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Parsiana

July 1989
Volume 12 Number 1

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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 Unsigned letters or those without a complete address will not be published.

Sanjan Dar-e-Meher

In November 1987, the Mazda Adarian Trust laid the foundation of the Dasturji Kookadar Saheb Memorial Dar-e-Meher in Sanjan (*Parsiana*, December 1987). Over the last 20 months, we have collected about 16.5 lakh rupees and the work of the Dar-e-Meher is nearing completion. We need approximately five lakh rupees more to give the finishing touches.

In keeping with the community's needs and sentiments, we would like to accommodate a holy fire from an existing agiary which may be under pressure to close down. We could work out a scheme with its trustees which would enable us to preserve such an existing holy fire at our new Dar-e-Meher in Sanjan – the place where we landed 1,354 years ago.

This offer is open to all anjumans and trusts in India. We would appreciate an

early response because we intend to enthrone the holy fire in our new Dar-e-Meher in Sanjan in January 1990. Correspondence may be addressed to: The Trustees, Mazda Adarian Trust, Offiman Centre, 13, Nanabhoy Lane, Fort, Bombay 400023 (Tel 244329).

HOMI P. RANINA
Chairman, Mazda Adarian Trust

"The rebel priest"

On reading through In Memoriam (*Parsiana*, May 1989) I noted two errors which I point out to you for correction.

Dastur Framroze Bode wrote his thesis for PhD on Zoroastrianism, not on Aurobindo. He used to teach Aurobindo at the California Institute of Ancient Studies.

You state on page 40 and I quote: "Homai who had left her first husband to join the rebel priest..." This is incorrect to the extreme. To write about an individual's personal matters without even a simple enquiry, to say the least, is unethical. As the other party involved has long since passed away, it is not in the fitness of things for me to dilate upon this as the person is not here to speak for himself.

As a responsible paper and editor, you should be careful to find out facts before giving your readers incorrect, false information.

Ms HOMAI FRAMROZE BODE

"Navjote by choice..."

I liked the eloquence of Ali A. Jafarey's *Fravarane* ("Navjote by Choice, not Chance," *Parsiana*, May 1989). How well he has explained *Jasa me avenghe Mazda*. Mr Jafarey says, "In recent times no authority has thought of continuing the tradition by either substituting or adding to the Pazand part of the prayers... in one of the languages the praying person understands best..."

I believe an important part is understanding. But then what about the vibrations created by *Manthra-Spenta*? Can you or any of our scholars illumine?

The readout in Mr Rogers' article stated, "Among the Iranis, the age limit for the sadreh-pooshi ceremony has disappeared and even pregnant women have been initiated." I personally think it is foolish. A woman at that stage is unclean. How then can she be initiated? Even in the First Testament Jesus Christ had said so.

FALI F. MULLAN
Udwa

"The Parsi Sena"

We learnt from the letter by Mr Homi J. H. Taleyarkhan, member, Minorities Commission, in Readers' Forum ("The Parsi Sena," *Parsiana*, May 1989) that a few disgruntled Parsis – whose main grouse is that they did not receive any accommodation from the Parsi Panchayet – have formed a Parsi Sena. This is most annoying and disgusting as also the fact that a leading newspaper like *The Times of India* has taken the cudgels to bring to light the shortcomings of the Parsi Panchayet. Would it not have been better for these gentlemen to have discussed and sorted out matters across the table than to form a Parsi Sena and go to the Press with a view to mudslinging the Panchayet?

It is imperative that timely steps be taken so that the cobwebs can all be cleaned out. The chairman of the Parsi Panchayet, Dr Aspi Golwalla is due to retire and there will be an election. Cannot we select from such outstanding persons as Mr Nani Palkhivala, Mr Homi J. H. Taleyarkhan, Mr Jehan Daruwalla, Mr Fali Poncha, Mr Jamshed Bhabha, Justice Bakhtawar Lentin, Mr Russey Karanjia, etc? It is possible that some of them may not have any depth of knowledge on the Zoroastrian religion, but any of these gentlemen can surely steer the community onto a better footing with the wide experience and knowledge they have attained. It is high time that we leave out all our differences and work for the common goal of upliftment and welfare of the Parsi community.

JEHANGIR R. BALSARA

"Why cremate?"

This is in response to the letter "Why cremate?" (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, April 1989) from Ms Shirin Cooper.

I strongly condemn the last words of the letter, "Why cannot we think of the noble future of going to Iran where we once belonged?"

I fail to understand why Ms Cooper finds it disadvantageous to live in this great country, India.

It's a blessing of Ahura Mazda that, of all nations, we landed in India when we were being persecuted in Iran. Thus, 13 centuries earlier, India had the same vision of secularism.

Whatever it may be, we have become an inseparable part of Indian society.

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UK regulation will not permit residence to the latter. I have two grown-up boys at public school and are not residing with me. I enjoy my business, socialising, outdoor sports and travel. It is anticipated that I shall be visiting Bombay sometime in December.

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Are we becoming communal-minded day by day?

DINYAR N. JALNAWALLA
Jalna

Calcutta Youth Fest

Parsiana, February 1989, carried very interesting reports ("A world body of youth" and "A youth trustee in every city") on the All India Parsee Youth Fest, held in Calcutta from November 5-8, 1988.

However, while going through the articles I noticed a discrepancy which I must point out. You have mentioned Mr Godrej Engineer as the principal of La Martiniere. This is a mistake as Mr Godrej Engineer, at that time, was the principal-cum-administrator of Park English School.

Unfortunately, there is no mention of the work, effort and coordinating done by Ms Aban Medhora, who was the convener of the All India Youth Fest. No doubt she had an excellent band of dedicated workers but at least a mention would not be out of place.

NOSHIR S. WADIA
Calcutta

Parsi surnames

Whereas 'English' surnames among us Parsis, like Cooper, Captain, Driver, Guard are readily understandable as coming from professions/occupations, it is intriguing how we came to acquire 'English' surnames like Baxter, Forbes, Ashton, Morris, Grant, etc. We have quite a few of them. Some historically well-versed reader(s) may perhaps elucidate.

Looking at the history of northern India – the various incursions of Greeks, Persians, Bactrians into India – it seems plausible that long before the advent of Zoroastrians via Sanjan, there already could have been sizable, well-established Zoroastrian groups/communities in northern India which eventually merged with the mainstream. Parallel surnames like Chibber (north Indian Chabra, Chabria), Davar (Dabar), Madon (Madan), Lally (Lal), would seem to support this. Perhaps some historians could spell out the part (which was probably considerable) played by these early groups.

R. H. KUKA

Edited by Arnavaz S. Mama

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Events and Personalities

Jamé daily closed

After struggling to survive for the last few years, the veritable Parsi institution, the *Jam-e-Jamshed* daily ceased publication on June 30, 1989.

According to a notice in the paper on that day, the paper was suspending publication on account of rising costs, especially of newsprint. The *Jamé* weekly, however, would continue.

Subsidized by Nanabhoy Jeejeebhoy and his family, the paper had disposed of its historic, red brick building on Marzban Path early this year and contracted the printing of the publication to Onlooker Press, a commercial job printing unit. The appearance of the paper greatly improved after it switched from the old letterpress hot metal printing procedure to photo offset, but the economics did not improve. The editorial content was more often than not devoid of Parsi news. The paper was read by an aging readership whose main items of interest were the obituary column and the *vartas* (serialized stories).

But whatever its shortcomings, the paper brought a sense of community belonging to the households that received the paper and its loss was deeply felt by its loyal readers.

A public meeting was convened by Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy on July 30, 1989 to voice the community's appreciation of the paper's services.

Udwada trust

If there is one thing more controversial than the future of dokhmenashini and intercommunity marriages, it is the formation of trusts to ameliorate the conditions of the priests.

After the furor created by the founding of the Athravan Educational Trust (AET), anyone would have thought twice about venturing on another such scheme to benefit mobeds. But out of Karachi comes young Ervad Paurusasp D. Magol, full of high hopes and fervor, to talk about the formation of The Zoroastrian Religious Trust for Udwada

da Mobeds. Along with trustees Hoshang N. Wania, Adi J. Bhoot and Ervad Keki S. Dastur, Magol registered the Trust in Bombay on March 3, 1988 "to remove these economic disparities and discrepancies, to change the present socio-economic order for our mobeds, to enable them to maintain the dignity of their office."

And like the AET, the new Trust is also talking of raising a crore of rupees. In an attractive printed brochure, the trustees state that the Trust is not a cosmopolitan but "a communal trust exclusively working for the mobeds of Udwada." The trustees wish to "remove existing defects in the current system of mobedi" and provide a fixed guaranteed monthly stipend to all Udwada mobeds. They would also like to assure perquisites like medical assistance, old age security benefits, house allowance, construction of a hostel for outstation mobeds, the creation of a community kitchen and ensuring that facilities provided under the Trust do not result in the encouragement of slothfulness. In addition, the Trust will also endeavor to create congenial, tranquil work conditions conducive to the overall intellectual and spiritual growth of mobeds - ultimately benefiting the entire Parsi community. While the objectives are laudable, the notion that the trustees have all the answers and can succeed where others have failed, created some rancor.

Editor of *The Bombay Samachar*, Jehan Daruwalla noted, "The most astonishing thing about the Trust is that the Udwada Anjuman, Udwada Dasturji Sahebs or the mobeds of Udwada residing in Udwada have not been associated with the Trust. Worse still, the opinions of the Udwada Anjuman, the Dasturji Sahebs and prominent social workers of Udwada who are themselves athornans, do not seem to have been consulted."

In a letter in *The Bombay Samachar*, Peshotan Nargolwala, who is actively involved in the Athornan Mandal and

who is a candidate for trusteeship of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, stated, "There are funds in Udwada (for) helping the local mobeds and their families. Under the circumstances it is necessary for mobed sympathizers to answer the question, 'To what extent is it advisable to divert rupees one crore of Parsi charity in the cause of mobeds?'"

And as in the case of the AET the lawyers have questioned whether the new Trust could claim exemption if it was meant for communal purposes. Apart from assisting the Udwada mobeds, the trustees also wish to form similar trusts for the benefit of mobeds residing in Navsari, Surat, Bombay and other areas. For this Magol has said the financial requirement would be approximately 15 crore rupees.

Stung by the criticism levied against the Trust, Magol retorted in a letter to *The Bombay Samachar* of January 8, 1989, "For God's sake let us have our priorities straight. We don't want to lose a ceremonial heritage which is our culture, our history, our everything." To which the editor replied that though Magol "feels deeply for the mobeds of Udwada, his approach is however unilateral, emotional and illogical."

While all efforts to assist any section of the community are welcome, those who wish to assist would find a better response if they first started to do some thing and then approached the community, noted Daruwalla.

In the meanwhile, trustee and chartered accountant Hoshang Wania informs that the Trust has thus far received nearly one lakh rupees in donations. At the time of *The Bombay Samachar* controversy, donations had dried up, he says, but now there's a revival. Moreover, they have been promised funds from abroad, says Wania adding that when these build up to a feasible amount, the trustees will proceed with the Trust's avowed goals. Until then, they are unwilling to allow the interest income to accumulate and have dis-

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3,000 to 4,000 meters, the aircraft is capable of flying up to heights of 7,000 meters, at a minimum speed of 100 kmph and a maximum of 350 kmph. It can take off and land comfortably in an airfield which has a runway length of one kilometer, noted a press release from NAL.

Earlier in 1983, Damania and his

*Left: LCRA piloted by Damania
Below (from left): Damania
(gesticulating) in discussion with
aviation authorities including J.R.D.
Tata (second from right)*



bursed Rs 3,000 to some mobeds in Udwada, says Wania.

India's 'Voyager'?

An eight-minute flight by the Light Canard Research Aircraft (LCRA) piloted by Prof Rustom B. Damania, was billed by *The Times of India* of January 29, 1989 as the highlight of the air display at the diamond jubilee function of the Bombay Flying Club. Damania, head of the flight experiments laboratory of the National Aeronautical Laboratory (NAL), Bangalore, together with a team of 10 scientists, had built the aircraft which made its maiden flight two years ago.

The original design of the LCRA was borrowed from Burt Rutan, designer of the Voyager aircraft. (The Voyager created aviation history when it flew non-stop around the world.) Weighing 600 kgs, the LCRA is reportedly the first Indian aircraft to be made from rigid foam and fiber glass composites. The total cost of the aircraft is five lakh rupees, *The Times* noted.

Called a 'Canard,' as it has its tail in the front and the wing at the tail end unlike other planes, the LCRA is a two-seater having a fuel capacity of 200 liters. Normally flown at a height of

team had fabricated a one-man, single-engined gyrocopter, based on the Benson model. A cross between a helicopter and an aeroplane, a gyrocopter has a free-wheeling rotor which emphasizes its superficial resemblance to a helicopter, and controls which are very similar to those of an aeroplane, noted *India Today* of June 30, 1983.

The 50-year-old aeronautical genius had been with NAL since 1983. His field of interest includes aircraft design and development, flight mechanics and flight testing. He also holds a private pilot's licence, a commercial pilot's licence and a flight radio telephone operator's licence, notes his bio data. Before joining NAL, for nearly two decades he was with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, in the department of aerospace engineering. (Since Damania's retirement, the IISc, founded by J. N. Tata, reportedly has no Parsis, either on the faculty or as students.)

Graduating in science from the Bombay University in 1958, Damania subsequently passed the bachelor of mechanical engineering exam with distinction from the Baroda University. He was awarded a Government Open Merit Scholarship in 1959-60. Bangalore-

based Damania holds an ME degree in aeronautics from IISc and a doctorate in engineering from the Mississippi State University. He was also a member of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. At several seminars has he contributed papers and in addition written articles for aviation journals, further adds his bio data.

For the future, Damania and his team plan to design a light two-seat trainer aircraft for the use of the Bombay Flying Club.

Adi Marzban Award

To perpetuate the memory of the well-known playwright and theater personality, the Adi Marzban Memorial Award has been instituted. The Adi Marzban Endowment Fund Committee, under the aegis of the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), will recognize outstanding innovations in contemporary theater, notes *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of June 19, 1989.

This year, the award of Rs 5,000 will be presented for the best original play in English or Gujarati. Marzban's own creativity was expressed in these two languages. The last date for submitting the plays is November 30, 1989. A panel of judges comprising theater personalities are to judge the scripts, *The Afternoon* notes. For more details contact the Programmes Department, NCPA, Tata Experimental Theatre, Nariman Point, Bombay 400021, Tel 233939.

From literature to law

Reshad Sarosh Forbes' decision to study law at the London School of Economics and Political Science has meant forsaking the national scholarship that would otherwise have been his due. He was declared a scholarship winner for ranking among the top 10 successful candidates at the Bombay University's bachelor of arts examination in 1988. A letter dated April 24, 1989, signed by the University's vice-chancellor Dr (Ms) Mehroo Bengalee, certified that Forbes had excelled in his studies.

Forbes hopes to complete his law studies by mid 1991 after which he plans to return to India and practise law like his maternal grandfather.

