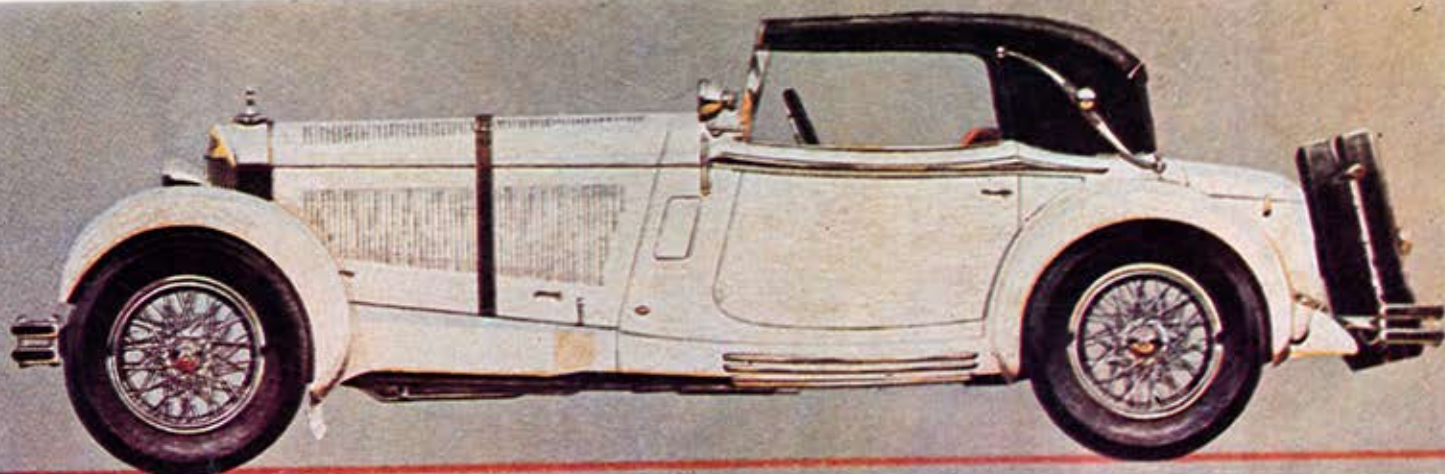
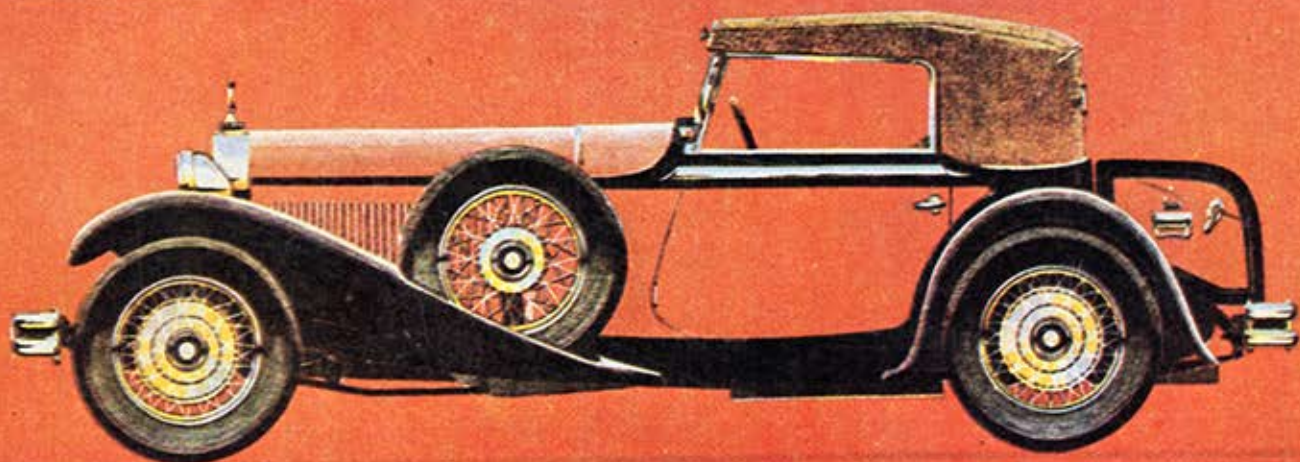
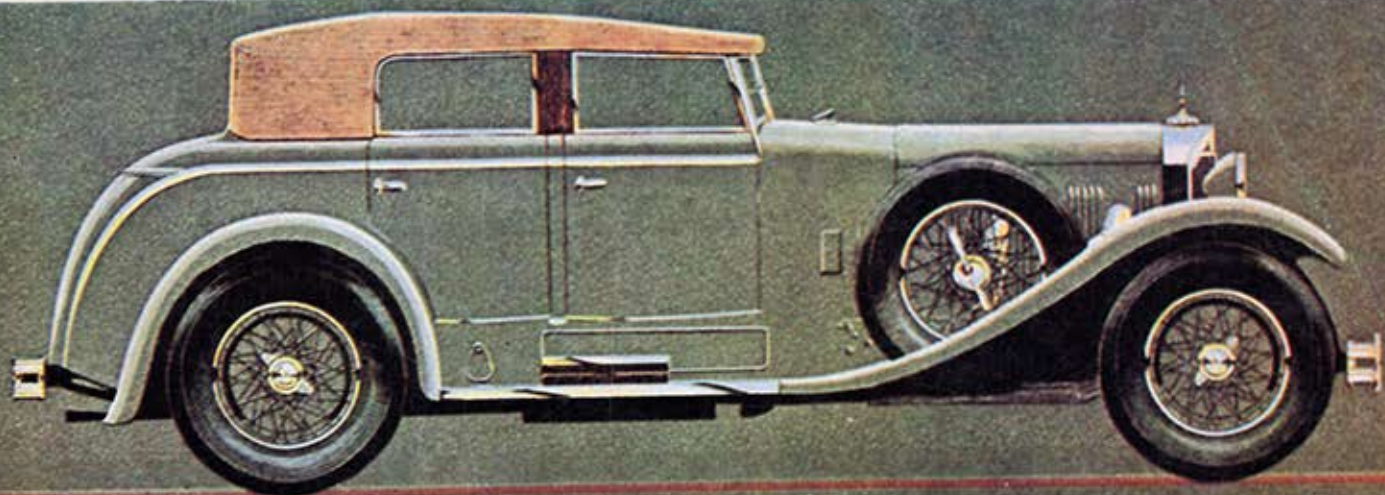


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AUGUST 1984
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3 Readers' Forum

8 Events and Personalities

12 Zoroastrians Abroad

15 BPP Electoral reforms by March 15, 1985 by Arnavaz Mama

23 Religion

26 Vintage Cars: the Parsi connection by Ali Rajabally

32 'I'm not interested in controversies' by Prochi Badshah

37 'A profile in grace' by Manohar Malgonkar

40 From clerks to industrialists

46 After the death of loved ones by Ingrid Albuquerque

54 'The lone strong voice' by Shalan Savur

61 Duchess, my dear by Firdaus Kanga

67 Death of a stuntman

69 'Mody Studio' by Sooni Taraporevala

71 Sports

76 Books

Cover: Renderings of Mercedes Benz Models of the late 1920s.

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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.

Alienation of the priesthood

I have read your Editorial Viewpoint 'The Alienation of the Priesthood,' (Parsiana May 1984) in which you have carried a report of the informal meeting of the Parsi Press and the High Priests held at the K R Cama Oriental Institute library in January last.

It was decided upon and agreed by all present that the discussions will not be published or made public.

I am therefore surprised that you, unlike the other Editors, have not complied with the undertaking given by all present including yourself. I must also point out that some of the statements made by you are incorrect.

(DASTUR DR) H K MIRZA

Editor's reply:

As I recall the situation, Mr Rustomji wrote to us in January about the meeting noting "It will be

appreciated you depute some Parsi staff member to jot down notes for your journal."

When we arrived at the meeting you and Dr JamaspAsa and Dr Kotwal were under the impression that the meeting was only to exchange ideas and not for publication purposes. We explained our point of view and made no commitment as to whether we would carry material or not. The Press was invited in its official capacity and it is obligatory for us to therefore report on the proceedings. However, as there appeared to have been some misunderstanding and because of the high regard we have for the High Priests, we did not take verbatim notes. Also when we published the item we categorized it as an editorial viewpoint and did not make any direct or specific quotes from any individual High Priest. If there is any factual error in the editorial, you are most welcome to point it out to us and we would print the correction.

Subsequent to our meeting, Mr Rustomji met me on several occasions and asked when the article was going to appear. As to the policies of the other newspapers, I am not in a position to state why they did not report on the meeting. I trust this clarifies our position.

I have a copy of your letter of August 16 addressed to my colleague, Dasturji Dr Mirza, in reply to his letter of August 10 and also the xerox of Mr Rustomji's letter to you.

If I recollect well, when Dasturji Mirza made it clear that the discussions of the meeting would not be made public, no one from among the Editors present explained their 'point of view.' In fact, I came to know about Mr Rustomji's letter only from your present letter to Dasturji Mirza; no one informed us about it at the meeting itself so that the position could have been clarified and there would have been no place for any misunderstanding. Even Mr Rustomji's letter is ambiguous: in para 3 he states 'High Priests ... who have agreed to meet to discuss amongst themselves as to what are the true teachings' and in the last para asks you 'to jot down notes for your journal.'

I am therefore not happy with your explanation; especially in the light of

compliance from the other Editors to Dasturji's request.

(DASTUR DR) KAIKHUSROO M JAMASPASA

I have my reasons to presume that the steps you have taken are in the right perspective. There is nothing wrong in the attitude you have adopted.

R N RUSTOMJI

Surat Punchayet

In Parsiana (March 1984) there appears a report of a press conference convened by the Trustees of the Parsi Punchayet, Bombay, on February 24, 1984 in which is stated: "A press representative enquired why the Bombay Parsi Punchayet was spending funds in Gujarat when the main anjuman there were well-endowed and had to cater to the needs of a diminishing community. Surat, for example, is said to have the highest per capita income."

Dr Aspi F Golwalla, chairman of the Parsi Punchayet, Bombay, has given a reply to this remark; however, we would like to add a few words. It's a fallacy to believe that the Bombay Parsi Punchayet is using its own funds for the benefit of Gujarat villagers. To be precise, joint appeals were inserted in Parsi Papers to liberally aid the improvement of the lot of the poor of Gujarat, especially those living in villages. Funds were collected both in Surat as well as in Bombay. Naturally, a greater number of donors being Bombayites, they sent their amounts to the Parsi Punchayet, Bombay. So the amount collected was for Gujarat Parsis, especially villages, and both the Punchayets, in close collaboration with one another, are using this amount for the betterment of those for whom it was especially collected.

It is an incorrect notion that the Surat Parsi Punchayet has vast funds to meet the demands of its various institutions. The Surat Punchayet has shouldered tremendous responsibilities and it finds it very difficult to make two ends meet in the present extraordinary times; several of its institutions work in heavy deficits and in several cases the amounts of the deficits are also increasing.

Through these institutions, the Surat Parsi Punchayet caters to the needs of the entire Parsi community. The doors of the Surat Parsi Orphanage for Parsi

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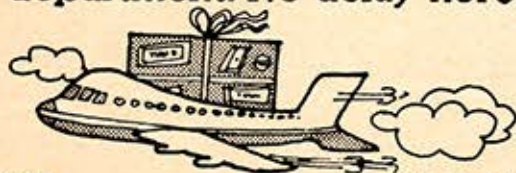
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Boys, Nariman Parsi Zoroastrian Girls Orphanage, Nariman Home and Infirmary, are open for Parsis from any part of the country.

In the past, we sometimes felt that in the absence of English as the medium of instruction in our schools it was not possible to admit students from other parts of the country in our orphanages for Parsi boys and girls. Now we have separate institutions with Gujarati and English mediums, and as such, it has become feasible to admit students from outside our state having English as the medium of instruction. Besides, we are giving monetary aid to students from various places towards their expenses of higher education, some of them receiving instructions in foreign universities.

From the above it will be clear to your readers and the community that the Surat Parsi Punchayet is not affluent but badly needs monetary assistance of the community as well as its Public Trusts. The community may please take into consideration the fact that through its various institutions the Surat Parsi Punchayet caters to the needs of the entire community in several directions and it becomes the duty of the community to assist an organization which works for its benefit and betterment. We are thankful to those who helped us in the past and shall feel more thankful for the continuance of their support.

MANECK GHEYARA
President,

Office of the Surat Parsi Charity Funds and Properties.

Gibbs Road plan

Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustees, the Committee for Electoral Rights, the Task Force appointed by the BPP and most experts are agreed on one point, that the Gibbs Road project is essential to and will provide the bulk of the finance for the housing plan of the BPP to build 1000 flats for Parsis.

This near unanimity makes me hesitant to question the validity of the basic assumptions underlying the scheme. Its very importance to the housing needs of the community, however, makes it imperative that all facets of the scheme be examined.

The scheme provides for about 64 flats to be built on a plot of land in the Khareghat Colony abutting on Gibbs Road. These flats will be sold to the affluent sections of the community at a

price of about Rs 800 per square foot. Even this fairly stiff price will be "less than 60-70 percent of the ruling price in that area, yet they will generate the major part of the funds that are required" for other housing projects of the BPP.

The first question that comes to mind is whether it is necessary for the BPP to subsidize 64 affluent Parsi families? If it was the only way to generate funds for further housing, there can be no objection.

Let us, however, look up an alternative:

The BPP can sell this small plot of land on Gibbs Road at the market price. The financial gains to the BPP from the sale may exceed the profits from the proposed housing project without undergoing the work involved in such a project. The purchaser/builder can pay more for the land, as he will be able to sell the flats at market price, and will not have to subsidize the affluent.

The land can be easily separated from Khareghat Colony, as even now it is proposed that the entrance will be from Gibbs Road. A covenant can be provided in the sale transaction, whereby the purchaser cannot build above a specified height so as to preclude any possibility of the proposed building overlooking the dokhmas.

The moneys from the sale of the plot of land can be safely used by the BPP for construction of flats or acquiring other larger areas of land, say, in New Bombay, for the benefit of the community, without payment of income-tax. On the other hand, there is a very real fear that the construction and sale of flats under the Gibbs Road Scheme may be regarded as a business activity, profits whereof would be liable to income-tax in the hands of the trustees, thereby leaving precious little for the benefit of the community.

Would it therefore, not be advisable if the BPP at least invites quotations for the sale of the plot of land in question, before embarking upon the Gibbs Road project, which may leave little for the needy after the affluent 64 have been subsidized?

E P BHARUCHA

Noble in deeds

We would like to record our deep appreciation of the work done by Dr (Ms) Nelie Rustomji Noble during her 10 years as a trustee of the Bombay

Parsi Punchayet.

We have been closely associated with her over the last six years as members of the Ladies Committee of the Parukh Dharamshala. We have admired her capacity for patiently hearing out the



Noble: 'patiently hearing complaints'

complaints of old people, the sympathy shown to them and the dedication with which she has helped solve their problems.

Her patient hearing and soothing words have acted as a balm to the frayed nerves of the homeless who come to her for shelter, and others who seek help in reducing their hardships and sufferings.

She is a trustee who has reached out to the people who really need Punchayet help. She has seen to it that justice is done to the weak and the downtrodden. She is noble not only in name but in thought and deed.

We have worked together as members of one family and it is with heavy hearts that we bid "au revoir" to the one who has worked the hardest and best among all of us.

As the Chinese proverb goes, "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." Dr Noble has lighted several candles, thus dispelling darkness for hundreds of underprivileged families of our community.

COOMI S KAMBATA
ZENOBIA Z ADAJANIA
DAISY H MEHTA
Members, the Ladies Committee,
The Parukh Dharamshala

Welcome to our fold

Allow me to say that the flap over Peterson's navjote, reflected time and again in these columns, only serves to rob Zarathushtra of his status of a world-teacher and prophet.

According to the prophet, the best gift one could make to another was of religion. Everybody was welcome in his church whether he was an Aryan or a Turanian. It was his wish that the whole world embrace his religion and he has made it incumbent upon us and our priests to seek to proselytize.

Let not our American Zoroastrian brothers be disturbed by the newcomer to our fold, so long as he is respectable enough. The officiating priests have only done their duty.

DARA J D CAMA

Conversion as violence

As a Zoroastrian these questions often come to mind: Is there factual evidence that the modern Parsi Zoroastrian community has a 100 percent descent from the original band of Persians that landed in India? Can it be definitely said that there were no mixed marriages between them and the Hindus of Gujarat? What was the actual proportion of males to females in the original

settlers? Is it written in our scriptures that only children of Parsi fathers can be taken into the faith? If not, who decides what? Among the Jews the child born of a Jewish mother is regarded as a Jew.

If the pro-conversion lobby is right, we Parsis have not a leg to stand on in preventing our children from being converted to Islam or Christianity, the two most militant religions in regard to conversion. I personally consider conversion as violence perpetrated on another individual. It does not matter if it is subtle blackmail or brainwashing or physical force. In the West the Parsis have to face the evangelical zeal of people like Billy Graham who are out to proselytize. No doubt some Parsis are trying to retaliate by thinking of converting others.

But how is it that all this time the Parsis lived in an ivory tower and hardly tried to explain the message of Zarathushtra to the outside world? Today an average citizen of the world has heard of Buddha, Jesus Christ and Mohammed but not of Zarathushtra.

As a community we must realize that beliefs and rituals divide and that it is better to foster "direct experience of God" or "God-awareness" in every individual.

DR KEKI R SIDHWA
Essex, UK

May our tribe increase

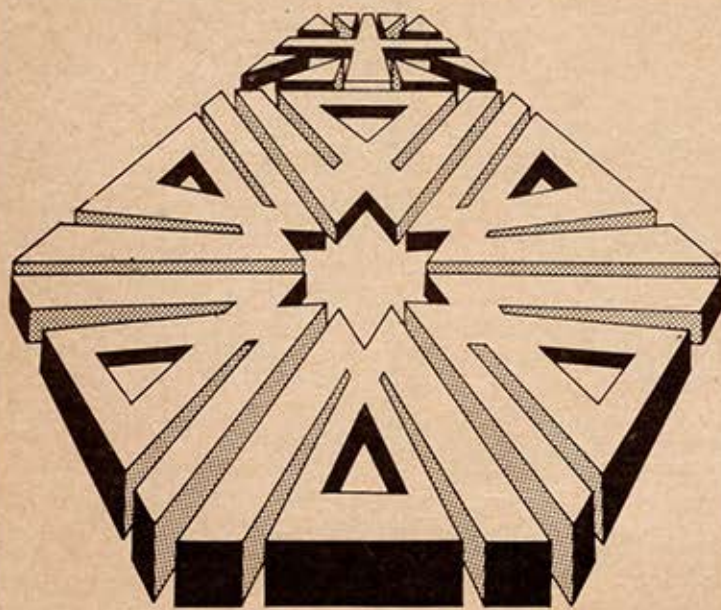
Today the greatest crisis facing our community is its dwindling numbers which, if not tackled in time in an honest, practical and scientific manner, may lead to the disappearance of our community and with it the religion of our prophet Zarathushtra from the face of this earth.

There are two remedies for this situation. The material remedy is to solve our housing problem. To quote Dastur Minochehr-Homji: "So many young couples do not get married because they have no houses. And no marriage means no children. Then because of the same problem there are late marriages, and late marriages preclude a sure segment of birth." The spiritual remedy is to improve the conditions of our priests. To quote Dastur Minochehr-Homji again: "I see the signs written on the wall — that is the dwindling number of priests in the community... Because of the economic condition of priests, few want to get into it. I believe that even a *jhaduwalla* earns more."

No priests means no Parsis. What will all our religious dogmas, nay even all our money and power be worth if no Parsis remain to make use of them?

Therefore let the Bombay Parsi Pun-

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chayet pledge itself to see that every Parsi family has at the earliest a decent home to live in. Also, the social and economic conditions of our priests should be improved without delay.

DR MINOCHER K CONTRACTOR
Surat

Memorial trust appeal

The Behdin Homa Behdin Jamshed and Ardeshtir B Homavazir Memorial Welfare Association of Bombay has been formed to assist self-help, and to ultimately restore self-respect among the needy Parsi Zoroastrians who live in dire poverty today because of unemployment and the high cost of living.

The Association has the following aims in mind: To promote child and family welfare, make available medical facilities; to grant financial aid to the needy; to provide assistance to the physically handicapped of the community, the aged and widows as well as help educate orphans; and to render aid to victims of calamities – natural or otherwise – in the form of financial

assistance, medical aid, food, clothing and necessary services, in an attempt to rehabilitate the victims and their families.

The managing committee of this organization is headed by Ervad Ratanshaw C Panthaky as chairman. The other members include Keki A Homavazir, founder president, Adi F Doctor, president, Eruchshaw C Dastur as joint honorary treasurer with Ervad Panthaky, and Coomi C Dastur and Keki V Dehnugara as secretaries.

The office of the Association will ultimately be located at a place most convenient to the managing committee members; the interim address is 690 Dr Dinshaw Master Road, Mancherji Joshi Parsi Colony, Dadar, Bombay 400 014. Your cheques may be forwarded directly to the Association and you may write to them if you wish to render honorary services. North Americans may send their cheques to Dara Homavazir at 203 Willowdale Avenue, Willowdale, Ontario M2N 4Z1, Canada.

There will be an annual audit of the accounts of the Association by a firm of

chartered accountants appointed by the Association. Auditor's reports will be posted to those who donate in excess of Rs 100 a year; and to other donors on request.

D B HOMAVAZIR
Ontario, Canada

Best-seller list

I was thrilled to see that the book *Law and Tax – for the Layman* by M K Rustomji and Khorshed Javeri is presently No 1 on the best-seller list of International Book House.

DINYAR DARUVALLA

Ashoi, despite the stars

We are passing through a very unfortunate period in our lives. As a community, we are degenerating, decreasing, dissecting. Yes, dissecting in many ways, on different paths, all because of the weakening Jupiter and a strong phase of Mars.

Be that as it may, we have to mend our way on the path of righteousness or *Ashoi*.

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Events and Personalities

National art gallery

Bombay's Sir Cowasji Jehangir Public Hall that has hosted everything from the World Zoroastrian Congress to sari sales is now to be converted into a National Gallery of Modern Art.

Sir Cowasji Jehangir who is reported to have consented to the change in the use of the Hall was among the dignitaries present at a ceremony to mark the signing of the transfer deeds on July 21.

Built by the Government in 1920, the foundation stone for Sir Cowasji Jehangir Public Hall was laid on April 5, 1911 by Lord Sydenham, the then Governor of Bombay. Thereafter, the Hall was being managed according to the wishes of Sir Cowasji Jehangir and his successors, states the press release. Retaining its original name, the Hall will now be known as the National Gallery of Modern Art, Sir Cowasji Jehangir Public Hall.

Servants or masters ?

Rustom Baug, one of the spacious Parsi residential complexes near Byculla Railway Station, has become a favourite haunt of anti-social elements.

On July 22 around 10.30 pm, a resident saw three unknown persons moving in a suspicious manner in the Baug premises.

He saw them entering a room in the servants' quarters. When they came out they were confronted by him. Soon they picked a quarrel and a non-Parsi woman rushed out from the same room and intervened on their behalf.

When a crowd collected, the three fled.

The resident, who wanted to remain anonymous, alleged that the woman was running a brothel there.

It was learnt that the servants' quarters had been allotted to domestics serving not only in Rustom and Jerbai



C J Hall: converted to National Gallery of Modern Art.

Baug but also other baugs in the city.

Many of these domestics had, in turn, given out their tenements on leave and licence.

The residents charged that most of these licencees were anti-social elements who were misusing the quarters.

They alleged that though numerous complaints had been lodged with the

authorities, they had done nothing to remove the nuisance which has exposed the residents to all kinds of dangers.

Reprinted from The Daily, July 24, 1984.

Mahaluxmivala: plastic surgeon



Plastic surgeon presides

The new president of the Association of Plastic Surgeons of India for 1984 is Dr Sam Mahaluxmivala, the noted Bombay plastic surgeon.

In addition to maintaining his private practice as a consultant plastic surgeon, Mahaluxmivala also holds the post of honorary plastic surgeon at the B D Petit Parsee General Hospital, Bombay Hospital and the Bombay Municipal E N T Hospital.

He is also honorary professor of plastic surgery and head of the department of plastic surgery at the B Y L Nair Hospital and the T N Medical College in Bombay and an elected member of the faculty of medicine and of the board of surgical studies of the University of Bombay.



A Parsi first

Noted puppeteer and teacher Ms Meher Rustom Contractor is the first lady to receive the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for puppetry from the Government of India. For the awards ceremony, Contractor and the Darpana group staged a colour shadow play on Rustom and Sohrab.

Actively associated with the puppet theatre in India and abroad, Contractor has represented India in various international puppet festivals and has performed all over Europe, USA and Japan with the Darpana Puppet Group. She has also conducted lecture-demonstrations and seminars in different parts of the world, states the press release.

Her involvement in the field of puppetry for more than three decades has won Contractor international recognition. Presently, she is the president of Union Internationale de la Marionnette. In 1972, UNIMA awarded her a bronze medal in recognition of her efforts in propagating puppetry in India.

When teaching at the International Puppet Institute in France in 1982, she was twice invited to teach in the USA at the universities of Wisconsin and Michigan. As head of the puppet section of the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts at Ahmedabad since 1964, she has trained many students who have won scholarships to study abroad. Among her students is the noted puppeteer Dadi Pudumjee.

