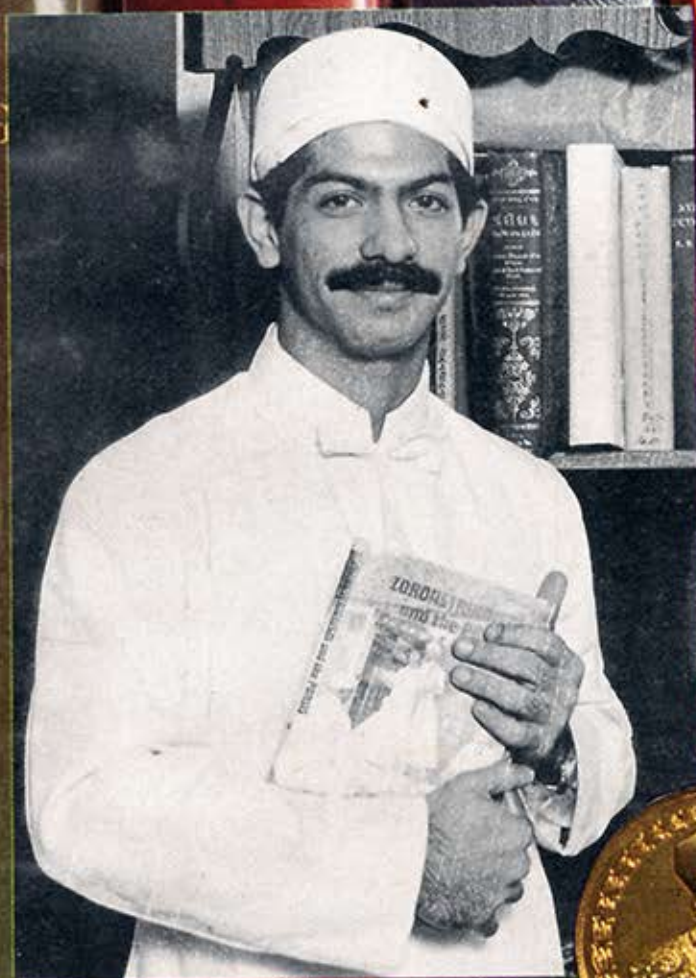


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# Parsiana

May 1986

Volume 8 Number 11

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### Cover: Sanjana and Parekh Medals (Courtesy Rooyintan Peer)

Transparency and photographs by Homyar Mistry

Parsiana is published by Jehangir R. Patel for Parsiana Publications Pvt Ltd at C/o H.L. Rochat, Navsari Chambers, ground floor, 39 A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Bombay 400 001 and printed by him at Parsiana Publications, 300 Perin Nariman Street, Bombay 400 001, and phototypeset at TRIACE, Bombay 400 005. All rights reserved. Address all editorial and business correspondence to Parsiana, G.P.O. Box 892, Bombay 400 001. Phone: 2048730.

Annual inland subscription: Rs 40 for one year (12 issues); Rs 75 for two years (24 issues). Foreign subscription rates: Seamail Rs 80 for one year, Rs 150 for two years; Airmail Rs 160 for one year, Rs 290 for two years. For U.S. cheques add \$4 to cover bank charges.

For Indian upcountry cheques add Rs 3 for bank charges. Cheques and drafts are to be drawn in favor of Parsiana and posted to G.P.O. Box 892, Bombay 400 001 or C/o H.L. Rochat, Navsari Chambers, ground floor, 39 A.K. Nayak Marg, Fort, Bombay 400 001.

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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.

## Zoroastrian directory

The need for publishing a directory of Zoroastrians has been emphasized time and again. Mr Russi N. Engineer, managing director of Industrial Boilers Private Limited and a trustee-cum-joint honorary secretary of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman has very kindly offered to undertake this mammoth and onerous task. However, without the active cooperation of all Zoroastrian anjuman, punchayets, associations and individuals in and outside India, it will be impracticable to bring out a comprehensive directory which will act as a vital and valuable international link.

We therefore appeal to all Zoroastrians to send the following particulars of their family members: name, relationship to head of household, sex, age, marital status, educational qual-

ifications, particulars of occupation profession/business, telephone numbers and postal address to Russi N. Engineer, managing director, Industrial Boilers Pvt Ltd, 79-80 Satkar, Nehru Place, New Delhi 110019.

KEKI J. GANDHI  
Hon. Secretary  
Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India

## Cadet entry scheme

The Indian Navy, now has a scheme for recruiting permanently commissioned technical officers. Known as the "10 + 2 Cadet Entry Scheme" for which the age limit is 17 to 20 years, the candidate should have passed the 10 + 2 or equivalent examination aggregating 70 percent or more in physics, chemistry and mathematics, and 50 percent or more in English in the matriculation or 10 + 2 examination. This scheme is normally advertised in various newspapers in the month of May.

Under this scheme, no written examination is held. However, the candidates will have to go through the Services Selection Board (SSB) interview, physical and medical examination. The selected candidates will then be trained as marine/electrical engineers at the Naval College of Engineering, INS Shivaji at Lonavla at state expense, with approximate starting total emoluments of Rs 800 per month as a midshipman and jumping to about Rs 1,750 per month as an acting sub-lieutenant after three years at the college.

A career in the Indian Navy, or for that matter in the defense services, is a rewarding, satisfying and lucrative proposition for many a young Parsi lad these days who is not able to gain admission into a suitable engineering college because his percentage in the SSC and 10 + 2 is not the 90 percent expected. Here is a golden opportunity for an average academic student, if his IQ, personality, characteristics and extra-curricular activities get him into the services. Besides travelling within and outside the country, the numerous perks offered these days include subsidized furnished housing, free medical facilities for the family also, canteen and sports facilities and free rations.

Interested persons may write to the Directorate of Personnel Services, Sena Bhavan, Naval Headquarters, New Delhi - 110011.

CAPTAIN JAL POSTWALLA  
Visakhapatnam

## Plea for plays

Our 78-year-old Calcutta Parsi Amateur Dramatic Club was founded in 1906 with the main objective of performing a *natak* (comedy) every year on Parsi New Year's day for our community in Calcutta. Despite all odds, the club has maintained an unbroken tradition of performing to full houses, 78 consecutive times.

Over the last few years, we have faced a threat to this traditional activity. It is not funds, not lack of interest among its members, nor the lack of enthusiasm and support from the community. We can't find plays.

We desperately need a "bank" of four to five good modern racy Parsi comedies to fall back upon and despite our efforts in the past, our rewards are limited. We therefore appeal to playwrights, producers, anjumans and others to help us find material for our annual *nataks*. Royalty is no problem.

B.J. MASTER  
Hon. Secretary.  
Calcutta Parsi Amateur Dramatic Club

## Why do mobeds opt out?

I have been following the debate in your periodical on the predicament of mobeds. In the recent past, the Athra-van Educational Trust has generated funds for educating potential priests with a long-term view to have a continuous stream of mobeds in the community.

My interest in the subject stems from the fact that I belong to a priestly family. My father is a practicing priest in Bombay. I am a *sampuran* navar and maratab from the Boyce Agiary after obtaining religious education from the M.F. Cama Athornan Institute, Andheri, in the early fifties. I have two elder brothers who are also *sampuran* ervads, but regrettably, none of us opted to take up mobedi as a profession.

There are many like us, qualified ervads, who preferred to do likewise.

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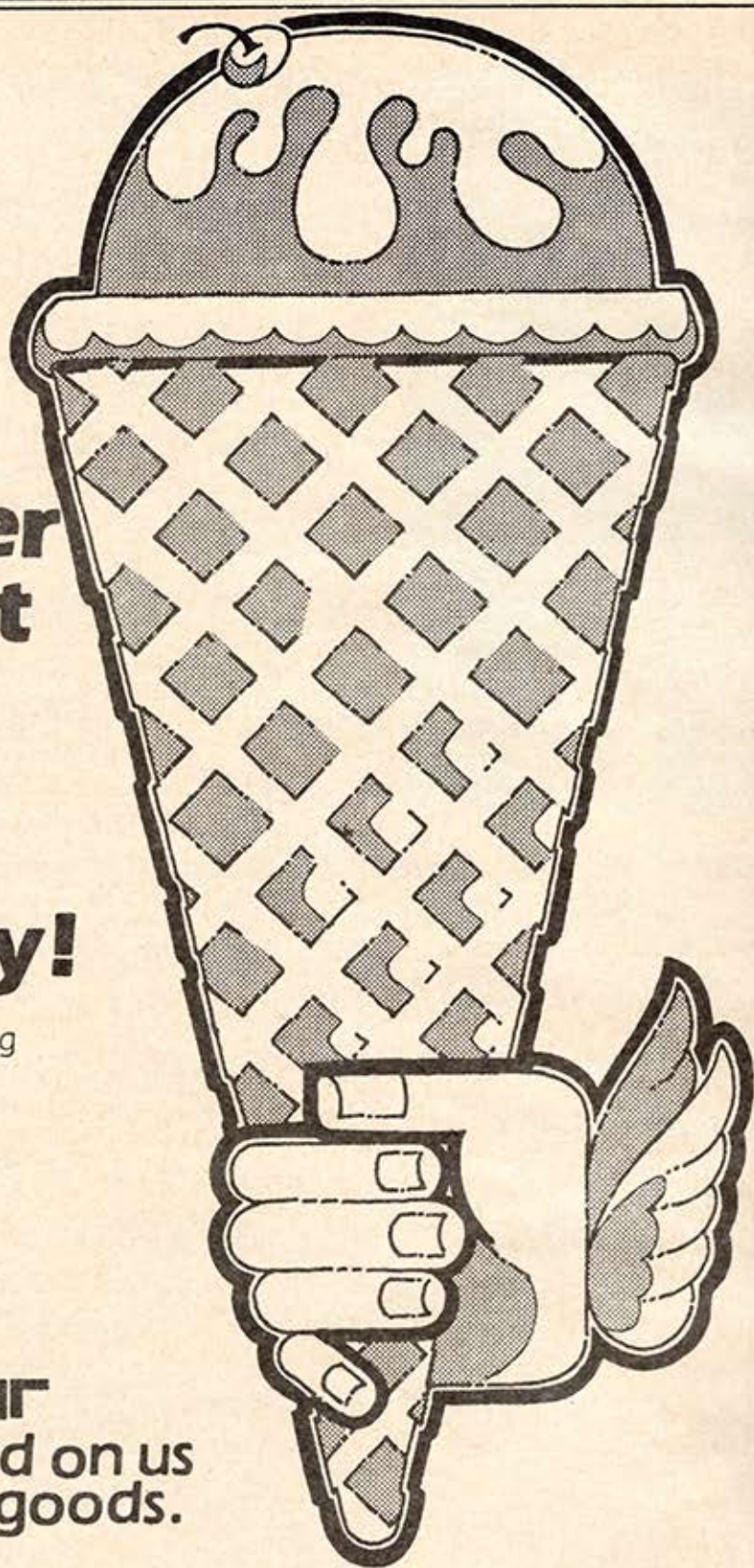
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When I was at the Cama Institute undergoing my studies, there were a total of 60 students. Out of these 60, I recollect that only five took to mobedi as a full-time profession. However, all of us have, during our teens, performed various ceremonies to give a helping hand, and continue to do so occasionally even today, as and when the need arises. My father, with his foresight and judgment did not force us into this vocation for he knew then that there was no future in it and he gave us a free hand to pursue a career of our choice; this was in the fifties. Over a quarter of a century has since passed. Athravans have become few and far between. The community has woken up belatedly to the problem.

The mere creation of a corpus of funds to attract young athravans to do mobedi will serve no purpose now. The question is two-fold, first of respect and secondly of money. Today, a man with a *safed pugree* is scorned at, so why should a young man knowingly opt for a profession where he is not respected? How many of these so-called messiahs who today have taken up cudgels on behalf of the mobeds,

have the interests of the priestly class genuinely at heart?

This is all a cosmetic effort; a sudden awakening to the problem which stems from the realization of the bleak prospects that the community faces in the twenty-first century, of having to cope with no priests at all if the present trend continues. To that extent our high priests must also share the blame. All along they have been fully aware of the housing conditions, the meager emoluments and the strenuous working conditions of mobeds. Unfortunately, they opted to keep a low profile and, for reasons well-known to them, preferred not to enlighten the laity or suggest any course of action to improve the state of affairs.

Today, you cannot buy the priests. They are not a commodity that can be bargained for. The young lot is fully aware of the problems and shortcomings of the system and prefers to look for greener pastures. The present situation is self-created and the community will have to face the dilemma in which it now finds itself.

Ours is an affluent community. Our standard of living is high. Yet, at any

forum where upliftment of priests is discussed, the salaries suggested are meager and the increments still less. The anjumans in most places are well off financially, but the salary paid to the mobed is a mere pittance of less than Rs 1,000, the justification being that he is also given a free room/house in most cases, or a few minor fringe benefits such as free travel once a year. The community plainly chooses to ignore the fact that such fringe benefits are paid today to the Class IV staff of all government and private establishments!

Does the mobed have to be beholden to the community for giving him what is in any case his due? His paltry salary is not enough to keep body and soul together. The community chooses to forget that he too has family obligations, besides which he must cater for sickness in old age, housing and retirement, for which no provisions are made by the anjuman to which he has given the best years of his life. This kind of salary ensures that he will always be the underdog in an otherwise affluent community.

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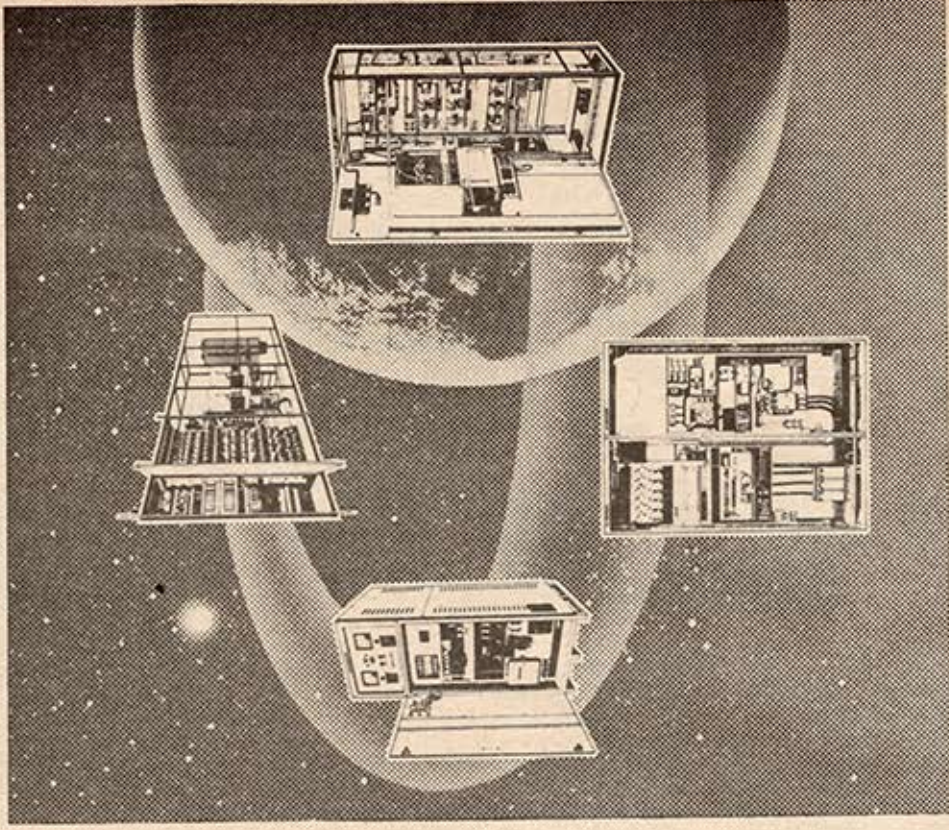
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to give his children the best education and to see them well settled, both professionally and domestically. Marriage prospects are directly linked with job status. Let me put across a question: How many parents, today, are willing to give their daughters in marriage to a practicing priest? None, I am sure. Being fully aware of these problems, which father would knowingly spoil the prospects of his son by urging him into this profession? None!

Since criticism without suggestions is not constructive, I suggest that while talking of improving the living standards and ameliorating the priests, let us keep the average standard of the community in mind. Let us give them a living wage to ensure the basic amenities and comforts which all of us enjoy today. Let there be a visible improvement in their lifestyle. This may draw some of the younger generation towards the profession. The opinion of young men who, after becoming *ervads* have opted for other professions, may be sought. They would be able to identify the steps that should be taken to make the profession attractive, keeping in mind the shortcomings of the profession which made them opt out.

COLONEL B.M. PANTHAKI  
New Delhi

### “Reform Zoroastrian...”

Our attention has been drawn to Mr D.N. Sethna's letter “Reform Zoroastrian Bodies” (*Parsiana*, December 1985).

We have to state on behalf of the managing committee that the contents of that letter are so totally inaccurate and unfounded that they merit no reply.

S. SHAHROKH  
R. CONTRACTOR  
Jt. Hon. Secretaries

World Zoroastrian Organization, London

### Parsi achievers

The cover of the March issue of *Parsiana* was delightful. Thank goodness that it did not depict either windbags or moneybags but young Parsi achievers.

