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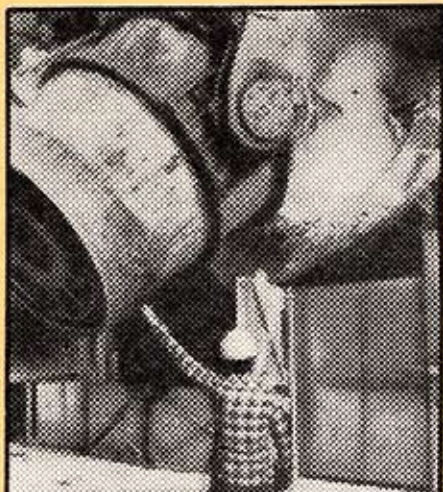
Visakhapatnam Steel Project: Thermal power plant and blower house with three 60 MW turbo-generator units



Sponge Iron Plant, Paloncha: DR unit with waste gas cleaning facility



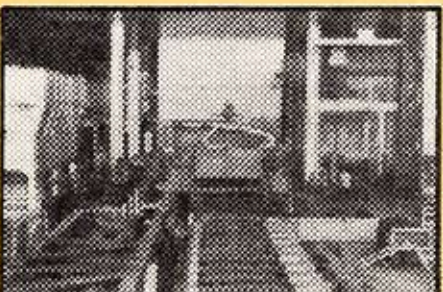
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Parsiana

March 1990
Volume 12 Number 9

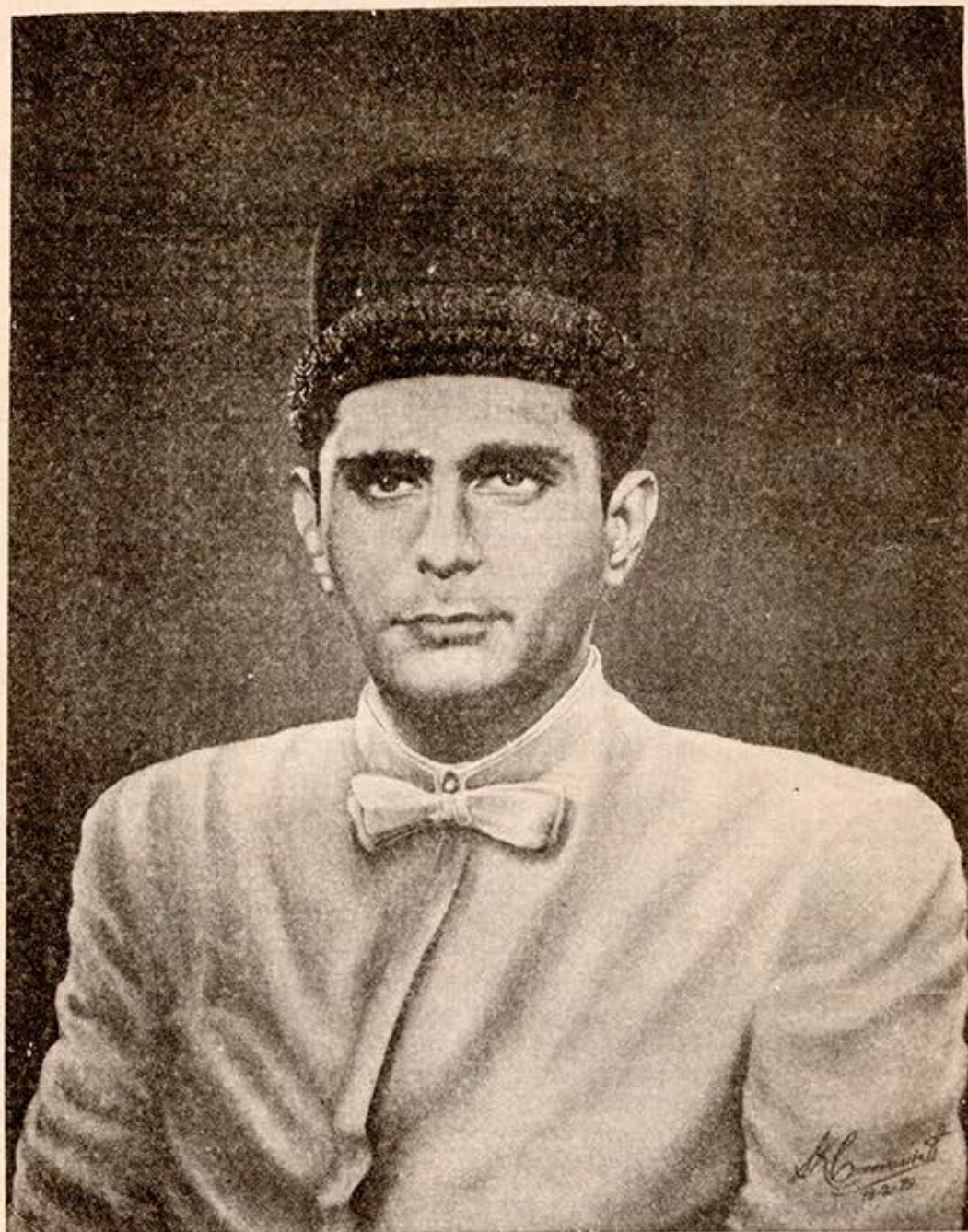
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Cover: Symbolic depiction of Nowruz tables

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In Memoriam

Mr Fali Meherji Variava

Director

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 Unsigned letters or those without a complete address will not be published.

The Parsis of Gujarat

In the past, the majority of Parsis of Gujarat used to live fairly comfortably in villages and their main occupations were agriculture and businesses in liquor, toddy and transportation. With the introduction of prohibition and nationalization of the passenger transport service, Parsis of rural Gujarat lost two of their main means of livelihood; furthermore, land legislation based on "land to the tiller" philosophy, also hit some of them very hard on the agricultural front.

Parsi farmers who have limited agricultural landholdings have to face competition from well-placed and hard-working farmers of other communities. They have to encounter major labor problems as well as the rigors of land legislations, and have to struggle very hard even for survival at the time of natural calamities like floods or droughts. At the time of all

such natural calamities, the Parsi community in general, and the Bombay and Surat Parsi Punchayets in particular, have always stood by them and have helped them substantially.

The World Zoroastrian Organisation took keen interest in their problems and together with the Surat Parsi Punchayet made a socioeconomic survey of the rural Parsis of South Gujarat. The survey work was entrusted to Ms Kashmira Bhaya (now Bharucha) who was knowledgeable in the field of social work and was connected with the Maharaja Sayaji Rao University of Baroda. Ms Bhaya's report has already received adequate publicity. She has estimated the expenses required to implement her suggestions to be about Rs 84 lakhs. According to her analysis, assistance is required for 687 families in 206 villages of Surat, Bharuch and Valsad districts in the direction of house repairs, repayment of debts, and additional stipendiary help.

The Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India has taken a positive interest in this report and, with a view to arrive at a definite action program, it has appointed a committee consisting of Dr Sam Bhacca, president, Surat Parsi Punchayet as the convener with Mr Dara Deboo (Navsari) and Mr Rustom Anklesaria (Bombay) as its members. This committee has further coopted Mr Rohinton Davierwalla (Sanjan), Mr H. Homawalla (Bharuch) and Mr J. F. Chavda (Valsad), as members.

The above committee has held four meetings in Surat and has made the following suggestions:

- To initially defer the help required to wipe off debts and repair houses — as it would require a very large amount of funds which are presently just not available — with the exception of those facing imminent house collapse or property sale.
- To promote activities which would help those in need to generate more income and to be self-supportive. This would be achieved by giving help to till the land, where feasible, by loan of tractors, provision of improved seeds, manure and fertilizers, irrigation of lands by water from canals, or by boring or deepening wells.
- Encouraging those who have very limited or no land and a large family to start poultry-farming, dairying, plying rick-

shaws in villages or nearby towns, plying handcarts for sale of food-stuffs and other provisions, learning and practising the trade of diamond-cutting, etc.

- Ladies who are capable may be trained in typing, stenography, secretarial work, sewing, stitching, etc and for this purpose, they may be provided temporary accommodation facility.

- Those who are too old, weak and incapable to undertake any work may be provided adequate stipendiary help.

In providing finances for generating additional incomes, it is intended that the beneficiaries, instead of becoming completely dependent on outside help will, wherever possible, contribute their small mite also towards the new ventures. The help will therefore be, as far as possible, in kind instead of cash.

It is proposed to make this a five-year plan with an annual budget of the order of Rs 10 to Rs 12 lakhs per annum but it is possible that with wise and economical utilization of funds, a total amount of Rs 60 lakhs to Rs 70 lakhs may prove adequate. If funds are not forthcoming in sufficient amounts, the period of the plan may have to be extended to seven to 10 years.

We appeal to the benevolence of all charity trusts and funds, anjumans and associations and their trustees and office-bearers all over the world as well as to all charity-minded individuals to extend their helping hand and to donate generously to assist us in this endeavor to alleviate the suffering of the poor Parsis of Gujarat.

The following donations have already been promised to us for the first year of the plan:

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet Rs 2,00,000, The Surat Parsi Punchayet Rs 2,00,000, Gheyara Family Charitable Trust Rs 20,000.

Cheques stating the purpose may be drawn in the name of 'Parsi Punchayet Bombay' or 'Parsi Punchayet Surat' and may be sent respectively to the Parsi Punchayet, 209, Dr D. N. Road, Fort, Bombay 400001 or Parsi Punchayet, Dr J. Lashkari Marg, Shahpore, Surat 395003.

Dr ASPI GOLWALLA

Chairman, Bombay Parsi Punchayet, and President, Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India

Dr SAM BHACCA

President, Surat Parsi Punchayet, and Vice President, Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India

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"Jamshed Pavri..."

Regarding the late Parsi 'akabar' Mr Jamshed Pavri ("Jamshed Pavri: The nurturing of a community," *Parsiana*, November 1989), his wife Roda writes, "He worked for the good of humanity till his last day."

Jamshedji was in regular correspondence with us so that my husband Dara and I knew all about his spirited work on behalf of the Zoroastrian community, even prior to my visiting Vancouver in 1982. Just as I had imagined, I found Jamshedji full of typically Parsi generosity, immense goodwill and bubbling with enthusiasm on every occasion he could find to serve the community, both Parsi and Irani (in fact the human community at large.) After my brief stay with the Pavris, Jamshedji continued even more frank correspondence. Writing in his fine hand, he often discussed the activities of overseas communities, particularly of British Columbia, the matters relating to his large collection of rare Gujarati and English books and how to place them for maximum utility, and of course his desire to complete his book on the Parsis of the Far East.

In his last letter to us dated September 15, 1989, Jamshedji said that 80 percent of his book was probably complete and "Now I have to write on two or three families, then Anjuman matters, one chapter each on Singapore and Shanghai — there were court cases and nobody knows anything about them. He grieved over the accidental death of his pet dog, literally 'man's best friend.' He also related with deep concern the various community tasks, now in the hands of younger 'akabars' of the Society as well as the Federation (FEZANA).

I had replied to him in November before my setting out for a visit to India and as promised therein, on arriving in Bombay prayed for his tandarusti at a fire-temple; then not knowing that his peaceable soul had left the earthly vestment!

It was part of a fitting tribute that the organizers of the recent Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress, together with the audience, paid homage by standing in silence in the pious memory of Mr Jamshed Pavri, a Zoroastrian son who has bequeathed the community with a legacy of good works.

Dr (Ms) JER RANDERIA
Durban

"Nariman makes a Point"

I must draw your attention to a grave fac-



Pavri (left): immense goodwill
Nariman: married at a late age

tual error that has crept into an article on Khurshed Nariman by Dara Kadva, edited from an article in *The Times of India* of September 1, 1989 ("Nariman Makes a Point," *Parsiana*, October 1989).

It is stated therein "A bachelor all his life, Nariman died in 1948."

It may be categorically stated that the late Mr Nariman was not a bachelor all his life. He had married at a late age (I believe his wife is the sister of the late Mr B. K. Boman-Behram, ex mayor of Bombay and former chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet) and had children.

KEKI M. MEHTA
Nagpur

[*Parsiana* apologizes to Ms Maneck Nariman (née Boman-Behram) and to their children Zarine and Cawas -- Editor]

"We've got to be..."

With reference to "We've got to be competitive to survive in New York," an interview of Ms Arnavaz S. Mama with Mr Erach Munshi, president of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (*Parsiana*, October 1989), may I add that the differences between the Iranian Zoroastrians and the Parsis of New York is regrettable and we all hope that these would eventually be resolved through goodwill and friendly communications. Differences, if not carried to a dangerous point, are sometimes stimulants, and we all have our petty quarrels.

But the point I want to make is on the statement made by Mr Munshi to the effect that "The Iranis shy away because of difficulties with the English language. Besides they have grown up within the confines of Islamic culture." This is a general statement concerning a delicate matter. The language barrier still exists. But the younger generation is as conversant with English as any Parsi resident of America could be. Those who have resided here for a decade or so can well understand the language and can easily join in a conversation. It is the new immi-

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grant who finds it difficult to express him or herself. But these newcomers are so far not involved in the socioreligious politics which have divided and plagued the community.

One of the causes for petty differences in mixed gatherings is not the culture. It is the lack of mutual knowledge. The Iranians wonder why Parsis have become completely Indianized so much so that they have forgotten their mother tongue Persian, given up the Iranian mode of life, and know little of the glorious history and culture of their *mader-e vatan* Iran. (The Iranians think so particularly because they see how small ethnic pockets of Armenians and Assyrians in Iran and other countries including the United States have well preserved their languages and cultural traditions — and so far I have not heard that any of their non-Iranian coreligionists has blamed them for being under the Islamic culture.) On the other hand, the Parsis have their own notions about Iranis. When some of the Parsis whom I met during my first visit to India came to know that I did not speak Gujarati and did not wear a sari, they doubted my being a Zoroastrian! To them, a person could only be a Zoroastrian if he or she was as Indianized as they were. I had to explain to them that it was the religion that bound us together and not the mode of speaking and dressing. That was long ago. Fortunately, now many of the barriers have come down and we know more about each other.

But what grieves me is to hear an experienced and responsible person of the New York Zoroastrian community make a statement that would line him up with those who know very little about Iranian Zoroastrians and the Iranian history.

Mr Munshi, who "despite about 20 years in the US... maintains his Indian citizenship, considers himself Indian first, Parsi second and Zoroastrian third," should know that the Iranian Zoroastrians have lived under incredible duress for 1,400 years to remain both Zoroastrians first and Iranis first because to them these two terms are synonymous. They have maintained all their religious customs and traditions — navjote, gahambar, roj and mah, muktad, nowruz, sadeh, memorial of the martyrs who fell before the Arab onslaught, and many more — so much so that it is the Parsis in America who wonder why they do not observe so many festivals as do the Iranians and some "think" these observances are Islamic!

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As far as the Islamic culture is concerned, may I make it clear that the Arabs of the desert who invaded and occupied Iran were far inferior in refined culture than the Iranians. They did not possess any cultural superiority to impose on the Iranians. Moreover, like most of the lightening invaders, they were a minute minority and remained so until they were dissolved into the Iranian milieu. They had taken possession of a highly rich empire and they wanted to keep it. Fired by their faith, all they wanted was to impose their religion and this they did through force and concession. The Iranians, who formed more than 95 percent of the population, changed their religion over some 500 years but not the culture. They retained their culture, and, as such, their identity. It is this Iranian culture that Mr Munshi calls Islamic! Had he known the fact, I am sure that he, who has been meeting Iranian Zoroastrians now for more than a decade, would not have made that statement.

Furthermore, despite the common culture with their Muslim neighbors, the Iranian Zoroastrians have all along lived in their own exclusive zones in towns and villages. We have still many villages in Yazd whose entire population is Zoroastrian. Yet the Iranis have one quality. The more they study the Gathic principles, the more enlightened they become, and the more they believe in the universality of the Good Religion. The Gathic teachings of continuously renovating the world (*feresho-kereti*) has made them quite progressive. If the Parsis see Iranian priests performing jashan on chairs and at tables, inviting non-Zoroastrian friends to their festivals, admitting some in their dar-e mehers, taking to aramgahs, or giving up nirang and taro, they should know that it has not been under any Islamic influence, but only recently and after modern studies of the *Gathas* and understanding Asho Zarathushtra's teachings.

The point Mr Munshi forgot to mention in his interview is the new spirit observed among our youth. Irani and Parsi young men and women, brought up in the free American environment, are meeting and cooperating more than ever. Let us read the reports on our youth congresses and conferences being held in North America and learn from our youth that we diehard grownups too can accommodate each other. Let us join them in being competitive and progressive

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enough not merely to survive in New York but to grow and prosper in this vast and varied land of prosperity. At the same time, let us study with more passion our deep roots in culture and tradition and feel proud of the "glory that was the Zoroastrian Iran." That will merge the Iranis and Parsis into one force, strong enough to spread the message of Zarathushtra far and wide.

Ms FARANGIS K. SHAHROKH
Anaheim, California, USA

"Jokhi's donation to PGH"

It was with great pleasure and satisfaction that I learnt of the donation of Rs 1.5 crores by the late Seth Shapoorji F. Jokhi to Bombay's B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital ("Events and Personalities," *Parsiana*, October 1989). This is a noble and very foresighted act on the part of a generous Zoroastrian, for I believe that when our numbers reduce in the middle of the next century, it will be institutions such as the Petit Hospital which will see the last of the community pass through its corridors to the towers of silence. At that time it will be through donations such as this that the remainders of our once mighty community will find succor

and comfort in their ultimate hour of need.

Dr ARDESHIR B. DAMANIA

Syria

"Coming to terms"

I was particularly interested in the report on the Zoroastrian Youth Congress ("Coming to terms," *Parsiana*, November 1989). Yes, it is a fact that Parsi girls do not want to marry outside of Bombay. For them *bahar gam* (out of town) means Dubai or Kuwait. I personally know of three boys who had to marry non-Parsi because girls were not willing to settle in the towns of Neemuch and Udaipur. Now, Udaipur is a beautiful place on the tourist map of the world and my cousin there is working in a bank.

One of the most negative aspects of our community is that we are living on our past glory, not yet having realized that 'You have to do your own growing, no matter how tall your grandfather was.'

Neemuch once boasted of a big and well-placed Parsi community and we have a dokhma and an agiary with a big compound to prove it. At present the community is dying out and we are a handful left. Our children are already citizens of Bombay.

Most of the development of this town was done by our grandfathers. Now the vast private properties are being disposed of. Loath to see my family property of four generations meeting the same fate, we opened the small S. B. Jal Primary School in one of our buildings in 1987. It has caught on well, but now we face the problem of space: our old buildings need repairs, specially the roofs. This must be the problem in most of the old Parsi buildings in mofussil areas, for buildings don't migrate.

Why can't we, through the columns of your magazine, get together in mutual cooperation? If other people could emulate the late Mr Shapurji Jokhi of Hong Kong and donate for the upkeep of these buildings, they could be used as institutions for the benefit of all communities. The property would remain with the community and be looked after and be made good use of.

Ms SOONU JAL
Neemuch

In "Coming to terms," (*Parsiana*, November 1989) I was surprised to read that one of the speakers at the Third All India Zoroastrian Youth Festival from November 3-5, 1989 told the youngsters that our

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community needs more intermarriages for a shot of fresh blood, and that intra-marriages within the community will breed a race of infirm and mental retarded.