For his BA degree Forbes chose to major in English literature. He scored a total aggregate of 65.5 percent, and attained his best marks in the literary criticism paper (71 percent). Whilst studying at St Xavier's College, Forbes,

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Rasna Shahi Gulab



who is 'passionately' fond of dramatics, had organized and directed a few plays.

Formerly studying at the Cathedral and John Connon High School, Forbes later went to Creighton Comprehensive, England, to complete his schooling. Reading literary books and elocution are Forbes' chief interests.

Arnawaz: a retrospect

On the occasion of the first death anniversary of artist Arnawaz Vasudev, Sarala's Art Centre, Madras presented a retrospective of her works from February 24 to March 4, 1989, notes a brochure announcing the exhibition. The exhibition was sponsored by the Arnawaz Vasudev Charities Trust set up to perpetuate her memory. The pro-

native bowls. Her bowls reportedly won acclaim at a show of Asian bowls organized by the Crafts Council of Australia, notes S. Krishnan, a Madras-based freelance writer, in the brochure.

Whether dealing with realistic or abstract subjects, the contents of her paintings depicted nature, and Hindu mythological forms and figures, each frame bearing her distinctive style.

Described by Doctor as a purist both in her taste for music and her response to people, she could be both, very austere and yet down-to-earth in her emotions, generous and yet inflexible in her attitudes.

Three years before succumbing to cancer in February '88 at the age of 42, Arnawaz did a mural in metal for the Grindlays Bank, Madras. In 1987, she did another outstanding mural for the Madras branch of Standard Chartered Bank, the book notes.

Some of Arnawaz's best works are abroad, in institutions like the Smithsonian in Washington DC. In India they can be seen at centers like the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi and the Lalit Kala Akademi, also in New Delhi.

The idea of the exhibition, the book (dedicated to Vasudev's son Bharani) and a documentary film in memory of the late artist, was conceived by her husband, S. G. Vasudev, also an established artist. In a foreword to the book, he acknowledges the help of organizations like the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, MRF Ltd and Sarala's Art Centre in keeping alive Arnawaz's memory.

The sound of ghungroos

Over the years, Ms Arnawaz Sukhadia has made her mark at dance ballets, inter-exchange sessions and solo recitals presented by the Khurshid Nritya Kala Mandir. In March last, she gave her *arangetram* (solo public performance to test a dancer's virtuosity) at the Hinduja Auditorium in Bombay, notes a brochure printed on the occasion.

The presentation of a shawl (belonging to the late Dastur Navrooz Minochehr-Homji) to the dancer set the mood for the evening's performance. Sukhadia had learnt much about religion from Minochehr-Homji, and he in turn, would always be present for her dance programs, notes her father Behramji.

The 23-year-old classical dancer, who has since migrated to Canada (where she will work as a textile designer), staged her first performance abroad at a summer festival in Brampton (a suburb of Toronto city) where she was "very well received by the crowd" which asked for a repeat performance, noted Sukhadia in a letter to her father.

Since the age of four when her parents encouraged her to learn Bharata Natyam, Sukhadia has imbibed the knowledge and experience of dance from teachers like Ms P. N. Rajalaxmi, Dr (Ms) Khurshid Irani, Guru Kutti Krishnan and Ms Gayatri Venkatraman, notes the brochure.

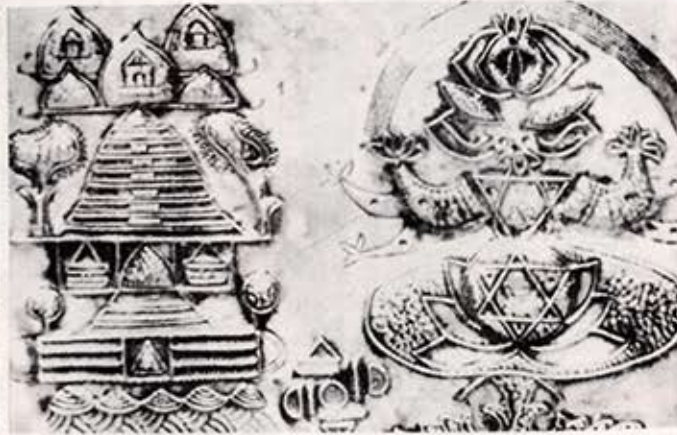
She studied at the St Joseph's Convent High School and the Amrutben Jivanlal College of Commerce. A diploma holder in textile designing from Sophia Polytechnic, Sukhadia was, till recently, working with Tata Textiles in the rotary screen-making department.

Among her other qualifications are a foundation course in fine arts and a certificate in computer programming. According to the brochure, besides dancing she also enjoys painting and music.

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

Forbes (right): law is a priority

Vasudev (below) and her metal creation



ceeds from the sale of her works will be utilized to grant annual scholarships to two artists.

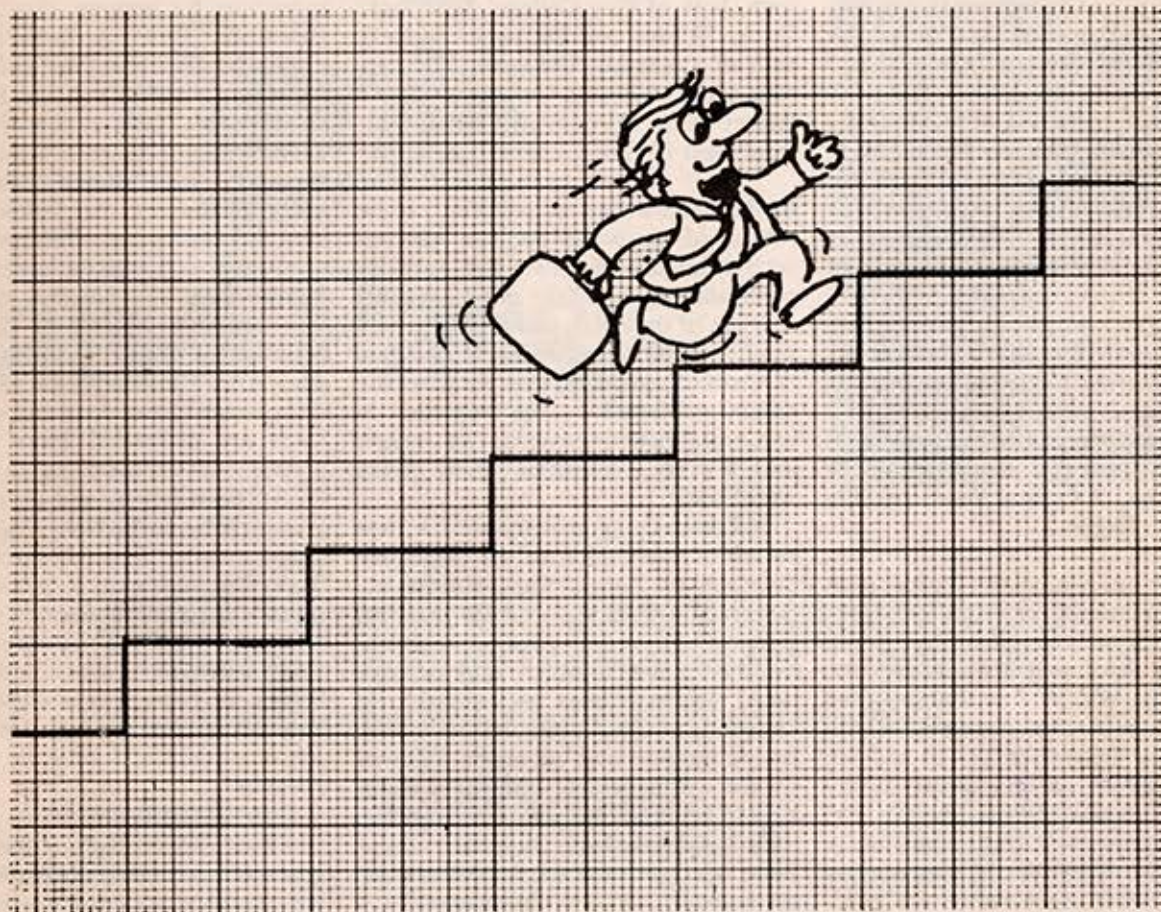
A 24-page book recounting Arnawaz's life and the evolution of her art was also published to commemorate this occasion. Nearly every page of the book has the stamp of her drawings and an interesting narrative by Ms Geeta Doctor that recounts the highlights of her career.

Working in a variety of mediums – pen and ink drawings, color and wash, oils, and metals – Arnawaz particularly enjoyed metal designing, making deco-

Sukhadia: creating dance awareness



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WZO in focus

The World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) has decided to purchase a property for its use as headquarters, informs the June newsletter of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC). Quoting an appeal from the Organization, the newsletter notes that a modest freehold building would cost at least £200,000 plus another £30,000 for renovation and possible extension.

The appeal refers to WZO's work on behalf of the community and speaks of its "vital role in assisting and safeguarding the community globally" in time to come. To enable the Organization to "operate freely on an international scale," it needs a separate identity and adequate space. Donors are directed to the honorary treasurer, WZO, AMP House, 2 Cyprus Road, London NW3 3RY, England.

Worldwide integration, the regeneration of the community through entrepreneurial skills and the role of Parsi youth in national development will engage the attention of WZO's first International Youth Congress scheduled to be held in Bombay on December 28, 29 and 30, 1989, notes an announcement in the *FEZANA Journal* (Vol II, No 2). The Youth Congress will thus immediately precede the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress being organized by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet at the behest of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India in the first week of January 1990, and will provide the youth an incentive to attend both meets.

Religious, cultural, social and economic aspects of the community will occupy workshops and discussion groups. Entertainment, games and sightseeing is also on the cards. Those planning to attend the Youth Congress are required to contact Ms Farzana Bodhanwalla in Bombay.

Just before going to press Parsiana learns that the WZO has dropped the idea of the Youth Congress.

A recent activity cosponsored by the WZO and the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) was a full-day conference on "Zoroastrianism in Iran" at the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr in New York, scheduled for

May 6, according to the advance intimation published by ZAC's May newsletter. The panel of speakers included Professors L. Heller and Kaikhosrov Irani, both of City College, New York, Dr A. Skjervo and Dr James Russell, both of Columbia University, Dr Farhang Mehr of Boston University, Dr Ali Jafarey of the Zoroastrian Center, California and Dr Lovji Cama of ZAGNY.

In the meanwhile, an editorial on the subject of the world body in Vancouver's bilingual (English and Persian) publication *Pak-e-Mehr* drew a cogent analysis of the needs and problems facing the WZO from Shahin Bekhradnia in Oxford, England. The letter to the editor, published by the magazine in two instalments, provides an insight into how lay Zoroastrians think of the world body.

Acknowledging that the WZO "was set up in recognition of the increasing dispersal of Zoroastrians worldwide," Bekhradnia notes that "all the practical problems of running such an organization were not foreseen and perhaps could not have been anticipated." He suggests a clear enunciation of the body's purpose and intentions followed by the willingness of individual members to become involved in its working. "We frequently hear complaints about those who give their time up to serve on committees, and yet, ironically, there seems to be a dearth of new willing members to take their places," he says.

Bekhradnia advocates a careful determination of procedures for the selection of working members that would be fair and identical in all countries. But he is chary of allocating national representation based on population ratios (a moot point advocated by the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India and the Bombay Parsi Punchayet) as "this would result in the domination of policies."

The Organisation, to be effective, will need an efficient secretariat staffed by permanent employees to coordinate activities, inform, and liaise within the Organisation and outside it, feels Bekhradnia. "Inevitably, all this translates into a highly sophisticated and costly operation. Money is a subject about which people get uncomfortable. Yet without a strong supportive member-

ship paying realistic subscriptions, this body will not succeed. If Zoroastrians simply rely on bequests, anonymous donations and the like, and expect to get something for nothing, they are being unrealistic. This is particularly true for those who live in the West and therefore for whom the WZO should have more significance... It is commonly said by Zoroastrians of themselves that they are very good at criticizing others' efforts and contributions, but fail to see that they themselves are often mere takers, offering no constructive suggestions for improvement, nor financial aid."

Addressing himself to the thorny problem of differing cultural backgrounds of Parsi and Irani Zoroastrians ("Language, dress, food and social customs are different. Even religious practices are different and, in some cases, religious beliefs and principles are at issue between the two groups") Bekhradnia essays, "A sensitive and tolerant leadership must exist to produce a universally accepted representative body. It will not be achieved if accusations of being somehow incorrect in doctrine or liturgy, or impure in descent or tradition are levelled by any one group at any other, which is what we witness at present."

Even if Zoroastrians in the West eliminate this problem within the next generation with their children all growing up in a western milieu with a common language, the cultural and doctrinal differences between India and Iran will need to be confronted and an atmosphere of greater tolerance inculcated by sensitive accommodation of different viewpoints, says Bekhradnia. "The Organisation cannot afford to be rigid," he concludes. "It must use the wisdom and conscience of individual members to ... adapt itself as necessary, trying always to increase the sum total of its achievements towards its ultimate target: the well-being and perpetuation of the Zoroastrian community."

Clearer perspectives

The mission of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) emerged clearer at its second annual general meeting in Montreal on March 24 and 25, 1989, according to its president Rohinton Rivetna. "As a coordinating body for North American

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Zoroastrian associations... FEZANA serves as a forum to seek out items that need to be addressed, and then ensure that they are addressed." Rivetna's reflections after the event have been published in the *FEZANA Journal* of June 1989.

Rivetna was not as happy about attendance at the meet, especially of the members of the coordinating and planning committee which includes many community elders. "Sending reports or proxies is not enough - the value of interpersonal dialogue and interchange cannot be over-emphasized," he writes.

The coordination and planning committee, under the chairmanship of Homi Homji, had shortlisted 12 long-term objectives to enable the Federation to determine its projects, with suggestions on who should initiate them. Identifying who is a Zoroastrian, adopting a uniform calendar and rituals, and creating better trained, multidisciplinary mobs and paramobs are its first three suggestions. The intention is to invite discussion at North American seminars and congresses with the education committee initiating the first and the mobs initiating the next two.

Member associations are advised to strive for better Parsi-Irani social integration and, along with the youth committee, to create the atmosphere for more marriages between Zoroastrians, and higher birth rates. The education committee is asked to assist Sunday school teachers with standardized texts with a good balance between philosophy, ethics, rituals, scriptures, mythology and history, in the interests of better and more comprehensive education for adults and children alike. Acceptance of the non-Zoroastrian spouse in mixed marriages and their children stands seventh in order of priority, in the listing. A prod to all concerned to project a better understanding of Zoroastrianism by participating at all levels in the affairs of governments and communities, follows. Brief pamphlets on different rituals and prayers in English, demographic studies, a central charity trust fund and a composite North American Zoroastrian center as supportive infrastructure for FEZANA are the remaining injunctions.

The 13 short-term objectives are based on the results of the grassroots survey carried out earlier and reflect the desires of the North American Zoroastrian community. They are essentially

the same as the long-term objectives but with different priority ratings, with the exception of three items not listed above: immigration and welfare assistance to Irani Zoroastrian refugees, information on youth scholarships and "acceptance, by retrieval of ex-Zoroastrians who had left the faith."

