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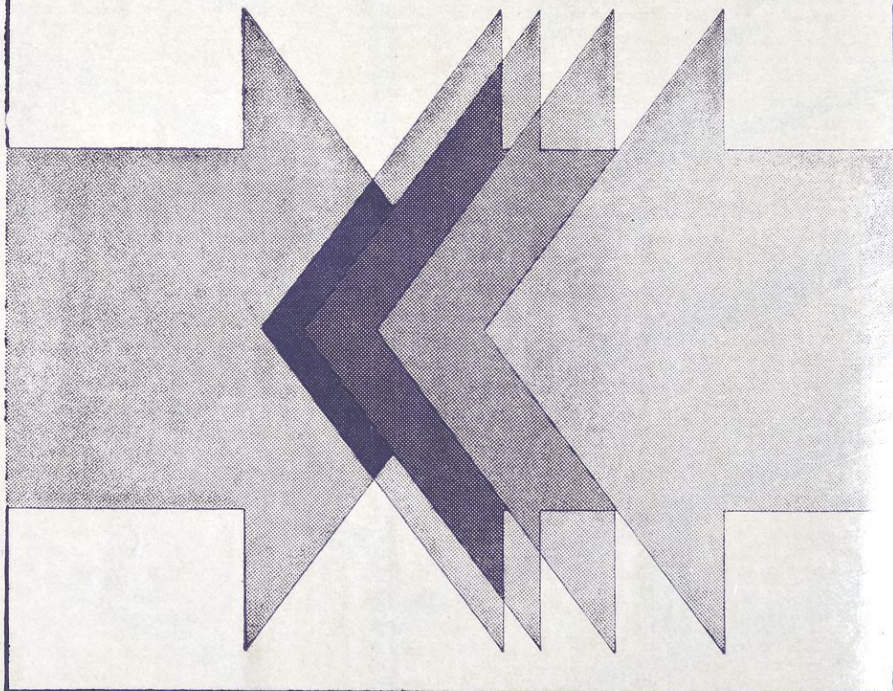
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Parsiana

March 1981 Volume 3 No. 9

READERS' FORUM	3
EVENTS AND PERSONALITIES	13
ZOROASTRIANS ABROAD	21
NEWS FROM THE MEDIA	25
THE B.P.P. ELECTIONS : THE FINAL DAYS	33
THUS SPAKE RAJNEESH	49
DASTUR DHALLA — XII	61
IN MEMORIAM	71

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In Memoriam

Mr. Fali Meherji Variava,

Director

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Readers' views are welcome on any subject of interest to the community and should be sent to The Editor, Readers' Forum, Parsiana, G.P.O. Box 892, Bombay 400 001. Letters are subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity.

A Mother's Rights

I think the Parsi community owes much to the Committee for Electoral Rights (CER) for the splendid job it has done in enlightening Bombay Parsis on its aims and educating them on their rights. CER comprises of a band of people who have devoted their valuable time and effort to perform selfless service to the community; they deserve praise and admiration.

Because I have been so full of enthusiasm and support for the CER, I was saddened and disappointed to learn, at a recent meeting I attended, of their stance on "religious" issues. No doubt, because of the lies and mud-slinging that they have endured from certain sections of the community, they perhaps felt it necessary to be very defensive (unnecessarily, I think).

They emphatically denied over and over again that they had any interest whatsoever in "religious" reforms and that, in fact, they whole-heartedly supported all existing Parsi religious customs, institutions, etc. and, among other things — as one speaker mentioned — did not wish to have anything to do with the issue of children of Parsi mothers married to non-Parsis being accepted into the fold. (They have gone so far as to file an affidavit to the effect that they would have nothing to do so with such "reforms".)

Why was this necessary? As one who is particularly concerned with the last point, I should like to focus on this issue here. I believe that denying a Parsi woman married to a non-Parsi the right, if she so wishes, to raise her children in her own faith is illogical and an outrageous miscarriage of justice (Parsi men married to non-Parsis may do so). This is not simply a question of religious reform but a violation of the basic human rights of a mother.

It is monstrous that in this day and age, a Parsi woman can be dictated to by total outsiders, a handful of people who deem to be the "guardians" of the community, on an intimately personal matter such as the religion of her children. What right has anyone to tell a mother what religion her children may or may not follow? In effect, it is a denial of Zarathushtra's teachings and, surely, anathema to the very concept of Zoroastrianism.

I am not subscribing to the view that our doors be opened indiscriminately to everyone, simply because of the practical problems this could create (although I cannot forget that Zarathushtra's message was, in fact, for all mankind), but surely the terrible injustice born of fear and bigotry so far as these Parsi women are concerned must at least be put right?

There must be any number of such women who have had to suffer unnecessary heartache, anguish and rejection which no one has a right to inflict upon them. If the children of Parsi men married to non-Parsi women can be accepted as Parsi Zoroastrians, why can't the children of Parsi women married to non-Parsis? What is the difference between these two sets of children? It is sometimes argued that the children of these women would have non-Parsi surnames! This argument is too absurd to countenance simply because most Parsi

surnames are of non-Parsi Indian origin, now accepted as our own.

The gentlemen of the CER informed us at a meeting recently that the already microscopic Parsi community is declining at the alarming rate of something like one percent per annum. It has also been observed that the community comprises of more females than males. To make matters worse, many Parsi men go abroad, marry non-Parsis and they (and their children) are often lost to the community. Then, what else can be expected if not an ever-increasing number of Parsi women marrying non-Parsis?

This is a phenomenon that has increased by leaps and bounds in the last decade or two and will continue to do so. Alternatively, our women can remain unmarried (we have always had an alarming percentage of spinsters) but, how will that help the community? There is no way one can reverse the trend simply because we are such a tiny community, so what can be achieved by being stubbornly blind to the facts?

What is referred to as a "religious reform", therefore, is hardly "religious" or a reform but only a question of putting right these injustices and absurdities.

One has to go back to the pristine purity and truths of Zarathushtra's religion to be guided to do what is courageous and right.

The CER if they so wished, could start a virtual renaissance of the Parsis, something that is well overdue. With foresight and courage and the support of all thinking Zoroastrians so much can be achieved on so many fronts for the benefit of the community. But, we must act now if we are to be saved from the tragedy of becoming an effete race of people heading inexorably for eventual extinction.

DINA NAYAR

Election Equality

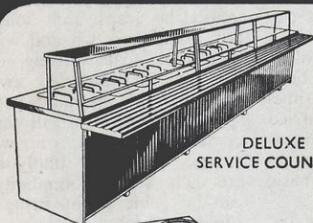
We have taken our birth with pride as Zoroastrians and therefore, no one should ever think of betraying our religion. It is desirable to stand united, to respect and follow the teachings of Zarathushtra.

The Committee For Electoral Rights (CER) has taken a lead in giving wide publicity through their circular *Do You Know*, about the working of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP), and the community's voting rights.

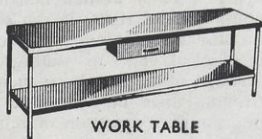
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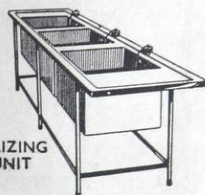
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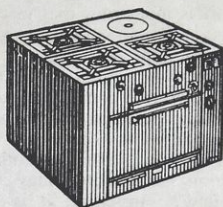
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equated against Register "E" which is composed of "A, C & D" Registers which represents the whole Parsi community? This voting system was evolved by our ancestors who were educated philanthropists, wanting to be in power because they were the donors. They did the right thing then.

All of us are now more democratic, sensible, reasonable and alive to our rights as adults. Our community is 99 percent educated and everyone has the right to demand adult franchise.

Abolish Register "F" and all other Registers and combine them into one membership Register for the whole community without any preferences to the donors of Register "F".

Donors should donate generously to the BPP for the welfare of the poor members of the community. But today the men who donate have no right to know where the money is going. There is no accountability to the donors or to the public. No one has any right to ask for annual progress reports. They cannot remove an inefficient trustee for ten years and, therefore, it comes to this that the community is at the mercy of the trustees for 10 years.

We are all created equal and so every member of our community, the donors, the rich, the middle-class and

the poor members have equal rights to select their own Anjuman Committee.

JAMSHED D. ENGINEER

Serving Two Masters

Personally, I do not think it wrong on the part of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat to deny Parsi women married to non-Parsis the right to register on its electoral rolls. The law may be in their favour, but can law interfere with religion? Would any true Zoroastrian Parsi like to accept the opinion of a Parsi female married outside the fold? If such a woman had any interest in her own community would she have sought a life-partner from another community?

No one can serve two masters. That is my opinion.

FRENY DALAL

In Praise Of Palkhivala

I am glad that the world renowned jurist, who served as Ambassador of India to the United States of America, Nani Palkhivala, has come out with a bold statement giving his candid opinion and supporting it with authentic quotations and examples set out by other great men and scholars.

He has done yomen service by speaking out to open the eyes of the

Paisis and I am sure that under his leadership many more enlightened ones in the community will take up the task of revitalization and rejuvenation of the great religion, not only to save it from degeneration but also to make it stand on the highest pedestal among other religions and beliefs the world over. To achieve this goal, we have to stand firm against the fanatics till they see and understand the value of tolerance.

Zarathushtra exhorted his audience to listen to him, think over what he had said and to accept his teachings only if their intellect and conscience approved, otherwise they were free to follow what they thought was best for them...and that, in doing so they did not sin.

When Zarathushtra himself preached and invited people to embrace his teachings, how dare the so-called Zoroastrians, who claim to be his followers, prevent people from embracing the religion? Are they above Zarathushtra who invited people to deliberate on his teachings and embrace his religion only after being convinced of its munificence?

And who could be a greater democrat today than Zarathushtra was thousands of years ago?

ASPI KAI OSHTORI

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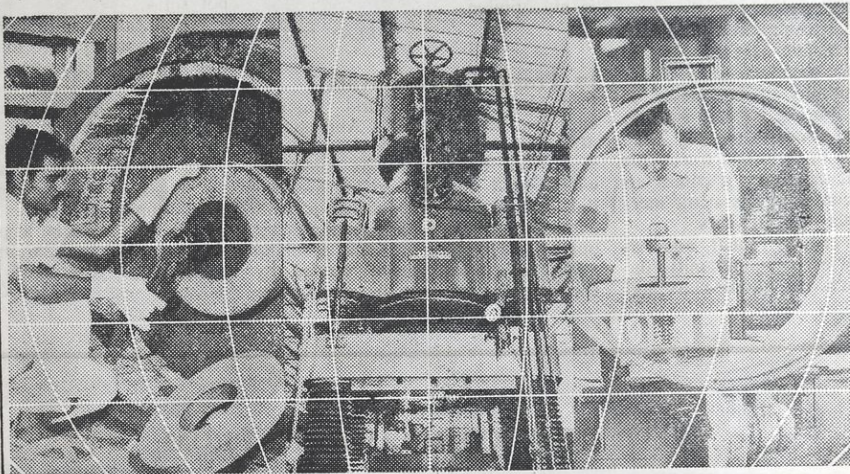
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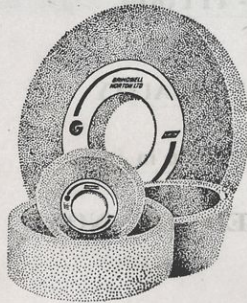
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Salute to Darvish

My husband and I always had great respect for the late Darvish Irani, a well-known and well-loved figure at Doongarwadi, a friend of the dead and of those, who were left behind.

I was deeply moved to read of the courage of Dr. Syrus Darvish Irani, in breaking away from the wrong customs laid down, over a hundred years ago, about covering the faces of our dead and not allowing their friends, from other communities, to pay their last respects.

My heartfelt condolences to the members of the Darvish Irani family in their great loss and congratulations to Dr. Syrus, on his bold step forward.

I do feel that other Zoroastrians should follow his lead.

PERIN M. R. B. JEEJEEBHROY

The Irony Of The WZO

A newspaper report on the first meeting of the World Zoroastrian Organization Ltd., (WZO) in London, England, mentioned that one of the original subscribers had said that he had appealed to the former U.S. President Jimmy Carter to protect the interest of the Zoroastrians in Iran and was assured of efforts in this regard by the State Department.

The WZO Constitution's interpretation of a Zoroastrian, prevents 70 per cent or more Zoroastrians from becoming members.

Out of a supposedly 25,000 odd Zoroastrians in Iran, over 95 percent have not had their *Navjote* ceremony performed and are thus not confirmed in the Zoroastrian faith. Besides this, every third marriage abroad and possibly every fifth or sixth in India is a mixed marriage. It is ironic, those who urged for a WZO themselves are shut out.

Those of us who are in the know, know that Zoroastrians are still the most respected persons in Iran. The head *Mullah* of Yazd, Ayatulla Saduqi, a deeply religious person, was the first to announce that Zoroastrians are the roots in Iran and the Muslims are the branches. If the roots are cut off or disturbed, nothing will remain.

Recently, a young Irani Zarathusti, Housang Jangi, who was in the Iranian army, was killed during the present Iran-Iraq war. His *Porseh* ceremony was performed in Tehran and Yazd. At the ceremony in Yazd, Ayatulla Saduqi personally came to offer his respects and condolences. Muslims, specially of Yazd, do not even drink tea or water from non-Muslims. Ayatulla Saduqi accepted tea, a remarkable gesture of goodwill, after which

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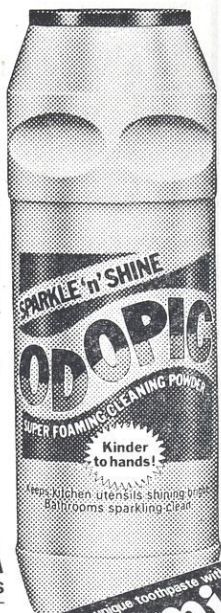
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most of the other Muslims present did the same and embraced the Zarathustrian.

No American President or the American State Department or the WZO, as presently constituted, can do anything for the Zoroastrians either of Iran, India or anywhere else. In fact, such thoughtless actions and pronouncements are likely to endanger the lives of the Zoroastrians of Iran.

The main concern of every thoughtful Zoroastrian is the survival of our community wherever they are settled. The only way this can be done is by accepting and treating all categories of Zoroastrians as part of our community.

JAMSHED K. PAVRI
Vancouver

The Strange Case Of George Edalji

In reply to the query raised by Viras P. Mehta of Karachi in the *Parsiana* issue of December 1980, *Readers' Forum*, I wish to state that Shapurji Edalji was not the second convert made by Dr. John Wilson.

The second convert was Hormusji Pestonji, as pointed out by Sir Rustom Masani in *Dadabhai Naoroji*; Piloo Nanavutty in *The Parsis*, and E. Kulke, in *The Parsees in India*.

PILOO N. JUNGALWALLA
New Delhi

The Baba Cult

More and more Zoroastrians are taking to the Baba cult. It is shocking to know that, in proportion to their numbers, the percentage of Zoroastrians professing the Baba faith, is higher than in any of the non-Hindu religious communities like the Christians, Muslims or Buddhists.

Why is that, of all the other communities, Parsis are gravitating in such large numbers to cults outside their own religion? Where have the elders failed the youth and our religion failed our community? Somewhere down the line something has misfired and gone astray. Whereas formerly this trend was confined to individual worship, today we find complete Zoroastrian families around a Baba cult.

Will the exponents of Zoroastrianism, high priests, or our trustees care to come forward to explain this drift, and answer the question — "where is it that Zoroaster failed the Parsi community, for them to turn to a Baba cult?"

A. C. BHUMGARA
Ahmedabad

Tribute to Adi Irani

In the "Iron Game," where body-build-

ing and weight-lifting are considered different sports, Adi Irani excelled in both. Further, not all weight lifters participate in what is called 'power-lifting'. As a 'power-lifter' Adi created a Maharashtra State 'dead-lift', record several years ago. It stands unbroken to this day.

On numerous occasions he won in the Inter-Railway and Nationals, in the Middle-Heavy-Weight class, the Heavy-Weight class and the Super Heavy-Weight class. Barely a name or two may arise in comparison and the level of achievement would not be equal or superior to his.

RASHID KHUSHRAVI

Matchmaker, Matchmaker...

I suggest you start a matrimonial column for unattached Parsi boys and girls settled abroad who are willing to marry within the community. This would create a feeling of unity amongst the foreign settled, as well as widen the scope for quite a few of the Parsi boys and girls in India, who are anxious and willing to settle abroad.

The various committees abroad would, and should encourage this scheme by sending forth the names of marriageable persons in their locality.

N. KALAPESI
Toronto

Names are welcome — Ed.

'Star Wars'

Our attention has been drawn to an article published in the *Parsiana* issue of January, 1981, under the caption *Stars Wars*, wherein you have written "the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman of Bombay whose relations are reported to be strained with the Bombay Parsi Punchayat".

Both institutions have worked in a spirit of harmony and co-operation with each other, maintaining close and friendly ties at all times.

We are sure you will appreciate that our work is difficult enough without the media causing controversies where none exist.

F. H. JAMOOJI
Secretary and Treasurer,
Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman

Parsiana stands by its original statement. — Ed.

What's in a Name?

What are these 'Darbe Meher's' springing up in the New World, of which we see frequent mention in *Parsiana*.

Surely what is meant is 'Dar-e-Meher', if the intention is to designate a place of worship?

My small smattering of Persian tells me that 'Darbe Meher' might well arise from a mis-print or mis-typing,

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but it would seem incredibly careless to perpetuate it indefinitely.

Since a place of worship is pivotal to a community centre, might I suggest that the Zoroastrian associations of America, which are fortunate in having their own places of worship, give some thought to how they will be designated?

If Persian words are to be used, it would be wise to ensure that they are the correct ones.

MITHOO COORLAWALA
Secunderabad.

Hats Off

I had the privilege of attending the *Afringan* ceremony performed in memory of the Iranian philanthropist, Arbab Rustam Guiv. Considering the large number of Zoroastrians residing in Los Angeles and its suburbs, the attendance was rather thin.