I do not exactly know what the speaker had in mind when making such exhortations to youngsters. Was he implying that non-Parsi blood is superior to that of Parsis, or whether his own progeny (if any) out of intermarriage was of better stock? Such irresponsible statements are bound to misguide and mislead young minds. No wonder one young participant, who was vociferously clamoring for religious classes for the community at the same Festival, ended up with a non-Parsi husband as reported in the same issue. Another girl who said "love is blind" continued, "I might just marry outside." What these youngsters don't realize is that they fall victims of circumstance, to lust. In future, the community must be careful that the youth festivals are not hosted by proponents and propagandists of intermarriage who are eager to foist their own provocative and controversial views on young minds.

Dr P. D. SUNAVALA

"Shirdi ké Homi Baba"

Being a Zoroastrian, Mr Homi Dadi-Barjor should be ashamed of dragging in other Zoroastrian worshippers by his narrations about Sai Baba in dreams and other praise which is difficult to believe ("Shirdi ké Homi Baba," *Parsiana*, October 1989). By this he is diverting other innocent Zoroastrian minds and some of our community people are such that they fall prey to *chamatkars* (miracles) and other beliefs. Sai Baba was a simple and noble man who was helpful to all but he was not a god-avtaar. This craze has arisen since the last 25 to 30 years.

We would not find any Muslims or Christians bowing to any other religion or accepting other beliefs so deeply. A man should follow only one religion — the religion in which he is born. Giving respect to other religions is a different matter from bowing entirely to it which is a sin in the eyes of our prophet. What is pre-ordained by Dadar Ahura Mazda cannot be changed by any saint or other beliefs.

Mr Homi Dadi-Barjor has not known the greatness of Zoroaster's religion, and what one can achieve by faith in it.

May I, therefore, request *Parsiana* not to entertain such unbelievable stories



**Bakhtavar
and
Tehmas
Byramji:
captivating
cordiality**

which mislead other innocent Zoroastrians.

ASPI K. RAO

Information, please

Would any *Parsiana* reader know the name of the lyricist of the well-known, good old Parsi song: *Chhaiyé Hame Zarhosti*?

I believe the tune is from western music. Perhaps you could also enlighten us about the origin of the tune.

JAL M. KORKHIAO

Late Dr Tehmas Byramji

Some medical journals have printed articles about the outstanding contribution of ophthalmic surgeon Dr Tehmas D. Byramji (52) who, together with his wife Bakhtavar, perished in an aircraft crash near Pune on September 23, 1989.

Born in 1936 in Hyderabad, Dr Byramji's bright academic career culminated in his winning the gold medal for his masters degree in ophthalmology from the Osmania University. After a few years of field experience under the guidance of Dr Rustom D. Ranji, he established his own clinic in Secunderabad.

Initiated as a small eye clinic, in the course of a decade it grew to include a large scale eye hospital containing full-fledged units of optometry and equipped with the latest surgical facilities including the capability of handling intra-ocular lens implant operations.

Conferences, national and international, became a part of his life-style. Trends in recent research pertaining to eye treatment held a tremendous fascination for him, specially with the hope of making it available to his patients.

Rational in thought, scientific in temperament, his qualities of care and compassion towards his fellowmen have been described by one of his patient-friends: "He did not run a medical factory but operated a clinic for human beings. His Persian courtesy, captivating cordiality and infectious smile stand the wear and tear of time." A number of economically weak individuals were treated

gratis.

Bakhtavar, who had her schooling and college life at Solapur, assisted her husband at the eye hospital, and served on the managing committee of the Zoroastrian Stree Mandal for many years.

The couple is survived by their sons, Sherzad, Ariz and Firdaus.

Ms HAVOVI K. PATEL
Secunderabad

Aid to publish Khabardar

In 1981 we had celebrated the birth centenary of the great national Gujarati Parsi poet A. F. Khabardar. He was the first Gujarati poet who sang and appreciated the freedom struggle of India and wrote for national unity, selfless service, sacrifice, non-violence, truth and independence. In these present days of class and caste, of wars of clashing self-interest, his poems are of much importance and a fountain of inspiration for high values and ideals. His parodies in Gujarati are second to none. He wrote many good English poems also which are appreciated by English critics and poets. He wrote on the *Gathas* in English as well as in Gujarati. A favorite poet, he often received Gandhiji's help.

On his birth centenary, we had published the PhD thesis *A. F. Khabardar's Poetry — a study in Gujarati* by Prof Dr Dharmendra M. Master (Madhuram). This is the first part of the thesis. The second part — *A. F. Khabardar's Prose — a study*, is yet to be published. There are also other unpublished works of Khabardar. Our aim is to publish them. We have got the cooperation of Khabardar's granddaughter Ms Manek Khabardar for this work but we need liberal financial assistance.

Kindly send your generous donations by cheque or draft to the undersigned at C/875, Kesurmama Chakla, Near Sankadi Sheri, Bharuch, (Gujarat State) 392001.

Prof (Dr) DHARMENDRA M. MASTER
Bharuch

Edited by Amavaz S. Mama

Events and Personalities

Navroz telegram

A message in English, "Heartiest greetings on Navroz," or in Devanagari as "Navroz ki shubh kaamnaae," can now be conveniently transmitted via a telegram. The Government of India's department of telecommunications has made special provisions for the inclusion of this message in the list of standard phrases used in greetings-telegrams as per their notification dated January 31, 1990.

The latest addition to the existing list of telegram messages, the Navroz greeting is numbered '40.' The benefit from this inclusion is in terms of cost saving, explains a representative of the Central Telegraph Office (CTO) in Bombay. The sender would pay for the four-word Navroz greeting at the rate applicable for one word. Thus the total word count of the telegram would be lower by three words. This is permitted because the number corresponding to the greeting-telegram (number '40' in the case of Navroz greeting) is an indicator of the message to be relayed. Since the minimum charge for a telegram is Rs 3.50 for a word count not exceeding 10, plus 50 more paise for every additional word, the introduction of this new facility by the postal department would mean a maximum saving of Rs 1.50 for an ordinary telegram and Rs 3 for an express tele-

gram where the rates applicable are double.

The credit for getting the Navroz greeting included in the list of standard greetings-telegrams should go to R. E. Canteenwala of Lucknow, acknowledges the telecommunications department. In their letter, they express their "appreciation for the interest taken by (him)."

Though the Delhi office informs that the subordinate units have been instructed "to give wide publicity to the new greeting phrase," the Navroz greeting text was not visible on the display boards at CTO, Bombay until April 25, 1990.

Dastur Hall: Round III

Whose land is it anyway? The ownership of Dastur Hall, Poona, still remains unresolved as the city's VII additional district judge D. S. Jamkhedkar allowed an appeal against the joint charity commissioner's ruling that the property is the private estate of Dastur Hormuzdiar N. K. Dastur and not trust land. A temporary injunction has been granted against further development of the property.

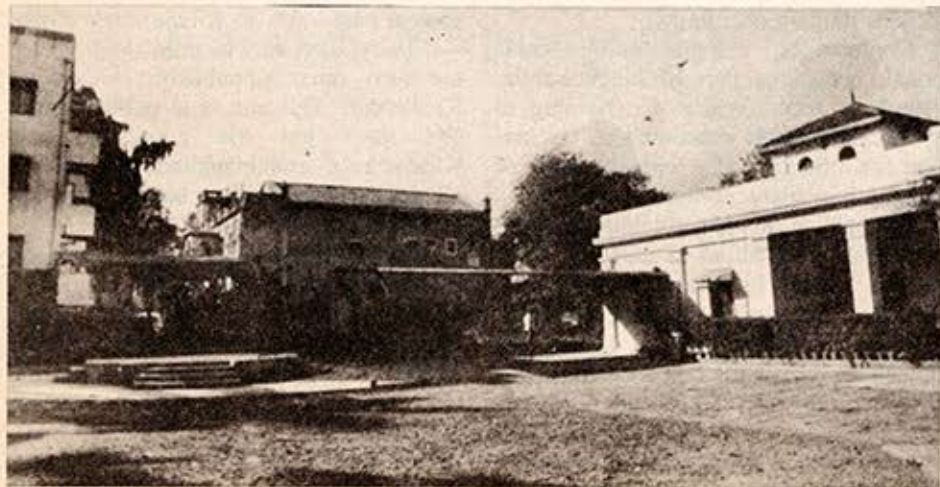
As reported earlier ("To whom does Dastur Hall belong?" and "Decree for Dastur Hall," *Parsiana*, January and July 1989), Eruch M. Irani and three others obtained a stay order against the sale of the land by Dastur on the grounds that the property belonged to Sardar Sorabjee

Ratanjee Patel Charitable Trust (S. R. Patel Trust). Later, the joint charity commissioner P. V. Kakade ruled that only 5,332.66 square yards of the property on which Dastur Hall stands belonged to the S. R. Patel Trust and the rest was the private property of Dastur Hormuzdiar.

While allowing the appeal against the ruling of the joint charity commissioner, the additional district judge observed: "Since the order(s) passed by the joint charity commissioner are in question and since we are yet to decide the appeal...it would be hazardous to reject these applications...at this premature stage." This, he felt, was in itself ground enough for a temporary injunction against further development of the property.

He noted that the joint charity commissioner relied exclusively on the document of July 2, 1884 to arrive at the verdict that the disputed land was not part of the S. R. Patel Trust but had been transferred by S. R. Patel, the settlor of the trust, to the high priest of the fire-temple managed by the Trust. The additional district judge believed that the judgment does not consider "the scope and ambit of the (earlier) document of 1843 which in fact decided the rights and limits of the high priest." He further observed: "It appears that one hall, viz Dastur Hall...was allowed to be utilized by the high priest for his residence. It is not disputed. Now the question comes for our consideration as to whether this amounts to transfer of ownership to the high priest or whether he was simply allowed to reside there being a high priest." The additional district judge was of the opinion that if Dastur Hall was built "to maintain the dignity of the High Priest of the community, and now if it is allowed to be disposed of, that would (be) futile or a setback to the wishes of the original testator."

A factor that could establish the status of the property, according to the additional district judge, was the question of



Dastur Hall: ownership unresolved

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expenses and maintenance costs. "If the expenses incurred for the maintenance of (the) big property were from the funds of the Trust then there is reason to believe that this property is held as Trust property."

Also taken into account was the fact that the property on which Dastur Hall stands is classified as Clause-VII-Inam properties under the Maharashtra Revenue Code. "(This) would be sufficient enough to take us to the conclusion that these properties were used for religious use and were exempt from paying the land revenue. This would go to show that these properties were not given to (the high priest) as his absolute properties," noted the recent judicial order.

The additional district judge therefore believed that if the injunction was refused, "an irreparable loss is going to be caused" as two of the respondents are builders who are going to demolish Dastur Hall and build a new complex on the property. He believed that the appeal "deserves to be allowed" and directed the respondents to "maintain the status quo of the property till the disposal of the appeal."

Gustasp Irani

Blood mismatch

The B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital (PGH) is being sued for negligence in the Bombay High Court. Though the case is yet to come up for hearing, Ms Yasmin Tavaria has petitioned for five lakh rupees in damages for the death of her 78-year-old father Eruch Tavaria on August 5, 1989, informs *The Times of India* of February 10, 1990. Tavaria avers that the cause of her father's death was the transfusion of blood belonging to a different blood group which led to rigors, fever, and tripping of the kidneys resulting in a buildup of fluids within the body. The patient is alleged to have succumbed to the resulting pressure on the heart.

While the Hospital has not denied the failure on the part of the pathologist on duty to correctly check the blood samples of donor and recipient, it has tried to place the mishap in the perspective of the man's advanced age, history of heart trouble and stroke and, most recently, the grievous head injury sustained in an accident on June 24, 1989. For this last, he had initially been hospitalized at the St George's Hospital and thereafter at

the Parsee General Hospital.

The story broke on September 8, 1989 when *Mid-Day* carried a front page report entitled "Blood mismatch causes death." The article by Latha Venkatraman, based on information provided by Ms Tavaria, also alleged manipulation of the death certificate issued by the PGH.

The rebuttal to the article from the PGH Administrator was published by *Mid-Day* on September 15. Tracing the chain of events that culminated in Tavaria's death, the Hospital's reply noted that a complete report on the case had been submitted to the coroner who had confirmed the cause of death given by the Hospital.

The *Times*' story also informed that Ms Tavaria had written to the coroner and the Gamdevi Police, under whose jurisdiction the Hospital falls, seeking an official inquiry into the alleged criminal negligence. There has been no response from either quarter, states the report, quoting Tavaria, but the Maharashtra Medical Council to which she has complained, is said to be holding a hearing.

Funds for Boys' Town

"A God-intoxicated Sufi told a fish, 'You're stinking! Go have a bath.' The fish replied, 'But I live in water!' Similarly, people can live with God all around and yet be fouled by greed, hatred and other vices."

Bejon Desai, secretary of Boys' Town — the residential school in Nasik founded by Pherozeshah Mehta — was addressing the audience at the musical soiree organized by the P. N. Mehta Trust at the Birla

Matushri Sabhagar on February 18, 1990. "When the mainstream of society is full of crooked people, our goal is to prevent this crookedness from entering the lives of children," Desai defined the aims of the institution he had earlier led as principal for 32 years.

Singing star Ms Penaaz Masani had performed free of charge to augment the School's funds, to enable it to provide a computer, a gymnasium and a child art theater for its students, informed Desai. Penaaz had rendered a similar performance in Nasik earlier. Phiroze Shah on the harmonium, Rasi Ahmed on the tabla and Nasir Ahmed on the electric guitar provided a lively rhythmic base. *Toohi méra dil, toohi méri jaan* and *Jo mére paas tha, mainé sub kuch diya*, were two of the many melodious offerings that evening. Penaaz, who said her services would be available to Boys' Town whenever required, was presented a floral tribute and a souvenir by the institution's managing trustee Behram Mehta and his wife Allu.

Desai traced the history of the School and remembered some of the outstanding trustees of yore — Dastur Framroze Bode, Freydoon Mehta, Noshirwan Petigara, Rustom Sidhwa, etc. The board of trustees, currently chaired by industrialist Naoroji Godrej, includes Keki and Behram Mehta, sons of the founder, informed Desai. Among those felicitated that evening for their help and support were 'ex-parents' Ms Hemaben and Dharendra Mehta "for making the whole fund raising project a grand success," and eminent ex-students: architect Hafeez Contractor, Rajendra Barwale,



Masani (center) singing at the Boys' Town fund raising function

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Manoj Patel, Ajit Shah and others. Arvind Inamdar, joint commissioner of police, was the chief guest.

Unfortunately for Desai, on the return trip to Nasik the ambassador car in which he and his wife were travelling met with an accident near Bhiwandi, informs the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of February 25, 1990. Desai, who sustained a fractured rib as well as injury to the head, and his wife who fractured her leg, had to be hospitalized at Bombay's Jaslok Hospital. The car reportedly skidded while swerving to avoid hitting a cyclist.

Amavaz S. Mama

Epic effort rewarded

Dr Bahman Surti's seven-volume translation of the *Shah Namah* was recognized by the Naishapoor Foundation which presented him an award on November 10 last year. The Naishapoor Foundation is involved in promoting cultural, historical and literary activities of the ancient Iranian and Zoroastrian civilization, notes a press release. At a function held under the auspices of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, eminent industrialist and Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustee Jamshed Guzder presented the award to Surti.

Surti, a consulting gynecologist by profession who has retired as additional director of the medical and health services of the Government of Andhra Pradesh, reportedly took 12 years to translate the 5,994 couplets of Firdausi's Persian epic, the *Shah Namah*, into English prose.

The seven-volume set priced at Rs 540 including postage within India, can be bought from Marzban Giara, Dhunmai Building, 667, Lady Jehangir Road, Parsi Colony, Dadar, Bombay, 400014. (Telephone 4120371).

Play on Parsi names

The speculation on Parsi names has been given a contemporary twist by D. B. Rustomji. In a humorous piece titled "For what's in a Parsi name?" published in the *Calcutta Gavashni*, November '89-January '90, Rustomji asks, "Why isn't violence ever mentioned in the FED letters? Because it's edited by Gandhi." Some samples of Rustomji's 'philology' of the 1990s:

- Which is the most popular ABBA song amongst the Parsis?
Gimi Gimi Gimi
- Why did Bo Derek stop at 10?
Because the Parsis took on a Gyara
- Name a female bingo Parsi
Tamboli



Poona's well-known book collector Jimmy Ollia (right) who donated a 1546 edition of Hall's Chronicle to The Asiatic Society of Bombay, seen felicitating Praful A. Shah, managing director of Garden Vareli Silks, who made the highest bid of Rs 51,000 for the book at the auction organized on February 23, 1990. Prof D. R. Sardesi (left), president of The Asiatic Society, looks on. To further augment funds for the library, Ollia donated two volumes of an illustrated leather-bound Bible (1794) which will be raffled later

- Why do some Parsis never tell lies?
Because they are Mugaseths
- Who owns Woolworths in Bombay?
Oon walla
- Who is the only Parsi Rajput?
A Lang Rana
- Why is Parsi mail service always so strong?
Because we have a Bahadur Postwalla

Captain leads to victory

The Bombay University cricket team led by Khushroo Vasania emerged victorious at the West Zone Inter-Varsity Cricket finals, notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of December 17, 1989.

In the finals played at the Pithawalla Stadium, Bhimpore, near Surat, Vasania's team beat opponents Shivaji University of Kolhapur by 30 runs. The Bombay University team scored 194 runs for the loss of nine wickets with captain Vasania contributing 43 runs to the total, adds the *Jamé*.

SPOTLIGHT

At an exhibition, "Biology through stamps," in Madras in October last, veteran authorities on philately Darabshaw R. Mistry and P. M. Medhora were awarded a citation and a special memento, notes a press release. The invitee section featured 17 frames from Mistry's

collection which evoked considerable interest, it was reported.

Farad D. Bhathena and his teammate Farokh Commissariat, driving a modified Gypsy, were adjudged the overall winners of the McDowell Rallye D'Endurance, notes the *Indian Express* of December 8, 1989. During the four-day 1,800 km national rally they had to mainly traverse the Western Ghats terrain.

In the category of mechanical toys, Stomper Super Rider, manufactured by Rumi Homi Tangri, was awarded a prize for the Best Toy of the Year 1989 at the All-India Toy Fair held in Calcutta, notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of March 4, 1990. The 24-year-old started his toy manufacturing venture last year under the Astroplast banner.

Minoo H. Mody, former chairman of Tata Unisys and a leading executive whose resignation from the board of Tata companies last July jolted financial and economic circles, has joined the board of Apple Industries, notes *The Independent* of February 22, 1990. He will chair the company's export oriented software subsidiary.

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

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ZOROASTRIANS ABROAD

Education aimed at changing community attitudes could lead to Zoroastrian revival, says Iranian philanthropist Meheraban Zartoshty

Arnavaz S. Mama



PHOTO: YASMIN POONEGAR

“Once youth gets educated...”

“I enjoyed and was amazed at the youth...How they spoke with open-mindedness! I'm an old man but I believe (them).”

Noted Iranian philanthropist Meheraban Zartoshty was referring to the youth session at the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress where the youth speakers more than held their own, speaking out their mind with total candor.

It took some persistence and persuasion for *Parsiana* to obtain the interview with Zartoshty. Despite his munificence all over the world in which he says he and his brother Faridoon are equally involved, the gentle Iranian prefers to remain in the shadows. Having agreed to the interview, however, Meheraban and his wife Paridokht epitomized gracious Iranian hospitality, in their room at the Taj Mahal Hotel on January 8, 1990, spreading fruit and sweets to “refresh” us. “It is an Iranian custom,” says Zartoshty, “to offer sweets when people first come.”

Flying in from Vancouver where he now resides, Zartoshty was one of the patrons of the Congress in Bombay, unfailing in his attendance at every session. He found it a good gathering for exchanging ideas, meeting one another, but he was not much in favor of discussing controversial issues: “because we don't get any result. The orthodox get more

rigid and the liberal more liberal,” he notes.

