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MARCH 1989 Rs 8



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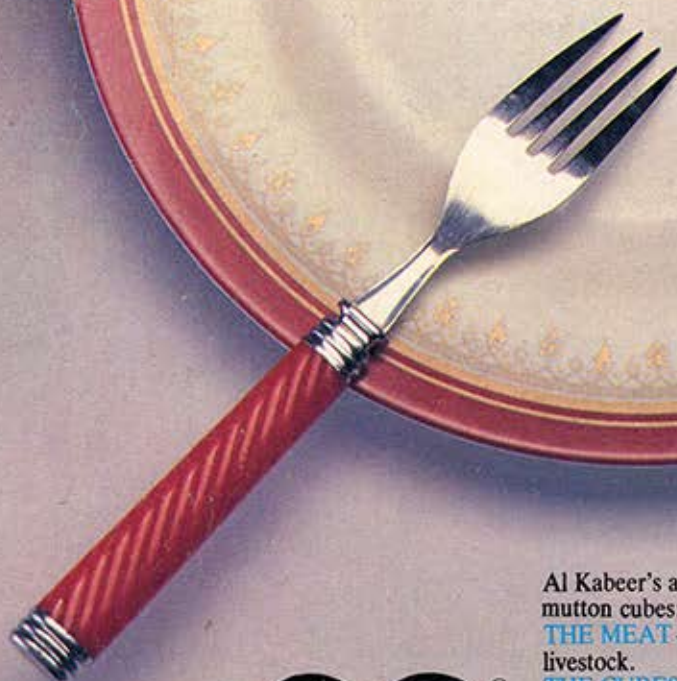
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Parsiana

March 1989
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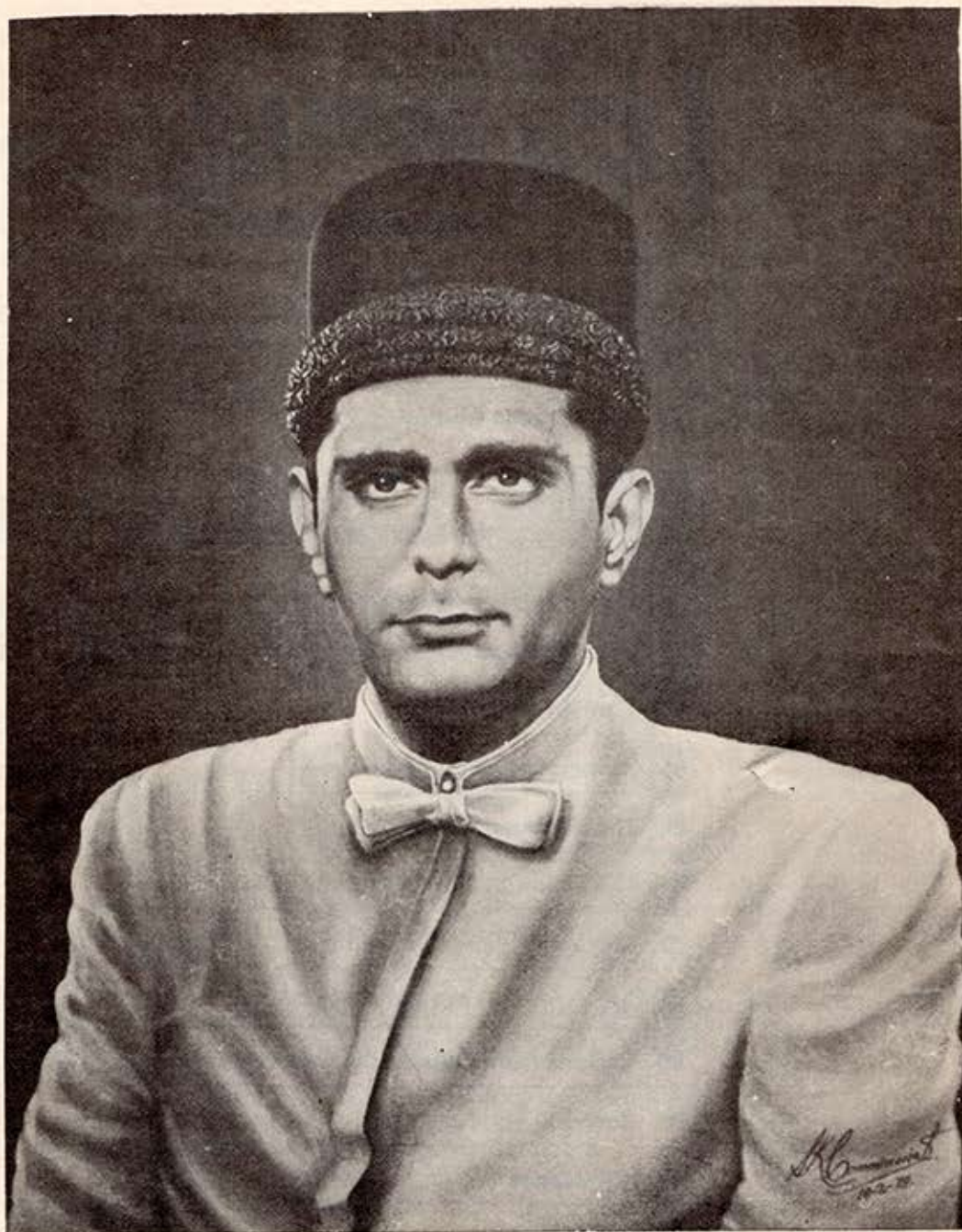
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In Memoriam

Mr Fali Meherji Variava

Director

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 Unsigned letters or those without a complete address will not be published.

"Romance with ..."

In "Romance with the Railways" by Joy Fernandes (*Parsiana*, December 1988), the mention of Maneckji Dhunjibhoy Pithavala jogged my memory to when I was 15 years old. My father was then a panthaki at the Igatpuri Agiary. Pithavala had paid my father all the expenses for my navar initiation at Wadi Dar-e-Meher, Navsari.

Those were the good old days of steam locomotives. All trains from Victoria Terminus, Bombay, were pulled by engines upto Kasara station. From there on, the trains were pulled up the ghats to Igatpuri by two ghat engines: one in the front and the other backing the last bogie of the train.

Most of the drivers, firemen and guards were Parsis who lived in Igatpuri. At that time there was a school for Parsi boys and girls, and a dokhma about three miles away from the agiary. Now, I have been informed, there are only five Parsi families left.

FRAMROZE FARDUNJI MULLAN
Udwada

"The Federation offers..."

A careful reading of the article "The Federation offers to intervene" (*Parsiana*, November 1988), creates an impression in the mind of the reader that I alone have been coming in the way of The Bangalore Parsee Zoroastrian Anjuman joining the Federation. The statement, "The other major anjuman to still hold out is Bangalore, where the panthaky of the Dar-e-Meher, Nadirshah Unvalla has reportedly threatened to resign if the issue of rejoining the Federation is raised by the Bangalore Anjuman," is a maliciously made, false and meaningless allegation and recklessly reported without ascertaining the truth or otherwise of the said statement. By making such false publication with malafide intentions and ulterior motives, you are trying to tarnish my image and reputation in the community. I, therefore, take strong objection to such baseless and false publication and want you to tender an unconditional apology by publishing the same in your next issue.

Ervad NADIRSHAH UNVALLA
Bangalore

Parinaz Gandhi replies:

If, in reporting the proceedings of the Federation meeting, *Parsiana* gave the impression that Ervad Nadirshah Unvalla was solely responsible for the Bangalore Anjuman not rejoining the Federation, it is because this is a general view held by many. The fact, of course, is that the general body of the Bangalore Anjuman has voted not to rejoin the Federation and the responsibility for the decision therefore rests with the Anjuman. If the report, that Unvalla has threatened to resign if the issue of rejoining the Federation was raised by the Bangalore Anjuman,

is false, we regret having published the remark.

"Does Zoroastrianism...?"

Ms Aban R. Minbativala has expressed her views in a most splendid way for all those who have doubts about reincarnation (*Readers' Forum, Parsiana*, December 1988). Her article is most thought provoking. "As you sow, so shall you reap" clearly indicates the theory of reincarnation.

How can an all bountiful, merciful God punish a soul for no fault of his, or bestow all that is good in life on one who is evil and does not believe in the existence of Dadar Ahura-Mazda? Every scrap of reason disappears from the universe if evolution is considered unnecessary.

I had profited from a small booklet, *Karma - Life's Problems in the Light of Karma* by A. H. Mody, in my youth. I sincerely hope it will do the same good to others.

Jamshed R. Batliboi in *Some stray*



thoughts on life, chapter V, also clearly indicates the theory of reincarnation.

Ms SHIRIN MEHERWAN COOPER
Secunderabad

Zoroastrian way of life

In my opinion it is better to review and reform something that is not in the *Avesta*, such as keeping a fire always

burning in fire-temples.

In our villages in Iran there is no permanent fire in the temples. So we have no problem regarding planting trees to provide the wood to be burnt there.

We should have weekly or monthly gatherings (gahambars) and our scholars, mobeds and doctors should preach and speak about the problems of drug addiction, cigarette smoking, alcohol, etc and show our youths the way of Zoroastrian life, to live as our forefathers lived.

ROSTAM ROSTAMI ASRABADI
Tehran, Iran

New hall in Jalgaon

The Jalgaon Municipal Council has allotted 10,000 sq ft of land in Shri Gurudutt Housing Society, Maya Devi Nagar, under Survey no: 473/A/B to enable the Jalgaon Zoroastrian Trust to construct a prayer cum meeting hall of nearly 1,000 sq ft. The construction cost of the project, including the plinth, comes to approximately Rs 2,00,000, which is a sizeable amount.

Hence, the trustees of the above mentioned Trust appeal most humbly to the philanthropists of India and

other Zoroastrians to contribute generously in helping our Zoroastrian community.

Our trust is registered with the Charity Commissioner of Jalgaon under Reg. No. E-482. Cheques may be drawn in favor of the Jalgaon Zoroastrian Trust and mailed to Jalgaon 425002.

M. J. ADAJANIA
Trustee, Jalgaon Zoroastrian Trust

Zoroastrian values

Zarathushtra preached a positive and kinetic doctrine. He taught that there was a perpetual battle between good and evil. Rabindranath Tagore says, "The most important of all outstanding facts of Iranian history is the religious reform brought about by Zarathushtra. He was definitely the first man we know who gave moral character and direction to religion, divested it of all magical rites and blood-thirsty sacrifices and rituals. He was the first prophet who emancipated religion from the exclusive narrowness of a tribal god or an elemental god of nature."

Zarathushtra taught that God was to be won by righteousness and love and

not by sacrificial ceremonies. He inculcated in his followers a passion for honesty and justice and encouraged them to fight for a righteous cause, to stand up against oppression, to side with the weak against the strong. So deeply ingrained are these teachings that you can almost foretell how a Parsi will react to a given situation. Time and again you come across a Parsi Zoroastrian fighting for a "lost cause," carrying on a lone battle against what he thinks are the forces of evil. Unfortunately, much of the truth of Zoroaster's teachings, like that of all other religions, has been diluted by dogmas, rituals and ceremonies propagated by generations of priests to keep their hold on the faithful.

The most redeeming traits in our genetic makeup are our "joie de vivre" and our sense of humor, honesty, integrity, justice and fair play. As long as we maintain these we, as a people, can never perish. Then it matters little if we intermarry or not, or whether we are buried, burned or offered to the vultures when we die.

Dr H. S. ADENWALLA,
Trichur

Edited by Arnavaz S. Mama

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Events and Personalities

The electoral scene

Social worker and honorary treasurer of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India Peshotan Nargolwala has announced his candidature for the next election to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet's (BPP) board of trustees. This makes Nargolwala the second contender for the seat due to be vacated by chairman Dr Aspi Golwala. Ms Perviz Dotiwala had announced her decision to contest the vacancy in July 1988.

"I am offering myself as a candidate who respects tradition and believes in ethnic pride (*Zarthostipano*)," writes Nargolwala in his letter to the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of January 29, 1989.

"I was transferred to Bombay in 1962 after over two decades of fruitful industrial and social welfare activity at Tata Chemicals Limited, Mithapur. On arriving in Bombay, apart from working as a highly qualified senior technical executive with the House of Tatas, I plunged into very useful social work ...

"Currently, I am a member of around 15 committees covering a dozen organizations. Three of these are cosmopolitan. The rest are all Parsi charitable trusts or committees appointed by them. As of today I devote 10 hours a week to Punchayet-related activities. If elected, I propose to increase it to 20 hours a week – 10 hours for routine work and another 10 hours to work of a fundamental nature requiring concentrated attention/guidance from experts. I claim, in all humility, my variegated experience of Zoroastrian social work is of an exceptional nature.

"If I am elected, the only consideration on my part whilst making the decision in all matters of the Punchayet, including the board decisions, would be purely on merits of the issues involved. Therefore...a vote for Peshotan is a vote for integrity, honesty, hard work and dedication to the prog-

ress of the community. I shall mail my biodata/manifesto a few weeks later. My request – vote for me if my biodata meets with your best expectations. For the Prophet hath said, 'Think with the good mind, make your choice, decide and act wisely.'"

Udwada High Priest Dastur Dr Hormazdyar Mirza has extended his support to Nargolwala in a letter to the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of February 5, 1989. "I am sure he will continue to do good work as in the past for the community at large and the priests in particular," noted Mirza.

Nargolwala has been particularly active in support of mobeds, being a prominent member of the BPP's mobed amelioration subcommittee. He has also actively supported the Federation's paramobed scheme – which envisages training interested behdins or uninitiated athornans in the performance of Zoroastrian rituals, barring the higher liturgical ceremonies – to help alleviate the pressure on the community's dwindling number of priests.

Though Golwala's term ended last October, the Bombay High Court decreed that he continue in office until the election scheme appeal is finally settled. Ravamping the Punchayet's 70-year-old electoral scheme to bring it into tune with current socio-political concepts was the battle cry of the Committee for Electoral Rights (CER – now renamed Committee for Economic Revival) during the last Anjuman Committee elections in 1981. The Punchayet had submitted its revised scheme to the Bombay High Court in

1985 as per an understanding eventually reached with the CER in 1984. The case was initially decided by Justice H. Suresh in 1987 but Suresh's simplified scheme was challenged by four members of the F (donor) register in May 1987 and, to date, the issue pends in the High Court.

Thus, the Anjuman Committee or general elections are already overdue. According to the original scheme, the seven year tenure of the Anjuman Committee ended on December 31, 1987. Until the case is decided and a new Anjuman Committee elected, the trusteeship election remains in limbo.

In the meanwhile there is considerable jockeying for the chairmanship of the BPP's board of trustees, according to *The Bombay Samachar* of February 26. The chairmanship will fall vacant when Golwala steps down. "The difficulty and danger begins when the board is divided into two groups and the issues will be decided by the type of new trustee who will be elected. If the matter were to be resolved once and for all, it is all right with the community; but the rumblings we have been hearing go to indicate that even if a new trustee and a new chairman... adorn the board, the tug of war will continue," noted *The Samachar*. The two likely contenders for chairmanship are Eruch Desai and Jamshed Guzder. The article suggested that someone like trustee Minoo Shroff, who "is not involved in any power controversy and (whose) track record is inspiring," should be made chairman "by common consent" to eliminate "inbuilt tensions" and enable "the board of trustees to work for the betterment of the community."

Dharamshala's centenary

The twin cities of Secunderabad and Hyderabad celebrated the centenary of the Bai Pirojbai Chenai Parsi Dharamshala with a ghambar on January 29, 1989, notes a write-up by Ms Sanobar Marker. About 1,000 people attended the function



Nargolwala:
announces
candidature
for trustee-
ship elections

which was preceded by a jashan ceremony.

The dharamshala building is strong enough to stand a further 100 years, said trustee Burjor Batliwala, a civil engineer by profession. Realizing that travellers need a place to stay in, philanthropist Edulji Chenai had donated his personal property and converted it into a dharamshala in 1889.

The Bai Pirojbai Chenai Hall was added on in June 1893, having been built by the lady herself out of her own savings. The Jamshed Chenoy Hall was built in May 1919, and the Edulji S. Chenai Pavilion was inaugurated in 1929. Both, the Hall and the Pavilion, were built by Jehangirji Jamshedji Chenoy to perpetuate the memory of his father and grandfather, notes Marker.

Edulji had also gifted two other properties to the community, remembered Ms Roshan Patel, trustee and secretary of The Late Khan Bahadur Edulji S. Chenai Trust. Patel was hopeful that on one of the Chenai-donated properties at Bowenpally, a housing colony - Edulji Bagh - be developed.

She further noted that the Trust has maintained itself without any outside help. It was only when the manager's quarters had to be built in '87 that the Trust had to look beyond the family for financial assistance. A cousin of the Chenai family, Ms Mithoo Coorlawala, who is closely involved with her family endowments for education and welfare of mobeds, applauded "this tremendous sense of continued personal commitment in an unbroken line...as evinced in the 30 odd trusts/endowments formed by them over the years," notes Marker.

The contribution of the late Maneckshaw Daruwala as the Trust's manager, and that of his late wife Jerbanoo, who had reportedly handled the Trust's affairs honestly and sincerely for over 30 years, was also recognized by Patel. Now, it is their daughter Zenobia, helped by her sister Ms Roshan Katrak, who has taken over the responsibility, Patel informed.

Romancing by video

"Gilly-gilly-gilly, lucas-lucas-phoo," said the magician, as he attempted to change the color of the feathers in his hand at the Sir J. J. Modi Hall of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute on March 20, 1989. He was entertaining the 60 hopefuls gathered under the aegis of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet's (BPP) matrimonial bureau



and seemed to symbolize the Punchayet's own attempts to change the tide of community statistics, now increasingly flowing towards spinsterhood.

The 25 girls and 35 boys who had accepted the BPP's invitation, had agreed to be videotaped - singly and in groups - so that up-country and foreign-based suitors, with limited time to spare, could pick upon likely candidates more easily. Accordingly, the cameraman was the star of the evening.

It did not take too long to break the ice - the girls being more venturesome and asking for activities with greater physical movement "so we have a better chance to meet someone." While a number of boys noted that they had been attending these get-togethers over the years, many of the girls had come for the first time. There was an advocate, doctor, visualizer, among others, who said they had not found a matching level among the boys. While they would be happy to marry if they found a worthwhile mate (and were not averse to raising two or three children if the economic and social conditions were favorable), they said they were mentally prepared to continue to lead a single life.

Though the bureau has successfully united 25 couples in its six-year existence, as notes BPP chief executive Rustom Anklesaria, the depleted attendance had led to a tapering off of its activities which at one time had included socials, dances and full-day excursions on a regular monthly basis.

One peculiarity of the marriage bureau's functioning has been the presence of parents at the functions. Though far fewer now than at the earlier events, their presence seemed to be a damper on the participants, most of whom were in their late twenties and early thirties.

Chennai Dharamshala at Secunderabad

Facing page:

Most charming baby Khambatta (left) and bonny baby Bhuri at the All Parsee Contest.

Taraporewala (below) on his hundredth birthday

Organized by social worker and BPP matrimonial bureau subcommittee member Ms Homai Modi - with the assistance of Punchayet stalwarts like Anklesaria, Ms Gool Tata, Ms Sheroo Master, Ms Gool Kiass and others - and compered by Royce DeSouza, the evening had been planned with intellectual and physical games wherein couples participated as a unit. The entertainment also included mimicry artiste Popcorn who regaled the audience with the song and dance styles of various cine celebrities as well as the declamations of politicians. Popcorn is said to have made his debut on Bombay's entertainment circuit at the fete organized by Modi for the B.D. Petit Parsee General Hospital's platinum jubilee celebrations in 1987. The evening ended with a chicken and pulao dinner catered by Dr (Ms) Katy Dalal.

Arnavaz S. Mama

A spirit of competition

Thirty-six students from various schools, colleges and Parsi colonies participated in the brainstorm quiz contest organized by The Rustom Baug Association on December 18, 1988, notes a press release by vice president Kumi Darooowala. The Association also organizes competitions like the All Parsee Bonny Baby Contest, On-the-spot painting competitions and elocution competitions for school and college students twice a year. Encouragement, in the form of



October 9, 1988, had "over 30 healthy, happy babies from all over Bombay" participating in three different age groups, informed the release.

The winners in the three different categories were: Master Meherzad Bhagwadia (from birth to six months); Master Yohan Bhuri (six months to one year) and Master Keziyar Wadia (one year to three years), the release notes.

At the competition, Daroowala announced that The Rustom Baug Association will enroll children between the age of two to three years at their pre-school nursery which is conducted on the mezzanine floor of the Neville Wadia Hall. The nursery, which is specially conducted to prepare children for entrance exams in various schools, has highly qualified teachers, notes the write-up. Sessions begin in June and December, but information regarding admissions may be had from the principal at the Neville Wadia Hall on any working day.

Taraporewala crosses 100

Reportedly the first Parsi centenarian in south India, Kaikhushroo Siavashaw Taraporewala celebrated his hundredth birthday on September 28, 1988, as per information sent to *Parsiana* by Minoo Belgamvala.

Taraporewala was educated partly in Bombay and partly in Bangalore. In 1908 he came to Bezwada (now Vijayawada) and worked as a railway contractor for 24 years. He then took up civil contracts with the municipality there. After a short stint with film distribution work, the centenarian later ran a litho press.

Marrying his cousin Arnavaz in December 1911, Taraporewala's marital life spanned 68 years, adds the letter. Taraporewala retired at 79 years of age, and since then has settled in Madras with his two sons Firoze and Savak, notes Belgamvala.

SPOTLIGHT

Burjor Patel has taken over as advertising manager of the Dubai paper *Khaleej Times*, notes *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of December 6, 1988. A noted Bombay theater personality, Patel was formerly *The Statesman's* business manager for western India.

The South Gujarat University conferred



prizes and scholarships, is given annually to newly-ordained navar-maratabs and orphans by the Seth Sorabji Framji Titina Trust.

Among the schools, the first prize was won by the Christ Church High School team of Farhad Kerawala, Arzan Singpurwala and Cyrus Irani. The first prize among the various colleges was bagged by St Xavier's. Their team comprized Feredoon Dotiwala, Ashish Kapadia and Cherag Sarkari.

For her colorful painting, *The Balloon Seller*, Shermeen Jal (J.B. Petit High School) bagged the trophy for the overall best performance in the On-the-spot painting competition held on October 23, 1988, the press release notes.

The 70 young artists were divided into three age groups. In the five to eight year age-group Zenobia Tarachand (J.B. Vatcha High School) was adjudged the winner; in the nine to 12 age-group Jal was declared the best; and in the 13 to 16 category Shernaz Nadirshah (Girton High School) walked away with the first prize, adds the release.

At the All Parsee Bonny Baby Contest Nazneen Khambatta was adjudged the most charming baby and Yohan Bhuri the bonny baby of 1987-88. The contest, which was held on

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the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters (D Litt) and Doctor of Science (D Sc) on **Pandit Firoz Dastur** and **Dr Homi Sethna** respectively at its convocation held on January 28, 1989, notes a press release.

Cyrus Cama and his teammate **Amish Ved** won the gold medal at the twenty-second World Cadet Class Yachting Regatta which ended on January 1, 1989, notes the *Indian Express* of the following day. They now join the ranks of world champions from India.

**Fifth
World Zoroastrian Congress**

"To 2,000 AD and Beyond" will be the theme of the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress to be held in Bombay at the Birla Matushree Sabhagar from January 3 to 7, 1990. The plans, as well as the subjects and speakers, are yet to be finalized. The inauguration is to be held on the evening of January 3 on the Cusrow Baug lawns, as was the case with the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress.

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

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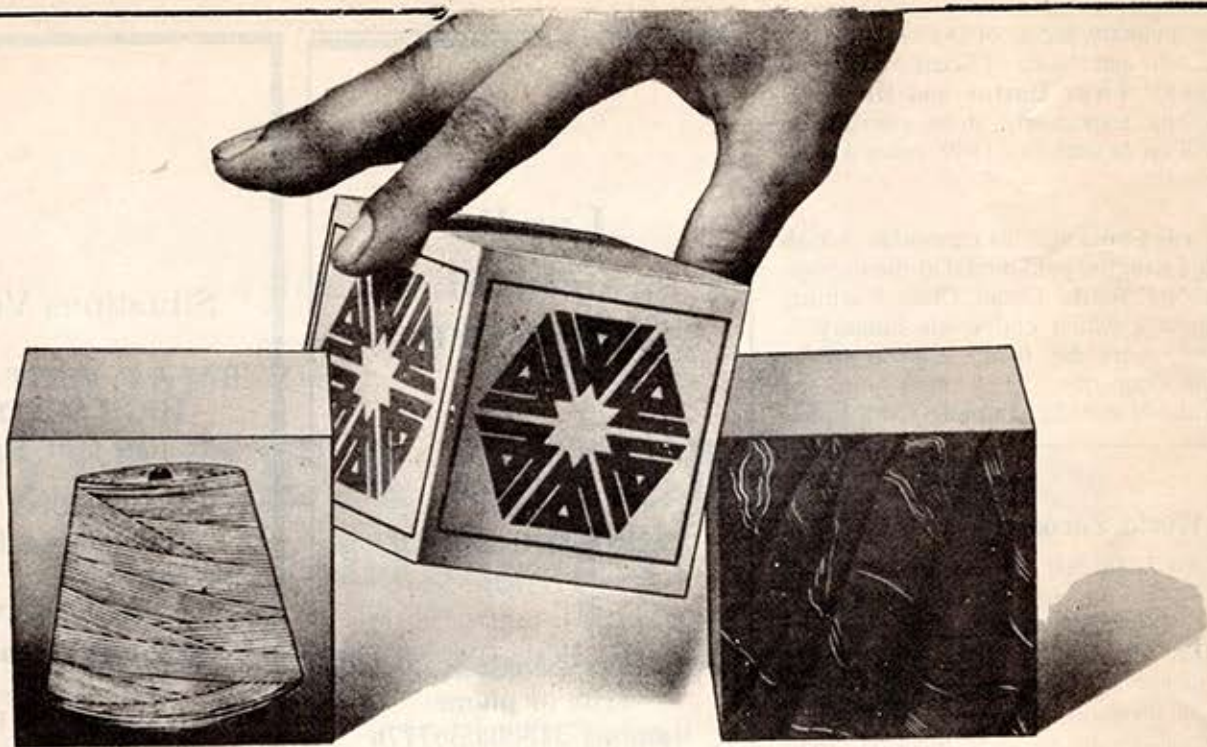


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Man of many parts

Arnavaz S. Mama

"The whole occasion is like a Parsi wedding. After the banquet there is a ball and people sit around at the tables, talking." Physicist Nariman Mistry was describing the aftermath of the banquet that followed the distribution of the Nobel Awards in Stockholm on December 10, 1988, the death anniversary of Alfred Nobel.

The 1988 Nobel Prize for physics had belatedly honored Leon Lederman, Melvin Schwartz and Jack Steinberger for the neutrino experiment conducted in the early 1960s at Columbia University. Mistry had joined the team, along with three other postgraduate students, at the invitation of Lederman and the experiment became the subject of his doctoral thesis. All the seven physicists and their wives had been invited by the Swedish Academy of Sciences to Stockholm where they were hosted at the exclusive Grand Hotel, informed Mistry.

The white tie and tails ceremony was very impressive, said Mistry, with the whole diplomatic corps present. "It is, perhaps, the most important occasion for Stockholm," he noted. All the 1,300 guests had assigned seats at the banquet at the City Hall following the ceremony. Even so, the atmosphere was not stiff, says Mistry: "Everybody was more human than you'd expect, even the king and queen! The finest champagne was served. The student band from Upsala marched in with an army of bearers to serve ice cream. The university choir sang pop and funny songs... The hundreds of university students were the most lively bunch at the banquet and the ball."

An essential element of particle physics, the neutrino is the most elu-

sive of the known elementary particles, says Mistry, struggling to explain a complex scientific concept in non-scientific terms. "It is invisible and interacts very weakly. For example, during the eight-month experiment, a trillion neutrinos went through the detector and only about 50 interacted visibly." The Nobel Prize was given to the awardees because it was the first experiment that used neutrinos to study "high energy weak interactions and also established that there were two types of neutrinos. The challenge was that nobody thought (the experiment) would work. Since then, other experiments have used neutrinos." A science graduate from St Xavier's College, Bombay, Mistry had spent two years at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) learning the basics of research in physics before leaving for the US in 1958. He credits this early training for the opportunity of working with the Nobel laureates on the experiment that took two years to prepare and eight more months to run before completion in the summer of 1962.



Mistry, who spent a short holiday in January with his parents at Bombay's Rustom Baug, belongs to a family with strong academic leanings: father Burjor Mistry, one of the most senior advocates specializing in criminal law who has often been retained to plead the government's case against smugglers and other criminals, is the chairman of the board of directors of the Alexandra Girls' English Institution; brother Jehangir is vice principal of St Xavier's College.

Keen on maintaining tradition, Mistry and his four children - Roshan (22), Manek (21), Premila (15) and Jal (10) - pray together, though his American wife Virginia is a practising Roman Catholic. There are not too many Zoroastrian connections for Mistry in Ithaca, where he lives, or at Cornell University where he is senior physicist at the Newman Laboratory and a professor in the physics department. His current research deals with the constituents of matter known as "quarks."

The time away from physics is spent sketching or painting in oils or at the piano, accompanying Manek on the violin and Premila on the flute during their informal recitals. (Roshan plays the harp.) Ithaca, in central New York state, is full of professional musicians, says Mistry. During his two-year stint as president of the board of directors of the Cayuga Chamber Orchestra, a body of professional musicians, he had to conduct a search for a music director, coming to know a lot of young musicians in the process. The young man they had engaged has since become the assistant conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, notes Mistry with a touch of professional elation...

Physicist, artist, musician Nariman Mistry speaks of the Nobel Prize distribution ceremony in Stockholm where he was a guest of the Swedish Academy of Sciences



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Community crisis management



Crisis management expert Dr Firdaus Udwadia prescribes positive thinking and communication within the community as the need of the hour

Arnavaz S. Mama

"Both in crisis management and in life there is a strong correlation between expectation and reality. What you expect, you create... If the general expectation is that we will die out, it will be a self-fulfilling prophecy," said Dr Firdaus Udwadia, referring to the Parsis' declining population.

A professor of civil and mechanical engineering who coordinates the center on crisis management of the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, Udwadia was in Bombay in March 1989 to participate in a family wedding and had been pinned down by the Bombay Chamber of Commerce and Industry to hold a one-day workshop in crisis management at the Oberoi Towers.

Initially, the reticent Udwadia had declined to be interviewed. He didn't think he had any momentous statements to make. But accosted with the community's threatened survival (plus some gentle pressure from father-in-law Jangoo Gagrati), Udwadia was cornered...

To explain the impact of imagination on life, Udwadia related an experiment that had been conducted in the US where three basketball teams had been randomly selected. One was made to practice for four hours every day; the second for four hours every other day; and the third was asked to imagine itself scoring goals for four hours every day. When the teams actually played against each other, it was the one which had spent time im-

agining that scored the maximum points. "If you imagine yourself a corporate head, you'll become a corporate head," counselled Udwadia.

Though it's "very difficult to change personal culture," Udwadia suggested the daily publication - regular and prominent - of the number denoting the total population of the community because one must "not just know the fact, but be alive to it, (and) repetition creates awareness. We must communicate that it is a community problem and needs community effort."

Economic aid could then metamorphose awareness into action, felt Udwadia. "Most families have a trade-off between economic benefits and the number of children." If aid towards child care, education, medical benefits were available, it might induce couples into having one more baby, says Udwadia, and he does not believe it is too late to begin even now.

Eventually, every family faces one binding resource - time. One must "work at getting the child well adjusted." But with more and more mothers being required to work outside the home, only additional "economic resources would ameliorate the time constraints," he felt.

Comparing the Parsis to the Jews, Udwadia says our cultural heritage is "diasporic." But unlike the Jews, we do not have an inbuilt mentoring system that helps to establish the younger generation, especially in the professions. "I have often received letters of

introduction from Jews stating 'This is a good Jewish brain. Please put it to use.' I don't think Parsis give such letters of introduction to other Parsis!"

