

Parsiānā

Landslide win for CER candidate

Minoo Shroff trounces opposition in BPP trusteeship elections.

Parinaz Toddywalla

With social worker and politician, Aloo Chibber deciding not to file her nomination a few days prior to the candidacy registration deadline, management consultant and Committee for Economic Revival (CER) candidate Minoo Shroff's election appeared a certainty. And when, at the last moment, two opposition lady candidates decided to contest the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trusteeship seat to be vacated by businessman Maneck Hodiwala, Shroff was further assured of victory. Thus the landslide lead of 213 votes over opposition orthodox candidates, educationist Shirin Wadia and lawyer Meher Master-Moos, came as no surprise.

Indeed so confident were the CER of victory that most of the managing committee members did not feel it necessary to be present throughout the election day on July 5, in the foyer of the Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy School building which houses the offices of the BPP.

"When two cats fight, the monkey eats the cake," noted a circular issued by Ms Katy Mehta, Ms Perin Jasawala, Ms Doly Munshi and Ms Franie

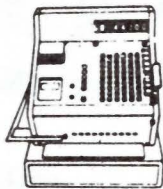
Daruwalla, supporters of Master-Moos. The two women candidates engaged in written attacks against one another with Master-Moos' supporters claiming that Wadia "is not even an SSC pass" and that she was "running a kindergarten school in her residential premises at Khareghat Colony, without the permission of the BPP." In contrast, the circular hailed Master-Moos for holding an MA degree from Oxford University, securing a PhD and being a Barrister-at-Law. "The need of the community is for an educated, competent and qualified lady to become a trustee and not just any lady who desires to become a trustee," said the women. Master Moos' supporters also attacked Wadia's supporters, namely, former BPP trustee Dr Nelie Noble and Ms Jer Bardi, an active member of the Rayomand Committee which raises funds for community housing.

Wadia retorted, "I have not only passed my SSC but was awarded a scholarship for standing first in my class. Had I so wished, I could have accumulated the string of degrees that is deemed so necessary for a trustee of

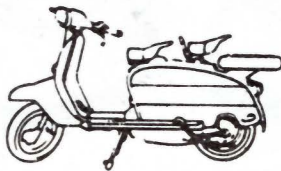
the BPP. However, an abiding love for children and an early recognition of my preference for teaching, led me to do my (teacher's training diploma courses) which necessitated two years of study in St Xavier's College and additional two years at St Margaret's Teacher's Training College." Wadia went on to further note that while Moos' supporters did not consider "a school mistress good enough to be elected as trustee of the BPP," the British voters had elected Margaret Thatcher, an ex school teacher as their Prime Minister, and that Princess Diana, the future Queen of England, was also a school teacher.

The attack on Shroff was not personal as much as that he was a CER candidate and that "the CER are hell bent upon having their own CER based trustees," as noted Jal Olia, a former CER supporter, in a letter to the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of July 4, 1986. While Jamsheed Kanga is the only CER candidate on the BPP board of trustees, both Eruch Desai and Jamsheed Guzder received electoral support from the CER, during their elections. "The suggestion...that the CER

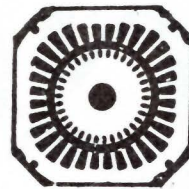
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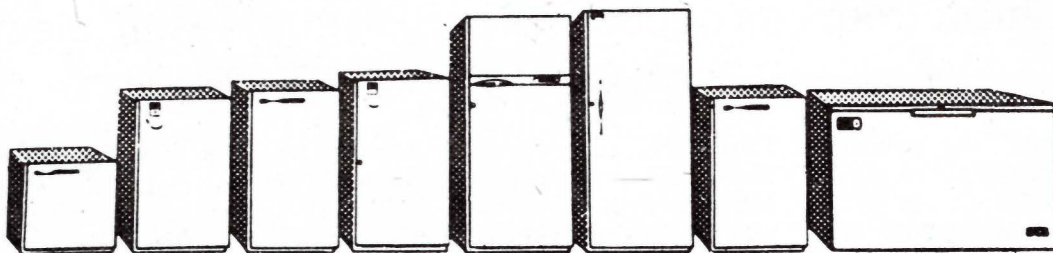
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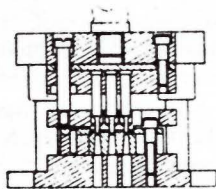
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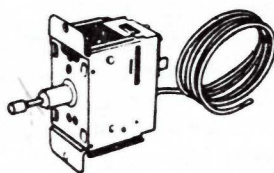
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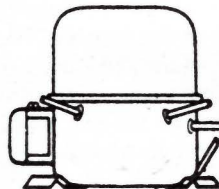
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is trying to gain control of the BPP is not only odious but is an unhealthy gimmick on the part of an aspiring candidate," noted Rusi Mehta, municipal corporator and CER supporter.

Six days prior to the election, seven members of the community published a letter in *The Bombay Samachar* supporting Shroff. "Mr Shroff has made a mark in the business world because of his managerial and financial acumen. He is a man of character, integrity and known for his independent thinking. The community is indeed fortunate that he has offered to make his talents and vast experience available," noted jurist Nani Palkhivala, banker Maneck Goiporia, surgeon Fardoon Soonawalla, lawyer Jehangoo Gagarat, industrialist Jamshed Setna and social worker Ms Dinbai Dubash and travel agent Ms Nergish Dalal.

Ms Chibber came in for attack from several quarters for not announcing her candidature and deciding not to stand at the last minute. As a columnist in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of June 25 noted, "Aloo Chibber could not make up her mind. She was going to stand, she was not going to stand, she was going to stand... If the ladies of the community cannot make up their mind, they are not likely to be of much use as trustees."

Election day

"On the day of the elections (July 5) the CER was already well sprawled out on the right side of the J.J. School's front portico, an hour prior to the 11 o'clock schedule for commencement of voting. The key workers of the CER were camping there for the day, with lunch and tea all planned out, whilst they dutifully ticked each new arrival on the scene whom they considered a prospective Shroff voter. The left half of the portico was shared by the two ladies' supporters. Among Wadia's supporters were Hilla Nagarwala who had proposed Wadia's name as BPP trustee, the Bardi couple, and the Medora couple (from Rustom Baug) who gave her moral support for the greater part of the day. Master-Moos' supporters included her aged parents, who patiently sat through the morning's events and her secretary, who held reins for Master-Moos in the afternoon while the latter was praying at a fire-temple. On the center of the court were the day's deities - Shroff, Wadia and Master-Moos who were



(Top left) Shroff: hailing supporters after the results. (Top right) Wadia: second in race. (Above) Police bandobast on election day. (Left) Master-Moos assisting her father.

making their acquaintances with the voters, and the community stalwarts socializing with each other, depending on their loyalties.

For the convenience of the voters, BPP had taken special exemption from the RTO to permit parking of vehicles on D. Naoroji Road on election day. Though there was not much action on the scene, it was the police bandobast which kept the suspense moving.

In a way Master-Moos was the first to publicly greet Shroff, presenting him with a sweatmeat box wrapped in Parsi Dairy Farm paper at 5 pm, prior to the counting of votes. (As at the time of the last elections, the scrutineers for the day were Jehangir Bamji and Silloo Kavarana, with Pesi Jagus

acting as president of the elections.) Approximately 30 supporters patiently hung around until the declaration of the results at 6.50 pm, to greet Shroff with garlands and bouquets. Out of a total of 561 votes cast, Shroff topped with 348, followed by Wadia who got 135 and Master-Moos with 74. Four votes were declared invalid. The total number of eligible voters was 985.

The election was a setback for the orthodox groups who had intended to contest the election on the basis of the Punchayet requiring a woman trustee on the present all-male board. This opportunity lost, the orthodox groups will now have to wait till after the Anjuman Committee elections in 1988 to once again field a candidate, unless of course, a trustee resigns prior to the expiry of his term. In the meantime, the legal proceedings for reforming the BPP's archaic electoral scheme is still pending before the Bombay High Court. If reforms are introduced prior to the 1988 Anjuman Committee elections, this may be the last election held under the existing scheme.

'Wings' on fire

The orthodox groups' appeal to prevent the screening of *On Wings of Fire* was twice rejected by the Bombay High Court.

Arnavaz S. Mama

Up to 4 pm on June 20 – with barely two hours to go to the scheduled premiere of *On Wings of Fire*—it was not certain whether the program would go through. The Council of Vigilant Parsis president Behram R. Mistry, Bombay University professor, Rita Doctor and Sorab Patwa had petitioned the Bombay High Court demanding a stay order against the public screening of the film until certain scenes were censored.