Tribute to Ketī

K T Satarawala who took over as the new governor of the troubled state of Punjab on July 3, 1984 has a distinguished service record. Captain Burjor Dalal, a colleague of Satarawala, recalls his impressions of the man in a letter to the Bombay-based newspaper *The Daily*, July 6, 1984.

"What little I know of him having come into personal contact during my army days in the Second World War, I can say he is no sycophant of the High Command. Ketī, as he was popularly known in the army, was an officer in the Frontier Force Rifles when we were in the same 44th Indian Armoured Division, first stationed at Secunderabad and then at Ranchi in 1943-44. Subsequently, when we moved into Burma during the 1945 campaign, I ran into him again when Major K T Satarawala was a principal staff officer in one of the Corps HQ of the 14th Army. Major Satarawala was such an outstanding officer that the British General commanding the Corps once remarked, 'Ketī can do the work of four staff officers at a time.' He well deserved such tributes, for whenever we few friends called on him at his HQ, we found him at his desk working late in the evening. Soft-spoken, unassuming, very well-read and well-informed, he was one great character who based his life on purity and integrity.

"After the war when he got his release from the Indian Army, he was soon absorbed in the Indian Administrative

Service (IAS) and was first collector of Dang District where he did memorable work. Later he held various offices and brought credit to whatsoever job he was assigned. The success of the Asian Games testified to his administrative abilities, where, behind the scenes, he was responsible for all the splendid arrangements which earned him a well-deserved *Bharat Bhushan*. When he was appointed Lt Governor of Goa, many who knew him, felt this assignment was too small for a man of such calibre.

"The Satarawalas hail from the hills of Mahabaleshwar. Ketī's brother Lt General Jehangir Satarawala, who retired from the Indian Army, was a highly decorated soldier with an MBE, MC and with quite a few Mentions in

Contractor: renowned puppeteer (left)

Satarawala: outstanding record



Dispatches and many other decorations during his career with the Indian Army. Both the brothers, brought up in the fine environments of Pratapgarh Fort facing Mahabaleshwar, imbibed from their childhood the qualities of valour, great patriotism and leadership.

"Let us all wish K T Satarawala success as the new Governor of Punjab."

Pundole's anniversary

Pundole Art Gallery celebrated its 21st anniversary on May 3. The gallery has come a long way since 1886, when the present owner Kali Pundole's grandfather, Dadabhai Rustomji Pundole, began by selling clocks and timepieces.

The gallery, as it is known today, had its inception on May 3, 1963, when a workshop for making pictureframes took birth on the premises. The paintings displayed at that time were merely meant to go along with the frames. A major problem was finding suitable pictures to be framed, and Pundole solved

the problem by getting artists to do water colours for the purpose.

In a small room above the main gallery is an exquisite collection of art work in wood, metal and bronze which any art lover would envy. The art shop was established three years ago, and profits from it maintain the gallery. Kali Pundole has had no formal training in art, and building up the collection has been a labour of love. He has spent many days travelling to distant parts of the country in search of artifacts which make up the collection. In the process, he has learnt through trial and error, and he does not grudge the cost.

Pundole's ambition is to bring the country's rich works of art to as many Indians as possible. To ensure this, he keeps his margin of profit to the minimum. This is undoubtedly not a commercially wise decision. A few years ago, a part of the gallery caved in. Pundole did not have the money for repairs, and had to approach a bank. He could not offer a security for the loan. The bank officials laughed, he recalls, at what they felt was a ridiculous way to run what they saw as a commercial venture. Yet the gallery's reputation helped him get the money.

Ironically, the low prices at which he sells the artifacts serves as a deterrent to many buyers, who begin to suspect the genuineness of the article. The response from foreigners has, however, been more encouraging. The gallery's reputation for driving a fair bargain has travelled far. Pundole spoke of an American who approached him recently, after reading about the gallery in an antiques magazine in the US.

Pundole runs the gallery with the help of his son, his sister and two helpers.

To mark the occasion, the gallery

presented an exhibition of water colours by J Swaminathan.

Reprinted from Indian Express, May 5, 1984.

BPP quarterly report

Of the six Bombay Parsi Punchayet board of trustees meetings between January and March, four were attended by all seven trustees, one by six trustees and one by five, notes the *BPP Quarterly Review* for the months of January, February and March 1984, edited by R K Anklesaria and D F Bharucha. Unlike in other association reports, the report does not mention the trustees present and absent, by name.

The total number of items on the agenda for the meetings was 109, an average of 18 items per meeting.

There were 303 deaths recorded at Doongerwadi of which 101 were between the age group of 71 to 80, states the report. The second highest number of deaths, 68, was amongst the 81 to 90 year group and the third highest, 65 was between 61 and 70 years.

The Matrimonial Bureau issued 144 forms during the first quarter bringing the total number of forms issued to 299. A total of 149 persons had registered with the Bureau till March, the report says.

'Honourable mention'

Architect Homi Irani's entry entitled "A house for an aristocratic Zoroastrian family" (location: vicinity of Yazd, Iran) won him an Honourable Mention at the Shinkenichiku Residential Design Competition in Japan.

The theme for the competition being "A dwelling with historicism and localism," a total of 370 entries were

received from 36 countries. A panel of five members, which included renowned architects from Japan, USA and India, judged the entries.

Born in Poona in 1947, Irani graduated from the Poona College of Architecture, 1970, and completed his graduate work in town and country planning at the Poona University College of Engineering. Having considerable work experience in Iran, Canada and India, Irani has presently settled in Iran, doing his doctorate research on planning for arid zones, particularly for the Iran region.

New sight

With the support of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, Marezban P Vimadlal, a 21-year-old blind youth, has set up a 'Commodity Centre' at Khareghat Colony.

The Centre was opened on May 17, before a gathering that included R C Ankleswaria, a social worker who had helped Vimadlal complete the formalities necessary for opening the stall.

Cricketer in need of care

With his faculties diminishing with age, Jehangir Khot, 71, is in need of care, observes Pradeep Vijaykar in a report in *The Evening News* of March 6.

Khot had a memorable career in the 1930s and '40s. Working for the Bombay Baroda and Central India Railway, he led them to two successive victories in the senior division of the "Times" shield, notes the report. As a member of the Parsi team in the Quadrangulars (community matches), Khot had the distinction of dining with the governors and governors-general. His fine performance earned him the sobriquet of

Pundole: 'a labour of love' (Photo: Homiyar Mistry)



Vimadlal: at the Centre. (Photo: Rashid Bamanbehram)



'Chota Amar Singh' from Lord Willington, says the report.

In 1943, in the national championships against Baroda, Khot was the first person to take a hat trick when he claimed the wickets of Vivek Hazare, C S Nayudu and M S Indulkar. Khot also won the "Times" Shield 'A' Division bowling prize thrice and the batting prize twice, reports Pradeep. He also points out that as a motorman of the Western Railway, it was Khot who averted an accident at Charni Road when, in 1966, a BEST bus rammed into the railings and onto the railway tracks.

Needy retired cricketers merit the concern of the cricket public, observes Pradeep, more than retired Test Cricketers, for in their playing days they gave to the game more than they ever got out of it.

Depressed dolphins

A touching scene took place recently at the "sea pool" of the US Club located at the tip of Colaba in the Defence area. To those who know this delightful spot, rocks ring the pool, making it fairly safe and free from strong currents. The other day at low tide, with the water receding and the rocks coming up, the Nari Rustomji family, who frequent the place regularly, noticed two dolphins trapped in the shallow waters. Their desperate efforts to go beyond the rocks to the deeper waters were proving futile and they were only succeeding in cutting themselves on the rocks. While mama Avi Rustomji kept watch, daughters Shahnaz and Rashne called some caddies from the nearby golf course and together they succeeded in creating a makeshift dam. This had the effect of raising the water level and thereby allowing the dolphins to slip over the rocks to safety.

There is obviously something strange and moving about the empathy that dolphins and humans seem to have with one another. Unfortunately, with Bombay's coastal water so heavily polluted nowadays, dolphins rarely venture close. Hiro and Margaret Shroff, who for years have been sailing across to Mandwa regularly on week-ends, recall seeing dolphins frolicking happily around their yacht. But such experiences, they say sadly, are becoming increasingly rare.

Reprinted from Indian Express, July 9, 1984.

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Zoroastrian defined

The constitution and byelaws of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario defines a Zoroastrian as "a person who is a follower of the religion as propounded by the prophet Zoroaster and who has been initiated into the Zoroastrian faith."

The definition will assist the Association to better deal with the issue of acceptance/non-acceptance in North America.

Toronto mobeds' conference

With one of the objectives being standardization of the navjote and funeral ceremonies, a mobeds' conference was held in Toronto in November last year states the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago (ZAC) newsletter received in August. "As far as the navjote ceremony is concerned, people should be encouraged to have the ceremony in the *Havan Geh*," states the newsletter. "As far as possible *nahan* should be performed at the place of the navjote and pomegranate be substituted when *nirang* is not available. The mobed has to confirm that the child knows *Kemna-mazda*, *Ahura Mazda Khodai* and *Jas Me Avanghe Mazda*."

"Among the notable decisions taken with regard to the funeral ceremony were: a) cremation was recommended as a method of disposing off a corpse and the ashes be strewn in a flower bed; b) It was recommended to train a few male members of the community (non-dasturs) to perform the *sachkar*; c) whenever only one mobed is available for the *geh sarna*, any behdin Zoroastrian can join the mobed to make a pair; d) all the ceremonies could be performed for a deceased who has donated a part or whole of the body for medical purposes."

Information for the interested

Bibliographies of books and papers pertaining to Zoroastrianism were presented to the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago by Professor H Michael Simmons, director of the Centre of Zoroastrian Research, Bloomington, Indiana, states the ZAC newsletter received in August.

Prof Simmons takes a personal interest in preserving the old books in the possession of the ZAC and is known for his work in the field of Zoroastrian studies. Some of his projects include computer-aided searches for Zoroastrian publications and a permanent exhibit on Zoroastrianism at the Smithsonian Institute, notes the newsletter.

Congress postponed

The fifth North American Zoroastrian Congress scheduled to be held in September this year has been postponed to 1987 in view of the Zoroastrian Congress held in London in June this year and the fourth World Zoroastrian Congress scheduled for January 1985 in Bombay, notes the ZAC newsletter received in August. Another reason cited for postponing the Congress is the expected inauguration of the Zoroastrian Association of California (Los Angeles) Darbe Mehr in April 1985, and the possibility of hosting a North American Zoroastrian Congress on that occasion.

Gandhi Award for Chicago

The Zoroastrian Association of Chicago is one of the nine recipients of the "Gandhi Community Award" offered annually by the *India Tribune* to individuals and associations for their services to the Indian community, notes the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago newsletter of June 1984.

"The ZAC is a tiny association and speaks for the hundred Zoroastrian families scattered over the Mid-West," according to the *India Tribune* which continues, "It has built a memorable community center, vibrant with pur-

poseful activity, in the face of tremendous handicap."

In other Chicago news :

Rohinton Rivetna has been re-elected president of ZAC for 1984-86. The other office-bearers are: Kayomars Mehta, vice-president; Bomi Damkevala, secretary; Rumi Jamsetjee, treasurer; Ms Dinoo Rivetna, assistant secretary; and Minoo Press, assistant treasurer. Committee chairpersons are: Neriosang Karanjia, religious; Bahram Shahzadi, education; Ms Roshan Patel, program; Ms Dinoo Rivetna, children; Hoshi Mehta, youth development; Keikhosrow Mobed, membership; Aspy Daboo, library; Dilshad Antia, festival planning; and Rohinton Rivetna, building improvement. Dr Kersey Antia, ZAC's headpriest and Yezdi Engineer, in-charge of photography and artwork are also on the Board.

"Membership on the ZAC Board may be viewed as an opportunity to serve the Zoroastrian cause," noted the earlier annual general meeting notice of the ZAC. "The Board is not a prestigious advisory body but rather a 'working body' of committed individuals, who pledge to work together in a spirit of 'cooperation NOT competition.' Each Board member will serve as chairman of a committee with members from the general membership and will contribute not just ideas, but carry them through to fruition."

'Karachi YMZA' platinum

The Young Men's Zoroastrian Association, Karachi, founded in 1910 to "diffuse ethical and religious knowledge... cultivate literary and elocutionary powers... promote the interest of the community... and spread goodwill and friendliness all around..." will celebrate its platinum jubilee in 1985.

Aside from a series of functions to mark the event, the YMZA intends to enrol more new members in the 75th jubilee year, notes Godrej D Sidhwa, joint honorary general secretary. The Association's 48th annual report for the years '78 to '83 shows the membership in '82-'83 to be 87.

"We regret the delay in presenting this report" notes the report of the Association. "During these seven years your Association has been as active as ever. We have not only organized conferences, workshops, lectures, compet-

Rivetna: carrying ideas through to fruition



itions but whole-heartedly participated in all communal and national functions."

Over 50 lectures, 18 competitions, and birth and death centenaries of national and community leaders as well as founder members of the Association were held.

The report does not appear to list all the present office-bearers. Their president is Dinshaw B Avari, noted hotelier; Faredun Dadachanji is vice-president; and Godrej Sidhwa and Pesi M Magol are joint honorary general secretaries.

"We have always been a progressive and forward-looking community. Our Zoroastrian faith teaches us to be active, energetic and optimistic. Let us do everything in our power to review and resurrect the YMZA" notes the annual report.

Zubin's musical elbow

One of the occupational hazards of being a music conductor appears to be chronic inflammation of the muscles attached to the elbow, as Zubin Mehta discovered when he had to undergo surgery for epicondylitis of his right elbow. A report in *India Abroad* cited in the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario newsletter of June notes, "Mehta's right arm has been immobilized and he will not be able to return to the podium for the most challenging programmes planned for this coming season..."

The report quotes Zubin Mehta as saying, "But every crisis has its brighter side and this one allows for several conductors to make their debuts with our great orchestra (New York Philharmonic) — the beginning of a new and perhaps auspicious professional friendship."

Mehta is the recipient of the Rose Award for 1984, awarded to individuals "who have enriched our lives through their talents and humanitarianism" notes the report.

Zarthosth no.....?

The following item appeared in the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario newsletter of May 1984.

"Funny..... Funny?!! The following has come to us from a member, Percy Surti: 'There was a news article in India which said that Zoroastrians are getting westernized, and forgetting their rich heritage. The article said that in Toronto, Parsis recently celebrated Zarthosth no 'Disco.'"

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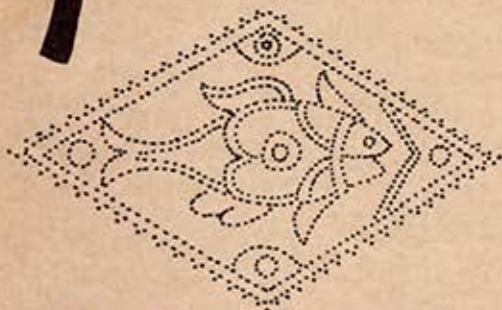
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BPP electoral reforms by March 15, 1985

Electoral reforms, taped prayers, Congress plans
amongst items announced at the BPP press conference.

Arnavaz S Mama

Reforms in the electoral scheme are to be presented to the Bombay High Court by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet before March 15, 1985. Announcing this at a press conference attended by all seven trustees of the BPP on August 11 at the Punchayet office, the trustees noted the reforms were in "the process of finalization."

"The preparatory work for holding the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress sometime in January '85 has been started," noted the press release handed out a day prior to the conference. Committees are being formed while the list of speakers, subjects and even venue are to be decided. (Subsequent to the press conference, it is learnt that the Congress inauguration will be held at Cusrow Baug and the next three days' sessions at the Birla Mathushri Hall.) Disagreement among some of the trustees as to the purpose of holding the Congress was voiced at the press conference.

A scheme for the uplift of priests was briefly outlined by BPP trustee Jal Vimadlal, but once again no plan has been finalized.

Payment of Rs 83 lakhs from the Jyoti Studio property sale is still to be received. At the last BPP press conference held on February 24, 1984 the trustees had expected payment of the amount "within three to four months." BPP trustee Homi Ranina said the matter "was still pending with the Charity Commissioner" while BPP trustee Jamshed Guzder said sanction should be given for the sale in "the next week to ten days."

Plans for development of the Gibbs Road housing scheme which is expected to generate a surplus to build more housing, may undergo changes due to

legal and tax requirements. The BPP's other housing projects have also been delayed, noted BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwala, due to charges of corruption levelled against the Bombay Municipal Corporation for sanctioning additional illegal Floor Space Index (FSI) to certain commercial builders. The FSI

A two-cassette recording of daily Zoroastrian prayers has been released.

determines the area which can be constructed over a fixed portion of land.

A two-cassette recording of daily Zoroastrian prayers recited by Ervad Peshotan Peer has been released by the BPP. This follows a three volume course on Zoroastrianism by Ervad R R Motafram published by the trustees three months earlier.

Towers of Silence, a 36-page booklet originally published in 1899 and reprinted in 1970, has been revised and reprinted. It now includes guidance regarding the procedure to be followed when death occurs in the family.

No action has been taken as yet to counter the increasing frequency of drug addiction in the community discussed at the last executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans held in Bombay on May 19 and 20.

A paper on encouraging Parsis to pursue careers in government services written by BPP chief executive R K Anklesaria, a retired Indian Administrative Officer, suggests the BPP sanc-

tion Rs 15,000 for the project. A Parsi philanthropist has offered further assistance of Rs 10,000 if a scheme is initiated. Extracts from Anklesaria's report will be carried in a future issue of *Parsiana*.

Golwala also announced that for the first time the Parsi Medical Amateurs Association had been invited by the Zoroastrians of North America to give performances in the USA and Canada.

Electoral reforms

The Committee for Electoral Rights (CER) which had filed a petition for electoral reforms in the Bombay High Court, agreed to withdraw the petition as the BPP trustees have given an undertaking to the Court to provide a new scheme by March 15, 1985. In the meanwhile the F register (list of donors of Rs 5000 and above) will be frozen so that new donors will not have the right to vote early next year when Guzder's first 10-year term draws to a close. The F register along with the E register which consists of elected members, form the Anjuman Committee which elects trustees.

BPP trustee Eruch Desai stated "We are still in the process of finalizing the voting rights of the F register." Golwala declared that the two priorities were parity between the E and F registers and constituency wise voting. BPP trustee Jamsheed Kanga noted that before the trustees' scheme is accepted, any member of the community can offer suggestions. The court will then decide. "We should first finalize with the public" said Ranina.

Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress

Referring to the "tremendous awakening in our community" Guzder, who is

chairman of the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress, noted that he "expects a very large attendance" — a peak of 2000 with about 200 delegates from abroad, 70 being from Iran.

The Congress, (to be held between January 10-13 in Bombay) will be inaugurated by the President or Prime Minister of India as per the Federation's recommendation. But Guzder said that the "inauguration was not yet decided because it was premature."

Referring to Zoroastrians settled abroad as "small rootless communities," Kanga said, it is "very essential that we in Bombay develop a kind of system so people come back here to meet." He mooted the idea that Bombay being the hometown for a great number of Zoroastrians subsequently settled elsewhere, it should be developed as a continuous contact point, for which the "most appropriate vehicle would be the World Congress." He also said that such an occasion would give Parsis a chance to see how thinking and behaviour change under the pressures of a different environment.

Desai felt that it was essential that such contact with Zoroastrian settlers abroad should be maintained for "if you leave them apart, they're likely to go astray."

Vimadlal noted "I have grave misgivings about the Congress because the

Payment of Rs 83 lakhs from the Jyoti Studio property sale is still to be received.

last Congress had created discord." He was supported in his dissent by trustees Maneck Hodiwalla and Homi Ranina. But Guzder contrasted the present concern against the atmosphere of complacency that prevailed in 1975 when he was elected. Referring to the Foreign Students Committee of the Panchayet which had given loans and grants to 48

students but a fortnight earlier, Guzder noted that the Congress would provide the occasion to discuss with foreign delegates, especially from the US, a community-based reciprocal arrangement for the boarding and lodging of young Parsi students who go there for higher education. This, felt Guzder, would help to rein in the cost of the youngsters' higher education overseas.

Books and tapes

Daily Zoroastrian prayers as recited by Ervad Peshotan Peer have been recorded for the BPP by Sarosh Bhabha at a total cost of Rs 8,600. Both individuals have given their services free of charge, notes the BPP press release. The two-cassette set priced at a subsidized rate of Rs 50 includes the *Kusti* prayers, *Sarosh Baaj*, the *Gehs*, the *Nyashes*, the *Namaskars*, etc. (Subsequent to the press conference, it was noted that the first batch of tapes is already sold out and a second batch will be available shortly, at a slightly enhanced rate.)

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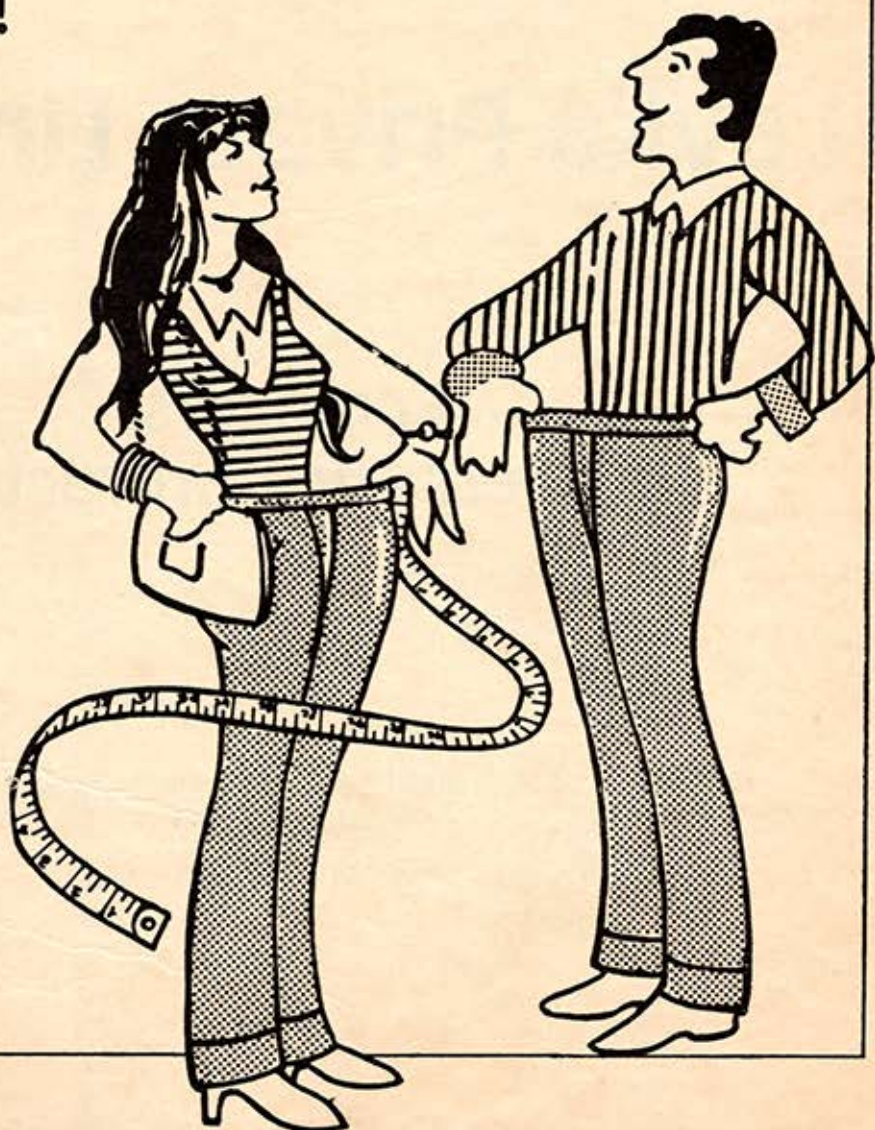
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Zoroastrianism, authored by Ervad R R Motafram and published by the trustees at a total cost of Rs 49,230, as notes the press release, is being sold at a subsidized rate of Rs 30. The press release of February, 84 had stated the cost to be "Rs 28,000 approximately."

Both, the publication as well as the tape recording, constitute implementation of a report on religious uplift made to the trustees by Vimadalal. Surplus funds were utilized for the purpose with the permission of the court, notes the BPP press release.

Mobeds

Income subsidies to mobeds, medical relief, and a recurring bank deposit scheme are some of the proposed highlights of the mobed amelioration plans being proposed by Vimadalal.

Mobeds have been classified into three categories and pay scales recommended accordingly: Yozdathregar mobeds who can perform higher liturgical rituals (Rs 600 to Rs 1,250 plus Rs 500), mobeds with academic qualifications in Avesta Pahlavi (Rs 600 to Rs 1,250 plus Rs 300) and regular mobeds (Rs 600 to Rs 1,250).

All categories would be provided medical relief and education for their children, plus Rs 5,000 on the occasion of each child's marriage. Rs 150 per month in a recurring bank deposit for 20 years is expected to provide some retirement benefit.

A mobed fund would make payment to those priests who fell below these income levels. But how one was to gauge the mobed's earning in order to decide the amount of subsidy has still to be determined.

Housing

Because of the FSI irregularities whereby some commercial builders were reported to have illegally altered figures on land assessment papers and, with the connivance of municipal authorities, added several unauthorized floors to their buildings, the municipality has tightened procedures. "Occupancy certificates are being withheld generally even though the buildings are ready for occupation," noted Golwalla. Among these is transit accommodation in Dadar, he noted.

