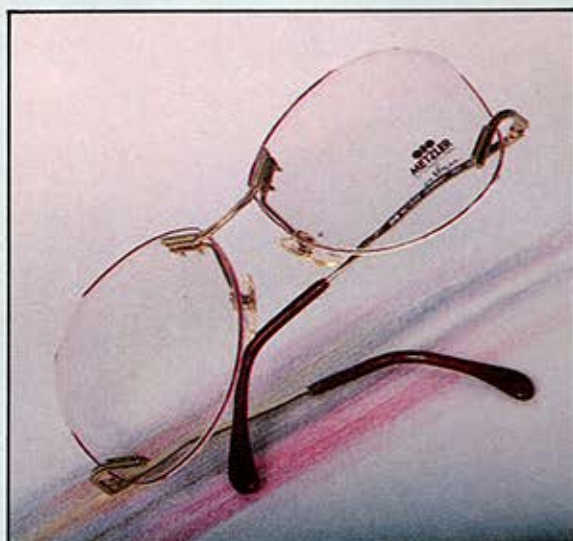




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the clock,
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running,
Back aching, bone
shaking,
Fireman, fireman,
keeper rolling.

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"Does Zoroastrianism...?"

Parsiana deserves all praise for the cudgels taken up regarding the most debatable subject of reincarnation ("Does Zoroastrianism teach reincarnation?" *Parsiana*, August 1988). However, on reading through the article, some of the questions posed seem quite repetitive, or even out of tune.

The general impression gathered from the answers given by both the Western and our own religious scholars is that the Zoroastrians have been greatly influenced by Hinduism in their belief in reincarnation.

With due respect to all the scholars, may I pose a very simple question, especially to the Iranian scholars? In their ritual of sacrificing goats on Mehergan, are they by any chance influenced by the Muslim religion? If not, in which of our scriptures has a

mention been made regarding such a sacrifice on Mehergan? Further, it is rather harsh to brand any religious organization, institution, group or body as pro/anti believers in reincarnation since both are bound to exist in each of these.

I personally feel that the subject of reincarnation falls more under the domain of the day-to-day philosophy of life, rather than religious philosophy. In any field, scholars are but a handful. It is the masses, the common folk, who keep the wheels of evolution turning. There are those who are easily convinced by airy-fairy answers, while there are others who accept answers that are straightforward and absolutely convincing, leaving no room for doubt anywhere. In view of this, could the philosophers or even scholars of our religion oblige by giving answers to the following, down-to-earth questions, so often asked by myriads of common folk?

- We are all manifestations of that one great Light, Creator, Spirit – call it what you may. Why then is a child born blind, deaf, mute, or even crippled? What sins has it committed right at birth, that it should be so punished?

- A parent oftentimes loves and gloats over a real good-for-nothing child and hates a truly good and virtuous one. What is the reason for this shocking behavior on the part of the parent (who is supposed to be so wise)?

- Very often, a good, noble and helpful soul is blessed with nothing but misery, hardships and brickbats all through life. On the other hand, a truly wicked, dishonest and inhuman soul is blessed with everything that you can think of. Pray why?

- In spite of showering the very best of love and kindness on our own loved ones, all they can return is hatred and ingratitude. Stark strangers on the other hand prove so benevolent and useful to us all through life. Thanks and rewards we want not, but deliberate harm and unwanted animosity from our very own can disquieten even a noble soul. Why should this queer-ness exist at all?

- A real murderer escapes and an innocent goes to the guillotine. Human justice fails and falters. Does the

Creator also falter in His justice?

- God expects us not only to be good, but achieve the maximum perfection possible. Can perfection be really achieved in one single life, especially when someone dies at a very young age, when a chance of doing good is snatched away so mercilessly?

- God has created not only bountiful things, but He has adorned them with absolute beauty. Why then, should God choose to be so unkind to human beings, the crown and glory of all His creations?

Now, in general, if the wickedest of wicked is also going to be pardoned ultimately at *Frasho-kereti*, why then the doctrine of "Be good, do nothing but good?"

Why is it that only when men get steeped in wickedness, lies and animosity, the Cosmic Laws give vent through floods, droughts, wars and other natural calamities?

To a searching and deep-thinking mind, "As you sow, so shall ye reap" makes tremendous sense, as it stands out as a fortress of hope and strength and a lighthouse to illumine the darkest and wickedest of actions.

To attain knowledge, we go step by step, through school, college, etc; the building is built floor by floor; to reach the top, we ascend step by step. Why then should God, in all His wisdom, have chosen to give just one life, one chance for men to reach perfection?

Ms ABAN R. MINBATIVALA

For the last 60 to 70 years the story was something like this: Somebody would write an article or a letter to the Editor of a journal or a newspaper, maintaining that our religion teaches reincarnation. Another one would say, "Nothing doing, this dogma is unZoroastrian." Surprisingly, the same text would be quoted by both, but with absolutely different translations and contradicting interpretations. Sometimes each would find fault with the other's conclusions. The debate would go on for some weeks and the poor Editor would be compelled to put a stop to the controversy. After a short lull, the controversy would be reborn in some form or another and simmer off once again. I think laymen like me

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used to find the innumerable references, with their contradictory meanings and interpretations, very confusing, with no authoritative guidance for us from any side.

Your wide-ranging inquiry, "Does Zoroastrianism teach reincarnation?" (*Parsiana* August 1988), has satisfied a long-felt need. As expected, the very few Parsi supporters of the dogma have raised some irrelevant issues while answering the questions; the beauty of the questionnaire is that answers to these queries are automatically provided by some other scholars. I think the commonplace argument of "scriptural evidence" has been given a crushing blow. More importantly, the blow has been given by our own high priests and scholars, by Iranian scholars and also by a number of scholars from England, France, Belgium, Japan and different parts of the USA.

Once and for all, 25 eminent scholars have conclusively shown that the dogma of reincarnation has just no place in the truly Zoroastrian outlook. I feel Dr Mary Boyce has given the best advice to Parsi laymen in a rather ladylike manner when she says that she "had always hoped that the majority of Parsis opposed those who propagate this idea (of reincarnation)." Equally important is the answer of Dr Rostam Shahzadi in which this eminent Iranian scholar avers that "A real Zoroastrian would never come to believe reincarnation."

In all, it was a very fruitful and illuminating inquiry for which the Parsi public should thank *Parsiana*

and the scholars who responded to the questionnaire. RAMYAR BHADA

I read with interest the opinions of the experts mentioned in your inquiry "Does Zoroastrianism teach reincarnation?" (*Parsiana*, August 1988) and I choose to divide the same into two groups – product and by-product.

The product is obviously "No reincarnation in Zoroastrianism." I think a few Parsis (they are only to be found in India), who keep on insisting about the relevance of reincarnation, should, from now onwards, respect the majority verdict and refrain from wrong exposition of our religious teachings and ceremonies.

To the bystanders, the by-product is more interesting. I regard those who are not actively pro or anti reincarnation as bystanders and 'division' as the by-product.

Division or groupism exists in all communities. Large communities can afford it, small ones can't. The opinions of different scholars indirectly show that we have, in alphabetical order, the following groups: AET, Bombay Jashan Committee, Council of Vigilant Parsis (COVP), Dabuites, Dadar Jashan Committee, Ilm-e-Khshnoomists, K.N. Dastur faction of Khshnoomists, Mazdayasnie Monasterie, Parsee Vegetarian and Temperance Society, Pundolites, Rahnumae Mazdayasni Sabha, Real Zoroastrians of Iran, Truncated Council of Vigilant Parsis, Zoroastrian Radhi Society and Zoroastrian Studies. If there is any omission, it is not intentional.

Not that each group consists of hun-

dreds or thousands of Parsis. From whatever information I have been able to obtain, and from what has been stated in your inquiry, some groups are made up of less than half a dozen persons. Yet 15 groups, with each group supporting a different ideology and in disagreement with another, must be regarded as a shocking symptom. I think this symptom requires to be dealt with on a war footing if our tiny community is to survive. I suggest that a round-table conference may be arranged under the aegis of either *Parsiana* or the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and leading Parsi scholars be invited to attend the same. Some of our scholars have been participating in meetings and congresses around the world. If they could throw their weight in this round-table conference, I am sure ways and means can be easily found to banish groupism from the community.

MS AVAN K. BILIA

Zoroastrian fashions

It was interesting to read (Zoroastrians Abroad, *Parsiana*, September 1988) that the Zoroastrian Association of Houston, at a Navroze function, had a presentation showing the changing apparel of Parsis from the time they landed in India, with only the apparel of the mobed remaining as it originally was. The two instances one has seen of a historical depiction of Parsi dress – one from Ackerman's

Left: Depiction of Parsi women from Ackerman's Hindoostan

Below: Parsi children's attire in the 19th century



Hindoostan, and another from a much later French publication – show how unrecognizably their dress has changed. The first photo makes one feel the chronicler has got his facts wrong!

Incidentally, one wonders if there is sufficient material available to research similarly on whether the food Parsis eat has changed much over the centuries. Which are the dishes they, so to speak, brought with them, and which have they adapted to their own tastes? For a community so fond of its food, amongst the gourmards surely there must be a gourmet with a historical, scholarly bent of mind?

Ms S.N. NANPORIA

Spenta flats

The attention of the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) has been drawn to the advertisement in *Parsiana* (September 1988) for sale of a flat in the building Spenta.

As per the provisions of the agreement for sale between the trustees and the flat purchasers, no sale may be effected until the full purchase price is

paid and till a cooperative society is formed and registered.

Under the circumstances, members of the general public are warned not to enter into any agreement for sale in respect of the flats in Spenta. If they persist, they will be doing so at their entire risk as to the costs and consequences thereof.

B.H. ANTIA

Partner, Mulla and Mulla and Craigie Blunt and
Caroe Advocates for the BPP trustees

"Farvardian Jashan..."

The advertisement "Farvardian Jashan at Brookwood" (*Parsiana*, July 1988) invites all Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians married to Zoroastrians to attend a sacred Zarthushti religious ceremony.

One must learn the fundamental and basic meaning of the tenets of Zarathushtra – *humata, hukhta, hvarshata* – before reducing them to being a tool of convenience.

These pristine principles are meant for each individual to develop a cultured, disciplined mind that is oriented towards humanity's welfare and leading to peace and harmony. Zarathushtra had not given privileges to some to

run roughshod over others with their rambunctious ideas.

In no case does *humata* permit anyone to interfere or transgress the code of conduct of the entire community. For, such individual or group freedom, utilized for personal gain or base motives, creates anarchy.

The jashan, especially one dedicated to the dear departed ones, is a very sacred ceremony which must be performed with purity and piety, donning the sudreh-kusti – the insignia of the faith. *Vahishta Ishtish Gatha* (Ha 9) advises:

"With evil believers hatred leads to the condemnation of worthies:

They are slaves of desire – despisers of truth:

They are struggling amongst themselves.

Who shall oppose them with all his life force?

That O Ahura Mazda is your divine power through which

You bestow upon the right living their higher reward;"

As long as the divine power is up there and as long as the divine light of

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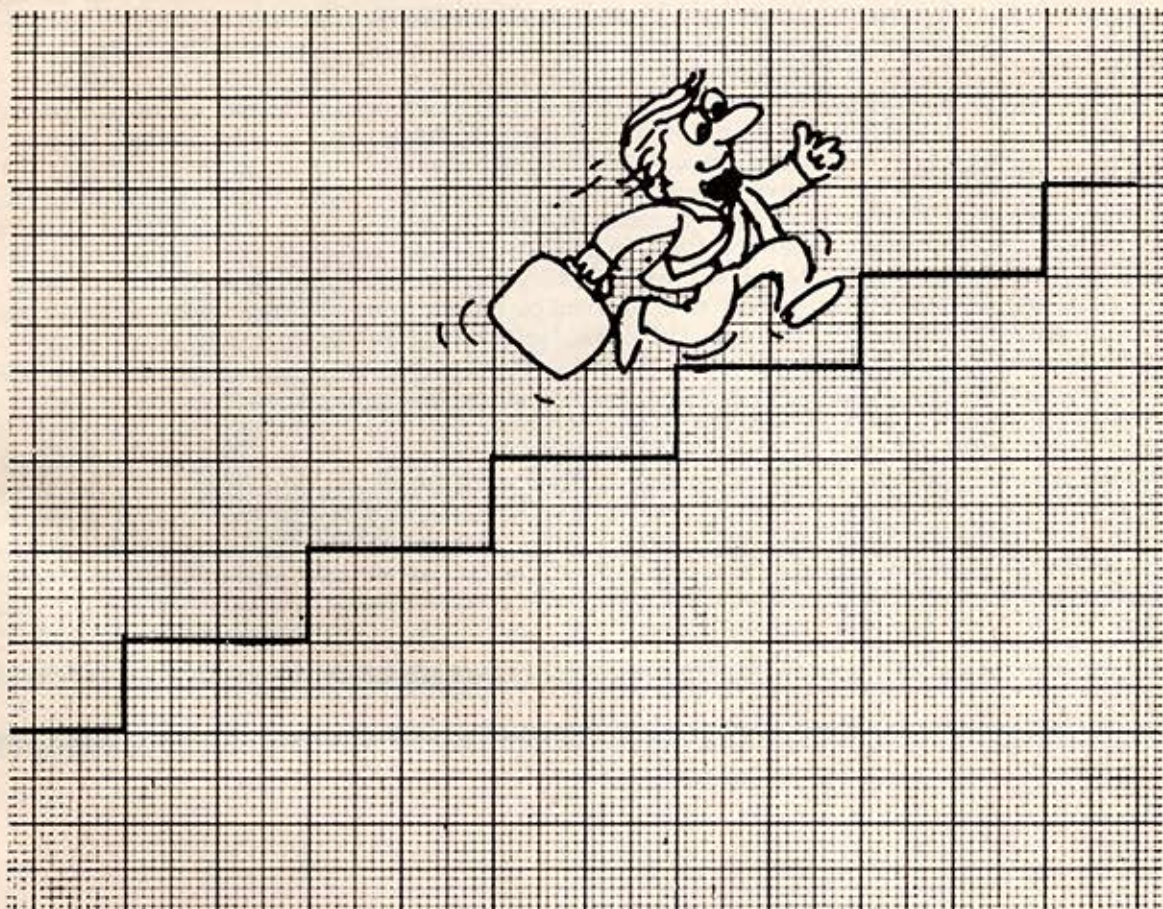
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the true spirit remains kindled, this minuscule community of the true Zarthustis, having borne the vagaries and vicissitudes of the last 2,000 years (1,358 years in India and about 800 in perilous Iran), preserving their faith, propagating and progressing with flying colors worldwide, shall march on, kingdom come. Or, if so destined, we the true Zarthustis shall perish with pride rather than exist within the abyss of shameful pollution.

PHIROZ D. DOTIWALA
Houston

Salesman extraordinary

Minoo Rustomji died suddenly on September 3, 1988 of a heart attack. He was my co-author on the book *Law and Tax for the Layman*. Before that, I had known him and his family for many years when we were working for Tatas. It seems strange that his death should have gone unnoticed considering that every few months his bespectacled, cheery face peeped out of the page of some daily or the other, followed by a write-up on his latest book or the publication of an existing one abroad. Perhaps the explanation lies in the fact that he was a one-man

publicity department for his books; his publishers, realizing that he handled the job better than anyone else, left it to him. Consequently when he died, there was no one to speak for him.

Minoo was, by training, an accountant; but his forte lay in selling – selling whatever was necessary at any point of time, an idea, a book or himself. This, combined with his genuine enjoyment of people and their company, made him an excellent public relations man. He had a clear mind and an ability to translate into simple language complicated concepts and propositions that I have seen very few people possess.

The impression that people had of him was that of a man with his head in the clouds, a little woolly and very garrulous. Nothing could be further from the truth. He had his feet planted firmly on earth. He was a shrewd judge of men and practised human psychology instinctively and effortlessly. He made it a point to remember people's names and something of their background. There is nothing more flattering than meeting a person who, after several years, accosts you by name and inquires about your cataract operation or your back!

The carefree, eccentric, outward personality concealed a wonderful human being with very rare qualities. I never heard him say a bad word of anyone; and I never heard him crack or enjoy an "off-color" joke. He was a refined person who could talk knowledgeably on a variety of subjects. He gave the impression of being disinterested in people's problems; and yet I have seen him go out of his way to do favors for mere acquaintances.

He was a fitness fiend. As he got older, he became more and more obsessed with keeping fit. In the last few years, several of his close friends died or fell ill and he developed an almost abnormal fear that he may one day become incapacitated. He often discussed, very seriously, the proposition that if at any point of time one became aware that one was going to lose one's mental or physical faculties, one should not hesitate to put an end to one's life, rather than face an undignified death. God spared him that.

He died exactly as he would have wished. Perhaps, he managed to sell the idea to God! Ms KHORSHED JAVERI

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Events and Personalities

Elections in sight?

Bombay has been divided into 10 electoral constituencies for the forthcoming Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) Anjuman Committee elections tentatively scheduled to be held in March 1989. Each constituency will consist of 1,600 to 2,000 voters (barring constituency J comprising Grant Road area which may yet be split into two). The community will elect more than 800 representatives, about 80 from each constituency. There will be an equal number of voters from the Donor Register. The computer division of Airfreight has helped the Punchayet create the constituencies on the basis of postal pin codes. Contiguous as well as distant localities have been bunched together to create constituencies that are near equal in size.

