

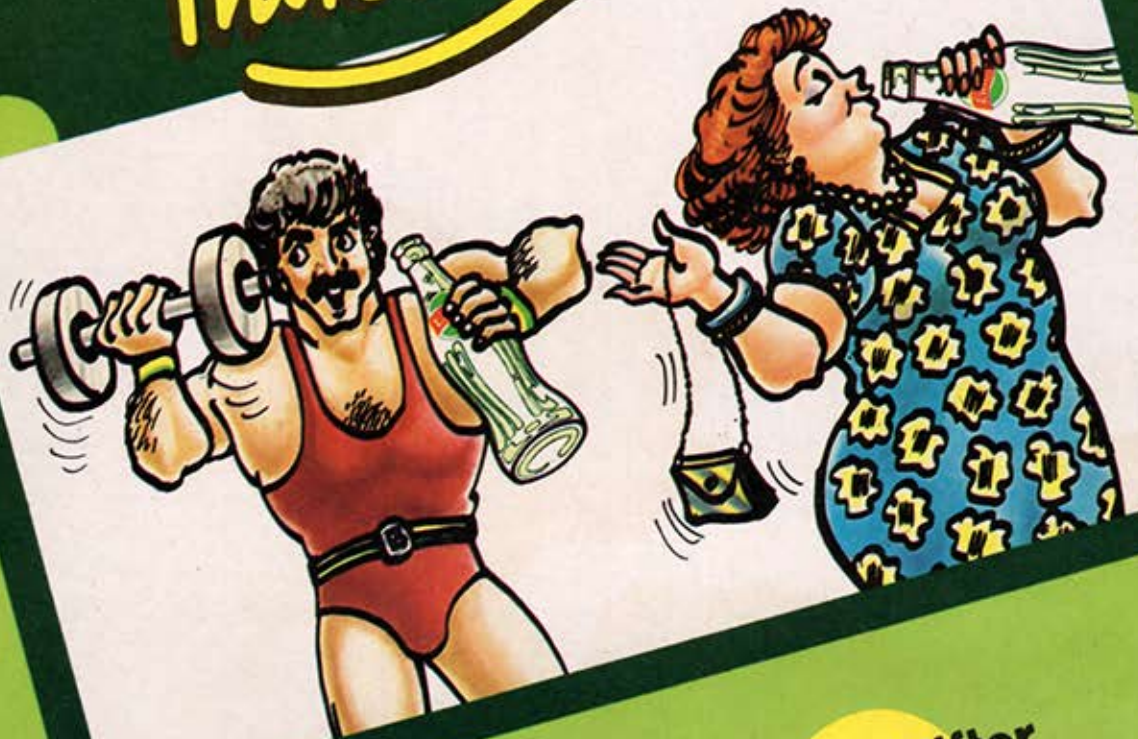
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Parsiana

February 1989
Volume 11 Number 8

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3 Readers' Forum

9 Events and Personalities

16 Zoroastrians Abroad: Karachi elections by Arnavaz Mama

22 The new-look *Jamé* by Parinaz Gandhi

24 Meher *roj* at Aslaji's by Homi Rogers

34 'A world body of youth' by Persees Antia

41 A youth trustee in every city by Khursheed Khurody

46 Milestones

Cover: Devotees at Bombay's Aslaji Agiary
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Readers' views are welcome on any subject of interest to the community and should be sent to the Editor, Readers' Forum, Parsiana, G.P.O. Box 892, Bombay 400 001. Letters are subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity. Unsigned letters or those without a complete address will not be published.

"Romance with the..."

I read the article "Romance with the Railways" (*Parsiana*, December '88) by Joy Fernandes with great interest since four generations of my family were connected with the Indian railways. My grandfather Merwanjee Major, and my uncle Dorabjee served in the Stores Department of the Bombay-Baroda and Central India (BB&CI) Railway. My father Sorabjee joined BB&CI at a very early age as a guard of local trains and within a short time was promoted as guard of mail trains. He retired in 1930 on reaching the age of 60 years. My brother Merwan (known to all as M. Sorabjee) joined BB&CI as a fireman but later got himself transferred to the Madras and Southern Mahratta (M&SM) Railway to be near his wife-to-be in Bangalore. He served as a steam engine driver on the meter gauge line, being passionately fond of steam locomotives. His son Khushroo

who is now settled in Australia, had joined the Great Indian Peninsula (GIP) Railway and had served as assistant driver on electric locomotives. My brother's son-in-law was chief inspector of carriages and wagons in the Southern India Railway (SIR). And here our connection with the railways ends.

Ms Fernandes has missed out one important point. Whenever the viceroy or the governor travelled, in most cases it was the Parsi drivers and guards who were called on duty to run the special trains. This was considered a great honor in those days. **LI COL DADY S. MAJOR (Retd)**

"The Federation offers..."

The Bangalore Parsee Zoroastrian Anjuman takes strong objection to the paragraph in "The Federation offers to intervene" (*Parsiana*, November '88) stating that the panthaky of our Dar-e-Meher at Bangalore, Ervad Nadirshah Unvalla, was responsible for our Bangalore Anjuman not having joined the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India. This is totally incorrect. We would like to categorically state that at our general body meeting at that time, an overwhelming majority of our members decided that they did not wish to join the Federation for various reasons.

By making such comments in the article, we feel that the good name of our panthaky Nadirshah Unvalla is being tarnished. For your information and for the information of your readers, Ervad Unvalla carries out his duties in all sincerity and is a respected figure in our community. A respected magazine like yours should understand that the decision to join the Federation is taken by the general body and not by any individual.

D. N. BILLIMORIA
Hon Secretary

The Bangalore Parsee Zoroastrian Anjuman

Parinaz Gandhi replies

Nowhere in the article or in any issue of *Parsiana* have we ever stated that Ervad Nadirshah Unvalla was responsible for the "Bangalore Anjuman not having joined the Federation." What we stated was that "Unvalla has reportedly threatened to resign if the issue of rejoining the Federation is raised by the Bangalore Anjuman," a fact not refuted by you.

In the issues of *Parsiana* referring to the Bangalore Anjuman not rejoining the

Federation, we have always categorically pointed out that the decision was taken by the Anjuman and not one individual. We are aware of Ervad Unvalla's contribution to the Bangalore Parsi community and the sincerity with which he carries out his duties. His views on the Federation in no way detract from his priestly duties and obligations.

Intercommunity marriages

It was with great disappointment that I read the news item "Bombay intercommunity marriages 14 percent" (*Parsiana*, November 1988). It was heartbreaking to read that 14 percent of the youth had been literally "lost" to the community in Bombay alone. If this is the rate of intercommunity marriages in Bombay, one can well imagine the rate of such marriages in other metropolitan cities like Calcutta, Hyderabad, etc where the Parsi youth (being meager) are more exposed to non-Parsis.

It is most ironical that the very Parsis who had left Iran to save their religion from being destroyed by the Muslims, now do not even think twice before giving up their oldest and most respected religion.

It is likely that by the end of this decade, it will be very difficult to find a "pure" Parsi. It is high time the Parsis realize the grimness of this situation and undertake to control it before it gets too late.

Ms SANAE ANITA
Patiala

Aibara's faith

For Dasturji Nadirsha Aibara, his passing away must have been a wonderful reunion with his "saheb" as he used to call Dasturji Jamshed Kookadar. But for all of us who at some time or the other came in brief contact with him, it was a sad piece of news.

I had first come in his contact when my son was very sick and dying at the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital. It was 1981 and for me the world seemed to be collapsing on all sides. Some kind lady in the hospital told me about him and the holy water he gave to the sick and suffering. She warned me, "Don't go directly from the hospital. He will not meet you. Go home, take a bath and then see him." I was beyond warnings by that time; utterly desperate. I decided I must meet him.

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So I rushed from the hospital straight to the Karani Agiary at Cusrow Baug, early next morning. I saw a saint-like figure, with the sunlight streaming on him, doing his kusti. When he asked me my problem, my words came tumbling out and I ended my bitter story with "Dasturji I have come from the hospital." With a serene smile he said, "*Hoon hamna bhanva javas. Tamara dikra nu naam aapo* (I will be going for prayers. Give me your son's name)." Assuring me that he would pray for my son, he asked me to return to the hospital and send someone later to collect the water. *Parvardigar* (God) is great and I must not lose hope, was his message. Well, my son only recovered temporarily, but while he lived I gave him Dasturji's holy water. I also took him to meet this God's good man.

Lots of people have said lots of unkind things about him. But the fact remains that the spirit survives physical death and Dasturji was a healer of the best kind. He could not change a human being's destiny, but he could strengthen the reserves of the sick person and give him strength to fight his illness. He could restore faith when all was lost and the suffering soul felt there was nowhere to turn. His simple faith and trust in God did more to restore confidence than all the medical treatments which are usually worse than the disease.

ME GOOLOO MEHTA

An adarian abroad?

Almost all the Zoroastrians who have settled in the USA, when visiting India, make it a point to pay their obeisance to the holy Iranshah at least, if not all the eight atash bahrams located in the country. Abroad, they miss this important aspect of visiting a place of worship. Some orthodox, influential and well-placed Zoroastrians in the USA very strongly crave for such a place of worship and it is understood that plans are underway to consecrate a fire of the status of an atash adarian.

In consecrating a fire, the priest has to carry the *alaat* (consecrated implements) such as *nirang* (bull's urine), *aap* (water), *rakhya* (ash), *hom sali* (twig of hom plant), *varas* (hair of varasyaji's tail wound on a ring of eight metals) by road from an established atash bahram to the building where the atash adarian fire is to be consecrated. Using these implements, four pairs of yaozdathragar mobeds should undergo the *bareshtnum* ceremony extending over 10 days.

The newly constructed building including the *gumbaz* (the room in which the consecrated fire is to be enthroned) and the *urvisgah* (room set aside for ceremonies of higher liturgical order) are thrice washed with bull's urine and then thrice with pure well water. The *yazashne* and *vendidad* ceremonies are then performed on *indhoras* (stone stools) installed both in the *gumbaz* as well as the *urvisgah*.

Four fires — one each from the household of an *athornan* (priest), *ratheshtar* (a warrior or the head of a village), *vastriyosh* (a farmer) and *hutox* (an artisan) — are collected in the prescribed manner by the four pairs of mobeds. These fires are next purified by an elaborate process performing thereon *yazashne* and *vendidad* ceremonies in required numbers. The consecrated fires are then mixed in a certain proportion and the mixed fire is reconsecrated. The fire is then carried ceremoniously through delineated *pavis* (furrows which can preserve consecrated vibrations) and enthroned on the *afarganya* (metal vase) installed in the *gumbaz*. The *boi* ceremony is first performed followed by the *baj* and *afringan* ceremonies, after which the atash adarian fire is supposed to be fully consecrated.

The purpose of these ceremonies is to help remove all kinds of impurities and activate the energies latent in the fires of the four groups of Zoroastrians. Six magnetic circuits (*karsh*) around the fire and *urvisgah* are established and the *pav-mahal* ceremony (establishing connection with fire energies in the spiritual world) too is undertaken. The current of endless light emanating from the *yazatas* and *ameshaspentas* are first received by the fire and then spread in the universe. This means that the fire acquires spiritual power because of which it is referred to as the *padshah* (king).

The entire ceremony must be meticulously examined because the success will depend upon the observance of rituals, sanctity and reverence at all stages.

In case it is proposed to shift one of the existing atash adarian fires, the ceremonies for purification and consecration of the four fires individually will not be necessary. But all other ceremonies of bringing the *alaat*, consecration of the building, including *yazashne* and *vendidad* ceremonies for reenthronement of the fire will have to be performed. Moreover, arrangements shall have to be made for performing the *boi* ceremony regu-



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larly during the period of transit.

Consciousness about prevention of environmental pollution is so great at present the world over that in such an advanced country as the USA, one may face problems (in observing the rituals) which could perhaps not be solved easily.

It is not at all difficult to appreciate the religious sentiments of the orthodox Zoroastrians who without a place of worship, experience a vacuum. But then, the enthusiasm for a place of worship should not be misplaced. There is no point in setting up a fire-temple which is not consecrated in accordance with the time-honored customs and practices of the religion. There should be no hesitation in adopting a relatively lesser and simpler alternative of maintaining an ordinary dadgah fire, burning for twenty-four hours, which could be manned by even a religious-minded behdin. If that too is found difficult for some reason, even a *divo* (using coconut oil or castor oil) burning throughout the day should be regarded as good enough. We have to face the realities of the situation and refrain from deviating from time-honored customs and practices in order to satisfy the zeal for a place of worship.

SOHRAB NAVALSHAW PATWA

What are we degrading?

Who but a priest could have come up with the notion that an adarian devoid of a

moted for some period would lapse into a dadgah? Is there any reliable Avestan source to support this belief?

Much about our community deserves our concern, but anxiety over the "degradation" of an adarian, because no priest is available, is surely misplaced. Does degradation stop at the dadgah level?

There are degradations towards which we usually close our eyes: A priest whose conduct is scandalous often continues to hold the post. Is it not a kind of degradation that we are now seeking reservations for our students instead of relying on merit?

Dr J. K. ADRAVALA
Pune

Aid for medical costs

My 30-year-old wife Schnaz Irani is on dialysis every four days. She needs a kidney transplant urgently and her mother has agreed to donate her kidney. We have a small baby girl who is now a year old.

My wife was in hospital during pregnancy from September 1987 to January 1988 and the baby was born after a lot of difficulty. I work as a driver in Mazagaon Dock. I had borrowed Rs 28,000 from our Mazagaon Dock Credit Society during my wife's pregnancy to save her life and that of the child as she was suffering from acute toxemia. Now, a substantial part of my salary is being cut to pay back this loan, and I am unable to meet the medical expenses.

Dr F. P. Soonawalla has agreed to help me out and give his and his team's services free of charge. Even then he has estimated an expense of Rs 1,00,000, including Rs 20,000 for hospital bills, Rs 10,000 for pre-transplant investigations and Rs 15,000 for drugs, etc. The cost of medicines after the transplant would be about Rs 5,000 per month for six months, after which it will get a little less. After one year it would get reduced to Rs 1,000 to 2,000 per month.

I would greatly appreciate any financial help to meet the medical expenses for saving the life of my wife. This may be sent to me at 30, Sunmills Road, Lower Parel, Bombay 400013.

MEHERWAN S. IRANI

Facts on Parsi pioneers

Zoroastrians throughout history have enjoyed a reputation for being the first in many areas: introducing monotheism, empire building, constructing the first Suez Canal, establishing east-west exchanges since Greco-Persian wars, etc.

I am therefore interested in researching facts about Parsi pioneers in every field of human endeavor. I'll be grateful if those in the know will forward any information in this regard to me at 8318 West 138th Place, Orland Park, Illinois 60462.

Dr KERSEY H. ANTIA
Illinois, USA

Doctoral distinction

We would like to know if there are any Zoroastrian doctorate holders, past or present, from Oxford or Cambridge Universities. As the Oxford University awarded a doctorate in mathematics to our 25-year-old son Zarathustra on January 11, 1989, we wondered if there were any other Zoroastrians who have achieved this distinction.

JAL AMROLIA
London, UK

Seeking contacts

I am a stamp collector and can make use of any used Indian stamps sent to me. Duplicates too will be welcome because I can sell them to collectors to raise funds for our eclectic Zoroastrian group here.

I would also appreciate if a Zoroastrian priest, who knows the old rituals by which to establish contact with Ahura Mazda through Verathragna, Sraosha, etc could get in touch with me at U.L.C. (Brythonic) PO Box 15259, Portland, Oregon 97215, USA.

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Edited by Arnavaz S. Mama

Once The Flame Of Freedom Is Extinguished, It Never Lights Again

Wednesday, 15th February 1989

Dear Readers

SOCIAL EVENINGS FOR ZOROASTRIANS IN UK AND EUROPE

With the blessings of Almighty and sincere and very hard efforts of well-wishers, I have re-established social evenings as had existed for over 50 years, in the past, in UK. The main purpose of social evenings is to meet at a rendezvous for a convivial and happy get-together in order to engender closeness and unity among Zoroastrians. The social evenings will be enjoyed by Zoroastrians, spouses and their family, always retaining freedom – of thoughts, words, deeds – and always avoiding politics and religion to preserve peace and harmony and above all unity.

I am appealing to all readers to send me the names and addresses of Zoroastrians residing in United Kingdom and Europe so that I can approach them to join us at the social evenings.

The rendezvous for the social evenings is at Montague Hall, Montague Road, Hounslow, Middlesex, UK.

On Saturday – 29th April 1989 – 7 p.m. to midnight

On Saturday – 22nd July 1989 – 7 p.m. to midnight

On Saturday – 21st October 1989 – 7 p.m. to midnight

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Events and Personalities

Doongaji Agiary update

The proposed Pestonji Aslaji Doongaji Agiary at Godrej Baug has made scant progress since the foundation laying jashan on January 31, 1988. On that day it had been estimated that, funds permitting, the structure would be complete in about one and a half years. Architect Maneck Engineer of Godrej and Boyce Manufacturing Company, who has designed the hexagonal dar-e-meher, says however that no funds have been forthcoming.