Kanga stressed the urgency of commissioning work at the M and P plots of Godrej Baug adjacent to Doongerwadi. This is part of the land purchased by our ancestors to provide a buffer

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zone around the Doongerwadi. Kanga said that this land is not only vast and vacant, but is the only open land in the area and hence under constant danger of encroachment from the enormous adjoining slum.

At Panthaki Baug, Andheri, an encroaching Sikh family was said to be terrorizing the neighbourhood, said Guzder. The court has been petitioned. Kanga suggested that community properties should be developed in such a

be built under the current plan which includes construction at Contractor Baug, Dadar Parsi Colony, Khareghat Colony, Bharucha and Panthaki Baugs, and Pirojsha Godrej Baug, only a third of the waiting list of 3,000 applicants will get some kind of accommodation, noted Kanga. Golwalla acknowledged that the BPP is on the lookout for other trusts who might have land. Some lands have been encroached upon, said Kanga. The Zoroastrian Radhi Society is spending Rs 3,000 per month on security alone. As the BPP has agreed to take over the management, the area is likely to come under our control, noted Kanga. Some trusts do not have managerial skill. The builders can entice the trustees to sell as happened at the Thuthi Agiary. There is beautiful land adjacent to and extending beyond the Tower of Silence in Thana, but, as Golwalla generalized, "No trustee wants to give up his right."

Repairs

The BPP chief executive Russi Anklesaria explained that the Punchayet bears 100 percent of the cost of external repairs and 50 percent of internal repairs. Minor repairs have to be undertaken by tenants at their own cost. However, as Golwalla indicated, there is no sinking fund in the Wadia baugs and hence although all the repairs at Nowroze Baug were external, the BPP bore only 50 percent of the cost. Kanga announced that the BPP has decided to seek exemption from the municipal repairs cess under the court's ruling that exempts landlords who carry out their own repairs from the repair fund tax.

Jyoti Studio

The Charity Commissioner's approval for the sale of the Jyoti Studio property to real estate developer N L Mehta for Rs 90 lakhs, which had been anticipated shortly at the time of the February press conference is still pending. In February it had been mentioned that a major portion of the money — Rs 83 lakhs — was expected "within the next three or four months." Seven lakhs had been deposited earlier, but no money has since been received and Guzder again referred to a delay "of a few days."

Marriage bureau

With one marriage solemnized in May and two more due next November, the

BPP's one year old matrimonial bureau is making slow but steady progress. However, the meetings — social gatherings held every three or four months — were considered too infrequent and *Jam-e-Jamshed* Editor Adi Marzban volunteered to draw up a scheme to assist the marriage bureau achieve its objectives.

Kusti weavers

At the Jehangir Rural Girls' Home in Golvad, young girls from rural areas are being taught to weave kustis so that it becomes a side income while augmenting the short supply of kustis, noted Anklesaria. Six girls there have been insured for a period of five to nine years by a benevolent donor, notes the BPP press release. The sum insured which varies between Rs 5,000 and 10,000 will help the girls settle in life, with the donor paying the premiums for a period of five years.

The August press conference was the first in recent times to see all the seven trustees present (Golwalla, Guzder, Desai, Hodiwalla, Vimadlal, Kanga and Ranina). The Press was also well represented, with *The Bombay Samachar*, *Jam-e-Jamshed*, *The Zoroastrian*, *The Parsi Voice* and *Parsiana* attending.

way that "substantial chunks of vacant land are not open for encroachment."

Explaining the financial implications of the M and P plots, Golwalla noted that the money for the development will be spent entirely by the BPP. "The Gibbs Road scheme is not going to finance the entire project: Shapoorji Pallonji will contribute towards the cost of two buildings and another lady has agreed to donate Rs 25 lakhs for one building; Rs 15 lakhs have been promised by Russi Mehta."

While Fali Poncha who represented *The Zoroastrian* stressed the need for the Punchayet to obtain a commencement certificate for the project to forestall encroachment, Ranina noted "Everything hinges on Gibbs Road. Without those profits we cannot go ahead with the development of the M and P plots."

Kanga noted "We're going to use the Gibbs Road plot to yield resources one way or another." But he acknowledged the legal problem that the BPP cannot enter into business. Desai also alluded to legal problems that have to be solved to avoid taxation.

Municipal approval of the plans for 16 mobed staff quarters at Doongerwadi, which according to the February press release had been expected by March 31 is, according to the current press release, "expected shortly." The estimated cost which was stated at 16 lakh rupees according to the February press release is now shown as 21 lakhs.

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Some Surtis sore over shifting

Goti Adaran fire moved to permit repairs

Sarosh Bana

A section of the Parsi community in Surat has been inflamed by what it feels has been an act of reprehensible profanity committed in April by the ruling Surat Parsi Punchayet.

As a consequence, the punchayet secretary was reportedly assaulted twice on April 26, once in his office and once out on the street.

Trouble started when the punchayet announced its proposal to temporarily shift the holy fire from the Goti Adaran to the 161-year-old Modi Atash Bahram. Believed to be constructed in the latter 18th century, the Goti Adaran was in need of urgent repairs and hence the necessity to shift the fire. The repairs, expected to last about a year, would have necessitated bringing in non-Parsi masons.

However, many conditions need to be fulfilled before the fire can be moved. According to a local religious scholar and former teacher Rusi Besania, about 175 Parsi requisitionists from Surat and outside appealed to the trustees not to transfer the fire to the Modi Atash Bahram, which is a considerable distance away.

The group suggested, instead, that a make-shift structure be built on the grounds of the adaran to shelter the fire. They pointed out that shifting the fire would immediately desecrate it since it would have to be moved over streets which had sewage flowing below them. In addition, artificial (electric) street-lighting and the route through a red-light area would tarnish it, they felt.

Bapuji Lakdawala, a manager in a local bank, stated that the trustees were rather taken aback by the popular opposition. To preclude an out-right confrontation, they went from house to house at midnight disturbing Parsi priests at night and asking them to prepare for a funeral service, said Farokh Turel, one of the rebel priests. Only

later did the priests realize why they had been summoned.

Most of the priests, according to Besania, did not even have the time for *nahn*, absolutely obligatory for an assignment of such consequence. The hot coals were hastily gathered into a censer, which was duly shrouded, and the nocturnal procession hastened quietly through the streets.

At the Modi fire-temple, the trustees instructed the priests to curtail the prayer ceremony since Turel was raising a row in protest against the entire episode, said Besania. The censer was

Protests against such issues as moving the fire over underground sewage was carrying religious principles too far.

hastily installed in a room in the temple specially erected for the purpose.

Dastur Dr Hormazdyar Kayoji Mirza, one of the two high priests of Udva and an eminent religious scholar, explained that there are three grades of sacred fires, the Atash Bahram, the Atash Adaran and the Atash Dadgah, in that order of prominence.

Whereas the first two kinds supposedly involve more ceremony for their instalment, and more learned and advanced priests to tend them, the Atash Dadgah can be tended even by a *behdin*. Wrong handling of the first two may bring them irrevocably to the level of the third. The requisitionists charge the trustees of being guilty of such an act.

Former Surat Parsi Punchayet secretary Ratan Marshall stressed, however, that the transfer was executed properly, adding that protests against such issues as moving the fire over underground sewage was carrying religious principles too far.

Besania, Lakdawala and a few others whom this reporter met, criticized the Punchayet for being the only Parsi Punchayet not holding periodic elections.

In response, Dr Marshall remarked, "the present council has been acquitting itself remarkably well."

Reprinted from Indian Express, May 7, 1984.

Bana's report elicited the following two letters amongst others which were



The Modi Atash Bahram where the Goti Adaran fire presently rests. (Photo courtesy: Indian Express)

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printed in the Indian Express of May 25 and June 18.

The report states that the trustees of the Parsi Punchayet, Surat, have removed the holy fire from the Goti fire temple to the Shenshahi Atash Bahram. This is not true. The Goti fire temple is managed by trustees who have no connection with the trustees of the Parsi Punchayet, Surat. Likewise, the trustees of the Shenshahi fire-temple are a separate body, though there are some common trustees.

It is also not true that the secretary of the Parsi Punchayet was assaulted on April 26 last. Neither the secretary nor any other person has been assaulted.

Suffice it to say that this very holy fire has been removed in the past and housed in the Shenshahi fire temple on at least three to four occasions.

MANECK GHEYARA
President, Surat Parsi Punchayet

On behalf of the trustees of the Adaran, I would like to clarify the misconceptions created in the minds of the community.

As far back as March 1981, the trustees resolved to get the Adaran premises renovated and repaired. Appeals were issued and a good sum has been collected so far, amounting to nearly Rs 2.5 lakhs.

After mature consideration it was decided to shift the sacred fire to the Sheth D N Modi Atash Bahram Saheb. In the past also and since 1922 the sacred fire had been shifted to the Atash Bahram Saheb thrice. Had the fire been kept at the Goti Adaran itself in a temporary structure, there was every possibility of it being desecrated during the repair work.

I had discussed the matter of shifting the fire with various learned persons and no one opposed the idea. The opposition appears to have been engineered and only a handful of persons appear to be involved.

The holy fire has been shifted in accordance with past traditions and all "tarikats" and rituals have been observed. It is wrong to state that "an act of reprehensible profanity" has been committed. All rituals have been observed and none was curtailed as alleged.

The rumour that the trustees intend to sell or lease or otherwise dispose of the Goti Adaran properties is entirely false and baseless.

DAVAR KAVASJI T MODI
President, Goti Adaran Trust

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Vintage cars: the Parsi connection

From Manek's Mercedes to Russa's Rolls
Parsis have been connoisseurs of cars.

Ali Rajabally

I take great delight in things that belong to yesteryear. Throwing my memory back, I often think of the days when some of us interested in what are now termed rightly or wrongly, as vintage cars, hung around motor car showrooms and imagined we owned those expensive toys. And even today when I pass one of those beautiful things on the road, I try hard to imagine how it must have glistened when it was new. Like looking at an old face in the mirror—mine, may be yours—and trying to recall what it must have looked like when it was young, when life was still an experience to be lived, when time hadn't written its rude name all over it.

Cars made in the '20s and '30s have a special attraction for me. Like Manek Petit's 540K Mercedes, a 1935 cabriolet he had bought from Dadajee Dhackjee on Sandhurst Bridge. The K in the *marque* stood for Kompressor, the supercharger in this throaty, thirsty model. A beautifully made precision thing, solidly built. You bang on the bonnet and the bonnet went on ringing long after you took your hand away, but Maka thought it was a bit too heavy and

it had its vices (Like its country of origin, when it was made).

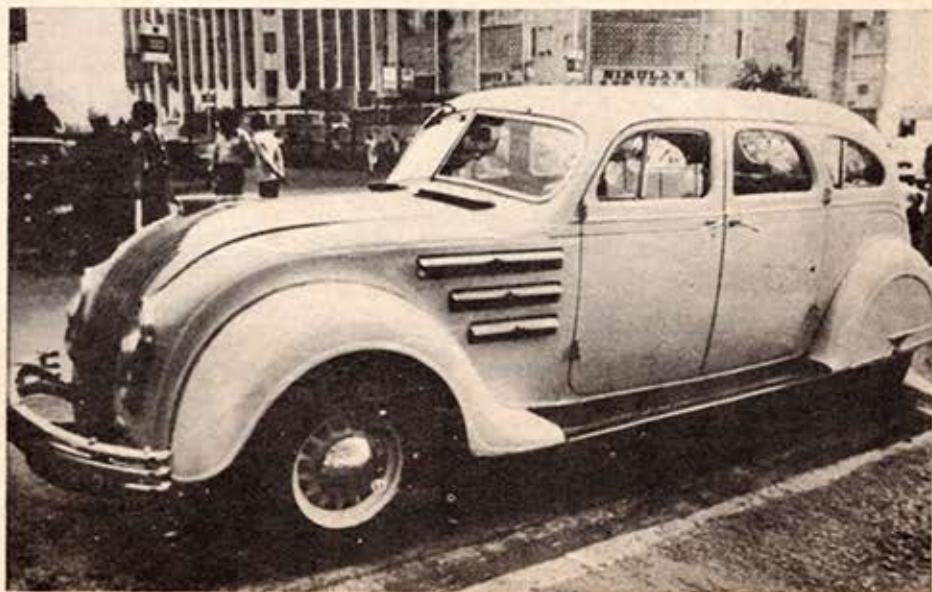
Cars of each country seem to bear their nation's characteristics. The Honda and the Mazda: neat, small and impeccable like the Japanese who built them; the Rolls and the Daimler: majestic and dignified as the British who ruled the world we knew. At the other end of the scale, the brash Impala for the fast highways of America, or the little Fiat, for the tricky hills of Italy. And, so this 540K, this magnificent monster with its enormous bonnet, its gigantic headlamps, its bulbous wings, its chrome flashes, looked as impressive as a Nazi demonstration. It was born at the height of Nazi Germany's power when they also had their super cars, Horsch and Maybach. But they stood in the same relation to the 540K, as the Daimler or the Sunbeam stood to the Rolls. Good, but not quite equal.

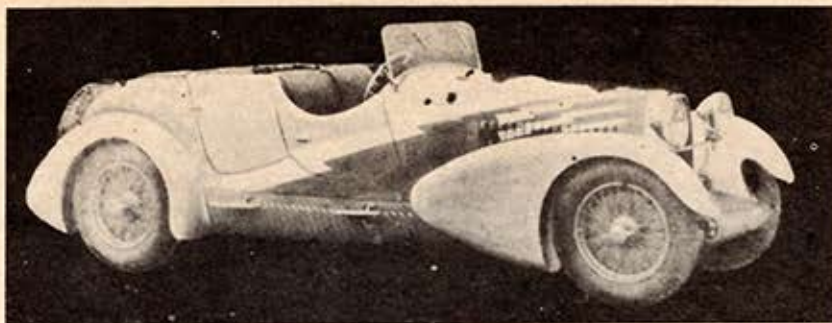
The Bhiwandiwalla family was yet another that had a succession of classic cars: from Sir Dosabhoj's Rolls, to Perin's egg-shaped yellow Baby Austin, that collected a crowd wherever it went.

But the best taste was displayed by Adi. A twin-ignition Bugatti, custom-made, body designed by himself and D R D Wadia of Auto Cars of Queen's Road, who had it imported from London for Adi. In 1935 Khursedji Limji would sell you a Chrysler for Rs 5,000 and Russa Mehta a Buick for a little more, or a Cadillac for under 10 thousand. The Bugatti had set Adi back 18,000 of the best, very nearly the price of two Cadillacs! A fabulous amount in any currency.

I first saw this mechanical monument to individuality and craftsmanship, in the compound of their bungalow on Cuffe Parade, by the sea, as it was then. It stood there looking so lively and reckless, so male and vigorous, and I stood there with my mouth hanging open like an offertory bag in a rich man's church. Then down the steps came Adi, raised the bonnet and you saw a massive engine, lurking there like a monster sleeping in its metal cage. And when the tinkering was over, the growl of an exhaust, the beat of an eight-cylinder engine, tyres spinning on loose gravel and he was gone, leaving behind

As a sales gimmick,
Dady Wadia used to
tell everybody that
only distilled water
was recommended
for the Cord's
radiator.





him only the smell of exhaust hanging in the air, mixed with the rich oily perfume of Castrol R.

This epitome of expensive motoring was a three-tone sports job. A pearl-white aluminium body, over-painted across the bonnet and part of the front doors in electric blue, a silver streak of lightning, separating the two colours. Four doors with a tiny footstep under each door, two spare wheels on the sloping back, bulbous wings over big wired-wheels. And inside, steering-wheel and gear-lever knob made of ivory, dashboard inlaid with mother-of-pearl, upholstery from pig-skin, soft as a baby's bottom. This speedster with a fast pick-up, was a tourer as were most Continental cars of the day, so you could drink to the full, the exhilaration of the wind, carousing with you as you speed up, say to Poona, as it was then known, on a late Sunday morning with your girl friend by your side. First stop, Muratore's in East Street. A pasta lunch, a carafe or two of Chianti and you're back in time for *The Dansant* at the Taj. Over and over again it had done the jaunt to

Poona in a shade under 2½ hours. But then, wouldn't you expect it from a low-slung car capable of 105 mph?

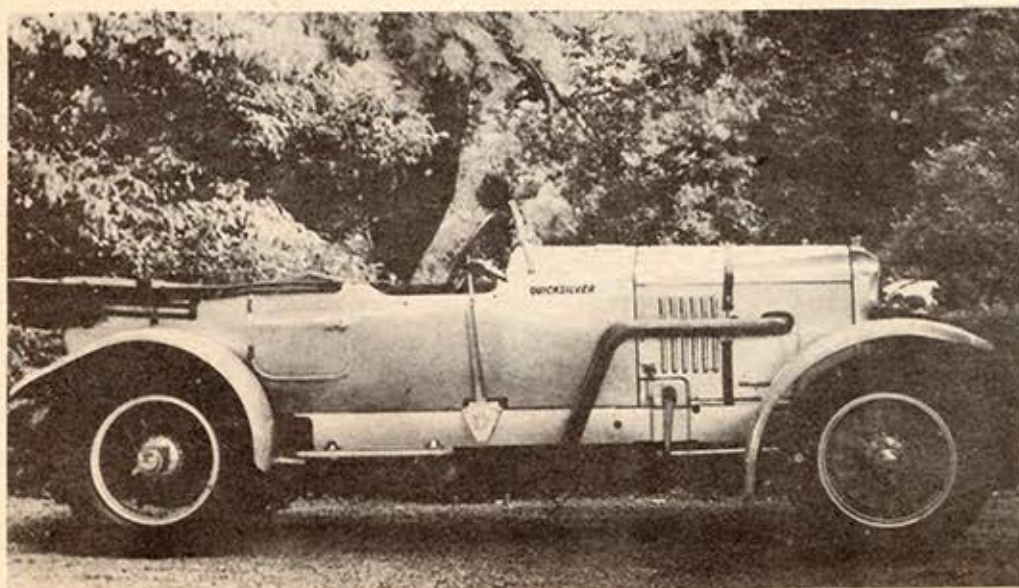
Faly Petit, the baronet to be, had some enviable cars. But full marks to him for at least one of them. The rare, rear-engine Tatra, a giant of a car with a motor the size of a ship's engine! So big that you didn't have to take your dog out for a walk. You just walked around the car twice and that was it! It was a gigantic, mechanical extravaganza. And to think the country of its origin now has a communist regime, not entirely of its own volition.

In days of yore, a car came along and for long thereafter, it affected the course of other cars. Sometimes what happened was an engineering breakthrough, sometimes it was the design that tickled the world's fancy. Like the 1935 Cord 810. A breakthrough in design, bold and manly, with aircraft type controls on the dashboard and retractable headlamps adopted from the landing lights of the aeroplanes of those early days of flying. For sheer taste, for its aesthetic, functional correctness, for its lasting

beauty, it has been repeatedly praised since its production was stopped in 1937.

The Cord never really died. It was truly in advance of its time and the changes it made in the accepted tastes in auto designing, have never been forgotten. Of the 3000 odd Cords manufactured during its two-year production span, almost all survive in private or public collections, nurtured by their dedicated owners. So widespread was its fame, that its dies sold to Japan as scrap, were carefully hidden in Tokyo during World War II and to this day remain reverently crated in the warehouse of Nissan Company. One day they will have the good sense to bring it out of the moth balls and again conquer the motoring world. No wonder this long remembered, much missed barouche is even today referred to as the Indestructible Cord.

For some inexplicable reason there were only a handful of Cords in the country. The one I remember best belonged to D R D Wadia, who along with brother A R D owned Auto Cars Ltd. They were agents for Austins and for a while also had the Cord agency. Their



Fali Mehta's Chrysler Airflow (far left): judged a commercial failure because of its ugliness.

Adi Bhiwandiwalla's Bugatti (above): speedster with a fast pick-up was capable of 105 mph.

Vauxhall 30/98 (left): 'a heady reputation' for being a fast touring car.

show room was on Queen's Road, one of those with potted palms and funny looking nickel ashtrays on long stalks.

They also sold little gadgets like St Christopher plaques, chromium vases with plastic flowers, fancy radiator mascots, little dogs that nod their heads on the back shelf of the car. One would have thought these silly knick-knacks were a product of the present day but they've actually been around ever since cars were built. Apparently they appeal to a wide public.

Dady Wadia's Cord was a shining black beauty (remember Henry Ford's jibe that a customer may have any colour he wants as long as it's black?) and as a sales gimmick, he used to tell everybody that only distilled water was recommended for its radiator. He wouldn't let any of his friends drive the car but often took us for long spins to Khandala or Poona. The Cord was a lovely job in all respects and I would have loved to have owned it.

But it's not always that a car produced far in advance of its time, drives away with the cake. Here's one that didn't. When in 1934 an eight-cylinder Chrysler Airflow was produced, they said it was 10 years ahead of its time. But 10 years later in 1944 it looked just as ugly. But like some ugly things and people I know, it was also interesting. Their idea of course was to design a car that took advantage of the air by offering the smallest possible resistance to it.

The Airflow, with a front like a chromium waterfall, was the result. A very soundly built beast, very well thought out on the drawing-board, it still

met the stiffest resistance from a quarter more important than the air—the customers. They wouldn't take to this misconceived modernity in spite of the manufacturers billing it the world's most advanced motor car.

After four years of production this pseudo-aerodynamic car design was judged a commercial failure. But let's be kind to it. It had failed majestically. It did not fail because of its novelty or too radical a departure from the conventional norm.

It was a distinct break from the previous car design which was more box-like. The Cord 810, which came a year later was equally bold in design yet to this day retains a strong following. But the Airflow became an object of ridicule and failed purely and simply because of its singular ugliness.

But there were some in Bombay who didn't think so. One was Pilloo Mistry an ardent driver who owned an M G Midget—and a Magnette, probably the best woman driver of those days. (Is there any one better today I wonder!) She used to collect a crowd around her new Airflow every Sunday morning at what is now known as Breach Candy—It was then known as Scandal Point (and before that Tope Khana, because of a cannon, a remnant of the World War I, that was kept perched on a small hillock. This had to be razed to the ground when Sir Nowroji Saklatwala's bungalow came up. Now the Tope's gone, the bungalow is no more and the high-rise 'Vaibhav' stands in their place).

Another one I remember with a certain amount of nostalgic affection, belonged

The Bhiwandiwalla family had a succession of classic cars from Sir Dosabhoj's Rolls, to Perin's egg-shaped yellow Baby Austin.

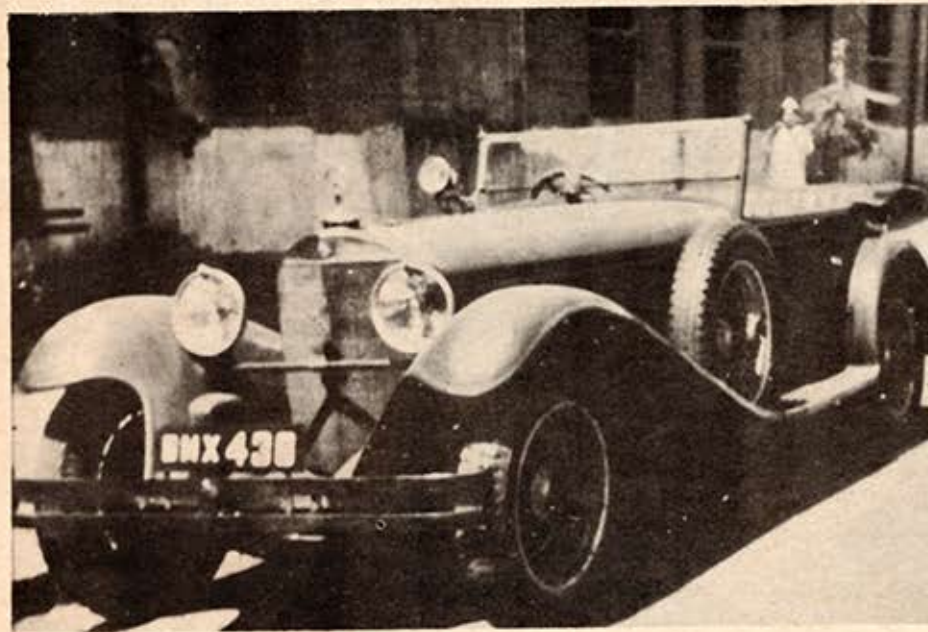
to ex-RAF flyer "Baba" Gazdar, man of many parts and at one time or the other owner of a great number of enviable cars. I used to drive this beefy muscular machine often and eventually began to like it. It was one of those things that grew on you.

In its production span of four years, from 1934 to 1937, about 40,000 Airflows were produced. Today less than 250 of them are scattered around the world. And one out of them is in Bombay. The present owner tells me it's the only one of its kind in the country, and that makes it rare. Auto aficionados will find its history somewhat interesting.

In 1934 Khursedji Limji's Bombay Cycle and Motor Agencies, who were agents for Chryslers among other makes, proudly displayed an Imperial Eight Airflow in their showroom on Sandhurst Bridge. The advertisement said it was the first streamlined car in the world.

It evoked strong reactions even while standing in the show-window: people either admired it, or ridiculed it. Among those with the former reaction was the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot, a young man who could have been a replica of a Pickwickian cherub. His choice cost him Rs 5000, a high price for those days (Around the corner on Hughes Road, T R Pratts, forerunner of today's Metro Motors would have sold you a Buick Straight-Eight for a shade less or a La Salle for a shade more). This made him the very first Airflow owner in India. Having maintained it with royal disregard of cost for nearly 45 years, it was still in mint-condition when he sold it in 1978.