Subject to the High Court clearing the scheme quickly, BPP's chief executive Rustom Anklesaria was hopeful of publishing the constituency-wise list of voters by end January 1989. The administrative task of organizing the elections simultaneously in various places would be "too huge" feels Anklesaria who expects to hold the elections one constituency at a time (or perhaps a combination of two or three) at the J.J. School building itself in March as "the scheme lays down that the elections be held in March" and as they have traditionally been so held. However, since March is also the time of the School's annual and Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exams, the Punchayet has kept its options open: "If we don't get room here, we might have to postpone the elections to April or hold them at another venue," says Anklesaria who estimates two to three weeks for the counting of votes, one constituency at a time, as the scheme provides for only one president and two scrutineers for the election.

In the meanwhile, the final hearing of the election appeal before the Bom-

bay High Court, slated for December 2, came on the board on December 16 when all sections of community opinion unanimously accepted the scheme. (According to a recent report, one party is expected to challenge this revised electoral scheme.) But the end was not yet. The Charity Commissioner and the Advocate General claimed they had not been able to apply their mind to the amended scheme and sought a postponement. The appellate bench comprising Justice Lentin and Justice Tipnis refused to proceed with the hearings unless all concerned had approved the scheme. The BPP's advocates, pleading urgency, sought a hearing from the Chief Justice later the same day where Rusi Sethna, counsel for Ms Mani Dalal opined that the Charity Commissioner and the Advocate General be given the time they desired. The case now stands adjourned until after the court's Xmas break.

The prolonged litigation (1985-1989) regarding the election scheme reform seems to have sapped community enthusiasm for the Anjuman Committee elections, as witnessed by the fact that only 1,100 of the 19,248 new certificates, prepared by the BPP under the original order of Justice Suresh, have been collected so far. This despite the Punchayet staff visiting each of the colonies in an effort to

facilitate the dispersal. These visits, arranged over weekends, had, moreover, been given advance publicity. Under these circumstances, the trustees have decided to seek the court's permission to allow the voters to cast their ballot on the strength of their old certificates. Of course, those who have acquired the new certificates will be able to use them, says Anklesaria.

BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla, whose term expired in October last, but was extended by a court order, will continue until the next trusteeship elections are held—"about six to eight weeks after the general elections," estimates Anklesaria.

Commemorative function

The late Dastur Navrooz Minochehr-Homji, former high priest of the Fasli Atash Kadeh, was remembered at a function organized under the joint auspices of the Rustom Baug Association and the Sorabji Framji Titina Religious Ceremonies Trust, notes a press release. Observing the seventy-sixth birth anniversary of Minochehr-Homji on October 14, 1988 at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute (KRCOI), prominent citizens of Bombay recalled the priest's signal scholarship and stately demeanor.

In memory of the late Dastur who had passed away on February 25,



From left to right: Taleyarkhan, Minochehr-Homji and Palkhivala (extreme right) with the portrait of the late Dastur

Merwanji (right) explaining a scene to Deboo

1988, an oil painting of the priest by artist Jamshed Irani was presented to the KRCOI where he was associated as honorary secretary. The painting was unveiled by Ms Nergish Minochehr-Homji and will henceforth be on display at the Institute's library hall.

Nani Palkhivala, senior advocate of the Supreme Court, as the chief guest of the function, noted in his speech that it was Minochehr-Homji's knowledge that made him a highly respected figure at international interreligious meets. He was endowed with that rarest quality, *buddhi*, a word that defies translation in any language, according to Palkhivala.

The vice-chancellor of Bombay University Dr (Ms) Mehroo Bengalee, in her presidential remarks, remembered the priest as one of her star pupils who graduated at 36, making the teachers initially wonder what they could teach this savant!

Jehangir Nicholson, the then sheriff of Bombay, compared Minochehr-Homji's character to the white cassock he wore - spotless.

The president of the Rustom Baug Association Darius Bhappu recalled the Dastur's long association with the Baug and described him as the "torch-bearer of Zoroastrianism." Among the others who paid their respects to the scholar were Homi Taleyarkhan and Father Felix Machado.

Excerpts from tributes and messages sent by more than 25 Zoroastrian associations and anjumans were read out by Ms Homai Modi, secretary of the KRCOI, further adds the release.

Percy on screen

The *moorat* (inauguration) of the first film to be shot in Parsi Gujarati, *Percy*, which boasts a Parsi director, scriptwriter and an all-Parsi cast, was performed at Khareghat Colony on October 16, 1988. The shooting was scheduled to commence the next day, notes Meher Pestonji in *The Indian Post* of October 26, 1988.

A maiden directorial venture for Pervaz Merwanji, *Percy* is scripted by Cyrus Mistry and stars theater personalities Ruby Patel and Hosi Vasunia, and newcomer Kurush Deboo who plays the lead role of Percy whose



character has been flawed due to the constant friction between his parents.

Merwanji's past experience has been with documentary films, including handling the camera for Anand Patwardhan's *Hamara Shaher* and for the dramatised wildlife serial *Rakshak*. Looking at his community with "affectionate amusement," the director has not intended to laugh at the community, but has introduced some touches that show the idiosyncracies of the Parsis, notes Pestonji.

Originally a short story - a poignant characterization - written by Mistry, *Percy* is "the first time one of his stories is being made into a film." His play, *Doongaji House*, had in 1970 won the Sultan Padamsee Award. Initially reluctant to rewrite the story for cinema, "Pervaz was very persuasive so I finally agreed," Mistry was quoted in *The Post*.

Patel, who has considerable experience with Gujarati-Parsi theater, plays Percy's mother - a mother whom Percy loves and hates in equal intensity. Playing father, Vasunia's role is "tailor-made for him," believes Merwanji. Newcomer Kurush Deboo from Navsari has completed a year's course in dramatics with Roshan Tarneja.

Percy is slated for release by the end of March, notes Merwanji.

Poona Parsis celebrate

"A record crowd of over 1,100 people" attended the Khordad Sal func-

tion organized by the Zoroastrian Youth Association (ZYA) of Poona on August 29 at the Sir J.J. Agiary, notes president Percy Jijina in a press release.

Two eminent Zoroastrians of Poona were honored for their selfless service to the community and the society in general: Ms Arnavaz Damania for her contribution to the field of sports and Prof Hoshang Moogat for his service to the field of academics. Momentos were also presented to 10 youngsters for their achievements in various fields, notes Jijina.

A short Gujarati skit, *Bolti Band*, directed by Ms Phiroza Bharucha and a parody on the Indian television, *It's a mad, mad, ad world*, directed and choreographed by Rumi Ghadially, were well-received by the audience. The evening's fare, including dinner catered by Marazban Dorabjee was moderately priced so that the middle-class Zoroastrians could afford to participate. All the priests, their families and the helpers of the agiaries were given complimentary tickets. In addition, Zoroastrians at the mental hospital were fed free of cost that day, further adds the release.

Four weeks later, the Zoroastrians of Poona had another occasion to celebrate - the ninety-sixth anniversary of the Kadmi Shahenshai Anjuman Daremeher on September 25, 1988. The jashan was followed by an entertainment program in the evening

which was organized and compered by Rustom Anklesaria and his team, adds the release.

Health Unit update

The Lady Hirabai Cowasjee Jehangir Health Unit, which serves the "very poor members of the community," treated or referred to other hospitals a total number of 7,433 patients in its various departments, in its thirty-ninth year. The annual report of the Unit for the year 1987, issued by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) which manages the facility, gives a department-wise breakup of the patients treated.

Based at Gamadia Colony in central Bombay's Tardeo area, the Unit treated 2,802 general medicine cases, 1,759 ophthalmological cases and 1,454 physiotherapy cases, the last having

this institution are: A.F. Golwalla, R.J. Patel, K.R. Mehta, Ms Villie N. Bamboat, S.J. Divecha, J.D. Kapadia, Ms A. Havewalla, S.M. Javeri, Ms D.S. Dalal, B.A. Daruwala, D.N. Hormusjee, Ms S.H. Mulla and S.E. Batliwalla. Three lady volunteers, Gool Bhesania, Homai Modi and Rati Karkaria, have been serving as honorary workers.

In 1987, the donation receipts by the Unit totalled Rs 2,14,571. Major donations (of Rs 10,000 or more) were received from the estate of N.R. Mistri of Singapore, R.M. Mehta Charitable Dispensary, trustees of the BPP, Sorabji Kanga Charity Trust, and Time and Talents Club. The report appeals for help and cooperation of "donors, friends and sympathizers" to enable the Unit to continue its work.



Framji: high water mark
Lintas trio (from left): Pocha, Alyque Padamsee and Kateli

528 indoor patients. The other active departments, according to the report, were the dental, pathological, pediatric, cottage hospital, orthopedic, dermatological, and gynecological. Patients were also electrocardiographed and some of them referred to the B.D. Petit Parsee General Hospital for X-rays by the radiology department.

The Unit is also responsible for the medical needs of the Parukh Dharamshalla inmates, notes the report. Free vitamin tablets, calcium, shark liver oil, iron, tonics, etc were additionally given to "expectant and nursing mothers, to weak and debilitated children and to those in need of help," the report says.

With doctors R.F. Workingboxwalla and Ms T.M. Nalladaru on the medical staff, other medicos who have been giving their honorary services to

Safety Helmet rides high

Safety Helmet, a television spot produced by the advertising agency Lintas, was the only Indian entry to win the international Clio award this year, notes *Business India* of September 5-18, 1988. Dramatizing the need for two-wheeler riders to wear helmets, the 40-second film, written by Adi Pocha and shot and directed by Porus Kateli, won the distinction in the public service category.

Drawing a parallel with the international awards, Grammy for music and Oscar for films, Kateli, in a letter to *Parsiana*, says, "Similarly in the advertising world there (are) the Clio awards." The Clio organization, which is based in New York, annually honors notable achievements in radio and television commercials.

With water connections

In appreciation of "his distinguished services" as secretary-general of the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage from 1963 to 1988, Dr K.K. Framji has been elected president honoraire of the Commission, notes the *Science Herald* dated October 26, 1988.

Honored as one of the Engineering Personalities of 1987 by the Institution of Engineers (India) during his service with the Indian government for over three decades, Framji held such appointments as director-general of Ordnance Factories, chief engineer, and joint secretary to the ministry of irrigation and power, government of India. After retirement he continued to assist the government on national and international river problems. Framji is also a fellow of the Indian National Academy of Engineering.

His contributions in the global efforts for the protection of environment earned him the Olympia Prize from the Alexander Onassis Public Benefit Foundation in Greece. He was also instrumental in "closing the largest breach and writing a *Flood Control Manual* for the Indus river embankments in Sind, and for presenting Sind's case to the Indus Water Tribunal," for which he was awarded an MBE (Member, Order of the British Empire) in 1943. He is also known to have promoted the study of standardization in liquid flow measurements in open channels, notes the *Herald*.

Member of different professional societies and author of several books and papers of international repute, Framji is a graduate in civil engineering from the London University. He joined the Indian Service of Engineers in 1931. The first Indian director of the Indian Waterways and Navigation Experiment Station at Pune, now known as the Central Water and Power Research Station, the octogenarian has held eminent positions with leading companies since retirement, the *Herald* further notes.

Masani's albums catch on

Ghazal singer Penaaz Masani's latest music cassette *Tu hi mera dil, Tu hi meri jaan* was released by actor and member of parliament Sunil Dutt at a function held at The Supper Club in the Oberoi Towers, Bombay, on Octo-



(Left): Anjirbag—impressing her teachers

(Far left): At the cassette release function (from left) Dutt, Masani, Jeetendra, Music'India chairman Sashi Patel and Lazarus
Photo: United Photos

ber 26, 1988. Actor Jeetendra was also among the invitees present to celebrate two other landmarks in Masani's singing career — her album *Nasha* going platinum and the *Dil Ke Qareeb* album, gold.

At the start of the evening, songs from the artiste's albums were being played on the sound track to familiarize the audience with her lilting melodies. Appreciating her talents, Vijay Lazarus, vice president of Music India, the recording company, remarked on how the "lovely, young artiste (had) blossomed into a star." Dutt, in his brief speech, remarked that Masani has the "rare combination" of good looks and a beautiful voice.

Responding to the compliments, the singer, in chaste Urdu, thanked the well-wishers who had contributed to her success.

In *Tu hi mera dil, Tu hi meri jaan*, well-known film composer O.P. Nayyar, who "has been selective in composing for non-film" music, has written "unusual and haunting melodies (for) eight geets and ghazals," notes a press release from Music India. To these, and the lyrics by Nasir Kazim and Noor Devasi, Masani has done "full justice," the release says.

Ramgopal Balakrishnan

Of loans and advances

As part of the diamond jubilee celebrations of The Zoroastrian Co-operative Bank Ltd, an additional dividend of two percent has been declared over the usual maximum dividend of 12 percent, noted Noshir Pochkhanawala in his chairman's speech at the annual general meeting of the Bank on October 21, 1988.

The net profit of the Bank for the year 1987-88 — Rs 6,67,665 — is reportedly higher than that of the previous year (Rs 5,71,386).

The total number of shareholders increased from 4074 to 4193 as on June 30, 1988, notes the brochure featuring the annual report and accounts. From Rs 11,48,828 in the previous year, loans and advances of the Bank increased to Rs 19,45,584.

Citing that the Bank's primary concern is for the depositors and shareholders, Pochkhanawala added that the board of directors is planning how best to maintain a balance between "their interest and (that) of the industry and business community."

The Bank's first branch, opened at Gamadia Colony at Tardeo in 1986, "has continued to show satisfactory results. Deposits and advances of the branch stood at Rs 70,84,720 and Rs 1,84,751 respectively," adds the brochure. Permission to open new branches at Colaba, Dadar, Sion, Wadala, Andheri and Bandra is still being awaited from the Reserve Bank of India, further states the brochure.

The staff-management relations were cordial throughout the year, according to the brochure.

Noting the changes that have taken place in the Bank during the last one year, Pochkhanawala said that the Bank has been fortunate enough to avail of the knowledge and experience of Dadi Contractor. Former executive director of the Central Bank of India, Contractor has been co-opted on the board of directors. Board member Jehanbux Gandevia replaced Nanabhoy Jeejeebhoy as vice chairman.

Screening for a degree

Having impressed her teachers at the University of Texas, Ms Feruzi Framroze Anjirbag has been invited to return to the University to complete her higher studies in mass communications, notes a press release issued by

the Xavier Institute of Communications (XIC) in Bombay. She left for the US on August 26, 1988, and is at present working towards her master's program in cinema studies at the Radio-TV-Film Department of the University.

Producer, director and scriptwriter of audiovisuals, videos and films on educational and development themes, Anjirbag is a guest lecturer at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune, and at the film appreciation course at the Centre for Development Communications, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, notes the release. She has also scripted and produced an audiovisual on the navjote ceremony, *Mazdayasno Ahmi, Mazdayasno Zarathushtrish*, featuring the importance of the navjote ceremony in the life of a young Zoroastrian, which was screened at the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress in January 1985. She is making an audiovisual on the jashan ceremony with the assistance of Ervad Rustom Panthaki of the Dadar Athornan Madressa.

Manager of AXIS, the professional media unit of XIC, Anjirbag had the "distinction of being selected as an Indian Fulbright scholar in 1986," and was also the recipient of the British Government's Technical Cooperation Training Award in 1987 which enabled her to take up TV studies at the University of Manchester for a three-month period. Working with XIC since 1979, Anjirbag has a master's degree in sociology and is a diploma holder in TV broadcasting from XIC, the release adds.

In future, "Feruzi might do her PhD in mass communications, if funds are available," notes her mother Naju.

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

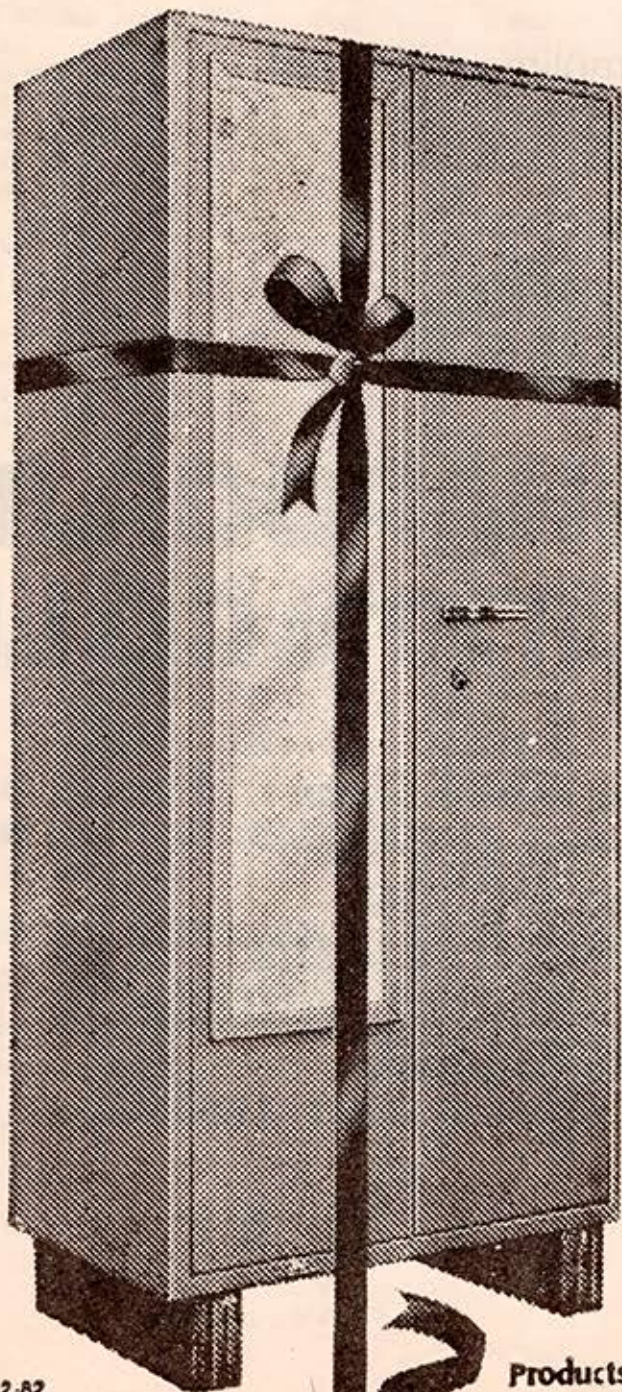
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The Karachi Parsi Anjuman Trust Fund (KPATF) "has made arrangements for a burial ground (elsewhere in) Karachi, for those Parsis who wish to use this system, as an alternative to the dokhmas which will continue," notes the Trust newsletter dated June 23, 1988.