According to the statements made on that ceremonial occasion, the Rs 45-lakh construction, designed to house two or three sacred fires, was initially expected to proceed with two sides of the hexagon and one gumbaz. Ten lakh rupees of the initial cost of Rs 15 lakhs were expected to be contributed by the Doongaji tribe to enable their family's sacred fire in Broach to be rehoused in more congenial surroundings. (It was stated that there were hardly any devotees attending the fire-temple in Broach.) The balance Rs 5,000 was expected to be borne by the Bombay Parsi Panchayet.

Hoshang Doongaji, the project's prime mover, says the monies have been collected but may not be released until the Gujarat charity commissioner approves the relocation of the fire and permits an alternative use for its erstwhile premises.

On the residential front, construction activity is brisk at Godrej Baug, with a number of buildings being in various stages of completion.

Mhow's panthaky retires

For having served the atash adarian in Mhow - reportedly the only one in north India - for the past twelve and a half years "with dignity and dedication," Ervad Ardeshtir Kaikobad Dastur

was given a cordial send off on his retirement, notes the Mhow Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman's vice president Gp Capt Dhunjishaw Marker, in a letter to *Parsiana*.

At a function on January 8, 1989, the Mhow anjuman presented a citation, shawl and a purse to their panthaky. A separate gift was given by the Mhow Zoroastrian Youth Club.

Due to advancing age and ill health, Dastur and his wife Piroja have returned to their home in Udawada.

The new priest taking Dastur's place, Ervad Pervez Behramshah Karanjia, has starting conducting religious discourses under the auspices of the Youth Club, adds the letter.

Noting that the Zoroastrian community in Mhow is steadily increasing, Marker invites Parsi families to come and settle in this "lovely semi hill station centrally placed in the country." The anjuman plans to build flats on ownership/hire basis over and above the trust flats that they already have in hand, writes Marker. Those wishing to settle in Mhow may write to the Anjuman's honorary secretary Dr Behram M. Masani, Mhow Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman, 120, Simrole Rd, Mhow (MP) 453441.

Adopting grandparents

At a function to celebrate the first anniversary of the grandparent adoption scheme, 20 inmates of the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Dharamshala were adopted as grandparents by 20 students from varied schools and colleges of Bombay like the Bharda New High School, J.B. Petit School, Tyabia School, St Xavier's College and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, notes a press release.

At a function held on January 10, 1989, at the Dharamshala, each adoptor garlanded the aged, and the adoption bond was signed before the chief guest of the evening, film star and MP Sunil Dutt. Convenor of the project Ms Khorshed Aga reviewed the scheme.

Under the program started in November 1987 to overcome a feeling of loneliness and to fill a void in the lives of the inmates of the Dharamshala, the students visit their adopted grandparents regularly to provide companionship and to listen to their problems, notes a newspaper report. Last year 12 grandparents had been adopted by 12 children, the release adds.

The Dharamshala is run under the



L to R: Secretary Ms Suman Anand, Dastur, Dutt and Aga, celebrating grandparental adoption

auspices of the District Benevolent Society of Bombay, whose chairman is Vispi Dastur.

Award for fair business

Jal Dastur of Ahmedabad was one of the winners of the Council for Fair Business Practices (CFBP) Jamnalal Bajaj Awards, notes a letter by R. S. Pandit, executive secretary of CFBP. The award was given by the Vice President of India Shankar Dayal Sharma on December 2, 1988, in Bombay. Dastur, who heads J. R. Dastur and Co (a firm dealing mainly in cement, steel and asbestos cement sheets) was awarded the first prize in the 'traders' category.

In the nomination filed, Dastur noted that his company, established in 1960, charged only fair and even concessional prices, did not hoard stocks in times of scarcity with the intention of profiteering, did not deal in goods "other than those of our principals," never published any misleading advertisements, and "discharged our social responsibilities...towards helping the weaker sections, the handicapped and (for) community welfare and development."

Dastur was a senior sales officer in Asbestos Cement Ltd before becoming a stockist for the Company. He

basis." At another time, when the city faced an acute shortage of water, the firm procured pipes "well in time to execute the project which averted the crisis of water supply to the city." Dastur also received letters of support from the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, The Gujarat Institute of Civil Engineers and Architects, The Indian Institute of Architects and many others.

Parsis in US Consulate

In the course of its 150-year history, the US consulate in Bombay has twice been headed by Indians, both of whom were Parsis, notes *The Times of India* of November 29, 1988.

Except for their names and dates of office, the consulate's own records do not contain many details about them, but there is some mention of them in *Parsi Prakash*, a Gujarati language publication, past volumes of which are with the Parsi Punchayet in Bombay.

In May 1852, Dossabhoy Merwanjee, a merchant of Bombay, became vice consul when the appointed American consul, Edward Ely, failed to turn up, complaining of poor pay. Merwanjee continued in this post till January 1854, when Ely arrived after his demands were met by the US government. Whether Merwanjee was for-

tion of President Grover Cleveland appointed businessman Hormusjee Eduljee Bode (of H.E. Bode and Sons) as vice consul after the sudden demise of the then consul, Benjamin Farnham. Bode held office for barely a couple of months until the new consul, Henry Ballantine, assumed charge on October 1, 1890. Bode was again made vice consul in early 1891 for a few months during the absence of the consul, adds *The Times*.

A homeopathic approach

Dr Farokh Master, representing India, was appointed chairman of the scientific session at the forty-third International Congress of Liga Medicorum Homoeopathica International held in Athens, notes the July-August issue of *Hamazor*, the newsletter of The World Zoroastrian Organisation.

The meet was described as a "convergence of scientifically inclined minds having devoted their lives to the practice and furtherance of homeopathy." During the five-day sessions from May 22 to 26, Master presented a paper on "A homeopathic approach to the neurology of hereditary ataxias."

The write-up refers to Master being conferred an honorary fellowship of the Royal College of Homeopathic Medicine. Master has also been appointed visiting professor of homeopathy at the Royal College of Hahnemann, adds the newsletter.

Dance on the Great Wall

Fusing both Indian and Western dance forms in the courtyard of a Beijing sixteenth century palace which houses the China National Arts Academy's Dance Research Institute, Astad Deboo enthralled the Chinese audience with his performances, notes the *Free Press Journal* of November 7, 1988.

Described by the paper as "the renowned Indian exponent of modern dance," Deboo gyrated in the manner of the Western contemporary dancers while combining the *mudras* (hand gestures) and facial expressions of Indian classical forms, notes the *Journal*.

Deboo performed *Awakening*, set to the music of Ananda Shankar, and *Sculptures*, to Rachmaninov's piano concerto along with improvisations involving audience participation. Calling Deboo "very special," Ou Jian-Ping, a Fellow of the Institute, says that he (Deboo), shows how Asians can adapt



was president of the All Gujarat Asbestos Cement Ltd Stockist Association, the All Ahmedabad Cement Stockists Association and the Ahmedabad Builders Association, notes his bio data.

Supporting his nomination was the mayor of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, Jayendra Pandit. Pandit noted that on two occasions, one when hutments on the river banks were flooded, Dastur's firm supplied "very large quantities of asbestos cement sheets...on a no-profit - no-loss

Dastur: doing 'clean' business

Left: Deboo, impressing Chinamen

basically appointed or not is not clear as his name does not appear among those of the past consuls and vice consuls, the report adds.

Merwanjee has been variously described as a businessman, a *dadal* (broker), a philanthropist, and an educationist who once headed a fund for the promotion of the English language in Bombay.

On August 27, 1890, the administra-



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modern approaches and can dance with anything, anywhere. Asking for the use of a weatherbeaten piece of furniture, Deboo wove himself in and out of it.

Keen on his talents being expressed "against the backdrop of the natural environment," Deboo performed, though not for the audience, on the Great Wall of China, writes Bachi Karkaria in *The Times of India* of December 7. So intrigued were the Chinese with Deboo's fusion of the dance forms of the East and West, that the dancers wanted to come to India to imbibe the classical traditions, she adds.

The artiste has trained in the Kathakali form of dance under guru E. Krishna Panickar and in the Western forms under the Martha Graham Technique and the German Wuppertel Theatre and the American Pilobolus Group, further notes the *Journal*.

Deboo had earlier been invited to Moscow to choreograph for Bolshoi ballerina Maya Plisetskaya.

First among solicitors

Mahernosh Jehangir Humranwala stood first in the solicitor's examination conducted by the Bombay Incorporated Law Society in September 1988, notes *The Bombay Samachar* of December 18, 1988.

Having graduated in law from the Government Law College, Bombay, Humranwala completed his articles for his solicitor's exams from M/s Ambubhai and Diwanji.

After studying at Mithapur High School in Mithapur, Humranwala graduated in biochemistry from St Xavier's College, Ahmedabad. He further did a postgraduate diploma course in rural management from the Institute of Rural Management, Anand.

"Apart from his proficiency in studies," Humranwala has also excelled in extra-curricular activities. He has performed many plays in Gujarati, both at the amateur and the professional level. He was also a member of the National Cadet Corps in the naval wing and represented Gujarat at the Republic Day Parade. While in college he was declared the best naval cadet in 1981. In the same year, Humranwala



Above left:
Cama,
triumphant
tour of
Europe

Left:
Humranwala
solicitor,
actor, orator

was adjudged the orator of the year. Knowledgeable in both English and Gujarati, the 26-year-old lawyer won the state-level award for the best Gujarati handwriting at an annual competition held by the Sukhan Samiti, adds *The Samachar*.

Cama in France

Bharata Natyam dancer Rohinton Cama gave five performances in France in November 1988 as part of the Nehru centenary celebrations being observed there. The response to the recitals in Paris, Cannes, Poitiers and Chatellerault "was tremendous," writes Ms Shireen Isal of the Sargam Association of Paris, the organizers of the tour, in a letter to *Parsiana* dated December 18. Many cultural centers have expressed an interest in re-inviting him to perform again in the near future, notes Isal.

Referring to Cama's Paris concert organized jointly by the Zoroastrian Association of France and Sargam at Musée Guimet on November 26, 1988, Isal writes, "The public unanimously appreciated the precision, purity and beauty of the Pandanallur style (of Bharata Natyam) presented by one of its finest interpreters in India today."

These recitals were part of Cama's

European tour that also took him to Berlin, Stuttgart and Amsterdam. Cama's trip had been sponsored by Air India and the Godrej Foundation. Sarosh Dastur's Prontaprint-Prestographs in Paris had assisted with the printing, adds the report.

Pleader's term extended

The law and judiciary department of the Government of Maharashtra has extended advocate Ms P. D. Anklesaria's term as government pleader, Bombay High Court, for a further three years, notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of November 6, 1988.

A law graduate from Pune University, Anklesaria is a qualified solicitor and is enrolled with the Supreme Court of England and Wales. While a student at the University, she was awarded prizes for academic excellence and extra-curricular activities, adds the report. A Charles A. Dana Fellowship helped Anklesaria to attend a course in advanced international legal studies at Salzburg, Austria.

A government counsel with the Bombay High Court since 1977, Anklesaria represented the Government of Maharashtra in several cases of importance and contributed articles pertaining to law to journals of national and international repute, adds the *Jamé*.

Veteran runner

Three silver medals and one bronze were awarded to Calcutta runner Ms Prochy Mehta at the Fifth Asian Veteran Championships held at Tainan city in Taiwan from December 3 to 5, 1988, reports *The Statesman* of December 27.

Mehta represented India in the women's 35 to 39 age-group and stood second in the 200 and 400m races. In the 400m, both she and the gold medallist broke the existing meet record. She also participated in the 4 x 100m relay in which the Indian team came in second. In the 100m she stood third, adds the report.

Earlier, at the Veteran Athletics Federation selection trials at Bangalore in August, Mehta had broken the national records for women between the ages of 35 and 39 years. She clipped approximately two seconds, four seconds and 30 seconds off the previous Indian records in the 100m, 200m, and 400m races respectively, according to a press release.

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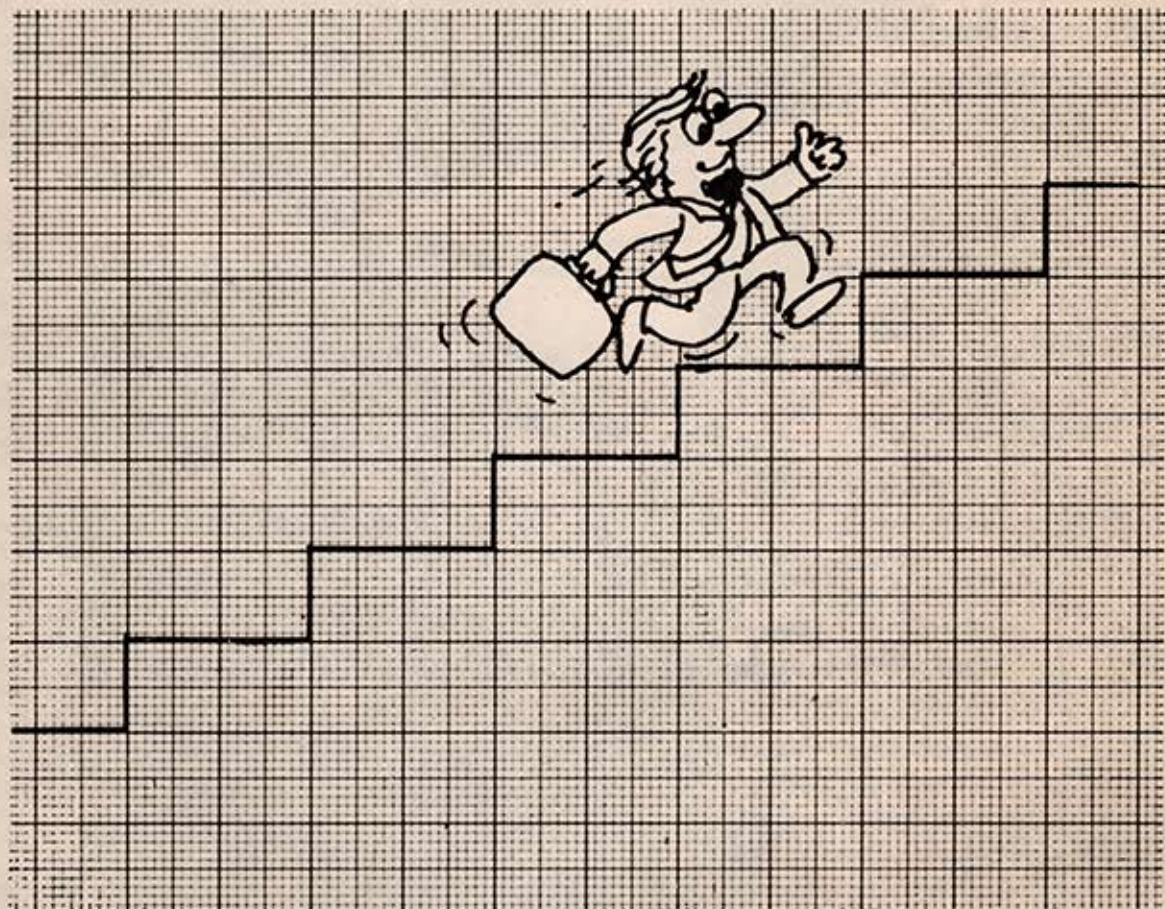
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Gulf Autocross champions

In the Sportcraft-organized Gulf Autocross for Cars and Motorcycles, motorcar rallyist Farad Bhathena emerged as the fastest driver, and national motocross champion Kaizad Patel bagged the first place in the upto 110 cc class, notes a press release from the organizers.

Farad stood first in two events and third in one. He was driving a Maruti Gypsy and a Maruti 800. Ms Navaz Bhathena came third in the Maruti 800 'A' Indian class, adds the release.

Earlier that month, on December 4, Navaz won the ladies' race and Farrokh Commissariat stood first at the Nulon Go-Kart Race Meet held at Bombay's Juhu aerodrome, according to a press release.

Reportedly a very popular form of motor racing in the West, Go-Kart racing features small, open, single-seater racing cars, and children as young as eight years compete in such events. In fact, many aspirants to circuit and formula racing start with Go-Karts, on which they learn the skills required, notes the release.

Tick of the old engine

At 69, Gool Bharucha was the oldest participant to complete the Good Year Women's Car Rally, according to a report in the *Indian Express* of December 2, 1988.

"Gool had twice fractured her knee before the rally. She even had meningitis a few days before the event. She cancelled her trip to Australia and recovered speedily to find time for preparation for the rally," notes Bharucha's co-driver Ms Zarin Dubash.

Bharucha's navigator was Ankush Chaudhary, with Cyrus Dubash as crew member, adds the *Express*.

Salutes all the way

The coveted Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award was presented to Ms Zarine Eruch Chinwala, who is said to be the first Indian NCC (National Cadet Corps) cadet to win this honor. Though she was invited to receive the gold medal and certificate at St James Palace in London, Chinwala had to forego this experience as she was unable to find sponsors or to bear the travel and accommodation expenses herself. Instead, the award was presented to her by the chief minister of Maharashtra, Sharad Pawar, in his office on September 19, 1988, notes *The Times of India* of Octo-



Chinwala: India's star cadet

ber 10, 1988.

Recognized as the country's best NCC cadet, Chinwala has other honors to her credit: the Prime Minister's baton (1986), best all-India girl cadet (1986-'87), the chief of army staff's scholarship (1986-'87), best girl cadet in Maharashtra (1985-'86) and the NCC director-general's gold medal (1986-'87), notes *The Times*.