Zartoshty supported the recurring cry for more and better education, particularly about the religion. “Once youth gets educated, with open mind and more knowledge of religion, (they will be wiser) to decide whether to have rituals or not,” he comments on the topic on which the youth speakers had dwelt at length. The problem of who will propagate the religious education which the youth sought with such earnestness, remains. The problem exists among all communities, says Zartoshty. “Every religion has different sects, beliefs, ideas,” he adds. He recommends, however, an integrated approach, one that will make the community self-reliant, confident, adventurous. They must be educated on “how to live a good life, be independent, have initiative...not only professional education,” he says. Simultaneously there is the problem of attendance when no compulsion is invoked. For example, there were 150 attending religious education classes in Tehran in the Shah's time. In Ayatollah Khomeini's time there were 1,500! Unfortunately, in North America, numbers are dropping, he says.

Conversion or acceptance is not a solution to the problem of the community's demographic decline, according to Zar-

toshty. Only propagation can increase population, he says. Zartoshty suggests that the youth of the community be educated and given the facilities to have more children. He refers to “two groups among Parsis -- one very well-to-do: God has given them everything but neither men nor women marry early. No marriage, no children!...They should share with others...The other group doesn't have the facilities.” Referring to the community's attitudes, Zartoshty says, Zoroastrians “want to live well. The children should have a separate house to live in. Most are standing, waiting for a house to get married. I myself know those waiting for more than five years. Housing is one cause of the declining numbers. Even then, we should not worry about it...”

“Though we're small in number we have a good past record... we must keep up our quality. I don't believe in conversion, because we're not going to gain much. We have to accept the children and spouses (of mixed marriages). If we don't accept, we'll lose them. It is the mother who is always taking care of the children.” But Zartoshty does not believe in encouraging intercommunity marriages. “Those who have married non-Zoroastrians had problems at the end of life — of religion, language, habits... the end is not very happy.” He ad-

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vocates lectures and books on the subject that would direct the youth to make happier choices.

Zartoshty is more perturbed about the loss of independence and initiative among Parsi youth: "Everyone goes to office. Should try to be independent, in trading or business, small or big. Should not stick to Bombay -- go out. Why not Surat, Navsari, Australia? Any business will be successful in India. Where there is population, there's good business." The Iranis of Dahanu are a good ex-

**The community must
be educated on
"how to live a good
life, be independent,
have initiative"**

ample, according to Zartoshty, of good business as well as a growing, thriving community. "In 1933 when I was in Bombay and went for a holiday to Dahanu, there were two families there: of Merwan Irani and Rashid Shahmardan. Merwan won gold medals for good fruits. Rashid was studying, meditating... In 1982 there were 400 families all over Gholvad and Dahanu. There was propagation and hard work. It is a healthy, rich community. This is the way to increase the community -- not by conversion!"

Charity to Zartoshty is not only defined in financial terms. The sharing of information and knowledge through individual advice and public lectures is also charity, he says. "My brother and I do our duty towards the community in all countries," he says, recalling the example of Manekji Limji Hataria, the Parsi emissary of the Bombay based Amelioration Society, who was sent to Iran in 1854 to report to his Indian coreligionists on the conditions of Zoroastrians in Iran, but who remained there for the next 35 years, helping the Iranian community back on its feet. Referring to Hataria as the "savior of Iran" and to Bombay's Petit family as "the backbone of the Amelioration Society" which provided the financial base for Hataria's work, Zartoshty had noted reverently that February 15, 1990 would mark the centenary of Hataria's death in Tehran. The Tehran Anjuman as well as the Council of Iranian Mobeds in North America

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would commemorate the event, Zartoshty had said.

So far as his own philanthropy is concerned, Zartoshty believes it is not so difficult to pay money as to use it wisely and was appreciative of the working of the trusts and organizations to which he had donated. Happily, the CER-HOME (Committee for Economic Revival's House Our Mobeds Endeavour), a scheme to which he had contributed substantially, was close to completion during his short stay and a thanksgiving jashan organized.

Born in Iran, Zartoshty considers it his first home, India where he spent 15 years of his life between the ages of 15 and 30, his second, and Canada the third. An alumnus of the Bharda New High School and Elphinstone College, Zartoshty says, "I love Bombay and India because the culture of Indians and Zoroastrians is so close together. They are the best among the whole world. India and Indians have cradled world civilizations. I think highly of them and respect them."

In course of time Zartoshty says he touched everything -- export-import agencies, machinery and plastic factories, etc. But he is particularly "proud to say I'm a mobed." Their father was anxious that his sons be navar and maratab and Zartoshty says that though they never practiced while they were more involved in business, now, in semi-retirement, "My brother and I perform religious ceremonies in Canada, Los Angeles and Australia."

For the past 30 years the Atash Bahram of Yasht is under the management of Faridoon and himself, says Zartoshty. The duty devolved on them when the Zoroastrian Society of Yazd found itself unable to cope with it. "During the Shah's time the political situation and the conditions in Iran (were such that) it was decided to open it to the public. But the fire altar where Zoroastrians pray is not open to the public. A big glass separates them from the sanctum...so that those praying are not disturbed...There is also a library and bookshop (where) every year thousands of people come for knowledge of Zoroastrianism and 20,000 to 30,000 books (all in Persian about the religion, philosophy and teachings of Zarathushtra) are sold at a nominal price because anything, if given free, is not valuable; but when they pay, they take the trouble to read at least a page or two!"

During their brief stay, the Zartoshtys

made it a point to visit Udwada and Sanjan where the consecration ceremonies of the new Kookadaru Dar-e-Meher were in progress. Commenting on the Zoroastrian College which is also a building in Sanjan, Zartoshty complimented the president of the College and Mazdayasnie Monasterie Ms Meher

"Any business will be successful in India. Where there is population, there's good business"

Master Moos "for doing a wonderful job singlehanded -- collecting funds, lecturing..." He appreciated the way different people were working for the community in the way in which they believe: "It shows that the community is alive -- there is effort in every direction," he noted.

Unhappy that today "people don't know who lives next door," Zartoshty

recalled the social gatherings and mutual help he had witnessed in his younger days. Living in the "dastur area of Yazd, around us were all behdins..." The nature and structure of village life was different in the Zoroastrian pockets, he recalls. During ghambars, a large loaf of bread, three or four different kinds of soups, dry fruits like dates, raisins, almonds, dry peaches were distributed to the people of the mohalla for five days. As all the better-off families distributed in this way, it kept the poor going for at least a part of the two months before the next ghambar. What is more, the giving and receiving were "not in the name of charity but of religion -- it was a religious duty to partake of sacred food." At ghambars and jashans, the rich and the poor, the old and the young gathered together without distinction and everyone received an equal share of the consecrated food, says Zartoshty. Even now, in North America the Iranians try to follow the same custom and, in particular, "the refugees enjoy it," he adds.

Describing the methodology of charity in Iran, Zartoshty notes, "People of means set aside a piece of land with its

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rent or farm products being used for the purpose of charity. The land would pass from father to son, but no one had the right to sell the land."

Speaking about the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia and its homogeneity, Zartoshty paid tribute to the missionary zeal of the late Jamshed Pavri in binding the community together, interlocking his fingers to show the sense of cohesion between the Parsis and Iranians there. The Society's seven directors include three Parsis, three Iranians and one in common, he informs. The Arbab Guiv Darbe Meher in Vancouver, British Columbia, is unique in North America according to Zartoshty, with a prayer room and a completely separate gathering hall. The property, when acquired, was a Christian Science church but has now acquired a Zoroastrian atmosphere and "looks much better than before," he notes with satisfaction.

The Zartoshtys' three daughters were all educated in the west. "Luckily, all are married to Iranian Zoroastrians," says Zartoshty. Referring to three marriages between Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians in California, Zartoshty is optimistic of future trends: despite the differences of language, some rituals and food, there is no basic disunity which will not be ironed out as "the youth grows up in a common culture," he adds fervently.

Update on the Mody case

When the four teenagers involved in the fatal mugging of Navroze Mody on September 27, 1987 in Hoboken, New Jersey, were let off with 10-year prison sentences on a charge of aggravated assault, Mody's parents and the Zoroastrian and Indian communities in North America felt let down. "We should not sit by and allow this to happen," Dr (Ms) Lalitha Masson, a spokesperson for the Indian community in New Jersey, voiced the general indignation, as reports *FEZANA Journal* of September 1989. Masson said she had been assured by the Assistant US Attorney Michael Chertoff that "he would look into any possible improprieties in the handling of the case," informs the *Journal*.

In the meanwhile the parents, Jamshed and Khorshed Mody, filed a federal law suit against the city of Hoboken, its police department chief George Crimmins, several police officers, and the four Hoboken teenagers convicted of assaulting their son, notes the *Journal*. Mody has reportedly questioned the skewing of the legal system in favor of the criminal defendants and in a letter to FEZANA president Rohinton Rivetna noted with disappointment that "our New Jersey Governor is not interested in helping us. He does not reply to our letters or our

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phone calls." It has been the Modys' contention that the criminals got off so lightly because there were several members of common Hispanic origin on the jury which heard the case.

The subsequent *FEZANA Journal* (of December 1989) notes, however, that "a united front on matters of broader concern such as this does draw a response from the highest office of the state," citing a letter from Gregory J. Sakawicz, chief of the Prosecutors Supervisory Section to Rivetna. Excerpts from the letter as published in the *Journal*:

"The Prosecutors Supervisory Section within the Division of Criminal Justice has been directed to review your letter addressed to Governor Thomas H. Kean and to attempt to address your concerns...

"The law in New Jersey is quite clear. If a prosecutor systematically excluded prospective jurors based upon their race, color, religion, ethnic background, the courts would rule that the jury selection was flawed and that any conviction that may have been returned would be overturned with the matter being scheduled for a retrial...While I accept your frustrations, I am constrained to advise you that jury exclusion based upon the background of the victims, defendants or others, would do great harm to our system of criminal justice... I am quite certain that he (Jamshed Mody) will support my statement that the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office assigned a very experienced prosecutor who presented the evidence in a very professional and dedicated fashion. I have also come to appreciate the inner strength of the Modys who have endured more than any person should have to bear...

"Please accept my assurances when I state that we, in New Jersey law enforcement, have attempted to the best of our ability to gather evidence and to make a professional presentation in our attempt to support the charges in the indictment."

FEZANA jottings

A two day tutorial seminar on Zoroastrian thought, beliefs and tradition has been conceived by FEZANA's education committee. With a broad range of topics, such an event would spark interest in the study of Zoroastrianism among youths and adults, notes the *FEZANA Journal*.

The Zoroastrian Youth of North America (ZYONA) issued its first newsletter as the 'Youth Section' of the *FEZANA*

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Journal of December 1989. It aims at providing young Zoroastrians across North America with vital information on upcoming events, activities and news throughout the country, informs the write-up.

The editing, printing and circulation tasks of ZYONA are to be performed by FEZANA, while ZYONA's news and editorial content will be provided by the Zoroastrian Youth of North America from which this newsletter gets its name, informs Jamshed Engineer in the introductory article. The rest of the section is devoted to a recap of the Third North American Zoroastrian Youth Congress at Houston; Texas earlier in the year.

ZAQ team

Khushroo Mirza leads the 1989-91 executive committee of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, informs *Gavashni*, the Association's newsletter in its September 1989 issue. Mirza is assisted by vice president Parvez Shahriari, joint secretaries Ms Zerene Saklatvala and Ms Vahishta Canteenwalla, and treasurer Gev Karkaria. Directors at large include Ms Dolly Dastoor, Ms Natasha Dastoor, Minoo Gandevia, Ms Roshan

Lakdawala, Noshir Irani, Nari Madan and Rusi Master.

AZA estimates

Plans for a new structure on the AZA House property were scheduled to be obtained by March as per the resolve of the volunteers who met on December 21, 1989 informs the January-February 1990 issue of *Manashni*, the newsletter of the Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA) of New South Wales. Original plans for development of the property have stymied as official permission has been withheld on the objections of neighbors.

According to costings that have already been made, the total legal cost of the appeal — against the Baulkham Hills Shire Council's embargo on development and community use of the property — will amount to Australian \$ 20-25,000.

Provision for vehicular access and parking, landscaping, sewerage etc is estimated at \$ 65,000. Upgrading of electrical and water services would cost another \$ 20,000. Contingency allowance: \$ 15,000.

Estimating the total fees for architectural and engineering services at about

15 percent, the amount available for actual construction of the hall will be only about \$ 1,00,000, notes AZA president Noshir Irani in his message to the community.

Another AZA institution in trouble is its newsletter *Manashni*. Its regular monthly publication is threatened due to costs, informs Irani. Editor Kersi Meher-Homji provides more details:

Postage (concessional), photocopying (though the cheapest in Sydney, he notes) and stationery costs for 10 issues of *Manashni* annually add up to over \$ 3,000. Since advertising revenue is only \$ 280, the annual loss is \$ 2,720.

Accordingly, Meher-Homji has placed two alternatives before the Sydney community: reduce the frequency of *Manashni* to six issues a year, saving 40 percent in production cost, or get more advertisers.

Advertising rates have been concurrently hiked from \$ 45 to \$ 90 for a full page contract for three issues for members. The rate for non-members has risen from \$ 90 to \$ 115. Half page and quarter page costs have risen in proportion.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama

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BRING IN THE SPRING

Iranians throughout the world continue to observe the rituals associated with Nowruz

Ali A. Jafarey

History shows that tradition has been strong among Iranians. The traditional festivals, often equated with religious rites or national festivities, have survived time and place. The festivals have survived Macedonian, Arab, Turk and Mongol invasions and occupations. Even the converting supremacy of Islam did not erase the festivities that are purely Iranian. On the contrary, after a few generations, the occupying powers succumbed to them, and we have Arab caliphs, Turkish rulers, and Mongol emperors participating in some of these festivals. Records show that Iranians in their migrations to other lands have retained their festivals. We notice traces of these from Morocco to India. The influence of the Iranian culture, especially the calendar and festivals, was at its peak during the Mughal period in India.

Nowruz (Gujarati Navroz or Navroz) holds a special place among the Iranian festivals. It is traditionally ascribed to Yima (Sanskrit *Yama*, Persian *Jamshid*, Gujarati *Jamshed*), a legendary leader who helped his people and cattle to survive the Ice Age some 10,000 years ago. They first took refuge in a cavern, and then driven by overpopulation, migrated southwards in three stages to settle on the Iranian Plateau. To this day it continues to be the most popular event in the Fasli year, the Iranian calendar officially followed in Iran and Afghanistan.

Nowruz is called *Hamaspahmaedhaya*, literally "summer equinox," in the *Avesta*. It is called *areto-kare-*

thana, the time of "proper procedure," as the annual socioreligious ceremonies include, among other acts, correcting the calendar, making it precise. It is the most important of the six seasonal Zarathushtrian *Gahanbars* (ghambars). It begins with the five Gatha days at the end of the year, and ends with the precise time of the vernal equinox — for those who are not familiar with the precise tropical calendar — on or about March 21.

The Achaemenian kings (550-330 BC) had their splendidly gigantic Persepolis especially prepared to hold their Nowruz durbar and receive representatives of all nations within their empire. Persepolis bas-reliefs give us a glimpse of that grand ceremony lasting several days. The Parthians (250 BC-224 AD) continued the tradition at their capital of Ctesiphon, a city on the Tigris in modern Iraq.

We have a better written record of the Sassanians (224-652 AD) to visualize the Nowruz ceremony. At that time, when Zoroastrian Iran was four times its present size, preparations began at least 25 days before the event. Twelve pillars of mud bricks, each dedicated to one month of the year, were erected in the royal court. Various vegetable seeds — wheat, barley, lentils, beans, etc — were sown on top of the pillars. They grew into luxurious greens by the New Year. The great king held his public audience and the high priest of the empire was the first to greet him and pray for a long life for him



Above: A symbolic welcome to visitors, auguring a happy year beginning with Nowruz

Facing page:

(Left) An elaborate Nowruz table
(Right) A salver embossed with a traditional Iranian motif

and an enduring prosperity for the land. Government officials followed next. Each person offered a gift and received a present. The audience lasted for five days, each day for the people of a certain profession. Then on the sixth day, called the Greater Nowruz (*Avardad Sal*), the king held his special audience. He received members of the royal family and courtiers. A general amnesty was also declared for the convicts of minor crimes. The pillars were removed on the sixteenth day (day of Mehr). Crop predictions were made depending on the

comparative luxuriance of the seeds sowed on top of the pillars. The occasion was celebrated on a lower level by the people throughout the empire. The festivity of praying, singing, dancing, visiting relatives and friends, and gift-giving came to a close on the sixteenth day.

The Iranians lost their empire to the invading Arabs. In the long run of 1400 years, the majority gave up their religion and became Muslims. But they never abandoned their culture. The Arabs and all subsequent invaders were Iranianized in culture and language. However, the pomp of the royal celebrations declined with the decline of the Iranian power, and what remains today is the tradition which guides the common Iranian family — whether Zoroastrian, Muslim, Bahai, Christian or Jew — to continue to celebrate the Nowruz. The difference in the way of celebration of Zoroastrians and others, or from region to region, is negligible. Furthermore, the Iranians in dia-

spora have kept the flame alive. The Nowruz celebration in an Iranian city is basically the same as it is in Bombay, Karachi, Istanbul, Rome, Paris, London, Toronto, Vancouver, New York, San Francisco or Los Angeles. Therefore, the following description holds true for every Iranian enclave within and outside Iran.

Every house gets a thorough cleaning almost a month before. Wheat, barley, lentils and other vegetables are grown on china plates and round earthenware vessels some 10 days in advance so that they are three to four inches in height by Nowruz time. A table is laid — it has a copy of the book (for example, the *Avesta* in a Zoroastrian family and the *Quran* in a Muslim house), a picture of Asho Zarathushtra (in case of Muslims, a picture of a prominent saint), a mirror for good reflection, candles for light, *afariganian* or incense burner for sanctity, a bowl of water with live gold fish for

lively life, the plates and vessels with green sprouts for luxuriant growth, flowers, fresh fruits, dried fruits, coins for wealth, bread for food, sugar cane for sweetness, various grains, fresh vegetables, colorfully painted boiled eggs like the Easter ones for birth of life, and above all, seven articles whose names in Persian begin with the letter 'sh,' or in a Muslim house with the letter 's.'

The difference between 'sh' and 's' is that in Persian the word for wine, symbolizing health, is *sharab*, but since wine and other alcoholic drinks are prohibited in Islam, wine was substituted by vinegar, *serkeh* in Persian, and therefore the change from 'sh' to 's'! The usual things with 'sh' include wine, sugar, syrup, honey, candy, milk and rice pudding (Hindi *khir*). The usual things with 's' in Persian, not very palatable and pleasing, are vinegar, sumac, garlic, *samanu* (consistency of germinating wheat), apple, *senjed* (sorb) and herbs. The seven ar-



The Iranians lost their empire to the invading Arabs. But they never abandoned their culture

ticles are prominently exhibited in small bowls or plates on the table. The whole table, beautifully laid, symbolizes health, happiness and prosperity. It is, in fact, an elaborate thanksgiving table. Supermarkets in Iran and some North American cities provide the customers with ready-made table articles. And, of course, colorful Nowruz cards are a pleasant addition to the traditional decoration.

Family members, all dressed in their best, sit around the table, eagerly awaiting the precise time of the vernal equinox, now announced over radio and television in Iran and many European and American cities in which the Iranians form a substantial pocket. The time depends on the year. It differs each year because the tropical year consists of 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds. It is the precise hour, minute and second which count. It could be early in



Nowruz tables laden with valuable heirlooms and choicest food

Photos: Yasmin Poonegar

the morning, noon, late afternoon, or midnight. This year it is on March 21 at 2 hours 19 minutes, 26 seconds (Indian Standard Time).