Orthodox Parsis in Bombay had waged sporadic wars with director Cyrus Bharucha during the four years of the film's production. The cause of the acrimony was the script, based on Bharucha's avowed concept of Zarathushtra as the first human philosopher. Orthodoxy, viewing Zarathushtra as a divine being, protested this alleged devaluation. Other focal points of theological sepses, according to them, were the mock funeral ceremony filmed at the Albless Bungli of the Doongerwadi, "the poisonous philological dogma of 'freedom of choice,'"...the new fangled heresy that Lord Ahura Mazda is not yet omnipotent...and as a corollary, the concept of death as the triumph of evil (*The Parsee Voice*, March 1984).

Despite the orthodox fringe's ceaseless campaign against the movie (originally titled *A Quest for Zarathushtra*) in the Press and in letters to the Central Board of Film Censors, *Wings* received a certificate for public screening as an educational film. But not before *Parsee Voice's* Editor Adi Doctor was invited to a second screening of the film in deference to the community's wishes. Also invited was Ms Roshan Kalapesi, a Bombay theater personality and costume designer.

Doctor, with all his suspicions confirmed, convinced the Athornan Mandal and the Jashan Committee – two orthodox Bombay groups – of his objections to the movie. Several hundred people answered the Mandal's call for a meeting at Albless Baug on June 9, 1986 and signed a memorandum to the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi appealing to him to censor the offending film. A telegram and a letter were accordingly despatched to Gandhi.

A memorandum jointly submitted to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) by Jehangir Shroff, president of the Athornan Mandal and Cawasji Dinshaw (Adenwala), president of the Jashan Committee, in early June,

noted, "... it is entirely incomprehensible that while the taking of a single photograph is prohibited at Doongerwadi, by your own rules and by tradition, the shooting of the whole scene in a film to be exhibited internationally, is allowed. This amounts to clear breach of trust and we would like to know the justification for such a flagrant breach." The memorandum suggested that the trustees "write to the Central Board of Film Censors and record your vehement objection to the scene," failing which the memorandum promised legal steps, holding the Punchayet responsible for costs and consequences.

In a letter to the Minorities Commission, Dinshaw (Adenwala) charged, "Far from explaining the tenets of the Zoroastrian religion, (the film) departs from the true principles and historical background of the religion... the film is not an authentic version of what the Zoroastrian religion is and what it preaches."

When the case came up for hearing on June 19, legal luminary and community doyen Nani Palkhivala, who is chairman of the Oriental Heritage Trust which has partly financed the movie, personally handled *Wings'* defense in the Bombay High Court. Justice Pendse, rejected the petition on grounds of freedom of speech and also that the BPP, a conservative community body, had been party to the making of the film after seeing the script; that the Film Censor Board had granted the certificate after taking all factors into consideration and also that it was "necessary to bear in mind that the film had got good (Press) reviews"

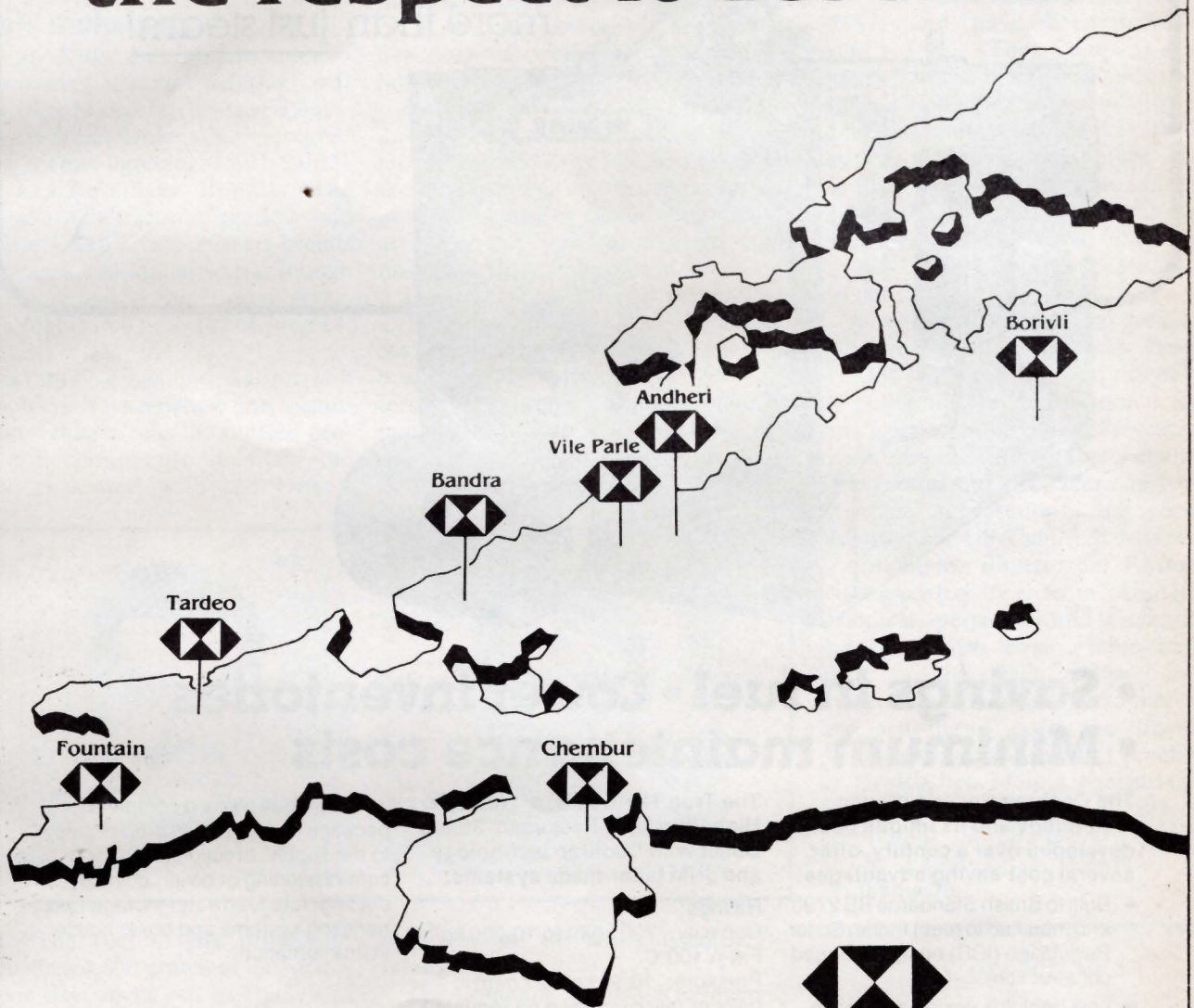
Undeterred, Mistry immediately contested Pendse's judgment in the appeal court of Justices Khetri and Shah. The following afternoon the judges agreed to hear the case, setting the date for June 25 and agreed with

continued on page 17

At the premiere: (from left) Bharucha, Palkhivala and Mithoo Coorlawala, chairperson, premiere committee



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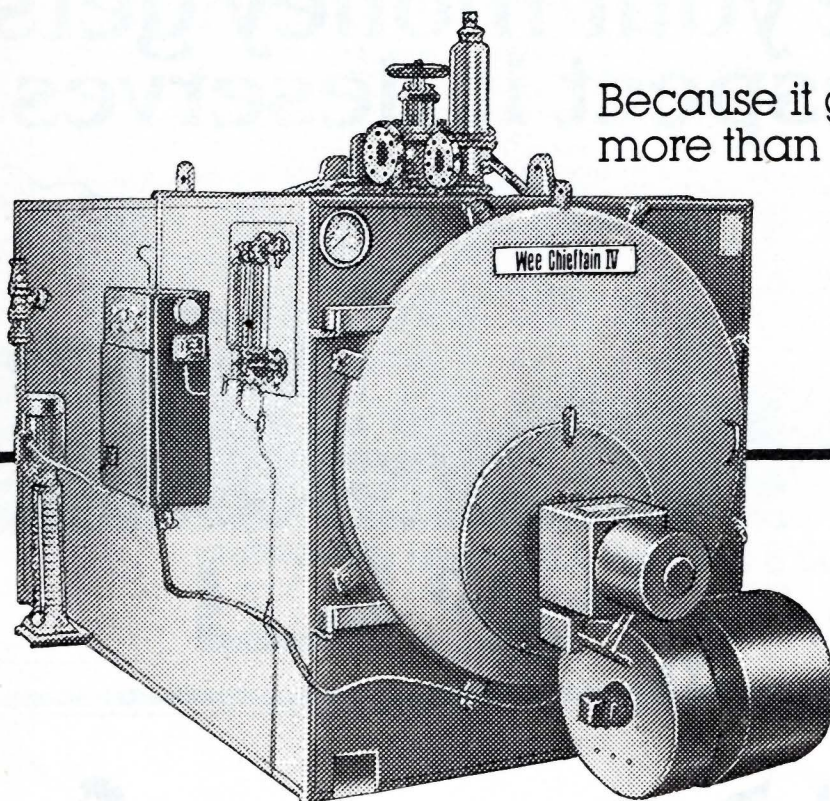
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On Wings of Fire

At last saw the much talked about *On Wings of Fire*. It was a momentous occasion for us. All were decked out in their finest and all behaved surprisingly well. I believe the rains dampened the fervor of those who wanted to protest.