"Wanting to do something different, unusual and challenging to get out of the dull routine of a suburban college life," she joined the NCC (air wing) in 1984 at the behest of friends. She was then studying in the twelfth standard, notes Quaid Najmi in the *Education Express*, a supplement of the *Indian Express* of October 19, 1988.

After undergoing a lot of training, basic exercises, and learning to sweat it out in the first year, the next year was more rewarding, notes the 21-year-old cadet. In the second year she attended a series of camps all over Maharashtra and participated in debates, elocution competitions, cross country running, etc. Aero-modelling, shooting, radio-telephones, air-diving and parachuting were part of her curriculum. In 1986 she was chosen to lead the Maharashtra contingent in the Republic Day parade at New Delhi, *The Bombay Samachar* notes.

In the course of her four-year involvement with the NCC, Chinwala was selected to visit Quebec for three months on an Indo-Canadian Youth Exchange Program.

After doing her ICSE (Indian Certificate of Secondary Education) from

Maneckji Cooper Education Trust School, Zarine graduated with a bachelor's degree in commerce from the Narsee Monjee College of Commerce and Economics, Vile Parle. At present she is studying for her master's degree in commerce from the University of Bombay and intends to pursue a career in management, adds the *Express*.

SPOTLIGHT

Industrialist Soli P. Godrej was awarded the French medal of the Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur. Godrej is presently the president of the Indo-French Technical Association and vice-president of the Indo-French Chamber of Commerce and Industry, notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of December 1, 1988.

Chairman and managing director of Central Bank of India, Manek Goiporia was one of the recipients of the tenth Shiromani Awards for 1988, for his outstanding contribution to the field of banking, notes *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of January 13, 1989. Instituted in 1977, the awards are presented to honor Indians worldwide who have performed commendably in their chosen field of endeavor, adds the paper.

Dr Jamshed J. Irani, joint managing director of Tata Iron and Steel Company Ltd, was awarded the prestigious platinum medal of the Indian Institute of Metals (IIM) for 1986, notes the *Mid-Day* of November 30, 1988. The topmost award of the Institute, the platinum medal honors eminent technologists for outstanding contributions to Indian metallurgy.

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

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Avari candidate scores in Karachi election

Arnavaz S. Mama

Charges and counter-charges regarding the electoral system featured in the heavily contested Karachi Parsi Anjuman Trust Fund's trusteeship election

Rusi Sethna, the candidate backed by the Avari faction in Karachi – and reportedly one of the first people to approach the Karachi Parsi Anjuman Trust Fund (KPATF) with suggestions to have a separate graveyard as per the wishes of the community – won the trusteeship election on January 27, 1989. Cyrus Cowasjee, the opposition candidate, also favors a burial ground. The vacancy on the KPATF board of trustees had been occasioned by the demise of its chairman Dinshaw Avari.

Allegations and counter-allegations had clouded the community landscape prior to the election as the Cowasjee and Avari groups confronted each other. In the dock was trustee Byram Avari's handling of affairs, specifically the expansion of the donor register and an alleged attempt to preempt the election in favor of Sethna on whose behalf 161 nomination forms had been filed. Ranged in opposition, behind Cowasjee, were Jamshed Mehta and Dr Jamshed Wania.

Circular letters to the community and letters in the *Parsi Sansar and Loke Sevak* were refuted by Avari in an open letter in the same publication. Referring to the long-standing rivalry between the Avaris and the Cowasjees, Avari had accused his detractors of crying foul because they were currently out of power.

Another bone of contention was the

institution of the secret ballot at trusteeship elections proposed by Avari in 1982 and hitherto blocked by legal action. "I am confident that this will be brought about on an immediate basis and hopefully before the election to be held on January 27, 1989," wrote Avari.

A stop press notice in the *Parsi Sansar* of January 14 stated, "A number of members have advised that they have been approached to obtain their proposals on nomination papers without explaining full facts. Normally only one nomination is necessary (with one or two more as provision for safety). However a large number have been sought, to give the impression that proposers/seconders are committed (to their choice). This is not correct... members are free to vote according to their choice in view of their now having an option (which had not been divulged earlier)."

Of the 654 persons currently on Karachi's Anjuman Committee according to the Anjuman's notice in *Morning News* and *Millat Gujrati* of January 13, only 60 are elected representatives (see box). According to this notice, therefore, there are 594 donor members on the Anjuman Committee. (The figures cited for the present membership of the donor register in the different letters varied between 600 and 700.) Nearly 400 of these are

donor nominees who have been added on within the past few months by Avari, "in (his) personal capacity" on behalf of donors Dr Burjor Anklesaria and Dr (Ms) Soonamai Sethna. It was averred by Avari's detractors that the majority of these nominees are Avari's employees or people indebted to him in some way. According to Avari, he had used the opportunity provided by the doctors' total donation of 42 lakh Pak rupees to widen the base of the electorate. Avari justified the increase in donor register membership as a step towards his electoral promise of "one man one vote" (sic) and says that the list includes members of the Cowasjee group.

Apart from the fact of the expansion of the donor register, Avari had been faulted for inducting members without their permission or knowledge. In a letter dated January 13 to the *Parsi Sansar and Loke Sevak*, Cowasjee stated, "At a meeting of the Anjuman Committee held today, a number of members objected to their names being included on the donor register without their permission... The vehemence of the protests from the members and feelings of insult perhaps was due to their doubting the purpose of the creation of these lists which appeared to be contradictory to the spirit of the rule."

Implying that Avari had unleashed a

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proxy war Cowasjee asked, "Why have young and middle-aged intelligent, active, educated, well earning ladies been asked to give proxies?" He counselled the community, "Call back your proxy if you have reconsidered your choice... If you have given my supporters your proxy, feel free to ask me to return it. I am confident my opponent will do likewise."

Cowasjee had also faulted the present board for its delayed publication of accounts, writing, "The last time that annual accounts (were) submitted in time (was) for the year 1981 before the present group of trustees took control of the board." He held them culpable of negligence for admitting that they have "constructed buildings on lands, the title deeds of which were not available."

Evoking the past in his defence, Avari wrote, "Since 1956 no elections

The electoral college

The five Karachi trustees, like their Bombay counterparts, are elected by an Anjuman Committee comprising donors of Rs 5,000 and more and representatives of A, B and C class members of the Anjuman. Class A includes donors of between Rs 1,000 and Rs 5,000 to community charities; male municipal councillors, delegates to the Parsi matrimonial court, honorary magistrates, title holders, graduates, doctors, lawyers, engineers and those who file income-tax returns comprise class B on payment of seven rupees; class C includes every adult male Parsi who has registered with a payment of three rupees.

At the general elections held every five years, class A elects 10 male representatives while classes B and C elect 30 and 20 representatives respectively to the Anjuman Committee. Apart from the donors, the 60 elected members of the Anjuman Committee must, by statute, be men only.

The scheme, which dates back to 1917, was amended in 1957 so that donors of large sums (or their agents) could nominate a representative on the donor register for every Rs 5,000 gifted. Thus, for example, a donor of Rs 25,000 has the right to claim five permanent seats on the Anjuman Committee.

"A number of members objected to their names being included in the donor register without their permission"

for trustees of the KPATF were held because Mr Rustom Cowasjee had arranged to get his nominees enrolled on the donor register of the KPATF against an amount of Rs 1,50,000 which was paid to the Anjuman. This monopoly was only broken in 1982 when I stood as a trustee to ensure that my father would be elected as the chairman as Mr Ardeshir Cowasjee, because of our family rivalry, stated, 'Eh buddha tu chairman nai bani sake' (No way you can be chairman, old man). Mr Ardeshir Cowasjee and his father proposed and seconded Justice Dorab Patel (Retd). In a hotly contested election, I secured nearly double the number of votes only to find that the Cowasjee group refused to attend the meeting of the trustees, thereby not forming a quorum and not enabling the results of the election to be declared." Avari says he had to move the court against the trustees be-

fore being declared elected, that the verdict was initially appealed but that a compromise was reached between the advocates by which "I was accepted as trustee subject to the request of both parties for secret ballot being instituted." However, when the High Court published a notice asking for objections, Maneck Wania applied to be made intervenor "because he objected to only this amendment being carried out and wanted a large number of amendments to be incorporated," wrote Avari.

Explaining the recent expansion of the donor register, Avari stated, "In my 1982 elections, I had committed to bring about either one man one vote or a parity between the donor register and the combined A, B and C registers. As my commitment... for a simple change to the secret ballot (was frustrated) by the application of Mr Maneck Wania, I felt that the electoral college, which in 1982 was a total of 140 persons (including 60 persons on the A, B and C registers), needed to be expanded by another legal method.

"When Dr Burjor Anklesaria donated over 25 lakh rupees and Dr (Ms) Soonamai Sethna agreed to donate over 17 lakh rupees, I requested them in my personal capacity to make as many donor members as possible, so that the electoral college could be expanded from the meager 140 persons. They readily agreed to this...

"Today I am proud to say that the

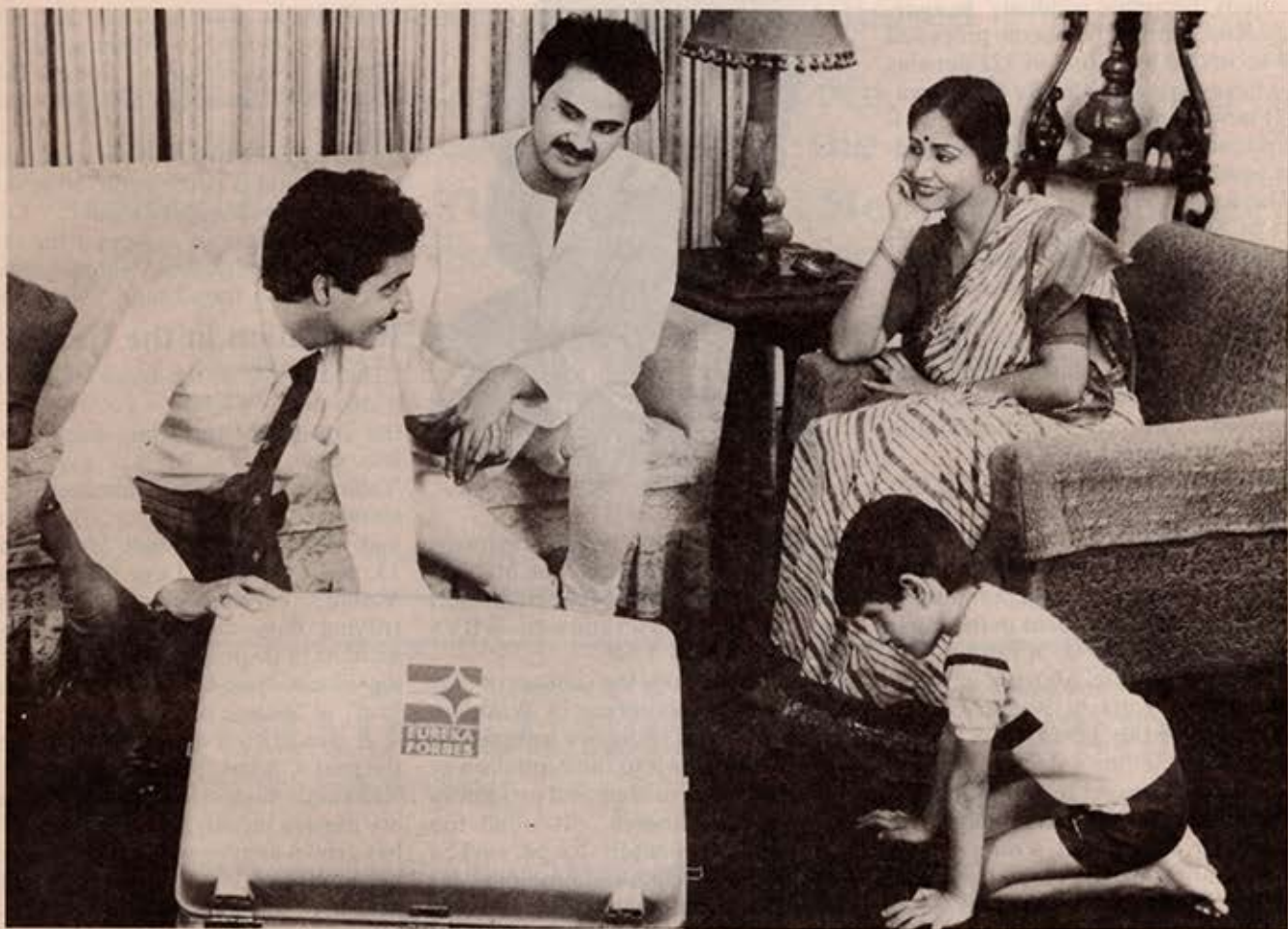
electorate is more broad-based and there are 654 persons on the Anjuman Committee. God willing, I will be able to soon fulfill my commitment."

Defending the integrity of the nominees Avari wrote, "The new members like all Parsis are also free thinking, responsible persons of integrity. It is difficult to get six Parsis to agree to a proposal; so how is it possible for 654 Parsis to ever follow the dictates of any one person? Persons nominated in this additional list also include close friends, associates and relatives of the Cowasjee family. To suggest that 654 Parsis would vote for a person nominated by me is a sad reflection on the character and integrity of the Parsis of Karachi." Avari also noted that Ervad Godrej Sidhwa had been appointed president for the election while Ms Dinoo Mistry and Darius Rabadi were the assigned scrutineers. "I do not think there would be a single person in our community who could cast any aspersion on their integrity," he added.

In response to the controversy regarding the 161 nominations for Rusi Sethna, Avari noted, "The past history of the Anjuman elections shows that candidates have been proposed and seconded by some trustees or the other. An impression is being created in the minds of the people that Dr Burjor Anklesaria and I having nominated Mr Rusi Sethna is 'morally' incorrect. Surprisingly, when the Cowasjees

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have done this, as trustees of the Anjuman, this was regarded as 'moral' but our nominating a person from Parsi color becomes suddenly 'immoral'... Rusi Sethna has been proposed and seconded by a total of 322 persons who have done so willingly and happily. It now seems that the usual Cowasjee pressure and arm twisting is in action again."

The rest of Avari's letter was in support of Sethna's trusteeship qualities, crediting Sethna's progressive thinking for the trustees' decision to approach the government for land for a separate graveyard as per the wishes of the community. He added that the KPATF had received the Karachi Development Authority's sanction for the same.

Meanwhile, an invitation to the two candidates to debate community issues under the auspices of the Zoroastrian Association of Pakistan (ZAP) was declined by Sethna as per the announcement of the ZAP president in the *Parsi Sansar and Loke Sevak* of January 21. The meeting at Hotel Metropole, open to all Parsis of Karachi, was scheduled to be addressed by Cowasjee.

Defending Sethna's decision to opt out of the debate, Avari noted that an open debate between candidates "is not only irregular and wrong but is commercialization of the Anjuman election. Never before has this been done nor should it ever be done... The National Assembly requires debating powers; the trusteeship of the Anjuman is for a person who can do community work."



Mehta's involvement

"Culture shock is being in a completely new environment where nothing is familiar; everything is a new experience... everything makes you nervous," Ms Ruksana Mehta, the new president of the World Bank Volunteer Service (WBVS) – the first from a third world country – told writer Jill Roessner in an interview published in *the Bank's World*, November 1988. The article in the World Bank's in-house monthly relates Mehta's initial bewilderment when she reached Washington DC three and a half years ago when her husband Darius joined



Mehta: opportunity to shatter prejudice

the Bank as senior power engineer. The write-up then traces her involvement with the various volunteer services, up to her elevation to WBVS president in May 1988.

The WBVS helps the spouses of new World Bank appointees in Washington, many from countries around the world, shake down to the capital's way of life and learn to cope and prosper in the new environment. "It is all too easy to allow oneself to be sucked down into a whirlpool of problems, indulging in a continual venting of complaints, feeding on each other's problems and wallowing in self-pity... (But) by making an effort to meet and learn about each other, we create the opportunity to examine and shatter, biases and prejudices which we might have brought along with us, thereby broadening our horizons and becoming more understanding and tolerant human beings," says Mehta.

Under the aegis of the 16-year-old WBVS flower a myriad organizations and activities – the African connection, the Asian cultural group, the Bible study and book project, the annual champagne ball and children's Xmas party, international cooking, the international arts and crafts fair, languages groups and support network being just a few among them. The WBVS publishes its own newsletter and holds seminars.

An alumna of the St Joseph's Con-

vent and Lady Amritbai Daga College of Nagpur, Mehta was executive director of Diners World Travel, the travel wing of the Diners Club, till 1985, when she moved to Washington. The Mehtas' two children, Sonya Bomi Patel and Jamsheed, are also in the States.

"Taking the first step towards active participation is perhaps the most difficult," acknowledges Mehta. "Once taken, however, it can open the door to new experiences, opportunities, activities and friendships," she adds.

Integration in the UK?

"The attitude of the black people towards me as a white is far worse than the attitude of the white people ever was when I was black," says Jaron Yaltan, a Parsi from Ahmedabad who converted to Christianity a long time ago. Writing in the *Daily Mail* of June 13, 1988 Geoffrey Levy narrates how Yaltan's skin changed color in six electrifying days due to vitiligo, a pigmentation disorder that left him looking like a "one-holiday-a-year Englishman" at the age of 60.