Boman Dubash's Mercedes: 'a bit too heavy,' built during the height of Nazi Germany's power.



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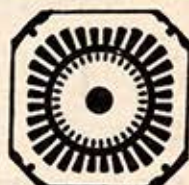
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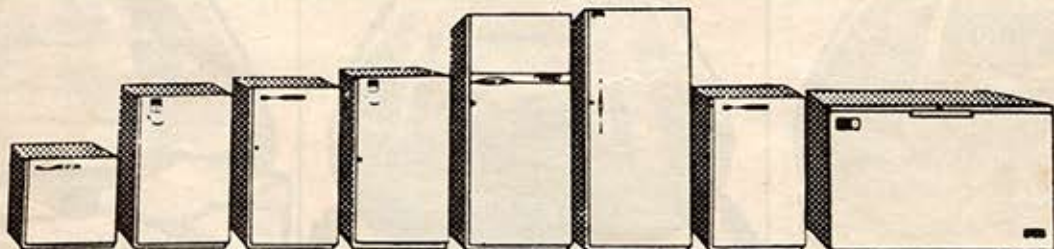
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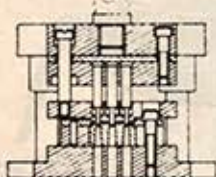
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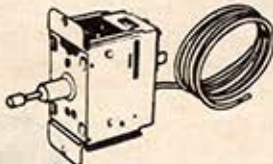
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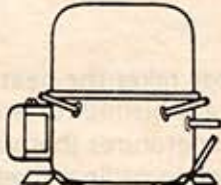
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This time it changed hands for a song—a mere 2000 rupees. The astute buyer was Fali Mehta, the society dental surgeon and although this ardent collector of classic cars drives around today in a comparatively new Mercedes 280 (having recently parted with his old, green and black Rover), he regards the Airflow as an antique curiosity and is

In 1935
Khursedji Limji
would sell you a
Chrysler for Rs 5,000
and Russa Mehta
a Buick
for a little more.

perceptive enough to appreciate the milestones of automotive history it represents.

There was yet another car in the early '30s in Bombay that often brings back wonderful memories. It was a gem, a snappy, sporting type British job, much thought of in those days. This was Vauxhall 30/98 that Faly Petit brought back with him from Blighty, the only one of its kind in the country. But the baronet to be had to take second place, for Manek Powvala stole his thunder when he returned from Cambridge with a Vauxhall 30/98 too.

Picture a slim lowsided, elegant sports job with a bonnet-strap, handsome flared wings and rakish lines. A fast touring car but a car less for the track and more for the road. To my mind, the kind of a car that went with suede shoes, cavalry-twill trousers, split-back jacket, silk handkerchief peeping out of the breast-pocket. A four-seater with three doors, the space for the driver's door being taken up by a long hand-brake bristling like a sabre. There was no howl, no shriek, no wail, just power with decorum. A tranquillizing rumble of the exhaust and this marvellous little car was off.

It had come to India with a heady reputation. In a trial run it had lapped Brooklands at a 107 miles an hour, the first British stock-job to do so, a feat that had made the Bentley owners sit up and take note. Yet if you were to compare it to a Bentley it would come up a very poor second.

I remember Mack telling me that when

he read of the tremendous surge of power the 30/98 packed, he had to try it out himself. This he did on the straight and long Great North Road one morning but when he had touched 91 mph his shrieking passengers made him lose his nerve and he took his foot off the accelerator. So that was that.

But take it from me, the 30/98 was a beauty—an affair of the heart. One look at it and you'd want to drive it. Gliding down the road, it was fully capable of drawing audible 'oohs' and 'aahs' even from the most staid gathering.

No satisfactory explanation has been provided for calling it 30/98. The only explanation guessed by people who matter, is that the first number represents the increased horsepower and the second its maximum intended horsepower. At any rate, a classic is after all never to be defined...merely to be cherished.

Daddy Mazda, the Calcutta playboy—in no way connected with the Japanese extravaganza of the same name—was a rather adventurous young man with a taste for the good, the fast things of life and the wherewithal to indulge in them. Soon after World War II, he had a low chasis, long-nosed, eight-cylinder pre-war Jensen roadster in BRG. (To the uninitiated, the letters stand for British Racing Green.) It's a safe bet that any green open sports car whether it is emerald, pea-green or near-black is diligently described as BRG.

The Jensen had a three-toned Stentor horn, huge Marchal lights with amber lenses and a cut-out loud enough to awaken the dead (this includes the Calcutta policeman on point duty). A car with a fast pick-up, touching 70 on the short Red Road or 10 miles more on the long stretch of the Strand, was easy. But when you were in the bucket-seat next to him, you rode in silence for it's difficult to talk, and harder to hear, when you've got the wind rushing past you, the bellow of two, three-inch exhausts only a foot or two away from your ears and 125 angry horses fighting mad to go places. This was the kind of a car that must have once belonged to someone who was probably dead, lost in the Battle of Britain, or sunk on some forgotten Atlantic convoy defending an Empire due within years to disintegrate and be given away.

Where is this splendid beast today? In some junkyard somewhere? Or has some smart Alec taken it across and flogged it as a veteran/vintage job?

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"I'm not interested in controversies"

Society magazine interviews Dastur Minochehr-Homji.

Prochi Badshah

I knew Dastur Minochehr-Homji long before he got to know me. He was a visiting teacher of religion in my school. And every Monday (or was it Wednesday), Dasturji lectured us for an hour on the various religions of the country. If only I had yawned less and listened more, I wouldn't have been as ignorant about my religion as I am today.....

Minóchehr-Homji talked as well then as he does now. With his magnetic voice and perfect diction, I still wonder how my classmates and I could doze off to sleep during his talks. I blame age and immaturity more than Dasturji's script for our boredom. At a Peace Conference in Mount Abu, early this year, this Parsi High Priest, presiding over the spiritual business of a vanishing community, made a very good impression. He spoke authoritatively on Indian scriptures, and even narrated a *shloka* in faultless Sanskrit to the audience's utter amazement. He's scholarly and severe.

In his late fifties or early sixties, Minochehr-Homji sat erect on a chair in his study-cum-drawing room. "I'm not interested in controversies," he told me at the start, "so please avoid asking me any embarrassing questions." "I'll speak only on tape," was the second condition. He then gave me a time limit. "Please finish the interview and photographs in an hour's time," he said in a no-nonsense manner. But two hours later, he was still answering my questions as specifically as only a man with a clear conscience can do.

What exactly is the difference between a Parsi and a Zoroastrian?

Really speaking, it's a dual term. It goes together. We are Parsis because we come from Persia. And an important province in Persia was Pars. So people coming from Pars are Parsis. That's then the ethnic term. The term used for our faith is Zoroastrian - one who follows the teachings of Zarathushtra. Zarathushtra means the soul of the golden light, of purity and wisdom. Unfortunately, later on, it was also translated as one who is a master of all camels. And just as Jesus was known

as Christ, Siddhartha as Buddha, Mahavira as Jeena, after they got enlightenment, Spitma was known as Zarathushtra after he got light.

Zoroastrianism, though an older religion, did not become as popular as say, Christianity and Islam which came much later. Why?

This has got something to do with us being refugees. Up to 1250 AD., in Iran itself our population was in lakhs. For, the Iranian Empire extended from the shores of Asia Minor in the West to Kanoj in India in the East. And from

the Russian Steppes in the North to almost Bander Abbas in the South. But then, when we lost our empire to the Arabs and the Zoroastrians were massacred, we came to India. The number started dwindling from lakhs to thousands. For the last so many years we used to say that we were one lakh one thousand. Now we are ninety thousand. And the majority of the Parsi population (about 60 - 65,000) is in Bombay. If something happens to Bombay, God forbid.....

What is being done to stop this dangerous trend? Statistics say that for every 1,100 Parsi deaths in a year, there are 300 births?

There are two sides to this problem. One, so many Parsi-Zoroastrians have left India. So many families have migrated abroad. So when Zoroastrians from one country go to another, it is to be considered as a relative disappearance. But if by census, as you say it is 1,100 deaths and 300 births, then it is something to be apprehensive about. There is definitely some truth about this dwindling number even if I wouldn't use the word disappearing. Our numbers are dwindling, and it has some sociological factors behind it. I would say it is because of want of homes. So many young couples do not get married because they have no houses. And no marriage, means no children. Then again, because of this same problem, there are late marriages, and late marriages preclude a sure segment of birth. For there are certain ages when a lady is considered fertile, but when she marries after that period, there are less children.



Minochehr-Homji: 'families should mind their own prayers.'

Isn't this a problem that every community faces?

Well yes, but it hits us the most, because we are so few.

Isn't the fact that more and more Parsis are marrying outside the community, the main reason for our dwindling number?

True. Especially when the lady marries outside the community, it is a loss, because her children are not taken into the community.

Why this discrimination?

Maybe because it is a man-made law. When a man is married to a lady of another faith, then his children can be Zoroastrians, though the community doesn't look upon them with much favour.

But isn't the mother supposed to be closer to the child and therefore has more influence on him than the father? Maybe there is some truth in this philosophy of the more important role of the mother in a child's life, but it is the law that ultimately works.

Can't the law be changed?

That's none of my lookout. But as it stands now, if a Parsi lady marries a non-Parsi, then she and her children are not considered as Zoroastrians.

Is this law practised only in India?

I don't know what the state of affairs is in Iran and I wouldn't like to comment on it either. But in the States and in Canada it is different. Recently, I read

in *The Bombay Samachar*, that the Chicago Anjuman Association, had taken an opinion poll of the community and had opted for taking not only the Parsi father and non-Parsi mother's children but even the Parsi mother and non-Parsi father's children into the community.

Who changes this law, the Parsi Panchayet?

No. The whole community. But it's no use discussing all this. For as long as there is light in the discussion, it's good. But as soon as there is heat in the discussion, I cease to discuss it.

But what happens if a Parsi lady who is married to a non-Parsi, somehow gets the navjote ceremony performed on her child?

This is not in my jurisdiction. How can a navjote be performed 'somehow.' It is to be performed in a particular manner. I do not know how this can happen or why it should happen.

What are your personal views on conversion?

I do not discuss my personal views in interviews.

Is conversion forbidden in the scriptures?

By custom and tradition it is not favoured.

How could Zarathushtra be against conversion, when he himself converted people to his faith?

That is the stock argument. Every prophet converts. This is a debatable point. But another argument that follows is, that it is the quality and not the quantity that matters.

Why aren't non-Parsis allowed into the fire-temples?

When the Arabs conquered Iran, they desecrated our bodies and our places of worship. It was out of this fear and the need for self-preservation that we closed the doors of our fire-temples when we came to India. Our custom of the last so many years has now crystallized into a law, at least that's my explanation.

Do you think Parsis still consider themselves as foreigners?

Even the idea is rebellious.

Aren't we treated as foreigners?

I don't know. Now we enter into politics and that is something I don't fancy. But to my knowledge, we are out and out Indians. We have never asked for a separate franchise or a separate electorate or anything of that kind. We have very amicably adopted this as our own land. We call India our motherland. If this question was asked after thirteen years of settlement, it would have been understandable but after thirteen centuries.....?

Do you agree that Parsis were the biggest cronies of the British?

It may be that because of our English education, we did well and prospered with the British. But we were also in the forefront of the freedom movement. I would say that Dadabhai Naoroji showed the way. We are and always have been Indians first, Parsis next.

It is only after comparative study, that you can find out the excellence of your religion.

We have the Priest class Athornan and the non-priest class Behdins or those who cannot become priests. Isn't it ridiculous to follow this kind of a class system in such a small community like ours where even the priests are dwindling?

This also is a tradition. Nothing of the kind is written in our scriptures. Nowhere does it say that a particular person cannot become a priest. It's like this: what is a profession today, becomes a vocation. So vocation is more important than the profession. I see the signs written on the wall, that is the dwindling number of priests in the community, and it may start the system of lay priests (*behdin mobeds*). It may first be started by the *behdins* who recite the prayers very well (i.e. those who have good intonation and good pronunciation) and who have a minimal understanding of the text. If this is achieved, then to my knowledge, he is a priest and can perform all the religious ceremonies, barring only two which can be performed only by the ordained priests, that is those who have undergone the *naavar* and *martab* cere-

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monies. But the way things are going, individual families should mind their own prayers, because the priests are few and the pressure of work is a lot. Besides, because of the economic conditions of priests, very few want to get into it. I believe even a *jhadoowala* today earns more

How many high priests are there in India?

Previously we were fourteen. In Bombay today, we are four - Dasturji Mirza, Dasturji JamaspAsa, Dasturji Kotwal and myself. In Poona there is one, one in Navsari and two in Surat.

What are the functions of a High Priest?

I would say it is studying the religion and diffusing knowledge. Both in the schools and among the adults. And to answer the inquiries about the religion from people who come to us. We even write in the papers. I have my Friday classes, here, for the last twenty-seven years. Previously I had similar classes in Secunderabad where I was the High Priest from 1950-57.

What kind of a training does a Parsi boy have to go through before he becomes a priest?

Fortunately, I was trained in a very good school, the Cama Athornan Madressa in Andheri. We were given secular education plus religious education plus the comparative study of religions. We had Avesta, Pahlavi, Persian and Sanskrit as compulsory languages. And it is only after comparative study, that you can find out the excellence of your religion. And by knowing Sanskrit which is a sister language of Avesta, one can study the Vedas. And by that we are in a position to know the similarities of the two systems of religion and philosophy. There are a lot of similarities between Hinduism and Zoroastrianism. However, we have two madressas in Bombay, in Andheri and Dadar, where boys are sent for training. But there are many priests who do not belong to a madressa, but are tutored by their fathers and uncles who are also priests or by a priest in an *agiary*.

What is the exact significance of the sipping of Nirang (cow's urine) during the various ceremonies?

Nirang means mantras that we recite from the Avesta. But later, mantras that were recited over a particular thing came to be known as nirang. There is



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no mention of it in the earlier scriptures except in the *Vendidad*. Later it came into our religion as a custom of which we have no references in other scriptures. This practice has come after the influence of some other community on us.

Do Parsis believe in life after death?

Yes. But not in reincarnation. We believe in future life and that the soul is immortal.

Do you think that the Parsis are an exceptionally gifted people?

They are not the gifted, but one of the gifted communities. Because we are small in number, those who are gifted are marked out. Same is the case with those who have done something wrong.

Why is honesty considered synonymous with Parsis?

It is our tradition. It is said that Iranian education consisted of three things – (1) horse riding (2) archery (3) speaking the truth. They embodied three aspects of education. Horse riding was physical education, archery was intellectual concentration and speaking the truth was moral education.

Same is the case with charity which is pursued more vigorously by the Parsis?

It is in the doctrine that says, 'he who gives happiness to another person, finds happiness for himself.' I call it also the religion of altruism – another man first and myself afterwards. I am told that we are .003 percent in the world census. Even then to make a mark in the history of the country, means there are certain sterling qualities which have been kept up by our youngsters. We do not live on past glories.

How come, in spite of these various charitable institutions, we still have Parsi beggars? What are the rich Parsi families like the Tatas, Wadias, Godrejs, etc., doing for the community?

To put the surplus of what you earn into the good of the community and the country is part of religion. The Godrejs, Tatas, Wadias, etc., are not only putting in their money for the good of the community, but also for the good of the country. Especially the Tatas. It is a cosmopolitan concern. Their scholarships are all on merit given to all Indians. Ours was once a community without beggars. Now because of urbanization there may be some, but if certain measures are taken and looking

at our small number, this can be eradicated. Besides, not just these few individual families, many many Zoroastrians are leaving money in their wills for certain purposes as charity.

I believe there are crores and crores of unused funds lying with the Parsi Pan-chayat. What is being done about them?

I am not in a position to talk about this because I haven't studied it. An

The dwindling number of priests may start the system of lay priests.

enlightened member of the newly created CER (Committee for Electoral Rights) may enlighten you.

What do you have to say about these tall buildings which have come up near the tower of silence and from which the well of the dead can be seen? The sight you will agree must be quite sordid....

Whether this is a fact or not I do not know, because I haven't studied it. To me, amongst other systems, this is the system which will go on without any special encumbrance on the funds of the community. Fuel is costly, so burning with fuel could be a problem. Where the crematorium is concerned, what happens when there is a power failure? If we keep aside feelings and sentiments and take into account only one thing and that is the disposal of the body, this is the best manner of disposal. It is only when sentiments are brought in that controversies start. One really doesn't know what to believe because people do not bring out actual data, but that which supports their own beliefs.

How did this system originate?

It is there in the scriptures. Besides, there is a very relevant story about Socrates. When Socrates was condemned to death, some of his followers asked him how his body should be disposed off. And pointing to the hill from the small window of his prison cell, he said "On yonder hill, according to the custom of the ancient Persians, dispose my

body. Take my body to the-hill and the agents of nature will dispose it off!" This was in BC times. Socrates knew it to be a very sensible and scientific mode of disposal, provided scrupulous cleanliness is maintained all around. Isn't this also associated with a Parsi's last deed of charity?

That is also true. But it is incidental.

Why does the community quietly accept the fun that Hindi films continuously make about Parsis?

Because we take it sportingly, it goes on. No one will try it to this extent with any other community. We are tolerant because the Hindus have taught us tolerance. I agree that at times it crosses limits but then, to complain? Isn't that childish?

Where does the term bawaji that is used for Parsis originate?

It was a term of endearment in the beginning. Bawa means father and bawaji means grandfather. In the villages when Parsis served the local people, this was the term of respect used for them. Of course now the term is no longer of endearment. It has assumed another meaning.

Were you in any way connected with the film, 'The Quest for Zarathushtra' that Zubin Mehta is working in?

Yes. The scripting was already done, but I along with some others were invited to Washington as members of the script committee. The script was defective in the sense it carried certain fundamental fallacies where religion was concerned and we pointed it out. I don't know if it was corrected later.

Is it true that when you were the palace guest of the Shah of Iran during the celebrations in memory of Cyrus the Great, the Shah himself had asked you to convey a message from him to all Parsis in India inviting them back to Iran? Seeing the present condition in Iran aren't you glad that not many accepted the Shah's invitation?

The Shah had conveyed this message not just to me but to all the plane full of leading Zoroastrians who had gone to Iran at that time. He had said that the Parsis should come back to Iran and once again prosper there. A few did go, but not many. Unfortunately, we never knew that ten years later the tables would be turned!

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A profile in grace

Novelist Malgonkar writes of his long friendship with the late Sir Dinshaw Petit.

Manohar Malgonkar

He was, by almost any definition, The Man Who Has Everything: a commanding height and bold good looks, enormous wealth, a Cambridge degree, a brilliant intellect, a hereditary knighthood, a raging beauty for a wife.

His house on Bombay's seashore may or may not have been bigger than the palaces of the Nizam or the Gaekwad up on Malabar Hill, but it was far more tastefully furnished and its surroundings — flower beds and lawns and shade-trees — far better maintained.

His estate on the French Riviera, Savaric, was the envy of Chicago Pork-Barons as of Hollywood superstars — it was the third largest after those of the Prince of Monaco and the King of Belgium.

Streets in Bombay were named after his father as well as his grandfather, and marble effigies of both still stand in seedy gardens which have been chopped up into oddly shaped bits for widening the roads.

His family's charities ran schools in Bombay and Poona as in Karachi and Tehran, to say nothing of hospitals for humans and for animals, libraries, and orphanages.

One of his brothers-in-law was the creator of Pakistan, M A Jinnah, and another was — is — India's greatest industrialist, J R D Tata. But neither could dwarf his stature, and indeed I have a feeling that it was they who must have felt a little uneasy in his company because he had a somewhat puckish sense of humour which often took the form of making the high and mighty look a little ludicrous.

But none of this was known to me when, on a bright winter's morning in 1937, I received a telegram from Thos Cook (now Thomas Cook) in Bombay, informing me that I was to meet a certain train by which Petit and a friend were arriving "for a ten-day shoot."

The telegram needs explaining. I had passed my BA and was hunting for a job. My family village (near which I still live) was surrounded by heavy jungle which abounded in wild animals, and I



Sir Dinshaw with Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw

had been brought up at a fairly early age to hunt them for food or sport. Why not, I asked myself, become a professional hunting guide — like one of Hemmingway's White Hunters?

Hunting

I had dashed off a letter to Thos Cook saying that I would be prepared to take hunting parties of two at the rate of Rs 2,000 for ten days, plus Rs 200 for each additional day. Each extra person would be charged Rs 100 per day. The telegram was Cook's belated response.

Belated because, between making my proposal and Cook's finding me a client, I had got a job, some might even call it a career (even though I did not

pursue it), for I had been selected as an officer of the Cantonment Service and was actually under training in the cantonment office at Poona under a Major Cave.

But it is not easy for someone who had camped under canvas to ignore the hunter's horn, particularly when the venture might just bring him enough money to buy his first car. I actually had to take a couple of weeks' leave in the middle of my training, which did not please Major Cave at all.

Petit turned out to be Sir Dinshaw Petit, third Baronet, and his friend was an American, Tom Taylor. The shoot went off well. Taylor got a fine leopard, and I was able to buy a second-hand Morris Eight, a little maroon beauty

which I began to park right next to Major Cave's tipsy-looking old Ford.

I think there were two more shoots — or was it three? — before the Second World War started. I would take my annual leave just when Sir Dinshaw wanted to go on a shoot during his winter sojourn in India: from March through September, he lived in France. For a few days before and after the shoots I was his guest at Petit Hall. Then the shoots stopped, but I still continued to spend a week or two of my leave at Petit Hall.

Over the years our friendship grew so that it became customary for me to stay with him whenever I happened to be in Bombay. I would often drop in without notice and be sure of a welcome. Sometimes, if he happened to be out when I arrived, his first question on seeing me would be: "Have you told them what you want to eat?"

What I wanted to eat was Petit Hall food, than which there was no better in the world. Mughlai, Parsi or European dishes concocted by gifted cooks, eggs such as only Parsis know how to make, Goa curries such as the Goans dream about. But the dish that had, over the years, become recognized as my particular favourite, was a house special-

ity: chicken murugdani — no, *not* muligattawny. If I arrived with notice, it always figured on the menu.

Tolerated

He would not only tolerate fools, he was positively kind to them. I suspect that most of his fellow men and women, must have seemed a little dim-witted to him anyhow. It was pompousness he

He was finicky about handling soiled books and never read a paperback unless he could not find the same book in hardcover.

could not bear; people who pretended to knowledge they did not possess, affected haw-haw accents, or flaunted their riches. He wore his own wealth with grace and restraint and impeccable good taste.

Hunting, killing animals for sport, he

gave up long before wild-life conservation became fashionable — or even necessary. He gave it up because of an abounding love for animals.

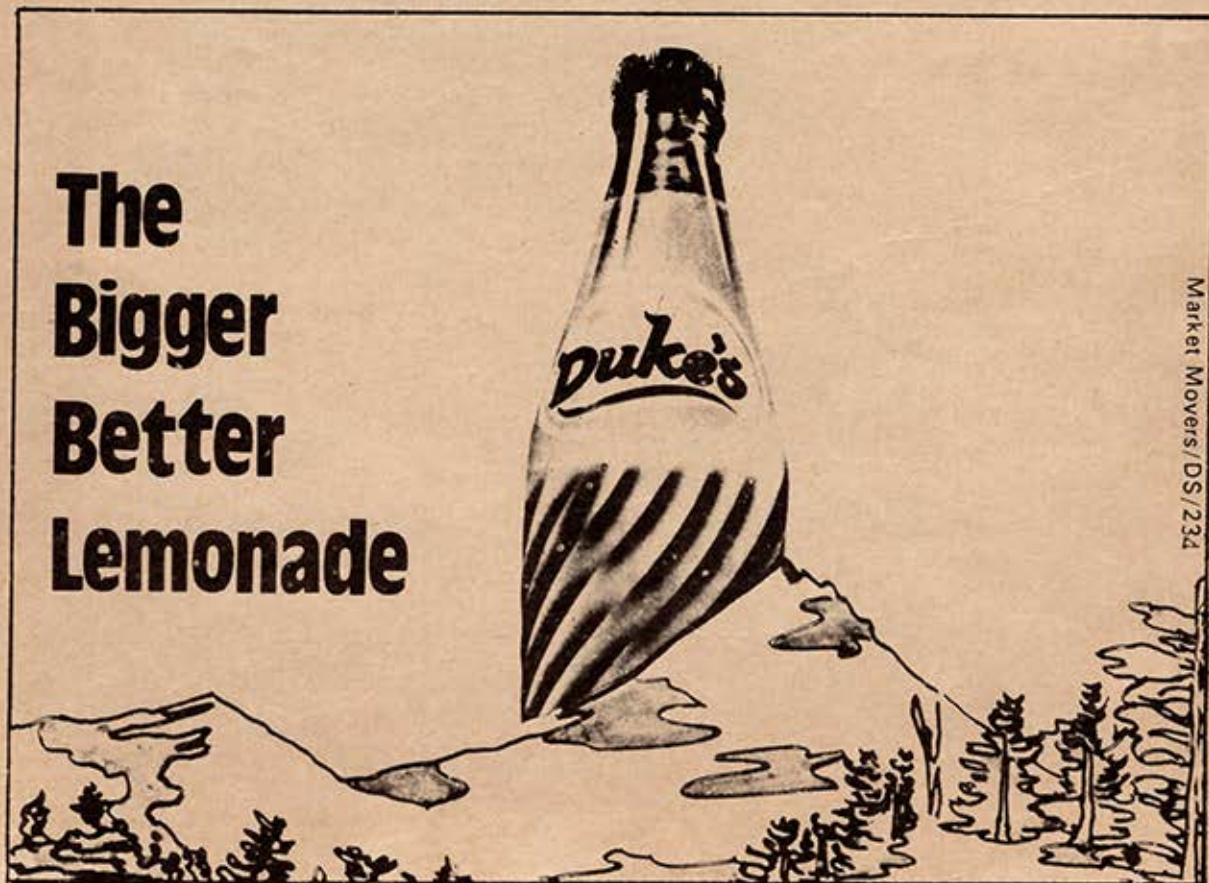
He was a bad sleeper, and had a habit of reading in bed till the small hours of the morning. Once, in the Old Petit Hall which had a vast compound full of graceful old trees, he asked me to shoot a brain-fever bird which used to wake him up at dawn every morning.