The head of the family recites the prayers, and after the time is announced, each member kisses the other and wishes a Happy Nowruz. Elders give gifts to younger members. Next the rounds of visits to neighbors, relatives and friends begin. Each visit is reciprocated.

The Zoroastrians have an additional festivity. *Khordad Sal Gah*, the birth anniversary of Asho Zarathushtra, on the sixth day — March 26. It is a great gathering at Zoroastrian centers with prayers, plays, talks, songs and refreshments. In southern California, the *Khordad Sal* festival has superseded Nowruz in its festivity. It is the birthday of the founder of the first monotheistic religion — the religion of Good Conscience, popularly known as the Zoroastrian religion.

The festive spirit of Nowruz continues



for 12 days with visits, parties, shows and dances, and on the morning of the thirteenth day (April 1), a mass picnic in the countryside begins. It is called *sizda-be-dar*, meaning "thirteen-out-of-doors." Cities and villages turn into ghost towns with almost all the inhabitants having gone to enjoy the day in the woods and mountains along streams and riversides. People sing, dance, eat, drink and make merry. Girls of marriageable age tie grass tops into knots and make a wish that the following Nowruz may find them married and carrying their bonny babies! Here in southern California, with an estimated population of over 3,00,000 Iranians, most of the public parks are aswarm on the thirteenth day, an annoy-

The Achaemenian kings had their gigantic Persepolis especially prepared to hold their Nowruz durbar

ing surprise to those living close to parks!

What has now come to be confused with the Nowruz festival are certain beliefs that are not strictly of Iranian origin, such as its correspondence with different

animals and colors, in rotation. The Chinese system of animal years was introduced by the Mongol and Turkish rulers of Iran and was followed by Iranian almanacs until it was abandoned during the Pahlavi regime. The Zoroastrian — Fasli — calendar in Iran, followed by as many as 98 percent of the nation's population, does not carry any animal information.

These extraneous features notwithstanding, the core of the celebrations remain the same.

The Iranians, Zoroastrians or not, keep their festivals alive wherever they are in a substantial number. A word to the Parsis, especially those who have in their midst an increasing number of Iranians. Join them in their great fun and wonder less why these *Irans* break into festivity so often. It will be a great, ameliorating move on the part of the Parsis. After all they will be celebrating the same festivals their ancestors did too. These festivals are the common heritage. Participation of Parsis in Iranian Zoroastrian festivals will also help the proposed adoption of a common calendar, preferably the Fasli calendar. The Fasli calendar, we all know, is the correct seasonal calendar and all the festivals, particularly the *Gahanbars*, are in their proper places, and almost all the Iranian Zoroastrians follow it. It will definitely bring the two parted halves of the one common stock and community, together. A Happy Nowruz to all readers of *Parsiana*!

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ADAPTING TO FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

Ervad Rustam Shahzadi

Zoroastrians need to distinguish between Zarathushtra's teachings and the practices absorbed from other sources in order to overcome their current problems

Our community is dynamic. Problems that our forefathers never dreamt of, are being discussed. To set its footsteps on the path of real reform, there is need for true knowledge, worldly experience, common sense, farsightedness, courage and the capacity to endure the onslaughts of the conservative section of an easily excited and sentiment-ridden community. The orthodox members believe that the duty of a dastur is only to safeguard age-old customs and traditions zealously. They place the precepts of religion and the practice of its rituals on the same level. If with the passage of time the true spirit of the religion is lost and undesirable elements have crept in, then it is the duty of a true Zarhosti to remove such misunderstandings and to bring in reforms.

We must remember that all the laws and customs that are made by man, and not the prophet, can change with time and place.

Our Prophet, Asho Zarthusht, like other prophets, has done three main works during his lifetime:

- He has continued with the practices of celebrating national festivals, such as Navroze, Mehrgan, Sadeh and the ghambars; of wearing the sudreh and kusti; of turning towards the light to pray as one would towards an altar. He also left the social laws unaltered.

- He has forbidden what was harmful and dangerous for the welfare of our body and soul in the older practices such as

drinking Haoma juice, blood-sacrifice and worshipping *divs*, *paries* and *droges* (supernatural entities).

- He brought in monotheism: as Herodotus has said about the ancient Persians, they reproached with folly even those who erected images, temples and altars, because they did not believe in gods endowed with human figures as did the Grecians.

In the *Gathas* Zarathushtra introduces Ahura Mazda as the friend, brother and father of the good and the noble. But, unfortunately, the religion that is found in our books after the *Gathas* is mainly the ancient Indo-Iranian religion prior to Zarathushtra. There is a striking similarity between the teachings of the *Avesta* and the religion of the ancient *Vedas*.

Later influences from other races and other beliefs also crept in and the faith faced an enormous change. Later priests attempted to seek sanction for their beliefs by repeating in later scriptures, "Zarathushtra asked Ahura Mazda and Ahura Mazda replied" and in this way every superstition and every practice of later ages was justified and doubly sanctified.

Zarathushtra took firm hold of the "one Reality" of Ahura Mazda, and eliminated all other deities of the Aryan Pantheon. However, soon after the passing of the Prophet, all the ancient ceremonies and the worship of the ancient Aryan nature gods returned to Iran, and the Achaemenian inscriptions placed



Shahzadi: spiritual life is difficult

these deities side by side with Ahura Mazda.

Since leading the true spiritual and temporal life is always a difficult task, human beings easily slip into ritualistic observances and ceremonials which are easier to follow. As time passes this message of spiritual life gets more and more dim and at the same time the name of the teacher is invoked with evergrowing vehemence. Man remembers the messenger and forgets the message, and priests find a satisfactory means of livelihood by multiplying the ceremonials.

The history of religion reveals that wherever there is hereditary priesthood, religion becomes replete with rituals — for the maintenance of the priests — to the detriment of its ethical and devotional message. Hindu and Zoroastrian priesthood being hereditary, the respective priests have made these religions more ritualistic than the other religions of the world. With the variety of dates and calendars that are followed within our minute community, and the priestly class becoming less capable of applying itself to the required modernization or purity of faith has led the laity, growing in education and knowledge, to become

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dissatisfied with both religion and ritual.

Sir J. J. Mody had mentioned that the Zoroastrian priesthood was hereditary from very ancient times but during the regime of the Parthians, this custom was more honored in the breach than in the observance, until Ardeshir Papakan revived it. However in Iran, even as late as the seventeenth century, Dastur Rustam Gushtasp Ardeshir was said to have sprung from the laity. Recently in Iran by the order of Tehran Kankashe Mobedan we have again started accepting behdin youth as mobedyar (assistant mobed) if they pass a special class in necessary *Avesta* and religious instructions (the vendidad, visparad and nirangdin ceremonies excluded). It appears that under certain circumstances women also worked as priestesses. So sacred a work as that of Zaota or the chief priest, at a yasna or ijashni ritual was not denied to their sex. The *Shayast na Sahayast* mentions that a woman is fit for priestly duty (Zoteh) among women and when she is consecrating the sacred cake or darun.

A dastur's duty is to take a leading part in the community's social controversies. He has to establish new organizations that can fulfill the awakening needs of the community. The trends that can

deal a fatal blow to our strength at present are:

- The decreasing number of marriages.
- Families wanting fewer children.
- Zoroastrians who marry non-Zoroastrians converting themselves into the alien faith to save their children from future conflicts.
- Our girls getting converted and marrying *juddins* (non-Zoroastrians).
- Iranian Zoroastrians turning to other faiths.

For a community whose total strength is so meager, the decrease of marriages and children is a major calamity, so is our policy of "no admission," even outside India or Iran, to those of other faith eager to cast their lot with ours. By this we are barring the entrance to the fold and widening the exits. The community is aware of the numbers of boys and girls who go out of the fold and marry non-Zoroastrians.

The *juddin* question is the thread on which hangs the very existence of this microscopic community. In Iran, as Amir Taheri, editor of the English daily *Kayhan International*, published in Tehran in September 1974, wrote, "according to legend the oldest Zoroastrian fire still ablaze, is some 4,000 years old

and I was among the first non-Zoroastrian permitted to enter the fire-temple in Yazd. Forced conversion to Islam was the practice even until a century ago and around Yazd the *Jadidis* (newly converted) mixed the Zoroastrian religion with Islam, and have both Zoroastrian and Muslim names... The claim of racial purity and 'Aryanism' advanced by some Zoroastrian hot-heads has no basis in fact. Many Negro slaves and Turkish servants of the Zoroastrians were converted to the religion according to the Zoroastrian law in Sassanian times (*Mathene Hazar Dastan*)."

Today, the Zoroastrians of Iran have changed their mind. They have realized that many Iranians are becoming attracted to their ancestral faith for nationalistic reasons. Most of our leading authorities on the religion and its history are Muslims and stormy sessions of the Tehran Zoroastrian Anjuman have decided that "outsiders" married to Zarthushtis should be accepted into the 'family' provided they wish it so. Scores of Zoroastrians educated abroad have foreign wives who can now become Zoroastrian. Also *Jadidis* should be readmitted to the fold if they so desire. In Iran non-Zoroastrians are permitted to



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enter the atash bahram restrictively. Princess Margaret during a state visit in the last regime, having evinced much interest, was permitted to be the first visitor, followed by the editor of *Kayhan* (Amir Taheri) and then by Shahbanu Farah. Now it is open to all tourists, both Iranian and outsiders. (One of the Iranian trustees of the Yazd Atash Bahram later explained to *Parsiana* that a glass wall separates the non-Zoroastrian visitor from the sanctum sanctorum.)

The Islamic Republic of Iran has prohibited us from accepting Iranian Muslims into our faith and we should obey the law. Yet with the current cultural renaissance in Iran and the reborn zeal for Zoroastrianism in some of its citizens, its Zoroastrian population is rapidly increasing — the Zoroastrian population in Iran according to 1986 census has jumped to 90,891 including 10,525 in Khorasan.

In Iran there is a future replete with potentialities for all Zoroastrians if only we accelerate the pace of our contact in all departments of life. We find that the present generation is greatly interested in knowing its ancient past, realizing who their ancestors were and to what religion they belonged. It only requires an effort on our side to make ourselves felt

there, and this has to be done not through any propaganda method but through sustained and continuous cultural and social contacts.

Today there are already hundreds of scholars doing research work into the past and, though not Zoroastrians, are reviving Zoroastrianism through no propaganda, but through sheer exposition of the fact that the whole of Iran was all along Zoroastrian. Already, the official Iranian calendar is the Zoroastrian calendar, and in the schools and colleges everywhere the story of our ancient monarchs and of Zoroastrianism and what it stood for, is told in the text books.

If we, as a community, play our part in supplementing the work of the scholars with quiet tenacity, promptly, effectively and above all continuously, the very danger, numberwise, that faces us will soon transform itself into a day of promise.

The text is abridged and edited from a paper presented by Ervad Rustam Shahzadi in the session on 'The survival of tradition in the twenty-first century.' A senior member of the Council of Mobeds in Iran, Shahzadi is an alumnus of the M. F. Cama Athornan Madrasa in Andheri, Bombay.

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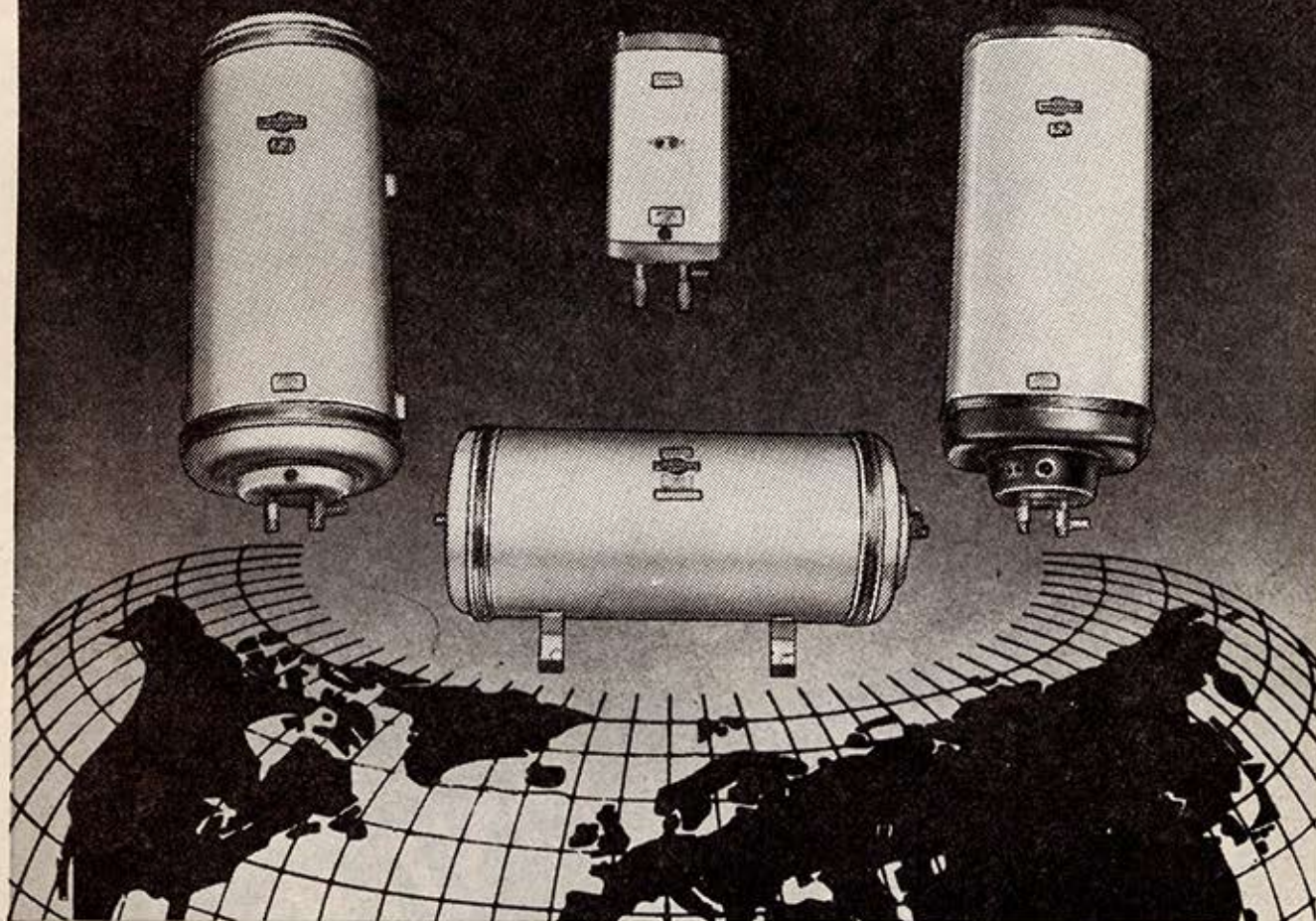
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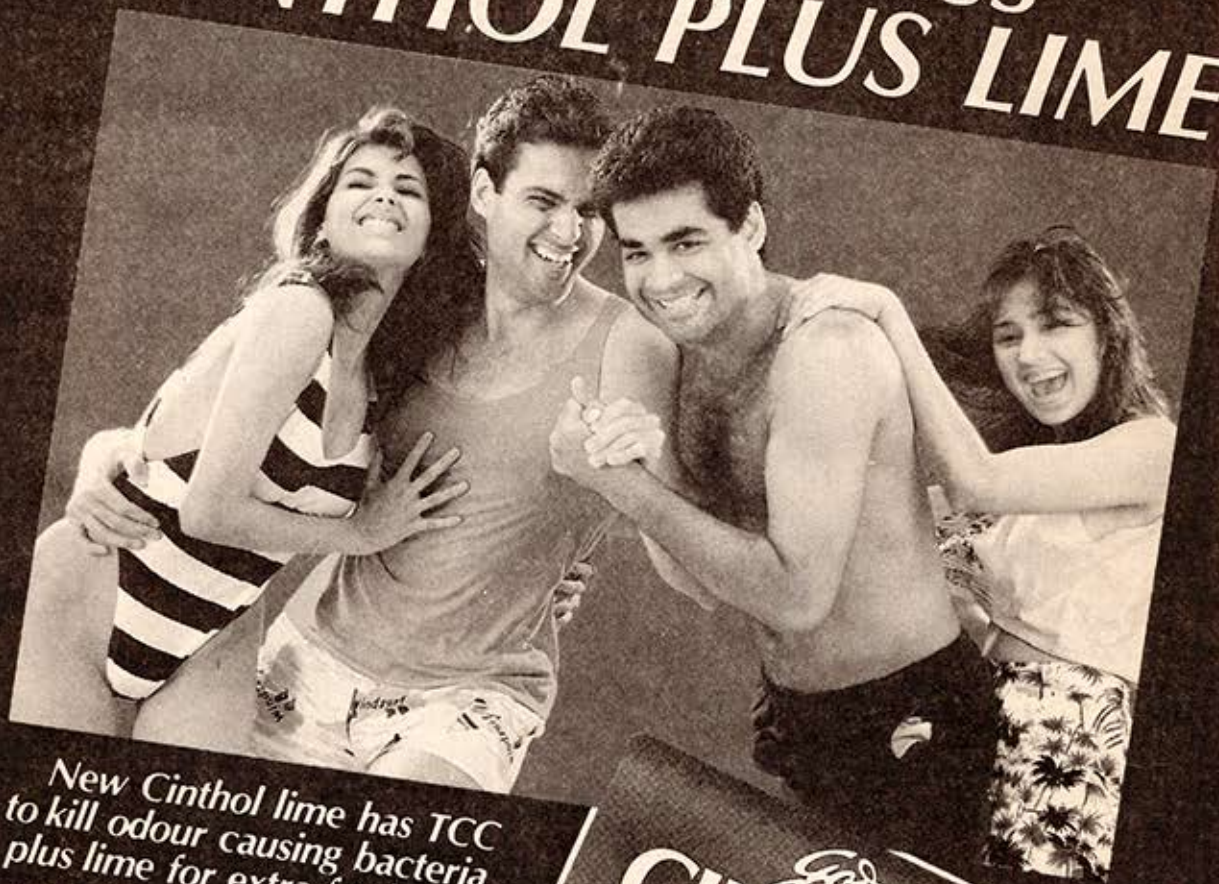
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A Story of TRIUMPH

Gustasp Irani

"The apparent differences between Parsi and Iranian (Zoroastrians) can be most striking. They speak in different languages; they eat different food; they look different; they have a different sense of humor. While the two groups seek to establish the 'true' Zoroastrian vision...one major instrument in overcoming the obstacles to unity is an understanding of the 'story,' the experiences and historical conditioning of the other." Dr (Ms) Rashna Writer, author and scholar, tells an interesting 'story' of the Iranian half of the Zoroastrian family in her talk titled "The Zoroastrians of Iran — Triumph Over Adversity," delivered under the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute's auspices at its library hall, Bombay, on January 10, 1990. The talk, rich in scholarly content and anecdotes, tells of the persecution the Iranian Zoroastrians endured for centuries to keep the faith alive, their emergence from the hostility and oppression of the primitive society in which they lived — not without the assistance of their Parsi brethren — their achievements, and more. It stops short, however, at the Islamic revolution that swept the country in 1979.

"The chief determinant of the societies created by the Indian and Iranian Zoroastrians have been the two major cultures — Hinduism and Islam — within which they have compulsorily operated," observes Writer. While the Parsis lived in relative peace in a tolerant Hindu India, the Iranians, who had to survive under the persecution and fanaticism of Islamic Iran, feel "very wounded when Parsis forget this very aspect of their (Iranian) struggle and history," says Writer.

