the extracts from an interview (*Parsiiana*, November 1975) taken with me two years ago. The present method of the disposal of the dead has nothing to do with the Zoroastrian religion. I can conclusively prove that the ancient Aryan Zoroastrian method of disposal was cremation. For years I have been lecturing on this subject and on the necessity of having the three days' ceremonies for the departed soul. All the dasturs have declared that the first three days' ceremonies should not be performed in atash behrams for those who are cremated but may be performed afterwards.

The Zoroastrian religion is based on the immutable, divine law of Asha which is applied equally and universally. Therefore, some Parsis maintained that the Zarthoshti Anjuman Atash Behram should be open to all for religious ceremonies, and that they would go to the courts to assert their religious rights. Why can we not have the first three days' ceremonies performed in the atash behram, for family members who have been cremated? I said that my personal views are different, but as an honorary secretary and a trustee of the atash behram I cannot take any decision on such matters.

I also perform navjotes for children of Parsi mothers married to non-Parsis, and make the children Zoroastrians but not Parsis according to the present law. Many are now ready to go to the courts and remove this discrimination

between male and female. The Ulema Committee of 11, appointed by the Parsi Panchayat at the beginning of this century, said unanimously in their report that Zoroastrianism does not prohibit proselytization but enjoins it.

DASTUR FRAMROZE A. BODE

Fire Power

Members of our community accuse the athravans (priestly class) of not coming forward to take up the noble professions of mobeds, ervads, panthakies, and dasturs in the various dar-e-meher, particularly outside Bombay. But they fail to realize that few athravans would like to take up a profession where there is no economic security and social status.

At present, a mobed is completely at the mercy of the trustees. To give a recent instance: the panthaky of a local dar-e-meher was sacked summarily by the trustees, who had done likewise with previous panthakies. While the previous panthakies took it lying down, this man challenged the arbitrary action of the trustees in a court of law, on the grounds that a panthaky is to be treated as a respectable individual who plays as important a part in the running of a dar-e-meher as do the trustees. After winning in the lower court, he lost in the higher court which upheld the trustees' contention that a panthaky is an employee.

But his battle will not have been in vain if it stirs up the conscience of our community and stimulates them to improve the financial and social status of our mobeds, ervads, panthakies, and dasturs—which is the least that can be done for them.

B. S. SURTI
Secunderabad

Grass Roots

Parsiiana deserves credit for describing where our priests stand today and in days gone by. Over 30 years ago, my late husband and I had been apprehensive of our community's future. At that time too, only a few seemed to heed what the consequences of imitating foreign ways, depending on past

glory and being bereft of true Zoroastrian righteousness would lead to. Luckily, I feel there is some hope nowadays, as more of us have come to understand our plight and are trying to revive our spirit.

The only path for recovery is entirely dependent on the proper education of our children. This relies mostly on the selfless efforts of parents and teachers to guide children towards responsibility, honesty, hard work and common sense. Zarathustra's message—to be patient to gain righteousness, to be generous and selfless in all eventualities—would help children to be worthy Zoroastrians and worthy citizens.

GOOLBANU SUKHIA
Los Angeles, California

Prayer Pages

We read your November issue from cover to cover and congratulate you on a very fine production. It's most interesting and you are doing a fine job in educating and instructing the community in its heritage and the mofussil Parsis in the doings of the community in its main centre, Bombay.

Could a few pages be reserved for publishing translations of our prayers by eminent scholars?

A. H. SETHNA
Calcutta

We carry in this issue a translation and explanation of the kusti prayers by Ms Piloo Jungalwalla.

Tolerance

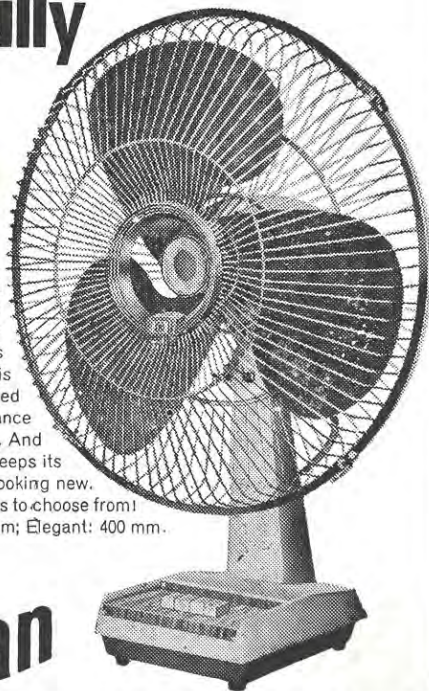
In the *Gathas* it is written: "Tolerance helps one to understand and endure the views of others and roots out bigotry, fanatic zeal, and dogmatism—whereas intolerance is the bitterest enemy of religion, capable of tyranny and persecution. Intolerance is blind and savage—it stifles reason. Therefore, like a frog for whom his well is the whole world, the bigot boasts and insists that his is the only inspired and perfect thinking and, moreover, that salvation lies in his views only."

Such is the glorious message given to us through Zarathushtra, but how little we follow it in prac-

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tice. For years the burning question of the disposal of the dead has been the cause of rift in our community. Either we are not aware of the tolerance in our religion or, much against the spirit of this tenet, we enforce our beliefs upon others. Be it remembered that reason moulds our thinking and that this age-old controversy can be pleasantly concluded if the contending parties arrive at a mutual understanding.

Aramgahs and crematoriums are in no way against the tenets of our religion. They are just customs, and customs always change with the times. Why should bigotry demand that those people who choose an alternative method for the disposal of their mortal remains be denied prayers—prayers which are but the last act of a faith which they embraced and cherished all their lives? How tragical it is to see people at the helm of affairs ignoring the message of tolerance.

Again, the *Gathas* speak eloquently about progress, saying: "Progress is the rule of life—life presses on and onward in its incessant march, until it reaches a certain goal." But with us progress seems a backward march and the march of time plays no role.

A custom-bound community requires more reformers, more men of insight. How thought-provoking are these lines from the *Gathas*, where Zarathushtra prays to Ahura Mazda, saying: "Let me not be a purist and regard those as irreligious who regard not formalism. Fill my heart and mind, O Ahura Mazda, with the spirit of toleration."

MUNEEZABANO KAOOSJI
Hyderabad

The Flame Flickers

The first teacher of monotheism, Zoroaster singled out *Athra*—energy or heat—from all the elements as the universal force which maintains all creation. With the passage of centuries after his death, mystical and ritualistic interpretations weakened his original teaching that in man there burned the cosmic fire of the spirit, and that the visible fire is only the outer symbol of the inner divine fire. Zoroaster says: "O

Ahura, by means of *Asha* (the immutable divine law) we long for Thy inner cosmic fire which is enduring, courageous, bringing clear guidance and joy to the living."

The host of meanings associated with "cosmic fire" is conveyed through the many fire-energies spoken of in the Avestan texts: *Berezisavangh*, the fire which is beneficent and burns in the presence of *Ahura Mazda*; *Vohu-friyan*, the fire that dwells in the bodies of men, the fire of animal heat; *Urvazishta*, the fire in trees and plants; *Vazishta*, the fire in lightning; *Spenishta*, the celestial fire which burns in the abode of *Ahura Mazda*. Even the word *dakhma* is derived from the Avestan root *daz*, "to burn." Ervad Kanga's Avestan dictionary calls *dakhma* "the burning place," and the great scholar K. R. Cama affirms that the original meaning and method was cremation. According to Greek classical historians, the ancient Aryan method of disposal of the dead was cremation. At different times, other methods were followed, but the same word *dakhma* was used. But to Parsis nowadays, *dakhma* means the open tower where the corpse is consumed by vultures. Believing in this ritual as *chasni* ("charity"), they cite their reverence for fire as their reason against cremation. They do not see that fire is so victoriously pure that it will not admit pollution, but destroy it.

The very word fire is derived from the Avestan and Sanskrit root *pu*, "to purify." Fire was never considered by the Indo-Iranian seers to be the physical fire or the fire of the ceremonial sacrifice. The sacrifice is merely the symbol of man's dedication, whereas Zoroaster speaks of the inner flame: *Athro Ahurahe Mazdao Puthra* means "fire, the purifying energy of *Ahura Mazda*." But now the ceremonial flame only serves to dull the smart of sin or to grant material boons: wealth, position and power. The *Atar* may burn, enthroned and crowned and venerated, in shrines that none but a born Parsi can enter (not so in Iran); but where it should kindle in man's heart, it flickers and burns low.

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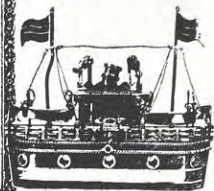
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In the News

Edited by Sanobar Marker

The Parsis have a naval tradition dating back at least 1300 years when they set sail for India. So it is in keeping with character that a member of this microscopic community should be appointed Naval Chief of Staff. That distinction was conferred on March 1, in New Delhi to **Jal Cursetji**, a 40-year veteran of the armed forces. A soft-spoken individual with a ready smile, Cursetji termed his new office "an onerous responsi-

bility" that he prayed he be "given strength to carry out to our best national and service interests."

Two weeks before taking over the reins from retiring Admiral S. N. Kohli, Cursetji hosted an informal press conference cum luncheon aboard the *I.N.S. Mysore* where he discussed naval affairs. *Parsiana* Senior Editor Feroza Paymaster reports on the conversation.

"The primary role of the Navy

is security and denying such security to any other Navy. Any nation can pose a threat as far as maritime interests are concerned. It all depends when your interests clash with that of others. The size and strength of your Navy has to be sufficient to fulfill the task assigned to it.

"The Indian Navy has been built up as a balanced force. It has to remain so; you can't go for one type of vessel to the exclusion of the others. There is no doubt the submarines are very important. The air element also has become an integral part of any naval force.

"When you go into combat you're pretty keyed up. There is nothing routine. Anything might happen. You don't have much time to think of anything else. You just hope you will do well.

"Planning has to go on all the time. Today a particular weapon system is ideal, but it may take five years to develop. The Navy is an expensive service and we have to pay the maximum attention to material and personnel."

Cursetji joined the Dufferin in 1935 because he felt "going to sea would be a rather good thing." In 1937 he was selected for the Royal Indian Navy as a cadet and was sent to England for training. He was commissioned in September 1940 and served on various naval ships during the last world war. In 1944, he was put in command of the *INS Bombay*.

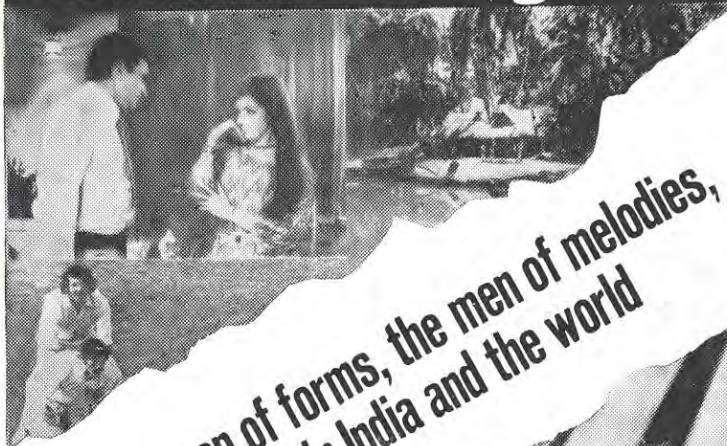
Cursetji was surveyor-in-charge, marine survey of India for four years from 1950. He became the first Indian chief hydrographer to the government of India in 1955, an appointment he held for more than two years. Amongst his other important appointments were naval attache in the Indian embassy in Washington and commanding officer of the *Vikrant*. In February 1973, he became the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command.

Cursetji received the Param Vishisht Seva Medal in 1971 for 'distinguished services of the most



Cursetji: 'A balanced force' (Photo by Manjula Padmanabhan)

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exceptional order.' A native of Jabalpur, the 56-year-old Admiral is married and has two daughters.

The Republic Day Awards for 1976 singled out for honour several Parsis in various fields of endeavour. Below we list the awards given and the names of the recipients along with a brief write-up where possible:

Padma Bhushan to **Naoroji Pirojsha Godrej**, noted industrialist and member of the Godrej family that started and manage the well known Godrej Boyce Company, manufacturers of diverse products ranging from office furniture to fork lift trucks. A publicity-shy person, Godrej can be located more easily midst the obscurity of lathes and presses in Vikhroli rather than in the carpeted, air-conditioned head office in the heart of the city. According to his son Jamshed, Godrej is a "very serious minded" person whose desire is that India be industrialized rapidly but not at the cost of the workers or the environment.