Zoroaster was portrayed by a Jew (perhaps Nancy Mehta's relative) and the portrayal was insipid. Zoroaster was a strong powerful man who had to cross mountains to preach the truth of Ahura Mazda, and here we see on the screen a skinny looking Zoroaster. Also Alexander looked like a weak spoilt brat instead of the athlete he was. You have to see Prithviraj Kapoor as Alexander in Sorab Mody's *Sikander* to realize how Alexander should have been portrayed. One can-

not blame the producer for it: skimpy budget led to skinny actors. Class and dignity was provided to the whole show by Zubin Mehta himself, but as a conductor he looks a bit over stuffed.

All aspects of our religion were shown; even the funeral. I pity the person who had to act the dead man. The general public gets to know who a Parsi is: in short, a person who has the right to be gobbled up by the vultures, and be proud of it. Even Zubin Mehta mentions that it is his burning desire to end up in the Towers. But has anyone ever wondered what are the feelings of vultures who have to survive on a continuous boring diet of diabetic Parsis? I believe the ornithologist Dr Salim Ali can throw light on the subject.

One salient point was not portrayed. The point which also puts us apart as Parsis is our famous, unique social institution - The Parsi wedding. I mean specifically the way we eat, the way we attack our chicken *farchas*, and *patra* fish, and it is immediately recorded on video by the host as proof that you have eaten well. That would have really given a complete picture of the Parsis.

Before the final fade out we are shown the perplexed face of Zubin Mehta with furrowed eyebrows. It seems he went back from Navsari more confused than when he came from the States.

All said and done, we all came out of the theater feeling proud to be born Parsi.

Z.M. ZEND

Learn from missionaries

It is generally acclaimed that of late a new religious awareness has dawned among Parsis. Perhaps it is a wave which has caught the community napping. Parents, priests and community organizations could not have been more ill-equipped to face this challenge thrown up by the youth.

Today's Parsi youth, faced with tremendous competition in every field, sadly inherits a legacy of lethargy from "the generation of bank clerks." But he is ready and prepared to fight the odds in the spirit of enterprise that his ancestors were known for. After a

quarter century of inertia, the true Parsi is once again raising his head with pride and his new-found interest in religion is but a consequence of his overall stimulation.

A child can hardly hope to learn the meaning and substance of Zoroastrianism from his equally, if not more, ignorant parents. Without active parental support, religious rejuvenation cannot be achieved because parents preside over the critical formative years of a child's life.

Organizations which have emerged with the objective of propagating Zoroastrianism are doing good work. And yet they often find themselves embroiled in petty politics and controversies between schools of 'orthodoxy' and schools of 'reform' - terms whose meanings are as confused as the minds of their advocates. Besides, these organizations have not yet been able to make a mass impact. They operate in pockets and need to spread out. Moreover, a growing number of Parsi families have moved to the further suburbs, adding the tortures of commuting to an otherwise busy routine. Despite their keenness for religious study they really have little time to spare for it. Zoroastrianism needs to be brought to their doorstep.

Ways therefore need to be found to:

- Motivate parents to either educate themselves in religious study or, at least, actively encourage their school and college going children to become interested;

- Create preachers either from among the existing priests or from non-priests who may be given proper professional training in preaching. No one should expect anyone to display missionary zeal without giving him an attractive pay packet in return;

- Find the money required for all this. This could well be provided out of the funds available with the Parsi Panchayet, anjumans, charitable trusts and donors - especially out of trust funds earmarked for education;

- Bring religion to the doorstep in the Parsi baugs and colonies as well as in suburban pockets with the help of suburban Zoroastrian associations like the ones in Bandra, Andheri and Borivli. Modern methods need to be adopted

for this purpose and we can take the example of other religious missions that are doing a wonderful job of selling their respective religions to the laity. For example, the Chinmayananda Mission or the Bible Society run very cheap, graded correspondence courses; the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) sells low-priced, good quality audio cassettes and books at street corners; discourses are held in open-air maidans on the *Geeta* and *Ramayana* by various organizations; the Rajneesh Ashram propagates its message through video cassettes.

This needs leadership – a group of experienced men and women dedicated to the task of catching our youth on the crest of this wave of religious renaissance that has been rolling in-shore. Will such leaders step forth please?

KHURSHED PASTAKIA

“Depriving ladies”

Many Zoroastrian ladies married to non Parsis would like to impart

Zoroastrianism to their children and have their navjote performed. Zoroastrian ladies married to non Parsis say that they did not find suitable Parsi boys in our noble charitable Parsi community so they found husbands from other communities. Now they realize what a blunder and mistake they have made. What religion are they to give their children now? Do they really want their children's navjote to be performed? Is it because the boys' family members neither care nor want the children of Parsi daughters-in-law in their own religion? Did they not think of all this before they gave themselves blindly to non Parsi boys? Why bring the innocent children into our community and make them suffer?

Why should our priests perform the sacred navjote ceremony on a *durvand* child? A child is called *durvand* not through prejudice but because any child born of a mixed marriage is called a *durvand* child.

How many of our Parsi girls put on the sudreh-kusti? Even though they may wear a sudreh with straps, it is

said and observed by some that the girls carry the kusti in their pockets and tie it in the agiary. Bravo to our Parsi men. Almost all Parsi men wear the sudreh-kusti and there is no modification in their sudreh.

We must look after our girls who have married out of our fold. Love them so that if they are rejected by their spouses they can come back to their parents and not put and end to their lives. But to take their children into our religion would be a mistake. Is there not one priest in the community who would raise his voice and end this matter once and for all?

T.R. Bhathena writes (*Parsiana*, February 1986) that we are about to enter the twenty-first century. But our grandfathers had also entered the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their ideas about the Zoroastrian religion remained firm.

The religion never dies. It will prosper even in the twenty-first century though our girls may go out and marry non Zoroastrian boys.

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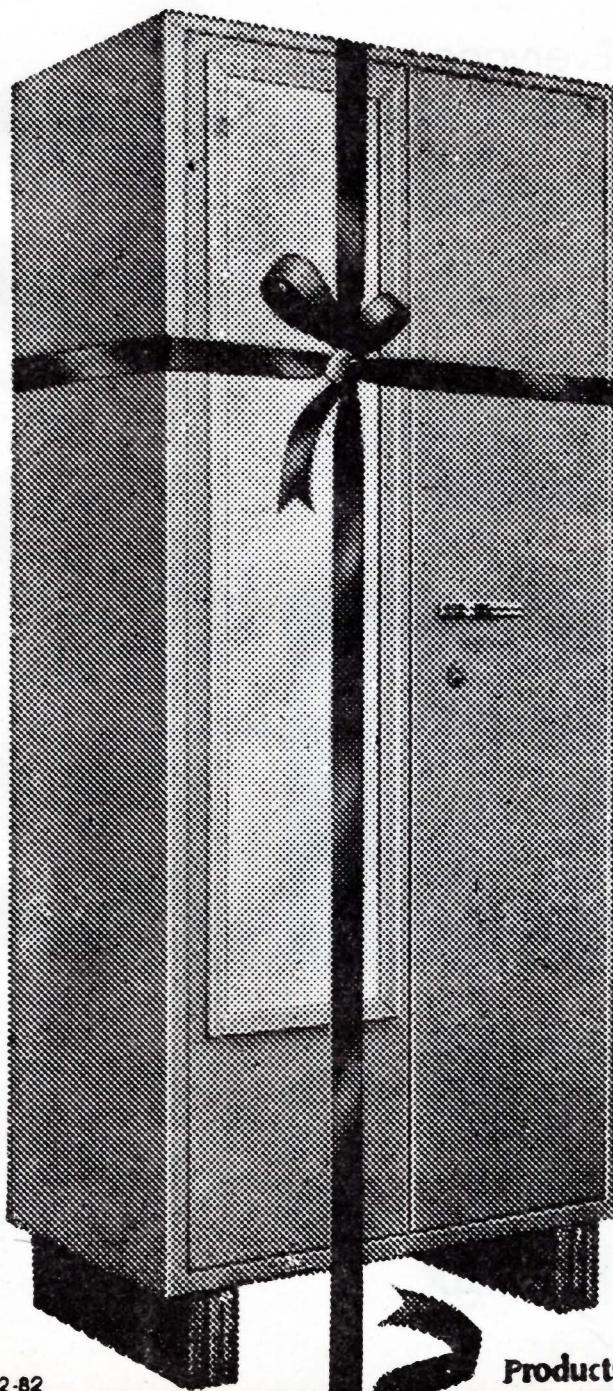
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Events and Personalities