To begin with, FEZANA will compile a descriptive list of all material currently available in Canada and the USA for children's religious education. This will enable the small anjumans and Zoroastrian pockets to avail of programs currently in use among the larger associations, notes the *Journal*.

"The community at large appears to be ready for discussions on issues facing us in North America," notes the *FEZANA Journal* (June, 1989) as it invites thoughts and suggestions to make the Seventh North American Zoroastrian Congress, due to be held in Houston in 1990, more participatory. Comments must be directed to Ms Dhunmai Dalal, chairperson of the FEZANA Congress Committee at 2906 Elvida Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90049.

In the interests of promoting marriages within the far-flung Zoroastrian community, the *Journal* will publish short (four to five-line) announcements from individuals in search of spouses, beginning with its September 1989 issue. Each party will be assigned a box number and confidentiality will be preserved, notes an announcement in the *Journal*. FEZANA will discourage third party involvement, will not be aware of which two parties are in correspondence and will accept no responsibility for any mail lost through redirection, notes the *Journal*.

Announcements may be mailed to Dr Jehan Bagli, Editor, *FEZANA Journal*, 7 Cleveland Lane, RD# 4, Princeton, NJ 08540 or Ms Dolly Dastoor, Secretary, FEZANA, 3765 Malo Street, Brossard PQ J4Y1B4, Canada.

The Fali Chothia Trust

Scholarships to attend institutions of higher learning open to young Zoroastrians everywhere is the aim of the Fali Chothia Charitable Trust incorporated by the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington, (ZAMW), informs the *FEZANA Journal* of March 1989.

Trust fund chairman Soli Choksi

informs that they have collected \$ 7,000 so far and invites donations with cheques payable to the ZAMW at 4639 Bettswiid Drive, Olney, Maryland, 20832.

While the funds of the Trust will repose with the ZAMW, the overall business of the Trust will be conducted by a three-member Trust committee which shall be responsible for selecting the recipients of the scholarships. The financial needs of the applicant, a superior educational record and extracurricular activities including involvement in community affairs will be the criteria for selection.

The Trust commemorates Bombay-born Chothia, a pioneer in the educational field who was associated with the universities of Bombay, London, Harvard and Queensland. It was Chothia's belief that "education is crucial to the well-being and survival of our community." After nearly 20 years in establishing innovative systems in India, Chothia served as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) field expert in Nigeria and an International Labor Organization (ILO) expert in Malaysia. He died in Washington DC in 1987 where he lived in retirement after working the last few years in the US.

Addendum

The item "Refugee resettlement" (Zoroastrians Abroad, *Parsiana*, May 1989) had omitted mentioning the fact that the efforts of FEZANA and the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) were aimed at helping Iranian Zoroastrians who had fled to India and Pakistan. The lapse is regretted.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama

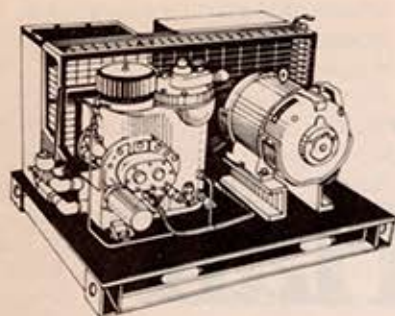
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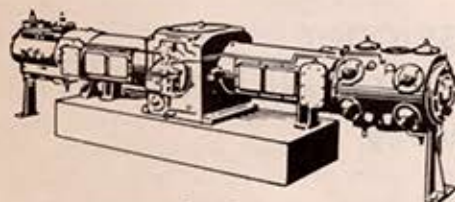
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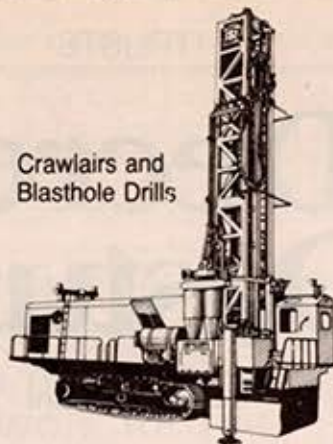


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Decree for Dastur Hall

Gustasp Irani

The joint charity commissioner
has ruled that the disputed Dastur Hall land
is private family property

☆☆☆

Whose land is it anyway? Private property of Dastur Hormuzdiar N. K. Dastur and not trust property decreed P. V. Kakade, joint charity commissioner, Pune. The judgement was served on the title dispute over the plot of land at Nana Peth, Pune, popularly known as Dastur Hall.

As reported in "To whom does Dastur Hall belong?" (*Parsiana*, January 1989) Eruch M. Irani and three others filed for and obtained a stay order against the sale of the land on the grounds that the property belonged to Sardar Sorabjee Ratanjee Patel Charitable Trust (S. R. Patel Trust). In reply Dastur Hormuzdiar, chief trustee of the same Trust and High Priest of the Trust fire-temple located on the land adjacent to Dastur Hall, argued that only 5,332.66 sq yards of land belonged to the Trust and the residue was his family property.

In resolving the issue, the joint charity commissioner observed in his judgement: "The crux of the matter lies in the document which created the present Trust... In this connection therefore, it would be necessary for us to determine the legal status of the document executed on July 2, 1884 which was registered during the same month." He refers also to

the documents of 1843 and 1852 executed by the "original settlor" of the Trust, S. R. Patel. "It appears from the records that S. R. Patel executed a document in 1843 transferring the said property unto Dastur Noshervanjee Jamashjee Dastur, entrusting him with the sacred duties of maintaining the fire-temple and the Patel Hall for the purpose of the Parsi community. It further appears that S. R. Patel executed a will in the year 1852, and died during the same year." The judgement observes that neither party was able to produce this will.

Irani's counsel asserted that the document of 1884 "merely reiterates the foundation of the Trust made by the earlier documents (of 1843 and 1852)." However, the joint charity commissioner concluded that "the recitals of the document dated July 2, 1884 are more than sufficient to show that it is the true and legal deed of trust."

Having established the legal status of the document of 1884, the joint charity commissioner relies on it to "settle the

dispute pertaining to the Trust property." He points out that in this document the boundaries (of the S. R. Patel Trust) are described: "On its southern side are the 'lands and premises of Dastur N. Jamashjee and his brothers known as Dastur Hall...' Therefore, it is beyond any shred of doubt established that the lands and premises known as Dastur Hall and the residences and buildings appertaining are not the properties dedicated for the purpose of the Trust... The fact that (Dastur Hormuzdiar) has not conclusively established as to how his original predecessors in title came to possess and own that property, is quite immaterial for our present purpose." He goes on to observe though: "Since it is evident that the office of high priest has come by hereditary rights, it is quite logical that the Dastur Hall residence was given to the private ownership of the family for the purpose of their residence..."

In his final order, the joint charity commissioner ruled that the earlier interim injunction of August 1987 stands vacated and that only 5,150.41 sq m of land belong to the S. R. Patel Trust.

Irani and his associates intend to appeal against the judgement.

*Land adjoining
Dastur Hall*



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Thana land development stayed

Homi J. Rogers

The Bombay High Court and the charity commissioner have ordered a stay on the development of the Divecha Trust property at Thana

The attempt by the Thana Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman (TPZA) to prevent the Divecha Trust land in Thana being developed by a builder – as against being put to use for housing the Zoroastrian community – has resulted in the charity commissioner passing a stay order on all development on the 8583 sq m plot at Charai, Thana, till the final disposal of the case. The Bombay High Court has further upheld the order, and ruled that "hearing before the charity commissioner (be) stayed pending disposal of this petition.

The TPZA, it may be recalled (see "Thana land sale dispute," *Parsiana*, January 1989), had filed an application in the charity commissioner's court last year contesting the Divecha Trust's decision to sell their Thana property to a non-Parsi developer. Instead, the Anjuman offered to buy the land and develop it, to provide flats for around 150 Parsi families on a no-profit no-loss basis at practically half the market rate.

While the matter was pending before the charity commissioner's court, Radhika Builders, the developers of the land, proceeded with construction on the site. The Anjuman hence made a fresh application on December 14, 1988 to the charity commissioner, requesting him to use his powers to grant temporary injunction/stay. The Anjuman prayed that the trustees, builders, and the contractor – Kiran Enterprises, whose bonafides the Anjuman doubts – be restrained from carrying out further construction activity. The two petitioners, Rustom Cursetji and Zarsis Udhna-wala, president and committee member respectively of the TPZA, pointed out that the developers wanted to present a fait accompli which was not in the interest of the beneficiaries and, moreover,

violated the Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act. They also asserted that they were unable to reach the contractor at the address mentioned on the board at the site, the flat being always locked and the nameplate bearing another name.

The case first came up for hearing in the charity commissioner's court 19 days after the application was filed. For six times thereafter, an adjournment was sought until April 4, 1989. In the meanwhile, construction work was further speeded up, and on the open, maidan-like Divecha property, a five-storey building rose with alarming velocity.

In the absence of a directive from the charity commissioner, the petitioners (TPZA) filed an application in the Bombay High Court on March 20, 1989 to restrain any further construction. They claimed that the trustees "were breaching their obligation under the Bombay Public Trust Act, and committing contravention of the Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act." The writ petition came up for hearing before the court of

Justice S. P. Bharucha on April 11, 1989. On this occasion, Radhika Builders, the developers of the property gave, through their counsel, an undertaking to the High Court that they have "neither carried out any development work...nor created any third party rights so far...and shall not do so" pending disposal of the case before the charity commissioner. On receiving this undertaking, the hearing for the admission of writ petition was adjourned. Thereafter, on April 25, 1989, the charity commissioner directed the respondents (Divecha Trust, Radhika Builders, Kiran Enterprises) to "maintain status quo until final disposal of the application" contesting the sale of the land. The order also called for the parties to "expedite hearing of the application."

Subsequently, on June 15, 1989 Justice S. M. Daud of the Bombay High Court admitted the petition on the grounds that it "raises important questions." The High Court's order also directed the respondents to maintain status quo as instructed by the charity commissioner. The order further permitted the intervention of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India which had promised to support the cause of the TPZA (see "The Federation offers to intervene," *Parsiana*, November 1988).

The Bombay High Court order has had the case "stayed" from the charity commissioner's court pending its disposal of the petition. The next hearing has been fixed for August 14, 1989 when the Divecha Trust, the developers and promoters can show cause against the petition. Cursetji believes that the trustees/builders are "likely to appeal against this order admitting the writ petition."

Construction in progress on the Divecha Trust land in Thana



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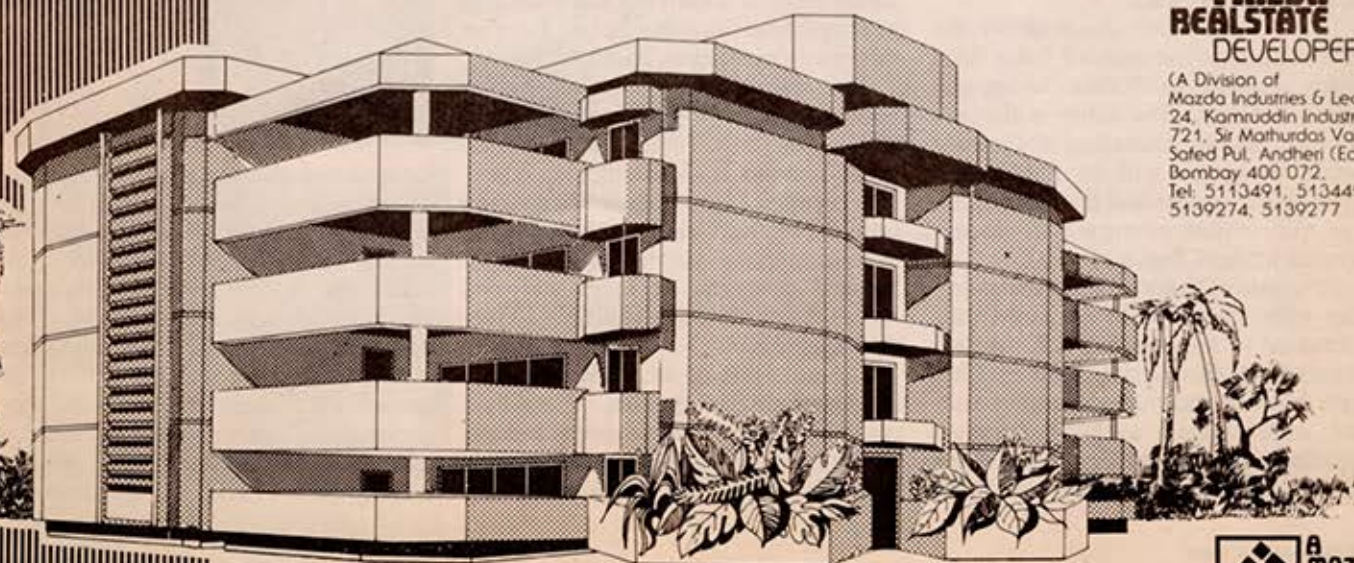
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The Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress (WZC) will focus on the community's existence in the twenty-first century, announced Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustee and subjects committee chairman Jamsheed Kanga at the executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India. The delegates assembled at the Muncherji Khareghat Hall in Bombay on April 8 and 9, 1989 were intimated by BPP trustee and Congress chairman Jamshed Guzder that nearly 500 Zoroastrians from Iran are interested in attending the Bombay Congress to be held from January 3 to 7, 1990 if they can manage to convince the Iranian government to waive the departure fee of around 20,000 toman (approximately Rs 20,000) per person. The airport fee is an additional 5,000 toman.

Some Federation delegates criticized the all-India body for not keeping them informed of developments pertaining to the Congress, nor involving them in the decision-making. Pointing out the difficulties in coordinating meetings in Bombay with out-of-town representatives, the Federation however issued an open invitation to members who wished to serve on the Congress executive committee. Representatives from Delhi, Surat, Poona, Ahmedabad and the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman (IZA) showed their willingness to be included on the planning team.

The Poona Youth Association has offered to host the next all-India Parsi youth seminar in Poona during the Diwali holidays. The subjects that are to come up for discussion at the next World Congress will be deliberated upon by the youths and the representative views that emerge will be expressed at the Congress.

To create a "happy blend of leadership with the expertise available," the formation of a think-tank was mooted. Founder of Zoroastrian Studies Khojeste Mistree and management consultant Aspi Moddie as guest speakers explained the implications and working of "this pool of informed talent." "We

The Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India is preparing for the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress and the community's future in the next century

Parinaz Gandhi

think we know, but every single problem in the community lacks hard data input. It is high time we invest in knowledge," recommended Moddie. "We have to think the unthinkable; look for high quality minds," he continued. Despite its institutional nature, the think-tank will be above politics, clarified Mistree. Its solutions will not be binding on the decision-makers, but once the specialists come together, "a subtle form of leadership will emerge... healthy discussions that spring from an informed community," added Mistree.