As it happened, I too had given up killing animals, but manfully rose to the occasion to oblige my first hunting client. When, however, I got up the next morning, bent on murder, the night watchman handed me a chit which said: "Big Mac don't shoot the bird. Faly."

Over the years, I had become Big Mac, to distinguish me from a genuine Scotsman who was also among his friends, and who was shorter, by just half an inch. 'Faly' was what his friends called Sir Dinshaw.

Before the war, the main social event of Bombay's season was the Polo Ball that the Petits gave at their house. And all through the years of the war when he was stuck in India, the house used to be full of army and naval officers on

continued on page 43





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From clerks to industrialists

The Petits 'revolutionized Bombay and converted it into an Eastern Manchester'.

The Petit family typified the entrepreneurial spirit of Bombay at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Bombay has been, and will probably remain, the Mecca of entrepreneurial spirits, drawing men from all parts of India. A typical example of how Bombay rewards men of enterprise can be seen in the history of the Petit family.

The Petit family came to Bombay in 1784 when Nusserwanji Petit emigrated from Surat. He was in the forefront of a large exodus which gathered momentum, especially after the famines of 1813, and 1833, and which brought to Bombay the Parsis and Gujaratis who were responsible for making Bombay the leading industrial city and port of India. Nusserwanji Petit began business as a "dubash" and commission agent to some French and Dutch ships. As his stature was

fitable commodity. Manekji earned only Rs 100 a month as managing clerk, but was allowed, as was the custom of the time, to trade on his own account within the auspices of the company. This side-line was quite profitable and enabled him to accumulate some capital.

Within five years, Manekji learnt enough about Western business practices and general trade conditions to set up his own brokerage firm. He began to trade with London and other European markets and built up valuable contacts.

The fortunes of the Petits began to soar with the increasing China trade in opium and tea. 1842 saw the defeat of China at the hands of the British in the Opium Wars. Now China with its addiction to the poppy and its vast reserves of silver to pay for it, was at the mercy of every trader who could scrape enough capital to start trading in opium. Manekji was quick to seize his opportunity, and soon followed the example set by the Sassoons and Cowasji Readymoney. This business was so profitable that soon the Petits were the owners of a large merchant ship, the *Charles Grant* of 2000 tons, which sailed between India and China.

The China trade, though profitable, was not the only important line of business. The brokerage firm began to acquire agency after agency. The rate of growth increased manifold by the entry of Manekji's two sons, Dinshaw (1823-1901) and Nusserwanji (1827-1891), into the firm. Both the sons inherited their father's business acumen and were keen businessmen. They received the same initial training as their father who managed to get them posts as clerks in the same trading firm where he had formerly worked. Once they had acquired some experience and proven themselves, the father and two sons joined in a partnership, Manockjee Nusserwanjee Sons & Co. This was a brokerage firm which handled the business of several important European agencies

such as Dirom & Co., George Rennie & Co., and Sillar & Co.

The partnership worked well for quite some time. In 1858 the Petits promoted the third cotton mill in Bombay, the Oriental Mill. The first cotton mill started in 1854 by C N. Davur was a spinning mill only. The Oriental Mill had additional machinery for weaving cloth. The promotion of the mill was a truly entrepreneurial act and its success laid the foundation of the textile industry of India. Other Indian capitalists soon jumped onto the band-wagon and some twenty-

Maneckji earned Rs 100 a month as a managing clerk but was allowed to trade on his own account.

short, he was styled by the French "le Petit", and hence the surname "Petit" of the family. Though Nusserwanji was responsible for bringing his family to Bombay, he could not make a fortune - whatever he had was lost during an unfortunate trade deal in Calcutta. He died in 1819 at the age of 50, leaving behind him the younger of his two sons, Manekji Petit.

Manekji (1803-1859) was more fortunate than his father. He knew English, and after doing a stint as dubash like his father, which enabled him to see the Arabian ports, he became an apprentice in a European firm. Like other European firms in Bombay and Calcutta, this was an export-import firm trading in any pro-



eight concerns were promoted in the next 15 years. The profits made by the Oriental Mills were so large that the year after their father died (1859) the brothers prepared to erect another mill, the Manockjee Petit Spinning & Weaving Mill, which also generated extremely good profits.

Wealth in its train brought friction. The Petits by now had come from clerks to industrialists, employing over 10,000 workers. Their fortune was augmented during the American Civil War (1861-64) when their trading activities reached phenomenal heights. Both the brothers had enough acumen not to fall into the pitfalls of speculation into which the majority of their brethren fell. They came out of

the speculative boom relatively unscathed. Indeed, Dinshaw reputedly spent some Rs 30 lakhs to help out some of his friends. Whether it was his generosity or other reasons, the partnership was dissolved in 1864; Dinshaw acquired the Manockji Petit Mills and the Victoria Mills, while Nusserwanji managed the Oriental Mills.

The end of the partnership was a watershed in the Petit saga. For Dinshaw and his three sons, it marked the point of accelerated industrial growth. Dinshaw duly received the accolade of being a captain of industry and "one of the pioneers of the movement which has revolutionized Bombay and converted it into an Eastern Manchester." From two mills in 1864 the

number rose to 82 by 1898. Dinshaw had the foresight to advocate that Indian products must at least be equal in every respect with English manufactures to compete in foreign markets. Though conservative in outlook, he was an employer with "heart and feelings."

For Nusserwanji, circumstances were less pleasing. The Oriental Mills at Tardeo worked profitably for many years with a subsidiary factory at Colaba. But in an age where large families were the norm, he had two children only, Jamshed and Avabai. Jamshed showed marked promise as a poet and writer but none as a businessman. Avabai married her first cousin, Framjee (second son of Sir Dinshaw) who now began to manage his father-in-law's business as well as his own ever-expanding ventures. The death in 1888 of Jamshed (32) childless, left Nusserwanji inconsolable. He paid less and less attention to business and began to devote more time to the charitable institutions he had set up. Framjee died in 1895 and Dinshaw in 1901.

The management of all the Petit enterprises was now controlled by Bomanji (third son of Sir D M Petit). It was a colossal inheritance which Bomanji administered with vigour. A new agency, B C Petit Sons & Co., was formed which promoted several new concerns (including a ginning and



pressing factory at Jalna, several dyeing and bleaching units) and took over existing concerns such as the Emperor Edward Spg. & Mfg. Co.

Bomanji's death in 1915 heralded the disintegration of the family. Internal family bickerings meant neglect of the pioneer undertakings. Sir D M Petit (second) and J B Petit took opposing views on the British question and Gandhi's non co-operation movement. J B Petit was far too radical for the conservative Parsis. The discerning had already perceived the trend when the Oriental Mills had been sold in 1903 to Sir Adamji Peerbhoy under pressure from irate shareholders for mismanagement. 1933 saw the liquidation of the Manockji Petit Mills.

By the late 1920's the control of the other mills was in the hands of the Wadias. Sir D M Petit (2nd) invested his energy in becoming one of Bombay's largest property owners. J B Petit, interested himself in private banking by establishing the Petit Financing Co., the Petit Bank Ltd., Petit Industrial Banking Co. Ltd.

In words which referred to the Manockjee Mill but which could as well apply to all the Petit ventures, one disheartened Parsi wrote:

"These mills which once revolutionised the industrial situation in Bombay and brought prosperity and livelihood to numbers of Parsis and other communities went into liquidation in 1933. Soon after, the machinery was sold as scrap iron and the building was razed to the ground. Thus vanished from the city one of the greatest industrial concerns, the pride of the Parsi community."



Left: Nusserwanji Manekji Petit inherited his father's business acumen.

Right: J N Petit Institute which houses the famous Petit Library which was established by his parents in memory of Jamshedji Nusserwanji Petit (above) who showed marked promise as a poet but died young.

Top: Avabai Petit, Nusserwanji's daughter after whom is named the Avabai Petit Girls' School.



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continued from page 38

their way to somewhere or other; so that there were seldom less than a dozen people for meals.

The Navy opened a gunnery school at the end of his garden and made him its commandant. Over the week-ends, there were marathon bridge sessions, at which one would find people like Dodds, or Lindenbaum, or Simmons, gobbling pate sandwiches or crisp triangular samosas by the handful just like any of us even though, in the bridge world, they happened to be names to reckon with; but so, too, I discovered, was their host.

I myself did not play bridge, at least never in that class, so I read books and relaxed and put on weight. In his house, there were books in most of the rooms. I remember opening the door of a downstairs toilet in his London house and causing a landslide of books which had been held up by the door.

He had books stacked in neat rows on one edge of his bed, and there were more books piled all around on shelves and tables. He was finicky about handling soiled books and never read a paperback unless he could not find the same book in hardcover.

This meant buying books by the

score and he had an agent in London doing just that. When he liked a particular book, or even felt that it might help one of his pet projects such as wild-life preservation, he bought a large number of copies of it, just to give away to friends.

I remember once, going with him to see the famous private zoo run by one of England's most paradoxical characters, gambling-club owner turned animal-lover, John Aspinawl, (and who only a couple of weeks ago, came into the news because one of his elephants literally squeezed the life out of its favourite keeper in a sheer burst of affection).

At tea in his house, Aspinawl showed us a book he had written about his zoo, titled *The Best of Friends*. After we had returned to Sir Dinshaw's house in London (it was just off Berkeley square), he told me: "Ring up Macmillan to send me a hundred copies of Aspinawl's book."

He had no idea that, if he was buying as many as a hundred copies, any publisher would give him a hefty discount. As it happened, Macmillan was just then bringing out one of my own books, so I went and saw my editor, and got Sir Dinshaw his copies and saved him

something like £250.

Whoever bought books for him in London had to buy a new suitcase to send them in. The storeroom at Petit Hall must be stacked to the roof with these once-used suitcases. The books, most of them also once-read, were sent as gifts to the Petit Library in Bombay.

He not only read voraciously, but possessed a phenomenal memory. How often, late at night after the others had retired to bed, have we not sat before a fire in Savaric, or in the freezing airconditioned room of Petit Hall, a glass of brandy in my hand, listening to him holding forth about what a gamma ray was, or what a laser beam was capable of doing, or what were the chances of our planet colliding with another heavenly body and being pulverized.

He never attended an office even though, I believe, there are at least three Petit-run offices in Bombay itself, and I never saw him doing any serious work for even an hour in a day, and that was restricted to the reading of reports, dictating to a stenographer or, very rarely, making a telephone call.

But he did not need to work; he had the uncanny ability of making his money grow without so much as leaving



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his bed, buying or selling mysterious currencies or commodities through his London agents, till he had come to a stage when money itself had come to mean very little to him; and it seemed to upset him that it should be, for most of us, our main preoccupation.

Even his hobbies made money, or would, if he could bring himself to part with something which he had acquired because he genuinely wanted to possess it. He collected jade for more than 50 years; he understood it and spoke of his major pieces as though they had a life of their own.

But what he took a quite school-boyish delight in was the bargains he had managed to find, such as an album of Indian prints which he bought at a Sotheby auction for ten pounds, for instance. It had 50 pictures and each was valued at more than a hundred pounds. Or again an illuminated *Shahnama* he picked up in Bombay for under Rs 5,000. It was worth that many pounds.

I dedicated my first-ever book to be published in England to him, and it became customary for me, as I began to travel to Europe and America fairly frequently, to spend a couple of weeks at Savaric, his fabulous estate midway up the hillside towering above the sea between Monte Carlo and Nice.

Cuddled among immaculately barbered spruce trees, a pink and white villa guarded by eight dogs, its garden and its orange and fig trees tended lovingly by a gentle old gardener, it was kept as spic and span as a ship of the Royal Navy but with unmistakably French overtones by a lady of extraordinary charm and elegance, Genevieve Oger.

Its kitchen was in charge of a second-generation cook, Assunta, who in addition to her own specialities such as a really inspired Quiche Lorraine, could also produce the exact Petit Hall version of murugdani. Always, always, there was both white and red wine, selected by Mme Oger, even though the host himself rarely drank anything except water, or while in India, coconut water.

Munificence

He was a great giver-away, of money as well as of things, but since he had a very strong aversion to advertising his munificence, it was only what he donated to causes while he was away from India that came to public notice.

When there was a famine in Maharashtra, he gave lakhs for digging wells, and more lakhs for the floods in Poona.

The marble staircase from Old Petit Hall today adorns the foyer of the National Centre for Performing Arts, and the Grecian pillars that give the large dining room at the Taj its Edwardian elegance have been lifted bodily from his house. Once he offered the Old Petit Hall itself to the Bombay University — with the proviso that they would have to maintain it as it was.

Sensibly enough, they declined — who could have kept up his family house as he himself had kept it? And where it stood, are now half-a-dozen developers' dreams: Malabar Apartments.

In the summer of 1983, I had to go to England and, as usual, I was looking forward to my holiday in Savaric on the return trip. And when I found that Sir Dinshaw himself was staying in Bombay at that time, and I expressed my disappointment, his comment was: "But why do you have to go to France to stay with me? You come and stay here."

During this talk, I happened to mention to him that I had recently lost my dog. A few days after I had gone, he discovered that he had a dog which was proving troublesome in that he often got into fights with the half a dozen other dogs that he had also collected. So he told his daughter, Dina, "Ask Big Mac if he will take Buster."

Unwell

On September 20, I took Buster for a drive to get him used to me, and that night I stayed to dinner. He was talking to us and cracking jokes and enjoying himself hugely when suddenly he felt unwell. He asked me to help him to go to his bed, and I remember trying to hold up his frail body in its long, long walk to the room next door. Soon we sat down to dinner — without our host. Chicken murugdani was served. For the first time I had no appetite for it.

The next afternoon, I went to Petit Hall to pick up Buster. I found that Sir Dinshaw had gone into a coma, and the ambulance was waiting in the porch to take him to the Petit Hospital. They put him on a stretcher and slid the stretcher into the ambulance and shut the door. As the ambulance drove away, I and Dina ran up the stairs and stood on a spot on the balcony from

which you can see the traffic as it passes over the new bridge on Napean Sea Road. Sure enough, we caught a glimpse of the ambulance.

It had begun by a telegram from Thos Cook; it ended in a sighting of an ambulance speeding over a hump in the road. The two events bracket two lifetimes, and they made at least one of them, mine, infinitely richer. Buster sleeps beside me as I write this and I think he is happy to be with me. Dogs don't sleep peacefully unless they are totally relaxed.

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*Prior to the accident:
(from left) Rumi, Vispi, Khorshed and
Ratan.*

After the death of loved ones

The Bhavnagris 'communicate'
with their dead sons.

Ingrid Albuquerque

This is the story about Khorshed and Rumi Bhavnagri, an elderly Parsi couple, gentle as most elderly Parsis are, kind and simple. They live in Rustom Baug, one of the Wadia Trust Colonies, in Bombay's Byculla, a modest two-bedroom apartment, reasonably well-off, at least not wanting in anything, upper middle-class.

God had been kind to them, for the first three-quarters of their life at least. Khorshed was the only daughter born late in her parents' lives and so she was pampered and given all her heart's desires which included Rumi who had been a relative of Khorshed's best friend. They were married in 1949, when Khorshed was 23, and Rumi was chief cashier in Polson's.

Children were born to them almost at once. When Khorshed became pregnant immediately after her marriage, everybody was certain it would be a girl because all the first-borns in the clan had been girls.

But, on August 9 1950, when Khorshed went into labour, it ended up with the birth of a strapping, bouncing male child. The parents, grandparents, relatives were all delighted. The boy was called Vispi (after King Vistaspa in Persian history).

Six months later, when she conceived yet again, the parents' joy knew no bounds. Khorshed longed to have a daughter ("It would have made everything complete"), but when, on December 13 1951, another son was born to the Bhavnagris, Khorshed forgot her disappointment in the warmth and ecstasy of childbirth and motherhood. The second boy was called Ratan (affectionately known as Rato).

Khorshed would have liked another child, she was sure it would be a daughter. But Rumi was firm: "It is better to have two children and bring them up well than to have more than we can afford and make our lives into a burden."

Boys will be boys. Vispi and Ratan were full of mischief, high-spirited and bursting with energy. Ratan was a bit jealous of his elder brother and Khorshed accepts the responsibility for this. "Vispi was my first-born child and first-borns are so dear to their mothers. When Vispi was a year old and I was expecting Ratan, I had hugged Vispi and made a promise: I would always love Vispi and never neglect him no matter how many children God would give me. I think Rato sensed this, though I tried my best to maintain the same attitude towards both children."

The boys were sent to the best of schools, starting out with 'Christchurch' in Byculla. They hated studies. Vispi would even go as far as developing a kind of 'examination fever' every time the finals drew near. Once he contracted small-pox, another time typhoid, once it was chicken-pox, then even rheumatic fever... and all this only on the eve of or during every exam.

Both boys had a good IQ (Vispi: 140, Ratan: 100) but eventually they grew disgusted and disappointed with their poor academic performance and dropped out of school without completing their SSC. They tried to explain their feelings to their unhappy father: "Daddy, let us do something our hearts are in."

Automobiles were in their blood. Even before he'd celebrated his twelfth birthday, Vispi had built mechano models of ships, tanks, trucks, aeroplanes and engines which till today adorn the showcase in his parents' house. Ratan too was totally geared towards automobile engineering and even managed to get himself a driver's licence before his eighteenth birthday.

The family owned a Fiat, bought a new one every two or three years. Ratan was always fiddling with engines, his father's car and those of others. At one stage, he managed to coax his father into buying him a share in a garage near their house. Within a few years, the other partners had gone off to Dubai and Ratan owned the garage wholly.

Vispi meanwhile, got engaged, married, went to Canada, returned, went to Teheran, returned, and eventually settled down to helping Ratan with the business side of the garage. Things began to look rosy indeed.

The boys were interested in all aspects of motoring, especially rally driving. Their interest became evident to all the neighbours, because the once very sober Fiat, mostly driven by a very sober silver-haired Rumi Bhavnagri, was suddenly sporting flashing stripes and rally numbers.

The two brothers started participating in several rallies. They had their own garage now to soup up their cars. Initially their father Rumi was not too keen about his sons' passion, in fact, the first time they asked to join WIAA's 'chotta London-Sydney Open Rally' in 1969, the father said no ("Because they were too young, Ratoo was only eighteen"), but they pestered him until he gave in. Among the 140 cars that participated, Vispi and Ratan were among the first 20 cars to complete the race.

Destiny stepped in as it usually does when life becomes too orderly, too comfortable, too smooth-sailing.

In 1980, Vispi and Ratan were to enter a cross country rally to be run over a course of 1632 miles. They were most excited about it. The neighbours could hear them tuning their car and revving the machines late into the night. Peace in the Parsi colony was no doubt disturbed, but nobody minded. The boys were well-liked and popular, and after all, it was an important rally.

On February 21, a night before the big event, Vispi and Ratan decided to take the car out for a trial spin, from Bombay to Khopoli, to warm up and expand the engine which they had just overhauled and inserted.

The day is etched firmly in Khorshed's mind. It was a Thursday, around 8.30 at night. "I told them to have dinner and go, but Ratoo said, 'No, we want to set out soon, we can have a bite on the way. We'll have biryani at Talaja.' I went to see them off and then, something very strange happened:

"We stay on the second floor. Ratoo, who has never been very close to me, hugged me tight, said goodbye and went out. He hardly went down a few steps, then he came running back to the door, to me. Again he hugged me tight and kissed me. I could not understand what had happened, he said goodbye again. He went down one floor, then once more he came running to me and held me tight and hugged me. By then Vispi too came

The mechanics and the friend, had all escaped with minor injuries and scratches. But both my sons had been killed instantly.

to wish me goodbye. I told them to drive carefully. They said, 'Don't wait for us Mama, we will go till Khopoli and return, or we might stay there overnight and come tomorrow morning.'"

Just as they were stepping into their car, they met their father. Rumi recalls: "I was returning from the solicitors. Our neighbour was giving over his house to Ratoo and so we had gone to file in the legal application. I told them to drive carefully and Ratoo said, 'Why are you worried, Daddy, in any case we can't go over 30 (mph) since we have just overhauled the engine. We will be alright.' In the car with Ratan and Vispi were three others: A Parsi mechanic from Kurla (Khushroo Mirza), a Muslim mechanic who is now in Dubai (Ismail Mohammed), and a friend. All five drove out of Rustom Baug in happy spirits not knowing what awaited them.

Morning came and there was no sign of Vispi and Ratan. By 8, Khorshed began to worry and grumble. At 8.30 the door-bell rang; one of the mechanics from Ratan's garage came to say that there had been a call at the garage stating that there had been an accident somewhere near Khopoli and Vispi and Ratan were in hospital. There were no more details or explanations, just this baffling message.

Rumi rounded up a few friends and sped towards Khopoli. "We reached the accident site. The car was smashed into a tree, but there was nobody else there. There was a hospital just two minutes away from there, we rushed to that hospital. There I was told that the three other persons in the car — the mechanics and the friend, had all escaped with minor injuries and scratches. But both my sons had been killed instantly, on the spot."

The father paused sadly; then continued: "I asked the mechanics how it had happened, but nobody could tell me. They said, 'We were asleep one minute, the next minute there was a crash!' It had happened on the Pune-Bombay road, near Panvel."

One of the neighbours identified the boys' bodies. Rumi filled in the applications for the death certificates and completed all the legal formalities. "I could not understand what was happening. Everything was so unreal. I was fortunate to have my friends and neighbours with me, they helped in everything, so we could leave the hospital soon." He went home to Rustom Baug, to break the news to his wife, the boys' mother.

Heart break takes its own tear-drenched course. Rumi climbed slowly and painfully up the two floors to his house (Khorshed remembers, "I heard him coming and I kept asking from the top, 'Why have you taken so long; where are Vispi and Ratoo? Why can't you move faster?'") Rumi reached finally, and in spite of the affection of caring friends and neighbours, Rumi and Khorshed began to acknowledge the bitter reality that they were alone in the world.

Beyond the funeral and the four-day long rites and rituals at the Tower of Silence at Kemp's Corner, and after the series of condolence visits had ended, there was nothing left.



The prayer table used for 'communication.' (Photos: Mukesh P Shah)

They were a broken couple. Too old to start all over again, even if they had wanted to. They had nothing to live for. "We thought of death ourselves, about how nice it would be if we too could die and join our sons wherever they were. It was so difficult for us, we could not bear it. We prayed to God to at least make us mad so that we would then be free from our senses."

Khorshed adds, "I had been very religious. Now, for the first time I began to doubt whether there was a God. If there was a God then why should He do this terrible thing to me, snatch my sons away when I have never harmed a hair on anybody's head? I was ready to give up God, religion and life."

Hope inevitably takes its birth amidst the deepest despair.

At some stage Rumi and Khorshed, or one of them, must have felt the uncontrollable urge to meet their sons again, experienced the non-suppressable desperation to contact them, know where they are, a growing belief that out in the great beyond there was life after death. It must be that hope, slowly

turning into a strong belief, which made them carry on... finally bringing them to the present stage.

To explain the present stage, we have to go back to their dreariest days of mourning—on the 28th day after the funeral (to be precise). That was the day when the elderly couple was in the darkest despair and a neighbour from the E-block, fourth floor, brought them the first message.

Ms Dastoor, the neighbour, was unable to say much: "I had gone to a concert in town, and over there in the interval, another Parsi lady mentioned that she had received a message from two boys who'd had an accident. She could not say anything else. She did not know who they were or their address; just that the boys were restless and wanted to reach out to their parents. She mentioned it during the play and I was surprised by the coincidence. I took her telephone number."

Devastated, Khorshed and Rumi dialled the number. The lady they spoke to was a Ms Umrigar in the Dadar Parsi Colony. She refused to say anything on

the telephone. She asked them to come over to her house where they went.

Rumi explained: "She was an elderly lady, around fifty years or so. She told us that a brother she was very close to, had died earlier and she used to regularly contact him through seances organized by a very powerful medium, a Ms Kapadia on Napean Sea Road."

Ms Umrigar said: "I was in communication with my brother and our communication was suddenly disturbed. There was a cry from these two young boys. They would say nothing except, 'We are two brothers. We died in an accident. Mom and Dad are shattered in their sorrow. You must tell them not to break down. We are in the spirit world, we are happy where we are; we are looking after them, they must not worry.' Before I could ask anything else, they had gone off the plane and I was in communication with my brother again."