Padma Shree **Ms Jai Hormusji Vakeel**, 75, Founder-Principal of The School for Children in Need of Special Care which tends to 325 mentally handicapped and physically defective children. Started by Ms Vakeel in 1944, the school has a staff of 42 trained personnel and its own teaching programme which prepares individuals for a diploma recognized by the Maharashtra Social Welfare Board. Finance is generated through the school's fund-raising activities and is complemented with grants from Central and State Welfare Depts.

Padma Shree to **Dr Amy Dhunjibhoy Engineer**, 60, Professor and Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the K. G. Medical College in Lucknow. Her research in the field of childbirth and female disorders which has been published in several Indian and international medical journals has among other things, resulted in her devising a method of vaginal tubectomy which can be performed under local anaes-

thesia. Widely used in birth control camps in Uttar Pradesh, the technique permits women to be so treated as out-patients. Ms Engineer was awarded the B.C. Roy Medal for meritorious teaching in 1974 and is President of the Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecological Societies of India.

The Param Vashisth Seva Medal to Air Vice Marshal (Rtd.) **Jamshed H. F. Manekshaw** for distinguished service. Manekshaw was in the medical services of the armed forces for over 33 years before he retired last year. He was awarded the Ati Vashisth Seva Medal in 1971 for distinguished service to the Indian Air Force, especially to the Institute of Aviation Medicine.

President's Police Medal for meritorious service to **Jal Bejon Jal**, 54 Assistant Commissioner of Police, Greater Bombay. In charge of four police stations in the labour areas of Worli, Bhoiwada, N. M. Joshi Marg and Mazagaon, Jal is "known for his conciliatory



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with nothing on
and with nothing on
your mind
except him,
thinking of him,
craving for him,
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methods in cooling down explosive situations by talking to excited members of the public—politicians, trade unionists and labourers,” notes an associate in the crime branch, J. B. Contractor. A student of the Esplanade High School and St. Xavier's College, Jal joined the Bombay City Police Force in 1942 as a sub-inspector and has risen through the ranks.

The President's Award, to **Rustom J. Parakh**, Superintendent, Central Excise and Customs, Bombay, for the detection of about 220 major cases of smuggled gold, textiles, silver and electronic goods totalling six crore rupees. Parakh, a law graduate, joined the Customs and Central Excise department in 1944 and became Deputy Superintendent in 1962.

The President's Police Medal for meritorious service to **Lovejoy Sical Dadi Mehervanjee**, 50, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Bombay Fire Brigade. Mehervanjee who joined the Bombay Auxiliary Fire Service in 1942 as a sub-leader was severely injured in the fire that followed the historic explosion of an ammunition ship in the Bombay dockyard in 1944. He has partici-

pated in nearly every major fire fighting, house collapse and other emergency operations in the city.

The Fire Service Medal to **Jehangir N. Bharucha**, Fire Brigade Superintendent, Bhavnagar. He began his career in the Army Fire Fighting Training Centre in Calcutta during World War II and on his return to Bhavnagar organised the Bhavnagar Ordinance Depot Fire Service. In 1947, Bharucha joined the Bhavnagar Municipality as Fire Brigade Superintendent.

Dr. Tehmi Mino Ginwalla, 57, Dean in charge of The Nair Hospital Dental College was the first speaker to deliver the newly instituted Dr. R. Ahmed Memorial Oration. Her lecture on Public Health and Dental Care was delivered to the Indian Dental Association Conference in Indore on January 30.

The Sangeet Natak Akademi Award has been given to **Zubin Mehta**, conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra.

The noted physician, **Minocher B. Mody** was presented a silver medal

at the first international conference on Surgery in the Tropics held in Bombay in January.

The newly conceived Public Grievances cell of the Bombay Police is in charge of the Assistant Commissioner of Police, **Kersasp Kaikhushroo Palkhivala**. Palkhivala, a student of the Behramji Jeejeebhoy High School and St. Xavier's College, notes, the grievance office receives 15 to 20 complaints a day usually pertaining to petty offences committed by neighbours or complaints against police handling of cases.

The relationship between Zoroastrianism and Sufism is the subject of *Visnu and Mazda*, the latest book by the noted Bengali scholar **Jatindra Mohan Chatterjee**. "The Sufi cult teaches that Mazda is God of love and is accessible through love," notes the book's preface. "The Sufi cult became very popular in Iran and continued to be so even after the advent of Islam."

The 90-page discourse, priced at Rs. 5 and published by Pur-nendu Bhusan Dutta Roy, is available. (Continued on page 37, col. 2)

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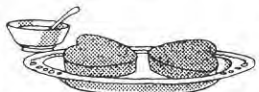
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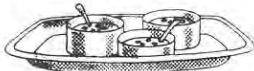
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"No Mobeds, No Parsis"

When the plight of the priesthood was raised in the executive council meeting of the Federation of The Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India last November, members noted that it was a "delicate matter" and that "it would be best to discuss it at some other time." Accordingly the matter was scheduled for a later meeting and letters were sent to various priests soliciting their views. The replies they received showed exactly how sensitive a subject it was. In a scathing joint letter high priests Hormazdyar K. Mirza and Kaiikhushroo M. Jamasp-Asa wrote, "We are keenly aware that the question facing the community is very grave. Our frank opinion, therefore, is that this matter should not be discussed any more but something concrete should be done. We frankly feel that to discuss one and the same question at intervals without any positive results accruing therefrom is a grotesque joke and humiliation of all concerned."

The letter also noted: "For the information of the Executive Council, we send herewith a Xerox of a paper read before the Second World Zoroastrian Congress held in 1964 at Bombay. The paper was discussed in detail, lectures were delivered, suggestions were made, resolutions were passed at the meeting, and the matter ended there. The report of the proceedings of the Congress must be lying in the files of the Parsi Panchayat, Bombay."

Dastur Khurshed S. Dabu, high priest of the Wadijaji Atash Behram, while remarking that he was "too old [87] and weak of sight to prepare a comprehensive report on the topic," went on to state, "I have already written so often... and spoken to the public that repetition would not be worthwhile."

Ervad Firoze M. Kotwal, principal of the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute in Andheri, replied in a similar vein, noting, "I do not know what new thing one can now say... first of all great confidence will have to be created in the

schemes to be introduced for the amelioration of the athornans. Athornans have lost trust in such schemes, especially they are afraid that some day when some well-wisher expires or retires some new person will cancel or liquidate the entire scheme under one excuse or another. This should NOT happen under any circumstance... Only then will the athornans dare to enter into any 'scheme', even if it is for their amelioration. More is meant than meets the ears."

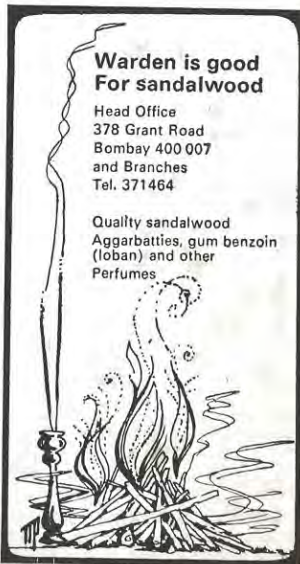
Many of the replies singled out the alarming drop in the number of priests and the low remuneration, lack of respect and bleak future prospects for clergymen. Dinshaw B. Irani of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman of Bombay quoted scholar Richard Frye's warning "No Mobeds, No Parsis," and along with several others suggested revised pay scales ranging from a minimum of Rs. 500 to over Rs. 1,500, the higher salaries being reserved for madressa trained and qualified priests. Sarosh B. Anklesaria, president of the Ahmedabad Parsi Panchayat, felt that only those students who were "prepared to work as priests should be admitted at the two madressas." And Nariman A. Panthaki of the Parsi Agiary of Ahmedabad claimed that because the madressas tutored students upto the high school exam level and beyond, the youngsters naturally turned to other professions. "Today hardly 10 to 15 per cent of the athornans who have studied in madressas have chosen the priestly profession," writes Panthaki. "Our community is not in need of priests speaking fluent English. The clear need of the community is that of only those priests who can perform religious ceremonies and protect our temples." But even with the full academic curricula offered, student enrollment at the madressas is dwindling. Dastur N. D. Minochehr-Homji of the Fasli Atash Kadeh, after listing his suggestions, ended his letter with the exhortation: "Now is the time to act,"

Taking the hint, the executive council of the Federation at its meeting on January 30 in Bombay decided that a "central fund" be created wherein "every anjuman and individual Zoroastrian should help and contribute" and a "central body" be formed, consisting of senior priests and members of the Federation council to administer and maintain the fund. The representatives also recommended that fire-temples and trusts that employ priests introduce provident fund and gratuity benefits for them. But in concluding, the council "requested that the Bombay Panchayat take the lead" in the matter and the subject may well end there. For as Mirza and JamaspAsa noted in their missive, "Meetings and discussions have produced a number of papers, reports, resolutions, plans and schemes on this matter published and unpublished—lying in the files of the Parsi Panchayat, Bombay and other Parsi institutions."

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Seventy-two Strands

by Thrity Keeka

To some it symbolizes a ship, bearing travellers to safe harbour; to others, it is a signpost marking out the true path; to still others, an emblem which reminds the wearer to confine himself within the limits of righteousness; and to some it is merely a cream-coloured string of wool, tasseled at both ends. Yet, whether it is of profound significance or merely one more item of clothing to be hurriedly wound round the waist, the *kusti* has become synonymous with being a Zoroastrian.

But like many symbols of the community, its future is uncertain. For though the demand for *kustis* still remains, the weavers who spin the seventy-two strands of pure Australian wool into the sacred thread are steadily diminishing in number. What was once considered a domestic skill necessary in every young girl has with the changing times become a specialized craft practised mainly by elderly women. "Girls nowadays like to work in offices, however poorly paid they may be," says 69-year-old Goolbai Kateli who has been making *kustis* since the age of 15. She estimates that the number of *kusti*-makers has dwindled by 50 per cent over the last 30 years. "Even a packer in a factory earns more and enjoys more benefits," says Aloo Billimoria, a weaver of *kustis* for over 40 years.

Attempts to revive interest in the ancient *kusti*-making craft through competitions have met with little success. Eruchshaw Dotiwala, president of the N.N. Wadia Welfare League at Navroz Baug, found that they only received seven entries, although they provided free wool and refreshments, kept no entry fee and even announced the competition well in advance in a prominent Parsi daily. Jehangir Shroff, president of the Bombay Parsi Association which holds a competition every year at the Byramjee Jeejeebhoy School, feels that the poor response is due to the fact that "eighty per cent of the

kusti-makers are not residents of Bombay."

Another disincentive to the profession is the rising cost of wool. The fine yarn imported from Australia in clean, shrink-proof bundles called *jara* by Ardesheer Karai, and after his death by his son-in-law, Kaikhushroo Pir, has today become a rationed commodity. It is now available only in small handfuls called *pooni* and, unlike *jara* wool, it shrinks. The Panchayat supplies 125 grams of this wool to registered *kusti*-makers twice a year, during Pateti and Jamshedi Navroz. "It is distributed in alphabetical order, and last time only the surnames from A to J got their quota at New Year," lamented Ms Kateli.

The acute scarcity of wool is accompanied by spiralling prices: 125 grams used to cost Rs. 7 only a few years ago, now it costs Rs. 13. This yields four to five *kustis* of three yards each. Though the wool for each *kusti* is worth about Rs. 2.50 to Rs. 3, the finished product is priced at Rs. 25 or Rs. 30. A *kusti*-weaver still makes a profit of Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 per *kusti*, after deducting all the costs. "*Mehnat na paisa*," says Ms Billimoria, a widow and mother of a lively, school-going son. "Tell me,

how many *kustis* do you wear out in a year, and then tell me how much you spend on clothes, entertainment and eating out."

Kusti-making is an art that takes years to master. "But it is not difficult," insists Ms Kateli, whose shuttle flies almost instinctively in and out of the warp threads, bringing to mind the steady, unhurried rhythm of a lullaby, her silently moving lips not counting the strands, but ceaselessly repeating the *Yatha ahu Vairyo*. Before the actual weaving can begin, the wool has to be spun into a fine but strong yarn with the help of a spindle—the *takli*. The yarn is woven on the *jantar*, a wooden loom which used to grace the home of all athornan ladies. Two strands of the yarn are twisted together into a single one, which is stretched taut across the *jantar* seventy-two times. The weaving of the weft requires great skill as the thread has to be gently pushed into place each time with the *kateli*, a smooth axe-shaped wooden instrument. Shroff, who describes himself as "a weaver with forty-six years of weaving experience," maintains that the *thok*, the gentle push given to the weave, is "in itself an art."