The revolutionary freedom fighter Madame Bhikhaiji Cama's portrait will be hung up in the central hall of Parliament, announced Minorities Commission member Homi Taleyarkhan. To be unveiled by the Vice President of India, her photograph will be in the distinguished company of other stalwarts whose frames line the Gallery of Freedom Fighters.

The inclusion of the Parsi New Year (Shehenshahi) in the list of holidays declared by the Government of India is a breakthrough that was made possible by Taleyarkhan. Commending his

efforts, Federation joint honorary secretary Keki Gandhi hoped that Taleyarkhan would be equally successful in bringing about a unification of calendars in the community instead of the prevailing practice of three different ones observed by the Shehenshahi, Kadmi and Fasli sects.

A directory of Parsi Zoroastrians residing in Ahmedabad was compiled and published by the Parsee Youth



League of Ahmedabad. Delegates attending the executive council meeting were presented a copy each. In addition to the exhaustive list of names and addresses of 2,093 Parsis in Ahmedabad, the directory also refers to the age-composition of the populace. Nearly 24 percent are in the 1-20 age-group, 53 percent in the 21-60 age-group and 21 percent over 60 years of age. A list of blood donors as also addresses of Parsi dharamshalas in

ENTY-FIRST CENTURY

India are included to make the directory a "useful book of reference."

Three new anjumans - Jalgaon, Mandvi and Mysore - have applied for membership of the Federation body. This subject made the Federation president and BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla raise the question, "Can't somebody persuade Bangalore to join?" Once again Gandhi provided the background picture on how the Banga-

lore Anjuman had years back shown an interest in joining the all-India body, asking for clarification and papers, promising to take a decision at its next general body meeting and ultimately deciding to defer enrolment. The panthaky of the Bangalore Dar-e-Meher Ervad Nadirshah Unvalla is grieved with reports in the Press publicizing his personal opinion that it would be preferable for the Bangalore Anjuman to

maligned in the community when actually "it is the decision of the overwhelming majority" that is responsible for Bangalore's refusal to join the Federation. But according to Gandhi, "There is no doubt that a lot of weightage has been given to Unvalla's opinion by the Bangalore Anjuman and the past history is very clear that if Unvalla would agree to Bangalore joining the Federation, Bangalore would join... but we respect his right to express his views and congratulate him for the influence he is able to exercise over the Bangalore Anjuman..."

Though the numbers on the Federation rolls keep increasing, there is not a corresponding regularity in attendance at the executive council meetings, especially when they are hosted by far-off anjumans. With the next meeting scheduled for September 9 and 10 in Madras Gandhi urged, "Let me know in advance whether you are planning to attend the meeting. Otherwise we can cancel the meeting... It is not fair to the hosts and others who spend time and money..." And, with the third meeting of the year planned in Ahmedabad, not even a month before the World Congress, participation was doubtful there too. It was thus recommended that only one more meeting be held in 1989 at either of these venues. (Subsequently it has been finalized that the next meeting will be held in Madras on September 16 and 17.)

"Let's make the meetings more business-like," advised Kanga. Officially only two people from each anjuman should benefit from the host's hospitality, the rest should be asked to foot their own bills, he continued. But when Gandhi explained that it was up to the host anjuman to lay down the restriction on attendance, Kanga explained, "Most would not like to be branded as inhospitable. We have to impose this discipline on ourselves."

"For the last three hours I didn't know whether this was a meeting of the Federation or the BPP," complained Brig Noshir Grant of Poona. The



Top row (from left): Taleyarkhan, Golwalla, Gandhi and Guzder

Middle row (from left): Desai, Mistry, Sethna and Shroff

Below: Jamsheed Kanga

stay away from the Federation, reported Gandhi. In his letters to two members of the Federation, Unvalla felt that he was indirectly being held responsible for Bangalore's non-membership and his name was being

lengthy discussions on affairs concerning the BPP made him declare, "I'm not interested in your problems; I want to discuss my problems. No wonder people are not attending. It's a bore I'm sorry to say." "From the experiences of the BPP other anjumans can take a cue," pointed out Gandhi. "My regret is that messages are being carried back home, but nothing is being done regarding implementation," Gandhi lamented. "It is the responsibility of those present to prepare a report/summary of what transpired at the meeting and to circulate it to the members of their anjuman," was Kanga's view. Further, when Golwalla repeatedly asks the smaller anjumans to bring up issues of relevance to their community, nothing new is expressed, said Gandhi.

With the demise of the former Surat Parsi Punchayet president Maneck Gheyara in March this year, there is now no founder member left to steer the Federation ship. And the vessel occasionally tends to drift. A simple request from the Calcutta Anjuman that the Federation should urge Dastur Meherji Meherjirana of Navsari to give a prompt reply to their query on whether in the absence of vultures the dokhma should be substituted by a cemetery was argued heatedly, and largely by those who were not present at the preceding meeting in Calcutta. Not realizing that the initiative had come from the Calcutta Anjuman, some felt that the Federation's correspondence with Meherjirana would tantamount to an intervention in the internal workings of an anjuman, while others opined that it would mean infringing the ban the Federation has laid on dabbling in controversial reli-

gious issues. Even the young Calcutta representative Ms Khursheed Ardesheer's emphatic statement that the Federation "is a lot of hot air... This is not a religious problem but a practical problem," left the delegates unconvinced. She further elaborated, "The volunteer nassessalars are of my age.

"We think we know, but every single problem in the community lacks hard data input"

They have to put to rest people whom they have known. No one likes the thought of a relative rotting..." Affronted by the "Federation's weak knees," Gandhi declared, "If the Federation has no guts to write a letter just because of the fear of it being misconstrued, then we should close down the Federation." An applause from all corners greeted his words and he was authorized to request Meherjirana to expedite a reply to the Calcutta Anjuman.

At the Calcutta meeting in December '88, the trustees of the Calcutta Anjuman had chastised the Federation for not coming to the aid of anjumans which were beset with problems. Their own difficulties then were the dokhma issue and the Banaji Agiary which has been closed down, its courtyard occupied by encroachers. They were asked to forward the documents concerning the Agiary to the Federation which would then seek Taleyarkhan's help. But, as reported, no written communication has since been forthcoming from

the Anjuman.

In the sphere of contributing towards religious education, Gandhi admitted that "we are guilty of neglecting the Dadar Madressa" where previously one boy used to be sponsored by the Federation. It was decided to clear the arrears since '88 and revive the sponsorship by paying at the rate of Rs 4,000 per annum.

A letter from Bahadur Postwalla of Calcutta (circulated in advance with the agenda notice), was brought up for discussion. Postwalla was advocating that the Federation adopt a more pragmatic approach when dealing with the time-worn problems of dwindling numbers, maintenance of funds and assets, motivating youth and promoting excellence. Of all the proposals, the subject of housing as usual was discussed at length, and the other recommendations bypassed on the grounds that the points mentioned therein had been touched upon before, or that the members needed time to "digest" the proposals.

On the subsequent day when the members were presented with a progress report on the preparations for the ensuing World Congress, a topic not mentioned on the agenda, the Federation secretariat was faulted for not giving the members sufficient time and chance "to study the subject and participate in the discussions," as noted Delhi representative Dadi Mistry. And since the WZC is supposed to be the Federation's responsibility, Mistry wanted to know who constituted the executive committee and why there was a preponderance of Bombayites amongst its members. When it was explained that the members were selected on the basis

Moddie (left) and Mistree



of their availability to participate in the executive committee meetings and more involvement was welcome. Dr Minocher Contractor of Surat, Aspi Irani of IZA, Mistry, Keki Pavri of Ahmedabad and Grant offered their services. They will supplement those presently on the committee: Guzder, Golwalla, Kanga, Eruch Desai, Gandhi, Ms Homai Pudumjee, Ms Daisy Mehta, Hector Mehta, Moddie, Dadi Engineer, Lt Gen Adi Sethna, Prof Khurshed Sheriar, Dinshaw Anklesaria, Dr Sam Bhacca, Bazun Dittia, Homi Bodhanwalla, S. D. Daver, Ms Nergish Palkhivala, Darius Forbes, Dr Burzin Khan, Khushroo Merchant, F. Sidhwa, Ms Tehmi Grant, Taleyarkhan, Rustom Kushesh, Yazdanyar Bonshahi, Meher Anklesaria, Rustom Anklesaria, Ms Sheroo Master and joint honorary secretaries Ms Gool Tata, Ms Homai Modi and Peshotan Nargolwala.

Instead of the theme of the Congress being "2000 and beyond" the focus should be on "growth," emphasized Grant and Mistry. They felt that if there was no growth in the numbers of the community, there would be no one left to benefit from the sessions scheduled to discuss topics like the effect of social change processes on contemporary Zoroastrian societies, implications of demographic trends on Zoroastrian institutions, attitudes to marriage, problems of the poor and the aged, strengthening of community organizations, management and communication network, religious education and survival of tradition.

As explained by Kanga, "The aim of the Congress is to try and understand what is happening all over the world." Gandhi had another query: "What steps will be taken to ensure that recommendations arising from the Congress will be implemented?" He was also keen that "no attempts should be made to sweep live, burning issues and controversies under the carpet. If we cannot arrive at a consensus, let us at least become aware." He felt that the problems of the priestly class should be discussed by a panel consisting of high priests and select other qualified priests who could arrive at feasible solutions. The time schedule for the speakers should also be adhered to strictly, advised Gandhi.

The topic of anjuman providing a seat for a youth trustee on their managing committee has repeatedly come up for discussion at Federation meetings. However, most anjuman do not seem

to be in favor of adopting this step on the grounds that they have already been "thinking about the youth, and for the youth." Judging by the accounts of different anjuman that are received by the Federation, Gandhi was emphatic that the proportion of expenditure incurred on youth activities is negligible. He was strongly in favor of the youths having a



say in future policies that concern them. "2000 and beyond is going to belong to whom? Certainly not to you and me," Gandhi made his point.

Pavri of Ahmedabad however was not in favor of "spoonfeeding the young. Let them come up on their own merit, with hard work and perseverance. Why presume that we are not concerned about the youth?" He was more worried that the youths would be used as tools by those who were anti-establishment. Mistry did not agree with Pavri and the dialogue that followed thereafter was more of a personal affront, questioning each other's age qualification and right to monopolize discussions. Disagreeing with Pavri, Porus Karanjawalla from the Ahmedabad Parsee Youth League enquired, "How many youth-oriented schemes have been floated since the new managing committee has come to power? If the youth puts its own view forward, does it mean that we are encouraging politics?" Rather than see the discussion continue further, Gandhi interrupted, "This is not the place for the youth and management to voice their (internal) disagreements." As worded by Contractor of Surat, "Instead of viewing every youth as a rascal and a rogue, and every old person as a booby, the relationship between them should be like father and son...can't do without each other."

When Navroze Kanga of Ahmedabad voiced his concern that the inclusion of a youth on the management sounded like "a political theme that the Federation is preaching," Gandhi reassured



him that even when youths approached him to form a youth wing under the Federation's canopy, he advised them to function independently without aligning themselves with any particular body.

Stressing the importance of "involving youth from the formative stage of life," Federation's joint honorary secretary and BPP trustee Eruch Desai



(From left): Marfatia, Pavri and Debara

explained the objective of the proposal: "If one seat is reserved for the youth, then he may get accustomed to following the good precepts which elders have laid down; to get used to their mature thinking."

Ms Puran Irani from the Young Zoroastrian Association of Dahanu was blunt: "There are no opportunities for the youth in rural areas." Addressing the decision-makers of the community, she continued, "You all think; never act." To this Gandhi replied that the initiative should come from their end. It is up to the local anjuman to support the youth programs, felt Gandhi.

"Please leave the thinking to us..." urged Zereh Jehangirji, youth representative from Thana. "We have our own minds; we learn from history... This does not mean that we won't listen to you, but let the motivation to work for the community come from within."

As BPP's chief executive Rustom Anklesaria summarized, "The youth are thinking in their own way, and we are thinking in our own way. What we are seeking is greater involvement and participation from the youth in the affairs of the anjuman."

Interest in the community's decision-making activities alone is not sufficient. Youths must join the country's political scene however dirty, insisted Anklesaria. In the ocean of politics, along with the sharks and whales must survive the small fish too. But he was quick to clar-

ify that he was referring to politics which is different from *zanda* (flag) waving and *rasta roko* (road blockade).

Similar efforts are on to induce youths to pursue fulfilling careers which would enhance the community as well as the individual. "One subinspector, one inspector or one *tehsildar* (an official at the district level) can do more good than 100 airhostesses or couriers," insisted Jamsheed Kanga. "Forget the *murghi-machhi* (more lucrative jobs) and concentrate on *bhaji-tarkari* (arduous careers)?" asked Gandhi in jest. This year the BPP, it seems, advertised thrice in the papers offering to finance the tutorial costs of students aspiring for entry to the armed/civil services. Only two applications were received, noted a disappointed Anklesaria. In the interests of the community, different anjumans should identify one or two students who are suitable material for entry to the government services, suggested Jamsheed Kanga.

While continuing with the project to sponsor the coaching fees of students aiming to enter professional colleges, a program will also be formulated to promote excellence among intelligent and talented students at a young age. Their progress will be monitored and the youths made to feel accountable for the community's concern about their development.

The counselling program at four schools in Bombay gave an indicator that "the reason for Parsi students not faring well in school is because of their problems with English," said Ms Diana Marfatia, coordinator of the BPP's school counselling project. Some however did have problems of scholastic backwardness, behavioral and personality disorders and family relationships. To give them a chance to improve their self-worth, self-awareness and personality development programs were devised. Career guidance was offered to



Federation delegates attend the BPP-convened samast anjuman meeting on April 8, to mourn Gheyara's death

students of Std IX and X, most of whom admitted that they "haven't even thought" about their future plans.

Just as the community adolescents don't seem to be overly bothered about their career prospects, the neo-adults appear to delay taking decisions about marriage. In Federation vice president Lt Gen Adi Sethna's words, "Whenever you mention marriage, they are like frightened horses... *bharké* (shy)." Gandhi suggested that an ethos should be created whereby a stigma would be attached to those delaying marriage and

children "like in sister communities where any individual remaining unmarried at 25 and any couple remaining childless for two-three years after marriage meet with raised eyebrows." "In other communities, students are encouraged to go around and plan marriage. In our community the parents will say '*Muo kamaich soo ké maari dikri né panva nikalyo* (What does the damned fellow earn that he has the audacity to propose marriage to my daughter)?" conveyed Contractor.

BPP trustee Minoo Shroff explained that with the new company policy of printing the salaries of its employees, many girls refuse to consider marriage proposals from suitors if they have found out that Rs 36,000 per annum "*ni income nathi* (income is less than Rs 36,000)." From the experiences of his matrimonial bureau in Ahmedabad, Pavri narrated an incident of a marriage being cancelled because at the last moment the girl's family felt that the boy's income was Rs 500 less than what they had expected. Golwalla said that he had even heard of marriage being broken because the parties could not agree on a caterer for the wedding function. The BPP's matrimonial bureau has resulted in 25 marriages, with one heading for a divorce, informed Anklesaria. An optimistic Shroff suggested, "See the success ratio. Study how they clicked; how they are clicking. Marriage is a matter of mutual adjustment."

