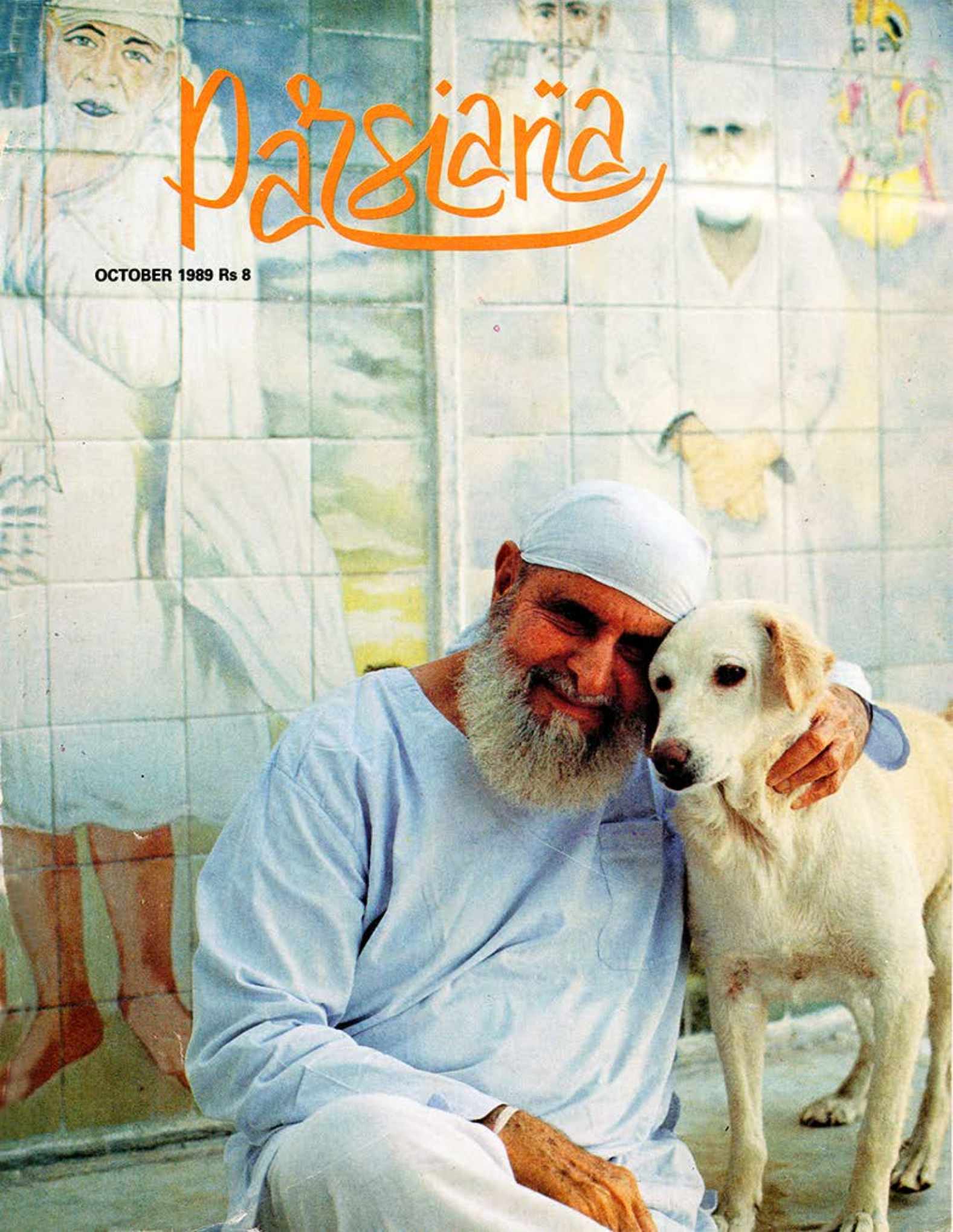


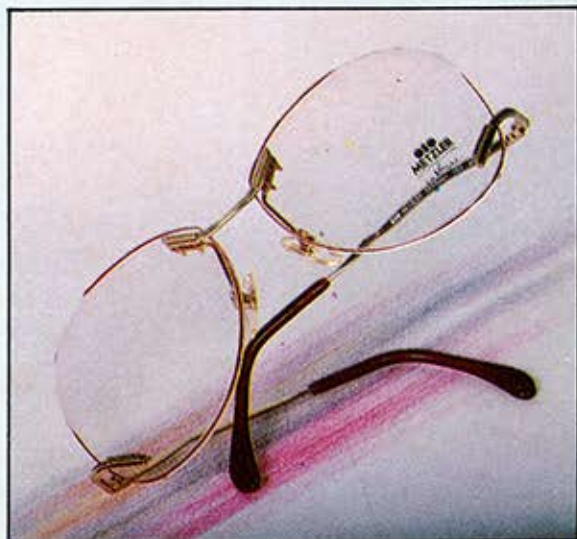
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Parsiana

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 Unsigned letters or those without a complete address will not be published.

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A North American Zoroastrian center requires a large *afarganiun* and the other accessories that go with it. If any agiary or institution has one to spare, please contact me at 3311, Nadine Crescent, Mississauga, Ontario L5A 3L4, Canada.

KOBAD ZAROLIA
Ontario, Canada

"Navjote by choice..."

I am surprised at the carping criticism levelled by Homi Rogers ("Navjote by choice, not chance," *Parsiana*, May 1989) against the illustrated children's books published by the Delhi Parsi Anjuman. Not having taught navjote-age children, Mr Rogers has little idea of the function and purpose of readers and activity books. Be that as it may, I am happy to say that 4,000 copies of Activity Book II, *The Navjote and Me*, with its reader, *The Navjote*, have almost sold out within the year of publication, having been bought by Zoroastrian associations at home and abroad. Mr

Rogers "wistfully" recalls my *Farvarane*, first published in 1958. It is still popular; the fifth edition came out in 1987, processed entirely by members of the Delhi Parsi youth and published free of charge by The Bombay Samachar Press.

As for the meaning of the word "fravarane," with due respect to Dr Jafarey, the word does not mean, I choose. Fravarane means I declare, I proclaim, I affirm, I confess. The word for choice is "varyo" as in our *Ahuna Vairya* prayer. It is sad that very few Parsis study and know the ancient languages in which our prayers are written. Anyone can, therefore, fool us. Would it not be wiser if, in future, Mr Rogers first consults a learned priest before he rushes into print?

Ms PILOO N. JUNGALWALLA
New Delhi

Homi Rogers replies

Ms Piloo Jungalwalla's surprise at my 'carping criticism' is, as can be seen from her letter, unsubstantiated. Nowhere does she point out the fallacies in my review, or reply to the errors as indicated by me in her work. I hence fail to understand where I have 'carped.'

Regarding 'fravarane,' I grant, and so too, I'm sure, will Dr Jafarey, that the word literally means "declare" or "profess." Zoroastrianism is not a dogmatic faith, and hence the declaration indicates the decision that has been made. Ms Jungalwalla herself writes in the book under review: "Lord Zarathushtra said: 'Let the people choose to serve Ahura Mazda and put on the sudreh and kusti for the first time at the Navjote.'"

As for the books having sold very well, let us not make commercial success the yardstick for judgement. A recent book published by Penguin India has sold its first run, and is going for a reprint, yet its author candidly confesses that she writes 'readable trash.' While Jungalwalla's work is definitely not 'trash,' its phenomenal sales are primarily because of the paucity of similar literature.

"Udwada Trust"

Apropos "Udwada Trust" (Events and Personalities, *Parsiana*, July 1989) it is wrongly asserted that we should have just one trust for all the mobeds. It is like saying that we should have just one wonder drug for all sorts of ailments!

Udwada is the community's last citadel. The *barëshnum* preserved there is our heritage. We must work together to improve the life-style of this village in gen-

eral and of the mobeds in particular.

The Zoroastrian Religious Trust for Udwada Mobeds is a communal trust and hence unable to get exemption under section 80-G which is a serious impediment in collecting funds. For the sake of our community's psyche, our target of one crore rupees is indeed a negligible amount. I expect my community to donate generously towards a cause which will enable us to face the coming century and its complications with confidence.

Mobed PAURUSASP D. MAGOL
Karachi, Pakistan

Parsi landing in Sanjan

As per Mr Homi P. Ranina's letter ("Sanjan Dar-e-Meher," *Parsiana*, July 1989) we landed in Sanjan 1,354 years ago. This is not correct. We landed in Sanjan 1,273 years ago. To be exact our illustrious Pilgrim Fathers touched the soil of Sanjan on August 25, 716.

RUSTOM P. MIRZA

"Parsi surnames"

Mr R. H. Kuka asks how Parsis acquired English surnames ("Parsi surnames," *Parsiana*, July 1989). An interesting book in Gujarati by S. M. Desai entitled *Parsi Vishayas* (subjects) deals in part with Parsi surnames. Desai says most Parsis acquired English surnames because they were working with either a European firm or an individual.

As example, and I quote, "Seth Pestonji Beramji was serving in the firm of Messrs Baxter Ferar (another version that he was a partner) and he got the surname Baxter." According to the book, Parsi surnames were more to identify a particular person than a family appendage. Thus they were easily acquired for all sorts of reasons and as easily changed. Hence there was a plethora of surnames. Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy's ancestors were surnamed Vatchha but because Jamsetji started life selling bottles, he was known as Batliwala. As Jamshedji became famous, the Batliwala appendage was dropped and Jejeebhoy was used.

The author gives instances of families where three sons (brothers) bore three different surnames. One well-known instance is that of a behdin of Surat, Sorabji Cawasji. He had learnt watch-repairing from an European. Some watches presented to one of the Mughal emperors by an European stopped functioning and nobody could repair them. However, the Surat Parsi's fame had spread to Delhi and he was specially summoned by the em-

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Worshipping Ganesh

The Hindu festival, Ganesh Chaturthi, is celebrated by a Parsi family in Goregaon each year. Ms Parveen Davar, who has been bringing home an idol of Ganpati along with the one installed by her co-operative housing society, says, "I have great faith in Lord Ganesha. Four years back when my family was in great trouble a Hindu acquaintance of ours advised me to bring in the idol of Lord Ganesha for five years consecutively." Since then every year, religiously, the ceremony is being performed by the Davars.

Asked whether she would continue with the practice after five years or stop the ritual completely, Ms Davar said that she was thinking about bringing in the Ganpati for another three years. "My doctors have warned me about my delivery not being safe; but if, God willing, my delivery is a success, then I will definitely keep my vow to bring in the idol for the next three

years."

Her husband Parvez Davar, who works for a private firm, was once a staunch believer in the Zoroastrian religion and never believed in any other religion or God. Says Parvez, "When this proposal was put forward, I was against the idea of having a Ganpati at home. For days on end I had this argument with my wife. But ultimately she did have her last say in the matter and got the idol home."

For the first few days Parvez refrained from taking part in the ceremony, but slowly he realized that it was foolish on his part to be so one-tracked. Now he philosophically analyses his mistake, "Religions are many but God is one. It doesn't really matter as to whom you worship, be it Lord Zoroaster or Ganpati or Mother Mary. What really matters is how you worship." For him what is important is, "To have faith."

Ms NILOUFER S. IRANI



peror. He repaired the watches and the pleased emperor bestowed on him the honorific Neksatkhan (master of the auspicious hour). His two sons, who were also proficient in watch repair, were given the titles Taleyarkhan (master of good for-

tune) and Behremandkhan (master of good blessings). While the two other surnames are not heard of, Taleyarkhan is a very well-known surname.

In my own case, we were originally Antias from Navsari. My father's grandfa-

ther settled in Kalyan where he owned property and had a big garden. The flowers, specially roses, from there were daily brought to Crawford Market for selling. Hence we came to be called Bagwala.

Edited by Arnavaz S. Mama

H. F. BAGWALA

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Events and Personalities

Navroze with the PM

On the morning of the Shahenshahi New Year heavy rain and the Prime Minister's security staff flooded the Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) complex. The security personnel, not having attended the four-day awareness course in March, dutifully wanted to enter into and search the Dar-e-Mehr (for bombs), but DPA vice president Zal Nowsherwanji stood firm and his tactful persuasion carried the day.

That evening the traffic police also had a tough time clearing the Bahadurshah Zafar Marg for Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's passage — because they could neither book the violator nor convince him. The next day's *Patriot* carried a photograph of the violator and the traffic police locked in a head-to-head combat for the right of possession of the road. The violator, a powerful bull, had his head against the front bumper of the police jeep and was trying valiantly but in vain to push it off the road!

The Bhiwandiwalla Hall in the DPA complex was packed with Parsis — many sitting on the window sills or lining the walls. In the process the few seats in the second row meant for the Press were found to be occupied by distinguished Delhi Zoroastrians who did vacate them but felt humiliated by the tone and content of the announcement over the microphone.

Several suggestions were made about the methods for avoiding or resolving such situations. They ranged from polite whispers in the ear to placing the reserved chairs in position only at the last minute. The one about the trustees and their families releasing their own front row seats was stoutly opposed by their friends. The ones which we liked most and would commend to the organizers were to announce cancellation of the program. Or better still, a bomb scare which would achieve the desired result at a much faster pace. The announcer in that event would, at the most, be dubbed an irresponsible prankster, which is far better than most of the other adjectives

we happened to overhear.

With *tili, aachhu michhu and miththoo mohnoo*, the Prime Minister and Ms Sonia Gandhi were ceremoniously ushered in by Ms Dhun Bagli, manageress of the Mengusi Dharamshala. The speakers for the evening indulged in the oft repeated refrain about our 'greats' — past and present and a subtle hint given by the PM seemed to escape attention of all and went unreported. He said that our small community was able to make a tremendous contribution to the country's development because in the past we had been looking outwards, but of late we had started looking inwards and if we could once again switch over to looking outwards, our contribution to the development of the country could be proportionately far greater in the future than in the past and the present.

The Prime Minister agreed to meet and encourage the children by giving away the merit scholarships. (One youngster seized the opportunity to further his concept of India's economic requirements with the Prime Minister who graciously invited him to send his ideas in writing to the Prime Minister's office, as DPA president Lt Gen Adi Sethna informed the executive council of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India in Madras last September.)

Everyone met the PM and Sonia Gandhi

face to face, chatted with them, got photographed with them, aired views, comments, suggestions and, in a case or two, even their grievances.

The snacks and the dinner served by Bagli were excellent. She had been literally run off her feet catering for the large crowd in the face of daylong pressures upon her time and energy due to the thorough inspection of the Anjuman complex by the security personnel. Her overburdened shoulders also carried the load of a substantial portion of the organizational aspects of the evening function.