While Udwadia says that in his 20 years in California he has tried to help out Parsi students whenever he possibly could, he feels that the community is too strongly "entrepreneurial and individualistic. Parsis forget that their experiences must be communicated. There is a premium on competitiveness. The good side is that we are high achievers. On the down side, each one is for himself, with little time left for mentoring others."

Describing himself as "apolitical," Udwadia said he was not aware of the work of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), nor had he attended any of the North American Zoroastrian Congresses. A member of the Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC) along with his wife Farida, daughter Shanaira and son Zubin, Udwadia participates in social gatherings from time to time. He was the first recipient of the distinguished alumnus award of the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay. The US government has conferred upon him the NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) Award for outstanding contribution to technological innovation.

Reverting to the problem of the Parsis' dwindling number, Udwadia suggests, "Ask your readers. They may have lots of good ideas."

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AZA's property problems

With the Baulkham Hills Shire Council having refused permission to the Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA) of New South Wales (NSW) to develop AZA House, the community is left with two main options, noted AZA president Noshir Irani in *Manashni*, the Association's newsletter of January-February 1989. Accordingly, an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) was summoned on February 5, 1989 to decide whether to litigate or relocate.

The well-attended EGM heard several suggestions before adopting a four-pronged consensus plan, notes the March edition of *Manashni*. Accordingly, the AZA will withdraw the current application to the Council for permission to develop the property and continue the current self-imposed embargo on large scale activity involving more than 100 members while re-commencing with Sunday school. The Association has also decided to engage a town planning consultant to survey the property to see if the Council's objections regarding civic matters can be overcome and to advise what type of structure would accommodate the Council's requirements. "Our immediate goal is to get our current activities 'legalized,'" writes Irani.

The Council had not only turned down the development application but the AZA has been informed that it is not authorized to hold Sunday school, or social and religious functions and meetings there. This has put a damper upon the property's use for navjotes, weddings or receptions by the community on a rental basis. Even the EGM was organized elsewhere.

Despite these strictures, *Manashni* had SOsed for plumbers, electricians and carpenters for AZA House in its October issue, as also for more regular volunteers to keep it clean.

Notwithstanding the legal hassles with the Council and the neighbors, "the atmosphere that prevails on a typical Sunday school day at the AZA House (always the second Sunday of the month) is something unique," writes Ms Gooloo Katrak in *Manashni* (November-December 1988). "There are these 40-odd kids, being taught in different rooms by four teachers; then

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there are the parents of the kids – some socializing and some toiling away in the garden. Also there are usually two mothers who are in charge of the House that day; cleaning away, serving non-stop cups of tea-coffee to one and all. And some fathers... become expert handymen, attending to various heavy jobs around the property (on that day). Where would one find such a conglomeration of activities and togetherness?"

In the meanwhile, an open letter from Noshir Sachinwalla to all Zoroastrians of Sydney and NSW in the March *Manashni* has urged the 190 Zoroastrian families in the area to donate one percent of their annual income on a regular basis "to our Zoroastrian building fund."

Since AZA membership has risen past 500, the Association's adult discussion group – an informal forum of adult members – is focussing on a study of the community history of AZA members, notes group coordinator Perviz Kolsawalla in *Manashni* (November-December 1988). A seven-page questionnaire has been prepared to help collect information which will then be transferred to a computerized file for future community historians, writes Kolsawalla.

A published summary of the results will also aid intending migrants to know what to bring and what to leave behind, and avoid some of the pitfalls others before them have encountered, says Kolsawalla.

The questionnaire – the third one attempted by the group, earlier ones having focussed on demography and religious and social definitions – will be mailed on request only, notes Kolsawalla.

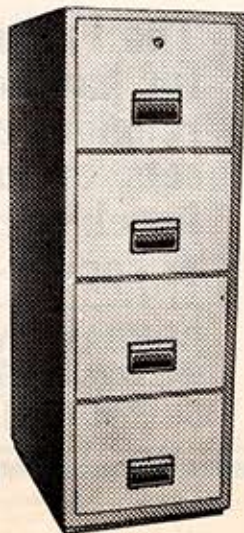
Manashni (November-December 1988) carries an advertisement of an entertainment agency named Wizbiz whose director is Adil Sarkari. Located at Penrith, NSW the comprehensive services that the agency promises to provide include four types of dancers, four types of musicians (Indian classical and ghazal singers among them), lyric writers, choreographers, comperes and disc jockeys, theater artistes and directors, film and video editors, firework displays, theme parties, barbecues, chil-



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dren's, disco, cocktail and *moorat* parties, singing telegrams (sic) and much more!

The youth group of Sydney has been named Young Australian Zoroastrians, writes Ms Homaxi Irani in the March *Manashni*. The competition for a visualized name and logo yielded only two entries, laments Homaxi. The group will use both logos in turn and has split the prize money between Kermiz Irani and Shehernaz Bilimoria, the two entrants in the contest.

Zoroastrian Victorians

The Zoroastrian Association of Victoria (ZAV) comprises a small group of 75 families mainly resident in Melbourne, according to its president Perviz Dubash's letter to *Parsiana*. Dubash's current team includes vice president Shiraz Driver, treasurer Jal Pestonji, secretary Ms Nergish Dubash and members at large Ms Aban Irani, Jamshed Bhathawala, Percy Khadiwala, Shahryar Noushi and Viraf Bhavnagri.

The ZAV has decided to undertake project APOOO (a place of our own). Four families have pledged 5,000 Australian dollars each, two have donated smaller amounts, while others have organized a kitty party, a film night and a shopping tour by bus and "the money has started trickling in," notes *Rathaeshtar*, the ZAV's newsletter, currently in its second year of publication. "Let us unite and build our

APOOO brick by brick and let each brick be baptized with our love and our sweat, so that one day, however humble our Darbe Mehr might be, it would stand out in this world as a true monument to Zoroastrianism," states a later, more euphoric, write-up.

Also on the anvil is the Great Zoroastrian Jamboree scheduled for June 10, 11 and 12, 1989. It will include the Maidyarem ghambar celebration, according to an extract from the *Rathaeshtar* reprinted in *Manashni*. The venue is expected to be somewhere midway between Melbourne and Sydney and there is a commitment to keep the costs to a minimum.

Aimed to initiate a program that will bring Zoroastrians closer through religious bonds, the Jamboree hopes to inculcate community pride, create friendships, impart knowledge and skills such as sudreh, topi and sapat making. "It is our very firm intention not to make this a serious affair and not to initiate debates or discussions on controversial aspects of our traditions and beliefs. It is our fervent desire to make this 'Jamboree Fun and Learn' so tremendously successful that it would become an anxiously (awaited) annual affair in the future. It is also our hope to make it into an international Zoroastrian jamboree at a later date," notes the write-up.

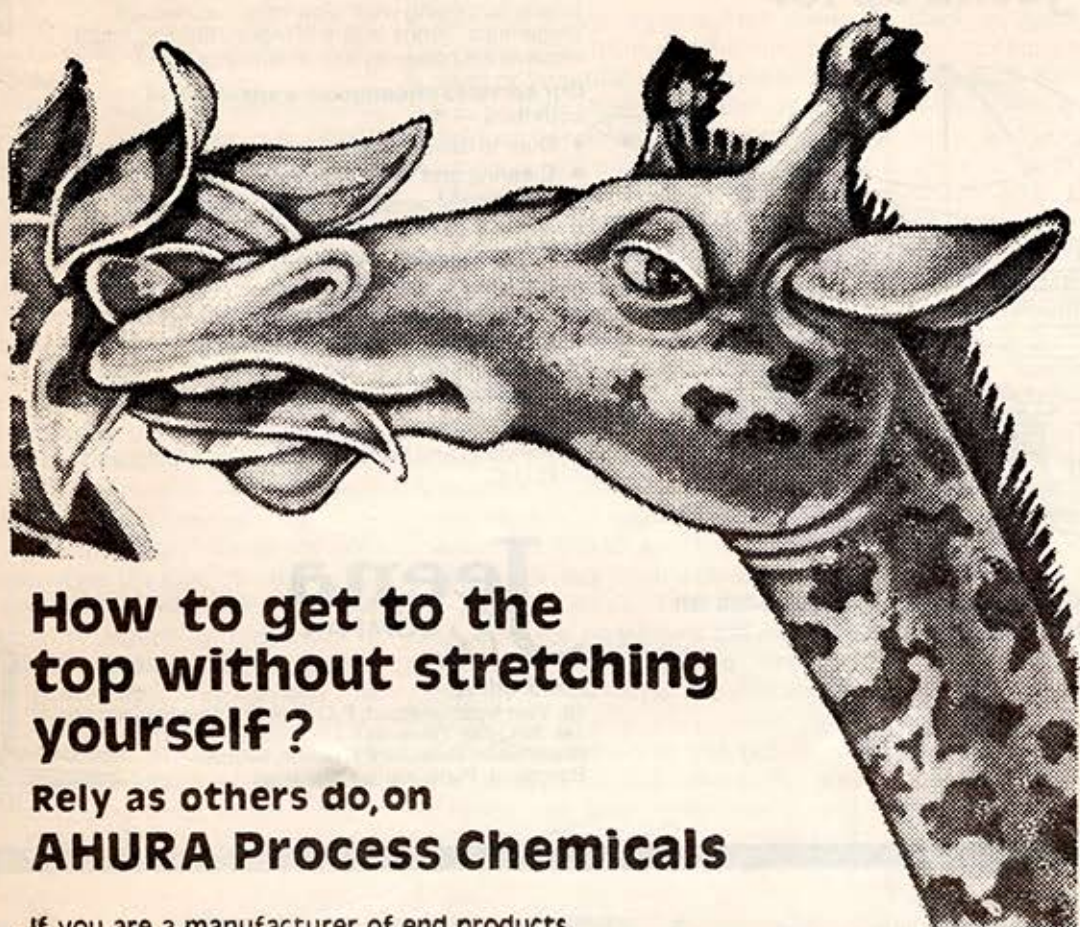
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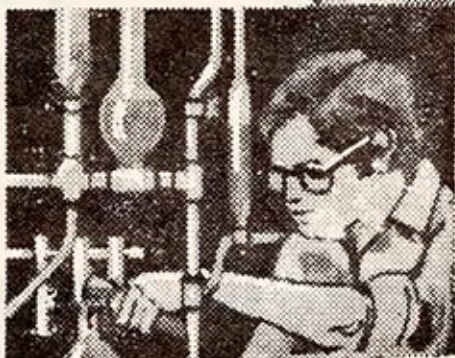
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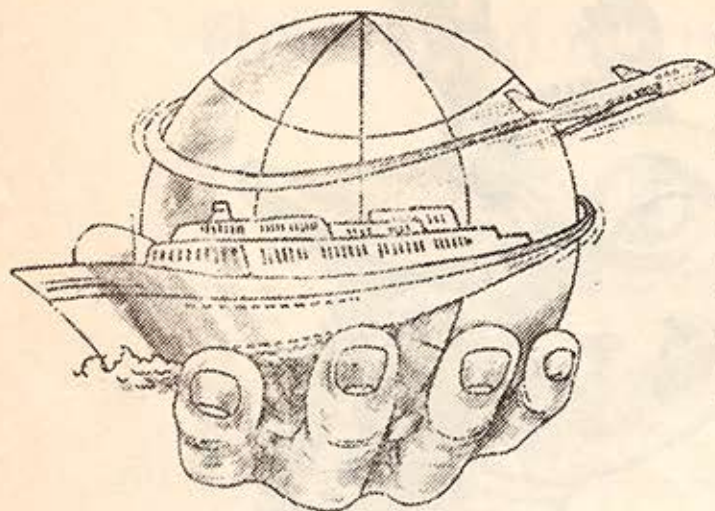
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The Federation at Calcutta

Parinaz Gandhi

The achievements of the Calcutta Anjuman compensated for the low attendance at the Federation's executive council meeting

For once the venue appeared more impressive than the meeting. The Edulji Olpadvala Hall in Calcutta, where the executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India was held, stood testimony to what the Calcutta Zoroastrian Community's Religious and Charity Fund had managed to accomplish with perseverance, leadership, time and effort. In contrast, the Federation meeting on December 10 and 11, 1988 proved to be a damper with a record low attendance and often rambling discussions on the first day which rehashed much of what was said at earlier meetings. As Calcutta trustee Dr Russi Anklesaria observed, "This is perhaps the smallest crowd of all the meetings." This sentiment was echoed by co-trustee Dali Bhesania who regretted that "many were absent and many backed out."

Altogether only 12 anjumans were represented. Even the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) had only one trustee, Jamshed Guzder, representing the seven-member board. While some felt that it was possibly the distance that had kept many members away, the representation at the meeting in Jamshedpur in December 1987 had indicated that distance was not the deciding factor. Explained the Federation's joint honorary secretary Keki Gandhi, "If Calcutta were to make it a point to attend meetings more regularly, other anjumans would reciprocate." In his subsequent sentence he emphasized

that this in no way questions Calcutta's support to the Federation which is "considerable."

The oft repeated refrain to reduce the frequency of the executive council meetings to two or one a year instead of the present three was voiced by Anklesaria. He felt that at Federation meetings the problems of the smaller anjumans were not being heard and if given a hearing, no solutions were being offered. Clarifying his misconceptions, the suggestion for fewer

meetings was turned down. Yet, the sentiment expressed did indicate a disenchantment with the functioning of the Federation.

In the absence of the Federation president Dr Aspi Golwala and zonal vice-president Homi Bodhanwalla of Jamshedpur, the next item on the agenda was the election of a chairman from among the two vice-presidents present: Bazun Dittia, president of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and Hyderabad, and Dr Sam



*From left:
Anklesaria and Rabadi
Below (from left)
Dittia, Bhacca,
Gandhi and Guzder*





From left:
Captain, Clubwala and Narielwala
Below: Master



Bhacca, president of the Surat Parsi Punchayet (SPP). After Dittia proposed Bhacca's name, Gandhi wholeheartedly seconded the proposition, saying, "Bhacca by tradition speaks very little. This gives me an opportunity to speak more." In response Bhacca noted, "I hope he will be as brief as possible, though not as brief as me." The executive council was also concerned about the health of former SPP president Maneck Gheyara who was then ailing in Bombay. The members stated that they missed the active support and seasoned advice of the only surviving founder member of the Federation. (Gheyara passed away on March 3, 1989.)

In addition to the awards instituted by the Federation to encourage individual excellence, outstanding performance by an anjuman should also be recognized with an award, suggested Navroze Kanga of Ahmedabad.

Calcutta's Olpadvala Hall will, in the coming year, become self-financing for the first time, and in fact generate additional funds to subsidize rent, education and medical costs of the poor members of the anjuman, said Anklesaria. Briefing the delegates on the developments within the Calcutta anjuman and the problems encountered were trustees Anklesaria and Adi Rabadi. The fortune of the anjuman turned when Edulji Olpadvala donated valuable land in a prime locality along with his residential house. It was Olpadvala's intention that the building be restructured to serve the purpose of a community hall in Calcutta, with the rest of the land being used to build houses for the community. The settlor has also empowered the trustees to sell the property, noted Rabadi. Since the building was too old to sustain alterations, the anjuman was advised to demolish it and build afresh. So the old building was rented out to a company and with the

advance rent and the monies advanced by companies like M.N. Dastur, Tatas and a Japanese firm, a new building was commissioned on the complex. Completed in 1985, this building now houses the Olpadvala Hall on the ground floor, the anjuman office on the top floor, and offices of the three firms which had helped with the finances.

The 150-year-old defunct Banaji Agiary in Calcutta, which had been closed down a few years ago and in whose courtyard encroachers had mushroomed, has been surrendered to the government, it was reported. The sole surviving male member of the family, who is now the trustee-in-charge, has reportedly not been able to ward off the encroachers though he rejected the community's offer to intervene. The property is said to be worth crores of rupees. The anjuman was advised to send the relevant documents to the Federation so that Minorities Commission member Homi Taleyarkhan's assistance could be enlisted to help vacate the encroachment. "All of us at Calcutta should take the responsibility for the present situation," said Gandhi. "We all patronized the centrally-located Mehta Agiary even though we knew that the Banaji Agiary was fighting for funds."

There are not enough vultures to devour the corpses to justify the continuation of the dokhmenashini system in Calcutta, testify the voluntary nassessalors who carry the bodies into the dokhmas. The anjuman would like to close the dokhmas and resort to burial, and the priests would be agreeable to perform the last rites subject to approval from the High Priest of the Deccan and Poona, Dastur Hormazdiar Dastur, briefed Anklesaria. With all the priests owing allegiance to the High Priest of Poona, they insist on waiting for his reply to the anjuman's letter seeking his permission for a

change in rites. Since no reply has been forthcoming, the Federation's joint honorary treasurer Peshotan Nargolwala offered to approach the High Priest directly if the Calcutta Anjuman would provide him with a copy of the letter.

The search for capable paramobeds continues. Of the 30 candidates interviewed for professional paramobed training, only two were found suitable, mentioned Nargolwala, an active member of the paramobed subcommittee. This reinforced the need for voluntary paramobeds from different localities. In the meanwhile, objections continue from some quarters on the designation and the attire of the 'paramobed.'

The Allahabad Anjuman is still on the look out for a priest, noted its president, Capt Homi Dandiwalla. In Ahmedabad, the mobed position is stable and the dokhmenashini system continues well, despite the demise of 45 vultures whose death is attributed to their feeding on the carcass of a dead cow which was possibly poisoned, reported Kanga. The anjuman secretary Dr Hafez Dalal informed that a public relations subcommittee in Ahmedabad ensures that the community is kept informed of the decisions taken by the governing body. At present, census data of the Parsis in Ahmedabad is being processed.

A survey of the Belgaum Anjuman conducted by Ms Ava Khullar reflected a "fairly prosperous community with no unemployed." Sixty-two

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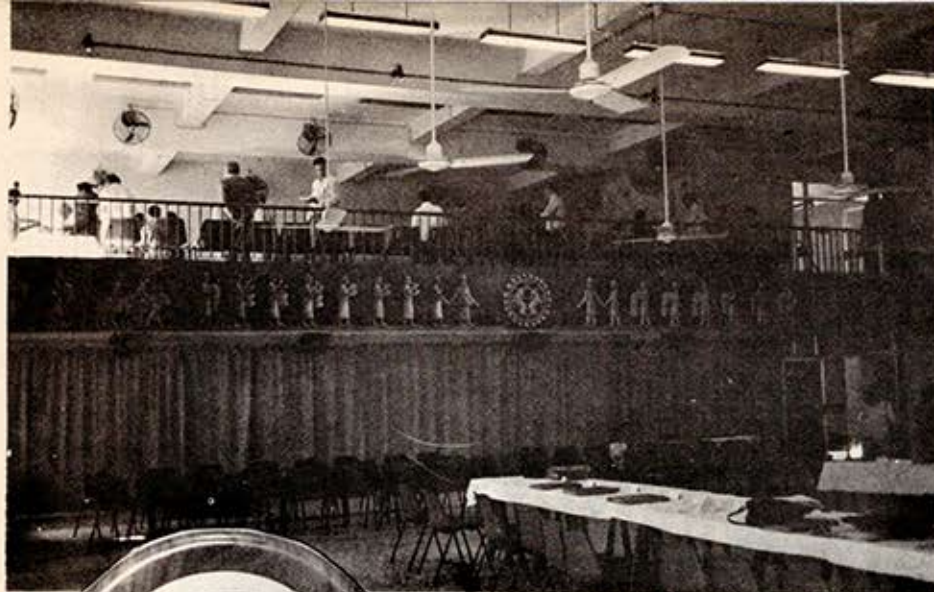


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*The mezzanine floor at the Olpadvala Hall
(Inset) A bust of the benefactor*



had an additional proposition: the anjuman should employ enterprising Parsis and get into the tourist business. Special trips to Agra could be organized by offering the tourists a novel sight-seeing program and Parsi menu. This would only be possible if the anjuman was willing to convert a portion of the dharamshala into a guest house by opening its doors to non-Parsis after earmarking certain rooms for Parsis. But Debara, knowing the orthodoxy of the old members of the anjuman, doubted whether everyone would be agreeable.

Get-togethers organized by the BPP's matrimonial bureau are no longer being held regularly because of the decline in the attendance, noted BPP's

percent of its 90-member population fell in the 15-60 age-group. The occupational pattern indicated that the largest numbers were in business, followed by those employed in professional and technical occupations, and finally those holding senior administrative, executive or managerial positions.

The small Agra anjuman with its limited population of 21 members is in desperate need of funds. "At one time there was such a tourist influx (of Parsis), but today the dharamshala is lying vacant," reported trustee Hosang Debara. Since they are keen to keep the trust building for community uses, they are looking for a firm or company which would hire their hall so that they can be self-supporting. Names of several firms and banks were suggested by different members. Gandhi

assistant secretary Ms Sheroo Master. It was also found that the parents of the unmarrieds were more interested in seeking a match for their children than the candidates themselves.

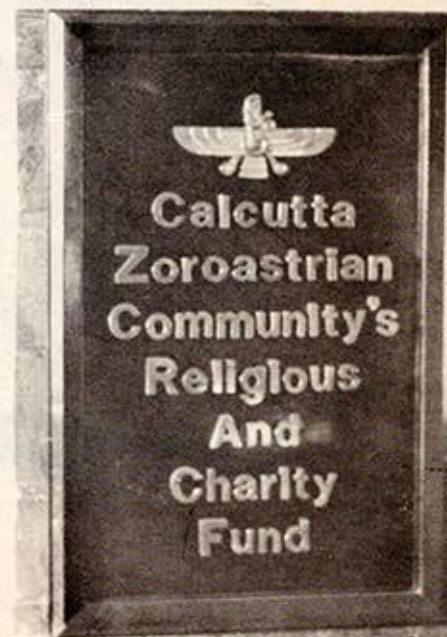
An insight into the world of spastics was provided by occupational therapist Ms Bakhtaver Ayrton, and the challenges of teaching mime and theater to the deaf were explained by Ms Zarin Chaudhuri. Care of the aged was an item introduced on the agenda for the first time. References to the disrespectful and callous attitude towards the older generation indicated that some Parsis, in their old age, were being neglected by their families.

Offers to host the next three Federation meetings have come from: Bombay, on April 8 and 9; Madras, on September 9 and 10; and Ahmedabad, on December 16 and 17, 1989.

Youths seek common sense

"The fear of youths being reformists should be abolished," clarified Anklesaria, who was a witness to the four-day Youth Fest in early November, when 182 Zoroastrian delegates from 15 cities converged on Calcutta to share ideas, views and enjoy themselves in the sports and other entertainment activities organized for them by the Calcutta Parsee Youth League. "The youths are looking for common sense," he assured.

Frontage of the hall building (left) and plaque indicating the location of the anjuman's new premises



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Chaudhuri (left) and Ayrton (at the mike)

Should the youth bodies function as an extension of the parent anjuman, or independently as a democratic set-up? And if it functions independently, what about the constitution and financial viability of this entity? There is no unanimity on this point because, as Anklesaria observed, "What is good for one anjuman may not be so for another."

Whether the governing body of every anjuman should, "as a matter of chance or a matter of right," reserve one seat for a youth representative was deliberated upon at considerable length. There were different reasons cited for not pursuing this proposal: the general apathy of the youths; the difficulty in refuting claims for seats on the trust board by other Parsi organizations, if reservations are made for the youth group; subject matter at board meetings not of relevance to the youth; youths getting involved in internal politics that are inevitable in the functioning of any large anjuman.

When summarizing the proceedings of the Youth Fest for the benefit of the assembly at the Federation meeting, the Fest's convener Ms Aban Medhora, on behalf of the youths, beseeched, "What we would like is your help in building up our awareness and involving us in certain activities... The suggestion that would perhaps help us the most would be if the Federation would agree to allow one delegate from each city to be represented at each Federation meeting..."

"For today's youth, tomorrow is important," mentioned Medhora. "If today we don't sit, think and discuss, tomorrow we will have no solutions, no community."

The approach to the discussions on conversion and adoption at the Youth

Fest followed the same trend, with the same misconceptions surfacing as at the earlier seminar in Delhi. To clarify the misunderstanding that conversion is not allowed because "we had made this promise to Jadava Rana," Gandhi distributed cyclostyled extracts from the *Kisseh I Sanjan* to support his stand that it was only in the case of language, attire, weaponry and marriage processions that the Parsis had promised to adopt the prevailing customs of India. To give legal credence to his view, Gandhi circulated extracts from the judgment in the case of *Petit vs Jeejeebhoy* wherein it is stated, "It

**"We can't just
dismiss topics
because we believe
that rules can't be
changed"**

is as much the duty of every pious Zoroastrian today to make converts as it was in the remote past... They are ready to admit any and every Irani Zoroastrian about whose antecedents they cannot possibly know anything. But they will not admit the purest, most blameless foreigner of whose character and conduct they may have the completest assurance..." On the issue of conversion and adoption "we are pure cowards hiding behind the mask of religion," stated Gandhi. Reasoned Kanga of Ahmedabad, "Religion is not only a matter of the head but also of the heart."

In the interests of the community's future, "youth associations should motivate youngsters to participate in state and national politics... We unfortunately see politics as dirty and politi-

cians as corrupt. If we want favors we go to them, but if they cannot help, they are branded for 'taking money.'" Gandhi sympathised with the lot of a politician. This led, as at every meeting, to the counting and naming of the handful of Parsi politicians on the scene - Homi Taleyarkhan, Homi Daji, Marazban Patrawalla, Rustom Tirandaz, Rhoda Mistry and Noshir Mehta.

It was with Taleyarkhan's push that a science student from Bombay was able to secure admission into the veterinary college in Trichur, reported BPP's Master. And the usual doubts that plague all parents - whether the child will settle in the new environment - were resolved with the support and encouragement of the three Parsi families there, it was added.

What Gandhi has been trying to draw up for the last several years is a list of students who secured admission into professional colleges and the marks obtained by them, as also a list of students who were unsuccessful in getting admission, and the percentage they scored. This would help ascertain the demand for seats from the chief minister's quota in different states of India. In Andhra Pradesh, the chief minister was wary of allocating any seats to Parsis or any other minority community from his quota in medical and engineering colleges.

While the BPP has been continuing with its schemes to finance the coaching fees of students seeking admission into professional colleges, and the civil and defence services, it has, for the first time, offered to contribute to the cost of training of five students, at the rate of Rs 10,000 each, in careers like aviation, for candidates who cannot raise their own resources.

A survey on the attitude of young Parsi females towards matrimony has reflected their unrealistic expectations of the attributes in a spouse. This finding has led social scientist Prof (Ms) Homai Billimoria to submit a corrective program. The co-sponsors of the matrimonial survey, the Federation and the BPP, have agreed to contribute on a 40-60 basis towards the cost (Rs 50,000) of this package counselling program. The service will be introduced initially at Rustom Baug, a colony in Bombay, and thereafter extended to the community in different pockets.

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Way out for children

Are Parsi couples genuinely not interested in producing more children, or is there a lack of ability? And if there is a fertility problem, are there psychological inhibitions preventing the couples from seeking professional guidance even though this is made available to the community at the B.D. Petit Parsee General Hospital in Bombay? Ardeshir Batliwala, coopted member, east zone, lamented the attitude of the Parsi woman "who, even at the age of 35, thinks she is very young when she has actually passed the fertility stage."

Rather than "presuppose that there is a fertility problem in the community," Dittia felt that very probably the couple is "merely seeking economic benefits." Quoting the response of youths who had been polled at the first youth festival in Delhi, Gandhi repeated their sentiment: "To hell with incentives; we do not want to produce more children." On a lighter note, he recommended that at maths classes in Parsi schools, addition and multiplication should be emphasized rather than subtraction and division, which the community can ill afford!

The difficulty in looking after children when both parents are working is an important reason why parents restrict the size of their family, believes Master of the BPP. "This is where the day-care centers come in," Gandhi got an opportunity to reiterate the need to establish such community services in colonies like Godrej Baug. These centers are recommended not with the intention of providing charity service, but dispensing personal care by voluntary workers, psychologists, etc. If

Medhora (at the mike)

Below (from left):

Hosang Debara, Dolat Debara, Dalal and Kanga

"If today we don't sit, think and discuss, tomorrow we will have no solutions, no community"

there are not sufficient takers, the service can be discontinued, but let it first be introduced, he recommended. "We may run into problems if we cannot get the necessary number of children," Eruch Surti of Jamshedpur expressed his concern and wondered whether this facility could be extended to children of other communities.

If a well-organized set-up cannot be provided, then lonely widows should be approached "who would be very happy to look after children as happened with a lady in Madras," mentioned Ms Mani Clubwala of Madras.

Farmers in a web

"If you are thinking of a partnership with the farmer, think again," advised Bhacca, chairman of the rural subcom-

mittee, when it was proposed that the SPP, the BPP and the farmer who was seeking financial aid contribute equal shares towards schemes that could provide relief to the agriculturist. Bhacca doubted whether the Federation's rural subcommittee could come to the aid of even a few agriculturists, considering that sociologist Ms Cashmera Bhaya's survey of the rural Parsis in the three districts of Bharuch, Surat and Bulsar had indicated that funds to the tune of Rs 84,24,000 were needed. Fifty percent of this estimate is believed to be required for house repairs, it was reported in the survey sponsored by the SPP and the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO).

The instance of a farmer in Bardoli who owned 40 acres of land but refused to pay one third the cost of getting his son institutionalized at an asylum, was then recounted by Bhacca. The BPP, the SPP, and the farmer had initially agreed to pool in equal amounts, said Bhacca. "We had to fight a case for recovery of the outstanding amount. And as happens, if the BPP can't collect the amount loaned by it, the buck is passed on to the Surat Punchayet," Bhacca laughed. "Ultimately we were granted a decree to collect the amount from him. But as luck would have it, the very day our representative went to collect our dues, the man died. Finally, we not only had to write off the amount but (had to tolerate) snide remarks like 'See, they ultimately killed him!'"

Who needs a conversion formula?

The Surat Punchayet faced a problem of another dimension: a child (of a Zoroastrian father and his non-Zoroastrian mistress), whose navjote had not been performed, sought admission into one of their educational institutions there. The matter was resolved by first arranging for the marriage of the parents, then the navjote of the child, and finally granting admission to the child. "That is why we are still orthodox but also accommodative," said Bhacca.

In Calcutta, a 16-year-old boy whose father was a Zoroastrian was refused admission to the Parsee Club on the grounds that his navjote was not performed. "This practice is a sort of apartheid in my opinion," was Rabadi's view.



While Dittia commented that marrying outside the community signified a "lack of appreciation for Zoroastrian values," Gandhi urged society to "accept inter-community marriages as a fact of life."

"I hope we don't depart from this two-day meet without deciding on the navjotability of children (one of whose parents is a non-Zoroastrian)," proposed Pesi Narielwala of Calcutta. "I hope we will be able to resolve this wretched ambivalence" – some permitting the navjotes of only children of both Zoroastrian parents, others of children whose father at least is a Zoroastrian, yet others of children whose mother alone is a Zoroastrian.

According to Nargolwala, because Zoroastrians belong to a patriarchal society, they are willing to accept into the fold children of men who have married outside the community. The practice is reverse among the Jews. (Only a Jewish mother's child can be a Jew.) He then cited the case of a child of a Zoroastrian mother and Jewish father who was brought up as a Christian because the parents believed that they were not permitted to initiate the child into their respective faiths.

Before submitting the proposed amendments to the Indian Succession Act as applicable to Parsis, the BPP had asked for time to gather the opinions of other community-based organizations in Bombay. Gandhi informed that of the nine associations which the BPP had consulted, only two had replied. Of these, the Young Rathestars were seeking the implementation of a safety provision in the Act, such that only a successor professing the Zoroastrian faith can be entitled to a share in the deceased's property. Their argument was that it would ensure that the community property remains in the hands of the community.

"This means that we want to remove discrimination on grounds of sex (the proposed amendments as recommended by the Federation are drafted with the intention of granting females a share in equal proportion to their male counterparts) and introduce discrimination on grounds of religion," Gandhi explained the inconsistency. "This is private property and not community property," he stated, and the introduction of such a clause would

In Calcutta there is not a single vulture devouring the corpses to justify the continuation of the dokhmenashini system

mean "violating the principle of freedom of worship enshrined in the constitution of India." The Federation body decided to "recommend to the BPP that the proposals as finalised by the Federation be accepted."