A large number of Zoroastrians sadly lacked the dignity and decorum necessary during a religious ceremony. Many were bare-headed and the solemnity of the ceremony was marred.

Zoroaster's teachings consider a

piece of hair as a deadly *nasho* and if a single hair falls into or over *Maej*, comprising of fruits and other items, the ceremony performed becomes meaningless. I suggest that whenever the next *Jashan* or *Afringan* takes place, all those attending the ceremony be politely told to cover their heads with either caps or at least a piece of cloth.

If the organisers so desire, I am ready to send a reasonable number of caps to be used for the occasion, they should make an application addressed to the trustees of the late Mrs. Hilla and Rustomji N. Buhariwalla specifying the number of caps required.

I was also dismayed and disappointed at the lack of unity amongst the few hundred Zoroastrians residing in Los Angeles. I fail to understand why there should be a split amongst a few hundred Zoroastrians.

R. N. RUSTOMJI-BUHARIWALLA

Lost Genes

The Parsis are considered one of the world's most inbred populations. Among Parsis breast cancer accounts

for 49 percent of cancers which is more than double the incidence in any other community in any part of the world. This is because Parsis have lost the genes which provide the ability to combat the cancer.

The recently published report of the Cancer Research Committee pointed out that "The prevalence of cancer was higher among Parsis than among other communities and that it was highest among Parsis living in south and central Bombay, in areas extending from Fort to Grant Road and Tardeo. Also, cases of mental illness are reported to be high among the Parsis".

The need of the hour is to vitalise the community genetically and economically. It is better to have in our community learned non-Parsi scholars who want to embrace Zoroastrianism, than to have cranks and extremists. What matters is the character and calibre of a person in following the true teachings of any prophet.

RUSI B. PASTAKIA
Jamshedpur

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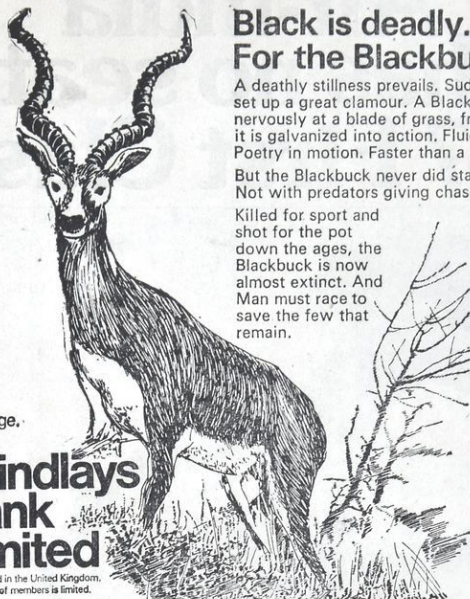


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Events and Personalities

Republic Day Award Winner

Prominent Maharashtra social worker and family planning pioneer, **Avabai B. Wadia**, was awarded the Padma Bushan, the third highest civilian honour bestowed by the Government of India. Wadia was among nine others who received this honour on Republic Day, 26 January 1981, from President Neelam Sanjiva Reddy.

Wadia is one of the founder members of the Family Planning Association of India (FPAI), of which she is the president since 1963. She is a member of several national and international committees and organizations of family planning, such as the Central Council of International Planned Parenthood Federation; the Governing Council of the Gandhigram Institute of Rural Health and Family Welfare; the Governing Board of the Family Planning Foundation, New Delhi; the Bombay Municipal Corporation Family Planning Implementation Committee; the Joint Councils of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India; the Programme Implementation Committee, Maharashtra State Government; and the Working Group on population Policy Planning Commission, New Delhi.

Born in Colombo in 1913, and educated in England, from where she acquired her LL.B. degree from London University, Wadia was called to the Bar from Lincoln's Inn in 1934, and later returned home to practice law at the Supreme Court of Ceylon, states her life-sketch. Wadia's choice of law as a career is said to have been due to her interest, even then, in the condition of downtrodden women.

When her family moved to Bombay, Wadia, who was by then so involved in the uplift of women, did not register herself at the Bombay Bar, but worked with several women's organizations, her interest eventually leading her to family planning and welfare, states her life-sketch.

Inspired by the family planning pioneers of the west, Wadia, is said to be "the guiding spirit" behind the sustained activities of the FPAI. An Hon-



Wadia: 'guiding spirit'

orary Metropolitan Magistrate, Greater Bombay, for 20 years from 1957-1975, Wadia has also reportedly been made a Doctor of Laws (LL.B.) *Honoris Causa*, by the Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, and been awarded the Padma Shri in the 1971 Republic Day Honours.

Blind Service

The recipient of the Rustom Merwanji Alpaiwalla Memorial Award 1981, is **Piloo Dorab Khambatta**, honorary secretary of the National Association for the Blind, (NAB). Presented by the NAB president Vijay M. Merchant, on 19 January, in Bombay, the award was given to Khambatta in appreciation of her "outstanding contribution in raising much needed funds, promoting employment of the blind, furthering public relations, and in recognition of (her) outstanding contribution as a voluntary worker".

Secretary of the NAB since its inception in 1945, Khambatta is reported to have started active interest in employment possibilities for the blind in 1964, as joint honorary secretary for the Employment and Placement Com-

mittee of the blind, and was appointed honorary secretary for Employment in 1975.

Starting her career in the welfare of the blind by assisting in the raising of funds, Khambatta was the honorary secretary of the Fund Raising Committee for the Workshop for the Blind and the first Finance Raising Secretary of the NAB, a position she held for almost 12 years, notes the bio-data.

As Delegate Observer, Khambatta attended the Fourth General Assembly of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind, at New Delhi in 1969, a symposium on Employment Opportunities for the Educated Blind, in Berlin, in 1972, and the Fifth Asian Conference on Work for the Blind, in Hongkong, in 1978, states the bio-data.

Bulsar Councillors

Burjor C. Pardiwala, has been elected president of the Bulsar Municipal Council, and five other Parsis have captured seats in the Council of 25. The Parsis, **Keki Phiroz Shroff**, **Shapurji Chavda**, **Roshan K. Shroff**, **Rusi P. Shroff** and **Phiroz D. Billimoria** captured 33 percent of the total votes cast at the October elections according to reports.

The Zoroastrian Union Bulsar, (ZUB), a youth club, invited the local Parsi community to join in felicitating the six councillors, on 2 November, notes the release, adding that ZUB president Dr. Rustom D. Asana, a presidential award winner and emeritus professor of Botany, Dr. Jal Turel and ZUB secretary Bomi Mehernosh paid tributes to the dedication of the new councillors, and the work they have already done for their town.

Keki Shroff was said to have helped out at the time of the *Nav Nirman* agitation in Bulsar, fetching passengers from the station and delivering milk during the curfew. Roshan Shroff is reportedly an active member of the Hospital Committee, looking after family planning. Burjor Pardiwala and Firoz Billimoria are keen on "beautifying the town, constructing shopping centres, and looking after housing



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problems...”, states the release, adding that Shapurji Chawda, at 71, riding his B.S.A. motorbike around his ward, and Rusi Shroff, are both known to be eager and active social workers.

Pardiwala, perhaps the youngest president of the Bulsar Municipal Council in its 150 year history, replaces **Phiroz Rustomji Shroff**, who voluntarily retired after 13 years as president, notes the release. During his term of office, Shroff is said to have increased the Council budget from 30 lakhs to over a crore of rupees, cut down many taxes, provided the *Adi-vasis* and hutment dwellers tax free water, and the *Harijan* municipal workers ownership tenements on a 20 year instalment basis. He is also said to have initiated town planning, built a shopping centre named after Dadabhai Naoroji, and improved the water situation.

Baroda Youth League

The recently established **Parsi Zoroastrian Youth League of Baroda** planned its first function for Jamshedi Navroz encouraged by the success of their Republic day celebrations, notes a release from Phiroz Surti, a retired railway engineer from Baroda. For the Republic day celebrations, a fancy dress competition, sports and games were organized, for which there were 35 and 75 entries respectively, including a two year-old child and 62 year-old retired railway officer, according to the release.

The fancy dress competition was judged by professor Aspi Rana, Mehroo Palkhiwala and Behram Bhamgara, and the prizes were given away by Jehangir Parabia, an engineering contractor and a prominent citizen of Baroda, who donated a microphone and loudspeakers to the Youth League, notes the release. Jimmy Havewala, a trustee of the Baroda Parsi Panchayat proposed the vote of thanks; and Arnavaz J. Havewala, Mehru Bomi Patel, Phiroz Surti, Kersi Kavina, Murzban Khajotia and Tehmas Anklesaria are said to have worked to make the occasion a success, states the release.

At a “mammoth gathering” of Baroda Parsis last November, the Baroda Parsi Panchayat established the Youth League under its auspices, to bring together Parsi boys and girls on a common platform, in an effort to curb the “alarming” rise of marriages outside the community, in Baroda, notes the release. The inaugural function was attended by Eruch Desai, trustee of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, and Mrs Desai, Manek Geyara, president of the Surat Parsi Panchayat and representatives of other Gujarat Parsi Panchayats.

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Mastering the Mind

Dr. Roshen S. Master, well-known Pune psychiatrist was installed as the 33rd president of the Indian Psychiatric Society at a function held at the B. J. Medical College, Ahmedabad on 28 December 1980, states a press release.

Master is Honorary Professor of Psychiatry at the B. J. Medical College and the Sassoon General Hospitals, Pune, and is a pioneer worker in mental health, social psychiatry and the rehabilitation of mentally retarded children in Maharashtra, notes the release.

Credited with over 80 publications in scientific journals in India, the U.K. and the U.S.A., as well as a text book in psychiatry, she is a Foundation Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, established in 1972, in the U.K., notes the write-up.

In her presidential speech, Master stressed self-therapy through *self-knowledge.



Master : psychiatric president

Speed Swimmer

India's probable representative to the 1982 Asian Games is a 16 year-old, bespectacled swimmer, **Persis Madan**. Reportedly the first girl to break the one minute barrier in the 100 yards Free-Style Women's Open Swimming Competition, the lanky Persis won the 1980 junior and senior 100 and 200 metres butterfly championship at the All-India National Open Championships. She is also reported to have set eight new meet records at the Trivandrum Junior National Age Group Championships in 1980, where she was adjudged best swimmer, and four new meet records at the 1979 Triangular Meet. (India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh).

The daughter of Jamshed K. Madan, Bombay's prominent ear, nose and throat surgeon, Persis started swimming at the age of nine, and took an immediate, "liking to water". Coached by Mr. N. Bhatena at the

Willingdon Sports Club, Bombay, she won six silver medals at the Junior Nationals at Delhi in 1974, at the age of 10. From then on, she has set new meet records at the various competitions she has participated in.

A First Year Junior College student of Arts at Bombay's St. Xavier's College, Persis says she trains daily for two or three hours, studying and reading in her spare time. A first class I.C.S.E. student from Queen Mary's School, she finds that so far she has managed her academic career and swimming quite well. "No priorities", she claims, "I manage to fit in everything." The school and college authorities, she notes, grant her leave during competition time and for intensive training courses, one of which she has just completed at Fort Lauderdale, Florida, under Robert K. Miller, an Olympic medallist.

Madan : butterfly champion



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Governor Talyarkhan

The new governor of the North Indian Himalayan state of Sikkim is **Homi J. H. Talyarkhan**, a former minister in the Maharashtra State Cabinet and India's former Ambassador to Libya.

A well known figure in the social, industrial and political circles in the country the loquacious Talyarkhan was chairman of the Maharashtra State Financial Corporation, the president of the International Tourism Council, Society of Goodwill and Culture, and a member of several state and national committees.

Elected four times to the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, Talyarkhan was a cabinet minister in Maharashtra where amongst the portfolios he held were health, food and civil supplies, housing, small savings, fisheries and tourism.

Talyarkhan was the Indian delegate



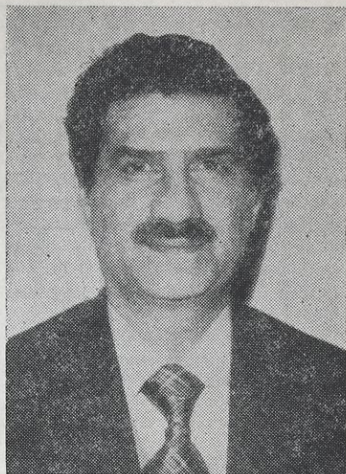
Talyarkhan: Sikkim appointment

to the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development II, (UNCTAD), and also accompanied an Indian delegation to the West Asian countries, notes his bio-data.

Airport '81

Group Captain A. M. Palamkote, who retired as General Manager of the International Airports Authority of India (IAAI), coordinated the activities for Bombay's new International Passenger Terminal, the first phase of which was opened to traffic in December last year.

Designed for a two level clearance system, reportedly the first of its kind



Palamkote: co-ordinating phase one

in India, the new terminal is expected to meet the current international traffic requirement at Bombay, with a handling capacity of an estimated 2,100 peak hour passengers. Its construction required the co-ordination of perhaps 50 major activities in various disciplines notes the IAAI newsletter of October 1980.

The new terminal opened almost 48 years after the start of commercial aviation in India, when J.R.D. Tata landed his now famous Puss Moth at the Juhu airstrip in Bombay, with its cargo of mail from Karachi. In commemoration of that historic event, at Palamkote's suggestion, Tata's Puss Moth now hangs from the ceiling of the Custom's hall at the new terminal.

Palamkote took over as General Manager of the International Airports Authority of India on 1 January 1980, after serving as director of Bombay Airport since 1976, according to a bio-data. Starting his career as a fighter pilot with the Indian Air Force in 1944, Palamkote was awarded his Instrument Rating Card and Instructor's Category while undergoing a specialist's course in the U.K. in 1948-49, notes his bio-data. Posted as Flight Commander in the first Jet Squadron to be raised in India, and commander of a Jet Fighter Squadron, Palamkote reportedly belongs to the Caterpillar Club, consisting of airmen who have parachuted to safety after having been shot down.

The Way to a Man's Pocket

Spenta, a small sales counter set up in Secunderabad, by the **Zoroastrian**

Continued on page 53



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Navars for the New World

Representing the next generation of priests in the west, are two Montreal youngsters, 12 year-old **Zubin Panthaki** and 13 year-old **Zubin Dastoor**. The two Zubins came to Bombay recently to qualify as Navars under Rustom Panthaki of the Rustom Framna Agiary at Dadar.

Though the facilities for initiation are not available in North America, the boys studied under the guidance of Dr. Ervad Jehan Bagli, editor of *Gavashni*, the quarterly publication of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, (ZAO) and Ervad Kersi Bhe-dwar, notes Dolly Dastoor, Zubin's mother who is president of the ZAO. The boys were initiated into the priesthood in December.

The initiation took 28 days, during which they "prayed, ate and slept," said Panthaki. They could not touch any perishable matter, had to wear gloves and sleep on leather mats, but he added stoically, "everybody else does it, so we can do it."

"It was to our expectations", added Zubin Dastoor, although he found the manner in which they washed the dishes with ashes and made the omelettes, "odd"; he said he loved the *papri malido*.

"It was a sacrifice for the boys as well as for us parents," commented Dastoor's mother. Playtime had to be given up, holidays and free time devoted to their training, leave to be taken from their schools, which she noted, were very encouraging, granting the leave, but not forgetting the homework: "I had to turn the pages of my Shakespeare with tongs", quipped Dastoor, who is an air cadet. Panthaki recalled his classmate's astonished reactions of, "Are you ever going to come back to school?" "Will you be able to get married?" and "That young!", when he told them he was going to be a priest.

Both boys sat in as assistant priests at Dastoor's sister, Natasha's navjot on 2 January, this year, said Dastoor.

Though Panthaki and Dastoor are the 72nd and 73rd Navars respectively to go through the Rustom Framna Agiary, they are amongst the first Zoroastrians from North America to come to India to be initiated into the priesthood. About a year ago, Jehangir Dastur of California underwent the initiation ceremonies at the Jeejeebhoy Agiary at Colaba in South Bombay.

Shorter Funeral Prayers

The traditional Zoroastrian last rites' prayers are too long for the limited time available at western cemeteries for performing funeral ceremonies, notes a newsletter from the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZSBC).

At the October 1980 meeting of the ZSBC Board of Directors, Jamshed Pavri, honorary treasurer of the Society pointed out that the London Anjuman gets only 30 minutes at the cemetery for their funeral services. Therefore, a small Zoroastrian Funeral Service booklet in romanized English and Gujarati scripts of the Avesta prayers with their English meanings has been prepared by the ZSBC. If a donor can be found for the project, the Zoroastrians of British Columbia hope to publish about 1,000 such booklets for distribution in Canada and elsewhere.

Cultural Preserve

The formation of a Zoroastrian Cultural Group is also being considered by the ZSBC, according to an earlier newsletter. "With the increase in our numbers, especially with the new community members having come from Iran... it now appears possible to form a Zoroastrian Cultural Group; a group that will preserve our cultural heritage in music, dancing, folklore, handicrafts, songs, poetry and other arts and also participate in cultural activities with all other ethnic communities."

The newsletter also points out that the Canadian Government is actively supporting the various multicultural societies and also have a Minister of Multiculturalism.

Annals of the Far East

Pavri reports that he has undertaken for the Hong Kong Anjuman, his "favourite subject of reading, collecting, collating and putting down on paper, the records achievements and information of our ancestors in the Far East." He hopes the project will be completed by the year's end.

Pavri also notes, "The community in Vancouver is steadily growing and our functions are getting crowded. It is indeed nice to see new faces all the time and together with the increase in number, there is also an increase in talent which if properly harnessed, will benefit everyone."

The ZSBC has donated Rs 1,500 to the Federation of Zoroastrian Anju-

mans for Welfare and Culture (FOZA-WAC) in Bombay, towards a trophy for the best female/male athlete at the FOZAWAC sports meet held on 27 and 28 December; and Rs 7,000 was donated to the Rayomand Committee of Bombay, notes the newsletter, adding that the ZSBC is also actively considering the possibilities of a Zoroastrian Centre.