DPA trustee Dadi Mistry put the Prime Minister on the spot by seeking his agreement to be with the community every year. Though he was not able to extract a firm commitment, he certainly got out of the Prime Minister a more positive response than the usual "*sochenge, dekhenge* (We shall see)!" What one cannot understand is why Mistry did not think of requesting the PM to turn up in a *dugli* and *pugree* or at least putting them on him at the function and taking photographs.

The late Prime Minister Ms Indira Gandhi had established an emotional bond with the community when she put her hand on her heart during her Jamshed-i-Navroze speech and referred to Parsis as "my community!" The present Prime Minister, a born Parsi, did not say so, nor did



DPA members Nergish and Noshir Captain with Rajiv Gandhi



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anyone put it across to him that he was one.

Edited and abridged from Fed Newsletter, September 1989.

Jokhi's donation to PGH

Hong Kong-based philanthropist Shapoorji Fakirji Jokhi has proved that the era of the great Parsi benefactors is still very much with us. A promised donation of Rs 1.5 crores to Bombay's B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital made welcome news when published by the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of August 8, 1989. It is anticipated that the money will be partly used towards the costs of new construction [planned to re-house the operation theaters, the ICU (intensive care unit) and other infrastructural departments] and partly towards the costs of new medical equipment. A portion of the giant donation may also serve to create a corpus towards maintenance of one of the community's most popular institutions.

Publicity shy Jokhi had earlier gifted two crore rupees to the community in the shape of Avan Baug, the colony in Navsari that has housed 496 Zoroastrian families, notes *Jamé*.

According to the *Jamé* report, Jokhi is deeply devoted to the town of Navsari and had wanted to donate for further residential accommodation there in the name of his wife Manijeh. However, no one was willing to accept the responsibility to see the project through.

Navsari's loss may prove to be more beneficial to the community as the demands on the Parsee General Hospital are always greater than what the institution can meet. Jokhi has provided a necessary shot in the arm.

The alloy connection

Sorabji Hormusji Commissariat is the second Indian to be appointed on the world body of foundrymen, notes *The Bombay Samachar* of July 23, 1989. It is after a gap of 22 years that a seat on the executive committee of the Comité International Des Associations Techniques De Fonderie (The International Committee of Foundry Technical Associations) was occupied by the Institute of Indian Foundrymen (IIF). The decision to include Commissariat on the five-member executive committee was taken at the Association's annual general meeting in Dusseldorf in May this year. Thirty-one different countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Oceania are affiliated to the world body, reads the paper.

Currently chairman and managing director of Premier Economisers Private



Limited and Mercury Iron and Steel Company Private Limited, 68-year-old Commissariat is also chairman of the IIF Standardization Committee.

At the International Foundry Congress in '87, he chaired the Technical Sessions Committee. The one-time chairman of the IIF's Ferrous Technical Committee, Commissariat had also headed Indian delegations to international foundry conferences, notes his bio data. A number of technical papers on foundry related topics, authored by him, have been published in newspapers.

The widely travelled technocrat is associated with several government bodies including the Maharashtra Smoke Nuisances Commission and was awarded a bronze shield by the National Research Development Corporation of India for his contribution to import substitution. In addition, on community organizations and trusts like the Bai Motlibai Wadia Udawa Atash Bahram Trust, the N. M. Wadia Charities and the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital Commissariat serves as a trustee or committee member, further adds the bio data.

India's aviation pioneer

With the presentation of the Daniel Guggenheim Medal to J.R.D. Tata, the industrialist will now be officially included in the select list of all-time aviation pioneers, notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of August 6, 1989. Tata, who is credited with starting the aviation industry in India, founded the country's first national carrier, Tata Airlines (later renamed Air India), in 1932.

The award presentation took place on the first day of the three-day Aircraft Design and Operations Conference and Applied Aerodynamics Conference, under the auspices of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA). The medal and scroll were presented to him by John Enders, president of the Flight Safety Foundation and chairman of the board of award of the 1988 Daniel Guggenheim



Commissariat (left): on the world body of foundrymen

Contractor with puppet Rudabeh in Rustom Sohrab

Medal, at a function held at the Pacific Museum of Flight in Seattle, Washington, on July 31, 1989. Over 500 prominent men from the international aviation community witnessed the evening's ceremonies against the backdrop of vintage planes like the Puss Moth and Tiger Moth amongst other things, the paper further adds.

Tata, who in the past has received other international awards in aviation, is recognized for his pioneering work in developing commercial air travel throughout India and Asia. For nearly 50 years he directed Indian commercial airline operations. Reportedly India's first licensed pilot, the octogenarian is sometimes referred to as the country's Charles Lindbergh (Lindbergh flew a solo flight across the Atlantic in May 1927), the paper notes.

Puppeteering in Tehran

Noted puppeteer Ms Meher Contractor was invited with her troupe to perform the shadow play *Rustom Sohrab* at the first International Puppet Theatre Festival in Tehran from July 21 to August 4, 1989, notes a press release. Director of the puppetry section of the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts, Contractor led her group of nine members which included another Parsi, Dr (Ms) Perizade Maloawala.

Over the years, Contractor has participated in several international puppet festivals, and has also trained many students who too have achieved distinction in puppetry.

Deeply involved with the Union Internationale de la Marionnette (UNIMA), she chaired the UNIMA Asia Pacific Commission in 1988, notes the July issue of *Fed Newsletter*, the newsletter of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI).

Reportedly the first lady to receive the

*Master (left): concern for the child
Jehangir: keen to study computers*

Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for puppetry from the Government of India, the Ahmedabad-based septuagenarian's name has been recommended for the 1988 excellence award instituted by the FPZAI, adds the newsletter.

New lease of life

For the year ended March 31, 1989, Vitta Mazda's provisional statement of accounts showed a further increase in income of Rs 42.83 lakhs as compared to Rs 213.43 lakhs of the previous financial year, notes a press release signed by Yezdi Master, managing director of the company. The cash profits indicated an increase of Rs 9.23 lakhs over the last year's figure of Rs 123.71 lakhs.

Like all leasing companies in India, which had previously enjoyed tax shelter for five to seven years, Vitta Mazda too will now have to pay tax on its past and current book profits.

A subsidiary of the Mazda Group of Companies, Vitta Mazda has, beginning this year, started offering consultancy services to some companies in Gujarat and one in Maharashtra. They have also helped these companies set up leasing divisions, the release notes. With a view to augment the company's resource position, negotiations for fresh bank limits up to three crore rupees are nearing finalization.

The publication division of Vitta Mazda had, last year, incurred a loss of Rs 7.83 lakhs. However, this year they showed a provisional profit of two lakh rupees despite facing odds like non-availability of



newsprint, the release further notes.

'Master' in psychiatry

In recognition of her pioneering work in the field of child psychiatry and rehabilitation of the mentally retarded for over three decades, Dr (Ms) Roshen Master was invited by the Andhra Pradesh chapter of the Indian Psychiatric Society to present a paper at their annual conference in Hyderabad on August 20, 1989, notes a press release. Poona-based Master spoke on "Child psychiatry — the emerging sub-specialty of the twenty-first century in India."

Child development and social psychiatry have been Master's chief concern. She has also played a key role in the founding of the Kamayani School for the Mentally Handicapped which is reportedly in its silver jubilee year.

Despite her professional commitments, Master also devotes time to social work. She is a recipient of the N. K. Diwan Award from the National Association for Equal Opportunities for the Handicapped (India). The Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India honored the psychiatrist last year with a Special Mention Award in the social and community service category.

Jokhi on Judo Committee

Navsari's Phiroz D. Jokhi will be one of the five members serving on the Judo Technical Committee, newly constituted by the Gujarat State Judo Association, notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of October 8, 1989. Joint secretary of the State Judo Association, Jokhi is also member of the Gujarat State Sports Council, the *Jame* further reads.

Recently, at the National Sports Talent Contest in Gandhinagar in October last, Jokhi was due to attend in his capacity as wrestling official. Physical instructor of the Tata Boys' High School in Navsari, Jokhi is credited with having coached many outstanding sportsmen and women of Gujarat.

Top science scorer

In the science subjects it was Kaizad Rumi Jehangir of Bombay who topped the list of ICSE (Indian Certificate of Secondary Education) students with his score of 96 percent, notes a press release. At the examinations held in March, 16-year-old Jehangir also fared well in other subjects like history, geography (92 percent) and accounts (95 percent), achieving an overall percentage of 86.

Son of the eminent Bombay ophthalmologist Dr Rumi Jehangir and Ms Parvin Jehangir, Kaizad is currently studying in the eleventh standard at Bombay's K. C. College. He says he is interested in pursuing a career in the computer science field and would like to do his bachelors in the USA after he completes his twelfth standard next year. If he fails to get admission to a scholarship program in a reputable American university, Jehangir's alternate plan is to study engineering in India.

During his school days at Campion, Jehangir had represented his school at science exhibitions and general knowledge competitions. In sports and games like football, swimming and tennis he has participated in inter-school events. He was also an active participant of the Junior Red Cross and attended several social awareness camps held by his school, states his bio data. From 1985 to '87 he was a member of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) Naval Wing and held the post of leading cadet. In his free time Jehangir

Kirtankar Pervez Katrak (far right) celebrated New Year with the inmates of the F. S. Parukh Dharamshala in Bombay regaling them with songs and talks of his adventures abroad

continued on page 18

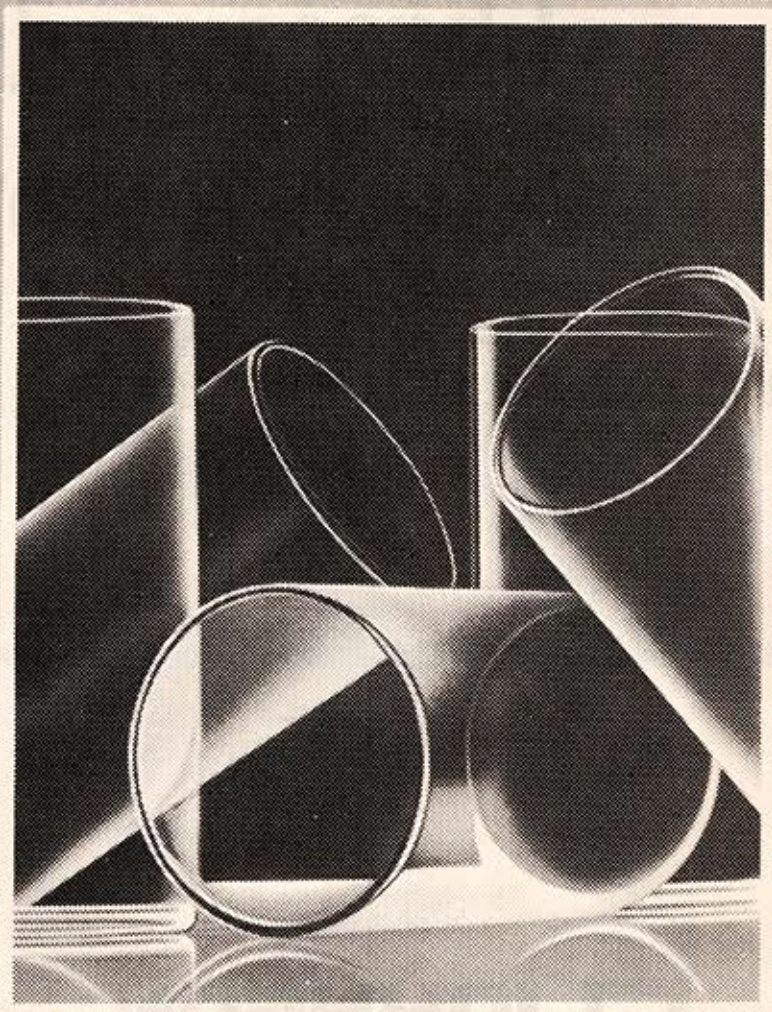


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"We've got to be competitive to survive in New York"

Arnavaz S. Mama

**A personal review
of Zoroastrian
problems
and achievements
in North America
by ZAGNY president
Erach Munshi**

"One reason why Parsis and Iranis are not getting together is because there is no space (at the Darbe Mehr where they can meet)," says Erach Munshi, professor of business administration and management, and the current president of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) who is spearheading the drive to build a new Zoroastrian center in New York. "There are no facilities for teenagers. It is very difficult to organize a dance even on Pateti," elaborates Munshi, a longstanding community activist, who was on a visit to Bombay and Surat in July 1989.

Agreeing to a departure eve interview with *Parsiana* in his individual capacity and not as ZAGNY's officebearer, Munshi spoke about the plans for the \$1.3 million New Zoroastrian Temple and Cultural Center (NZTCC) with which the Association hopes to replace the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr (ARGDM) in New

Rochelle, where it is currently housed.

The community in New York is going through a critical period, remarks Munshi. He cites Dr Farokh Tarapore, Jamshed and Yasmin Ghadiali, Fredy Patel and Astad Clubwala among those who are giving their best to the community. "Some people feel the project is not needed; but the majority is convinced that the religious and cultural needs of the community, projected for the next 15 to 20 years, do require a new center." However Munshi feels that interest is petering out and a lot of people prefer to wait and watch. "We still don't have sufficient funds to buy the land," estimated to cost between \$3,00,000 and \$5,00,000.

The property is expected to be designed on the lines of an agiary for, "no matter what anybody says, it is a binding force," according to Munshi who also notes that due to lack of exposure North American born Zoroastrian children find it difficult to relate to an agiary when they visit one.

The ARGDM, the first darbe mehr in North America funded by the late Zoroastrian benefactor Arbab Rustom Guiv, is under litigation. Though the supreme court of Winchester County has ruled in favor of ZAGNY and dismissed the petition of the Rustom Guiv Foundation, which administers the late millionaire's other estates, for ownership of the New Rochelle property, the Foundation has filed an appeal. No matter how the case is eventually settled, Munshi claims that the Darbe Mehr "costs us \$17-18,000 annually in terms of maintenance" to which the Iranian Zoroastrian Association, which shares the use of the property with ZAGNY, does not contribute, says Munshi. "Thanks to past boards

and members of ZAGNY and their dedicated services, its value has appreciated." Despite that, "the third floor and basement can't be used, there are no separate rooms for religious classes" and, more importantly, is authorized to accommodate 99 persons as against the 250-275 who get together on special occasions. "By having a new center we can have proper facilities for everyone, irrespective of where they come from; interact with Zoroastrians from Iran... they too would like to see a resident priest..."