A dancer cum actor in Britain since the past 42 years, this change has given Yaltan a unique viewpoint. "With every passing month as a 'white man,' he has grown angrier with his own people because of what he perceives to be the refusal of many to integrate their lives into this country," writes Levy, who quotes Yaltan as saying, "Our own people are the biggest racists. I hate to say this, but it's true. It is we who will not mix with the English people. How many times have I felt that rejection in the last six years from people who did not know I was Indian."

Referring to fellow Asians, Yaltan told Levy, "English people never turned away from me when I was black. But as a white, that is precisely what the blacks do."

Yaltan, whose grandfather had been knighted for his services as a government official in British India, has played in films and theater with people like Ben Kingsley, Christopher Cazenove, and Dirk Bogarde and is an active member of the Conservative Party in Chelsea, writes Levy.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama

1989
MARCH



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APRIL

The new-look *Jamé*

Despite having to surrender their old premises, the proprietors of the 156-year-old daily, the *Jam-e-Jamshed*, are determined to keep the newspaper running

Parinaz Gandhi

After several anxious months of uncertainty, the readers of the 156-year-old Gujarati-English community daily, the *Jam-e-Jamshed*, were relieved to receive the February 1, 1989 issue of the new-look *Jamé*. The editorial on its front page stated: "Let us...remind our dear esteemed readers that since long, we have been the target of rumormongers who got pleasure in demeaning us by shouting from the rooftops that *Jamé* is closing down and yet we have at all times staunchly denied such rumors... We had...slowly but (surely) been totally involved in the process of fulfilling our ambition without much ado and here it is now, for all to see where we stand today.

"We have, time and again, clarified our stand that we had no intention of closing down our paper. If our readers recall our editorial a couple of years back, '*Jamé* for sale? Never,' we had emphatically mentioned that *Jamé* will at no stage be sold. We had also previously hinted to our readers in one of our Gujarati editorials that we planned to go in for modernization by entering into offset technology and in all earnestness we have to confess to our dear readers that today whatever we have achieved is due to your unstinted support and cooperation to keep your paper alive, for which we shall remain ever grateful to you."

The immediate future of *Jamé* seems secure. "*Jamé* as a paper will never close down," was the conviction of the young editor Russi Dhondy when talking to *Parsiana* on January 23, 1989. The slim and spirited chartered accountant had accepted *Jamé*'s editorial responsibility in February 1987 on the death of the doyen Adf Marzban. He staunchly refuted the re-

ports, in some of the Bombay dailies in December, regarding *Jamé*'s possible stoppage.

The rumors of the *Jamé* being wound up or sold started when retrenchment notices were issued to the daily's staff and workers. The red-brick Ballard House on Marzban Path, which housed the newspaper office and the printing press, was to be returned to the J. B. Marzban Trust that owns the property. The Trust has been taken over by Madhusudan Vakharia; hence *Jamé* closing down its printing operations and having the paper printed by offset at the Onlooker Press in Bombay's Sassoon Dock.

The newspaper's ownership now vests with the *Jam-e-Jamshed Pvt Ltd*, a new company floated on January 18 this year. Its chairman for life will be the wealthy businessman and philanthropist Nanabhoy Jeejeebhoy. The other two members on the board of directors are Dhondy's mother Jer, and elder sister Khorshed Daboo.

As per the arrangement with Vasudev Shah of the Onlooker Press, *Jamé* will be printed on a low-cost basis despite the inherently expensive nature of offset technology. According to Dhondy, Shah's attachment to *Jamé* stems from a sentimental reason: he had bought his first printing machine from *Jamé* after which his business flourished. "People outside the community are more supportive than those within," mentioned Dhondy who also noted that the wives of these supporters, being unable to read the topical news and community coverage items in Gujarati, read the English section of *Jamé*. Featuring in the English section are reprint articles on themes as general as health, child rearing and estab-

lishing better marital bonds, regular columns on law, sports and cinema, besides other light reading. The editorial staff of *Jamé* too has taken up abode at the Onlooker Press.

In bringing out a community publication, "there are no bouquets, only brickbats," was the experience of *Jamé*'s editor who believes he has greyed considerably since taking over this challenge. "My legacy was most unenviable," says Dhondy, who is required to work seven days in a week and whose duties as editor even encompass placating disgruntled readers who may be upset that a particular *paidust* (obituary), in the widely read column listing deaths, was not made mention of at the right time.

"Unless we can make our paper more broad-based, and commercialize it, the chances for the future are not very bright," is Dhondy's view. Planning to give his full attention to editorial and advertising work in the coming months, the editor is attempting to project the weekly as a professional and artistic publication. More than as a newspaper, he is keen to present it as a news magazine. "But not like *Parsiana*," he was quick to clarify.

The price of the weekly will now be hiked to Rs 2.50, but the daily's rates will continue as before, notifies Dhondy. He promises to offer a mixed fare of news, concerning the Parsis and other communities, in Gujarati as well as English. Dhondy is currently caught between crosscurrents. While on the one hand he has ambitions of cutting into the market of other Gujarati dailies, on the other, he is considering devoting more pages for the English-reading subscriber. But he also realizes that most of his avid readers fall

into the 60-plus age-group whose morning cup of tea must be accompanied by a copy of the *Jamé*. "If I switch to four or six pages (out of a total of eight) in English, then I may lose these readers."

The estimates, as stated by Dhondy, indicate that in the next 12-month period *Jamé's* deficit will aggregate about Rs 10 lakhs. Though not very optimistic about the next six months,



Ballard House: former home of *Jamé*

Dhondy is hopeful that the advertisers who have committed themselves will not back out. With a full page advertisement in *Jamé* going at the rate of Rs 2,500, the advertising department (which along with the administrative staff will be operating from Dhondy's Kumbhta Street office at Ballard Estate) will be making a concerted drive to break even. And as another ambitious project, Dhondy also has dreams of setting up advertising depots in Andheri and Dadar. Advertisements usually come trickling in and not pouring in as Dhondy would have liked. There is just one Parsi advertiser, Nusli Wadia of Bombay Dyeing, who substantially contributes to *Jamé's* advertising revenue, Dhondy singles out the contribution. As he himself admits, "Because of the *Parsi-pantu* attached to community publications," most advertisers feel that their message will have only a limited reach. Conversely, there are also a few advertisers who feel that Parsi readers

would constitute just the ideal market for their product or service. If a small community publication were to compete in the open market, "we'd be completely wiped out," realizes Dhondy.

The concern's main paying sector is reportedly its jobwork division. Diversifying into hotel supplies division which provides stationery and other knickknacks to hotels mainly in Pune, and some in Bombay, *Jamé* has managed to keep afloat.

"My staff has been extremely good and loyal," acknowledges Dhondy, though on the editorial side he misses the presence of youngsters who can actively contribute to the running of a paper. Until he can manage to find such staff, he has plans of appointing freelancers in different localities who can file firsthand reports of community events.

Dhondy is keen to make the right moves so that *Jamé* can look forward to better days. But what happens if he is unable to bear the losses? "If such a certain stage comes about, if *Jamé* has to change hands, I'll offer it to *The Bombay Samachar* because the founder of the two papers (Fardunji Marzban) was the same... People are under a misconception that the *Jamé* and *The Samachar* are at loggerheads," Dhondy clarified, and repeated *Samachar's* assurance that they were willing to take over *Jamé* rather than see it be closed. "Until now we have resisted the offers (of takeover) from industrial houses," stated Dhondy.

"*Jamé* should have run on professional lines right from the beginning." The things that "we have been doing for years, *chaalya karéch* (continue unchanged)," Dhondy indicated *Jamé's* trend.

On the *Jamé* journey

Vital tidbits of information concerning the newspaper, its style and its popularity can be gleaned from the different opinions expressed in *Jamé's* centennial volume. "As a Parsi paper, (*Jamé*) has consistently pursued a policy of upholding the social and religious usages of the community and resisting the advance of modern ideas. Its policy has brought it in conflict, on many occasions, with the advanced section of the community... In politics, *Jamé* has pursued a strictly moderate policy and has refused to be led away by the political upheavals... Its outlook may appear cramped to its critics," had

noted H. P. Mody.

Wrote Sir Jehangir Koyaji, "Liberalism might indeed seem to be the heritage of the Parsi community which *Jamé* has so well served. The successive editors... have been true to their liberal ideals and have never abandoned them either to please the powers that be or to follow the popular fallacies of the day."

As is the duty of the fourth estate, *Jamé* has also been instrumental in creating public opinion. "*Jamé's* lead in communal matters always is taken up by the Zoroastrian community except (I beg your pardon) a desperately persistent tiny section - and *Jamé's* word becomes the final say for the Parsis in matters social, political or religious," asserted Rattan Cooper. The Gujarati daily has been described by Dr Jehangir Tavadia as "a journal bearing the name of the 'Cup of Jamshed' through which everything was made visible."

It was Fardunji Marzban, the founder of the newspaper, who is credited with introducing Gujarati printing in India. While on a sojourn at Daman, he got 444 Gujarati letter types carved in wood. He later sent these to England to have their steel replicas made. With the import of these types, it became possible to commence printing of books and periodicals in Gujarati.

His paper too made rapid strides after having started out in a tin shed, where stands the present Ballard House, "on March 12, 1832 as a Monday morning paper, becoming bi-week-

In bringing out a community publication, there are no bouquets, only brickbats

ly in 1838 and daily in 1853. It was from its very inception the organ of the Parsi Punchayet and vehemently defended its members and other *sethias* of the community when they were mercilessly attacked," recalled J.R.B. Jeejeebhoy.

The evolution of *Jamé* can be seen from Maneckji Kavasji Patel's vivid comparison of the paper as it was during its golden jubilee, and as it stood during its centenary year. "Fifty years

continued on page 38

"If it's Meher roj, it must be Aslaji's"

Text: Homi J. Rogers
Photographs: Homyar Mistry

An air of sacrosanct pallor hangs over the 134-year-old Seth Aslaji Bhikaji Wadia Dar-e-meher. The silence is rent only by the sporadic barks of a dog and the constant shriek of a cockatoo. In front of the atash padshah, two worshippers intone their *Khordeh Avesta*, their drone broken by the occasional crackle of the barely visible fire embedded between two rounds of *kathi* (firewood).

In the anteroom, paved with *pavis* (furrows), Ervad Faredoon Madon, the hereditary panthaky ("our family has been tending the fire here for more than 100 years," he says) aided by his sons Cyrus and Pervez, is busy pouring oil into containers. [The single-diva (lamp) glasses and the five-wick large bowls - the *panch jyot divas* 'pioneered' at this agiary.] For, tomorrow is the sixteenth day of the Zoroastrian calendar, the *roj* (day) of Meher. And the adarian, once a private fire of the Wadia family, will be converted into a Zoroastrian Mecca with faith-laden Parsis (and Iranis) converging from all parts of Bombay, and even India. "If you have not met a Parsi friend for long," says Ms Bakhtavar Bandhniwala, a regular on Meher roj (and on Ashishvagh roj too, when she prays at the well), "there is a very high chance that you could renew your acquaintance here."

On an average, according to the sandalwood sellers who frequent this beat, it is not uncommon to have at least 1,500 to 2,000 people call on the Aslaji Agiary, as it is popularly known, on every Meher roj. The fire-temple is tucked in between a row of houses in a by-lane, itself sprouting from a narrow street that breaks off from the cinema-crammed Lamington Road. The Aslaji Agiary, established in 1855 by Seth Aslaji Bhikaji Wadia, was for long perceived as a fire-temple for the residents of the neighboring Shapur (Bharucha) Baug. Then, some 30 years ago, a lady of untraceable origins claimed to have seen a vision in the well in the agiary complex. Her ailments soon vanished, or at least dissipated, as the stories vary depending upon the faith and/or fervor of its tellers.

And the trickle of worshippers gently turned into a flood. If Meher roj falls on a Friday, over 3,000 people congregate there because of the legend of Mushkil-e-Aasaan (the Muslim saint whose blessings are known to turn the fortunes of the devout) that soon got entangled with the miracle. It even reaches the 4,000 mark, as observers and worshippers claim on the festival of Meherangan (the day of Meher in the month of Meher, which in 1989 falls on March 7, according to the Shahenshahi calendar).

What is the magnetism that draws the community to a lesser-known agi-



Devotees wait their turn to pay homage at the Aslaji Agiary

On the day
of Meher
every month,
the faithful converge
at the Aslaji Agiary
with a hope
and a prayer

Divas by the tray-loads at the Aslaji Agiary: an indication of faith

ary situated practically amidst the seedy surroundings of Bombay's *mujra* (nautch dance) performing district? "It is purely a matter of *aastha* (faith)," says Madon. "People come redolent with worshipful faith, and we cannot stop them, or curb their *jusso* (fervor)." The faith, which Madon speaks of, has by now crossed the seven seas. "I got to know of the agiary when in Pittsburg, where I had gone for further studies. A Parsi friend there suggested the agiary as a possible cure for my constantly indifferent health," informs Ms Navaz Karanjia. At her daughter's behest, Tehmina Karanjia started visiting the agiary which, she confesses, she found with great difficulty. "I must have asked at least 10 people for directions," laughs Tehmina. She regularly visited the agiary for nine consecutive Fridays with the same zeal as do those who believe in the novena, and even now, continues to go there every Friday. Navaz's health improved, and she also secured a first class first in her course, "though whether it was due to Aslaji or to predestined fate, I cannot say," she admits.

Others are more sanguine. A lady claimed to have conceived after she regularly started visiting the agiary on Fridays and Meher *roj*. Yet another claims to have been cured of cancer. Some

worshippers, however, come because they "like it here... It gives me a peaceful feeling," as notes Behram Kavarana, who says he has been visiting the agiary without a break for the past 40 years, except when indisposed or out of Bombay.

Yet, few can ascribe any reason to the syndrome. "If it's Meher *roj*, it must be Aslaji's." Or, to the worship here of the agiary's patron saint Afsune Shah Faridun and the twin saint Mushkil-e-Aasaan whose frames are wreathed with garlands every Meher *roj*, making them barely identifiable. Even the panthaky, coincidentally a namesake of the agiary's patron saint, offers little by way of explanation. "Faridun was a padshah (a king) of Iranian times," says the panthaky who seems to know nothing more about him. He is similarly tacit on Mushkil-e-Aasaan, merely providing a translation of his nomenclature - "tider of difficulties" - adding "He is a form of Bahram Yazad, the angel of victory."

According to the late Ms Dollymai Kaikhushroo Surti who had retold the story (see box, "Mushkil-e-Aasaan's favors") of the woodcutter who had been blessed by the saint, for an Ahmedabad publisher, Mushkil-e-Aasaan's graces would be more powerful if the tale is recounted by Parsis on every Hormazd and Behram *roj*, and on Tuesdays. Since the legend has many Islamic references, many Parsis,

however, read the story on Fridays, which for the Muslim is a day traditionally set aside for public prayer. The occurrence of Meher *roj* on a Friday is treated with even greater reverence, and draws to the Aslaji Agiary a larger crowd.

To a small part of the community which scoffs at the display of blind faith and the ostentatious offerings of *diva battis* and *sukhad* (sandalwood), when other fire-temples are starved of the same, the Aslaji Agiary mystique is a cause of consternation. A letter in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* which was carried under the pseudonym of 'Mazda' and which ironically appeared on a Meher *roj*, questioned the wisdom of lighting innumerable *divas* to ward off difficulties, and the flocking to this adarian, in preference to a neighboring agiary or atash bahram, on every Meher *roj*.

Ervad Nader Turel, a trustee of the 70-year-old Zoroastrian Radih (meaning righteous) Society, and the older Parsee Vegetarian and Temperance Society, echoes Mazda's view. He beratingly wonders how religious the community was before this *chasko* (fad) overtook them some 25 years ago. "Would you say," he queries, "that the Zoroastrian in the '60s was not as devout as the one today because he did not worship on Meher *roj*, or revere Shah Faridun and Mushkil-e-Aasaan?"

"On the contrary," informs Turel, "Mushkil-e-Aasaan is not a Zoroastrian

concept," a view endorsed by Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal, High Priest of the H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram, and Dastur (Dr) Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa, High Priest of the Anjuman Atash Bahram at Bombay.

"Would sitting around a plate of *chana* (grams), and narrating a story about a woodcutter wipe away our sins, or make us richer?" asks Turel rhetorically. He regrets that the propagation of such myths is driving the religion further away from its pristine values of *humata, hukhta, huvarashta* (good thoughts, good words, good deeds). JamaspAsa takes a similar view that a dogma preaching recrimination or compulsion in worship cannot be true Zoroastrianism which, on the contrary, is a religion of free belief. "We pray to ask God to grant us what He thinks is best for us, not what we think we want from Him," elucidates JamaspAsa, discarding the tale as un-Zoroastrian.

"It is very definitely an Islamic concept," avers Kotwal. "Even the meal of *bhujan* described is Moslem." Probably, explains Kotwal, Bahram Yazad was entwined into the legend by the Iranian Zoroastrians who, having remained in Iran after the Islamic conquest, were forced to accept certain Islamic beliefs to escape persecution. The hotchpotch of different cultures, as Kotwal points out, passed into Zoroastrian folklore and, being of Iranian origin, was treated with circumspect re-

Religious 'requisites' on sale outside the Aslaji Agiary



Mushkil-e-Aasaan's favors

The legend of Mushkil-e-Aasaan, unknown to most of the younger devotees at Aslaji but recalled by some elders, is of a woodcutter who was granted three fistfuls of sand by Mushkil-e-Aasaan and Bahram Yazad (perceived of in some tales as two individuals, and in some as one). This sand turned into precious jewels, driving away the poverty of the *kathyara* (woodcutter) and his starving daughter.