An urgent appeal

"As my condition is getting critical and there are chances of getting paralyzed if foreign treatment is denied" for her serious spinal problem, 25-year-old Ms Meher Jal has appealed for donations to pay for her medical and airfare expenses.

Having complained of an initial backache during her pregnancy, Jal was given pain relievers as no X-rays could be taken at that time. She was then allowed to deliver a normal baby boy on May 3, 1985, notes orthopaedic surgeon Dr Parvez Hakim, outlining Jal's case history. An X-ray taken after delivery however, showed a collapsed vertebra and three months later when Dr Hakim operated, he found an aneurysmal bone cyst. (Aneurysmal is a permanent abnormal blood-filled dilation of a blood vessel resulting from disease of the vessel wall.) However, "since the site was quite inaccessible and due to excessive bleeding...further surgery was discontinued," notes Dr Hakim in the case history.

Radiation therapy was then tried at the Tata Memorial Hospital but in March 1986, the pain started again. A CAT scan was done and Dr Chaubal advised special surgery for stabilizing Jal's spine, and embolization of the tumor with total excision of the vertebra.

"This sort of surgery is not being done in India, and it is recommended that she should be allowed to go abroad," notes neurosurgeon Dr Gajendra Singh. Further consultation with Dr Suresh Vengsarkar, an orthopaedic surgeon, produced the same recommendations.

Advised to proceed to the Sloane Kettering Memorial Hospital, Jal notes, "As it is not possible for the family to finance my stay abroad for hospitalization plus air fares, I shall be grateful for your help." Contributions

may be sent to Ms Meher H. Jal C/o Ms Silloo Aderbad, 13/1 Rustom Baug, Victoria Road, Byculla, Bombay 400027.

Governor Ghandhi

The new governor of Himachal Pradesh is retired vice-admiral Rustom Khushro Shapoorjee Ghandhi notes *The Daily* of April 6, 1986.

With the unique distinction of having commanded both the Eastern and Western Fleets of the Indian Navy, Ghandhi has also been the Chief of Personnel at the naval headquarters. Once an Indian Naval Advisor in the United Kingdom, Ghandhi was awarded the Param Vishist Seva Medal for his long and distinguished service in the Indian Navy.

Ghandhi joined the Navy in 1941,

saw active service during World War II and commanded the frigate *INS Betwa* from 1960 to 1962, when the ship took active part in the liberation of Goa.

A graduate of the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington and the United States Naval War College at Newport (Rhode Island), Ghandhi also graduated from the National Defence College at New Delhi. As captain, he commanded the 14th Frigate Squadron during the 1965 conflict with Pakistan. During the hostilities in 1971, he was commander of the cruiser *INS Mysore*, for whose operation he was awarded the Vir Chakra, notes the write-up.

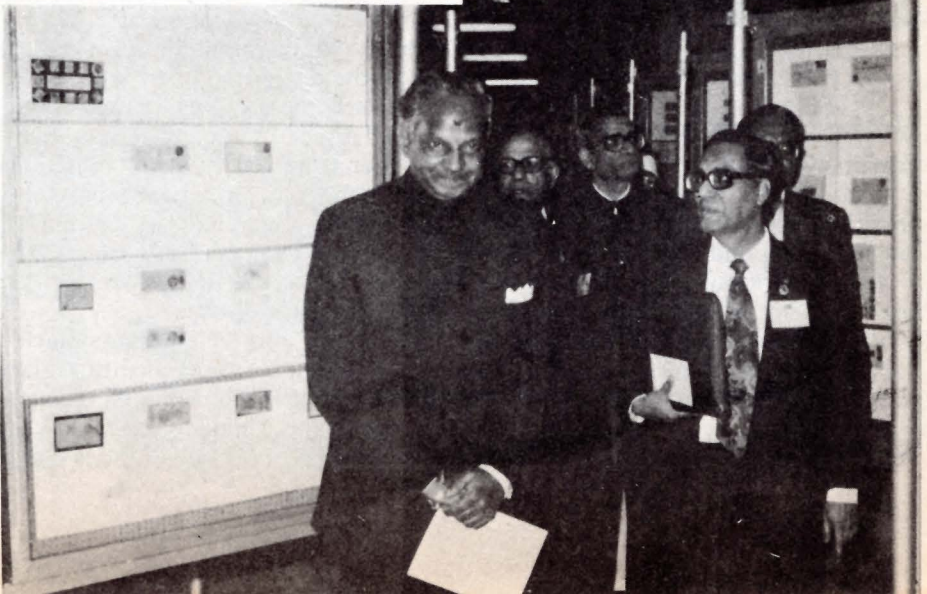
Dastur for Hafnia-87

Philatelist Vispi S. Dastur has been appointed commissioner for India when the country participates at Hafnia-87, the second international stamp exhibition to be held at Copenhagen, Denmark, from October 16 to 25, 1987, notes a press release.

To mark the centenary of the oldest Danish stamp club, Kjobenhavns Philatelist Klub (The Copenhagen Phi-

(Left) Jal: critical condition

(Below) Dastur (right) accompanying Colonel Bhavani Singh, ex Maharaja of Jaipur, at the Impex, 86, Jaipur.



latelic Club), the exhibition has been organized under the patronage of Queen Margrethe II.

"The exhibition will comprise about 4,000 display frames with a total of 64,000 plates in the competitive class. These collections, with a total value of five thousand million kroner (approximately Rs 7,700 million) will come from 65 countries," notes a pamphlet issued on the occasion.

"The arrangement will be the biggest hobby arrangement so far in the history of Denmark – and one of the biggest in the world. Postage stamps being one of the largest hobbies in Denmark, there is no doubt that it will be something of an occasion in Kobenhavn," adds the write-up.

Hafnia is the Latin name for the Danish capital, Kobenhavn (Copenhagen). Moreover, "it is short, it can be pronounced in almost any language, and it has been used before in connection with an important international philatelic arrangement, notes an article titled "Why Hafnia?" in the first bulletin of the exhibition.

Dastur, who is the jointeditor of *India's Stamp Journal*, has been for a number of years, a member of the Government of India's Philatelic Advisory Committee in the Ministry of Communications, New Delhi, notes his bio data.

The first Indian to win The Roake International Trophy (UK) for original research in philately, Dastur has authored two publications: *An Introduction to India Used Abroad* and *India Used Abroad*, adds the bio data.

A chartered accountant by profession for the past 20 years, Dastur is a member of many special interest groups and community organizations. He is trustee of the Sir J.J. Memorial Fund, managing trustee of the Soonawalla Agiary and president of the Association for the Death Ceremonies of the Parsis, notes the bio data.

Home guards medal

Commander Minoo Fardoonji Devlaliwalla of the Maharashtra Home Guards, received the President's Home Guards and Civil Defence Medal for meritorious service from the Governor of Maharashtra, Shanker Dayal Sharma at Maharashtra's twenty-sixth anniversary parade on May 1, 1986 at Bombay, notes a press release.

Having joined the Maharashtra

Home Guards in 1963, Devlaliwalla was posted as sector officer with the rank of platoon commander in the same year, notes his bio data.

Later, as honorary secretary of the Home Guards Rifle Club, Devlaliwalla introduced air-rifle training in various zones all over Greater Bombay, for women Home Guards and the children of Home Guards, adds the write-up.