"We do not see Irani Zoroastrians as different," says Munshi. The Iranis shy away because of difficulties with the English language. Besides, they have grown up within the confines of Islamic culture. But Munshi sees these barriers as temporary, affecting the first generation settlers only. ZAGNY has introduced Persian in its religious classes and children from both communities are very friendly, attests Munshi, attributing the bridging of the great divide to the summer camps and religious classes at which Lovji Cama, Prof Kaikhosrov Irani, Ms Ivy Gandhi (and her late husband Faroke), Pervez Patel, Villy Gandhi, Freny Dalal, Noshir Hormuzdiar, Farokh Deboo, Kuku Bunshah and others have contributed so much. "They have played an important role in bringing teenagers together. Our children have real sound religious knowledge as compared to (their compeers) here in India," notes Munshi. "We are extremely proud of our teenagers. They are well behaved, well educated, clean...I don't have children. The community children are my children. I really want to do a lot for them," he adds.

The second priority for ZAGNY as

Munshi sees it is to create a viable educational fund. "Ours is one of the oldest associations (in North America). We have more resources than others. We've got to be competitive to survive in the greater New York area. (But) we are the first generation settlers. We have to allow for house mortgages, college education, etc., calculates Munshi who attributes the community's present prosperity in the New York area to its high educational level and wants to ensure that this level is maintained in future.

"Quite a few girls and boys are seeking partners in the 35-40 year age-group," says Munshi. He estimates that there will be more marriages within the community in the years to come. Two marriages have resulted from the two youth congresses so far and Munshi predicts higher attendance at future congresses: "The boys and girls are aggressive...motivated...they want it on a yearly basis." ZAGNY may sponsor a youth congress in 1990 or 1991, ventures Munshi.

The self-styled "liberal conservative" believes, "We have to change according to time. What does not change, dies out. But traditions which have given us strength to survive shouldn't be weakened e.g. sudreh-kusti, muktad, jashan etc are very precious things." Though in favor of accepting the progeny of mixed marriages, Munshi qualifies that "names should maintain Parsi identity." But "a dead body is a dead body. Why shouldn't non-Zoroastrians see a dead Zoroastrian?" he asks. "I am of the opinion that any Zoroastrian should be allowed to be a priest. If my soul wants me to do the priest's job, no one should stop me. I might turn out to be a more successful priest...I don't think inherited priesthood has proved to be anything great..."

Viewing the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) as analogous to the Parsi Punchayet, Munshi considers its creation "an extremely important chapter in our community history. We need such a body to pull socio-economic interests together" and is confident that once its teething phase is past, it will be doing yeoman service in the years to come.

Despite about 20 years in the US, Munshi maintains his Indian citizenship, considers himself Indian first, Parsi second and Zoroastrian third. His zest for the good fight, however would appear to reverse that order. Referring to the New Zoroastrian Temple project in a subsequent letter to *Parsiana* he notes, "As it stands, the

road ahead...is quite rough. But what fun would it be if it were not a real challenge? We have highly dedicated members on the board and also equally dedicated members on the fund raising committee. Plus we have the blessings of members at large...We are creating something for the future generation to remember and cherish. So be it! I am totally confident that the project will be completed and we have the blessings of Ahura Mazda, Lord Zarathushtra and Pak Iranshah. We can't fail unless we want to."

"Visions and decisions"

"It was very inspiring to see how well the leaders of tomorrow's Zoroastrian communities could handle disagreements and personal opinions without becoming frustrated or offensive," notes a write up in the August newsletter of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC) on the Second North American Youth Leadership Camp (YLC) hosted by Houston, June 30-July 4. The theme of the conference — "Zoroastrian crossroads with visions and decisions for this new world" — drew active participation from the youth, largely from Chicago, California and Canada, notes Ms Tenaz Minwala in the report published by *Zoroastrian News*, the newsletter of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington (ZAMW) in its July-August issue. The majority of those who attended were in the 13-20 year age-group and there were quite a few adults, writes Minwala. Ms Michelle Engineer bagged the Most Involved Youth Award instituted by Dr Farhang Mehr of Harvard University's Center of Middle Eastern Studies.

Prof James Russell of Columbia University spoke about Zoroastrian roots in the western tradition where "he compared and contrasted our religion with Islam, Christianity, Judaism, etc," informs Minwala. Russell's speech was followed by an "opinion filled discussion about controversial topics that are usually banned," notes the ZAC report.

The second session, conducted by psychologist Yazdi Rustumji, dealt with "Facing evil, embracing goodness" which began with a video presentation of a white woman and a black woman and the way they perceived good and evil, writes Minwala. Rustumji's discussion examined the religion and its philosophy on a more psychological level "but the audience seemed unable to understand the analysis," she adds.

An outstanding event was Dr Farhang

Mehr's lecture on "Internalizing Zoroastrianism for daily life." In "One youth's opinion," a verified, not wholly complimentary assessment of the YLC published in the ZAC newsletter, Zubin Shroff notes, "With the dawn on Sunday, came the lecture of Dr Farhang Mehr Whose speech kept me awake in my chair

Actually, I liked what he said.

He spoke with a voice that was alive, not dead

Then came the most interesting thing to me It was a game where you agree or disagree

It helped me form my opinion on things..."

It seems that the youth were divided into small groups and given problems to solve. Then followed an agree/disagree session when they responded to each statement by moving to either the agree or the disagree side of the room where they were asked to explain their choice. On the following morning, youth under the age of 25 were segregated into a room and encouraged to express and discuss their thoughts freely, notes the ZAC report.

"The conference was for the youth; but throughout the discussions, the elders were trying to influence freewheeling discussions," notes Minwala. "As a result, no definite conclusions could be drawn nor (was) a clear agenda for the future direction of the community perceivable. It seems that the elders want things left just the way they have been accustomed to back in India, Pakistan or Iran," she adds.

As Shroff summed it up, "On this trip I attained goal number one That was to have a whole lotta fun I even learned a little on the side..."

Financially, however, the YLC was a mini disaster as appears from a "cry for help" from the Zoroastrian Youth Group of Houston featured in ZAC's November newsletter. Left "struggling with a \$6,000 deficit," young Houstonians are reaching out for contributions from participants and Zoroastrian associations across North America to alleviate the loss. ZAC youth will be organizing a fundraiser to help the Houston youth notes the appeal. Cheques favoring the Zoroastrian Association of Houston may be sent to the Zoroastrian Youth Group of Houston C/o Arron Rustom, 944 Highland, Houston, Tx 77009.

Minwala informs that the third YLC will be held in Toronto in 1990 while the ZAMW have been asked to hold the fourth conference in Washington DC in 1991.

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SHIRDI KÉ HOMI BABA

Gustasp Irani



The young lady respectfully approaches the 78-year-old man with a handsome Roman nose and white beard. She stoops to touch his feet but he objects: "If you must touch someone's feet, let it be the feet of Sai Baba, not mine." Then, smiling, he playfully pats the lady on her back as he offers her a seat on the stone bench. There is still power in those arms for five

**Adopting
Sai Baba's
life-style and
dress,
Homi Baba
inspires
a substantial
following
among the
pilgrims
who
come
to Shirdi**

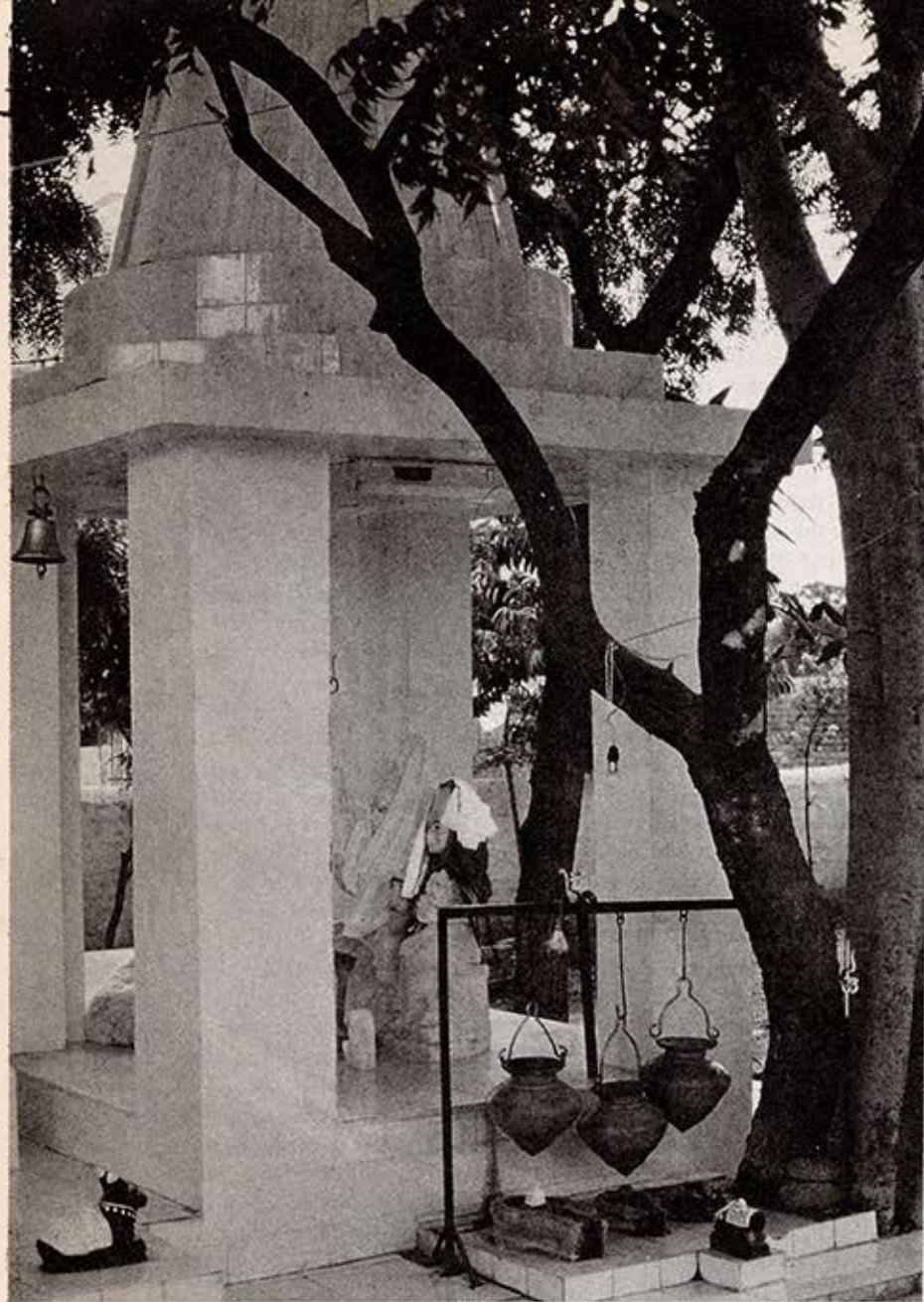
minutes the lady is massaging her back. Years ago, the old man informs us, he had bagged the second prize in the All-India Body Beautiful contest. Now, since 1974, he has been residing in Shirdi, his life dedicated to Sai Baba who lived in the village for 60 years before he attained samadhi (saints, it is believed, don't die) in 1918. Invariably, many of the numerous pilgrims who come to Shirdi to pay their respects at the Sai Baba Temple also stop by to visit one of Sai Baba's most famous devotees — Homi P. Dadi-Barjor, otherwise known as Homi Baba.

In response to his devotion, the Sai Baba is supposed to have visited Homi five times in dreams and visions. The first time he advised Homi to grow a beard. The second time around, it was advice to dress as he, Sai Baba, did in kurta-pyjama and a scarf around his head. This Homi did in the privacy of his home, but Sai Baba was not satisfied. He insisted that Homi dress as he asked, in public too.

The next time around, the Sai Baba came pleading for a smoke. "I have not smoked for three days," he told Homi. So his devotee filled a *chelum* (a locally designed pipe) and placed it in front of the portrait of the saint. The very next day, a man from Hyderabad came visiting and when Homi's back was turned, he slipped into the house and was puffing on the *chelum* placed near Sai Baba's picture. "I knew who he was. He was my *budha* (old man)" as Homi affectionately refers to his master. "I tried to grab his arm but he slipped away and was gone in a flash."

There are other boons that have been granted to Homi, one being the image of Sai Baba embossed on his chest. A Maharashtrian couple tells us of their experience, of how Homi bared his chest for them. "At first we saw nothing and we said so and that only made him angry. As he grew angrier, his chest became all red and then we saw it — a very clear image of Sai Baba. It was quite unbelievable."

Homi Baba's first contact with Sai Baba was in 1950 when a friend gave him a photograph of the saint. "That day I won at the races," recalls Homi. "Sai Baba, I thought, was going to make me a *lakhopati* (wealthy man). Instead, he made me a *bhikhari* (beggar)." After that first win, Homi's luck ran out. He lost at the races, he lost on the stock market. He recalls once having walked from Bombay's Flora Fountain area to Dadar, where he used to live, because he did not have enough money



*Miniature temple
in Homi Baba's courtyard*

Photos: Varghese Fernandez

major occasions celebrated by Homi Baba. One is his own birthday which he observes on December 26; the other is the Abhishek Pooja to Lord Shankar (Shiva) performed on the first Monday in the month of Shravan according to the Hindu calendar. "Around 8,000 to 10,000 people attend these celebrations," says Homi Baba, and he feeds them all. He points to two large *pittal* (brass) vessels in which the cooking is done.

The worship of Lord Shankar started some years ago when a visitor presented Homi with a piece of marble which he had carved into the lingam of Shankar. Now Shankar, according to Homi, is supposed to have consumed some poison which had got stuck in his throat. Due to this the body temperature of the Lord was prone to rise alarmingly and make him exceedingly excitable. To keep him cool and even-tempered water must constantly drip on him, like from a trough of water suspended over the lingam. "If you do this, Shankar is very happy with you," says Homi. Apparently Shankar expressed his joy over Homi's care and concern for him in the form of a gift presented to him a year ago. A visitor brought Homi Baba a marble statue, sculptured in Jaipur, of the Lord and his consort Parvati, now enshrined in a miniature temple in his courtyard.

When we first visited Homi Baba in the morning, he was engaged in ceremonies before the enshrined couple. He was abrupt, almost rude as he waived us away. "Not now. Come later. This evening, 4 o'clock." It's an abruptness you don't hold against godmen. Sai Baba reportedly had it too. In the *Shirdi Diary* of G. S. Khaparde, noted lawyer and right-hand man of freedom fighter Lokmanya Tilak, is the record of one such instance: "29-2-1912... Sayin Sahib (Sai Baba) exhibited an angry mood, abused those that had gone on the roof of the Masjid for lighting lamps and threw his stick at Mrs Tai Jog, the wife of Bapusaheb. At the Chawadi I thought he would beat Bapusaheb Jog...but after a while he beat Bala Shimpi with his stick and later on Trimbakrao. Bala Shimpi ran away but Trimbakrao received the blows standing and prostrating before Sayin Maharaj. I think he received the full measure of favour and got ahead by at least a stage." In other parts of the *Shirdi Diary* we get glimpses of a gentler and more tender,

for the bus fare. The soles of the shoes he wore had to be tied to his feet to keep them in place.