The girl, who for three days had not had a meal, and for whom the neighbor's *bhujan* (a meal of kidneys and liver roasted over a fire) was a delicacy, soon lived in a palace-like house, dressed in finery laden with jewels, ate the choicest foods, and attracted by her wealth the friendship of the sultan's daughter, who considered her of equal peerage. The woodcutter meanwhile diligently performed his

prayers, lit *koprelni batti* (lamp of oil) and *agarbattis* (incense sticks), and laid out *kabuli chana* (gram), *khajur* (dates), *sakar* (sugar), as enjoined by the spirits. Thankful for the favors granted, he remembered them by narrating their glories to an appreciative audience who intersperse the narration with "*ji-re-ji* (yes)."

But alas, the legend tells us, all turned to ashes when the woodcutter left for "*haj* (pilgrimage to Mecca)," and his daughter, disregarding his instructions, put off the weekly prayers and rituals. The saints turned malevolent: the sultan's daughter accused her of theft, the woodcutter on his return was consigned to a dungeon, and the wealth vanished, only to return when the woodcutter, despite the imprisonment, found a way to get his prayer accoutrements, and beseeched the favors of Mushkil-e-Aasaan.

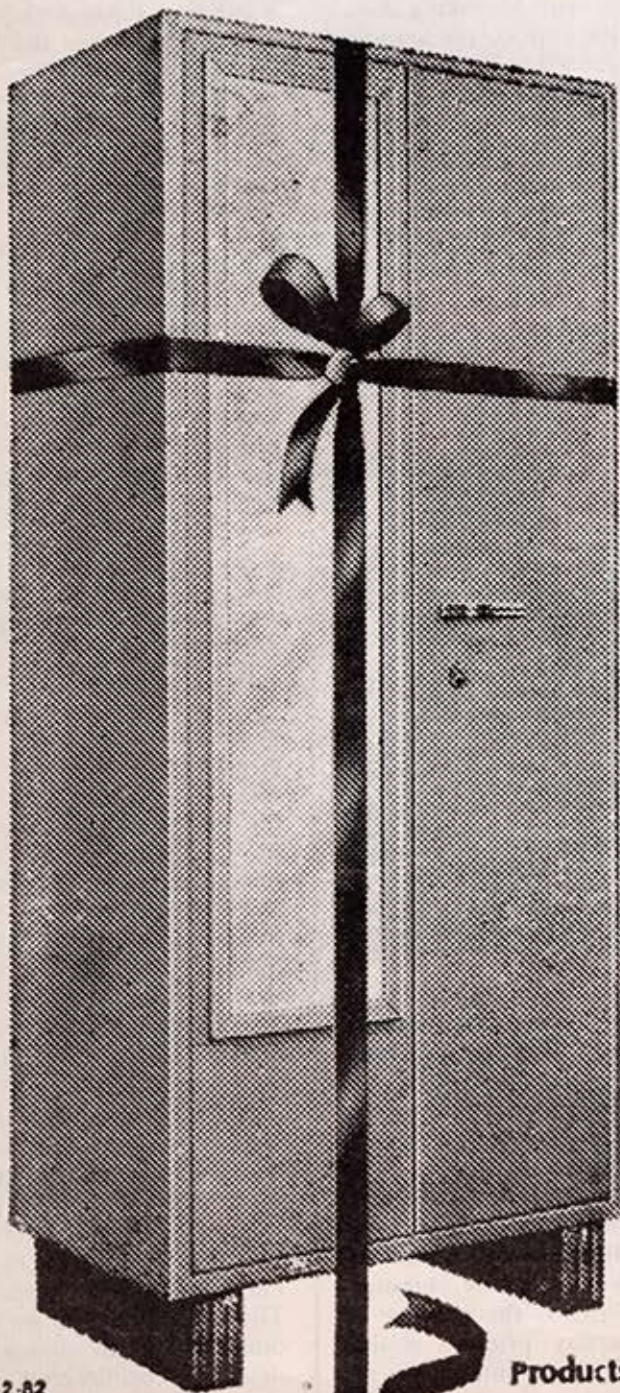
spect, its non-Zoroastrian genesis rarely questioned. This is borne out by the visual, commonly observable in religious places, depicting the Assyrian bull, the Persepolis ruins, the proverbial goblet of wine and assortment of dry fruits, and the cherubs, bearing a mixed resemblance to the Christian angels and Hanuman.

"It is not an artist's impression," counters Dr (Ms) Meher Master-Moos, a leading Ilm-e-Khshnoomist, and founder president of the Zoroas-

trian College which is being set up at Sanjan. Master-Moos, who regularly updates the work authored by her on *Meher Yasht*, claims to have been visited in 1982 by the winged horse, a part of the same visual. "Such a horse belongs only to Bahram Yazad," the archangel of victory, depicted in the legend glorifying Mushkil-e-Aasaan-Bahram Yazad's achievements. Master-Moos, who reads the tale every Thursday, except when she is "unclean," claims that the reading has definitely helped her. "The more you cogitate on the story, the more you find in it, no matter how many times you have read it," she adds with a rare conviction. According to Master-Moos, there were no fire-temples as we know them today in ancient Iran. Fire burned atop columns, which she hypothesizes was fed by the abundant natural gas below. "The bull portrayed stands at the entrance of Persepolis, and the bull columns shown indicate Mithra worship," Master-Moos attempts to justify the picture as a true representation.

The worship of Mithra is, however, yet another bone of contention in Zoroastrian theology. While some are willing to accept Mithra worship as a Zoroastrian concept, other scholars believe that Mithra was a pre-

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Zoroastrian deity, rejected by Zoroaster when he preached his monotheistic religion. Hence, there is no mention of Mithra in the *Gathas*. Yet, as age-old customs die hard, Mithra has been re-introduced as a *yazata* (adorable). Mithra, later contracted to Meher, was lord of the pastures, and since pastoral life begins at dawn, Mithra became synonymous with light, and consequently, as worshipped today, the sun.

The festival of Meherangan observed on Meher *roj*, Meher *mah*, or any festival in honor of Mithra, is not mentioned anywhere in the *Avesta*. The earliest reference to a celebration of Mithra/Meher is in the *Shah Namah*. Quoting the epic in his writings, Dastur (Dr) Hormazdyar Mirza of Udwada states, "Shah Faridun ascended the Iranian throne after overthrowing the dreaded monarch

Zohak on the first day of Hormazd in the month of Meher. Adds Mirza, "It was Faridun who instituted the summer festival and jashan of Meherangan, and celebrated it as a national festival." But according to Kotwal, it was probably on Meherangan that Zohak was conquered.

It is this Shah Faridun with the epithet "Afsun-e," translated by Turel as "efficacious," who is worshipped by Parsis, along with Mushkil-e-Aasaan. In fact, on the popular photograph reverentially carried by many Parsis, the figures of Shah Faridun, Mushkil-e-Aasaan, Dastur Kookadar and Prophet Zarathushtra are all devoted equal space.

To Madon's credit it must be said, that though he sits on a volcano of faith, he has done little to light the tinderbox of the already weakened senti-

ments of his *behdins* (laity). No nirangs are offered, no miracles promised. Even the Meher *roj* influx is taken by him dispassionately, and with a counter-argument that people do come on other days too, to the Aslaji Agiary.

His critics speak in hushed tones about the raid on the adarian by the income-tax authorities where, allegedly, currency worth thousands of rupees was found stashed under the *afargan* (container bearing the fire) pedestal. They accuse him of exploiting the *sona ni challi* (golden goose) situation by pioneering the burning of *divas*, particularly the five-wick *divas*. "The place is ablaze with lamps," writes Mazda. "In the event of a fire taking place, one shudders to think of what would happen." "It is not necessary to have *divas* in an adarian," says JamaspAsa, mildly criticizing those who rush to have the *divas* placed in front of the atash padshah and in the main hall, and in the process, reserve the *divas* and the position, days in advance. "At the Iranshah too," argues Mazda, "only one *diva* is kept lit in front of the holy fire... Would you light a *diva* in every room of your house?" "Light a lamp in your heart: mold your life - that is more important," advises Kotwal.

Be as it may, the beeline to the Aslaji Agiary continues. This is quite in contrast to its early days when the private fire-temple was built for the use of the Wadia family. On the founder's death, his wife Dosibai sold the land together with the agiary to their nephew Seth Jehangirji Bejanji Vakil. The present structure was built by Vakil in memory of his late son Pestonjee. Until his death he maintained the building at his own expense. Thereafter his three sons, Rustomji, Shapurji and Merwanji laid aside estates yielding Rs 453 annually to maintain the agiary. On January 15, 1937, as per the directives of the Bombay High Court, this private Dar-e-meher became a public property.

And the devout have been coming with their offerings to the fire, to Shah Faridun, to Mushkil-e-Aasaan, to... The links of Meher *roj* to Shah Faridun, though not known to any of the devotees encountered, lie rooted in the epic *Shah Namah*. But what binds Mushkil-e-Aasaan to Shah Faridun is

Shah Faridun and his nirangs

Faridun lived, according to Dr Meher Master-Moos, in 9500 BC. A Pishadian king, Faridun was born of paladins in an *athraavan* (priestly) family, and, says Master-Moos, traced his ancestry to Jamshed Padshah. Also referred to as Thraituna, informs Dastur (Dr) Hormazdyar Mirza, Faridun was known as a great healer, and the chanting of his nirangs (incantations) would, according to Master-Moos who considers him the world's first environmentalist, "cleanse the body of *druj* (evil forces)."

One of his nirangs is reproduced under the visual of him seated "in typical Persian fashion," to quote Master-Moos, "holding a scimitar in his hand." "*Aa vanghudaao vanghuim parendim yazmaide*" runs the line with an alluring footnote that if the same is chanted throughout the day, "*chalta ne harta farta* (while walking or ambling)," the reciter will have no pecuniary problems all his life. "These are only four words out of the nine secret words," says Master-Moos, stressing that they would bring about,



spiritual salvation. Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal doubts the veracity of the nirang, stating that it is grammatically incorrect, and could not have been so worded as its translation would read: "We worship to good giver of prosperity."

While Kotwal agrees with Mirza and Master-Moos that Shah Faridun had with his spiritual prowess probably woven many nirangs, what he decries is the practice of many latterday priests issuing nirangs, and the community's reliance on them.

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unknown, except perhaps that like the latter, Mushkil-e-Aasaan too redresses people's difficulties. Equally indecipherable is the nexus of the divinities with Aslaji Agiary. "Probably," says Burjor Screwvala, a frequent visitor to the agiary, "it is because the panthaky here says some prayers in honor of Shah Faridun on every Meher roj." But what brings him here unfailingly on every Meher roj is not the panthaky's said prayers, but a tradition. "An elderly gentleman told me years ago to visit the agiary on every Meher roj, and I have done so. But, yes, I do find peace of mind," avers Screwvala. Similarly, a young Parsi student claims to visit the agiary ever since "my grandmother told me about its efficacy."

For Adi Daruwala, a scorer at Parsi Gymkhana, the visits started when he had a vision of two priests sitting on an *idhora* (stool) and telling him to do *diva* and *daran* (holy food) on every Mohor or Meher roj. "I am not clear which of the two days they actually said," confesses Daruwala, but since

the *diva* here on Meher roj has miraculous powers ascribed to it, Daruwala has been coming here "on 99 percent of Meher rojs."

The association of the word Meher with blessings (*khudai ni meher chhè*)

**"Was the
Zoroastrian in the
'60s not as devout
as the one today
because he did not
worship on
Meher roj?"**

could, many devotees feel, be the reason for prayers being offered as thanksgiving or for a boon request on Meher roj. Ms Nargesh Daruwala alludes the association to the word "dar-e-meher" used to describe a fire-temple, and thus enjoining the de-

votees to feed it on every Meher roj at least.

Whatever the reason, it is a large and motley crowd that assembles here from the crack of dawn on Meher roj to the last fading hours of the evening, much after the day's penultimate *boi* (prayers chanted at the time of changing *gahs* or periods of day) has been performed. The small agiary, which can barely accommodate 200 people at a time, has long queues forming outside in the lane. And for the Parsi beggars, and sandalwood sellers, manna overflows.

Nargesh Daruwala, who sells sandalwood outside the agiary on every Meher roj, claims to earn around Rs 75. An aged Parsi claims to collect alms worth around Rs 100 on any Meher roj, and four times the amount on Meherangan. Kaikhushroo Aspandiar Irani, who has been selling *sukhad* here for the past 15 years with his four to five helpers, grosses on Meher roj, by his own admission, around Rs 1,500. Of particular demand is the *33-sali* (33 pieces, probably one for each

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yazata) ni manyata nu sukhad (wish-granting sandalwood).

The sandalwood shop at the corner of the lane run by the Mehta family, claims to have sold the *manyata salis* for as little as 15 paise initially. Now, each *sali* costs 75 paise. "*Manyata bhi moghi thai gayee* (even wishes have become costlier)," jests Jamshed Mehta who does a roaring business, being the only established sandalwood outlet here. Yet, there was a time when his father had seriously considered selling the shop for it yielded very little business. The deal fell through, and Fali Khandaria rues that he did not pay the additional Rs 1,000 demanded.

The Meher *roj* phenomenon, despite the covert disapproval of the community's high priests, is on the upsurge. Irani, who sells sandalwood at the Doongerwadi, and at many agiaries on their *salgirahs* (birth anniversaries) says that every month he always sees many new Parsi faces thronging here. Mehta concurs, adding that "It is the younger lot which has started coming - and many

have not come earlier." Mehta interprets this as "a very good sign," as he sees a religious revival in the community, especially amidst its younger set. JamaspAsa on the other hand laments, "Asking for miracles is like a drowning

**"Asking for
miracles is like a
drowning man
clutching at a
straw"**

man clutching at a straw." They may deny it outwardly, but it is the supposed efficacy, and the hope of a miracle that continues to draw the populace. And seeing the miracle wrought upon one's contemporaries draws fresh converts. In modern times, torn by strife and difficulties, chasing an ever-shrinking rupee, the younger generation needs a miracle. And, as

one of them argues, "Is it not better that we seek a miracle from our own faith, than from visits to a church, or from *babas* and *fakirs*?"

Would Shah Faridun with his time-tested nirangs, and Mushkil-e-Aasaan and Bahram Yazad, in conjunction with Meher, the oldest and supreme-most of Iranian gods, provide the panacea? Only time will tell. Till then, kilos of *sukhad* will be offered; some, after being tapped reverentially over the well, or touched to the bough of the tree overhanging the well, and even pecked initially by the panthaky's cockatoo, depending on the idiosyncracies of the Parsis. And every Meher *roj*, an old Dodge, the likes of which you would otherwise not see on Bombay's roads, will cause a traffic jam on the narrow street. A baby Morris parked beside a moped, will bridge the generation gap. And a two wheeler, with a side-car accommodating the archetypal Parsi family, will, if it is a Thursday, also take a halt reverentially at the Sai Baba temple across the road. Just in case...

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'A WORLD BODY OF YOUTH'

Persees Antia

A festival conjures up images of people having fun, playing games and generally living it up. But when the Calcutta Parsee Youth League decided to hold a Youth Fest in celebration of their golden jubilee, they decided to do things a little differently. Along with the fun and games, the Youth Fest also had daily sessions during which the stalwarts of the Calcutta Parsis and delegates were invited to speak on and discuss the problems that face the community today.

The All India Parsee Youth Fest - Calcutta, opened on Saturday, November 5, 1988, with benedictions from different faiths. Speaker of the West Bengal State Legislative Assembly and the day's chief guest Hashim Abdul Halim lit the *diya* (lamp) and one delegate from each of the different cities represented lit a *diya* too. Ms Khurshed Ardeshir, president of the Youth League, gave a brief introductory speech outlining the aims of the Youth League and of the Youth Fest.

She also introduced Dr Minu N. Dastur, the internationally renowned steel consultant, who was the presiding officer for the day. In his inspiring speech, Dastur said that it was gratifying to see so many young Zoroastrians

gathered together, and encouraging to see that today's youth were trying to learn the tenets and values of our faith. He said that in an attempt to blindly ape the West, we have spurned the very faith and culture that had produced individual work over the years, work which had benefitted all, even those outside the community. As a result of this, we now face a number of problems; prominent among them are: diminishing numbers, lack of knowledge of the faith, and difficulties in maintaining internal and external standards in life. However, Dastur was hopeful that the growing awareness in our youth might yet save the community from extinction, being as they are, young, adaptable and willing to listen to different points of view.

Whereas the term 'Zoroastrian' was melding, the term 'Parsi' was divisive as it tended to discriminate against Iranian Zoroastrians, according to Dastur. He also commented that a policy was always better after a group had discussed it together with goodwill, assuming that there was a base of real knowledge for fruitful discussions to take place. It could be a therapeutic shock to see how ageless, modern, and still applicable to modern life were the principles enshrined in the *Gathas*, said Dastur, enjoining a study of the *Gathas*. He felt that "only from knowledge can there be a strong thrust, only from proper self control can there be a right direction and only from enlightened progress can our community benefit."