PHIROZE JIABVALA

### Exclusive muktads

The managing committee of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe Incorporated (of which I am an elected member for over 12 years) has passed a resolution by an overwhelming majority: “Non Zoroastrians are re-

quested to refrain from attending the sacred *muktad* and *farvardigan* ceremonies.” This resolution was motioned by me at the request and demand of the majority in the UK who felt that they had the right to protect and preserve the privacy and sanctity of their prayers at the time of these, our most sacred ceremonies.

There was violent opposition from a few of the reformist section of our community. Regrettably, the resolution was opposed on the committee by the president Mr Shahpur Captain and the ex-president Ms Shirinbanoo Kutar.

However, the recent research findings of Professor John Hinnells and the survey of our community all over the world has categorically proven that rapid destruction is the inevitable result of reformist thinking.

DARIUS SETHNA  
Middlesex, UK

### Delhi Anjuman's appeal

The Kaikhushru Pallonji Katrak Dar-e-Meher will complete 25 years of its existence and useful service to our community on December 25, 1986. The Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) proposes to celebrate the silver jubilee in a befitting manner by holding a series of religious and social functions on December 25 and 26, 1986. To coincide with these functions, the DPA will also host a two-day meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, which is proposed to be held in Delhi on December 27 and 28, 1986. A large number of Federation

delegates and eminent invitees, including high priests and scholars from all over India and abroad, are expected to be present on the above occasion.

The Dar-e-Meher was consecrated on December 31, 1961, with funds generously donated by Ms Shirinbai Katrak and other charitable Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian individuals and institutions. Over the last 25 years Parsi Zoroastrians coming to Delhi from all over India and abroad have been visiting the Dar-e-Meher where facilities are available for the performance of all Zoroastrian religious ceremonies.

The trustees of the DPA maintain this Dar-e-Meher. A large amount is spent periodically on repairs, renovations, whitewashing, painting, etc. Recently, the expenses of the Dar-e-Meher have increased considerably. With great difficulty our Anjuman was fortunate in securing the services of two devoted *mobeds* on a permanent basis. These *mobeds* were appointed on fairly high salaries with free boarding, lodging and other perquisites.

Under the policy decision of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, the DPA is helping in the management of anjumans on the outskirts of Delhi. As many adjacent anjumans, like Agra, Allahabad, Amritsar, Indore, Gwalior, etc have no priests, the DPA sends its *mobeds* to these places on occasions like *navjotes*, weddings, deaths, etc. DPA is also contemplating to engage a third priest, who will be useful to the Anjuman in future. The Dar-e-Meher is not a profit-making organization and the

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Phone: 65942

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Phone: 26215

mobeds perform various ceremonies as required by the members of the Anjuman at nominal rates, fixed by the Anjuman, which are among the lowest in India.

The trustees also contemplate to construct a separate house for the priests comprising a hall, bedroom, kitchen and bath. This will involve heavy capital expenditure.

The trustees of the DPA have started collecting donations from the local Parsis but the funds that can be collected locally will be limited, as the number of Parsis in Delhi is small and most are employed in government or commercial offices; many Parsis are not stationed in Delhi permanently. Hence, the DPA looks to the members of our community and trusts in other regions for help.

A donation of Rs 5,000 and above will entitle a donor to get his name inscribed on the marble tablets placed in the Agiary premises. Donations to the Agiary Repairs and Renovation Fund will qualify for tax concession under Section 80G of the Income-Tax Act, 1961. Donations for the Agiary Maintenance Fund will also be most welcome. Donations in cash, drafts, cheques, drawn in favor of "Delhi Parsi Anjuman" may be sent to Noshir B. Captain, honorary treasurer, Delhi Parsi Anjuman, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, Delhi Gate, 110002.

SHIAVAX D. NARGOLWALA  
President, Delhi Parsi Anjuman

## Jamnagar's appeal

Over a century ago the Parsis migrated into the princely state of Jamnagar exploring business openings and job opportunities available here. Gradually, more and more Parsis from different settlements in India were drawn towards Jamnagar. The need for a fire-temple, dharamshala and burial ground were felt, and over a period of time, land was acquired and these structures were raised, all through collective effort.

Funds were raised to meet the working capital requirements, and interest earnings on these funds were adequate to meet the maintenance costs. Subsequently, to cope with the inflationary trend, the then trustees were forced to draw heavily upon the corpus which has depleted at an alarming rate. Being devoid of a compound wall, the

burial ground has been encroached upon, while the fire-temple and other structures need immediate repairs.

Funds however remain the major impediment which can only be overcome through munificent gestures from all over the country and abroad. Donations or drafts in the name of 'Mirza Agiary and Parsi Anjuman Fund' may be sent to Burjorji Wadia, Wadia Road, Porbandar or to J.D. Thanawalla, c/o Tata Chemicals Ltd, Mithapur.

J.D. THANAWALLA  
Hon. Secretary, Mirza Agiary and Parsi Anjuman  
Jamnagar

## "Depriving Ladies"

T.R. Bhatena has suggested in "Depriving ladies" (*Parsiana*, February 1986) that the children of Parsi mothers and non-Parsi fathers be accepted as Zoroastrians, if they so wish.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, in India, the term Zoroastrian is used synonymously with Parsi. If Bhatena's ideology is given a free rein then our community will be flooded with Fernandes, Mathur, Makhijani, etc and the community will lose its identity. A non-Parsi father may even give non-Iranian or non-Parsi first names to his children, and still consent to his children being brought up as Zoroastrians. This will create complete chaos in our miniscule community.

It is also a matter of conjecture, how long these neo-Zoroastrians will remain true to their adopted faith.

Regarding reconversion, I think if the father has converted to another religion, his children must be given the option for three or four generations to opt for Zoroastrianism, because the father's blood is flowing in their veins. This may not only help us to accept Rajiv Gandhi, but also others from such illustrious houses as the Wadias etc.

There is one lacuna I find in the community, which is causing a drift of many boys and girls into other religions. There should be regular lectures by learned dasturs and mobeds to awaken our youth and inculcate in them a pride for the community. It should be ingrained as a culture in every agiary and atash bahram, and the public should be encouraged to participate.

DR. P.D. SUNAVALA

# Events and Personalities

## Dharamshala inaugurated

Expressing his satisfaction at the construction, location, ventilation and management of the new three-storeyed Panday Dharamshala at Bombay, Dr Aspi Golwalla, chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet addressed a select gathering of around 100 guests at the inauguration of the new premises on April 5, 1986. A dharamshala is not only a "hava khavani jaga" (a shelter for change of air)," said Golwalla, who recommended the installation of a lift for the convenience of aged passengers.

The inauguration was preceded by a jashan when two kadmi priests and two priests from the Banaji Atash Bahram officiated. This was followed by a humbandagi led by Dastur Nowrooz Minochehr-Homji of the Fasli Atash Kadeh. Referring to the founder of the Trust, Seth Merwanjee Framjee Panday, present trustee Rustom Joshi recalled a time when the founder would face the sea at Colaba and pray for more money so that he could help the poor members of the community. When he was sufficiently blessed with funds, keeping his promise, he endowed it in a trust, contrary to the expectations that he would pass on his wealth to his son.

Faith in God was the hallmark of the preceding generation, noted Dastur Dr Hormazdyar Mirza, high priest of Udwada, who described the last century as a "century of opportunity" and advised the congregation to follow in the "footsteps of our forefathers."

Facilities at the Dharamshala can be availed of at rates varying from Rs 10 to Rs 15 per head, per day, depending on the size of the room, its location and the number of people sharing it. A maximum period of 15 days' stay is permitted, though extension may be allowed at the discretion of the trustees. Breakfast is served at extra cost. If the proposed plan of leasing the ground floor and basement to a commercial establishment materializes, "we may give further reliefs to our passengers," announced Joshi.

Those interested in staying at the Dharamshala should reserve their

room, preferably a month in advance, by writing to the Manager, Panday Dharamshala, Karelwadi, Thakurdwar, Bombay 400002.

## CER ghambar

Legal luminary Nani Palkivala has donated Rs 45 lakhs towards the construction of flats in Godrej Baug, announced a beaming Bombay Parsi



Above: Golwalla inaugurating the new Panday Dharamshala while (from left) Joshi, Mirza and Dadiba Master look on.

Right: Panday Dharamshala

Punchayet (BPP) chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla, chief guest at the fourth annual ghambar organized by the Committee for Economic Revival (CER) at Albless Baug, on March 26, '86. The occasion was the setting for the presentation of scrolls of honor to solicitor Eruch Desai and businessman Jamshed Guzder, both reelected recently to a second term of BPP trusteeship.

Prefacing his introduction of Desai with lighthearted ribbing, CER president Dadi Engineer lauded the trustee's straightforwardness and "capacity to take a balanced view of things." Before the CER announced its support for Desai in his electoral battle against businessman Hector Mehta last November, its core committee had

asked for support of all CER policies on the BPP board. Engineer related that Desai had replied, "Only if I agree. I will not agree just to get your vote." That response, said Engineer, squashed any lingering doubts in CER minds about Desai's qualification for trusteeship.

CER managing committee chairman Fali Poncha complimented Guzder for encouraging community members who offer voluntary service to the BPP, and noted that Guzder's courage in signing an affidavit in support of the CER petition for electoral reform (when five fellow trustees opposed it) "earned him gratitude... and the reverse. (It led) to a concerted attempt to keep him out (of the BPP board)."

"In matters of public interest, if you have an attacking posture, your work may not get done," Desai advised the assembled community. Then, expressing his gratitude to the CER for its



electoral support, he noted that his second term on the BPP board will be "four years from the day of reelection."

Complimenting the CER, Guzder said that the body had changed the whole concept of election of the Anjuman Committee. Noting that India is on the threshold of the largest economic expansion ever, Guzder advised the community to be ready to participate in the upthrust to maintain its share in the national pie.

Earlier Golwalla, in an address in Gujarati, had projected the Punchayet's problems and frustrations to the audience. The plan to transfer the Langrana and Godavara Agiary fires to a new abode in Godrej Baug had

been stalled by the intervention of some votaries in the Fort area despite there being several other agaries there. Within the next five years, there will be 5,000 Parsis residing in Godrej Baug and the community hasn't got the resources to create and maintain a new adaran fire, Golwalla noted. Similarly, community members are responsible for having stalled schemes for the better utilization of the Parsi Lying-in Hospital property in the prestigious Fort locality when there are only two patients there, he added. As a third instance Golwalla cited the case of some residents of Adarbad, the ownership building built by the BPP on Hughes Road, who objected to the signboard for the re-located Patuck Institute being put up on the building for the mutual benefit of the Institute and its clients. "Kaum ma nagunao bi chhé (There are several ingrates in the community)," Golwalla concluded.

The evening began with a jashan performed by over 100 mobeds, followed by a humbandagi led by Dastur Dr Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa, High Priest of the Anjuman Atash Bahram. Kersi Mistry's band regaled the gathering of nearly 1,600 people who waited their turn through four sittings to relish the Godiwallas' excellent repast.

Veteran social worker and member of the CER managing committee, Silloo Kavarana and president of the Youth Wing, Parveena Doctor solicitously supervised the serving of the meal. The evening had been co-sponsored by Airfreight and Vitta Mazda.

## Pragati Mandal's ruby

In the interest of the individual as well as the nation, youths should be convinced of the importance of starting small scale industries instead of pursuing white collar jobs, advised Eruch Desai, trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet while presiding at the ruby jubilee celebrations of the Surat Parsi Pragati Mandal on March 30 and 31, 1986, notes a press release sent by the Mandal's vice-president Rusi Besania.

On the occasion, *Chaturth Dashabdi Granth*, a souvenir compiled by Besania in Gujarati, carrying messages and a detailed pictorial history of the Mandal, was released.

Recapitulating the formation of the Mandal on October 2, 1944 in the dispensary of Dr Minocher Contractor,

retiring president Yasmin Dotiwala stated that the initial membership of 18 has now grown to 1,100 members. Despite financial difficulties, the Mandal's corpus was gradually built up to the current Rs 1,11,000 from which funds are expended for educational, social and cultural causes, notes the release. With a view to encouraging the poor sections of the community to be members of the Mandal, over the years the membership dues have continued to remain a rupee a year.

The celebrations commenced with a jashan led by Dastur Noshirwan Dastur, High Priest of Surat and was followed by a talk delivered by the High Priest of Udwada, Dastur Kaikobad Phirozji Dastur, who shared reminiscences of his trip to Iran and stressed that the Zoroastrians in Iran look to the Zoroastrians in India for the preservation of their race and religion.

Special felicitations were offered to the Mandal's founding couple, Minocher and Dinamai Contractor, present and past office-bearers of the Mandal, the outgoing and incoming presidents of the Surat Parsi Punchayet, Maneck Gheyara and Dr Sam Bhacca respectively, and Sorab Katpitia, the Punchayet's chief executive, for his ready guidance to the Mandal. The culmination of the two-day proceedings was the staging of a new drama, *Parsi Pandavo* by the Yazdi Karanjia Group.

## Pooling resources

The time has come when the pooling and planning of community resources for the welfare of Parsis need to be put on a sound footing, said Dr Aspi Golwalla, chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) and chairman of the Liaison Committee of Parsi charity organizations, at a seminar held on March 9, to consider ways and means for strengthening the Liaison Committee, notes a BPP press release. Golwalla suggested a regular dialogue between the various trusts.

The 36-year-old Liaison Committee reviews applications for help from the various Parsi charity trusts, recommending assistance on the basis of investigations. Its work center employs persons, unable to get adequate employment elsewhere, notes Ms Banoo Roovala, a senior social worker attached to the Committee.

While Professor Noshir Kaikobad, who monitored the discussion, talked



(Above.) A section of the audience at the CER ghambar

of "this long overdue get-together" as marking "the beginning of systematic thinking on welfare-related issues in this fast changing society," Naoroji Godrej, BPP trustee and eminent industrialist, warned against the dole system and suggested that Parsi youth must be encouraged to develop entrepreneurship, even if on a modest scale, states the release sent by BPP assistant secretary and public relations officer, Eruch Sethna.

Honorary advisor to the Liaison Committee Ms Freny Gandhi presented a paper on the working of the committee, and Jehangir Talyarkhan, Jal Vakil, Savak Sethna and Nariman Maneckshaw, all representatives of various Parsi trusts, felt that the committee should strengthen its investigation and reporting on applications received by the charity trusts. Ms Katie Mullan and Ms Aloo Artist, also trust representatives, suggested that the work center of the committee should be put on a sound footing, adds the release.

Nonavailability of professionally qualified staff was cited as an impediment to the working of the Liaison Committee, and Rusi Anklesaria, chief executive of the BPP and co-opted member of the committee sug-



(Above) Contractor: senior banking assignment.

(Top left) At Surat Pragati Mandal's celebrations: (from left) Bhacca, Contractor, Desai, Dotiwala, Coomi Desai, Gheyara, Dinamai Contractor, Kaikobad and Besania

(Top right) Guzder (center) being presented a plaque by Kersi Gazdar, while Poncha Engineer (right) presenting Desai with a scroll of honor looks on

gested a policy for long-term personnel recruitment and training whereby young Parsis could be absorbed on the staff of Parsi welfare organizations.

Representatives of 14 trusts participated in the seminar, including those from Sir Ratan Tata Trust, N.M. Wadia Charities, M.N. Sett Charities, Lalkaka Family Fund, Parekh Trust, P.E. Polson Charities, Innominate Parsi Charities, Zoroastrian Building Funds and the Zoroastrian Association.

## Billimoria at Wellington

Lieutenant General Faridoon Billimoria has been appointed Commandant of the Defence Services Staff College at Wellington, Tamil Nadu, notes

a report in *The Daily* of February 2, 1986.

The 52-year-old, sports-minded Billimoria is a product of the Doon School, and a graduate of the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington. He was selected as a trainee at the Junior Service Wing of the Indian Military Academy (IMA) Dehra Dun, receiving the Rajputana Rifles Gold Medal for tactics leadership on graduation.

Commissioned in the second battalion of the Fifth Gorkha Rifles, Billimoria saw active service in Kashmir, after which he was appointed ADC to the then President of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad. In 1962-63 Billimoria joined the United Nations Forces in the Congo, notes the write-up.

After three years as an Indian Army Liaison Officer in the United Kingdom, Billimoria saw active service in the Bangladesh operations in 1971, and was later appointed Infantry Brigade Commander in the Rajasthan desert. Prior to his appointment as Major General in the eastern sector for two years, he was Brigadier General in Kashmir, adds the write-up.

## Contractor is CBI director

"Seasoned banker" Dady Kaikhushru Contractor has been appointed executive director of the Central Bank of India (CBI), with effect from February 22, 1986, notes a press release.

Having joined the CBI as an officer trainee, Contractor has over the past 40 years, worked in different capacities and held various senior banking assignments, notes the release.

Elevated to the post of general manager in 1981, Contractor was in charge of banking operations, personnel and credit operations, adds the write-up. He was acting chairman and managing director of the CBI from February to April 1985, notes the press release.