With the object of utilizing "the energy and enthusiasm of young students for the benefit of society," Devlaliwalla, under the then Commandant General of Home Guards, Madhusudan S. Kasbekar, introduced the Home Guards movement in various colleges of Bombay in 1984. He is now Commanding Officer, Home Guards Student's Wing, State of Maharashtra.

During his 20 years as a Home Guard, Devlaliwalla attended various duties including those that resulted from the Indo-Pakistan wars. He was awarded the Paschim Star, the Sangram Medal and the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Independence Medal, notes the bio data.

Professionally, Devlaliwalla is director and proprietor of Freezon, a sales service and repair business, dealing in refrigeration and air-conditioning.

Stree Mandal's golden

The Calcutta Zoroastrian Stree Mandal wishes to start a contributory hospitalization and medical welfare scheme for the Zoroastrian community of Calcutta. Conceived as a golden jubilee project (which it celebrated between April 1985 and March 1986), the Mandal's president Ms Bachoo Parakh notes, "there is very great need for such a scheme," because the last census of the community shows that out of a total population of 1,220,377 persons (approximately 31 percent) are in the age-group of 61 and above.

The scheme requires a minimal corpus of three lakhs of which one lakh has been collected by way of donations during the jubilee celebrations, adds the release. The balance amount is sought to be collected from individuals, trusts and fund raising drives, notes Parakh.

The year long celebrations started with a jashan at the Calcutta Agiary and included treasure hunts, debates, quiz programs, dinner dances, cooking competitions, demonstrations and



Devlaliwalla: channelizing energies of the young

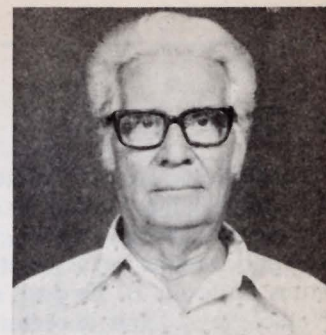
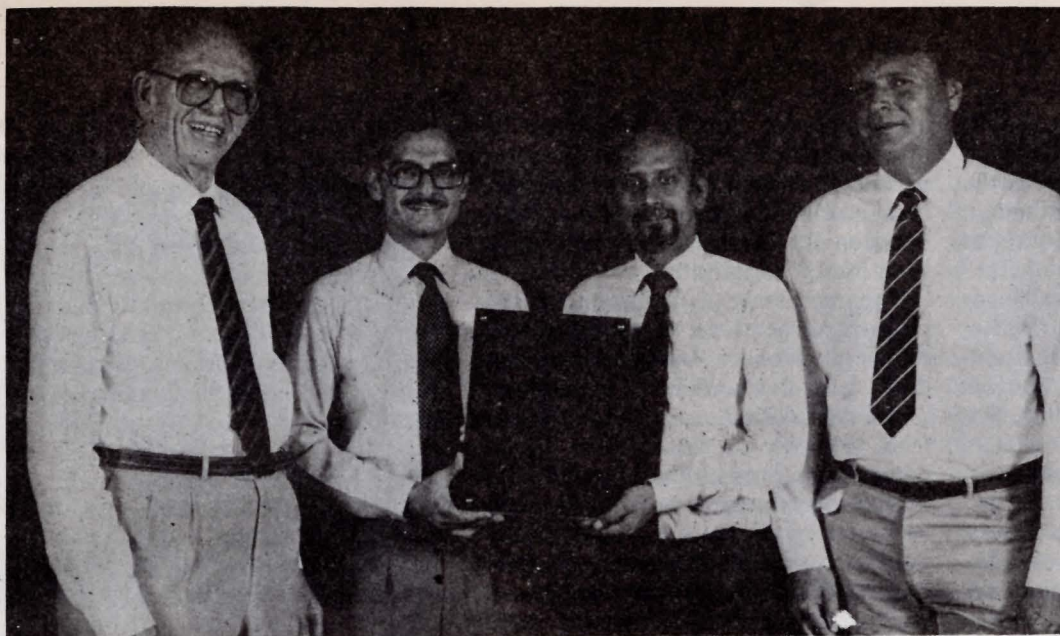
musical programs, all of which culminated in the *50 Golden Years*, a stage-show depicting the Mandal's history and activities, adds the release.

Extending a helping hand to needy Zoroastrians in and around Calcutta, the Mandal, which has 400 members, helps 12 to 15 Zoroastrian families every year in the form of rations, medicines, tuition fees, extra nourishment, etc. The organization also owns a three-storey building where needy families are housed at a nominal rent, notes the press release.

Heading energy session

Professor P.D. Sunavala of the Department of Chemical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay, was invited to chair one of the three sessions on Biomass Energy at the International Congress on Renewable Energy Sources held at Madrid, Spain, from May 18 to 23, 1986, notes a press release.

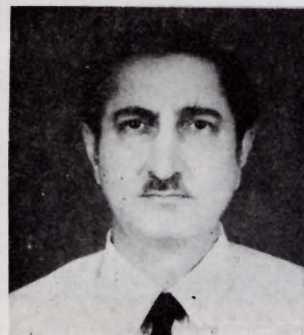
A professor at the IIT since 1958, Sunavala has published over 100 pap-



Above: Vakeel

Alongside (from left): Bill Walden, chief executive, DHL International, Cyrus Guzder, Suresh Checker, and Errol Gates, regional manager, DHL International

Below (from left): Sunavala, Italia and Bodhanwalla



SPOTLIGHT

DHL International, the worldwide courier network, presented its Golden Flyer Award to **Cyrus Guzder**, managing director of Airfreight Pvt Ltd and Suresh Checker, manager-India, Airfreight DHL who received the award on behalf of their Company which generated the best revenue and productivity based on sound budget planning. The plaque was presented at the recently concluded Annual South East Asia/South Pacific Regional Conference in Australia.

For her work in the field of family planning, **Dr Avabai Wadia** received the 1986 Citizen of Bombay Award instituted by the Rotary Club of Bombay on May 13. Wadia and eminent social worker Leela S. Moolgaokar, who also received the award, were the first women to be so honored.

Naval B. Vakeel, management consultant and social worker, has been elected president of the Citizens Organised for Public Service (COPS) and chairman, Complaints Panel, Consumer Guidance Society of India, Hyderabad.

Kirtankar Parvez Katrak is slated for a tour of Russia in July. For the last six years Katrak has entertained the needy and aged with free concerts at the Parukh Dharamshalla, Cheshire Home, Nagpada Dharamshala, Asha Daan, etc.

ers in British and Indian technical journals, and has filed over four patent applications, notes his bio data.

A graduate of the Bombay and Benaras Hindu Universities, Sunavala obtained his doctorate in fuel technology and chemical engineering from the University of Sheffield, UK. A fellow of the Institute of Energy, London, Sunavala is the honorary overseas Editor for India for the *Journal of the Institute of Energy*, London, and was nominated as a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Scientific and Industrial Research*, New Delhi for a period of three years commencing January, 1986, adds the bio data.

TT runners-up

At the twentieth all-India Civil Services Table Tennis Tournament 1985-86, at Bhopal, the three-member runners-up team from Gujarat, captained by Dr (Ms) Thrity Italia, was decorated with a silver medal by the Gujarat State Government at Gandhinagar, notes a press release dated February 11, 1986, sent by Ratan Marshall, special officer of the Parsi Pan-

chayat Board, Surat. The other members of the team were Ms Farida Bodhanwalla and Ms Rita Shivdasani.

Defeating Karnataka and Tamil Nadu in the quarter and semi finals respectively by a score of 3-0 against both, the Gujarat team however lost to Madhya Pradesh in the finals, adds the release.

Italia was the ladies singles champion in 1984-85 at the all-India Inter Medical College Tournament. Holding a masters degree in ophthalmology, she is currently working with the Civil Hospital of Surat as an assistant professor in ophthalmology, states the write-up.

Bodhanwalla, who has been representing Gujarat at the all-India Civil Services Tournament for the past five years, has also represented the South Gujarat University in the years 1974 and 1975. At present she is working with the South Gujarat Research Division in soil mechanics, notes the press release.

Shivdasani is connected with the Surat District Sports Office, adds Marshall in the release.

A 'Noble' drink

"Noble Soya House Limited, is the first public limited company quoted on the stock exchange that we, Godrej as a group, would be associated with," notes Ardeshir B. Godrej, chairman, Noble Soya, and director, Godrej Soaps, and Godrej and Boyce in an interview in the investment journal *Capital Market*, of April 18, 1986. Noble Soya's public issue of 26,40,000 equity shares of Rs 10 each was oversubscribed.