Halim, in his address, said that the Zoroastrians were among the very few people who came to India in peace. However, they made it their motherland adopting its customs and traditions, and there has been no sphere of activity where their presence has not been felt. He further added that the problems faced by the youth are the same everywhere in the world and must be seen in the right perspective for solutions to emerge. His message



The Calcutta Youth Fest focussed on all topics from conversion and reservation to drugs and employment

ALL INDIA PARSEE YOUTH FEST. CALCUTTA - 1988



*At the inaugural of the Fest
(Facing page) Sharing music on the
night of the campfire*

to the youth gathered at the hall that morning was, "India is proud of you, looks forward to you. India depends on you to give the leadership that is so necessary."

The octogenarian founder of the Youth League and a retired trustee of the Calcutta Zoroastrian Community's Religious and Charity Funds (CZCRCF) Ardeshir Batliwala, in his address, said that it was out of a desire to do something for the younger generation that the Youth League had been created, and it had been a source of pleasure for him to see it grow from strength to strength.

All of us have free will; our faith does not tell us that everything was preordained and we just had to go through the paces, noted Cushrow Irani, the first guest speaker at the Youth Fest. The basic principles that Zoroastrianism teaches us are: first, that Ahura Mazda created a good life; second, a concern for our fellow men; third, a concern for truth - a Zoroastrian's word is considered his bond; and finally, the equality of the sexes. In a nutshell, Zoroastrianism was humanism at its best. On the subject of interreligious marriages, he said that we should look upon this subject with understanding, sympathy and compassion. Migration is not a matter for grief, he felt. If Zoroastrians leave India to make a new life for themselves in other countries, they thereby enrich the culture of those lands. Humanity demands that we conduct our affairs with modesty and decorum, recognizing that there are other points of view too, he emphasized.

Speaking on the problems of drug addiction, La Martinière principal

Godrej Engineer referred to the youth as the most maligned and misunderstood human beings on earth today. He advocated that parents spend a little time explaining the effects of drugs to their children and teach them to say "no." He also warned against domestic help who were often the source of drugs. As a small intellectual community, we cannot, should not, and dare not allow drug addiction to get the better of us. He added that youth was the most crucial period, both formative and dangerous, and in this period a human being was either made or marred.

Ms Mehru Dastur, recounted her experiences as an organizer of the North American Zoroastrian Conference in Los Angeles. Towards the latter part of that day's session CZCRCF trustee Dr Russi Anklesaria spoke on the topic of migration and the difficulties faced by those who go abroad. He felt however, that though the environment was different, it did not mean that the religion too had to become different. He added that the religion was not being handed down to the present generation in the same way in which our parents had taught the religion to us.

During the discussion that followed, somebody asked a very pertinent question: Who is competent to make decisions on our behalf? Anklesaria suggested a world body to solve the problems, putting all Zoroastrians on the same plane, following the same rules. Ms Khursheed Khurody, a delegate from Bombay whose outspokenness and refreshing views probably stem from the fact that she has spent a large part of her life abroad, made many

thought-provoking statements. Earlier she tried to separate the concepts of religion, ritual and belief, and expressed the need to put the academic discussions at the Youth Fest into practice. She even had the courage to remark that if Zarathushtra had been alive today he would have been appalled at the way we were practising the religion he had taught. If the present priests were unwilling to accept change, then it was necessary to train a new generation of priests, people who had a modern and present-day way of thinking, she added.

Since the topics on the very first day were so hotly debated, the organizers decided to delay the next day's session and hold group discussions. The topics to be discussed were interreligious marriages, conversion, adoption of non-Zoroastrian children, and planning youth activities to help solve the problems of the community.

Interreligious marriages should not be encouraged, but individual freedom of choice should not be condemned or ostracized, was the overwhelming opinion emerging from the group discussions. Children, whose any one parent was a Zoroastrian should be accepted into the faith. On adoption, the majority were of the view that if the children were adopted when they were very very small then there was no reason why they should not be made Zoroastrians. Another proposal which found favor was the formation of a world body of youth, to serve a definite purpose.

Speaking on the creation of employment opportunities, Adi Rabadi, CZCRCF trustee and director of M.N. Dastur Ltd, noted that the real issue was quite the opposite - there was a need for more youth to fill the opportunities available to them. He said that his firm had not come across a single qualified Parsi engineer in the past 25 years. Parsi applicants mainly comprised commerce graduates. Recently, applicants have been seeking openings at the computer center, but even here, there were few with real qualifications, said Rabadi and suggested that we dissuade our youth from seeking employment right after graduation and encourage them instead to raise their qualification to professional levels. He



A section of the audience at the Olpadwala Memorial Hall

added that the reservation of seats was not a policy for an enlightened and educated community like ours. He felt that such a policy would only cause ill-feeling towards the community. Rusi B. Gimi had very much the same to say, adding that Parsis should strive towards setting up their own businesses and should have more children.

Once again the talks created a furore in the hall, with some delegates feeling that the entire system of reservations should be done away with. Others felt that in view of the size of the community we should have a reservation policy. Rabadi explained that it was not possible to have reservation of seats for only one minority community; all would have to be included and only the Hindus would be left out. Ultimately it would make no sense at all. Besides, he felt that our conscience would not allow us to accept a seat which rightly belonged to a better student. Some delegates also felt that a bureau should be set up to provide proper guidelines and consultancy for people wishing to set up their own businesses, as such facilities would give them the courage to leave their secure jobs and go ahead. Rabadi felt that it was not really worthwhile to set up an advisory panel to guide young people, especially in small communities; maybe in Bombay's large community it would work. Gimi felt that in Bombay, Parsis were reluctant to leave the city in search of or to avail

of opportunities elsewhere in India. Rabadi concurred, noting that this was why we found so few Parsis entering the administrative and armed forces.

Later that afternoon Pagal Olympics were held at the Olpadwala Memorial Hall. This item was thoroughly enjoyed by all the delegates who were quite unaware of the fact that the reputedly sedate Calcutta Parsis could dish up such fun-filled fare. The Pagal Olympics contained events like shotput with a cotton ball and javelin throws with a straw. Pretty tough when you think about it, but lots of fun, you can be sure.

The next day Kushroo Kiash spoke of the problems faced by the Calcutta Parsis with regard to the disposal of bodies at the dokhma. Rapid development of the area as well as other factors were reportedly discouraging birds from coming to the dokhma here. He pointed out that it would not be long before other Parsi communities in India would face the same problems. While some delegates later accused him of betraying a trust by revealing what he has seen inside the dokhma premises, others admired his courage and felt he was right in bringing the problems out into the open so that others would be aware of it and would try to find a solution. Rabadi informed that they had spoken to the priests at their agiary, asking them if they would do the last rites if the dokhma grounds were converted into a bu-

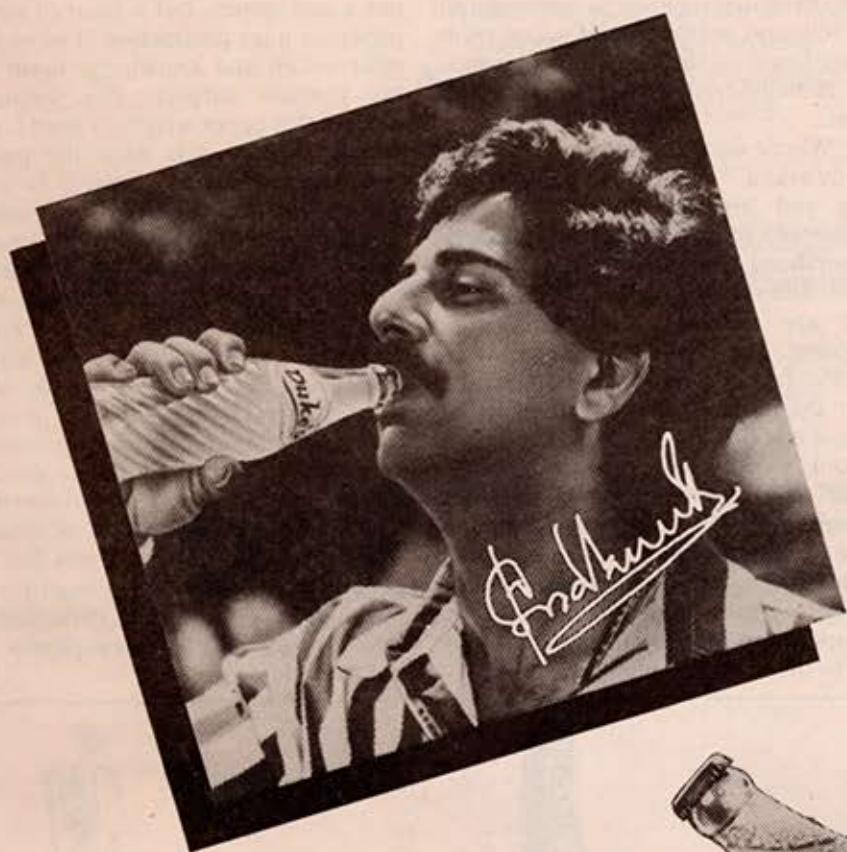
rial ground. One agreed but four did not. However the dissenting four stated that if the authorities in Pune gave their permission, they would not refuse. Accordingly, a letter was written stating the problem at length, and the alternative system they wanted to change over to. They received a response stating that since it was such a grave issue they would discuss it and then come back with a reply. Eighteen months later that reply is still awaited and the situation in Calcutta worsens. Cyrus Meherji, eloquent and poetic, spoke of the true purpose of the navjote ceremony, the significance of the sudreh and kusti and the basic purpose of life and death – according to our Zoroastrian faith. He commented that we find the time to send our children to art classes and piano lessons, for guiding and for swimming, yet we are reluctant to spare an hour a week teaching our children the meaning of the religion. At another point he stated that God did not require offerings of fruit and flowers, or incense and sandalwood, since He Himself was the creator of these things. In the debate that followed, it was interesting to hear the reaction of at least one progressive Bombayite to the fact that ordinary working men in Calcutta are often requested to volunteer as khandhias and carry the bodies inside the dokhma. She was also assured that even professional nassessalars do regular duties at the fire-temple.

During the evening games, the delegates were divided into teams for basketball, badminton, carrom, table tennis and even an advertising game. Much later a dinner dance was held at the Olpadwala Hall for the delegates and a restricted number of Calcuttans. The hall was packed, and Astad and his band played till well after midnight.

At the open house on the final day, the floor was open to all speakers, delegate or not, to express their views. Ms Persees Antia spoke briefly on the problems at the dokhma in Calcutta and felt that rather than looking at existing methods like burial and cremation, we should try to find a new unique solution, keeping the principles of the religion in mind. Ms Navaz Engineer opined that as our Parsi community follows the laws of a patriarchal society, it automatically follows that the child will adopt the faith of the father and not that of the mother. Ms

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Meher Khambatta spoke, from first-hand experience, of the problems faced by Parsi couples trying to adopt Zoroastrian children. The difficulty is that the Parsis have no adoption law nor any agencies where prospective parents may register themselves and where couples who do not want any more children can place such unwanted babies for adoption. She agreed that such Parsi babies coming up for adoption were very very few and felt that even if a non-Parsi child was adopted there should be no restrictions placed on making such children Zoroastrians as they would have grown up in Parsi Zoroastrian homes and would have the beliefs and values of their parents.

Later the Parsi troop of the Bharat Scouts and Guides arranged a campfire at the Calcutta Parsee Club. There was entertainment galore, both by the members of the troop and by the delegates themselves. Some were well prepared with scripts and costumes, others gave impromptu demonstrations of talent which were just as good.

Grim portraits are painted of the imminent death of the entire community. Seeing the vibrant young people so

aware of the problems, so determined to find solutions, one felt that the outlook was not really that grim at all.

The Youth League did a wonderful job organizing this Fest. While murmurs of dissent were heard among the audience, commenting on the fact that the delegates seemed mostly ignorant of religious matters or of social problems faced by the community, it must be remembered that it was a Youth Fest.

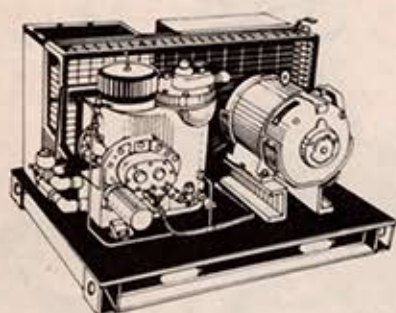
"Where were the solutions?" somebody asked. "What is the point of talking and arguing? What has been achieved by this entire exercise?" Khursheed Ardeshir summed it up well. She said the ideas are flying, people are thinking and talking and arguing. They have been made aware of the fact that these problems exist. For the moment that is sufficient, because it is not the youth that will bring about social change at the present time. It is the stalwarts of the community who will have to take the initiative. The ones who wield administrative powers are the decision makers and, to a very large extent, only the cooperation of our priests will enable us to make these changes.

THE NEW-LOOK JAMÉ

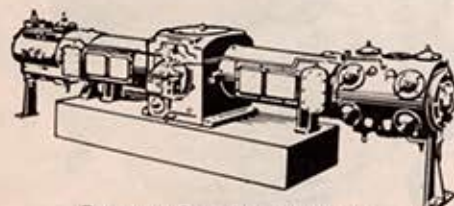
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ago, the *Jam-e-Jamshed* was a mere flysheet. Now, every day, especially on Wednesdays and Saturdays, the enterprising editor of this paper produces not a newspaper, but a heap of newspapers, a huge production of news and information and knowledge upon every possible subject. The Saturday issue of this paper weighs at least half a pound. And that is what the public now expects from the *Jamé*. In later years, *Jamé* too, like the community, has been waning in size. From a broadsheet, it has been made into a tabloid.

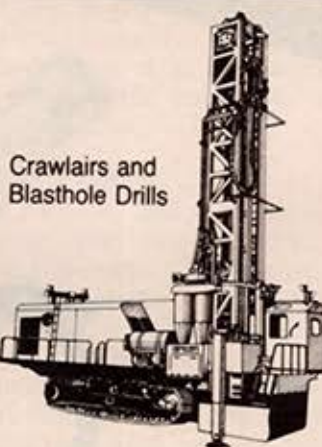
As summarized by S. S. Dubash in the centennial publication, "From grandpapa to grandchild, the paper passes and thus old *Jamé* should have been the order of the day for a long, long time until other fraternities sprang up to supplement or replace its unabated grip...As a Gujarati morning daily it has few compeers of such a wide favor to count, if not for its general policy with all, at least for its peculiarly Parsi news and Parsi characteristics which other newspapers do not provide or possess."



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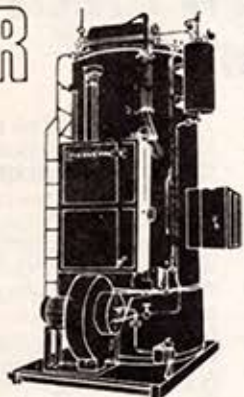
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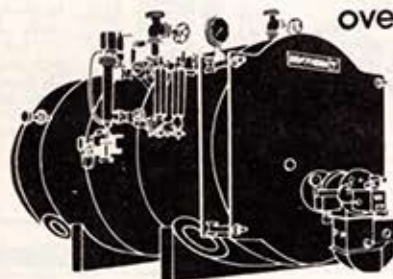
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The delegates at the
Calcutta Youth Fest discussed the role of
youth in the community

Khursheed N. Khurody

"Today, of all age-groups, youth are the most misunderstood. And the fault lies with the adults who misunderstand them... Parents must learn to respect your views and you must understand their years of experience." Godrej Engineer, principal of the La Martinière school was stressing the importance of communication and an open mind. In an environment of enterprising youngsters, in the seminar room at 52, Chowringhee Road, Calcutta, the Parsee Youth League hosted the second all-India Zoroastrian youth conference, November 5 to 8, 1988, in celebration of its golden jubilee. Nearly 200 delegates participated in the stimulating, challenging activities and discussions.

The Fest opened with a prayer from all faiths: Zoroastrian, Sikh, Muslim, Jain, Hindu, Christian and Buddhist scriptures were read or sung, followed by one delegate from each city lighting a lamp. While creating a festive spirit, the lamp lighting conveyed the message of equality among people.

The room was buzzing with activity at 8.30 a.m. on Saturday, November 5. Registration was well organized. Each delegate received a folder and name badges, together with a small golden Asho Farohar, creating a sense of identity and unity. Credit goes to all the organizers, and particularly Ms Khursheed Ardeshir who did more than just a fine job in hosting this festival.

The speakers were outstanding and, despite the controversial views, the general spirit was one of warmth and unity. By the end of four days, an

awareness had dawned upon most of us. The topics chosen were certainly probing and worth the time and effort taken. In a short while the small, closely-knit Parsi community of Calcutta accommodated a large number of stimulating discussions and activities, creating a spirit of enterprise. Translating all this into action lies with the young.

The organization and punctuality were impressive. The meals were clean and well cooked, and the service efficient. Heated discussions were interspersed with a metro ride, sightseeing and games of various sorts, the organizers trying hard to maintain a balance between work and play. Dinner on the lawns of the Rabadis' beautiful mansion gave the delegates a thoroughly enjoyable chance to interact amongst themselves and the speakers. A campfire and a dinner dance were

other diversions.

The second day onwards, the delegates were organized into groups, each with a leader, in order to draw to a close the previous day's unsettled topics. Engineer, as moderator, posed the problems: "What should be the community's attitude towards inter-community marriages, conversion, adoption of non-Zoroastrian children? How can youth activities help in solving community problems?" Our task was to analyze the extent of the problem, find solutions and discuss how they could be implemented.