## Modern dance tour

"Uttara's work in innovative dance has grown since I last saw her...She has been able to establish links with movements of modern dance and the Indian classical heritage," notes dance critic Sunil Kothari writing on the recent tour of India of modern dancer Uttara Asha Coorlawala, in *The Economic Times* of January 19, 1986.

On a tour of India (sponsored by Vazir Sultan Tobacco) with two other New York artists, Daniel Maloney and Nada Clyne, Coorlawala performed in Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, and Madras where she presented two aspects of dance - the American Black tradition and other experimental dance forms, notes the report.

"I have enriched myself so much with the knowledge of Indian classical dance, that now it is time for me to explore whatever will reinforce my newly discovered identity," notes Coorlawala.

Trained in modern dance with Martha Graham, Meice Cunningham and Perl Lang, Coorlawala plans to divide her time between India, New York and Europe which, according to Kothari, "augurs well for the Indian dance situation and the east west encounters."

# Gibbs Road Scheme additional 50 lakh ru

Housing and repairs predominate the first Anjuman Committee meeting

The floor space index (FSI) of the seven basement flats in the Gibbs Road property which were not acceptable to buyers, has been converted into four terrace flats generating about 50 lakh rupees more for the Panchayet's construction fund. This was stated at the Anjuman Committee meeting addressed by all seven trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP) at the Framji Cawasji Hall on March 30, 1986.

The subject of housing preoccupied the committee and the trustees, the morning's dialogue being largely devoted to new construction as well as repair to existing buildings. References were also made to the Maharashtra State ordinance, aimed at compelling landlords of buildings over 40 years old to sell flats to their tenants on the condition that the tenants would undertake to repair the building. Of particular concern to the committee was the delay in construction of housing for the poor.

In the present democratic climate, it is believed that elected officials should give an account to the electorate of what they do. In the case of the BPP, the electorate is the Anjuman Committee representing the general population of Parsis in Bombay comprising the members of the elected E register, and the donors of Rs 5,000 and over who are members of the F register. Although the new scheme for electoral reform pending with the High Court recommends the annual convening of the Anjuman Committee, accountability has been a vexed subject on the BPP's board of trustees, being one of the reasons for the recent resignation of trustee Jal Vimadala.

In a sense, this was a historic meeting when all seven trustees voluntarily faced the electorate to give an account of their joint and several responsibilities. But the majority of the members

of the Anjuman Committee failed to show up. Indeed, hardly one-sixth of its total strength of 980 was present.

A subcommittee is being set up under BPP chairmanship to resolve the moral and legal complications arising from the cosmopolitan Athraivan Educational Trust's (AET) funds gathered on the basis of the education and uplift of Zoroastrian mobs. Though the committee's membership has not been finalized [The subcommittee is said to consist of four lawyers - Rusy Sethna of the CER, Baji D. Bharucha of Zoroastrian Studies (ZS) and Keki Dastur of the Council of Vigilant Parsis (COVP) under the chairmanship of BPP trustee Eruch Desai. But, community sources note that Desai has refused to accept the assignment. His contention is said to be that the committee should be com-

The electorate, was worried that with the overemphasis on the ownership flats at Gibbs Road, housing for the poor was being neglected.

posed entirely of impartial members and not of representatives of the feuding organizations], the move resulted from a Committee for Economic Revival (CER) initiated meeting held on the morning of March 26, 1986 between representatives of bodies with diverse viewpoints, including the CER, the COVP, ZS and the AET.

Unhappy at the rate of repairs undertaken in the Wadia baugs, Anjuman Committee members demanded

that more than one architect and/or engineer be appointed to expedite the work.

The general decline in the community's moral structure was decried by trustees and audience. Specific instances, noted with dismay, concerned transit camp residents - sheltered in flats earmarked by the BPP for the temporary residence of tenants without permanent abodes - who refused to move out at the end of the six-month allotted period, despite 50 other equally needy cases awaiting their turn for allotment; able-bodied Parsi beggars who were abusive if not given alms; and the physical and moral decay posed by drug addiction.

Welcoming the Anjuman Committee members, BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwala hearkened to the meeting held nearly four years ago, for the first time in the history of the Parsi Panchayet, when four out of seven trustees decided to give an account of themselves to the electorate. Reminding the collegians that he had said then that "there will be many firsts in the years to come," Golwalla referred to the BPP's trust advisory project, the marriage bureau and family counselling schemes, the special coaching for administrative services, etc. Emphasizing the "closer rapport with the community" generated by the BPP's official publication the *Quarterly Review*, the appointment of public relations officer Eruch Sethna, the contact with Parsis outside Bombay through the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India and the biannual press conferences, Golwala told Anjuman Committee members that they did not have to await the official accountability meetings: "You're all welcome to meet us at the BPP or elsewhere."

Assuring his audience that once an aspirant becomes "a trustee (he)

# to yield pees

Arnavaz S. Mama

g addressed by all seven trustees.

ceases to be a party man, his interest ceases to be a particular school of thought interest (and becomes) the community's interest," Eruch Desai spoke of the trustees' need for introspection and discretion, adding, "For the last many months, trustees have realized that public controversy is not in the interests of the community. In delicate matters we must sink our differences."

Although speakers from the floor were allowed only three minutes each, some points were tellingly made, though not always within the allotted time. The opinion of the house was that leadership is what the trustees owed to the community and that it "should be spontaneous, without prodding from the community," as said Fali Poncha, chairman of the CER managing committee. Poncha referred to two recent instances when the BPP failed to respond as akabars: one was the election time inflation of the F register (The CER claims that the sudden spurt of donor members at election time is tantamount to the buying of votes and should be discouraged by a time-bound embargo) which could have been frozen by the trustees but which was not done until the CER moved the court; the second was the unseemly AET controversy where a meeting between representatives of the main contenders was finally held under BPP chairmanship on March 26 because "the vigilance of community members enforced it."

While Poncha's first charge was bypassed in silence, trustee Jamshed Guzder congratulated Poncha and the CER for the idea of the joint meeting, and noted that there had been no recriminations at the March 26 meeting. Some trustees were present and the decision to call the CER and other groups to participate had been unanimous. Intent on arriving at a solution,

a subcommittee had been set up, said Guzder.

The inactivity of the Task Force on Housing was a source of frustration. Since the committee (which includes BPP trustees Jamsheed Kanga and Jamshed Guzder, Ratan Dubash, a national authority on structural engineering, the Punchayet architect Sam Rao, Ratan Batlivala, the chief engineer (civil) of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Poncha, who is director of Tata Housing, civil constructor S.F. Engineer, Cawas Pardiwalla, managing partner of Crawford Bayley, solicitors, who is an expert on Land Ceiling Law and others of equivalent professional caliber) has not met since June '84 and the Punchayet was not availing of its abilities, Poncha suggested that the Task Force be either reconvened or dissolved.

## Housing

The BPP's construction plans envisaged the creation of 1,000 new flats, the prestigious Gibbs Road property yielding 57 ownership flats and a surplus of six crore rupees for the construction of tenements at Godrej Baug, Bharucha Baug and Panthaki Baug. Changes and modifications in the Gibbs Road scheme have led to delays in implementation elsewhere, although that is not the only reason for the leisurely progress. The electorate, however, was worried that with the over-emphasis on the ownership flats at Gibbs Road, housing for the poor was being neglected and with the present inflationary trends, could become a dream.

"Despite the *Quarterly Review's* reports, progress on housing is way behind what hopes had been held out... housing for the poor is way behind," noted Poncha.

Detailing the Gibbs Road transactions, the trustees noted that 56 flats

were sold initially and 13 persons were on the waiting list when five parties backed out; there were five parties interested in the four luxury flats. The amount realized to date was Rs 82,56,540, with time limits stipulated to those from whom amounts were outstanding. Except for steel and cement prices, the tender is not subject to escalation.

Explaining the situation, trustee Naoroji Godrej noted that the Gibbs Road construction was "going as fast as it possibly can." Half the building has already come up, though it is not finished. The other half has been delayed as the originally planned seven flats below ground level have been replaced by four terrace flats, resulting in a delay of three to four months, Godrej said. He then noted forthrightly, "In today's context, building for the poor was very difficult and would go against the interests of the community. People who can afford to should go into the new houses (for ex-

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It was suggested  
that the names of  
the allottees of BPP  
flats be published in  
community  
newspapers.

---

ample at Godrej Baug, off Napean Sea Road, where living is expensive) and the old housing should go back to the very poor."

Godrej's viewpoint was contested by Nariman Mehta of Navroze Baug and others who felt that the provision of housing for the lower and the lower middle class should be a challenge to the BPP. Trustee Homi Ranina answered, "We are extremely anxious to build for the poor. To say we are trying to neglect the poor is absurd. (But there are) no surplus funds earmarked for construction."

Kersy Limathwalla of the CER, noted a contradiction between Godrej and Ranina's statements. "Is the BPP only going to build ownership flats for the affluent and those of the middle class who can afford it? Mr Chairman, please answer," he requested.

Golwalla spoke instead of the quality of construction work provided by Godrej and the high municipal taxes at

Godrej Baug which contributed to the high rents there. Golwalla noted that those Parsis who wanted to shift to Godrej Baug from older Punchayet tenements were encouraged to do so.

Taking over from Golwalla, BPP trustee and Bombay's municipal commissioner Jamsheed Kanga explained the reason for the BPP's preoccupation with construction in the elite Napean Sea Road-Malabar Hill locality. The land had been exempted from the Urban Land Ceiling Act on the basis of its use for housing the weaker sections of the community. "If we did not construct at Godrej Baug, we'd have lost (the land)," he noted, justifying the construction activity there despite the costs which the poor were not in a position to absorb. Kanga said that in an attempt to prevent acquisition of the land, the BPP had built several foundations there, though it did not have the funds to construct the entire buildings. The trustees were now trying to work out a system of accommodation exchange with those occupying older, cheaper tenements, who were in a position to afford the cost of living on Malabar Hill. "There is no such decision that we're not going to build for the poor," Kanga assured the Committee.

Desai added that the BPP was trying to subsidize the high rents for the benefit of the poor.

In answer to an Anjuman Committee member's query whether the BPP had tried to avail of the Andheri dokh-

ma land for housing construction, Kanga noted that the well-known lawyer, Shiavax Vakil, was negotiating for the land on behalf of the Tatas. The salvaging of some of the land of the Parsi Vegetarian Society near Jogeshwari would also provide a venue for housing, noted Kanga who was hopeful of receiving cabinet approval for the project within the next month.

Anjuman Committee member G.L. Kathawala suggested the trustees go personally from house to house. "If every Parsi family could contribute Rs1,000, it would solve the problem of funds," he added. Kathawala also suggested that the names of the allottees of flats be published in community newspapers.

Golwalla detailed the obstacles that the BPP faced: squatters were sitting on the land at Godrej Baug, holding up the construction of the driveway. While the Punchayet has successfully removed one, the other is very stubborn, he added. At Bharucha Baug, where the BPP envisaged the construction of 164 ownership flats in two buildings, three tenants in a dilapidated building due for demolition are refusing to move, despite alternative accommodation being provided. At Panthaki Baug work is pending until the court resolves the problem with P.D. Jilla (who is claiming ownership rights at the Baug). Some families are claiming the transit camp facility provided to them as their permanent abode. "What else can we do?" asked

Golwalla, "You suggest what else we can do."

Ranina informed the gathering that thanks to Godrej's personal supervision, the Gibbs Road project will be on schedule shortly, but that prospective buyers of the flats were unfortunately unable to pay up as fast. "Once we raise funds, we shall be able to start at Bharucha and Panthaki Baugs," he added.

#### Repairs

Holding out "the possibility of a stronger department of repairs," Ranina noted that the BPP is "one of a few organizations in Bombay (which accept) that a stitch in time saves nine." Speaking from the floor, Nariman Mehta noted unhappily that at Navroze Baug only one building had been repaired in the last five years although the colony was the first one to come forward with 50 percent contribution from the tenants towards the cost of repairs. "Why not appoint a second contractor and a second architect so that work is expedited?" demanded Mehta, but Golwalla said that more than one contractor would create further complications.

Noted Poncha sarcastically, "It is heartening to hear that one lakh of rupees is to be spent in five years. The cost of repairs is escalating at 20 percent per annum." Observing that a month ago Neville Wadia had pleaded inability to match the 50 percent contribution of Ness Baug tenants towards repair costs, Poncha reminded the gathering that it had been "agreed to make a case with the Charity Commissioner that all 72 lakh rupees (proceeds from the sale of the Jyoti Studio property adjacent to Ness Baug) be used for repairs in the year 1986." Poncha asked if the application had been made. But the trustees were unable to respond positively though the matter is more than a year old, and Guzder agreed, there is "no earthly reason why we cannot go to the Charity Commissioner and tell him that if we wait for five years, half of Navroze Baug will collapse." Then, alluding to the government ordinance which permits tenants of old, badly maintained buildings to buy over their flats, Guzder added, "If the tenants take the matter to court, we'll have lost it."

Golwalla however noted that five buildings in Cusrow Baug were undergoing repair simultaneously at the ex-

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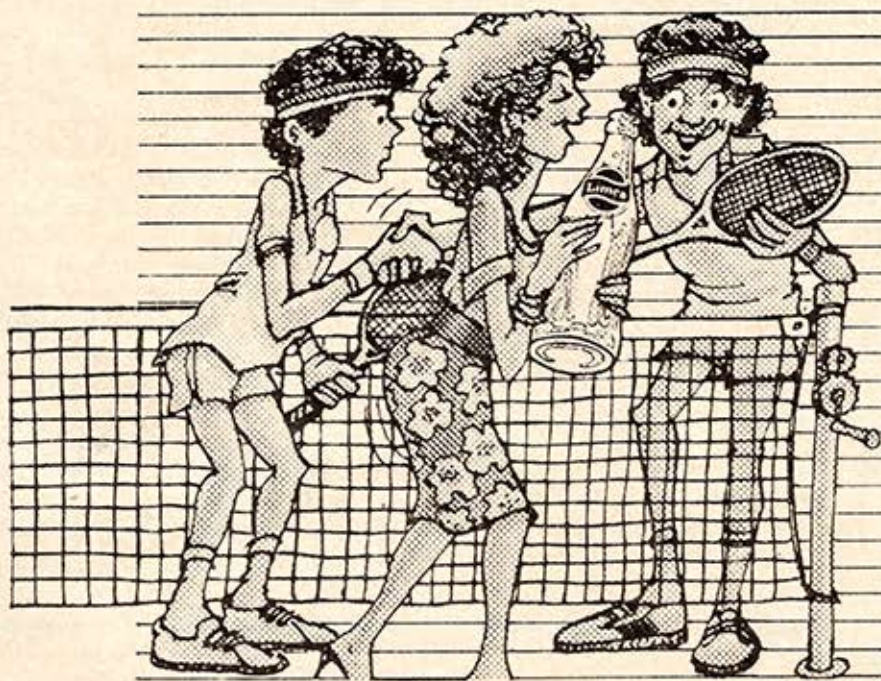
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pense of the tenants. "We've told them we will reimburse them when we can."

Referring to the 1986 ordinance of the Maharashtra Government on old buildings which permits the tenants of dilapidated structures to buy over their tenements at a price of 100 times the rent, noted lawyer K.C. Vajifdar enquired to what extent BPP properties were affected by it. Noting that the BPP properties are buildings between 60 and 80 years old, Vajifdar warned that it was absolutely essential that a strong repair fund be collected, so that the housing stock is well preserved.

It was stated that the BPP had sought exemption from the purview of the ordinance but Kanga noted that if the government were to exempt public trusts from the application of the ordinance, it would place such tenants in a better situation as opposed to other tenants. Kanga noted that a discussion with the housing secretary was in progress and the next session of the legislature may bring amendments. Or people may go to court and the ordinance may be struck down.

### **Ethics**

The declining moral standards of some of the beneficiaries of the Parsi trusts was a matter of frustration for the Punchayet. Individuals tended to stall schemes meant for the community for seemingly selfish and unjust reasons. There were trespassers in the various colonies against whom suits were pending for 10 to 15 years. Once poor families who had reached levels of affluence, continued to enjoy the benefits of subsidized housing—"the most absurd thing," noted Pesi Davar speaking from the floor of the house. "People in Balaram Street, earning Rs 3,000 and more, were staying in flats

where the rent continued to be Rs 20. Parsis had once believed that if they earn from the community, they must contribute to it," said Davar, but the permissive attitude in schools and homes was undermining the community's character, he added. "If you don't punish the guilty, you wrong the innocent. A good deal of introspection is necessary... Three full-time self-supporting Parsis could change the face of the community."

Kathawala noted that since 1981 a non-Parsi family has been occupying a flat in Navroze Baug. The matter had been reported to the secretary of the Wadia Trust. Kathawala enquired if anything had been done in the matter. Golwalla replied that a suit had been filed against them and the Punchayet had tried to offer them accommodation outside the colony, but could report nothing positive.

Noting that trustees, like company directors, never have an in-depth knowledge of what is happening (companies employ consultants — the BPP does not) and that the people who do the day-to-day work have not earned respect, Guzder stated that the trustees have decided to wipe the slate clean. "The whole concept of management (of the baugs) will change. (We must) ask the Task Force to ruminate over the managerial problems at the Wadia baugs."