Sections of community opinion have been pressing for a cemetery on the dokhma grounds to relieve the pressure on the dokhmas which, they feel, are not functioning efficiently for want of vultures. The trustees – chairman Dinshaw Avari, Dr Burjor Anklesaria, Byram Avari, Maj Gustad Nanavati (retd) and Dhun Ghadialy – however contend that the law will not permit a new graveyard to be set up as the land is in a residential locality and must, according to Pakistani rules, be used for housing.

Since 1963 there have been no vultures in Karachi, notes the newsletter, the first published by the KPATF. Thus the system of dokhmenashini has had to depend solely upon the rays of the sun. The inefficiency of the system, when shorn of the support of the birds of prey, became evident when a clearing of the main 118-year-old Anjuman dokhma was undertaken, with a notice to the community in the *Parsi Sansar ané Lok Sevak* of February 23, 1988. The central pit of the dokhma, which has not been cleaned for the past 15 years, "has the bones of about 750 bodies" estimated the newsletter, computing on an average of 50 deaths a year. The central well, however, yielded not just calcified bones but "undecomposed bodies with distinctive features and even hairs," wrote Karachi resident Virasp Mehta in a letter to *Parsiiana*, citing the testimony of noted surgeon Dr Kershaw

A section of the Karachi community desires a graveyard

Khambatta who had examined photographs of the grisly remains.

Noting that "the only method (to clean the dokhmas) is to remove the bones and deposit them in a pit (called *astodan*)," the newsletter informs that the trustees decided that a huge pit be dug with "seven-foot-high walls constructed around it to prevent non-Zoroastrians from prying into what's happening...Unfortunately, only the bones of 40 corpses could be removed before two Zoroastrian youths were paid sums of money by vested interests, to scale (the) walls surrounding this *astodan* and take photographs which were subsequently blown up and distributed throughout the community."

In a letter addressed to the KPATF chairman Dinshaw Avari on May 22, Jamshed Mehta, K.S. Talati, Virasp Mehta and A.N. Wadiwala described the removal of the corpses as "desecration of the dead." The dumping of the bodies in an open pit could lead to an epidemic, they feared. Another source of worry was the impact on non-Zoroastrian neighbors, if they should become aware, and the repercussions on the community. "We therefore think that the only solution to this problem is to reduce the pressure on the dokhmas by allowing people to be buried/cremated if they so wish," continued the letter and requested the KPATF to arrange for "a piece of land to use as a burial ground,

preferably on the same land but at a distance from the towers of silence, so that the *sagri* there can be used jointly."

In a separate letter to the trustees dated June 21, Cyrus Cowasjee urged the trustees to reserve adequate space in the doongerwadi area for burial before the land there is "haphazardly used up for other projects...10,000 sq m should be enough to last our community for 50 years or more."

"The corpses...have remained in a state of putrefaction in spite of the much-talked-of disposal of the dead by exposure to the sun's rays. The trustees of the Anjuman who had a desire to visit the inside of the dokhma have had to shut their eyes and noses and beat a hasty retreat from the gruesome sight," noted the write-up by Talati in the Informal Religious Meetings newsletter of May 20-June 19, 1988.

The photographs were reportedly circulated along with a xerox copy of the relevant page from the late Dastur M. N. Dhalla's autobiography wherein he states, "Dokhmenashini is not a system created by the Almighty. It is a man-made system. This system of disposing of the corpse has been rendered a sacred custom because of its practice for 3,000 years. Yet, even its 3,000-year-old tradition of sanctity has not endowed it with immortality. With the change of times and circumstances its sway has come to an end." A circular letter, which accompanied the two, was signed by more than 600 persons, according to Virasp Mehta.

"It is strange," writes Mehta, "that an anjuman like ours which is by no means very rich, on the one hand defends its actions of dumping undecomposed bodies in a pit and at the same time stoutly maintains that the dokh-

Burial ground for Karachi?

Arnavaz S. Mama

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mas are functioning even without vultures, yet on the other hand applies for land for burial purpose for a small minority of the Parsi community! To date, the Anjuman has not come up with the outcome of their application, and no one knows when the aramgah will come up and where."

Acknowledging the efficacy of the system in a favourable natural environment, Mehta adds, "Dokhmenashini is continuing in Karachi because there is no alternative method of disposal of the dead for Parsis. But it is on its last legs. We have four khandhias. It is unlikely that this number will increase as no one is prepared to enter the profession. Whenever there is a heavy body, some youths give a helping hand to the khandhias and the body is taken inside the dokhma, but I very much doubt that any of these youths would roll up their sleeves to do a cleaning job which means lifting undecomposed bodies and dumping them in the pits."

The KPATF is said to have requested the Bombay Parsi Punchayet to arrange to send some khandhias to Karachi, but the Punchayet, itself beset by problems of diminishing numbers of pallbearers, was unable to comply.

Apart from the high capital cost, most people have tended to disregard the idea of installing a cremator on the basis of substantial maintenance costs for a community with very limited usage. In a reportedly well-circulated letter dated September 20, 1988 Darayus Minwalla writes, "Cremators are now available which would suit the low usage which our community has and the cost of each cremation would be minimal, i.e. below Rs 200 for gas and electricity per cremation." Suggesting that a group of like-minded people raise a sum of 15 lakh rupees to cover the cost of the furnace, its import duty and the construction of a simple structure to house it, Minwalla offers to start the ball rolling with Rs 1,00,000.

Although the dokhma cleaning has been stopped because of this controversy, the KPATF newsletter states that it will need to be "resumed sooner or later, as the central well will have to be entirely cleared of all the dried bones." Noting that Jamshed Mehta, Talati, Virasp Mehta and retired Justice Dorab Patel were invited to inspect the *astodan* before it was covered up, the newsletter charged that the

gentlemen "did not have the strength of conviction to do so." Reiterating that the trustees have followed the traditional procedure for cleaning the dokhmas as practised in Bombay, and earlier in Karachi, the newsletter invites any Parsi Zoroastrian wanting to visit the inside of the dokhma or the *astodan* to contact Ghadialy or KPATF manager Brig Jal Golwalla for arranging a visit.

The Dinshaw Avari Colony

An ancillary controversy focuses on the use of the doongerwadi land. The proposed residential colony to be set up there is to be called 'Dinshaw Avari Colony' because it was Avari's "initiative which got this project underway (and) his continued efforts that managed to remove encroachers every time they illegally took possession of areas within the doongerwadi," notes the newsletter, adding, "The principle of the project is that the development should take place initially around the periphery to protect our land."

Originally the scheme had visualized 78 plots for development which were later reduced to 46 because of the nature of the land as also the requirement that nothing be constructed within a radius of 100 yards from the center of both dokhmas. The land was on offer to the community at Rs 300 per square yard in plots of less than 1,000 square yards and at Rs 400 per square yard for plots over 1,000 square yards, informs the newsletter. According to the estimates of architect Dadi Surti, the development will result in a surplus of 20 lakh rupees which would constitute a corpus for the Anjuman. This corpus would help the Anjuman organize a professional office and maintain its other properties.

The Avari family sought part of the area, on payment, to construct two blocks totalling 16 flats for the poor, states the newsletter. In addition, they wanted to construct a sports complex, incorporating a modern well-equipped swimming pool, a plush auditorium, a health club and gymnasium, squash and volleyball courts, a mini golf course, roller skating rink and landscaped gardens including a children's playground, plus a cafeteria which would be handed over to a Parsi to operate. "The important aspect of this community development was that the maintenance, upkeep, operational and running costs of the project were going

to be borne in perpetuity by the Avari family," stresses the newsletter. The cost of the project was estimated at Rs 70 lakhs - the largest donation so far made to the Parsi community in Karachi, adds the publication.

The trustees state that they have learnt that if the property is put to any use other than residential, the land would be requisitioned as no graveyard is allowed within a residential locality. "The principle is that housing development can grow and come up to an existing graveyard but a new graveyard cannot be developed within an existing residential colony."

However, in a letter to the trustees also dated June 23, Jamshed Mehta has charged that the KPATF board is "refusing to take into consideration the wishes of the members of the Parsi community." Reportedly enclosed with the letter were 650 signatures of community members who questioned the wisdom of the project. Mehta's letter warns of litigation if amicable processes fail to settle the dispute.

No matter how these issues are resolved in Karachi, the repercussions will be widely felt.

THE PARSIANA BOOK OF IRANIAN NAMES

The Iranian names of boys and girls along with their meanings which originally appeared in *Parsiana* have now been reprinted in an attractive 24-page booklet.

The book, which is priced at Rs 15, is available on sale at:

Kaiser-E-Hind
300 Perin Nariman Street
Behind Reserve Bank of India
Fort, Bombay 400001

Fareedoon and Burjor
Sandalwood Shop
Princess Street
Bombay 400002

Union Press,
13, Homji Street
Bombay 400001

Helping Hands

To aid needy Zoroastrians and to develop an effective communications network among Zoroastrian youth are the twin objectives of the Helping Hands Zoroastrian Youth Communication Network in North America, notes the introduction to the scheme's charter formulated by Ms Saghar Javanshir, Rattan Appoo, Farshid Sohrabi, Aadil Palkhivalla and Meher Amalsad.

Twenty Zoroastrian associations of North America are a party to the charter including the Zoroastrian Associations of Alberta, British Columbia, California, Greater New York, Houston, Metropolitan Chicago, Metropolitan Washington, Northern California, Pennsylvania and Quebec; the Austin, Greater Boston, Michigan, Minnesota and Utah Zoroastrian Communities; the California Zoroastrian Center; the Persian Zoroastrian Association of Northern California; the Dallas and Washington State Zoroastrian Associations and the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario.

The concept of aid has been defined by the charter to include food and shelter for survival, medical expenses and hospitalization, education and miscellaneous help for Zoroastrian refugees as well as help to maintain Zoroastrian places of worship in Iran, India or Pakistan. The charter qualifies that the amount of assistance will depend upon the funds collected by the Network and the time and other resources available to it, to do so.

The Network will operate "independently (though) in close collaboration with the youth committee and the welfare committee of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA)." The funds that the Network collects will be maintained under a separate account with FEZANA and will benefit from the tax exemption available to the Federation, notes the charter. The executive committee of FEZANA will have the right to debate any monetary transaction which may have legal entanglements, adds the charter.

Appoo and Amalsad, who represent the Zoroastrian Association of California, together with Javanshir and

Sohrabi, who represent the California Zoroastrian Center, will control the Network headquarters at Los Angeles. The headquarters will be responsible for assisting and contacting other Network representatives when necessary as well as making direct decisions on the validity of the proposed recipient. Palkhivalla is the Network's legal advisor.

Any Zoroastrian needing help could contact the Network representative in the area who would then inform the headquarters in Los Angeles to clear any legal implications before communicating with other, contiguous members. To avoid blockages in communication, the flow of information has been charted out as per a diagram. As the message spreads through the 20 associations, each representative contacts the membership of his/her own association through its managing committee and then forwards the response to the headquarters.

The charter provides for an annual revision of the scheme's rules and regulations based on suggestions and recommendations from the representatives and the community which may be routed to Meher Amalsad at 15842 Villanova Circle, Westminster, Ca, 92683.

Having composed the lyrics of the song *We are Zoroastrian*, Amalsad now seeks a musical score, preferably by a Zoroastrian "so that religious sentiments will be present," according to his letter to the Network representatives dated October 1. "We hope that this song will touch the lives of Zoroastrians all over the globe and help us all to be united in spirit, faith and understanding," writes Amalsad.

Tehran's new committee

Khodayar Movanate is the new president of the Anjuman Zartoshtian Tehran, informs a letter from the Anjuman dated October 26. The 21-member committee, appointed by the Zoroastrian community in Tehran on July 12, 1988 will have a tenure of three years and includes vice president Mehraban Kushesh, treasurer Shahjahan Dehmoobed and secretary Ms Farimarz Sheid. Along with Aflatoon Ziyafate who represents the community in the Iranian parliament, other

members at large are Rustam Abadian, Bahram Bahikish, Esfandiyar Tirandazian, Rustam Sharifabod, Ardeshir Sharifabod, Dinyar Khosraviyani, Dr Khosroo Debastani, Iraj Rashiedi, Khodadad Nasser, Rustam Faramarzian, Sorab Movandadnadjad, Rustam Mojgani, Mehraban Noushian, Kiumarse Vafadari, Manoucher Mobarakai and Ms Azemeedoukht Hormozan.

Women to the fore

Women outnumber men two to one on the new governing committee of the California Zoroastrian Center (CZC): president Ms Parimarz Javanshir, vice president Ms Mahin Sassani, treasurer Ms Farimah Behrouzi and secretary Ms Yasam Farin are aided by vice president Parviz Soheil and Rostam Nosrat who is in charge of the CZC's public relations, notes the Center's newsletter, *The Zoroastrian*, of October-November 1988.

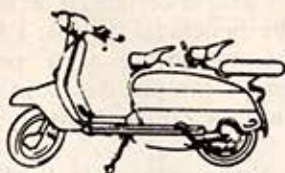
The governing committee's two subcommittees – the cooperation subcommittee which aims to promote cooperation and mutual help among those who need it, and the cultural and education subcommittee which aims to educate Zoroastrians in their rich socio-religious culture as well as introduce it to those who are interested – are seeking volunteers to promote their objectives, notes the newsletter.

The Zoroastrian introduces two works on the religion and the community. *The Zoroastrian Quest*, *Zoroastrians and the West* and *Parsi Zoroastrians* are three units written by Prof John Hinnells of Manchester University in the second level course on man's religious quest, *Spanning East and West*, published by the Open University Press. In its entirety, the course includes Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism in two main areas. *The Zoroastrian Quest* begins with pre-Zoroastrian Iran and discusses the teachings of the prophet, interpretations of the Ameshaspentas and the problem of evil, Sassanian and early post-Sassanian Zoroastrianism including Zurvanism. *Zoroastrians and the West* discusses the religion vis-a-vis the Greeks and the Romans (including the cult of Mithra), Jews, Christians and Moslems. The third unit concentrates

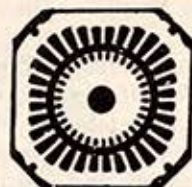
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tomorrow.**



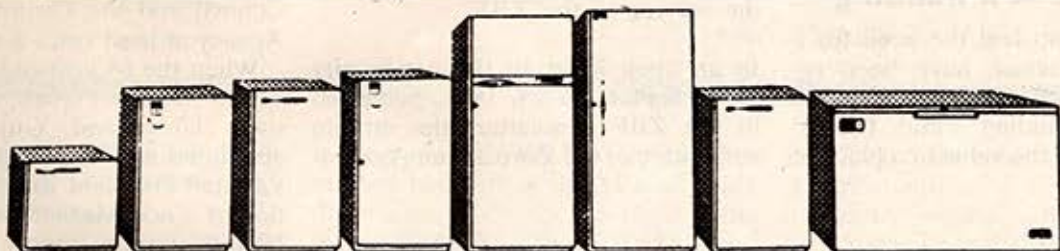
**CASH REGISTER
DIVISION**
(Electro-Mechanical &
Electronic)



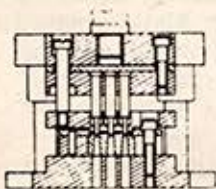
**AUTOMOTIVE
DIVISION**



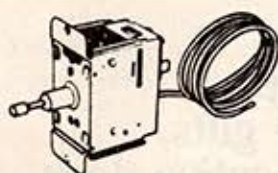
**LAMINATION
DIVISION**
(Electrical Motors &
Stampings)



REFRIGERATION DIVISION
(Refrigerators & Deep Freezers)



**CENTRALISED
TOOL ROOM DIVISION**
(Sophisticated Tools,
Dies and Fixtures)



**CONTROLS
DIVISION**



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on the history of the community in India and the practice of the religion including the towers of silence. "Although mostly prepared on the basis of European points of view, the book, with its exercises, specimen answers, discussions, illustrations, conclusions and Hinnells' own remarks - proof of his moderating views - is a stimulating work," opines the newsletter.

Another work of interest to Zoroastrians is *Iran's Men of Destiny*. Containing biographical sketches of 35 Iranian leaders ranging from prophets and kings to assassins and quislings, the book has been authored by Calcutta-born Iranian Jamal Kashani and has been published by Vantage Press of New York. A career journalist, Kashani's academic background in economics and politics has been buttressed by his life as an officer in the Iranian army and as an administrator of Iran's oil industry, notes the newsletter.

Importance of a building

Houstonians who feel the need for a community structure have been requested to enroll as members of the Zoroastrian Building Fund (ZBF). Reflecting upon the value of a place of

congregation to strengthen community bonds, Nerina Rustomji writes in the October issue of the ZBF newsletter, "If one saw the Darbe Mehr that Chicago (has), then one would realize the importance of a building... The community of Chicago made this building possible through donations as well as through immense effort. For the people who are uncertain if a building would be beneficial or not, I suggest that you reconsider your position. Together we can make a more unified community of Zoroastrians!"

At the elections held in September, Piloo Ilavia has been chosen chairperson of the ZBF committee for 1988-89, notes the newsletter. Farokh Mistree and Sarosh Collector will assist as secretary and treasurer respectively.