After the weaving is complete, the *kusti* is removed from the *jantar*, cut and turned inside out. Only the ends (*ler*) now remain to be finished. The unit for measuring the ends is the *kateli*, two and a half *kateli* being used for a small (Please turn to page 39, col. 1)



Ms Billimoria: Hard-earned (Right) Ms Kateli: A 50 per cent drop (Photos by Ian Pinto)



The Symbolism of the Sadrah and Kusti

The sacred shirt is called sudreh or sudrah. The word is variously derived. Anquetil Du Perron says that the word sudrah comes from Zend *setehr paesehenghe* which means 'useful clothing'. Dastur Edalji D. Sanjana also derives the word similarly and says further that the word sud-reh means an advantageous path.

The sacred shirt is symbolic in its structure. It is made of white cambric. White is symbolic of innocence and purity, and as such is the symbol of the Mazdayasan or Zoroastrian religion. It must be made up of two pieces of cloth sewn together on the sides, so that one seam may be on the right hand side and the other on the left hand side. These two parts—the front and the back—are said to be symbolic of the past and the future, both related to each other through the present.

The front part must remind a Zoroastrian of his duty to persons and institutions of the past ages.

We owe a duty towards those who have gone before us—to our ancestors, our forefathers, our departed dear ones, all who have preceded us. We also owe a duty to our superiors who have been in the front before us.

The second or the back part of the shirt must remind us of our duty to the future—to our children, to future generations. It must also remind us of our duty to our inferiors who are still to rise to our position. In short, these two parts of the shirt—the front and the back—are said to indicate and to say to us as it were, "Look straight in the front, bearing in mind that it is the past that has come up to the present and will lead to the future."

The most important part of the shirt is the *gireh-ban* (literally 'that which preserves the knot') which signifies loyalty to, or faith in the religion. The *gireh-ban* is also called the *kisseh-i-kerfeh*, i.e. the purse or the bag of righteousness. It is

put up in the form of a bag or a purse, a little below the portion of the shirt which covers the part of the body below the throat. It indicates symbolically that a man has to be industrious and has not only to fill his bag or purse with money but has to fill it up with righteousness.

Thus the sudrah is symbolic of purity of life and actions of righteousness.

The Avesta word for the sacred thread is *awiyaonghana*. Kusti is its later Pahlavi rendering.

The word is variously derived. Some derive it from Pahlavi, *kosht*, meaning direction. So, the word may mean "that which points out to us the proper direction or path." Sudreh (the sacred shirt) indicates "advantageous path" and kusti indicates the proper direction of that path.

Some derive it from *kosht*, i.e. waist, and say that it is so called because it is put on, on the waist.

Some take the word to be Persian '*kishti*,' i.e. a ship, and say that it symbolizes the way that carries us to the safe harbour of righteousness.

But the probable derivation seems to be *kost*, i.e. limit or boundary. Kusti then is that which keeps us or reminds us to keep ourselves within proper limits or boundaries. Sudreh or the sacred shirt symbolizes the path of righteousness and kusti symbolizes one's duty to confine oneself within the proper limit of the path of righteousness. It indicates a direction in the path of morality.

The Avesta word for kusti is as said above, *awiyaonghana*, which literally means "to sit round about or to limit." This word then suggests that this last one is the probable derivation of the word 'kusti'.

The kusti, being prepared from the wool of a lamb which is in all ages considered to be the emblem of innocence and purity, is held to be a badge reminding a Zoroastrian of the purity of life and action which he has always to observe. The seventy-two threads, which make up the kusti, symbolize the seventy-two chapters of the Yasna, which forms an important part of the liturgical prayers of the Parsis. The seventy-four

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threads, which make up each of the three tassel-like *laris* or string ends of the *kusti*, symbolize the twenty-four sections which were believed to make up the *Visparad*, another liturgical prayer. The six parts or strands, each of twelve threads, into which the seventy-two threads of the *kusti* are divided at the time of weaving, are said to symbolize the six religious or ceremonial duties of a Zoroastrian. The twelve threads in each of the above twelve parts and strands symbolize the twelve months of the year. The six *laris* or tassel-like string ends, three at each end of the *kusti*, symbolizes the six *gahanbars* or the six season festivals of a Zoroastrian year. The hollow of the thread symbolizes the space between the earth and the heaven, between this world and the next. The doubling or the twisting of the thread in the beginning symbolizes the connection between the present corporeal world and the future spiritual world. The two worlds are so connected that what you will sow in this world, you will reap in the other. The turning of the *kusti* inside out has a somewhat similar signification. It symbolizes the passage of the soul from this corporeal to that spiritual world. The weaving or the uniting together of all the threads into one, symbolizes universal union or brotherhood. Though the explanation of the symbolism rests, not on any old Avesta books but on later books, still it is clear that the structure of the *kusti* had some symbolic signification like that of the cord worn by the Franciscan fathers on their waist.

Just as the cross is said to have existed as a symbol at times anterior to Christ, though Christ's crucifixion added to its signification, so, though Zoroastrianism added further significance to it, the *kusti* is said to have existed as a symbol prior to Zoroaster.

It is enjoined that except at the time of bathing, a Zoroastrian must always have the sacred shirt and thread on his body. Again, the thread is to be untied and re-girded several times during the day. The times are the following:

Immediately on leaving bed in the morning, after ablutions and

answering the calls of nature, before saying prayers, after a bath and before meals.

When performing the ceremony, one always turns towards light. In the morning, one turns towards the east. In the afternoon and in the evening, towards the west. At night, towards a lamp or towards the moon.

A Parsi has to perform ablutions when he performs the *kusti* ceremony on the above occasions. Having done so, he repeats a short prayer, unties it and then re-girds it with another short prayer known as *Nirang-i-kusti* described above. It is passed round the waist three times with two knots, one in the front and another at the back.

The knots are said to symbolize certain religious and moral thoughts. While forming the first half of the first knot in the front, a Zoroastrian must think that Ahura Mazda (God) exists, that He is one, is holy and is matchless. While forming the second half of the first knot he must remember that the Zoroastrian religion is the Word of God and that he must have full faith in it. While forming the second half of the second knot at the back, he is to remember that Zoroaster is the prophet of God, that he is his guide and that he shows the proper path of worship. While forming the second half of the second knot, he is to bear in mind that he has always to attend to "Good thoughts, good words and good deeds." A knot symbolizes a resolution. So these knots of the sacred thread symbolize resolutions for the above-said thoughts.

The *kusti* is a kind of belt. *Kamar-bastan* i.e. to tie the waist, or to put on the belt, is a phrase which has come to mean "to be ready for work." So, according to the *Dadistan* the putting on of the *kusti* on the waist signifies that the Zoroastrian who puts it on, thereby symbolizes his readiness to serve God. A person stands before his superior with his waist girded with a belt to show that he is ready to obey the orders of his master or superior. So, a Zoroastrian with waist girded by the belt of a *kusti* shows his obedience to his Great Master.

(Extracts from Sir J. J. Modi's
The Naqote Ceremony)

Ashem Vohu Vahistem Asti...

Tying and re-tying the Kusti is a ritual that faithfully punctuates the day of a Zoroastrian. But the meaning of those hurriedly mumbled prayers between bath and breakfast is as much part of the forgotten past as the flavour of the ice-cream served on that navjot day. In an effort to enlighten Parsis as to the significance of the Kusti ritual, Piloo Jungalwalla explains and translates the ancient prayers.

The *kusti* prayers begin with the words: *Kshnaothre Ahurahe, Mazda, "Joy to Ahura Mazda, Lord of life and wisdom."* Then follows the *Ashem Vohu*: "Blest is righteousness (*Asha*) the highest good, the greatest happiness. He who loves righteousness for its own sake, to him righteousness is bliss untold."

The word *Asha* is derived from the Avestan *areta* which is related to the Sanskrit *rita*, meaning absolute righteousness. *Asha*, however, is more than righteousness or virtue. It is the divine law, the spirit of harmony in the ordered universe, as well as the truth and justice of God. *Asha* is an integral part of Ahura Mazda. In the *Gathas* it is said that before Ahura Mazda created the world, He created *Asha*, so that divine justice may be manifest in the entire creation.

In one *Gathic* passage, Zarathushtra says: "*Asha* is given us for our choice, the benefit of our faith, and the destruction of all falsehood." Again, in the first of the three sermons of Zarathushtra found in the *Gathas*, the Prophet asserts that it is *Vohu Mana*, the good mind, that prompts penitent sinners not to smite the wicked, but to surrender them "into the two hands of *Asha*". That is why in the *Ashem Vohu*, *Asha* is said to be the highest good, an eternal joy that must be sought for its own sake and is its own reward.

The worshipper having put himself in a receptive frame of mind by meditating upon *Asha*, now begins to recite the *Kem-na Mazda*, which is composed in the Avestan language, as are the *Ashem Vohu* and the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*. The *Kem-na Mazda* is a composite

prayer. Its first two paragraphs are two widely separated verses taken from the *Ushtavaiti Gatha*. The third paragraph is a prose exhortation against evil and is taken from the *Ardebeshst Yasht* and the *Vendidad*. The fourth paragraph consists of a line taken from the *Spenta Mainyu Gatha*. The coherence and unity of the prayer, however, are in no way broken by its composite structure:

"Who will protect me, O Mazda, when the followers of the Lie threaten to overpower me with violence, what other than your flaming fire of thought, and your pure mind? The divine law is established through the workings of these two, O Ahura. Reveal to me that sacred doctrine through your true religion.

"Who will smite the enemy except your all-protective, divine teachings? Reveal to me, with visionary clarity, the very essence of wisdom in the dual life (of body and mind), and let the light of God and His good mind come to whomsoever you love, O Mazda.

"May the Lord of Wisdom and His shining devotion protect us from our enemies.

"Down with the Lie. Pluck it up from the roots. Burn it to ashes. Crush it underfoot. Begone from my sight, you devilish Lie. Run far from me. Vanish into the cold north where the icy winds blow. Do not dare to destroy this divinely ordered physical universe.

"Hail, Holy Devotion. We adore you."

As the Avestan language was not understood in Sassanian times a free translation of the *Kem-na Mazda* was made in Pazard, the spoken language of the Sassanians. This is the *Ahura Mazda Khodae*, a

composition charged with the spirit of penitence and humility. By renouncing all temptation and all evil, the Zoroastrian strengthens himself in the spirit, and pledges himself wholeheartedly to the service of Ahura Mazda.

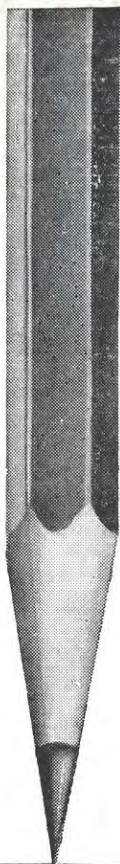
Here is a free translation of the *Ahura Mazda Khodae*:

"O wise and living God, my master, may You take away all power from *Ahriman*, the brooding darkness of my own mind, and free me from the fetters of ignorance. May the *Ahriman* within me be bruised and battered to bits. May all barbaric instincts, all deceptions and sorceries of the mind, those impulses which set me upon the unrighteous path, blinding my spirit so that seeing, I see not, and hearing, hear not, all mental tyrannies forged by my intellect, every sin and heresy, the evil genii of my lusts, the profaners of God's sanctity, and all such haters of truth who dwell within me be broken and destroyed. May all these tendencies to wickedness be made powerless, and every one of your enemies be defeated and disarmed.

"O most wise and living God, my Master, I turn away from my sins after true repentance. Every evil thought which I may have thought, every evil word which may have fallen from my lips, every evil act which I may have done or which may have been conceived by me or have originated from me, all these sins which I have heaped upon myself in this short life, which affect this world and the world of the spirit, which affect my soul, my body, my mind, my speech, my actions, from all these sins, thrice repeating this confession, and with a penitent and contrite heart, I turn back.

"Joy to Ahura Mazda, Lord of Life and Wisdom. Down with the evil spirit. The desire of the righteous for righteousness is the highest of all desires, therefore I praise *Asha* with the *Ashem Vohu*."

As soon as the *Ahura Mazda Khodae* is completed, the *kusti* is twice wrapped round the waist, and the two ends brought forward and crossed in front of the worshipper. The *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* prayer is now recited twice; and



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twice, on the word, *kshaotherenam*, meaning "in action," the first two knots of the *kusti* are tied.