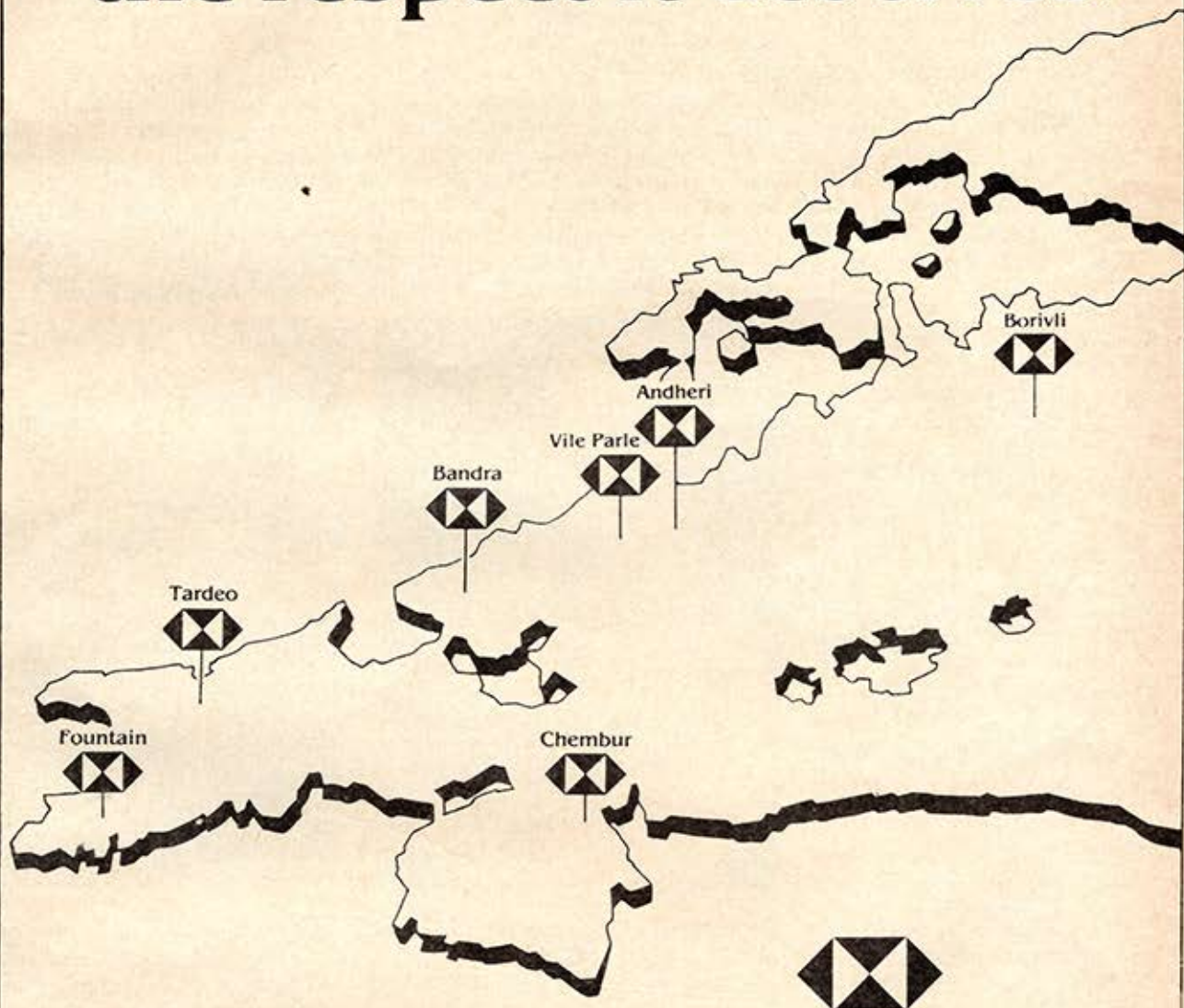
Although the Anjuman Committee had been invited after a lapse of four years, the poor attendance was a source of disappointment to the trustees—Dr Aspi Golwalla, Eruch Desai, Maneck Hodiwalla, Jamsheed Kanga, Homi Ranina, Naoroji Godrej and Jamshed Guzder— who noted that long weekends and Sunday mornings were best avoided when setting the date for such a meeting in future.

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# The elusive medals

Scholars question the delay in the award of the BPP's two gold medals.

Arnavaz S. Mama

Avesta-Pahlavi scholars, few as they are, have always enjoyed a special niche among the intellectual elite of the community. An even smaller group comprises the gold medalists—those who've stood first at the Bombay University's BA and MA examinations in Avesta-Pahlavi, thereby claiming—and receiving—the Sanjana and Parekh gold medals respectively. Joining that select band this year are Ms Arnavaz Chubb and Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia. But Chubb and Karanjia soon discovered that qualifying for a prize does not mean receiving it.

Dastur Dr Hormazdyar Mirza, principal of the Sir J.J. Madressa, the students' alma mater, is said to have written three letters to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP), informing the august body of Chubb's and Karanjia's claim to the Parekh and Sanjana gold medals awarded by the BPP, without evoking a response.

Initially unmindful of the delay, the duo's youthful enthusiasm propelled them into a few personal trips to the Punchayet's office. The information filtered through that the BPP was considering three options—a token reward of Rs 100, a gold plated medal or a silver medal. None of the options appealed to the winners. With each visit to the Punchayet, their frustration mounted and revived earlier memories.

"Going to the Punchayet to collect scholarships is one of the most degrading and disagreeable experiences of my life," noted Chubb (nee Patel), an ex-Parsi hand who forsook journalism in 1981 to learn Persian, Pazend, Pahlavi and Avesta, graduating as Bachelor of Arts from Bombay University with a first class in 1983 and as Master of Arts in 1985. A soft-spoken, hardworking idealist, Chubb related an earlier encounter when she had won a prize at the BA level (the gold medal for the BA is restricted to ordained priests only). A letter from the BPP had invited her to call at the office to collect it. A visit to the Punchayet was enough to undermine the joy of achievement.

"It takes you a minimum of two hours

to collect and you are made to give half a dozen specimen signatures. The silly thing called a prize (amounts to) Rs 13. You are supposed to buy a book and give them the voucher. What book can you get for Rs 13?

"Fortunately I found one from the Punchayet's list of books and I was told 'We'll have to find it in the godown—come next week.' They then said that the money goes to the author, so there's no bill, so you can't have this book. The *tamasha* took two hours and the whole morning was wasted... I got my scholarship almost in December, while

Dadar Madressa, Karanjia has decided to dedicate his life to the institution, even as Panthaki has done. Mirza, on his part, expects to groom Karanjia to take on the principalship of the J.J. Madressa as well.

If, in the years to come, Karanjia indeed becomes principal of the Dadar Madressa and the J.J. Madressa simultaneously, it might be one of the

*Below:*

(Left) Rooyintan Peer: claimed gold medals

(Right) Dadar Athornan Boarding Madressa

(Photo: Homiyar Mistry)



the results had been declared in June-July."

Karanjia is one of the finest representatives of the Athornan Boarding Madressa, Dadar, who has been walking away with virtually every trophy since 1978, and topped the merit list at St Xavier's College at the BA level. The son of Parvez Karanjia, the only mobed tending the Narielwalla Agiary fire in Broach, Gujarat, "Ramiyar (Karanjia) is a particularly bright student in recent years," who could aspire to any job in the secular world, attests Mirza. But, inspired as he is by his mentor, Ervad Rustom Panthaki, principal of the



very rare instances of a single principal for school and college level institutions.

There can be no doubt that the arrival of such committed young people put new heart into the two high priests, Mirza and Dastur Dr Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa—a closely knit team of professors at the J.J. Madressa, grooming their young charges with transparent dedication. Though the two priests maintained their traditional reserve, they shared the frustration of their wards. Questioned on their response to the Punchayet's long silence, their only answer was an ironic chuckle!

Shapur Desai's preface to the *Sir J.J. Madressa's Centenary Volume*, publi-



*Karanjia with mentor Rustom Panthaki  
(Right) Chubb: dimmed enthusiasm  
(Photos: Homyar Mistry)*



The medals are not presented every year, but only when Zoroastrian scholars of merit can claim them.

shed in 1961, notes that the last awardee of the Parekh medal was the late revered Dastur Khurshed Dabu, High Priest of the Wadia Atash Bahram. Enquiries revealed that the community's three scholar priests, Mirza, Jamasp-Asa and Dastur Dr Firoze Kotwal did not receive the medals. Mirza and Jamasp-Asa confirmed, "Unfortunately, we were not aware of the medals, though we used to get scholarships."

The forgotten medals shot back into scholastic consciousness when Dr Rooyintan Peer completed his graduation, standing first at the University in Avesta-Pahlavi in 1973 and a letter

from the Panchayet announced that he was awarded a medal—"There was no mention of the word 'gold,'" says Peer. Being away from Bombay at the time, the letter was read by Rooyintan's father Dr Peshotan Peer who was aware of the existence of the Sanjana gold medal. Peer Sr "went to the Panchayet, asked the clerk in charge, met the trustees... The last winner was Dr Peshotan Anklesaria in 1953, subsequently principal of the Cama Athornan Madressa in Andheri. After him Jamasp-Asa, Kotwal etc. had (qualified) but were not given (the medal)," noted Rooyintan Peer.

"At first (the Panchayet) said the cost was prohibitive. Then it was found that interest had accumulated heavily, so there were enough funds. Once the people at the top were consulted, there was no problem. Within a couple of months Dr Golwalla called me to the office and presented the medal. Commander Nariman Vatcha was joint secretary at that time," Peer added.

Peer noted that he was "quite elated" at receiving the medal—and subsequently the Parekh gold medal for the MA also. Peer, who was St Xavier's top student at the MA exam in 1975 admitted that he

*continued on page 37*

Come October, the Anjuman Committee representing approximately 3,500 Parsis of Poona will be electing a new board of trustees to the Poona Parsee Panchayat. Unlike as in Bombay, where elections take place when an individual trustee's term expires, Poona Parsis will have to elect an entirely new board of seven trustees.

The present trustees of the Poona Parsee Panchayat (PPP) are: Marzban Kaikobad (president), Dinshaw Anklesaria, Ms Tehmi Grant, Minoo Irani, Kersasp Irani, Minoo Dinshaw and Dr Rusi Marolia. Though not trustees, Homi Udachia and Rustom Dubash render honorary service to the PPP as secretary and treasurer respectively. The electioneering and selection of candidates etc is still to begin.

The PPP was conceived in 1951 in the clinic of Dr Edulji Coyajee, a res-



# In trust for Poona Parsis

Poona's Parsi population has increased and so have the problems of the Poona Parsee Panchayat.

Parinaz Toddywalla

pected resident of Poona. When Coyajee was having discussions on community matters with some other Parsis — Aspandiyad Jassawala, Rustom Patell, Maneck Mody, Ardeshir Sethna, Rustom Irani and Maneck Anklesaria — they deliberated on the possibility of forming a central administrative body for the Parsis, explained former PPP trustee Ms Homai Pudumjee.

[When Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, V.N. Gadgil presided over a social function organized by the PPP on February 22, 1986 to greet delegates of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (who had assembled in Poona for their two-day deliberations), he remembered Dr Coyajee's selfless service. As a very sick child he was treated by Coyajee who, realizing the family's financial difficulties (Gadgil's father was then a political prisoner), immediately condoned his usual fees.]

Until 1951, "no common institution existed to voice the combined needs for the community's welfare," notes an official press release from the PPP. "There were 25 or more institutions under independent management for

religious, economic, educational and other purposes. However, due to lack of coordination amongst them, the desired results were not obtained. In order to overcome these difficulties, some members of the community decided to establish (the PPP) and a meeting of the anjuman was accordingly held on February 25, 1951 in the Petit Hall and in that meeting it was unanimously decided to frame a constitution for the Parsis of Poona."

The constitution of the PPP is patterned on that of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, with some slight modifications, explained Pervez Avari, industrial engineer at TELCO, who takes an active interest in the affairs of the PPP. The seven trustees of the PPP are elected by the Anjuman Committee comprising a fixed representation of four registers, plus the Donors' Register whose members having paid Rs 5,000 and over are all represented on the Anjuman Committee. The four registers include Register A comprising those who have donated Rs 1,000 and over, with a representation of 15 seats; Register B with a representation of 15 seats includes those who have paid life



membership dues of Rs 300 or have donated Rs 100 and pay annual dues of Rs 8; Register C with a representation of 20 seats, comprises members who pay annual dues of Rs 15; and Register D with 25 seats on the Anjuman Committee includes members who pay an annual subscription of Rs 5.

The PPP has also devised a system of annual rotation of its presidents such that each of the seven trustees on the board can avail of a chance of

heading the body for a year. But according to some critics, this system has created "ego problems" preventing the trust board from functioning as a team. The allegation is that every new

president faces the same problem of non-cooperation from his teammates.

When certain present and past trustees of the PPP were asked to highlight the main achievements during their tenure, each of them referred to the donations made and received from the 11 PPP funds, earmarked for particular objectives; to the four ghambars held every year; and to a survey of the Poona Parsis conducted in mid 1984.

In addition to the General Fund

dokhmas and two bunglis. The dokhmas, facing each other on opposite hillocks, are now used alternately depending on the renovations and cleaning operations necessitated. History has it that the second dokhma was built by the Pudumjees who were debarred after a family rivalry with the Patels (the other most important family in those days) from entering the latter's dokhma. Of the two ravan-ni bunglis, the one on Dastur Meher Road, being in the heart of the city, is found more convenient for use. The Kayani Bungli, donated by the family to the Parsi community, has a picturesque setting, built atop the hillock within a permitted distance from the dokhma. Though the Bungli is well-furnished with two bedrooms, a hall and a kitchen, and a permanent caretaker residing there, the Bungli was apparently in disuse, if the calendar on the wall was any indication to go by. Except for certain ceremonies like the Farvardin *roj*, Farvardin *mah* jashan which are performed at the Kayani Bungli, at most other times, people are reluctant to go out of the way despite PPP trustee Dinshaw Anklesaria, always providing them bus service free of cost.

There are no full-time khandhias in Poona. Whilst continuing with their regular jobs, when summoned, the khandhias also look after the post-death rites, though the PPP only pays them a nominal monthly stipend. The PPP however holds the strings to several funds — Nassessalar Fund, Dokhma Fund, Doongerwadi Kathi Fund, Rawanni Bungli Maintenance Fund (D.M. Road), Matador Harse Repairs/Replacement Fund, Late Ruston N. Kayani Building and Hall Maintenance (Nibhave) Fund — which are expended on deserving causes, notes the annual report of the PPP.

All the three agiaries in Poona are within walking distance of each other, though the narrow lanes and the congestion of the neighborhood make the journey appear longer. The Patel Agiary under the supervision of Dastur Hormazdji Noshirwan Dastur, high priest of Poona and the Deccan, has a select clientele. In the cantonment area is the Sir J.J. Agiary whose adjacent open lands make it an ideal venue for Parsi weddings, navjotes and ghambars. (Ghambars, be they exclusively for males, females or for entire families, are a regular feature in Poona

Left: Kayani Bungli

Below: painting on glass panel at J.J. Agiary

Far below: open community lands at Lullanagar



which has a corpus of over five lakh rupees, some of the other funds within the ambit of the PPP are: Anaj Fund, Education Fund, Medical Relief Fund, and the Zoroastrian Residential Building Fund. The book value of the assets of the PPP are in the region of Rs 22 lakhs, informs Dubash, and are mainly invested in fixed deposits.

Among the main assets of the PPP are the 44 acres of open land adjacent to the Doongerwadi at Lullanagar, gifted by the late Aspandiar Irani in 1953. The original trust deed provided for a sale of eight acres from the total 44, with a condition that the proceeds be utilized for the construction of a bungli and/or tenements for the poor on the remaining 36-acre area. But with the controversy surrounding the sale of eight acres remaining unsolved till today, there is no progress on the construction front, except for a half completed gate allegedly built by a non-Parsi encroacher who was attempting to obstruct the only motorable road leading to the dokhma.

Though on an average there are only 60 funerals a year in Poona according to Avari's estimates, there are two

Until 1951 no common institution existed to voice the combined needs for the community's welfare in Poona.