Navjot News

"In Singapore a Navjot ceremony is a rare occasion," writes **Suna Kanga** from Singapore, "So it was a very



Sherzad's Singapore Navjot

special day here when **Khursheed** and **Yezdi Mehta** celebrated the Navjot of their son **Sherzad**." The ceremony was performed by Ervad Vispi Dhalla, and was attended by relatives and friends of the Mehta's from India and Singapore, who enjoyed a buffet amidst the traditional *chalk-chandan* and flowers, notes Kanga.

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Chicago Center

Artifacts of Parsi culture are sought by the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC), for their proposed new Zoroastrian Center. *Asli* carved furniture, *divas*, *torans* for *Agiary* doors, *Farohars*, *afarghans*, *khoomchas*, *cheepias*, *chamach*, *karasias* and other ceremonial vessels, religious books, paintings and photographs of artistic or historical value, tape recordings or films of Gujarati songs or plays etc. "Such artifacts of Parsi culture will be deeply appreciated, well cared for and preserved for posterity", assures Rohinton Rivetna, president of the Association.

As of 21 December 1980, the Association's funds for the proposed Center stood at \$ 39,500, noted the ZAC newsletter of January 1981. The Arbab Guiv Foundation's contribution to the Chicago community center of \$ 150,000.00 is intended to be supplemented by ZAC through fund raising ventures.

The center has been planned in three phases, the first phase will include a prayer room, an assembly hall and a library room, the second phase envisages a priest's residence and the third phase a guest house for visiting Zoroastrians, notes Rivetna.

ZAC hopes the center "will provide a religious and social focal point for our youth and the rest of the Zoroastrian community in the mid-western United States."

S.O.S. from Miami

Kersi and Mehroo Damri, victims of a road accident in Miami, are in need of monetary aid to help pay off hospital bills, court charges the mortgage on their house, as well as day to day living expenses, note the Parsis of Miami and Boca Raton, Florida, in a letter of appeal to the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec.

The Damris, both Chartered Accountants, newly married, and expecting a baby were involved in a head-on collision with another car, on 8 June 1980, notes the letter. The only survivors of the accident, Kersi and Mehroo sustained multiple fractures of the arms, legs, jaw and nose, besides other serious injuries, and had to undergo extensive surgical operations, including plastic surgery for their disfigured faces.

"They will be bed-ridden for another six months and unable to work for quite some time...although they have some medical insurance...it is understandable how difficult it would be for anyone to meet the expenses, especi-



Vakil seated with trophy: 6,000 raffle tickets

ally for a young, newly married couple like the Damris, who have just started out in life."

Those willing to help should send their contributions directly to Mr and Mrs Kersi P. Damri, 19312 West Lake Drive, Miami, Florida 33015.

Z.S.O. Snippets

New York Philharmonic Conductor, **Zubin Mehta's** baton was among the "hot selling celebrity items" at the New York Association for the Blind's 1980 "lighthouse 'posh' sale", announces the Zoroastrian Association of Ontario's (ZSO) December 1980 newsletter.

Neville Rabadi of the Royal Canadian Air Cadets Corps, has been chosen from 22 cadets across Canada for a two-week international exchange visit to England, where he will gain experience at the Royal Air Force bases, notes the October 1980 newsletter of the Z.S.O.

Twenty-year-old **Farokh Buhariwala** was awarded the W. Alan Curry Scholarship in anatomy by the Faculty of Medicine Research and Development Foundation of the Dalhousie University, states the October newsletter, adding that the Foundation's studentships were established to encourage young scholars of excellent standards to seek a career in medical research.

Neville Austin, a student with the Faculty of Music of the University of Toronto has been awarded the Music Talent Foundation Award according to the November 1980 newsletter of the Z.S.O.

Mr. Singapore Charity

Nineteen-year-old **Ratansha B. Vakil** of Singapore, won the Mr Singapore Charity contest from 15 other participants, at the Shangri-la Hotel, Singapore, when he collected Singapore \$ 36,671 on behalf of the Spastic Children's Association of Singapore, reported *New Nation* a Singapore newspaper, of September 1980.

Vakil, who was in Bombay recently, narrated how he collected the amount almost within a month, through donations, and raffle tickets, of which he sold 6,000 for one Singapore dollar each.

Besides the title and a trophy, Vakil also won a suit and a free ticket on Aeroflot, the Russian airline, to New Delhi, thanks to which he was able to make the detour to Bombay at his own expense. A sound movie camera, \$ 600 in cash, a refrigerator, two calculators, pen, lighter, perfume, a food hamper, a radio cassette, a \$ 100 gift voucher for clothes and a \$ 50 gift voucher for books, were Vakil's other prizes, which he said were auctioned and the money collected given to the Hans Anderson Club for underprivileged children.

Vakil, who is a *Navar*, is at present completing his two year conscription with the Singapore National Service, where he jokes, "they teach you how to become a good clerk."

Religion and Ravo

A mini symposium on topics related to the Zoroastrian religion is planned

Please turn to page 72

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News from the Media

The Chinnery-China Connection

When Sino-Indian relations are mentioned one thinks of those indefatigable Chinese pilgrims who made their way over the mountains in search of Indian wisdom. More contemporaneously, one also thinks of the border dispute. But what is less obvious is the role Bombay played in the cultivation of relations with India's overwhelming Asian neighbour. For this a vigorous and forward-looking band of Parsis were mainly responsible and it was not long before their keen and calculating eyes fell on China as a source of profitable trade. More than half of Bombay's wealth in the early 19th century was in their hands and much of this wealth derived from the China trade. Thus by a curious combination of circumstances, Bombay's development from a relatively insignificant island into a major port city owed a great deal to China and the intrepid Parsis who were among the first groups of merchant adventurers in Canton.

Old maps of the trading factories in Canton clearly demarcate that section of the waterfront in which the Parsis operated alongside the British, Americans, Danes and others. Of these Parsis the most enterprising and colourful was **Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy** who visited China four times between 1800 and 1808, cooking his own food on board ship, living in insanitary and uncomfortable quarters, being attacked by the hostile French, and narrowly escaping shipwreck. Those were indeed rugged days but to the Parsi entrepreneurs we are indebted for the porcelain, tea, silks and other exotica that flowed into the country. Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy negotiating with the astute Chinese in Canton became a familiar sight and is now a part of the lore of the China trade. It was at this point that history, again arranging its affairs with consummate skill, brought George Chinnery (1774-1852) onto the scene.

This painter spent the first half of the 19th century in the Orient, mainly

India and China, painting portraits of Chinese merchant princes, of British taipans and other personalities whose exploits had been such as to merit pictorial documentation for posterity. Jamsetjee, by now prosperous and established, sat for Chinnery and we have in the portrait that Chinnery produced one of the earliest and most fascinating memorials which links India with China and England. Chinnery paintings now sell at enormous prices and are prized for both historical and aesthetic reasons. He himself was as romantic a figure as Jeejeebhoy and the books of the period refer to him as capturing in his paintings the atmosphere of the East-West relations of those times, as constantly running away from his debts and as freely indulging in opium.

Trading in opium and smoking it were not then regarded as unusual or a vice. Parsi fortunes and many Bri-

tish ones were founded on opium and, indeed, looking at Chinnery paintings, one fancies that one catches the fantasy reek of opium.

It was considered a great distinction in the Sino-Indian-British world of the commerce of those days to be painted by Chinnery, and although Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy's place in Indian and Bombay history had been confirmed by his accomplishments, that he was commemorated in a Chinnery painting (now owned by Mr. John Keswick, an old China hand) was one of those felicitous ordering of events with which history regales us from time to time.

In Bombay itself Jamsetjee was housed in the building which is now Handloom House, to which carriages came transporting celebrities of all kinds. Of one of his parties the *Bombay Courier* wrote: "We had seldom the opportunity of witnessing, even in



Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy: part of the lore of Chinese trade

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the houses of the first European gentry in this Island, an entertainment so agreeably and judiciously arranged, as this of Jamsetjee's." He was the first citizen of Bombay to introduce ice and ice confectionary at his "entertainments", though after one of these some of the guests and Jamsetjee himself were reported to have developed "colds".

What was there in the ethos of those days that produced men of such vigour and enterprise, whose adventuring brought Bombay, Parsis, China and Chinnery together within the romantic framework of the China trade? Bombay's contribution to this colourful chapter in Asian history was Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy and, from any point of view, it was indeed an extremely worthy one.

N. J. NANPORIA
(Times of India 11 January 1981)

"Impact of Parsis on India Fascinating"

Although the numerical strength of the Parsis is declining at an alarming speed, the number of students taking to research on the community is increasing.

The community's religion, Zoroastrianism, has evoked considerable interest among the student fraternity in the U.K. and the U.S.

"I have 90 students researching into various facets of Zoroastrianism," said John R. Hinnells, head of the University of Manchester's department of comparative religion.

Hinnells has been particularly fascinated by the Parsi community's enormous catalysing influence on Indian social, political and economic life.

He started research study on the community's religion eight years ago. He is in Bombay to make a deeper study on the Parsis' rich cultural heritage, and to write a book in collaboration with Dastur Jamasp-Asa.

The demographic profile of Parsis shows a one percent decline in its numbers every year. This disturbing trend, bearing a sharp contrast to accretion of numbers in most other Indian communities, is attributed to late marriages among Parsis because of impecunious circumstances and migration of a few.

It may be recalled that some months ago, an American professor of comparative religion and a distinguished scholar of Zoroastrianism, Prof. Pangborn, exploded some months ago the myth of the Parsi prosperity. Most members of the community lived on doles and had to defer marital propositions because of economic insecurity.

Hinnells does not feel much differently. He is also averse to the suggestion of dispersing the Parsis out of Bombay to relieve the economic pressures.



Hinnells: "not a single Parsi student"

Hinnells' book, a standard reference material, now under print in Britain, titled, *Role of Parsis in British India (1862-1947)*, will have detailed accounts of the community and its members' contribution to the Indian culture.

There will be moving chapters on Madame Cama's vigorous fight for freedom, the estrangement it caused in the family, her exile to France and the plea for return to India to die on the soil of the motherland.

How the Parsis made sure their charity went for the poor, how they excluded richer Parsis to make way for the poor of other communities in schools and how generously and unconditionally they took part in ameliorating the distress of those who suffered a natural calamity, are all being recorded in the forthcoming book.

Hinnells' initial inspiration to pursue research into Zoroastrianism was derived from that religion's influence on the Jews and the Christians. Certain recondite facts of the Bible like the concept of hell, heaven, resurrection and angels have originated from Zoroastrianism, he feels.

Hinnells's life itself is no less colourful than the role of the community he has studied. Because of a childhood affliction of tuberculosis of the bone, he attended, only three years of school, starting from the age of 12. By 15, he was advised to discontinue because of inadequate academic standards.

He went to an arts school and took to painting landscapes for the next

six years. At the end of that, he joined an Anglican church monastery. "The monks encouraged me to study and prepared me for a university entrance examination", he said. He went on to make a mark in his academic career.

Hinnells still walks with the aid of a stick and a limp. Periodically, he has to submit himself to surgical operations of a hip bone.

He has a lively interest in sports and had opened the innings for the college staff association with the England captain, Mike Brearly who taught philosophy at the same university. "I did not have many runs to my credit but I could stay on for hours". And he always batted with a runner. When it came to fielding, he was at the slips, a safe catcher.

Hinnells also trained with the Derby Union Football Club and, being strong in soccer theory, worked out strategy for London University's Kings College, thus enabling them to win cups.

His only lament is that he has still not got a single Parsi student to learn in his classrooms. "I have taught Hindus, Muslims, Christians but so far not a single Parsi".

(Times of India 7 February 1981)

City Crematorium a Health Hazard

Dead men tell no tales. But in Chandanwadi, a crowded locality near Marine Lines housing a crematorium, the ashes of the dead are rising to bring slow death to residents.

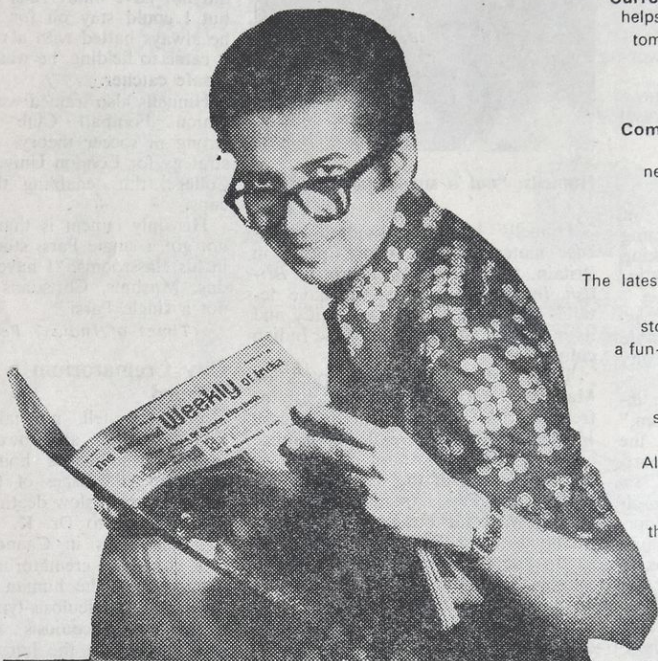
According to Dr. K. S. Engineer, 75, who lives in Chandanwadi, the soot from the crematorium is highly dangerous to the human body. It generates a tuberculosis-type of disease called 'pneumoconiosis', causing "fibrous growth in the lungs, very similar to the one found in tuberculosis-afflicted textile mill workers." Dr. Engineer contends, adding that "in children, this disease can be fatal."

To this, Dr. Rajesh Chandan, a radiologist, who runs a clinic on Shamaldas Gandhi Marg (Princess Street), agrees, saying, "The incidence of tuberculosis is very high in this area, and since the majority of the population belongs to the lower classes, they cannot afford to get X-rayed. Besides TB, there is an equally high incidence of asthma and other bronchial diseases and even a few cases of lung cancer."

Even more significant is his contention that the ash can cause tetanus if it falls on an open wound. "This ash, unlike normal ash, is hea-

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vier and oily. It easily adheres to any surface and if you try to brush it off, it leaves an oily residue behind," he explains. "This oiliness is probably due to the human fat that burns during cremation."

Nargis Mistry, 40, a social worker crusading to reduce the nuisance that the crematorium is causing, herself lives on Shamaldas Gandhi Marg and suffers from asthma—a disease, she feels, she has contracted from the smoke emanating from the pyre.

A more illustrative case is that of M. D. Bandivdekar, 60, retired electrician-in-charge of the crematorium. Bandivdekar, worked there ever since its inception in 1954 and, during his tenure there contracted tuberculosis. He complains that operators working in the crematorium are themselves left without much protection, and though they are housed near by, they are not entitled to medical insurance or superannuation benefits. The gross monthly salary of an operator is Rs. 550, while an electrician gets about Rs. 700 per month.

To mitigate the health hazards to operators, Bandivdekar feels that the corporation should, at least, provide smoke screens and give monthly vaccinations against diseases likely to be contracted by the workers.

The crematorium is open round the clock with operators working in three shifts (6 a.m., 2 p.m. and 10 p.m.) The normal charge for the cremation, of a body is Rs. 50. For children, the rate is reduced by half.

A special 2 ft. by 6 ft. wooden coffin is prepared, in which the body is placed, clothed, and a podium is erected inside the hall for the last rites. All communities and castes, regardless of class, use the crematorium, more so during the monsoons when humidity is high and normal cremation is difficult and time-consuming. Twelve bodies are admitted every day, each body taking about one-and-a-half hours to burn completely, thus consuming 60,000 watts of power.

Problems in the crematorium began when indigenous machines were installed in 1968. These were inferior, outdated and required more maintenance. The previous machines, brought from Denmark in 1954, had three furnace chambers, of which one was shut down and used as a standby. The present machines have only two chambers, which are continuously in operation. This frequently leads to overloading, resulting in breakdowns.

Another problem is the water sprinkling system. This is meant to purify the smoke before it is released through

the chimney, but it generally fails to work when bodies are continuously brought in and the load is increased. Indeed, there have been occasions when the water chamber has burst due to overloading and caused dense smoke to float over the neighbourhood!

In this regard, four councillors complained to the MBC on January 21, 1980. The former mayor, B. K. Boman-Behram, said the chimney was not tall enough and that the voltage used to cremate the bodies was not sufficient. No further action was taken, even though Tatas were willing to supply the additional voltage.

As early as November 1970, the first signature campaign was started. The list was presented to the then minister for urban development, P. G. Kher. In April 1974, when Murli Deora visited the site, he suggested that a standby unit be set up and that the chimney be cleaned more often.

On May 20, 1980, residents approached the pollution control cell and in September sent a letter to the municipal commissioner, B. K. Chowgule. Finally, another letter was sent to the chief minister, A. R. Antulay, in October. In spite of all this, however, the matter, for all practical purposes, is a dead issue.

RAJU CHELLAM

(Times of India 20 January 1981)

Crime novel by Bombay's Frene Olbrich is 1979 award-winner

Move over Ellery Queen, Sam Spade, Inspector Ghote, Nero Wolfe and Father Browne — Inspector Frank Desouza of the Bombay police is here!

At least, he is making waves in the West that have earned his creator, **Frene Olbrich** nee Dastoor, the Current Crime award for the best British crime novel of 1979.

Frene herself is married to a German settled in Scotland and is also the daughter of an ex-police surgeon of Bombay. Which is where she got her ideas of creating Inspector Desouza and having him go through a series of adventures that is gripping crime buffs not only in England but further afield.

Strangely enough, she started serious writing only in 1976 when the school where she is teaching English had a strike. With time on her hands and a secret yearning to write, she set to. The result was *Desouza pays the price* which was snapped up by Heinemann and soon had a large fan following. But Frene had to pay a price as well.