The *Ahuna Vairya* or *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* prayer is considered the most ancient and the most sacred prayer in the entire *Avesta*. It embodies the religion in a nutshell. An understanding of the prayer is therefore essential. Here is a literal translation:

"O living God, even as you exercise your free will (beyond the limits of time and space), so may the Prophet act by following righteousness for the love of righteousness.

"The riches of the good mind come to him who dedicates every act of his earthly life to Mazda, and who strives to establish the sovereignty of God in this world by loving and serving the afflicted of the earth."

The final knot of the *kusti* ritual is now tied with the recitation of the *Ashem Vohu*. The need to cleave fast to *Asha* and all it stands for is again emphasized.

The ritual comes to an end with the recitation of the *Jasa-me-Avan-*

gahe Mazda, the Zoroastrian confession of faith. This prayer, which is in Avestan and forms the last two paragraphs of *Yasna* 12, embodies the basic tenets of the religion:

"Come to my help, O Mazda. (Repeated thrice.) I am a worshipper of Mazda, a follower of the Mazda-yasni religion, and a Zoroastrian. I declare that I have full faith in and fully accept this religion."

"I profess and have full faith in the very mind of the Good Thought. I profess and have full faith in the very utterance of the Good Word. I profess and have full faith in the very act of the Good Deed."

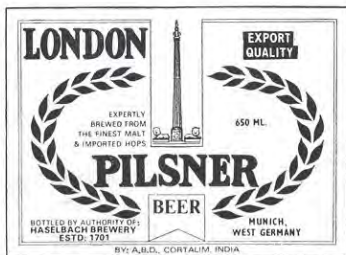
"I profess and have full faith in the good and true Daena Mazda-yasni, the religion which proclaims God in His wisdom through His divine revelation, the religion which breaks all fetters from the mind, sets aside strife and violence, shows the way to a perfect surrender and a perfect union of the soul with God, and which cleaves to the paths of righteousness forever. The Daena Mazda-yasni is the

greatest, the best, the most profound of all religions which are or which shall be, for it embodies the Laws of Ahura, the one eternal God, as they were taught to the people by Zarathushtra, His Prophet." (The Ahuric law of righteousness is not the sole monopoly of any one religion. This prayer was probably composed when the followers of other religions were eager to convert people to their respective faiths.)

Ending with a recitation of the *Ashem Vohu*, the *kusti* prayers remind us continually that our aim is to love and serve the *drighu*, the poor, the homeless, the afflicted of the earth, and through that dedication establish the sovereignty of Ahura in this world. This is the supreme value of the *kusti* prayers, and their importance in our daily life.

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Aban, Abandokht, Abanhir ...

Names are forever. They are given at birth without our consent and depending on what we make of our lives, help or hound us till the grave and beyond. With no alternative in sight, the best we can do is provide as wide a range of names as possible for parents to choose from. Then if future progenies are named Aban, Abandokht, or Abanhir, they will at least have the satisfaction of knowing their parents did so after due deliberation.

Below we produce a list of names of

Iranian origin along with their meanings. In some cases we have furnished the Avestan (Av.), Pahlavi (Pahl.) and Cuneiform (Cun.) forms. The spellings of the names may be altered but the correct pronunciation should be adhered to as far as possible. The list is not comprehensive and readers are requested to draw omissions and errors to our attention so that corrections may be incorporated, should the list be produced in book form. Parsiana extends its many thanks to Dasturs Kaikhosro

M. JamaspAsa and Hormazdyar D. K. Mirza and Ervad Jamshed C. Katrak for assisting us in our endeavour. The responsibility for any shortcomings is entirely ours.

In deference to our mothers, we carry the list of female names first. The male list will follow in the next issue. Parsiana staffers Sanobar Marker, Pervin Mahoney, Veera Parbhu and Veera Patel worked on the project. Alphabet illustrations designed by Manjula Padmanabhan. Copyright 1976, by Parsiana, Bombay.



ABAN

Waters; name of an angel; name of 10th day and eighth month

ABANDOKHT

Daughter of Aban

ABANHIR

Possessing essence of Aban

ABENAHAR

Water of stream or canal

ABETHEI

Water from the skies, rain-water

ABNAI

Sons

ANAHITA

Stainless, immaculate

AREDETTFREDHI

One having a righteous father; mother of a future saviour

ARDVISURA

Brilliant waters; name of a river of Iran; name of the 10th day and eighth month

ARENAVACH

Daughter of King Jamshed

ARMAITI

Humility, devotion, piety

ARGAVAN

Red colour

ARMINDOKHT

Daughter of fourth son of King Kaikobad

ARNAZ

Purely graceful

ARNAVAZ

Holy comforter

ARTDOKHT

Righteous daughter

ARYENISH

Of a noble lineage

ARZU

Wish

ASBANI

A miller

ASBANA

Wife of Pourudhakhshiti, a holy man

ASHISHVANGH

Good blessings, sanctity;

name of an angel;

name of 25th day of month

ATURDOKHT

Daughter of Adar

AZADDOKHT

Daughter of a freeman

AZADEH

Noble

AZAD

Noble

AZARMIDOKHT

Beloved daughter;

a polite girl;

name of a Sassanian queen



BANU

Lady

BANUGUSHNASP

Lady who possesses a male horse; name of a brave

daughter of Rustum

BAKHTAVAR

Fortunate

BANUHURURISH

Lady shining like the sun

BANUDADHUSH

Lady with justice and intelligence

BANUGUL

Rose-like lady

BANUHURAM

Lady with joy; name of hero

Rustum's wife

BANUHUFRIZ

Well-born lady

BENAFSHA

The violet flower

BEHMANBANU

Lady with a good mind

BEHRUZ

Good day

BEHZAD

Well born; name of a horse

BEHAFRID

Well created

BOMANDOKHT

Good-minded maiden;

daughter of Boman

BOSTAN

Place of fragrance; garden;

name of a book by Sheikh

Saadi



CHAMAN

Garden

CHEHERAZAD

Of noble descent



DADAI

A nurse; tutor

DADHUSH

Born intelligent

DADHUSHFARROKH

Born with auspicious

intelligence

DAWLAT

Wealth

DELARAM

Comfort to heart;

lovely woman

DELBAHAR

Heart of the spring season

DELDAR

Keeper of heart; lover

DELRUBA

Ravishing of heart

DELSHAD

Of happy heart

DELKHUSH

Pleasant; cheerful;

opener of heart

DELARA

Adornor of heart; beloved

DELBAR

Loving; sweetheart

DELNAVAZ

Caresser of heart

DELBANU

Lady of heart; loving lady

DELAFRUZ

Kindler of the heart

DEHBANU

Village lady

DIN

Religion; name of an angel;
name of 24th day
DINBANU
Lady of faith
DOGDO
Daughter; Av. *Dugedhra*;
name of Zarathushtra's mother

**FAHNK**

Virtuous
FARKHONDA
Happy, fortunate
FARIDA
Proud
FARHANG
Knowledge, learning
FARZANAK
Learned
FERANGIS
Dazzling glory; name of
mother of King Kaikhusru
FEROZA
Victorious
FEROZBANU
Victorious lady
FRANAK
Glorious;
name of King Faridun's mother
FRENY
Beloved; name of one of the
daughters of Zarathushtra

**GANJ**

Treasure

GOHAR

Essence; nature; jewel
GOHARAFRID
Created by nature
GORDAFRID
Created as a hero; name of
an Iranian heroine who fought
against Sohrab

GORDIEH

A woman warrior

GUL

Flower; rose

GULAFRUZ

Dazzling like a flower

GULAFSAN

Rose fable

GULAFSHAN

Dispersing like a flower

GULANDAM

Having the form of a flower;

slender, delicate

GULBADAN

Having a body like a rose

GULBANU

Flower-like lady

GULBARG

A roseleaf

GULBAHAR

A spring flower

GULCHIRR

Having a countenance like a
rose; name of the beloved of
Aorang

GULESTAN

Garden of roses;

name of book by Sheikh Saadi

GULKHANDAN

Smiling like a flower

GULKHURSHID

Sunflower

GULLALA

The tulip flower

GULMOHOR

Name of a flowering tree

GULNAR

Pomegranate

GULPAEKAR

Rose-faced

GULROXAR

Rose-faced; rosy-cheeked

GULRUKH

Rose-faced; ruddy

GULSHAN

A delightful spot;

rose garden

GULSHIRIN

Sweet like a rose; name of
daughter of King Yazdgird
who defeated the Arabs for
a time

GULZAR

Garden of flowers

**HVOVI**

Of the family of *Hvov* which
means 'having good animals';
consort of Zarathushtra

HOMA

Name of an Iranian bird

HOMAI

Name of Kaianian King

Bahman's wife

HOMAYUN

August; royal; blessed

HORMAZBANU

Lady bearing the name of God

HURFRISH

One who possesses much love

HUSHANBANU

Lady of beauty

HUTOSH

Well-formed

HUTOXI

Diligent, industrious;
name of King Gushtasp's
queen

**IRAN**

Av. *Airya* = noble

IRANBANU

Lady of Iran

IRANDOKHT

Daughter of Iran

IZAD

Angel

IZADAN

Angels

**JAMRU**

Harp of monarch; name of
a town near Peshawar

JEHANARAY

Adornor of the world

JER

Gold

JERBANU

Lady of gold

**KAIDOKHT**

Daughter of a king; princess

KANIZ

Maiden

KATAYUN

Name of the Queen of

King Gushtasp

KATIN

Belonging to the house

KEHERAFRID

Made of chestnut or

bay colour

KERBANU

A lady of felicity,

strength and power

KESHVAR

Country, region

KAINDOKHT

Daughter of Kaianian family

KHARMEN

Hero

KHUBCHIRR

Good looking

KHUBTABA

Of good disposition

KHUBRUI

Of fine features

KHURSHID

Shining sun;

Av. *Hvare Khshaeta*

KHURSHIDBANU

Lady like the sun

KHURMAND

Possessing glory

KHUSHCHIRR

Of pleasing face

KHUSHNAMA

Of nice appearance

KHUSHMAND

Happy

KHUSHTABEH

Having pleasant manners



LAL

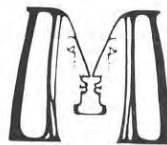
Ruby; red wine; vermilion lips of a lovely woman

LALAGUL

Tulip flower

LALEH

Tulip; the tulip-shaped pestle used in the Yasna ceremony



MAHAFRID

Created great

MAHAFRIN

Blessing of the moon

MAHAZIVER

A lady with golden ornaments

MAHBANU

Moon-like lady

MAHCHIH

With features like the moon

MAHDOKHT

Daughter of the moon

MAHIN

Like the moon

MAHINBANU

Lady like the moon

MAHKHATUN

Lady of the moon

MAKHURSHID

Moon and sun

MAHPAEKAR

Having a face like the moon

MAHPARI

Fairy of the moon

MAHPARVIN

Moon Pleiades

MAHPERVIZ

Excellent like the moon

MAHRU

Having a face like the moon

MAHROKH

Having a face like the moon

MAHSULTAN

Moon-monarch

MAHTAB

Shining moon

MAHZARIN

Golden moon

MAKHMAL

Velvet

MANDANI

Greek name for the Queen of Cyrus the Great

MANIJEH

A jewel of a lady; name of wife of Bizan and daughter of Afrasiab

MASTI

Intoxication; cupidity; pride

MEHER

The sun; love, kindness, friendship; justice; name of an angel; name of the 16th day and seventh month