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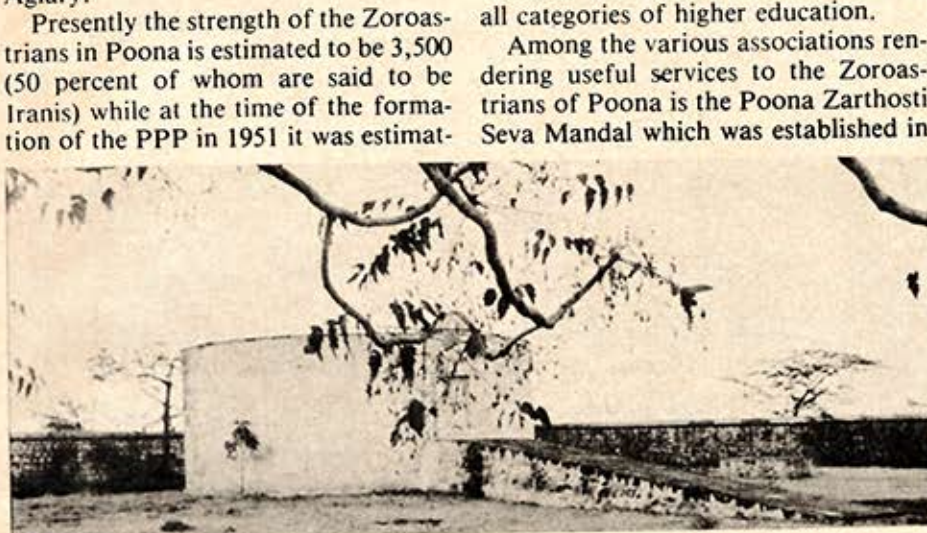
Self-reliance is both a means and an end. For Godrej it is the essence of independence.



when free meals are served to all Zoroastrians.) On such occasions, the catering is always the prerogative of Marazban Dorabjee. In the heart of the city is the Nanapet Agiary, also known as the Gaam-ni Agiary or the Anjuman-ni Agiary.

Presently the strength of the Zoroastrians in Poona is estimated to be 3,500 (50 percent of whom are said to be Iranis) while at the time of the formation of the PPP in 1951 it was estimated

at 1,500. To a certain extent, the increase in the number of Parsis is attributed to the influx from Africa and other areas. According to Ms Freya Wadia who worked on the findings of the 1984 survey of Parsis in Poona, 40 percent had an income of over Rs 2,000 per month and at the other end 6.13 percent had an average income of less than Rs 500 per month. The size of the households varied from 1.98 persons in the lowest income group to 3.36 persons in the highest income group, the average being 3.21. A total of 197 households replied in the affirmative when asked "Are you in need of residential accommodation?" Wadia wrote in her report, "A number of households were in dire need of accommodation as they were living in servants' quarters of old houses, stables and garages. There were families living in a dharamshala and lodges in the city who had been unable to obtain accommodation within their income limits." While 40 percent of the respondents owned bungalows or flats, 56.86 percent lived in rented accommodation.



*Dokhma at Lullanagar*

years of age while 25 percent were over 60. The occupational break-up indicated that 43.09 percent were in service, 19.69 in business, 10.41 professionals and 26.81 retired. According to the 1984 survey findings, compared to females, males are better educated in all categories of higher education. Among the various associations rendering useful services to the Zoroastrians of Poona is the Poona Zarthosti Seva Mandal which was established in 1940 and continues to organize jumble sales and disburse amounts from the Grain Fund and the Education and Medical Aid Fund. The Poona Medical Foundation which runs the Ruby Hall Clinic founded in 1959, has a majority of Parsis on its trust board, chaired by Dr K.B. Grant. The Athornan Aid Trust, Poona, is the renamed version of the Poona Mobeds' Fund established in 1966 to give monetary, physical and moral assistance to mobeds and their families. There is also the F.B. Boywala Kamdar Welfare Fund started in Poona in 1982 to improve the conditions of workers at the agiaries, Towers of Silence and rawan-ni bunglies.

There are two Zoroastrian youth associations in Poona working on almost parallel objectives: Zoroastrian Association of Poona and the United Zoroastrian Youth Association. The youngsters help as volunteers during important community meets, besides planning their own programs like camps, get-togethers and other social welfare activities.

In the field of education, Parsis have made a substantial contribution in Poona. Though not many Parsis avail of the educational instruction offered at the Sardar Dastur Schools and the J.N. Petit Technical High School at Poona, these two institutions will soon be celebrating their centenary. Under the banner of Sardar Dastur Schools, having a strength of 2,500 students, are the Sardar Dastur Noshervan Girls' High School, Sardar Dastur Hoshang Boys' High School and Sardar Dastur Nursery and Primary Schools, with separate hostel facilities for boys and girls. Beginning as a Parsi orphanage, the J.N. Petit Technical High School now has 1,140 students on its roll including 144 boarders who are attracted to the school for its technical instruction imparted in the form of engineering science, workshop technology and machine drawing. Located in a select area of Poona, the school has two well-endowed playgrounds occupying an area of 16 acres.

The founding members of the National Model High School, B.J. Medical College, Ness Wadia College of Commerce, Nowrojee Wadia College of Arts, and Cusrow Wadia Technical Institute belonged to such eminent Parsi families as Jeejeebhoy, Wadia, Petit, Nagarvala and Dastoor. There are six Parsi professors today commanding a lot of respect at the Symbiosis Law College, Ranade Institute, Wadia College and B.J. Medical College.

But not content to rest on past laurels, president Kaikobad feels, "What is important is not what lies behind us, which is minor as compared to what lies before us."

But not content to rest on past laurels, president Kaikobad feels, "What is important is not what lies behind us, which is minor as compared to what lies before us."



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# New site for an old bite

Operating from its new premises off Hughes Road, the Patuck Institute awaits better patronage.

Parinaz Toddywalla

"Enter Khareghat Colony via the green gate. Then turn left and after walking past a few garages you'll find our stall." Though the directions given by Ms Aloo Colah, managing trustee of the R.H. Patuck Institute were explicit, one could rely on one's nose to lead one to the place. The signboard, a little off the entrance to Khareghat Colony on Hughes Road, was an indication that Patuck's had acquired a new abode after years of catering to the palates of

middle class Parsis in the Grant Road locality.

The newly constructed structure, which houses the main outlet and central kitchen, has a utilitarian appearance. The whitewashed walls, the ladies at work in their green checked uniforms, the goodies on display at the counter, and the godown where the large weighing scales precisely monitor the raw materials at the time of purchase and consumption were a reminder of Colah's words, "The Institute is running for our workers who can't find employment elsewhere. They put in their best efforts knowing that whatever profits accrue to the Institute is in their own interest, as they are the ultimate beneficiaries."

The division of labor and benefits is

*Left and far below: Patuck's new premises reached via the Khareghat Colony entrance*

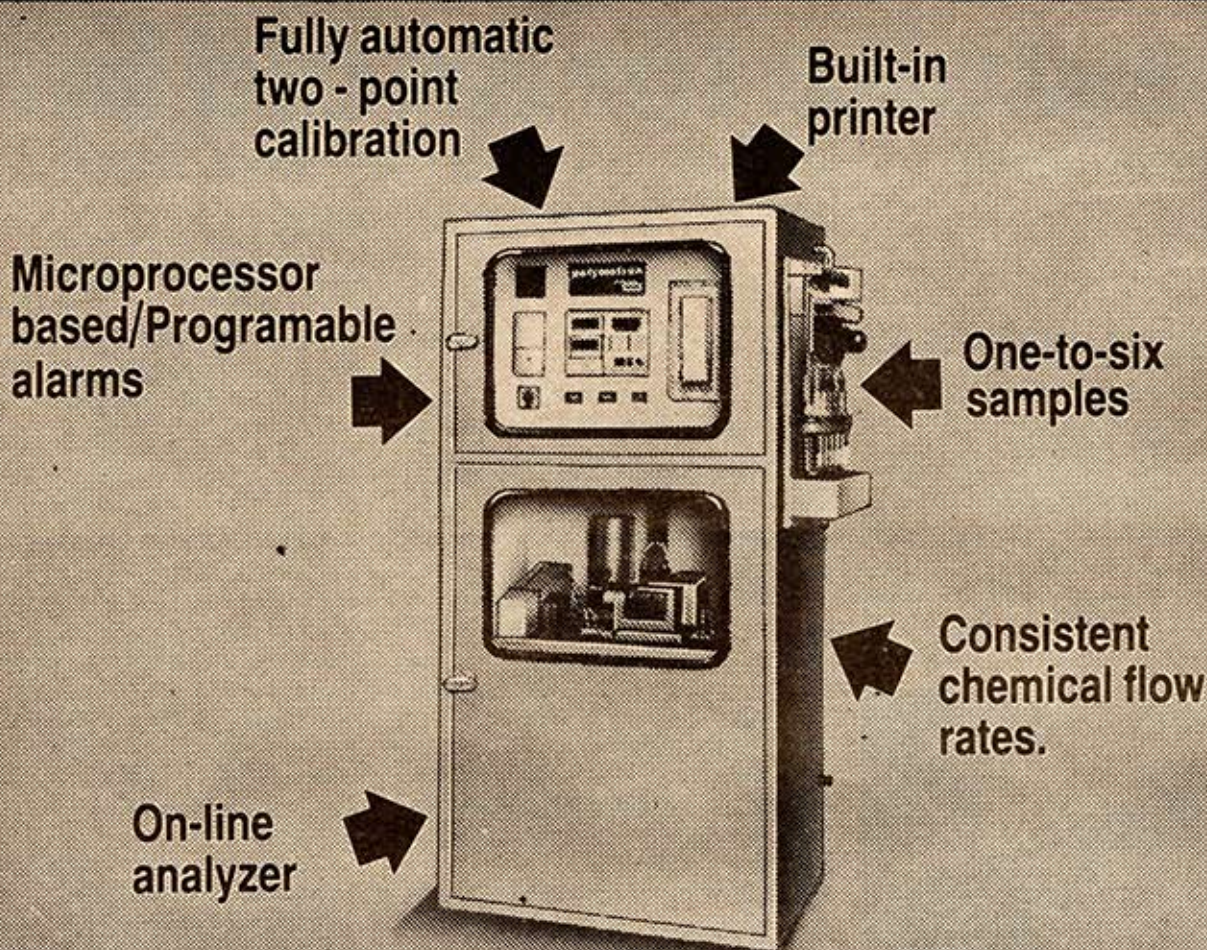
*Below: Patuck's central kitchen*  
(Photos: Homiyar Mistry)

based on the principle 'From each according to his capacity to each according to his needs.' On the confectionery side, the ladies work in subgroups depending on their aptitude, the day's menu and the ingredients that have to be planned a day or week in advance. A cyclostyled version of the menu for the month, hung on the wall within easy access of all, regulates the routine of the workers. While some were busy kneading the *bhakhra* dough, others were absorbed in the mango *khajas*, yet another group was preoccupied with the jam puffs, some older workers were seeding the dates for future use and on the central table, people were rolling *patrels*.

All the eats are prepared at the central kitchen at Khareghat Colony. By 9.30 in the morning, the first taxi is loaded with the food stuff to be carried to the two other outlets — a rented shop in the Grant Road Station building, opposite the New Alice Bakery,



"Since our shop is off Hughes Road, we find that people don't just drop by..."



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and their premises on the junction of Hamam Street and Meadows Street. By 12 noon, meals reach different stalls, where they are kept warm in *bain-maries* (stainless steel double boilers). Sending luncheon boxes has proved quite convenient for customers and quite rewarding for the Institute because by 1 pm the stock at Hughes Road is exhausted and by 3 pm, the officegoers in the Fort area have refuelled their bellies. "To avoid disappointment, clients should place their meal orders in advance," advises Colah.

"We also send very good household meals," informed Colah. "In our

*Below and right:*

*Employees working on different specialties*



though our rates are very reasonable, people don't just drop by unless they want something specific. Our specialties are *patrel*, *dar ni pori*, *bhakhra*, chicken crust patties and mutton cutlets, judging from the demand." Colah admitted that after the initial transplantation shock, their sales are now picking up.

The shift from the Sleater Road premises was necessitated on March 5, 1986 because "way back in 1968 we had been requested to surrender our rented premises... the Municipality needed the space for a municipal market. In 1968 when we approached Lady Hirabai Cowasjee Jehangir, then chairperson of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP) for an alternative site, she showed me this (Khareghat Colony) place. We've had to spend a considerable amount on these new premises. By forming a fund raising committee under the chairmanship of Lady Jerbai Mody, we collected Rs 1,10,000. We also appealed to other trusts like the Sorabjee Behramjee Bhabha Charities, the A.H. Wadia Charities and M.N. Wadia Charities who gave us substantial donations... For the new place we'll be paying a very nominal lease on a yearly basis, the agreement of which has yet to be finalized with the (BPP)."

"The institute is running for our workers who can't find employment elsewhere."



workers to prepare the confectionery items and to service our stalls.

"All our workers are well looked after and their basic needs and problems are given sympathetic consideration by the management. We never have any problem of leftover food because workers may take the excess food home, along with their meals for the night," informed Colah.

At her residence, Colah was studying the Institute's menu for the month when *Parsiana* called on her on April 18, 1986. She recalled how in 1963-64, when they were planning to close down the Institute because of its heavy losses, she decided to try her hand at it. Her previous experience as honorary supervisor of the confectionery department at the Ratan Tata Institute enabled Colah to raise the turnover of the Institute from Rs 20,000 a month to Rs 1,20,000 a month. "We try to make it self-supporting," she added humbly, giving credit to the advice of her friends, especially Zal Contractor of the Committee for Economic Revival (CER).

The Institute was started by her mother-in-law's *kaka*, Rustomba H. Patuck in 1939, after whom her mother-in-law's sister Dinbai Patuck continued to run the show till 1963-64.

Presently on the trust board are Jehangoo S. Khambatta, Ms Vahbiz H. Shroff and Colah who is managing trustee.

Though the procuring of several licences and the various other teething problems arising from the shift seem to have tired Colah (who had to give up her Time and Talents activities and her passion for bridge), after a few months she plans to start renovation work on the mezzanine floor of their shop at Meadows Street, to maximize returns there.

Presently Colah is caught in a cross-current, unsure whether to increase production at Patuck's in view of inconsistent demand, yet unhappy to turn away customers when the eats are sold out. If more Parsis on their way home from work, would drop by the Hughes Road stall (which is open until 7 pm) instead of waiting on that very road for the signals to turn green, Colah feels her dilemma would be resolved.

regular meals, which cost just Rs 450 per month, we send two dishes in the afternoon and two dishes at night. We also give a la carte service where the rates would vary each day, depending on what you order.

"Sixteen items are cooked on a regular basis every day. In addition we offer a choice of four to five items on the confectionery side, and a variety of six to seven cooked dishes daily. Since our shop is off Hughes Road we find that

said Colah who was very appreciative of the "unstinted support" of the BPP trustees, especially chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla.

"Out of a total workforce of 48, 30 are Parsis. While the confectionery section is looked after exclusively by the ladies, the general cooking section is manned by males and supervised by women. At the managerial level are those who have retired from more remunerative services. We do need Parsi

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# Resuscitating a dy(e)ing art

Nelly Sethna writes about Kalamkari, an art form she revived.

Homi J. Rogers

*Kalamkari* by Nelly H. Sethna. Illustrations by Roshan Mullan. Published by Mapin International Inc, New York, USA, 1985. Pp: 94. Fully illustrated. Price: Rs 195

Kalamkari, to indulge in a pun, is a dy(e)ing art. A conglomeration of two Persian words, *kalam* meaning "pen," and *kari* meaning "work," kalamkari, literally pen-work, is the craft of painting (and in later years, printing) on fabrics, with a brush-like pen, shaped and pointed at the end to form a nib, with a compact ball of hair above to store the liquid dye.

For centuries together, kalamkari flourished as a form of visual art in India, both decorative and functional. Fragments of dyed cloth have been found at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, and trade is indicated with Egypt and Greece, from fragments unearthed there. The art, however, reached its zenith under the Mughals in India who commissioned these paintings as tent hangings, or more specifically, for the decoration of screens which were used to surround the tents and give privacy to the occupants. It was the Mughals too, who gave the art its present name.

With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, however, the trade link with Europe was broken. Demand ceased drastically, and by the early years of the present century, kalamkari had slumped. The craftsmen moved on to other occupations to keep their hearths burning. At Kalahasti, one of the main centers of kalamkari from early times, only five families continued to have at least one member practicing the craft. And in Masulipatnam, whose hand painted cloth was popular in Greece even before the time of Christ, "craftsmen's houses lay silent with piles of unused blocks covered in dust and cobwebs."