The paramobed pulse

While Allahabad, Calcutta, Gandevi and Madras indicated an immediate opening for paramobeds in their anjumans, all the other anjumans supported a mandate that if circumstances demand, they would not hesitate to

Hawkers spread their wares on the Banaji Agiary premises



employ a paramobed. But where is the elusive paramobed to be found? Aban Medhora wanted to know whether females would be accepted for paramobed training.

The new principal of the Cama Athornan Madressa, Dr Rooyintan Peer, as reported by Nargolwala, is still upset at the 'paramobed' nomenclature which, he insists, cannot be used for behdins. He has suggested alternative terms like *khadin* (meaning servant) and *karabaran* (meaning skilled worker) which, according to paramobed subcommittee chairman Jamshed Guzder, are "so difficult that they can hardly be pronounced." Peer's second main objection is to the use of *padans* (loose mask worn by mobeds to cover the mouth while praying) by paramobeds because he feels that they should be used exclusively by the priests. He offers an alternative: when praying, paramobeds should symbolically cover their mouths with an elongated sleeve – a proposition not considered viable by the delegates.

"Can't we relax rules so that any generation of the priestly family can be trained as a mobed, irrespective of whether his father or grandfather was trained as one?" enquired Narielwala. "Religion is not a club; and besides, even clubs change rules. We can't just dismiss topics because we believe that rules can't be changed," he persisted.

Those present at the Federation meeting were: Hosang Debara from Agra; Navroze Kanga and Dr Hafez Dalal from Ahmedabad; Capt Homi Dandiwalla from Allahabad; Jamshed Guzder, Peshotan Nargolwala and Ms Sheroo Master from Bombay; Dali Bhesania, Dr Russi Anklesaria, Adi Rabadi, Pesi Narielwala, Ms Aban Medhora and Adil Master from Calcutta; Keki Gandhi and Noshir Captain from Delhi; Ardeshtir Batliwala, co-opted member, east zone; Aspi Irani and Pervez Irani from the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman; Eruch Surti, Rumi Battiwalla and Rohinton Pithawalla from Jamshedpur; Ms Mani Clubwala from Madras; Rustom Daroga, co-opted member, north zone; Bazun Dittia from Secunderabad-Hyderabad; and Dr Sam Bhacca from Surat. The Press was represented by Navroze and Parsiana.

Same Old Class...

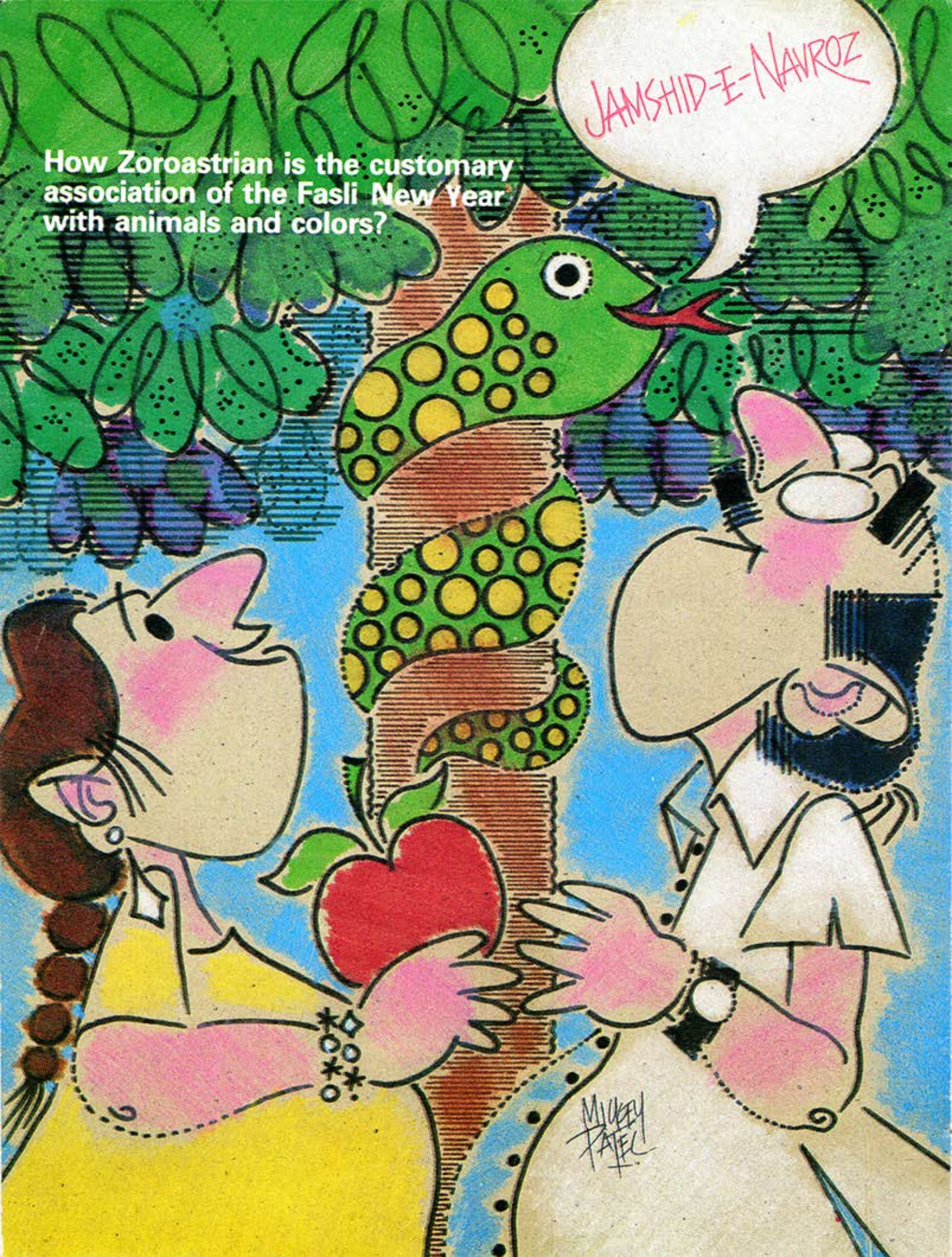


Now with a New Look



How Zoroastrian is the customary
association of the Fasli New Year
with animals and colors?

JAMSHID-E-NAVROZ



The Year of the Snake

Gustasp Irani

On March 21, from the burrows of obscure origins, the snake slithered up to bask in the glow of Navroz and to preside over the current Fasli year. The whale, its term done, plunged into the depths of time to return 12 years later after the sheep, horse, monkey, dog, hen, pig, mouse, cow, leopard and rabbit have taken turns in lending their names to each successive year.

Where do these animals come from? What is the source and significance of this endearing custom that Iranian Zoroastrians observe as an integral part of their Navroz ritual along with their fruit laden table? No one seems to know. There appears to be no authority on the subject. Scholars believe that there is nothing Zoroastrian in the linking of animals with calendar years.

"Our religion scorns the snake. If we see one, we are advised to crush its head. To have a year of the snake...No, not Zoroastrian at all," says Dastur Dr Firoze Kotwal, High Priest of the H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram.

"All creatures, according to Zoroastrianism, are either *Ahuric* or *Devic*, that is, they are either good or evil," says Khojeste Mistree of Zoroastrian Studies. "The snake is *Devic*. Now, of course, we know that a snake has its uses; it maintains the ecological balance. But back in the Sassanian and Pahlavic times the priests classified all creatures as either good or evil. The system was quite simple. The dog, because of its loyalty, was *Ahuric*; the snake, because it was feared, *Devic*. I

don't believe that in Zoroastrianism we could have a year of the snake. The system is probably borrowed from the Chinese. It definitely is not mainstream Zoroastrianism."

Yezdanyar Bonshahi of Khazeh Book Sellers at Grant Road, and member of the Iranian Anjuman, believes that the system is most probably borrowed from the Chinese. He points out that in Malaysia, where a large number of Chinese reside, it is also their year of the snake. In the matter of attributing a color to each year, he is quite certain that the custom is neither Zoroastrian nor Iranian. "People phone the (Iranian) Anjuman and ask: 'What color?' They expect to be told a color. But there is none. So we make up a color. Last year it was blue because of the whale. This year, because of the snake, we decided on green and green is a nice color!" He admits that in this matter of animals and colors his knowledge is, at best, an educated guess.

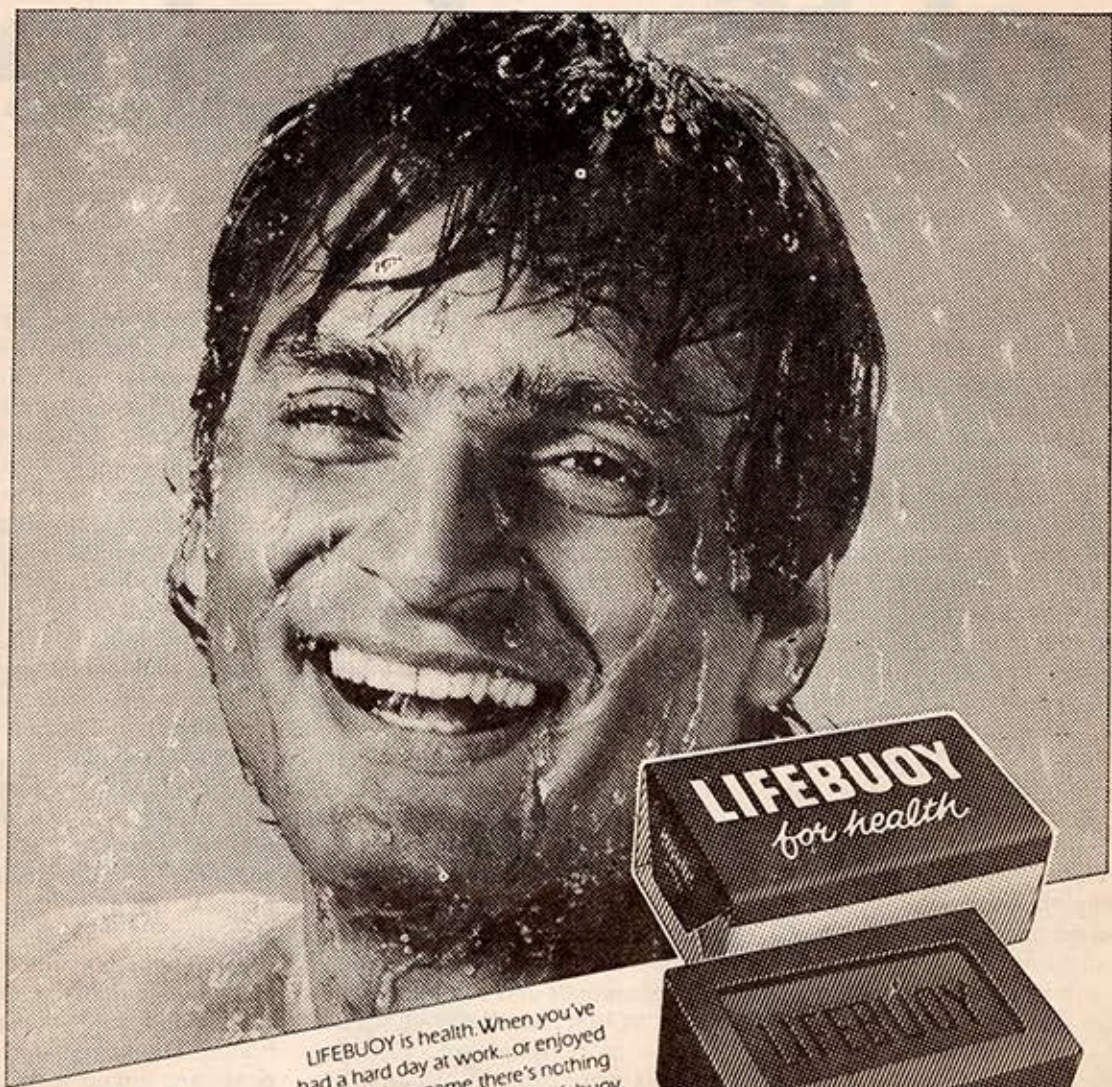
This is more than most other respondents were able to offer. All inquiries about the subject met with a blank. The Iranian Anjuman office, members of the Iran League, and the priests at the Dadiseth Agiary at Flora Fountain, Bombay, confessed ignorance of the origins and source from which sprang the custom of associating animals and colors with the year. Ervad Dr Peshotan Peer and Ms Homai Modi, secretary of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, Bombay, turned the poser around: "If you find out something, will you let us know?"

All agree that the roots of the practice are embedded in astrology, but there appears to be little by way of astrological records that can be classified as truly Zoroastrian. Manly P. Hall in his book *Story of Astrology* devotes a chapter each to the works of the Chinese and Tibetans, Hindus, Greeks, Romans, Aztecs in South America and Arabs. Apart from passing references to Zoroaster as an astrologer and "Darius, Emperor of Persia, who relied on his venerated astrologer Al Hakim, which means 'the wise one,'" there is no further study of Zoroastrian astrology.

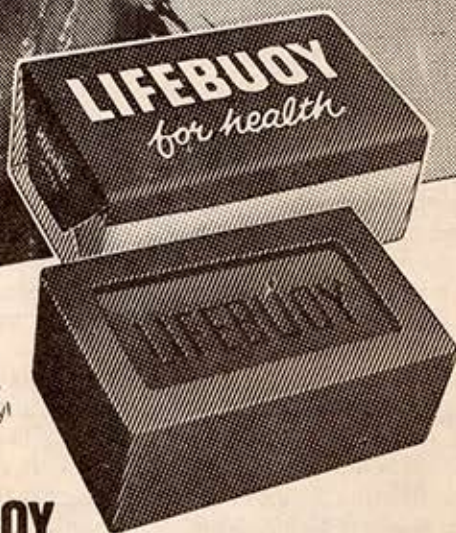
Al-Biruni, an eleventh century astronomer and astrologer, lists the various animals that are associated with the 12 Zodiac signs and the planets. In the book *Elements of Astrology by Al-Biruni*, edited by R.R. Wright, are listed groups of creatures rather than specific animals that correspond to the various heavenly bodies. Hence reptiles, snakes and serpents are linked with seven of the 12 Zodiac signs and two planets. It is open to debate if Al-Biruni's work can be classified as Iranian, Zoroastrian, Islamic or Arabic.

To the Iranian Zoroastrian, however, the origins are not important; the custom is. Each year, on Navroz day, they welcome the new year and the animal that is to preside over it at that exact moment when the sun crosses the equator and moves into the northern hemisphere; the moment of the vernal equinox. This exact moment,

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when the Fasli year 'turns,' is determined by pure astronomical science. Many phone the Nehru Planetarium or refer to the daily papers to pinpoint the exact moment of the equinox which need not necessarily fall on March 21. This year the year 'turned' on March 20 at 20 hours, 57 minutes and 58 seconds (IST). Iranian Zoroastrians, as is their custom, prefer to spend this moment in the embrace of their immediate family, in front of their 'table' and in prayer. The ritual over, they sprinkle each other with rose water and offer one another a hand mirror to smile in; a symbolic way of saying, "Keep smiling throughout the year." Jamshid-e-Navroz...

Jamshid-e-Navroz is a misnomer. According to Kotwal and Peer, the Fasli New Year and calendar have little to do with King Jamshid and less to do with Zoroastrianism. It is the creation of the eleventh century Islamic King of Iran, Jalaludin Malikshah and his minister Omar Khayyam who, apart from being the author of the celebrated *Rubaiyat*, was also an astrologer and astronomer, among other things.

The lunar calendar of Islam had its problems. Every 33 years it gained a full year over the solar calendar, which to the people of Iran translated into payment of one additional year's tax every 33 years. The problem that the rulers faced was that of collection. Since the best time to fill the treasury was just after the harvesting of crops, it was advisable to have a calendar that was seasonal rather than one that was fluid over the seasons like the lunar calendar. Hence the need for a solar calendar.

According to Kotwal and Peer, the New Year in Iran goes by a number of names: Navroz-e-Jalali or Navroz-e-Malik (after the king who introduced the Fasli, seasonal calendar), Navroz-e-Sal Juki (after the dynasty to which Jalaludin Malikshah belonged) or Navroz-e-Sultani (after the kings). Yes, it is also known as Jamshid-e-Navroz. "Anything big and important and we tag the name Jamshid, Noshirwan and even Zarathushtra to it," says Kotwal.

This arbitrary attribution of the name Jamshid is not restricted to Zoroastrians alone, says Peer. Iranians indulge in it too. He refers to the ruins of

King Darius in Persepolis which goes by the name Takht-e-Jamshid, though they have little or nothing to do with the king whose name they bear.

Poet Firdausi, in his *Shah Namah*, contributes his mite to the misnomer when he writes that King Jamshid was crowned on the first day - *navroz* - of the year. "He probably was," says Peer, "but his *navroz* corresponds to the Zoroastrian calendar which is distinct from the Fasli calendar of Jalaludin Malikshah."

The distinction between the two calendars is in the method of adjusting

"Anything big and important and we tag the name Jamshid, Noshirwan and even Zarathushtra to it"

for the extra quarter day that the earth gains each year while revolving around the sun. The Fasli calendar accounts for it by adding a day every four years; the Zoroastrian calendar by adding 30 days or a full month once every 120 years. This is more than a technical matter. For one, during the reign of Jamshid and other Zoroastrian kings, Navroz did not fall on March 21 each year and, more important in Kotwal's view, the Fasli calendar fails to qualify as a religious one. "The Zoroastrian calendar is a purely religious calendar. Every day has a name, every day has a presiding deity. Our prayers are linked to the calendar," says Kotwal. He points out that in the Fasli calendar there is no name for that extra day that comes once in every four years. "What if someone dies on that day; what prayers do we say? Do we say his prayers once every four years instead of every year? Nowhere in Zoroastrianism is there a leap year; the concept is non-existent in the religion."

Historically, the Zoroastrian intercalation was done every 120 years when the month prior to the adjustment was repeated. According to

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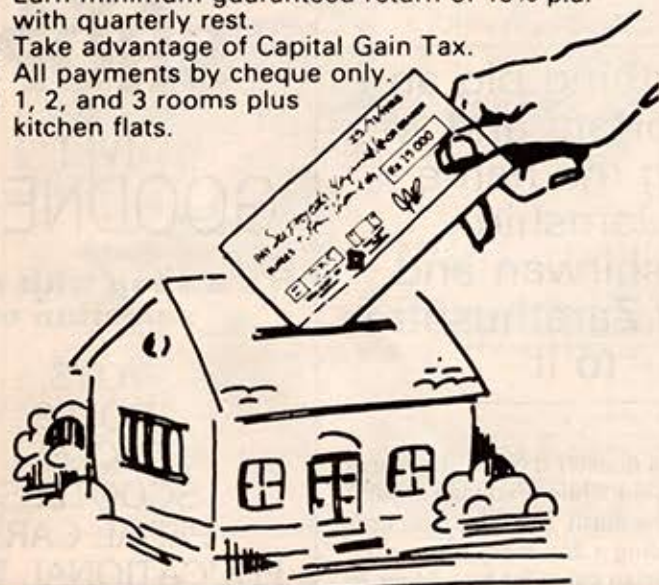
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Peer, the last intercalation was performed in the fifth century during the reign of Piroz. The priests of that time, Peer states, were great astrologers and they foresaw turmoil in Iran and the destruction of the religion. To forestall these events they suggested that an intercalation of two months be performed. The king approved and the necessary adjustments in the calendar were made. But, as events eventually showed, this was not enough to prevent the fall of the Sassanian and with him, the Zoroastrian Empire. What it did do was to deny Noshirwan the Just the privilege of presiding over the intercalation 120 years later as the task had already been done by his grandfather Piroz. About 70 years after Noshirwan's death (580 AD) the Sassanian Empire collapsed and the calendar was set adrift in time with no adjustments made for that quarter day the earth gained every year.

Peer goes further to say that *navroz*, or the first day of the New Year (*Hamazd roj* of Fravardin *mah*) during the time of the Sassanians fell not around the time of spring or the vernal equinox, but around the time of the summer solstice, the longest day in the year. Al-Biruni and modern astronomer Padam Godrej are Peer's sources in this deduction. Since the calendar was set adrift in the sixth century with no intercalation or adjustments, the date of Navroz fell back to around the vernal equinox and spring in the eleventh century, the time when King Jalaludin Malikshah and his minister Omar Khayyam reinstated the modified solar calendar.

Kotwal refers to the fact that in 1992 the Fasli *roj* will coincide with the Kadmi and Shehenshahi *roj* and the plea by some members of the community to unify all three calendars into the Fasli one. His advice is: don't. "It will only create turmoil," he gesticulates to illustrate, "and only create more factions in the community. As it is, we are so small..." But he does not grudge the Iranian Zoroastrians their function. "Definitely celebrate Navroz. Have a holiday. Be happy. There's nothing wrong. It's all well and good..." But, Kotwal clarifies, "Do not confuse the Fasli calendar with a Zoroastrian religious calendar, which it is not. When you start doing that you are bound to create problems."

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The religion of charity

Writers Ali Jafarey and Noshir Dadrawala emphasize the Zoroastrian spirit of charity and the need to assist the less fortunate

Scholar Ali Jafarey, editor of *The Zoroastrian*, the newsletter of the Zoroastrian Association of California, says that the Zoroastrian dictum of charity should be interpreted as rehabilitation of the underprivileged. Social worker Noshir Dadrawala, executive secretary of the Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy, suggests that in proportion to their income, Zoroastrians reserve a stipulated amount for charitable causes.

Jafarey: concept of charity

Charitable institutions founded by Zoroastrians in the shape of temples, schools, libraries, hospitals, sanatoriums, poorhouses, low-rent apartments, clubs, parks, recreation grounds and various other public endowments may be found everywhere in India, Iran, Pakistan and now in some Western countries where a sizeable Zoroastrian population exists. Human rights and social progress are two of the fundamentals of the Zoroastrian religion. And the idea dates back to Zarathushtra's announcement of his divine mission.

The last line of the oft-repeated *Ahunavar* (Avesta *Ahunavairya* or, as it is popularly called, *Yatha Ahu*), *yim driguhyā dadat vastarem*, in translation reads: rehabilitator of the restrained.

The key words are *drigu* and *vastar*. *Drigu* — meaning restrained, constrained, in Avesta and Sanskrit — is generally rendered as poor, weak,



Parsi banoo's Pateti wish: "May the spirit that animated these enlightened and illustrious pioneers of Parsi charity, philanthropy, industry, education and public spirit, descend on me and mine running from generation to generation and raising the Parsi name higher and higher in the scale of nations" (Pickings from *The Hindi Punch* — October 1903)



Left and inset: patients at the B.D. Petit Parsee General Hospital being entertained by youngsters
Below: a feast for the poor



a *drigu* – a righteous person, man or woman, who has been deprived of his rights and uprooted from home because of religious convictions – is sought to be rehabilitated by the Zoroastrian religion to become again a productive and creative member of society. The importance of the concept for Zarathushtra may be seen from its inclusion in the *Ahunavar* formula, the very motto of the Good Religion.

It is here that we understand the true meaning of Zoroastrian philanthropy: it is the rehabilitation of the persons who do not enjoy the rights they must have. It means eradicating the very causes which have turned them into *drigus*. It means freedom from oppression, absence of exploitation, genuine justice, full liberty, true democracy, effective measures, mutual help, and selfless service in the name of God.

Dadrawala: philanthropic package

"They (Parsis) assist the poor and are ever ready to provide for the sustenance and comfort of such as want it. Their universal kindness, either in employing such as are needy and able to work, or bestowing a reasonable bounteous charity to such as are infirm and miserable, leaves no man destitute of relief," observed Rev. J. Ovington in 1689.

Philanthropy runs in the lifeblood of every Parsi. The ancient scriptures as

well as the daily prayers of the Zoroastrians are replete with passages extolling philanthropy, and from the earliest period in Parsi history we find this value evident in the community's ethos.

According to the Pahlavi *Dinkard*, five things are considered worthy of merit: truthfulness, charity, skill, endeavor, and encouragement to others in good deeds. In fact, the *Dinkard* goes on to explain that "to be charitable is an act equivalent to promoting the Mazda-worshipping religion."

And so, whenever there has been a call to the community for funds for its various causes, it has been answered promptly and generously. However, a need has been felt for a package of philanthropy so that every Parsi can contribute his mite to all Parsi community causes and institutions which need funds on a regular basis. This will also help him to fulfill his duty to donate to other humanitarian local and national causes as a good citizen of India.

An added benefit is the exemption available to the donor under section 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961 for contributing to one of the women and children's funds set up by many of the Parsi charitable trusts. The B.D. Petit Parsee General Hospital's Women and Children's Fund is one such example.

With this end in view we have worked out a model philanthropic package

needy, meek. In the Pahlavi and Persian versions it acquired the notion of a poor and needy person. One meaning of *vastar* (derived from *vas*) is interpreted to mean shepherd, herdsman, agriculturist, or protector. The second meaning is to settle, to inhabit. This interpretation has many derivatives in Sanskrit, and yet every scholar of Avesta has neglected this concept of a settlement.

That is the reason why many take it that helping the poor means giving alms, a version of charity which implies only temporary relief. That is the very reason why poverty has not been eradicated. How could temporary measures cure a chronic social ill?

Should we take the true meanings of the two terms, things would change. *Drigu* has been used 10 times in the *Avesta* (Yasna 10.13, 19.14, 27.13, 34.5, 53.9, 57.10, Yasht 10.84, 11.3, Avesta passages in Pahlavi Pursishniha 26 and 44). These references show that



Cusrow Baug: one of the several housing colonies for Parsis in Bombay founded by the Wadia family

of Rs 1,000. This is only a model and each individual may modify it according to his preferences. Further, while the model is for Rs 1,000, it goes without saying that the donor may divide the amount or multiply it as he/she thinks fit.

Considering today's busy lifestyle, this exercise of making donations to various causes could be done by each Parsi once or twice a year, either on his own birthday or that of his loved ones, the New Year, or a death anniversary. Whether it be once a year or once in two years, whether on the lines of the philanthropic package outlined here below or otherwise, it is time we rededicate ourselves to the sublime teachings of our great prophet: "Happiness comes to him

who seeks happiness for others (Yasna 43.1)." Let this sincere prayer be on every Parsi lip: "May generosity prevail over niggardliness in this house (Yasna 60.5)."

The minimum annual contribution of each individual could be based on the combined monthly income of a family after tax, divided by the number of members. The rate of contribution could range from one and a half percent for families with a monthly per capita income of less than Rs 1,500 to six percent for those earning over Rs 2,500.

Personal preferences play a very important part in deciding who the beneficiaries would be. As a broad guideline we would suggest the following pattern: 40 percent to Parsi char-

ities, 40 percent to regional and/or national and international charities, and 20 percent for ad hoc donations for natural calamities, charity shows for good causes, medical aid to deserving individuals, donations for religious causes in Bombay or outside, etc.

We have shortlisted a few of the many organizations which work for the Parsi community, for your guidance, with suggested amounts for distribution totalling Rs 1000.

The 'A' Group consists of Parsi community causes and institutions, and includes:

- *Byramji Jeejeebhoy Parsee Charitable Institution*, 33, M. Karve Road, Bombay 400004 (imparts highly subsidized education, free text books, lunch, etc to poor and deserving Parsi students) – Rs 100
- *Dadar Parsee Youth Assembly*, Perviz Hall, 800 Jam-e-Jamshed Road, Dadar, Bombay 400014 (education and welfare of the community's youth) – Rs 50
- *Jam-e-Jamshed Charity Fund*, Ballard House, Mangalore Street, Fort, Bombay 400038 (provides doles of cash, clothes and grain to the poor and needy) – Rs 50
- *Dadar Athornan Madressa*, 651-652, Firdausi Road, Mancherji Joshi Colony, Dadar, Bombay 400014 (provides academic and priestly education with boarding and lodging facilities, to boys coming from priestly families) – Rs 50



*A stall at Khareghat Colony symbolizing the enterprise of a handicapped Parsi youth who started running it
Right: Parsi ladies at Patuck Institute are encouraged to earn their living*



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- *Bomanji D. Petit Parsee General Hospital*, Bhulabhai Desai Road, Bombay 400026 (provides all forms of medical treatment to Parsis) – Rs 50
- *The Bombay Parsi Punchayet*, 209 Dadabhoy Naoroji Road, Bombay 400001 (it has a large number of objectives, covering every facet of the community) – Rs 100

The total donation for category 'A' would amount to Rs 400.

The 'B' Group consists of local and national causes and includes:

- *Indian Cancer Society*, 74, J. Wadia Road, Bombay 400012 (to prevent cancer mortality by preventive check-ups, assistance to cancer patients in various ways, research on cancer, etc) – Rs 50
- *Thalassaemie and Sickle Cell Society of Bombay*, PO Box 7284, Rajawadi, Bombay 400077 (to help patients of thalassaemie, a genetic disease, the treatment for which includes lifelong medication and blood transfusions) – Rs 50
- *HelpAge India*, 1, Jai Singh Road, New Delhi 110001 (to institute wel-

fare, health and rehabilitation schemes for India's 45 million aged people) – Rs 50

- *Sir J.J. Hospital*, Bombay 400008 (probably the largest public hospital in Bombay, founded on Parsi charity, and

The daily prayers of the Zoroastrians are replete with passages extolling philanthropy

therefore deserving the continued support of the Parsi community) – Rs 50

- *National Society for Equal Opportunities for the Handicapped, India*, Postal Colony Road, Bombay 400071 (renders assistance to individuals and institutions for giving aid to the handicapped) – Rs 50

- *National Association for the Blind*, 91 M. Gandhi Road, Bombay 400023 – Rs 50

- *Prime Minister's Relief Fund* (for relief in cases of natural calamity) – Rs 50

- *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund*, Regional Office for South Central Asia, UNICEF House, 73, Lodi Estate, New Delhi 110003 (looks after the needs of children all over the world) – Rs 50

The total amount donated to category 'B' charities is Rs 400.

The writers would welcome readers' views on the subject of this article. It is also proposed to set up an organization which would handle the administrative work of collecting donations from prospective donors and passing them on to institutions of their choice.

This will require the service of at least one person. Those interested in rendering honorary or semi-honorary service for this purpose may contact: Kaiyos T. Marfatia or Noshir H. Dadrawala, 10/33 Shiv Sagar, Worli Hill Road, Bombay 400018. Tel 4932948.