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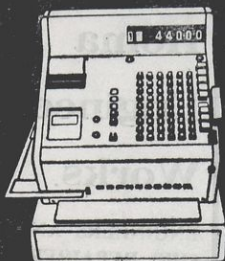
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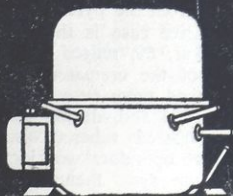
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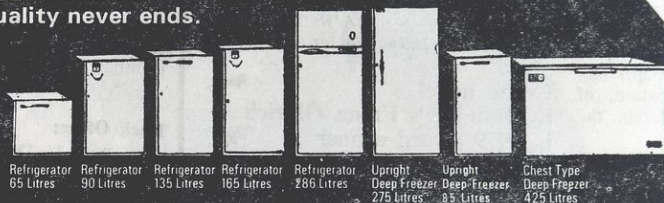
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a crime thriller because I was reading a lot of those at the time. I wanted something completely original and thought nobody had ever written a thriller set in Bombay before. I did not know about H. R. Keating and his Inspector Ghote. If I had known, I might never have come up with Desouza.

"Anyway, I finished the book and because I wanted it to be a one-off, I made Inspector Desouza resign at the end. But when Heinemann agreed to publish it, they also made it a condition of acceptance that I would write a few more, using the same hero. So I had to add another chapter, in which I make him withdraw his resignation."

It is a pity that the Bombayite has been deprived so far of these books. For all three, including *Sweet and Deadly* (for which Freny won the award) and *Desouza in Stardust* would find a ready market in India and more especially in Bombay for the settings are achingly familiar. It is as if Freny is homesick and must bring back the atmosphere of the city where she lived for so long, as a school-girl, then a collegian at Elphinstone College and a lecturer at St. Xavier's College, before going to Oxford more than 20 years ago.

"And I chose Desouza rather than a Maharashtrian because at that time there were many Goans in the police force holding senior positions, and also because I had more Goan colleagues, so I was more familiar with the way their minds worked."

The details of how the police worked she got from her father, the rest she owes to her memory. *Desouza in Stardust* especially is vintage Bombay, for it sets the intrepid inspector in the middle of investigations which take him into the heart of the film world. And who in Bombay does not like to read about film stars.

But the yen to be a straight writer is there too, so Freny has now written a book about a Parsee boy, the youngest son in a family whose history she traces right up to Independence. And when she goes back to Scotland later this week, she too has been accepted for publication.

(Mid-day 13 January 1981)

Painting Philately

On November 1, 1980 **Jamshed Pirojshaw Irani** queued up at the Bombay G.P.O. to buy a First Day Cover commemorating the Seminar on the Great Indian Bustard. Irani's interest in the

cover was more than philatelic: he had designed the stamp. Other philatelists scrutinising the First Day Cover are unlikely to notice anything very unusual about the stamp. But there is: it is the product of a specialised but little known discipline in the art of painting, a tradition of scientific painting that goes back to the great American naturalistic painter Audubon, of the early 19th century, and his contemporary British counterpart John Gould.

Irani was himself only hazily aware of the scientific tradition in bird painting until 1964 when, as a 25-year old commercial artist, a set of fortuitous circumstances resulted in his putting a phone call through to Dr. Salim Ali, the internationally renowned ornithologist. The call culminated in an invitation to Irani to be the first Indian painter to do the colour plates of his monumental, 10 volume *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan*, and thus launched him into the most satisfying stage of his artistic career.

Dr. Salim Ali's work demanded total accuracy. Every bird could not be painted life-size, but every bird had to be drawn in exact proportion to the real specimen; the length of the beak, wings, tail, limbs (known as tarsus), as

Continued on page 41

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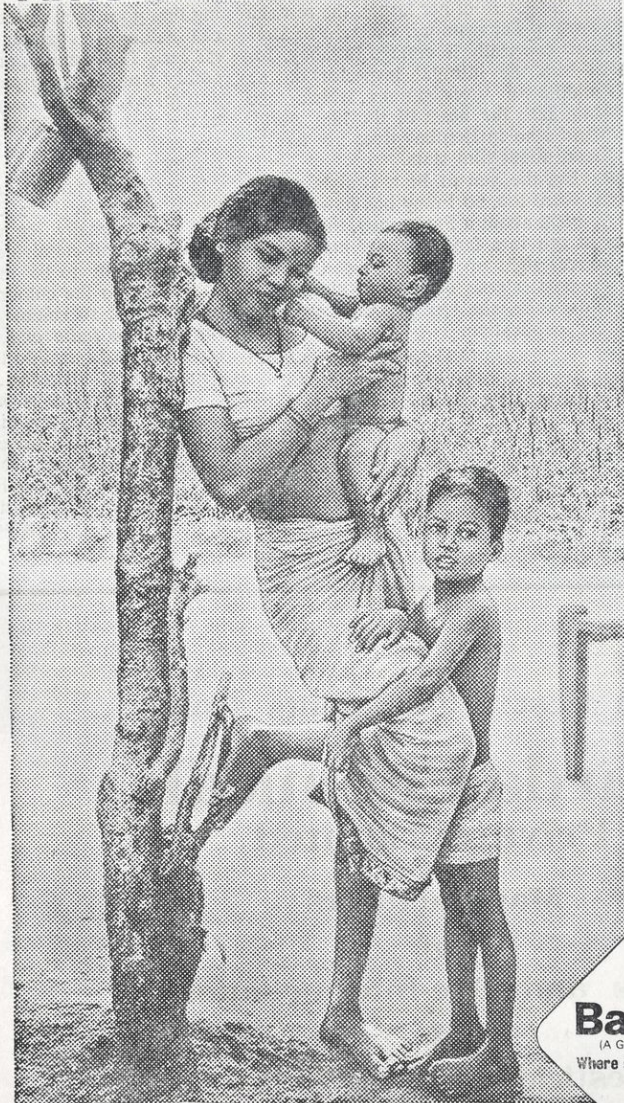
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BPP ELECTIONS THE FINAL DAYS

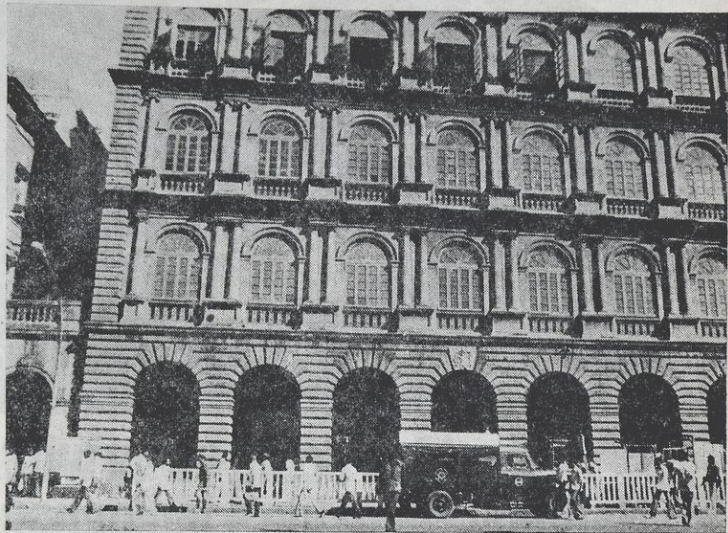
It was the pavements of Dadabhoy Naoroji Road that provided the final forum for the keenly contested Bombay Parsi Panchayat Anjuman Committee elections. Over the course of four weekends, a camaraderie developed between the members of the two competing parties, the Committee for Electoral Rights (CER) and the Committee of United Zoroastrians (CUZ) outside the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Institute building that houses the Dickensian offices of the BPP. The scars of the rough-and-tumble campaign slowly began to heal and talk of working together to achieve common purposes emerged.

Even in the final days of the election, the trustees of the BPP whose Chairman B. K. Boman-Behram is one of the CUZ leaders along with Trustee Nelie Noble, tried to obstruct measures to ensure a fair election. Once again the CER leaders had to drag the BPP trustees to court, this time for appointment of their observers on all the tables where counting of the votes take place and for more observers on the 'D' register for the final two days of the voting.

The CER leaders' fears were not without foundation. On Saturday March 14, one voter was charged with impersonation by the vigilant Panchayat staff and handed over to the police. He reportedly implicated one of the CUZ office bearers and is said to have made a statement to the police to that effect. According to reports, another CUZ leader, a former police official, had the report altered.

Duplicate certificates in large numbers had been issued by the Panchayat reportedly to Noble and other CUZ leaders; several voters found when they went to vote that someone else had already cast a vote in their name.

An elaborate police bandobast was made on the polling dates of February 21, 22 and 28 and March 1, 7, 8, 14 and 15. Aside from some minor incidents on the first day, polling was peaceful and orderly, thanks to the careful arrangements made by the Panchayat with each voter requiring about 10 minutes to complete the voting formalities. However, with the trustees' usual phobia of certain sections of the press, photographers were not permitted to photograph the polling. When Blitz correspondent, Ma-



Police van stationed in front of the polling station

neck Daver, who had been standing near the front gate along with press photographer Rashid Bamanbehram, for almost an hour seeking permission to enter, finally tried to walk in, he was physically jostled out by the overzealous doorkeepers.

In every case the judgement went against the BPP trustees or they had to concede.

The entrance to the polling station was festooned with a host of banners and posters with several tables spewed along the length of the stone building manned by volunteers of both parties and a few independent candidates. Every weekend saw a proliferation of new literature, with the CUZ claiming the religion was in danger and the CER countering that the community was in danger. Jeeps went around to the various Parsi colonies exhorting Parsis to vote.

In Rustom Baug, a CER jeep ran into trouble when some residents, reportedly CUZ sympathizers objected and a minor scuffle ensued in which a microphone was damaged. A bulldog

also reportedly growled menacingly at Nariman Mehta, one of the CER's most active members. The newspapers carried advertisements on the four weekends inserted by the two parties and an occasional public meeting or two was held.

The CER was forced to resort to advertisements in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* when it found that *Jame* Editor Adi Marzban refused to print any of the letters or articles supporting the CER. As Jamshed Kanga, the CER convenor, noted in a public meeting at Sir Cowasjee Jehangir Hall three days before the election, "The only way we can get anything into the *Jame* is by paying for it." Though Marzban had in a private meeting with the CER leaders promised to carry any material sent to him by the CER, once the electioneering started in earnest, almost none of the letters favouring the CER saw print while column after column appeared daily supporting the CUZ. However, in the final week of the election, the *Jame* did carry the court decision on the extra observers and for once did not headline it as a victory for the Panchayat. In two of the other cases where the Panchayat suffered humiliating defeats in court, one in regard to the Parsi women pro-

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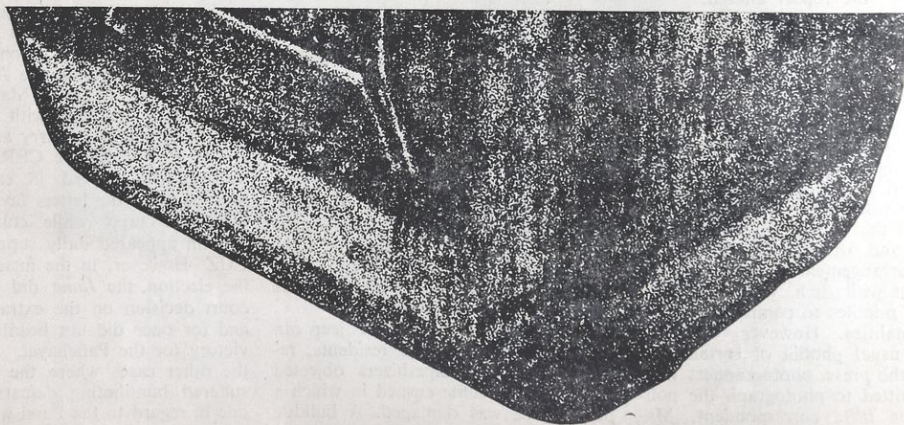
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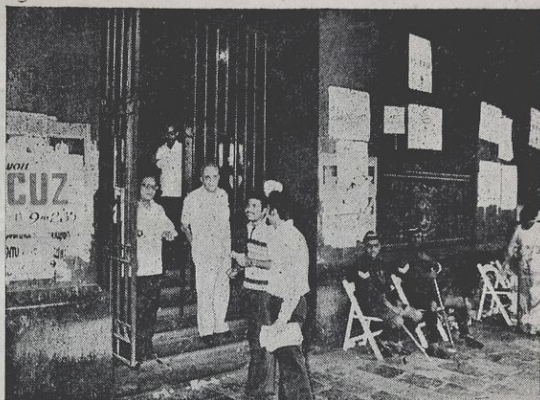


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Volunteers outside the polling station and voters at entrance

Photographs: Rashid Bamanbehran

fessing the Zoroastrian faith but married to non-Parsis being allowed to register as voters and the other pertaining to the extension of polling dates from two to eight days, the *Jame* had termed them as victories for the trustees. When the paper was threatened with legal action by Gagrat & Co., the noted Bombay law firm that championed the case of the six Parsi women married to non-Parsis, they finally carried the correct version of the Bombay High Court judge's decision.

The enigmatic *Jame* policy made the CER members resort to stuffing cyclostyled sheets into copies of the paper to get their message across to the readers. However, after CER member, Jal Ollia slipped his cyclostyled statement into the paper in the early hours of the morning, the *Jame* a few days later carried an item on its front page denouncing the practice and saying it was done without the paper's consent.

The *Bombay Samachar* on the other hand attacked the CUZ and the Panchayat while extending support to the CER. The *Samachar* also prominently published the court decisions on the front page the very next day, while the *Jame* would often delay such publication if it did not favour the BPP.

The *Samachar* also took CUZ leader, Jal Contractor to task for his extremist stand on religious issues. A former deputy commissioner of police, widely respected in the community, Contractor emerged as one of the CUZ leaders in the course of the campaign. He favoured barring any Parsi male or female who married a non-Parsi "from taking part in any religious ceremonies or attending or entering any agiary, atashbehran or avail-

ing of the Dokhma facilities" and also promised to "strive my utmost to have the definition of a 'Parsi' fixed in law in such a way that it will debar any Parsi marrying an alien, from being considered a Parsi Zoroastrian."

The burly Contractor, spoke at a CER meeting about "physically preventing intercaste marriages," and enquired whether the CER "would assist him," according to the *Samachar*. Due to the *Samachar's* espousal of liberal causes, the CER was wary of acknowledging the paper's support and

The murky manoeuvres on the 'A' register were ominous harbingers of big money entering Parsi politics.

would release their campaign literature to the *Jame* first and then the *Samachar*. The CER leaders sent word to the *Samachar* Editor Jehan Daruwala not to raise any controversial religious issues, but Daruwala ignored the request and in one of his columns launched a broadside against the CUZ for supporting the ban on non-Parsis paying their last respects to the Parsi dead.

The *Blitz* weekly had carried a series of articles on the elections, including one written by Boman-Behram and B. K. Mistry, secretary of the CUZ, wherein the duo claimed the bar on non-Parsis paying their respects was based on ancient religious scriptures. The custom, in fact, started 100 years ago at the initiative of the Rahnumai Mazdayasne Sabha, a religious reform body founded by men such as Dadabhoi Naoroji, K. R. Cama and Sheriar Bharucha. It was the custom

in those times to perform the *Geh sarna* ceremony in the house and then carry the corpse with its face uncovered to the Tower of Silence. As this was unhygienic and an unpleasant sight for passersby on the streets, the Sabha wrote to the BPP to issue instructions that the face be covered.

Boman-Behram co-authored the *Blitz* article in his capacity as chairman of the BPP, thus publicly associating the Panchayat on the side of the CUZ. Referring to the CER and its supporters the two writers stated, "The Parsi community is not likely to be misguided by the reformists' propaganda, which thrives on falsehood and intellectual dishonesty. If they succeed, woe betide the community!" The article abounded with factual errors and amounted to little more than a tirade against the CER and the "reformists."

That Boman-Behram and Noble are amongst the CUZ leaders is commonly known but while Boman-Behram chose this time not to stand for election on any register, Noble stood from the 'D' register. The entry of the BPP chairman and another trustee in the political fray, explained why the Panchayat repeatedly opposed attempts made by the CER leaders and others to ensure the holding of a free and fair election and thereby forced the community to resort to the courts of law. It is significant that in every case the judgement went against the trustees or they had to concede.

On the first day of the polling, the CER leaders found to their dismay that the Panchayat, without consulting them, had changed their ballot serial numbers. The explanation given was that one candidate, Pesi Cama, a retired colonel and executive had filed

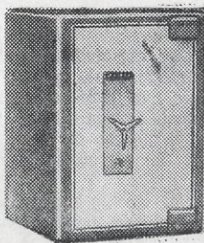
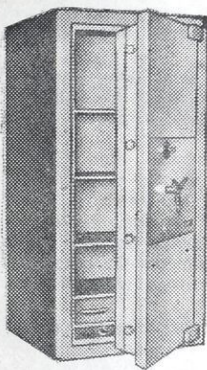
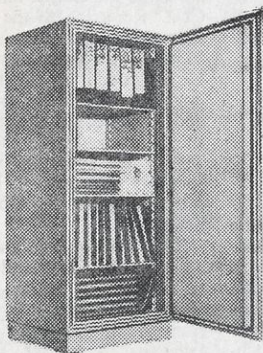
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his nomination papers from both the CUZ and the CER. It was only when both parties released their list of candidates that the duplication was noted. Cama then opted to stand from the CUZ and as a result of which the CER list, which extended from number 249 to 475, had one less candidate.

The Panchayat, instead of leaving Cama's number blank, moved all the numbers up by one and allotted number 475 to Freny Ponda, an independent candidate and one of the six Parsi women to take the Panchayat to court on the issue of voting rights, thus creating the impression that she was a CER candidate. A leaflet published by a "well-wisher" appeared shortly thereafter claiming "the cat is out of the bag," and that the CER was in favour of Parsis married to non-Parsis, one of the most controversial issues in the election.

The CER, exceedingly sensitive to the charge, immediately put up posters stating that Ponda was not a CER candidate and issued advertisements in the press to that effect. Instructions to voters with the new ballot numbers, 249 to 474, were also printed and given to voters outside the polling station. In a letter to the *Kaiser-E-Hind*, the Gujarati-English weekly, and in an advertisement in the *Jame*, Cama apologised for the inconvenience caused while Ponda also let it be

known she was standing as an independent candidate.