Katy Piloos Patel of Houston provides an unusual service to fellow Zoroastrians, informs the newsletter. She says prayers and lights *divas* (lamps) on request and donates the earnings from the service to the ZBF.

In an open letter to the community dated September 24, 1988, published in the ZBF newsletter, the interim committee of the Zoroastrian Associa-

tion of North Texas (ZANT) sought funds to aid a Zoroastrian lady hospitalized in Dallas. Since the ZANT lacked a tax exempt status, donors were requested to channel their contributions via the California Zoroastrian Center.

Distinctive diplomat

"He has helped forge a joint strategy with the United States in one of the great geopolitical battles of the 1980s," notes an article on Pakistan's ambassador to the United States, Jamshed Marker, in *The New York Times* of September 1, 1988. Marker's diplomatic skills have been honed in 15 countries including the USSR, Canada, East and West Germany, Japan and France over a 23-year diplomatic career, informs Robert Pear in the working profile filed from Washington. "Few diplomats work so intimately with the Reagan administration," writes Pear. Marker is said to meet with officials of the State Department, the Pentagon, the National Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency at least twice a week.

When the 65-year-old polyglot - he speaks English, French, German, Russian, Urdu and Gujarati - was appointed in 1986, people questioned Pakistan President Zia-ul-Haq's selection of a non-Moslem to represent an Islamic country "striving to bring its own laws into conformity with the tenets of Islam," notes Pear. Marker explained the appointment as illustrating "the tolerance that (is) practiced in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan." According to Gordon Humphrey, the Republican Senator from New Hampshire, Marker played a major role in "smoothing out the bumps in US-Pakistan relations," especially disputes over Pakistan's nuclear program, quotes Pear.

Marker is said to have responded with hand-written notes to the letters of condolence that flooded the embassy from the late Zia's admirers and attended an Afghan-sponsored condolence meeting at a mosque, notes the article.

Scion of a business family, Marker has worked in the family-owned shipping and pharmaceutical companies in Baluchistan, compered cricket matches on radio and is a keen opera lover.

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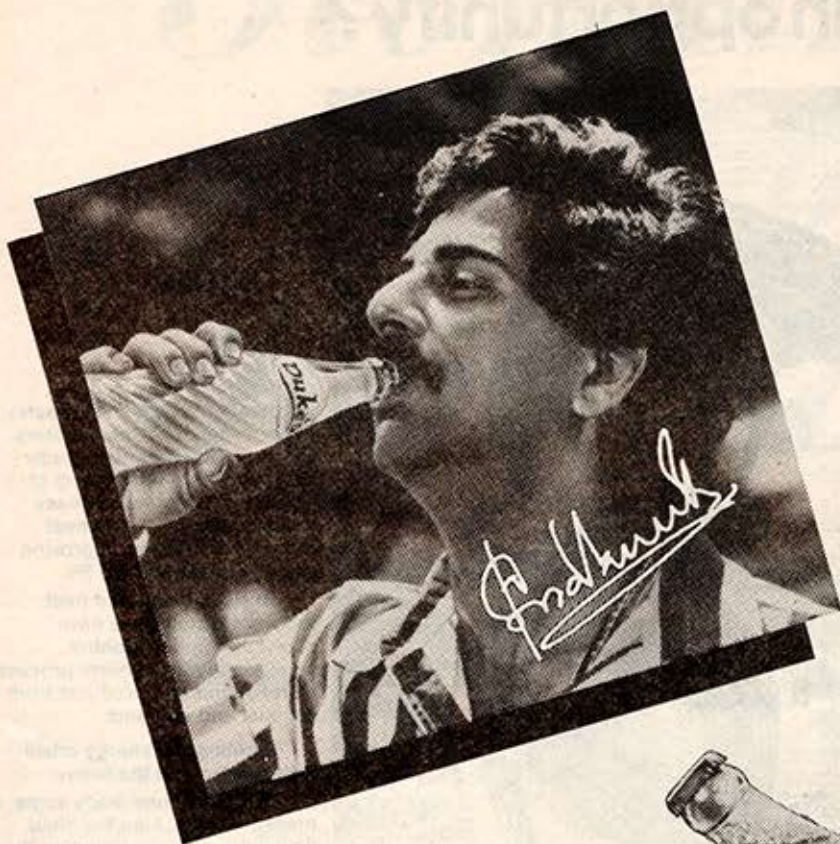
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Delivering the chosen message

Parinaz Toddywalla

"Stop sending me the *Fed Newsletter* lest I be tempted to read it and in the process cause further damage to my eyesight," was the plea from an elderly priest made to the editor of the *Newsletter*, Keki Gandhi. Accompanying the request was a cheque. Heartened by such feedback to the *Newsletter*, the official publication of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, Gandhi acknowledges that he is always touched by letters of encouragement and appreciation.

Abounding in energy and enthusiasm, his cheerful countenance framed by his pepper-and-salt hair, there was a glint in Gandhi's eyes as he warmed to the subject dear to him — the role of the *Fed Newsletter* and the labor pains that accompany the delivery of each issue. The four-page tabloid is reportedly mailed to nearly 5,600 Zoroastrian families throughout the world.

Initially the *Fed Newsletter* was conceived with the intention of promoting the image of the Federation and publicizing its aims and objectives, informs Gandhi at his Machine Tools office in Bombay on October 10, 1988. The focus since has shifted to "conveying news about Zoroastrians to Zoroastrians, creating awareness of the situations and circumstances prevailing in different locations, and highlighting the good deeds and achievements of individuals and organizations in the belief that it would inspire others to follow suit," summarizes Gandhi who is also the joint honorary secretary of the Federation.

"A newsletter is in between a newspaper and a magazine so the style has to be brief and to-the-point," realizes Gandhi. "I would have liked to have highlighted the achievements of every single winner of the Federation Award (felicitated by the community in September this year). But where is the space?"

Since the *Fed Newsletter* is meant as a free service to the community, Gandhi feels that it is an important avenue for publicizing the track records of Zoroastrian notables. And for the stratum of the community, more fluent in the Gujarati language, the *Fed Newsletter* has a Gujarati edition which is managed by Rustom Anklesaria, chief executive of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP). Originally Dara Deboo of Navsari had volun-

teered to translate and distribute the Gujarati counterpart of the *Fed Newsletter*, but a few issues later, he was unable to continue with the task. So, after a lapse of almost two years, the Gujarati edition was revived in early 1988 when Anklesaria offered to edit it. "The Gujarati edition also provides a service to the less affluent members of the community who may not be able to afford the subscription costs of the Gujarati dailies, *Jam-e-Jamshed* and *The Bombay Samachar*," reports Gandhi.

However, like all other publications catering to the dwindling Parsi community, the *Fed Newsletter* too is plagued by shortage of funds. In his own amusing style, Gandhi relates how he is often introduced as "Keki Gandhi from Delhi" to which the usual response flows along the following lines: "Yes, yes, we have been receiving your *Newsletter* regularly. Thank you very much for sending it. But how do you get the time for all this?" Gandhi, the company secretary of Machine Tools, laments, "Rarely, very rarely, does someone enquire, 'How do you finance it?'"

Every executive council meeting of the Federation finds Gandhi soliciting sponsorship commitments from anjumans and individuals to help defray the costs. The break-up of the expenses for the publication of the English edition, as indicated by Gandhi, reflects that Rs 1,000 are spent on printing, Rs 1,500 on paper, Rs 700 on inland postage and Rs 2,500 on the most exorbitant item, overseas post-

Gandhi: keeping in touch



The official organ of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, the *Fed Newsletter*, edited by Keki Gandhi, is the largest circulating community publication

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age. The income is generated from sponsorship advertisements and occasional donations which may dribble in. With a sponsorship rate of Rs 3,000 (increased from Rs 2,500 since September last) every advertiser is given an opportunity to flash his message on a half page of the *Newsletter* earmarked for it.

The monthly loss of approximately Rs 3,000 which is subsidized by the Federation does not discourage Gandhi, but he is disappointed when it is suggested that he bring down the frequency of the *Newsletter* to cut costs.

"I would have liked to have highlighted the achievements of every single winner of the Federation Award. But where is the space?"

And when he is asked, "Why isn't a subscription fee charged?" Gandhi doesn't have to think twice before giving his reply: "Because I believe that all good things in life — air, water, light, friendship, love, etc — must come free. How can you put a price to a labor of love?" Nevertheless, with his relentless determination, Gandhi is optimistic about the future of the *Fed Newsletter*.

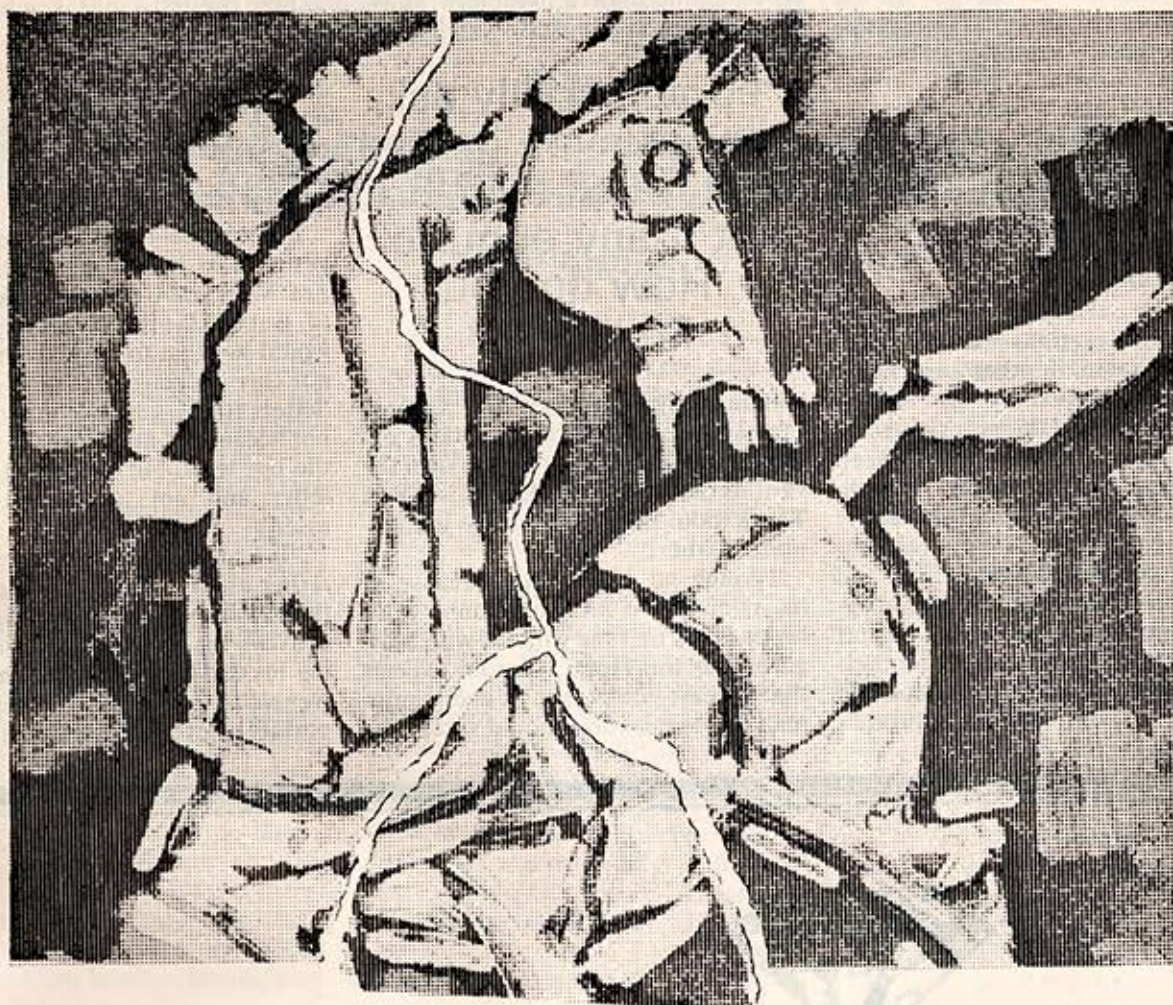
If donations can be assured, the financial burden on the Federation would be considerably reduced, notes Gandhi. He refers to the generosity of one Parsi couple who donated 50 reams of paper, and at the same time, does not fail to mention the smaller amount — an anonymous contribution in the form of postal stamps worth Rs 15 — to indicate that any gesture is appreciated. When smaller anjumans pledge advertisements, Gandhi says that he "chokes with gratitude." Considering that 50 percent of the *Newsletter's* monthly expenditure goes into overseas postage, he would like to appeal to the "goodwill of Zarthostis" settled abroad. "There is a very wide gap between receipts from overseas countries and the costs incurred on their account," Gandhi mentions,

though sanguine that the *Fed Newsletter* too will benefit from the largesse of the Zoroastrians abroad who willingly contribute to various welfare causes. "Their need to keep in touch with the community is greater," reiterates Gandhi.

The Federation's first publication was *Rah-e-Asha*, edited by the late Furrokh Bamji of Bangalore. It was a six-monthly periodical, religious in content. But when its publication ceased, the Federation was left without a medium of expression. Thereafter, "in 1981 when the idea of starting a newsletter originated from Jehangir Patel, editor of *Parsiana*, it was with the intention of making the community aware of the Federation's aims and activities," reports Gandhi. That was the time when the BPP and some major anjumans had withdrawn from the Federation. "Subsequently it was decided that the 'truncated Federation,' as it was then called, maintain a low profile. So, the publication was suspended until the BPP and other anjumans rejoined the Federation," says Gandhi.

In its initial, cyclostyled format, only a few hundred copies were distributed among the anjumans, remembers Gandhi. When they decided to print the *Newsletter*, the circulation was increased to 1,000 and gradually built up to its present 5,600. "At one stage we used to carry reports on the proceedings of the executive council meetings of the Federation. But we stopped when we saw the community receiving news of our activities from independent and unbiased sources like *Parsiana*, *Jamé* and *Samachar*," Gandhi explains.

And though Gandhi is known to have candidly announced that he likes "to have his finger in every pie," what prompted him to accept responsibility for editing and publishing the *Newsletter*? "Ha kehvani khoti aadat pari gaich (acceding to requests has become a faulty habit)," he suppresses his mirth while clarifying that the suggestion to bring out a newsletter sounded a good proposition, and as with every positive project, he adopted his principle of "Fravarane (I accept)... It is a job I enjoy doing and haven't regretted for even a moment," he declares. Subsequently he adds, "It gives immense job satisfaction to be able to bring out an issue every month when most other



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Zoroastrians, including myself, bring out the issue that really matters only once in a lifetime."

For want of a journalistic background, Gandhi feels that he is tremendously handicapped in expressing his thoughts. "I sometimes have to write and rewrite" which means wasted effort and possible delays in the printing schedule. "If I can get professional help and the Federation can afford it, I would welcome it," he noted, before informing that he had just bought a book on *How to take the fog out of writing!*

While the selection of news items and their presentations are exclusively Gandhi's domain, in other areas he is, or has been, helped by the staff of Machine Tools, and the proprietor Rajendra Sanon and the staff of Yugeen Printers. In his own words, Gandhi acknowledges, "It would certainly prick (nay, chew up entirely) my conscience if the tremendous effort and sacrifice of others were to go unrecognized: Rajendra Sanon and his staff work late into the nights and on their weekly holidays to meet impossible deadlines; Nazim and his brother

Kazim work in their homes and even on their Idd, readying the copies for despatch; formerly Ms Mary Philip, and now Ms Sadhana Sharma read and type literally undecipherable writings, handle the mailing lists and other

People usually ask,
How do you get the
time for all this? But
not many enquire,
'How do you
finance it?

administrative aspects; and George Maman does the posting, obtains extensions and maintains liaison with the various departments." His 'Boss' Yezi Tata's indulgence does not go unmentioned either.

Though he admits that because of his involvement with community work he loses out on time with his wife Margaret and son Homi, Gandhi expects that at least one person in every anjuman or organization should accept the

challenge of editing a local newsletter. The failure to bring out a newsletter is because of the stereotypes entertained by misinformed people, states Gandhi. "There is often a mistaken feeling that there is no real need for it, or that the anjuman's newsletter should be only about local happenings, or that there is no able person who can shoulder the responsibility, or that it is too costly, or that it is not worth the trouble," Gandhi lists the excuses usually cited.

Improvements and pragmatic suggestions to better the quality of the *Fed Newsletter*, Gandhi looks forward to. But he clarifies at the outset that he would not like to cover controversies, nor carry appeals for donations, nor a 'letters to the editor' column. "This is not because of my penchant for having the last word but because it is a news letter and not a views letter," he asserts.

"If I could get more money, I would rather use it to increase the circulation than to improve the get-up," Gandhi conveys his priorities before expressing his fervent wish of seeing the *Fed Newsletter* make its way through the portals of every Zoroastrian home.



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Graphic A-181

Romance with the Railways

While four decades ago 50 to 70 percent of the railway drivers were Parsis, today only a handful remain

Joy Fernandes

The iron road is a hard road and the work is never-ending.
Working night and day on the iron way
We're the boys who keep the engines rolling...