Dr A.S. Aiyar, the main promoter, is a leading food technologist of international repute with extensive research and development experience in the sphere of food and nutrition; the chief executive is Shyam Pherwani. Noble Soya has the financial backing of the Godrej and Bhiwandiwalla (of Great Eastern Shipping) groups, each holding 24 percent of the equity and having two representatives on the board of directors. Nadir B. Godrej, Kanaiyalal Maneklal Sheth, Ghanashyam S. Sheth, Anand Gopal Mahindra, Mansingh L. Bhakta, Pheroze Jamshed Tarapore, Dr Anantharaman S. Aiyar, Anup V. Mehta, Vasant R. Dalal and Dr Dinanath V. Rege are the other members of Noble Soya's directorial board.

The Company has signed a collaboration agreement with Kibun Co Ltd, Japan — "world leaders in the soya milk industry" — to provide technical and process knowhow for a period of five years for the manufacture of non-beany flavor soya milk and other soya milk beverages.

To be marketed as a beverage which will cater to various tastes and needs, as notes Godrej in the *Capital Market* interview, "One could have it in place of a cola or a lemonade, or like a juice; we may even have a chocolate flavored soya drink."

Referring to soya milk as a "unique selling proposition," Godrej says, "You can tailor the protein content of soya milk as per your requirement." In milk, the protein content is fixed and cannot be altered. Moreover the fat content in cow or buffalo milk leads to cholesterol formation in the body. Besides, there are many who cannot digest the lactose in milk. Soya milk, according to Godrej, has "all the

advantages of buffalo milk sans its drawbacks." The 200-milliliter tetra-packed soya milk (as with Frooti, the mango drink) is expected to be priced between Rs 2 and Rs 2.50 and has a shelf life of six months.

The processing plant, located in the industrial area of the Madhya Pradesh Audyogik Kendra Vikas Nigam (Indore) Ltd at Mandideep, a centrally notified backward area about 25 kms from Bhopal, is expected to begin commercial production of soya milk and an assortment of soya foods in the last quarter of '86. The plant is expected to reach full capacity production in 1988 with 20 million liters of soya milk and 2000 tonnes of solid soya foods per annum according to an article in *Business World* of March 31-April 13, 1986; its turnover at that stage may reach Rs 25 crores per annum, as per the *Capital Market* write-up.

The London Stout

The latest addition to the beers bottled by the Associated Breweries and Dis-

tilleries (ABD), makers of London Pilsner and London Diet, is the London Stout, notes a press release dated April 1, 1986.

"One can define Stout as a strong dark beer brewed with roasted malt or barley ... a full bodied, malty beer, as compared to Pilsner and London Diet," noted D. Murugesan, chief executive of ABD, at the launching of the beer at the Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay on April 1, 1986. Partners of ABD, Ms Zenia Lawyer, Ms Mehroo Irani and Ms Bakhtawar Chenoy were also present on the occasion.

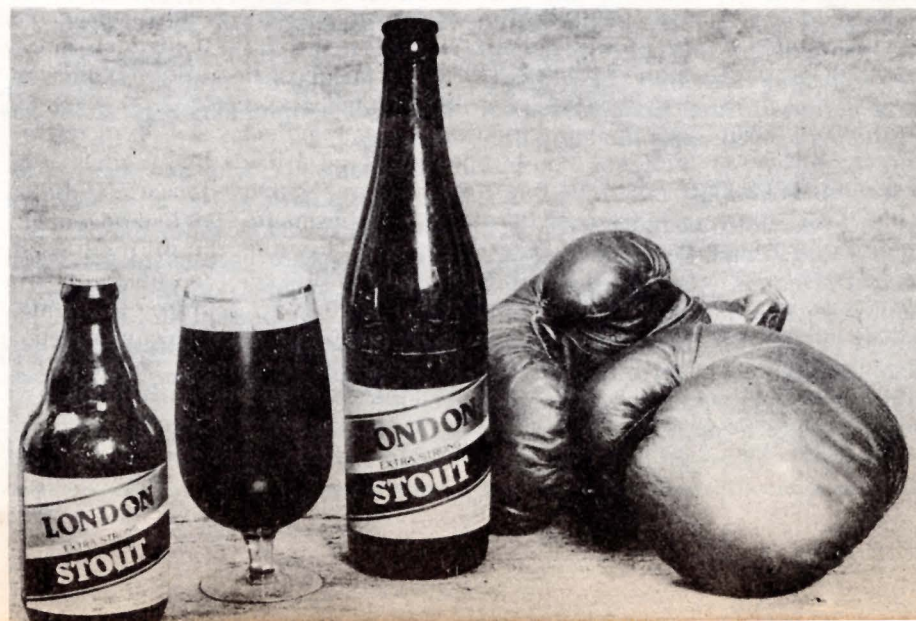
Stout is a full-flavored ale which combines the bitterness of the hop with full malted flavor and sweetness to give a typical balance, not observed in other types of ales — Pilsner or Lager. Stout's nourishing value prompts doctors to recommend a pint to expectant mothers and convalescent patients, notes the press release.

Akin to the famous Guinness Stout of UK, a favorite Irish mix, black velvet, combines stout and champagne in equal proportion; as a shandy, stout



Alongside:
At the launching of Stout
(from left) Murugesan,
Lawyer, Irani and Chenoy

Facing page:
Vitta Mazda's chairman,
Dara Deboo (left) and
managing director, Yezdi Master



may be mixed in equal proportion with lemonade, limca or soda, notes Murugesan.

Housed in a modern hygienic plant, ABD has excellent testing and quality control procedures to ensure the products' international quality, notes the press release, to which Murugesan adds, "Our London Stout does pack a punch and would recommend all of you to go slow when you start tasting it..."

Duke's make a deal

To enable Duke and Sons to cater to the increasing demand for their soft drinks like Mangola, Tango, Lemonade and Soda, Duke's have entered into a franchise agreement with Salstar Foods and Beverages, Bombay. The latter will manufacture, market and distribute Duke's "established brands of beverages," in Maharashtra, though not Bombay and its neighboring areas, notes a report in *The Daily* of June 14, 1986.

Under the agreement, Salstar will receive technical knowhow and formulae from Duke's, and the bottled products will continue to maintain the quality associated with the Duke's

father and son team of Pheroze and Dinshaw Pundole, chairing the board of directors of Salstar is Salil Chandra Ghose, informs *The Daily* article.

Vitta's expansion plans

Apart from equipment leasing as its main activity, Vitta Mazda Limited, is all set for its ambitious expansion plans. The Company, which started operation in February this year and which had within a short span of three months declared an interim dividend of 20 percent, "is actively considering a prestigious warehousing project in South Gujarat," notes a press release.

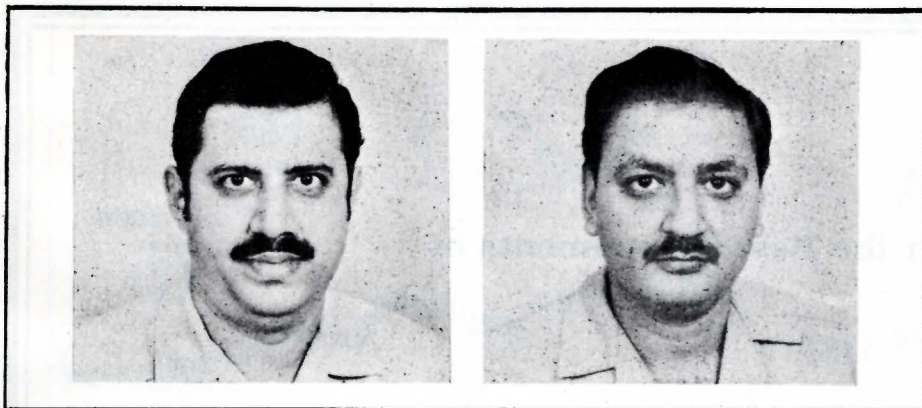
Entering the capital market on June 3, 1986 with a public issue of Rs 180 lakhs, the Company has also taken up the management of a leasing company in Gujarat and is negotiating similar arrangements with three more organizations, notes the release.