Ms Umrigar could tell them no more, she could not even assure them that the spirits who had spoken to her were Vispi's and Ratan's. Khorshed and

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Rumi begged for her advice, but there was nothing she could tell them.

Reunion between sons and parents took place at a seance held on March 22, (exactly one month after the sons had died) at Ms Kapadia's residence on Napean Sea Road.

Khorshed explained: "It was a group seance. All of us who wanted to communicate with departed souls sat in a circle. Ms Kapadia, the medium, was in

"We thought of death ourselves, about how nice it would be if we too could die and join our sons wherever they were."

the centre (they did not know her, nor she them). After intense concentration and meditation, she had established communication with the spirit realm, and then she moved from one group member to the other, assisting them to communicate with their dead loved ones."

When she came near the Bhavnagris, they were frightened, doubtful and partly skeptical in spite of their earnest hope. Then, the first words uttered by the medium were: "Hello Mummy, fatso." Khorshed was almost struck dumb. That was what Vispi always called her. The sons spoke on, through their mediator: "Mom and Dad, this is Vispi and Ratoo. Yes, we died and reached the spirit world at once, within minutes of our death. It is God's will and God knows what is best for each one of us. God is good. You must not cry for us or miss us; we are so much happier here. We can see you all the time, we are looking after you. But we cannot communicate with you until you are completely relaxed and happy. You will have to develop the powers of concentration."

Khorshed continued to be nonplussed, but Rumi recovered sufficiently and through the mediator, asked his sons: "Vispi, Ratoo, you were such good drivers. You promised me you would not cross 30 (mph), then how did this accident take place? What happened?"

The sons said they could not explain,

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there were too many others present, but they were alright, mom and dad must not worry, must not be sad for Vispi and Rato were happier in the spirit world.

Life for the Bhavnagris changed completely after that. Neighbours, friends, relatives all wondered if the couple had taken leave of their senses. For suddenly though it was barely over a month after the accident, Rumi and Khorshed stopped mourning or grieving for their sons and almost looked happy again.

Life for the Bhavnagris today—years after their sons died—is no longer filled with hopelessness and despair. For, they no longer feel they have lost their sons; in fact, "we communicate with them every single day."

After the initial seance at Ms Kapadia's, they went to another...and another...until, over the months, they developed powers of complete concentration and relaxation, which made it easier for their sons to reach out to them and vice-versa. Khorshed has gone one step further, she has developed the power of 'automatic writing.'

In the 'automatic writing' process, you hold the pen lightly and limply on to a book, you concentrate intensely, and gradually the pen starts moving, slowly and tediously and unevenly over the page...this goes on for some time, until, communication is established and the spirit uses your hand and script to speak to you. You ask questions aloud as you would to someone sitting right before you, and the answers come written on the book.

Khorshed says: "It is a kind of telepathy. It took me more than four months to be able to do it. For four months the pen used to just move over the book in scratches or circles and no sense would come out of it. Then slowly, words started forming, then sentences and today the pen moves automatically."

And this is how they communicate with their sons and their sons with them. When they are in doubt, trouble or facing illness, or every evening when they find the loneliness unbearable, they sit on the little prayer table in their bedroom (on which there are images of their Gods and photographs of their sons and other departed family members, and one eternal flame *diyaa*), concentrate and pray a while, then Khorshed puts the pen to a thick exercise book that is always there (and dozens of books have been filled so far), and the communication with their sons begins.

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The sons have, in detail, described the spirit world, and expressed all kinds of spirit philosophy. On April 17, 1981, Vispi wrote through his mother's hand: "We are all humans. You are on the earth plane and we are on the spirit plane. But there is a vast difference between us. You cannot know all truths, and we know most of the truths. You cannot know the extent of good and bad in your fellowmen; we know exactly how good or bad each person on earth is. You cannot read each other's minds, we can. You cannot see us or hear us, we can see you, hear you and even know exactly your mind and thoughts so we can judge you better than you can judge yourself. We have wider vision."

On the 21st of the same month, he wrote: "There are seven planes or realms in the spirit world. The first plane is lowest and darkest, it is nearest to the earth. It is a most horrible place. Bare rocks with crawling creatures like human souls with disfigured bodies and horrible minds full of bad feelings. They never see even a tiny spark of light at any time." And so on, until he reached the seventh plane: "You earth people will never even imagine how beautiful the seventh plane is. It is beyond any powers of description, beyond imagination. Souls on this realm have light, perfect, young looking bodies which are as light as clouds. They live with utmost harmony and love."

The descriptions do not always deal only with the supernatural. Once when Khorshed developed kidney trouble, was on the verge of dehydration, Rumi coaxed her to call out to Vispi. It took some time for Vispi to come because her hand was weak, she could not even hold the pen. After some hours however, the pen began to move, slowly, surely, with increasing vigour. Ratan and Vispi came to their parents to tell them: "Do not worry. You are very sick, but do not call the doctor, do not think of admitting yourself into hospital. You will be very ill for seven days, but on the seventh day you will recover completely. The Almighty has promised us this." And that is how it happened. Without a doctor, without medication Khorshed rose from her bed on the seventh day.

Rumi was facing problems regarding the occupation-rights of his house. He did not know what to do, who to turn to. His sons told him not to worry, he should just leave himself in their hands and they would guide him to the correct channel. They did, and the problem was surmounted in (even the lawyers called it

IS IT TRUE?

Chance took me, eight years ago, to stay for a few months next door to the Bhavnagris. I was waiting for the occupation rights of an apartment I'd purchased and since I required to live somewhere until then this kind old Parsi couple in Rustom Baug, who were my friends, accommodated me.

At that time, I did not meet Khorshed or Rumi. They were away on a one-year stint with their son Vispi in Teheran. But I was acquainted with Ratan. He used to allow me to use their telephone to make or receive calls. He would open the door for me, then leave me to make my calls and see myself out.

And once, maybe I'd got down to making too many calls, he came out of the bath in a brief bath-robe and got the start of his life to see me still there. And I don't know who was more embarrassed, he or I. But we laughed it off; I went to my new house soon after that, and Ratan and the incident were soon forgotten.

Then, in 1980, I heard about the accident and said 'What a pity' and 'How tragic' with the rest of Bombay.

When I went to meet Khorshed and Rumi recently, for our first meeting ever, it had been merely to ask them to share with readers the method of how to survive the death of loved ones. I had known nothing about their strange communications.

When I mentioned the word 'article', they gasped, "You want to print something! No, please leave us alone. Earth people cannot understand these mysteries. For them it is all humbug. We are not interested in becoming part of any controversy. Excuse us, but the answer is no." Like a conscientious journalist, I requested them to at least think about it and told

them I would return the next day for their decision.

The next afternoon I was considerably surprised to find them awaiting me warmly. They had communicated with their sons the evening before, and I was shown the book in which the boys had written: "She has not come to harm you, she has not come with any bad motive. You must co-operate with her. And she will be able to take the truth about the spirit world to the people on earth. And we are there to help her with the article. You can send for us at any time, but remember, complete concentration."

We worked on the story for three hours, and then I asked if I could 'speak' to the sons. We went to the prayer table, meditated for a long time, and eventually the pen Khorshed held began to move.

In most of the 'communication' books I had seen that afternoon, it had always been Vispi who would address the message to his parents. This time, it was Ratan who came on the 'line.' He said he remembered me quite well: "You used to be so fat then, you have lost weight now." And then (that's when I broke into a cold sweat) he referred to the bath-robe incident. I asked questions, all kinds of questions, about the accident, my article, the spirit world, and pat the answers came on the book. It was a six-page conversation.

The I asked whether they had come across my brothers and sister who had died a few years ago. They said no, but that if I could give them the names, the dates of their deaths and return the next day, I could speak to my people myself.

I gave the details, but I have been too chicken to go back since.

that) a most miraculous manner.

The Bhavnagris do not force their beliefs or convictions on any other person. They are content to go through the day in the usual routine manner, and then communicate with their sons every evening. Once, in anguish, Khorshed cried aloud to her sons: "Why can't we come and join you in your world, why can't you ask the Almighty to take us too?"

The sons replied: "Your time is not yet over. You have to complete your tasks on earth, you cannot join us before

that."

The mother argued: "And you, why did you go? Had you completed your tasks on earth?"

The sons said: "There was a terrible life awaiting us on earth if we had continued, we were going to become slaves to some very evil force. God loved us and wanted to spare us that pain and so we are here with him."

Could this be what the mystery of death is all about?

Text and photographs reprinted with permission from Savvy, July 1984.

'The lone strong voice'

Celebrity magazine writes on the noted crusader and journalist, A D Gorwala.

Shalan Savur

On December 9, 1983, Astad D Gorwala turned 83. He can be described as having the most controversial, prolific pen the Indian sub-continent has ever produced. Over the course of half a century, he has written columns for the Times of India, Indian Express, Statesman, Bombay Chronicle... His intentions were diaphanously clear—to point out the wrongs of an arrogant government and keep them on the their blinking toes. His searing home truths found their target, but produced the wrong results. One by one, the columns were spiked by cautious publishers who didn't want to displease the government. With no medium left open to him, Gorwala started his own weekly aptly named Opinion. During the Emergency, while other publishers (barring Goenka) chose to crawl, Opinion continued to be printed. When printing presses were threatened, he cyclostyled his magazine. As that avenue was dammed by an increasingly authoritarian government, he typed out his essays and posted them to various subscribers. Until the black day arrived when the government categorically ordered him to close it down.

Over the years, Gorwala's has been

the lone strong voice which has served as the conscience of the nation. True communicator that he is, he makes his points in short story fiction style, or sometimes in the form of a play, rather than in the straight, dry essay form. In doing so, Gorwala narrates the truth almost as a supreme fairy tale.

Celebrity (magazine, January 1984) salutes one of the greatest writers of our time. Vladimir Nabokov, master of literature, once said, "There are three points of view from which a writer can be considered: he may be considered as a storyteller, as a teacher, and as an enchanter. A major writer combines these three—storyteller, teacher, enchanter—but it is the enchanter in him that predominates and makes him a major writer." If Nabokov's words can be used as a yardstick to measure a writer's greatness, Gorwala is a major writer. If he hasn't received the recognition he deserves, it is due to his own preference in keeping a low profile, and an impotent media which couldn't digest his fearless pen. The weight of his words inked on their pages was too heavy for their empty, shallow 'pay-the-price-to-get-your-newsprint' policy.

There was snow all around him in Quetta. It covered the distant mountains from where the icy winds burst through savagely, with a high whimpering sound like gored animals. Down below, the orchards sunned themselves in the watery, weak sunlight which filtered onto the earth like a fading screen. The trees hung heavy with fruit, filling the atmosphere with an ambrosial fragrance.

The stillness is broken by halppy childish laughter echoing in the cold, unmoving air. The child is being lifted high in the air by the orderly so that his plump little palms can reach out and grasp the mulberries. The orderly urges him on "Todo, baba, todo!" (Break it, baba, break it!) His button-like nose, still to

take shape, is cold, and his eyes are filled with the whiteness surrounding him, as he breaks off the fruit and crams it into his mouth. The child is Astad Gorwala. ("It's my very first memory.")

Later, his lips stained purple with mulberry juice, he is propped up on the orderly's shoulders and carried into the high-roofed cottage for his mid-day meal. His mother passes her hand through his soft curls as he wolfs down his food. "You must have been a Boer of Transvaal who got killed in the war," she says with a fond smile, as he holds out his plate for a second helping. ("A Boer—because I was always hungry!")

His wet nurse—Daulat, an Irani lady, is trying to make him wear his

silken, embroidered *jabla*. He struggles vehemently, turning his head this way and that, "I don't want it!" he cries petulantly. "It's meant for girls. I want to wear pants!" She sits back on her haunches and surveys him with pride. "You have drunk Daulat's milk," she tells him. "So you will be a brave man!"

A Brave Man Grows Up

To Recapitulate*

Ms Gandhi claims that she has reduced prices. But I now have to pay: Rs 1.40 for a loaf of bread which some months ago used to cost Rs 1.25; Rs 1.45 for a bottle of milk which a few weeks ago used to cost Rs 1.30; Rs 3.00 a dozen for bananas, the fruit of the poor, which a month ago used to cost Rs 2.50.

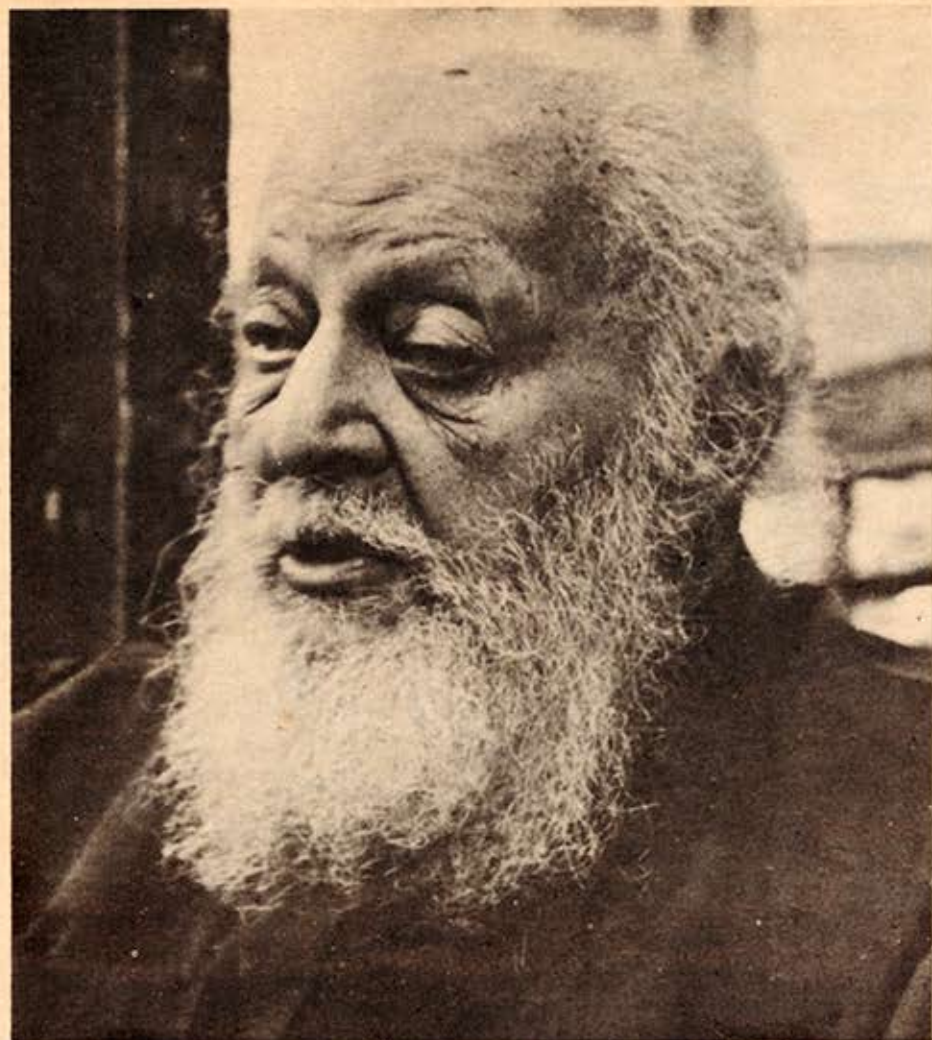
So it would seem clear Ms Gandhi has not reduced prices. That this is so is clear also from the fact that her government has had to give in the last year more than one increase of dearness allowance to government servants because of increases in the cost of living index, and has according to today's papers, another increase under contemplation.

To say what she does then Ms Gandhi must be very ignorant or very careless of the truth. Ignorant she is not. But in speaking for effect, she lies stupendously...

People of India, difficult as it may be to accept it, remember that your Prime Minister is an inordinate liar. In your own interest, take nothing she says at its face value. From Philip drunk, his people appealed to Philip sober. From Indira lying, who can you, less fortunate, appeal to? Why, only to lying Indira.

* An extract from *Opinion*, January 12, 1982.

A.D. Gorwala has lived that rare life where his ideals have matched his behaviour. Unlike many others whose pulpit has only become pulp fiction,



Gorwala: always willing to take the consequences (Photo courtesy Celebrity magazine).

Gorwala's has formed the hard core of his conduct. He laughs as he recounts a conversation he had had with a friend who is an industrialist:

Friend : I m giving you advertisements for *Opinion* not because I like your face, but because you are a friend !

ADG : (laughs) Thank you !

Friend : But if you write against Ms Gandhi in three full pages and put my advertisement on the fourth page...

ADG : Hmmmm ?

Friend : It won't do.

ADG : Why ?

Friend : How will I get more licences for further expansion of my activities ?

ADG : Then don't expand !

Gorwala's outlook on life is simple, not simplistic. An important difference we often tend to confuse. If to achieve your ambition, you have to go back on your principles, then forget the ambition. "A government," he says, "sets an example. If Ms Gandhi were honest, then there definitely would be honesty in

public life. When the breeze blows in a certain direction, the grass below sways in the same direction." The only time, one could overlook dishonesty, according to him, is when a mother steals to save her starving child.

As Supply Commissioner to the Government of Bombay, soon after the war, he set up a rationing system for supply of foodgrains and sugar to the public. "We could manage only six ounces of sugar per person." Milk was a scarcity. When the people protested, Gorwala asked them, "Do you take sugar in your tea?" "Yes." "Don't take it anymore." Feeling the burden himself, he started having black, sugarless tea, and continues to do so even today. He laughs in recollection. "Everybody got the same amount—whether it was Birla or a sweeper." When he procured milk powder ("it was for pregnant women") there were loud protests from the milkmen. The secretariat in Bombay witnessed a strange sight. A procession

of milkmen walked in with their buffaloes and flung litres of milk on the floor!

Gorwala's writing career began explosively. In his first article, he criticized Mahatma Gandhi's speech which advocated the decontrol of foodgrains. It was like criticizing God himself! Exclaims Gorwala, "Ooh, what a reaction that received! But Mahatma Gandhi was under the influence of Birla. In fact, political corruption started right there from the old Congress. They took money from the industrialists..." and set the trend. Later, came a spate of articles in *The Times of India* under the pseudonym of 'Vivek.' The column pointed out the weaknesses of the government. Until, one day, when Dalmia's (the publisher's) secretary met Nehru while travelling in the same plane together, and introduced himself. Expecting a cordial how-do-you-do reply, the secretary was taken aback when Nehru turned on him. "How can you carry such articles about me?" blazed the Prime Minister. The shaken secretary immediately relayed the message to Dalmia. The next day, Frank Moraes, editor, had a short slip on his table: Stop Vivek's column.

When Moraes took over the editorship of *Indian Express*, he requested Gorwala to continue writing for him. And flowed an honest pen once again, until he wrote an angry tirade against President Eisenhower. This time, Nehru is supposed to have rung up Goenka. The American embassy was furious. The delicately constructed Indo-American relationship was in jeopardy. Once again, the column was axed.

The Bombay Chronicle was next on the list, but they were wary of taking on the man with the angry pen. Yet, the column promised enormous readership. Gorwala was asked to take sole responsibility for his writings. He agreed. His column carried the blah: "The views of the author are not that of the paper..." A few months later, the *Chronicle* closed down. "I wrote under different names to other papers, but all I received were rejection slips!"

In a country of chaos, Gorwala is the sprinter trying to overthrow colossal obstacles. At the end of the obstacle race is the reader who more often than not has given up after trying to scale the high wall of apathy. Gorwala's words pierce the wall and unite him to the reader forever. In this case, the obstacle was the publishers' boycott of his writing. The

THE COMMUNITY FARES WELL AT TATAS

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only alternative was to start his own magazine. *Opinion's* was a painless birth, with its initial expenditure of Rs 4,000 per year. Sometimes the revenue coming in from advertisements covered basic costs. Says Jehangir Patel editor of *Signature* and *Parsiana*, "It was a one-man crusade. It wasn't his intention to make it a profitable set-up. He sacrificed a lot of things to put his money

into *Opinion*."

Twenty-five years passed by. Suddenly, in June 1975, an entire country was brought to its knees. Emergency had been declared. Every printing press was hounded by the government. Censors ruled the printed page. Not at *Opinion*. Recounts Jehangir, "We'd get stencils cut and take it to the cyclostyling machine. We had to be careful that there

wouldn't be any waste paper at the end of the operation. Throughout, Mr Gorwala was fearless. He said, 'What can they do to me? They may stop my pension or throw me out of my house, or put me in jail.' He was one person willing to speak out—always willing to take the consequences. That's always been his greatest strength. He really is a fearless person."

When the government closed *Opinion* under MISA, Gorwala typed out his letters and posted them from different post offices so that even if the mail was stopped at one place, the other post offices would continue to deliver the missives.

It's almost prophetic. It is as though Gorwala had always known that honesty has its own enemies. In his fairy tale, 'The Queen of Beauty,' the queen tells the Assistant Collector (Gorwala had been an Assistant Collector in the '20s), "You are honest, too honest. You will not go 'political' with anyone. You will suffer much in this life."

He has not received any direct threats for his outspokenness. But he was paid a visit by a lady political scientist some years ago. Sitting at the same round table in his kitchen as we did, she told him, "Mr Gorwala, why don't you go and settle abroad? Say in London or the U.S.A... You will be better off materially, there is a lot of culture there..." Not taking her seriously, Gorwala said "But I don't know anyone there." "That can be arranged," she replied quietly. "I can see to it that you will not lack for anything." A little later she casually mentioned that she had gone to the same school as the Prime Minister. They talked of sundry things. She asked him, "Aren't you scared of being attacked by your enemies?" She pointed to his wide open, large windows which ran all round his house. "No," he said. "But if God wills..." Gorwala's outlook comes out in his queen story where "On the way back to camp, the Assistant Collector reflected on how easy it was to appear to act bravely when of Death one had no fear, and since for each man the hour of death is fixed, how foolish it was to fear Death. When it had to come, it would come, and if it had not to come it would not, wherefore it should not be a factor in human decision at all." When the political scientist had gone, Gorwala put the entire episode out of his mind. A week later, she was back. "Have you thought over what I spoke to you about?" He was puzzled. "About what?" "Settling abroad." Without a

Gorwalian Quotes During the Emergency

Gorwala's writings show an almost savage, satirical intensity. No one has allowed his pen to speak so freely. No one has had the guts to put himself on the line the way Gorwala has. Even the Emergency couldn't stop the man who does not fear even death.

● "I can always talk learnedly of decentralization, competition among State units, etc. when I feel it's needed, or even if I don't. It will always go down well at meetings of top personnel in the business I own, and give my captive press and other media something meaty to report. Ha, ha, the poor devils, must throw them a morsel now and again! They can't remain as hungry as hell-hounds all the time."

(Gorwala expresses a dictator's thoughts in his article 'THIS MOST OPPRESSED BANKER': 30 September, 1975)

● "Your speeches of late have a note almost of hysteria. That is likely to prove much more of a danger to the nation and yourselves than the whole crowd you have locked up... Nothing is so disgusting as the present mishmash, in which the most undemocratic measures are taken in the name of protecting democracy, in which all life is lived in an obscure half-light."

(THE GREATER THE POWER, THE MORE DANGEROUS THE ABUSE: 6 January, 1976)

● "Living by law? The truly powerful make their will the law, so that what they want to do they lawfully do. The will of the powerful is the right; there is no other, however much the weak may pretend otherwise."

Looking into the mind of the Prime Minister in NOT HEHEED (27 January 1976)

● "Continue then to glorify and magnify her on bended knees, and if

your kneeling in adoration be on the necks of your fellow citizens, why so be it."

(A scathing attack on the sycophants in 'THE YEAR AND NEXT': 13 April, 1976)

● "From free men they have been turned into serfs. What was theirs as of right, they must now plead for as a special favour. They must listen to long disquisitions by the despot and her myrmidons on how their present servitude is better than the freedom they enjoyed in the past, on how the change has wrought much good, on how perverse it is to want to be free when you are being offered a golden cage for your residence in future."

(THE PUBLIC VOICE: 6 July, 1976)

● "For true lovers of the country and of freedom, the present is a tragic time, and the future likely to be even more saddening. In such periods it is important to realize that the seat of freedom in man is the mind."

(LETTER FROM A.D. GORWALA: 13 July, 1976)

● "What an unfortunate woman! Surely, the most unfortunate of human beings! And it is true, too, for what greater misfortune can befall any creature than to be responsible, knowingly and willingly, for the destruction of the liberties of all her fellow citizens?"

(LETTER FROM DELHI: 20 December 1976)

One of his most poignant lines is in his article 'THIS YEAR AND NEXT' of 13 April, 1976:

"Opinion's sixteenth, and saddest, year comes to an end with this issue. Why saddest? Because it opened in a country of free people and closes in a country of timorous, acquiescing semi-slaves."

A Clash of Opinions

The letters which closed down the magazine

Sir: As a close observer of the Indian scene for nearly 40 years and the servant of the Indian people for nearly 60, I would ask men and women of goodwill devoted to the public interest to consider whether: (a) Mr G D Birla's example and influence had no connections with the deservedly low reputation of Indian business today; (b) Mr G D Birla's example and influence had no connection with the deservedly low reputation of India's political and governmental behaviour at the present time.

Yours faithfully,
A D GORWALA



word, he took her arm and they walked towards his windows. The tall pine trees swayed gently in the breeze. The heat of the sun warmed their faces. Pointing to the glistening pine needles, he told her, "In England or America, will I be able to see the sun shining on those trees?" She never returned again.