While many of the 453 CER and CUZ candidates left the electioneering to the party faithfuls, several of the independent candidates who numbered about a dozen remained present throughout the four weekends, handing out their literature to voters. Amongst the independents was Dr. Syrus

"The only way we can get anything into the 'Jame' is by paying for it".

Irani, the controversial son of the late doongerwadi keeper, Darvish Irani. Irani came into the public eye when he let non-Parsis pay their last respects to Darvish despite the BPP trustees' dictum that non-Parsis were to be barred from viewing the face of the dead.

Out of a total electorate of around 18,600, over 9,650 Parsis voted, that is 51 percent. Considering there was only one polling booth and voters had to travel from all parts of Bombay and the suburbs to vote, the turnout was considerable. And compared to the 1,500 votes cast in 1974, it was over a six-fold increase.

The counting of votes began on 16th March at the Parsi Panchayat offices. Fifteen tables have been set up each manned by two Panchayat staff mem-

bers and one observer each from the CER and the CUZ.

In the 'A' register which consists of people who have donated Rs. 500 and over but less than Rs. 5,000, the 46 CER endorsed candidates won by a margin of around 11 votes each. The 'A' register had the highest turnout of voters, over 96 per cent with 280 of the eligible 291 voters casting their ballot. Noble and her Pundolite group, followers of the late mystical leader, Minocher Pundole, had swept the 'A' register in 1974 and would in all probability have won it again except for the courts of law.

Boman-Behram and Noble's strategy for the 'A' register was to wait till all the various groups and individuals had submitted their applications on 31st December 1980.

Just before the Panchayat doors were shut at 6 p.m., Noble's supporters reportedly entered and after ascertaining how many people had registered from the opposition groups, submitted their applications. Altogether 140 voters were enrolled on the 'A' register on the last day, involving a total of Rs 70,000. But what Noble and Boman-Behram had not counted on was a tough fight from the Rayomand Committee donors, people who in good faith had donated money to the Panchayat for housing and whom the two trustees refused to enrol as voters on the 'A' register.

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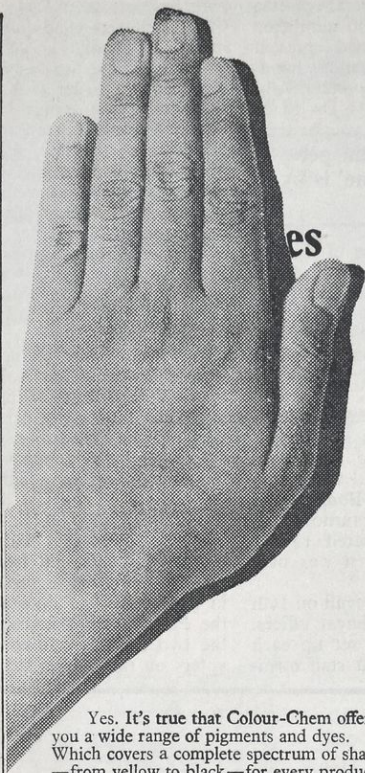
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Spearheaded by the indefatigable Rayomand Committee's Jt. Hon. Treasurer, Jer K. Bardi, two donors, Shavak Dhunjishaw Udwardia and Khodadad Boman Irani filed a plaint in which they described the trustees' action as "arbitrary, malicious, fraudulent and in excess of and in fraud of the powers conferred" upon them. The trustees, realising they had no legal grounds to fight on, agreed to register the donors.

The additional dozen or so votes gained by the Rayomand Committee gave the edge to the CER which had an alliance with another group led by Dinshaw R. Mehta, a new entrant to the Parsi political fray.

The murky manoeuvres on the 'A' register were ominous harbingers of big money entering Parsi politics. Because of the archaic and undemocratic systems of election laid down over 70 years ago, Parsis with money to buy votes constitute 58 percent and more of the electorate. The 'F' register, people who pay Rs 5,000 and over to the BPP get a direct vote to elect trustees. Depending on the number of donors on the 'F' register, an equal number is allocated to the 'E' register which comprises of the 'A', 'C' and 'D' registers. 'A' is for those who pay Rs 500 and over but less than Rs 5,000, 'C' is for graduates who pay Rs 7 while 'D' is for any Parsi Zoroastrian over 21 who pay Rs 5.

Thus in the present elections, the number on the 'F' register was put at 303, though actually the number was less as the Panchayat had erroneously forgotten to strike out the names of dead donors. Thus the 'A' register was allotted 15 percent or 46 seats, the 'C' register, 10 percent or 30 seats, and the 'D' register, 75 percent or 227 seats. But while the 'E' register will remain static at 303 for the next seven years till a new Anjuman Committee is elected in 1988, the 'F' register will continue to grow.

A combination of the 'F' and 'A' register donors accounts for 58 percent of the electorate. If for the 'A' register Rs 70,000 could be spent in one day, the possibility of a few lakhs being spent to bolster the 'F' register with voters of one's choice looms large. Thus the present election system legitimizes buying votes, a practice that in almost any democratic election procedure would be considered criminal.

In the 'C' register, the United Orthodox Graduates group, an independent party with orthodox leanings, won over the CER endorsed slate of candidates. The CER had not actively enrolled voters for the 'C' register and fielded only 18 candidates for the 30 seats. The UOG, which fielded 30 candidates, was the only party concentrating on the 'C' register. The CER and the CUZ had focussed their acti-

vity almost wholly on the 'D' register because of the large number of seats involved.

With each voter in the 'D' register being permitted to vote for 227 candidates, the counting of votes would drag into April. As this issue of *Parsina* goes to press, around 5,300 votes of the 8,791 cast in the 'D' register were tallied, with the CER ahead by about 425 votes.

With the counting of the votes, the long vigil began. All political activity, which was petering out in the final days of the voting, came to a halt. After three months of hectic campaigning, both sides temporarily retreated to the sanctity of their homes and offices. The pavements of Dadabhoi Naoroji Road that made Parsi history, once again became the preserve of raucous hawkers selling smuggled goods, of rampaging Shiv Sainiks, endless morchas demanding a better life and the harried Bombayite.

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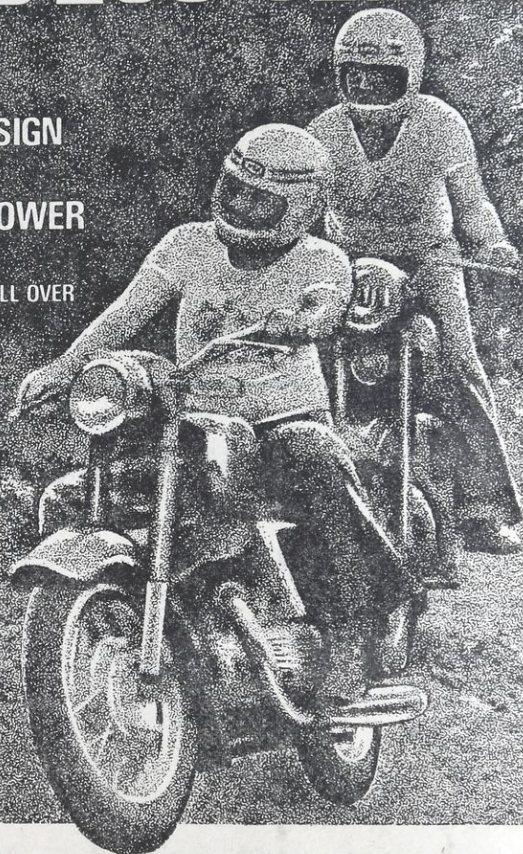


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Continued from page 31

also the total size. The specimens used as models for the paintings were actual birds, dead and disembowelled but with their bones intact and stuffed with cotton. These specimens, of which Bombay's Natural History Society boasts one of the largest collections in Asia, about 25,000, are known as 'skins'. Besides the precise proportion, the paintings had to capture the birds in the typical 'pose' of their species. It would hardly do to show a ground bird perched on a tree branch. And not only had the brilliant plumage to be accurately reproduced in water colour but, with equal exactness, the painter shades of the bill, iris, legs and feet, as well. And, of course, the background had to reflect faithfully the bird's natural habit: anything like a bird in winter plumage shown in the backdrop of a summer landscape would be a scientific scandal of tragic dimensions.

But why bother about a painstakingly elaborate painting technique in an age of the most amazing colour photography? "Photographs of all birds are just not available," says Irani, "and in those that are available, all details are not visible." In any case, far from daunting him, the prospect of illustrating Salim Ali's work only exhilarated him. This infectious enthusiasm for Ali's work, and Ali's natural courtesy and patience touched the artist, and completely bowled him over. Irani has

since completed hundreds of birds for the great ornithologist's *Handbook* as also for several other books, including *Birds of Bhutan*, *Book of Indian Birds*, *Birds of Eastern Himalayas*, all by Salim Ali, *Common Birds*, by Salim Ali and Mrs. Laeeq Futehally, and *Watching Birds* by Mrs. Jamel Ara.

After a decade of such patient work by Irani, Dr. Salim Ali was approached by the Posts and Telegraphs Department for advice on their contemplated 'Indian Bird Stamps' series. Naturally enough the ornithologist turned to Irani for the designs, Irani obliged with a set of eight rough colour designs done in the actual, minuscule stamp size, depicting a Crimson-breasted Barbet, a Blossom-headed Parakeet, an Indian Pitta, a Black-headed Oriole, a Pink-headed Duck, a Great Indian Bustard, a Western Tragopan and a Monal Pheasant. Out of these, four were selected and the final paintings, done six times larger than the actual stamp sizes, were then submitted, accepted, printed and the stamps released.

Though thankful that circumstances have enabled him to combine his twin love of nature and art in his work, which has permitted him to share some of his enthusiasm with a wider public, Irani bemoans the general lack of interest in nature among his compatriots. As a telling example he points to the facilities provided by the Bombay Natural History Society, the oldest

in Asia, which are only meagerly utilised and could easily cope with a manifold increase in interest and membership.

LUIS S. R. VAS

(Sunday Standard 11 January 1981)

Deboo's World

"There were times when I was in tears. I danced my heart out but could not make any contact with the drug addicts. They just sat there without responding."

Modern and classical dancer, **Astad Deboo**, recalls his experience at a drug addicts rehabilitation centre in Canada. Astad used to act out the case history of an addict before a group while the psychiatrists studied the patient's responses. Astad is quite clear about his contribution to the rehabilitation effort: "The psychiatrists used me."

The Canada encounter is one of the diverse experiences Astad has had during his eight years around the world, five of which were spent hitchhiking. The journey was spangled with achievements which clicked into place with the naturalness of a kaleidoscopic formation. He was chosen lead dancer in *Rose Garden*, the opera performed at the controversial Royal Sydney Opera House during its inaugural season. He was the lone Indian artiste there. He has participated in the International Art Festival, Brazil, 1976, and has danced before the royalties of Japan and Thailand, the drug addicts of



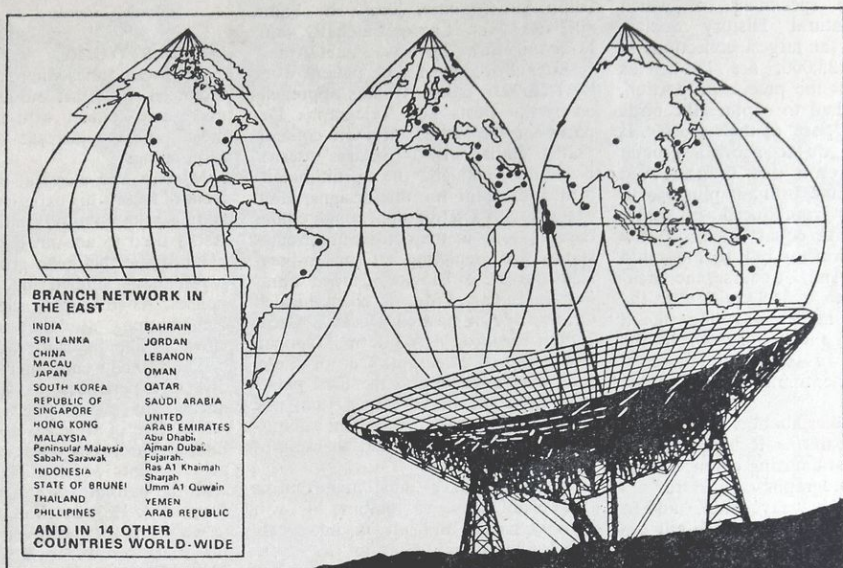
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Deboo: diverse experiences

Hongkong, and the mayor of Los Angeles. He has performed with the ace rock group Pink Floyd, in London and modelled in Paris.

In fact the list of the international cities where he has performed is too long to be listed here, and, Astad concludes, "I have felt more rejection and frustration in this country than anywhere else. They kill your drive here."

Astad is a trained Kathakali dancer (under the guru, E. Krishna Pannicker) and has studied the Jose Lemon technique in New York. But he has had to face remarks like: "Why do you want to dance? You are 31 now, you can't have a long career in dancing!" The Indian sponsors when willing, don't even appreciate what his art involves. They usually don't want to think beyond a few hundred rupees spent on theatre rent and classified advertisements. It has been a job for him to explain to his sponsors that he needs special costumes and sets for his performances.

Costumes and sets; they are some of the fascinating aspects of Astad's creativity. Unlike a classical dancer

who dances out a performance designed by a generation of gurus — the patterns, themes, costumes, music, rhythms, everything is predetermined, prepared by tradition — Astad has to begin with a blank. A piece of music, usually contemporary European, suggests a theme to him. The projection of his concept involves a multi-dimensional design: costumes, lights, sets, props, body language, changing rhythms, showmanship. And he is working in this country in isolation, as he is the only male modern dancer India can boast of. There are no encounters with other modern dance conceptions which could help him test his ability, give him a take-off base, or make comparisons.

For this and many more reasons I respect Astad — the man and the artist. The compositions Astad devises can only flow out of a man who has experienced life deeply and responded to those experiences sensitively, and with a powerful creativity. For example, as he dances the composition *Ritual*, hot wax from the lit candles held in his hands drips on his bare chest. Later he extinguishes the flames with his palms. "Why do you do all that? Surely the wax and the flames must scald you?" I asked. Astad showed me his scarred palms. According to him, the undertones of masochism in the *Ritual* demanded this.

Each creation often varies so very much from the other, that it is a wonder that the same person has conceived them. The satire in *Model* has elements of mime, wit and pathos. An unnamed composition inspired by Anand Shankar's music, is basically motifs (Indian and modern, like Anand's music itself) of joy strung together. The *One Cell Organism* is pure showmanship devised with lights and costumes. There are many compositions which are woven around death and the wanderings of a spirit after death.

In his expositions of a theme on stage, Astad is absolutely uninhibited, but in person, he is old fashioned and polite. He is restless and full of laughter. "When were you born?" I asked him. "In the Year of the Pig," he laughs. I ask about audience reactions. "Oh yes. I get it instantly. I love children's reactions: 'Mummy see, his underwear can be seen.'"

This reminds me of a delightful incident that happened recently. Just before his latest show, I went to the green room, and knocked on the door announcing myself. Astad was wearing a skintight, skin-coloured briefest of briefs; and nothing else. As I entered

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the room he hurriedly reached for a towel and wrapped it around his waist. Fifteen minutes later, I was among the audience full of males, females and children, and Astad was performing on the stage, wearing nothing else but those same briefs!

SHEELA BARSE

(Sunday Standard 19 October 1980)

Adi Marzban — Man of Many Parts

Adi Marzban's personality is reflected in his office or that is at least what a student of psychiatry would say. It is housed in an old redstone building in the Ballard Estate area, above the rumbles of the *Jame* press. It is a huge cavern, with a table slightly bigger than the vast table of governor O. P. Mehra and, unlike the governor's, crowded with thousands of odd things.

There are old medicine bottles, inkwells, hundreds of ball-pens, some of them still bundled in their rubber bands, books piled to the ceiling, papers scattered around. The editor sometimes sits at one side of the table, sometimes at the other, I suppose depending on which side he can find room to put his paper down and write on it. And there are books in cases reaching up to the ceiling, which he does not lend. There is also an ante-room, with a couch and more books (joke books, crossword books, astrology books), where he sometimes offers his visitors *phudina* tea.

This is where Adi edits the *Jam-e-Jamshed*, started by his great-great-grandfather, Ferdoonji Marzban, in 1832. He talks with the interest of an antiquarian about his forefather.

"He sold sola topees to Britishers, started the country's first courier system, he also started the *Bombay Samachar*, which was the first ever newspaper to be brought out in India. Then, after some 15 years, he quarrelled with the people there and started the second newspaper in India, the *Jame*. He got the women of his house to cut the Gujarati types out for the press."

About the paper today, he says: "Besides the Parsis, it is read by all the Gujarati-speaking minorities, including the *Bohris* and the *Khojas*."

The Parsi community, as is known by those interested in it, is at the moment divided into three groups; the orthodox, the reformers and the indifferent. I do not know where the chain-smoking (smoking is forbidden in Zoroastrian religion) Adi stands in this division, but his paper is a little on the orthodox side. He explains the position: "We have no objection to reforms, provided they are well-conceived, well-thought of and constructive. But until somebody works out such reforms, we had better stick to our traditions."

Like all good Parsis, Adi Marzban is a great one for tradition. "I don't want to lose my Parsi way of life," he says. "When I go to a wedding or a funeral, I wear Parsi clothes."

But Adi is not a respecter of Parsis. All his plays, on stage and on the radio, debunk the community, though with a certain amount of affection. The very first Parsi play he wrote (all the 50-odd Parsi plays that he has produced have been written by him), *Chhaiye Hame Jarhosti* (We Are Parsis), envisaged a Parsi heaven. There, at the gate, the guardian angel stood, checking the new arrivals. Each arrival was asked: "Are you a Parsi?" If he answered yes, then he was told, "You may go in."