(From *The Ballad of John Axon* by Ewan MacColl, Peggy Seeger and Charles Parker)

"When he was 17, my grandfather Maneckji Dhunjibhoy Pithavala ran away from home to join the Great Indian Peninsula Railway (GIP)," remarked D.R. Maneckji (Pithavala), ex-driver and motorman, and president of the Central Railway Motormen's Association, Bombay. "It was in the 1870s and he was recruited by the loco foreman at Shahbad near Sholapur. That was the method of recruitment before - there was no commission, no agency. You could be recruited by any railway officer. Generally, the father took his son to an officer such as the loco foreman or divisional officer. If the father was a good worker they recruited the son, and so about 95 to 99 percent of the old drivers came from families where

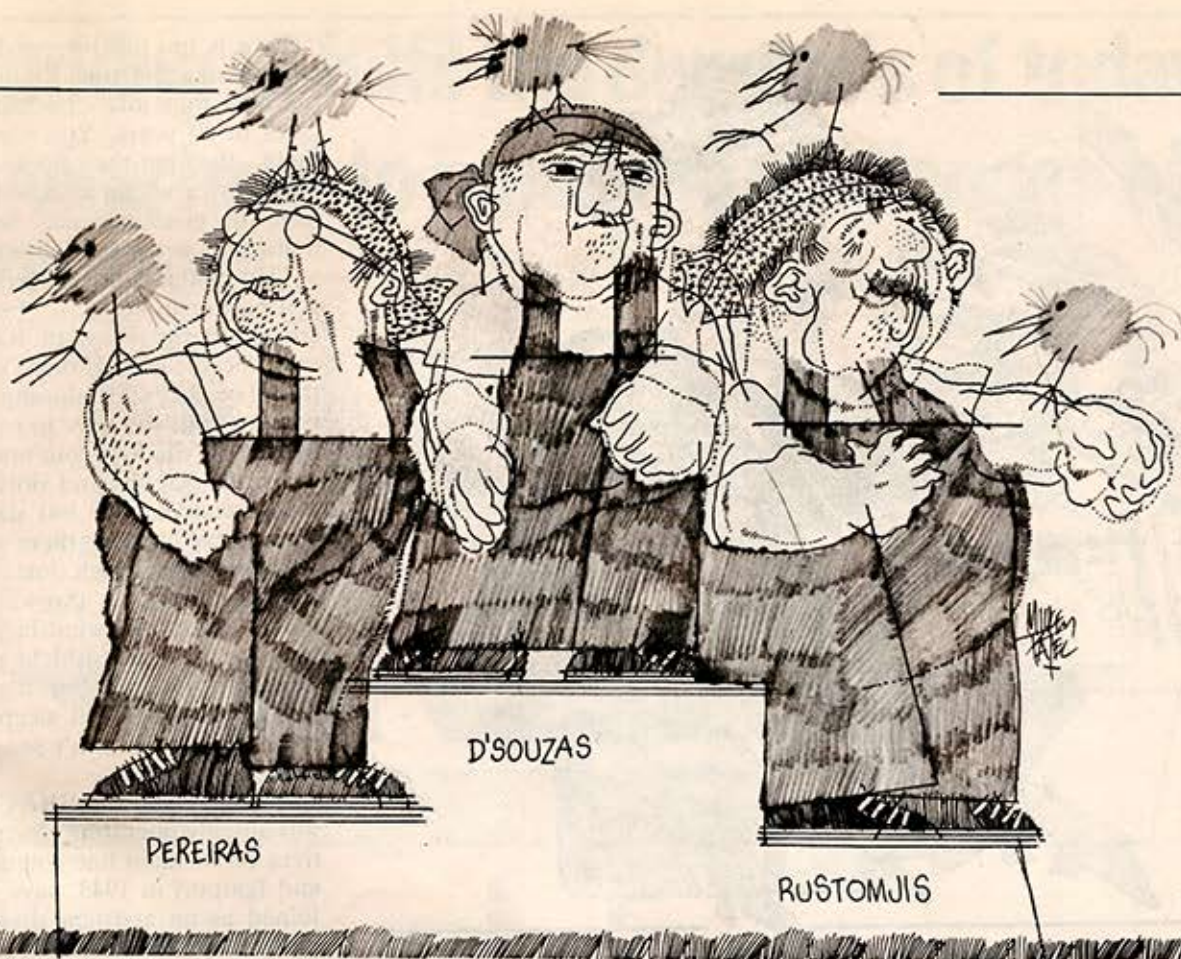
someone was already in the railways." Minoo P. Patel, retired driver and motorman of the Central Railway (which was formed by combining the GIP and the Southern Mahratta Railway), is from one such family. "I come from a family full of railwaymen," he says proudly. "My father's father, mother's father, two uncles, two cousins, my father, brother, and myself..."

A similar system was in operation on the Bombay-Baroda and Central India Railway (BB&CI - now the Western Railway), and in both the GIP and the BB&CI the majority of the firemen and drivers were Parsis and Christians. "In one loco shed you would find 10 Pereiras, 18 D'Souzas, and six Rustomjis," points out Western Railway motorman and railway historian Dr A.K. Arora. "The Parsis got preferential treatment from the British because they were loyalists."

But Indians had not always been allowed to work as drivers. "When the GIP started on April 16, 1853, the drivers had been brought in from England along with the engines, bogies and rails," notes Maneckji. "They

were called covenant hands because they came here on contract. Indians were employed only as cleaners - they were known as 'shed rags' - and as *aagwallas*," he adds. An *aagwalla's* post was equivalent to that of a second fireman, and his task was to break the coal into small pieces on the tender on which it was loaded. The first fireman's responsibilities were to shovel coal into the firebox, make sure the steam pressure was maintained, and generally assist the driver. "One who knew no English was called an *aagwalla*," explains Maneckji. "After five to seven years, when he had picked up the language, he could be promoted to fireman." An incentive to learn English, provided in the form of an English Speaking Allowance, added eight rupees to the fireman's salary of Rs 12 to Rs 20.

"The British policy was to take people with less education because the job was such that it would not suit educated people," he says. "Very few of those who joined in the early days had studied up to matriculation; most of them had completed the old fourth standard (present eighth). Seventeen



was the minimum age for recruitment, and if they joined as *aagwallas* they could rise to drivers in about 15 years." The stages of promotion were shunting driver, goods driver and passenger driver, and there were three grades: A for Europeans, B for those who spoke English (mostly Parsis and Christians) and who could be recruited directly as firemen, and C for those who spoke broken English. Indians were not eligible for promotion to Grade A.

The network of BB&CI and GIP railroads was worked by steam and electric locomotives on the main lines, and electric multiple unit (EMU) rakes on the Bombay suburban routes. EMU rakes have a motorman, electric locomotives have a driver and an assistant driver, and the steam locomotives had a driver, a first fireman, and an *aagwalla* (second fireman). Speaking to drivers and motormen, we found that there were differences in their training and conditions of work.

When Western Railway motorman Merwan R. Govekar was recruited as an apprentice fireman in 1956, the main line still used steam engines. "I

spent one year in the loco shed in Bulsar and learnt how to fire coal, wash the boilers, maintain the engines and repair them," he says. "Then I was put on the line – for the first six months as a second fireman, later as first fireman." For eight years he worked the Bombay-Baroda route before becoming head loco shunter at the Parel and Bandra loco sheds, goods driver at Bulsar, and motorman on Western Railway's suburban line. Talking about the hard physical labor of the early days, he says simply, "We had to fire about 16 tons of coal in nine hours."

For some, the work could also be hazardous. In 1944, Western Railway fireman Jehangir Hormusji, was in-

jured when the lever chain of a water column snapped as he was filling the locomotive's tank with water. After his training he had worked for just one year. "I was flung off the engine and injured," he recalls, gesturing towards his right side. "So in 1945 I was transferred and came to the electric engines at Bombay. I liked it. Compared to the steam engines it was very clean, neat, and the duty hours were also less."

Talking about the city and service conditions of those days, Hormusji becomes nostalgic. "From 11 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. we would run three-coach trains because there were hardly any passengers. When peak hours started at 4 p.m. we would run six-coach trains. It was good. There were very few people, no suicides, no trespassing; the working was easy and the Thompson Houston Rakes from London were easy to maintain. It was peaceful, inflation was not there, commodities were cheap, and the British officers were very nice – they would consider... Once, in the shed I had collided with another engine, but..." he smiled, obviously pleased with the way the matter had been resolved. Speeds,

"About 95 percent of the old drivers came from families where someone was already in the railways"



he says, were limited to 35 or 40 mph, and the whole face of the city was different. "Did you know that where the road crossing is (between Churchgate Station and the Asiatic Department Store) there used to be only sea? All this land has been reclaimed. The *Frontier Mail* used to start from Ballard Pier, the others from Colaba. Finally they moved to the Bombay Central Station."

On the GIP's suburban line the most famous motorman was Jehangir Framji Daroowalla who expired last year at the age of 92. His claim to fame was established on February 3, 1925 when he drove the first EMU rake from Bombay VT to Kurla and back, thus becoming India's first motorman. Daroowalla was the son of a railway guard of Jhansi and had joined the GIP as an apprentice fireman. The journey, which was hailed as a significant step in the electrification of the Harbour Branch, had the Bombay Governor Sir Leslie Wilson, Lady Wilson, and a group of important officials transported in a manner that reportedly shocked the local populace by the speed and smoothness of the accelera-

tion. A couple of years after the historic journey – which had gained added glamor from the fact that a gold reverser handle had been used to drive the train – Daroowalla sustained an injury to his eye, and was assigned other duties.

Unlike these others, motorman inspector Phiroze Tantra who joined the service in 1953 was recruited directly onto the Western Railway suburban line and received his training exclusively in this area. "I was an apprentice motorman for four years," he explained in the motorman inspectors' busy office, the windows of which overlook the noisy Churchgate Station hall. "I had three years in the shed, and one year on the line – six months learning and six months driving with a regular motorman. For the past five years I've been a motorman inspector. There's not much benefit in pay, but it's a stationary job. I train and monitor the drivers."

Motormen, he says, get neither calendar days nor bank holidays off. "We get only hours off – 30 hours, five times a month." And there are other problems they face, Tantra elaborates.

"There is too much trespassing, people crossing the tracks, suicides. I've run over lots, lots – perhaps 40 or 50 cases in 30 years. You can't do anything...they put their necks on the rail and its over within a second. Then we have to give evidence because the motorman is the first eyewitness."

The commuters' behavior is also getting worse, he feels. "Formerly the crowd on the Western Railway was very decent; now, if there's even a little delay, they start abusing. They irritate you, but you have to be very cool-headed. If you lose your temper..." he trails off. Bandhs and riots cause not only inconvenience but danger, says Tantra. "Whenever there are bandhs we have a very tough time. People obstructing the train, throwing stones... Once I had my windshield broken. Now we have windshield guards and police protection, but it's still very dangerous. They put sleepers on the track and if we don't see them, the train can derail."

In contrast to the BB&CI, the GIP was already operating electric locomotives on its main line routes to Poona and Igatpuri in 1943, says Patel, who joined as an assistant driver. "I had nine months of training at Kalyan," he notes. "We had to learn the mechanical and electrical parts of a locomotive, faults and failures, the working of the signal system, electric circuit breakers and their function, and overhead equipment. Then we went on line with another driver to learn the road – from Kalyan to Igatpuri and Kalyan to Lonavla – eight hours a day for 10 days before we could become assistant drivers." Their duties at this stage were to help the driver, repair the locomotive, oil the side rods on the wheels, clean the engine, and keep everything ready for the journey. "We were allowed to handle the levers only in an emergency. For example once, when the *Deccan Queen* was passing Kalyan, the driver collapsed and his assistant took over till the next station."

Promotions were awarded as vacancies occurred, and were on the basis of seniority. "So we used to tell our senior drivers, 'Your only qualification is that you were born before me,'" he smiles. Since he joined during World War II, promotions were quick. "After six years I became an independent goods driver, then motorman, passenger train driver, Ghats driver, and mail and express driver. I preferred mail

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driving: it's a fast service, plus it's prestigious. You can drive the *Deccan Queen*, *Punjab Mail*, etc. When I was working as a mail driver I often spotted panthers on the Lonavla ghats; also hyenas, barking deer and wild boar. Once, at Atgaon Station in summer, I cut a 10-foot long python that had come to lie on the cool steel of the rails. When another driver, Tom Wilby, heard about this, he went and got the skin to make a bag for his daughter."

Patel talks of the time when Raj Kapoor brought his son Chintu to see his *Deccan Express* locomotive at Dadar Station, and an earlier occasion when a wide-eyed child who came to see the locomotive of the 11 Down *Bombay-Madras Express* turned out to be Rajiv Gandhi. "This made me think," says Patel. "He was so fascinated by locomotives, and he became a pilot."

Wars have been a period of special hardship for railwaymen due to the blackouts and increased duty hours. "1939-45 was the worst time," recalled Maneckji. "Since it was wartime we were not governed by any rest rules. After my duty was over, I had to travel back from Kalyan to Bombay where I lived, rest, and report back within 12 hours. And since there were open timings we had no guarantee as to what time a military train would be ordered. The station had no restroom, so we would roam around the platform for four, five, 10 hours. And because of the rationing, we had to carry our own grains, sugar and condensed milk."

During this time, passenger traffic was reduced to a minimum. Trains were mainly military and ammunition specials which moved troops, arms, and ammunition from the Bombay and



Calcutta ports to the military depots. "We would carry cannons and armored cars to the North West Frontier," recalls Hormusji. "The military depots were all over - Mhow, Deolali, Khadki (near Poona)... Poona was a military cantonment and there was a military academy at Dehradun."

On the suburban lines too, there were many changes, he says. "People went home early and the trains were practically empty. The signal lights were dimmed and shaded, and we were not allowed headlights or lights in the cab." But World War II was also a time of intense recruitment, acknowledges Maneckji. "British railwaymen were given special military training - they were called the Railway Auxiliary Force - and stationed to guard bridges and ammunition dumps, so promotions for us were rapid." In more recent times, the 1962 Indo-China War produced the same kind of difficult conditions.

Above left: Old Colaba station
Above: Local train hauled by a steam engine from Colaba station
Left: Daroowalla, first motorman on EMU

In spite of all this, however, railway service continued to exercise a powerful pull. "The (biggest) attraction was the free train passes," admits Maneckji. "After one year you got one set per year for yourself and your family, after 20 years you got two sets. There was also free medical treatment, and the housing, especially in upcountry areas, was for a very nominal rent." Leave was also adequate. "When I retired as mail driver in 1979, we used to get 21 days privilege leave, 15 casual, and 15 days half-pay sick leave," notes Patel. "In 1943 we got Rs 60 basic and Rs 12 dearness allowance, an increment of five rupees every year, and a mileage allowance of one rupee ten annas per every 100 miles. But we got no night allowance; no overtime."

As a result of widespread Parsi employment in the railways - 75 percent of BB&CI drivers and 50 percent of GIP drivers were Parsis in the 1940s, according to the estimates of Hormusji and Patel - there were large concentrations of Parsis in railway colonies at towns like Igatpuri, Bhusaval, Bulsar and Jhansi. "When my father was posted at Bina near Jhansi from 1925 to 1930, about 14 families out of 45 were Parsi," points out Maneckji. "On auspicious occasions they used to visit each other and at least once a year they had a community gathering on a contributory basis. There were no formal associations, but they would visit each other in the evenings, or go for a walk. Generally they gathered at the Railway Institute which had facilities

"Since it was wartime we were not governed by any rest rules. We never knew when a military train would be ordered"

for tennis, badminton, billiards, and a beer bar."

Their sense of kinship extended to life on the line, and an easy camaraderie existed among them. "Every Parsi driver was nicknamed according to his habits," he recalls. "Those who could read and write (well) and offer explanations were called 'Penmen.' Then there was 'Dirty Dick,' 'Zoroaster' - he was the son of a priest - and 'Narad Muni.' That one was named after the secretary or king's agent in the Mughal period, because he used to go and backbite. My grandfather was called 'Dhansak' because he would gather his friends and cook dhansak for them in Igatpuri. Another was 'Sodawaterbottle.' He used to change his colors just as the old bottles rocked from side to side (they had curved bases)."

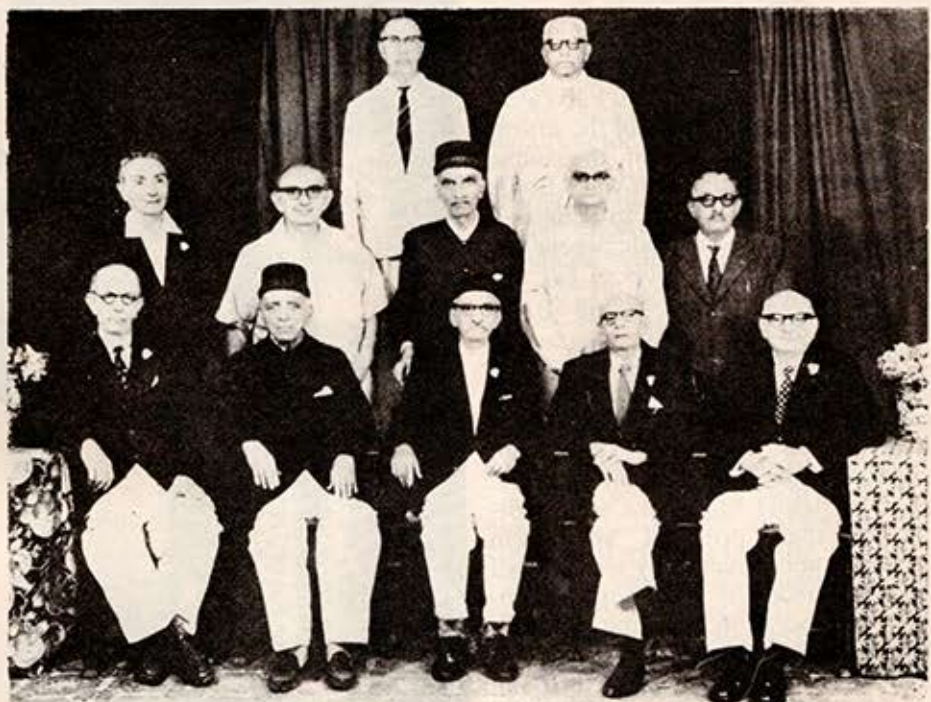
Some of the drivers, adds Maneckji, were also very mischievous. "There was one hero, Jal Cooper, who used to come into Poona with the *Madras Mail* at 1.30 a.m. In winter he would open all the doors and windows of the running room (restroom) and start all the fans, in summer he would close all the doors and windows before leaving. Or, when we woke up the next morning, we would find our clothes shifted onto someone else's mosquito net post, and our slippers missing. Then we would know, Cooper has been here." But despite their closeness, there was no isolation from those of other communities, points out Tantra. "The community feeling was there, but still we mixed about with other people."