MEHERAFRAZ

Exalted by love

MEHERAFRID

Created by love

MEHERAFRIN

Blessings of the sun

MEHERAFRUZ

Kindled by love

MEHERCHIH

Having features like the sun

MEHERKHODA

Lord of friendship

MEHERKHUDA

Grace of God

MEHERPAEKAR

Of a face like the sun

MEHEROKH

With a face like the sun

MEHERSIMIN

Having a silvery form like Meher

MORVARID

Pearl

MUNAVAR

Illuminated, bright

MEHERANGIZ

One that creates love

MEHERBANU

Lady of love



NAHEED

Venus; stainless, immaculate

NARENJ

Orange

NARGES

Narcissus

NAVAV

One who caresses, soothes; name of a musical instrument

NAVAVASH

Caressing, soothing

NAZAKAT

Elegance, politeness, tenderness

NAZBANU

Graceful lady

NAZNEEN

Graceful maiden

NAZCHIH

Graceful looks

NAZTAB

Shining grace; epithet applied by Firdousi to Mushknaz

NEKAKHTAR

Of good stars

NEKBAKHT

Of good fortune

NEKCHIH

Of good appearance

NEKDEL

Of good heart

NEZHAT

Pure

NURJEHAN

Light of the world

NURMAHAL

Abode of light



PAESANGNU

A decorated female

PARI

Fairy

PARENDI

An angel of prosperity

PARIBANU

Fairy-girl

PARICHIH

Fairy-faced

PARIN

Fairy-like

PARINDOKHT

Daughter of a fairy

PARIZAD

Born of a fairy

PARVANA

A butterfly, a moth

PARVIN

Pleiades; pearls

PARVIZ

Victorious; happy; excellent

PAYENDEH

Permanent

POREGAV

Having many cows

POREMAE

Of perfect quality; name of cow that nourished Faridun

POURUCHISTI

Full of wisdom; name of daughter of Zarathushtra

POYENDEH

Swift

PURAN

Of red colour; successor

PURANDOKHT

Name of a queen, daughter of Puran



RAKSHANDEH

Shining

RAMBANU

Lady of joy

RAMBEHSHT

Paradise of joy

RASHIDBANU

Sagacious lady

RASHNA

Rectitude

ROBAB

A musical instrument

ROBEAB

Sweeping of waters

ROSHAN

Bright; shining

ROSHANAK

Bright woman

ROSHANAF

Bright

ROSHINI

Lustre

ROXANNE

Greek form of Roshan

ROXENDA

Flashing

RUDABA

River water;
name of wife of Zal

RUHAE

A woman of good fortune

RUXAR

Face

RUZBEH

Good day

**SABAR**

Patience

SAMANBAR

Forebearing

SAMANRUKH

With a patient face

SANAM

Beloved

SANOBER

A name of an evergreen tree like the cypress

SAPINUD

Name of an Iranian queen

SARAFRAZ

With an exalted head;
honoured

SARV

Cypress

SARVAZAD

Noble like a cypress

SARVAR

Sovereign; prince; lord

SAVANGHVACHA

Speaking gainfully; Av. name for a daughter of King Jamshed

SHAH

Royal

SHAHBANU

Queen

SHAHDOKHT

Daughter of a monarch, princess

SHAHNAVAZ

Caresser of a King

SHAHNAZ

Pride of a King

SHAHRU

Having a face like a sovereign

SHAHZAN

Royal spouse; virgin wedded, so named in Parsi marriage benediction

SHAKER

Sweet

SHAKERBANU

Sweet lady

SHAKERNAZ

Delicate as sweet words

SHEHER

Learned; month; moon

SHEHERBANU

Lady of the city

SHEHERDOKHT

Learned daughter

SHEHERIVAR

Power at will; name of an angel; name of fourth day and sixth month

SHEHERNAVAZ

Comfort of the city

SHEHERNAZ

Glory of the city

SHIRBANU

Brave lady

SHIRDOKHT

Brave daughter

SHIRIN

Sweet

SHIRINBANU

Sweet lady

SIMBAR

Having a white complexion

SIMIN

Silvery

SIMINDOKHT

Silvery girl

SINDOKHT

Name of a female ancestor of Rustom

SAROSH

Obedience; an angel; name of 17th day

SRUTATFEDHRI

Having a famous father; Av. name of the mother of one of the three saviours of the world

SUDABA

Having lustrous profit; name of the daughter of King of Hamavaran, and Queen of King Kaus, the Kaianian

SUMANNAZ

Beautiful lily of the valley; name of the daughter of Kurang, King of Zabulistan, who married King Jamshed

SUSAN

Lily; fir tree; name of a Turanian dancing girl who trapped Iranian heroes

**TABENDA**

Shining

TAJBANU

Lady of the Crown; queen

TANAZ

Having a delicate body

TEHMINA

Strong woman; name of hero Rustom's wife and daughter of King of Sangan

THRITY

Third one; Av. name for one of the daughters of Zarathushtra

TOKHMESARV

Having stature like a cypress

TURAN

Turkestan

TUSHNAMAITY

Contented mind

TUTI

Parrot

**YASMIN**

Jasmine

**USHTAVAITY**

Having bliss; name of the second Gatha

**ZARINE**

Golden

ZENOBIA

A Greek name, possibly from Persian *Zimbeh-nice* ornament

ZER

Gold

ZAMROD

Jamrud, the river of Jam, a town near Peshawar

VAHBIZ

Bestowed by God

VANGHUFREDHI

Of good parentage; name of mother of third saviour

VIRA

Heroine

VIRBANU

Heroic lady

VISPANFRAYA

Beloved of all



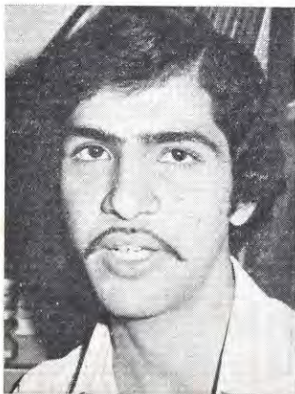
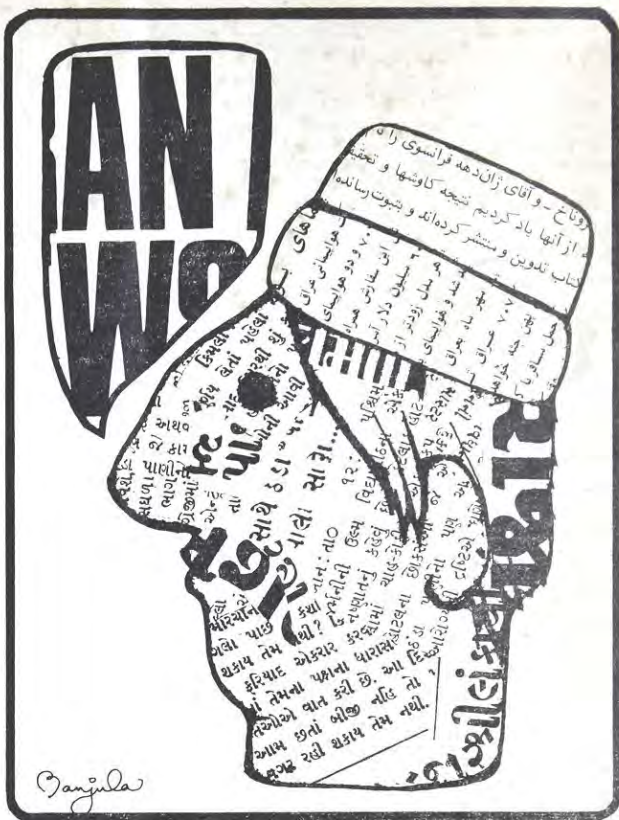
As the list of male names is substantially larger, they will be printed over the next two issues of Parsiana.

The life span of most languages is limited. Whether it be Gathic, Avestan, Pahlavi or Persian, they all have to bow to the exigencies of time and space. And while it is true old languages don't die, they do, however, fade away.

For the Parsis, Gujarati became their mother tongue after being tempest tossed on India's hospitable shores. With the arrival of the British, began the corruption of Parsi-Gujarati, a process that has continued to this day and left in its wake a community without a language. In Bombay where the large majority of Parsis stay, the schools no longer teach Gujarati. And except for Gujarat, the languages taught in all other Parsi settlements range from Cantonese to cockney, but not Gujarati. So what is the alternative?

Should we switch to English?

Interviews by Feroza Paymaster and Jerro Gorimar



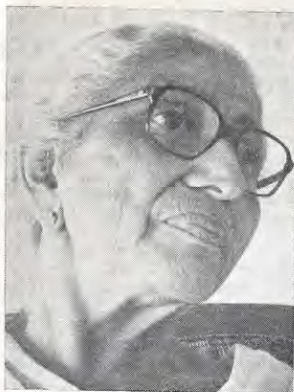
Homi Irani, 21, Asst. Steward, Oberoi Sheraton Hotel

"We should keep both. Our forefathers have been speaking Gujarati for years. Gujarati is their mother tongue. Switching to English would make us more westernized. But in the modern world and in the hotel line, English is necessary. Job opportunities are better. We can go abroad and settle. Gujarati is useful only if you work in a Parsi concern.

"Some Parsis are not proud of being Parsis. They prefer to speak only in English. I don't think Gujarati has any religious significance. But when a Parsi meets

a Parsi they should talk in Gujarati. We can make out a Parsi by the way he speaks Gujarati. It makes us different. But we should learn correct Gujarati.

"Parsi newspapers should be in both languages. So that those who speak Gujarati can improve their English and those who speak English can improve their Gujarati. We should also know how to speak Hindi and Marathi. To a Maharashtrian you should speak in Marathi, to the Japanese in Japanese. If we want to settle in Iran, we should learn Persian."



Tehmina Sholapurvala, 74, Housewife

"No, we should not switch. We are all not so educated. We should keep both. Gujarati is our mother tongue. It has no religious importance, but it makes us different from others.

"The Panchayat could use both languages. But I think Parsi newspapers should be in Gujarati. The younger generation doesn't touch Parsi newspapers, as it is. They only read *The Times of India*. In *The Bombay Samachar*, for instance, the Parsi columns are in English. Why? They should be in Gujarati, so we can understand. I

am only a matriculate; I can speak and read English, but I can't write freely."

Ms Sholapurvala feels, however, that English is necessary today. "Children should learn English. There would be more jobs then. Gujarati, Marathi and Hindi are important too. But not French and all those other languages. Children are heavily burdened.

"Bombay Gujarati is very bad. I am from Baroda, my husband is from Sholapur. We speak pure Gujarati at home. Parsi Gujarati should be improved."



Percy Siganporia, 25, Asst. Executive Officer, Tata Finlays

"Certainly, we should switch. Language is for communication, not to make people distinctive or exclusive. You have to speak and live a language. You should use the language in which you are most comfortable and which is most widely understood.

"Half the people I know cannot read Gujarati or speak it grammatically," says Percy who feels a section of Parsi literature should be in English to cater to the younger people. "Older people like to read Parsi newspapers. Let the Parsi press keep the Gujarati

language. I read the English papers anyway.

"As far as I know Gujarati has no religious significance. Even our prayers are not in it. When you fill a form you are expected to say Gujarati is your mother tongue, but I speak English all the time.

"When you have a language there is no need to purify it. It should be colloquial otherwise it becomes staid and heavy. The only other language you should know is Hindi. I find no occasion to use Marathi. And certainly not Persian, because nobody understands it."



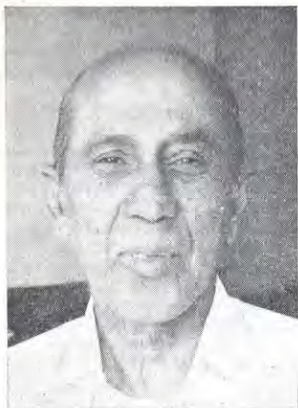
Jaloo Sethna, 30, Information Assistant, Govt. of India Tourist Office, Bombay

"I would like both. Gujarati has been our mother tongue since we landed in Gujarat. English is a foreign language after all, but it is essential. There should be a balance between the two, so that we keep our identity."

The Parsi papers and the Panchayat publications should be in both languages, says Ms Sethna, "as the younger generation cannot read or write Gujarati. Don't you feel that *Parsi* should be in both so that even older people can read it?

"Gujarati has no religious significance. It wasn't our language in Persia. It is not at all pure. I don't see why we should speak *shudh* Gujarati. Parsi Gujarati is quite sweet.

"I am so used to speaking in English that I don't feel it makes us anglicized. At times other communities wonder why we don't speak Hindi. As for our Marathi, it's disgraceful. We should learn Hindi, but not Persian, really."



Kaikhushru Gorimar, 63, Insurance Agent

"Of course not. We have been speaking Gujarati for generations. It is our mother tongue. English is an asset, but we should not discard Gujarati. Most of our religious literature is in Gujarati.

"For official purposes, such as the forms and pamphlets of the Panchayat, both languages should be used. Especially for the benefit of the younger generation. They think in English," Gorimar who can speak, read and write Gujarati feels Parsi Gujarati is not pure,

"just as English spoken by the Americans isn't. But it makes them distinctive. To discard Gujarati entirely would make us more westernized.

"English serves as a lingua franca. It is necessary. It offers more job opportunities. Hindi is the national language; Parsi should be able to speak it. Maybe a little Marathi too. Persian is a sweet language, but it has no value."



Mohur Sidhwa, 18, Student, Kinnaird College

"I don't think so. Gujarati unites the community. And unity is what we need right now. We have been speaking Gujarati for 1300 years and English only of late. We should at the very least continue to speak Gujarati. Gujarati is more our mother tongue than English ever could be.

"Switching to English would make us more westernized. English could be the second language. For official purposes we could use both, as the older generation is more comfortable in one, and the younger in the other. English is necessary because there are

more jobs for English-speaking people. I guess it is a hangover from the British. In addition to these two languages, we should know Persian. That is where we came from originally. And for those who live in India, I suppose they have to know Indian languages to get by."