Personality problems and ego prob-

"Whenever you mention marriage they are like frightened horses... *bharké*"



Youth representatives Eruch Irani (left) and Ardeshir

lems are the chief causes for marital conflict in the community, announced Ms Roda Pardiwalla who is in charge of the BPP's family counselling program. And reconciliation becomes difficult when one party refuses to cooperate at counselling sessions, she continued. The legal aid cell is an ongoing weekly feature. She also recommended the setting up of a work shelter for psychiatric cases who are not considered safe at home.

Whether marriages are being disrupted or delayed for want of adequate accommodation was once again a topic featuring at the meeting. While Gandhi could not understand why people with lakhs in their pocket turn to the BPP for housing instead of being self-reliant, others recommended that the BPP expand its housing construction plans by joining hands with trusts which have lands lying spare. In the merit-rating system for accommodation, amendments are being considered to reserve 50 percent of the allotments for the engaged-to-be-married and newly married couples, in the hope of increasing the community's population.

To reduce the pressure on housing, Golwalla announced that there is room for aged males at the Punchayet-run Parukh Dharamshalla at Bombay. The Surat infirmary too is in a position to accommodate senior members of the community.

Several flats in Bombay have only one or two old Parsis staying there. The threat that such flats would be lost to non-Parsi servants if adoption was recognized in the community, has deterred the initiation of an adoption law for Parsis. Lest any move on this front have future repercussions on the community, it was decided to study the problem, consult legal luminaries and then decide how to proceed. Meanwhile, proposed amendments to the Indian Succession Act as applicable to Parsis, which seek to remove discrimination on the grounds of sex and to prevent bequests to charity from being invalidated, will be forwarded to Taleyarkhan who will take up the matter with the authorities concerned.

Lands belonging to Parsi individuals and trusts that have become the subject matter of legal controversies are the Divecha Trust land in Thana and the Dastur Hall property in Poona. In both these cases, the intended sale of the trust lands has evoked opposition from members of the community. The Fed-

eration has intervened in support of the Thana Anjuman which has moved the Bombay High Court for a stay order against further development of the Divecha Trust property (see "Thana land development stayed," page 18, *Parsiana*, July 1989). Though the Fed-

"Please leave the thinking to us... Let the motivation to work for the community come from within"

eration has not yet impleaded itself in the controversy surrounding Dastur Hall, Eruch Irani's appeal to the Federation to lend its name will be considered after examining the papers.

There are two other community properties in Thana which are ideally suited for residential complexes. But while the dokhma plot comes under the purview of "non-agricultural" land which cannot be developed until all the necessary permits and licenses have been secured, on the land adjoining the agiary (about 40,000 sq ft), 60-70 flats will be constructed once the charity commissioner's sanction is obtained. When Gandhi was hopeful that some of those on the BPP's waiting list could be transferred to Thana, Anklesaria

explained that this was a separate management over which the BPP could exercise no control.

Indicators point to the conditions prevailing in the community: where land is available, the funds are missing; where funds are in surplus, there is no land; often, there are assets, but no personnel. In Bina (in Madhya Pradesh) there are more than three acres of land and the last Parsi there died some 10 years ago, reported Ronny Dick of Jhansi who wanted the Federation's help in preventing the property from being lost to the community. In Karanj, there are reportedly no Parsis left and Pheroze Karanjia sought the Federation's opinion on whether it was permissible to sell off the agiary building to a non-Parsi, now that its fire has been shifted to Surat. While some in the gathering wondered whether the Federation would be treading on the forbidden territory of "controversial religious issues," the general opinion seemed to favor selling the building, preferably to a Parsi, though not for a song, and if no one was interested, to a non-Parsi. One member suggested that the land be used to restore Parsis whether in agriculture or small scale industries. It was realistically pointed out to him that Parsis can't be expected to stay in isolation in the rural regions.

Agra's effort to lease their hall at the dharamshala building so that the monetary compensation could contribute

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Agra's monumental task

Gustasp Irani

"When we first came to Agra in 1969 there were 45 to 50 Parsis here. Now we are down to 21. What more can I say? The statistics speak for themselves." To Hosang Debara, secretary and treasurer of the Agra Parsi Anjuman (APA) since 1972, the future of the community in this historic city of the Taj Mahal is bleak. Eleven of the community members are over the age of 60 and only four below 30 — no, make that three — in a community of 20. Shortly after the interview Debara's daughter was married and settled in Poona.

"The last Parsi wedding celebrated in Agra was about 10 years ago," says Debara. And navjotes? "Where are the children?" asks Debara in reply. To his son Porus, youth trustee of the APA, the lack of Parsi youth poses another problem. "There is just no social life in Agra. We crave for company. We look forward to our visits to Delhi where we can meet Parsis of our own age."

Porus accepts the reality of his predicament: "I'm stuck in Agra." He is referring to the fact that the family business, Hindustan Crushers and Fertilizers Co., precludes the option of looking for opportunities elsewhere. And he sees no reason why other Parsis, the youth in particular, would want to settle in Agra. Debara senior shakes his head when asked about job openings that the city can offer to Parsis desiring to make it their home. "Few," he says. "The opportunities are few." But the matter, according to him, is hypothetical and superfluous. "Parsis just don't want to leave Bombay," he observes.

This reluctance of Parsis to leave Bombay creates another problem for young Parsi boys and girls settled outside the great metropolis — finding suitable life partners. It is not just a problem that Agra faces, but concerns all pockets of Parsis that do not fall on the West Coast, according to Debara Sr. "Boys doing well and with good future prospects are not able to find girls because they (the girls) would rather marry and settle in Bombay, Poona or

There are only 20 Parsis left in Agra who are making every effort to hold on to community institutions

Gujarat. Of course this only encourages intercommunity marriages."

Girls are not the only ones who are reluctant to make Agra their home. After Ervad S. Dastoor left in 1980, the APA has not been able to persuade another priest to relocate in Agra. Debara recalls that Ervad Daraius Bagli had served as a priest in Agra before he moved on to Delhi in 1952. "Now, whenever we require a priest we have to rely on Delhi to lend us one of their priests. We pay for his complete expenses."

Priests aside, the APA finds that they cannot get a Parsi to manage their dharamshala, Rustam Bagh, and cater to the guests who might want to use the facility. Till a year ago, trustee Homi Khambatta managed the guest house. But since then, a Muslim, Mohammed

Nassiruddin, has taken charge of the place. Along with his wife and children, he cares for the premises. "Mohammed is a qualified caterer and he knows how to cook Parsi food. He cooks as per the guests' requirements," explains Debara.

The dharamshala charges Rs 15 per bed per day, breakfast costs Rs 5, lunch and dinner Rs 15 per meal and tea Re 1, Debara informs us. However, there are very few who avail of the facilities. On an average only about three to four guests use the dharamshala every month. Most of the time the 10 rooms, the dining hall and the main hall (Kekugodrej Hall) lie desolate and empty. Sad testimony to this fact were the clouds of dust that belched out of the room that was being readied for us during our recent visit.

There was a time when Rustam Bagh (named after Rustomji Rustom-Faram who along with his wife Putlibai donated it to the Parsi community in 1918), bustled with traffic: Lala's Tours used it as a base; groups visiting Nani Tal stopped over as did Parsi visitors from Bombay, Delhi and the rest of the country; and Parsi boys on temporary posting to the city were accommodated here. In 1953, extensive renovation and restoration work was undertaken at a cost of Rs 75,000, says Debara. In 1956, Kekugodrej Edulbehram built and donated the Kekugodrej Hall.

The introduction of the Delhi-Taj Express and, more recently, the Shatabdi Express, has had a telling effect on the occupancy of the dharamshala, says Debara. People now prefer to use Delhi as a base; visiting Agra in the morning and returning by evening. Luxury bus operators have also started to offer same day return tours from Delhi to Agra. "People come to Agra in the morning and rush back by evening. There is more to Agra than the Taj Mahal and Fatehpur Sikri. There is Itmad-ud-Daulah's Tomb, Dayal Bagh, Agra Fort, Sikandra and more. A person should spend two to three comfortable days in the city rather than rush

Hosang Debara: a bleak future



through it," says Debara.

Till Parsis appreciate the wisdom of Debara's views, the dharamshala will continue to wear a deserted look. The revenue as a result is negligible and this in turn puts a financial strain on the APA. Funds to maintain the dharamshala premises and also the aramgah (burial grounds) of the community are scarce. "The Agra Parsi Anjuman is a financially weak anjuman," Porus Debara writes to us. He informs us that in order to raise funds, "We (the APA) are trying, since the last one year, to rent out the hall, an adjoining room, verandah and a store room at the dharamshala, having a carpet area of approximately 1,250 square feet, to some government organization or a Parsi-owned business house." He adds, "People reading your article may respond and we may get a suitable party."

According to Debara senior, the APA has already leased out, for tree plantation, a 15,000 square yard plot of land adjoining the aramgah. Other funds available to the Anjuman are membership subscriptions. These are Rs 10 per family per month towards maintenance of the dharamshala and Rs 5 per family per month towards the aramgah fund.

The general body meeting of the APA is held every two years when trustees and office bearers are elected. The present committee has been the same for the last four years, says Debara. The committee comprises president Dr (Ms) Meher Bharoocha, retired professor of Agra University, Dadi Sohrabji, Ms Homai Pestonji and Homi Khambatta,



(Top)
*Dharamshala:
deserted by
Parsis*
Photo: Gustasp Irani
(Above and left)
*Parsi aramgah:
scarce resources
to spend on
grave issues*

trustees; and Porus Debara and Dr (Ms) Rati Khambatta, youth trustees.

The task before the committee is one of holding on. In their quiet battle for survival they suffered a setback when in 1985 they could no longer look after the aramgah at Hathras, 55 km from Agra, and handed over the responsibility to the Delhi Parsi Anjuman. If the trend continues, it will not be long before the city, where the Taj Mahal was built in memory of a dead queen, acquires another 'tomb' - Rustam Bagh dharamshala, a monument to a dead community.

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Of Pots, Paints and Parsis

Gustasp Irani



Potter turned painter, artist Frenny Billimoria's exhibits on Parsi themes were on display during the Parsi Festival in Delhi

Every day, for a week, the Fiat drew up in front of the potter's hut. The lady in the car rolled down the windows and for hours watched him molding clay. On the eighth day she got out of the vehicle and requested the potter to let her try her hand at the clay and wheel. The potter's wife protested that the lady's hands would get dirty: "*Mehn-shab, haat ghanda hoga.*" But fear of dirty hands was not going to stop the spirited Frenny Billimoria. For her, the journey into the world of art was about to begin when in 1960 she was cast in Jamshedpur after marrying Rusi Billimoria, then the Tata Iron and Steel Company's director of personnel. Pottery, clay sculpturing, black and white sketching and painting – it was a voyage of self-discovery and self-expression.

The journey, which culminated most recently in an exhibition of her paintings and collages on Parsi themes at the India International Centre, Delhi, from March 18 to 21, 1989, can be traced back to Billimoria's Parsi roots. The

exhibition was part of the Parsi Festival sponsored by the Centre and organized by the Delhi Parsi Anjuman.

The collection of 16 displays was the fruit of three years of creativity. Though Billimoria's brush explores other subjects too, in this exhibition its strokes portrayed the Parsis. Why the Parsis? "Why not?" Billimoria retorts. She probably has the right credentials to undertake such a task, being part of the community yet blessed with an objectivity that comes to one who does not fit into the mold of a typical Bombay Parsi. Billimoria recalls the time when, during one of her infrequent visits to Bombay, a Parsi lady commented: "*Tahmé Bombay na Parsi nathi* (You are not a Bombay Parsi)?" "But of course I'm a Parsi," Billimoria protests when one tries to read more into the incident than there is. Billimoria was born a Saklat in Calcutta and grew up in the city till she married Rusi and made Jamshedpur, then Ranchi and finally Delhi her home.

Distanced from the main body of Parsis in Bombay, however, has not dis-

tanced her from their sensitivities. She admits that she had to impose certain curbs upon herself when working on Parsi themes so as not to create controversy. "I enjoyed painting the Parsis, but I found myself being pulled down." She refers to the painting titled *The Creation* in which she portrays, according to Zoroastrian myth, the first man and woman, Mashya and Mashyanag, emerging from a single stemmed plant with 15 leaves. "I had to keep a semblance of truth... If I had my way I would have gone wild...but as my husband said, 'We don't want another Rushdie.'"

An artist works best when there is nothing to curb or hold back the creative juices, believes Billimoria. Yet, restraints imposed by market and public acceptance are real and are factors that every artist must come to terms with. "A painting sells or does not sell; that's not the criterion of its merit." Unfortunately, Billimoria adds, to some, selling is all important. "Certain artists sell because they have caught onto the



Billimoria's paintings: Anniversary (left); Going to the Races (right) and A Patriarch of Yore (below)

wavelength of current fashion. They keep repeating themselves. Commercialism kills that certain spontaneity..."

"Commercialism is good." No, there is no contradiction here. The commercialism that Billimoria is referring to is the current trend in which large industrial houses are emerging as the modern day patrons of art. Japan, according to Billimoria, is an example of how this form of patronage is manifest. Painters and artists are adopted by industrial houses and their every human need is taken care of. "These artists can devote their entire energies to creativity; they don't have to model their work after money." To a degree Billimoria has also done her bit towards promoting industrial patronage of art in India. Years ago, in the early 1970s, she had suggested that artists visit the Tata factories and paint their impressions. "We got a very successful calendar that year," Billimoria recalls. Industrial houses, she believes, stand to gain too. "It costs them so little and considering the way art appreciates in value, the investment is well worth it."

Billimoria does not subscribe to the belief that a suffering artist begets good art. Van Gogh, we prompt. "It makes no difference that he suffered or not. What is important is that he enjoyed his painting. An artist has got to enjoy painting and that quality comes through to a trained eye. It shows," she insists. This quality of enjoyment, according to

Billimoria, is one of several criteria that determine a good painting. It does not necessarily have to be a definitive work. "Photography now is so sophisticated that you don't want to reproduce a reflection. What you want is to capture emotions and feelings... A painting may be perfect; its color scheme, its compo-



sition, its structure may be just right, but if it has got no feeling or emotion, it's quite soulless... A good painting suggests."

Billimoria illustrates this idea of suggestion through the canvas titled *Dog*. "I had the option of putting a corpse on the bench (there is none), yet the painting conveys the feeling that a (dead) body is there." She points to another

canvas, *Lagan* (Wedding) *Feast*, in which three seated women are seen floating on a cloud, only their hands on reality – the *patra* or banana leaf. "If you have got a sense of humor, it shows."

We are now before the canvas *Humata-Hukta-Huvarshita* in which good thoughts, good words and good deeds are portrayed as vapor steaming out of a crater. Billimoria explains the balance of colors, of brush strokes, of structure and the composition of the canvas. One understands this intimate bond between creator and creation better when Billimoria states that she talks to her paintings... "and they talk back. One false stroke and they protest that you are going wrong." A painting, we understand, is creativity. It's also discipline, we are told. It is also an inner eye... "Like a third eye...like a foreign language... You've got to tune in to the right wavelength of the composition... It's meditation. If you sit in front of a painting for five hours every day, it's very much like meditating..."