"Concept of charity," edited from an article by Ali Jafarey in *The Zoroastrian* (February-March 1988)

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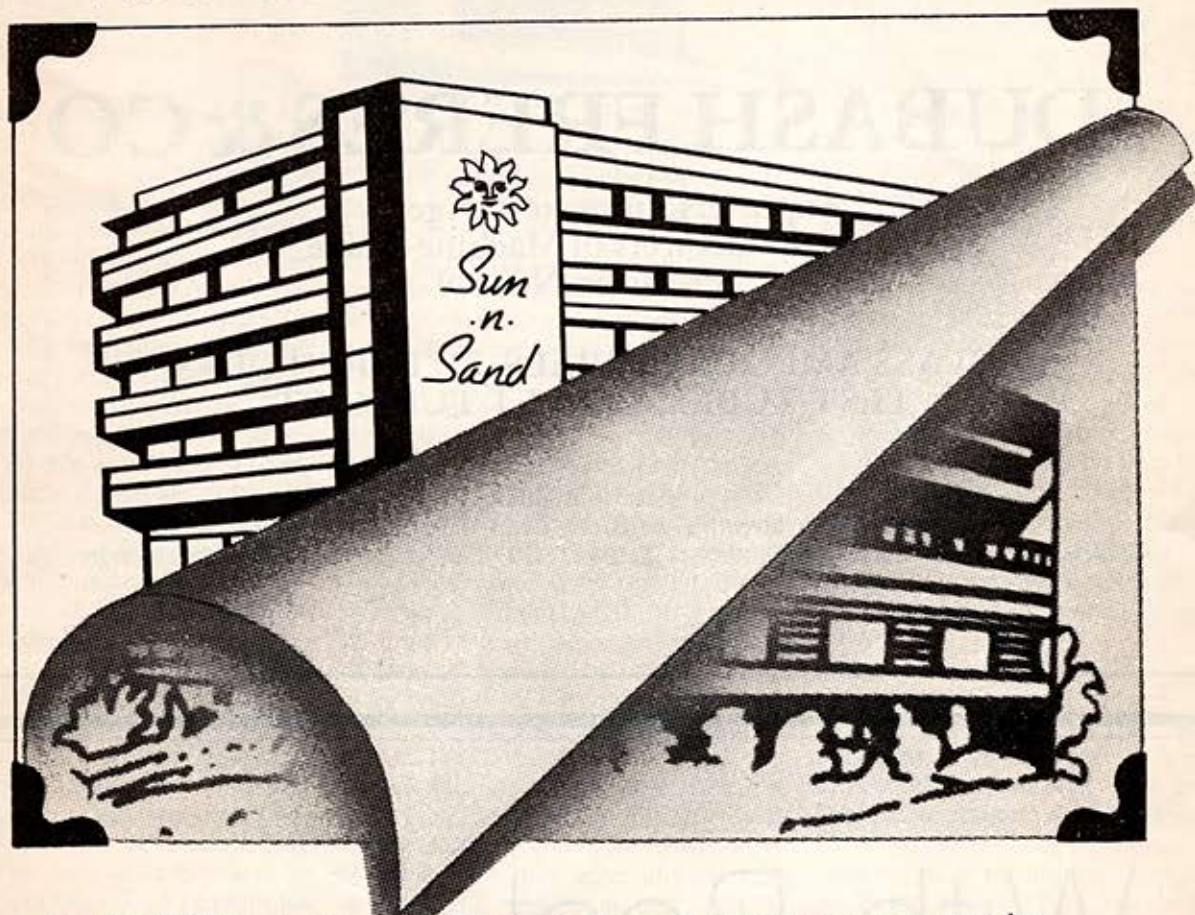
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DOES ZOROASTRIANISM TEACH REINCARNATION?

Ali A. Jafarey

The souls of the righteous cross over *chinvat pul* while those of sinners return to be purified

Parsiana, (August 1988) has presented a very good panorama of views expressed by scholars of Zoroastrianism on the interesting and somewhat controversial issue, "Does Zoroastrianism teach reincarnation?" The result was, "No, say 25 of the 29 scholars who responded to *Parsiana's* questionnaire on the subject." Had the mail, sent to an old address of mine, got to me, my response would have been "No, but..." Here is the reason for that 'but.'

Reincarnation – and its more general synonym, transmigration – means passing of a soul into a new body or new form of life, especially in a new human body. It is an idea and a belief held, among others, by the Egyptians, the Greek philosophers, the Gnostics and the Manichaeans in the past, and the sophisticated Hindus, Buddhists and Jains and some simple animistic religions to this day. A look at the Avesta and Pahlavi writings will be sufficient to make a negative statement. There is no reincarnation or transmigration in Younger Avestan texts, Pahlavi scriptures, and Zoroastrian Persian books. It is as simple as that. On the contrary, they speak of the soul leaving the body; remaining near the body for three days; departing for its ultimate destination on the fourth morning in company of *daena* (conscience), a beauty or hag of a lady, only to be judged by three yazatas (Mihr, Srosh and Rashn); crossing or falling down the *chinvat pul*

guarded by dogs; ascending to four stages of paradise or being thrown into four layers of hell, or being held in suspense in *hamistagan* until the final resurrection of soul and body, with heaven or hell as the final goal. It is a picturesque eschatology, based on pre-Zarathushtrian Aryan beliefs and Gathic conceptions, and developed and elaborated through Avestan and Pahlavi ages after the Gathic era. It is this eschatology which, in its earlier stages, influenced Judaism and Christianity, and subsequently Islam and Bahaism.

However, a closer look at the *Gathas* (Yasna 27.14 to 34.15 and 43.1 to 51.22 and then 53.1 to 54.1) and their closest supplement *Haptanhaiti* (Yasna 35 to 41) gives an altogether new view.

A study of all the instances found in the two scriptures shows that the soul is created and given a form by God (29.1). Men and animals, in fact the living world, have souls (28.4, 29.1, 39.1). Soul is associated with conscience, intellect, teaching, choice, thoughts, words, and deeds (45.2). The soul grows strong through righteousness (45.7). It attains "good happiness" by consulting the good mind (*vohu manah*) and understanding the reality of life through righteousness (44.8). In fact, a progressive man's soul accords with righteousness (34.2). Therefore Zarathushtra, in his opening prayer (Yasna 28), aspires to

please the soul of the living world by his wise and righteous actions in order to usher in a new era, and attunes his soul to the good mind (28.1, 4 and Yasna 29). His soul turns to divine principles of righteousness and the good mind for help for himself and his companions. When oppressed, the soul complains to God for help (29.1).

Soul and conscience upbraid a wrongdoer at the sorting bridge (*chinvato peretu*), the crossroads of good and evil (46.11, 51.13). In fact, if it belongs to an "evil-ruling, evil-doing, evil-speaking, evil-conceiving, and evil-thinking" person, it turns back because it has really been dwelling as a "guest" in the house of wrong (49.11). Souls of the righteous, eternally strong, are guarded by Ahura Mazda in His abode (45.7, 49.10). The wrongful, especially the superstitious, ritualistic priests and princes are upbraided by their souls because they dwell all along in the house of wrong (46.11, 49.11). They experience repeated failures (47.7). The singers of *Haptanhaiti* join in by venerating the soul of the living world, their own souls, those of their domesticated animals, and particularly, "the souls of law-abiding, righteous persons, born in whatever land, both men and women, whose consciences are growing, have grown, or shall grow" (39.1, 2).

Thus, soul is a principle, faculty or force, created by God and strengthened by righteousness. It may be

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clarified here that soul is not the animating force in the *Gathas*. It is *ushtana* which, when breathed into a physical body, gives life (31.11, 33.14, 34.14, 43.16). In Yasna 55, tribute to the *Gathas*, death is said to be the separation of consciousness (*baodhanh*) and the physical frame. The soul, if belonging to a righteous being, lives eter-

The wrongful, remaining behind, are ultimately refined too, to be led to perfection and eternity

nally in the divine abode; but if it belongs to a wrongful individual, it temporarily resides, as a guest, in the world of wrong. In other words, only the souls of the righteous cross over the sorting bridge, and those of the wrongful return until the wrongful are refined to be worthy of the crossing. It may be pointed out that there is no indication of the soul, moved enough by evil actions to complain or upbraid, being subjected to consequences of good deeds and evil actions. The rewards and reprimands, more mental through one's *daena*, conscience, than physical, are for the person endowed with faculties of thinking and discerning. Also there is no sign at all of the souls remaining behind to reincarnate into any form.

But what is the sorting bridge, *chinvato peretu* or as commonly called, *chinvat pul*? It is mentioned thrice in the *Gathas*. It is the bridge which separates Zarathushtra and his companions from the wrongful people. Speaking of the earlier failures in his divine mission and the ultimate success in Yasna 46, Zarathushtra states: "Omniscient God, whoever, man or woman, shall give me what You know to be the best in life - rewards for righteousness, power through the good mind - I shall accompany him and her in glorifying such as You are, and shall, with all of them, cross over the sorting bridge" (46.10). Then he turns to the priests and princes who are bent on destroying life with their evil actions, and says that they are upbraided by their souls when they approach the bridge,

only to return until they turn into righteous persons (46.11, 51.13).

It may be made clear here that whether the verb *paiti-yeinti* is taken to mean return or approach, the *Gathas* do not give the slightest chance of interpreting it to fit with the common notion that those not crossing the bridge fall down into hell. Does it mean another life? Zarathushtra, divinely logical as he always is, does not describe a vivid picture of a world from which no one has physically returned to tell of his experiences. He does speak about the consequences of our thoughts, words, and deeds - better for the good and bad for the evil. Yet he does not draw a line between life and after-death. In fact, life does not part with death. It is, indeed, a continuity. And death, a natural process, is a transitory passage, perhaps in an anesthetic state, to eternity, finality.

Zarathushtra speaks but only once of *parahum* or future life (46.19). The stanza reads: "Whoever truly accomplishes through righteousness the complete renovation of life for me, Zarathushtra, as is the will of God, deserves the desired future-life in a fruitful, living world as a reward." This does not seem to allude to a heaven. It is the fruitful, living world in which we live. *Garō demana*, the house of song - interpreted to mean paradise as against *drujo demana*, house of wrong - is explained in the *Gathas* as the house of the good mind (*vanheush demane, mananho* - 32.15), in which Zarathushtra wants us all to "offer Him our devotions" (45.8). The house of wrong is the house of worst mind in this earthly life of exploitation and destruction (32.13). The *Gathas* say that while turning to good mind and righteousness leads one onto the path to perfection and immortality and places one in the "house of song" to live with Ahura Mazda, the wrongful, remaining behind, are ultimately refined too to be led to perfection and eternity. In fact, the sublime songs repeatedly emphasize progress, perfection and immortality as the goal of life, to reach - rather to return to - Ahura Mazda. The house of song or the house of good mind are but allegories for the ultimate mental state of a righteous person.

A question arises now: Was the Zarathushtrian view of the refinement

and the ultimate union of soul with Godhead lost to orthodox Zoroastrianism, but retained, transformed and developed by Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism in the east, by Gnosticism in the west, and by Manichaeism on the Iranian Plateau and around, only to emerge in a form of Sufism under Islam? The second question is: Did the Gathic refinement and the reunion of soul with the Godhead and the Buddhist *shunya* give some of the Sufi orders, with their roots deep into the coexisting Zoroastrianism and Buddhism of pre-Islamic days in Central Asia, the blended belief that the soul remains in this world until it is refined enough to rise and be merged into the Godhead (*fana fi-Allah*)? Although we know for certain that Zarathushtrian teachings did find their way to east and west and influenced Indian thought, Greek philosophy, and other knowledge-seeking circles, a satisfactory answer would warrant deeper studies of the subject.

But whatever the outcome, the conclusion is that the *Gathas* do not speak about heaven and hell, or of judgment, or of a physical or spiritual resurrection, or of reincarnation and

Divinely logical, Zarathushtra does not describe a vivid picture of a world from which no one has physically returned

transmigration (*samsara*), or release (*moksha*), or emptiness (*shunya*), but only point to the refining of the soul for an ultimate existence with Godhead. A final word of caution: the *Gathas*, as repeatedly said by me, are the guide. They are thought provokers (*manthras*). They stimulate our thoughts, point to the right road, then leave it to us to search, to research, discover, determine, know and comprehend the truth. They want us to think, speak and work for progress, perfection and immortality, in order to refine ourselves to dwell with our loving God in a state of songful life. May the *Gathas* guide our souls to our goal - *Garō Demana*.

WOMEN AND MARRIAGE

Gustasp Irani

The two-kilogram, 445-page report confirmed what has been known all along: There is likely to be a decrease in the Parsi population because of the trend towards late marriages and the adoption of the small family norm. The study, titled *Attitudes of Parsi Youth (Females) Towards Marriage*, by social scientist Prof (Ms) Homai Billimoria was commissioned by the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India and the Bombay Parsi Punchayet to ascertain how strong the bonds of marriage were, the number of children desired, and so on. The findings, based on a survey of 100 young Parsi women, further indicated that married couples did not want to have more than two children due to inadequacy of housing and other economic reasons. In fact, 44 percent of the married women found it difficult to look after children as they worked full time. Generally, it was considered difficult to bring up children these days due to problems in educating them, shortage of servants and other difficulties. Quite a few unmarried respondents wanted one child only and only eight percent felt that others should have more than one child.

To stem the tide of declining numbers, the report – released by Federation president and BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla at the executive council meeting of the Federation in Ukai in April 1988 – offers a number of recommendations, some tentative and open to further study before they become policy goals of the Punchayet. The first suggestion is that the Punchayet should consider building bigger houses in place of the two-room tenements it is constructing at present which, according to the report, “may adversely affect the growth of (the) Parsi population. Married couples living in such houses may decide not to have children or only one child instead of the usual two.”

Another suggestion aims to assist those who have deferred having additional children because of economic constraints: by providing family allowances to deserving cases. “However, this needs further research and deep consideration,” the report notes. “What would be the criteria? Would it be per capita income, or a flat allo-



wance? On what basis would a couple be eligible? Would they really have one more child if they could afford it?" it asks.

Also recommended is pre-marital, reality-oriented counselling for Parsi women whose expectations of the man they hope to marry are probably too high. Simultaneously, the Parsi male should be encouraged to boost his earning power with assistance from the Panchayet in terms of career guidance and counselling, and financial assistance for higher/technical education for deserving candidates. The Panchayet is also advised to act as a catalyst and, along with other community-oriented organizations, encourage human resource development programs to boost enterprising youths. Finally, the report recommends sex education programs "at all levels starting from the high school level," and family counselling services along with day-care centers and child support services, which would not only ease the burden on the working mother, but also provide the children with a healthy environment to grow up in.

It is important to note that the recommendations are meant primarily to encourage Parsi couples to have a second child at best. The question of having more children is not the issue as the majority of the respondents (92 percent) indicated that their ideal family would comprise of just two children. Only eight percent wanted three or more children. When asked about the number of children other couples should bear, only six percent opted for figures of three or more. Therein lies the tale; the issue is not the inability to have more children but the desire to have a few. To another question asking the married women why they did not want more children, the answers were to be indicated on a list of multiple-choice responses provided. Twenty-two percent attributed accommodation as the chief constraint and another 32 percent mentioned economic

reasons for not having more children. Significantly, 22 percent singled out difficulties in bringing up more children and looking after them when working.

What about the fourth and fifth child that logistically will determine the survival and growth of the community? The report does not elaborate on the subject. As it points out, it is an 'exploratory survey' that limits itself to three main objectives: one, determining the attitude of young Parsi women to marriage; two, the expectations of Parsi women from marriage and their attitudes to sex and family size; and finally, to determine the marital adjustment of those already married.

A total sample of 100 young Parsi women in the age-group of 18 to 35 was selected. Fifty of the sample group were married and the other 50 unmarried. The criteria for selecting the married sample (taken from the Registrar of Parsi Marriages of the Bombay High Court) was that they had to be married for at least seven years and should still be married at the time of the survey. Nineteen of the unmarried respondents were selected from the list of the matrimonial bureau of the BPP and the rest from recommendations made by the married respondents and the counsellors working for the BPP. Efforts were made to see that the sample was fairly evenly distributed over the city of Bombay. According to the report, "The sample surveyed, on the whole, was middle class (and) better off than the rest of the Parsi community. Yet," it adds, "one of the most important reasons for not having more children was economic." By implication, then, the problem is more acute than the report suggests.

Excluded from the survey were the young married and unmarried Parsi males and partners of broken marriages and inter-religious unions. The report laments, "In view of the limitations of time and finances, these interesting aspects, which no doubt need

further study, had perforce to be left out."

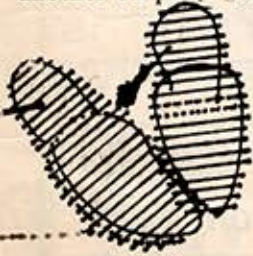
However, by excluding divorced and separated women, the sample, in light of the third objective of the survey - to determine the marital adjustment of those married - is incomplete. It is not really surprising that all the respondents are maritally adjusted; 50 percent fall into the well adjusted group and the other half into the adjusted group. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that late marriages

The issue is not inability to have more children, but the desire to have a few

led to better adjustment. Expectedly, those who did not have to change their standard of living and had adequate accommodation also fell into the better adjusted group.

Though the project cannot be faulted for excluding young unmarried Parsi males because of the limitations of its scope and resources, the findings seem to reinforce the pre-conceived notion that the unmarried Parsi male is one of the main causes of the community's woes. "(The) Parsi woman has high expectations regarding the man she marries. Perhaps the expectations are too high... either girls will have to be educated to lower their expectations or men will have to work harder, earn more, be more educated. (Otherwise) the Parsi women will remain single or marry out of the community..." The opinion seems to be a trifle harsh especially since the male has not been given the opportunity to state his case. Silently he must examine what his female counterpart expects of him and strive to match up in order to win favor with the community again. What are these expectations of the Parsi female?

When asked to rank the qualities most wanted in their spouse in order of priority, the unmarried Parsi woman ranked 'understanding and accommodating towards you' first. 'Affectionate' was ranked second. 'Fidelity' ranked third. On the other side of the scale 'industriousness' ranked twenty



What the Parsi woman looks for first in a spouse is understanding and affection, according to a recent survey

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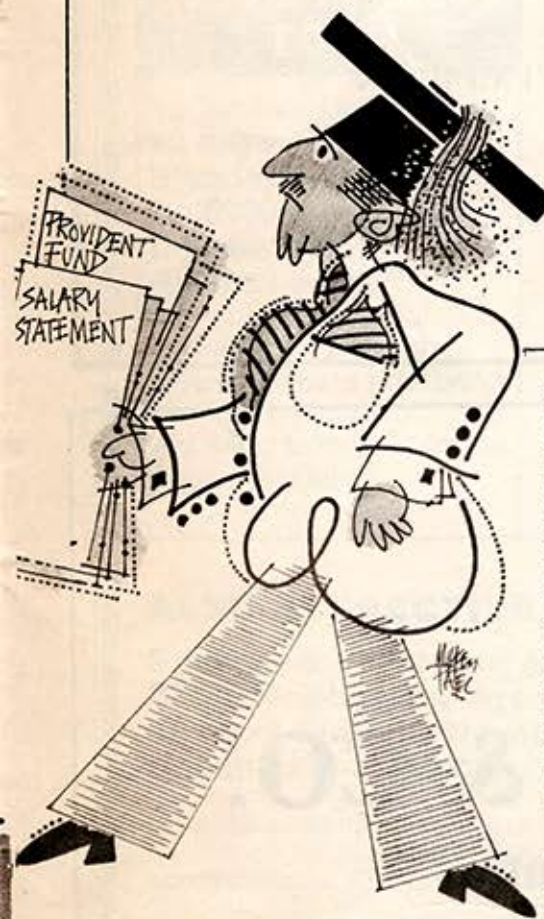
He is loving, considerate, understanding and supportive of his wife.
He need not be particularly hand-

some though he must have gentlemanly and social poise. He frowns on womanizing and is devoted to his wife. He is well educated, preferably with a post-graduate degree in any professional or technical line, and earning over Rs 3,000 a month. He is talented, intelligent and has a sense of humor, though there is no great pressure on him to be overly industrious or ambitious. He should have an equable temper but he should not smoke, drink or gamble. He need not be particularly religious and will be expected to look after his wife and children, providing for them financially.

He could expect a supportive and accommodating wife. She will chip

in financially by working; if needed, she will be willing to change her food, social and even religious practices and not hold it against him. However, he should not expect her to change her values or friends; yes, male friends, included. Pre-marital necking with her is fine, petting okay, but beyond that point the male will be ill advised to push his luck. After marriage, though, he can expect a fairly rewarding sex life. He should not expect a dowry but he is free to accept one if it is given. Being a divorcee or a widower will not be held against him.

If he is lucky the punchayet will give him a flat in one of its baus... hopefully before he's extinct.



second (28 points), closely followed by personality and character attributes like presentable, good character (22 points). Economic aspects like well settled and ability to support family scored only 9 points. The expectations of the ideal partner then, if one goes by the unmarried women's response, are not limited to industry, earning capacity and educational qualifications. The young, unmarried Parsi male needs more than a post graduate degree and a salary over Rs 3,000 to win his lady fair - he has got to be humane.

When he does win a Parsi bride, he will find in her an accommodating and adjustable partner. According to the report most of the unmarried women are willing to change their eating and other habits, their social life and forms of entertainment, their living standards and even their attitudes to religious matters and Parsi customs and, that too, with minimum resentment towards their husbands. They are not willing to compromise where friends or values are concerned. Though the report does not deal with inter-religious marriages, this revelation about Parsi girls' readiness to accommodate and adjust could be a dis-

turbing factor for those who disapprove of girls marrying out of the community.

The chief consultant for the study was Prof. P. Ramchandran, with contributions from the faculty members of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and the Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work, notes Billimoria. Ms. Lajwanti Trivedi, who was engaged as a research assistant, was assisted in data collection by Ms. Diana Marfatia, Ms. Kamal Shroff, Ms. Roda Pardiwalla and Ms. Jeroo Billimoria. Prof. Noshir Kaikobad, convener of the Federation's school counselling project, is also acknowledged by Billimoria for "his inspiration and continued support."

In summing up, the scope of this 'exploratory survey' limits it from coming up with comprehensive findings or concrete proposals. It is a start, though, a painstaking, professional effort, the first step of data-based facts to start building upon. As it points out, more research and study has got to be done before the problems facing the community come into sharper focus. But that should not be an excuse for the leading institutes of the community to defer acting upon it.

tieth out of 22 options. 'Drive towards accomplishment' managed a poor fourteenth and 'ambition' only a tenth rank.

In a similar exercise to determine the concept of the ideal spouse, once again the unmarried respondent placed the greatest emphasis on interactional and emotional qualities like loving, understanding, considerate, humorous, helpful, (55 points). Mental qualities like educated, talented, intelligent came a distant

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Surveying the community

Parinaz Gandhi

"We know what makes the Parsi marriage tick. Why the marriage does not tick is still not known though it is probably because of the very high demands and expectations of the community which insists on high living standards and 'must have this and that,'" noted sociologist Prof (Ms) Homai Billimoria who had undertaken a research study on the "Attitudes of Parsi Youth (Females) towards Marriage."

Contrary to the general impression that divorces are on the increase in the community, the married women surveyed viewed marriage as a permanent feature - "for life." This means that there is not much fear of "westernization and modernization altering the existing values," stated 61-year-old Billimoria in an interview at her resi-

dence on February 22, 1989. The social researcher, whose rotund figure was matched by her rounded features and wavy hair caught in a knot at the nape of her neck, continued, "There is a very small tendency towards premarital sex in the community. But it may increase. It will depend on the role models, the generation gap and the degree of freedom allowed to a child."

The premium on privacy is high among all Parsi families, observed Billimoria. Keeping this requirement in mind, houses should ideally be of the size of two bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen. It is not necessary to have big rooms, but the dividing wall should be there, recommended Billimoria to the community's decision

makers who are planning ways and means to induce couples to increase the size of their families. Referring to the demographic study of the Parsis in Gujarat, by the US-based demographer Dr (Ms) Ketayun Gould who, in her research on the community's declining figures, found that housing space was not correlated to marriage or having children, Billimoria clarified, "What I am saying is that lack of housing is not the main reason for couples not procreating; but for want of space, they will definitely not think of expanding the family." Many mothers surveyed by her felt that "*jagaa kah che* (where is the space)" for another child.

Billimoria does however mention that these findings are based on an ex-

While a lack of housing is not the main reason for a declining community, it does restrict the size of the family, says researcher Ms Homai Billimoria



ploratory survey of the 100 females interrogated and cannot be compared with a sample survey, where the sampling procedure adopted would have been more representative of the general population. But the latter procedure would have doubled the cost for the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India and the Bombay Parsi Punchayet which sponsored the study. While no conscious attempt was made to reach the middle-class stratum of the community, it so happened that most of the respondents fell in this category. In the responses received to the questionnaire, Billimoria sensed no 'holding back' of information.

Also omitted from the survey were the divorcees and those married outside the community. And since gauging the marital adjustment of the community was one of the aims of this study, the views of these ladies would have provided an insight into their concept of matrimony. "Comparing the married females with the divorcees would have been in the nature of a different study altogether," so they were deliberately given the miss, ex-

plained Billimoria.

"There is no doubt that the population of the community is going to decline very rapidly (seeing that the females are in no hurry to get married at a young age)," deduced the sociologist. "Mind you, the study never aimed at reaching this conclusion,

Instead of causing a rift, living with in-laws contributed to a greater degree of marital happiness

but this fact came across" very glaringly to the researchers. Her prognosis for the community's future: sharing the fate of other endangered species!

Many said that "Marriage is not the only thing in life," repeated the researcher. However, not a single woman from the 50 unmarried respondents in the 18-35 age-group (who constituted half the sample surveyed) categorically said that she did not want to get married. "There is nothing like an aver-

sion to marriage," believes Billimoria, "provided they find 'the right man.'"

This attitude of delaying marriage until "Mr Perfect" comes on the scene would be representative of the unmarried Parsi female not only of Bombay but probably of the other urban towns and cities of India too, rationalized Billimoria. The women in such areas being well educated, career-oriented and basically self-supporting, have "other alternatives besides marriage to improve their prospects. Very rarely do you find girls opting for marriage directly after passing their SSC," she noted. The inherent fear that "marriage is a risk" worries all matrimonial candidates so they are keener to get a graduation and postgraduation degree rather than be saddled with a marital degree for the rest of their lives.

To match their educational qualifications, they insist that their suitors too have a postgraduate degree appended to their name, and a minimum earning capacity of Rs 3,000. Quoting figures from Dr Malini Karkal's demographic study of the Parsis, Billimoria pointed out that only 10

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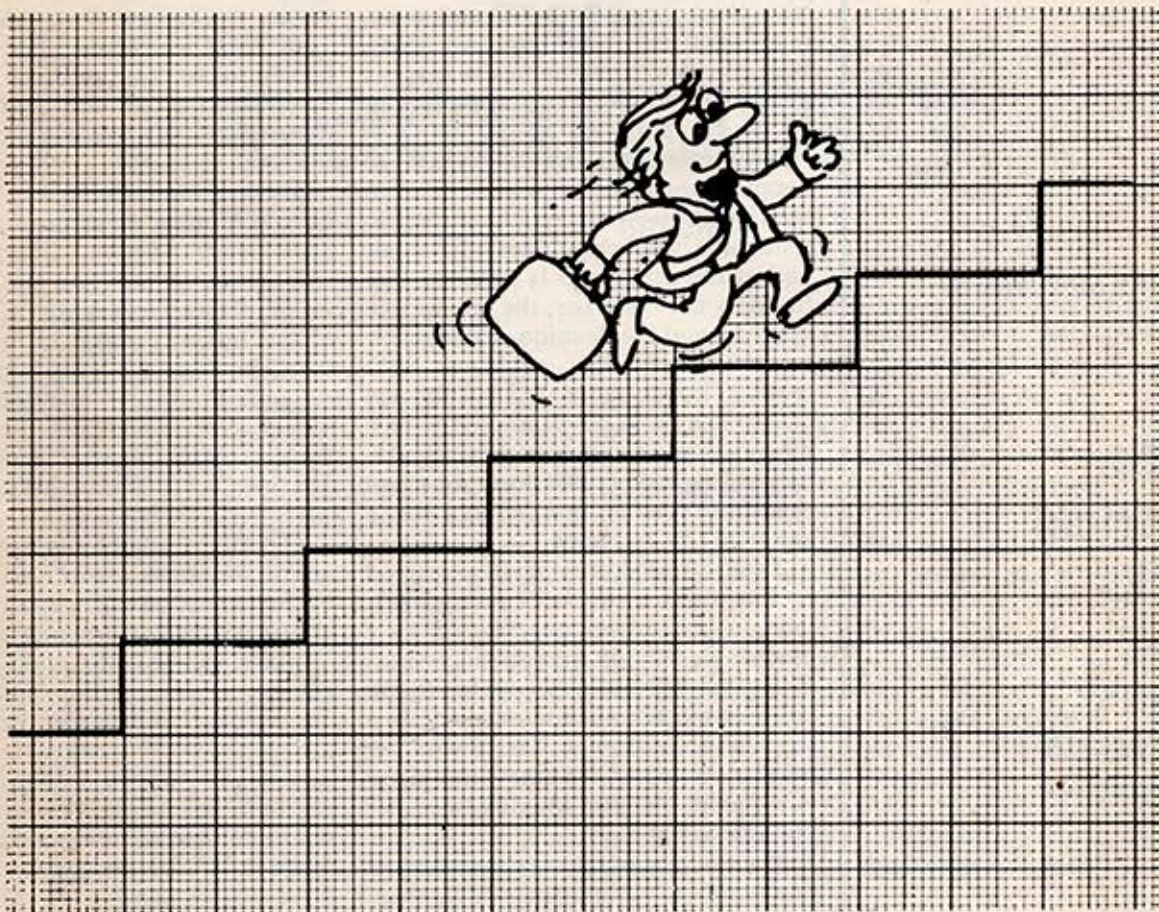
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percent of the Parsi males are supposed to be postgraduates. Under such circumstances, "considering the availability, the expectations of the Parsi females are very high," Billimoria maintained. And if both the partners in a marriage are earning, why should there be a precondition that the man must draw Rs 3,000 and over, questioned the social scientist. Members of other communities manage a house comfortably on a much lower income, she continued.

Late marriages are correlated to happier marriages, it was seen from the replies given by the 50 married respondents who constituted the other half of the sample. It is assumed that the later the marriage, the greater the maturity and the decision-making ability of the individual, explained Billimoria. Though she married at the age of 33, Billimoria advocates early marriages in the interest of community statistics. "However, this does not mean that those who get married at a young age won't be as happy."

There was another myth shattered by this study: instead of causing a rift, living with in-laws contributed to a greater degree of marital happiness. Billimoria attributes this factor to the working mother phenomenon where a woman can pursue her career with her mind at rest when she knows that there is a family member looking after her child in her absence.

The findings of the survey should be made public, recommends Billimoria. Before the community can plan any follow-up action, the views of community and non-community members should be ascertained which would only be possible if 10,000 to 12,000 copies of the educational-sociological report are published and distributed to those interested. If a charity trust or an organization could sponsor the publication, most libraries would welcome such a report, she was sure.

For Billimoria, this survey was of special interest for it is the first time that the subject matter of her study concerned her community. Through the years she has researched topics like adoption, juvenile delinquency, child welfare agencies and institutions for the socially handicapped, sponsored by the United Nations or the United States.

A director of various research projects, Billimoria retired from the facul-

ty of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) last year. After schooling at St Anne's High School, Bombay, she graduated in philosophy and psychology from St Xavier's College, did her MA in sociology, followed by a diploma in social work from TISS and finally an MA in social work from the University of Chicago. It was the Dorabji Tata Trust which gave her the scholarship for her first research. Thereafter Billimoria got the confidence to undertake other research projects and was even conferred a United Nations' fellowship for training in social welfare. A founder member of the Indian Sociological Society, Billimoria has also served as member and secretary on the Research Advisory Committee of the Indian Council of Social Welfare. Her daughter Jeroo is in the USA studying non-profit management and son Rustom works for the Housing Development Finance Corporation. She lost her husband Merwan three years ago.

The BPP's school and family counselling programs are being monitored, by Billimoria who is working towards improving the performance of students - from select Parsi-founded schools in Bombay - both at school and at home. The counselling program will now be broadened so that sex education can be imparted at the school level, and children be taught to nurture only realistic marital expectations. The findings of the marital survey also prompted Billimoria to recommend the establishment of community centers. Sponsored by the BPP and the Federation, the project will be launched on an experimental basis at Rustom Baug. At these centers, not only the school children, but their families and the group within which they interact, will be counselled too. "We could perhaps start supervised recreation for young adults at the baug level," added Billimoria.

Recently, the researcher was commissioned by the World Zoroastrian Organisation to submit a scheme that would indicate the basic ancillary facilities required by the aged who are said to comprise nearly 20 percent of the total Parsi population in Bombay. A change in the community's birth figures may not be probable but taking better care of the aged should, hopefully, be within the reach of the community.



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When Ms Cashmera Bhaya started on her socio-economic survey of the rural Parsis in south Gujarat in 1984, she visited 337 villages where Parsis had been known to reside as per the previous survey conducted by Maneck Mistry in 1967. Over a period of 18 years, she found, all traces of the community had disappeared from 128 of these villages. The declining trend, if one accepts Bhaya's findings, will continue.

The findings of the survey, sponsored by the World Zoroastrian Organisation, London and the Surat Parsi Punchayet (SPP), were first made public in *The Bombay Samachar* of September 4, 1988. As per the information collected from 684 families from the three districts surveyed - Bharuch, Valsad and Surat - over a period of a year and a half (June '84 to

December '85), the highest concentration of Parsis is in Surat where there are 400 families spread over 129 villages. In Valsad, there are 231 families in 68 villages and in Bharuch, 56 families in 12 villages.