To Nelly Sethna goes the credit of sweeping off the cobwebs, revitalizing the ancient art, and creating a consistent demand for it. Sethna, who was

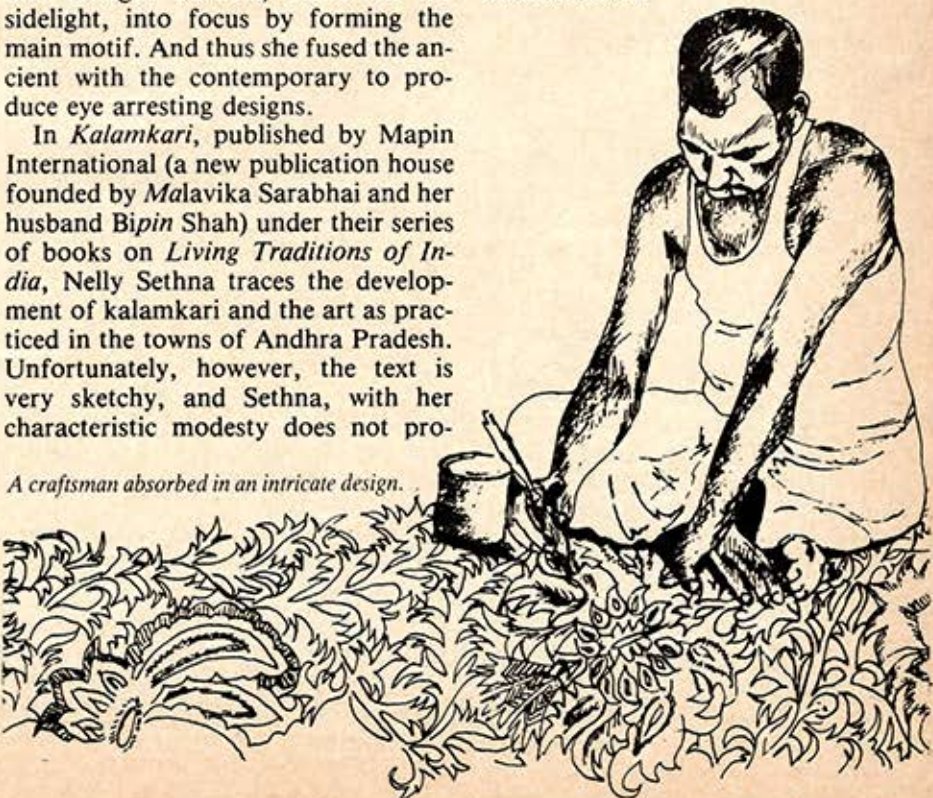
enraptured by kalamkari when she regularly observed the Indian collection while working on her thesis at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, got actively involved with the craft after her visit to Masulipatnam around 1970. She was saddened by what she saw: the workers had lost the imagination or will to create something new from their ancient tradition. The art was static. Armed with the Homi Bhabha Fellowship (awarded to her in 1972), Sethna set out to rejuvenate the industry, or should we say, the art. She worked closely with the crafts people in both centers of Andhra Pradesh (Kalahasti and Masulipatnam), and slowly but surely transformed some of the faded and weary fabrics. She searched for more contemporary layouts. She unearthed many old blocks which had fallen into disuse. She removed the jarring contrast between the shocking white background and colored motifs. She brought borders, earlier in the sidelight, into focus by forming the main motif. And thus she fused the ancient with the contemporary to produce eye arresting designs.

In *Kalamkari*, published by Mapin International (a new publication house founded by Malavika Sarabhai and her husband Bipin Shah) under their series of books on *Living Traditions of India*, Nelly Sethna traces the development of kalamkari and the art as practiced in the towns of Andhra Pradesh. Unfortunately, however, the text is very sketchy, and Sethna, with her characteristic modesty does not pro-

vide the layman with the nitty-gritty of the labor undertaken by her to bring about this revival. Today, the work units at Masulipatnam are flooded with much more demand than they can cope with, and the exquisite designs meet with the approval of a variety of tastes and aesthetic sensibilities, as a result of Sethna's contribution. Yet — contrary to the promise in Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay's foreword — "the fascinating tale of how she (Sethna) quickened every line, made every curve pulsate with a new life, without mutilating the exquisite beauty of the basic design" remains untold.

Primarily, however, the book is a visual monograph, and the textiles have been reproduced in their true colors, reflecting the mellowness of the vegetable dyes. The credit for this excellent reproduction goes to Roshan Mullan, who has been with Sethna since 1969, and worked for over the last 15 years on the loom, weaving wall hangings, floor coverings, tapestries and upholsteries.

With visuals that speak with the barest of commentary, *Kalamkari* is an excellent book for craftspeople and designers. It is however, partly because of its limited contents, by way of text and more, because of its steep price (Rs 195) that *Kalamkari* serves more as a coffee-table book than a volume giving information of an ancient Indian tradition and its resurrection to suit modern times.



A craftsman absorbed in an intricate design.

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*Zoroastrianism: Religion of Good Thought, Good Word, Good Deed* edited by Dr Vishwanath Pandey, S-A 16, Bangur Nagar, Goregaon West, Bombay 400090. Pp: 68. Price: Rs 20.

Frequently, misgivings are expressed by the laity in our community about the erudition of our priestly class. Doubts are raised regarding the education of the coming generation in religious matters.

While the method of oral training has become practically extinct, and the coming generation may not receive their education — particularly on the Zoroastrian faith — from the mouths of their priests and elders, a very welcome trend has been ushered in, of preserving for posterity the wisdom of the scholars, and particularly the athravans, by persuading or commissioning them to write essays and books on different aspects of the religion. The twenty-first century Zoroastrian, in the absence of a guru, can refer to books published, especially during the past five years, like *A catechism of Zoroastrianism* by Dastur Kotwal and James Boyd, or the Parsi Punchayet commissioned three-part treatise by Ervad Ratanshah Motafram, to quote just two.

To the category of the above two works, add *Zoroastrianism*, a slim (68pp) volume edited and published by Dr Vishwanath Pandey. The fountainhead for this work may seem bewildering, but Dr Pandey, who has been publishing *The Orient*, a respected quarterly journal on the arts, philosophy and religion, had dedicated a special issue on Zoroastrianism, which, "although a comparatively less(er) known religion is very important from many points of view." He commissioned leading dasturs and priests to write for this special number. The hard cover edition of the magazine is now available in a no-frills, typewritten-off-set book incorporating many Sanskrit and Pahlavi words, characters and diacritical marks.

What distinguishes *Zoroastrianism* from the many other books on the religion, is the choice of subjects, and the manner in which they have been handled by the contributors. Nine essays on seven

different, yet vital aspects of our religion have been comprehensively dealt with in this little book.

Ervad M.F. Kanga has written on the sacred scriptures of the Zoroastrians. A gist of the prayers said when performing the Ijashni, and the Vendidad ("it is the Leviticus of the Parsis") are provided. Further, these and other prayers, including the Gathas, are dated on the basis of their linguistic evidence and contents.

Dastur Nowrooz D. Minochehr-Homji, Head Priest of the Faslis, and Dastur Hormazdyar Mirza have contributed pieces on the Zoroastrian way of life, quoting from the scriptures. There is a freshness of approach to this much discussed theme, especially in Minochehr-Homji's article.

Faribourz Nariman and Dastur K.M. JamaspAsa have written on fire. While

An important strain that runs through the book is the similarity between the Vedic philosophies and practices, and Zoroastrianism.

Nariman is more scholarly in his approach, and draws parallels to the Vedic traditions of fire (Agni worship). JamaspAsa breaks equally new ground with his interpretation of fire as a religious symbol:

"What symbol is there of truth and virtue higher than light, the aspect and companion of fire? The beams (of fire) are never in straight lines, but always curved. Curved flowing lines according to all great artists are always used to express infinity, grace and mystery, while straight lines represent the finite... The devotee

sees the burning wood with its dark core. It is the great law of polarity: the dark mixed with the bright, the evil mixed with the good..."

JamaspAsa assuredly puts to rest the much misquoted and misunderstood fact that Parsis are fire-worshippers.

Yet another important contribution by a priest included in this work is by Ervad Rustom N. Panthaki, principal of the Athornan Boarding Madressa, Dadar, who writes on the white hair of the *varasiji* (albino bull) and its significance in Zoroastrianism. The article imbibes within its framework Panthaki's deep knowledge of our rites and rituals — not just their practice, but also their philosophy, and the science behind them.

Ervad Parvez Bajan describes some important Parsi ceremonies like the jashan and navjote. However, his interpretation that jashan comes from the Persian word *chash* — to taste, to eat — from the fact that all jashans end in a kind of communion, and navjote is derived from *nav* meaning 'new' and *jote* the 'officiating priest,' could be disputed.

Two other very interesting — and controversial — articles complete this handbook. Dr Homi E. Eduljee writes on the date of Zoroaster, a subject to which he has devoted much study. The article convincingly demolishes the commonly held belief that Zoroaster preached over 8,000 years ago, and places the date of the Prophet as around 1,700 to 1,400 B.C.

The other article is by Adi Doctor, who with the knowledge of Ilm-e-Kshnoom, as propounded mainly by Dr Framroze S. Chiniwala, puts forth the contention that the winged human figure to be found even today on the facades of Parsi fire-temples is neither a representation of Ahura Mazda, nor a Farohar, as commonly referred to, but the *Kehrpa* (pious thoughts) of a spiritually elevated person, which the ancient Iranian king or paladin was. Similarly, the winged bulls, guarding the entrance at many agiaries, is not a visual aid borrowed from the Assyrians to add impact to temple architecture, or a figure of worship representing the animal kingdom, but the *Kehrpa* of Bahman Ameshaspand (Gopat Shah), as symbolically described in the *Mino Kherad*. Gopat Shah, in Zoroastrian cosmology, sits near the sea (*Zareh*), performs the Ijashni ceremony, and pours the consecrated waters into the sea to destroy noxious creatures. In other words, the winged bull constantly stands

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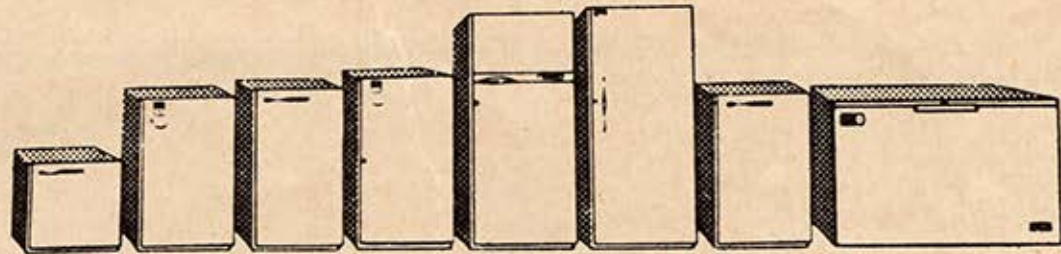
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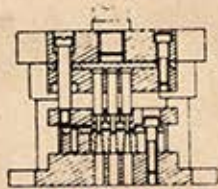
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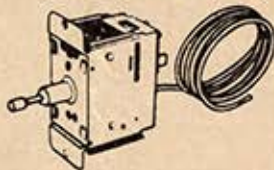
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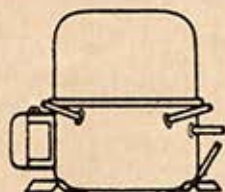
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guard against the wicked energy or force in nature.

An important strain that runs through the book is the similarity drawn by the authors between the Vedic philosophies and practices and Zoroastrianism. Practically all the contributors in the course of their articles have brought out

the close links between the two schools of ancient thought, as manifested in literature, customs and rituals. It is indeed gratifying to note that our priests are not only well-versed in Zoroastrianism, but also in drawing parallels and establishing links with 'sister' civilizations and thoughts.

Homi J. Rogers

## Not so pen-etrating

A layman's guide to the newspaper world.

*What Journalism is all about* by C. Northcote Parkinson, M.V. Kamath and M.K. Rustomji. Published by India Book House Pvt Ltd, Bombay, 1986. Pp: 123 + x. Price: Rs 25.

There is a story—undeniably apocryphal—of a cub reporter sent to cover a political meeting, who returned to his news editor with the complaint that he had nothing to write on, as someone shot the politician dead before he could start his speech.

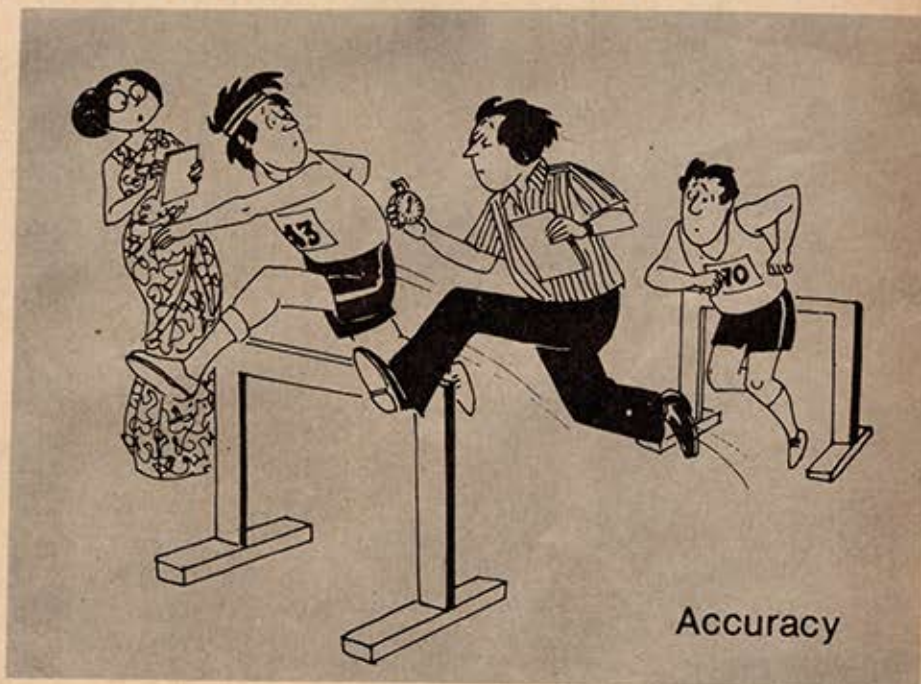
For that reporter, and those of his ilk (if any) who aspire to a career in journalism, Rustomji's new book ends on page four: "no plastic surgeon can give you a nose for news." But, the Parkinson-Kamath-Rustomji trio, can provide some helpful guidelines. Rus-

However, in *What Journalism is all about*, the trinity have failed to set Fleet Street, or whatever be its Indian equivalent, afire. The book is hardly—as claimed by its publishers—"a dynamic and integrated viewpoint on all aspects of journalism." The text is too scant, and even as an introduction for beginners, the book does not give

the core of the book, as they proceed to detail the workings in a newspaper office, and outside it. Unfortunately, the jobs are not as cut-and-dry, as Rustomji and his illustrator Halbe would have us believe. The editor is not a pipe-smoking individual whose duties begin and end with the commissioning of stories and the writing of a leader article. A newspaper editor especially, who is responsible for pouring over proofs, leaves his desk for the night only after putting the paper 'to sleep.'

Similarly, the subeditor, a person not much known to the layman, has much more importance and responsibility than credited by the authors. The book describes the work of subeditors, chief subeditors, and news editors, within a total of just 85 lines: too meager to give a proper understanding of their functions. It is, however, heartening to note that this species of the journalist family has been recognized, and the debt owed to them in making a newspaper readable brought, however scantily, to the attention of the lay-

The editor is not a pipe-smoking individual, whose duties begin and end with the commissioning of stories.



tomji, of course, knows best. With an effective style of presentation, that has marked all his earlier works, he attempts to fuse the combined wisdom of his collaborators, C. Northcote Parkinson, the management doyen and consultant, and M.V. Kamath, the celebrated Indian editor and columnist, and author of two best-selling books on journalism, *Professional Journalism* and the more recent, *Behind the By-line*.

an adequate account of the intricacies, and the pleasures, of being in the newspaper business.

The book is divided into five chapters. The first is an introduction, attempting to answer questions like what is journalism, how does one qualify to be a journalist, and what skills or additional knowledge help in practicing this profession.

The next three chapters constitute

man.

Some of the most crisp guidelines in the book come from the make-up of what constitutes news. The mix has been perfected by most Indian publications, which provide their readers with stories in practically all the 20 categories suggested by the authors. Probably the Indian psyche, accustomed to having a thali, needs equally varied food for thought. Kamath, a reporter for

long, has contributed much, we presume, to the comprehensive manner in which this aspect has been treated.

In addition to news stories, the authors also suggest feature articles, giving capsule histories and Indian examples, that help in understanding, if not exactly writing, them. A list of dos and don'ts, including the clichéd "do not use clichés," has also been included. Two interesting notes are on "developmental journalism" and "writing for radio/television." Both these are very informative and appropriate for our contemporary times, when the function of news is changing, as well as the media for imparting it.

The last chapter is reserved for the special correspondent — the qualities he must possess, the way he must conduct himself, and the pressures he is

subject to. One suspects that this breed of journalist was awarded a chapter to himself, as against an editor, about whom most aspiring journalists and laymen would like to learn more, because of Kamath's experience in this field, being for years a foreign correspondent of *The Times of India*.

Restricted thus within a narrow framework, Rustomji omits many aspects of the trade. A section on printing and production would have been appreciated as some knowledge of this is essential for every journalist, who then learns to meet his deadlines, and be totally involved in the making of the paper. Similarly, a small note on copy editing, and proofreading with the signs frequently used, would have added to the contents. Photojournalism has also been sadly neglected. Further,

with the growth of specialized publications, a note on feature writing for magazines, and the opportunity for freelancers, could have been included.

The bump and grind of the media world is too complicated to compress within 123 pages. *What Journalism is all about* is not, as claimed by its publishers, "an excellent and unrivalled introduction to the subject." Buy a teach yourself series book on journalism instead. It may not make you chuckle. But then journalism is no laughing matter, Halbe's delightful illustrations notwithstanding. The layman may enjoy, and probably get a fair introduction into the world of journalism, but the practitioner, student, or aspirant, will fail to be impressed.

Homi J. Rogers

## Journey down memory lane

Farrukh Dhondy recalls his adolescence in Poona.