Although most of the groups arrived at similar answers, it was interesting to note the sharp variation between a couple of others. Most agreed that inter-community marriages should not be encouraged, but certainly allowed and accepted. However, to preserve the identity of the race, monetary and other benefits should be given to children born of both Parsi parents. This would serve to encourage marriage within the race. Similarly, the right to initiate the child of a non-Parsi father and Parsi mother into the faith was demanded by nearly everyone. I had imagined that being a youth conference, this topic would bring about 100 percent agreement, but was surprised to find that even amongst the youth, orthodoxy prevailed. The one or two young men who spoke against the right to a navjote for the children of mixed marriages were taken to task by the girls that night on the dance floor. It is encouraging to know that tolerance levels are high amongst the youth, as



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most understood that intolerance does not make for a true Zoroastrian.

Similarly, with conversion, the general agreement was to allow conversion to the religion, but there can be no conversion to the race. This cut out the possibility of conversion purely to share the benefits of our reasonably wealthy community (as the beneficiaries of long-standing trusts are required to be Parsi-Zoroastrians). On the subject of adoption, we learned that the law says that if we adopt, the adopted child shares all the rights and benefits of the parents. Also, it is illegal for an orphanage to reveal the parenthood, and under the circumstances, most felt that an adopted child, regardless of color, caste or creed, should be allowed to be brought up as a Zoroastrian with full Parsi rights. The choice of adoption and upbringing is personal. We cannot deny another man his rights.

Several solutions were posed for the practical involvement of the youth, some of these being marriage bureaux, Sunday schools to teach young children about the religion, younger and more modern teachers to train our new priests and, perhaps most important of all, the formation of an all-



M.N. Dastur (sitting in center) with speakers and participants at the Youth Fest

Some were present only for fun and games; another group was totally unaware that the purpose of the trip was conferences and seminars

India youth committee. I think that there was 100 percent agreement on the need for youth trustees in each city. They could slowly form a national committee and eventually a worldwide body that would make uniform decisions. The need for a single religious head was ruled out. One group even suggested keeping vultures as pets in order to breed them and another said that "when we run out of vultures, we should release lions into the dokhmas to devour the bodies, just like the Romans did!"

The second day of the Fest opened

more leisurely. The slackness, apathy and late arrival of a few led to delays in the deliberations which otherwise would have proceeded at a clipped pace. A possible suggestion for the future is to restrict participation to a select few and put a greater emphasis on the age limit of 18 to 40 years. It was disappointing to know that some were present only for fun and games and it was shocking to find that yet another group was totally unaware that the purpose of the trip was conferences and seminars. They arrived prepared for a football match. The poor punctuality and inattentiveness on the second day was not the fault of the organizers. A lot of younger members went dancing all night and painted the town red. Consequently, the following morning, buses arrived empty at the conference center and became a cause of great annoyance to everyone.

Though games and sport are crucial for a healthy life, some of the recreation time could have been channelled into games for the mind, such as a quiz competition on the history of the religion. At times the atmosphere tilted more towards festivity, than the important subjects being discussed. But still, the participation was tremendous and all enjoyed the activities.

"We elders have not discussed controversial issues in the name of peace, but now your open, bright minds are tackling controversies and problems. Therefore, we must hand down to you and boost you to work for the com-

munity," Dr Minu Dastur's opening speech set the tone of the ensuing discussions. The chief guest H.A. Halim (how wonderful it was to be addressed by a non-Zoroastrian at a Zoroastrian festival) talked of Zoroastrians as being "great contributors... felt everywhere." He took Calcutta as an example. From a population of over 10 million, the Parsis number only 1,500. Yet, they are a significant group of people whose presence is felt and wanted. "India would be a happier place if there were more Zoroastrians," said Halim. "But do not be the cause of segregation. India has Muslims, Hindus and Parsis, but not Indians. The responsibility of the youth is to unite."

"How and why do Zoroastrians abroad start centers?" questioned Ms Mehru Dastur. The answer is isolation. Zoroastrian communities overseas probably started off with just a few families, and their need for identity brought them together, particularly in the USA. She talked of the youth in America and how active they are, particularly in bridging the generation gap. Ms Dastur's words gave us hope and encouragement.

Cusrow Irani, managing director of *The Statesman*, was perhaps one of the most popular speakers in the whole conference. Discussing the topic for the day, "Community development and its survival," his message was direct and appealed to the youth. He delivered his speech with outstanding



Youths enjoying the dinner hosted by the Rabadis

clarity and captured the complete attention of those present.

Stressing the importance of discussing social problems, such as mixed marriages, rationally and dispassionately, Irani noted that there is often a tendency for discussions to get emotional and subjective. This leads only to bickering, a very prominent feature of the Parsi community, he noted. Mixed marriages and migrations are personal choices. "It is not necessary to deprive another man of his rights," said Irani. Intolerance gets you nowhere. If a Parsi woman marries out of the community, that is her personal preference and if the couple should so wish, their children should be given the right to be Zoroastrians. The same applies to migration. No man can hold another back if he should wish to leave. "In fact," said Irani, "those Zoroastrians who have migrated are doing better for themselves and their community than we are in India." Irani alluded to the differences between religion and customs. The problems of migration, inter-marriage and other issues such as our death ceremonies are not religious issues. They are social customs that we have created, and customs in the name of religion that cause hardship and hate certainly need to be reviewed and changed. Religion should not be restrictive. If we are true Zoroastrians, i.e. those who follow the teachings of Zarathushtra, we will not be intolerant of anything, which includes mixed marriages and migration, he said, con-

cluding with the words of the Buddha, "He who conquers himself is the greatest one."

Engineer dealt mainly with the problems of today's youth - drug addiction and the generation gap - amidst pin drop silence. Adolescents and young adults are sensitive, and indifference or careless remarks to them is a major cause of drug addiction, he noted.

"Zoroastrians abroad are better educated and have better job opportunities, but their links with Zoroastrianism are becoming thinner," opined Dr Russi Anklesaria, trustee of the Calcutta Zoroastrian Community's Reli-

**How many of us
set aside even 10
minutes a day or
week to sit and
contemplate the
teachings of our
prophet?**

gious and Charity Funds. Personally, I would disagree with the latter half of this statement as I have met the Zoroastrian youth of London and California, and their knowledge and practice of the religion is far greater than one would expect. In California, children six years old go to Sunday school to learn about their religion. It

is creditable that their knowledge is far greater than that of the average Parsi child in India today. Nonetheless, Anklesaria did talk of perhaps a better survival, in the future, for Zoroastrians abroad than in India, with a brief word that "orthodoxy is not wrong, but it must change with the times."

Hoshang Sabhaval and Porous Karanjawalla were just two of the delegates who participated actively, with a sense of urgency in wanting to be involved in the decisions concerning the community. The discussion also highlighted the inconsistent policies adopted at the agiaries, depending on the opinion of the panthaky: some allow entry to the child of a non-Parsi father and Parsi mother; others do not. "There should be a universal code," said nearly all the delegates. "It is not right that each fire-temple has its own rules."

Not employment opportunities, but education and qualifications are lacking, according to CZCRF trustee Adi Rabadi, who spoke on the topic "Education and Employment."

Several youths disagreed with this, saying that the elders are unaware of the corruption and pressures on the youth today. Many want reservation of seats as a precautionary measure and many felt that the competition is too fierce to be dealt with by a small community. Nonetheless, the pride that we felt came first, and both Rabadi and Rusi Gimi who had similar views were respected and well applauded.

K. Kiash and C. Meherji spoke on Parsi Zoroastrian religious and social customs - a session moderated by J. Dastoor. Kiash talked at length on the death ceremony. Here is someone who regularly volunteers to carry the bodies of the deceased into the dokhmas in Calcutta, a job that most of us would not dream of performing. Kiash talked to us on his practical experiences and handed down firsthand information on the towers of silence in Calcutta. He spoke first of the ceremony itself and explained the significance of the prayers recited for the dead. He explained our beliefs on the concept of heaven, hell and the bridge of the separator. Many of us learnt for the first time that mourning is kept at a minimum as it causes hindrance to the progress of the soul.

Kiash then went on to talk about the job of a nassessalar or khandhia.

"Usually, they are not allowed to reveal what goes on in the towers," he said, "but it's about time we bring it out into the open." A short while back, an arm was found in someone's nearby garden and that's not all. Kiash talked to us about the most horrendous scenes of half-eaten bodies lying rotting for days and rigor mortis stiffening the limbs. "The stench is unbearable," he said, "let alone the sight of a body with eyes plucked out and one limb off." Kiash carried his own

"We simply want to alert the minds of our youngsters, to probe and search for solutions"

father's body into the wells, an act which deserves complete credit and admiration.

Nature gives to nature; nothing can be more scientific or sensible, he conceded. But today, with high-rise buildings and congestion, the method is no longer efficient or hygienic. Calcutta is short of pall bearers too, as are most other places in India.

Changing this system is not going against our religion as disposing of bodies is not a matter of religion. It is a ritual or custom that has been adopted and used by man for centuries. But as Kiash says, "If customs and rituals are performed in the right perspective, then keep them. We don't want change for the sake of change. But since circumstances change, so should some customs with them." And a custom that is now outdated, inefficient and unhygienic certainly warrants change. We need a method by which bodies can be disposed of swiftly and hygienically. Most were in agreement with this.

Meherji talked on religious scriptures, rituals and ceremonies. Here again, we had another outstanding speaker who captured the hearts of all present. An enlightened man, Meherji's words were simple and precise, his message powerful. "Go and seek God within yourselves before you argue and bicker with one another," he said. "How many of us learn the translation of our prayers?" he pinpointed a major flaw in the Parsi community. We talk of change and argue over customs,

but we have all failed to look within ourselves first, to capture the essence of our religion.

How many of us set aside just 10 minutes a day or week to sit and contemplate the teachings of our prophet? How many of us even know the teachings of Zarathushtra? queried Meherji. How many know that *Ahuramazda Khodai* is the Pahlavi translation of *Kem Na Mazda* (Avestan)? And that Zoroastrianism, as do other religions, teaches us to achieve a state of *Frashakente* (God realization), a state of being where there is no evil (i.e. absolute goodness), when the soul unites with the *Fravashi*. Meherji went on to tell of how rituals and ceremonies arose with sessions of communal prayer, and his brief explanation on the differences between Shahenshahis, Kadmis and Faslis was most informative. "We don't want hasty solutions," he said. "We simply want to alert the minds of our youngsters, to probe and search for solutions; our Parsi youngsters, who are amongst the world's most cultured and best educated people. I simply urge that we join our hands and use our brains to keep up the good name our forefathers created."

An afternoon of outdoor sports and games followed at the Parsee Club. Dinner and dancing was next on the agenda, followed by a good night's sleep. (Well, for most of us anyway. There were those who danced through the night and then slept through the following day - mentally at least, if not physically.)

The last day of the festival consisted primarily of discussions by the delegates, moderated by Noshir Wadia. Here, Rustom Anklesaria from Poona deserves special mention. During the discussions, all around him thought how diligently he was note-taking only to discover that he had written an ingenious song putting together all aspects of the festival. Further, his sense of humor and dramatics kept the delegates' mood crackling bright at the bonfire that evening. He is a young man of extraordinary talent who deserves full credit for having brought this four-day conference to such a delightful close. And so do the young Scouts and Guides and other talented people who came forward courageously to perform on bonfire evening.

Undoubtedly, it is quite safe to say that there is no shortage of talent, brains or looks within the community. Provided we have the knowledge and maintain the right balance, we shall have the best of both worlds, orthodox and modern. But if we give way to emotional and subjective attitudes, we shall risk the fragmentation of our essential, shared values - our courtesy, our care for the wider community and our obligations to each other. So let the Calcutta experience be a motivation to the youth, to use the initiative and drive that was apparent in every one of them, to step forward and start playing an active role in the community. Without this we will only deteriorate, but with this, the Parsis will recreate the outstanding name that was once associated with the community.

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MILESTONES

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled from information provided by various newsletters and anjuman in India and abroad, courts and hospitals. It must be pointed out that this information is not always complete or consistent.

This list of Bombay marriages includes 23 civil marriages between November 1988 and January 1989, seven of which were between Parsis.

Heart disease claimed 20 of the 86 Parsis who died in Bombay. The other major killers were old age (10), pneumonia (nine) and lung disease (eight). Others fell prey to cancer and brain disease (seven each), hypertension (five) and septicemia and liver disease (three each). Asthma, blood disease and accidents claimed two victims each. Isolated cases of kidney failure, Parkinson's disease, diabetes, shock, hemorrhage, diarrhoea and bronchitis were also registered. Two babies and a 24-year-old girl were lost to the community.

In the break-up of deaths according to illnesses, it must be noted that in some cases, especially in those of the very old, death is often due to a combination of several diseases.

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

AHMEDABAD

Born

A boy, *Rohan*, to *Anu* and *Rinton Talati* of Bangalore on October 24, 1988

BANGALORE

Died

Behramji Savakshaw Sidhwa (80), husband of *Silla*, father of *Homai Faredoon Ankleshwaria* and brother of *Goola Khurudy*, *Freny Makuji* and late *Hilla Karkaria* and *Rustom Sidhwa*; January 8, 1989

BOMBAY

Born

A girl to *Firuz* and *Firdush Mogrelia*; January 1

A boy to *Behroze* and *Shahrukh Mody*; January 2

A boy to *Zarine* and *Viraf Adajania*; January 5

A girl to *Nina* and *Pheroze Engineer*; January 6

A boy to *Dinaz* and *Farokh Mistry*; January 6

A boy to *Kashmira* and *Noshir Pestonji*; January 6

A girl to *Rashna* and *Neville Mistry*; January 7

A boy to *Niloufer* and *Ratanes Dang*; January 9

A girl, *Trisha*, to *Shirin* and *Merwanji Batliboi*; January 12

A boy to *Farida* and *Percy Parekh*; January 12

A boy to *Niloofer* and *Dadi Wadia*; January 14

A boy to *Nilamani* and *Nagraj Huilgol*; January 16

A boy to *Hilla* and *Rustom Bharucha*; January 17

A boy to *Kathleen* and *Homi Chothia*; January 17

A girl to *Ferzin* and *Mehernosh Colsawalla*; January 17

A boy to *Niloofer* and *Jamshed Meherhomji*; January 18

A girl to *Roda* and *Rohinton Sahar*; January 18

A girl to *Tina* and *Hoshang Vajifdar*; January 18

A girl to *Pervin* and *Keiky Press*; January 19

A girl to *Ruby* and *Cyrus Vankadia*; January 21

A girl, *Manaz*, to *Rashna* and *Zubin Bharucha*; January 24

A girl to *Kashmira* and *Kerman Elavia*; January 24

A girl to *Aban* and *Farokh Nanavati*; January 24

A girl to *Homai* and *Homi Shroff*; January 27

Married

Munira Abbas Shaikhally and *Jamshed Burjor Banaji*; November 13, 1988

Farida Jamshed Tatna and *Vijay Rao Banja*; November 14

Lina Maria Camperos and *Neville Keki Golvala*; November 20

Kalpna Joseph Naidu and *Jimmy Dali Fitter*; November 25

Yasmine E. Parcelwala and *Kayomerz L. Mehervanjee*; November 27

Smita Arun Gail and *Cawas Munchershaw Affinwalla*; November 30

Farida R. Adajania and *Neville Jal Balsara*; November 30

Jasmine-Elke Pervez Ghyara and *Divesh Wadhawan*; December 2

Persis Eruch Kaka and *Hormuzd Behram Irani*; December 6

Smita Y. Patil and *Shiroy Percy Daruwala*; December 11

Binaz Burjor Bhaya and *Samy Jehangir Choksey*; December 18

Kashmira Pheroze Dalal and *Porus Homi Daruwala*; December 20

Nargish Minocher Bhathena of *Surat* and *Keki Maneckshaw Barsiwala*; December 22

Geeta Ramesh Macwana and *Dara Adi Patel*; December 22

Neelam Rusi Jijicawna and *Keki Phiroz Pagdiwala*; December 24

Roxane Jal Mehta and *Yezdi Naval Dordi* of *Cambridge, USA*; December 26

Jasmine Paeterasp Patel and *Iqbal Daljeet Singh*; December 26

Zenobia Homi Katki and *Nitin Vijay Seth*; December 30

Benaifer Manchershaw Davierwala and *Marzee Naval Tarapore*; December 31

Meher Phiroze Baria and *Paorusp Rustomji Ghandhi*; January 1, 1989

Zenobia S. Irani and *Uday K. Nair*; January 1

Tinaz Framroz Bhomisha and *Mahiyar Pirojshaw Wellington*; January 1

Tanaz Hirji Mewawala and *Cawas Kersasp Billimoria*; January 2

Roosbeh Kaikhushroo Dossabhoj of *Jabalpur* and *Jimmy Bomansha Davar*; January 2