Then he wrote *Choopo Rustom*, about a Parsi who prayed 20 times a day and then, on the quiet, did every-

thing else. The titles of his plays tell most of the story: *Shireenbai Noo Shantiniketan*, *Cawasji Casanova*, *Katariyu Gap*, *Gustadji Ghore Chariya*, *Sukaigaila Sundarlal*, *Dinshajee No Dabba Gool*, *Maro Tehmul Eyoo Karej Nahi* (My Tehmul would never do that).

Adi's entry into the theatre was through his father. The father was Pirojshaw Jehangirji Marzban, otherwise known as Pijam, a good writer and director. As a child, Adi used to be taken to the old Baliwalla, Victoria and other theatres on Foras Road and Playhouse area and left standing in the wings.

Of those days he says: "The audiences were repeat audiences, they used to come again and again for the same plays. Like in the Hindi films today, the songs were very popular. When a song would start on the stage, the house lights would come on, so that the audience could read the songs in their programme books and sing

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with the artistes. And in the aisles, the hawkers would move around selling *badam-pista*."

Adi also started dabbling in the English theatre at an early age, in fact he was a pioneer, beginning with *Tilly of Bloomsbury* and J.B. Priestly's *Time and the Conways*. And who all among the present theatre personalities began their careers under him? A shorter list would be of those who did not. Today the second generation of actors is with him. Bomsai (*Ah Norman*) Nicholson, whose mother, Dinoo Nicholson, was with Adi. And Rohinton Mody, whose elder brother, Sarosh Mody, has had a long association with him.

Ruby Patel was brought to him as a schoolgirl by her father. "She wants to act, I leave her in your charge," the father told him. And Hosi Vasunia was brought to Adi by his partner, Pesi Khandalawalla. "We were casting for *Ah Norman*, and Pesi brought Hosi saying we should introduce some new talent.

Adi himself is at his best, at least in my view and that of many others, in his Gujarati radio plays. Many years ago, he began a series known as the *Buddhi Dhansak Mandal*.

Adi's wife in the radio plays, Jer, is also his wife in real life, Silla. Of her he says: "There is nobody in radio to touch my wife as an actress. Warm, easy, natural, she talks as if she is sitting at home. I am so proud of her."

What else does Adi Marzban do? He paints, designs his own new year greeting cards, plays chess, the piano, has one of the largest collection of

western music in town, does conjuring tricks with cards, reads everything that comes his way, is an astrologer of some standing.

Mornings and afternoons he edits his paper, evenings 6.30 to 9 he rehearses his plays, then reads, listens to music, plays against his chess computer. Wife, Silla, shares the same interests, they never go to bed before 2 a.m. "We are owls, not larks," says Adi.

BEHRAM CONTRACTOR
(Sunday Mid-Day 14 December 1980)

All in the Family

Piroja and Shavaksa Shroff, middle-class residents of Grant Road, Bombay, stayed in an old, two-bedroom flat with their married son, 25-year-old **Phiroze**, his wife **Homai** and their younger, unmarried daughter, **Sunoo**. Sunoo's marriage to **Minoo** had to be postponed as Shavaksa was lying at the Parsi General Hospital in April 1970, recovering from a second heart attack. Out of the two bedrooms, one bedroom was given to Phiroze and his wife, while the other was shared by Piroja, Shavaksa and Sunoo.

In April 1970, Piroja after taking her afternoon tea used to visit her husband at the hospital and return home around 8 p.m.

On April 7, 1970, at about 4 p.m. Homai was sleeping in her bedroom with the door closed as she had a bad headache. Her husband Phiroze, a bank employee, was not expected

home till 6.30 p.m. In the living room on the rocking chair sat Minoo reading a novel, waiting for his fiancée, Sunoo, to return home as the two of them were to go that evening to shop for their marriage. As Piroja was about to leave, there was a telephone ring. It was Sunoo informing Minoo that she was held up at work and would not be able to return home till 6 p.m. When Piroja left the house there was nobody else there except Homai and Minoo. The maid-servant was on leave and was not expected to return till the next morning.

Piroja walked the distance from her house to the bus stop and stood in the queue. Half an hour later she was still in the queue. She was 50 and rather stout and she could not tolerate the heat of April which gave her spells of dizziness. She thought it advisable to return home and send Minoo to the hospital. On returning home, she rang the door bell. There was no response. She kept on ringing the door bell. After about seven to eight minutes, the door was opened by Homai who was fumbling with the buttons of her blouse. Her hair was dishevelled. Pirojabai had to pass by her son's bedroom. The door was closed but a little ajar. She pushed the door and looked in. Her future son-in-law was lying on her son's double bed. The windows of the room were closed. This was April and it was not as if the room was air-conditioned. Piroja's mind was in a state of acute turmoil. Her daughter-in-law and her future son-in-law together in

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one room with the windows closed!

Piroja was in a dilemma that even- ing as to whether she should tell her son Phiroze and her daughter Sunoo about the incident. If Minoo was an outsider it was another matter. But he was to get married to Sunoo who thought the world of her future hus- band.

One statement from her would des- troy the happiness of both her child- ren. And what about the effect of such a disclosure on her husband's health? She chose to remain quiet. However, she could not quieten the feeling of intense disgust and repugnance she felt for her daughter-in-law. She stopped talking with Homai. Hitherto a good mother-in-law, she now started expressing her resentment for her daughter-in-law in a hundred little ways. Phiroze sensed his moth- er's growing hostility towards his wife who expressed her inability to comprehend what had brought about the change in Piroja.

Towards the end of April, Shavaksa returned home from the hospital. Homai had cooked a sumptuous meal to celebrate her father-in-law's recov- ery. At the table, Piroja refused to eat a morsel cooked by her daughter- in-law and had coffee and biscuits in- stead. Phiroze complimented his wife's cooking and told Sunoo to call Homai over to her new house after she mar-

ried whenever she wanted help in cooking. On hearing this, Piroja could not contain herself any longer. She burst out, "Sunoo, don't you ever call this prostitute to your house." Phiroze was uncontrollably wild with his mother. "How dare you call my chaste wife a prostitute?" he demand- ed. Piroja could not retrace her steps now. She mocked, "Chaste indeed! Ask her what happened on the 7th." She narrated the incident and by way of proof she swore on the *Khordeh Avesta*, the sacred book. Homai ve- hemently denied it. However, Minoo took Sunoo into another room and touching her feet asked her to forgive his lapse. He excused himself on the ground that Homai had taken the initiative and made overtures which he could not resist. Sunoo forgave him.

However, Phiroze was raving and ranting like a lunatic. He ordered Homai to leave his house immediately. His family tried to reason with him. It was midnight. Homai was from Ahmedabad. She had no relatives in Bombay. Where could she go in the night? Finally, Phiroze agreed to her staying the night only on condition that Homai give a written confession. Homai wrote it wherein she confessed she had "done with Minoo what ought not to have been done".

The next day Homai was outside

the house and Phiroze was inside the office of a solicitor who was instruct- ed to proceed for divorce on the ground of adultery. Minoo was made the co-respondent.

By the time the suit reached hear- ing Minoo and Sunoo were happily married.

Both Minoo and Homai denied having committed adultery. Phiroze relied on: 1) His mother's oral evi- dence. 2) The document written by Homai, viz. the confession. 3) The circumstantial evidence that Homai and Minoo were behind a closed door in a room with closed windows. There was, therefore, opportunity coupled with inclination. Phiroze did not succeed in proving adultery. His mother's oral evidence was not believed — the fact that she did not tell anyone about the incident for about three weeks was a factor which went heavily against her.

The written confession was held to be not voluntary. Homai was forced to write it as she was threatened to leave the house at midnight.

Moreover the words, "I have done with Minoo what ought not to have been done" did not necessarily mean adultery. It could be anything short of adultery. Phiroze's suit for divorce was dismissed.

FRENY PONDA

(Times of India 4 January 1981)

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THUS SPAKE RAJNEESH

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is the founder of the Rajneesh Foundation situated in Pune, Maharashtra. A colourful and controversial spiritual leader, Rajneesh has spoken out on a host of subjects including Zoroastrianism. Parsiana publishes an extract entitled "Zarathustra Must Have Had An Immense Sense Of Humour", from a discourse given by Rajneesh at the Shree Rajneesh Ashram.

Question: Bhagwan, it is said that Zarathustra laughed loudly when he was born. Is it true?

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh: It must be true, because a man like Zarathustra comes into the world with great insight. He must have seen the world immediately — he must have seen the whole crazy scene! It depends on how much intelligence you have. A few people take their whole lives to realize that they have been living in a madhouse. He must have seen at the first moment that "This is a crazy place I am entering into!"

And it is not only Zarathustra — every child, the moment the child becomes capable of focussing properly, he starts smiling, because he is then able to see what his father looks like!

A recent story tells about a baby who was giggling and laughing min-

utes after he was born. The obstetrician noticed he had unusual muscle control, his tiny left fist being tightly clenched. When the doctor pried it open he found a contraceptive pill.

Zarathustra must have laughed! Whether he laughed or not...I am not concerned about history, but to me his laughter is very significant. The world is in such a mess! Ordinarily children are born crying—that too is their judgement! They are saying, "My God! So this is the world I am born into?"

Zarathustra has a different attitude, from the other extreme—he laughed. He must have been a man like me, hence I have a very deep love for Zarathustra.

He must have been a man like me, hence I have a very deep love for Zarathustra.

A man won a turkey in a raffle and brought it home, but his wife was annoyed. "Who wants the bother of plucking it?" she said in a huff.

"If that's the way you feel," he replied, "I will pluck it and cook it myself."

So he busied himself plucking it and when he was finally through he trussed it and put it in the oven. But he forgot to light the gas. After wash-

ing up he settled down to read. Half an hour later he heard a muffled voice say, "What are you going to do about it?"

Without taking his eyes off the newspaper he said, "Do about what?"

The voice answered, "I am getting cold. Either put my feathers back or light the gas!"

If Zarathustra laughed, what is wrong in it? He must have seen the whole stupidity, that he had to live with these people, and he started with laughter.

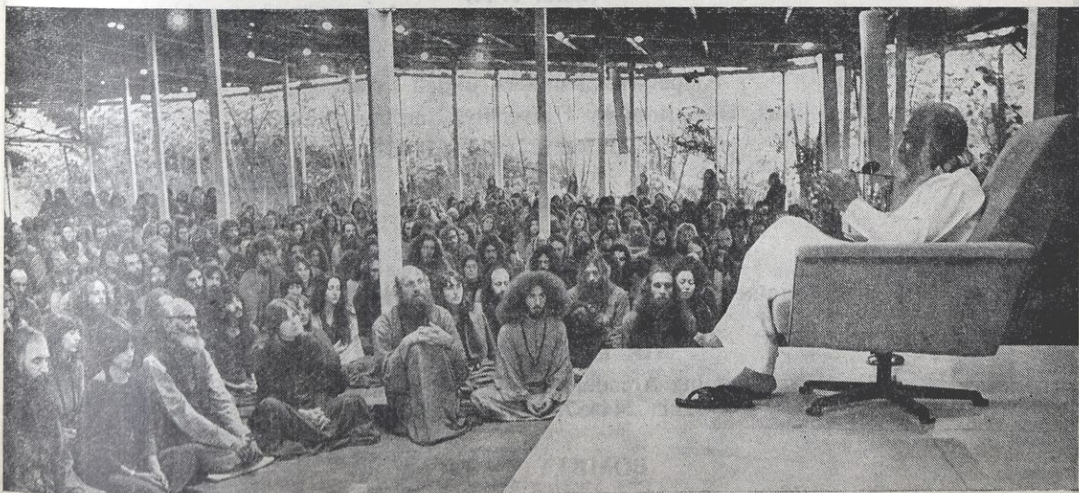
The noted agnostic lecturer, Robert G. Ingersoll, said once: "No man with a sense of humour ever founded a religion."

He is wrong — Zarathustra did. Of course, in about 99 percent of religions, Ingersoll is right; his statement is significant. He says no man with a sense of humour ever founded a religion. It is true about Jesus, about Buddha, about Mohammed, about Krishna — it is absolutely true; these people don't seem to have any sense of humour—but it is not true about Zarathustra. Maybe Ingersoll had never heard about Zarathustra.

He is the only man known to have started his life with laughter — must have had an immense sense of humour. To begin your life with laughter is not an easy matter. He must have prepared for it for many

Rajneesh's morning discourse: "I am trying something like Zarathustra tried".

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lives; he must have come ready.

Christians say Jesus never laughed in his whole life; maybe they are right. I don't want to believe it because that means a great condemnation of Jesus, but if Christians say so, then, of course, who am I to disagree with them? They are the authoritative people, at least about Jesus—their own Jesus!

This may be one of the reasons why Jesus has succeeded in converting almost half of humanity to Christianity, because people are sad. Zarathustra has not found many followers, you know? His followers are confined (largely) to Bombay—only a few thousand. Why has Zarathustra failed? Maybe that laughter is the cause: he has a sense of humour.

People are serious, sad, miserable, hence the cross of Jesus seems to be very appealing, because their life is also on the cross. They can understand Jesus and his agony—they are passing through it. Their whole life is nothing but carrying a cross. They can find a deep affinity with Jesus, his crucifixion—they are also crucified. But what affinity can they find with Zarathustra? Why did Zarathustra fail?

Buddha has found millions of followers; the whole of Asia is Buddhist. Christians have found millions of followers; half the earth is Christian. Mohammedans are next to Christians—and Mohammed has no sense of humour at all. With a sword in his hand he is very serious, really serious. He is much concerned about your welfare—if you don't listen to him he is ready to fight with you, but he is determined to convince you because he is determined to save your soul. Even if he has to use the sword he has to save you. How can he allow you to fall into hell? It is for your own sake.

Zarathustra is the only person who has not been able to find followers. I can see the point: with a sense of humour, who is going to listen to you?

I am again trying something like Zarathustra tried. My effort here is to prove Ingersoll wrong. I am trying to found a religion based totally on the sense of humour!

Shakespeare and others have punningly described the foolish pretender to philosophy as foolosopher. By the same wordplay the philosophy of foolosophers is called foolosophy.

Bertrand Russell was always critical of foolosophers, for their lack of both common sense and a sense of humour. He tells how he was once near death with pneumonia, delirious for three weeks. After he revived, the

Why has Zarathustra failed? Maybe that laughter is the cause: he has a sense of humour.

doctor said to him, "When you were ill you behaved like a true philosopher: every time you came to yourself you made a joke."

Russell wrote afterward, "I never had a compliment that pleased me more."

He himself was a serious man. In his delirious state he must have forgotten all his philosophy and seriousness, must have become more relaxed, must have forgotten that he was a philosopher and had to be serious—must have joked.

To me, a sense of humour should be the foundation stone of the future religiousness of man. There is no need to be so serious. Man is the only animal who has the sense of humour. You have never seen buffaloes laughing, or donkeys. Only man can have the sense of the ridiculous, of the absurd. It needs great intelligence to have a sense of humour; on the lower planes it does not exist. And not even all human beings have it; those who exist on lower planes of intelligence are bound to be serious—serious like the donkeys. Donkeys are very serious people, always thinking about serious things, it seems, much disturbed with all the problems of the world.

Zarathustra seems to be of the highest calibre, of the most refined intel-

ligence. At his first sight of the world he laughed. He could not contain himself, he could not resist the temptation. Seeing where he was landed...

The laughter of Zarathustra looks irrational, but it is not irrational. To see the irrationality all around he must have been perceptive, very perceptive.

The story is strange. There are many miracles told about people like Jesus, Buddha, Mahavira, Krishna, but they are almost the same. The miracle of walking on water is repeated in thousands of stories; it is nothing special to Jesus. The miracle of curing people of their incurable diseases is nothing new to Jesus. It is the same miracle being done by so many people around the world, in every tradition, in every religion. Even the miracle of raising the dead is not new; that too is a common miracle attributed to many people.

All these miracles are meaningless, but Zarathustra's miracle of laughing at the moment of his birth is really significant.

A great Zen Master lay critically ill. As his doctor prepared to leave he said cheerfully, "I will see you in the morning."

Although the dying Master knew his hours were numbered, he could not resist quipping, "Of course. But will I see you?"

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Continued from page 19

Stree Mandal of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, selling Parsi delicacies prepared by local Zoroastrian ladies may have to shut down, fears Aloo R. Rustomfram, President of the Stree Mandal. High rent for the tiny shop, indifference and a decreasing demand for their produce amongst the local Zoroastrians, inadequate kitchen facilities, and lack of funds, are some of the reasons for which Rustomfram feels Spenta will have to shut down.

Launched as part of its 'Project Self-Help', which aims at "ameliorating the condition of poor women by offering them employment and consequently making them self-reliant and self-respecting", the Mandal set up the kitchen and sales outlet, at 125, M. G. Road, Secunderabad, in October 1978, states Rustomfram.

The Zoroastrian Stree Mandal of Secunderabad and Hyderabad was established in 1959, "in the teeth of opposition, scepticism and even ridicule", by a group of Zoroastrian ladies who felt that "poverty is a crime for those who do nothing about it", notes Rustomfram.

Headed by a Managing Committee elected by its members, the Mandal's activities include giving employment to Zoroastrian ladies, helping students financially, helping the sick, old and disabled with medical aid, a trade is taught to those able and willing lists Rustomfram, and adds that they hope to "discourage the common habit of indolence and asking for doles each month and encourage the spirit of work and self-reliance among deserving Zoroastrian ladies."

Each year a sum of over Rs. 27,575 is distributed among 40 needy families, says Rustomfram, plus the kitchen workers are given medical, educational and health grants every month, new clothes, bed linen, towels, etc. are distributed to the beneficiaries yearly.

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I, Jehangir R. Patel, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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To continue with the work the association has been doing for the past 20 years amongst the poor Zoroastrians, the Mandal appeals to well wishers for aid, requests Rustomfram.

The Stree Mandal committee members include, vice presidents, Mrs. Y.F. S. Chinoy and Mrs. R. S. Plumber, hon. secretary, Dr. (Mrs.) R. M. Patell, hon. treasurer, Mrs. K. S. Rustomfram, hon. jt. secretary, Mrs. R. M. Katrak, hon. jt. treasurer, Mrs. B. J. Mody and hon. jt. treasurer Spenta, Mrs. D. N. Chinoy.