In her portrait of the Iranian Zoroas-

The historical factors that have molded the Iranian Zoroastrians are highlighted by Dr Rashna Writer

trian during the late nineteenth century in Yazd, "one of the most bigoted towns of Persia," the image is a sad, almost pathetic specimen. According to Napier Malcolm who wrote in 1905, the Iranian Zoroastrian had to wear shoes with broad turned-up toes up to 1880 and was permitted to wear only a torn cap up to 1885. He was barred from wearing rings up to 1885, had to dismount whenever he met a Muslim of any rank whatsoever up to 1891 and was not allowed to carry an umbrella or wear spectacles up to 1895. The list of 'do's and 'dont's goes on and on, and painfully so, says Writer. Dr Rostam Sarfeh, now a resident of California, had related to Writer how in his youth, in Yazd, during the first decade of the current century, Zoroastrians were not permitted to wear shoes, only slippers; had to carry a shawl upon which they had to sit in Muslim houses so as not to contaminate the place; wear wide pants; not wear anything black — a Muslim color — so that they could be distin-

guished as Zoroastrians.

Writer refers to American Iranologist A. V. W. Jackson who records the destruction of Zoroastrian texts and literature. In 820 AD, Tahir, a Muslim governor of Khorasan who was to form the Tahirid dynasty, issued an edict compelling all Zoroastrians to bring one *maund* (about 14 pounds) of Zoroastrian books which were to be burnt, or face death. Much of the religious texts were burnt and many Zoroastrian lives cut short. The easy way out was to convert to Islam, but many Iranian Zoroastrians chose not to.

According to Writer, the greatest instrument used to force conversion to Islam was the *jazia* or poll tax imposed on all non-Muslims. "Some, as a last resort, embraced the faith of Mohammed. Others, who would not violate their conscience, abandoned their homes to escape...and even when they escaped, (they) had always to leave their wives and children behind them," states Writer.

Then along came Manekji Limji Hataria, a Parsi from India, who battled tirelessly from 1857 to 1882 when, finally, the hated tax was lifted. In this task, he had to rally Dadabhoy Naoroji and other eminent Parsis, and win the support of sympathetic British parliamentarians and the British ambassador to Tehran, in a bid to get the British Crown to put pressure on the then Shah of Iran to abolish the *jazia*.

Hataria's first contact with the Iranian Zoroastrian community was in 1854 when he was sent as an emissary of the Parsis of India, then prospering under the British, to report on the conditions of the Zoroastrians in Iran. His trip was spon-

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sored by the Society for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Zoroastrians of Persia or otherwise known as the Amelioration Society. The Society had been started by the children of Framji B. Panday who, on the urgings of his Iranian Zoroastrian wife Gulestan Banu, assisted Zoroastrians from Iran coming to Bombay.

The population of Zoroastrians in Iran in 1854, as reported by Hataria, was: 6,658 in Yazd and the surrounding villages, 450 in Kerman, 50 in Tehran and a few families in Shiraz. Hataria undertook the rebuilding of the atash bahrams of Yazd and Kerman and the building of new dokhmas for the two cities. During the 23 years' struggle against the *jazia* tax he persuaded the trustees of the Amelioration Society to pay Rs 1,09,564 for and on behalf of the poor Zoroastrians in Iran. The eventual scrapping of the poll tax, according to Writer, meant that the Zoroastrians could now, theoretically at least, claim a share in the national wealth of their land — for the first time since the Arab conquest.

It also signalled the migration of Zoroastrians from Yazd and Kerman to Tehran where the urban Muslims looked more kindly on the followers of other religions. "Paradoxically, while the relative freedom of work, worship, education and commercial advancement became available to the Zoroastrians in Tehran, it meant that the urban life was to erode the close community ties which had kept them together through centuries of harassment and persecution." Writer draws a parallel between the Iranian experience and the similar effect that the migration of the Parsis from rural Gujarat to urban Bombay had on the community in India.

It was around the turn of the century that a Zoroastrian merchant Jamshid Jamshedian won the main contract to supply provisions to Iran's Qajar army. The monopoly led to his financial prosperity and he soon became a prominent banker. Banks had been controlled by the British and Russians hitherto; it was Jamshedian who established Iran's first national bank.

Of the 150 to 200 Zoroastrians employed by Jamshedian was one Kaikhoshrou Shahrokh. If Jamshedian epitomized the community's economic emancipation, Shahrokh symbolized its social and political liberalization. Educated in Bombay to be a teacher, he returned to his native Kerman as an employee of the Amelioration Society.



Writer: conveying the Iranian 'story'

Here, he set about establishing schools for Zoroastrian girls and boys. As the English teacher of the Governor's children, he was able to use his influence to shake off the shackles of the past. He rode a horse when Zoroastrians were only permitted to ride donkeys and he stopped wearing the Zoroastrian attire. "Shahrokh maintained that the time had arrived to challenge the dated preconceptions of Zoroastrians, and if they missed the opportunity, they may never succeed in changing attitudes," Writer summed up the man's trend of thought.

It was a time of political change in Iran. In 1906, Iran got its first constitution (prior to that authority lay with the local mullahs) and Shahrokh became the official representative of the Zoroastrians in the *Majlis* (parliament), a position he held for 25 years. With the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1925, he became an advisor to the new ruler of Iran, Reza Shah. When the USA snapped diplomatic relations with Iran (because American tourists photographing a passion play on the martyrdom of Hussain were lynched by a mob) Shahrokh was sent to Washington to negotiate the reestablishment of diplomatic ties — a job he did with great success. Another notable achievement of this Zoroastrian patriot was the establishment of the Reserve Bank of Iran.

He also invited Zoroastrians from Yazd and Kerman to Tehran and advised them to invest in property in the capital city. "Thus it was, through property speculation, that the growth in Zoroas-

trian prosperity for the first time in 1,300 years, got underway," states Writer. Of the Pahlavi dynasty she observes: "Regardless of how future historians may assess the Pahlavi regime, the years 1925-1979 were to benefit greatly the small Zoroastrian community in Iran." Zoroastrians were granted all rights and concessions enjoyed by the Muslims and permitted to join the armed forces — General Nowzari became the first Zoroastrian general in the Iranian army.

Writer, however, stops here. She does not look at the situation of Zoroastrians in contemporary Islamic Iran. Probably, she will deal with the topic in the book she proposes to write in the next two years. The paper presented at the Cama Institute will constitute the first chapter of the book.

Nevertheless, Writer does dwell briefly on the Iranian Zoroastrian community settled in the West. "The Parsi migration to western Europe, North America and Australia has primarily been inspired by a search for a 'better life.' Iranian Zoroastrians have migrated west in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution in 1979." She adds: "The Parsis...while they are Indians, do not perceive themselves as of India. The case of the Zoroastrians of Iran is (that) they see themselves as intrinsically of Iran." According to Writer the two groups, despite their distinct socio-cultural-religious environments must eventually determine what exactly constitutes the 'correct' Zoroastrian stance.

Later while answering questions from the floor, Writer called for the formation of a united world Zoroastrian body. "This is the single most important matter that requires our active involvement. No matter what our differences in opinions, we have to speak as one people when we speak to the world," she pleads. The Jews, the Bahais, the Islamic sects all have international representative bodies that can plead the case of their people with national governments as well as the United Nations and have secured immigration quotas in the UK. Writer narrates an instance when a British government official had asked her and some other co-religionists "Are you a recognized international body?" and how a British judge, presiding over a case of an Iranian Zoroastrian seeking asylum in the UK, had commented on the need for a world body of Zoroastrians which can speak with unified voice and authority to the governments of the world.

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THE NAME GAME

The historic association of each village with a human characteristic continues as Iranians humorously label each other with uncomplimentary traits

Gustasp Irani

"Whereas the Parsis can trace their roots to Valsad or Vadodara, we (Iranis) can trace our roots to the villages of Iran, the land of Darius and Cyrus," says Zend Zend proprietor of Yazdani Bakery in Bombay. Whenever Iranian and Irani Zoroastrians make acquaintances, they will invariably ask each other before parting: "Which village do you come from?" Even if the last three generations of the family were born in India, the Irani Zoroastrian always names a village around Yazd or Kerman from where his forefathers migrated. And as he answers, he knows that his friend is labeling him with characteristics associated with that village — not complimentary, for sure. No offence is caused because both tend to fall prey to the same habit. And also, it's never meant to be taken seriously but with a pinch of humor.

"Not all villages have special characteristics," says Yezdanyar Bonshahi of Khaze Book Sellers at Grant Road, and member of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman (IZA) in Bombay, "only those villages that are close to the city of Yazd." According to him, this practice of labeling people with the characteristic traits associated with their particular villages was started by the rich Zoroastrian traders, merchants and landlords who resided within the city limits of Yazd. The city dwellers — referred to as *mohalites* — would send for the poor Zoroastrians

from the neighboring villages — *dehates* — when help was required in the cooking, cleaning and other chores involved when celebrating religious or family events. Upon observing the mannerisms of the *dehates*, the affluent soon started to tag them with convenient labels — not necessarily accurate, but the labels stuck nevertheless. The *dehates* too took up this name-calling and the die was cast.

Of course, the *mohalites* did not go unscarred by what they had started; the *dehates* branded them too — misers. The saying goes that the *mohalite* will not let even the smallest drop of spilt ghee go waste.

Roped into this name-calling practice, prevalent in the satellite villages of Yazd city, is distant Taft. Of the residents of this village they say: Tafti thief. Zend believes that the Taftis probably won their reputation and the displeasure of the *mohalites* as a result of their enterprise. When Zoroastrians started to migrate to India in the nineteenth century, they would send home money to the families they had left behind. To collect these remittances the villagers would have to go to the houses of the rich *mohalites* who carried out these transactions; that is until the Taftis beat them in this business by offering personalized service and home delivery.

Not only is a Tafti considered a thief, even his trees are said to be thieves. A



Zoroastrians of Kerman

visitor to this village is warned to be cautious against a branch of a Tafti tree bending down and dislodging his headgear. The Tafti tree is famous in other ways too. According to Bonshahi it produces the best pomegranates in the region, make that country. The skin of the fruits is thick which does not dry up or split as other fruit in the region do.

Ellahabad is another village some dis-

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tance from the city which picked up a tag — night blindness. Don't ask why. It remains a mystery. Another characteristic of the people of the village is that they love to label people with nicknames. Reportedly, anyone who enters the village — and assuming he were to walk straight through — would have picked up a nickname before he reached the other end.

Ahrestanis, many of whom established the Irani restaurants in Bombay, are known to be short-tempered and arrogant. According to Zend a large percentage of the Irani restaurants in Bombay were established and run by migrants from this village. Likewise most of the Irani bakers in Bombay are from village Narsiabad. They are supposed to be crafty, their cunningness staining their bones. Baking, according to Zend, comes naturally to Iranians as against the Parsis or for that matter any other Indian community which has a chappati tradition. "Iranians are masters of the leavened dough process," he observes. *Nan*, he



explains is made in every household in Iran through the fermented dough process. In this process instead of yeast, a little dough is left behind and used to ferment the next batch.

The Koochebiyogis are the reputed showoffs, the dandies. The chains the men twirl, according to Bonshahi, are more than ornamental. About the thickness of a chain attached to a pocketwatch but longer, they are multifunctional and carried by all the Zoroastrians of Yazd.

They may be used as a whip to urge their donkey to greater speed or as protection against robbers. Occasionally when a pretty maiden married a boy from another village, young men, with chains swinging and egos bruised, would block the path of the wedding party leaving the village. Cousin marriage was the practice, rather than the exception, among Iranian Zoroastrians and invariably all the residents of a village were related, part of one big family.

Other villages falling into the name-calling circuit are Moryabad, Mohmedabad, Khairabad and Khoramshah. The Moryabadis, the Zoroastrian Jews, are reputed to be penny pinching and clever. Mohmedabad is supposed to be the abode of giants — the people of the village are supposed to be descendants of giants though there is nothing exceptional in the physical endowments to justify the claim. Khairabadis are supposed to display the trait of a donkey — its stubbornness. The Khoramshahis too are likened to a donkey, but not for their stubbornness. They are believed to be simpletons.

The donkey, incidentally was an important part of the Iranian Zoroastrian's

lifestyle for, according to Dr (Ms) Rashna Writer, in her paper presented at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute in January 1990, members of the community were not permitted to ride horses or cycles, only donkeys, well into the early part of the current century.

This harmless practice of attaching labels is "not really important," says Aflatoon Shokri of Kyani Restaurant near Metro Cinema, Bombay. "We are people first, Zoroastrians second and all the rest follows afterwards." "This is between us Iranis, why get the Parsis involved?" asks Rusi Arastani of Mondegar Restaurant near Regal Cinema, Bombay.

Don't the Iranians say anything good about anyone? Yes, they do. The Shariabadis, they maintain are religious and noble. This is probably so because the small, humble village became the eventual home of one of the three sacred fires of ancient Iran as recorded by Dr (Ms) Mary Boyce in her book *A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism*. Boyce writes: "It is recorded that after the (Arab) conquest (the) priests made desperate efforts to save it (the fire) from extinction, even dividing its embers and keeping them as two fires in different places, and it seems that in the end one group followed the high priest to this chosen haven, bringing their fire to burn in safe obscurity in Sharifabad."

Left: A Zoroastrian merchant

Below: The Zoroastrian Anjuman at Yazd Photos: Persia Past and Present by A.V. Williams Jackson, 1906



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Yazd, according to Boyce, had become the stronghold of the Iranian Zoroastrian community because of its inaccessibility and harsh environment. "Up to the 1920s, it could take as much as three dangerous, exhausting weeks to journey there (Yazd) from the capital. Even to reach the nearest cities, Kerman, Shiraz or Isfahan, was an eight-day journey, often fraught with peril; and so Yazd remained 'insular beyond the insularity of islands.'" Elsewhere she observes: "The region (Yazd) was hardly one to attract Arab settlers, for the climate is harsh, with burning summers and searingly cold winters; and since the rainfall is scanty, the plain is partly desert. The ground slopes gently down from north-west to south-east and in the south eastern corner, which as the lowest point has the best supply of water, stands the city of Yazd."

It is along this gradient that the villages are situated; irrigated by natural springs or long underground channels (*qanats*) that bring the melted snow water from the surrounding hills to the villages where the Zoroastrians grow their wheat and their fruits, particularly pomegranates.

According to Bonshahi, the group of villages to the south, is peopled by settlers from the Zoroastrian community in Isfahan who fled the city in the middle of the eighteenth century when the ruler of the land allegedly ordered his troops to kill every Zoroastrian living there. The ruler is believed to have been offended by some of the beliefs and practices of the Zoroastrians.

Those who survived the massacre fled to Yazd as did those in other pockets of Zoroastrians over the years. The shades of Zoroastrians from different parts of Iran, collected in Yazd, is reflected in the language they speak — Dari. "The language is the same, but the dialect is different," says Bonshahi. "Just by listening to someone speak, I can tell from which group of villages he comes."

The hunt for a map of the villages around Yazd at the offices of the IZA, the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute and other sources proved to be futile. But according to the list provided by the IZA, Zoroastrians have been known to reside in 25 villages in Iran. They are: Abshahi, Ahrestan, Aliabad, Assrabad, Casamabad, Chem, Ellahabad, Hassanaabad, Hosseinabad, Jafferabad, Kasnaviya, Khairabad, Khalilabad, Khoramshah, Koochebiyog, Mazra-Kalantar,

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In fact, elections to the managing committee of the IZA are based on a system of village representation. There are separate membership rolls maintained for different villages and a quota of seats assigned to each village. An Irani Zoroastrian is registered on the rolls of the village he hails from and can elect only from among candidates contesting the seats allocated to his village. In addition, seats have also been allotted to Tehran, Yazd and Kerman in Iran and Bombay in India.

The lines of distinction have now started blurring in Iran. Many Iranian Zoroastrians have migrated. Only the aged have stayed behind as the Iranian delegates at the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress observed. While some of the abandoned villages like Abshahi and Assrabad have been lost to the desert, other villages have been absorbed in the expanding city, consumed by airports, railway terminals and highways. And yet, when two Iranian Zoroastrians meet for the first time, they will invariably ask: "Which village do you come from?"

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"MAKING GOOD, CLEAR CHOICES"

If, in the late twentieth century, we are to reconsider community organizations and their work "To 2000 AD and Beyond," the theme of this Congress, we first have to take stock of three fundamental questions:

- What are the core teachings of Zarathushtra? Can we rearticulate them clearly and relevantly? How do we incorporate them into our institutions in the modern context?
- What is the present situation in various parts of the world to which our institutions must realistically address themselves?
- What are the best Zoroastrian choices, in the spirit of Yasna 30.2 — the doctrine of good listening, good thinking and the responsibility of choice — for the individual and the organization of the future?

The core Zoroastrian messages

Let us first refresh our minds and articulate the core messages of Zarathushtra. They are first, that doctrine of good listening, good thoughts, and the responsibility for creative choices: not negative, dysfunctional ones. My first question to all of us as individuals and office bearers is: are we making good, clear choices; or are we carrying on mindlessly and ad hoc?

The second message was to further the purposes of the Good Creation, with lives which are a combination of the Getig, the material, and the Menog, the

spiritual. And in so doing with Vohuman, the Good Purpose, promoting what we today call the 'Quality of Life' — with moderation, not excess, which in Zoroastrianism is sinful. Also sharing that Quality of Life to promote the welfare of our world, human and of all creation. According to the spirit of Yasna 34.14, are we making ourselves fitter to serve the community and the world, as individuals and as institutions? Or are we stuck in status quo and decline?

And, lastly, in the spirit of Yasna 29.1 are our rulers, i.e. trustees and office bearers "good shepherds" and "diligent nourishers" of the community and the world?

These questions are addressed to all of us. Let there be no we/they adversarial relationship.

The global situation

Zoroastrians are in three main contemporary contexts today. First, there are those who have migrated to the Western world, who have largely found themselves

- without fire-temples, priests, dokhmas, the facilities of traditional rituals;
- inevitably mixing and intermarrying with other cultures and communities, faced with the problem of clear and meaningful identities, and a possible loss of the next generation;
- increasing in numbers, education, wealth, but faced with fresh pragmatic cultural choices and the making of new

institutions. Let them learn from the lacunae, the shortcomings, the apathy of the institutions in the home countries.

One clear choice they have made overwhelmingly when they went westwards to the centers of gravity of the new world — the choice of making their future in modern, liberal, democratic societies. That is a significant choice in the late twentieth century between the inherited feudal, less liberal, less democratic cultures of Asia, and the un-Zoroastrian communist, fascist and such authoritarian societies of this century. Their future institutions need to reflect it and to cope with its consequences. They will be pacemakers in the next 50 years for those left behind in Asia.

Second, in Iran, recent history seems to have adversely affected the resurgence of the long-suffering Zoroastrians there. Their institutions are touched by two contradictory forces, those of the modern world and those of a reversion to fundamentalism. How will they cope in a world where the surrounding world is changing faster than the internal one?

Third, those who have remained back in India and Pakistan are

- fast shrinking in numbers;
- shrinking in education and competitive capabilities, with about 30 percent below a hypothesized poverty line of Rs 500 per month in Bombay, and afflicted by endless inflation;
- unclear about future choices in an old

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society, in which its self-confidence is not what it was pre 1950;

- with inherited institutions torn between religious and secular responsibilities, between a host of private trusts and public anjumans and punchayets, with less liberal and less democratic ruling and electoral systems, and styles of the *mottaseth* (oligarchic) culture of the past.