Having opened a Lease Counselling Cell which renders lease counselling services in Bombay and in other industrial and commercial cities and centers in India, the Company plans to inaugurate branch offices in Ahmedabad and Baroda to tap huge business potential in the fast growing, economic

was converted into a public limited company on March 6, 1986. They entered the share market, offering a public issue of 4,50,000 equity shares of Rs 10 each at a premium of Rs 2 per share, and 45,000 secured non-convertible debentures of Rs 100 each at 15 percent interest, notes a brochure released by the Company.

"The Company's products are distributed all over India ... Some of the semiconductor devices and equipment have been exported to Europe and the USSR and have been technically accepted ... (The Company's products) find use in various fields such as defence, railways, power plants, telecommunications, transport ... To keep up with the pace and image of the Company and to be ready to satisfy the customers' demands, the Company is entering new lines and updating its present technology," mentions the brochure.

When the Company was formed in 1969, it was a closely held company with 34 percent foreign equity held by its collaborators, International Rectifier Corporation, USA. Presently on the board of directors are chairman Eric Lidow and vice-chairman Robert Mueller, representing International Rectifier for USA and UK respectively. Managing director Jal Ruttonsha "is supported by a team of qualified technical, personnel and professional managers with considerable experience in the field of production, marketing, finance, personnel and administration," notes the brochure. The team includes medical practitioner Dr Ruzbeh Mehta, consulting engineer J.S. Engineer, chartered accountant Sorab Davar, engineer D. B. Patell and solicitor M.S. Bodhanwalla.



name. "The cost of the project to manufacture 4,800 crates of 24 bottles each per day works out to Rs 179.25 lakhs which is being financed by the promoters' contribution of Rs 60 lakhs and a public issue of Rs 90 lakhs, including NRI (Non Resident Indian) investment of Rs 36 lakhs," states *The Daily* write-up.

Salstar has acquired 50 acres of land at Mulshi Taluka in Poona District and the project is nearing completion. The Company is also considering schemes to effectively utilize process waste water.

While Duke's is headed by the

development of Gujarat, notes the release.

The Company also plans to diversify into the export oriented leather business with the assistance of government recognized leather industry experts and is slated to undertake property investment and development as also various investment activities in shares, securities and stocks, adds the write-up.

Ruttonsha goes public

Ruttonsha-International Rectifier Ltd, manufacturers of power semiconductors and power electronic equipment,

Correction

In *The Tarnished Titan* (*Parsiana*, May 1986) it was erroneously stated that B.K. Boman-Behram succeeded Lady Hirabai Cowasjee Jehangir as president of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet while actually he took over from Eruch A. Nadirshah in 1977.

Further in the same article mention was made of a Colonel Muncherji Khareghat. The name should have read Colonel Rustom Khareghat.

The errors are regretted.



The Old & the new

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continued from page 4

the defense that the premiere scheduled that evening go through as planned.

COVP supporters spoke of staging a demonstration at the premiere at Sterling theater at 6 pm. Nature however laid a wet blanket on COVP's plans – no demonstrators ventured at the Sterling that squally evening, rendering the extra-large security turn-out redundant, though *Parsiana* witnessed a couple of Athornan Mandal stars meekly walking into the theater, ticket in hand!

With the Time and Talents' penchant for organization, the premiere netted approximately rupees three lakhs for the Oriental Heritage Trust which is the beneficiary of any profit the film makes in India.

Before the appeal court on June 25, advocate Tehmtan Andhyarujina almost annihilated the petitioning advocate B. Suresh's (interestingly the traditionalists' viewpoint was not espoused by a Zoroastrian advocate or solicitor) long discourse by noting that Zarathushtra's cardinal tenet is one of "total tolerance and adaptability. It's a pity that the three petitioners do not exhibit his views." In defense of the funeral scene Andhyarujina produced Sir Jivanji Modi's *The Customs and Practices of the Parsis*, a 1915 publication detailing the funeral rites and noted that *Wings* had only pictorialized the knowledge that was available to any non-Parsi who sought it.

The judges rejected the orthodox appeal, though no written judgment was offered. While the COVP's fillibustering tactics considerably ate into Bharucha's time in India and frayed

his nerves, it did provide unexpected publicity for *Wings* – and ensured large audiences.

A review

"I have come back to find out if it (Zoroastrianism) has any relevance to my life today," says maestro Zubin Mehta in an early scene in the movie, *On Wings of Fire*. Vignettes of Zoroastrian ideas and practices seem to chase through his mind as he conducts Richard Strauss' famous piece *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.

The docu-drama directed by Cyrus Bharucha and coproduced by him with Meherji Madan is a retelling of familiar Zoroastrian lore in an effort to view the precepts and practices of the religion from the twentieth century perspective of a westernized Zoroastrian – personified in Zubin Mehta, professionally brilliant but ignorant of the spiritual values of the religion of his birth.

The docu-drama unfolds by way of Mehta's questions and the answers he receives from a scholar priest (played by Khojeste Mistree). The seeker-mentor dialogue is interspersed with dramatic visualization of scenes from Zarathushtra's life, followed by commentary and picturization of the great Achamenians, Cyrus and Darius, the destruction of the Persian empire after the third Peloponnesian war with the Macedonian hordes destroying Persepolis at the command of a drunken Alexander. The narrative winds its way through the barbarism of the Parthians, the overbearing dogmatism of the Sassanians which eventually falls prey to the equally rabid Islamism of the Arabs. The community seeks

shelter in Gujarat under the hospitable Jadav Rana, creates settlements in various parts of India and abroad, and in due course produces the Tatas, the Godrejs and, of course, Dadi Balsara, the millionaire perfumer from Singapore.

The search for his roots leads Mehta to Navsari, the family's hometown and also, in the process, helps him to meet three of the community's seven high priests in India today who thus enjoy bit roles in the film.

In trying to encapsulate 3,500 years of history and simultaneously explain and justify the doctrine and practices of Zoroastrianism – all in the space of 100 minutes – producer-director Cyrus Bharucha set himself an impossible, nay hopeless, task. His modest budget effectively prevented him from depicting the climactic scenes in true dramatic splendor; the long dialectic stretches needed thespians of Gielgud's or Burton's caliber to sustain them.

In the process, directional flaws abound. For example, the court of King Vistasp seemed more like a village punchayet; the pillars of Persepolis – "the greatest palace ever built" – igniting at the touch of a single torch, seemed too obviously crafted of cardboard; Cyrus the Great addressing the liberated Jews – an epoch-making event that has been reverently enshrined in the *Bible's* Old Testament – proved visually and emotionally tame. One also expected better employment of musical themes to augment the subject on view – indeed, would not a musician of Mehta's caliber, the focal point around which everything revolves, automatically translate emotion and knowledge in terms of the art he knows best?

On Wings of Fire might prove more effective on TV where the film's small canvas size may be viewed to advantage. Indeed, TV is Bharucha's metier where he is said to have carved a niche – with the BBC in the UK and independently in the United States. The staccato nature of the narrative, highlighting events from 1,500 BC to date, might also be more acceptable in the context of television than of the motion picture where continuity, visual splendor and emotional impact have become essential ingredients.

Parsiana's interview with Cyrus Bharucha, director of *On Wings of Fire*, will be carried in our August '86 issue.



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The epic as ballet

Dancer Khurshid Irani presents a Bharat Natyam dance ballet depicting episodes from the *Shah Namah*.

Niloofer J. Madon

The lights dim and, as if on cue, the cacophony of adult voices and the pattering of small feet subsides into hushed expectation. And overhead revolving globe bathes the audience in light and darkness. Cymbals clash and the strong soothing voice of Ervad Dr Peshotan Peer, reciting a prayer in Persian, floats into the darkness. *Manthra Spenta*, the dance ballet in Bharat Natyam has begun.

A presentation of the Khurshid Nritya Kala Mandir, whose directress Ms Khurshid Irani is an exponent of Bharat Natyam, the ballet consists of seven scenes encompassing certain episodes from the *Shah Namah*, the Persian epic by Firdausi Toosi. A synopsis of the ballet describes it as projecting "the eternal struggle of good over evil and Zarathushtra's message that when man walks on the path of *asha* or purity, with devotion and meditation, he realizes the *manthra spenta* or spiritual knowledge and finally attains *frashogard* or enlightenment."

The idea of performing scenes from the *Shah Namah* in Bharat Natyam, came to Irani when the Iranian Zoroastrian Association (IZA) invited her to perform at their Navroze celebrations in March 1981. Tired of the usual depiction of scenes from Hindu mythology, Irani thought it was time something new was brought in. "Why not do something on our own religion?... If the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* can be shown via dance, why not the *Shah Namah*?" she asked, adding, "I have always wanted to do different themes, not limit (the dance) to the same stereotype" subjects from Hindu mythology.