Katrak: devotional songs

Katrak's Kirtans

Well-known kirtankar, Parvez Katrak performed at the diamond jubilee celebrations of the Khan Bahadur Seth Edulji Sohrabji Chenoy Anjuman Dar-e-Meher, writes Naval B. Vakeel, member of the managing committee of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and Hyderabad.

The two day programme was a "rare treat", notes Vakeel, adding that "Katrak was invited by the Gujarati Seva Mandal and the Rotarians of the twin cities at the palatial Ritz Hotel, where the non-Parsi audience was thrilled by the singing of the famous *dohais* of the saint-poet Kabir."

Spotlight

Jurist H. M. Seervai, of Bombay was one of the 1980 recipients of the Dadabhoy Naoroji Memorial prize fund awards, given in recognition of his valuable contributions to the study of constitutional law and particularly in recognition of his book, *Constitutional Law of India — A Critical Commentary*. (*Times of India* 15 November 1980).

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Yasmin Sethna has been awarded her Ph. D. degree by the Bombay University, in Ancient Indian Culture for her thesis on King Ajatashatru. (*Times of India* 14 November 1980).

Faribourz Nariman of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, Bombay, was elected unopposed as president for the Iranian Studies section of the All India Oriental Conference to be held at Jaipur in 1982. (*Indian Express* 15 November 1980).



Nariman : Iranian studies

Bakhtawar Khambatta, representing Western Railways, set a new national record of 13.26 metres, in the women's shot put event in the 46th Inter-Railway Athletic Championships held in Delhi in December 1980 (*Free Press Journal* 3 December 1980).

Cyclist **Khurshid Irani** of Karnataka, was adjudged the best woman cyclist in track events on winning the 10 km road race in the National Cycling Championship held in Calcutta in

December. (*The Statesman*, 4 December 1980).

Boxer **Farhad Engineer** of Dadar Parsi Youths Assembly School, Bombay, was adjudged the best boxer in the Inter School Boxing Tournament, on 13 December 1980. (*Indian Express* 14 December 1980).

Cyclist **Homi Bhathena**, a 21 year old Pune collegian, won the 600 km 'Promise Stage Cycle Race' from Baroda to Bombay, when he completed the distance in 17 hours 49 minutes and 2 seconds. (*Indian Express* 15 December 1980).

Cricketer **Diana Eduljee**, Bombay's left-arm spinner and middle order batswoman lead the Indian women's cricket team in the first two tests against England. (*Indian Express* 5 January 1981).

Yachtsman **Cyrus Hirjee** won the Talpade Memorial Shield in the combined class handicap yacht racing in Bombay harbour. (*Times of India* 9 January 1981).

Special Executive Magistrate **Vispi Shapur Dastur** has been appointed a member of the Government of India's new committee for the Promotion of Philately in India and Abroad; reappointed member of the Government of India's Philatelic Advisory Committee in the Ministry of Communications, and is also the first Indian and non-westerner to be awarded the prestigious Roake International Trophy of the U.K., according to a release.

Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission of India **Dr. Homi N. Sethna** has been appointed principal secretary in the Atomic Energy Department, by the Government of India.

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Fifteen year old Bombay student **Darius Pandole** claimed the Maharaja Patiala Trophy in the National Junior Squash Championship at the Ram Bagh Court, Jaipur on 17 January 1981. (*Indian Express* 19 January 1981).



Variava : silver medal

Road Safety Patrol Officer **Khurshed Noshir Variava** of Surat is the first officer in Gujarat to get the silver medal for consistent good performance for the second time, according to a press release.

Cyclist **Armin Arethna** was the winner of a gold medal at the 14th Junior Nationals and Fourth Inter-State Cycling championship in Hyderabad in January this year, according to newspaper reports.

Raymond Elavia of St. Mary's SSC, set a new record of 4.31 metres in the midjet boys long jump at the 88 Annual Athletic Meet of the Bombay High Schools held at Brabourne Stadium in January this year, and **Binaisha Dhody** of St. Agnes set two new records with 28.86 metres in the discus throw and 9.98 in the shot put in the girls junior section, according to newspaper reports.

APRIL ISSUE

Due to limitations of space, the World Congress papers have been held over for the April issue as well as some Events and Personalities and Zoroastrians Abroad news items.

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Vultures At Death

*The great wings hover
Over the thighs
Again a young girl's
Given over to death
Where the bird presses
His beak and tears
Piece by piece
This arm hand eye
Every thing is given over
Again: Women wail from Towers
Persepolis destroyed/Yezdegird's daughter
The bird keeps home
A bracelet circles a young girl's bones.*

The Zoroastrian Minority's Representative to the the Islamic Constituent Asembly, Iran, 1979.

*He sat in Majlis in white
Addressed it in Avestan
Of god's party than Satan's
He had no fright
Parleying with Armenian, Assyrian
(Bahai, Jew taboo)
He voted with the government
(Salute the rising sun)
Keep distant
As loving keeps from love
Spoke a little on a mother's right
Dreamt without a word
Of Anahita come into a garden
With a sword*

Tehran 1981

At the Firetemple, Tehran

*A weak flame flickers
In the holy of holies fires dead
Beyond a barred window
The moneychangers have taken up the
temple
O lord how late in coming ...
Ashes on forehead: humility
I leave
Having brought such a weak flame*

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Aek Atmakatha is the autobiography of the late Dr Maneck Nusserwanji Dhalla, high priest of the Parsi community and a religious scholar of world repute. This is the twelfth condensed and edited extract from the English translation of the book — *Dastur Dhalla: The Saga of a Soul*, by Gool and Behram Rustomji, published by the Dastur Dhalla Memorial Institute, Karachi.

AEK ATMAKATHA

THE RELIGION OF DEVOTION

The life of Dastur Dhalla-XII

THE STORY SO FAR

Born to a poor dastur family in Surat on 27 August 1875, Dhalla moved with his family to Karachi three years later. At the age of eight he was married to five-year-old Cooverbai. After failing his matriculation, Dhalla sought employment while educating himself in religious matters. The Parsis of Karachi made arrangements for him to study for his masters degree in Iranian languages at Bombay University. While in Bombay, Dhalla came into contact with various Parsi religious factions, and also met several prominent Parsis of the times, among whom were Jamshedji Tata, Jeevanji Modi and Shapurji Saklatvala. With their assistance, Dhalla went to New York's Columbia University, where under the guidance of Professor A. V. W. Jackson, a well known Zoroastrian scholar of the west, Dhalla secured his Ph.D. in 1908. While in America, Dhalla read widely on his own, attended and gave lectures, and grew interested and involved with the debate on cremation prevalent at the time. He lived a frugal life, remitting as much money home to Karachi for household expenses as he could. Four years in the west had altered Dhalla's outlook to life and religion. He was now a reformist rather than an orthodox, interpreting the literature and sacred writings of the Zoroastrians according to the principles of philology, sociology, anthropology and philosophy. He was now the propagator of new concepts, examining Parsi customs and traditions in a scientific light, clearing up peculiar myths and fallacies regarding taro, menstruating women, dogs, hair and nails.

For the devotee, ceremonies create an atmosphere of serenity, solemnity and sanctity. He visualizes miracles through ceremonies and gives them a place of priority in religion. It is believed that ceremonies have the power to attract spiritual forces and to ward off evil spirits. In sheer ignorance man begins to believe that ceremonies will fulfil all his desires, that they will purchase virtue on his behalf, that they will absolve him from sin; and as with the living, so also with the dead. The efficacy of the ceremonies performed for the dead will release a sinful soul and carry it onwards step by step from hell to the eternal abode, from there onwards to the highest heaven and ever onwards to the habitation of Light where dwell the pure of heart.

In the sacred *Gathas*, Spitama Zarathushtra teaches us quite the contrary. Taking into consideration that every man and woman in an individual in his own right, he teaches life's eternal and infallible lesson that, progress depends entirely upon the actions of each individual. The accumulated treasure of one man's good deeds cannot be loaned to another, and no man's burden of sin can be lightened by another.

The lofty Zoroastrian precept that man's deeds and not his creeds or ceremonies are his salvation began to weaken after Zarathushtra's passing away by the mingling of ancient Indo-Iranian religious beliefs with his own unadulterated faith. Pahlavi and Pazend books openly drift away from it and invest ceremonies with the power to expiate sin and give them a place of prestige.

According to the *Patet* prayer composed in the Sassanian era the supplicant prays that at the time of his death his heir should recite the *Ashem Vohu* and the *Patet*. He continues that it is his wish that after his death his surviving children should be penitent for his sins and they should perform the *Sarosh* and *Getikhardi* ceremonies for the salvation of his soul. It is said in the *Sad Dar*, the popular book of

the orthodox sect, written after the Persian Empire had disintegrated, that the grace of having performed the *Getikhardi* ceremony grows according to the number of years the performer lives after its performance. When he dies he is immediately shown his place in heaven which has been reserved for him, but if he fails to perform the *Getikhardi* ceremony his soul cannot find accommodation in heaven.

Amongst us, at the time of the *Uthamna* ceremony the son of the deceased or his heir is made to recite certain set verses known as *Gai*, *Sosh* or *Lakh*. Before the assembly the heir promises to pray 1,25,000 *Ahunavars* and to consecrate 30 *daroons* in dedication to the deceased. In 1686 there was a major fight between the Sanjana and Bhagaria *mobeds* of Navsari where two *mobeds* and six *behdins* were killed. Legal proceedings commenced against the accused at Surat. At that time Mody Cooverji Nana-bhoy, a leader of the Anjuman used his influence and had the *mobeds* acquitted. After four years when there was a death in the Mody family, the Anjuman at Navsari took up the responsibility of performing the *Uthamna* ceremony for the deceased and to pray 25,00,000 *Ahunavars* for him as a mark of gratitude.

In Persia at the dawn of the *Chahrum*, after the *Uthamna* ceremony, the leading *mobed* or the *panthaky* of the town goes to the assemblage of men and women and makes a note of the prayers each volunteers to pray for the salvation of the deceased. At such a time, each according to his or her own free will offers to pray 500 or 1,000 or 2,000 *Ahunavars* or *Ashem Vohus* or a certain number of *Patets* or *Yashis*.

During the last 50 years the various communal institutions that have been established in many a town and city, perform public *Jashans* during the course of the year. They appeal to the community that if they wish to include the names of their dear departed ones in these prayers they should pay Rs 100 per name or more or less ac-

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As the economic prosperity of the community grew the ceremonies performed for the benefit of the living and of the dead also increased.

According to the amount stipulated by the association, and have it registered. There is a generous response to this request from the community. Some families pay for the inclusion of the names of their dear ones in the *Nam-grahm* and believe to have earned for themselves a quota of virtue.

About the middle of the last century the Rahnumai Mazdayasni Society, established by the educated reformists of the community, began to discuss the question of the ceremonial creed in a scientific manner. There were complaints about the poor of the community incurring heavy debts for having expensive ceremonies performed merely to imitate the rich. The Parsi Panchayat of Bombay and the thinking members of the community objected to the distribution of traysful of sweets and dry-fruits on the occasion of a death anniversary. But these objections had no effect. The reformists took up the responsibility of speaking and writing in protest of such extravagant practices. They conceded that ceremonials were an essential part of religion.

Ceremonies create in the mind of the honest participant a sense of devotion, a feeling of religious fervour, stir the nobler qualities of his heart and enrich his character. All this the reformists did not deny, but at the same time they taught that a ceremony is merely the outer shell whereas religion is the kernel. They gave priority to religious devotion, religious knowledge and religious behaviour over ceremonies. The orthodox majority did not approve of this and accused the reformists of shutting the doors to ceremonials.

As the economic prosperity of the community grew the ceremonies performed for the benefit of the living and of the dead also increased. From the beginning of the last century some wealthy co-religionists started to specify large amounts in their wills to ensure the performance of ceremonies for the eternal peace and happiness of their own souls and the souls of the members of their families, for generation after generation.

Later, when some disputes arose in such families regarding the distribution of inheritance and cases were taken to court, the legal authorities refused to sanction such permanently earmarked funds, not for the welfare of the living but for the supposed benefit

of the dead. Thus the trusts for ceremonies for the dead began to be annulled. Eventually, in the beginning of this century, when the conservative co-religionist, Justice Sir Dinshaw Davar, sat on judgement, he declared such trusts legal.

With the passing of time as economic conditions altered, the traysful of sweets and dry-fruits that had become part of the ceremonial creed lessened. On the one hand, while increasing expenses has been the cause of a decrease in ceremonies family-wise, due to the continued zeal and zest of the orthodox to maintain the ceremonial creed, funds for the performance of ceremonies have been established running into lakhs.

The new *Atashbehrum* at Bombay and other *Atashkadehs* hold large permanent funds for ceremonies. The officials of one such *Atashkadeh* appeal yearly to the community that as the fund of Rs 1,00,000 collected for the purpose of performing ceremonies for *Hama Anjuman* to accumulate a store of virtue on behalf of the community was not sufficient, and as it was extremely benefactor to have the *Nirangdin* and other ceremonies performed year after year, it should contribute generously towards the fund.

As in Bombay so also in other smaller and larger towns, the orthodox sect continues to make public appeals to have more and more ceremonies performed. And our ceremony-ridden community continues to extend its generous support.

As the performance of ceremonies increase, the conservatives falsely proclaim that it is an infallible proof of the increasing religiousness of the community. Here their accounting is at fault. Ceremonies are not the criteria by which to weigh the worth of religiousness. The religiousness or irreligiousness of an individual or a society can only be measured according to its moral ethics. Is the community sound in its sincerity and its honesty? Is the community clean in its public and private dealings? On this basis alone can its religiousness be estimated.

If an unbiased survey shows us that the community is losing its characteristic of depending upon its own resources, that the ardour of self-respect is diminishing, that the former ideal that death is better than begging is being dimmed, that enthusiasm, industriousness and diligence are lacking

in the able-bodied, that indolence and ingratitude have found a footing in the community, that the love of comfort and pleasure has increased, then know that the morale of the community is in jeopardy and that the moral backbone of the community has been injured. If that is lost, then all is lost. A 101 *Nirangdins* or a 101 *Hamayashts* cannot fill the void.

As ceremonies increase, the burning of sandalwood increases. The fire plays a central part in our religious life. A fire is essential in our religious ceremonies. We place the consecrated fire in a sanctum sanctorum as a symbol of Ahura Mazda. Just as the new custom of performing ceremonies in the name of the Anjuman has become prevalent, there has arisen a zest for collecting public donations for performing expensive *Agar Macchis* at the *Atashbehrum* at Udvada on behalf of the Anjuman, as if individual sandalwood is not burnt in sufficient quantity.

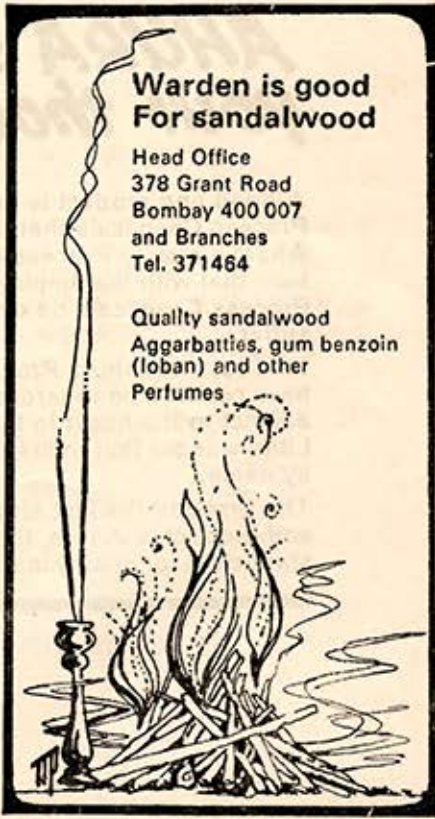
The vast wealth that is expended on our ceremonies at least gives the satisfaction that it provides for the livelihood of priests. But the unlimited and reckless expense to feed the fire is to say the least, a sheer wastage of money. Asho Zarathushtra has certainly not recommended this.

The vast amounts expended on ceremonies and sandalwood pose a seri-

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We lean upon the supposed magical powers of ceremonies and sandalwood and crave in an un-Zoroastrian manner the privilege to purchase salvation without personal effort.

ous question to the community from the economic and ethical stand-point. The false notion that by performing many ceremonies and by burning much sandalwood all worldly desires are fulfilled and heaven is attainable gives signs of the community's degradation. Instead of fashioning our own destiny, we lean upon the supposed magical powers of ceremonies and crave in an un-Zoroastrian manner, the privilege to purchase salvation without personal effort.

Ceremonies pose not merely an economic problem but also a moral one. The desire to attain unearned credit through the power of ceremonies does not end with the community's craze for performing excessive ceremonies. Despite our advanced education, of 125 years, the belief in ceremonies of other religions, in *devas* and temples, in *pirs* and tombs has not abated. Even

today such beliefs are prevalent in towns and villages.

Our community's lamentable mania for such idolworship only reveals their pitiable mental attitude. They try to snatch ready-made fame, success and happiness from whatever source possible. They are not self reliant. They have not the courage to stand on their own feet. They do not have the skill to shoulder life's burden. They do not have faith in their own kind. They do not realize that in man's communication with man, subservience and servility are shameful. It is equally regrettable to depend upon the efficacy of a few rupees to purchase ill-gotten and undeserved rewards from some celestial spirits instead of moulding their own personality by the force of their innate intelligence. Their wild attempts to attain their desires through saints and *pirs* and preists is a painful proof

of their feeble mentality, their faint morality and their failing Zoroastrianism.

In order to prevent the poorer section of the community from unnecessary expenditure on religious ceremonies, the Rahnumai Mazdayasni Society started, in 1951, to give guidance on proper lines. In 1859 it published a list of the obligatory ceremonies at the time of a Zoroastrian's death for the guidance of the community and had it reprinted time and again and distributed freely amongst the members of the community. Yet there has been no decrease in ceremonies. On the other hand, complaints regarding the drain on the poor due to the performance of ceremonies continue to be heard.