Mohur, who is from Lahore, speaks a mixture of English, Gujarati and Urdu at home. She says, "Parsi Gujarati is not pure. To improve it, to change the way we have been speaking for years, would be difficult."



Dinshaw Pavri, 39, Manager, Industrial Press

"We should not switch. How many in the community know English well? We should keep both languages as English is essential as an international language. The Parsi papers and the Panchayat publications should be in Gujarati and English.

"Our Gujarati is not pure; our accent is not quite correct either," says Pavri. "But the older generation will not tolerate any attempt at improving the language. Besides Gujarati helps to identify us as

Zoroastrians. If it's not our mother tongue, than I don't know what else could be. Speaking English does not make us westernized. But it offers more employment opportunities.

"I think Parsis should learn to speak Hindi at the very least as it is the national language. I speak Marathi, Hindi, Punjabi and Konkani quite fluently. I speak both English and Gujarati at home but I'm more comfortable in English."

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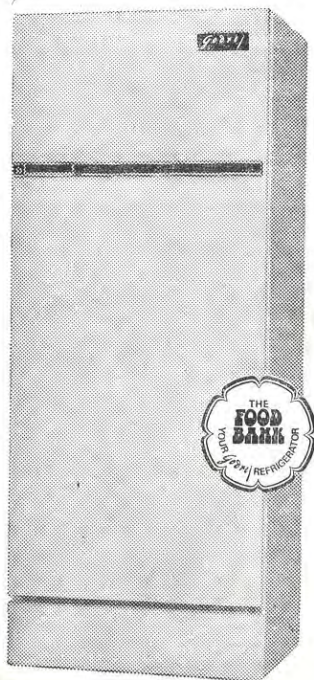
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TATA ENTERPRISES



DINI AVAZ

When the Gujarati weekly *Parsi Avaz* closed down in July 1974, people came to Kaikhushru Dastoor and wept. Their tears bore fruit eighteen months later as a new, more attractive bilingual publication devoted to the esoteric philosophy of *Ilm-e-Kshnum* rolled off the presses. Dedicated to the late mystic leader Behramshah Shroff, who founded the movement, *Dini Avaz* or 'Religious Voice' promises to take over where modern science stops.

"Our magazine is addressed to those who don't know the ABC of Zoroastrianism and its mystical science," says Dastoor, one of the prime forces behind the magazine and the mystic movement. "What we want to show is that modern science has a limit. It doesn't understand all nature ... it has not understood even a speck of dust."

The bi-monthly journal, whose first forty-page issue appeared in December, is run by a committee of ten "who have a craving to work," and is edited by Dosabhai Hormusji Desai, "a well-known teacher from Navsari who is an M.A. in Persian and writes Gujarati ghazals," says Dastoor. "No trusts have supported us, only individuals. People have donated money voluntarily—anything from five rupees to even 1001. There is no profit motive, no salaries are paid. We'll just have to see how well it works out."

The Gujarati section of the first issue is more erudite than the English. An article on atash-behrams describes 16 different kinds of fires with their technical names. By contrast the English articles are more firmly rooted in the 20th century. One describes the relationship between Shroff, whose followers believe he gained spiritual knowledge from higher souls residing in Iran's Mount Demavand, and K. R. Cama, the scholar trained in the Western tradition; another talks of the frontiers of modern science. Both are attempts to show that mere reason—in this case, physics and linguistics—can never offer ultimate explanations.

"The class of readers to whom English is addressed will be entirely different from the Gujarati readers.

For all practical purposes, the Gujarati contents are a continuation of *Parsi Avaz*. We didn't keep the same name for this magazine, in deference to the Chiniwala family's wishes. But we wanted to have an *Avaz* somewhere, so we had *Dini Avaz*.

"*Parsi Avaz* closed down in June 1974 and was running at a loss of 3000-4000 rupees a year. To its founder, Jehangir Chiniwala, it was a mission. After his death we thought that the chapter was over. But some young people, who are now members of the *Dini Avaz* committee, wanted to run a class. I then reluctantly opened a class—once a month at Bharda School. We have had 17 sittings so far; today about 150 people attend the classes. It was here the idea of starting a magazine was mooted."

Within the "meagre subscription" of twelve rupees a year, the journal even caters for children. "People tell me: *bacchao ne mate kai lakho*" (write something for the children), said Dastoor. Accordingly the "Children's Corner" article, "What is navjot?", is subtitled "the story of a divine power-station."

"Call us ultra-orthodox if you like," says Dastoor, a student of science turned legal officer in a leading bank. "Our aim is to show that Zoroastrianism has two inter-related sides: our scriptures on the one hand, and on the other our institutions such as the sudreh, kusti, manthra prayers, agiaris, dokhmas and so on. The latter is as important to Zoroastrianism as *manashni*, *gavashni*, *kunashni* (good thoughts, good words, good deeds). The truths appearing in *Dini Avaz* will be mostly based on *Ilm-e-Kshnum*, the mystic science of Zoroastrianism."

Alternately hailed as the spiritual core of Zoroastrianism by its adherents and dismissed as obscure mumbo-jumbo by its detractors, *Ilm-e-Kshnum* was not always made very clear to the puzzled objective viewer. In *Dini Avaz* this emotional zeal has yielded at last to a more thoughtful explanation of the doctrine behind the fervour.

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Crime and Punishment

by Jeroo Gorimar

The telephone echoes shrilly in the lonely house by the sea. The waves swish menacingly outside. The Coroner drags himself out of bed. There has been a railway accident. In the blood-streaked dawn, he confronts "death, the only reality I know."

After ten years of doing so, Homi Chinoy stepped down as Coroner for the city of Bombay. During that calamitous decade, the Coroner's Court over which he presided dealt with a reported 40,000 corpses of people who had died sudden or unnatural deaths. It also resulted in a landmark ruling upheld by the High Court that a party making allegations had the right to cross-examine witnesses led by the prosecution, and a 9 p.m. to 4.30 a.m. court session in which two women demanded possession of the body of a man they both claimed to be their husband. When neither could substantiate their claim, they agreed to hand the corpse over to the brother of the deceased.

"As a coroner I had to investigate all cases of murder, poison, hit-and-run accidents" and the like, Chinoy noted. He was aided by a jury comprising people with a "sound and robust common sense" and by doctors who perform post-mortems. Post-mortems are conducted when a complaint is filed alleging foul play or a police report is submitted to that effect. If the findings reveal "injuries which in the ordinary course of nature would not result in death," an inquest is held to determine the possible causes of death.

The Coroner's duties often conflict with religious sentiments, as was the case when Chinoy had to commandeer the body of a Parsi lady from Doongerwadi. Her brother alleged foul play and the Coroner, accompanied by the Registrar and the Assistant Commissioner of Police, rushed to Hodiwalla Bungli. "The *sachkar* ceremony had been completed but we took the body to the morgue. There

was a great hue and cry about it ... I appreciate religious sentiment but a coroner is a servant of the law. I never allowed communal considerations to come in my way or let myself be pressured by higher-ups.



Chinoy: a servant of the Law.
(Photo by Manjula Padmanabhan)

Aside from the routine cases, the Coroner's Court also has to cope with disasters on a larger scale. Chinoy vividly recalls a train collision one misty morning in Matunga when over 30 bodies lay strewn on the tracks and many more were injured. "We rushed to the scene as it is our duty to release the bodies as quickly as possible," he notes. Similarly the explosion some years ago at the Alexandra Dock saw his office working round the clock.

"My hair has grown grey with experience," says the tall, pink-cheeked lawyer. His hankering for the law took its root during the struggle for independence. "All those who led the Freedom Movement were in the legal profession." Chinoy recalled: "I wanted to contribute my mite." He came from

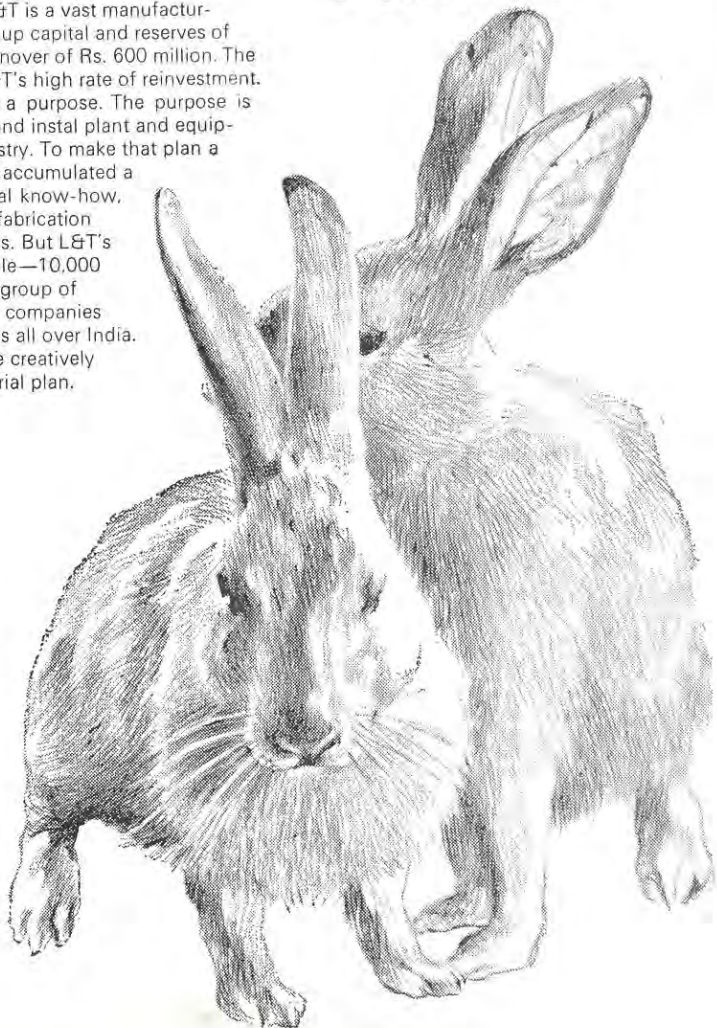
"a very poor family" and "owed everything" to Fr. W. Pereira, the principal of the Dr. Antonio D'Silva School in Dadar. "He took me under his wing and educated me. Since it was a Catholic school I couldn't be educated free, so I paid a nominal sum of one anna in the first standard and six annas in the sixth." Chinoy earned his way through Elphinstone College and the Government Law College by giving tuitions and writing for the now defunct *Bombay Chronicle* and *The Morning Standard* (now *The Indian Express*). He started his legal career in the chambers of M. C. Chagla, the first Indian Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, and then in the chambers of Sir N. P. Engineer, the one-time Advocate General of India. In 1949 Chinoy was appointed Presidency Magistrate, the youngest man to be elevated to the post. As a magistrate, he delivered two historic judgements. One concerned bigamy, which resulted in the all-India anti-bigamy act, and the other dealt with the sales tax administration, which resulted in an ordinance being passed, the first ever to be done so on the judgement of a Presidency Magistrate. In 1965 he was appointed Coroner and was given three one-year extensions before retiring last November. "As a magistrate I dealt with those who broke the law. As a coroner I dealt with sudden and unnatural deaths." As to which he preferred, the lawyer shrugged, "You make your bed and lie in it."

Now that his life has come to an arid pause, Chinoy would like to "return to my first love, the bar." He has no regrets about his retirement. "One quits the job as one quits the world." Untouched by the cold greyness of the morgue, the Coroner has developed a philosophical resignation. "I believe there is a hidden power that guides man from the womb to the tomb. Birth follows death and life goes on."

The common multiplying factor

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BOOKS

The Long Duel

A rather blinding missionary zeal blurs the attempts of most Parsi scholars to put their views down on paper and in perspective. *Dokhmenashini* and *Khurshed Nagirashini*, brought out by the Dadar Jashan Committee and Baug-E-Iranshah Trust, is no exception. The refrain that runs through its 256 pages is "*Dokhmenashini* is the best method of disposal".

The contents include prize-winning essays in English and Gujarati, invited for the purpose of preparing "the members of the Parsi Zoroastrian community against the propaganda of crematoriumwalla reformist Parsis appearing in some cheap, local papers..." articles and opinions of Parsi scholars and men of standing in the community pertaining to the disposal of the dead and the controversy surrounding the *Time* magazine article of April 1, 1974. The *piece de resistance*, is a chapter on Shrivax R. Vakil, who with his statement on the *dokhmas* in October 1973, sparked off the controversy.