Over the decades there has been a steady decrease in the number of Parsi

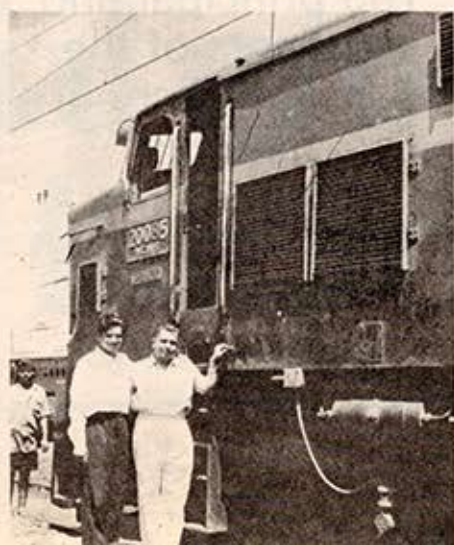
drivers and motormen, a phenomenon that is best illustrated on the Western Railway's suburban service. "At present there are hardly two and a half percent Parsis among our motormen," says Tantra. "Out of 234, we are six Parsis, and in the year 2000 it will be nil because we will have retired." The reason for this decline, said most of those we spoke to, is the change in the system of recruitment. In 1951 a Service Commission was appointed by the government to screen all applicants, and entrance was made competitive, not automatic. The result was a steep

drop in the number of Parsi recruits, though it has taken some years for this change to be apparent. Currently, recruitment is handled by the Railway Recruitment Board, and those applying in response to their advertisements have to pass a general written exam and an interview. "These days they also have quotas for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes," adds Gov-ekar.

The reason for this decline, however, may lie as much within the community as in the change of system. "Nowadays, a graduate would not like



*Sitting (left to right): N.N. Merchant, A.N. Zaveri, F. Nasserwanji, Naval Patel and D. Byramji
Second row (L to R): E. Warden, R. Maneckji, R. Ardeshir, M. Dadabhoy and M. Rustomji Third row (L to R): L.D. Patel and H. Nasserwanji*



Engine turner Y.R. Chitre (left) and mail driver (Grade A) Minoo P. Patel

to go at two o'clock in the night and all that," acknowledges Maneckji. Tantra agrees: "The new generation of Parsis doesn't want to work irregular hours. We have actually slogged, worked nights, but they want to sit in air-conditioned banks."

But for the men who have spent decades on the line, nothing can compare with the railway life, however arduous. "I enjoyed driving, I still love it," smiles Tantra. "Any time, it's a pleasure." And Patel, who retired after 36 and a half years, agrees. "My favorite time was daybreak, especially in the ghats...the scenery, fog, hills... When I retired I missed the railways a lot. Even in my dreams I still drive trains. A foreign writer once said," he pauses to recollect the quotation. "The pension you get is the work that you do in your dreams."

"Daring to be different"

Jeroo Irani

It had all the trappings and the rituals associated with a traditional Parsi wedding. As the incantations of the priests wafted over the hushed air, the couple was pronounced man and wife. Eager relatives surged forward to congratulate the duo while the bride preened in her finery – the rich folds of her sari and the heavy jewelry adding to her lovestruck air.

But the bride and groom were not a man and woman joined in holy wedlock but two students of the J.B. Petit High School for Girls. They were enacting an original play on the Parsi freedom fighter Madame Cama, written by their principal Ms Shirin Darasha, and directed by well-known theater personality Ms Pearl Padamsee. The occasion was the School's annual drama festival which gives students, ranging in age from 14 to 16, an opportunity to face the footlights, and Darasha to tap the infinite histrionic talent in the School.

Darasha describes theater as one of the great creative activities of the School and seems to have transmitted her stage fever to her students and staff. For every year, the festival of plays – a massive collaborative effort of the staff and the students, welded into a whole by the dynamic principal and an equally dynamic director – is put up with great gusto. Earlier, classical or modern plays from the western stage were produced. In 1986, the prizewinning plays of a competition held the previous year were put up. Last year's play, *Pantry Girls*, was scripted by Darasha while Sangharsh



The principal and students of the J.B. Petit School stage an original play on the little known freedom fighter, Madame Cama

(also produced last year) was a collective writing effort of the staff. Darasha is probably one of the few principals who writes plays for her students to enact. And equally unusual is the fact that the performances are reviewed by the Press every year.

So also with *Madame Cama*, which was hailed by critics for successfully bringing to life a slice of history. Historical plays, which deal with living issues of the day, can be ephemeral artistic productions that age quickly. However, the focus of dramatic conflict in *Madame Cama* is an issue which is still a burning one today, points out Darasha. It is the story of a lone woman, trapped and battling against an established order; trying to break out of the traditional mold of wife and mother that society is forcing upon her.

Bhikhaji Rustom Cama (played superbly by Tarini Bedi of Class X), once known as the 'Mother of the Indian Revolution,' was way ahead of her times. Born into a rich Parsi family, she married into an equally rich one, and walked out on it all without a backward glance. When presented with a choice – cosy domesticity versus a life spent pursuing her burning desire to free India from the British yoke, she chose the latter. She worked with Dadabhai Naoroji in England for a while, got tired of the policy of constitutional agitation and adopted the direct revolution approach of Veer Savarkar. She decided to forge ahead on her own – holding meetings, publishing pamphlets, building up public opinion against the rulers in Britain, and subsequently in Europe. The battle finally culminated in her unfurling

Madame Cama on stage, unfurling the Vande Mataram flag



*Scenes from the play:
(Left) At Mme Cama's wedding
(Below) An ailing Cama during her
last days at the hospital*

the Vande Mataram flag at the Second International Socialist Convention in Stuttgart in 1907, with Cama declaring: "This is the flag of India's Independence. Behold, it is born, sanctified by the blood of martyred Indian youth. I call upon you gentlemen to rise and salute this flag of Indian Independence." Even after this, she continued to wage her one-woman war against the colonizers, resulting in her arrest by the French who had to bow to pressure from their Allies.

Introduced on the stage when in her teens, Cama in the play slowly blossoms into a self-possessed young woman. When she left Indian shores, she had vowed never to return on a British passport. But, inexorably, loneliness in a foreign land, age and blindness overtake her, and she returns to the country that she loved and missed when in political exile. She dies eight months after her return, alone, bereft and penniless at the Parsee General Hospital.

If, at times, the actresses and the parts they played seemed to become one, it testifies to Darasha's dramatic craftsmanship and Padamsee's deft touch. Tarini Bedi, the leading lady, held center stage almost from the rise of the curtain, and her hold was not relaxed until the climax and the end. At times she seemed to vibrate with emotion (making the audience vibrate with her) and exuded, at other times, a lofty hauteur. She embodied, at all moments, grace of movement and perfect timing.

Riddled with pathos, poignancy and humor, what comes across finally in the play is a sparkling, harmonious welding and a neat plot that races



along, occasionally slowing down to a creaking limp. This is perhaps due to the fact that in the first act the friction in Madame Cama's personal relationships provides dramatic conflict. In the subsequent acts, which rely on historical facts and her public life, the conflict is diluted. Darasha could also be criticized for not capturing all the varied facets of Madame Cama's character. For the play concentrates on Cama's magnificent obsession – liberating India from the British yoke – to the exclusion of almost everything else.

Despite the flaws, Darasha seems to have matured as a playwright and has acquired a better command of the medium. The message is less strident and the dialogue flows more smoothly and credibly in *Madame Cama* than it did in *Pantry Girls*. "My mind runs much faster than my pen," observes Darasha. "I felt as though I was physi-

cally giving birth to something. I can now read the play and see which sections could be improved."

The genesis

Initially, however, Darasha had considered an easier way out – putting up *Annie Get Your Gun* for the 1988 festival. But the play was jettisoned as it was against the School's concept of a woman as a thinking, capable adult. "Annie gave up being a damn good shot to be with her man," says Darasha, faint disapproval glimmering in her eyes. "We considered giving the play a new twist. But finally abandoned the idea."

When the School's music teacher Ms Jean Kalgutkar suggested that Darasha write a play on the little-known Parsi revolutionary Madame Cama, the principal's reaction was dismay: "I don't know anything about her except that she unfurled a flag somewhere in Europe." The music teacher argued persuasively. "We don't know much about her perhaps because she was a woman," (which galvanized the principal into action). "And also because the contribution of the minority communities to the freedom struggle is not so well-known."

Darasha launched into the project with grim determination. She did not have to delve into reams of research material or flick through parchment paper tomes to discover what made this intrepid woman tick. For her ignorance of Cama's contribution to history was shared by virtually the rest of the world. "There was really no comprehensive record of her life," said Darasha. "I had to rely on little pamphlets that give the bare historical facts." Finally, she came across Ms Khorshed Sethna's book *Madame Bhikhaiji Rustom Cama* in the Builders of Modern India series. "As I read it, I began to understand the woman for the first time. She was a wonderfully humane person. She was a great giver: of herself, her time, energy and wealth. She was unwilling to compromise her ideals, her personality.

Even today, how many women would do half the things that she did? Yet she never complained; she was never bitter."

Darasha recalls one incident, not included in the play, but which nevertheless gives one an illuminating insight into Cama: "She nursed her ailing millionaire brother in Paris at a time when she herself was down and out." What is perhaps more tragic was that the brother, when he died later, left all his money to charity. Her generosity was not restricted to her family. Every month she would regularly send Rs 30 to a jailed freedom fighter. The play perhaps passed the acid test when the children began to understand what Cama stood for. "The actresses identified strongly with her."

Particularly Bedi. "Tarini was scared that the long speeches she would have to deliver would bog the play down and that people would find her boring," confesses Darasha. Her reservations were taken into consideration, and the speeches were shortened and tightened. Other suggestions made by the children were in-

corporated, illustrating the maxim that few plays can be staged exactly as they have been written. It is this well-known fact that accounts for the ceaseless reiteration of the aphorism: "Plays are not written, they are rewritten." However, the basic conception and the substance are seldom changed. The changes that are made in the course of rehearsals – usually at the suggestion of the director – are for purposes of clarification and greater dramatic effectiveness. "We fortunately have Pearl Padamsee who has the ability to bring the printed word to life," Darasha acknowledges. "It is a skill honed through years of hard work. She can look at something and fine tune it. We have learnt so much from her."

Aside from the the director's editing and polishing, Darasha was selective in her choice of material and portrayed only the most dramatic milestones in Cama's life. However, she did give her fancy free rein in the first act when she portrays the relationship between Cama and her husband Rustom (played by Pia Sabharwal), editor of *The*

Bombay Chronicle; and Cama and her interactions with her mother Jaijimai (played admirably by Kashmira Shaw), and with her loving spinster aunt Tehmina (a dignified portrayal by Zia Dastoor).

Literary license

"I had to use literary license because a historical play can get boring," says Darasha. To evoke the period, the stage was crowded with actresses clad in rich garas, typical bordered saris draped over lace-trimmed, long-sleeved blouses, and net sudrehs; while the girls impersonating as men sported duglis and phetas. One of the problems that Darasha had not envisaged was carting the typically Parsi, heavy, carved furniture to Patkar Hall (where the play was staged) on a rainy day.

"But what was truly horrendous was draping the girls in their saris," laughs Darasha. "At the first dress rehearsal we wept in despair. We didn't realize that the girls would have to change so fast." Often they would have to deliver the lines and would not arrive on cue because the sari had not been draped. At the end of the first dress rehearsal "Pearl was bawling, the teachers were bawling, and worst, the children were bawling." But by the time of the second and third dress rehearsals, a system had been worked out to dress the actresses speedily and efficiently. Tarini had several changes in the play. For her wedding scene she had three girls and two teachers dress her!

Ultimately, one goes to see a play in order to be amused, excited, interested and exalted. In other words, the arousal of emotion in the audience is the litmus test. The portrayal of Cama's last days is poignant, as the bent old lady does not even have enough money to tip the maid in the hospital who takes care of her basic needs. The fraction of a second's pause between the fall of the curtain and the outbreak of applause was evidence of the fierce tension in the audience, moved by the lonely battle of a woman who had "dared to be different." As thunderous applause rent the air, one could feel the waves of pent up emotion which surged and enveloped the young actresses who had come onto the stage to take their final bow.

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"Why I became A ZOROASTRIAN"-1

William H. Brawner

A troubled American finds solace in Zoroastrianism

I have been a follower of Asho Zarathushtra, to the best of my ability, for the past six or seven years. My wife is also a Zarathushtrian and we are raising our two-year-old daughter in the Good Religion.

To date, I have not yet undergone formal conversion. I have been in direct contact with the community only a short time. There are very few Zarathushtrians here in the West and these are difficult to find. While members of other religions go out of their way to let people know how to contact them, Zarathushtrians seem to try as much as possible to hide and to avoid any such contact. I finally located the California Zoroastrian Center after a long and frustrating search.

To enable you to understand why I have chosen the Good Religion, I would need to tell you a little of my life story:

My hearing is severely impaired – legally, I am deaf. I was born this way. I did not learn to speak until I was seven or eight years old and then only with difficulty and not at all clearly. My hearing loss was not diagnosed until I was eight and then the diagnosis was ignored because my father was unwilling to accept it. His verdict of my problem was that I was faking in order to get attention, and all I really needed was a good beating – something that he did not fail to administer, quite

literally. I have enough broken bones to last more than a lifetime.

The schools mostly ignored me. I was labeled "retarded," stuck in the back of the "slow" class and largely given up as a hopeless case. Along with my hearing loss, I had a learning disorder which caused me to invert numbers and letters so that 345 would become 543 in my mind.

It wasn't until I was 17 that a counselor at school took an interest in me. She had my hearing tested and, despite opposition from my father, sent me to a speech therapist who taught me how to read lips and how to speak clearly. It was hard work but now many people are unaware that I am deaf when I speak to them. I do mispronounce some words and my speech is still a bit strange but no longer markedly so. Most people assume that I am a foreigner and are surprised to learn that I can't hear. This counselor also had a psychiatrist test my intelligence and found that I am not retarded and so moved me into normal classes. This was not the best thing to do since I was not socially prepared for the change.

Life was "hell" for me as a child and I was extremely unhappy. Somewhat naturally, I turned to religion for comfort. Like other hearing impaired and physically/emotionally abused children, I blamed myself for my problems, feel-

ing that somehow I must have done something wrong to bring this down on me – this wrath of God punishing me for my sins. So, when my mother suddenly decided, when I was 14, that the family must go to church, I was overwhelmed by the Christian message of forgiveness, and I went through the "second birth" experience (as they say "accepted Christ as my personal savior"). At the time, it was very real and intense to me. So, even though I no longer believe that way, I have a genuine understanding of fundamentalist Christians.

Accepting Christ as savior seemed to change things for a while. I studied the *Bible* intently every day, spending hours at it daily. I rapidly became a star Sunday school pupil...with large sections of Christian scripture committed to memory.

Still, things remained the same. My hearing loss was still there. I still couldn't speak clearly. And I continued to have few friends. I didn't let these things shake my faith.

But the more I studied, the more I began to see contradictions in the *Bible*, contradictions between *Bible* passages and what my church taught, logical conflicts between various doctrines, and between Christian doctrine and the world around me.

From the time of my conversion, I had believed that I was called to be a

minister. So, in spite of the conflicts I felt inside, I went off to a seminary where I was a terrible student. Academically, I had difficulty with the fact that we were required to keep notes and these notes formed a large part of our grades. I find it impossible to take notes since I can't write without looking at the paper and I can't 'hear' without looking at the instructor's lips. And copying someone else's notes was considered cheating – no exceptions granted. Most of all, I was a problem student who asked troubling questions instead of accepting the teachings at face value. After a year

We share guilt with the evil-doer for any evil done. God is also bound by this rule, if He is just

and a half, I was asked to leave. (I would have left anyway since I no longer could believe what I was being taught there.)

After that, I drifted from job to job. These were very difficult to find and to keep. If I told employers that I am deaf, they wouldn't hire me. Yet if I neglected to tell them, they would later fire me legally for omitting that information on my employment application. Either way, I was out of work.

During this time, I continued to study the Christian faith. You name the Christian sect, the chances are very good that I have been to their worship services, studied with them, prayed with them, broke bread with them.

I tried to handle job problems, the problems from my childhood and the religious conflicts that I was experiencing until I couldn't do so any more. In one night of dark despair, I slit my wrists and almost died. I ended up in a psychiatric ward and frankly, I remain suspicious of modern psychiatry to this day. It did nothing to help me, but being there gave me time to realize that I had to reject Christianity totally.

This left me without a religion, and I turned to my ancestral religion, Judaism. Judaism is not a theological religion. It is centered on practice, not dogma. Here I was able to drop my theological questions for a time and simply practice the religion.

But, I could not escape the questions which had plagued me earlier: If God is truly good, all-powerful and all-knowing, why did He create a world which is imperfect – filled with evil, pain and suffering?

The Jewish answer to the problem of evil is basically the same as is found in Christianity (and also held by some liberal Zarathushtrians): If God had created a world without evil, we would have been like robots without free agency. God could have created us perfect but chose to give us free will which necessitates the possibility of choosing evil. He planted within us the *yetzer-tov* (good inclination) and the *yetzer-ra* (evil inclination) and then set us free to choose between good and evil. Our purpose here is to learn to reject the evil and embrace the good; to develop strength of character and to come to love God freely of our own choice.