"It's labor," says Billimoria, "child-birth labor... Painting is not relaxed, easy inspiration. It's hard work, like having a baby. You feel the same pangs, the same doubts and anxieties, the same joy, the same wonder. Then after the painting is done, the same attachment and then the slow emotional detachment till it becomes like a foster child."

Billimoria's house is filled with her foster children. "I like to keep one piece

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BOOKS

Madame/Bhikhaiji Rustom Cama by Khorshed Adi Sethna. Published by Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Patiala House, New Delhi 110001, 1987. Price: Rs 32. Pp: 171.

Jamshed Nusserwanjee: A Memorial. Published by The Jamshed Memorial Volume Committee, Karachi. Second edition: 1987. Price in India: Rs 60. Pp: 266. Available in Bombay with: Ms Armaiti A. Desai, Mino Meher, 22, Union Park, Bombay 400052, and Ms Meher D. Engineer, Sohrab House, Garden Road, Colaba, Bombay 400005.

When one thinks of the Parsi involvement in India's struggle for independence, two names immediately spring to mind — Dadabhoy Naoroji and Bhikhaiji (often wrongly spelt and pronounced as Bhicaji, a man's name) Cama. The images portrayed by the two, however, are diametrically opposite: Dadabhoy, cool, composed, a man who bearded the British lion in his own den with constitutional methods by winning a seat in the House of Commons; and Cama, a young firebrand revolutionary who created history by unfurling for the first time ever the Indian tricolor on foreign soil. The flag, as many revolutionaries believe, was improvised by Cama by tearing off her precious silk sari.

Many tales have been woven around Cama, mainly due to the paucity of truly historical material and their proper documentation. Shattering such myths comes a biography published by the Government of India as a part of its Builders of Modern India series. The book is authored by Ms Khorshed Sethna, wife of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman president Lt Gen Adi Sethna, who candidly admits in her introduction that the "urge to popularize the work of this

pioneer patriot is the fact that we belong to the same community and religion ... (and) share a common birthday."

Under such propitious circumstances, we have a 171-page biography bringing into print the incredible life story of a remarkable Parsi woman. She was born in the lap of luxury, and married to "a good-looking, wealthy, educated barrister from one of Bombay's wealthiest and best-known Parsi families." But, the comforts and luxuries of life were spurned to serve her country. In the process, she embittered her husband, Rustom, the son of the great Orientalist and Avestan scholar, K. R. Cama, and many of her own relatives,

Cama: self-exile turned to glory



to die "unhonored and unmourned" on August 16, 1936 after braving 75 winters. Approximately 34 of these were spent in the inhospitable climes of England and France from where she waged her relentless battle for India's freedom. Advocating revolution by writing and collecting monies for seditious literature which she sent to India through the French colony of Pondicherry, Cama also smuggled pistols and weapons through false bottoms of 'book' boxes.

Yet, Madame Cama was no spring chicken when she embarked upon her mission to secure independence for India through violence. In 1902, when Cama was 41, she fell gravely ill (of what, Sethna does not tell) and had to go abroad for treatment. By the time she settled down in London after spending a year each in Germany, Scotland and France, enlarging her vision and contacts, she was 45. It was at this 'mature' age that Cama orated from the soapboxes at Hyde Park, berating the Englishmen for their economic and social pillage of India. It was also at this time that her path crossed with that of Dadabhoy Naoroji, the "Grand Old Man of India" (a biography of whom has also been published in the same series by the Indian Government). Coincidentally, he was known to her in-laws, who had helped him financially to set up a newspaper, *Rast Gofar*, over 50 years ago. Naoroji, for whom Cama 'worked' as an unofficial secretary, introduced her to Shyamji (Varma), the founder of India House in London, and editor of *Indian Sociologist*. Cama contributed profusely to this journal until, angered and alienated by Varma's vacillating

One for arms, another for armis

Homi J. Rogers

opinions on martyrs, and his purely theoretical radicalism, she moved away.

Later, with Har Dayal, in September 1909, Cama launched a radical newspaper, *Bande Mataram* (Hail Motherland), and a few years later, with Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, *Talvar*, edited and printed in Holland. The latter openly advocated physical force, both individual and collective, against British rule in India. Hence, both these publications were quoted in evidence against Cama when charged for sedition by the British Government. It would have been appreciated if the book had reproduced photographs of the mastheads, or a page from a copy of these journals.

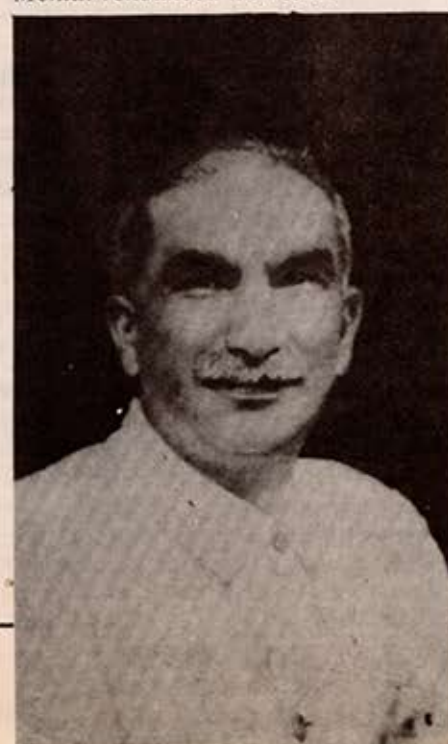
Based on her writings and the various documents, letters written to and by Cama (two such reproduced in the appendixes in Cama's own handwriting should delight graphologists), Sethna has woven together the strands in Cama's fiery life. It is, as Sethna puts it, "one crowded hour." We marvel at the energy and the spirit of the lady. She left Indian shores beleaguered by illness and a broken marriage, yet miraculously converted her period of self-exile into moments of glory, earning for herself the epithet of "Mother of Revolutionaries." Cama hopped across continents. From London, she even went visiting Egypt and America. She pleaded justice for India amongst the people at The Hague Tribunal, and amidst the socialists at the historic conference in Stuttgart, where on August 10, 1907 she first unfurled the Indian tricolor on foreign soil.

Yet, where Sethna disappoints in her narration is that she is unable to flesh out the relationships. Varma drops out

of India House, and Cama, judging by Sethna's narration, merely continues her work without him. Does not the broken relationship leave any scars? Naoroji, to whom she attaches herself, accepts her services. But does he, in view of his relationship with the Camas, ever work for a reunion of Bhikhaiji with her husband? For a woman, elsewhere portrayed as sentimental, and who weeps when family photographs are lost, relationships developed in the course of fighting for a cause would have been important. But Sethna prefers to narrate a straight tale, rarely getting beneath the skin, or providing fresh insight through introspection or investigation on Cama's personal relationships.

Of equal disappointment is the fact that, like in Cama's earlier biography, the little-known work by Bulu Roy Chowdhury, Sethna too provides minimal information on the first 40 years of Cama's life. We learn she was born into "the already large family" (no details of how many brothers or sisters she had) of the affluent Patels who endowed charities and an agiary in Bombay. Once again, no details are provided about which Patel Agiary is being referred to. Images about her childhood and adolescent days are amiss, barring the facts that she played cricket, and wore frocks, being "perhaps the first Parsi young lady to do so." It would be an onerous task but, probably, from

Mehta: renounced his riches



school records, or families known to the Patels, more facts about the early years could have been gleaned. The marital years too are briefly dealt with, and the disharmonious strands are not delved into.

Commendably, Sethna provides a picture of Madame Cama as a Zoroastrian. Despite her modern outlook, Cama, we learn, never parted with her sudreh and kusti, always kept a small *Khordeh Avesta* in her handbag, and constantly repeated the *Ahunavar* (*Yatha Ahu Vairyo*) prayer. She yearned to read *Jam-e-Jamshed* and *Kaiser-E-Hind*, and chastised the young who had forgotten to speak in Gujarati. Such vignettes are, unfortunately, few and far between.

Considering that so little is known about Madame Cama, and there is a paucity of material chronicling her life and times, Sethna's attempt to fill the lacuna is praiseworthy, though it is more a patchwork quilt than an original biography. Within its narration lie numerous unanswered questions which, probably, a later-day biographer could undertake. Why, for one, did Cama take to arms? Did she ever actually pull the trigger of any of the guns? Was Cama only an armchair revolutionary, sans the adventurousness of Savarkar? Judging by Sethna's biography, it was for only 10 years out of her 75 (from 1905 to 1916) that Cama was really in the fray. She lived in tumultuous times when Russia overthrew the Czar and Sun Yat Sen ushered in the Revolution in China, deposing the 'Last Emperor.' Yet we gather little from Sethna's biography of Cama, of her involvement or interaction with her co-socialists at a time when

The biography of
Mme Bhikhaiji
Cama portrays her
fiery approach,
while the Jamshed
Mehta memoir
provides glimpses
of a humanitarian life

tice

history was being made in Asia and Europe. References to her marginal links with the Russians are a repetition of Chowdhury's work.

Jawaharlal Nehru writes in his autobiography: "She (Cama) formed her own impressions and stuck to them, despite facts to the contrary."

She was then 65. Had Nehru analysed Cama rightly? Why did a much-ailing Cama end her self-exile period by sign-

Despite her modern outlook, Cama never parted with her sudreh and kusti, and always kept a small *Khordeh Avesta* in her handbag

ing a written undertaking that she would not hold any meetings or make any speeches in India? The answers remain locked in the tinderbox of history. Cama is known to have died unhonored and unsung at the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital. But if it be any consolation, a complex in Delhi, and a road in Bombay, are today named after Madame Cama.

If Cama argued that we need not "deplore the use of violence when our enemies drive us to it," her contemporary in Karachi, Jamshed Nusserwanjee Mehta (1886-1952), while wholeheartedly supporting the Home Rule Movement, did not even join Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent Satyagraha Movement. For, "he did not like the idea of mass passive resistance" which stemmed from a secret hatred for the British. "To a man like Jamshed, to whom hatred was a nausea, in whose heart there was a sea of love for all... Gandhiji's doctrine naturally appeared undesirable."

Celebrating the first birth centenary of this Buddha-like personality who, in spite of his riches, lived a life of austerity and renunciation, the Parsis of Karachi have brought out the second edition of the Jamshed memorial volume. They had to abandon their original plan to bring out a biography for want of "someone who could really handle this great undertaking."

In memory of the "Maker of Modern Karachi," the Jamshed Memorial Volume Committee decided to bring out a second edition to the original volume published in 1954. This compilation includes tributes from those who had come in his contact though, with "the scattering about of men and women occasioned by the partition of India, the rush and burden of modern living" amongst other reasons, many were precluded from contributing to the volume. However, it is not very clear from Gool Minwalla's preface whether the second edition has added on to the contributions published in the first. Yet, the reprint - with or without the additions - is a most welcome volume for the new generation who has either not heard of Jamshed Nusserwanjee (he dropped his Mehta surname on his father's death, according to a contributor, Kewal Motwani) or forgotten him.

Jamshed, like Cama, was born to riches. His father had a large wholesale business in addition to a retail shop, a tile factory, a flour mill, an aerated water company, an ice factory, and a saw mill amongst other interests. His mother, in his own words, "was a votary of purity and her love for God transcended her love for any human being on earth." Jamshed was blessed with a compassionate nature, and in his adolescence, he turned vegetarian, repulsed at the sight of the agony writ over a cow's face, as she was being led to the slaughter house. The early stirrings continued, and Jamshed learnt to give up luxuries, living on the barest minimum simple food, wearing handspun cotton clothes, and sleeping on a wooden bed without mattresses. "Wealth meant nothing to him, except as a means of spreading happiness," wrote the late Dastur Khurshed Dabu, the equally austere High Priest of the Wadia Atash Bahram in Bombay, in the book. Innumerable examples of his charitable disposition are quoted in the book, as known of, or as experienced by the writers.

His greatest contribution was naturally to the city of Karachi, of which he held the proud distinction of being Municipal President for 12 consecutive years. All contributors to the volume have acknowledged his service into making Karachi a clean, beautiful, well-planned modern city with amenities like school, park, dispensary and public conveniences in each municipal ward.

Hatim Alavi, a councillor elected to the Karachi Municipality in 1927 (seven years after Jamshed) writes that "Jamshed seized the city in his hands as a potter does his clay and, in the words of Omar Khayyam, worked incessantly to 'remold it nearer to the heart's desire.'" Alavi outlines the major contributions initiated by Jamshed who gave Karachi city its constant water supply, macadamized 72 miles of road from just 14, laid out a dozen public gardens, raised loans for housing the offices of the Municipality.

Yet, as M (probably, Minwalla) tells in the life sketch, "from time to time, the meanest accusations were levelled against him...(but) he never resented even the worst calumnies that were hurled." Elected unanimously as the first Mayor of Karachi in November 1933, in recognition of his 12 dedicated years as President, Jamshed resigned from the office in July 1934, as the new Karachi Municipal Act gave wide powers to the chief officer, leaving the Mayor as a dignified head, which was irksome to

"Meanest accusations were levelled against him...(but) he never resented even the worst calumnies"

him. Six years later in 1940, he retired from public life, and for the next 12 years, M tells us that "he was used by the Higher Ones, for higher services, not to be judged in visible values."

It is hence unfortunate that a man like Jamshed was not to be active at a time when the subcontinent was being rent apart. A few contributors have briefly dealt with Jamshed's feelings on the Partition.

One Naval Fakirji Gabla tells that watching an infuriated mob at Ratan Talao in January 1948, Jamshed stood at a distance crying like a child, grieved at his own helplessness to stop the carnage. A life-long theosophist, the events must have saddened Jamshed greatly. As B. F. Bharucha tells us, Jamshed maintained his relations with Mohammed Ali Jinnah, generally regarded as the Father of Pakistan, and the man responsible for Partition, "with the sole

object of maintaining harmonious relations between Hindus and Muslims." The much-illustrated volume carries a photograph of Jamshed reading an address of welcome presented by the Parsis to Jinnah.

There is a strong hagiographic element – expectedly – that runs through the book. One does not expect warts in a memorial volume; they are a biographer's prerogative. Yet, it is the freshness in many of the writings that pleases, and helps the reader in viewing Jamshed as a normal person. Minwalla, for example, in "To Whom Life was Love," narrates how Jamshed, who died a bachelor, could have wedded a girl of his choice, had he not been the archetypal silent lover who never revealed his heart to the girl he yearned for and who also pined for him but married elsewhere receiving no response from him. "A friend" from Karachi reveals that ice creams were Jamshed's weakness, and a year of voluntary self-denial when he resolved not to have any ice cream, "was rather gloomy for him."

The memorial volume is a commendable work. The contributors – numbering over 80 – are drawn from diverse backgrounds and places. A handful are from Adyar, and are possibly Jamshed's theosophist colleagues. For the others, including some from England too, a line in introduction to the author of the piece would have been appreciated. The book is further embellished by quotes of Jamshed and over 40 photographs.