Though Homi remained a bachelor, he admits having had intimate relationships with a number of women. "Ask me what I did not do," he laughs. Study, he admits, is one thing he did not do. "My father (a doctor) would whip me but it made no difference. My *budha* would not let me study. He would not let me do anything. He planned to make me a fakir," says Homi. But first he let Homi have a go at life. He worked as an assistant carding master with Bombay Dyeing, Elphinstone Mills and Jacob Mills.

Then, in 1972, Alu Sethna, a woman he treated as a sister, died. Homi Baba's eyes mist over. "I was left all alone in this world. I cried to Sai Baba. 'The one person

I really cared for, you took away from me.' And he replied: 'Come to me, come to Shirdi.'"

Two years later, in 1974, Homi Baba took the plunge. Shirdi, as he remembers, was a far cry from the modernization it has witnessed in recent times. Though the place where he resides is less than a five-minute walk from the temple, the heart of the town, 15 years ago it was a jungle. "A mongoose bit my toe. A snake slithered over my body..." he breaks off. There is too much to tell. Today, concrete structures ring his humble habitat; over 30 new hotels have opened within the last two years, according to officials of the Shirdi Sansthan of Sai Baba.

The growth in the number of devotees coming to Shirdi has resulted in a rise in the number of people attending the two

caring fakir saint.

Homi too radiates this human warmth. A white mongrel bitch nuzzles up to him and then curls herself near his feet. "That's my Lilly," he says as he reaches down and affectionately pats the dog. In the collection of family and religious photographs that line the walls of his house are pictures of his dogs—dogs that have been buried in one corner of his compound with marble gravestones to mark the place.

Age has taken its toll. Arthritis, Homi complains, has affected both his knees. He hobbles into his simple house and offers you ash from the fire he maintains. But

Being Sai Baba's devotee does not stop me from being a Zoroastrian

first, he chants a prayer over the ash; it's a prayer he claims Sai Baba has given him. Muslims assure him that it is not from the Koran and Hindus cannot recognize it either. The offering of ash is similar to what Sai Baba did in his lifetime—ash or *udhi* from the fire that the saint maintained, was, and is, reputed to have miraculous qualities.

The fact that Sai Baba's fire is still kept burning endears him to many Zoroastrian devotees, especially as no one knows the true name, origin or religion of the saint. "Sai Baba prescribed no form of worship and being his devotee does not stop me from being a Zoroastrian," says Homi Baba. Yes, he wears a sudreh and kusti and lifts his kurta to prove the point.

But like many men who choose to walk well away from the trodden path, Homi has had his share of critics; his family, in general, and his brother, in particular. Homi Baba shows us a letter written by his brother a little before he died two years ago. In it, the brother confesses that he never really understood Homi, but judging by the respect and esteem others hold Homi in, he probably was wrong. He asked for Homi's forgiveness. "He even visited me twice in Shirdi," says Homi. With his implicit faith in Sai Baba, Homi continues, "My *budha* looks after me."

Yes, Sai Baba looks after his devotee and it shows. That evening in a restaurant family members at the adjoining table are discussing Homi Baba. A young girl gushes: "My, he's so handsome. I just can't believe that he is 78 years old."

ZOROASTRIANS ABROAD
continued from page 14

Rebuff to Mobed Council?

Mobeds of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC) have unanimously decided against membership of the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC), informs ZAC's November newsletter. The decision is stated to be based on the belief that "Membership in the Council, as it is currently organized, will not be in the best interests of the priests or the Chicago Zoroastrian community," reports the newsletter.

As per the mobeds' recommendation to the board of directors of the Association, ZAC has declined the invitation to host the next Mobed Council conference in Chicago, scheduled for Easter in 1990.

ZAC mobeds however have notified their willingness to help the Council in any specific matter which may be significant to the Zoroastrian cause in North America.

The ZAC muktad prayers were "dedicated to the commemoration of the *fravashis* of the past, present and future," notes the Association's August newsletter. Names of the departed, submitted in advance, were included in the common daily prayers on all the five Gatha days. Each name required a payment of \$25. Fruits for the *chasni* (consecration) were provided by ZAC. Individual prayers on those days were priced at \$300 and were subject to the convenience of the mobeds and availability of time.

An LP of perennials from such Indian movie hits as *Avara*, *Anarkali*, *Taxi Driver*, etc have been recorded by Dr Adi Tamboli, a pediatrician and an allergist by profession, informs the September issue of the ZAC newsletter.

The melodies recorded have been played by Tamboli on a Wurlitzer 950 Organ and a Prophet 5 Synthesizer. Priced at seven dollars, half the record's sales proceeds have been earmarked for ZAC funds.

Dr Karan Singh, India's Ambassador to the US, was surprised to learn of the size of the Zoroastrian community in Chicago when apprised of its presence by ZAC president Kayomars Mehta at a dinner hosted by the Indian consul general Pyarelal Santoshi. In a TV speech a couple of days later, Singh acknowledged Zarathushtra's message with admiration, notes ZAC's November newsletter.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama

EVENTS AND PERSONALITIES
continued from page 10

likes to swim, play tennis, squash and badminton. He enjoys playing the guitar and listening to music, he says.

'Mr Bombay University'

Out of 43 students competing at the inter-collegiate Best Physique Contest, Kaizad Kapadia of R. N. Ruia College of Arts and Science walked away with the Mr Bombay University title, notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of August 20, 1989. Kapadia was also the winner of the Bantamweight Class (up to 65 kg).

Another Parsi to win a medal was Kavas Vicaji. A student of H. R. College of Commerce and Economics, Vicaji finished second in the Middleweight Class (up to 80 kg), the *Jam'e* adds.

Batliwala's glorious win

Unseeded Firoza Batliwala won the women's singles title at the first ever Maharashtra State Selection Badminton Tournament in Poona which concluded on August 18, 1989. She also claimed the junior girls' singles and doubles titles, notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of September 3, 1989.

For the women's singles title, which is reportedly her first, the 16-year-old junior champion had to defeat Bombay's inter-collegiate champion Jyoti Sanghi at the quarter finals, Shirin Garda at the semi finals and international and third seeded Manjusha Pawangadkar of Poona in the finals. Despite the fatigue from playing three final matches on the concluding day, the left-handed champion overthrew Pawangadkar.

In the junior girls' singles class she beat Bombay's Anju Nair. Overpowering Larissa Sadarangani and Ramola Naik, Batliwala together with Preeti Nerlekar, bagged the junior girls' doubles title, notes the sports correspondent.

At the Pune District Badminton Championships held in the second week of August, Batliwala defeated Devika Rajwade, thus claiming the junior girls' title. Pairing up with Nerlekar, the duo bagged the girls' double title beating Geeta Gandhi and Chaitali Pandit, notes the *Jam'e* of August 20, 1989.

At the same meet, unseeded Garda defeated Archana Deodhar to bag the women's singles title. Later she teamed up with Deodhar to beat the junior pair of Batliwala and Nerlekar in the women's doubles, the *Jam'e* further reads.

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

Thirst Treat



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When you're hot and thirsty after treating yourself or making sure you look a treat... reach for zero-bacteria Limca with isotonic salts to quench your thirst.



How does it feel to be a MINORITY?

To adapt to the western milieu
without being engulfed by it, is the problem
faced by Hindus, Muslims and Parsis

Aspi Moddie

What are the problems of identity and cultural assimilation? How far are minority communities able to carry traditional beliefs, practices and customs into present day plural societies? Once the bonds of religion, family and language are severed, people seem to float into a new world to try and find new identities and meaning. How we float or find new moorings is the problem of adaptation, assimilation and identity.

At the forthcoming Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress, January 3 to 7, 1990, the community is likely to face these questions. Prof John Hinnells, professor of comparative religion at Manchester University and his assistant, Dr (Ms) Rashna Writer, are scheduled to speak on the contemporary situation of the far-flung global community in a variety of host societies and also in the home countries. Apart from how the young view these issues, the sessions on religious education will also address the future of Zoroastrian tradition and ritual in the West.

Zoroastrians may find a reflection of their own situation through a consideration of the comparative studies of other Asian minorities in the West. The community may also examine its minority status in the older homelands of India and Iran.

For example, leading scholar Nirad Chaudhari has described the Parsis in India as "friendly aliens." A minority is a minority anywhere, with its consequences. Assimilation could be partial; else the community ceases to be a minority.

Muslims in the US

Let us consider the situation of Islam in the West, first. *Islamic Values in the USA* by Yvonne Yazbeck, Haddad Adan, T. Loomis (OUP, 1987) had been published long before the late Ayatollah Khomeini, Iran's maverick leader, pronounced the death sentence on Salman Rushdie, author of *The Satanic Verses*. In contrast to the paucity of Zoroastrian temples and priests, the two to three million Muslims there already had 598 mosques and study centers. And, startlingly, it was anticipated that by 2010 Islam would be the second largest religion in the US after Christianity.

It is interesting to see the Islamic community in the US divided into five groups, with different world views. There are the liberals, the westernized conservatives who adhere to the minimum Islamic requirements, the evangelicals who follow Islamic tenets in daily life, the zealots whose goal is to transform all societies to the Islamic way, and the Sufis, who account

for a majority of converts among them and nourish a mystical dimension on Islam. Similar to the Jews in past ages, the nodal points of the Islamic community were the mosque, the community center, the Koran and religious education.

The central question facing the Islamic community there was how to live an Islamic life in a secular context. The conflict between American civil law and the Shariat family law particularly affects the self-image of Muslim women. Matters such as the charge of interest on capital, welfare, inheritance, wills, diet, alcohol and participation in a permissive American culture are other perceived areas of conflict. Such areas of differences extended to clothing, dating, birth control, abortion, divorce and child custody, significantly affecting everyday life.

Other socioreligious issues embrace the growing impact of centralized, hard-core Islam on "unmosqued" Muslims, its missionary out-reach including attempts at conversion of blacks and whites, its rejection of Western culture and the West's negative image of Islam.

In the American view, the central issue seemed to be: is Islam a religion of peace? Islam was widely perceived to be fanatic, terrorist and warlike. Three-fifths of Americans were apprehensive of the spread of Islam which seemed in historical conflict with the Judeo-Christian tradition. The scenario was hardly favorable.

Hindus in the UK

There is a contrasting study of the Hindus - *Preservation of Religious Life: Hindu Immigrants in England* by D. F. Pocock (Vikas, *Indian Sociology*, July-December '76). It is about a Gujarati *sansha* (organization) originating from Kutch, now settled in London. Here, in a culture of religious "exclusiveness" full of prescriptions and prohibitions in the customary practices and life of the sect, the problem was, how to make the religious co-exist with the secular?

The study shows that the larger the amount of exclusivity in an immigrant community inclined to prescriptions and prohibitions, the greater the difficulties in social adaptation. The origins of the East African Gujarati community was in "the psychology of the ghetto," resulting in the clustering of kith and kin to escape loneliness in the new homeland. So strong was this clustering that it remained unimpaired

by religious differences, even when some members declared themselves as atheists.

Because *sanstha* families were close, individuals were brought up in the family values of respect for elders, religious beliefs, vegetarianism and the *brahmachari* (abstinence) concept. Non-*sanstha* families were under greater strain as their children were more prone to external cultural influences.

When the next generation drifts to a mixed *bhasha* (language), and then to English on either shore of the Atlantic,

It was anticipated that by 2010 Islam would be the second largest religion in the US after Christianity

the result is "the impoverishment of the mother tongue." They are caught between two cultures speaking different languages, thinking differently. Gujarati, in such a sect is a special, sacred language. Even English translations of religious texts seem weak and misleading; not authentic. Among *sanstha* families, "England-born girls are devalued." There is a preference for better trained, traditional girls from Gujarat. As in the case of the Muslims, food orthodoxy makes integration with others very difficult.

The lack of a resident priest and local lay versions of scripture among the *sanstha* Gujaratis in UK impedes the transmission of pure doctrine and introduces extraneous elements into it. The annual examination papers in religion come from a central place in Gujarat. All this is reported to create "conceptual confusion." Religion did not seem to be congruent with the culture of the real world. These manifestations are common to most traditional societies in transition, both in host countries as well as in their home countries. How far can such a sect be embedded in foreign culture, especially "when British society itself is in a process of redefinition?"

Zoroastrian identity in the West

How far do these accounts mirror Zoroastrian families in the US and UK? How far not?

Usually, contemporary Zoroastrians see

themselves in two broad groups, the orthodox and the reformist. With better research, one may find, we too are in more than these two groups. We may find ourselves in several social categories similar to the Muslims in the US, for example, except that we have no great desire to convert the world. We await the Hinnells/Writer response to this question at the Congress.

Having been exposed earlier to westernization and the English language in India, Pakistan and East Africa, most Parsi Zoroastrians in the US would probably not find such deep and extensive conflict in their values, customs and life-styles as the Muslims do in the US and the *sanstha* Hindus in the UK. Comparative research could throw light on their adaptability vis-a-vis the Iranians, who do not share the same degree of westernization and familiarity with the English language.

Also it may be safe to assume that there is no such negative image of Zoroastrians in Christian history as of Muslim "infidels" of Crusadic lore. We are too microscopic in number to pose any kind of threat to any other society. There may be some fanatics among Zoroastrians too, but they have not graduated to being terrorists! There is not the same sharp divide between the religious and the secular in day-to-day life. This is an advantage in a religion which mixes both in the golden mean, in moderation in all things. They have no

taboos about food, are not so rigid about sex relations, and socialization comes easier. Besides Zoroastrians are almost unknown in the West.

Though some East African Zoroastrians may exhibit traces of ghetto psychology, to them Gujarati is not a sacred language. It is a *khichri* (mishmash) folk language, not as pure as Ahmedabadi Gujarati. There is the complicating factor that the language of Zoroastrian texts is so archaic that there may be as many variations in translation as there are scholars. So there are no deep roots in language either.

It is significant to note the difference from Jewish boys who can chant and know the meaning of sacred texts since 'Barmitzvah,' the equivalent of the navjote. Central theological texts need the most careful handling. Jewish scholars have found true meaning from the original Hebraic; and through the centuries "they have made translation and interpretation a fine art." Zoroastrians, partly because of their broken history, have lacked this sustained intellectual tradition.