This is not a solution to the problem because if God is all-knowing and all-powerful, then He has the knowledge and the ability to create a perfect world, free of evil, pain and suffering without depriving us of free will. Free will implies freedom of choice but does not necessitate that the choice be between good and evil.

We are faced with many choices every day, but in actuality our options are limited by our circumstances and abilities. I can choose to go live in Hong Kong, but if I lack the money for transportation or am unable to obtain permanent residency, my option is restricted though the choice is still valid. When we meet another person, we have many options ranging from love to hate. We do not need evil choices in order to have free will. It is true that we need to develop character, but we need to develop character because evil exists. We don't need evil so that we can develop character.

Indeed, if God is pure goodness, He would not create a world with evil in it. The originator of an action is responsible for the ultimate outcome of his action. If I fire a bullet into a crowd, I am responsible for the fact that it strikes and kills someone. Even if I did not know that person, and bore no ill feelings towards him, I am nevertheless responsible. To inflict suffering or death on a sentient being, either by commission or omission, when it is within our power to prevent that suf-

fering or death, is an evil act. Similarly, if the world is as God created it, then He is responsible for the actions of nature, if not for those of man. When a hurricane kills hundreds of people, God is to blame for He created the laws of nature under which that hurricane operates...if in fact those laws are in operation as He planned them. The ignorance of men concerning those laws is no more an excuse for His action than is the ignorance of the man standing in a crowd when I shoot into it. In both cases, an evil has been committed.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam all teach a theory of evil that can be summed up as: Evil does not exist; it is merely the absence of good. Imagine the comfort this doctrine must give to those parents standing by the grave of their child. And if we should die in an earthquake here in California, would it comfort our dying thought that our death is not evil but merely the absence of good?

This absence-of-good doctrine con-

We would like to think that God is absolutely all-powerful, but the reality of moral and physical evil leaves us no choice

tradicts a basic teaching of all three religions: the omnipresence of God. If God is perfectly good and He is present everywhere, there is no place that evil or the absence of good can exist. Either God is not present everywhere or is not perfectly good, or else this theory that evil is the absence of good is simply false. Evil is not merely the absence of good: the difference between good and evil is not of function (nor of absence) but of substance, of essential nature. We have a responsibility to oppose evil.

These thoughts led me to leave Judaism. I went on to study Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Shintoism and Sikhism...often going to learn directly from members of these faiths. Eventually, I came across references to Zoroaster in various books. I had

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first read about him while in my teens and although I found him interesting then, I was not yet prepared to accept a non-Christian solution.

I learned of Zarathushtrian monotheistic dualism which defines God as perfectly good, totally just, all-knowing, yet limited in His power temporarily by an opposing being, a semi-god, powerful, uncreated and yet not eternal. (Ahura Mazda – the wise eternal, ever-living creator – alone can rightfully be given the title 'God.' Since Angra Mainyu is not wise, nor eternal, nor creative, the title cannot be applied to him.)

For me, this solved the problem of how a good God could permit evil to exist in His creation. There are three aspects of God involved in this: goodness, knowledge and power.

We cannot limit God's goodness, for who would desire to serve a whimsical God who vacillates between good and evil? Such a changeable God would be a tyrant and unworthy of intelligent worship. We dare not limit God's knowledge for this aspect is the one which assures us that all will ultimately work out for the best. We must believe in a God who knows what He is doing or else abandon all hope. This leaves us with God's power. Admittedly, we would like to think that God is absolutely all-powerful, but the reality of moral and physical evil in this world leaves us without this choice. There is one thing which must limit God if He is truly good: His own nature. He must be incapable of thinking, saying or doing evil. Thus He would not create a world where His children suffer as they do in this one. And He must be limited by evil. Where evil is, good is not – not because evil is the absence of good but rather because these two are total opposites.

Many in the reform movement of our faith do not see natural calamities as being evil, but I do. The example of a man being foolish enough to stand in the middle of a busy highway without expecting to be hurt is an illustration cited to explain the view that natural calamities are not evil but merely misunderstood aspects of the divine order. According to this view, the sufferings and deaths of people in natural calamities are not examples of evil but merely of human ignorance and stupidity. I think that this example is totally inappropriate to the human situation. An adult, intelligent person,

with his faculties intact and with knowledge of the danger confronting him, would be a fool to stand on the expressway. But mankind is not an adult. We are but infants – without knowledge or experience of the dangers confronting us or the ability to overcome them. The only way this analogy could stand would be if God had given us full knowledge of natural law and the ability to immediately overcome the physical dangers we face. But since He did not, He cannot escape moral

Western man is in search of a new faith, and I believe that we have the answers in the teachings of Zarathushtra

responsibility for our sufferings if He indeed created the world this way.

I don't have much faith in science in itself nor do I have a belief in unlimited progress. We have been through two major world wars and many other armed conflicts. Science has given us the means for self-destruction. We are unable to live in peace with each other nor to find peace within ourselves. Our civilization is materially, technologically and scientifically advanced but morally bankrupt. There is no reason to believe in unlimited progress when our cities are falling apart and, in some areas, the gangs have become more powerful than the police.

I do recognize the existence of Ahri-man and the on-going struggle between good and evil. This has long been basic to the Good Religion. It is unique among the religions of the world and provides such a perfect answer to the age-old problem of evil that it must have been revealed to the prophet by Ahura Mazda.

I believe in the creation of a perfect, just civilization. But I believe that the road ahead is a long, hard one and we must struggle to gain each and every step. The struggle against evil must be fought and won, individual by individual, but it must not stop there. There is no salvation apart from the community. Anyone interested in his

own salvation alone is far from obtaining it. We must wage peace society by society, nation by nation until we are at last one world, one community. The weapon we must use in the struggle is the Good Religion of Asho Zarathushtra.

The traditional Western religions have failed and many people are abandoning them, only to find themselves without any real alternatives. Western man is in search of a new faith, and I believe that we have the answers in the teachings of the Prophet.

The Good Religion satisfies the needs of my soul. Many of my problems continue. I am still deaf and I still have difficulties finding good jobs but I have peace of mind and am able to work at overcoming these problems. As good soldiers of God, we must expect hardships on the battlefield. The spoils are to the victor but normally only after the war has been won.

I would like to see the creation of a Zarathushtrian missionary organization here in the West which would be staffed by converts and aimed at obtaining converts to the faith. I believe that this is a job which is best handled by converts, for the missionary impulse and mind-set does not come naturally to Parsis.

Perhaps the 'born Zoroastrian' community lives so close to the light that it has come to take the light for granted. For those of us who were not raised in the light of the prophet's teachings, they are a tremendous revelation which we cannot take for granted. We have a duty to share knowledge of this revelation with others who are still lost in the darkness. The Chinese say, "It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness." And the Good Religion is far more than a small candle; it is the very Sun of divine revelation to humanity.

Naturally, there should be no disharmony between the new converts and born Zarathushtrians. This must be stressed.

This is my dream. At this time, I do not have the funds necessary to undertake such an enterprise but I remain hopeful.

The above is an edited version of a letter from William Brawner (an American of Judeo-Christian origin) to Parsiana, published with the author's permission. A second piece, detailing an individual's right to choose to be a Mazdayasni, will be published in January. The author welcomes correspondence at Box 16024, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401, USA.

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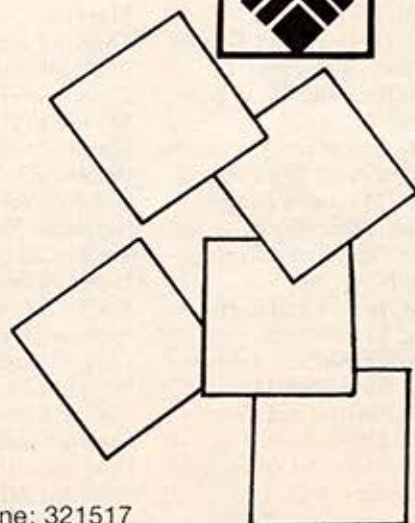
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MILESTONES

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled from information provided by various newsletters, as well as anjumans in India and abroad, courts and hospitals. It must be pointed out that this information is not always complete or consistent. One marriage registered with the Registrar of Civil Marriages in the month of June has been carried a second time as it was also registered with the Bombay High Court in the month of October.

Of the 73 Parsis who died in Bombay, 23 fell prey to heart disease while 12 succumbed to old age. The other killers were cancer (eight), pneumonia and lung diseases (seven), brain disease (four), dehydration and diabetes (three each). Hypertension, Parkinson's disease, septicemia and liver failure claimed two victims each. Isolated cases of ulcer, blood disease, bronchitis and nervous disorder were also registered.

If the readers have any information they would like published, some proof to ensure the veracity of the report would be required.

BARODA

Died

Gulamai Framroze Dinshaw (85), on September 28, 1988

BOMBAY

Born

A girl to Parivaz and Manchi Balaporia; November 1

A girl to Zarine and Hoshedar Panthaki; November 1

A boy to Dilnavaz and Ferishid Hushmandy; November 2

A girl to Bina and Micky Irani; November 2

A boy to Soonu and Marazban Darukhanawala; November 3

A girl to Pervin and Perses Bilimoria; November 4

A girl to Sabhi and Sarosh Dubash; November 7

A girl to Nergish and Zarir Govekar; November 9

A boy to Kermin and Behram Gheesta; November 11

A boy to Parizad and Percy Dumasia; November 12

A boy to Nabir and Homi Irani; November 12

A boy to Sanobar and Deenyar Kaka; November 12

A girl to Mona and Tehmuras Saklar; November 12

A girl to Sabita and Neville Umrigar; November 12

A girl to Rukshana and Beram Bode; November 13

A boy, Kyrus, to Huzan and Rustom Sethna; November 14

A girl to Siloo and Khushroo Ghadiali; November 15

A girl to Deena and Zaigham Huque; November 15

A boy to Pinaz and Noshir Kumana; November 15

A girl to Khurshid and Jolly Siganporia; November 15

A boy to Maharukh and Adi Doctor; November 16

A boy to Nina and Mac Bodhanwalla; November 17

A girl to Kety and Pillo Mistry; November 17

A girl to Parizad and Bomi Shroff; November 19

A girl to Roda and Jimi Chikliwalla; November 20

A girl to Mahnaz and Bakshi Irani; November 21

A boy to Zarin and Dadi Hataria; November 22

A boy to Binaifer and Aspi Hilloowala; November 23

A girl to Aban and Neville Kapadia; November 24

A boy to Khianush and Rumi Dadabhoy; November 26

A girl to Kashmira and Garshasp Irani; November 26

A girl to Homai and Sorab Irani; November 26

A boy to Natasha and Dinyar Kapadia; November 27

A girl to Freny and Khurshed Vazir; November 27

A girl to Ruby and Rohinton Todywalla; November 29

Married

Khurshid Barjor Mody of Ahmedabad and Farhad Jivanji Jamadar; October 23

Armin Adi Pohocha and Zareer Peshotan Wadia; October 23

Gulshan Noshir Bilimoria and Hosheder Kaikobad Rabadi; October 25

Meher Phiroze Gorimar and Kersi Jal Dubash; November 1

Jasmine Marzban Irani and Vistasp Maneck Dastoor; November 6

Sandra Kenneth Pedder and Sarosh Shapoor Irani; November 7

Khurshid Minocher Bhesania and Hoshang Nariman Kalyaniwala; November 13

Persis Rustom Mowdawalla and Percy Minoo Batliwalla; November 14

Tushnamaiti Pheroze Tarapore and Percy Homi Sasuri; November 14

Farshak Phiroze Wadia and Dinyar Rustom Vajifdar; November 14

Jasmine Sorab Dastoor and Darayas Behram Bhot; November 15

Delna Cawas Lalkaka and Darayas Ardeshir Mehta; November 15

Feroza Ratanshah Ferozshah of Hyderabad and Neville Shiavax Bachana; November 17

Vabiz Rustom Irani and Aspi Eruch Chaina of Indore; November 17

Havovi Pesi Chubb and Sammy Phiroze Medhora; November 17

Bakhtaver Nanabhai Patel and Gev Cyrus Ayrton; November 19

Nilufer Tehmurasp Tavadia and Sarosh Hosi Doomasia; November 20

Yasmine Bomi Anklesaria and Kaizad Eruch Elavia; November 21

Farida Jalejar Pardiwala and Jamshed Godrej Hodiwala of Surat; November 24

Zenobia Sam Mehta and Cyrus Noshir Kerawalla; November 24

Jasmine Rustomji Mehta and Hormuzd Bahadur Masani; November 24

Kerbi Jamshed Tangri and Arish Maneck Patel; November 24

Zarina Aspy Dadabhoy and Shaharukh Sam Gandhi; November 25

Maharukh Aspy Dadabhoy and Viraf Keki Lelinwalla; November 25

Hufrish Ferdoon Mistry and Shahrookh Cyrus Dumasia; November 26

Nilufer Jalejar Elavia of Surat and Nariman Nowrozji Dhalu of Bulsar; November 27

Keshmira Pestanji Bhesania of Dahod and Dinyar Navroz Jalnawala of Jalna; November 27

Parwana Hormuzdyar Irani and Aflatoon Rustom Khodavandi; November 27

Rashna Cawasji Engineer and Dinyar Homi Rustomji; November 27

Pervin Keki Dastoor and Marzban Phiroze Sadri; November 27

Roshni Dara Kapadia and Cyrus Keki Taraporewalla; November 27

Shernaz Firoze Daji and Murzban Rustomji Thunthi; November 27

Tanaz Gustad Vaghaiwala and Kersi Phiroze Vaghaiwala; November 27

Nagja Nari Pavri and Cyrus Soli Bamji; November 28

Kamal Keki Randelia and Aspy Adarbad Panthaky; November 28

Ketayun Rusi Dalal and Mehernosh Keki Parekh; November 28

Died

Jal Navroji Bharucha (83), residing at B-4, Shirin Mans, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; November 1

Sorabji Framroze Kotwal (92), F.S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; November 1

Perin Bahadur Patel (72), 683-B, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 1

Boman Shavakshaw Talati (81), Khodad Bldg, Opp Sales Tax Office, Mazagaon, 400010; November 1

Feroze Rustomji Mistry (71), 'C,' Wassiamull Bldg, Grant Rd, 400007; November 2

Jehangir Sohrabji Randeria (84), B-3, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; November 2

Piroja Nadirsha Sethna (89), 12-A, Mayflower, Carmichael Rd, 400026; November 2

Adi Pallonji Bhathena (68), Cama Bldg, Gilder Lane, 400008; November 3

Tehmina Dara Mehta (77), 22-A, Mistry Bldg, Maraya Hill, Mazagaon, 400010; November 3

Allamai Jamshedji Gilder (89), Aspen, Perry Cross Rd, Bandra, 400050; November 5

Jal Bejanji Pardiwala (64), Dina Ter, 68, Wodehouse Rd, Colaba, 400005; November 5

Minocher B. Dastoor (75), 33, Gonidhi, Hill Rd, Bandra, 400050; November 7

Jer Shiavax Dotiwala (81), 2/4, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; November 7

Sam Dinshawji Khambata

(57), G-15, Cusrow Baug, S.B. Rd, 400039; November 7
Behram Jehangirji Presswalla (81), Presswalla Bldg, 190, Lamington Rd, 400007; November 7
Gool Dhunjishaw Vakil (77), 26-B, Hari Nivas, New Queen's Rd, 400004; November 7
Jehangir Khodamurad Afkham (47), Macawee Mans, 7 Gunbow St, Fort, 400001; November 8
Jamshedji Palonji Bamji (79), 3/5, Dhanbai Wadi, Dadabhoy Rd, Vile Parle (W), 400056; November 8
Najamai Hormusji Bharda (75), 5/11, A.H. Wadia Baug, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; November 8
Sheroo Homi Bharucha (71), Sethna Bldg, Princess St, 400002; November 8
Mehra Merwanji Gandhi (84), Q-7, Bharucha Baug, Andheri (W), 400058; November 8
Dina Nadir Patel (69), 13/2, Godrej Hillside Clny, Vikhroli, 400079; November 8
Gaimai Jehangir Ghadially (87), 269/70, Contractor Bldg, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Parel, 400012; November 10
Soona Jamshed Engineer (75), 6/8, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; November 11
Earuch Shapurji Variava (75), 2/5, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; November 11
Jehangir Meherji Balaporia (73), 301-A, Cosmos, Lokhandwala Complex, Andheri (W), 400058; November 12
Alamai Shorabji Motishaw (81), 35, Sanchetty Hse, Khetwadi 4th Lane, 400004; November 12
Sheroo Rusi Patell (72), 'G', Shapur Baug, V.P. Rd, 400004; November 12
Baimai H. Vania (90), Mehta Bldg, Khan Est, Mahim, 400016; November 12
Homai B. Antia (83), B/32, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; November 13
Banubai P. Hodiwalla (80), 12A-2, New Khareghat Clny, Babulnath, 400007; November 13
Pestonji Shapurji Katrak (89), Room 9, Hormaz Baug,