The major choices

There seems to be a historically inherited confusion between the private domain and the public domain; the religious and the secular; and in consequence, a lack of clarity of roles and functions. Our institutions are not facing their future choices clearly. Every social and economic problem, e.g. mixed marriages and their pros and cons, educational and economic decline, the condition of priests, future housing needs, etc lacks good hard data.

If we are to heed Zarathushtra in Yasna 30.2, we will need to listen carefully to the nature of our problems, and make creative, liberal, future-oriented choices in the realities, the Asha of our times, in the interest of the coming generations. How to harness better the forces of 'Spenta' to reinforce our institu-

tions, to meet the social and economic challenges of higher education investments, more meaningful, more widespread religious education investments, help for the poor, the sick and the aged? How to compete harder with declining numbers against the heavy social odds

Between 1971 and 1987, in Bombay, only four percent got the higher level technical and executive jobs while 96 percent got low-level jobs

that favor host societies? How to outgrow exclusiveness and insularity, and undergo Zoroastrian modernization in a new challenging world which waits for no man and no institution?

To clarify the implications of authentic modernization, I offer two brief formulations:

- Modernization is not like the simple discarding of traditional clothes and putting on modern dress. It is the mindful reexamination of tradition as well as modern life in terms of beliefs, rituals, customs, ways of living, and a world view, to ascertain what has continuing value and relevance. It is like the reploughing of cultural fields, treated with the fertilizer of fresh thinking, and irrigated with the waters of contemporary sustenance, to make such fields fertile and productive again.

Modernization is not necessarily westernization, or the discarding of tradition and all westernization may not be good even for the West. When the two words are treated synonymously, Cantwell Smith reminds us "it is unconscious error, an unexamined confusion... To be modern is to know widely and to choose freely." To the extent we live as microscopic groups and individuals in so many non-Zoroastrian host communities, to that extent, we need to ask ourselves who we really are, what is our identity, what cultures and values do we represent, and what contributions we can make to the cultures and values of our host societies in Asia, Africa, Australia or

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the West. We are not doing this consciously enough;

• All this also means greater involvement in community affairs, not only by elected office bearers, but more democratic participation and consultativeness, the creation of syntheses out of different views.

Basic institutional criteria

The five basic criteria of modern democratic institutions, official and voluntary, which we could apply to Zoroastrian institutions are:

- Participative, forward-looking, well-led public institutions;
- Clear responses to felt public needs;
- Operational effectiveness;
- Public accountability;
- Good communications, credibility and openness.

It is for each member of the community and its trustees to examine how far we have these in our anjumans and trusts. Without them there are weak institutions, public dissatisfaction, inefficient management of public resources, low public accountability, low performance, poor communications and low credibility. This applies as much to the voluntary sector as to governments and all public institutions. They are the basic symptoms of health or ill-health in institutional life.

Specific responses

All anjumans, trusts and federal bodies need to draw up five-year plans for the material and spiritual uplift of the community. The planning is required because:

- most of our elected bodies have no clear community mandates for future community needs; only office-holders with an ad hoc, on-going agenda;
- planning calls for clearly thought-out institutional objectives with future-orientations, after due consultation with various sections of the community;
- planning compels analysis and constructive planned responses with cooperative community participation;
- planning compels resource mobilization for major objectives on a sustained basis; and
- planning is a yardstick for public accountability for institutional performance. Good senior corporate managers in the communities could show our trustees how this may be done. The community is too privatised and fragmented for the collective needs of today and tomorrow, which only good public planning can hope to meet.

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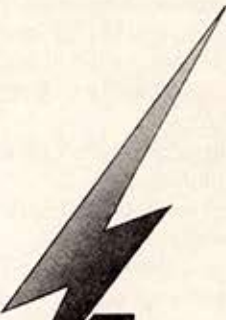
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Management of community finances

My second major thrust is the better management of community finances, with growing community needs which, in an inflationary age, is of cardinal importance.

The first lesson is the maximization of incomes from both investment and non-investment sources (rents, membership fees, donations, etc); with an examination of higher potential incomes from the latter. An examination of three actual institutional case studies in India over the last 10 years showed that in the absence of planned financial management, incomes, expenditures and surplus trends seem erratic.

The second lesson is the need for better annual/quarterly cash flow management for controlled liquidity only for cash needs and the putting of surplus cash into short-term investments for better returns. In the case of all three institutions over the last decade, year-end bank balances have been too high, varying from 44 percent to 100 percent of annual expenditures. Too much money left in low interest bank accounts leads to the question. "Are we working for the banks, or for community institutions?"

The third lesson, and a major one, is to keep the value of all assets above inflation, as far as possible, as inflation erodes the real value of assets and, in the long run, the community is poorer, and income

"The caring instinct is the test of a truly civilized society"

will not keep up with rising expenses. Regrettably, all three institutions' assets have materially lagged behind the inflation rate.

The fourth is that more Zoroastrians should remember community needs in their wills, specially in publicly accountable institutions for flexible public purposes.

Education and investing in the future

The great Jamsetji Tata believed in a policy of investing in the future, in the shape of high quality persons and high quality institutions. We are losing that vision, that aspiration. Here are some symptoms of that loss thrown up in Bom-

bay, the largest traditional center of the community in the world. In 1971, Rs 138 per student was spent as a grant on school education; in 1987 the figure was Rs 293, apparently less in real value than in 1971. Again, both figures are paltry. The figures for college education for the two years were Rs 258 and 420 respectively, again wholly inadequate, even for books. The picture is somewhat better in the case of loans/gifts given for foreign education. Yet it was Rs 5,000 per student in 1971, and Rs 8,149 per student in 1987, far below the real value of the 1971 figure. It is not just the fault of the BPP that these figures are so low. It is equally the fault of the voting community in Bombay, which is content to live on the munificence of a few ancestors, rather than making contemporary contributions to contemporary problems and needs.

If one examines the types of jobs secured through the Central Employment Bureau, Bombay (probably representing the situation of 50 percent to 75 percent), one finds that aspirations are falling and Jamsetji Tata's vision fading. Between 1971 and 1987, only four percent got the higher level technical and executive jobs

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while 96 percent got low-level jobs, of whom 52 percent were unskilled and semi-skilled, in this day and age. This is in marked contrast to Zoroastrians in the West, especially in the USA, where over 80 percent are graduates. All over the world high level jobs await higher levels of trained people. Little wonder that, since 1971, only a third of those applying for jobs get employed; and out of about 90 employed a year, only one or two get incomes over Rs 1,000 per month. The community here needs to upgrade its levels of training and job competence considerably. Parents should press for this. McCulluhan, an industrial psychologist, has found that educational standards are not enough. It is necessary to build achievement-motivation, the 'N' factor as he called it. So education for a better working life, that achievement orientation for higher aspirations needs to be built into it. It should be a part of our educational investment for the future.

All over the world minorities are getting stuck in slow-growth jobs, and are not trained and qualified enough to enter fast-growing ones. In the high growth areas in the USA, which include natural scientists, technicians, engineers/architects, marketing/sales, the percentage of jobs held by minorities in 1986 ranged between eight and 12 percent in most categories, and to about 15 percent in marketing and sales. In the slow growth areas of transportation, labor, machine operators, assemblers with growth rates ranging from minus four percent to only 10 percent, the minorities held 20 to 30 percent of the jobs.

This is an area for imaginative promotional trusts in each major region of the Zoroastrian world, from the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India to the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA). Let me call these Human Resource Development (HRD) trusts. Unlike trusts for gahambars etc, these will never be obsolete in a changing world. Apart from larger financial resources, this challenging task requires the organization of sustained participation by senior, experienced leaders in many fields. If need be, such senior resource persons could be from outside the community also, as it needs the organization of versatile clusters of experienced people, even before larger finances. The priority investment in human resources is probably the best single investment in the community's future. With religious education, it should

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Human resource development

Trustees everywhere need to upgrade their concern for education and career guidance with a new-look HRD policy, backed with enough resources, especially of high quality people. A higher investment three-track course, for different human potentials, would include high tech for the high fliers of the future, the middle track for talents in the professions, business or administration and vocational education for those unfit for, or not desiring to go for higher education, but needing gainful employment. In all three tracks we should be investing in the future growth areas, not just in yesterday's dying or static ones.

Development philanthropy

We need to move from the traditional concept of charity and dependency (save for those unable to help themselves), to the modern social concept of philanthropic development, in which people are helped to help themselves to go forward to higher levels of living. That way lies greater self-respect among receivers too. In advanced societies in the West, this is a recognized social activity with large foundations and trusts. The mark of a developed society is the extent to which it outgrows dependence on government or institutions. The organization of this calls for high quality professional people, with leading figures from industry, law, banking, education, science and the humanities, working in voluntary public service institutions and managing large public funding. It is a Zoroastrian expression of high level 'Kunashniks,' deeds with community caring concern.

Take the American example. Apart from great names like Carnegie, Ford and Rockefeller, 89 million Americans out of a population of 230 million contributed unpaid service to voluntary organizations (Volags) worth an estimated \$ 110 billion in working time. Significantly \$ 66 billion is given by people whose incomes fall in the bottom three-fifths of the scale, because Christianity teaches, "I am my brother's keeper." Seventy percent of American households support charity. (We have no such figures for Zoroastrians.) Religious bodies receive 47 percent; and health, education, social services and the arts receive 53 percent. "The caring instinct is the test of a truly civi-

lised society."

Even in the Philippines (80 percent Christian), 120 companies have formed, the "Philippine Business for Social Progress," and each contributes one percent of net income for human resource development, food programs, and the promotion of small-scale industries. Can this Congress throw up a proposal for "Zoroastrian Foundations for Social Progress" among Zoroastrian business-

**The mark of a
developed society
is the extent to
which it outgrows
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men in each of the main regions — India, FEZANA, Europe and Iran — in relevant fields?

We are no longer a pyramid society. We have been transformed into an onion society, with a large middle-class professional and business bulge. In most anjumans the members pay rising subscriptions with the years for community facilities and services. In the core city of Bombay, with three-quarters of the world community outside Iran, we alone seem to want to live off the past munificence of a few ancestors. There is no systematic contribution from the community at large. It is a shockingly uncivic condition.

If Bombay claims to be the leading single community, let it set an example by at least catching up with other communities with a more modern electoral system, and with regular contributions from all members, except the poorest. We have no moral right to demand public services without voting and paying, the first duties of a citizen. Let us recall President Kennedy: what can we do for the community? If, for example 58 percent Bombay Zoroastrians earning above Rs 15,000 p.a. paid graded annual subscriptions between Rs 50 and Rs 200, the BPP could be richer by Rs 1.7 million a year, or about Rs 10 million (with compound interest) in five years. More than money, it would be a mark of the Bombay community's stepping into the responsibilities of a contributing and con-

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cerned democratic society.

Organizational renewal

We live in an age when all authority and all institutions are questioned. Daniel Bell, the famous sociologist, has said insightfully, "Modern organizations are too small for the big problems of life, and too big for its small ones." In our organizational restructuring and change we must match social tasks, organizational structures and roles, human and financial resources.

The various anjumans, close to the grass-roots, are ideally placed for the traditional problems of the community:

**Priority investment
in human resources
is probably the best
single investment in
the community's
future**

namely social get-togethers, maintaining agiaris, dokhmas, cemeteries, dharamshalas and local community properties, and some charitable activities. In a concurrent list of subjects, they could share responsibilities and resources with federal bodies like the Indian Federation and FEZANA, and such regional bodies suggested as Zoroastrian Foundations for Social Progress from among Zoroastrian companies, and HRD investments in such areas as religious education, uplift of priests, higher and vocational education and career guidance, and housing.

The Federal bodies should help promote regionally endowed foundations for such matters as religious education, higher and vocational education, career guidance, housing and such matters requiring multiple larger organizations with larger resources. The federal bodies could then organize resources and resource persons, and come to mutually agreed working arrangements for the concurrent list of subjects with local anjumans. The federal bodies could also liaise with governments and public policy agencies in larger matters affecting the community, especially in education and employment, business promotion, emigration, immigration, etc.

Reinforcement networks

Both anjumans and federal bodies need to

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be strengthened beyond their electoral members, by the wider networks of resource persons and panels of consultants in various fields, e.g. health, education, housing, the poor and aged, in various know-how areas of law, finance, management, education, architecture, etc. These persons could be either coopted onto the elected committees, or included as associate members on the electoral bodies.

Elected bodies are not enough. Their members cannot work full-time, nor do they embrace all talents and experience in a community. Elected bodies should be supplemented and reinforced by more voluntary action groups in various fields. In modern societies, leadership has to go beyond electoral bodies. Anyone who can take initiative, contribute ideas and resources, help in problem solving and implementation of social programs, is as important in the wider community leadership role as the formal elected leaders. When that happens, a community's human resources are more widely developed and utilized. It's basic capital is enhanced beyond depreciation.

Youth wings in each anjuman and federal body should have autonomy, and a supplementary functional role. Within the larger community organizations,

youth and others should reinforce each other and not be in separate camps. There could also be a resource pool, and a succession pool for future community leaders. Succession-building in organizations is as neglected, as it is

**Anyone who can
take initiative,
contribute ideas...
help in...
implementation of
social programs, is
as important as the
formal elected
leaders**

vital for organizational sustainability and strength.

There should be regional cells for: updating and refining demographic data and social studies; monitoring the follow-up experiences of the recommendations of each Zoroastrian congress through federal bodies and anjumans. These are clear la-

cunae which, hopefully, the Fifth Congress will fill.

To paraphrase Mao, I may summarize by saying community power comes through a double-barrel gun:

- One barrel is for higher knowledge, talents, and social capabilities for group actions,
- the second barrel for wider community cooperation, participation, and institution-building.

The vision and these tasks call for patient, creative craftsmen of organizational life, people who make live and lasting organizations. Towards these ends, let us apply Vohuman and be better participative Kunashniks in increasing numbers. Let that Vohuman tell us, that the unthinking status quo prisoners of the past cannot be helpful fathers of the future, if we are to think and act with the future-oriented theme of the Congress.

To be, or not to be, a growing, contributing, future oriented part of Zoroastrian modernization — that is the choice Zarathushtra asks us to make today.

The text is abridged and edited from a paper presented by Aspi Moddie at the session on "Strengthening community organizations." A management consultant, Moddie opted out of the Indian Administrative Service to make a career with the private sector.



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The rumors came thick and fast: Homi Mehta, managing director of once-upon-a-time high-flyer, Mazda Industries and Leasing Limited, had been sacked; one of its subsidiary companies, Mazda Deupa Engineering Limited was being closed down; and, the most shocking of them all, the company's chairman and chief promoter, noted tax consultant Homi P. Ranina, had sold off all his shares in the company.

One of the most promising leasing companies floated in the mid eighties, Mazda Leasing Limited later diversified into new businesses and was rechristened Mazda Industries and Leasing Limited (MIL). But the company's leasing activity, its four other divisions, and most of the five subsidiary companies, went through rough times. Profits plummeted, the price of MIL's share dipped below par at Rs 9 and business circles were abuzz with speculation about Ranina's imminent departure.

New developments

"I am, and will continue to be, the chairman of Mazda," insists Ranina. But how much control he will be able to exercise remains to be seen. For, new developments last month have completely altered the nature of the company and the constitution of the board.

After diluting their holdings in the Killick Nixon group of companies, the brothers Gopal and V. K. Rathi have bought seven percent of MIL shares to



begin with. Ranina continues to be the largest individual shareholder with 15 percent holding (the remaining 78 percent shares are with the public). At the same time, Krishan Murari, the former head of the Bank of Credit and Commerce in Bombay and now a financial consultant in London, cine actor Dilip Kumar and local businessman V. K. Modi — all "good family friends" of the Rathis — have found places on the MIL board of directors.

A London-based NRI, Gopal Rathi exported pharmaceuticals and dyes worth Rs 14 crores last year through his export firm in Bombay. He meets 60 percent of Zambia's pharmaceutical needs and is known to have excellent contacts among importers in London, New York and Dubai. "The future of leasing is not bright and we are thinking of going into exports in a big way," says Ranina. "Besides pharmaceuticals and dyes, Mazda will export electronic items and

Ranina: striving for better returns

leather goods. Gopal Rathi's rich experience in exports will be a great asset to the company."

Ranina may be pessimistic about the leasing business but market observers believe that a leasing company which has the ability to raise resources and which can exercise tight control over its funds, can continue to make big money. Part of this view stems from the fact that the total leasing business in the country, which stood at Rs 150 crores in 1985, is expected to touch Rs 950 crores by the end of this year. "Good leasing companies like 20th Century Finance and Empire Finance in Bombay, Classical Finance in Calcutta and Grover Leasing in Delhi, continue to be run profitably," says a merchant banker.

Into the act

On their part, the Rathis have invested in

A new lease on life

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A new board of directors and a change in the company's objectives are expected to alter the future of Mazda Industries and Leasing

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MIL because, as V. K. Rathie puts it, "Ranina is a family friend and the company has a large untapped potential." Having taken the decision, the Rathies got into the act right away. Gopal Rathie arranged a short-term loan of Rs 1.5 crores for MIL before flying off on a month-long business tour of Europe. Younger brother V. K., in the meanwhile, replaced Homi Mehta as managing director. Mehta, who has been with the Mazda group ever since its inception, has been shifted to a department working on blueprints for the new business areas the Rathies plan to take MIL into. Rathie has also shifted part of the MIL office from Nariman Point in south Bombay to the northern suburb of Andheri from where most of the group's real estate transactions are carried out.

All these, however, are mere cosmetic changes when compared to the tough tasks that lie ahead. The new team has to turn around a Rs 12-crore group whose profits have been under intense pressure in the last few years. MIL's leasing ac-

tivities, for instance, have been showing declining profitability in recent years. The company's income from lease and hire purchase increased from Rs 7 crores on June 30, 1987 to Rs 9.5 crores on November 30, 1988, but the profit before tax decreased from Rs 2.3 to Rs 1.2 crores in the same period.

The declining profitability from leasing, however, is not a recent phenomenon and MIL has been buffeted by the same strong forces which have wreaked havoc with many other leasing companies in the country. Mazda was one of the 500-odd leasing companies floated in the mid-eighties. A big success in the US and the UK, the leasing business was perceived to be the money-spinner of the future.

The advent of so many companies simultaneously, however, had the opposite

"The future of leasing is not bright and we are thinking of going into exports in a big way"

effect. Lease rentals, for instance, dropped from Rs 34 per Rs 1,000 in 1985 to Rs 16 per Rs 1,000 within a year. To make matters worse, public sector giants like Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI), Industrial Reconstruction Corporation of India (IRCI) and the subsidiaries of State Bank of India, Canara Bank, Bank of Baroda and Punjab National Bank entered the leasing business. These public sector giants quoted unbelievably low lease rentals which were very uneconomical for the private sector companies to match.

Unrelated diversification

To escape further beating, some of the private leasing companies tried their hands at diversification. Swadeshi Leasing set up a unit for manufacturing PVC bottles. Key Leasing put up a flour mill. Pressman Leasing floated a stretch blow molded container project. And in 1986, Mazda set up Mazda Deuspa Engineering Ltd, the first of its many businesses totally unrelated to leasing.

"The capital market was then experiencing a buoyancy and we went into a diversification program," says Mehta, explaining why the group moved away from leasing. "We thought we would put in a little seed money and leave the rest to the investing public. But the stockmarket collapsed. We had to honor our commitments, however, and we ended up with Rs 3 crores stuck in the new projects."