The total population of Parsis in the three districts is 2,477, which works out to an average of approximately 3.6 members per family. In 1967, according to Mistry's survey, the population of Parsis in these areas was 3,881. Hence over the last 18 to 20 years the population has declined by 1404. If the trend persists, in the next 20 years there will be only a little over 1,000 Parsis left. Bhaya attributes the decline to "low fertility rate, decline in economic conditions, and migration."

Records show that the total number of Parsi births in these three districts of Gujarat for the period 1981 to 1985 was 131, compared to 233 in 1964 to 1969. Deaths over the same comparative period were 118 in 1981 to 1985, as against 84 in 1964 to 1969. The low birth rate is reflected in the low per-

centage of children (17 percent below the age of 14) amongst the Parsis of this region. The high death rate confirms the high ratio of the aged in the community (38 percent over the age of 50). The reproductive age group, 15 to 49, constitute only 45 percent when, according to Bhaya, it should be between 50 to 55 percent. The Parsis, in Bhaya's words, are "a biologically declining community."

As reflected in the findings, the ratio of married Parsis to non-married Parsis is almost 1:1, a significant factor which has contributed to the decline in the rural Parsi population figures. Bhaya reports that the community, far from being illiterate peasantry, is fairly well educated. Only 68 adults (17 males and 51 females) have had no formal education.

By occupational distribution, the community is primarily agrarian. Fifty-six percent (or 507 people) of the 914 gainfully employed are involved in agriculture, but often they are under-employed as there are more hands tilling a plot of land than is required. This is due to a dearth of alternative employment in the villages. Only 55 people have indicated that they are unem-





ployed. Of these 34 are matriculates and 21 are graduates. Of the effectively employed, 25 percent are in service, 14 percent have their own business, there are 26 mobeds (poorly paid and economically depressed as one might expect) and 17 rickshaw drivers. The study showed that the mobeds are very few in number; not sufficient to cater to the needs of the laity. The fact that 38 percent of the population is aged and retired and has no intention of being gainfully employed accounts for the low unemployment figure. Also, the main occupation of these Parsis being agriculture, generally all family members are absorbed in managing the land. This also applies to those who conduct a business for their livelihood.

The housing condition of these fami-

lies is deplorable. The majority of the houses are over 90 years old, leak during the monsoons and badly need repairs. Seventy percent were found living in *pucca* (permanent) houses, 25 percent in *kutchha* (temporary) houses and five percent in huts. Seventy-six families are without the facility of electricity, tap water or flush toilets.

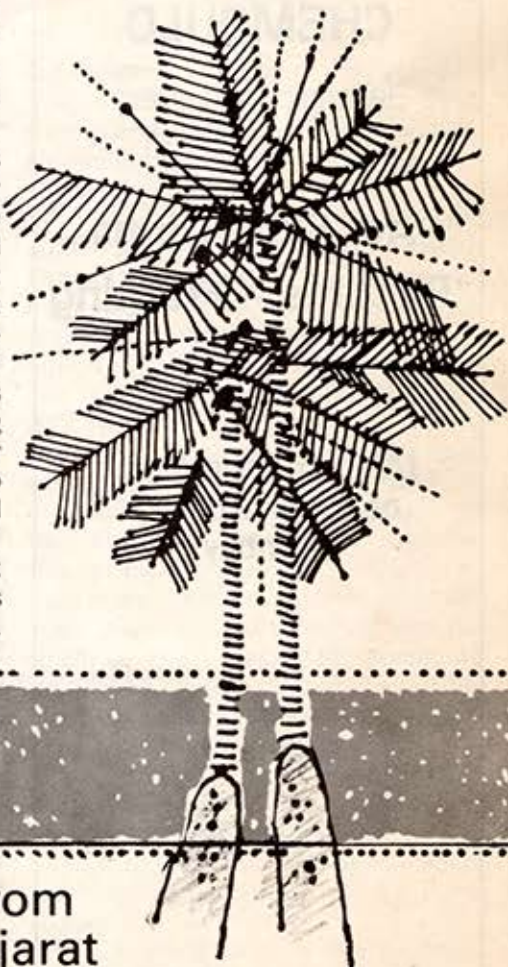
Many of the needy are desperately clinging onto the last remnants of their ancestral homes and lands that are slowly slipping away from their grasp. The rot, according to the introduction of the report, set in with the post-Independence imposition of prohibition. The Parsis in these areas were seriously affected by the new law as most were engaged in the trade of toddy tapping and distilling of liquor. The inability to adapt to the new raj and the changing times was the community's chief failing; its slow eradication from the face of rural Gujarat was inevitable.

Currently, the Surat Panchayet is aiding 135 families, 125 with monetary help and 10 with material support like free education, books, grains and clothes. There are 55 families that have no other source of income, not even remittances from children and relatives, and live entirely on doles. They are elderly bachelors/widowers (15), spinsters/widows (32), all staying alone, or elderly couples (8). Their economic condition, according to Bhaya, "is in a very pathetic state and calls for immediate attention."

The average yearly assistance that families get from the Panchayet works out to Rs 800 or Rs 66.66 per month.

Only 17 families have indicated that they are satisfied with what they are getting, while 118 say that it is not enough and would like more. Moreover, another 125 families have applied to the body for financial assistance.

In her conclusion, Bhaya had noted, "At present much of the help rendered to the various families is in the form of monetary doles. However, continuation of this form of help would gradually lead to the creation of a class of idle families dependent upon communal charities, ultimately turning them into parasites. Though the system of doles cannot be abolished completely, it could be restricted to the aged, the physically and mentally disabled and the widows/widowers with no source of income. But only giving



Over 18 years Parsis have disappeared from 128 villages in three districts of south Gujarat

Gustasp Irani

The Deserted Villages



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them a few rupees per month would neither help much to ameliorate their condition nor ensure that the donated money is being utilized in its proper way. It would be better if the Panchayet supplemented the monthly monetary aid with grains and clothes at least three times in a year because the amount given per month at present is too meager for the poor families to survive even at a subsistence level.

"Also, when many of the houses were visited at dusk, the menfolk were found to be lying in a corner of their rooms, high with alcohol. Perhaps some inquiries could be made into such houses, and the money given to a responsible family member who would not waste the aid received on alcohol. As an alternative, such families could be helped in kind."

The merits of Bhaya's effort, with the data tabulated in 19 charts, are that it gives some degree of focus to the nature and scope of assistance required by the Parsis in the three districts of south Gujarat. She does not clutter up the report by devising grandiose schemes and recommendations, nor does she dilute it with a bleeding heart message. She concludes with the advice: "Efforts could be made in a way in which the burden on charitable institutions is lessened in the long run and these families reach a stage wherein they can maintain themselves." One thinks of the prosperous community of Zoroastrian Irani agriculturists in Dahanu and wonders if they might serve as role models.

The World Zoroastrian Organisation, London and the Surat Parsi Panchayet should be congratulated for sponsoring the effort. Bhaya too was keen to record her appreciation to the SPP and WZO for the cooperation extended; to Professor Noshir Kaikobad, president of the Maharashtra Council of Social Welfare, who guided her through the survey; to Dr Ratan Marshall, special officer of the SPP, who helped operate the survey; and Prof Harish Doshi and Dr Pravin Patel, departmental heads of sociology at the South Gujarat University in Surat and Maharaja Sayajirao University in Baroda respectively, who acted as consultants to the survey.

Now, it remains to be seen how the community as a whole acts on it. It would be folly to dismiss the entire report as an academic exercise and therefore an excuse for inactivity.

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The vision of Homi Bhabha

Russi M. Lala

The scientist who laid the foundation for India's nuclear program, also established its pure research institute

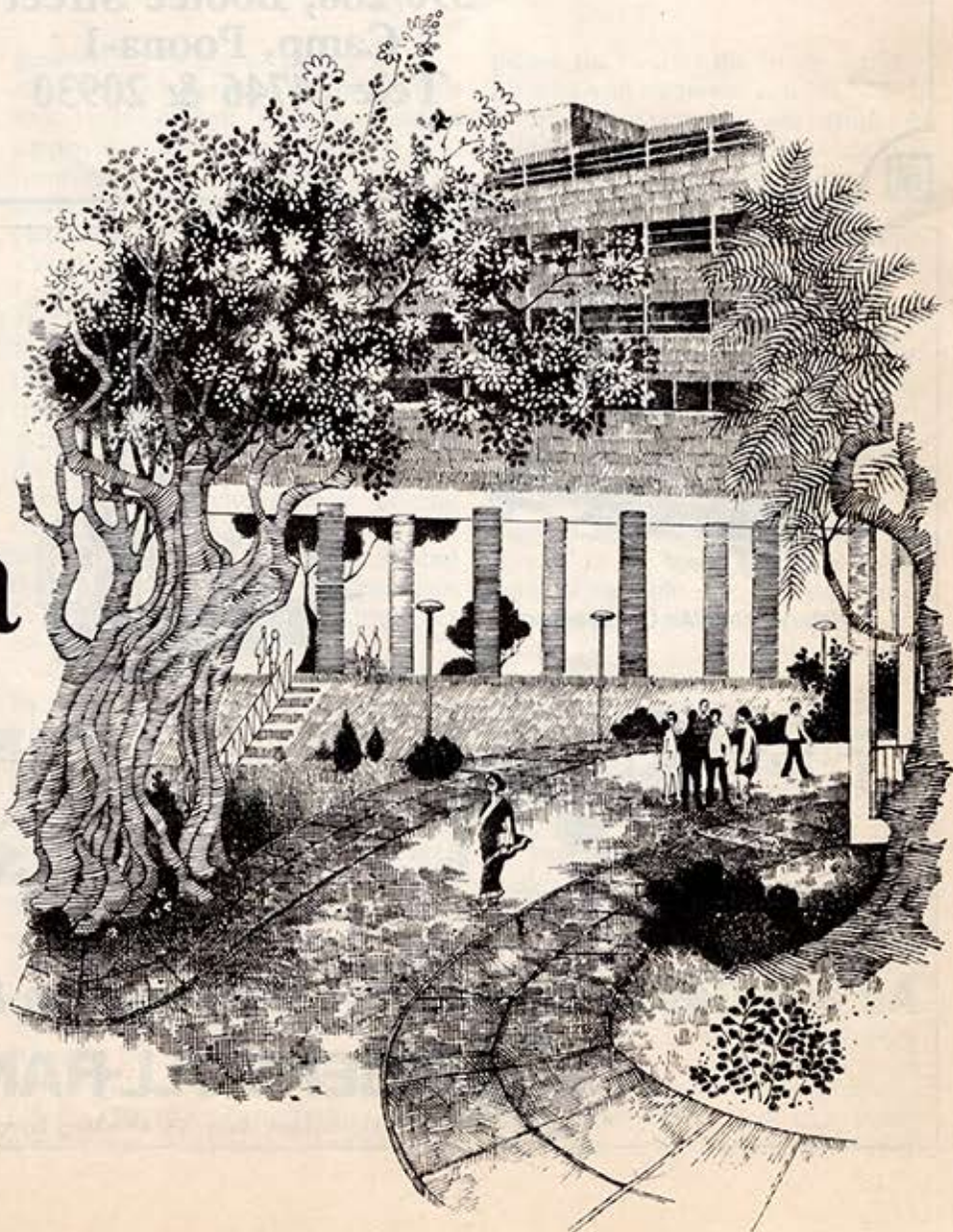
On August 8, 1928, a young Indian of 18 was writing from Cambridge to his father in Bombay, "I seriously say to you that business or a job as an engineer is not the thing for me. It is totally foreign to my nature and radically opposed to my temperament and opinions. Physics is my line. I know I shall do great things here."

Homi Jehangir Bhabha was pleading with his father to allow him to switch from an engineering to a mathematics tripos. Father and son struck a bargain. If Bhabha got a first class in engineering, he could do two years more of mathematics at Cambridge. In June 1930 Bhabha obtained a first class in the mechanical sciences

tripos and thereafter went to work as a research student in theoretical physics and passed out first class with a tripos in mathematics.

The first years of his research work coincided with a remarkable period at the Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge. It was a period of great interest and excitement in the world of theoretical physics. Bhabha was selected to an Isaac Newton Studentship in 1934 and travelled to the principal European centers of theoretical physics. He studied at the Niels Bohr Institute of Theoretical Physics in Copenhagen, the Mecca of theoretical physics; with W. Pauli in Zurich and with Enrico Fermi in Rome.

The Tata Institute of Fundamental Research: picturesque premises



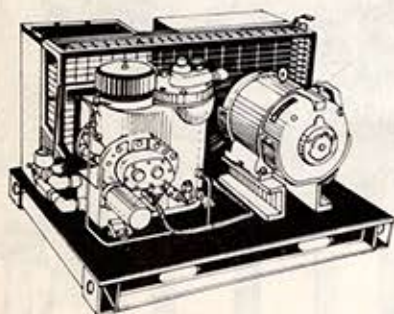
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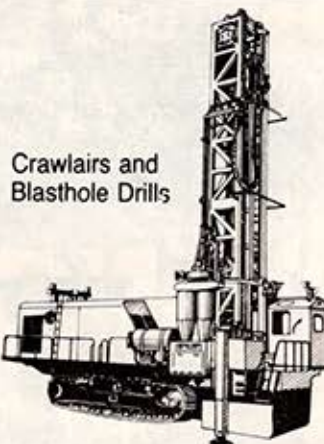
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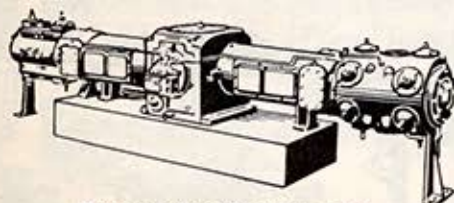
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From the age of 17 to 29 Bhabha studied and worked in the West, and nowhere in the world could he have found a finer atmosphere for his study than in Cambridge in the 1930s. With two exceptions, Bhabha's papers at Cambridge were written by him alone. A mathematical physicist, he lectured at Cambridge from 1935 to 1939. For him it was a fruitful period.

In 1939, Bhabha published two important papers. One reported the existence of a hitherto unknown fundamental particle in the penetrating component of cosmic radiation. The second gave the quantum theory of this particle which has since been called the Meson. The first paper explained the production of 'showers' by the penetrating component through the agency of 'collision electrons.' The process was named after Bhabha. All these 'great things' he achieved before he was 30. He also found at Cambridge the time to design and paint sets for plays and operas as well as to paint and draw for his own pleasure. He was fond of track-running and tennis.

At the age of 30, Bhabha came on a holiday to India. While he was here, World War II broke out and he was unable to return to Cambridge. In 1940, through a grant from the Sir Dorab Tata Trust, he was appointed Reader at the Indian Institute of Science at Bangalore, and two years later he became professor of Cosmic Ray Research. The five years he spent in Bangalore were important years in his life in many ways. Professor M.G.K. Menon, who succeeded Bhabha as director of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) said: "I believe this was the period when he found his mission in life; he became aware of the role he could play in the development of India."

As Bhabha contemplated at Bangalore on issues concerning the develop-



Kenilworth: TIFR's first location

ment of the country, the inadequacy of scientific facilities in India came sharply into focus. On August 19, 1943, he wrote in a letter to J.R.D. Tata that "lack of proper conditions and intelligent financial support hamper the development of science in India at the pace which the talent in the country would warrant." He mentioned that he himself had an idea of accepting, at the end of the War, a job at Cambridge or Princeton but had come to the view that, provided proper facilities are available, "it is one's duty to stay in one's own country" and build up schools comparable with those in other lands. Tata replied, "If you and/or some of your colleagues in the scientific world will put up concrete proposals backed by a sound case, I think there is a very good chance that the Sir Dorab Tata Trust... will respond. After all, the advancement of science is one of the fundamental objectives with which most of the Tata trusts were founded, and they have already rendered useful service in that field. If they are shown that they can give still more valuable help in a new way, I am quite sure that they will give it their most serious consideration."

Bhabha wrote, on March 12, 1944, a formal letter to Sir Sorab Saklatvala, chairman of the Sir Dorab Tata Trust. In this letter, which he wrote at one sitting, he described his vision for the India of the future. "...when nuclear

energy," he wrote, "has been successfully applied for power production, in say a couple of decades from now, India will not have to look abroad for its experts but will find them ready at hand." Closing the letter he said:

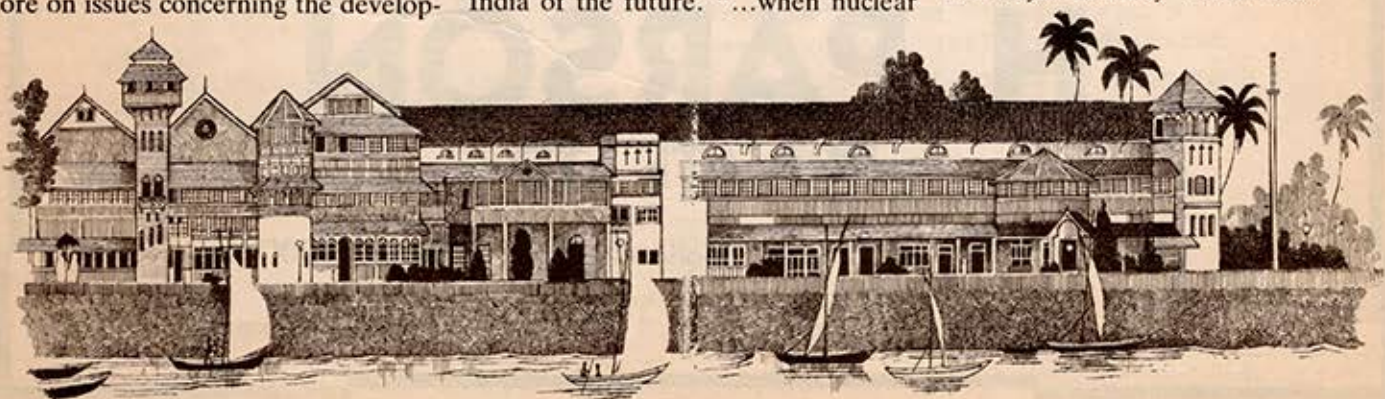
"The scheme I am now submitting to you is but an embryo from which I hope to build up in the course of time a school of physics comparable with the best anywhere. If Tatas would decide to sponsor an institute such as I propose through their trusts, I am sure that they would be taking the initiative in a move which will be supported soon from many directions and be of lasting benefit to India."

When Bhabha spoke of nuclear energy at that time, he was not aware that work on the atomic bomb was already far advanced and that 18 months later the world would awaken to the first atomic blast at Hiroshima. All that he knew was that nuclear fission (the splitting of the atomic nucleus) had been achieved and his mind was already engaged in working out means for its use, not for destruction but for the generation of electric power.

The minutes of the (Dorab Tata) Trust record:

"After discussion of the financial implications of Dr Bhabha's proposal as embodied in his letter, the trustees decided to undertake the responsibility. They were of the opinion that this responsibility should be shared from the outset with the Bombay University and the Bombay Government - both in respect of finance and administration. It was remitted to Professor Choksi under the general direction of the chairman to explore the possibilities of such cooperation with the university and the government. Dr Bhabha was present at this stage of the

The Royal Bombay Yacht Club



meeting and entered into the discussion. He readily accepted the trustees' views regarding the sharing of responsibility."

Thus the Trust took on the responsibility both in terms of long-term finance and administration for the new institute. J.R.D. Tata tried to interest a senior industrialist friend in supporting the project. In a letter to him dated June 22, 1945, Tata spelt out his vision of what this Institute could do for the country.

"Thanks to the work done in this field by Bhabha and some other Indian scientists, India has already contributed her full share to the present day knowledge of the subject. More than ever before, the future of modern civilization will depend on scientific progress, and that progress itself will continue to depend on pure research. Because the realization of this is becoming universal, all the important countries of the world have enormously increased the extent and scope of their activities in pure research, and India should not be allowed to lag behind in this vital quest for knowledge. She has men of world renown, like Homi

Bhabha, Chandrashekhar and others, and if given proper facilities she is more than capable of holding her own."

Bhabha believed that while the government should support scientific in-

The room on the first floor, where Bhabha had worked as director of TIFR, was the very room in which he was born

stitutions financially, they should not be placed under the government control. Under its constitution, the TIFR is run by a governing council on which the Dorab Tata Trust, the Government of India, the Government of Maharashtra and, latterly, the Atomic Energy Commission are represented. The Atomic Energy Commission now provides the funds for running the Institute.

When the Dorab Tata Trust had sanctioned the proposal, Sir Sorab Saklatvala, chairman of the Trust, became the first chairman of the TIFR with a provisional committee consisting of Dr John Matthai; S.N. Moos, Director of Public Instruction, Bombay Presidency; and Bhabha. On June 1, 1945, the Institute began functioning in Bangalore as Bhabha and his facilities were based there. However, Bhabha always felt that the Institute should be located in Bombay and by December 1945 it had already shifted to an old bungalow, Kenilworth, on Peddar Road (now Dr Deshmukh Marg) owned by his aunt, Ms Cooverbai Panday. Half of that old house, about 6,000 sq. ft was obtained on a rent of Rs 200 for Bhabha to instal his little laboratory and staff. Inaugurating this first home of the TIFR on December 19, 1945, Sir John Colville, Governor of Bombay, said, "We are embarking on an enterprise of importance to the country's development, in which great wealth, wisely husbanded and applied, individual initiative and government support are all blended. I do not think there could be a better combination

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for progress."

Professor Kosambi, the well-known mathematician, was one of the first to be invited to join. N.R. Puthran, a young accountant, joined the Institute when it had a staff of six. He recalls that Peddar Road in those days had mostly gracious bungalows with hardly a couple of buildings more than two storeys high. Bhabha's aunt was very fond of her nephew and Bhabha was always served tea in the finest china-ware of the house. The nearest teashop was at Gwalia Tank, half a mile away, and for the convenience of the then small TIFR family, Ms Panday allowed the use of her staff and kitchen to serve their refreshment needs. On Parsi New Year's day, the TIFR family feasted on traditional Parsi delicacies. Ms Panday's warmth and kindness pervaded the Institute and made them all feel that they were really part of a family.

The Institute soon outgrew these small premises and one day the building had to be vacated for demolition. Puthran recalls that, on their last day there, Bhabha's mother, Meherbai, came to Kenilworth and nostalgically

recalled that the room on the first floor, where her son had worked as director, was the very room in which he was born. Puthran, who worked with Bhabha for the next 20 years, recalls that in all those years, he cannot recall him ever losing his temper or raising his voice. He gave so much of himself that all those who worked with him felt they had to do the same.

Bhabha enjoyed the goodwill and unquestioned confidence of the trustees, as he was later to enjoy that of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Sir Sorab Saklatvala told the accountant, "Cheques and other routine papers should be put up to me for signature so that Bhabha can spend his time on scientific affairs." Dr John Matthai, one of India's most distinguished administrators, assisted in the formulation of administrative norms.

In September 1949 the Institute moved into the picturesque 35,000 sq.ft. premises adjoining the Gateway of India, previously occupied by the Royal Bombay Yacht Club. In 1962, they moved to their present premises in the south-east of Bombay, overlooking the Arabian Sea.

In 1948 the Atomic Energy Commission was formed with Bhabha as chairman and in 1954 the Atomic Energy Department of the Union Government with Bhabha as secretary. These offices he held concurrently with the directorship of the Tata Institute which he was busy developing. However, he clearly demarcated the respective roles of the Atomic Energy Establishment (AEE) which was coming up at Trombay, Bombay and the TIFR. The function of the AEE (later the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre - BARC) was to undertake research of a technical or semi-technical nature, aimed at solving problems arising in the design and construction of atomic reactors. The TIFR was to undertake research in all aspects of atomic science without reference to immediate utility.

Bhabha was planning the expansion of the TIFR at the same time as he was working on the blueprints of the Atomic Energy Establishment at Trombay which included designing the landscaping of its gardens.

The Yacht Club could not serve as a permanent home for the growing Insti-



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tute. Space large enough to accommodate the Institute of the future was being examined. The only land Bhabha found spacious and suitable enough was in the extreme south of Bombay in an area belonging to the Ministry of Defence. He applied for it. The Ministry of Defence, then headed by Krishna Menon, initially turned down the request. Bhabha went up to the Prime Minister, and through Nehru's intervention had the land released, and started constructing on it a magnificent structure of 2,50,000 sq. ft. He was intensely involved in the architecture, design and structure of the building. The architect, Helmuth Bartsch, was to say later: "In the past I had always worked *for* my clients. This is the only time I have worked *with* a client." Bhabha converted what was once a site for coastal batteries into a large expanse of green lawns and a small casuarina forest extending almost to the sea front.

For Bhabha, the Tata Institute was to be a 'Centre of Excellence' for the country. What put it in a class by itself was his close personal attention to every detail, be it the buildings, the gar-

dens, the art collection, or, most important, the scientific programs and its high standards - they all bore the unmistakable imprint of Bhabha's personality and genius.

Bhabha was a lover of art and a pat-

"A member who sees another not using the buildings properly should draw his attention to the proper conduct in such matters"

ron of artists. He bought scores of paintings in the 1950s and early 1960s of artists who were later to become famous - Husain, Chavda, Raza, Gaitonde and many others. He had a sculpture of the head of Einstein fashioned by Jacob Epstein; a Rajasthani temple pillar of the ninth century AD; fragments of sculpture of the Chola period from South India (tenth

century AD) which included a large Vishnu; and several wood carvings. He personally supervised the hanging of paintings and the placing of the other works of art. He was proud of the new building. Some months before it was completed, on February 28, 1961, he issued the following standing order:

"These buildings are as fine as any corresponding buildings to be found anywhere in the world and no pains have been spared in providing the members of the Institute with as good conditions of work and amenities for their comfort and general well-being as are to be found anywhere today. The buildings have been paid for by generous grants from the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and the Government of Bombay, and above all, from very substantial grants made by the Government of India. These buildings have, therefore, been made available to the staff of the Institute by the people of India through the taxes they have paid.

"Each member of the staff should have a sense of personal pride in these buildings, which have been given for

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his use, and it is his duty to take personal interest in their proper maintenance and to see that he himself uses them in such a way as to maintain their quality and cleanliness and so as not to cause inconvenience to others. Certain normal and elementary good manners with regard to the use of the buildings and the fixtures and furniture in them must be observed. A member, who sees another not using the buildings properly should draw his attention to the proper conduct in such matters. If any person continues to misbehave, the matter should be reported to his superior.

"The strictest norms of cleanliness should be maintained throughout the buildings, more especially in the lavatories. Feet should be wiped on a mat before entering the building, and marks from dirty hands should not be left on the walls. Lavatories should be used properly and kept spotlessly clean."

Bhabha wanted to create in India something much more than a scientific institute. He wanted to establish a center for research that would radiate to the rest of the country, standards as high as any to be encountered anywhere. What is heartening is that these standards are still maintained. Twenty

years later the building is as good as new – it has not even been repainted.

Bhabha's mind ranged over a wide spectrum of human endeavor – the arts, music, science and industry. Way back in 1952 he was thinking in terms of using solar energy for air-conditioning in Bombay. He was very keen that the finest foreign scientists should visit India and lecture at the TIFR and among those who came at his invitation were several Nobel Prize winners in physics, including professors Niels Bohr, W. Pauli, P.A.M. Dirac, P.M.S. Blackett and Sir John Cockcroft.

The whole of Sunday, January 23, 1966, Bhabha worked at the TIFR and his close group of scientists and administrators worked with him. He spoke to them about his ideas for the rapid development in India of science, technology and industry. He was to leave that night for Europe and, as was their practice, they were all present at the airport before he left, in case he had last-minute instructions to give. He took off for Geneva. Early next morning, as his Air-India plane, the *Kanchenjunga*, was flying over Mont Blanc, it crashed into the frozen heights of the Alps.

The following day *The Guardian*,

London, wrote: "India has lost a prophet and a guide in Dr Bhabha who single-handedly at the start, set the nation's sights on the highest peaks of technology." The *New York Times* recalled that only a few days earlier the Indian atomic scientist had said that India was only 18 months away from nuclear capability. The paper called the TIFR "the biggest Indian research laboratory."

At the age of 24, writing to one of his trusted friends, Ms Jessie Maver, Bhabha had said, "I know quite clearly what I want out of life. Life and my emotions are the only things I am conscious of. I love consciousness of life and I want as much of it as I can get. But the span of one's life is limited. What comes after death no one knows. Nor do I care. Since, therefore, I cannot increase the content of life by increasing its duration, I will increase it by increasing its intensity. Art, music, poetry and everything else that I do, have this one purpose – increasing the intensity of my consciousness and life."

The personality of Bhabha was summed up by Lord Redcliffe-Maud: "Affectionate and sensitive, elegant and humorous, dynamic, one of the very few people who enhance life

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whatever the content of their living... Whatever he set himself to do, he did as a professional – but one who worked for love; restlessly creative, enhancing life because he loved all forms of it."

One of the men that Bhabha left behind to continue the atomic program

**Bhabha believed
that while the
government should
support scientific
institutions
financially, they
should not be
placed under
government control**

was Dr Homi Sethna. Sethna called his guru "...a man of outstanding dimensions, a giant among men. He was an engineer par excellence and a scientist, an intellectual of rare calibre, a savant of art and culture, a sensitive artist himself, and an inspiring leader and an architect of modern India. Above all he was a visionary who looked far into the future and tried to shape it... He laid firm foundations for self-reliance in nuclear technology."

It was J.R.D. Tata who ensured that Bhabha's genius would flourish in India rather than flower in Cambridge or Princeton. Barely overcoming his characteristic modesty, Tata was to say about this in later years: "Of all the activities in the creation of which I have played some role, in this case a very minor one; there is none of which I am prouder today than the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research." It is perhaps a small but significant fact that for three successive Sundays the chairman of Tata Sons who also ran Air-India came to the TIFR with Bhabha for discussing the model, design and details of an auditorium for the TIFR. This was completed after Bhabha's death and is named after him.

Jawaharlal Nehru gave Bhabha his utmost trust, support and confidence. In her speech at the inauguration, on November 9, 1968, of the Homi Bhabha Auditorium, (the then) Prime Minister Indira Gandhi disclosed that it was on board a ship in 1937 that

Bhabha, then only 27, met her father Jawaharlal Nehru. Said Ms Gandhi:

"The life of a politician lacks many of those warm moments of sensitivity that other people take for granted in their everyday life... I know that Homi Bhabha opened one such 'window' for my father, and he always found it. No matter how tired my father was, no matter how late it was in the night, he always found time for Dr Bhabha, not only because the problems which Dr Bhabha brought were important and he wanted to give them urgent attention, but because he found at the same time it was relaxing and it was an entirely new world."

"The stature of a man can be judged by the width of his mental horizon. Homi Bhabha was a man who bridged the generations – he bridged the old and the new, the West and the East. He was equally at home in the world of science and in the world of the arts. For, he was a creator and a doer – a man of thought as well as a man of action... India owes him a very great deal. Amongst his many activities, he founded this Institute of which we are all so proud, the TIFR."

Bhabha left a personal collection of distinguished works of art, including a Picasso, paintings of some of the finest Indian artists of whom he was a prime patron, as also an impressive array of his own paintings and drawings. The TIFR and the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre are also his legacies. Perhaps his richest legacy is in the large number of trained scientists who, alongside him, embraced the vision of a new India.

Professor M.G.K. Menon, who succeeded Bhabha at the TIFR and later became secretary of the Union Ministry of Science and Technology, says: "Homi Bhabha sought to create the right environment and right conditions for work. He succeeded in enthusing those who worked around him with the same spirit of dedication in national endeavour which motivated him, and to set standards of quality in all that they did. This viable, self-generating group of trained personnel, the scarcest commodity in a developing nation, products of Homi Bhabha's inspiring and warm leadership, are his richest legacy to India."

Much was to flow from this legacy in the years to unfold.