*Poona Company* by Farrukh Dhondy. First published by Fontana Lions, 1985. Pp: 149. Price: Rs 14.90

Like Salman Rushdie, the much-acclaimed Booker-prize winning novelist, Farrukh Dhondy is yet another expatriate who has carved a niche for himself in the literary world abroad. Of late, success has been coming his way in large dollops: his new play *Vigilantes* has opened to rave reviews in London, and his television serial, *Tandoori Nights* continues to draw critical acclaim and public appreciation.

Probably, this snowballing success has prompted Fontana Lions to reissue Dhondy's collection of nine short stories about his childhood days in Pune, then Poona. The book *Poona Company* was first published in 1980, and is now available in a neat, handy edition, at a very fair price of just Rs 15, in India.

*Poona Company* is a delightful collection, abounding in genial wit and clever turn of words ("Bombay was a city in which people minded their own business and had plenty of it"). It harkens back to one's childhood and youth, and if one was fortunate to be Pune-bred, it recreates tellingly the sounds and smells of this not-so-sleepy

cantonment, especially its Parsi quarters around Sachpir Street and Dastur Meher Road.

Dhondy's work is peopled with characters he loved and admired, whom he has sketched with all their quirks and eccentricities with a rare affection mingled with perception. There's *Soli Kolmi* (prawn), Sarbatwala Chowk's chief bookie, so called

Dhondy's work is peopled with characters he loved and admired.

because he was constantly bent with a crooked back; Eddie the Inventor, who claimed to have cracked the code by which the Russians were relaying the New York cotton figures through Sputnik; Dr Minocher Toot, self-styled inventor, philanthropist and industrialist, who also brought out a scandalous rag, *Synagogue Spotlight*, containing all the gossip and filth and rumor that had circulated around the Parsi community in the previous month.

There are just as many non-Parsis in

Dhondy's adolescent world too — all equally strange characters — like Ajit Gandhi, with a penchant for punting; a Sardarji who brings a woman for his neighbor, so that he too can enjoy on his birthday; a Catholic, Confession D'Souza, who rebels against the Church, and takes up cudgels for mixed marriages when he falls in love with a rich Muslim girl.

The backdrop for the characters is the same: Sarbatwala Chowk, with its many teahouses, bakeries, and bicycle shops. Within them, and in the narrow winding streets outside are enacted the small dramas — sometimes funny, occasionally tragic, which Dhondy vividly brings to life in the book. The stories are uniformly good, and though none can claim to have an O. Henry sting, they make for an interesting read. Particularly outstanding are *Black Dog*, a tale with a tinge of the macabre; and *Dinsy*, a humorous narration of the ill-requited love of Dinsy, a constant SSC failure, and Miss Bapsi ("the plain and orthodox Parsi favorite name") Kohla, the proprietress of a typing class.

Dhondy is a master storyteller. He fleshes out his characters with a rare and innate skill, and hangs a tale rumbustiously around them. The humor is occasionally bawdy, like in Bapsy Sidhwa's *The Crow Eaters*, but then Parsis are colorful people! At less than Rs 2 a story, the book is a steal! Do buy a copy. The streets of Pune, when you visit them next, will seem more alive, more lived-in.

Homi J. Rogers

# A zest for living

The quality of life in defense more than compensates for the hazards, says Major General Ardeshir Minwalla.

Niloofer J. Madon

"To eat well, live well and save enough," join the army, advised Major General Ardeshir Minwalla. Speaking to the executive council of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, in Poona, Minwalla discounted worries of parents who seek to dissuade the child from enrolling in the defense services by saying, "*Dikra army na join kar — mari jasé* (Don't join the army son, you may die)."

Minwalla noted matter-of-factly that any job could be dangerous.

It is what the army has to offer a person which makes a job in the defense services so attractive. "The quality of life in defense is a subject I can talk on for days," said Minwalla. "It grooms you into a mature, balanced, thinking individual... After the grueling training and exams you come out an independent, self-reliant, confident human being... It makes a complete man out of you and gives you social and professional status and the type of culture which makes you perceive things differently and in better light. The wife too is influenced by the army," added Minwalla, explaining how the home environment is positively affected, instilling in the children "the zest to do better."

Gross income in the army ranges from Rs 2,300 for a lieutenant to Rs 7,000 for the chief of army staff with yearly increments, so there is no fear of stagnation, said Minwalla. Food up to a point is free, and housing is provided. Health and medical attention is nearly free, the officer patient paying only Rs 3.50 per day in hospital. With an insurance cover of two lakh rupees and a premium of only Rs 200 a month, insurance schemes in the army are attractive, informed Minwalla adding that when the officer retires, he carries home two to four lakhs of rupees. Even the pension structure is good, ranging

from Rs 1,400 per month for a major to Rs 2,800 for a lieutenant general and the chief.

However, not everyone can be an officer, warns Minwalla. But the starting salary for even an ordinary soldier is between Rs 1,000 to 2,000 per month and with a service of 25 years the savings can be tremendous. What is more, a person can be trained to become a doctor: the army gives a loan against a service bond, that the individual on qualifying will work with the army.

Noting that today there is a lot of competition, Minwalla revealed that out of a total of 45,000 applications to the National Defense Academy (NDA) every six months, only 450 are finally chosen for a total number of 320 vacancies. "Such is the competition that boys of our community will have to face," said Minwalla. "Left to the boy, he cannot compete today. Centralized training is a must. Retired army officers could be paid to train the boys and mobilize their zest for living a better life." Emphasizing that the work of such officers should be honorary, Minwalla suggested that Zoroastrian anjumans at Bombay, Poona and Allahabad could organize training centers to acquaint the youth and prepare them for life in the army and the competition they will have to face. Motivational talks by officers would help, feels Minwalla, advising in a nutshell, "Group 'em, fund 'em, train 'em."




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"The gruelling training and exams... make a complete man out of you and give you social and professional status."

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# Business opportunities

There is no limit to what a good craftsman or technician can earn, say three outstanding industrialists.

Society as a whole is badly in need of services such as plumbing, carpentry, electrical work, motorcar and TV repairs, and is willing to pay handsomely for good work, noted the three industrialists — Darayus Forbes, retired managing director of the J.N. Marshall group of companies, Rohinton Aga, managing director of Thermax and Dara Damania, managing director of Buckau Wolf — addressing the executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India on February 22, 1986. The message to the community was to grab this opportunity by setting up small businesses providing one or more of these services. Moreover, training facilities for these simpler technologies are more than adequately available within the community framework — indeed opportunities were going a-beg-

or girl anxious to learn a trade."

Aga cited the many self-employment opportunities available, and talked of the fast food business whose original prototype is the Irani restaurant of yesterday. He also mentioned subcontracting work, and gave the example of his own firm which subcontracts 50 percent of its work to entrepreneurs who were previously Thermax employees. Aga suggested setting up an engineering college wherein it would be easier for the youth of the community to get admission, referring to it as an "ambitious project (with) considerable prospects." For admission into the existing

sulting in garage and TV technicians being in great demand. Stressing the accommodation difficulties of students undertaking vocational training, Damania underlined the need for hostel facilities in the neighbourhood of technical training institutions.

In the general discussion that followed, Farida Variava of Delhi raised the question of finance for a small business. Noting that "the problem of not having capital... is only an excuse," Forbes explained that banks are willing to give 70 percent of the capital needed and the remaining 30 percent can be raised from friends and family members. He also noted that "there are certain trusts who make it their business to give small loans for seed capital." Taking up financial partners or raising capital through a public issue, were the other methods suggested. However, Forbes cautioned, the "first requirement in any type of enterprise will be the inputs and training — a basic knowledge on what (the entrepreneur) wants to do."

Boman Khodaiji of Lucknow ex-

Counselling centers are needed to advise the youth about existing facilities and opportunities in their field of interest.

ging, they noted.

Differentiating between those who have "the opportunity, brains and ability to make a success of themselves" and those who do not, Forbes noted, "The discussion here is confined to the (second) group."

Referring to those persons who were not interested in further studies and needed vocational training skills, Forbes noted unhappily, that a six-month vocational training course offered by J.N. Marshall registered 200 to 300 participants of which only seven to eight were Parsis. Added Forbes: "We have not turned away a single boy

Damania, Aga and Forbes: training facilities available

technical colleges, Aga suggested community sponsored tutorial classes to prepare students for difficult entrance exams — a prerequisite for admission into engineering colleges and the like.

According to Damania, counselling centers were "most essential" wherein the youth could be advised on the existing facilities and opportunities in their field of interest as also "to project the facilities available" for training. Moreover, according to Damania, jobs which service the current needs of people are bound to succeed, as for example the boom in the car and TV industry, re-

plained the working of the Uttar Pradesh Minorities Finance Development Corporation, set up with a corpus of Rs 55 lakhs, which helps finance self employment schemes, not only providing the 15 percent margin money normally required to be met by the entrepreneur, but also ensuring that the burden of interest is not more than 7.5 percent. He urged the anjumans to set up a similar mode of assistance to budding entrepreneurs.

Peshotan Nargolwala, representing the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman, recollected how a firm in Gujarat helped



many Parsi youths to get adequate employment by training them in their fields of interest and then employing them. Today, noted Nargolwala, 300 such persons were gainfully employed thanks to this program, and induced others in the community to do the same. However, Aga noted that it was very difficult, even for his firm to find good Parsi boys for technical and sales work, to which Nargolwala responded that the assistance of individual anjumans could be taken by way of an employment exchange.

Soli Katpitia of Surat was of the opinion that today's youth should be taught the value of hard work — that they can achieve much more by striving hard, and that right living is in itself a religion.

Mehernosh Mehta of Ahmednagar noted that accommodation was the greatest difficulty faced by outstation boys who come for education and employment to the bigger cities, and urged the congregation to do something in this connection. He cited the example of a community hostel in Poona, which was in a state of total disrepair.

Ms Homai Pudumjee, trustee of the J.N. Petit Technical High School, informed the gathering that the Petit School had vast compounds which could be made available for building a hostel — especially since the Institute would be celebrating its centenary in 1988, and the trustees were looking out for some noteworthy projects. Pudumjee suggested that the three magnates formulate a scheme and "put down their thoughts on paper" to enable the J.N. Petit trustees to consider.

Dr Aspi Golwalla, Federation president and chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, however noted that, "Today building something new is very costly."

Keki Gandhi, honorary secretary of the Federation, who voiced the fear that having a hostel for working persons along with a hostel for school-going boys would disrupt discipline, was of the opinion that there was need to educate parents in the dignity of labor, since they normally discourage their children from taking up what they consider to be lowly jobs. Furthermore Gandhi noted that the message of the guest speakers should be addressed to the community's youth; at the Federation meeting "most of us are 50 and above."

Niloofer J. Madon

# Drugs: a family crisis

Dr (Ms) Roshan Master  
moots a model center for the treatment of  
the addict and his family.

"For every one zombie that frequents a drug den, there are three to five family members who are emotionally disturbed." Psychiatrist Dr (Ms) Roshan Master, addressing the executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, talked of the fear and guilt which parents of drug addicts go through and the beligerence felt by the siblings. Emphasizing the fact that one family member taking to drugs suggests that the family as a whole has a problem which needs



Master: varied expertise under one roof

to be solved by a psychiatrist or a social worker, Master advocates a model center for the rehabilitation of drug addicts, wherein, under one roof, a team of experts can help the patient and the family.

Noting with surprise how many parents are ignorant that their children take drugs, and of the company they keep or where their children go, Master added that even obvious signs like a syringe and a phial lying around do not give them a clue. It is therefore important, noted Master, to impart to the family members knowledge of drug

addiction — its symptoms and causes — and describe to them in advance the withdrawal symptoms which their child will go through when he is dried out.

There are 50,000 drug addicts in Poona, Master said, but no center exclusively for the cure of drug addiction. She revealed that the World Health Organization, in collaboration with other psychiatrists, wishes to start a center in the Sassoon General Hospital, Poona.

Dwelling on the high cost (between five and six lakhs of rupees) of the model center she proposed, Master discounted the establishment of an exclusive facility for Parsis and suggested instead a cosmopolitan center, to which Parsi anjumans could contribute so that addicts referred by them could be treated at the center.

Describing the three phases of her treatment of drug addicts, Master noted that the first phase was known as the crisis intervention period, when the drug addict is dried out and feelings of guilt and fear, depression and shock within the family are all dealt with.

The second phase involves explaining to the family members what drug addiction is and getting them to understand and accept that it is due to the breakdown of the family that the patient has become a drug addict. Says Master, "80 percent of drug addicts come from broken homes (wherein) parents are constantly fighting, are incompatible and have no time for their children as they are busy doing their own work." Such children then seek affection and attention outside their homes, which is when they come across others like themselves who may induce them to take drugs. This phase spans a period of 30 to 40 sessions.

The third phase prepares the family to assimilate the reformed addict.

Advocating preventive steps rather than curative ones in the fight against drug addiction, Master emphasized the need to improve the quality of life of the youth who would be the community's "future leaders."

Niloofer J. Madon

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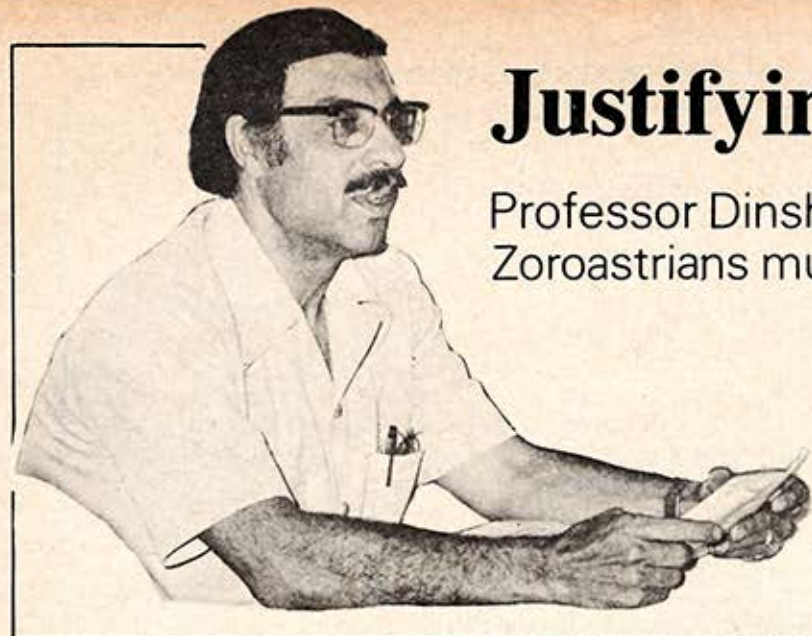
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# Justifying reservation

Professor Dinshaw Kelawalla says Zoroastrians must assert their rights.



There are adequate rights provided in the constitution which have given full autonomy to minority communities to ensure reservations for their children," noted Dr Dinshaw Kelawalla, addressing the executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India on February 22, 1986. Zoroastrians fight shy of asserting their rights — "*chalva deo* (let the matter ride)" is the attitude adopted by most, noted Kelawalla, adding, "I see no harm in encouraging my brother from my own village... Why should we not reserve seats?"

Kelawalla, ex-principal of the Symbiosis Law College, Poona, advised that data be collected regarding the institutions which could qualify for reservation for Parsis: the number of seats available; the applications received; those reservations not availed of by the community etc. On this comprehensive data base the community could build its case for reservation, he added.

However, Kelawalla cautioned that according to him it would be very difficult to reserve seats in existing establishments. He impressed upon the delegates the need to ensure that reser-

vation is demanded in any new institution created by the community.

Adi Rabadi of Calcutta had some queries: Asking for the names of a couple of institutions which could qualify for reservation, he wanted to know what qualified a college or school for reservation — was it necessary that the founder be a Parsi? Did an institute built with Parsi funds qualify? Would not such a demand for reservation "raise the ire of other communities" against Zoroastrians?

Kelawalla was at pains to emphasize that Zoroastrians can ask for reservation as a linguistic as well as a religious minority. He noted that the Sardar Dastur Schools could qualify for such a reservation: though having only one or two percent of Parsi students now, the schools had been established by a Parsi. As for raising the ire of other communities, Kelawalla said, "Here again we always try to play safe. Why should we not assert ourselves? Parsis are losing ground..."

Nitoofer J. Madon

## THE ELUSIVE MEDALS *continued from page 17*

received only Rs 30 in lieu of the silver medal from the college, being the sum originally instituted. "But," says Peer, "when it (a medal) is available and you're not given, it's detrimental (to a student's hopes)."

By January 21, 1986, nearly six months after Mirza's initial letter, Chubb and Karanjia had their fill of suspense. In a hand delivered letter addressed to the BPP's joint secretaries, they noted, "We the undersigned are the recipients of the above mentioned gold medals for passing with honors our BA and MA examinations respectively for the year 1984-85. Our principal, Dastur Dr H.K. Mirza informs us that three of his letters to you in this connection remain unacknowledged till date. Repeated inquiries by us at your office have yielded no results."

"Since we are entitled to these gold medals, and the matter is quite

straightforward, we cannot understand this inordinate delay in awarding us our just rewards."

A letter dated January 23, 1986 from the BPP's joint secretary informed Mirza, "We have received your two letters dated October 10 and December 1, 1985 in the above matter. We may inform you that the matter is under active consideration of the trustees. We have written to the India Government Mint several letters regarding the same. We are awaiting their reply and as soon as we receive the same, it shall be placed before the trustees for their orders and we will let you know further accordingly."