Thus it would appear that while the Muslims are perceived as a violent threat to Western society and the Hindus seem culturally confusing, the Zoroastrians pose no problems, except among themselves!

Aspi Moddie, who belonged to the first batch of the Indian Administrative Service, is a scholar of history and economics with publications in both fields.

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IN PARLIAMENT, AT LAST

Arnavaz S. Mama



Madame Bhikhaiji Cama "came to be known as 'the high priestess of Indian nationalism.' Her portrait has appeared in French papers along with that of Joan of Arc." Vice President of India, Dr Shanker Dayal Sharma's tribute to the fiery freedom fighter as he unveiled her portrait in the Central Hall of Parliament House on August 2, 1989 unleashed waves of euphoria in Parsi bosoms and justifiable satisfaction among the members of the Surat Parsi Pragati Mandal (SPPM).

It had been artist Coomi Dallas' dying wish that her portrait of the valiant Bhikhaiji take its place among the other immortals of the freedom struggle. The Pragati Mandal had tried relentlessly for 30 years without

much success, notes the *Fed Newsletter* (the mouthpiece of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India) of September 1989, until Homi Taleyarkhan, member of the Minorities Commission, put his shoulder to the bureaucratic wheel. Dallas' desire was fulfilled with such aplomb — the ceremony was attended by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and other members of his cabinet as also the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Dr Balram Jakhar and members of parliament — as to give the lie to decades of neglect. On behalf of the SPPM, its founder president Dr Minocher Contractor responded by presenting a shawl and a sandalwood plaque, inscribed with Mme Cama's portrait, to both, the Vice

President and the Prime Minister. Floral tributes were offered to Jakhar and parliamentary affairs minister H. K. L. Bhagat, as Taleyarkhan later described the happy occasion.

Speaker after speaker paid homage to Cama, the hitherto semiforgotten episode in India's history. "Mme Cama was the first woman crusader for India's freedom at a time when it was considered very foolhardy. She dared to defy British might on British soil," said Taleyarkhan. Bo.n

Above: Sharma unveiling Cama's portrait Photo: The Press Trust of India

Right: Members of the Surat and Delhi anjumans with Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi

to wealth and social status—Bhikhaiji was daughter-in-law of the renowned scholar K. R. Cama—she sacrificed everything to “her uncompromising patriotism and tireless efforts to fight against exploitation and injustice,” attested Jakhar.

Best known for having hoisted the Indian tricolor at the International Socialist Conference at Stuttgart in 1907, Cama’s “perceptions and expectations were very clear. She had visualized much before that India would be a republic and Hindi would be the national language, with Devnagari as the national script,” said Jakhar, concentrating on Cama’s advocacy of communal harmony and stand for “liberty and justice for all people irrespective of caste, creed or country.”

“While she was considered ‘mother of the Indian revolution’ by her colleagues, the British described her as a ‘notorious lady’ ... an ‘anarchic revolutionary, anti-British and irreconcilable,’” informed Sharma. The Vice President provided a rare glimpse into how other outstanding Indians had assessed Cama’s contribution. Sharma recalled former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s comment, “It was the tricolor she unfurled which was adopted with some alteration by our freedom movement.” Continued Sharma, “A flag is far more than a mere piece of cloth. Bapu had said a flag ‘represents an ideal.’ It symbolizes the values and aspirations of a nation. Mme Cama’s tricolor inspired countless revolutionaries during the days

Bhikhaiji Cama’s
portrait has joined
other notables
of the
freedom struggle
in Parliament Hall,
82 years after
she defiantly
unfurled
the Indian tricolor

of the struggle. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had said, ‘We looked up to this flag not only with pride and enthusiasm but with a tingling in our veins... when we were sometimes down and out, the sight of this flag gave us courage to go on.’”

These tributes to Cama were echoed in other fora. *The Times of India* of August

16 reports that T. K. Tope, former vice chancellor of Bombay University, suggested that a fitting tribute to Mme Cama would be to rename Bombay’s international airport at Sahar after her. Tope was speaking at an Asian Book Trust function concluding Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay’s one hundred and fiftieth birth anniversary celebrations.

When the Parliamentary function concluded, the Parsis had another treat in store for them. At the request of Contractor, Taleyarkhan had conveyed to Rajiv Gandhi the desire of the Surat delegates for a group photograph with the Prime Minister. Gandhi’s response was a gracious invitation to tea at his residence where the Prime Minister and Ms Sonia Gandhi met and spoke to all. “As if to prove ‘Zoroastrian unity worldwide,’ the Delhi Zoroastrians also went along—some were invited, others wittingly or unwittingly gate-crashed,” notes the *Fed Newsletter*. The *National Herald* of August 4 reports the Prime Minister’s tribute to the community’s role “during the freedom struggle as also in pioneering various economic and educational programs and projects.” SPPM president Bhesania and Contractor were quick to support Taleyarkhan’s fulsome thanks for the Prime Minister’s hospitality and affection, notes *The Herald*.

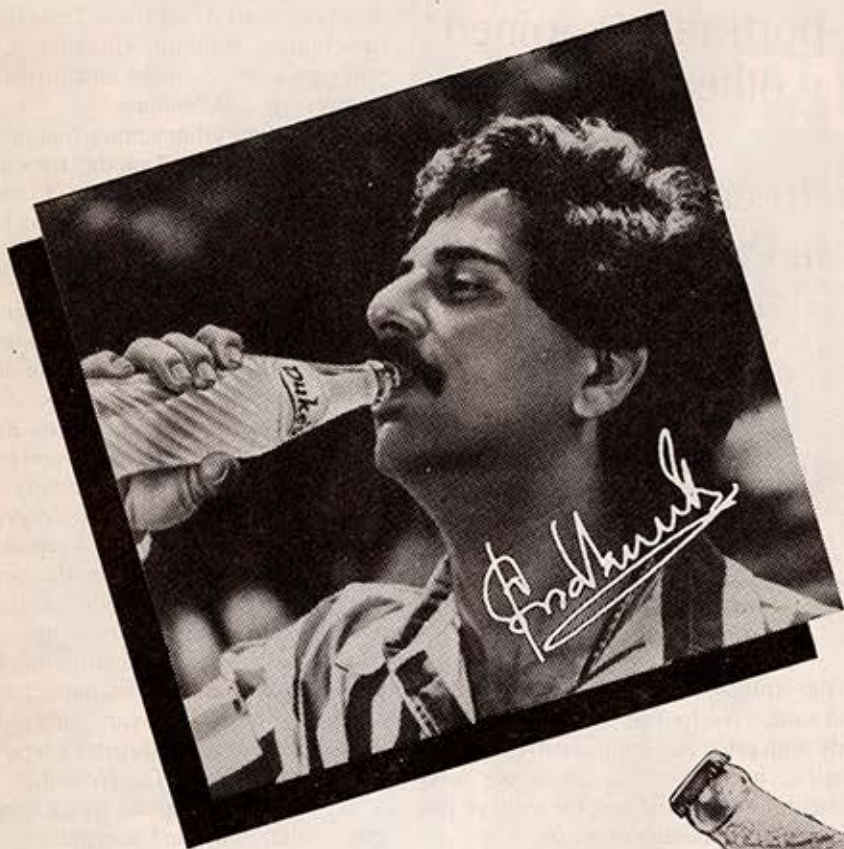
An unexpected fallout was a spontaneous invitation to, and acceptance by, the Prime Minister for a dinner engagement with the Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) on Navroze night. According to DPA president Lt Gen Adi Sethna who related the anecdote to the Federation’s executive council at its Madras meet in September, the scenario went somewhat like this:

The irrepressible Dadi Mistry, a committee member of the DPA and a former secretary of the Federation, asked Gandhi why he did not grace DPA’s Navroze functions the way his mother had done. “Ask me,” smiled the unperturbed Prime Minister. “Join us on the twenty-sixth,” responded Mistry, adding waggishly to Sethna, as though in afterthought, “It’s all right Adi, isn’t it?” “Of course,” supported Sethna, “We’d be delighted!” “Fine,” accepted Gandhi, cutting through all the normal reels of red tape that package prime ministerial social appearances. Thus Cama’s spontaneity and commitment to national unity and harmony is being carried forward—hopefully into the twenty-first century.



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Nariman makes a Point



Khurshed Nariman, after whom Nariman Point is named, was active in exposing the irregularities in the Back Bay reclamation deal

Dara Kadva

Nariman Point is a very famous and affluent locality now, but few are aware that the man in whose memory the place has been named was a disheartened figure in his last days, lived the life of a recluse and died an unsung hero at the age of 65.

Khurshed Framjee Nariman met with this fate even though his career was full of achievements - as an advocate, politician and social crusader.

He became mayor of Bombay in 1935 and later a member of the All India Congress Committee (AICC). He was a member of the Congress Nationalist Party of the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) for 15 years and president of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee (BPCC) for seven years.

But he achieved national prominence through his exposure of what had come to be known as the "Back Bay Scandal" which also earned him the popular title of "Veer (brave)." But if this incident brought him popularity, the subsequent "Nariman episode" cost him not only the chief ministership of Bombay Presidency but also the eventual eclipse of his political career.

Contracts

In the Back Bay Scandal, his battle was with the Bombay government's Development Department over reclamation of the Back Bay area. Nariman rallied the citizens of Bombay to his side because of the corruption, bungling and over spending on the project which he proved in the famous Nariman-Harvey libel case. He also raised a cry against the government's "usurpation" of the functions of the Municipal Corporation. In this, Nariman was encour-

aged by some nationalist businessmen who resented that they were kept out of the reclamation contracts which were awarded only to British firms.

The reclamation work had begun in 1919 and the first salvo of Nariman came in 1923 in the BMC. He succeeded in forming a Vigilance Committee under himself which led to the institution of the Back Bay Inquiry in 1926 in which the principal accused was the secretary of the Development Department, Mr Harvey. The inquiry was one of the longest in the city's history, lasting over 68 hearings. Its result was an immense loss of face for the Bombay government. Even more damaging was the fact that the drubbing came at the hands of a fearless nationalist.

Thereafter, Nariman preoccupied himself with an active role in the Congress Party. He led the salt satyagraha in Bombay, and boycotted the Governor's Council during the civil disobedience movement. He also spent four jail terms intermittently.

Then came the famous "Nariman episode" at the time of the formation of the ministry. Nariman was deemed a natural choice to be the first Indian chief minister of Bombay Presidency by virtue of his presidentship of BPCC and membership of AICC. But the Congress Parliamentary Board, and particularly Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, regarded Nariman as too "independent" a person and wanted a "safer" man like B. G. Kher, a solicitor by profession.

Fearing public humiliation, Nariman started a campaign against Vallabhbhai and complained to the Congress Working

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Committee (CWC) against his "persecution" by the Sardar. Unfortunately, some of Nariman's supporters gave a communal twist to the issue by publicly hinting that the Sardar did not want a Parsi to be the first Indian chief minister of Bombay. To avoid this impression, the CWC formed a sub committee comprising Gandhiji and D. N. Bahadurji, himself a Parsi, who was a former Advocate General of Bombay.

Nariman's detractors listed a number of charges against him which included an undenied allegation that in the Central Assembly election of 1934, Nariman had "betrayed" Congress by withdrawing in favor of Sir Cawasji Jehangir who contested as an independent.

Some leading citizens of Bombay appealed to Gandhiji to undo the "injustice" to Nariman and followed this up with a memorandum bearing 20,000 signatures. Embarrassed by the communal overtone of the issue, Gandhiji and Bahadurji did not publicly announce their report but only showed it to Nariman privately.

The Bombay Press later quoted a statement by Nariman that he was withdrawing from the race, with an acknowledgement of his "indifference" to the 1934 election. He was also quoted as saying that he would not accept any other office in the Congress organization again. Unfortunately, Nariman retracted the statement the very next day under tremendous pressure from his agitated followers.

Ultimately, the CWC at its Wardha session ruled that "in view of the findings of the report and Nariman's acceptance of it and his subsequent recantation, his conduct has been such as to prove him unworthy of holding any position of trust and responsibility in the Congress organization." B. G. Kher then became the first Indian chief minister of Bombay.

Thenceforth, Veer Nariman ceased to figure in the public life of Bombay. Later, he joined the INA (Indian National Army) at the invitation of Subhas Chandra Bose and also spent a year in Singapore. But that stint was wholly ill-starred and ended with the disappearance of Bose himself. Nariman returned to Bombay shortly before the end of the Second World War.

A bachelor all his life, Nariman died in 1948.

His name is, however, commemorated by naming "Nariman Point" after him, as well as renaming the road down Churchgate as the Veer Nariman Road.

Edited from an article in The Times of India of September 1, 1989.

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Modern dancer Astad Deboo and puppeteer Dadi Pudumjee came on stage together to treat the audience to a rare blend of dance and puppetry

Parinaz Gandhi

An encounter between *Friends*

A confluence it was — of dance and puppetry, of traditional and contemporary art, of life and form. The force behind the life was the talented modern dancer Astad Deboo; the spirit behind the form was the popular puppeteer Dadi Pudumjee. And, they had joined hands to depict the theme, friendship, at Bombay's Tata Theatre on October 12, 1989.

While Astad, casually dressed, was the mainspring, it was Dadi's towering puppet that was the cynosure of all eyes. The puppet's face was a picture of composure, the forehead and half-closed eyelids resembling the Buddha's. The neck and palms were the only other visible segments of the puppet, the rest being concealed within a flowing red robe. Synchronizing the movements of the puppet with those of Astad was Dadi who physically

manipulated the puppet without any strings. The gestures were evocative of the sentiments shared in the relationship: from the beginning when they explore each other, build a friendship, support each other in times of difficulty, to the stage when the friendship turns sour and both are left feeling more desolate than ever.

The whole idea of an abstract presentation "is not to spoonfeed the audience," said Astad in an interview with *Parsiana* a week before the performance. The title of the item is there to give the guidelines. The corresponding music plays a contributory factor in identifying the ideas projected. Beyond that, the interpretation is left to the audience. In the case of *Friends*, the accompanying music was a composition by Ryuchi Sakamoto, David Byrne and Cong Su. "Astad selected the

music," informs Dadi, "to go with the concept." Sometimes music is the motivating factor, and sometimes the theme. In this case, they had decided on the theme, friendship, before the quest for music began.