Slowly, his eyesight began to fail him. The hands which had once held a pen so firmly now trembled uncontrollably. Arthritis took its toll on the once erect frame. Suddenly, the world would go black and he'd fall down. It was clear that if *Opinion* had to go on, he'd have to find a worthy successor. His thoughts fell on Jehangir Patel whom he had first met at the Leslie Sawhney seminar for democracy at Coonoor, and who had been such a pillar of strength during the Emergency. In December '82, he rang him up, and said, "Can you come over?" When Jehangir reached his place, he told him, "I can't manage any more. Can you take over?" After deep thought, Jehangir said, "Yes." Recalls Jehangir, "Such is his devotion, that he hadn't even got down to billing for advertisements which had appeared in '81-82. I saw cheques lying uncashed. He had stopped sending reminders to subscribers. He had 6000 people on the

subscription register to whom he mailed his copies regularly."

In September '83, there was clash of opinions. Two letters each written by both editors—the former and the latter—showed up their differences in thinking. The idealistic versus the practical. (See box). And 'Opinion' closed down.

Gorwala has never been an ivory tower writer. Never the self-styled prisoner who shuts himself in that impenetrable fortress and throws away the key, and in doing so, throws away the key to civilization and humanity, to love, life, literature, observation, passion, emotion... Gorwala, true writer that he is, has always flowed against the tide of time even if it has threatened to turn into a tidal wave and engulf the shore of life...A long time ago, Gorwala locked away his ambitions and threw away that key, and in the process, threw off the mantle of hope of seeing his name carved forever in the marbled busts of history, and forever threw off mediocrity.

Today, he lives alone in his huge rooms lined with grey shelves. He's bent almost double and never steps out of the house. Yet, his personality is still overpowering. The shock of white hair which bristles like a lion's mane all around his

The Editor replies:

In a controlled economy such as ours, how can one gauge the reputation of business? When every essential product, service and commodity required to start and run a business is directly or indirectly controlled by government, how is a businessman to function? And when it is an unwritten—and sometimes written—policy to manipulate business to fill political parties' and individuals' coffers, can we expect business to refuse compliance?

From cooking gas cylinders to bank loans, from cement to telephones, the government determines who gets what, when and at what price. And government does not decide these issues on merit alone. The businessman who refuses to adapt to the realities of the situation would soon be out of business.

In such environs how does one define business ethics? Can one sit in judgement on business in terms other than financial? On a global scale what is considered ethical in one country would be looked upon as an unfair practice in another country. So finally the reputation of Indian businessmen will be determined not by their methods alone but their profitability, market value, assets and revenue.

Both are men of honesty and integrity. Yet they didn't see eye to eye. Said Gorwala: "There were some basic differences in philosophy..." According to Jehangir: "*Opinion* belongs to Mr Gorwala. If he wants to close it, one must respect his decision and judgement..." When they finally parted in September 1983, they parted as good friends.

face can give him a yogic look. But instead of a calm there is still the gleam of youthful fire. Of spirit undampened by years and time. "Maybe I'm not so angry anymore," he says. Yet, he holds on to his ideologies: "Evil is continuously on the attack. We've got to fight it." He quotes Mother Teresa's words when she won the Nobel Prize and was asked, "Now don't you feel you are successful?" She replied: "God sent us on earth not to be successful, but faithful."

The pigeons' 'gnu gnu' carries into the room. He often tries to drive them off, but they always come back. "Sometimes," he says, "I sit on the verandah and close my eyes, and I turn within. Sometimes I'm aware of everything happening around me. Sometimes I'm not. But I've had a good life, a good time."

And we leave behind an old staunch stalwart with his thoughts of the past, present and future. The house is quiet with memories. We leave him behind and close his front door firmly. And in doing so, we shut out of the house that fiend of cynicism from the outside world, which tries to tell us that high ideals and noble principles are fine, but in today's 'practical' world, well...

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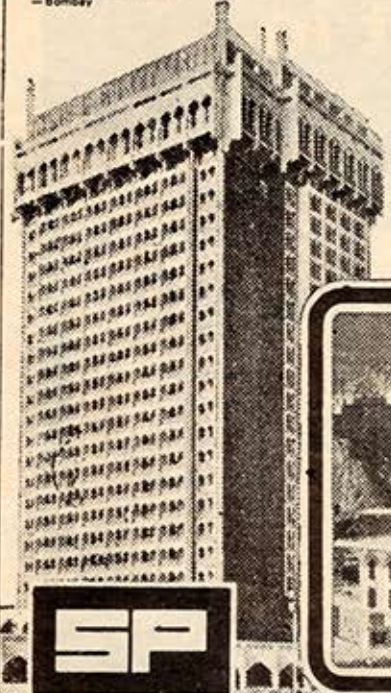
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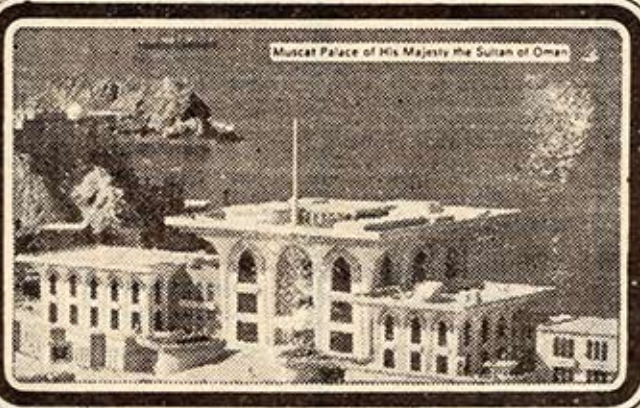
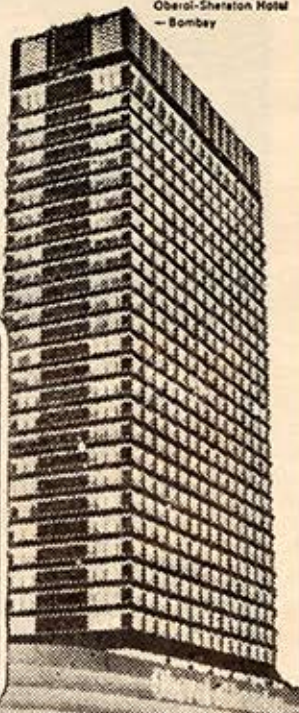
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Duchess, my dear

The story of a handicapped youth and his teacher.

Firdaus Kanga

Bursting with excitement, I rang the bell. When the old servant opened the door, I wheeled myself into the large living-room, waving my new diploma in journalism. "First class first!" I exulted. "Medals galore!" The woman in front of me rose, her face shining, and then the two of us were locked in an embrace, laughing and crying. I suppose we made a most unusual pair. I—20 years old and because of a rare and incurable bone disease, just 122 centimetres tall and confined to a wheelchair. And hugging me—a short, plump, middle-aged woman—my beloved teacher Moti Dalal.

It was a sweet moment for both of us. For years Moti Dalal had taught me that just because I had a stunted body I didn't have to have a stunted life. And now I had taken on the world—and won!

My thoughts went back to the day we had first met nearly 16 years earlier. I was four then, a victim since birth of osteogenesis imperfecta, which had made my bones so brittle that they fractured on the slightest impact. I could not walk, and the dangers of a friendly push or a slap on the back ensured that I could never go to school. But my parents, keen that I learn something—even if I never used my knowledge—took me to Moti Dalal, a young woman who gave private lessons.

I sat on my mother's lap as she chatted with Moti Dalal. Surprising, I felt perfectly at ease. Normally I hated meeting people. They stared at me, their pity or embarrassment only too evident. Miss Dalal, on the other hand, regarded me as a subject of no special interest.

Teaching Gifts

"Please come to my house tomorrow at five," was all she said to me. Years later she told me what she'd really felt. "You were so tiny and dependent," she said, "so timid and docile that I felt a stab of sadness. But I decided that you were

never to know about that sadness, lest you begin to pity yourself."

The next evening, as I was carried into Moti's living-room for my first lesson, I was surprised to see her on the floor surrounded by blocks and pictures. She had decided that since I couldn't sit on a chair, she wouldn't either. For the next hour I hunted for letters of the alphabet and watched Moti make nursery rhymes come alive with her expressive recitation of them. "Humpty Dumpty had a great fall," she exclaimed with such horror and pain on her face that I—veteran of innumerable agonizing tumbles—felt a pang of identification. After that I was totally involved in the escapades of Mary's lamb and a host of other characters. For me, school turned out to be a source of high entertainment.

Moti's ability to win me over so

quickly probably stemmed from her own childhood. Born into a conservative Parsi family, she was a shy and sickly child who often had to stay away from school. Her father, a lawyer with a large library, became her best friend. And Moti loved to teach. As a child, she would gather the family servants around her and regale them with tales from the Indian epics. Not beautiful, she was diffident about mixing with young men, and in college, where she read philosophy, her seriousness set her apart from others her age. Perhaps that is how her rapport with children was born. Later Moti studied law. But, as ill health prevented her from pursuing a career as a lawyer, she started a kindergarten and also began tutoring children who found schoolwork difficult.

As we progressed beyond the three R's, I got the full benefit of Moti's

When others did not feel sorry for me, I did not feel sorry for myself.



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teaching gifts. One morning she read me Guy de Maupassant's short story about a woman who borrows a diamond necklace from a rich friend to wear at a dance. Unfortunately she loses it and, too ashamed to admit the truth, goes deeply into debt to buy a new necklace of exactly the same design. Then, to pay off the money, she's forced to drudge for years, only to discover at the end that the necklace she'd lost had been a fake.

Lucid Explanations

As Moti finished the story, I heard her voice tremble and saw that her eyes were full of tears. I said nothing, but I was shaken. If a story could make Moti cry, then literature had to be more than mere entertainment. I realized that literature is born out of life, that in a sense it is more real than reality because it expresses the truth about feelings and relationships. And with a child's sense of drama, I decided that I wanted to be a writer some day.

At her best teaching literature and history, Moti was no expert on science. But she never let that confound her. Once, when I was baffled by the mysteries of electromagnetism, I asked her for help. She read my physics textbook and confessed that she couldn't understand it either. "But don't worry, I shall find a way," she said and proceeded to talk to some better-informed friends and to buy a couple of simple books on the subject. To this day I remember the lucid explanation she finally gave me.

"After lessons, your teacher is your friend," said Moti in her usual firm manner, and so she was. She would tell me her family secrets "in strict confidence." And her relatives and friends were an exciting crew - celebrated lawyers and lunatics, society matrons and gamblers. But none of her stories was told in a gossipy fashion. Moti always had a point to make about human nature: of someone's nobility, of someone's folly. That's how I learnt to analyze my own and other people's feelings. For my part, I could tell Moti about my problems, however small, without ever being afraid of adult disapproval.

Like many Parsis, Moti was westernized. Passionately interested in the British royal family, she'd adopted many of the manners of the English upper class. One morning, I arrived to find her looking annoyed. "What's the matter?" I asked. "That cook of mine,"

she replied heatedly. "He spoilt the roast last night. If he thought I'd swallow it meekly, he was mistaken. I rose and dismissed the table."

High Standards

That the "table" had consisted of - apart from the overdone roast - just Moti and an aunt, did not matter to my teacher. "Oh, you're much too aristocratic to be just plain Miss Dalal," I said. "From now on, I'm going to call you Duchess de Lal." Moti looked at me sharply, and then dissolved in laughter. "I'd love that," she said. Ever since, she has been "Duchess" to me.

Even then I sensed that her admiration for the aristocracy was really an expression of her passion for excellence. She had high standards and demanded the same from others. It was quite normal for her to help pupils prepare for exams for up to six hours a day, instead of the one for which she was paid - and never dream of asking for extra money. Indeed, it never failed to amaze her that many people actually worked less than they were supposed to.

Moti's anglicized ways, however, never blinded her to the grandeur of India. "Don't you know how advanced our ancient civilization was?" she once asked me. "You'll be the richer if your

She taught me that
having a stunted
body did not mean I
had to have a
stunted life. That
was the beginning.

intellectual legacy comes from more than one source."

Moti also believed, in line with much of Indian philosophy, that the highest virtue is the ability to take joy or sorrow, pain or pleasure as they come, without guilt or regret. "Do what you think is right, Firdaus, and it will be the easiest thing in the world not to care about consequences," she told me. This was the best lesson I ever received from her.

Once, as she was reading to me, I had a severe bout of coughing. "It hurts," I whimpered, waiting for the onrush of

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concern. Moti merely said, "Pain comes and pain goes," and resumed reading. For a moment I was filled with rage at her callousness. But, as I calmed down, I also made an important discovery: that when others did not feel sorry for me, I did not feel sorry for myself.

From Moti I was never to get the sympathetic smiles, the tut-tuts of regret or the lowering of standards by which the world thinks it should judge the handicapped. Instead there were optimism, confidence, and laughter. At home, my mother had the same sensible attitude. This gave me what I value most today – the feeling that I am completely normal. This self image is so strong that most of the time I totally forget that I am different.

But Moti was not severe and, as I got to know her better, I began to realize what a tender heart she had. There were times, particularly in my teens, when because of frequent fractures, I would be bedridden for weeks. During such periods, Moti would come to my home as often as she could to teach and talk.

Dedicated

On another occasion, while I was revising a paper for a sixth-standard history

exam, I suddenly panicked. I had been admitted to school so that I would eventually be able to get a school-leaving certificate, but I never attended classes and only went there to take exams,

I could not walk,
and the dangers of a
friendly push or a
slap on the back
ensured that I could
never go to school.

which were an ordeal for me. "My mind's a blank," I told Moti "I can't take the test."

"We'll stop now," she said gently. "Go home and don't worry." Next morning she came to my house, placed her hand on my head in the traditional blessing and said quietly, "You know everything. You will do well." I felt a surge of confidence. I did do well and, from then on, whenever I had an exam, my Duchess would come over in the morning to bless me.

Moti played the part of six school teachers rolled into one, though she had just two hours a day to do it, and a fee of only Rs 80 a month as financial incentive. It's a tribute to her skills and dedication that I remained top ranked throughout my school days.

Today, four years after winning the journalism prize, I am pursuing my writing career with some success. I no longer go to Moti for lessons, but she visits me frequently. Recently we had a long argument – my newly found scepticism and rationalistic philosophy contending against her gentler, semi-mystical beliefs. Of course, I made no dent in her convictions, but when I left she was smiling. "You put up a good show. I'm proud of you," she said.

I could not reply. My heart was too full. If there was any reason for anybody to feel proud of me, it was because of her. She, more than anyone else, had made sure that my life did not become the long-drawn out misery everyone had feared it would be when I was born. Because of her, I can look back and smile "a smile to so much that has been possible." *Thank you, Duchess.*

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race could manage to furnish between them enough material for a distinct number. This number now lies before us, and is the avowed result of the controversy about the Parsi girl of the period, which was originally started in our columns and still rages as warmly as ever in some of the vernacular papers. This interesting effort is designated "A slap at Ginwalla and his contingent of writers," and may fairly be taken as a

high watermark of the intellectual progress of the better-educated class of Parsi women.

The *Stree Bodh* was started 20 years ago by that small but earnest band of old Elphinstonians, to whose public spirit the native community owe so much of their political and social advancement.

Reprinted from The Times of India, July 19, 1984.

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Death of a stuntman

The memory of Parvez's death still stalks the Irani family.

Sixty-five-year-old Keikhushroo Irani is the father of Dharmendra's stuntman, who died whilst executing a rather difficult and dangerous shot from a helicopter for the film *Saazish*. The shocking death of his favourite son, Parvez, changed the old man's life completely.

Stardust took up the case and tried to re-open the closed file of the stuntman called Parvez Irani. The producers of *Saazish* were rather abrupt when questioned about the dead stuntman. "We have paid the family whatever we had to and no we don't have his address," they stated rather defensively, and banged the telephone down. The Stuntman Association, though they remembered him and the accident, had struck him off their roll book and insisted they were in no position to help with the details. The Junior Artist Association also knew nothing about either him or his family's whereabouts. It was only by a quirk of fate that *Stardust* met one particular stuntman who remembered where Parvez lived and gave vague directions to his house in Parel, Bombay.

When *Stardust* visited the Irani family's small tenement, in an old, broken-down chawl in an over-crowded Parel, Bombay was torn by riots. While every household was busy reading the events in tones mixed with fear and suspense, there was a disturbing calm in the Irani household. The old man was sleeping and his son and daughter-in-law had just finished their morning cup of tea. It was only when they spoke, that one realized what a major calamity they had passed through, and how everything else (riots included) seemed trivial in comparison.

Surprisingly, the family was not at all astonished to know why *Stardust* was contacting them about an accident that occurred 10 years ago. Maybe that was because the wound still hasn't healed and none of them have been able to forget the



disaster. While his brothers feel as though it happened only yesterday, Parvez's father is still finding it difficult to accept his son's death. For he talks about him as if he is alive and still living under the same roof.

Keikhushroo shuffled around dragging his feet (he suffers from acute varicose veins), carrying a file of his "star-son's" photographs and advertisement cuttings that he had modelled for. He sat down on a chair and enthusiastically unfolded his dead son's file. "Doesn't he look like Dharmendra?" he asked. There were no tears, no cracking voice, no emotional display. He was very cool, calm and collected, breaking into a smile at times. While his son spoke quietly about how exactly his brother died on the sets of *Saazish* in 1974, the father showed a child-like affection for the star as he narrated how fond his Parvez was of Dharam and Hema. "He really adored them," he explained in Gujarati. "Everytime he came home after a shooting with Dharmendra, he used to relate in detail what happened between them during the day... Parvez always promised me, 'Baba, I'll take you to Dharmendra's house one day.'"

Without waiting for questions, Keikhushroo continued to talk about his

Keikhushroo: unable to accept his son's death. Inset: Parvez

dead son. "He looked exactly like Dharmendra," he smiled. "Once when he was travelling by bus, some girls got so excited thinking he is Dharam, that they actually asked him for autographs." He then spoke about the time when Parvez modelled for the 'Vicks Inhaler' advertisement in a white naval uniform and how he looked exactly like Dharmendra in *Dil Ka Heera*: "It was so difficult to believe it wasn't Dharmendra." He was quiet for a while. His youngest daughter-in-law (Keikhushroo has five sons), who claimed never to have seen or met Parvez before, broke the silence when she said that she cried every time she saw a Dharam film. "I've heard so much about him," she cried, "that I feel he is around here, all the time. I feel as if he'll just walk in through the door." She looked accusingly at Keikhushroo as if to say that he was responsible for the whole family living with her dead brother-in-law's apparition.

According to a psychiatrist friend, the logic behind Keikhushroo's non-acceptance of his son's death even after 10 years, is very simple. "The grief is too

much for him to bear, so he prefers not to accept the reality and continues to live in the past, because it suits him." He revealed how the old man still kept a picture of Parvez (wearing the same shirt that he wore when he died), in his wallet. He also explained how the old man's eyes lit up only when talking about his stuntman son and how nothing else in the world interested him.

However, the only time he accepts the fact that his son is no more and that too very briefly, is when he sees a Dharmendra film. That's when the event of his son's death reels back to him. Funnily enough, Keikhushroo himself has never met the star who was indirectly responsible for his son's death. In fact, neither Dharam nor the producers attended Parvez's funeral or consoled with the family, and even when one of his brothers went to meet Dharam on the sets, to ask him for some assistance, the star first insisted that the father come to see him. Later however, he wrote out a cheque of five thousand rupees for the family, thereby closing the episode of his stuntman, Parvez Irani.

Text and photographs reprinted with permission from Stardust July 1984.

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"Mody Studio"

A visit with photographer Ratan Mody.

Soonil Taraporevala

Rush hour traffic struggles noisily on the street below his studio and horns honk impatiently as lorries stall with their consignments of milk for Parsi Dairy Farm. On the first floor, if you were to ever look up from your car window at that innocuous-looking sign that says 'Mody Studio,' lies the second-oldest living studio in Bombay. Climb the stairs and leave the street behind you as you walk into Ratan Mody's time machine.

Mody, 66 years old and single, grew up amidst developers and, stop baths, fixers and formulas, in the environment of his father's photo studio, begun in 1901. Ratan, the only one in his family to be enamoured of a photographic existence, apprenticed with his father and learnt the ropes, sometimes painfully, for his father was a stickler for perfection and could tweak ears till they hummed.

Much of what Ratan Mody learnt has become irrelevant in the world of today. Qualitatively, when we are satisfied with so much less, who cares about 27 different formulas for developers? The full-size camera which occupies the central part of the tiny room and which once took portraits of Gandhi and Nehru, today takes passport pictures. And in the cupboard, which sits huddled in a corner, lie two Japanese 35 mm SLR's because you can't be a photographer in today's world without them. Much of Ratan Mody's business

having served his mother her lunch and in the night after having his dinner.

Here, in this dimly-lit room, Ratan Mody has lovingly preserved the past under the dust of ages. His prized possession, besides his old cameras, is an old Kodak diary in which his father has written the history of Indian photography as told to him by Elban Cohen. The camera in the photograph once belonged to Cohen whom Ratan Mody credits with having first introduced the photographic process to Indians. Cohen, a good-hearted German Jew, was taken advantage of by the same people he had once taught. He almost died an ignominious death; a pauper, forgotten by all, missed by none — except one, for Ratan Mody still remembers him. In fact, Mody has made it his life's mission to resurrect Cohen to his rightful place in history.

In the old days when work was plentiful and the photographic field open and challenging, Ratan Mody did well for himself. One of the first to take aerial pictures of Bombay, he did this with a 21-rupee camera leaning out of an obliging friend's glider (and in the

process lost one camera when his friend suddenly took a dive).

Since his father's death in 1962, Ratan Mody has run the studio single-handed. Business today certainly warrants no assistants for there are few who disturb the calm of this little room. Its once scenic painted backdrop is now uniformly brown and its old wooden cameras are beautiful strong survivors of a not so distant past. Even the bulbs that flood the studio with light, date back to 1934 when they were bought in bulk by Ratan Mody's father. Although his father is a tangible presence in the studio, Ratan Mody has added to it his own concerns. The books on the shelves under the large map of Iran encompass a variety of interests from the *A-Z Book Of Universal Knowledge* to H G Wells' *Outline Of History*, *The First Principles Of Theosophy*, an Avestan Dictionary, Shakespearean volumes and Madame Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*.

When business is slow, as it usually is, Ratan Mody picks up a chair by his full-size camera and sits down to read as the portraits of his mother, Sai Baba and Zarathushtra watch over him benignly. Perhaps it is they who have looked after him and assured his survival. I leave this solitary man in his cluttered abode, hoping that the world of today will not destroy this portrait of the past.

Reprinted with permission from Imprint March 1984.

The full-size camera which once took portraits of Gandhi and Nehru, today takes passport pictures.



lies outside the studio now — photographing functions, weddings and navjotes. The studio has become a haven to which he comes every morning after

The disappearing turban

Imperial Hat Works on Cunningham Road used to manufacture turbans till a decade ago. Dhanjishah Maneckjee who founded this firm was the exclusive maker of turbans for the Mysore Maharaja Krishnarajendra Wodeyar. His Highness had an exceptionally large head, which was exceptionally oily as well. As a result he needed on an average, a turban a month. Red and green were his favourite colours.

Today Maneckjee's granddaughter Ms Aban Minocher runs the firm. She has diversified into a travel agency, a more profitable venture these days, but out of sentimental regard for the business that brought them money and fame, has retained the Hat Works. It is managed by her father-in-law Minoo Minocher, who sits in one of the little rooms in their old-fashioned residence, surrounded by ancient wooden cupboards and glass cases. From one of

them he brings out a couple of faded greasy silk turbans — the Maharaja's own, preserved as museum pieces.

"The Maharaja used to order turbans for special occasions — for his birthday; Dassera, Diwali, or when an important dignitary was visiting him," narrates Minocher. "We would use one silk saree to make three turbans. Readymade turbans are never made in one piece — the cloth is cut into several narrow strips, the 'butas' and gold lace are separated and attached in appropriate places. It's an art in itself. The Maharaja was so particular about the number of tiny pleats on the sides that if there was just one pleat more or less than the specified number he would not accept the turban."

In another glass case is preserved a letter from the palace of the Maharaja ordering for a turban to be "used for his Highness' birthday procession." A red

turban with gold spots was sent along with the letter, a "request that you may make up at your earliest convenience a turban of similar pattern and measurement out of the balance of the green cloth with gold spots and laced border left over with you, but without laced border at the end and exactly similar to the red turban sent herewith." A thrifty man indeed!

"The Maharaja used to send us the material and pay us just labour charges — Rs 15 in the beginning which was later increased to Rs 85," says Minocher. "The laminated mould once made can be used over and over again of course — only the cloth is changed." The mould is normally lined with soft material like silk, velvet or satin, with a strip of felt all around the inside so that the forehead is not bruised.

Reprinted from The City TAB, April 22, 1984

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World junior champ

13-year-old Neville Nariman wins international karate competition



Hanshi Gogen Yamaguchi, dubbed in Japan 'the living God of Karate,' had predicted during his visit to Bombay some years ago that Gojukai Karate-Do's Neville Nariman had the makings and promise of a future world champion. And the young St Mary's I S C lad did not take a long time in achieving that end.

The 13-year-old junior black belt, who started karate under the watchful eye of Shihan Vispy Kapadia at the tender age of three, returned triumphantly from the World Budo Championship held at Zurich, Switzerland, recently with two firsts. The eighth standard student, who has during his 10 years of dedicated training had considerable international experience, snuffed out formidable challengers from China, Japan, Korea, Europe and America to emerge as a junior world champion.