Interestingly, in the photographs, Jamshed is shown with his head covered, but not with a Parsi *topi* or *pheta*, unlike Madame Cama, who Sethna informs, always wore a Parsi cap. Yet, despite this, Jamshed, was acknowledged by all as a man of God, and one T. M. Advani even narrates two incidents of him as a mystic. He was not, however, to quote Behram Sohrab Rustomji of Karachi, an "orthodox bigoted Parsi," and "one rarely saw him at the agiary." Yet, as both Rustomji and Dabu, amongst others inform us, he was a true Zarthosti, and lived his life according to the faith's teachings.

Gita Piramal, biographer of India's 10 leading business houses, has stated that the value of any autobiography or biography is not in raking over the past, but in searching for the whole meaning of a person's life and times. Both Sethna's work and the Jamshed memorial volume are a good start in this direction.

OF POTS, PAINTS ... continued from page 30

(from) each of my exhibitions," she explains. There are pots, clay sculptures, black and white sketches and colored canvases all over. There are works of other artists too, including one done by her sister Ketayun Saklat of the building that housed their studio in Calcutta. On the facing wall is a canvas, *Roof tops*, by Bikash Bhattachaga, a scene of Calcutta as seen from that very same studio. Bhattachaga, as also Gopal Ghosh under whom she studied water colors, have helped her grow as an artist.

Billimoria has had no formal art education. "You can work all on your own and, by trial and error, learn in 10 years what with guidance may take five," she explains. In fact, she graduated from Calcutta University, Loreto House, with a rare mix of subjects – biology and economics. But what she might lack in

She talks to her paintings...and they talk back. One false stroke and they protest

theoretical grounding, she more than compensates with drive and determination, the same determination that manifest itself as she sat at the potter's house in Jamshedpur. For two months, every day, she made pots; and broke them too. "It looked so simple, but I broke them by the dozens." At the end of the two months she decided that she would try her hand at the rod that turned the wheel. "It looked as easy as chocolate cake, but, I couldn't move the damned thing," she recalls.

The setback was temporary. She modified her sewing machine by mounting upon it a bread board which had a spindle driven through its center. A flick of the electric switch and Billimoria was molding clay once again. For 10 years in Jamshedpur she made pots and did social work which, she admits, was expected of her. "Not that I didn't enjoy it. I did. I enjoyed Jamshedpur too; it was a quick lesson in life. After that experience you can throw me anywhere in the world and I'll survive."

In 1969 the Billimorias moved to Ranchi, Bihar. "Everyone felt sorry for

me, but little did I realize that those five years were to be my most creative ones." Her artistic expression found vent in an outpouring of pots and clay sculptures. There was no stopping her even if she had to 'fire' the clay in a German refractory furnace at temperatures of molten steel!

"Pots have a sensual feel. There is something very earthy and basic about them. A good pot has a certain sensuality; that's how you judge its artistic value," says Billimoria. Chinese Ming pots, according to her, ooze with this sensuality unlike Japanese pots which, to her, have a "hard feel."

In 1975, when Billimoria moved to Delhi, she set up, in partnership, an interior-decoration unit which for 10 years beautified private homes and offices in the city. "Personally I prefer stark white walls, with a minimum of clutter and furniture, and the maximum of art," says Billimoria when expressing her preference in home and office decor. But though the work was absorbing, there was a growing rumbling of discontent within her. "I felt that it would burst forth and then one day it did. I closed shop. Enough was enough." In 1985 Billimoria started to paint. Her first works were in black and white. Here, she explains, she used different pencils to create the effect of brush strokes.

Shades of this period were evident in three canvases at her exhibition at the Parsi Festival. These were primarily done in black and white with just a hint of color. They represented the period of her transition from one form of painting to another; "the cusp," as Billimoria refers to it.

Billimoria's art has witnessed many cusps, the first probably when she was a little girl and her parents – Rustom and Homai Saklat – took her and her sister to all the exhibitions in Calcutta. "I went along for the ice cream that came at the end," she confesses. The girls also had an art teacher. "Later he (the teacher) went mad and our aunt was sure that we had pushed him over the brink," Billimoria laughs and adds, "I guess it did rub off, this exposure to art as kids." Her sister, she points out, is an accomplished artist too. But one person who might have reservations about the rub-off effect is Billimoria's mother. Says Billimoria, "We don't understand why mother paints so pretty; she does not understand why we paint so ugly!"

MILESTONES

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

Heart disease claimed 19 of the 70 who died in Bombay. Eleven succumbed to pneumonia and diseases of the lungs, and nine to old age. Blood disease and circulatory problems (five), brain disease and cancer (four each), kidney failure and diabetes (three each) and liver disease and septicemia (two each) were some of the other killers. There were isolated cases of nervous disorder, dehydration, hypertension, accident, gastrointestinal bleeding and Parkinson's disease. A five-day-old baby and a youth of 28 lost out to congenital defects, and a 22-year-old girl to diabetes.

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.

BOMBAY

Born

A boy to Rukhshana and Kersi Baria on June 1, 1989
A boy to Yasmine and Mehernosh Patel; June 1
A girl to Khushnoor and Emmanuel; June 4
Twins (girls) to Bakhtawar and Nozer Bhamgara; June 5
A girl to Hutoxi and Hoshang Boman; June 5
A girl to Gulshan and Sarosh Kolah; June 6
A girl to Dilber and Hoshi Daruwala; June 7
A girl to Kumi and Rusi Mistry; June 7
A girl to Yasmin and Firdaush Laskari; June 8

A girl to Jasmine and Ardaviraf Mogal; June 8
A boy to Naynem and Jal Thanwala; June 11
A boy to Jasmine and Rohinton Mehta; June 18
A girl to Shenaz and Hormuz Cooper; June 20
A boy to Jenai and Burjor Banaji; June 20
A boy to Dilshad and Shahbaram Jammehdiabadi; June 21
A girl to Anahita and Dara Sherdiwala; June 22
A boy, Cyrus, to Roshan and Homiar Poonawala; June 24
A boy to Mahazarin and Rohinton Gandhi; June 26
A boy to Firozi and Fali Mistry; June 27
A girl to Arnawaz and Rohinton Garda; June 28

Married

Mahrugh Pervez Bhatporia and Dara Pirojshaw Saher; April 22
Sanobar Jalejar Daruwala and Xerxes Pirojshaw Saher; April 22
Jasmine Hiraji Medhora and Farokh Piroz Bharucha; May 1
Navaz Faramarz Bengalee and Dara Savaksha Dordi; May 7
Niloufer Jamshed Wadia and Kersi Minoo Godiwala; May 14
Anahita Soli Doctor and Darayus Minocher Colabawala; May 15
Anaita Adi Irani of Poona and Zubin Bomi Mistry; May 21
Bakhtawar Rustom Anklesaria and Homi Rustomji Patel; May 21
Hufiz Dadiba Chhapgar and Dara Ruttonshaw Nariman; May 23
Hoofish Kersi Hozdar and Jehangir Rustom Bisney of Secunderabad; May 25
Goolcher Rustomji Vajifdar and Hoshang Noshir Bajan; May 26
Mahazarin Tehmuras Mevawala of Valsad and Hoshang Adar Dumasia; May 26
Zenobia Nadershaw Gazdar and Dinshaw Darabshaw Gollwalla; May 27
Mahvash Mashallah Fallah Tafti and Aspiandiar Kaikhushru Biok of Kansas, USA; June 5
Armaity Sam Irani and Yezdi Darasha Irani; June 6

Benaifer Feroze Guard and Pervez Maneksha Makhania; June 6
Ruby Minoo Amra and Yazdi Nariman Parekh; June 10
Ternaz Freddy Bagli and Danny Firoze Hansotia; June 13
Meher Tehmuras Bodhanwalla and Percy Furrokh Hataria; June 20
Syrine Burjore Mehta and Bomi Naval Khandhadia of Achhad, Thane; June 25
Zarin Ratanshah Gandevia of Navsari and Dinshaw Eruch Elavia; June 29

Died

Maneckbai Kekobad Mobedjina (92) residing at 681-A, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 31
Behramji Maneckji Wadia (76), 724, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 31
Gool Jehangir Anklesaria (89), 12-A, Mayflower, Carmichael Rd, 400026; June 1
Perin Jivaji Porter (80), Gulmohr, Pali Hill, Bandra, 400050; June 1
Khorshed Homi Engineer (84), Adenwalla Bldg, 626, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; June 2
Rustom Sheriar Irani (70), 4, Manik Bldg, 112, Lamington Rd, 400008; June 2
Rustom Sheriar Irani (74), Ideal Farm, Dahisar (W), 400068; June 3
Banoobai Jehangir Sidhwa (70), Kashinath Hse, 7th Lane, Khetwadi, 400004; June 3
Ketty Phiroze Commisariate (67), Noor Mhl, Sir Ratan Tata Rd, 400034; June 4
Rustom Merwan Irani (Tehmuras) (60), Happy Home Bldg, Panvel, 410206; June 4
Nadirshaw Navroji Jotwalla (76), Moose Manzil, N. Petit St, Grant Rd, 400007; June 4
Jer Dady Ghadialy (68), Edena, 91, M. Karve Rd, 400020; June 5
Khorshed Dinshaw Mistry (83), 10/8, Ratan Tata Bldg, Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; June 5
Tehmina Bomanshaw Mistry (85), Contractor Bldg, Kashinath Rd, Tardeo, 400034; June 5
Roshan Homi Dhalla (78), F/13, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; June 6
Arnawaz Khushroo Jivaasha (22), Flat 17, 62, Neelkanth

Apt, Worli, 400018; June 6
Alamai Gustadji Kudianiwalla (77), 11/17, Ratan Tata Clny, Tardeo Rd, 400034; June 6
Phirozshaw Sorabji Bhathena (79), 2, Habib Hse, Grant Rd, 400007; June 7
Khodadad Ardeshtir Irani (80), 22, Baimai Bldg, J. B. Wadia Rd, Parel, 400012; June 7
Savak Dinshaw Kotwal (85), B-9, Navajbai Contractor Baug Mori Rd, Mahim, 400016; June 7
Nariman Boman Tarapore (60), K-3, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; June 7
Shirinbai Jehangir Confectioner (96), B-6, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; June 8
Maneckshaw Fardoonji Desai (73), 'B,' Imperial Mhl, Khodadad Circle, Dadar, 400014; June 8
Rustom Bomanshaw Bhagat (67), 34/51, Manish Ngr, J. P. Rd, Andheri, 400058; June 10
Banoobai Bomanji Mistry (80), 8, Hendre Bldg, Sleater Rd, 400007; June 10
Meheremai Jamshedji Todiwalla (73), 3/1, A. F. Petit Block, Grant Rd, 400007; June 10
Rustom Perozshaw Bharucha (70), Meher Mans, Near Tardeo Bridge, 400008; June 12
Dady Hormusji Cooper (84), Guest End, Cuffe Parade, 400005; June 13
Dhunmai Pirojshaw Deboo (95), 18/A, Marazban Clny, Gilder Lane, 400008; June 13
Rusi Eruchshaw Engineer (57), Dubash Bldg, Kashinath Rd, Tardeo, 400034; June 13
Homai Ardeshtir Irani (65), 17, Markar Bldg, 5th Lane, Khetwadi, 400004; June 13
Gool Jamshedji Vajifdar (69), Room 1, Tower Bldg, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; June 13
Keki Jehangir Contractor (74), Toddywalla Bldg, Parel, 400012; June 14
Pesi Khershedji Cooper (72), Ava Cottage, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari, 400102; June 14
Khushroo Merwan Irani (63), Block 1, Petit Chawl, Balaram St, 400007; June 14

Perin Phiroze Kapadia (85), Wadia Bldg, 604, E. S. Gandhi Marg, 400002; June 14
Roshan Fredoon Madan (54), 17, Sagar Darshan, 81-83, B. Desai Rd, 400026; June 15
Nergish Framroze Mistry (61), Sethna Bldg, 689, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; June 16
Homi Edulji Noble (75), 151, Noble Bldg, Manubhai Desai Rd, 400004; June 17
Hoshang Burjor Panthaky (28), 2/12, Lalbaug Agiary Chawl, Lalbaug, 400012; June 17
Dhunmai Keki Ayem (80), Jer Mans, Girgaum Rd, 400002; June 18
Khorshed Naval Hansotia (75), J-1, Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; June 18
Perin Sorabji Karanjawalla (89), Shahani Villa, Gamadia Rd, Peddar Rd, 400026; June 18
Armaity Nusserwanji Khan (75), 65, Om Ark, Nepean Sea Rd, 400006; June 18
Piroja Pestonjee
Sodawaterwalla (86), Soona Bldg, Zoroastrian Blocks, Chikalwadi, 400007; June 18
Naju Jamshed Irani (58), 286/D, Irani Hse, Supari Baug Rd, Parel, 400012; June 19

Piroja Jehangirji Engineer (77), 11, Khareghat Clny, 32-B, Hughes Rd, 400007; June 20
Mini Adi Ichhaporia (56), Gai Bldg, 646, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; June 20
Tehmtan Khurshedji Byramji (56), Room 28, Petit Sanatorium, Cumballa Hill, 400036; June 21
Piroja Minocher Karma (88), B/16, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculia, 400027; June 21
Hormusji Ratanji Limboowalla (80), Generalna Est, Golanji Hill, Parel Tank Rd, 400012; June 21
Rusi Behramji Pajdiwalla (50), Contractor Bldg, Victoria Garden Rd, Byculia, 400027; June 21
Feroze Shavaksha Panthaki (84), Preyas, 20, Dadyseth Rd, 400007; June 21
Manek Rustomji Daruwala (70), 22, Bakhtawar, N. Dabholkar Rd, 400006; June 23
Homai Ardeshir Mukati (73), 7, Wadia Bldg, 585, Lady Jehangir Rd, Matunga, 400019; June 23
Banoobai Pirozsha Amroliwala (82), 3/24, Vaibhav, Barkatali Darga Marg, Wadala (E),

400037; June 24
Dossoo Kavajji Sanga (75), Diamond Court, 40, Nepean Sea Rd, 400036; June 24
Alamai Hormusji Balsara (72), E-11/2, Tata Hsg Soc, Lallubhai Park Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; June 25
Alamai Rustomji Mehta (80), Room 544, Radha Bldg, Pavwalla St, 400004; June 25
Firoze Navroji Mistry (63), Room 7, Bhedwar Bldg, Khan Est, Chhotani Rd, Mahim, 400016; June 25
Khusrav Neville Chaina (5 days), 22-A, Maria Hill, Gunpowder Rd, Mazagaon, 400010; June 26
Bhikoo Noshir Vania (75), B/2, Godrej Baug, Off Nepean Sea Rd, 400006; June 26
Dosa Jehangir Choksy (86), B-1, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; June 27
Daulatbanoo Adarbad Irani (65), Q-14, Shapurji Bharucha Baug, Andheri (W), 400058; June 27
Manek Hormusji Langrana (89), 11, Clover Apt, 29, Cuffe Parade, 400005; June 27
Ratty Ratanshaw Chinoy (80), Dastur Block, Naigam Cross Rd, Dadar, 400014; June 28

Kaikushru (Keki) Maneksha Daruwalla (74), 51, Sainara, Cuffe Parade, 400005; June 28
Minocher Hormusji Kanga (82), C/o Ms T. Ghadiali, 'C,' Empire Mhl, Khodadad Circle, Dadar, 400014; June 28

CALCUTTA Born

A boy to *Khushnum* and *Vistasp Mehta*; June 4

HAMILTON, ONTARIO Born

A girl, *Ava*, to *Arooz* and *Adi Irani*; March 2

HOUSTON Died

Khorshed Shroff, mother of *Rohinton*; March 8

KANGRA, HIMACHAL PRADESH

Died

Tehmi Uppal, wife of *Balbir*; May 10

LAHORE Born

A boy, *Shahvir*, to *Yasmin* and *Neville Patel*; April 16

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

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The former president of the Surat Parsi Punchayet had followed a humanitarian approach in the management of community funds and properties

He slipped away quietly, as was his style, on March 3, 1989. Surgery for a brain tumor had been followed by two and a half months of coma. There would be no more quips or tongue-in-cheek comments. Maneck J. R. Gheyara, 76, who virtually embodied the Surat Parsi Punchayet (SPP) for 25 years, was no more.