Kasinath St, Tardeo, 400034; November 13
Rustomji Navroji Kerawala (87), J-10, Dalal Est, Lamington Rd, 400008; November 13
Dhanmai Tehmurasp Randalia (66), Motiwalla Bldg, Proctor Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; November 14
Darabshaw Phirozeshaw Bhesania (77), B-7, White Rose Hsg Soc No 4, Perry Rd, Bandra, 400050; November 15
Bachubai Jehangirji Mogul (86), 613, Dinshaw Bldg, Jame Jamshed Rd, Dadar, 400014; November 15
Darabshaw Adarji Munderoina (79), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; November 15
Homi Framroze Tata (74), 583, Chira Bazar, 400002; November 15
Framroze Phirojsha Daboo (94), R-7, Cusrow Baug, S.B. Rd, 400039; November 16
Jal Hormusji Balsara (59), F-47, Cusrow Baug, S.B. Rd, 400039; November 17
Piroja Sheriyar Irani (69), K-3/33, Merwanji Cama Park, Cama Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; November 17
Bacha Sorabjee Karanjia (62), Umrigar Bldg, Chikalwadi, Tardeo, 400007; November 17
Hutoxy Rustomjee Vazifdar (28), 7/7, Panthaky Baug, Andheri (E), 400069; November 17
Sorabji Burjorji Dhatighera (74), 6/13, Parsee St, Jama Masjid Lane, Kalyan, Thane, 421301; November 19
Goolbai P. Dubash (95), Room 15, Tata Clny, Bldg 4, Tardeo, 400034; November 19
Aimai Dhanjishaw Mehta (87), Cassinath Bldg, Kasinath St, Tardeo, 400034; November 19
Kaikhushroo Phirozshaw Daver (79), 5, Master Chmbs, Cinema Rd, 400020; November 20
Polly Rustom Mogul (50), 674, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 20
Behram Eruchshah Morena (57), A-38, Nootan Nagar, Guru Nanak Rd, Bandra, 400050; November 20
Aloo Manek Patel (58), 10/B/24, Takshila Apt, Andheri (E), 400069;

November 20
Dina Dara Rivetna (76), 686, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 20
Kaikhushroo Khurshedji Kharas (81), F.S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; November 21
Keki Nusserwanji Mistry (64), Thoothi Agiary, 105/106, Walkeshwar, 400006; November 21
Mottan Hormusji Mowji (81), Sethna Hse, Khetwadi Cross Lane, 400004; November 21
Fali Phirosha Chinoy (74), 10/7, Mody Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; November 22
Ardehsir Rustomji Irani (82), 749, Mithu Villa, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 22
Dinshaw Burjorji Bharucha (65), C/o Ms D.P. Banaji, 10-C, Lalkaka Bldg, Gilder Lane, 400008; November 23
Hilla Daran Kanga (85), Captain Bldg, Zoroastrian Clny, Chikalwadi, 400007; November 23
Hormasji Gustadi Kapadia (92), 665, Band View, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; November 23
Bejonji Framroze Chacha (85), 21A/2, Surya-Kiron, Pan Gully, Cumballa Hill, 400036; November 24
Jehangir Kaikhushroo Irani (Abdahi) (70), Seva Sadan, Opp Gamdevi Police Stn, 400007; November 24
Alamai Dosabhai Daboo (97), 70-A, Darya Mhl, Nepean Sea Rd, 400006; November 25
Homi Khaikhusru Vandrewala (74), 16, Dubash Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; November 25
Pervez Tehmurasp Daruwala (50), Mahavir Gyan Co-op Hsg Soc, Sai Nagar, Vasai (W), 401201; November 26
Rati Ratanshaw Umrigar (60), Mody Hostel, Worli Naka, 400018; November 26
Rattanshaw Dinshaw Bookbinder (89), 73, Prabhav TPS III, Santa Cruz (E), 400055; November 27
Dina Jehanbux Dastur (81), 31, St Paul Rd, Bandra, 400050; November 27
Jimmy Ardehsir Moos (64), Arsiwalla Mans, Wodehouse Rd, Colaba, 400005; November 27
Jal Sorabji Sanjana (87), 26,

Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; November 27
Shirin Hormusji Bharucha (80), Mani Mhl, Behind Opera Hse, 400004; November 29
Dossabhoy Jehangirji Paowala (77), 695, Mistry Bldg, Dinshaw Master Rd, Dadar, 400014; November 29
Soonabai Rustomji Ghalla (77), B/4, Sayed Bldg, 324, Grant Rd, 400007; November 30
Rustom Minocher Dastoor (68), A/10, Bhagwati Soc, Linking Rd Extension, Santa Cruz, 400054; November 30

CALCUTTA

Born

A boy, *Dravast*, to *Senober* and *Cyrus Meherji*; November 1

KARACHI

Born

A girl to *Roshni* and *Rointon Shroff*; August 22

Died

Gaimai Jehangirji Amalsad (82); September 2
Najamai Faramroze Daruwala (68); September 2
Shera Mehervanji Umrigar (73); September 2
Jamshedji Palanji Aga (71); September 3

POONA

Died

Roda Soli Cama (73), 56, Wonderland, 5, Mahatma Gandhi Road, 411001; September 1
Allamai J. Cheezgar (78), 1964, West St, Camp, 411001; September 19
Khurshedji C. Bumla (76), Somerset Place, B. Desai Rd, Bombay, 400026; September 29
Mehra N. Engineer (84), J.N.Petit High School, Bund Garden Rd, 411001; October 7
Shirin R. Irani (60), Near Byculla Stn, Delile Rd, Bombay, 400027; October 7
Ardehsir S. Irani (87), 875, Dastur Meher Rd, 411001; October 29
Baby of Zenobia N. Patel (stillborn), 5, Star Apts, Bund Garden Rd, 411001; November 14

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

MUSICAL GENIUS

Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji

Khursheed N. Khurody



"Who was it who said that the English were the silliest race in Europe after the Swedes? How long is it going to be before they get it into their goddam silly heads that a Parsi is not, never was, and never could be Indian? That those who were born in the confines of India are the citizens of that beastly place and that is their misfortune and not their fault. One thing above all infuriates me and that is to be called English or British for no better reason than that I happen to have been born in this country. Is a kitten, born in a dog kennel, a puppy, I ask you?" had been the query of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, the musical recluse who died on October 15, 1988 at the age of 96.

Born in Chingford, England in 1892, his father was a wealthy Parsi businessman from Bombay, his mother a Spanish-Sicilian opera singer of fiery temperament. He was quick to point out that these origins made him neither Indian nor English.

He was christened Leon Dudley - nothing can be more British - but later he changed it to Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji. To quote him on an article concerning his name: "To those whom it may concern, if any, and others who mind anybody's business but their own. Dates and places of birth relating to myself given in various works of reference are invariably false. It is also stated that my name, my real name, that is the one I am known by, is not my real name. Now one is given one's name - one's authentic one - at some such ceremony as baptism, christening, or the like, on the occasion of one's formal reception into a certain

religious faith. In the ancient Zarathushtrian Parsi community, to which on my father's side I have the honor to belong, this ceremony is normally performed, as in other faiths, in childhood, or owing to special circumstances as in my case, later in life, when I assumed my name as it now is or, in the words of the legal document in which this is mentioned '...received into the Parsi community and in accordance with the customs and tradition thereof, is now and will be henceforth known as ...' and here follows my name as now.

"Certain lexicographical 'canaille,' one egregious and notorious specimen particularly, enraged my complete success in defeating and frustrating their impudent, impertinent and presumptuous nosings and prying into what doesn't concern them, and actuated, no doubt by the mean malice of the base born for their betters, have thought, as they would say, to take it out of me by suggesting that my name isn't really my name. Insects that are merely noisome like to think that they can also sting."

Obviously, behind this enigmatic personality was a brilliant musical mind which led Sorabji to compose the longest and most complex works in the entire literature of music. His largest piano composition takes over seven hours to perform and much of his piano music is notated on systems of three, four, five, six and even seven staves.

Most of his orchestral works are on a similar scale. The *Jami symphony* has a length of 830 pages, and is notated on a system of nearly 100 staves. Both

European and Eastern influences are found in Sorabji's compositions. Impressionism is evident in the early works, as is the influence of certain late romantics such as Busoni, Messiaen and Symonowski.

Sorabji's music is dense, highly wrought and elaborately decorated. Only a handful of pianists could possibly conquer the intellectual and technical difficulties. And so, in 1936, Sorabji imposed a ban forbidding all public performances of his compositions as being unsuitable under "present or foreseeable conditions." Furious at the inability of musicians to understand or master his works, he argued that a general silence was preferable to having his scores misrepresented or, worse, mutilated. Fortunately, Sorabji lifted the ban in 1976 and his works are gradually entering into the repertoire of formal recitals.

Early training

Sorabji was educated privately and spent most of his life in England, shunning the big cities and preferring his "blessedly quiet country retreat." Except for the last few years of his life, he secluded himself in a granite tower, in Dorset. Musically he had some early training in counterpoint and harmony, but as a composer he was largely self-taught.

His first compositions date from 1914. In all, Sorabji wrote over 10,000 pages of music, most of it unpublished, and a lot involving the piano. Only his earliest works are published (1918-1930). The most mature remain in manuscript.

In 1913 he decided to become a music critic and between 1924 and 1945 he wrote nearly 500 articles for several English chronicles and journals. Sorabji has also written two marvellously illuminating books – *Around Music* and *Mi Contra Fa*. As a stylist he was brilliant yet unselfconscious; as a critic he was gloriously unforgiving. In chapter 15 of *Around Music*, Sorabji writes, "As for the methods designed for the delectation and musical improvement of children (with the one notable exception of Miss Edroff whose method, like all great teachers, is to have no method or, rather a different one for every pupil – hence her extraordinary and astonishing success with the averagely stupid child with little or no musical ability), all of them that I have come across would have turned me into a raving lunatic in half an hour, and I can only thank heaven that my own early steps, although unspeakably dreary and boring, were in the hands of definitely old-fashioned teachers who had the sense to know at least that you do not make things easier for a child by teaching him as though both you and he were utter idiots. Personally, I should have regarded any teacher who attempted to make my music lesson a sort of game, with intense distrust..."

Composer without a parallel

Sorabji publicly performed his works in London, Glasgow, Paris, Vienna (1921-22) and Bombay (between 1920 and 1936), but disliked performing and abandoned concert life. Among his works are sonatas and concertos for piano, huge piano symphonies, organ symphonies, fragrant songs, chamber works and a large number of orchestral works.

Let me focus on *Opus Clavicembalisticum* (OC). Sorabji has never been noted for his modesty. "My *Opus-embalisticum* has been described as the greatest and most important work for piano since the *Art of the Fugue*, the *Forty-Eight* or the *Diabelli Variations*,

as indeed it is." He then goes on to say that "OC is dedicated, in part, to the everlasting glory of those few men blessed and sanctified in the curses and execrations of those men whose praise is eternal damnation." The score is 248 pages long and a performance lasts three hours and 50 minutes. It was written from 1929-30 and performed for the first, and very nearly the last time, by Sorabji himself in Glasgow in 1930. According to legend, Sorabji left the stage at the end of Part I, drank some scotch whiskey, said "Let's get on with it," and resumed playing while the audience was still getting up for the first intermission. He played straight through to the end, soaked like a rat in perspiration, whereupon it was necessary to wrap him up in blankets. Sorabji's instructions are colorful in this piece: *acervo, ruvido, irato, impaziente, metallico, catastrofico, nebiozo, luminozo, con ira declamato con viemense, morbido e severo*. The technical difficulties are unsurmountable. The unusually structured chords stretch the hands painfully and the rhythmic complexities are even more demanding. I think that it is quite safe to say that Sorabji wrote with no regard whatsoever for the performer.

He was a man of profound religious belief, but no particular faith. When he composed, Sorabji employed techniques that were largely mechanical. They are best called yogic – or tantric – and involve exercises that control breathing, the plexuses of the autonomic nervous system and states of awareness; quite the opposite of hypnosis. While in these yogic states, Sorabji was able to write down his music at unbelievable speed without sketches or planning, without looking ahead or back, and without blotting a note. The music literally flew to the page.

Sorabji's music is an acquired taste; it needs time and patience to assimilate and then appreciate. Here is what he has to say about his own music: "If you don't like it because it isn't the present-day done thing, that is just too bad."

A rapport established

Let me share with you the few personal exchanges I had with Sorabji during the five years that I studied him and his music.

On seeing his name, obviously Parsi, I wrote to him in late January 1934, stating that although I was aware he was a recluse, would he please see me as I was a young Zoroastrian girl studying music in England and interested in his personality and background. His reply was prompt: "No, I cannot see you, I see no one - But no one else at all." Wierd! But then he was 92 and a Zoroastrian at that! I was not discouraged by his reply - on the contrary my curiosity was aroused. I wrote back, sending him some Zoroastrian prayers to recite for his health and informed him that I had chosen him as the subject of my A-level music thesis. He must have been touched because he responded with an envelope full of program notes, information and a picture of himself, obviously a few decades old. The picture amused my music director and prompted him to advise me to send back a picture of myself at age six months.

Very soon after this initial introduction, I managed to establish rapport with a remarkable, fascinating, yet eccentric individual. In the summer of 1984, when I returned to Bombay for my vacations, I managed to locate distant relatives of Sorabji who helped me to explore his roots. He was described as a whimsical person given to aloofness even in his youth. He had a particular distaste for the telephone and made his appointments by telegrams. I also located the very Erard Medium Grand Piano on which he played on his visit to India in the early '30s.

On returning to England, correspondence was frequent and my efforts were soon rewarded with a phone call. In the summer of 1987, he finally relented and I paid him my first and last visit. "I must warn you that I particularly dislike the company of young girls," was his opening sentence, but there was no doubt in my mind that the man was utterly brilliant and charming.

The material sent by Sorabji has enabled me to enliven this article and bring it to you. It is my hope that this re-introduction of the name and the sound of his music will herald a fair and new appreciation of the creative work of so remarkable, so dogged and original a personage as Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji. Here is an important composer for whom wide recognition is long overdue.

Scholar's submission



Died: Prof Maneck Faredunji Kanga, 80, internationally acclaimed Avesta-Pahlavi scholar, on October 17, 1988 in Bombay, following cardiac arrest.

Having written four books and over 50 scholarly papers on themes connected with Iranian studies, Kanga was a familiar figure at the All India Oriental Conferences, at four of which he officiated as president of the Iranian studies section. He had also participated in the Pahlavi Dictionary Conference in Italy, the International Congress of Orientalists in Cambridge, Canberra, Paris and many such meets, remembers Ervad Dr Peshotan Peer who regarded Kanga as his "guru." "He was always in demand at various centers of learning in Asia and Europe," noted *The Bombay Samachar* of November 13 which also referred to Kanga being deputed as Indian delegate at the Shiraz Congress of Iranology on the two thousand five hundredth anniversary of the Persian kingdom.

Kanga's treatises "were an indication that he was a deep student of Avesta-Pahlavi," according to Dastur Dr Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa, High Priest of the Anjuman Atash Bahram. Dastur Dr Hormazdyar Mirza recalled Kanga's determination to continue with his studies while pursuing a full-time exacting career in the appraising department of the government cus-

toms service. After 30 years of employment, Kanga retired as gazetted officer - principal appraiser.

The *Avesta Reader*, a recent work by Kanga, was released by the Vice President of India Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma in September 1988 at the diamond jubilee function of the Vedic Research Institute of Pune under whose auspices the book was written. And though the function received coverage on the national television news, Kanga unfortunately never lived to receive his own copy which he was very eager to see in print. Otherwise, because of his international reputation, Kanga is said to have had the rare distinction of being the first in India to receive any foreign publication on the subject of Iranian studies.

"He was invited by various universities, foreign as well as Indian, as visiting professor in Avesta and Pahlavi," recorded a resolution passed by the Vedic Research Institute at its condolence meeting in honor of Kanga who was associated with the Institute for over three decades. He had taken over as honorary director of the Centre of Avesta after the demise of Prof Irach Taraporewala. For the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, Kanga lent his scholarship and administrative touch, serving as member on its governing board until his last, and even as the honorary secretary of the Institute for nearly 15 years during which time he edited the organization's journal and contributed articles to it.

Due to his proficiency in Iranian studies, the Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, London elected Kanga a member of its body. The other organizations where he was made a fellow or member were: the Royal Asiatic Society, London, Societe de Iranologie, Tehran and the American Oriental Society.

A colleague of Kanga's at the Centre of Advanced Study in Sanskrit (University of Poona), Prof R. N. Dandekar, wrote to Kanga's family: "He always struck me as a dependable colleague and an affectionate friend. In his death, Iranian studies has lost an eminent votary." Kanga was also the professor of Avestan studies at the University of Bombay, officiating as examiner at the graduation and post-graduation examinations in the sub-

ject. At the University of Allahabad, he was a member of the board of studies in Ancient Iranian and Pahlavi. He had the privilege of imparting his learning as visiting lecturer at the Frankfurt University and the University of Shiraz. In the management of the J. J. Z. Madressa and the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute, Kanga took an active interest.

Recollecting the firm foundation in the scriptural languages which had been given to him by Kanga, Peer stressed that "his method of teaching was slow and thorough. He would sit with his book and his copious notes. For every term he would give the corresponding interpretation of different Western scholars." After a full day's work, his evenings he would devote to sharing his knowledge with his students, often instructing them until late in the night. The more serious students continued to benefit from this fountainhead of knowledge even after they had completed their BA and MA degrees under his tutelage.

A qualified navar himself, Kanga is said to have learnt the *Avesta* by heart under the instructions of his father. His early education was in Navsari. Since his school days when he opted for Avesta-Pahlavi as his second language, Kanga retained an interest in the discipline and completed his graduation and postgraduation with first class honors in the same subjects from the Bombay University.

Kanga's effort in bringing out the entire *Avesta* in Devanagiri script (in three volumes) with the cooperation of N. S. Sontakke, at the behest of the Vedic Research Institute, soon bore recognition and he was invited to work on the *Avesta Reader*. In the last few months of his life he was busy translating the *Gathas* into English at the request of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet. He had just finished writing this mission but did not have the time to revise his text. Earlier, the Punchayet had assigned Kanga the responsibility of translating into English, Kavasji Eduljee Kanga's Gujarati translation of the *Khordeh Avesta*, informs Peer.

The professor is survived by his wife Naja and daughter Silloo.

Parinaz Toddywalla



The zing thing!



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