Was there a reason for selecting the theme — friendship? "No," reply the duo in unison. In fact, the two of them who have known each other for nearly nine years — art having brought them together — "toyed with the idea of a joint performance for over a year and a half" before it started materializing. For eight weeks they labored. Rehearsals themselves required a lot of time coordination, Astad being based in Bombay and Dadi being based in Delhi and each having his own

Deboo with Pudumjee's puppet in Friends Photo: Shantanu Sheorey

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program schedule.

The first presentation of *Friends* was at Delhi early this year under the auspices of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations. It was well-received by the Delhi audience which prompted Astad to introduce this item to the Bombay theater goers in his repertoire of six pieces choreographed and performed by him on October 12 under the aegis of the National Centre for the Performing Arts.

In Delhi, there is a cross-sectional crowd — from diplomatic corps to street vendors — that attends theater shows while in Bombay it is the regular crowd that makes the rounds, points out Astad. These days he is used to seeing a fairly good turnout at his shows "but it didn't start out that way," admits the dancer whose innovations with the traditional dance forms the Indian critics only learnt to appreciate after repeated exposure.

Gratified with the public adulation Astad adds, "People like my work. People are curious enough." For, at each presentation Astad tries to introduce a new element: collaboration with a puppet was just one of the many concepts he has experimented with. "It is not that one has to do it but as the work grows there has to be a certain amount of input to make the work look better and have a greater impact" is Astad's rationale.

And, he also likes to project themes with a socially relevant message as was the case in his dance piece *Broken Pane* where the desperate, carnal nature of a drug addict was effectively conveyed with a broken pane and a lone table to accentuate the isolation of the addict as he gropes in vain in darkness for his pills and syringes. *Skin Deep* was a silent satire on the way people project an image. There was no auditory stimulus, just the strut, amble or scurry as Astad paraded on the stage, the slightest change in garment each time and the corresponding mannerisms matching the personality depicted.

There were also dances on abstract subjects like in *Search* where he maneuvered his steps through a maze of entwined strips in search of a resting place. Through *Confluence* he showed that Indian and contemporary Western dance are interlinked. Dancing with rings suspended on elastic bands, he gave proof of his muscle control. The rings, symbolizing the two dance forms, he manipulated to indicate the distinctive yet cohesive nature of dance. In *Passage of Life*, a man's journey through different stages was highlighted with ap-

propriate light effects which were a visual delight. The lights for the program were designed by Sam Kerawalla, and the sets by Ratan Batliboi.

In '89 itself, Astad has been on a dance tour of the USA, Canada, Honolulu and Australia in between regaling audiences in India. At the grand inaugural function of the Festival of France in India, Astad and his troupe performed on the sands of Chowpatty while sophisticated audiovisual laser beams spun around them and the traffic in South Bombay ground to a halt to witness the event. An awareness for As-

**In Delhi, the
diplomatic corps as
well as street
vendors attend
theater shows, while
in Bombay it's the
regular crowd that
makes the rounds**

tad's talent was created in his native land when the famous French designer Pierre Cardin invited him to choreograph a piece for the Bolshoi ballerina Maya Plisetskaya. For years he trained in the classical dance forms of Kathak and Kathakali, his innovative approach surfacing only subsequently.

Dadi's recent shows have been for the India International Trade Fair, the Republic Day Parade and at several art centers. The artistic director and founder of the Sutradhar Puppet Theatre, Dadi has also been involved in directing a TV serial with puppets. In Japan, Canada, Germany and the rest of Europe he has performed at the International Puppet Festivals. Folklore, mythology as also abstract themes chosen by Dadi have been presented in his puppet shows. Of late he has been concentrating on serious puppetry to impress upon the audience that through the medium of puppets he can entertain adults and children.

It was *Friends* that brought Astad and Dadi together. The bonds being established, they would next like to widen their fraternity by involving more dancers and more puppets in their ensuing collaboration which will last for a longer duration. The theme has yet not been finalized but it promises to strike a new accord which the theatergoers can look forward to.

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JIMMY OLLIA for Love of Books

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With prices running into lakhs of rupees, rare books are treasured more for their monetary value than their contents, laments collector Jimmy Ollia

"If you want a tiger you have to hunt for one. You stalk it for days. The chances are you may not get it, or you may. Likewise with antiques, you've got to hunt and stalk what you want." The retirement years of Jimmy Ollia, former secretary of The Film Federation of India (FFI), have been one big shikar. His prey: beautiful, old, rare books. His modest apartment flat at Koregaon Park spills over with his trophies; trunks and drawers are crammed with books, posters and more books. They have even usurped cupboards that were once used to store clothes.

Ollia has travelled the entire span of the country, in rattling trains and over unpaved roads, with singleminded determination to dig out treasures from private libraries and collections, big and small. One rewarding source of rare books has been the former royal states. "There are around 500 states and it is not necessary that the big ones have the best collec-

tions," says Ollia. Being secretary of the FFI helped as most of the maharajas had private cinema halls and they knew Ollia, the film man; Ollia, the book collector, invariably got a red-carpet welcome. There is really no marketplace for rare books, states Ollia: "Life is full of surprises and very often you find a rare book in the most unlikely place... You may find a treasure on a casual visit to Walkeshwar, or visit seven princely states and have nothing to show for your efforts."

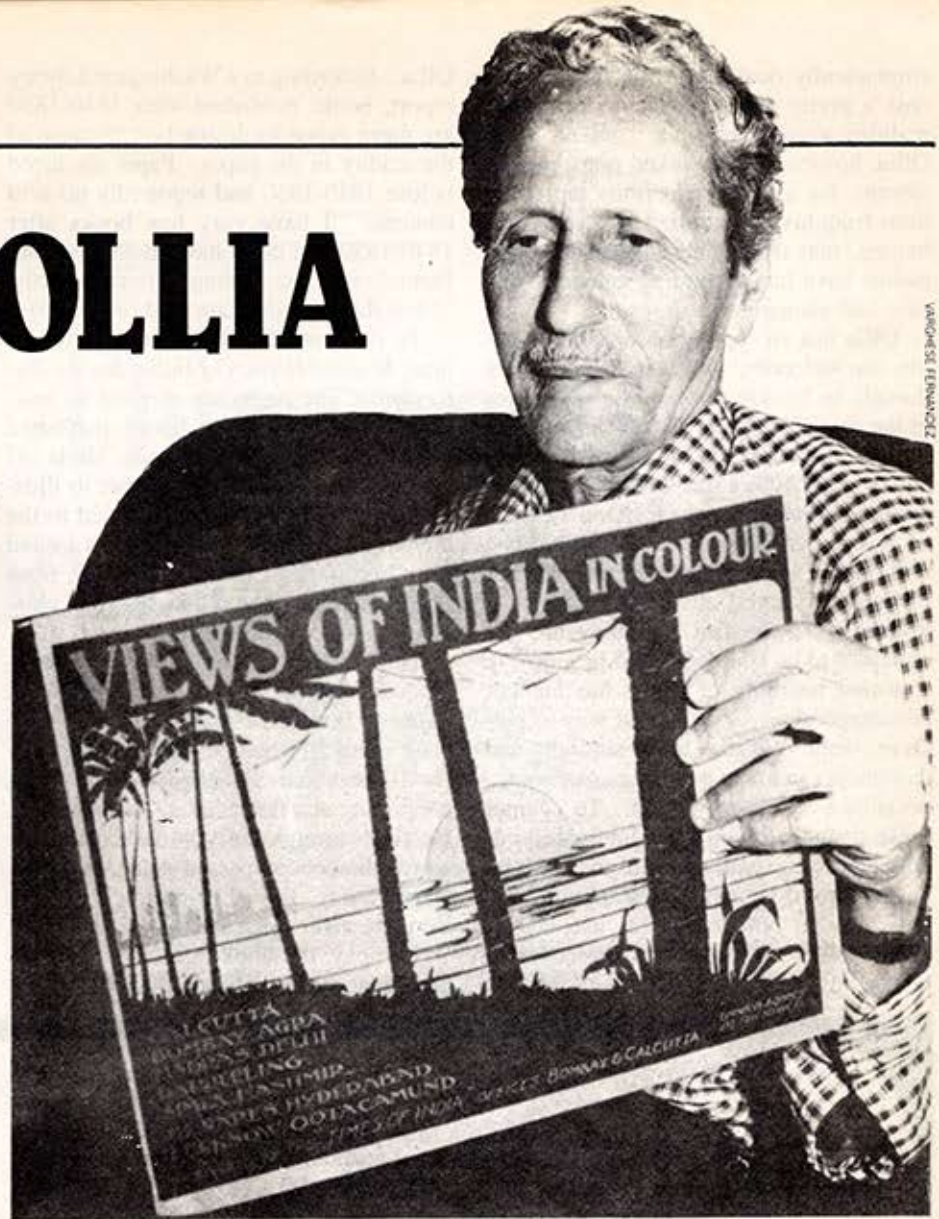
But it is eventually patience and perseverance that set aside a true collector from an amateur. "The thing with antiques, and not just rare books, is that you must wait for years before you get something of value." It took him seven years to track down the 1846 publication *Views of Simla* and he finally found it in Finland.

Unlike the West, however, in India rare books are not generally appreciated. Books in this country are still not considered

collector's items like jade and ivory are. A good deal of antiques are collected for status value and not as a result of true appreciation, is his view. Ollia recalls how he found Gould's *Birds of Asia* lying in heaps of dust in the library of Rajkumar College in Rajkot. "They were not aware of the value of those volumes," says Ollia. Only after he pointed it out to the authorities are the books now being properly cared for. Ollia estimates that the seven-volume set may cost up to six lakh rupees, that is if the Rajkumar College is willing to part with it.

Six lakhs, however, is modest compared to the price certain other rare books command. In the West, *Birds of America* by John Audubon may fetch a price up to one crore rupees and more. Yet books have a value that has little to do with their price tag, or the resale value, and sadly, it is a value that few take seriously.

"I'll never sell any of my books," Ollia



VANQISE FERNANDEZ

emphatically declares. But since books cost a pretty penny there are economic realities a collector must contend with. Ollia, however, has worked out a unique system: for a price he permits reproductions from his collection. Large corporate houses, magazines and advertising companies have had rewarding calendars, issues and campaigns as a result.

Ollia has an 'open house' where visitors are welcome, with prior appointment though, to browse through the rich pages of the past. Yet, there are few takers. For those who do take up the offer, there is a cup of tea, maybe a snack; but more, a rich and rewarding experience. Don't expect an orderly, catalogued library. What you will find are seemingly disorganized heaps of books scattered all over the place — testimony to the fact that they are not collected to be hoarded but to be enjoyed. Constant handling of books has another advantage too — it's the best way to preserve them. Dust, direct sunlight and dampness can affect the life span of books, possibly even destroy them. To counter these dangers, "You may fumigate your collection yearly along with your regular pest control if you want. Camphor tablets will also do but don't ever use DDT," warns Ollia. The greatest destroyer of books, however, is the paper itself informs

Ollia. According to a Washington Library report, books published after 1840-1850 are more prone to destruction because of the acidity in the paper. Paper produced before 1840-1850 had reportedly no acid content. "I have very few books after 1840-1850 so I don't have to worry about them," says Ollia, adding matter-of-factly, "Most things modern are made not to last."

To illustrate, he takes out a 1726 volume, *Modern History of India, Burma and Ceylon*. "The pages are as good as new. This book will outlive books published after 200 years," he observes. He is off again to dig out another volume; to illustrate another point. One gets used to the mercurial quality of Ollia as he flits around from one stack of books to another; from one topic to another. Ollia, lean and chiseled featured, exudes energy.

He has dug out a sleek, gilt-edged, crocodile-leather-bound, 1910 edition of *Asprey's World Gazetteer*. "I must have been about 20 when I bought this copy for Rs 10 and that too after three days of bargaining at a flea market," he mentions. He flips through the volume to Bombay which then encompassed Aden and Sind. "Even today, film distribution rights for Bombay cover Aden and Sind," adds Ollia.

Bombay, the book informs us, was an important center in the international opium

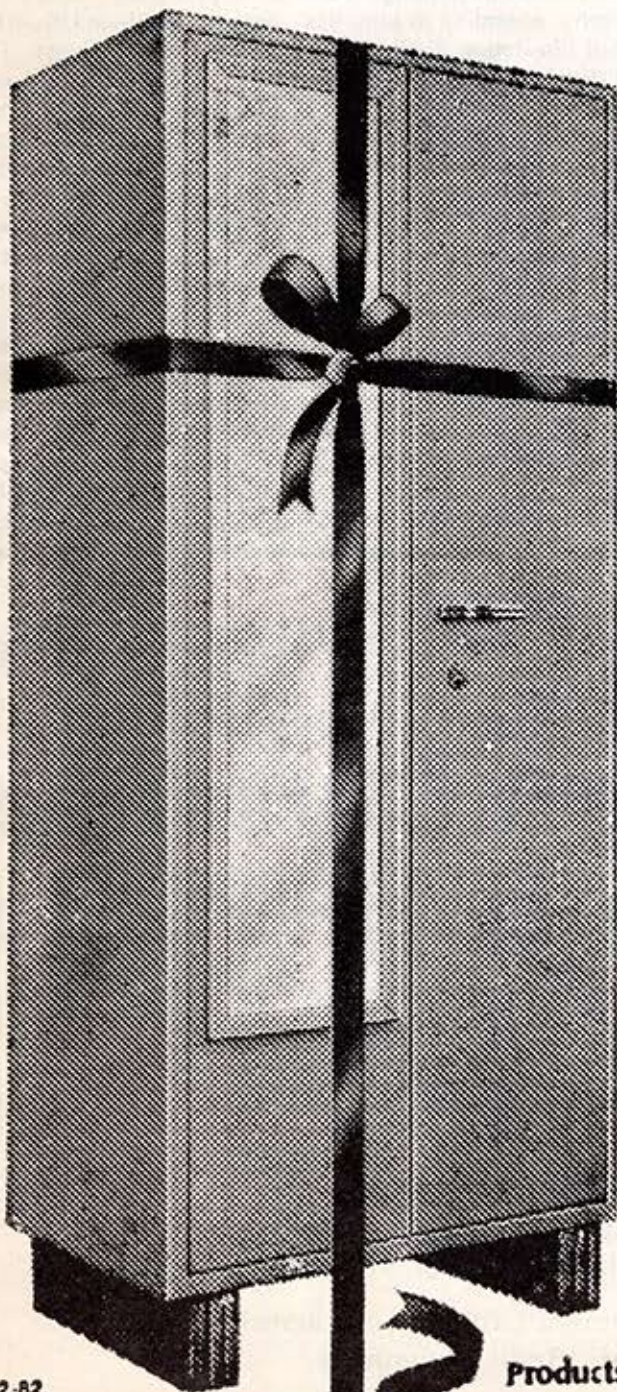
trade market. "My grandfather did business in China," says Ollia. "In fact my father was born in China." While many Parsis were directly involved in this opium trade and amassed fortunes trading in the drug, they frowned upon its use. Special care had to be taken to see that servants did not drug children to keep them quiet.