BPP chief executive Rustom Anklesaria and joint secretary Ms Gool Tata explained on January 6, 1986 that as "the cost of the gold medal was going up and the medal size was shrinking," the BPP was considering a substitution of cash or silver so that a presentable sized medal can be given. Tata said that the Mint had just sent its cost estimates for 50 gram and 35 gram gold medals in nine

and 14 carats and it was up to the trustees to decide.

The Parekh medal is presented from its own original endowment of Rs 55,000. The Sanjana medal's funds are separate. The medals are not presented every year, but only when Zoroastrian scholars of merit can claim them. Tata informed that the medals have been cast in 14 carat gold since 1961 but there were no available records to refer to.

By February 18, 1986 the Punchayet had at last decided to award 14 carat gold medals to the two youngsters. Having realized that the resources were available, Anklesaria is said to have convinced the trustees to award the medals and conclude the unfortunate affair. But the Mint is yet to deliver the medals (at the time of going to Press the gold had yet to reach the Mint) and Chubb, who had been serving the K.R. Cama Institute as librarian over the past year, has migrated to Australia, the shine of the medals dimmed by the gracelessness of the proceedings.



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# The Tarnished Titan

B.K. Boman-Behram's impact on the city and the community was considerable.

Arnavaz S. Mama

Advocate, politician, civic councillor, mayor, historian, publisher, community akabar, Boman K. Boman-Behram was a Goliath evoking strong responses from those who knew him. His demise on January 31, 1986 following cardiac arrest made front page news in Bombay based dailies.

Elected to the Bombay Parsi Panchayat's (BPP) board of trustees in

In an obituary published on February 8, the *Blitz* weekly called the 80-year-old Boman-Behram "a multifaceted personality who enriched the city's life by his contribution in various spheres. As an educationist, he was a member of the Senate of both, the Bombay as well as the SNDT Universities. As an environmentally conscious corporator, he fought for the

press further quoted Maharashtra's then chief minister Shivajirao Patil-Nilangekar as saying, "In his death we have lost a veteran social worker."

His "spontaneous, instantaneous sympathy" was evident at the scene of any house collapse where he would rush despite advanced age and heavy responsibility to console and personally help the dishoused find accommodation in transit camps. He took a lot of interest in the welfare of the Panchayat's peons. "Even after leaving us he'd come every year for their annual puja," recalled BPP chief executive Rustom Anklesaria.

A student of Dr Antonia de Silva High School who graduated from St Xavier's College and obtained a first class Master's degree from Bombay University, Boman-Behram simultaneously graduated in law and began his career at the Bar in 1934. 1957 marked his debut in public life when he was elected councillor of the Municipal Corporation of Greater Bombay, the first of his four terms on it.

But despite the public accolades, during Boman-Behram's tenure as BPP chairman (1977-1981) the Panchayat's stock with the community was its lowest, with rumors of corruption abounding. The private trusts in his care were pools of stagnation and decay as for example the Tithal sanatorium trust which allowed community property to be virtually frittered away. BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwala recalled that during his tenure the Wadia trust meetings, normally held every two months, were so infrequent as to merit a censorious remark from the auditors.

Nor did he seem concerned to stem the rot. When *The Bombay Samachar* highlighted stories that depicted the Panchayat's inertia or callousness, Boman-Behram was indignant, not contrite. Describing the running battle between *The Samachar* and the Panchayat, Editor Jehan Daruwalla



Boman-Behram: "instantaneous sympathy"

1961, Boman-Behram served the Panchayat for two decades, assuming chairmanship in 1977 after Lady Jehangir passed away. At the Samast Anjuman meeting called by the BPP at the Framji Cawasji Hall on February 16, 1986 a resolution in Gujarati proposed by Homi Taleyarkhan and seconded by Jal Vimadlal noted that Boman-Behram, who was associated with about 30 community trusts, had also founded Bombay's Civic Center in 1960. Intended to help poor tenants of dilapidated houses acquire basic civic amenities and necessary repairs, the Center's work resulted in the promulgation of the Bombay Building Repair and Reconstruction Board Act, noted the resolution.

preservation of green spaces on the floor of the Corporation as well as mobilizing public opinion and spearheading numerous agitations..."

The *Indian Express*, announcing his demise on the front page noted, "His speeches on the improvement and finances of the municipal corporation were scholarly and highly regarded."

Noting that mayor Chhagan Bhujbal was among those who attended Boman-Behram's funeral at Doongerwadi, the *Indian Express* added that a special meeting of the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) was adjourned to mourn the death of Boman-Behram, where "leaders of all parties recounted their association with the oldest member of the house." The *Ex-*

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noted, Boman-Behram "wouldn't approve anybody criticizing policies that he followed, and expected the Parsi Press to refer any complaints about the BPP to him. If he said there was nothing in the complaint, we should forget about it... (But people) approach newspapers only when they feel that their complaint or grievance is not availing. Sometimes when we refer complaints to the BPP it takes a long time. (There are) instances of (the Punchayet taking) two to three months to reply to the charge. By that time the complaint dies a natural death. (The community's) confidence in the BPP is eroded already and by (our) subscribing to this scheme, their confidence in the Press would also vanish."

As chairman of the BPP he ruled the Punchayet staff and fellow trustees with an iron hand, brooking no dissent. *Jam-e-Jamshed* Editor Adi Marzban who takes credit for having talked Boman-Behram into becoming a trustee in 1961 says, "Like all strong people, he had the tendency to ride roughshod over other people's opinions... He had the ability to go after his things and carry it through."

Anklesaria notes that Boman-Behram was "very quick and firm in his decisions - and knowledgeable. Whatever he decided on, he saw to it that he implemented it, right or wrong!"

Boman-Behram's "war or honeymoon" approach embarrassed his co-trustees. "The harmony which we have now was not there then. (There persisted) a little friction which was sometimes disturbing... His conflict with (BPP trustee) the late Maneck Mistry produced tension at board meetings. (It was basically) a personality conflict perhaps (as happened at the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India)... The main reason why we (the BPP) got out of the Federation (in 1978) was his clash with Delhi Parsi Anjuman president Shiavax Nargolwala," reminisced Gollwalla.

The Federation became the bane of Boman-Behram's community existence. The issue of topics for discussion at the Third World Zoroastrian Congress - a source of conflict - had been amicably settled at the executive council meeting of the Federation in Poona in late 1977, only after Surat's Ratan Marshall had made an emotional plea

in favor of leaving it to the discretion of the session chairmen. The same evening Nargolwala and Boman-Behram drank a toast to the forthcoming Congress. Yet, because Nargolwala criticized the electoral scheme of the BPP at the Congress, Boman-Behram reacted mercurially, claimed the Congress had failed and led the BPP out of the Federation a fortnight later.

Professing himself an admirer of Boman-Behram, Nargolwala said that their differences lay in the Delhi Anjuman admitting non-Parsi spouses as members, albeit with limited rights. Nargolwala contended that Boman-Behram was "impossible to deal with (because) he would not listen to reason," and asked, "How can 33 or 34 non-Parsi spouses destroy an anjuman of 500 members?... I had nothing against Boman-Behram. He was a friend and respected trustee of the BPP. There was no personal animosity," he added.

To Boman-Behram's autocratic nature, the formation of the Committee for Electoral Rights (CER) and its questioning (to his way of thinking, undermining) the status quo of the Punchayet, was another bugbear. During the Anjuman Committee elections in 1981, he fought the CER on the procedures to be followed for holding the elections but lost in the court.

A staunchly conservative Zoroastrian bachelor who disapproved of Parsi girls marrying outside the community, Boman-Behram tried to prevent these women from exercising their right to vote at the 1981 Anju-

man Committee elections. Several of the women moved the court to help them assert their right to vote. Yet, Boman-Behram had opined in an interview to *Parsiana* in January 1978: "If Parsis choose to keep themselves as a closed community, we shall not survive."

The election results ended Boman-Behram's political career in the community. He lost the elections and several months later stepped down from the chairmanship when his term expired. Yet seven years earlier he and his party had swept the Anjuman Committee elections.

In its tribute to the founder, the monthly tabloid *The Parsee Voice*, which Boman-Behram owned, noted, "He had had quite a few heart attacks, big and small, which made him flit between (his residence) and the B.D. Petit Parsee General Hospital frequently. Yet, even from his hospital bed, he would come out with interesting stories of who's been doing what, and inquire in detail about the hundreds of activities he was connected with..."

"Bomanji had an old world charm, which was particularly evident when he talked. He was particular about the selection of words and had a pleasant, unique style of talking..."

(Boman-Behram's legal heirs being unwilling to continue publication of *The Parsee Voice*, the responsibility of owning the tabloid has now been accepted by Progressive Group president Ms Perviz Dotiwala.)

Boman-Behram's pet scheme for

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the community was the Alpaiwalla Museum. He was also keenly interested in the 300 year history of the Parsi Punchayet. Like Colonel Mancherji Khareghat and Sir Jivanji Modi, he was known to encourage writers and scholars by generous help, and spearheaded the policy of buying the works of foreign scholars in quantity to pass on to Parsi schools which could not always afford to purchase them.

With so much that he did right, it was a matter of amazement and regret that he could stoop to the banality of 'The Pateti Papers' (*Parsiana*, November 1976-January 1977) on the issue of

thanking MLA Aloo Chibber and chief minister S.B. Chavan for declaring August 27, 1976 a public holiday. The papers pertained to the notings or *sheras* of the trustees on whether Chibber should be thanked or not. The personal and petty written attacks by Boman-Behram and two of the other trustees concerned, shocked the community. A decade later Golwalla shudders, "The Pateti Papers' really got us a bad name."

As one commentator noted, "some of Boman-Behram's faults arose from his virtues. He had a burning zeal for the community and for the city. But in

the final analysis, he was far better as a corporator — broadminded, secular, and tolerant — that he was as a trustee of a minority community."

Noting that when Boman-Behram said he'd do something, it was done, Adi Marzban pointed to the fact that those BPP trustees who had opted to rejoin the Federation had originally voted with Boman-Behram to withdraw from it. Marzban said, "Their excuse is, 'Boman-Behram made us do it.' I think that's a tribute."

Boman-Behram leaves behind his sisters Maneck, Kamal, Homai, Ava and brother Adi.

## Chemical pioneer

Died: Sohrab Muncherji Mistry, 77, a pioneer in the development and manufacture of textile auxiliaries and speciality chemicals in India, who founded Ahura Chemical Products and two other companies; in Bombay on February 24, 1986.

When Mistry started his career, "textile mills were not well-inclined towards the use of Indian products but Mistry succeeded in convincing a few units about the quality of Indian-made finishes, softeners, etc.... The Company did not take help from any financial institution or of any foreign know-how to develop and introduce a variety of industrial speciality chemicals... (They) developed many new products based on in-house research and development," notes a press release.

In addition to starting Ahura Chemicals (a company with an annual turnover of over five-and-a-half-crore of rupees at the time of its sale in 1984 to Behram and Darab Dubash of the Darabshaw B. Cursetjee group of companies), United Pesticides and Nonionics Pvt Ltd, and Industrial General Products Pvt Ltd, Mistry was president of the Indian Chemical Auxiliaries Manufacturers' Association, the Association of Merchants and Manufacturers of Textile Stores and Machinery and the Bombay Industries Association, states his bio-data. He served on the Textile Division Council of the Indian Standards Institution and was given a merit award for outstanding contribution to the industry by the

Association of Merchants and Manufacturers of Textile Stores and Machinery (India), notes the report.

Born in Bombay, Mistry studied in the Marathi medium at a school in Ratnagiri and was later in Poona for a year before matriculating from St. Xavier's High School in Bombay in 1924. He graduated from St. Xavier's College, Bombay; joined the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore of which he became an associate member; and thereafter went on to do his master's degree in organic chemistry from Bombay University in 1931, notes his bio-data.

Starting his career as a chemist with Indian Vegetable Products, Mistry launched Ahura Chemicals in 1932 with the encouragement of Ardeshir Godrej, founder of the Godrej group of companies. Soon after World War II, Mistry was selected by the British Government along with about five other technical experts to visit Germany and study the chemical industry there. The team was known as the British Industrial Objectives Subcommittee and their reports were later found to be very useful to the Indian chemicals manufacturing industry, states the press release.

Along with his wife Coomi, he established in 1967 a trust called "Sohrab and Coomi Mistry Foundation" for giving medical relief, educational assistance and relief of poverty to the deserving and the needy. The Foundation started in 1968, a Welfare

Centre with a dispensary, and a pre-primary school with 12 students in the compound of Ahura's factory. The school, with about 360 students in the pre-primary and primary classes was closed down in 1984 when Ahura was sold.

"The trustees of the Foundation made several personal visits to villages around Bombay along with their qualified doctor and the villagers were treated and given free medicine for scabies, malaria and intestinal worms. The Foundation has been operating a Welfare Centre in Sion, Bombay, since 1981 which is fully equipped to treat patients suffering from polio, cerebral palsy and those requiring physiotherapy, occupational therapy and



Mistry: helping others to succeed speech therapy at a nominal charge," states the press release.

An active Rotarian, Mistry advised and guided many young and technically qualified persons to become successful entrepreneurs.

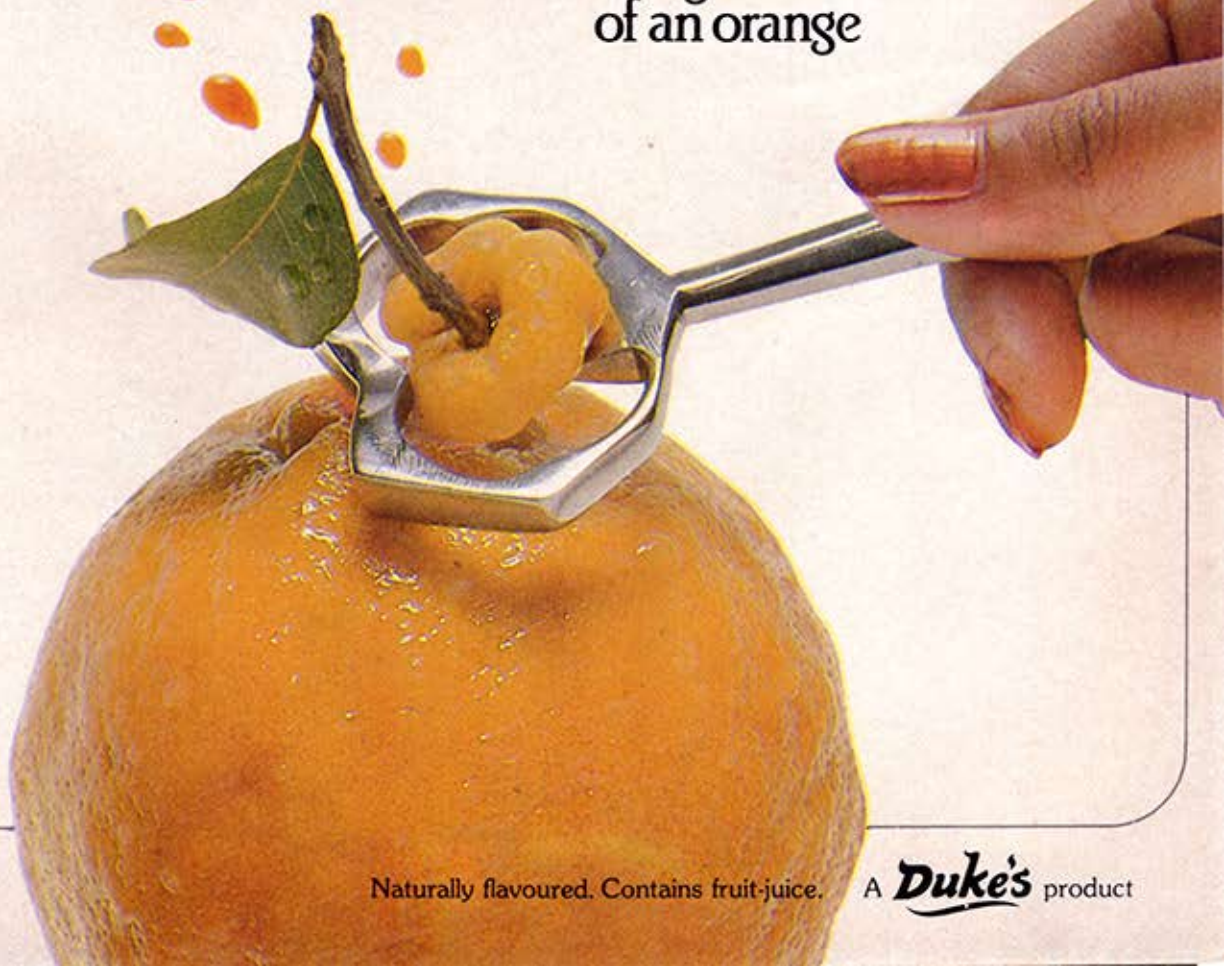
Mistry is survived by his wife Coomi, son Sheriar and daughters Dilnavaz and Freny.

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