Kashmira Pesi Kerawalla and *Noshir Rustom Mehta*; January 2

Shalini De Souza and *Zaher Mehli Lalkaka*; January 3

Dinaz Baji Mistry and *Naozer Phiroze Vankadia*; January 3

Armin Framroze Anjirbag and *Noshervan Dhunjibhoj Sethna*; January 5

Firuz Dorab Charna and *Cyrus Eruch Amaria* of *Poona*; January 8

Simonil Freddy Vachha and *Mayazban Jamshedji Bhungara*; January 8

Parinaz Rusi Toddywalla and *Minoo Kersi Gandhi*; January 8

Daisy Hoshang Daruwalla and *Phiroze Soli Navdar*; January 8

Yasmin Aspi Irani of *Thane* and *Farahad Khodi Irani*; January 9

Khurshid Rustomji Wadia and *Dinshaw Soli Mistry*; January 10

Naheed Ratan Lalkaka and *Hormazd Soli Sorabjee*; January 10

Mahrukh Rohinton Mobedji and *Hoshedar J. Cooper*; January 11

Zenobia Rusi Fraser and *Homiar Rumi Daruwalla*; January 13

Anahita Rusi Mehershahi and *Neville Hoshang Mody*; January 13

Parwana Behram Irani and *Marazban Pesi Chhor*; January 14

Zenobia Homi Tavadia and *Rumy Eruchshah Mamlatdar*; January 14

Roshni Merwanji Poonawalla and *Aspi Noshir Davierwala*; January 15

Kashmira Fali Tavadia and *Sheriar Khodayar Irani*; January 15

Yasmin Jehangir Tarachand and *Jehangir Shavakshaw Mogrelia*; January 15

Perviz Eruch Dastur of *Poona* and *Kaipushin Jehanbux Raimalwala*; January 15

Niloofer Noshir Bhathena and *Firdos Tehmurasp Balsara*; January 16

Parizad Nariman Morris and *Shapur Gew Irani*; January 16

Yasmin Rustom Zandbaf and *Behram Rashid Zandbaf*; January 17

Zenobia Minocher Fanibanda and *Khushroo Minocher Boyce*; January 18

Sunder Damodar Naik and *Hoshang Dorab Nazar*; January 18

Banoo-Benaz Bakhtavar Lentin and *Minoo Darab Dastur*; January 19

Tina Tehmasp Bhagwagar and *Keki Merwan Irani*; January 19

Tanaz Dadiba Zaiwala and *Bezan Minoo Karadia*; January 19

Farida Khushroo Bharucha and *Parvez Keki Umrigar*; January 19

Durriya Abbas Chinwala and

Dilawar Adi Baliwalla; January 21
Jehanara Bahadur Badhni and Fareedoon Darabshah Bhathena; January 21
Armaity Cabinetmaker and Christopher D' Rozario; January 21
Riah Mehli Pavri and Aref Rafique Khan; January 21
Hutokshi Jehangir Edulji and Sami Sorabji Mistry; January 21
Zenobia Kersi Tamboli of Thane and Godrej Bejanji Sachinwalla; January 21
Sheranawaz Peshotan Poonawalla and Kobad Nariman Balliwala; January 23
Phiroza Minoo Bhavnagari and Darius Khurshed Kapadia; January 23
Kamalrookh Minoo Bhaya and Zurvan Homi Marolia; January 23
Kim Dara Hormusji and Darayus Keki Khodaiji; January 25
Anahita Phiroze Deboo and Kali Soli Driver; January 26
Dilnavaz Beheram Irani and Jamshed Homi Karanjia of Karachi; January 26
Maharukh Khurshed Kavarana and Zubin Byramji Laher; January 27
Kaishirin Merwan Tirandaz of Poona and Behruz Jamshed Mazkoory; January 29
Yasmin Nozar Amrolia and Adil Firoze Patel of Gholvad; January 29
Farida Nariman Khory and Veera Phiroze Chinoy; January 30
Hufrish Pervez Charna and Rohinton Cowas Patel; January 30
Khushnuma Cali Pardiwalla and Khushru Dali Tampal; January 30
Parizad Maneck Mistry and Darius Dossu Gandhi; January 31

Died
Shehna J. Bajana (70), residing at 201, Mistry Chmbs, Opp Strand Cinema, Colaba, 400005; November 19, 1988 (cremated)
Hillamai Nariman Dastur (98), Wyoming, Little Gibbs Rd, 400006; December 31
Vira Phiroze Gandhi (77), Bglw 1/2, Swadeshi Mills Qrs, Sion, 400022; December 31
Darabshah Jamasji Siganporia (78), 6, Malegamwala Bldg,

Marzban Clny, Gilder Lane, 400008; December 31
Jerbai Ardeshtir Adajania (75), 573, Umrigar Hse, Chira Bazar, 400002; January 1, 1989
Baby of Daisy Freedy Spencer (stillborn), C/8, Malbari Bldg, New Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; January 1
Meher Soli Cardmaster (58), 205, Akbar Rd, Tarbund, Secunderabad, 500005; January 2
Darabsha Manchershaw Pedder (74), T-9, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; January 2
Sawaksha Hormasji Wadia (78), M-5, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; January 2
Alamai Rustomji Guard (87), Tehmi Ter, 805, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; January 3
Sarvar Rustom Irani (47), Dubash Bldg, Near Novelty Cinema, Grant Rd, 400007; January 3
Behram Ardeshtir Langrana (68), Room 16, Panday Sanatorium, Cuffe Parade, Colaba, 400005; January 3
Rusi Nadershah Bharucha (71), 44, Malkani Manor, 16, Pedder Rd, 400026; January 4
Shirinbai Dinshah Davar (74), 40/B, Gool Mhl, Sleater Rd, 400007; January 5
Fakirji Manchershaw Hathi (84), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; January 6
Byramji Khodabax Irani (80), Sultan Manzil, 177, Bora Bazar St, Fort, 400001; January 7
Sheran Kaikhushroo Lalkaka (91), Jehangir Mans, First Marine St, 400020; January 7
Dinsha Dadabhai Patel (53), 19/B, Malegaowalla Bldg, Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; January 7
Rati Maneckshaw Canteenwala (79), G-30, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; January 8
Sakarbai Barjoji Daruwalla (88), 133, Petit Widows' Chawl, Mody St, Fort, 400001; January 8
Phiroze Nadirshah Doctor (65), Society Bldg, 654, Firdoshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; January 8
Sheroo Faramroze Fanibanda (58), Society Bldg, 730, Jehangir Vimadlal Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; January 8
Homi Dinsha Irani (63), Sea View Ter, Opp Sassoon Dock,

Colaba, 400005; January 8
Neville Manchi Katki (38), U-7/5, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; January 8
Fareedoon Burjorji Patel (78), 44-A, Batliwalla Villa, Sleater Rd, 400007; January 8
Sheheriyar Hormusji Dadrawalla (64), Atur Apts, Opp Fariyas Hotel, 400005; January 9
Eruch Nusserwanji Mehta (47), Jame Jamshed Bldg, 54/811, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; January 9
Homi Sorab Boyce (76), Boyce Hse, 15, Vatcha Gandhi Rd, New Gamdevi, 400007; January 11
Nadarsha Navroji Aibara (56), F-46, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; January 12
Minoo Ratanji Nanji (62), Boyce Bldg, Chikalwadi, Grant Rd, 400007; January 12
Koomi Yazad Pardiwala (61), 7/C, Kakad Est, Worli Seaface, 400018; January 12
Kaikhushroo Behram Irani (84), 13, Chaina Hse, Mazagaon, 400010; January 13
Burjor Jamshedji Poonawalla (84), 34-1-B, Takshila, Mahakali Caves Rd, Andheri (E), 400069; January 13
Adi Jehangir Master (63), Sidik Ibrahim Mans, Lamington Rd, 400007; January 14
Nariman Navroji Billimoria (89), 629, Homavazir Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; January 15
Jer Jamshed Madon (78), Hormazd Bldg, Sleater Rd, 400007; January 15
Manizeh Phiroze Bamji (65), 14, Bhandari Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; January 16
Perin Ardeshtir Bhiwandiwalla (75), Hatfield, 61, Pali Hill, Bandra, 400050; January 16
Maneck Sorabji Chapkhanawalla (62), P/18, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; January 16
Khurshed Sorabji Dotiwala (75), Jamasp Tata Blocks, 38th Rd, Off Turner Rd, Bandra, 400050; January 16
Phiroze Ardeshtir Pastakia (80), Room 4, Kasinath Bldg, Kasinath Rd, Tardeo, 400034; January 16
Homi Pallonji Tavadia (64), M-24, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; January 16
Dinamai Cawasji Bharucha

(71), N-36, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; January 17
Mani Dhunjishaw Mistry (78), 2/17, Readymoney Bldg, Sir Ratan Tata Rd, Tardeo, 400034; January 17
Maharukh Homee Nowrojee (24), 781, Mancherji Joshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; January 17
Dadabhoy Rustomji Vajifdar (87), Shandilya Villa, 41, Worli Seaface, 400025; January 17
Behram Pirojsha Daboo (89), 3, Hormazd Bldg, Sleater Rd, 400007; January 18
Fareedoon Davar (60), Dadar India Garage, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Dadar, 400014; January 18
Rustomji Kekobad Shroff (75), Giriraj, 11, Anasty Rd, Off J. K. Barodawala Rd, Cumballa Hill, 400026; January 18
Peggie Dorab Adenwala (74), 16-A, Shreyas, Sleater Rd, 400007; January 19
Amy Farokh Maki Dalal (75), Raja Ram Wadi, 11, Hill Road, Bandra, 400050; January 19
Kaikhushroo Nanabhoy Bharucha (94), Bharucha Bldg, Gilder Lane, 400008; January 20
Jaiji Ardeshtir Chinoy (74), M-36, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; January 20
Noshir Hormusji Dubash (64), 71, Rewa Apts, B. Desai Rd, 400026; January 20
Dinamai Kaikhushroo Patel (82), S-12, Dalal Est, Bombay Central, 400008; January 20
Manekbai Nadirshah Avasia (90), Soonawalla Bldg, Proctor St, Grant Rd, 400007; January 21
Hosang Bomanji Ghadiali (52), A/2, Sir Shapurji Bharucha Baug, Andheri (W), 400058; January 21
Hormasji Jamshedji Kotwal (86), Nicholson Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; January 21
Khurshed Maneckji Mistry (80), 402, Namdar Hse, Opp Bandra Police Stn, 400050; January 21
Amy Fareedoon Baria (62), Pandole Bldg, Sleater Rd, Opp Mithaiwalla Fire-temple, 400007; January 22
Mani Maneck Dumasia (66), P. B. Mody Bldg, Parcel Tank Rd, 400012; January 22
Jamshedji Hormusji Hataria (85), G-50, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; January 22
Hilla Sorabji Kapadia (79),

'B,' Shireen Mans, Tardeo, 400007, January 23
Dinshaw Naserwanji Patel (72), Mohamedi Minar, Khetwadi, 14th Lane, 400004; January 23
Noshir Nadirsha Rabadi (70), 21, Dubash Block, Hughes Rd, 400007; January 23
Katy Sorab Chehna (70), 8, Jamasp Tata Bldg, Bandra (W), 400050; January 24
Sorabji Jamshedji Kanthanna (75), 2, Gool Dhun-Abad, S. V. Rd, Jogeshwari, 400102; January 24
Mehernosh Eddi Pherozsha (27 days), Keshav Bhavan, Khetwadi, 7th Lane, 400004; January 24
Gulnar Merwan Irani (72), Nergish Mans, Patel Pada, Dahanu Rd, 401602; January 25
Mani Jehanbux Lakdawala (76), 14, Wadia Bldg, Opp Hindmata Cinema, D. Phalke Rd, Dadar, 400014; January 25
Rustomji Dinshaji Pavri (70), Umrigar Bldg, 573, Chira Bazar, 400002; January 25
Najumai Nasserwanji Pir (78), C/o Ms Perin F. Asli, 10/A, Gool Mhl, Sleater Rd, 400007; January 25
Sheroo Manekshaw Mistry (70), 4-A, New Dubash Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; January 26
Rusi Navroji Tawadia (70), 2/1, Sir Dorab Tata Bldg, S. V. Rd, Bandra, 400050; January 26
Banoo Nadirshaw Kerawala (76), A/5, United Chmbs, Grant Rd, 400007; January 27
Perin Shiavax Doctor (52), T-3, Dalal Est, Lamington Rd, 400008; January 29
Ovenair Kaikhushroo (90), 104/A, Dariya Mhl, 80, Nepean Sea Rd, 400006; January 29
Tehmina Sorabji Mirza (86), Mirzan St, Udwarda (Dist Bular) and C/o A. M. Bhadha, Meherwan Bldg, Uranwalla St, Grant Rd, 400007; January 29
Manekbai Shavakshaw Singpurwala (92), 2/23, A. H. Wadia Bldg, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; January 29
Sohrabji Sherryarji Anklesaria (93), B-24, Vellard View, Haji Ali, Tardeo, 400034; January 30
Manekshaw Phirojshaw Engineer (83), 18-A, Saravasar Bldg No 1, Marzban Clny, Gilder Lane, 400008; January 30

Piroja Pirojsha Ichaporia (88), Room 65, Kasinath Bldg, Cadell Rd, Mahim, 400016; January 30
Jehangir Cursetjee Kapadia (84), Laxmi Niwas, 604/C, Lady Jehangir Rd, Parsi Colony, Dadar, 400014; January 30
Dadi Meherwanji Patel (53), 781, M. Joshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; January 30
Bapai Minoo Mistry (63), 43, Malhotra Hse, Karelwadi, Thakurdwar, 400002; January 31
Manekshaw Rustomji Mistry (75), Bhabha Sanatorium, Bandra Band Stand, 400050; January 31
Sorabji Savaksha Pochkhanavala (90), Phirojsha Bldg, 70/C, Gowalia Tank, 400036; January 31

CALCUTTA

Died
Tehmuras Dorabji Patel (65), brother of Framroze, late Jerbanoo Pavri and Tehmina Shroff; January 19

DELHI

Died
Boman Shapurji Engineer (71), of Dehra Dun, husband of Mehru, father of Hutoxie and brother of Framroze and Shera Adi Daruwala; January 7

HOUSTON

Married
Thrity Irani of Poona and *Kersi Engineer*; November 6, 1988
Shernaz Randeria and *Kurush Bilimoria* of Victoria, Australia; December 18

KARACHI

Born
A boy to *Cashmira* and *Adil Irani*; November 7
A boy to *Anahit* and *Eddie Shroff*; November 30
A boy to *Armin* and *Mondegar Mancherji*; December 25

Married

Dilshad Sam Mavalvala and *Rustom Feroze Boga*; September 2
Rashna Boman Dalal and *Razad Kersi Daroga*; October 20
Nilufer Behram Cooper and *Rointon Hoshang Shroff*; October 27
Natasha Rustom Patel and *Zubin Farokh Mavalvala*; November 24

Farishta Rustom Mondy and *Rashid Noshir Anklesaria*; December 8
Zenia Bejon Malbari and *Adarbad Rohinton Minwalla*; December 25

Died

Jemi Meherwanji Daroga (85); December 5
Dhunmai Feroze Hansotia (80); December 17
Dinshaw Byramji Avari (86), father of Byram, Havovi Shiavax Dadabhoy and Dinaz Minoo Bamjee; December 18
Noshir Jehangir Golwala (69); December 21
Dhunmai Jamshed Minwalla (80); December 21
Rustomji Hormusji Cooper (89); December 22
Dara Nadirshaw Dinshaw (67); December 26

LONDON

Died
Soonu Hodivala, wife of Jimmy, mother of Kairbaan and Cyrus, daughter of Jerroo and late Adi Modi and sister of Siloo Keki Limboowalla and Kekoo; December 19

MADRAS

Died
Jehanbux Hormazshah Tarapore (87); November 29

MELBOURNE

Born
A girl, *Tanaaz*, to *Arnavaz* and *Aspi Chubb*, sister to *Serena*; December 29

ONTARIO

Married
Meher Mehta and *Ronnie Langdana*; January 21, 1989

Died

Sam Chinoy, husband of Katherine, father of Kelly, Shannon and Diana, and brother of Minoo; November 22, 1988
Mary Guzdar, mother of Betty Hoshedar Madon; November 22

SECUNDERABAD

Married

Gulnar F. Jilla and *Cyrus K. Viccaji*; September 16
Dinaz Phiroz Parakh and *Darayus Shapoor Chenoy*; December 22

Died

Jerbanoo D. Taraporewalla (about 87); August 28
Khorshedbanoo M. Wadia (about 80); September 14
Khujesta M. Bastawalla (about 85); September 15
Rattimai S. Plumber (about 82); September 22
Maneck D. Mistry (about 55); October 17
Zenobia Rustam Ranji (about 78); October 29
Freni Rasheed Chenoy (about 85); November 2
Cooverbai Sohrabji Debara (about 96); November 7
Rattanbai Kaikhushroo Taraporewalla (about 75); November 8
Rustom Cawasji Sahiyar (about 80); November 14
Hilla Faridoon Amin (about 78); November 20
Najamai Dhunjishah Dittia (about 91); November 20
Naval Hormusjee Colah (about 72); December 4
Nargish T. Lakdawalla (about 86); December 14
Naval B. Cooper (about 80); December 24
Meher S. Cardmaster (about 57); January 2, 1989
Dinshaw R. Toorkey (about 86); January 5
Nerges R. Aibara (about 75); January 8
Minocher Rattonji Parakh (100), husband of Coomi; January 30

WEMBLEY, UK

Born

A boy to *Hufiris* and *Cyrus Palkhiwalla*, brother to Jeshad; December 15, 1988

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

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