Reprinted from *The Heartbeat of a Trust*

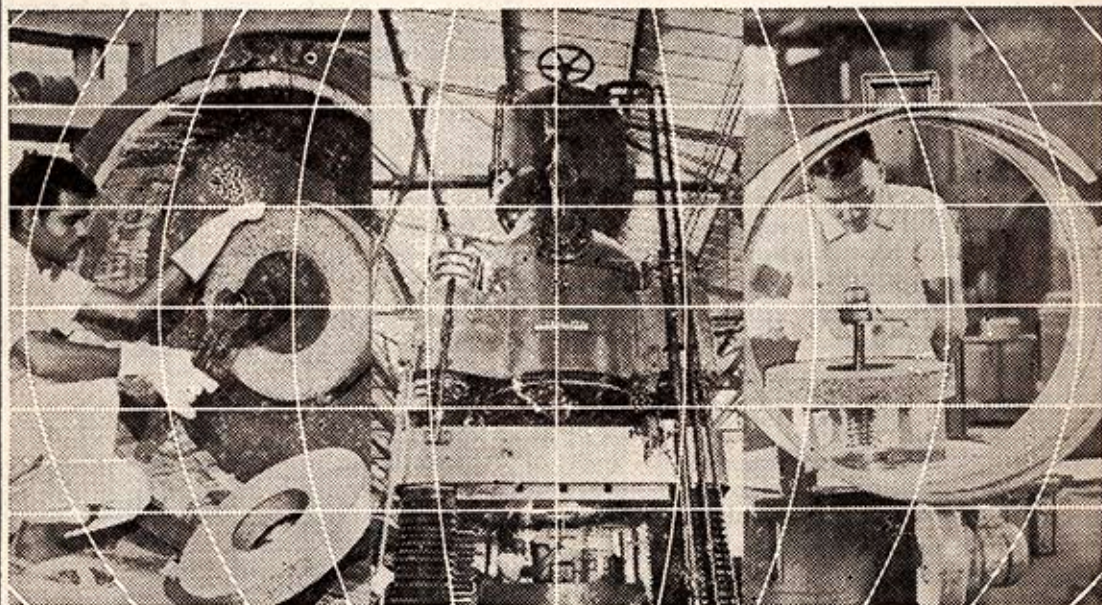
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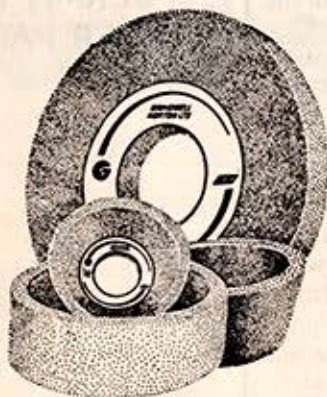
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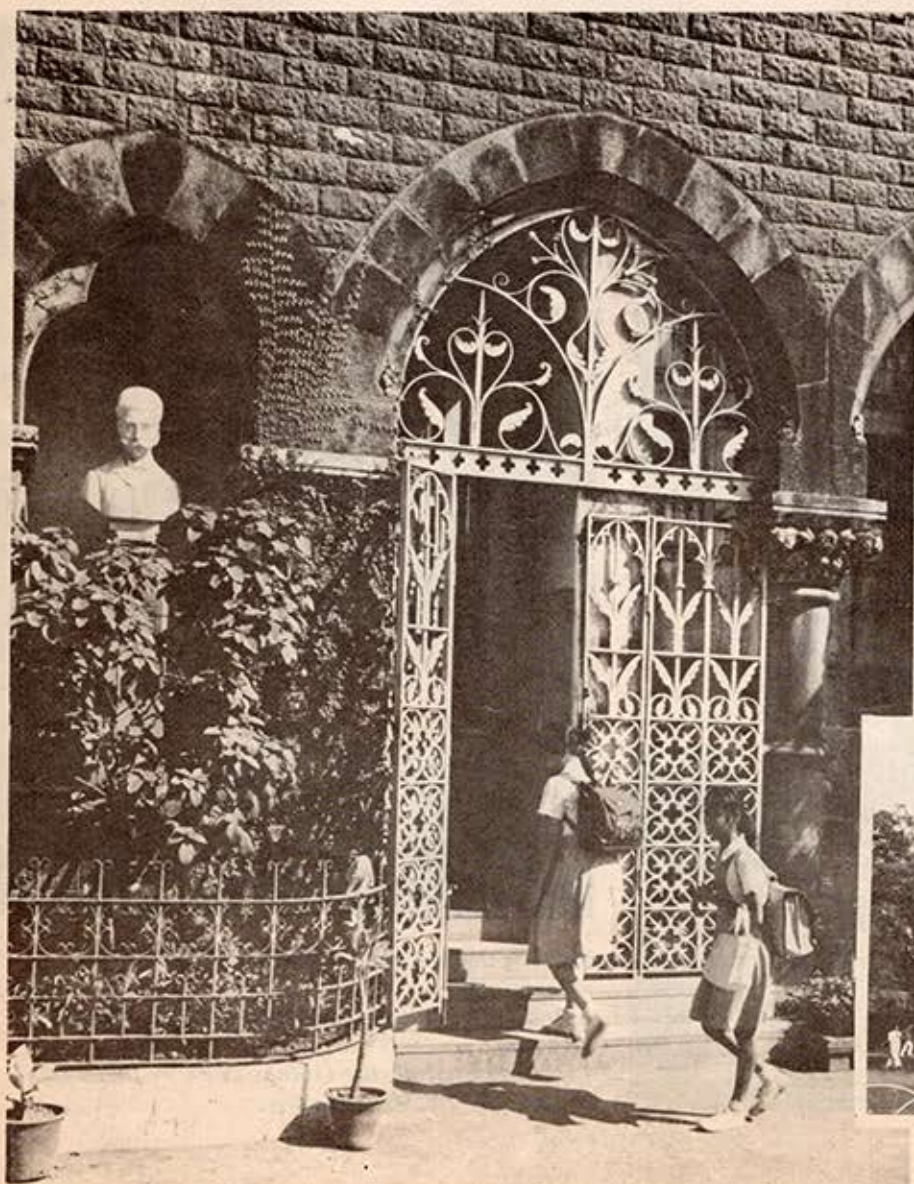
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Bombay University's vice-chancellor Dr (Ms) Mehroo Bengalee's words of resonant praise gladdened the hearts of three generations of women sporting "I love Alexandra" badges who had congregated at the Birla Matushree Sabhagar on August 31, 1988 to ring down the curtain on the school's one hundred and twenty-fifth year celebrations. A cosmopolitan institution since its inception, the celebrations had begun on September 1, 1987 at a very private function where the priests of five communities recited a few prayers each to bless the institution.

Alexandra (below), a part of her 'Gothic' past with a bust of the founder (left) framed into the new structure



The nostalgia had been harnessed through a series of functions – public concert, movie premiere, and dinner as well as the publication of a souvenir. The aim was to create a corpus whose annual yield would help maintain the sprawling building in the hub of Bombay, and also provide the facilities essential for contemporary education. “We’ll be very cautious, very judicious in using the amount you have presented to us,” assured Ms Mani Engineer who has invested 40 years of sustained effort into the school, the past 15 as its principal. “Those of you who’ve tried to collect money for any type of fund, know how difficult it is,” acknowledged Professor Sheriyar Ookerji, the founder’s great grandson and a director of the school.

It had been a three-pronged endeavor of the staff, the parent teacher association (PTA) and the active 45-year-old ex-students’ association. “All

the sets (for the public concert) were made by the teachers; not a single set had to be hired,” attested Ms Nergish Charna, chairperson of the 27-member celebrations committee. The principal appreciated the “bond of loyalty” that brought 60 and 70-year-old women flocking to the help of their alma mater while much of the onus of fundraising was borne by parents. Ms Hilla Guzder, honorary secretary of the celebrations committee, had cheerfully devoted all her free time to the organizing work. As for Charna who heads the department of politics at Elphinstone College, her association with the school continued unabated despite the fact that her daughter was now in her second year at college. “Our parents are our forte. (They have) been with us in whatever we have undertaken,” acknowledged Engineer.

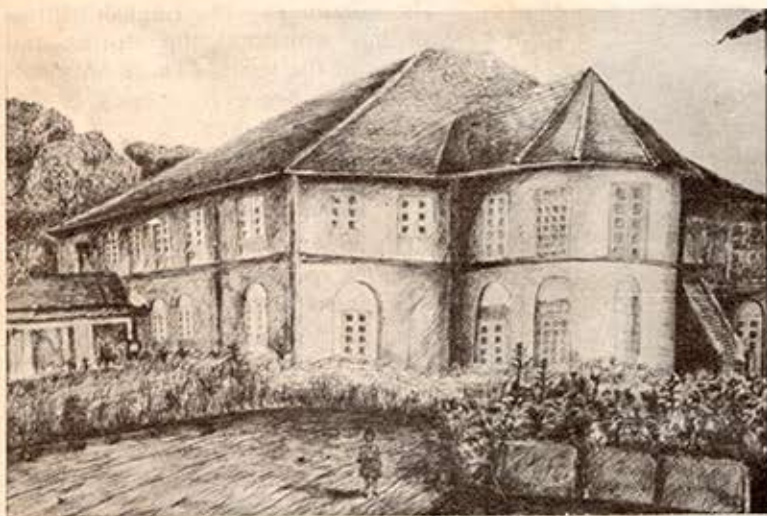
The presentation of silver salvers – the Gulestan Billimoria Award for

outstanding social service – to Guzder, Charna and Banoo Pavri, secretary of the ex-students’ association, was a gesture of appreciation from the trustees which seemed to have caught the ladies unaware. Responded Guzder with a sentimental catch in her throat, “We are proud to be associated with such a fine institution” and complimented the principal on her “immeasurable contribution” to the success of the celebrations.

Functioning

Alexandra confines itself to around 40 students per division in an attempt to maintain its tradition of individual attention to the pupils.

Bengalee had commented on the “sea difference between the teachers of today and the dedicated teachers of the past” in her address at the valedictory function. In an interview with *Parsiana*, Engineer sympathizes with



Manockjee Cursetjee: visions of an educated womenfolk

Left above: Villa Byculla housed Alexandra for 18 years

Left: Albert Hall, the Gothic structure loved by generations of Alexandrians



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Left: Charna, Engineer and Guzder at the Founder's Day dinner
Below: Behroze Cursetjee, 'authoritarian but lovable'



their changed conditions of work. The SSC (Secondary School Certificate) board which sets the syllabus, etc, has expanded and diversified the curriculum and also increased the clerical work that is required of teachers, she notes. On an average, a teacher now remains about 10 years with the school, assesses the principal who supervises the work and shares with newcomers her long experience in the field.

The school participates in annual interschool science exhibitions, dramatic competitions, Geet Manch, athletics and sports with one representative reaching the national level for schools in table tennis recently. Girl Guiding is a forte. "The largest number of President's Guides and Bulbuls earning Golden Wings in Maharashtra are from Alexandra," says Engineer. "There have been cases when we have won all the trophies available," she glows. The school also offered swimming and used to book the Garware and the Cricket Club of India (CCI) pools for its students. Unfortunately, due to lack of a good lady coach, the school has presently discontinued the facility. Classes watch educational movies in rotation on a video presented by the PTA. This year a theater workshop was organized under the tutelage of director Janak Toprani. Judo and computer classes are other optional activities.

Always strong on discipline, ex-students remember how raucous hilarity faded into pin drop silence when the late Ms Margaret Benjamin, the stately Jewess who was principal for 30 years, advanced into the corridor. Pavri, a student in the 1920s before becoming a mother and a teacher, recalls



Middle row from left: Benjamin: 30 years at the helm; Bengalee: socially relevant goals; Pavri: a lifetime with the school
Ext left: Ookerjee - the difficulties of fund-raising
Left: Mistry - preserving the best of the past

endless written impositions for any infraction of etiquette while Ms Perin Jeejeebhoy, great granddaughter of the founder and a student of the 1930s, remembers ruler-happy teachers and battered knuckles!

Engineer is happy that the understanding between the teachers and the students is better today than it ever was: "The rapport is closer now. The children confide, tell the teachers what they don't tell their parents; now they have the guts to say 'no,' make bold to make suggestions! (When) we understand children better, certain concessions have to be made to them. Yet the change is so gradual as to be almost unnoticeable. (Moreover) we are changing ourselves," smiles the principal. Noting that disciplinary problems are often an overflow from the home, Engineer says, "Parents are sometimes frightened of their chil-

dren" and notes that the increasing involvement of parents with the PTA has led to a better understanding all around.

Patiently repeating instructions until the peon served the tea and snacks just right, Engineer excuses herself: "That's what our school is known for - *Baddhi babut ni kich kich* (carping at details in everything)!" For example, children are sent back if they come to school ill kempt despite reminders; the bus service that the school charters is obliged to return primary school children to the school if there is no one to receive them at their point of disembarkation; senior office assistant Ms Rati Hakim and other administrative staffers maintain quality control at the school tuck-shop.

History

Manockjee Cursetjee, a prosperous

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merchant who was said to have been received by the British, Russian and French monarchs of the time, realized his vision – of enlightening society by educating its womenfolk – with the help of donations from the family and friends at the uthamna of his beloved son Heerajee. The school began with nine girls at his bungalow, Villa Bycula, on September 1, 1863. In 1881 it reached its present location, then known as Albert Hall, which was built to the school's requirements. An extension was added in 1939, commonly known as the "new building" until the "centenary building" was erected in 1963. The night before the old Gothic structure was demolished, a host of sentimental ex-students gathered in its portals to relive past events.

Attention to detail has been a characteristic of the founding family, notes Hakim. When the school was seeking funds for the building, the founder's granddaughter Behroze Cursetjee, then in her late seventies, wrote to a number of industrialists and trusts. Though she had no degree to her name, her letters were meticulously drafted and unfailingly produced results, recalls Pavri who had helped Cursetjee with the clerical work. Pavri describes her as "untiring in her efforts, very authoritative and exacting, but really lovable." "*Ek ek paisa no bi hisab joiye* (every penny had to be accounted for)," old envelopes had to be turned around and reused, paper was not to be wasted, every scrap had to be cleared from the floor, adds Hakim who remembers the old lady regularly inspecting bills and tramping through the school corridors to check on the work done. Hakim says she received some memorable dressings down but acknowledges, "I learnt a lot from her." Though born to wealth and status, Hakim recalls how Cursetjee would cheerily accept discomfort, using public transport while engaged in work for the school. Once, when there was no sitting space on a bus, a young man offered her his seat. Cursetjee declined, announcing, "It's my turn to stand!" "Having worked with such people, we have also become exacting," acknowledges Hakim with a smile.

Earlier, the accent was upon imparting spit and polish to young ladies entering a class dominated society. The process of Indianization began with

the first Indian principal, Ms Gulestan Billimoria, in 1922, as hitherto the senior governesses had all been English ladies. Jeejeebhoy recalls life with Cursetjee Manockjee Cursetjee – Manokji's son and her grandfather – a fiercely pro-British Parsi who refused to "close" the school for even a symbolic two minutes at the height of anti-British demonstrations and thought nothing of using his walking stick upon a female satyagrahi!

How well the new spirit of independent India has been assimilated into the institution is dramatized by the presence of the vice president of India at two of the school's annual prize distribution functions – Dr S. Radhakrishnan in 1960 and Dr Zakir Hussain in 1963 – emphasizes chairman Burjor Mistry. Over the years its board of directors has included such notables as K. R. Cama, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoola and Moham-medali Jinnah.

Goals

In the course of her speech at the Birla Hall, Bengalee had urged the school authorities to guard against commercialization and politicization – the two besetting evils of contemporary Indian existence. And she had suggested other socially relevant goals for the hoary institution: The children should not only be informed and groomed, they must be taught "to keep their heads up, to face the realities of life outside the home. The individual must be so fully strengthened that domestic life and career are not sacrificed one for the other." In the course of an interview the chairman of the board of directors expressed his own idea of how education can be made socially relevant: "Each generation must select the good values of the past and reject those unsuitable to progress."

Ultimately, it is the individual teacher who molds the student into a productive citizen – one whom you may thank only after you are decades older – for that special insight, that seed of self confidence... But what of the teacher's reward? "When you teach and from the expression on the face you can see that the girl is not daydreaming, that what you are teaching, is sinking in, that's the triumph," says Aloo Daruwala who retired as vice principal in 1984 after a 39-year teaching career, 25 of them in

Alexandra.

In her vote of thanks at the Birla, Guzder saluted the school: "To Alexandra we say, you are not of an age, but for all time." The euphoric audience was content to interpret the compliment as a prophecy...

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"There is nothing like a polite drawi

Gustasp Irani

On the surface at least, Mickey Patel, well-known painter, illustrator and cartoonist does not fit into the nonconformist mold of artists. No long, straggly hair, kurtas and open slippers for him. He is attired neatly—simple shirt, trousers and shoes—to blend in a crowd. He is 48 years old, of medium build, has the suggestion of a stomach but those who know him say that he was slim and wiry before. In a gathering he would not stand out, unless the crowd comprised painters and artists.

But there is nothing conformist about his art, not as he sees it: "Art is brutal. There is nothing like a polite drawing," he says. "It violates accepted conventions; it's an outrage on your norms and premises." It is not really surprising then that Patel complains that his recent exhibition of 10 serigraphs in honor of the jailed South African leader Nelson Mandela attracted unsolicited criticism. The ex-

hibition opened on July 18, 1988 at Gallery Chemould, Bombay, coinciding with Mandela's seventieth birthday and closed on August 5, 1988, the day the South African leader completed 25 years of solitary confinement. All the proceeds of the show were donated to the African National Congress.

Patel, who has participated in 28 exhibitions in India and abroad, and won nine national and international awards, soon found himself being sniped at. "I was attacked for not being involved in the Indian situation, of saying dangerous things about South Africa from a safe distance. 'Why not look out of your own window?' they asked." In his defense, Patel refers to "all those years of cartooning, a painful and a constant cry" against local injustice. Only moments earlier, he had been explaining a cartoon he had done for his regular column in *City Scan*, the Delhi city magazine. Police brutality was the theme. No words explained it, the message was in the line drawing: an imposing club in the swollen hands of a towering law and order officer threatening a shrivelled, cringing victim.

Even in his Mandela drawings, Patel points out that except for two exhibits, all the rest were images of India. He refers to one of these images: women sweeping the streets; the garbage their brooms are collecting is words, words

and more words. This, Patel feels, sums up the needless controversy.

Words do not flow in torrents from Patel. They come out slow and spaced, as though measuring the thought being expressed, its uncertainty and hesitancy. Patel does not deny this hesitancy even in his drawings and paintings. "It's necessary, the hesitancy, the first uncertain lines, the later marks, the record of the journey. You know where you were, you know where you went. I like to retain this," he explains. "The mistakes, the hesitancy, it's all part of the painting and makes it more compelling than a finished product where there is masking." Patel does not work with a rough sketch. "Those first marks, those uncertain lines stay." He illustrates by sketching you in the air. The thumb carves out a firm line that will be the left side of your face. "You are not sure of the other side, so you do it in dots and dashes." Patel's index finger traces the line. You wonder how the artist has perceived you, but he has moved on to clarify that all dots and dashes are not the product of uncertainty: "In inks, you might want a grey, so you break up the lines."

No distinction

Patel, like the Chinese and Japanese, sees no distinction between drawing and painting. However, if given the option, he would rather paint. "Paint-



Delhi-based artist Mickey Patel feels that drawings and paintings should make a timely and relevant statement

ng"

ing is a devastating medium. You don't stop short. You are not restrained by size, reproduction or other considerations. You nudge it along. It is demanding work," says Patel. He dismisses talent as 'facile' and style as a 'nauseating word.' One hesitates to use the word inspiration, but where does Patel find it? "The first inputs (as far as his illustrations are concerned) are from the (thoughts expressed in the) article; then, in the drawing, it gathers its own personality. Drawings and paintings are not (meant to be) stately. They should be making a topical and pertinent comment."

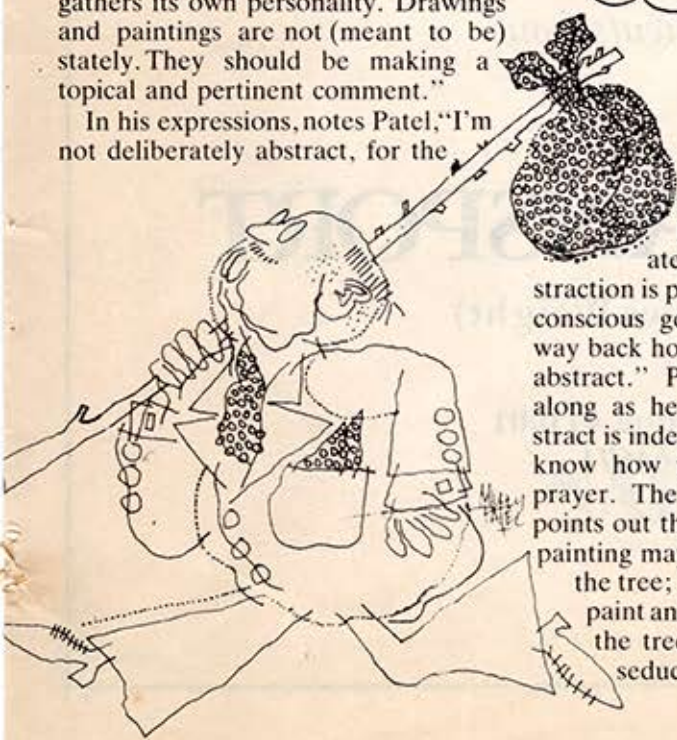
In his expressions, notes Patel, "I'm not deliberately abstract, for the



simple reason I wouldn't know how. To be deliberately abstract is absurd. Abstraction is part of our reality, it's not a conscious gesture. A laborer on his way back home singing a song – that's abstract." Patel nudges the concept along as he might a painting. "Abstract is indefinable, at least I wouldn't know how to define it. It is like a prayer. The word is confusing." He points out that no matter how much a painting may resemble a tree, it is not the tree; not wood and leaves but paint and canvas – an abstract of the tree. "A painter uses lines and seductions to create an image,

to capture the wood and define it. But all painting is abstract, even Rembrandt is abstract."

When doing cartoons and illustrations, Patel explains that one must work within the framework of certain constraints. If the work is to be reproduced in a magazine or newspaper, it dictates the materials one works with, the size of the work and other factors. He confesses that a full year's magazine cartoons can be done together in a single sitting. "There are predictable events. Republic Day, Independence Day, (Mahatma) Gandhi's birthday, the rains, the floods, the drought, the budget..." Patel does not think it



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necessary for a cartoon to be funny. "Humor can be depicted in a situation on the brink of a catastrophe or disaster. It need not be guffawing humor," he states.

We examine a cartoon from an issue of *City Scan*. A politician stands in front of a mike. Instead of a human head, it is a mike head, crowned with a Gandhi cap, that springs from his body. The mike is spotted, in Patel's words, "with those sensitive pimples, oozing pus cells." These spew words, "an endless dribble of garbage."

A characteristic of Patel's cartoons is that he avoids using words to explain his drawings. Earlier, however, he did a strip cartoon that he modelled on the works of Jules Feiffer who, according to Patel, "loved to write, but was not good enough and he loved to paint but was not good enough. So he combined the two." Patel's strip, "the slow unfolding of a situation," was popular, but soon he found that he got stuck with it. "I got branded and stamped. I was expected to churn out the stuff, but I grew out of it. I started to compress what I had to say in a single frame, one comment, one image, no words."

Patel did not study art, not in a formal sense. "I liked to draw and it upset people at home," he says. For a year, after finishing his schooling in 1955, he attended evening art classes at the Delhi Polytechnic, now known as the Delhi College of Art. These classes were primarily for professionals but Patel

had strong reservations about what they taught there. "We were expected to hold up our thumb to the object we were drawing, which would probably be a larger-than-life nose. I kept doing this (holding up the thumb) but it was not what I really wanted to do. Art, to use a cliché, is a living thing. It is not sacred as it is made out to be in art school."

Mentors

In Shankar Pillai, of *Shankar's Weekly*, Patel found his first true teacher. Every Saturday morning he would go to show Shankar his drawings. Shankar would flip through Patel's submissions and say savagely: "I want to see drawings." Patel would answer, "These are my drawings." Shankar would flare up and toss the pages aside. "These are not drawings," he would shout. He would spring up, take out books and magazines to illustrate his point: "This is a drawing, this is a drawing and this is a drawing," he would rant. "Damn it, use your head, use your eyes. What is the relation between you and the object?" Patel recalls these meetings. "The man was savage. Probably, he figured that I would not show up next week, but I would."

Another person who influenced Patel's work was Khushwant Singh of the Indian Police Service (IPS), in charge of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's personal security. He was also

the editor of the *Indian Police Journal*, a quarterly for which he needed drawings, "the real life stuff." He exposed the teenager Patel to *Punch* and a form of drawing "more vital than what was going on in art colleges." He encouraged Patel to break all norms. "You can't be mundane and clever," he would advise Patel. "Art can't be gentlemanly, poised or refined," he would say, the very characteristics which, according to Patel, Rustomji personified!

The third individual to leave a marked impression on the young Patel was Khushwant Singh. At that time, he had taken over as the editor of *Yojana*, a fortnightly magazine created to publicize the government's five-year plan program. "He was very daring. He gave freedom; he had the ability to risk..." Patel recalls.

In addition, Patel has done cartoons

and illustrations on a freelance basis for a number of publications – *India Today*, *The Statesman*, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, *The Times of India*, *Reader's Digest*, *Signature*, *Parsiana*, the list is endless and spills over into institutions like Air-India, IBM (International Business Machines) and UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) amongst others. He has also contributed to magazines in Australia, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur, London and Bhutan. In 1979, he was appointed cartoonist for *Business Standard*, Calcutta, in 1984 for *Patriot*, Delhi and in 1987 for *The Indian Post*, Delhi. He has also worked as creative consultant to UNICEF, World Bank and to a number of advertising agencies. After graduating with a BA in Economics from Delhi, he has worked in a number of advertising agencies in capacities ranging from illustrator to creative coordinator and art director. He has done animation films for Hindustan Thompson Associates, Lintas, UNICEF, Shyam Benegal and the Children's Film Society.

Participating in 11 international exhibitions, Patel's works have been on

display in West Berlin, Tokyo, Havana, Bratislava and Switzerland. In India he has participated in 17 exhibitions of which six were one-man shows. But perhaps, his greatest satisfaction is when his works form part of collections, be it in New York, London, Havana, Bombay or Delhi. They could be on view at museums, corporate houses, banks, airlines, or be included in the personal collections of the famous or even the unknown buyer who hangs it up to beautify his bedroom or living room.

One of Patel's desires is to do some work on the Parsis. He is not referring to the images that Parsis lend themselves to. "I'm tired of that. I want to get past that and capture the elusive and the abstract – the last gasps of the community." He has done some illustrations for a piece that Rustomji of the IPS had written on the Parsis, but unfortunately, the effort has not seen the light of print as yet. This was done a little after the navjote of his children Rishad and Ria in 1982.

He recalls the ceremony. He had been laid low by a severe heart attack and his non-Parsi wife Sunila supported the idea that the children be

initiated into the Zoroastrian faith. Patel phoned a number of people from his sick bed for help, but somehow, for some reason or the other, nothing came of it. He then phoned Rustomji. "The effort just to pick up a phone and talk into it was exhausting. You don't realize how much it takes out of you till you are down with a heart attack." Rustomji agreed right away. He organized everything. "Everyone was there. We had no problems," Patel recalls.

One problem Patel keeps encountering is his own determination not to compromise his work. A constant criticism is that his work is not Indian enough. "It's devastating, not being the seductive Indian. Buyers and viewers expect you to be one – the erotic Indian, sleeping under a tree. My tragedy is that I am unable to go against the tide of reality," Patel laments. To him painting is a very urban activity. "If I am not in a city, as a painter I am lost." When exposed to the beauty of unspoiled countryside and a rural setting he feels no urge to paint. "Painting is its own reality and has its own identity. How do I compete with nature?"

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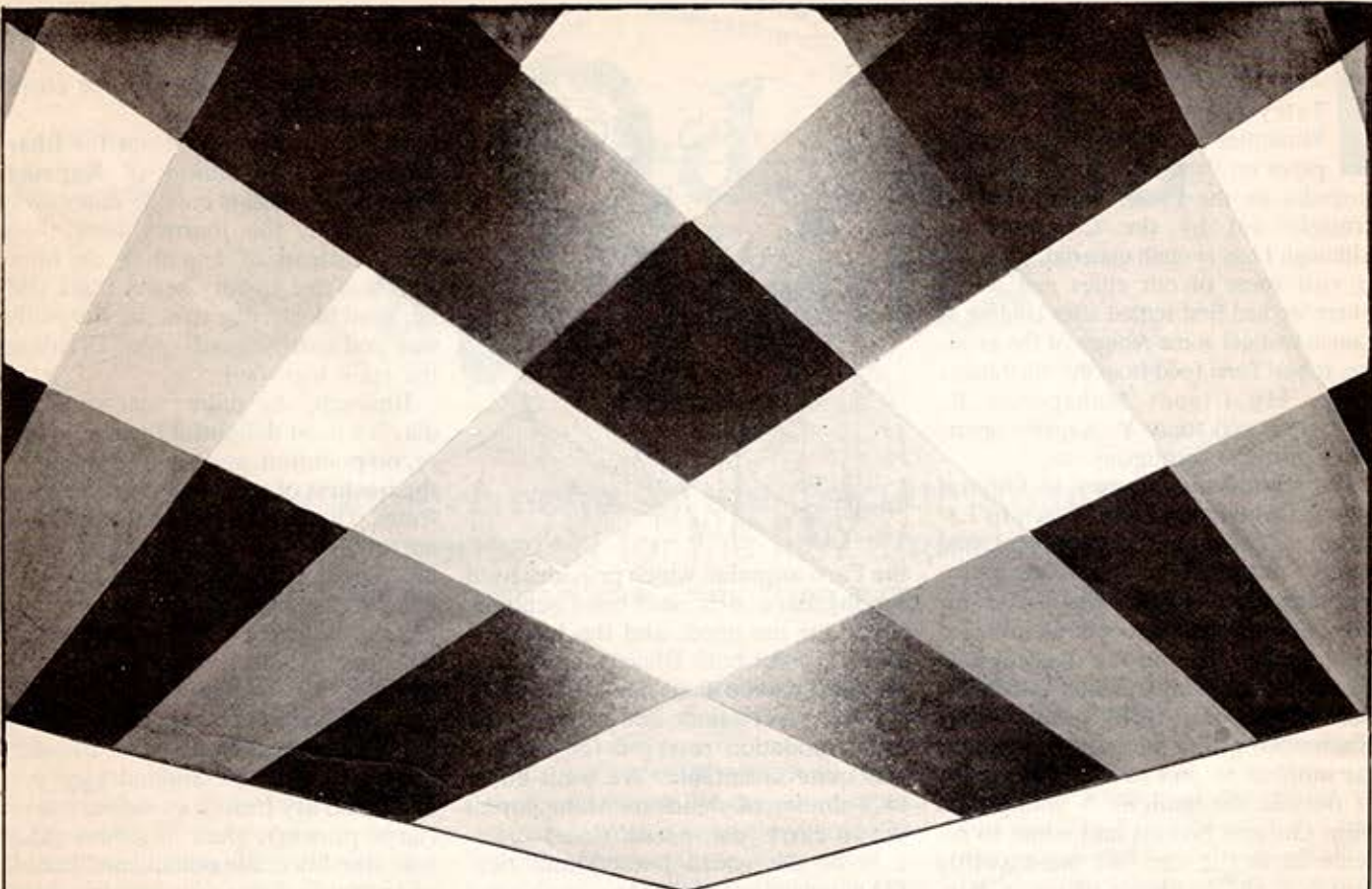
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I was asked by Ambassador Homi Taleyarkhan, member of the Minorities Commission, to write a paper on Parsi cuisine for an encyclopedia on the Parsis which will be brought out by the Commission. Although I had enough material, I wanted to visit some of our cities and towns where we had first settled after landing at Sanjan and get some recipes of the genuine, robust Parsi food from the inhabitants there. My friends Mahaperviz E. Dhatighara and Ruty Y. Kapadia sportingly agreed to accompany me.