Nariman: 'snuffed out formidable challengers'



In the under-14 age group, Neville competed against famed rivals before defeating a Japanese in the final of the children's kata competition. But that was not all. His cup of joy and triumph filled to the brim a little later. He once again took the pride of place on the victory rostrum after overcoming about 50 contestants from all age groups to win the kobudo or weapon fighting in the open class.

Indeed a great feat, as well as a rare one, for one so young. But not unexpected, as Shihan Vispy Kapadia, the chief instructor and director of the martial arts school, put it when describing Neville's sincere and dedicated training during the past 10 years.

However, the fourth degree black belt who has also been imparting training to the police force, quickly chipped in with: "We wear our belts around our waists and not our heads. I hope it doesn't go to their heads."

Neville was part of the two-member Indian squad that made the trip to Zurich. The other participant was Sensei Gita Raj, a second dan black belt. Both Neville and Sensei Gita Raj were felicitated at the Bombay Gymkhana (by the Gojukai Karate-Do Training School).

Reprinted from Free Press Journal June 16, 1984.

Cycling to success

Kursheed Irani clinched top honours in the women's section at the recently concluded XXXIX Senior National Championship at Patiala recently.

It all happened on that day in 1976 after Kursheed Irani won her maiden cycling race. Having told her mother that her school had arranged for a picnic she packed her lunch and sped off on her bicycle. Little did her mother realize that she was taken for a ride. Next morning's papers astonished Ms Irani to find her daughter being

crowned as the 'City's Cycling Champ!' From that time Kursheed never looked back.

Everything began in a lucky way for Kursheed as this rising star from Sophia High School took part in a few more meets only to find herself don the state colours in the junior and senior sections at the national championships in Bangalore the same year.

Today Kursheed holds two all-India records in the time trials lap race.

A tenacious cyclist, completely devoted to this sport, she is credited with winning no less than 50 to 60 odd meets at the state level, apart from the regular national championships.

A champion in road races, Kursheed has won the Srirangapatna to Mysore four times from 1978 to '81. And Sakarepatna to Chikamagalur thrice between '78 and '80. The main stages of the race pass through the hilly roads of Karnataka.

Selected in the Indian squad for the World Cycling Championships in England in early 1983, Kursheed donned the national colours. "It was an experience and will be ever fresh in my memory" says Kursheed. Over 30 countries participated in this meet and Kursheed feels that she has learnt from the US, Russian and German cyclists. "It was a tussle between amateurs and professionals leading to a marked difference in lead and style," says Kursheed.

Speaking about the veldrome, Kursheed went on to explain that unlike the cement surface used on tracks in India, it was wood which resulted in speed, smoothness and low friction.

Chosen twice before for the Asian cycling championships, Kursheed was unable to make the trip for personal reasons.

According to Kursheed, cyclists from Bombay, Punjab and Delhi have tremendous potential. "India could definitely achieve something at the Asian level" said Kursheed. "Karnataka has a lot of talented youngsters who should be nurtured in the right way. There should be a greater number of cycling championships at the state and national level."

Her dedication to this sport can be seen through her practice sessions consisting of five hours a day. This track and road specialist of the state cycles over 91 kms during her coaching ses-

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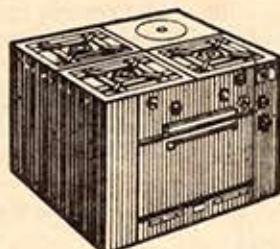
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sions with her coach, Pheroze Jhaveri, also a state champion in the men's section.

Kursheed, a science graduate from Mount Carmel's, is at present doing her IIB Electronics at the BMSCI, is also a keen cultural enthusiast and is an active Bharat Natyam dancer and musician playing the veena and piano.

She is the daughter of the famous horse trainer, the late Rustom Khodayar whose one ambition was to cycle on a world tour. And now young Kursheed Irani has fulfilled this wish cycling away to victory.

Reprinted from The City TAB, April 22, 1984.

Family fitness

Babli Mathur

The "no pain — no gain" syndrome has thrown today's generation into a frenzy of activity. Jogging, exercising, workouts, aerobics, weight-training. At dawn or at dusk, track suits flash by with calculated regularity as men and women generously endowed with more than a fair share of "body" sweat it out.

Initially, of course, the pleasure of being physically fit was the sole prerogative of the male. Today, not only are women as involved in the physical fitness fad, but the fever seems to have filtered down to children too.

The Mistry family sets a healthy example in family fitness. Pervaz Mistry himself, needs no introduction. A reminder, perhaps. He is vice president (technical) of the All India Karate Federation and a 4th degree Black Belt in karate. How did he get involved in the fitness fad? His story, of course, goes back several years.

"In school I found I was better at sports than at studies. Obviously I concentrated more on the former. At 13, I started going to Daba Shetty. He was my first instructor. He taught me weight training and body building. I also spent much of my time cycling, swimming, and doing gymnastics.

"And then when I was 15, I entered the (Junior) Bombay Body Building Contest and was awarded the prize for the most muscular body." One might add at this stage that Pervaz suffered from a rather unhealthy childhood. He was sickly, thin and suffered from asthma.... "I wasn't born muscular," he sums up.

And then came his introduction to

the martial arts. "I met Barodawala who introduced me to judo. Around the same time, I was introduced to Kawanko of Japan, another judo instructor. And then at 19, I had my first taste of karate." Today at 40, Pervaz is an internationally acclaimed karate instructor running several karate dojos all over the city.

His wife Mehroo, conducts her own aerobic classes. Having hitched onto the fitness bandwagon several years ago (undoubtedly under the influence of her husband), Mehroo too has undergone training in the martial arts. In judo she holds a Brown Belt and a gold medal, this apart from having been national champion twice. She is also a karate Black Belt. In the first National Karate Championship in Calcutta, she

was the only woman contestant competing against men — this too, when she was five months pregnant.

"After my second child I weighed 72 kg. Today, four years later, I weigh 45 kg. This I achieved through sheer will power, an enforced diet and rigorous exercise," she says offering an incentive to new mothers.

Having resigned from Hoechst Pharmaceuticals last year after 16 years of service with the Company, Mehroo found herself with time on her hands. And at 37, she decided to launch out on her own and started aerobic classes at a time when the aerobic boom in India was just coming of age.

"The exercises we do have not been picked at random from any book on exercise," explains Mehroo. "Pervaz and I together worked out a series of exercises for a total body workout and for body and muscle tone. The program concentrates on exercise and not so much on dance," says Mehroo dismissing the popular concept of dance in exercise.

"I check each student individually," she stresses. "Specific exercises are prescribed for persons who suffer from any kind of health problem. Those with heart problems are taboo and I unconditionally forbid any exercise for heart patients."

Both Pervaz and Mehroo stress the



Family workouts: Pervaz and Mehroo with daughters Kamal (left) and Kiku (right).

Below: Pervaz and Mehroo working out a series of exercises for body and muscle tone.



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need for warm-up exercises before the start of any routine. The warm-up includes stretching, and exercises for strength and conditioning — from head to toe. "In any sport or exercise, a warm-up is essential to avoid muscle cramp," says Mehroo. "It gets the adrenalin moving and warms up the entire body."

Yoga plays a pivotal role in both, Pervez's karate and Mehroo's aerobic classes.

Mehroo's aerobic course is of three months duration. "It takes a month to

"A day's work at home or at an office gives one enough exercise. But is it the right kind of exercise?"

be able to just do the exercises," she explains. She is currently holding classes at her Colaba residence, at the Bombay Gymkhana and the Wilingdon Club.

"Several boys used to complain of backaches," says Pervez "and that is what first gave me the idea of introducing yogic exercises in my workout routine." Everything revolves around correct breathing — the yogic way. "Yogic breathing exercises help asthma patients and also help in post-natal care," adds Mehroo.

Mehroo and Pervez are both prime examples of the fact that age is irrelevant in exercise. In fact, contrary to popular belief, the older you grow, the greater is your need to exercise in order to maintain muscle tone. Pervez's karate students range in age from "seven to seventy" and Mehroo's aerobic classes see ladies upto 60 years of age.

The different parts of the body, too, start aging at different times. "The eyes for example," says Pervez, "start ageing at seven years. Ears grow until one is sixty. As you grow older you do need to continue exercising, though your intake of food and your quota of sleep should be reduced. The recommended quota of sleep is essential, however, as sleep gets rid of the body's poisons and recharges the body's systems."

Mehroo feels a growing pride in her female brood. "Girls today, are more figure-conscious than ever before," she maintains. The latest concept in physical fitness for women is weight training. "I must clarify at the very start," says Mehroo, "that girls do not develop muscles through weight training. It improves muscle tone, that is all. It is not the same as weight lifting. Besides, I take girls for weight training only after they have reached a certain level in free-hand exercises."

"Women don't develop muscles," explains Pervez, "as men do, for they lack the hormone, testosterone, that men have and this prevents their bodies from becoming muscular."

Mehroo dispels the argument most frequently used by the average housewife or working woman: after a hard day's work why do I need to exercise? Says Mehroo: "Sure a day's work at home or at an office gives one enough exercise. But is it the right kind of exercise? An aerobic workout brings about a different kind of exhaustion altogether. It's refreshing exhaustion. It leaves you fresh, not tired."

Mehroo's aerobics lay much stress on muscle tone. This in turn serves to work away excess flab. One does not mean here that aerobics is only for fat people. "True, it fights flab," says Mehroo, "but mainly it firms the muscles — which even a slim person could well do with."

Returning to the concept of losing weight, Mehroo explains: "One must realize at the very beginning that no amount of exercise will help one reduce without the inclusion of a diet. It is the combination of exercise and diet that

works." Here, of course, one uses the word "diet" not in the sense of starvation; the secret lies in eating the correct food. "And India," adds Pervez, "has a wealth of natural foods: yoghurt gives you B-complex, fruit gives you vitamin C. And as you grow older you need not more than one meal of the 'correct' food a day." The adage, "You are what you eat," is as true as ever. "If you're thin, the only way to put on weight is to eat. And exercise makes you eat. So too, does weight training."

In the Mistry household, fitness is a family word. Their two children, Kiku (5½) and Kamal (4½) join their parents during family workouts. To the kids, the session spells pure fun. "Mehroo and I have worked out little routines for them," says Pervez, "with music and all!"

Reprinted from Mid-Day, March 13, 1984.

Mistry missed

Hosey Mistry, well-known sports journalist and photographer and a popular figure on the country's playing fields, died in Bombay on June 23, 1984. He was 56.

Mistry had been associated with *Sportsweek* since its inception and was its regular athletics and swimming correspondent. He had worked with *Free Press* and *Indian Express*, before becoming a freelance photo-journalist.

He was a qualified coach in athletics and swimming from the National Institute of Sports and for some time the PRO of the Institute at Patiala. His absence will be felt at all sports meets for a long time to come.

Reprinted from Mid-Day, June 23, 1984.



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'The pioneering factor'

Rusi J Daruwala

The Heartbeat of a Trust : Fifty Years of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust by R M Lala. Published by Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Company Ltd. New Delhi, pp. 187, Rs 45.00.

To many a senior citizen of this minority community could the phrase "Parsi thy name is charity" be applied, but few such philanthropists utilized their wealth with the insight and vision of Sir Dorabji Tata. No Indian or foreign charitable trust can boast of such varied and immense projects as those set up by the Dorab Tata Trust in the course of 50 years — India's first institute of social sciences, India's first cancer hospital, India's first institute of fundamental research in mathematics and physics which became the cradle of India's atomic energy program, a national centre for the performing arts.

The institutions set up by this Trust

have helped train two generations of social scientists, cancer specialists and distinguished scientists. As Lala points out, "discoveries, investigations, publications, research papers are just a fraction of the fall-out of the Trust. What has flowed from this foundation is new life for India's millions and an extension of the frontiers of her knowledge."

Dorab Tata was born on August 27, 1859. After his initial education in Bombay he was sent to a private tutor in Kent and then to Cambridge. He obtained his BA on his return in 1882 from St Xavier's College. He did some years as a journalist on the Bombay Gazette and went on to promote a new mill his father was planning to open in Pondicherry.

At 38, he married Meherbai, daughter of H J Bhabha, Inspector-General

of Education, Mysore State. Meherbai was talented, beautiful and shared Dorab's altruistic and philanthropic sentiments. Lady Tata passed away, at the age of 51, from leukaemia. Soon after his wife died, Sir Dorab put all his wealth, estimated at Rs 1 crore, into a trust for use "without any distinction of place, nationality or creed," for the advancement of learning and research, the relief of distress and other charitable purposes. This was the beginning of the Sir Dorab Tata Trust. As a memorial to his wife, he also endowed the Lady Tata Memorial Trust with a corpus of Rs 25 lakhs for research into leukaemia.

During his lifetime Sir Dorab had donated £ 25,000 (approx Rs 3,84,000) to the University of Cambridge for the equipment of a laboratory in the School of Engineering. He also gave to the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, his collection of paintings, statuary and other art objects, now on display as the Sir Dorab Tata collection.

The aims of the Trust were : institution, maintenance and support of schools, educational institutions, hospitals; relief of distress caused by the elements of nature such as famine, pestilence, fire, tempest, flood, earthquake or any other calamity; advancement of learning in all its branches, especially research work in connection with medical and industrial problems; financially aiding the Institute of Science, Bangalore in instituting professorships or lectureships or giving scholarships; awarding fellowships in any branch of science or assisting stu-

*Sir Dorab with wife Meherbai.
Background: Tata Memorial
Hospital*





Bhabha and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research
(Photos: Sir Dorabji Tata Trust)

dents to study abroad either by payment of lump sums or by payment of periodical sums; and giving aid to any other charitable institutions or objects endowed by the settlor in his lifetime or by the grandfather, father or brother of the settlor.

From its inception, the Trust was fortunate in having very capable and enlightened chairmen like Sir Nowroji Saklatvala, Sir Sorab Saklatvala, Dr John Mathai, Sir Homi Mody etc. One of the guiding lights of the Trusts and its philosophy (even today) has been Dr Rustum D Choksi. This can be understood from the following extract from a note by Professor Choksi on the proposal that led to the setting up of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research: "What distinguishes a Trust is not its ability to give or the extent or range of its giving but the character of its giving. It is important for a Trust to maintain its 'pioneering' character and this can only be done adequately where from time to time a Trust initiates and fosters new institutions and new types of service to society. For a great Trust the large project, carefully designed and executed, must always be a major objective. Even in the routine giving of grants and donations the Trust must constantly bear in mind the 'pioneering' factor."

Lala describes the founding and growth to international stature of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, the Tata Memorial Centre, the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research and the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre. The chapter on Dr Homi Bhabha makes for fascinating reading.

Following his own study and research, Bhabha realized that fundamental research in physics and mathematics, including nuclear physics and cosmic rays was too big a subject to be dealt with in a small department of a university or in a general purpose research institute. He visualized a time... "when nuclear energy has been successfully applied for power production, in say a couple of decades from now, India will not have to go abroad for its experts but will find them ready at hand."

On December 19, 1945 when the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research was installed in its first home at a bungalow on Peddar Road, Sir John Colville, Governor of Bombay, said, "We are embarking on an enterprise of importance to the country's development, in which great wealth, wisely husbanded and applied, individual initiative and government support are all blended. I do not think there could be a better combination for progress." Much has been written about Homi Bhabha and it all reads like some great hymn of praise to a superior being — an engineer par excellence, a scientist, an intellectual of rare calibre, a savant of art and culture, a sensitive artist, an inspiring leader and an architect of modern India and above all a visionary who tried to and did bring his visions into reality. But the greatest insight into his nature has been provided by himself. At the age of 24 he wrote a trusted friend, Ms Jessie Mavor, "I know quite clearly what I want out of life. Life and my emotions are the only things I am conscious of. I

love consciousness of life and I want as much of it as I can get. But the span of one's life is limited. What comes after death no one knows. Nor do I care. Since, therefore, I cannot increase the content of life by increasing its duration, I will increase it by increasing its intensity. Art, music, poetry and everything else that I do have this one purpose — increasing the intensity of my consciousness and life."

Lala explains some of the other excellent projects nurtured to full growth by the Dorab Tata Trust such as the National Centre for the Performing Arts, the Tata Theatre adjoining it and many others. Lala marshals his mountain of facts well and conveys them to the reader in an eminently readable prose style. The book is not just a testimony to an institution, or to a community, but to the Spirit of Man all over the world.

'Easy rider'

Geeta Doctor

The Keeper of the Dead by Keki N Daruwalla in the series "New Poetry in India" published by Oxford University Press. Price Rs 20, Pp 64.

Death is an easy rider in Daruwalla country, and the poet-policeman stalks it with the cool determination of a sheriff in one of those old cowboy movies, notepad and pad at his hip always ready to gun his targets down with a quick draw. To those readers who are familiar with his work, Daruwalla country is the harsh weathered terrain of Uttar Pradesh, a frontierland of seared images hovering between the living and the dead, where history — no less than the sun — has reduced the landscape to ridges of white bone and meaning to a dry rattle of memory. Nobody wins, nobody loses, but the sheriff rides on, picking at a skull here, tracking a trail in the desert, knowing apparently that the only meaning that there is going to be for him is in the search and not in the finding of a reason for it.

Daruwalla's poems are poems of attrition that speak of dry thoughts in a dry land. The very words with their corrosive, acrid touch seem to parch the mouth and yet for all that, in celebrating the all-too-short sharp moment of death he celebrates life. This is perhaps the recurring fascination of his work. In spite of the grim ugliness of death and decay with which he confronts us, what

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is moving, is the beauty of life, that is animated in the bright pinpoints of his poetic imagery. Where other poets have most often surrendered to a muddy wallowing of their personal emotion, Daruwalla looks about him with a clear dry eye and though he notes everything down with a precision

‘Throughout life a
man carries his death
even as a woman
carries her child, a
Parsi carries his hell.’

that seems to preclude passion, the sharpness of the observation provides its own momentum. In the first poem entitled *Hawk* for instance, one finds him using an almost identical image from Gerald Manley Hopkins' well-known poem which begins with the lyrically passionate outburst, "I saw this morning, morning's minion" and so forth, which in Daruwalla becomes "I saw the wild hawk-king this morning" and one immediately feels a sense of irritation for being deprived of the wild burst of Manley passion. Yet Daruwalla goes on calmly, never losing sight of his target and eventually succeeds in making the poem his own "Hawking is turned to a ritual, the predator's passion honed to an art," he writes. This could well be a description for the poet's own approach to his craft.

The Keeper of the Dead is memorable for other reasons as well. It reveals Daruwalla in a relaxed mood able to let his 'voice' try out a variety of ideas. There is no more the juvenile desire to stand on a soapbox or a platform labelled 'Poetry' and deliver a message, "no high flown language. I am not here to appease the gods" he writes. This allows him to range casually through the centuries as in the poem entitled *The King Speaks to the Scribe (Third century BC)*; or the delightfully witty yet sharp-edged poem *Pestilence in Nineteenth-Century Calcutta* where the British Sahib is presented with the bill for his recently cremated Sikh servant with the line, "Five rupees for roasted Sardar." Earlier Daruwalla had noted with an irony that is typical of his laid back style, "In dysentery/a gut feeling ceases to be/premonitory. That even-

ing the *kanjars*/ burnt him, guts and all."

In *Mehar Ali, the Keeper of the Dead* from which this collection of poems gets its title, and in the section entitled *In the Shadow of the Imambara* we see Daruwalla at his best, part narrative poet, part seer, part dramatist specializing in the dramatic monologue, compressing history, sketching in the geography and re-creating the drama in short brilliant phrases that are strung together like hot coals. Mehar Ali is described as "a face like a patch of fissured bark/and eyes: pools dulled with a film of moss...." with a voice that "creaks on/ like a cartwheel going over gravel." In the poem *Aag-Matam* he describes the ritual of fire walking, "The fire-bed is fanned with a reed-mat/and sparks fly as if the wind had scattered/a concourse of glow-worms." Or at another place describing the landscape he notes, "Even bluebottled drongoes/failed to bring colour to this heart-grey landscape. The cold afternoon was hammered out of zinc." Or talking about scorpions he says, "Whisked out of a matchbox one slid across my palm/ with a spider's lichen touch,/ like an acrobat walking on his hands."

In his personal poems however there is an embarrassing triteness in Daruwalla's choice of words. The sheriff can only be at home when he is out on the range; in bed his verse reads like snippets out of *True Confessions*. Even in the touching poem that

he has dedicated to his daughter with the lovely invocation at the end which reads, "and may your breath be spiked/ as now, with the tang/ of mint and clove and cinnamon" he begins with the dreary lines, "Three years and then again/the uterus flowered." Most people will not follow him through the murky reasoning of the poem entitled *The Parsi Hell* either, which ends with the lines "Throughout life a man carries his death/ even as a woman carries her child./ A Parsi carries his hell." So, one feels like asking him, what's new? Isn't that a luxury that other religions, Christianity for instance, offer just as well?

There is now also a tendency to keep using images that tear and sear, and claw and plunder with a sort of voluptuous violence that finally tires. In *Aag-Matam* a flashing idea is described as "a thought blisters along the arid skull" while writing in the persona of the comet *Kohoutek* he writes "I flash like a mad thought across the skull of the sky. I smoulder like a homicidal resolve."

At his best, however, the full range and splendour of Daruwalla country is exhilarating. Just as in *Mehar Ali, the Keeper of the Dead* the sky-woman that he describes: "her hair flaming red,/as she alights upon the shroud-grey skin/ that keeps him whole..." brings him back to life, Daruwalla's words whip and flay the reader into an ability to feel with his own passion, that brings with it a gift of life. For this alone the volume must be experienced.

‘Degeneration of conscience’

Khushwant Singh

We, the people by Nani Palkhivala. Published by T N Shanbhag for Strand Book Stall, Bombay. Price Rs 80, Pp 368.

My quest for memorable quotes by an Indian has been fruitful. They are not from the pens of authors like Nirad Chaudhary and Naipaul, nor from the speeches of politicians, but from a lawyer, Nani Palkhivala.

I had often heard him speak: he is a most persuasive and compelling orator. I had published many articles by him during the emergency against the emergency; he had a vast repertoire of very apt quotations for every occasion.

But I had not read anything written

by him till his *We The People* landed on my table. Most of this book is a compilation of convocation addresses and memorial lectures delivered by him with a few published articles thrown in.

All these are prefaced by a personal note which I found very moving and would like to share with you.

Palkhivala is very despondent about the way India is disintegrating: "The picture that emerges is that of a great country in a state of moral decay. The immediate future seems to belong to the doom-sayers rather than to the cheer-mongers."

"We suffer from a fatty degeneration

of conscience and the malady seems to be not only persistent but prone to aggravation. The life-style of too many politicians and businessmen bears eloquent testimony to the truth of the dictum that single-minded pursuit of money impoverishes the mind, shrivels the imagination and desiccates the heart. The tricolor fluttering all over the country is black, red and scarlet — black money, red tape and scarlet corruption."

His analysis of why things have gone wrong is as original as it is perceptive: "Our besetting sin is secular fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is the triumph of the letter over the spirit. It spurns the lesson taught two thousand years ago that the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life."

"In our unwitting addiction to fundamentalism we are fully supported by two defects in our national character — lack of a sense of fairness, and lack of a sense of moderation."

He ascribes our national decline to two causes: scant concern for public good as well as moral and spiritual recession. "The moral standards of our politicians, policemen and criminals are indistinguishable from one another. India today is a living example of the fact that cynicism corrupts and absolute cynicism corrupts absolutely." He puts the blame for this squarely on the leaders: "There are two basic lessons of Indian history."

"First, our people have always taken their moral standards from their rulers: the people have risen to great heights when they have basked in the glow of noble kings or leaders."

"Secondly, regimes and kingdoms



Palkhivala: spiritual recession

have been destroyed not by adversity but by abasement. Corruption is the greatest solvent of public institutions; poverty poses a far smaller threat."

"The peacock must not be replaced as the national bird by the ostrich."

The general air of permissiveness, the wanton destruction of public property, the proclivity for *bandhs* and strikes clearly demonstrates that as a nation we have not been able to draw the *Lakshmanrekha* between freedom and licence. Palkhivala writes: "When

we became a republic, we forgot that freedom is like alcohol — it must be taken in moderation."

Why don't our leaders wake up and see the perils that confront our nation? And if they are drugged by their own rhetoric, why don't we, the common people of this country, shake them by the shoulders — or better, kick them in the pants?

Palkhivala puts this sentiment in his usual gentle way; he would rather remind them that refusal to see the danger ahead can spell disaster: "The peacock must not be replaced as the national bird by the ostrich."

Palkhivala is a deeply religious man. Not in the conventional sense of being a devout Parsi — as a matter of fact he is a *bhakta* of Satya Sai Baba — but one engaged in the pursuit of the sense of beauty and the thirst for truth. He ascribes this passion to his parents from whom he learnt "that all the loveliness of the world can be reduced to its first syllable."

Palkhivala is acknowledged as one of the ablest lawyers that India has produced. It is hard to believe that as a child he had a dreadful stammer and admits that he had "as much chance of becoming an advocate or a public speaker as a victim of multiple sclerosis has of becoming an Olympic athlete."

He not only overcame the impediment in his speech but is today the most sought-after speaker in the country. However, unlike most successful Indians, Palkhivala remains an extremely shy and modest man.

Reprinted from the column With malice towards one and all, Sunday Mid-Day, February 19, 1984.

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