The cumulative impact of Gheyara's work became known as organization after organization held condolence meetings - 37 at one count - extolling his services to humanity at large, eulogizing his concern, care, philanthropy, devotion... The Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India bid adieu to the last of its founding vice presidents with a two-minute silence at its executive council meeting in April. The Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) summoned a samast anjuman meeting to mourn the death, the first in 37 years for one who did not belong to the city. The last individual the BPP had so honored had been Jamshed Mehta of Karachi in 1952. The Sarvajanic Education Society's schools in Surat remained closed in respect to his memory, and their examinations rescheduled.

The BPP resolution speaks of a lifetime of work dedicated to various social and educational institutions of Surat - as Congress representative on the municipal corporation and chairman of its waterworks department, as head of the Sarvajanic Education Society, as trustee of several fire-temple including managing trustee of the Vakil Atash Bahram. The resolution attested to his concern for the rural Parsis of Gujarat, prey to flood and famine, whose cause he espoused so that again and again well-off Bombayites contributed to their welfare. The Siganpur Anjuman's resolution described Gheyara's disdain for personal rest or comfort when the needy sought his help.

Each generation produces only one or two men like Gheyara, said Federation president and BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla. BPP trustee Eruch



The cautious liberal

Arnavaz S. Mama

Desai spoke of the ex-SPP president's philosophy, love for community and humanity at large: "He had all the time in the world to be a social worker. And what a social worker he turned out to be!"

BPP trustee Jamshed Guzder noted that one aspect of trusteeship Gheyara had taught him was to make life worth living for the less fortunate by inculcating a sense of security, giving a sense of comfort and goodwill. "He will remain an example and an inspiration," said Guzder.

Referring to Gheyara as one who had "many gifts by birth, position and wealth," SPP trustee Dr Minocher Contractor said, "To do so much for the community and sister communities was not much. But (there are) others, better placed, who've done nothing ... No one was as *tofani* (mischievous) as Maneck, (but) he worked like an ordinary soldier (who) believed in *ushta te* - happiness unto others." Rohinton Davierwalla, president of the Sanjan Stambh Committee, could not recall a single time when Gheyara had not attended the annual Sanjan Day function. When the Committee had felicitated Gheyara on his retirement from the SPP, he had advised them "not to be sentimentally attached to property but to ... dispose of the surplus and use it to best effect."

He resisted all attempts by the SPP to honor him on retirement, said Dr Sam Bhacca who succeeded Gheyara as president of the SPP. Bhacca, who grew up under Gheyara and was his constant companion in community affairs, at masonic lodges, etc., described him as "soft-hearted, lively and friendly," and, at an earlier interview with *Parsiana*, as "very sensitive - one who was easily hurt." Bhacca had also recounted how Gheyara kept a suit of nassessalar garments ready to use in an emergency.

Davar Kavasji Modi, chairing the condolence meet of the Parsi Samast Anjuman of Surat city and district, spoke of Gheyara's work for the Mahavir General Hospital, the School for the Blind and

the Remand Home in Surat.

"Twenty-five years of connection with the SPP and my heart overflows with thanks," Gheyara had reflected on his retirement as president in 1986. "What had worried me was that my predecessors had been men of experience and foresight. It was difficult to justify myself...I did all I could...consider myself lucky."

Duty and responsibility lay heavy on Gheyara and he never overlooked the cooperation of colleagues and subordinates which others tend to take for granted: "If I attained any success, I must thank my colleagues. For two and a half decades I received their love, cooperation, sympathy... It does not mean that there were no differences between us, but that when there were differences, we looked at the other point of view and tried to reconcile opposing viewpoints...in the interests of the community. I had good administrators. Trustees may take decisions, but the job of putting them into practice is that of the administrators and employees. Dr Ratan Marshall and Soli Katpitia (in turn chief executives of the SPP) have a big share in the SPP's administrative success..."

He would come early to the Panchayet office and go late, recalled Marshall and people would swarm in after him. Sometimes, Marshall said, he had protested that there was no time to clean the office before Gheyara arrived. "He would bring his cotrustees with him and take them home on the return. Letters were replied immediately. As chairman of the waterworks department of Surat he would go to examine the waterworks every day at his own expense," informed Marshall, adding, "His own car was used even for Panchayet work (and he) never permitted the Panchayet to pay for the petrol. Whenever the hearse was not available, his van would go to fetch the body and he even volunteered his services as driver... Every Sunday he visited the people at the Nariman Home. Every New Year he would distribute cash to them. This March 21 he was missed by the inmates, even though the cash was distributed." Marshall recounted that one non-Parsi had written to the Panchayet to say that during Gheyara's illness he had beseeched God to bestow his own remaining life span on Gheyara. "Despite all that, he received the usual mixed response from the community," said Marshall, making an oblique refer-

ence to Gheyara's critics in Surat.

"He shunned publicity for himself and for the good work that he and organizations connected with him did. The consequent communication gap often led to misunderstandings and allegations based on misinformation or lack of information," explained the *Fed Newsletter*.

Speaking of Maneck Gheyara's "religion of service," The *Bombay Samachar* editor Jehan Daruwalla noted at the condolence meet how Gheyara "gave a new dimension...to trusteeship, (considered) the trustee as the first servant of the community... At great difficulty and personal cost he set things right for Parsi institutions... strained every nerve. He was dedicated to service to the point of craziness."

Daruwalla and Desai alike attested to Gheyara's loyalty to the BPP as the premier Parsi institution. "He could never cut the umbilical cord," noted Daruwalla referring to the SPP's withdrawal from the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India in the wake of the BPP. Gheyara, a founder member of the Federation, did not agree with the BPP's stand but felt incumbent to accept its lead. Hence, when the BPP rejoined the Federation in 1981, the SPP followed.

A Congress leader in his student

"If anyone at the Nariman Home died, he was often the only person at the geh sarna, 'Because they are all alone and they expect me'"

days, Gheyara was never shy of facing the police when they came to arrest him, though he never was arrested because of the family's connections, recalls his sister Ala Bilimoria. His courage, leadership and humanitarianism were evident at the time of the Partition of India when he took the commissioner of Godra, a personal friend, to witness the arson on the border. With Gheyara, humanity and the country ranked above the community, says Bilimoria. Despite his

personal wealth, he "did not want to go abroad because of the (selfish) expense it would entail," she adds, recalling how Maneck "never used the pronoun 'I' in anything he did and stopped me from using it too."

Bilimoria remembers her brother's fondness for Indian classical music: "His radio was never switched off." A harmonica buff in his younger days, Gheyara was wont to refer to himself as "Ustad Mako," laughs Bilimoria with nostalgia.

A special plaque in Surat's Gandhi Gardens recalls his service as chief secretary of the flood relief committee that battled the floods in 1959 (and again in 1968). "During the Indo-Pak wars, he would visit soldiers on the trains bound for the front with food and gifts. He had a chance to join the Gujarat state government, but he preferred to concentrate on the community," says Bilimoria.

Gheyara was saddened by the new tendency to work under labor laws. He was particularly hurt when the *ayahs* (maids) of the Nariman Home sued the SPP for higher benefits. Though by and large "SPP employees continue to work in cooperation with trustees, how many such people will we find in future? Young people with affection and a sense of responsibility are not available for such work either in Surat or elsewhere," Gheyara had bemoaned.

His niece, Mahazaver Dalal, notes how the managers of the infirmary, the hospital, the girls' and boys' orphanages and doongerwadi had to report to him every night between 10 and 11 o'clock. "If anyone at the Nariman Home died, he always paid his respects 'Because they are all alone and they expect me.' Often he would be the only person at the geh sarna," says Dalal.

Gheyara believed that wealth and position could only be justified if they were used to help the underprivileged. But current socialistic legislation, with its labor laws, minimum wages, statutory bonus, etc has fettered the free flow of charitable services. These contradictory pulls created inner conflicts in the man, resulting in hesitation and fear of criticism. They were also evident in Gheyara's steadfast opposition to the concept of elected trustees (SPP trustees are appointed for life. When a vacancy arises on the board of trustees, the board nominates one, whom it considers of suitable temperament, from among the community to fill the seat). The proposition to publish a Panchayet

newsletter was similarly rejected. Thus, despite his liberal views, he emerged as "an advocate (for) slowing down the pace and degree of change," as notes the *Fed Newsletter*.

"In the name of religion there is maximum trouble. It is exploited by trouble-makers... Social work and religion are two different units. One should not (hamper) the other," he had maintained.

He was proud of Surat's community kitchen (the SPP reportedly uses its funds to feed nearly 400 Parsis per

Despite his liberal views, he emerged as an advocate for slowing down the pace and degree of change

day). He also believed that "Parsis cannot stay alone but must live with other communities. Hence, when the first deep X ray machine for cancer (detection) was installed in the Parsi General Hospital, in Surat, the facility was opened to all communities," he had told *Parsiana* in 1986. The sale of excess dokhma land has provided the income that pays for free funeral services for the community.

These developments have been sometimes viewed negatively and the motives of SPP trustees questioned. "I am content that thus far no aspersions have been cast about anyone here taking money," Gheyara had said, adding that the SPP functions on the "theory that whoever sanctions does not spend and the one who spends, does not sanction... Anybody can go through the books of the SPP via a chartered accountant..."

"People living outside Surat have bequeathed their estates to the Surat Parsi Panchayet. It shows that they have confidence in us and we have tried to live up to their trust," Gheyara had noted with satisfaction.

Gheyara, a bachelor, is survived by his sisters Ala Bilimoria, Dossa Limbawala and Banoo Colah.

FOCUSSING ON THE... continued from page 25

towards the cost of managing the anjuman's affairs, may soon bear fruit. The Canara Bank, is reportedly interested in the premises. The Allahabad Anjuman's Bazm Fund, which lies in the care of the BPP and which the Anjuman now wishes to recall, is not being released because of "ego problems" among those at the helm of Allahabad affairs. The progress of the Anjuman has hence been hindered.

"It is always dangerous to keep our lands vacant for many years," was Taleyarkhan's general advice to the anjuman representatives. "Someone or the other always has an eye on the land. As soon as possible, action should be planned. Grow trees if nothing better." Dara Deboo of Navsari informed that in keeping with his project, "already 40,000 babul saplings have been planted on 30 acres of land... Subabul can't be used at agiaries so desi babul is the best wood... We'll gradually increase the number of trees under plantation every year."

The questions and suggestions this remark generated prompted Sethna to state, "All day yesterday and the half of today we are hearing of someone not doing anything. Today we are hearing of someone doing something. Let him do it. Let others take a lesson from his example."

The successful compilation of the directory of Parsis in Ahmedabad made Sethna suggest to Gandhi that the mailing list of the *Fed Newsletter* be extended by posting copies to all families in Ahmedabad. But according to Pavri, more than the English version, the Gujarati version would be better appreciated in Ahmedabad.

Of the Rs 20,000 expenditure incurred by the Federation in the intervening months, nearly Rs 19,000 went into the printing of the *Fed Newsletter*. Sponsorship support - at the rate of Rs 800 - for the Gujarati *Newsletter's* 500 copies distributed each month, came from Bombay (six), and Thana, Guzder, Baman Cama of Baroda, Ahmedabad, Surat and Secunderabad (one each). The sponsorship of the English *Newsletter* costs Rs 3,000 and promises for

finance came from Guzder (two), DPA (one), BPP (three), SPP (one), Firdose Cambatta (one or two), Dinshaw Anklesaria of Poona (one), Desai (one), Pavri (one) and Jamsheed Kanga (one).

Then followed the usual questions on the effectiveness of the *Fed Newsletter*, its readership, its distribution network, its possible inclusion in *Parsiana*. Jamsheed Kanga was worried that with an "overdose of community newsletters, the good ones may not be read." It was the statement of Hosang Debara from Agra that showed promise: "After receiving copies we discuss... see the success of the Federation projects and how they can be made applicable to us."

Those present at the Federation meeting were: Hosang Debara from Agra; Keki Pavri, Navroze Kanga, Porus Karanjawalla, Behram Daruwalla and Darius Ginwalla from Ahmedabad; Capt Homi Dandiwalla from Allahabad; Baman Cama from Baroda; G. J. Dalal from Belgaum; Ruhnam Fouzdar from Bhopal; Dr Aspi Golwalla, Eruch Desai, Jamsheed Kanga, Jamsheed Guzder, Minoo Shroff, Rustom Anklesaria, Ms Gool Tata and Ms Sheroo Master from Bombay; Ms Khursheed Ardesheer from Calcutta; Zarhost Mobarakai, Puran Irani and Zarin Bahamuni from Dahanu; Dosabhai Oliaji from Daman; Lt Gen Adi Sethna, Keki Gandhi, Dadi Mistry, Rusi Engineer and Homi Taleyarkhan from Delhi; Aspi Irani and Pervez Irani from Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman; Zubin Chichgar from Jamshedpur; Ronny Dick from Jhansi; Pheeroze Karanjia from Karanj; Dr Sarosh Wadia from Kutch; Ms Meheroo Watchmaker and Ms Shiraz Doongaji from Nagpur and Kamptee; Dara Deboo from Navsari; Rustom Daroga, co-opted member, north zone; Kershasp Irani, Eruch Irani, Dinshaw Anklesaria and Brig Noshir Grant from Poona; Homi Palsetia, Nariman Bulsara and Meher Palsetia from Saronda; Dr Noshir Marker from Secunderabad; Dr Sam Bhacca and Dr Minocher Contractor from Surat; Rustom Cursetji, Pervez Bhesania and Zereeh Jehangirji from Thana; Jehangir Doongaji from Ujjain; Ruzbeh Patell from Vesu; and Peshotan Nargolwala, co-opted member, west zone. The Press was represented by *The Bombay Samachar* and *Parsiana*.

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