Within a short span of three years, Mazda had ventured into merchant banking, real estate, marketing and project consultancy, aviation and engineering, and hotels and leisure resorts. Explaining to his shareholders the rationale behind such a large diversification move, Ranina had said in 1985, "The manufacturing arm of the company will earn substantial profits which will ensure that Mazda continues to remain as the foremost leasing company in the country." Unfortunately, most of the new projects turned out to be turkeys. Mazda Deuspa, set up for the manufacture of micro hydraulics, mini internal gear pumps, power packs and other engineering products, was established at Dongari village in Talasari district of Maharashtra. It was a non-starter from the word go. "We were denied even the basic infrastructure. We had been promised adequate and continuous power supply but the authorities went back on their word,"



V. K. Rathie (top) takes over as managing director of Mazda Industries from Mehta (below)

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says Mehta.

Similarly, a project for the manufacture of concrete railway sleepers failed to take off. Started as a subsidiary of Mazda Eastland Industries and Leasing Limited, which itself is a subsidiary of MIL, Mazda Concrete Products Limited was incorporated in April 1988 in Orissa. But after Rs 42 lakhs had been sunk into the project, it was discovered that the plant had been set up on a site which was under litigation. All further work ground to a halt.

"Left in the lurch"

Not everybody has been sympathetic towards Mazda's woes. "Mazda's problems have accumulated because it did not stick to the knitting (meaning, the leasing business)," says the merchant banker quoted earlier. "Their diversification program is one big misadventure and the minority shareholders have been left in the lurch."

"Ranina may be a very good advocate but that does not necessarily make him a good businessman," says the vice president of a leading leasing company. In fact, a senior executive at MIL squarely blames Ranina and Mehta's non-business background for the mess the group presently finds itself in. "Ranina is basically a tax consultant and Mehta was a banker for more than 20 years. They lack the killer instinct so necessary in today's business."

That the group was unusually short-sighted is evident from the Mazda Packaging fiasco. In early 1988, following a proposal in parliament to make mandatory the selling of edible oil in plastic pouches, the Mazda group decided to set up a Rs 5.5 crore plant manufacturing five-layer packing films. But no governmental order followed and Mazda Packaging Ltd was stuck with an imported machine costing Rs 1.75 crores, and ended the 15-month period on March 31, 1989 with a loss of Rs 81 lakhs. Of the installed capacity of 1,080 tonnes per annum, only 82.43 tonnes of co-extruded multi-layer plastic film were manufactured.

Whether it was just plain bad luck or mismanagement, problems continued to accumulate not only in the subsidiary companies but in the flagship company, MIL, too. "While other leasing companies were able to arrange bank loans to the tune of Rs 15 crores, our financial team could organize absolutely nothing," says Ranina.

According to Mehta, the problem lay elsewhere; he cites the company's decision to raise fixed deposits in 1985 as the beginning of its myriad headaches. Deposit holders were allotted the company's convertible debentures on a preferential basis. "We collected Rs 5.5 crores as fixed deposits but did not expect a majority of the deposit holders to withdraw simultaneously," says Mehta. "However, now that they had their convertible debentures, the deposit holders withdrew all their money three years later. We had to pay out Rs 3.5 crores in one go." This, along with the Reserve Bank of India's recent guideline of a minimum two-year deposit period as against the earlier six-month one, pushed the company into a severe liquidity crunch. "We were lucky that the Rathis came along to bail us out," says Mehta.

Stronger industrial base

Now that they are firmly in the saddle, the Rathis plan to give a face-lift to the company. "Leasing will continue to be a major activity for some more time," says V. K. Rathi. "The exports business will be developed to a great extent but most important, we are going to give a much better and stronger industrial base to the Mazda group."

Plans include forays into the pharmaceutical and heavy engineering fields. A unit is being set up at SEEPZ in Bombay which will manufacture two-in-ones for exports. Mazda Deuspa will be sold off but Mazda Packaging Limited will be revived with its products now oriented for the exports market. Finally, construction activity, which so far had been restricted to Sanjan near the Gujarat-Maharashtra border, will now be extended to Bombay too. "The returns here are better, and faster," says V. K. Rathi.

Yes, the Mazda group has had disastrous experiences in its diversification program in the past but both Ranina and V. K. Rathi are confident that this time around, success awaits them. "Hopefully, within eight months things should begin to look up. In spite of the hammering the company has taken at the stock exchange, in the mind of the people Mazda Industries Limited still is a well-established company," says V. K. Rathi.

That, and a large dose of luck, seems to be the panacea for all of Mazda's present ills.

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In my book, *Traditional Recipes of India*, I have stated, "It has taken India about 4,000 years to evolve her system of cookery — intricate, full of subtlety and with a balance and delicacy achieved by no other." No single person, even if he or she has dedicated an entire lifetime to studying Indian food, can learn all the finer nuances of Indian cooking. Every state has its own established cuisine, yet there is a subtle variation not only from village to village, but at times from caste to caste, and family to family. And this is from Kashmir to Kanyakumari — an area as large as Europe without Russia!

It is sad that most of the members of the affluent class prefer to lean to the West in their style of living, thinking and eating. We can learn a lot from the West, but that does not mean that we do not give encouragement to our own people, especially the talented cooks. Not surprisingly, some of this culinary art is dying out in our country.

There are over 100 varieties of kababs made in Lucknow — by special kabab-wallas. Unfortunately the experts are all dying out and very few are left. Rarely do hosts invite them to cook their specialties; diners would rather go to five star hotels and pay a fortune for the type of mundane Indian dishes that these places offer.

Has any one watched a *roomali roti* (very thin, large, whitish *rotis* - unleavened bread) being made? How, from a small piece of rolled dough, the professionals expand it into a large thin disk ranging from 8 to 12 inches in diameter, and sometimes as large as a bicycle wheel. [The disk of dough is flung in the air such

that it lands on both hands (palms facing down) and stretched gently everytime it lands on the knuckles!]

To see a *dosa* (dough of blended flours fried crisp and paper thin) being made by an expert in a couple of seconds, or to watch coffee being cooled in South India by *tumbbis* (young apprentice boys) in small wayside restaurants who pour the coffee from one mug to another from a distance of a yard without wasting a drop, is a delightful experience! But all this expertise is just taken for granted and no notice or encouragement is given to our cooks. Yet, people will go to expensive hotels, see a foreign chef flambé crepes suzettes and say "wah wah."

Years ago when I was waiting for a friend near the Dhobi Talao maidan in Bombay I witnessed a man making *rotis*. In his small shop on stilts, not more than four feet by five feet he had a large flat *tava* (iron griddle) about one and

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a half feet in diameter. He would pick up a piece of dough, flatten it out with his hands to about a six inch circle. Then he would pick it up, and with a flick of his wrist (with the dough held between the thumb and first finger), the *roti* would expand. This was repeated until the *roti* was as large as the *tava*! Then it was flung on the *tava* to cook for a few seconds, removed and folded. Years later I went to see if he was still there, but all the shops down that line had disappeared! It is soul-destroying and frustrating to watch all this disappear in front of our eyes. Now the 'in thing' is to eat junk food!

Anyway, one must carry on doing what little one can to preserve some of the good things in life like food, glorious food. I am sharing with you some simple yet delightful recipes that I have collected.

DIN MOHEMED'S MUSALMANI GOSHT

Lamb or mutton (1 kg — cut into large pieces)
Onions (4 large — chopped)
Garlic (1 whole head — peeled and chopped)
Ginger (2-inch piece — peeled and chopped)
Coriander powder (2 heaped tbsp)
Cardamoms (3-4 black or 6 white)
Cloves (3-4)

Cinnamon (1-inch piece)
Bay leaves (2)
Black peppercorns (6-8)
Butter (100 gms)
Salt and chilli powder (to taste)
Put meat along with the rest of ingredients (except butter) in a pan. Add 2 cups of water. Cover pan and cook on a slow fire till meat is tender and the water dries up. Add butter. Brown the meat and serve hot with *rotis*.
(Din Mohamed was the chief baker in Chefair when I used to work there.)

CHICKEN MALAI KABABS

Chicken (750 gms — cut into large pieces)
Lime juice (2 tbsp)
Ginger and garlic juice (1 tbsp each)
Beaten curds (100 gms)
Masala to be ground
Poppy seeds (1 dsp)
Fresh coriander leaves (100 gms)
Green chillies (2)
Mixed magaz seeds (1 tbsp)
Flatten chicken pieces by pounding them slightly. Marinate them in all the juices for 1 hour. Add ground masala and beaten curds and marinate for further 12 hours. Add salt and barbeque on skewers.

Note: The kababs must not be brown but should remain whitish in color and juicy when done.

(Mr L. Joshi, manager of India International Centre, gave me this excellent recipe. He is an expert in Indian cuisine.)

CHANDERMOOKHI'S ALLOO CHOLE

Kabuli channa (chick peas — 250 gms)
Potatoes (250 gms)
Ginger (75 gms — sliced or chopped)
Aamchoor (dried mango powder — 30 gms)
Cardamoms pounded (15 gms)
Ghee (75 gms)
Chilli powder and salt (to taste)
Soak channa overnight. Boil channa and potatoes separately in fresh water till cooked. Keep the water in which the channa were cooked. Heat ghee and saute ginger till brown. Add aamchoor and peeled and cubed potatoes. Add salt and chilli powder. Add channa with water. Simmer for 15 minutes. Remove into a deep dish, sprinkle with powdered cardamoms and serve with puris.
(Ms Chandermookhi Dabra was a very dear friend of the Manekshaws in Amritsar — her vegetarian cooking was superlative.)

KOLI FISH

Fish chunks (1 kg — rubbed with salt and kept for ½—1 hour)
Masala to be ground
Green chillies (2-4)
Chilli powder (2 tsp)
Turmeric powder (1 tsp)
Garlic (6-8 cloves)
Lime (2)
Rice flour or wheat flour
Oil for shallow frying
Do not wash fish after it is salted. Rub ground masala on fish. Roll in rice flour and fry in a shallow frying pan on low heat. Cover the dish with a lid with a little water on it. Turn once or twice only. Alternately, roll fish in whole wheat flour, sprinkle oil on top and cook on a slow fire in a dish covered with a lid. There should be water on the lid. Serve with lime juice sprinkled on top. In Maharashtra it is felt that *til* (sesame) oil gives a special flavor to fish specialties cooked in the Indian style. In Bengal, the fish is usually fried in mustard oil.
(The above recipe was given to me by a cook of Chefair, Bombay, who has a fishing fleet of his own! The Koli fish is a speciality of Maharashtra.)

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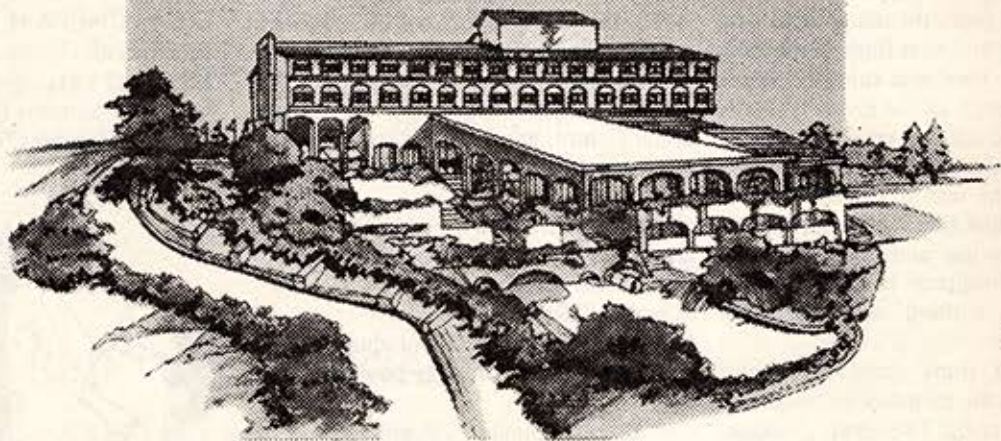
Rice (parmal basmati — 1 kg)
Mutton (1 kg)
White cardamoms (6-8)
Black cardamoms (4-6)



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Black peppercorns (10-12)
Cinnamon (2-inch stick)
Cloves (6-8)
Onions (4 large — sliced)
Oil as needed
Potli (packet)
Ginger (3-inch piece)
Garlic (1 whole head)
Onions (2-3)
Coriander seeds (1 tbsp)
Bay leaves (3-4)
Black cardamoms (4)
Cinnamon (1-inch piece)
A piece of muslin

Wash off starch from the rice. Soak in water for one hour. Drain the rice and let it dry for half an hour.

Put all *potli* ingredients in muslin and tie into a parcel. Pound lightly with a rolling pin. Empty the *potli* ingredients into a pan. Add meat that has been cut into pieces. Then add water till it covers the contents. Add salt. Bring to a boil. Remove scum and simmer till meat is three-quarters cooked. Keep meat and its broth. Heat about 2 tbsp oil, add onions and all the garam masala. Brown

onions. Add meat. Let it turn to a light brown. Add rice. Brown the rice. Add broth and salt to taste. The broth should cover the rice by about 2 inches. If it does not, add hot water. Bring to a boil. Cook till the broth is absorbed and small holes appear on the surface of the rice. Cover and seal the lid with a dough made with flour and water. With the oven set on 'medium,' bake for 20 minutes. Cover the pan with a napkin, bring it to the table and open the seal on the table to savor the aroma of the biryani.

KORMA

Chicken wings (1 kg — can use cut chicken pieces)
Onions (4 large — sliced)
Coriander powder (2 tbsp)
Ginger (1½ inch — peeled and chopped)
Garlic (6-8 cloves — peeled and chopped)
Green chillies (4 — chopped)
Chilli powder (1-2 tsp — to taste)
Tomatoes (3 medium — chopped)
Black peppercorns (6)
White cardamoms (4-6)

Butter (200 gms)

Oil (1½ tbsp)

Heat oil, brown onions. Add coriander powder, ginger, garlic, green chillies, chilli powder and sauté well. Add tomatoes and sauté again for 2 minutes. Add wings and sauté till wings are nicely browned. Add water till the ingredients are covered and add cardamoms and black peppercorns. Simmer till the wings are done and a gravy remains. Add butter and serve hot.

Note: Guard your cholesterol after this dish!

(Many eateries in Bombay and Delhi were manned by Mohammedans. They used to make excellent biryani and the korma which they ate with it.)

MANGALORIAN ONION STEW

Onions (15 — medium sized)
Water (½ pint, English measure 1 pint = 20 ozs)
Garam masala powder (½ tsp)
Cumin powder (1 tsp)
Turmeric powder (1 tsp)
Black pepper powder (½ tsp)

THE COMMUNITY FARES WELL AT TATAS

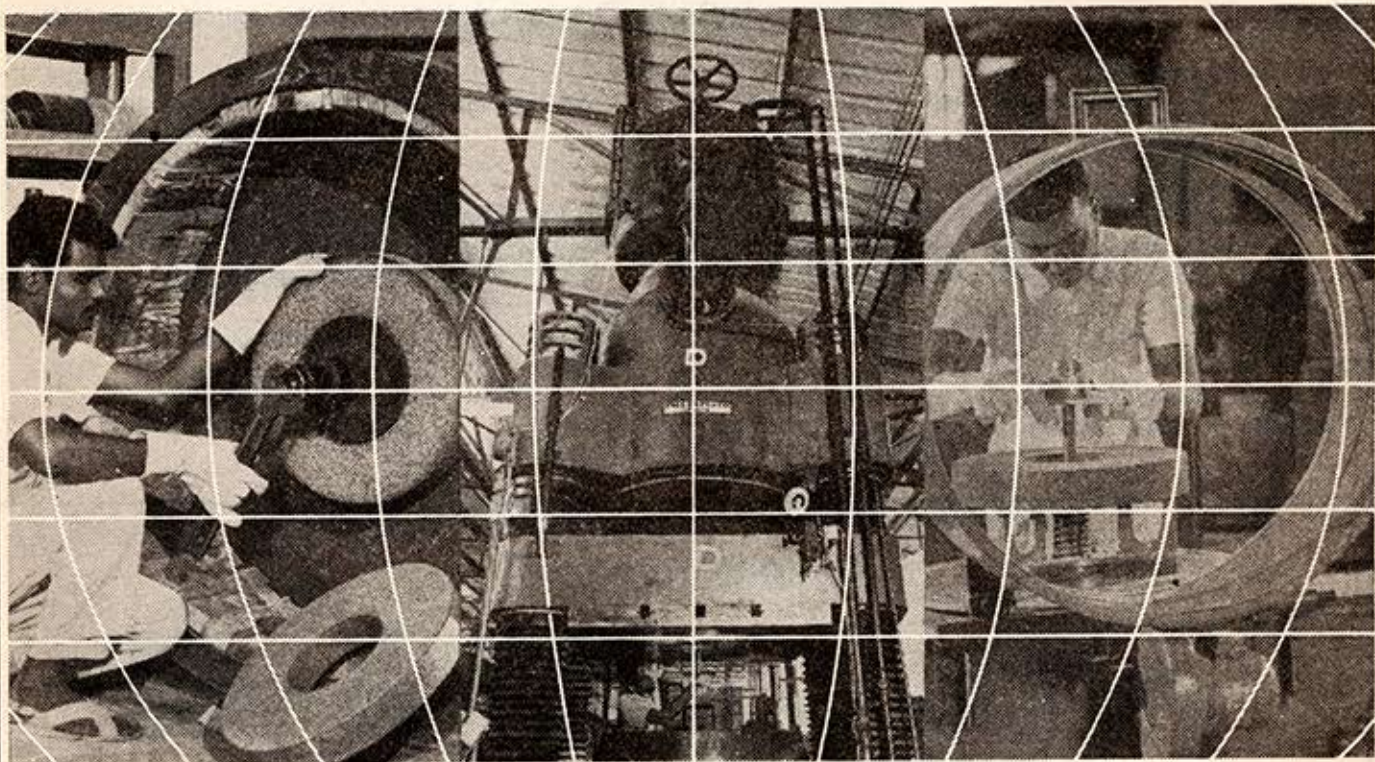
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In fact, Tatas have gone so far as to turn the entire town of Jamshedpur into a model in community living. There are wide roads, tree-lined avenues, hospitals and family clinics, and schools which any community would be proud of.

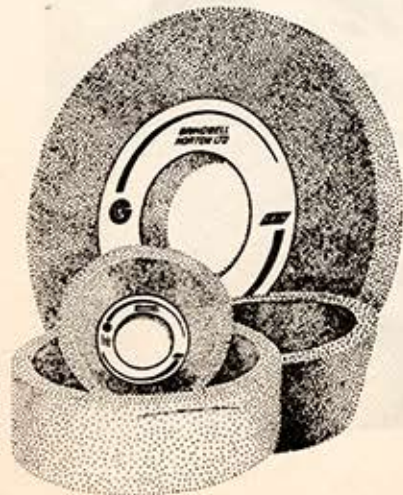
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Flour (2 tsp)
 Coconut milk extracted from ½ coconut (1 cup)
 Fat or oil (1 tbsp)
 Onion (1 — sliced)
 Salt (to taste)
 Peel onions and cut off roots and tops. Boil in a little water with salt. Strain if necessary. Add turmeric and cumin powder to coconut milk. Mix well. Heat oil and brown the sliced onion in it. Add flour and mix well. Sauté for a minute. Add coconut milk, black pepper and garam masala. Bring to a boil. Add onions. Simmer for 5 minutes and serve hot with a vindaloo or masala chops or fried masala fish.

KOSUMARI (Mysorian raw lentil salad)

Moong dal (½ cup — soaked overnight or at least for 2-3 hours)
 Carrots (2 — grated)
 Cucumber (½ — grated)
 Coriander leaves (1 tbsp — coarsely chopped)
 Cabbage (1 cup — grated)
 Pomelo or orange (1 cup — peeled)
 Coconut (2 small — grated)
 Salt and lime juice (to taste)

Mix all together chill and serve

PYALI

White dried peas (½ kg — soaked overnight and boiled with salt and turmeric powder)

Potatoes (4 medium sized — boiled, peeled and cubed)

Mix cubed potatoes with cooked peas

Garnishes

Cocum (*Garcinia Indica* — a dry sour fruit) paste

12 cocums soaked in water for half an hour after they are well washed. Then ground to a paste in the same water.