Talking of soothing children sparks Ollia. He is up and sifting through books. This time it is a 1846 volume of *Views of Simla*. Ollia shows us a passage where the author writes of how noisy children are quietened down and made to sleep by dipping the back of their heads in the cold waters of Himalayan streams. We flip through the book, taking in the illustrations. "Simla has changed," Ollia laments. "The old-world atmosphere and natural beauty is gone. The only place that you will still find it in, is books." Books are history, and geography, and culture, and art; books are more than printed words.

"I buy books not just because they are old. I buy them for their value and I don't mean resale value. I buy them for their beauty," says Ollia. "I have been collecting books ever since I was 18, so it is not really something new," observes Ollia. Serious collecting however, began with retirement. At that time, collection of marine products and fossils were other

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options Ollia had to weigh before plumping for books. But first there was a year of intensive study and research; time spent in libraries in Bombay, Delhi, Madras and all over the country.

There is even specialization in the kind of books one may collect, Ollia informs us. "Some collect books only related to the crafts, some only to trade catalogues, or maps or literary works, or astronomy or even comics. "If I come across any good book I will pick it up," says Ollia, though he prefers "books of visual beauty with old woodcuts and lithography. He illustrates the point with posters: "Prints that are like paintings. Today, with all the modern technology, you still cannot reproduce these vibrant colors." He tells us of one method of how the color amber was made in the days of yore. A cow was denied water for two days and made to eat only a certain strain of grass. Its urine was then collected and mixed with some special mud found only in certain specified areas. "The amber you get from this process will not lose its vibrance in 500 years," says Ollia. You find yourself leafing through a 1915 volume, *Indian Sport Birds*, and a 1898 publication, *Deer Of All Lands*. Time has not dimmed the brilliance of the colors.

Colors are only part of the story. It is

the total dedication that goes into a book that makes it outstanding — the printing, the binding, the text, the illustrations. Before the advent of color printing books were hand painted; every plate of every copy published had to be processed by licks of the artist's brush. Referring to Gould's *Birds of Asia* Ollia observes: "The first volume was published in 1850 and the seventh (the last) in 1888; 530 plates, 500 copies each. It gives you an idea of the time and effort involved."

Modern printing has killed the art of lithography and woodcut printing. Further, photography, according to him, has killed the art of illustration. Earlier, travellers carried sketchpads and pens instead of cameras. "Seven to eight out of 10 people knew how to sketch. It was the only way to record your travels. The very best were reproduced," says Ollia. To do justice to the illustrations the printing had to be, and was, of the very highest quality. Two Indian presses that did excellent quality work were Ravi Verma's Press at Malavli, Lonavla and the Chitra Shala Steam Press, Poona. Both are no more; only their bylines on outstanding posters remain as testimony to their excellence. The best printing presses, according to Ollia, were in Germany.

Germany also probably has the best

collection of books on the Zoroastrian religion, says Ollia. His own stock of rare books on the Zoroastrian religion and community is limited. He does, however, own a rare volume, *History of Persia From Most Early Times to Modern Times*, MDCCCXV (1815). But Ollia is quick to point out: "Parsis are Indians first and last and there is nothing more to it. We treat India as our home and India treats us as Indians." He comments on the complacency that one finds in the community today: "Parsis are resting on the halo of their past glory. In fact, it is the Parsis settled abroad—in UK, in Canada, in USA—who are more vibrant. They care. They want to do something for the community." He is happy that abroad the children of Zoroastrian women married to non-Zoroastrians are being accepted as members of the religion. "There should be no distinction between man and woman; it's against modern trends and modern thinking. Men and women can only be happy if they are equal. Discrimination breeds unhappiness," says Ollia.

Ollia, however, remained a bachelor. His life has been dedicated to the visual arts—first cinema, now books. "I have no TV, no music system, no other form of entertainment, only my books. I don't need more."

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Could India have avoided the Partition?

Khusro F. Rustomji

Partition of India - Legend and Reality by H. M. Seervai. Published by Emmenem Publications, India Book House, 22, Bhulabhai Desai Rd, Bombay 400026. Pp:237. Price: Rs 70.

When I took up the book *Partition of India — Legend and Reality* by Hormasji Maneckji Seervai, I wondered how that legend of Indian law, whose book *Constitutional Law of India* is a classic, has dealt with a political subject. Law is based on words and interpretations. Politics is not only the written word but numerous unspoken fears and anxieties and hopes, unspecified personal ambitions and attitudes, the emotions of millions of people. How has he dealt with this complex subject?

Mr Seervai's method of writing a book is unique. There is meticulous analysis of records. There is an emphasis on words and their juxtaposition which an ordinary man may miss. The narrative takes account of the unexpected remark in a letter, the sentence in a press conference which

seemed insignificant and which showed the mind rather than the public stance. Only a man of exceptional skill and the deepest regard for every word in evidence could have produced a book of such an incisive nature.

From among the main characters who played their parts in the drama of partition — Mohandas Gandhi, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Archibald Wavell, Louis Mountbatten, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru — the two that he picks out as the heroes are Wavell and Azad. The Maulana's faith in Hindu-Muslim unity was so great that he was prepared to accept a postponement of independence. Rajmohan Gandhi quotes him in the following words: "If an angel descends from the heavens today and proclaims from the Qutub Minar that India can attain swaraj within 24 hours provided I relinquish my



From left
Wavell,
Azad and
Nehru:
played their
parts in
the drama of
Partition





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demand for Hindu-Muslim unity, I shall retort to it, 'No, my friend, I shall give up swaraj but not Hindu-Muslim unity,' for if swaraj is delayed it will be a loss for India but if Hindu-Muslim unity is lost, it will be a loss for the whole of mankind."

Wavell comes out as "the rugged, straight soldier" — direct both in approach and statement — who more than anyone else was responsible for opening the doors to negotiations in 1945. He was a scholar, an administrator who prevented the recurrence of the Bengal famine and a man who wanted to transfer power to a united India. He was opposed first by Churchill and then by Clement Attlee. Had he been supported, it is claimed by Mr Seervai, the partition of India may have been avoided. Wavell was a man who never understood Gandhiji, probably never understood any politician at all, and was summarily dismissed on the pretext that he was a soldier and lacked political training.

Mountbatten on the other hand is shown as vain, deeply rooted in himself, his own glory, and his unbridled ambitions: "left alone for an evening he would devote himself to geneology." The author feels that the contemporary verdict on Mountbatten will be reversed by history and the last few days of his viceroyalty "will live in infamy" because of the tragic results of the partition. He underscores the energy, the drive, the sincerity with which he pushed the concept of independence, wrongly perhaps precipitating the date so that adequate preparations could not be made.

Jinnah appears as a realistic politician who wanted parity with the Hindus, played his cards with astute diplomacy and won the British over to his side. And, what comes through at the end, in the words of his biographer Ayesha Jalal is, "It was the Congress that insisted on partition. It was Jinnah who was against it." It is doubtful whether her statement, which amounts to saying that partition was forced on him, is correct. The book traces the transformation of the nationalist Jinnah into the man who strove to protect Muslims from Hindu domination, but in the process forced the larger number to stay behind in an independent India and bear the odium of what he had achieved.

In the light of hindsight, one error of strategy is clearly visible. The Congress, like the rest of the country, had become convinced that the British would never part with power voluntarily. All their moves were based on this assumption. In consequence, the war effort was opposed; the Congress ministry resigned in 1941 which was a blunder. Any effort made by

the British at reconciliation was distrusted and spurned, and it was generally accepted that the British were playing the Congress against the Muslim League to stay in power. Some sagacious men like Chakravarti Rajagopalachari hinted at the possibility of the war weary British leaving India, but they were ridiculed. How could Britain give up its empire which was the cornerstone of Churchill's policy? Even when the Cripps offer came in 1943 the Congress was hesitant to believe that they would quit India. Jinnah, on the other hand, was quick to see that keeping the British on his side was the best way to secure his initial objective — parity.

The shift in Congress policy came too late when Mountbatten came on the scene and convinced Nehru and others that His Majesty's Government (HMG) had given him the mandate to transfer power before June 1948, the deadline set for him by Attlee. By that time the idea of Pakistan had emerged, in a small way in the beginning, in the shape of a grouping of states. Once that was accepted, against Maulana Azad's firm advice, Pakistan began to appear as a feasible proposition, and the frequent rioting and the continuous obstruction by the Muslim League in the interim government made the Congress accept partition. What they wanted to avoid — rioting and bloodshed — ended in the bloodbath of 1947.

A view which is commonly accepted is that partition was an avoidable disaster, and that if a compromise had been achieved, all the horrors of the partition riots would have been avoided. Some part of the trouble was undoubtedly due to lack of preparation. A postponement till the communal tension had subsided may have saved us from some of the troubles. But to think that if the partition of India had been prevented we may have been better placed to deal with our problems is a debatable proposition. We had reached a stage where no progress in undivided India was possible. The virus of communalism had produced a fever which had made settled administration impossible. Yet what we could not achieve in 1947 may possibly be achieved in future as Canada and the United States have done, as all the warring states of Europe have been able to do — by moving into a common market.

Mr Seervai's book can serve as a reference book but it lacks an appendix. It puts the whole of the period from 1942 to 1947 before us in a compact and discerning study, removes misconceptions, puts forward some original theses, and does it all with clarity and good faith.

Eleven years ago, Homi Homji became the "prophet" of the writing on the wall to declare: *O Whither Parsis? Placate and Perish or Reform and Flourish* (Karachi, 1978). He was then in Karachi and his book was addressed to the entire dwindling community, particularly those in his hometown and Bombay. Now as a well-settled immigrant and a prominent social worker among an increasing number of the immigrant Zoroastrians, both Parsis and Iranis, of North America, "guesstimated" to be around 9,000 souls, he appears quite optimistic of the future. His third and latest book has disregarded the warning of "placate and perish" and focusses on his message of "reform and flourish" in the new land of plenty.

The *Gathas* of Asho Zarathushtra provide the guideline for reform. But the *Gathas*, translated by many with "a heavy emphasis on the individual author's personal pride, prejudice, orthodoxy or liberalism, sometimes even seemingly manipulative," have "no two translations...in adequate conformity of meaning and conception." Homji has, therefore, "attempted to read several of these translations and to select therefrom what seems proper to an intelligent mind living in a modernized society of free thinkers." The translations quoted by Homji are by Ardeshir Framji Khabardar (*New Light on the Gathas of Holy Zarathushtra*, Bombay 1951), Irach J. S. Taraporewala (*The Religion of Zarathushtra*, Bombay 1950), Stanley Insler (*The Gathas of Zarathushtra*, Tehran-Liege 1975), *The Zoroastrian* (a publication of the California Zoroastrian Center).

The book has, in addition to an Introduction, Prologue and Epilogue, five parts, each with several sections of stimulating titles and the author's own "perceptions." With the *Gathas* in view, Homji painstakingly reviews the purpose and goal of Creation, the character and philosophy of Zoroastrianism, Ahura Mazda and His names and characteristics, the wisdom and mind of mankind, the cultivation of bodily senses as a means to attaining spirituality and perfection, rebirth, ethics, the origin and history of Avestan scriptures and their pollution, dilution and reversion, the dual mentalities in the *Gathas*, Pahlavi scriptures and their quality and influences, *manthras* and their proper recitation, Sassanian theocracy and ritualism, the post-Sassanian situation interpolating Islam, the reformist movement and orthodox traditionalism, and demography and 'accep-

In Search of the Gathas

Ali Jafarey



Zoroastrianism: contemporary perception of ancient wisdom, a search for the true meaning and scope of Zarathushtra's Gathas by Homi B. Minocher Homji. Published in 1989. Available from the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO), 3590 Bayview Ave. Willowdale, Ontario M2M 3S6, Canada. Pp: 214. Price: Canadian \$10 + postage (payable to ZSO for use in ZSO's Publication Fund).

tance.' Homji deals with "some controversial problems that have vexed the community" in every section.

The author does not confine himself to the *Gathas*, but quotes from non-Gathic parts of the Avesta, Pahlavi writings, contemporary scholars of Zoroastrianism and modern science to arrive at his "perceptions" at the end of every title. He speaks of the pure, progressive and modern teachings of the *Gathas*; later additions, interpolations, interpretations, institutionalizations by succeeding priests and the growth of ritualism, changes that have forced Homji to express himself in forceful words: "One wonders whether Zarathushtra, the great seer, had a premonition of this sacrilege that forced him to advise his followers to use their own individual intelligence and

choice (Y.30.2) in the understanding of his religion, man by man, and to be aware of the false prophets (Y.32.9, 31.1-2) that would follow him and who would superimpose on, or sidetrack from, his pure philosophy by blind and total indulgence in the cult of rituals. Could he have meant to convey to his followers that his universal religion is for all mankind and for all time, and that the application of individual intelligence and choice has to be related to changing societies as best suited to the needs of the time? Did he ever advocate practice of religion by surrogate intermediaries between man and his God, and of rewards or merits to be achieved by intervention of priestly rituals? Think about it! Would he have advocated the acceptance of his *Gathas* at par with later Avesta, Pahlavi and old Persian scriptures and 'traditions,' as now being advocated by pseudo-scholars who brazenly challenge the omnipotence of Ahura Mazda?"

The author gives his perception on the life hereafter by stating that "the theory of reward or retribution is firmly established in the Gathic philosophy" and finds in Taraporewala's translation "some confusion or vague distinction" on rebirth. "For want of better knowledge or wisdom, for the moment we will have to let the matter rest here," he says. Yet he devotes some 23 pages to give an account of "the two Bhavnagri sons, Vispi and Ratoo" who, after their death in a motorcar accident, establish "telepathic communications" with their mother to describe in detail their life after death, and to inform about repeated rebirths of soul in order "to qualify for rising higher spiritual levels."

Homji deals at length on ethics which takes the reader from the freedom of choice to ecology in order to emphasize man's part in promoting God's world and concludes that "Prophet Zarathushtra, by his own precept, shows us that our duty is three-fold. We have to strive for our own perfection, but simultaneously also carry along other members of the brotherhood to perfection by our thought, speech and action. In addition we also have an obligation towards evil persons, pretenders and false speakers, to convert them to the right way of thinking..."