Seen as a whole, the book ultimately amounts to a litany of stock, orthodox arguments and does not fulfill the promise that "it is loaded with new and scientific points." Mystical, often incomprehensible theories are bolstered by mere denial of the charges of the opponents of *dokhmenashini*. Very little effort has been made to refute them with concrete evidence.

This is particularly obvious in the second prize-winning essay, whose bulk (all 70 pages of it) is devoted to the advantages of the age-old method of disposal, while electric cremation, the crux of the controversy, has been dismissed in two lines. But the two prize-winning essays are the best part of the book, for they are well researched and supported by religious and medical quotations. Their arguments have a convincing religious-ecological backbone, although in the later sections the logic crumbles, with racist overtones

and genetically unsound statements creeping into the essays. For instance, mixed marriage is compared to the mating of a horse and an ass, the offspring as a result is alleged to be inferior, the father becomes an imbecile and the female barren. This is contrary to what geneticists like Dr. Jayantilal Undevia (see *Parsiana*, July 1975) assert: "The hybrid is always of greater vigour. The first generation is always good." What the German sociologist, Eckehard Kulke, in his recent study *The Parsees in India* refers to as ethnocentrism—regarding one's own race or cultural group as superior to others—is embarrassingly conspicuous in statements like: "It appears that Zarathustrian law is fit for only advanced souls—souls that are standing on the culmination point of spiritual progress." Such anomalies weaken the book, which is further marred by proofing errors and a stilted style.

One chapter which highlights the inconsistencies of the book is 'Learned Opinions.' This is meant to give a cross-section of opinion, ranging from the views of Parsi and foreign scholars to those of ornithologists. The temperately worded sentiments of John R. Hinnells of the Department of Comparative Religion at Britain's Manchester University, former Justice J. Scott of the Bombay High Court and eminent Indologists like Monier Williams and S. L. Clements contrast sharply with the hypersensitivity of Parsi pundits. For them the chapter serves to attack the "crematorium-wallas who are playing dirty tricks to injure the feelings of orthodox Hamdins and especially Vakil who wanted to scare the community with horror stories," seemingly for the fun of it!

Indeed, Vakil is the pivot of the last chapters. These record for posterity the inflated rhetoric of those outraged Parsis who blasted the editors of *Time* magazine with letters alleging that their article was inspired by Vakil. The correspondence varies from the merely injured to the libellous and reite-

rates with tiresome doggedness, what is echoed in most of the book—one trustee's part in the controversy. One wonders what purpose is served by raking up old issues.

The book is obviously a product of dedication and deeply rooted convictions. But in the final analysis it leaves the impartial reader with a gnawing doubt about its goal. Has it served merely as a catharsis for the orthodox—or will it achieve its objective of swaying the reformist and uncommitted sections of the community to *dokhmenashini*?

—Jeroo Gorimar

Criminal Writing

He brought his book to the office for review. Even offered to review it himself. "I've done so for several publications," noted Captain F. D. Colaabavala. We explained that it wasn't the done thing at *Parsiana*, but then the *Indian Mafia in Action* is full of things one should not do. "The book has been recommended as a manual for customs and police officers," noted the author. "It's sold 22,000 copies."



As the title of the 148 page Orient Paperback suggests, the book abounds with everything you wanted to know about matka kings, flesh traders, smugglers, food adulterators etc. (all pre-emergency). It's blurb promises to prise the lid off the underworld.

"It really shook up the narcotic boys," says Colaabavala. "They

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threatened me on the phone. Captain saab, *yeh bura kiya*" (loosely translated: you done us wrong). But as the Captain *saab* notes with a shrug of his 70 or 80 inch shoulders. "After it is an accomplished fact, what can they do?"

"I was a crime reporter once," explained Colaabavala in reply to where he got his information. "I have my contacts. I also refer to press cuttings and books. I'm at my desk by 5.30 a.m. and I work steadily till 10.30." After the usual breakfast of six eggs and two hours of weight lifting, Colaabavala embarks to research his books and a crime busting column for a weekly journal.

"I always liked to write and I guess I always had a style," says Colaabavala whose first article appeared at the age of eight on the Children's Page of *The Times of India*. "My books are reportage rather than autobiographical." And with titles like *Hippy Dharma* and *Indian Mafia* to his credit, it's just as well. For at 51, when most writers tend to philosophize

about life, the former Captain is busy writing on what Oscar Wilde once termed "sordid sinners and splendid sins." Around March his book *Tantra* is due. "It's about sex," he notes casually, in case we hadn't guessed and following it are *Sinful Cities of the World*, *Pirates of Asia*, *Witchcraft Eastern and Western*. "My books sell because I'm a good writer," he notes on parting, and with your hand in his bone crushing grip, you're inclined to agree.

JEROO GORIMAR

News (Continued from page 13) able at The Parsi Zoroastrian Association, 1, Saklat Place, Calcutta 13; Bharat Prakash Bhavan, 24-B, Budhu Ostagar Lane, Calcutta 9 and The Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman, Kermani Building, Sir P. Mehta Road, Bombay 400 001.

A lecture series to commemorate the death of **Dr Homi Bhabha**, the noted scientist who ushered

India into the atomic age, has been instituted by the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research with financial assistance from the Sir Dorab Tata Trust. Eminent people from India and abroad who knew Dr Bhabha will be selected to speak on a wide range of subjects either encompassing the varied activities and interests of the late scientist's versatile career or on technology and industrial development. Dr Bhabha died ten years ago on January 24, in a plane crash on Mont Blanc, Switzerland.

"He discovered no wonder drugs and his name may not go down in the annals of medical history," reads an In Memoriam tribute to **Dr Edulji Hormusji Coyaji**, but his memory lives on among the citizens of Poona whose Municipal Corporation named a road after him last December. The "Dr Edulji Coyaji Road" recalls his 47 years of service to the sick and suffering of the city. Born into a poor priestly family, Dr Coyaji com-

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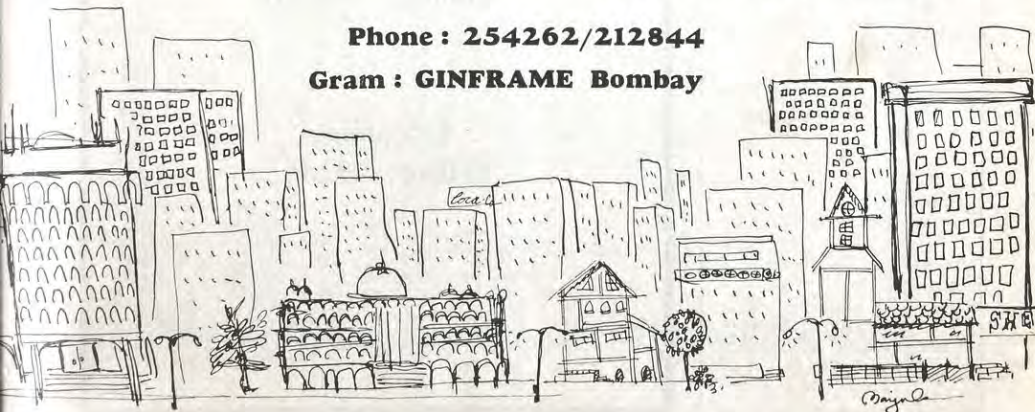
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pleted his studies with the aid of scholarships. After working as an assistant to the late Dr Sorabji Mody, he founded the Jehangir Nursing Home in 1924 where he attended a steady stream of patients from "dusk to dawn. No one was too rich or poor or too sick for his attention, whatever his caste, colour or creed," notes the In Memoriam. "He did not merely prescribe medicines, he also advised, encouraged, comforted and soothed mental tensions... No one was ever turned away."

Strands (Contd. from page 16)

kusti and three for a big one. The weave of the ends is totally different from that of the rest of the kusti. The finishing touches given to the kusti before it is put up for sale include an exposure to sulphur fumes to make it whiter, and a thorough wash, after which it is wound into a tight *jilebi* and wrapped in a piece of muslin.

"A fine *thokdar* kusti is undoubtedly better than a coarse, seemingly tough one," explained

Ms Kateli. "A kusti's fineness, however, depends more on the spinner than on the weaver: fine yarn makes fine kustis. Some people do cheat when making kustis for sale. They use a few strands less, thereby making a finer kusti, in a shorter time, consuming less wool and even fetching a higher price on account of it being finer...but then only one per cent do so."

Only a few years ago most people had two or more kustis—one worn every day and a finer one reserved for more important occasions like navjots, weddings or *siaf* (clothes for the dead). But those were the days of exquisitely embroidered and lace-edged *sudreh*s, when kustis cost only Rs. 4 or 5. Ms Bilimoria, who has been making kustis since she was twelve, recalls an occasion when she charged Rs. 5 for a special navjot kusti which she had completed in a record time of twenty-four hours. Yet she was scolded by her uncle and told that in his time, kustis were sold for "*baar aana, bahu to rupio*" (twelve annas, at the most a rupee). Smilingly she

adds, "*Te jamano gayo*," (those days are gone).

Ms Billimoria, who regrets not receiving a formal education which would have enabled her to take up a regular job, learned kusti-weaving from the "women at home, aunts, relatives, who used to make kustis. I picked it up watching them. The main thing is to have a liking for it." However, formal training is also imparted in certain institutions. Ms Aloo Sanjana of Navroz Baug studied kusti-weaving as an optional subject at the Bai Navaz-bai Tata High School for Girls from the first standard onwards. "We didn't use wool, of course, but practised with cotton thread, and were taught everything from spinning to finishing a kusti—and were even made to appear for an exam. It is a real boon to girls who are not good at studies or can't go out to work." Her mother, like many women in Navsari and other small towns and villages, supplies kustis to traders and shops in Bombay. An age-old custom demanded that the spinner gave the weaver yarn enough for two kustis. The weaver in her turn

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presented one kusti to the spinner and kept the other for herself; so no money changed hands. With growing commercialization, however, kusti-makers nowadays either buy yarn or spin their own.

But with the shortage of Australian wool, the question of selecting an alternative arises. People like Dotiwalla feel that the virgin wool symbolizes innocence and purity. "What can replace that?" he asks. "Of course, we will have to think of a substitute, but it is a very debatable question." Shroff is more specific "Kustis cannot be made of cotton yarn. You have to use double yarn which is strong enough to withstand the wear, especially when a kusti is being made or turned inside out after it is off the *jantar*. Besides, cotton has a tendency to curl and, in warm climates like ours, knots in cotton cannot be undone easily, in which case you would have to cut the kusti. And since a kusti is tubular, it needs considerable skill in weaving. The yarn has to be absolutely even, or else the kusti will not be even, and you cannot get all this out of cotton! The wool that comes from Australia is cleaned and combed, the shorter fibres are rejected, and a lot of effort goes into it before it is ready, and so it is expensive.

"I am now experimenting with wool from Rajasthan, Kashmir, and Himachal Pradesh," continued Shroff, holding in the palm of his hand what may be the future of the Parsi community, as far as kustis are concerned: a soft, ethereal fuzz of yellowish beige. "We will have to blend synthetics like nylon or terylene to strengthen the yarn for spinning and weaving. Just feel this." He held it out. "Pull a strand—see how strong it is. If it is successful, a kusti made out of this will initially cost more but will last very long."

Kusti-makers like Ms Kateli feel the issue of an alternative has to be decided by the elders of the community. But till such matters are settled Ms Billimoria feels, "Why worry? We all have to do what *khudrat* (fate) makes us do."



Fast Cars & Women

By Feroza Paymaster



The sight of a woman behind the wheel is enough to unleash a battery of masculine oaths, closely followed by a series of jokes about the inane little woman. When these are the accepted reactions on the road, the he-man world of car racing is well nigh impregnable. But one woman to have successfully stormed these macho barriers is Katie Bhathena, who beat all but one of her male rivals to come second in the gruelling 35-lap event for unmodified cars during the races held at Juhu air-field, under the auspices of the Indian Automotive Racing Club (IARC).

"I have been racing for a long time, so people have just accepted me," shrugged Ms Bhathena, "although sometimes the males drive rashly just to prove their superiority."

Having first got interested in rallying because her husband, Darayus, was doing a lot of motorbike racing, Ms Bhathena's first rally was the WIAA Golden Jubilee rally. "It was a real long one, starting in Bombay and going all over Maharashtra. Altogether forty or fifty cars enter, but only a few finish. We had a breakdown and didn't finish..."