Then, taking certain episodes from the Persian epic, Irani consulted Peer, who advised her on every little detail of translation, verse, costumes, music, etc. "Peshotan Peer was very kind. He would sit with me till late in the night

to discuss" certain aspects of the ballet. "I would not take a single decision without asking him every little thing," notes Irani who believes that whilst doing anything related to the religion it is essential to take the advice of scholar priests.



Irani: need for a different theme

Difficulties arose in the realm of music and costume, and Irani had to adapt both to suit the nature of the dance. Giving an example, Irani noted that because "*Ughare pagē bhanai nai* (you can't pray with bare feet)" and you can't dance in shoes, they compromised by painting black stripes on the feet of every dancer to look like shoes. Moreover, heads had to be covered for the sake of authenticity, and so Irani had to borrow caps from her Muslim friends. Recalling her initial enthusiasm at this new project, Irani noted woefully, "At that time we didn't know *ke etla* problems *thasē* (that there would be so many problems)."

Outlining her reasons for reviving the ballet once again, Irani noted that she wanted to give her students a chance to perform before an audience, which is the only way to gain confidence. With most of her students at the Dadar Parsi Colony being Zoroas-

trian, she decided that *Manthra Spenta* was the best bet.

The ballet begins with the victorious dance of the evil King Zohak who has captured the crown of Iran under the influence of Iblis, the force of evil. Zohak later has a nightmare in which he sees a warrior attack him with the cow-head mace, who then binds his hands and drags him to mount Damavand. As it happens, this warrior turns out to be Faridun who later succeeds in killing Zohak and becomes King of Iran.

Thousands of years elapse until Zarathushtra is born during the reign of King Goshtasp of the Kyanian Dynasty, at a time when the world was steeped in superstition, black magic and sorcery. The scene depicts Zarathushtra's meditations on mount Ushi Darena, where he encounters the forces of good and evil, and how he finally overcomes evil and realizes the "ultimate reality — Ahura Mazda."

The sixth scene depicts the followers of Zarathushtra — King Aspandiyar who spreads the teachings of Zoroastrianism throughout his country and King Arjasp of Turan who threatens to destroy all who believe in this new religion. Finally Aspandiyar decides to destroy his opponent for which he must reach Arjasp's impregnable castle, Rooyin-Dez, after overcoming the Haptkhan or the seven obstacles in his path. The climax comes in the last scene where Aspandiyar overcomes them and succeeds in killing Arjasp, ending in his victory dance.

Irani feels that Parsis are too "westernized. They have a block where Indian dancing is concerned" and adds with much irritation, "if it is Russian ballet they won't mind!" And so to draw a Zoroastrian audience towards this art form and to acquaint them with Zoroastrian culture, Irani restaged this ballet (originally presented in 1981) with a hope that sponsors would come



Scenes from the ballet: Irani as — Zarathushtra (left) and as evil Zohak (below) with her students.

forth and invite her to present it again and again for their associations. "You need funds and a lot of encouragement for this," she adds with a smile.

Explaining the ballet's lack of continuity in its presentation, Irani noted, "The epic is so vast... there are long gaps between episodes. Moreover, I couldn't depict everything in terms of dance. Some couplets in the *Shah Namah* can only be described in prose or poetry. A ballet on the life of Zarathushtra would have been too long and the confrontation between Rustam and Sohrab is too common." Continuity had therefore to be sacrificed in the face of these limitations.

No matter, the mainly Parsi audience seemed to enjoy the show. An elderly couple who had made the trip to the auditorium all the way from Dadar, called it "unusual" and for most, seeing a familiar aspect of their history enacted on stage through dance was an experience in itself. The enthusiasm of the audience overflowed and burst into spontaneous applause, when a surprisingly familiar, if short, Zarathushtra came onto the stage for the first time.

Scenes which deserve special mention were those which depicted the victory dance of Zohak, performed by Irani herself. The *abhinaya* (facial expressions) of that particular part was well done. The choreography of Zarathushtra's encounters with good and evil — twin sisters simultaneously performing the dual parts — was well thought out. The most appealing part of the ballet was the background recitations from the *Shah Namah* in Per-



sian by Peer, lending it that extra bit of atmosphere.

However, what the ballet could have avoided was a clutter of dancers on stage at a single time, and maybe concentrate on a single episode from the *Shah Namah*, thus maintaining continuity and story line.

At an interview with Irani at her residence at Nagpada, on May 17, 1986, one could see the reasons and needs for newly created themes. Dressed in a light purple checked dress with a golden belt, and matching purple necklace and earrings, Irani talked extensively of her career as dancer, teacher and researcher of Bharat Natyam. Noting that she too started off like any

other Parsi by learning Russian ballet and piano, she said that the change was brought about by her father Byram Irani who one day, unexpectedly, brought the dilruba into the house and arranged for his children to learn Indian music and dance.

Currently very much into her now seven-year-old research for her PhD in Fine Arts (dance), which is based on the study of Hindu mythological beings in relation to dance, and the comparison of postures and movements in dance and sculpture as depicted in Sanskrit texts, Irani notes that after she submits it for evaluation she would ideally like to present her thesis in dance form.

Ambitious where dance is concerned, Irani explains that her "life-time project" is the one she calls *Journey to Shiva*, a solo traditional dance item depicting the different stages of an individual's spiritual evolution, ending in nirvana. The unusual aspect of this ballet is that it will have lyrics in English, "not a translation" she adds quickly, but lyrics especially made for the dance as also the music which is composed by the renowned conductor Vijay Raghav Rao, which she believes is a first "in the history of dance and music in the world."

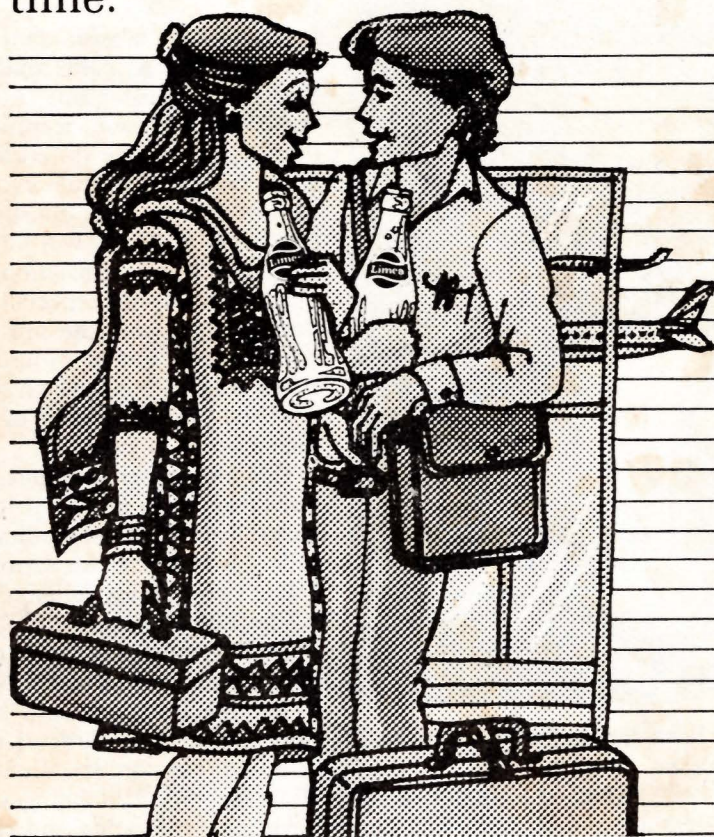
Describing her religious outlook as universal, Irani notes, "I love all religions. I do Buddhist meditation and in school won a prize for scriptures... but I won't give up my religion or sacrifice it" for any other.

Irani's family helps her with her dance career. Initially her mother Tehmina Irani and now her brother Sorab, managing director of SBI Impresario (an organization "born to shoulder the challenging task of discovering, cultivating and channelizing fresh talent in the field of performing arts"), his wife Meherangiz and her sister Dr Jai Dehnugara, are variously involved in stage management and costume design.

Irani strongly believes that dance is not just for entertainment but for a spiritual purpose. As she notes, "For us, dance is a form of worship, a *sadhna* (spiritual discipline) for our spiritual evolution... where every movement is a form of meditation and every *bhav* (emotion) has the base of *metta* (spiritual love)."

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