The community believed the fate of man's soul after his death is not sealed by his deeds in this world, but the ceremonies performed in his memory have the power to expiate his sins. If that soul is sinful, ceremonies can wrench it from the jaws of hell, and by their force the soul is elevated in its spiritual status.

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With this conviction, the wealthy man or woman takes precautions about the future during his or her own lifetime. They have the *Zinderavan* ceremony performed while they are still alive to derive its benefit, though normally that ceremony is performed on the first three days after a person's death. Some even have the whole year's ceremony performed. After death their dear ones besides having these ceremonies performed at the place of demise, have additional rites performed at the birth-place of the deceased or at Udva. Besides the regular *Baj*, *Afringan*, *Stoom* and normal ceremonies performed 365 days of the year, they perform other major ceremonies like *Barashnum*, *Getikhardi*, *Nirangdin*, *Hamayash*, *Davajdeh*, *Navar*, etc.

Seeing the rich, the poor and the middleclass are remorseful and envious of their fortunate friends who have been able to buy a store of virtue which will bring them happiness in the next world, whereas their poverty prevents them from performing ceremonies, for the souls of their dear ones in hell. They are not to be blamed for such thoughts, for such un-Zoroastrian precepts have been ingrained in them since childhood.

The history of religion reveals that as Hindu and Zoroastrian priesthood

A mobed's livelihood depends solely upon the ceremonies he performs.

is hereditary, the *brahmins*, *dasturs* and *mobeds* have made these two religions more ritualistic than any other religion in the world. However, in the Hindu religion, from the time a child is in the mother's womb, and continuing through his birth, christening, *janoi*, and marriage, all aspects throughout the course of his life are intertwined with ceremonies.

A Zoroastrian's life is not so interwoven with rituals during his lifetime, but where ceremonies for the dead are concerned Zoroastrians have out-done their Hindu brethren, both in the number of ceremonies and in the length of time that they are continued. The belief that rituals alter the destiny that the soul has forged for itself is completely contradictory to Zarathushtra's religion and is the offspring of false precepts of later Avestan and Pahlavi periods.

A *mobed's* livelihood depends solely upon the ceremonies he performs. It is but natural that his morning prayer would be a pleading for many ceremonies to fall to his lot. For him there is no other way. We are responsible

for this unethical mode of sustaining our priestly class.

The world is imperfect. It is imperfect in every field of life — be it physical, mental, moral, social or religious. Man's purpose is to steer it towards perfection. The perfected world, the perfected man — that is his salvation. To work for the progress of mankind — to seek its perfection and its salvation through a life of sacrifice and service — that alone is the religion of the individual. His salvation lies in that. In the *Gathas* Spitama Zarathushtra prays: "May we be the perfectors of the world, Ahura Mazda."

All the minor and major Zoroastrian and ceremonies are summed up in the combined prayers of the *Yajashne*, *Visparad* and *Vendidad*. Various ceremonies contain extracts from these prayers. The greatest ceremony is known as the *Hama Yasht*. In this 144 *Yajashnes* and 144 *Vendidad*s are recited. The *Devajadeh Hamayash* costs twice (as much) and lasts for 264 days and an equal number of prayers are recited.

If we were to express an unbiased opinion about the *Vendidad* which is considered the most important book on ceremonials, it can be stated that there is nothing like prayer or ceremony in it. Its 22 chapters contain completely irrelevant topics like prin-

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capital cities of Iran, King Jamshed, agriculture, taxation, systems of disposal of the dead, defilement, purification, *Bareshnum*, physicians' dues, social and economic laws, regulations regarding comfort and happiness, punishment ranging from 50 whippings to 10,000, other military crimes, care of dogs, customs of cutting the hair or nails and reciting prayers prior to burying them, pregnancy, menstruation, confinement, narration about Ahriman's torment of Zarathushtra, *mantras* to cure illnesses, etc. And yet the community squanders, lakhs of rupees every year over these supposedly incomparable prayers of the *Vendidad*.

Zarathushtra's religion of the *Gathas* is a religion of devotion. Zarathushtra is the devotee of Ahura Mazda. Zarathushtra sacrifices his own life and soul. He offers to His maker the sum and substance of his existence. Zarathushtra tells us that he who makes an offering of the divine love of his soul to Ahura Mazda is the true devotee — the true Zarathoshti.

Zarathushtra calls Ahura Mazda his Friend. Through the gift of the good mind, through concentration and though a pure life, each one can be Ahura Mazda's friend. Zarathushtra introduces Ahura Mazda as the friend, brother and father of the good and the noble. Zarathushtra asks Ahura Mazda for the help that a brother gives to a brother.

Zarathushtra wishes that those who accept his faith may ever strive to attain and assimilate *Armaiti* — the Vedic *Armaiti* or the spirit of devotion. He says that those who greet *Armaiti* are made pure in heart. He teaches us that the noblest prayer of the aspirant is: "*Armaiti's* devotion be mine; may she become my very own; through her may I reach Ahura Mazda".

Man asks his Maker for innumerable gifts — gifts of cattle and corn, comfort and wealth, prosperity and progress, success and fame, happiness and health, longevity and loving progeny and many a blessing. Zarathushtra asks not for alms but for the giver of alms himself. Rather than receive gifts, he prays for the giver that lurks behind the gift. In the *Gathas*, the words that frequently flow from his sacred lips are "O, Ahura Mazda, I seek but a glimpse of thee. I long to look through thee, to think through thee and to converse with thee. I crave to know thee, to reach thee, to be by thy side. I am athirst for thy divine love."

The noblest desire that he infuses in us is: "Oh, Ahura Mazda, may we

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enjoy your everlasting bliss and your constant companionship. Come to us, greet us make us your channel, be a part of us. May we see you through our own pure life, surround you, be with you, enjoy your abiding friendship and love you ever." There is no need for an intermediary—the assistance of an ambassador is unnecessary—no offering is called for at the feet of the King of Kings. This, then, is the religion of devotion—the religion of Zarathushtra.

Reference to the above-mentioned devotional religion can be found in Zarathushtra's own *Gathas* composed in poetic form and from the eighth chapter of the *Yasne Maptanga Haiti* written in prose in the ancient Gathic language by his followers and from a few verses of the *Yasne*. It cannot be traced in the later *Visparad*, *Yashts* and *Vandidad*. These revised versions are the mixture of Zarathushtra's basic precepts and the ritualistic and ceremonial religion of the Indo-Iranians.

After the Muslims conquered Zoroastrian Iran, many Zoroastrians who were converted to Islam, contributed a valuable share in composing precious Arabic and Persian literature. The *Sufis* have composed a vast devotional literature in the Persian language.

In the 17th century, Dastur Azar Kaivan and his companions who migrated from Iran to India lived like Hindu *Yogins* and Muslim *Sufis*. Many of their writings are in Persian, but they do not contain devotional literature. In the *Monajats* composed in Persian some attempts seem to have been made.

After Zarathushtra and a few of his disciples, devotional literature is not to be found in Zoroastrian Iran nor has Zoroastrian India created any.

In the history of Zoroastrianism, at no stage do we find any reference to renunciation of the world, penance or mortification of the flesh, or to a monastic life.

History has not recorded the existence of any Zoroastrian monasteries. Mysticism too, is a sort of unfulfilled urge in the religious life of man. Hence it is just possible that even in Zoroastrian Iran there may have been a handful of such individuals or sects.

In certain verses of the *Khordad* and *Behram Yashts*, it is stated that the sacred litanies should be taught by a religious leader to his son only, or by a brother to a brother, and its knowledge should be strictly guarded. Similar passages are found in the later Pahlavi-Pazend *Sad Dar* also, as well as in the *Upanishads* of the Hindus.

However, there is no reference to large numbers of people in Iran renouncing the world and going into *maths*

and *ashrams* in the forests to seek hidden knowledge through intuition rather than through intellect. Righteous and enlightened Zoroastrian men and women did not become monks or nuns. We have reason to believe that such sects were considered exotic, alien and un-Zoroastrian.

We learn from Mohsin Fani, a Persian writer of Dabistan, that in the 17th century there lived some Zoroastrian mystic *dasturs* and *mobeds* in Sind and the Punjab, who followed the doctrines of Hindu *Yogis* and Muslim *Sufis*. Parsi history of those times makes no reference to them. The genealogy of mobed families has been compiled and recorded very carefully since generations. No trace can be found in these records about those Zoroastrian mystics, as they were considered to be people outside the Zoroastrian fold.

Since very early days I have been opposed to the idea of renouncing the world, of fearing the challenges of life and going into seclusion to attain individual salvation instead of living in this world and gleaning the lessons of life and being moulded by its many and varied experiences. Even before leaving India I had written some articles on this subject and had delivered a few lectures.

The life of a true Zoroastrian is not for himself alone. He does not live for himself nor should he concentrate entirely upon his own salvation. To seek one's own individual liberation is selfish. Man is destined to live in this imperfect world, to wage, continuous war against its imperfections and to participate in its progress towards perfection. Man fulfils only half his obligation by saving himself from vice and pursuing the path of virtue. The remaining half of his duty is to radiate goodness around him and to lend a hand to those who have been entangled in the net-work of evil. This unfulfilled, his obligation remains incomplete.

Man is Ahura Mazda's soldier in the battlefield of life—in the fight for goodness over evil, truth over falsehood, virtue over vice, that is being carried on continuously in the world. It is his sacred duty to abolish ignorance, injustice, immorality and poverty and to lead mankind and not to seek God in solitude for himself alone. To live with people, for people, in the service of people and to help humanity to reach Ahura Mazda is his goal. On the Day of Judgement Ahura Mazda will perfect this imperfect world and man has to be His co-operator and His companion.

Died: Dr Sarosh Behramgore Anklesaria, 74, president of the Ahmedabad Parsi Panchayat and a well-known gynaecologist, on 25 September 1980, after a protracted illness at his Ahmedabad residence.



Anklesaria

President of the All India Obstetrics and Gynaecology Federation, vice president of the All India Medical Association, Anklesaria was also professor emeritus at the B. J. Medical College and Civil Hospital, Ahmedabad, and Honorary consulting Obstetrician and Gynaecologist at the Shardaiben Chimanlal Lalbhai Hospital, Saraspur, noted the *Free Press Journal* of 26 September 1980.

Gujarat chief minister Madhavsingh Solanki said that in the death of Anklesaria, Gujarat has "lost not only its father of gynaecology but one of its leading citizens and a philanthropist of rare genius who had made tremendous contributions to the quality of life."

As President of the Ahmedabad Parsi Panchayat Anklesaria represented Ahmedabad on the Executive Council of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India where he voiced the orthodox point of view and was a vitriolic critic of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman. He lectured and wrote on religious subjects.

Born on 24 November 1906 into an

Athornan family, Anklesaria graduated and qualified as a doctor from the Grant Medical College, Bombay and obtained the H. P. Thakersey scholarship and the Prince of Wales Gold Medal, notes his bio-data. Anklesaria was also a tutor in mid-wifery at the Grant Medical College, from 1931 to 1934, after which he came to Ahmedabad as the honorary head of the department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the V. S. General Hospital and Chinoy Maternity Home, which he superintended, notes his life sketch.

Anklesaria is survived by his wife Dhun, son Behram, daughters Meher Soli Engineer, and Shirin, brother Khurdad and sister Maha Sohrab Cooper.

Died: Sorab Maneckji Talati, 91, a former president of the Shanghai Parsi Anjuman, in Bombay on 6 October 1980.

As president of the Anjuman, Talati is reported to have supervised the plans and construction of the new Prayer Hall Building in Shanghai, which was declared open by him on 21 August 1932. Talati augmented the Trust Funds in Shanghai by developing new properties and increasing rental income, according to a press release.

Born in Surat on 2 November 1889, Talati went to Shanghai in 1909 to take charge of the family business; and later married Dowlat Aderji Mehta, of Nairobi in 1917, said to



Talati

be one of the first Parsi women in Shanghai.

In 1951, when the communists took over Shanghai, Talati was reportedly the last of the Parsi Trustees to leave China. He lived in Hong Kong for 20 years, before he retired in 1970 in Bombay, notes his bio-data.

Talati is survived by his wife Dowlat, son Pesi, and daughters Mary Matbar, Bepsi Jasubhoy, Zerin Lal-kaka and Sheroo Francis.



Bhiwandiwalla

Died: Erach A. Bhiwandiwalla, 82, noted portrait painter and artist on 29 August 1980, in a Bombay infirmary.

The executor of several portraits of British peers, members of parliament, royal families, Maharajas, Maharanis, Nawabs, scholars, saints, judges, politicians, poets and many a prominent Parsi, according to a bio-data and life sketch sent by his nephew, Bhiwandiwalla, died in obscurity, "unhonoured and unsung".

Bhiwandiwalla "was a great Parsi artist, who walked with the masters of art, scholars, presidents and monarchs. He was loved and respected... as a great artist", wrote *Bombay Samachar* Editor Jehan Daruwala in his *Parsi Tari Arsi* column of 16 November 1980.

Born in Bhiwandi, Maharashtra in 1898, Bhiwandiwalla right from an early age displayed a genius for art, even "before he could read or write", notes the life sketch. His career reportedly began as an assistant to M/s

J. F. Madon and Co., Calcutta, and later as an official of the Central Bank of India, but he is said to have devoted his spare time to the cultivation of his artistic talent, and was privileged to have been admitted to the studio of the Bengali master J. P. Ganguli.

"It was the Tatas who spotted the talent in this young man and sent him to England", writes Daruwala in the *Samachar*, "there he trained under the great master Sir John Levery." Bhiwandiwalla was awarded a scholarship from the Lord Northbrook Society, London, and distinguished himself as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, notes the life sketch.

In 1976, Bhiwandiwalla was reportedly commissioned to paint the portrait of the former Shah of Iran and his family, and later, at the urgings of the Shah stayed on in Iran, only to have to flee when the revolution began. "Bhiwandiwalla had to leave behind all his belongings and come away to Bombay, where due to shock



Irani

Died: **Dorabji Dadabhoy Pudumjee**, 67, well-known paper manufacturer, on 3 July 1980, following an operation in England.

Pudumjee is said to have pioneered the manufacture of speciality papers in India, which included natural tracing paper, glazed imitation parchment, teleprinter tape etc., thereby saving the country foreign exchange.

On the Board of Directors of The Deccan Paper Mills Co. Ltd., he was also a past president of the Rotary Club and a keen Rotarian, according to a press release.

In his capacity as technical director of The Pudumjee Pulp and Paper Mills, Pudumjee is reported to have shouldered the main responsibilities of planning and setting up a modern pulp and paper mill near Chinchwad in Pune.

Born in 1913, in Pune, Pudumjee was educated at Bombay's Bharda High School and Elphinstone College, from where he graduated in science, before leaving to study paper manufacture and to gain experience in German paper mills. Returning to India, Pudumjee joined The Deccan Paper Mills, a family concern in Pune, states his bio-data.

The years from 1955 to 1960 Pudumjee spent in Aden, assisting his father-in-law with the management of the renowned Cawasji Dinshaw and Brothers, after which he returned to Pune, and set up an integrated paper mill for the manufacture of mainly

greaseproof and Glassine papers used in food packaging, notes the bio-data.

He is survived by his wife Jeroo and sons Kaikobad and Dadi, the noted puppeteer.

Died: **Adi K. Irani**, 37, six times national champion in the super-heavy and heavy class weightlifting, of a massive heart attack, at his Pune residence, on 4 December 1980.

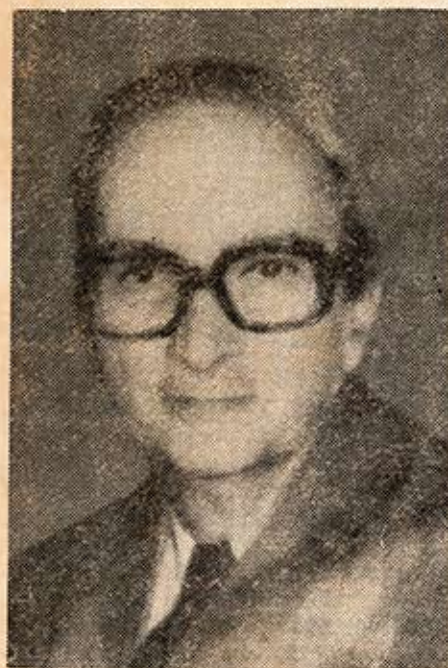
Winner of the 1965 Maharashtra Shree title, Irani was reported to weigh 126 kgs. and his national record of 520 pounds in the dead weight lift has so far remained unbeaten.

Continued from page 23

for 3 February 1981, notes a letter from the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) president Fredy K. Patel, for which, Professor S. Shaked of the University of Jerusalem is scheduled to speak on *Zoroastrian Influence on Judaism*; Professor J. Russel of Columbia University on *The Good Religion in Armenia*; Professor K. D. Irani of the City University of New York on *Zoroastrian Ideas and Western Religious Thought*; and Professor J. Stern also of the City University of New York on *Reflections on Themes in Greek and Zoroastrian Religions*.

What's Cooking ZAGNY?

ZAGNY experimented with a Zoroastrian cooking class, with the youngest group making *ravo*... "they eagerly learnt the art of cooking and the Gujarati words for the various ingredients. The sight of girls and boys measuring the ingredients, stirring the *ravo* and peeling the almonds was a delight," commented Ivy Gandhi, the ZAGNY joint secretary in the November newsletter. *Kababs*, *vagharela chaval* and *kachooobar* are next on the list at the cooking classes, notes the newsletter.



Pudumjee

and old age he almost lost his usual vigour and interest in life", writes his nephew.

His ability as a portrait painter on canvas was reported to have been admired and appreciated by the art masters of England and Europe, who considered him to be a versatile artist of unusual ability. Bhiwandiwalla has been given the epithet 'the Orpen of India.'

Bhiwandiwalla is survived by his son, Kersi.

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