We started our odyssey to Gujarat by the Deluxe train (AC Paschim Express). Yazad, Ruty's husband had kindly arranged for an alternative accommodation which was to be our base in Surat, in case we could not, for some reason, stay in the dharamshala there. As the train steamed into Surat station, we heard Ruty's name being announced with a message stating that car number so and so was waiting for us outside the station. A young man from Gujarat Nylons had come to receive us in the car. We were swiftly driven to the residence of the managing director of Gujarat Nylons, Annand Bhardwaj, and his charming wife Manju. Although we were complete strangers, they threw open their home to us and helped us in every way to make our journey not only successful, but most comfortable. We can never forget their kindness and generosity.

The lunch was an excellent Gujarati vegetarian one, with *toover ni dar* (lentil), *tarela bheeda* (fried okra), *papeta noo sag* (cooked potato), *kera noo raitoo* (banana and yoghurt combination) and *chaval* (rice). A simple unfussed meal cooked to perfection! The meal tailed off with delicious alphonso mangoes from Ratnagiri which is the home of the best variety of alphonso mangoes.

We rang up Dr Sam Bhacca, president of the Surat Parsi Punchayet, to tell him that we had arrived. I had informed him earlier regarding the purpose of our visit. He put us in touch with Sorab Katpitia, the chief executive of the Punchayet who, in turn, sent us to the late Erachsha Kapadia, a delightful man who was the president of the Bharuch anjuman. In the evening we visited the Central Kitchen of

"SOME 'GHARUB NOO ACHAR FOR YOU TO TAKE HOME DEAR..."



the Parsi anjuman which provides food for the Parsi girls' and boys' schools, home for the aged, and the hospital. We later met both Bhacca and Katpitia and thanked them for all the trouble they had taken but declined the accommodation reserved for us as it was quite unsuitable. We went home to a dinner of delicious Mangalorian prawn curry, dal, *parval* (local vegetable of the gourd family) and rice. (The *parval* was cut into fours, and lightly fried with only turmeric and

salt.) The meal ended with ice cream and fresh fruit.

The next day, we set out for Bharuch on the invitation of Kapadia. Though Bharuch is only 25 miles away from Surat, the journey took three hours instead of less than an hour. This was due to very heavy truck traffic, road blocks due to accidents on the way and narrow roads. And all this on the main highway!

Bharuch, the oldest seaport of India, is a most delightful town – no hurry, no pollution, and where is available the freshest of seafood, vegetables and fruits. The Parsi *wad* (locality) with its narrow winding lanes is situated on a hill. The countryside was full of sugarcane fields and banana and mango groves. We were taken by Kapadia to Khushru Cama's home by foot through the quaint little lanes. Ms Dhanbai Cama gave us a taste of *Bharuchi nasto* (breakfast), with *Bharuchi meva ni acoori* (scrambled eggs with herbs and dry fruits), *masalana sadhna* (large prawns), *ghau ni garam garam rotli* (freshly made unleavened bread), *gharub noo achar* (roe pickle), *bhaktaras* (sweet snack), and *ravo* (semolina)

A SENTIMENT

Time-tested popular Parsi dishes, when sampled in the towns of Gujarat, have an incomparable flavor, says master chef Bhicoo Manekshaw

Bhicoo J. Manekshaw



— a *nasto* which we will not easily forget. And the kind lady also packed a bottle of *gharub noo achar* for us to take home.

In Bharuch, they store rain water in a very ingenious way. The rain water, after it washes down all the dust from the roof, is collected in an underground tank called *tanku*. It is said that before the British *raj*, when the nawabs were ruling, young Parsi girls were hidden in these *tankas* and behind the secret doors of the agiary, lest they be abducted in the raids.

One beautiful agiary is situated on a hill overlooking the Narbada estuary, with Ankleshwar in the far distance. It is over 800 years old. We were told that during the monsoons, the river come right up to the base of the hill. The scene from the garden — the broad river flowing with the sea in the far distance — is superb. Sitting there in the quiet of sunrise or sunset, one can feel at peace with oneself and the world. Praying in an atmosphere which has an air of complete purity, one can surely cleanse oneself of everything negative from within — mind, body and soul. I had read some time

ago in *Parsiana* that one of the agiaries in Bharuch was going to be shut down. I do hope that this is not the one, as it is so very beautiful. If we cannot preserve it then a government agency should be asked to take it over and preserve it as a national monument.

There is also a 1,000-year-old disused *dokhma* with a lot of land surrounding it. The late Kapadia wanted to plant mango trees so that the land could yield some profit. Besides the mango trees, *kathi* trees could also be planted as there is so much need for the *baval* wood for our fire-temple. And this also could bring in a fair amount of revenue for the Bharuch Anjuman.

We were later taken to the beautiful home of Ms Vakharia. The former fort of Bharuch has been converted into her gracious home. It previously belonged to the nawabs of Bharuch. A magnificent carved screen stretches right across the large drawing room. The garden has a quaint little patio overlooking the river and the delta, with a typical Gujarati swing. We had to refuse her kind invitation to stay overnight and reluctantly said farewell

to delightful Bharuch.

Back in Surat we were invited by Bhacca to have breakfast and lunch at the Central Kitchen. We were given *meva ni acoori* quite different from Ms Cama's, and *gurchan*, made with liver. It can also be made with a mixture of meat and offal. Later we visited all the *atash bahrams* and ordered our Surti biscuits from the Dotiwalla bakery. We also ordered *baglu*, a speciality of Surat made with the lightest, and I mean really feather-light, pastry from rice flour. Layers of this transparent pastry (which flies off under a fan) are filled with almond or pistachio paste. It is so called because *baglu* in Gujarati is a cygnet and the fine layers of the pastry remind one of the down of a cygnet. There is only one man alive who makes the *baglu*, but he will not teach it to anyone.

We returned to the Central Kitchen for lunch and were served with *khattu gosht* (lamb cooked in curds) and *bha-jidana ma gosht* (lamb cooked with spinach and peas).

The next day we went to Navsari — the home of the 'greats' in Parsi history. The road was beautiful with avenues of large trees. Again, through Yazad Kapadia, we were at the beautiful guest house of the Tatas — Tata Bagh — which was Jamsetji Tata's home. It is a large, sprawling old-fashioned bungalow with a gorgeous verandah. The house, typical of the upcountry style, had bedrooms at the sides, and the drawing and dining room in the center with steps leading down to the kitchen. The house is surrounded by a *wadi* of mangoes, chikooos and other trees. The long carriageway to the house is lined with giant Rusty Shield Bearers which were in bloom. The trunks of these trees were covered with huge money plants.

Dara Deboo the young, dedicated president of the Navsari Anjuman came directly on being contacted by us. Soon after, we had the honor of the visit of Vada Dasturji Meherji Meherjirana and his gracious wife Meher, along with two other ladies. They wanted to know in what way they could help me. When I explained the purpose of our visit, Ms Meherjirana took over and I was given all the information I needed. Later, all of them took us round Navsari, a beautiful,

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sprawling town. We visited the house where J. J. Tata was born, and then on to the famous Kolah brothers from where we bought all our pickles, etc. The Vada Dasturji hosted a lunch for us at the Parsi boys' orphanage. *Tamota per enda* (eggs spread over a tomato gravy), *masala ni murghi* (chicken in spicy gravy), *dar chaval* (rice and curried lentils) and *kulfi* (frozen dessert of thickened milk). We were served by the boys of the orphanage. Then we visited the old peoples' home. Later in the evening we went to the atash bahram to attend a beautiful jashan where prayers were recited by at least 20 priests – a magnificent experience. We saw the image of the first Dasturji Meherjirana on the marble wall – it was not just the grains in the marble – something quite inexplicable! All along the rest of the walls were pictures of the 'Parsi Greats.' It was wonderful to see the portrait of my uncle Sir Dinsha Mulla, my dear friend Sir Dosu Bhiwandiwalla, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, all the Tatas, Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, etc. The portrait of the first Dasturji Meherjirana with outstretched hands was most impressive. I have been told that this is how a *bandagi* should be prayed as this produces a certain magnetic power in the body.

We went to visit Dasturji Antia's home to see the *Bhavana vasans*. What was most fascinating was the silver *velan* (rolling pin) with a bell in it; and the *patlo* (board for rolling out the dough), also of silver or stainless steel. How lovely to hear the tinkle of a little bell as one shapes a *rotli*! We were given excellent mango *kulfi* from the Kohla shop. We watched sunset from the Dandi beach (where Mahatma Gandhi had defied the British Government's salt law) and eventually returned to Tata House. We were overwhelmed by our kind and gracious hosts and, after thanking them, left for Udwada the next day. The Atash Bahram there is impressive and it was a wonderful experience. Later we had breakfast of fried *boi* (a type of fish), *levtano patio* (spicy concoction of anchovy), with a bottle of *tari* (sap of the palmyra tree).

Onwards to Devka, and Dosabhai Oliaji's Hotel Duke's. Lunch was of *bhejani* (brain) curry, fried *masala* chops and *palav* (rice cooked with meat and spices). The evening was spent at Daman which is full of character, full of Portuguese influence – the fort, the churches, the market place. We bought substantial Goa Port in plastic packets! Dinner comprised *taaja boomla* (fresh Bombay ducks –

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fried), *taaja levta* (fresh anchovies – fried), *kharia* (trotters) and *tari*. (I don't think we Parsis think much of a balanced diet, but it was superb!) According to Oliaji, who is an expert in Parsi cooking, in a classic *oomberyu* (dish baked in an earthen pot), there should be only *kaari* (black) *papri* (a vegetable), *vaal* (a type of lentil) *ajmo* (a spice), salt and oil. And one may add quails, whole eggs with shells, or chops. *Kaker* is a plant that grows at the root of the *papri*-plant, and its leaves are used to cover the mouth of the *oomberyu maitku*. Mango or banana leaves can be substituted.

Our last leg of the journey, before returning to Surat, was Valsad, the ancestral home of the Manekshaws! We were told to contact Rusi Shroff, the president of the Parsi anjuman, in *Mota Parsi Wad*. Every urchin on the road knew where Rusi Shroff lived. We arrived there, complete strangers. Keki, Rusi's brother, met us. We told him the purpose of our visit. I asked him to name the specialties of Valsad. He said "*Dhansakh* and *curry chaval*." I said that I was not interested in *dhansakh* as I had an excellent recipe from my grandmother which included *mosumbini-chhal* (rind of the sweet lime). He said, "It must be rubbish!" This was the first time that Bhicoo Manekshaw was caught with her mouth open! I could not believe that this young man sitting opposite me could speak to a stranger in this manner, but then, this is the straightforward way of the people who have no pretensions. I could see from the corner of my eye that both Mahaperviz and Ruty were trying very hard not to giggle and to keep a straight face. So I said, "What's so special about your *dhansakh*?" Just then, Aloo, his sister-in-law (Rusi's wife) walked in. Keki explained to her the purpose of our visit, and from then on it was plain sailing. Aloo most generously gave of her time and delightful recipes, including one for *dhansakh*! She even gave us the special *dhansakh no masalo* (combination of spices) to take home and a tiffin carrier full of *dhansakh* and *kachoomber* (onion salad) made by her.

Keki took us to his friend's hotel. We had the *dhansakh* with some left over *tari* from Devka. I agree with Keki: *Mamaiji's dhansakh* was not a patch on this superbly cooked one. I

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can honestly say that I have never tasted *dhansakh* like the one made by Aloo (hold your horses, the recipe is coming later) and Keki was quite justified in his blunt remark. The hotel proprietor would not charge us a penny, saying that not only was he a friend of Keki's, but he had the greatest respect and regard for Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw and cannot charge any relative of his. (Three cheers for Sam – we have at least one 'great' from Valsad!) I requested Keki to take us to the old ancestral home of the Manekshaws and an older home also belonging to the grandfather. We visited

Keki's *wadi*, and then proceeded to Tithal. We were given a whole basket of chikoos to take with us. We thanked him and Aloo for all their kindness and returned to Surat.

Our host and hostess had arranged a dinner party for us where we met many interesting people. We saw diamonds being cut and polished, bought *Surti ghats* (a type of silk) and returned to Delhi with *achars* (pickles), vinegar, *biscots* (salty local biscuits, normally relished with a cup of tea), chutneys and *ghats*!

It was sad leaving Gujarat. One experiences a deep sense of belonging. It

was for the first time that I, who have travelled almost all over India (my husband being in the air force), was able to hear our language being spoken by every one throughout the state. Even Sikhs with beards spoke fluent Gujarati! Everywhere one went, people were kind, helpful and polite.

I don't know where my roots lie. There is no one left to ask. My grandparents from both sides were in Bombay. But in the eight short days we spent in Gujarat there was a great sense of satisfaction in being there and feeling part and parcel of the land.

RECIPES FROM OUR GRASSROOTS

BHARUCHI MEVA NI ACOORI

Eggs (16)
Pure ghee (8 dsp)
Sultanas (25 gms)
Mixed almonds, cashew nuts and *charoli* (cheronji nuts) (40 gms)
Salt (to taste)
Scramble eggs, and when nearly done, add sultanas. Remove from fire and add previously blanched, slivered and lightly fried almonds, cashew nuts and *charoli*.

Variation: Add *leelu lasan* (green garlic), chopped coriander and chopped green chillies.

SADHNA MASALANA

Large prawns (1 kg – shelled)
Garlic (18 – 20 cloves)
Cumin (1 dsp – freshly roasted and powdered)
Red chillies (medium hot, powdered – approximately 1½ dsp – but adjust to taste)
Salt (to taste)
Til oil (for shallow frying)
Extra chilli powder (2 tsp)
Turmeric powder (2 tsp)
Sour limes (2)
Wash and dry prawns. Rub with extra chilli powder, turmeric and salt. Grind together garlic, cumin and chillies. Heat oil and fry the masala, add prawns and cook together till the prawns are just done. Serve with slices of lime and hot *ghau ni rotli*.

VALSAD DHANSAKH

Toover dar (½ kg)
Red pumpkin (150 gms)

Gourd (*dodhi* – 150 gms)
Potato (1)
Brinjal (1)
Onion (1)
Fenugreek (*methi*) leaves (4 small bunches)
Green chillies (to taste)
Curry leaves (2-3 sprigs)
Mint (a few sprigs)
Chilli and turmeric powder (1 tsp each)
Dhansakh powder (1 dsp)
Charbi dar (fatty) meat (1 kg)
Meat fat (1 piece – most essential)
Tomato (1 – sliced)
Jaggery (1 small piece)
Masala to be fried
Onions (3-4 – sliced)
Whole cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, star anise (*badian*), *leeli huldi* (fresh turmeric – a few, whole)
Dhansakh powder (1 dsp)
Ground masala
Cumin (1½ tsp)
Garlic (6 cloves)
Ginger (2-inch piece)
Coriander seeds (1 tbsp)
Boil together the first set of ingredients (except tomato and jaggery) until the *dar* is cooked and the meat is tender. Carefully remove the meat and push the rest through a colander (the easier way is to process in a liquidizer, but the texture is lost) with a wooden spoon. Keep aside. Heat about 100 gms ghee or oil. Brown the sliced onions with all the whole garam masala. Add the dhansakh masala and the ground masala. Fry well and combine with the *dar* and the meat. Add toma-

to and jaggery and simmer for a few minutes.

Note: *Sambhar no masalo* can be added if desired.

Serve with browned rice to which star anise has been added.

DODHI MA GOSHT

(Recipe given to me by Kekashru Bhikhaji Kamana who is a caterer in Valsad.)

Meat (1 kg)
Dodhi (Vegetable marrow – 1½ kg)
Dry red chillies (4 – whole)
Cinnamon, cloves and cardamom (1 dsp)
Garlic (2-3 cloves – pounded)
Onions (3-4 – cubed)
Ghee (75-100 gms)
Salt (to taste)
Ground masala
Ginger (2-inch piece)
Garlic (6 cloves)
Green chillies (4-6)
Heat ghee and brown the meat well. Add the rest of the ingredients (*dodhi* cut into thin slices) and cook on a slow fire without water till meat is tender.

DEVKA – TARI MA MURGHI

Chicken (1 – jointed)
Onions (3-4 – sliced)
Cinnamon (1 small piece)
Cloves (4-6)
Pure ghee (2 tbsp)
Onions (2-3 – cubed)
Potatoes (4 – peeled and quartered)
Salt (to taste)
Curry powder (2 tsp)
Chilli powder (1 tsp)
Tari (toddy – 1 bottle)
Turmeric (1 tsp)
Ground masala
Ginger (1½-inch piece)
Garlic (8 cloves)

Green chillies (4-6)

Heat ghee, brown sliced onions lightly, add ground paste and rest of masala. Sauté for 1-2 minutes. Add chicken and sauté till brown. Add *tari* (about ½ bottle at first) and the potatoes with the onions and simmer till chicken is tender, adding more *tari* if needed to make a thick gravy.

Note: If *tari* is not available, use beer instead. This recipe needs ghee – not oil.

SURAT GURCHAN

Liver, kidney, heart, lung (1 each – cut into small pieces)

Mix with *leelo masalo* of freshly ground ginger, garlic, green chillies, and *sooko masalo* of powdered red chillies, turmeric, cinnamon, cloves and cardamoms.

Heat oil and cook gently till the gurchan is done.

Note: Can add *tari* and cook till a thick gravy remains.

LEVTA NO PATIO

Levtas (12 – can use fresh *boomlas* or eels)

Turmeric powder (2 tsp)

Til oil (100 gms)

Chilli powder (1 tsp)

Vinegar (1 tbsp – optional)

Ground Masala

Cumin (2 tsp)

Garlic (1 whole pod)

Green chillies (4-6 – seeded)

Garnish: chopped coriander leaves, chopped green chillies (seeded) and chopped *leelu lasan*.

Cut off the heads and tails of *levtas* and gut them. Rub with turmeric and salt and keep aside for about 15 minutes.

Heat oil on an iron *lohri* (griddle), add ground masala, and fry for 1-2 minutes. Add *levtas* and chilli powder. Simmer gently for about 15 minutes. Do not use a spoon, do not shake or turn the *lohri* and do not cover it. You may, at the end of the cooking time, gently swerve the *lohri* if desired. Add the garnish and carefully remove the *levtas* onto a serving dish.

Note: Add vinegar last before removing the *levtas* from the pan. Try to use *Navsari no sarko* or a malt vinegar, not the synthetic kind.

Bon Appetit!

Bhicoo J. Manekshaw, a graduate of the prestigious Cordon Bleu School of Cookery, London, and author of The Traditional Recipes of India, has been associated with many haute cuisine organizations in the country.

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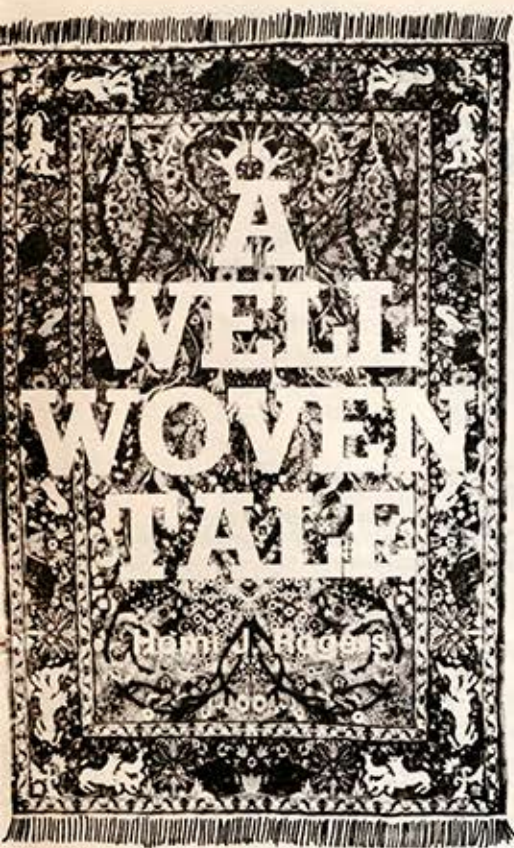
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The Rug Merchant by Phillip Lopate. Published by Viking Penguin Inc. Pp 218. Price: \$ 16.95 (approximately Rs 255).

Cyrus Irani, a 44-year-old rug merchant on Amsterdam Avenue in New York, has more Zoroastrian traits than just those "kind, black eyes, protuberant nose, bushy moustache, and harassed noble air." He quaffs no alcohol, smokes no cigarettes. He lives with fearful respect for his mother, as does Percy in India, the fictional hero in the film that is being made in Parsi-Gujarati. Irani appreciates Western classical music, and does not hesitate to criticize *apro* Zubin Mehta for his lack of introspection. And, like many in the community, he is yet a bachelor, not having accepted the idea of an arranged match in these times, and in this place (the USA), nor having plucked up enough courage to find a girl of his choice, and woo her.

He is too gentle for New York's changing milieu, where aggressiveness in selling is called for, as displayed by his Jewish friend George Aberjinnian, or his punk, hooked-on-drugs nephew Eddie. Irani faces a mid-life crisis as his new landlord trebles the rent of his

shop. His sedentary lifestyle is disturbed. He needs money to survive and lead his holed-in-the-wall life reading Cavafy and solving cross-words. Also, to run the shop he has inherited from his Uncle Noshir (who, as was his style, would prepare tea for his customers, while showing them around his rug collection), Irani would have appreciated more funds. Faced with this startling threat, Irani seeks the help of his neighbor Marge, a pet shop owner who, he suspects, is a lesbian. Marge, with characteristic American practicality, suggests the intervention of an ombudsman, and arranges for a meeting with a tenant counsellor.

When all efforts come to nought, Cyrus Irani turns to his family. His mother is more eager to see him married to Scherezade, a girl of around 25, who has come from Karachi (though elsewhere in the book Lopate trips himself up and states her domicile as Quetta), than to advance him a loan to keep the shop going. His brother, Farokh, now rechristened Freddie, to whom his mother turned as if he were her only child, on their father's death, is just as keen that Cyrus close down his shop and join him in his import-export business. Cyrus' world sudden-

"American-raised Zoroastrians are all becoming puritans"

ly seems to be up in arms against him. All his objects of quiet affection – the bookshop, the Greek restaurant, even Marge's pet shop – are downing shutters. His family is of little help. If only he could do something, wrench himself away from his introversion, he could solve his financial problems, his loneliness, and his spiritual yearnings, all in one stroke.

With the dexterity of a carpet weaver, Lopate coalesces all the different strands and brings them to a sudden and startling climax. But what charms most in Lopate's narration is the quiet skill with which he has woven into a simple scenario the many nuances of life for the Zoroastrians in America,

and their inter-relationships with members of their community in the subcontinent. There is scarce a false note in his characterization: a mild, introverted Cyrus, a highly strung mother who dominates her offspring with an interplay of words and actions. Even the priest from Pakistan, who strokes his cropped beard and lectures with scholarly ease on the *Gathas*, like many priests evades replying to the more day-to-day problems facing the community.

While Lopate rarely errs in his observations of the community, even discovering the famous cuss words suggesting incestuous relationships with mother and sister, he stumbles on theology. Most Western scholars stress the theory of duality in Zoroastrianism, and Lopate's Irani has preferred that part of the religion "which pitted a good but limited god against a destructive spirit." Writes Lopate: "The notion that the Creator God, Ahura Mazda, was not all-powerful" struck Cyrus as a sensible view expounded by the religion.

For the Zoroastrian custom of dokhmenashini, Irani expresses derision: "The health department would never have permitted a tower of silence in Queens – even in Flushing Meadows, where they dumped everything else." And there is a delightful witticism on the trinity of good thoughts, good words and good deeds. "This is not theology, this is advertising copy. The good religion, they call it. That's not an ethical doctrine, it's self-congratulation." Yet, it would be interesting to note that Aberjinnian calls Cyrus a puritan. "American-raised Zoroastrians are all becoming puritans."

The Rug Merchant is quintessentially Zoroastrian in flavor. All the characters are identifiable. Their gestures, their words, have a ring of familiarity, as if we were looking into a mirror. The dialogues are crisp, earthy, with not a didactic note to them, even when the discussion is on the serious problem of the community's decreasing numbers.

Lopate's novel is ribald and rumbustious at times, serene and sensitive at others. Cyrus Irani is the most improbable of heroes a novel could ever have

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had: so detached from his environs, buried between his Tabriz and Isfahans, dreaming about his ancestral home at Kirman, in a pistol-toting metropolis. And yet, Lopate manages to keep the reader rivetted to the life and days of so disengaging a person. The woof and warp of Lopate's tale highlights the myriad facets of a culture unknown to the Western world, making *The Rug Merchant* a minor classic. It is no magic carpet to America, but an engrossing tapestry on New York, and the Zoroastrian psyche in the West.

Phillip Lopate is a teacher at the University of Houston's Creative Writing Program. A personal account of his teaching experience *Being with Children* earned him a Christopher Medal in 1975. His collection of personal essays, *Bachelorhood*, received the Texas Institute of Letters award for the best nonfiction book in 1982. Lopate has also authored *Confessions of Summer*, his first novel, and two collections of poetry. His works have been recognized with different grants.



'DIVINE' VERSES

Gustasp Irani

To You: My Gracious Lord of Being by Thrity Bharucha. Volume of verse. Pp 56. Published by Writers Workshop, Calcutta. Price: hardback Rs 60, flexiback Rs 40.

To You: My Gracious Lord of Being, Thrity Bharucha's first volume of verse is, as the name suggests, a collection of devotional poems. One hesitates to classify them as psalms which are songs of praise and glorification of the Lord. Bharucha's poems say more. They record her discussions with a relatively accessible God who hovers protectively behind every sorrow, ready to dab away the tears. They are personal poems with a universal message which Bharucha hopes "shall survive the whirling of transient time."

The God of Bharucha's poems

speaks, in most cases, directly to his devotee, though at times he may pass on his message through a flute, a lake or a lamb. His language is simple enough, uncluttered by profound symbolism or imagery. He is a practical God who is not indifferent to the problems of everyday life. He often comes across as a divine physicist. For example:

"Reciprocity is Nature's law
Time does not flow in circles
It travels straight and never retracts,
Once gone, it is lost forever."

He is a God who needs no temples. All he expects of his devotees is that they seek him out with a sincere heart. For instance in poem 21, one of the longer ones in the collection of 27:

"Look there, you said ...
They are building there a temple for
me -

They need to house me ...
You bring me gifts - in exchange for
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business?

Come to me with outstretched arms

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and I shall hold you in mine own:
Come to me with an open heart, and I
shall fill it with love."

He is not particularly a 'Zoroastrian' God – Ahura Mazda – though he does talk about good thoughts, good words, good deeds, and of the choice that man must make. He frowns upon the act of *sanyas* (renunciation of worldly life):

"Fool, you told me, oh foolish, foolish man ...
Knowledge does not come from don-
ning saffron robes
You only entertain laziness in my
name
Realization comes from living life."

It is when she is living life that Bharucha turns to her Lord and sometimes away from him. On the birth of a child, the death of a loved one, in the face of false accusation, in the betrayal of a trusted one, in unanswered prayers, in undefined sorrow and longing, His divinity is everpresent.

One notices a predictable pattern in the structure of the poems. They start with the problem: the pain, the sor-

**This God needs no
temples. All he
expects of his
devotees is that
they seek him out
with a sincere heart**

row, the yearning; then find the Lord, record his consoling message and finally sing his praise in the last verse. All but the last poem end with the line "Gracious Lord of Being," which accounts for the title of the book. It also explains why some verses seem forced to fit the pattern.

The poems are not as stirring in their imagery and symbolism as one might expect, considering that they are dealing with a being as undefinable and infinite as God. The striving desperation to capture and trap the omnipotent in words is missing. Instead one finds honest simplicity.

It is surprising that Bharucha should have her God address her as a man,

especially when the sentiments expressed are often unmistakably female. In today's world of growing feminism, her God could surely have been less chauvinistic.

Throughout the 56 pages of the book, there are sprinklings of corrections done by hand. Undoubtedly, Bharucha would have been happier if her work had been spared the mutilation. She is probably not complaining too loudly, though. To have poetry published is creditable, and this does not apply to India alone. As one American literary agent commented: "Getting poetry published is like trying to market chickens' beaks."

Ms Thrity Bharucha, 39, has been writing poems, short stories, articles and middles since 1968. Her works have been published in various newspapers and magazines. For many years she edited Contact, the magazine brought out by Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari, where she lives. She also holds a full-time job with Tata Chemicals Ltd. She is married to a lawyer and has two sons, aged 14 and 6.



With the Compliments
Of

TATA ENTERPRISES

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.

Heart disease claimed 21 of the 72 Parsis who died in Bombay, lung disease claimed 11, while pneumonia and old age claimed six victims each. The other killers were cancer (five), brain disease, diabetes and hypertension (four each) and asthma (two). Bronchitis, blood disease, ulcer, liver disease, gastro enteritis, nervous disorder, kidney failure, bed sores and gastric bleeding claimed isolated victims.

In the breakup 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. We are sure our readers would appreciate this requirement and cooperate with us.