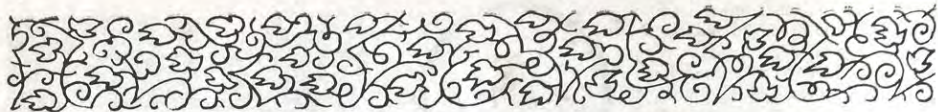
But when she did win, it was a substantial prize—a Fiat car—in a non-stop, three-day rally

organized jointly by the Indore Automotive Club and car manufacturers. "We went right through Madhya Pradesh, stopping only to fill up petrol and refresh ourselves," she remembers. "Then we'd drive like hell to make up."

"Rallying is usually conducted on ordinary roads rather than race-tracks and involves following a set route at a set speed, with a navigation chart. It tests the ability and endurance of the car and the driver." The Bhathenas frequently enter rallies twice or thrice a year, depending on which state is holding the rally. They have driven in South India quite often, especially Madras, and have entered many smaller club events in which they have been fairly successful. "The children too are interested and keep talking about what they are going to race when they grow up," she noted.

"People in India are interested in racing—one can see that from the way they drive on the roads. But when it comes to preparing the car, very few can do it. It takes up a lot of money and time. Unless you have a sponsor, it is too expensive," she says. "After

(Continued on page 44, col. 2)



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In memoriam

He was an obscure clerk whose reported mystical powers drew around him a devoted, oft-times fanatic, group of disciples that for a transitory moment affected the course of Parsi history.

Before his death last November at the age of 67, Minocher Nusserwanji Pundole had involved the Bombay Parsi Panchayat in one of its worst crisis and had divided the sacred city of Udwada into two warring factions. His followers allegedly assaulted the Editor of the *Kaiser-e-Hind* after his weekly carried a series of articles alleging misconduct in the handling of public funds. And it was the Pundolites led by Ms Nelie Noble that hounded Shrivax Vakil for his statements on the Towers of Silence.

"Some of his disciples were fanatics," notes Jimmy Shroff who contested the Panchayat trusteeship on Pundole's wishes, "but he was very broad-minded and sympathetic to people's weaknesses. He was against a personality cult and worship of any individuals including himself."

But to his closely-knit, motley group of followers, Pundole was a messiah who communed with God. "He saw and heard the Demavand Sahebs of Iran," noted several of his disciples gathered at the Erane Brothers import and export office on Forbes Street where Pundole used to work. "One had only to know him, to love him," says Shroff. "It was only after having established intimate contact that I realized there were divine forces working on him and every word he uttered whether in seriousness or jest proved true to the hilt."

According to Shroff, Pundole first communed with the spirits one day in 1939 in Cusrow Baug while performing the *mushkil asan no divo*. "When he lifted his head he found that a fog had covered

the mirror in front of him. The fog cleared and the Sahib appeared. Then for twelve years there was a break...

"He was working in a cable company when he developed some innovations relating to copper cables. This prompted him to start his own business. He flourished and at one time had goods worth several lakhs stored in a godown near the docks. There was a typhoon around 1945 and his goods were damaged. He was in financial difficulty and it was during the peak of this crisis that the Sahib reappeared. The visit afforded Pundole both solace and divine inspiration. In need of money and with children to support, he joined the office of Sohrabji Irani, as a typist on a salary of barely 200 rupees. Irani was the first man to accept him and become his *chela*."

Soon after his tribe increased and included in its wake two trustees of the Parsi Panchayat, priests and people from all walks of life. His following is estimated from anywhere between 300—by impartial judges—to 7,000 by some of his disciples. They developed their own set of codes, greeting each other with the words *Kshnaothra Ahura Mazda* (Glory to God) which they believe if said with conviction can work miracles. On their forefinger many of them wear rings said to comprise seven metals including mercury. On auspicious days they travel as a group to places like Udwada and on the birthdays of certain fire-temples they offer sandalwood of amounts ranging upto Rs. 4,000.

"Pundole emphasized the imperative need for every Parsi to regularly visit the agiary and atash-behram every day," says Shroff. "He considered the present tendency on the part of many Parsis to visit sadhus, sais, pirs, durgas and mosques a sign of frustration and a chronic malady resulting from an absence of religious knowledge. He laboured to bring Zoroastrians back to the fold."

The Pundolites reached their peak of fame after Shrivax Vakil issued his statement on the Bombay Dokhmas in October 1973. Led by Ms Noble, the Pundolites made capital gain of the sensitive issue and swept the elections for

the crucial "E" Register, that along with the donors elects the trustees to the Panchayat. When Nadirsha Mulla's trustee seat fell vacant, Ms Noble stood for election and defeated her only rival by over 200 votes. The name of her Guru, Minocher Pundole was fast becoming a household word. But then Pundole made a tactical error that brought him, Ms Noble and his party into disrepute and earned him the wrath of the remaining trustees. He instructed Shroff to contest the seat vacated by Vakil. Vakil had agreed to resign on condition that Jimmy Gudder be elected in his place and this alternative was reportedly acceptable to all the trustees including Ms Noble. Fearing a Pundolite plot to control the Panchayat and its vast assets, the trustees entered the electoral fray en masse and dealt the Pundolites a resounding defeat.

While the Bombay election was heating up, in Udwada the Pundolites were facing stiff opposition from the clergy in their efforts to construct an Adaran, a fire-temple that is supposed to complement an atash-behram. After crossing many legal hurdles, construction began but Pundole did not live to see its completion. He died of a heart attack without achieving the spiritual renaissance he hoped to bring about.

Mystery shrouds the life of most people, but more so of mystics. Pundole's disciples are reluctant to talk about their leader to the press or even give his photograph for publication. What they term as his miracles could be construed by others as the action of a perceptive and intelligent individual. But however he be viewed today, his place in the annals of the community will be determined by how long his movement survives its founder.

Died: **Bomi N. Mody**, 31, the cycling champion who captained the Maharashtra State team in the 1969 national meet; of multiple head injuries following a freak bicycle accident on January 13 in Bombay.

Mody was on a practice run but while negotiating a turn at high speed his cycle chain slipped, hurling him headlong to the ground, notes Dinyar Jamshedji, president

of the Maharashtra State Cycling Association (MSCA). The young cyclist died two days later at the B. D. Petit Parsi General Hospital.

Adopted by his aunt Gulbanoo Nasserwanji Mody, Bomi started his cycling career at the age of 16. He earned the nickname "The Gentleman Cyclist" and when he was dropped from the Asian Games delegation at the eleventh hour without any explanation "he remained a sportsman to his fingertips and never raised issues that would have ultimately harmed the sport of cycling in India," notes a tribute issued by the MSCA. The MSCA track meet scheduled for January 17 was postponed due to his untimely death. A trophy in memory of Mody has been donated by the cycling association.

Mody was a sales manager in the Swadeshi Mills. He leaves behind among others, his wife, Khorshed and their five month old child. His brother, Sam Daruwalla, was chosen to captain the State cycling team at the Inter-Zonal meet at Patiala in March.

Died: Dr. Sohrab Naushirwan Cooper, 72, the noted eye-specialist; of a coronary attack on 16th October in Bombay. Dr. Cooper, who served as the Asian representative to the International Committee of Ophthalmic Surgeons and

the WHO Trachoma Council, was instrumental in forming the All India Ophthalmological Society and particularly the Bombay Ophthalmic Association. An honorary professor and an honorary ophthalmic surgeon at the KEM Hospital in Bombay till 1958, Dr. Cooper had been the editor of the *All India Journal of Ophthalmology* from its inception. He also served at the Sion Hospital and the B. D. Petit Parsi General Hospital, the latter for close to 30 years.

A graduate of Bharda New High School, Elphinstone College and Grant Medical College, he received diplomas in ophthalmology from Oxford and London. After returning to India in 1930 and establishing himself, he helped many students pay their way through college, notes his associate of 28 years, Dr. Rustom J. Patel. Keenly interested in research, Dr. Cooper won the Adenwala Oration Gold Medal for his study on lens protein.

He is survived by his wife, Mah, principal of the High School at Dunne's Institute.

Cars (Continued from page 41)
using the car on city roads, most things need replacement. Every nut and bolt has to be tight. You can't take the risk. If you are

driving at a high speed and something breaks, you've had it. India does not have imported machines, racing cars have to be made from scratch; they're quite different from the showroom model. In the IARC races the Ceylonese all had imported machines and the same cars given to Indians would probably do just as well. You can't really compare rallies here with events abroad, because the cars are much faster there. Here the average speed of an unmodified car is 100 km; rarely does one top 120 km.

"Apart from the difficulties of preparing the car, is the problem about where to practise. You can't practise on the roads, and you can go round the race-track only on the day before the race. But there are so many entrants, you hardly get a chance. Abroad there are special practice tracks and advanced classes are held for people wishing to race."

But she notes, "Racing isn't something you learn—it is in you." And it may well be in many other women. However, when Ms Bhathena suggested to some drivers that they should let their wives enter the races too, they couldn't believe their ears and replied, "But we have just had the cars done up."



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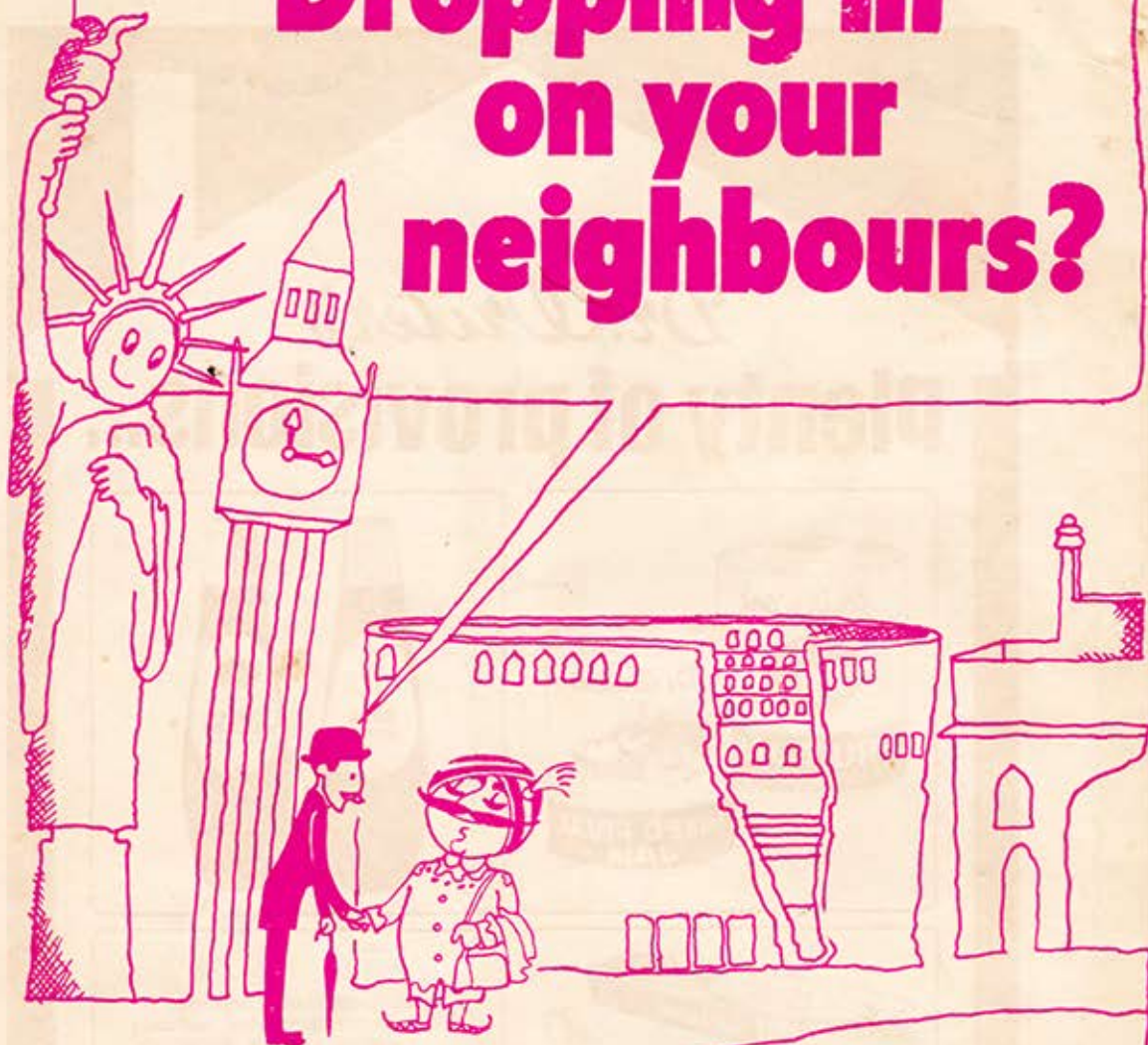


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