The Gathic and other quotations followed by Homji's perceptions clearly state that the message of Zarathushtra is universal. "Zarathushtra's vision was... not necessarily limited to conversions by navjotes, but more the formation of a uni-

versal brotherhood of the righteous (society of maza magha—great magnanimity). So when we talk about conversion or acceptance, let us be clear that what we are after is to win over both Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians to this brotherhood (p.214)."

The part on scriptures describes well the *Gathas*, Haptanghaiti and other sections of the *Younger Avesta* and some Pahlavi writings. Unfortunately due to Zaehner's *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, Haptanghaiti receives some degrading remarks by Homji for the supposed degeneration of Gathic concepts. One wishes he knew that when Haptanghaiti, now in prose, is shorn off later interpolations and restored to its original form in poetry, it fully agrees with the *Gathas* (see *Yasna Haptahati*, an attempt at restoration of meter and translation of re-versified text, by Ali A. Jafarey, Tehran 1975).

Should one keep in mind Homji's urge to serve his small community in Toronto in particular and in North America in general, the financial resources at hand and

the self-restraint for obtaining funds, one would understand why he has printed a modest number of only 500 copies. One wishes that the message could be con-

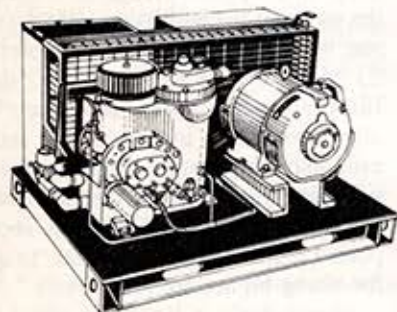
Could Zarathushtra have meant to convey to his followers that his universal religion is for all mankind and for all time?

veyed to a much larger circle. It is hoped that the second edition, duly revised, would have a wider circulation.

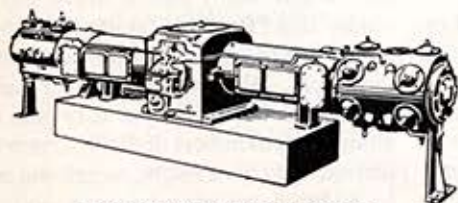
The book, although a little heavy for the laity to grasp the points put in the

perceptions, gives the clear, modern message of Asho Zarathushtra to promote a better world of loving and living together. It provides one with the insight of the Good Religion. It is a very good introduction to Zarathushtrianism and the aftermath. It may not be received well by some who might feel hurt at Homji's frankness. Yet a cool consideration would reveal his love and respect for everyone who truly serves the community and the humanity at large. Let us keep in mind that in this book Homji is concerned with the growing community in North America faced with a totally new environment and many challenges. It is on this community that he has pinned his hopes for a bright future.

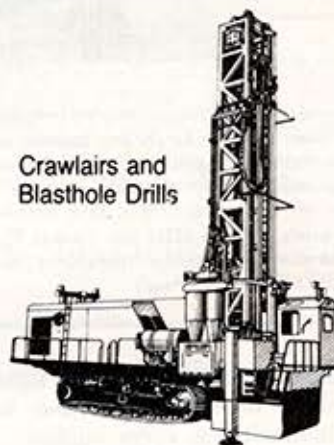
Incidentally, the book also portrays Homji not as a free thinker he perhaps wants the reader to believe, but as a serious thinker and a sincere contemplator. He is much concerned about the future of his community and above all, is not happy over the very limited reach of the universal message of Zarathushtra. He wants it to "spread over the seven continents."



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MILESTONES

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

Of the 81 Parsis who died in Bombay, 24 succumbed to heart diseases while 11 fell prey to lung diseases. Eight victims died due to pneumonia. Old age claimed eight. The other killers were brain disease (seven), hypertension (six), blood and kidney diseases (three each) and Parkinson's disease (two). Isolated cases of tuberculosis, cancer, liver disease, diabetes, dehydration and nervous disorder were registered. In the case of two deaths, medical reports were pending.

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 *Perviz and Perviz Daboo* on September 2, 1989
A boy to *Jeroo and Firoze Vazifdar*; September 2
A boy to *Aban and Percy Damania*; September 3
A boy to *Feroza and Neville Bachana*; September 5
A girl to *Havovi and Khodadad Irani*; September 6
A boy to *Piroja and Farokh Mistry*; September 9
A boy to *Farida and Jimmy Pardiwala*; September 9
A boy to *Zarine and Homyar Bodhanwala*; September 11
A girl to *Jasmine and Darayas Bhor*; September 12
A boy to *Havovi and Farokh Patel*; September 13
A girl to *Nilufer and Sarosh Doomasia*; September 15
A boy to *Zenobia and*

Khushroo Mody; September 15
A boy to *Kamalrukh and Perviz Wadia*; September 15
A girl to *Zarin and Temi Bodhanwala*; September 17
A girl, *Zanoishta*, to *Jasmine and Rohinton Vania*; September 17
A boy to *Meher and Rajan Mathrani*; September 19
A girl to *Hufrish and Rajiv Bahl*; September 20
A boy to *Khorshed and Jimmy Colabawalla*; September 21
A girl to *Aban and Jamshed Irani*; September 21
A boy to *Roshni and Shahrukh Tata*; September 22
A girl to *Freny and Behru Cardmaster*; September 24
A girl to *Jasmine and Yazdi Bharucha*; September 25
A boy to *Indrani and Cyrus Gandhi*; September 26
A boy to *Banoo and Farokh Mobedji*; September 27

Married

Dilshad Bhikhaji Marfatia of *Neemuch, Madhya Pradesh* and *Farokh Keki Pestonji* of *Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh*; September 3
Binaifer Burjor Katrak and *Kersi Phiroze Hilloo*; September 6
Niloufer Pirosha Rustomjee of *Australia* and *Minoo Keki Patel*; September 8
Benaifer Palanji Bajina and *Farhad Darius Sethna*; September 9
Kashmira Dorab Bardoliwalla and *Percy Meherji Karkaria*; September 10
Kerban Farukh Godrej and *Homi Cavas Bhaisa*; September 26
Dhan Jal Mehta and *Nosheir Maneksha Daruwala* of *Secunderabad*; September 29

Died

Homi Zand Ardeshir (73), residing at 'B,' The Reward, Tardeo, 400007; August 31
Perin Muncherji Aderiyawala (58), 257, Botawalla Bldg, Thakurdwar Rd, 400002; September 1
Homi Kaikhushroo Lalkaka (70), 39/2, Bella Court, Colaba, 400005; September 1
Jamasji Kawasji Pithawala (83), 515 B, Ratan Mans, R. P. Masani Rd, Matunga, 400019; September 1
Jehangir Dossabhoy Banaji (84), 4, Babulnath Rd, 400007; September 2

Rusi Kavasji Dubash (68), 111, Galaxy Apt Annexe, Bandra, 400050; September 2
Manek Manchershaw Lakadawala (75), Aidun Bldg, Dhobitalao, 400002; September 2
Homai Ruttonshaw Batliboi (82), 33, Hormusji Limjibhai Rustomfram Bglw, Bandra, 400050; September 4
Roshan Keki Kanga (46), F/38, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; September 4
Pallonji Behramji Bajina (69), 8, Gautam View, Seven Bglws, Versova, 400061; September 6
Piroja Ardesar Dotiwala (91), 16, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; September 6
Ratan Jamshedji Madon (82), 143, Fariyas Apt, Cumballa Hill, 400036; September 7
Dosibai Dhunjisha Pagdiwala (78), 9, Ruby Light, Bandra, 400050; September 9
Freny Nusserwanji Talaty (78), M/32, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; September 9
Khorshed Eruchshaw Chinoy (83), 522, Moon Mans, Opp Chira Bazar, J. S. Sheth Rd, 400002; September 10
Goolan Dara Dadachanji (84), 39/B, Gool Mhl, Sleater Rd, 400007; September 10
Edu Dhanjishaw Sodawaterwala (53), 15, Lady Navajbai Tata Bldg, Bandra, 400050; September 10
Savak Framroze Bamboat (83), G 1/2, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; September 11
Kaikhushroo Cavasha Dhalla (93), 11, Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; September 11
Perviz Darabshaw Panthaky (54), 'B,' Tardeo Chmbs, Kashinath St, 400034; September 11
Goolbai Kaikhasru Patel (93), Ali Manzil, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; September 11
Nusserwanji Nawroji Screwala (95), 804 B, Sainiketan, B. Ambedkar Rd, Dadar, 400014; September 11
Bachamai Dosabhai Surty (74), Bhivandiwala Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; September 11
Hilla Beharamji Bhagwagar (75), 8/3, Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; September 12
Rustom Framroze Eranee (80), Park View, Prof Almeida Rd, Bandra, 400050; September 12
Fali Sorabjee Fanibanda (62), 730, Jehangir Vimadlal Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 12

September 12
Rustomji Navroji Kutar (73), C/o Zoroastrian Studies, KRCOI Bldg, Bhagat Singh Rd, 400001; September 12
Dina Naval Master (77), 28, Ganesh Bhuvan, Dhobitalao Lane, 400002; September 12
Banoobai Burjorji Punjiaji (91), Master Chmbs, Cinema Rd, 400020; September 12
Najamai Pestonji Bhesania (78), 294, Crasto Bldg, Dhobitalao, 400002; September 13
Tehmina Nusserwanji Hozdar (80), Singanpori Bldg, 609, Girgaum Rd, 400002; September 13
Dinshaw Saeriarji Irani (68), Spenta Mans, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; September 13
Kaikhushroo Jamshedji Rabadi (64), Kashinath Bldg, Khetwadi, 8th Lane, 400004; September 13
Jamshedji Pestonji Sarkari (96), H/31, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; September 13
Khorshed Naoraji Wadia (88), Jamsapji Apt, Sleater Rd, 400007; September 13
Nariman Khurshedji Wadia (79), Wadia Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; September 13
Ruttonshaw Cawasji Panthaki (82), 682, Kapadia Bldg, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 14
Daulatbanoo Jamsapji Postwalla (80), J/7, Captain Clny, Tardeo, 400034; September 14
Aban Sam Aga (46), Banoo Mans, Cumballa Hill, 400026; September 15
Dhunmai Nariman Daruwala (62), M-8, Navroze Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; September 15
Noshir Hirjibhoy Gorimar (75), 28, Ganesh Bhavan, Makhamali Talao, Thane, 400601; September 15
Jamshed Noshirwan Engineer (70), Buena-Vista, Pochkhanawala Rd, Worli, 400018; September 16
Piroja Khushroo Irani (88), Kapadia Bglw, Khetwadi, 12th Cross Lane, 400004; September 16
Darabshaw Burjorji Medhora (96), G/8, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; September 16
Pirojibai Jal Palkhiwala (93), 'B,' Daruwala Bldg, Frere Bridge, Grant Rd, 400007; September 16
Rustom Jalejar Taraporvala

(80), Family Hse, 794, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 16
Fali Manchershia Titina (62), 182, Enterprise Apt, Forjett Hill Rd, 400036; September 16
Goolbai Shawaksha Dolikuka (97), 170/D, Amtobai Bldg, S. V. Rd, Bandra, 400050; September 17
Homai Erachshaw Bhacka (92), Sushil Bldg, Arthur Bunder Rd, Colaba, 400005; September 19
Hormuzd Boman Irani (75), B. Merwan Bldg, Opp Grant Rd Stn, 400007; September 19
Tehmina Hosang Kothawala (85), 2, Seagull, Bhulabhai Desai Rd, 400026; September 19
Khorshed Sorabji Kotwal (85), P/36, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; September 19
Fali Burjorji Gandevia (68), Sunder Mhl, 561, Chira Bazar, 400002; September 20
Rustom Namdar Irani (62), 'A,' Tapy Bldg, Jalbhoy St, 400004; September 20
Darabshaw Dinshaw Neterwala (85), C/o Dataram Chavan, New Transit Camp, Block 5, I-3, Sion, 400022; September 20

Nariman Pestonji Bhesania (75), 70-D, Meher Villa, Hill Rd, Bandra, 400050; September 21
Jamshedji Rustomji Dalal (86), Dubash Hse, Walchand Hirachand Marg, 400038; September 21
Homai Pirojshaw Shroff (84), 20, Hampton Court, Wodehouse Rd, 400005; September 21
Shirinbai Jal Shroff (66), Karani's Widow Chawl, Gilder St, 400008; September 22
Hilla Behram Umrigar (65), Dinshaw Bldg, Dhunbhai Wadi, Vile Parle, 400056; September 22
Jerbanoo Savakshaw Master (82), E/6, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; September 23
Tehmina Burjorji Bhiwandiwala (95), P/1, Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; September 25
Dinbai Pirojsha Daruwala (85), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; September 25
Behram Jal Godiwala (60), Hoshang Baug, Santacruz (E), 400055; September 25
Rusi Darabshaw Parakh (75),

6/8, Bhivandiwala Ter, 'A,' Dhobitalao, 400002; September 25
Homai Dorab Sidhwa (68), N/10, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; September 25
Najamai Pallonjee Zaiwalla (75), Dist Bordi, Thane, 401701; September 25
Homai Minocher Dalal (64), Piroja Villa, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; September 26
Piloo Pallonji Dumasia (62), 43, Madani Hse, Jijibhai Dadabhai Lane, 400001; September 26
Behram Jahangir Nazir (88), Bimal, Krishna Complex, Vasai (W), 401201; September 26
Eruch Bomanshah Dahk (79), 8, Rusi Mehta Bldg, Dinabai Petit St, Grant Rd, 400007; September 27
Jal Rustomji Mirza (85), B/28, Gool Mhl, Sleater Rd, 400007; September 27
Jamshedji Dhanjibhoy Vesuna (94), 5, Vijay Niwas, Sleater Rd, 400007; September 27
Maneck Keki Asavaid (63), Jehangir Mans, Dhobitalao, 400020; September 28

Hirabai Burjorji Basla (72), D/16, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculia, 400027; September 28
Nusserwanji Vicaji Dodhi (88), Green Fields, M. Karve Marg, 400020; September 28
Tehmina Rustomjee Banaji (87), 6/B, Crown Mans, Forjett St, 400036; September 29
Mehranbai Rustomji Daruwala (88), Navroze Mans, Tardeo Rd, 400007; September 29
Maneksha Sorabji Radheiya (68), 'A,' Kuka Bldg, Pila Hse, Liberty Hotel, 400008; September 29
Dhunmai Dossabhoy Balsara (81), Boman Hse, Homji St, Fort, 400001; September 30
Dorab Meherwanji Patel (83), M/30, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; September 30

KARACHI Died

Meher Patel, mother of Rubina Patel Lovelace; July 10
Franey Framroze Mody (71); August 4
Goola Bapuji Shroff (82); August 22

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka



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