AHMEDNAGAR

Died

Mehru B. Mehta (62), mother of Merwan, Mernosh and Behram on December 20, 1988

BOMBAY

Born

A boy, *Neville*, to *Sherma* and *Sharukh Bharucha*; January 30, 1989

A girl to *Ruby* and *Noshir Colah*; January 30

A boy to *Armaity* and *Neville Arjani*; January 31

A boy to *Dinaz* and *Nozar Kanga*; February 3

A boy to *Madhu* and *Farukh Chikliwala*; February 7

A boy to *Meher* and *Jehangir Bhandara*; February 9

A boy to *Khurshed* and *Edu Vajifdar*; February 10

A boy, *Areez*, to *Beroz* and *Rumie Gazdar*; February 12

A girl to *Shirin* and *Rustom Banker*; February 13

A girl to *Viloo* and *Tehmuras Patel*; February 15

A girl to *Armaity* and *Adille Sumariwalla*; February 15

A girl to *Bukhtawar* and *Pilton Kothawala*; February 16

A girl to *Khurshid* and *Mahiar Panthaki*; February 18

A girl to *Nina* and *Kersi Daruwalla*; February 20

A boy to *Maneja* and *Cyrus Irani*; February 21

A boy to *Zarin* and *Arsheesh Wadia*; February 22

A boy to *Tanaaz* and *Neville Shroff*; February 23

A boy to *Farida* and *Cyrus Mehta*; February 25

A boy, *Daanesh* to *Kashmira* and *Bejan Kalyaniwalla*; February 27

Married

Khurshid Behram Irani and *Khushroo Rustomji Irani* of Poona; January 2

Soonu Minoo Pavri of Navsari and *Firoze Tehmuras Jagirdar*; January 2

Phiroza Navroji Kharas and *Aspi Homi Saklatwala*; January 2

Binaifer Phiroze Mistry and *Percy Temool Kandawalla*; January 3

Azarmi Dinshaw Irani and *Sam Keki Billimoria*; January 9

Zarine Adi Lam and *Jamshed Adi Unwalla*; January 10

Yasmine Keki Rabadi and *Farshid Piroj Kapadia* of Middlesex, UK; January 12

Kamal Bomi Mistry and *Zubin Sam Mistry*; January 14

Kashmira Ardeshir Mody and *Yezdi Dinshaw Amroli*; January 15

Jasmine Bejanji Mehta and *Nozer Navroz Sutaria*; January 16

Zarin Tehmas Manekshaw and *Farrokh Dhunjishaw Bharucha*; January 17

Farida Eruchshah Minbatiwala and *Dadabhoy Behram Unwalla*; January 18

Meher Sarosh Mevawalla of Vasai and *Farokh Rusi Daruwalla*; January 22

Tanaz Minoo Wadia and *Firoze Keki Irani*; January 24

Rashna Fardoon Irani and *Fardoon Behram Irani*; January 27

Maharukh Rusi Bagwalla and *Hoshang Barjorji Gandhi*; January 28

Nilofer Ardaviraf Daruwalla and *Firdosh Jehangir Sethna*; January 29

Kim Dara Hormusji and *Darayus Keki Khodaiji*; January 30

Hutokshi Furdoonji Mahva and *Jimmy Behram Zaiwalla*; January 31

Roshan Peshotan Bamanji of Govandi and *Neville Homi Deboo*; February 2

Jerbanoo Kaikobad Randelia and *Khushroo Rustom Mirza*; February 2

Meher Darabshah Bavaadam and *Nevil Darasha Lall*; February 3

Anhaita Manek Charna and *Khushroo Jal Khambata*; February 4

Anahita Bomi Mandviwalla and *Aspi Erachshaw Elavia*; February 5

Pervin Adi Aga and *Behram Rustom Irani*; February 5

Putli Noshir Dubash and *Keka Rashid Irani*; February 5

Freni Adi Wadia and *Neville Sam Patel*; February 5

Hutoxi Jal Solai and *Daraius Faramroze Aibara*; February 7

Khurshid Phiroze Mistry and *Firoze Fali Cooper*; February 7

Tehmi Minoo Master and *Burzin Sohrab Morris*; February 9

Khushnama Keki Tavadia and *Zubin Jamshed Davar*; February 10

Rashna Hoshi Kotwal and *Homyar Nariman Sanjana*; February 9

Bakhtavar Rustom Rao and *Fareedoon Naval Desai*; February 10

Dilnavaz Firoz Tantra of Nagpur and *Zahir Minoo Mevawala*; February 10

Nargis Phiroze Balsara and *Mehernosh Rustomji Bhagwagar*; February 11

Jeroo Fareedoon Mistry of Vashi and *Godrej Minoo Billimoria*; February 11

Roxan Noshir Kavarana and *Kersi Dinshaw Bhada*; February 12

Roda Dhanji Irani and *Adil Polad Irani*; February 12

Jasmine Jehangir Pastakia and *Khushroo Aspi Irani*; February 12

Dinaz Adi Chinoy of New Delhi and *Cawas Gayomard Kharadi*; February 12

Villoo Jal Sahiyar and *Adil Jamshed Mistry*; February 12

Jessica Noshir Mistry and *Jasper Noshir Kateli*; February 13

Yasmin Hoshang Marshall and *Rummy Piroze Khan*; February 14

Daizy Jal Sethna and *Homi Nariman Kotwal*; February 14

Yasmin Pheroze Kharas and *Rumi Bahadur Palsetia*; February 14

Persis Adi Sui and *Vaspar Kali Patel*; February 14

Tina Jimmy Umrigar and *Pesi Dady Shroff*; February 14

Aloo Jal Vakil and *Jimmy Jehangir Billimoria*; February 16

Pervin Yezdi Sattha of Ahmedabad and *Pervez Jehangir Irani*; February 16

Jeroo Noshir Bajina of Poona and *Pesi Vicajee Patel*; February 16

Zaver Farrokh Dalal and *Baji Homi Sepoy*; February 16

Aban Nariman Chhor and *Mahernosh Nariman Umrigar*; February 17

Binaifer Naval Amroli and *Kaiwaan Russi Patel*; February 18

Nilufer Nariman Confectioner and *Nozer Sorab Dastoor*; February 19

Tehnaz Jamshed Farooq and *Farrokh Rustom Irani*; February 19

Khurshid Noshir Patel and *Khushroo Bomi Master*; February 19

Rashna Dhunjisha Ratnagar and *Nariman Sorabji Mehta*; February 21

Hufri Phiroze Pooniwalla and *Behram Keki Nagporwala*; February 21

Aloo Ardeshir Artist and *Minoo Pestonji Polson*; February 21

Nifriez Jamshed Contractor and *Rohinton Jehangir Jassawalla*; February 23

Nergish Minocher Bhadha and *Vispi Eruchshaw Katila*; February 23

Jacqueline Framroze Mistry and *Berziz Ratansha Marolia*; February 23

February 23
Hufrish Pesi Deboo and
Mernoz Pesatanoji Shastri;
 February 23
Tanaz Burjor Patel and
Rohan Firoze Bulsara;
 February 24
Freny Ardeshtir Ranikhetwalla
 and *Behruz Dinyar*
Cardmaster; February 24
Shirin Faquirji Contractor of
 Gandhidham, Kutch and
Tehmtan Jal Patel;
 February 25
Firuze Naval Daruvalla and
Kerman Fali Shroff;
 February 26
Hutoxi Meherji Munshi and
Phiroze Dhanjishaw
Vandrewala; February 26
Farahnaz Sheriar Falahati
 and *Esfandiyar Khodayar*
Yazdani of Panjim, Goa,
 February 26
Parinaaz Kaikoo Irani and
Sheriar Behram Khosravi;
 February 27
Daisy Shiavax Marolia and
Pervez Rustom Sidhwa;
 February 27
Arnawaz Jivanji Tadwalla
 and *Hoshie Rustomji*
Mevawala of Poona;

February 28

Died

Nadirshaw Shapurji Bhoja
 (79) residing at 12-B, Kawasji
 Petit Bldg, Marzban Clny,
 Gilder Lane, 400008;
 January 31
Cawasji Darabshah Hansotia
 (71), F. S. Parukh
 Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes
 Rd, 400007; January 31
Meherbanoo Shapurji Irani
 (85), 12/8, Sir C. J. Clny,
 Tardeo, 400034; January 31
Perin Rustomji Batliwala
 (75), B-305, Kailash Apts
 293, Balasis Rd, 400008;
 February 1
Framroze Ardeshtir Bode
 (88), 110, Heera Meher,
 Wodehouse Rd, Colaba,
 400005; February 1
 (cremated)
Phiroze Kariman Daruwalla
 (68), 62, Daruwalla Hse,
 Parel Village Rd, Parel,
 400012; February 2
Sorab Pestonji Kutky (72),
 Patel Chmbs, 9, Rustom
 Sidhwa Marg, 400001;
 February 2
Jamshed Boman Najmi (70),

11/B, Laxman Apts, Azad
 Lane, S.V. Rd, Andheri
 (W), 400058; February 2
Minoo Shapurji Wadia (82),
 617, B. Cooper Bldg, Dhobi
 Talao, 400002; February 2
Banoobai Hormusji Kaka
 (85), B-10, Tardeo Chmbs,
 Kasinath St, Tardeo Rd,
 400034; February 3
Jer Sorabji Solai (60), Room
 13, Bai Mai Bldg, Jerbai
 Wadia Rd, Parel, 400012;
 February 3
Roshan Burjor Guzder (54),
 Themis Ter, 74, Turner Rd,
 Bandra, 400050; February 4
Putalibai Dinshawjee Cooper
 (74), C/o Hilla Jamshedji,
 Room 15, Anil Bldg, Dhobi
 Talao, 400020; February 5
Meherbai Savakshaw Mistry
 (75), 7/7, B. S. Panthaki
 Baug, Andheri (E), 400069;
 February 5
Sheroo Pirojshaw Shroff (73),
 F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla,
 34, Hughes Rd, 400007;
 February 5
Bomi Minocher Deboo (46),
 Room 52, Hirabai Petit Bldg,
 Grant Rd, 400007;
 February 6

Homi Dossabhai Kharas (77),
 81, Navyug Mans, Grant Rd,
 400007; February 6
Nerges Ardaviraf
Taraporevala (68), A/4, Ness
 Baug, Nana Chowk, 400007;
 February 6
Jinee Rustomji Bharucha
 (66), 696-B, Firdoshi Rd,
 Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
 February 7
Jal-Cursetji Billimoria (73), 6,
 Jehangir Mans, First Marine
 St, 400020; February 7
Ardeshtir Rustomji Busha
 (87), C-17-18, Mohanlal
 Mehta Market, Grant Rd,
 400007; February 7
Najamai Kaikhushroo
Jalanawalla (79), Rustom
 Court, Annie Besant Rd,
 400018; February 7
Nargesh Dhunjishaw
Jassumani (72), M-29,
 Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug,
 400012; February 7
Nadir Framji Mehta (85),
 Jaiphal Ter, 31, Forjett St,
 400036; February 7
Pesi Jijibhoi Suntoke (65),
 17-B, Rustom Baug, Victoria
 Rd, Byculia, 400027;
 February 8

With best wishes from a regular reader

- Perin Jehangir Wadia* (64), 5, Proctor Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; February 8
- Nergish M. Amaria* (76), Mancharam Bldg, Grant Rd, 400007; February 9
- Sorab Jal Pardiwalla* (33), Annexe 3, Ness Baug, Nana Chowk, 400007; February 9
- Shapoorji Cowasjee Satta* (68), 17, Kala Niketan, 95, M. Karve Marg, 400020; February 10
- Homai Edulji Writer* (71), 4, Todiwala Bldg, 28, Sun Mill Rd, Lower Parel, 400013; February 11
- Roshan Savaksha Dubash* (58), Gadiwalla Hse, 17, Gilder Lane, 400008; February 12
- Dina Ratanshaw Balsara* (70), A-25, T.M.C. Qrs, Sion Trombay Rd, 400088; February 13
- Cooma Ardesheer Deboo* (74), Bai Ratanbai Tata Bldg, 38th Rd, Bandra, 400050; February 13
- Pheroze Hormusji Hathidaru* (78), 31, Sion Mans, Sion, 400022; February 13
- Pirojshaw Merwanji Bacha* (80), 2, Habib Court, S.B. Rd, 400039; February 14
- Goolbai Ardesheer Bhatena* (95), 6, Malbari Bldg, New Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; February 14
- Homi Dossabhai Ichhaporia* (65), 6-B, New Mistry Bldg, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; February 14
- Shirin Kersasp Dordi* (91), Dhun Hse, 6, Tejpal Rd, New Gamdevi, 400007; February 15
- Fali Shavakshaw Kapadia* (58), Akash Apt, Makhmali Talao, old Agra Rd, Thane, 400601; February 15
- Freny Burjorji Nariman* (65), 269, Nariman Hse, Dr Cowasjee Hormusjee St, Dhobi Talao, 400002; February 15
- Meherbai Peshotan Sethna* (88), A-12, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; February 15
- Nariman Hoshang Batly* (75), 89, Khorshed Villa, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari, 400102; February 16
- Jalejar M. Gundevia* (90), Nawab Manzil, 18, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; February 16
- Suna Dhunjibhoy*
- Darukhanavala* (94), 22, Vacha Gandhi Rd, New Gamdevi, 400007; February 17
- Ratamai Hiraji Gandhi* (86), Polson Bldg, 731, Vimadlal Rd, Dadar, 400014; February 17
- Rata Navroji Kabir* (69), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; February 17
- Jehangirji Naoroji Engineer* (86), A-22, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; February 18
- Shirin Sorab Talati* (88), 3, Hampton Court, Wodehouse Rd, Colaba, 400005; February 18
- Russi Kaikhushroo Boyce* (57), C/610, Usha Nagar, Khandelwal Marg, Bhandup, 400078; February 19
- Kali Kaikhushroo Cabinetmaker* (65), H-12, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; February 19
- Hormusji Sorabji Daroowala* (90), 27, Old Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; February 19
- Baji Cowasjee Mehta* (67), 32, Mahimwalla Bldg, Khetwadi, 12th Lane, 400004; February 19
- Bomansha Edulji Mistry* (76), G/6, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; February 19
- Mehroo M. Postwalla* (76), Makavi Mans, Gunbow St, Fort, 400001; February 19
- Fram P. Tamboli* (81), Boyce Bldg, 671, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 19
- Shirinbai Cawasji Mullan* (93), 'D,' Shree Bhatia Co-op Soc, Princess St, 400002; February 20
- Sorab Merwanji Postwalla* (80), 5/3, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; February 20
- Mani Gev Wadia* (65), 65, Pheroze Villa, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400060; February 20
- Noshirwan Byramji Motiwalla* (94), 9, Ferns Mans, 116, Hill Rd, Bandra, 400050; February 21
- Aloo Dosabhai Sukhadwalla* (70), D/8, Captain Clny, Tardeo, 400054; February 21
- Goolbai Cawasji Davar* (81), Kotwal Hse, Sleater Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; February 22
- Kerbanoo Pestonji Gora* (80), 18, Marzban Bldg, Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; February 22
- Avabai Behramjee Mody* (89), Rehmat Manzil, Veer Nariman Rd, Churchgate, 400020; February 22
- Sorabshaw Sapurji Merchant* (70), 11/3, Sai Kripa, Khush Villa, Ratlam, MP, 457001; February 23
- Homi Merwanji Kheshtvala* (76), C/o Bahadur C. Amroliya, 18, United Chmbs, M. S. Rd, 400007; February 24
- Firoze Rustomji Panday* (89), 'A,' Banoo Mans, Cumballa Hill, 400036; February 24
- Kaikhushroo Nawroji Patel* (68), C-17, Natraj, Sodawala Lane, Borivli (W), 400092; February 24
- Gaver Ardesheer Irani* (85), Nand Bhavan, J.P. Rd, Andheri, 400058; February 25
- Kola Pesi Majoo* (68), Ava Mans, Tardeo Rd, 400007; February 25
- Dhanmai Burjorji Baria* (79), Hari Niwas, 19, Mathew Rd, 400004; February 26
- Putlibai Ratanji Hathikhanawalla* (93), Zaveri Bldg, Opp Albless Baug, R. Mohan Roy Rd, 400004; February 26
- Sorabji Hormusji Mistry* (75), 7/D, Dadiseth Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; February 26
- Homai Rustomji Mistry* (65), E-36, Cusrow Baug, S.B. Rd, Colaba, 400039; February 27
- CALCUTTA**
Born
A boy, *Rustom*, to *Kashmira* and *Rumi Patel*; February 22
- Married**
Frenaz Modi and *Kersi Mogrelia*; February 19
- CHICAGO**
Born
A girl, *Nicole*, to *Niloufer* and *Mike Hagen*; January 4
- Died**
Dhunmai Gandhi, February 22
- KARACHI**
Married
Shermin Aspi Khambatta and
- Jal Juli Kaikobad*; January 5
- Arnavaz Rusi Kaikobad* and *Adil Rustom Bankwalla*; January 6
- Toranj Tehmuras Khursigara* and *Behram Jahnbux Irani*; January 12
- Perveen Minocher Gandavia* and *Zarir Zal Pohwalla*; January 15
- Dosi Jina Bhaddha* and *Bomi Minocher Anklesaria*; January 26
- Died**
Behram Munchersha Billimoria (73), January 2
- Natasha Fredie Sethna* (3); January 2
- Najamai Nariman Khambatta* (85); January 5
- Rusi Meherwanji Patel* (70); January 15
- Pirojbai Nadirsha Sukhia* (87); January 16
- Sarvar Mahiyar Allahbadi* (85); January 24
- ONTARIO**
Born
A boy, *Cyrus*, to *Parizad* and *Zahir Antia*; January 3
- A girl, *Amy*, to *Yesna* and *Teosar Bhesania*; January 29
- PENNSYLVANIA**
Born
A boy, *Malcolm*, to *Parinaz* and *Khodadad Irani*; October 7, 1988
- POONA**
Born
A boy to *Hufriez* and *Khushro Dastur*; January 17, 1989
- Died**
Hoshang Minoo Rustomji (34), 955, Dastur Meher Rd, 411001; December 2, 1988
- Behram Boman Irani* (69), 3, Jamshedji Petit St, Grant Rd, Bombay, 400007; December 12
- Shirinbai Jehangir Irani* (83), 613, Sachapir St, Camp, 411001; December 20
- Najamai Naval Naigamwala* (88), 480, Rasta Peth, 411001; January 12, 1989
- Daulat Minocher Forbes* (94), 30, Koregaon Park, 411001; February 3
- Minoo Savaksha Daver* (85), Bakhtavar, 129, B. Nagar Rd, 411001; February 16

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**TRANSPORT CONTRACTORS,
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Died: Dinshaw Byram Avari, 87, founder of the Avari chain of hotels in Pakistan and president of the Karachi Parsi Anjuman Trust Funds, on December 18, 1988 in Karachi, following cardiac arrest.

The guiding principle of his life as recounted in a resolution passed by the Samast Anjuman of Karachi was: "Contented with what I have, but discontented with what I am." It was this philosophy which spurred him to better his business prospects, improve the lot of his community, and envision a progressive future for his country, Pakistan.

On his death, Karachi's daily, the *Business Recorder* of December 20, noted, "Karachi has lost one of its most prominent citizens who was witness to the metamorphosis of this city from a small town of a couple of lakhs of people to a sprawling nerve center and the largest industrial city of Pakistan." Nearly 3,500 citizens of Karachi are estimated to have assembled at his residence to pay their last respects to Avari before his body was carried to the Towers of Silence.

In personal messages of condolence sent by the President of Pakistan Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Ms Benazir Bhutto, Avari was referred to as an "illustrious" man. In a letter, the Governor of Sind, Justice Qadeeruddin Ahmed (Retd), recalled his association with Avari spanning four decades. Syed Qaim Ali Shah Gilani, the chief Minister of Sind, remembered Avari's services "for the welfare of humanity in general and the Parsi community in particular."

Messages from institutions and individuals in different corners of the world were read out at the Samast Anjuman meeting convened by the Karachi Parsi Anjuman on March 11



to condole the death of Avari. There were many who narrated their personal experiences with the hotelier-philanthropist at the meeting at the Katrak Parsi Colony. "Dinshawji was a self-made man endowed with vision and foresight. With the dint of energy and tenacity of purpose... he rose to great heights," wrote Dr Aspi Golwala, chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet.

"A person of immense courage, determination, integrity and enormous benevolence" is how John Hinnells, professor of comparative religion at the University of Manchester, described Avari. "The Zoroastrian world at large will be the poorer for his demise and yet is the greater for his life," Hinnells continued.

Avari was a life member of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) and chairman of the WZO Committee for Pakistan from the outset. "This shows clearly his recognition of the fact that the need of the hour for the community was to have a world body to look after its interests globally," noted a resolution sent by the WZO.

On losing a pioneer of the hotel industry in Pakistan, the chairman of the Pakistan Hotels Association recollected, "As the proprietor of the Beach Luxury Hotel, he was one of the founder members of the Pakistan Hotels Association," and had served as a member of its executive committee and as its vice chairman for many years.

Though he had suffered more than one heart attack in the last year, Avari was hopeful of attending the centenary celebrations of his alma mater, the J. N. Petit Orphanage (now the Technical High School) in Pune, wrote educationist Behram Rustomji. In fact, he had just gone for a medical check-up before leaving for India when a massive cardiac arrest made him breathe his last. Reportedly, his school days and his humble beginnings were an experience he never allowed himself to forget in his lifetime and took pride in frequently referring to them publicly.

The Navsari-born Avari was orphaned at an early age. Throughout his school, and college life at Sydenham, Avari had known trying times. As he used to admit, "I was provided with scholarships but there were days in my life when I had nothing to eat and I slept hungry." With an educational background in commerce, Avari started his career in Bombay with the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada on the meager salary of Rs 75, recalls the Samast Anjuman resolution. Soon he became the highest selling agent in the presidency of Bombay. His efforts were recognized by the Company which asked him to open an office in Karachi. When he successfully handled this task, his authority was extended to the provinces of Sind, Baluchistan and the North West Fron-

Avari's towering achievements

tier Province, Punjab and Afghanistan.

Aspiring still higher, Avari, at the age of 42, invested his life savings and, with the help of a loan, bought the Bristol Hotel for one lakh rupees. The English seller taught him and his wife Khorshed the ropes of the hotel business for six months. Thereafter they managed independently. His busy life would start at four in the morning, going for marketing to meet the Hotel requirements.

Convinced that there was a scope for first class hotels in Karachi, he decided to build the Beach Luxury on Queen's Road which was then marshy land. Those were the days of Partition, when many minority community members were leaving Karachi. It is said that the first Governor of Sind, on hearing of Avari's proposal, had suggested to Khorshed that Avari get his head examined! Nevertheless, Avari proceeded with his plans. The 150-room plush hotel with banquet halls, swimming pool and other luxuries was the first to introduce the buffet system in Karachi. Initially, people could not reconcile themselves to this concept, and there would be articles in

newspapers criticizing the owners for treating their guests like dogs, making them stand and eat food!

At considerable cost, Avari, in collaboration with Hilton International, opened the Lahore Hilton at Lahore city in 1978 and dedicated the new hotel to his late wife Khorshed.

His latest addition to the hotel scene was Avari Towers-Ramada Renaissance, inaugurated in 1985. Its building, the tallest in Karachi, was built after weathering several legal and financial storms. Surrounding the hotel is Avari Plaza which houses the offices of multinational concerns in this prime locality.

As a corollary to his hotel business, he had introduced the Avari Travel Agencies in 1978.

"Dinshaw Avari was not a person but an institution who, by his personal pioneering zeal in building up a chain of magnificent hotels, shared its profits with the community, (and took) an active interest in the civic, business, cultural and charitable activities of the country," remembered Rustomji. His doors were always open to any and every one who needed his assistance. He

would often say, "The palm should never face up, always down (symbolizing giving)," remembers his son Byram.

For the B.M.H. Parsi General Hospital, Avari would host dinners at his hotel absolutely free of charge to raise funds for the institution, the Hospital trustees put on record his magnanimity.

"Since the last several years on our Parsi New Year's day, a fair is held at the Beach Luxury Hotel where the whole community gets together and the proceeds of the fair are donated to Parsi charitable organizations," acknowledged the Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal president. In fact, Avari would even arrange to hire buses at his expense to bring poor Parsis from different localities to these functions. Only last year, he arranged for a dinner-dance on Navroze eve at Avari Towers in aid of the Banu Mandal's Diamond Jubilee Higher Education Loan Scholarship Fund.

Until his end, he served as president of the Young Men's Zoroastrian Association and the Jehangir P. Dubash Health Culture Institute, Karachi. He

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was also most regular in his attendance at the Karachi Parsi Railway Ghambar Fund and the Parsi Jashan Fund.

Due to his religious leanings, for 45 consecutive years he provided kathi at the Seth Dossabhoy Wadia Daremeh-er at Karachi. To the H. J. Behrana Fire-temple too he rendered assistance and guidance, as noted their trustees. For the Dastur Dr Dhalla Memorial Institute, Avari promoted the aims of the organization "at the cost of his valuable time and (extended) excellent facilities of his hotels to the visiting scholars of Zoroastrianism," his contribution was recorded. Avari had also served on the managing committees of educational institutions like the Bai Virbaiji Soparivala Parsi School and The Mama Parsi Girls' School.

He was particularly concerned about the welfare of Zoroastrian refugees from Iran. He organized "a committee in which the various Zoroastrian trusts of Karachi were brought together to support, house and fund the refugees," noted the Samast Anjuman resolution. It was stated in a letter from the Sir Jehangir Kothari Trust that "his piety and generosity were infectious."

A message from the Jehangir Rajkotwalla Baugh Trust referred to his conduct of affairs: "As chairman (he) showed that everything as far as possible can be done with consensus. He always listened to the others' viewpoints and respected them. He never allowed anyone to go away from the meetings without satisfaction."

Yet, his own appointment as chairman of the Karachi Parsi Anjuman came during a tumultuous period in the history of the community in Karachi. Split into factions, one segment of the community was determined that the vacant chair should not be occupied by Avari. Equally insistent was Avari's son Byram who made every effort to get his father the post due to him even though Byram himself had to then face a tough challenge to win the trusteeship elections against retired Justice Dorab Patel.

One of Avari's most important contributions to the Anjuman was spearheading the development of the prime and surplus land at Doongerwadi into a residential Parsi colony, stated the Samast Anjuman resolution. Once the plots are allotted to those interested in purchasing land

here, the construction activity is expected to commence.

On his eighty-fifth birthday, different community organizations got together to felicitate the doyen.

There were other associations too with which Avari was involved. He was a freemason, the founder member of the Rotary Club of Karachi and the Deaf and Dumb Centre at Karachi. On the Sind Red Cross/Red Crescent Society as also on the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Avari served on the managing committee. He was vice president of the Pakistan National Committee of The World Constitution and Parliament Association of Colorado-USA, the World

Association of World Federalists, The English Speaking Union of Pakistan, the Pak-Kuwait Friendship Association and other organizations. Since 1941, he had been appointed Justice of the Peace.

His approach to life was: "Listen to all, as everyone has something to contribute towards one's development." His success in life he attributed to his daily prayers, rituals and ceremonies of the Zoroastrian faith. When faced with difficulties, he had a positive attitude: "Be brave and face the blast, as storms come but soon they pass."

Avari is survived by his son Byram and daughters Havovi Shiavax Dadabhoy and Dinaz Minoo Bamji.

Tarapore's landmarks



Died: Jehanbux Hormuzshah Tarapore, 87, leading construction engineer and philanthropist, and former sheriff of Madras, on November 29, 1988.

Many prominent landmarks in Madras and the rest of the country stand a witness to Tarapore's ingenuity as an engineer. He is known to have been involved in the shaping of monuments like the Indraprastha Indoor Stadium at New Delhi, the docks for the Cochin Shipyard Ltd, and building masonry and earthen dams for projects at Tungabhadra, Hirakud, Farakka and other places. It was Tarapore and Company, a firm jointly founded by him and his father, that had played a role in the laying of runways at the Trivandrum, Kolar and Bangalore Airports, as also a national highway

from Cape Comorin to Trivandrum, note the written tributes paid to the engineer by his associates Minoo Siganporia, Keku Parakh and Dilla Naladaroo, as also Marzban Giara who forwarded the memoirs to *Parsiana*.

His company was also commissioned to undertake civic works for well-known institutions in Madras such as the Reserve Bank of India, the United Commercial Bank, the Custom House and the Central Excise Office. Several steel, aluminium, copper, cement and fertilizer factories were constructed according to his specifications, notes the press release. The Taj, Group of Hotels too had enlisted his help in designing their structures at Delhi, Madras and Colombo.

"Commencing as a small contractor, he rose to secure a contract of 25 crore rupees in 1975, believed to be the biggest single civil contract in India," mentions the write-up. A founder member of the Builders Association of India, he was conferred the prestigious Best Builder Award in 1975, notes the press release. For 35 years Tarapore served as president of the Egmore Benefit Society Ltd, Madras, one of the largest financing companies providing loans for house constructions.

This respected member of society was appointed sheriff of Madras in the year 1962.

At the time of rebuilding the Phiroj

Clubwala Memorial Hall in 1980 for use by the Parsis of Madras, the fund-raising committee of the Madras Parsi Association was chaired by Tarapore. A corpus of nearly six lakh rupees was raised on this occasion. Not able to spare sufficient time for anjuman matters, his philosophy was, "Since I can't devote time to the anjuman, I help by cash." On religious issues he claimed that he was not an orthodox. "I don't go to the agiary," he had told *Parsiana* in 1985.

The education and welfare of children was one of his greatest concerns. He ran a school for girls in Madras. Named after him, the school reported-

ly imparts education to 3,000 children. He was also the chairman of the Chennapuri Annadana Samajan in Madras which feeds, clothes, houses and educates nearly 400 destitute and orphaned boys. Among his recent acts of charity was the establishment of The J.H. Tarapore Foundation to give financial grants for education, medical relief and the alleviation of the suffering poor. To the Sri Satya Sai Trust, Tarapore had donated Abbotsbury, a prized property with a hall and several acres of land on Mount Road.

Born in Dharwar, Karnataka, Tarapore received his education in Madras. He studied at the Christian College

School and the College of Engineering, Guindy. Tarapore always enjoyed playing a game of bridge. "My worries and tiredness go away when I play bridge," he would say.

Tarapore had lost his daughters Dinoo and Roda in a car accident in 1951, and his wife Dhunmai died five years later. The commercial complex that Tarapore built at Madras in 1960 and which houses the office of Tarapore and Company was named Dhun Building after his wife, it is reported. Nearly 25 years later, he left another impression on the Madras skyline by building the city's prestigious Tarapore Towers complex.

Bharoocha's 'Happy Home'



Died: Coomi Sohrab Bharoocha, 90, versatile social worker who was particularly committed to promoting the education of blind children, on December 30, 1988 in Bombay, following cardiac arrest.

"Her dedication, her perseverance in promoting a cause dear to her heart, her judgment of people and problems, her in-depth study, her considered decisions on all problems of importance and her practical approach" were Bharoocha's attributes recalled by Capt Hormazdiar Desai, who was a close associate of hers. In a eulogy to Bharoocha, Desai credits her with developing the Happy Home and School for the Blind in Bombay, which today is considered a model institute.

For her service to the School for over 51 years as honorary secretary and trustee, Bharoocha was remembered at a condolence meeting in her honor on January 30, 1989. It was proposed at the meeting that as a mark of her love for the blind children, the Happy Home School be renamed after her.

On taking over this appointment at the School, not only had Bharoocha set upon the task of finding new premises for it, but she also gave it a sound administrative set-up. The institution was then located on the top

floor of a chawl at Worli. Realizing that such a locale would not contribute to the healthy development of blind children, she persistently approached the chief minister of Maharashtra until she was granted a plot of land on Dr Annie Besant Road where today stands the commodious building.

To prepare the blind students for their ultimate integration into sighted society, she insisted that they be educated at institutions for the sighted and be provided with facilities for extra curricular activities like scouting, sports, games, music and other recreation. Bharoocha herself had an aptitude for music. She had studied both instrumental and vocal Hindustani classical music, was a talented pianist, and had also taken vocal courses at the London Music Higher International Academy. In fact, barely a week before her death, 'mai ji', as she was affectionately labelled by the children, sat with them to sing Christmas carols. "Though very loving and understanding, she was quite firm in discipline," remembered Desai.

Bharoocha was active on the committee that organized the first Provincial Conference for the Blind and had served on the executive committee which organized the First All India Conference for the Blind in 1952 at

which the National Association for the Blind was conceived. Her contribution to the cause of blind welfare was nationally recognized when she was conferred the prestigious Rustom Merwanji Alpaiwala Award, writes Desai.

Widowed at a young age (her husband Sohrab was an eminent architect and the first president of the Indian Institute of Architects), Bharoocha immersed herself in different movements, working for the betterment of society. The National Society for Equal Opportunities for the Handicapped, the Maharashtra State Women's Work Guild, and Parsi trusts like the Parsi Amelioration Committee, Stree Zarhosti Mandal and Anaj Mandal, Parsi Punchayet Fort Welfare Centre, the Sir Ratan Tata Industrial Institute and the Sir Sohrabji Pochkhanawalla Institute for Poor Parsi Ladies could count on Bharoocha's contribution as an office bearer or an ordinary member. She had worked as an honorary dressmaking instructress in several institutions.

Oriented towards art from the beginning, Bharoocha opted for painting and drawing at the Sir J.J. School of Art after passing her Senior Cambridge examination from Queen Mary's School. She had also studied cooking, nursing and hygiene. Her interest in books was chiefly on the subject of comparative religious studies.

A talented ballroom dancer, she retained her love for dancing to the very end: a month prior to her death, she had pleaded with her niece to be taken to the Christmas and New Year's eve dances.

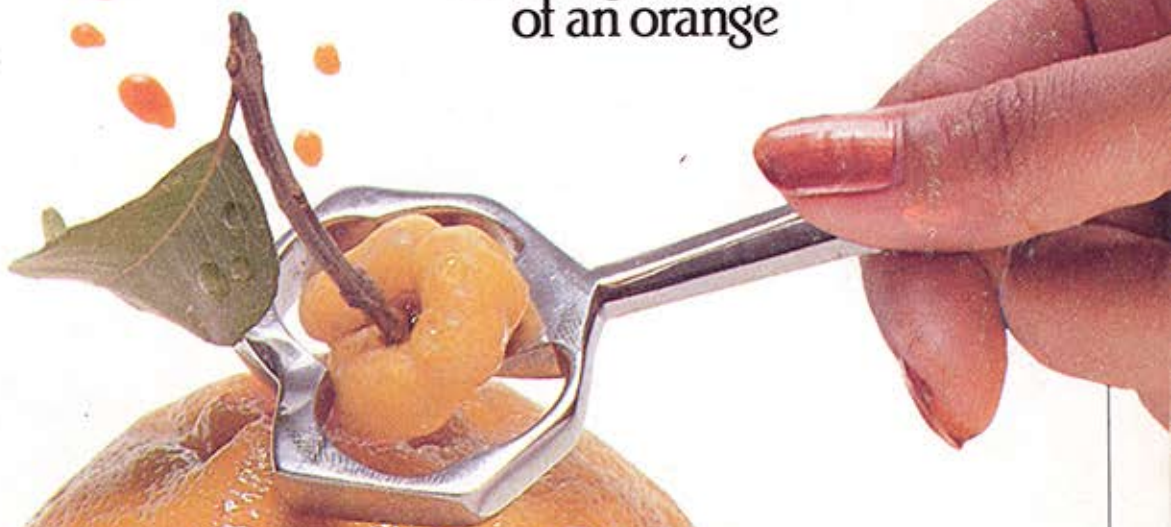
Written by Parinaz Gandhi

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