Tamarind paste

40 gms tamarind soaked in 1 cup water for half an hour then strained through a fine sieve till all the pulp is sieved out and only the fibres remain which are discarded. Add a pinch of salt.

Chopped onions

Chopped coriander leaves

Chopped mint leaves

Red chilli paste

Garlic (1½ heads — peeled and crushed)

Chilli powder (2 tsp, or 6-8 strong dried red chillies)

Potato (1 medium sized — mashed)

Grind all to a fine paste and mix with

mashed potato. Add salt to taste.

To serve: Put the bowl of peas and potatoes in the center, and surround with the different bowls of garnishes. Let your guests select the garnishes of their choice.

(This is served by roadside vendors in Bombay. This recipe was given to me by Ms Maya Sami.)

RABRI (from North India)

Full cream milk (4 pints — English measure 1 pint = 20 ozs)

Sugar (370 gms to 500 gms)

Pistachio nuts (chopped — for garnish)

Heat milk on a very slow fire. Fan milk occasionally to form a skin which is then pushed to the side of the pan. Continue to do this till milk has reduced by half. Add sugar and stir constantly until it has dissolved, and the mixture has reached the consistency of thin porridge. Pour into a bowl and chill. Garnish with the nuts. Peeled and crushed white cardamoms may also be sprinkled.

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

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The novel approach

Gustasp Irani

Instead of highlighting the pathos, Firdaus Kanga's novels take a lighthearted look at the disabled

"Review my own book?" Firdaus Kanga, author of the novel *Trying to Grow*, leans back in his wheelchair and ponders over the poser. Since the book was not available at the time of the interview — the hardback published by Ravi Dayal Publishers was due for release in India in end February, about a fortnight after Bloomsbury London, his publishers in the UK released his book on February 15 — Kanga's brief provides an insight: "It's enormous fun. Very readable. A fresh look at growing up and growing up disabled. It will be a surprise in a way as most people think it is a novel full of tears, full of struggle which it is not. What is special about it is that it is a comic novel about people who are disabled. People will realize that even the disabled have fun...if anyone is looking for a serious or scholarly work he will be disappointed." Kanga, a freelance writer, prefers to bring alive his character with the use of irony and humor rather than a straight narrative.

The story in this — his first — book, as related by Kanga, revolves around a disabled boy in a wheelchair "trying to grow" during the formative years of his life — from the age of eight to the early twenties. "Because I am disabled I was able to create such a character. He is not me in the sense that most of his experiences are not mine... No, definitely not me. The character is completely fic-

tional," clarifies Kanga and then he admits, "Yes, if I was in his place I would probably have reacted as he did." Similarly, the character from the book would probably have reacted as Kanga did had he switched from fiction to real life.

Though we have not yet read *Trying to Grow*, we begin to get a feel for the character. Fortright about his disability and his ability, Kanga says that for someone like him who grew up disabled he can relate to those feelings of being "special in a way; kind of self-absorbed. I had this tremendous understanding of the character so I did not need inspiration. The problem was fictionalizing it... In fiction you can bring out much more truth."

Inspiration is overrated. Writing is work. A novel has to be written and it took Kanga two years, three hours a day, to get his novel done. "Before I start writing I often wonder how it is going to work out. I know of some writers who go to great lengths to avoid writing — like polishing their shoes just to delay sitting down at their desk. When I'm writing though, I can't think why I do anything else; it's such enormous pleasure."

And Kanga indulges himself even more. Now he works even harder and

Kanga: valor is the ace virtue

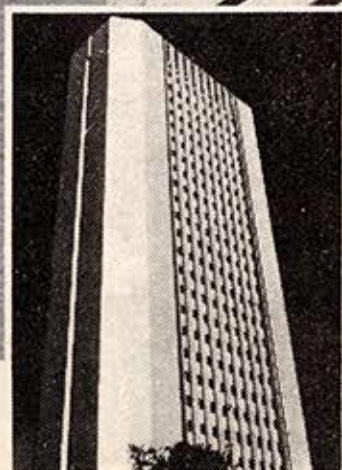
Photo: Gustasp Irani

longer at his writing — his second book, tentatively titled *Heaven on Wheels*. It is a book about a handicapped boy who reads a lot of literature about Britain and then comes to the country where the images from books confront the realities of life. "It's not just a travelogue, it's more," Kanga clarifies. The book is commissioned by Bloomsbury London, the publishers of his first novel, and "it's got a deadline," Kanga laughs heartily, explaining the longer hours he has to put in to get it written.

The laughter chips away your inhibitions about his disability. His cheerfulness helps you reach out and touch the man in the wheelchair. "If you have a disability, then you have a disability and that's it. It's like having bad eyes; you cope with it." Kanga's disability is that he was born with brittle bones which broke at the slightest excuse and hence impaired the full development of his skeletal frame. "It gets better with age."



Reaching for the Sky



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The bones do not break as frequently as they did before," Kanga, now 30, observes.

Yes, he did look on at other children play and realize that he could never really be one of them. But then, "There is the normal kind of fun, and the other kind of fun. If you are brought up right you know how to be happy. I grew up with a hunger for happiness and if you want something bad enough, you will fulfill it."

For this positive approach to life he thanks his parents, Tehmi and the late Homi, to whom *Trying to Grow* is dedicated — dedicated to their valor. "Valor is the first of virtues; without it you cannot achieve other goodness. The valor to face up to the disability of your child without showing it to the child; to let him grow up with this tremendous sense of normalcy when you can see how abnormal he is... I grew up with a lot of fun despite the physical pain... If you let your child bloom, you can't ask for anything more."

Part of this attitude stems from the fact that Kanga grew up as a Parsi. "I am an atheist," he declares though he

does believe strongly in the Parsi approach to life. "I think it's quite wonderful being a Parsi. It gives you a gigantic window to the West. We Parsis encourage individualism. We have access to the Western way of thought" unlike the others in the Indian society who have to fight against the values of the caste system, karma... simple things which won't trouble a Parsi. Parsis, he believes, are doing "wonderfully" and if they are the most enlightened people in India, it's only because they are allowed to be individuals.

But then, the Parsis are selfish too. Kanga feels, "It would be wonderful" if the community permitted others to share their religion and way of life. He has no reservation about conversion of people who want to share the experience. "I think we should forget about racial purity — it's all humbug. If you are honest with yourself you can plainly see that there is a lot of Indian blood in the race." From his residence at Cusrow Baug, Kanga points his hand towards the club house, inviting you to examine the Parsis who have collected there for recreation. "Even in the religion there is no bar against any-

one becoming a Zoroastrian. If people want to convert, it will be because the religion is attractive and the Parsi way of life is attractive. They will enrich the community besides help us in our fight for survival," Kanga laughs at the community paranoia about declining numbers.

If the writing reflects the writer, then the Parsi way of life is very apparent in *Trying to Grow*. "All the characters in the book are Parsi. I did not want it to be a Parsi novel. I wanted it to be the story of a family which suddenly has a disabled child." The family happened to be Parsi and being Parsi behave as Parsis do — "They feel that it is social status to have a TV in the bedroom." But more, they behave in a way that allows the individual to express himself even though he is disabled.

"There is no specific instance that relates to me, but the book does deal with giving a disabled child a sense of self-reliance," acknowledges Kanga. That self-reliance in Kanga expresses itself as a writer and he is trying to grow with it — the fun, the attention, the invitation to visit Britain...

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MILESTONES

The age of Parsi brides in Bombay in the month of February ranged between 21 and 43 years while the corresponding figures for the grooms were 23 and 53.

Of the 75 Parsis who died in Bombay, the major killer was heart disease, claiming 25 lives. Old age, lung disease and pneumonia claimed five victims each; brain disease and general debility, four each; bronchitis, kidney failure and cancer, three each; hypertension and septicaemia, two each. Isolated cases of brain tumor, blood poisoning, anaemia, enlargement of the prostate, inflammation of the brain, shock, blood disease, diabetes and asthma were also registered. The medical report is pending in the case of one death. An 18-year-old boy succumbed to bronchitis and a 30-year-old male to neurogenic shock. An 84 year-old woman donated her body for educational purposes to the anatomy department of the Grant Medical College. Highest age at death recorded this month: 99 years.

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled from information supplied by various newsletters and anjuman in India and abroad, courts and hospitals. This information is not always complete or consistent. In the breakup of deaths according to illnesses, especially of the elderly, death is often due to a combination of several diseases.

If readers have any births/marriages/deaths 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.

AURANGABAD Died

Dinshaw Navroji Printer (80), husband of Khorshed and father of Jangoo, Rumi, Zarin Keki Gorimar and late Kashmira on February 19, 1990

BOMBAY

Born

A girl, *Binaifer*, to *Zenobia and Burzis Patel*; November 14, 1989
A boy to *Amy and Rumi Kasad*; February 1, 1990
A girl to *Roshan and Aspi Dastoor*; February 2
A boy to *Vinaz and Cyrus Irani*; February 2
A girl to *Farnaz and Daneshmand Fallahtafti*; February 4
A girl to *Nilufer and Neville Patel*; February 5
A boy to *Rashna and Zubin Fouzdar*; February 6
A girl to *Vira and Pervesh Mody*; February 6
A girl to *Anahita and Faroz Joshi*; February 19
A boy to *Pervin and Kurush Kharas*; February 19
A girl to *Kamal and Kersasp Daruwala*; February 23
A girl to *Bakhtawar and Arzan Ghadially*; February 26
A girl to *Khurshid and Ashok Mathur*; February 27

Married

Niloofer Kaikhosrow Tiran-dazian and Shahrokh Behram Nooshian; January 28
Avan Minoo Vacha and Naval Jimmy Oonwalla; January 29
Phiroza Rustom Green and Kersasp Sorab Karak of London; February 1
Armaity Minocher Aibada of Surat and *Percy Faranroze Patel*; February 1
Hufiz Siavax Sinor and Pharoah Percy Basta; February 2
Tannaz Soli Hirjibedin and Hoshang Jalejar; February 2
Zenobia Nozer Surti and Neville Dosabhai Karkaria; February 2
Yasmin Keki Shroff and Jimmy Russy Cama; February 3
Valerie Homi Patel and Zahir Naval Baliwalla; February 4
Yasmin Kersasp Patel of Nallasopara and *Adil Meherwan Commissariat*; February 4
Shahnaiz Kaikashroo Noshirwani and Freddy Polly Randelia; February 4
Kamal Dara Pavri and Sam Nariman Katgara; February 5
Shahnaiz Phiroze Chinoy and Rohinton Tehemton Thanevala;

February 5

Hira Minoo Bharucha and Rohinton Framroze Pavri; February 6
Nafeeza Homi Daver and Darayus Fali Salta; February 6
Kamal Sohrab Banaji and Viraf Firoze Hansotia; February 8
Perviz Phiroze Reporter and Adil Jehangir Katrak; February 8
Aban Pesi Katgara and Mehrwan Pirojsha Dastur; February 9
Amy Jamshedji Dumasia and Cyrus Mehelli Rustom; February 9
Mehar Dhunjishaw Palsetia of Nargol and *Gev Keki Karai*; February 10
Farzana Kaikhushroo Tafti and Percy Hosi Dhanbhoo; February 12
Khurshid Bomi Dadabhoy and Jehangir Nariman Mistry; February 12
Maia Kersy Katrak and Zarvan Rohinton Patel of Madras; February 14
Laila Eruchshah Contractor and Roozbeh Faramroj Shroff; February 14
Jer Navroji Patel of Thana and *Lovji Manchershaw Adajania*; February 15
Gulrukh Keki Pithawala and Cyrus Rusi Dolasha; February 15
Farida Yazad Daruwala and Yezdi Marazban Karanjawalla of Khanpur, Ahmedabad; February 15
Banoo Jehangir Dubash and Riard Rusi Jasubhoy; February 16
Jasmine Parvez Palia and Zubin Keki Mody; February 16
Pearl Marazban Karanjawalla of Ahmedabad and *Boman Maneck Bulsara*; February 17
Pervin Mashuk Irani and Zahir Rustom Irani; February 18
Yasmin Edulji Kalyaniwala of Kalyan and *Jamshed Ardeshtir Modi*; February 18
Zarin Bahadur Patel and Khushroo Phiroze Dastur; February 20
Armin Jamshed Irani and Percy Nariman Dastoor; February 20
Dhun Adi Vasania of Bulsar and *Filli Burjor Lal* of Solapur;

February 20

Jean Bomi Vasaigara and Peshotan Teshmul Wadia; February 20
Navaz Hoshang Buhariwala and Darayus Bomi Marolia; February 22
Gover Jamshed Irani and Aspi Ardeshtir Irani; February 23
Jasmine Rusi Mistry and Burgis Keki Daruwala; February 24
Nilufer Jehangir Bacha and Zend Fali Lakdavala; February 27

Died

Shahzad Kersy Luth (18), residing at 32, Karelwadi, Thakurdwar, 400002; January 31
Aloo Noshir Dubash (80), Moraji Mans, Nepean Sea Rd, 400026; February 1
Tehmi Jalejar Mulla (81), Adenwalla Bldg, 626, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 2
Jal Ardeshtir Bhandari (60), Bakhtawar, Narayan Dabholkar Rd, 400006; February 3
Aspi Behram Bhesania (32), E/3, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; February 3
Najamai Manchershaw Patel (90), Danawalla Bldg, Lalbaug, 400012; February 4
Jehangir Hormusji Randelia (73), Chhotani Bldg, Proctor St, Grant Rd, 400007; February 4
Pirojba Ratanshah Siganporia (83), E/13, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; February 4
Amy Adalji Thanawalla (57), D-1, Union Bank Soc, Parijat Patel Est, Jogeshwari, 400060; February 4
Ratanbai Meherwanji Batliboi (99), Cumballa Crest, 42, Pedder Rd, 400026; February 5
Behram Nasarwanji Cooper (69), 19/19, Panthaki Baug, Andheri (E), 400069; February 5
Freny Framroze Parbhoo (75), 690, Dinshaw Master Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 6
Dhunjishah Firojshah Daver (85), 194, Talaty Bldg, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; February 7
Zarine Jehangir Engineer (45),

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Buona Casa, Sir P. M. Rd, 400001; February 7
 Shapurji Fakirji Jokhi (77), 20, Sargent Hse, Opp Electric Hse, Colaba, 400039; February 7
 Bachamai Ardesir Patel (68), 4-A, Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; February 7
 Parveen Farokh Patel (38), Room 8, Ambawadi, 400006; February 8
 Dhun Jehangir Thanawalla (87), 10, Wadia Bldg, Malcolm Bag, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; February 8
 Jal Navroji Bulsara (66), N-11, Dalal Est, Lamington Rd, 400008; February 9
 Khorshedbanu Rustomji Dastur (85), M-57, Cusrow Bag, S. B. Rd, 400039; February 9
 Rustom Hormuzdiar Nejabat (65), 554/A, Kanhaiya Bhavan, Chira Bazar, 400002; February 9
 Alamai Ratanshaw Patel (78), R/11, S. B. Bharucha Bag, Andheri (W), 400058; February 9
 Tehmina Nariman Trombaywalla (70), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; February 9
 Jamshed Gustad Zonji (85), 319, Mitha Mans, Room 18, Fort, 400001; February 9
 Tehmina Homi Irani (74), 45, Wellington St, Dhobitalao, 400002; February 10
 Rusi Pestonji Sethna (65), Lam Bldg, N. M. Joshi Marg, Lower Parel, 400013; February 10
 Sherin Pirojshah Surti (92), 4/3, Rustom Bag, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; February 10
 Pestonji D. Baliwalla (86), H/1, Cusrow Bag, S. B. Rd, 400039; February 11
 Kaikhushroo Edulji Italia (91), B/13, Nowroz Bag, Lalbag, 400012; February 11
 Zarthost Framroze Irani (45), 28/A, Todiwalla Bldg, Sunmill Rd, Lower Parel, 400013; February 11
 Phiroze Sorabji Mistry (80), 26, Old Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; February 11
 Mani Darabsha Mulla (74), 206/C, 5-B, Hari Om Apts, Borivli (W), 400092; February 11
 Dinsha Jamshedji Panday (84), 4/A, Rashmi, Carmichael Rd, 400026; February 11
 Mehera Aspandiyar Rabadi (76), B, Bhatia Bldg, Opp Parsi Dairy Farm, 400002;

February 11
 Framroze Sorabji Ranji (93), 2/9, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; February 11
 Suni Jiji Contractor (76), 1/11, Rustom Bag, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; February 12
 Edulji Jamshedji Karas (30), 59, Queens Rd, 400002; February 12
 Byram Edulji Marawalla (83), E-9, Jer Bag, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculla, 400027; February 12
 Bachan Maneksha Nussirabadwala (85), 0/6, Dalal Est, Lamington Rd, 400008; February 12
 Mehroo Cawas Palia (60), A-2, Mehta Bldg, Captain Clny, Tardeo, 400034; February 12
 Naval Nanabhai Sethna (70), Tafti Bldg, Frere Bridge, Grant Rd, 400007; February 12
 Meherwanji Sorabji Battiwalla (90), 764/B, Naval Hse, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 13
 Kodadad Byram Irani (58), 59/C, Bazar Rd, Bandra, 400050; February 13
 Jal Darabsha Parakh (76), Flat

3/12, Sir Dorab Tata Bldg, Bandra, 400050; February 13
 Eruch Framji Doctor (74), Gool Villa, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Dadar, 400014; February 14
 Aloo Navroji Mody (71), All Saints Home, 54-A, Dockyard Rd, Mazagaon, 400010; February 14
 Daulatbanoo Bomansha Irani (85), 8, Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; February 15
 Perin Darab Chinoy (56), 522, Parekh Hse, Opp Chira Bazar, 400002; February 16
 Freny Burjor Paymaster (72), Kamal Mhl, Dahanukar Marg, 400026; February 16
 Mary Phiroze Chinoy (78), 14-B, Pemino, Altamount Rd, 400026; February 17
 Minocher Jehangir Lali (80), Jer Mans, 70/B, Gowalia Tank Rd, 400036; February 17
 Kaikhushru Varmed Felfeli (72), Shirin Mans, 74, Trinity St, Dhobitalao, 400020; February 19
 Mani Dadabhai Mehta (67), 4/39, A. H. Wadia Bag, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; February 19

Bainai Chadabhai Mucadam (75), Orient Bldg, 50, Wodehouse Rd, Colaba, 400005; February 19
 Eruch Jhangir Rana (76), 4/5, A. H. Wadia Bag, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; February 19
 Cawasji Rustomji Marolia (82), Parsi Punchayet Cottage, Doongerwadi, 400036; February 20
 Rustom Rashid Irani (85), F-24, Cusrow Bag, S. B. Rd, 400039; February 21
 Pestonji Byramji Mistry (72), 16, Happy Home, Gowalia Tank, 400036; February 21
 Bomi Kaikhushru Oomrigar (66), Mani Manor, 803-A, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 21
 Dhunjishaw Bomanshaw Satha (72), 19, Ragunath Dadaji St, Fort, 400001; February 21
 Minoo Navroji Nalladaroo (86), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; February 22
 Sorabji Nadirsha Baria (87), Parsi Dharamshalla, Alibaug, Dist Raigad, 402201; February 23



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Tehmina Meherji Palia (87),
 Palia Mans, 822, Parsi Clny,
 Dadar, 400014; February 23
Banoo Pirojshah Billimoria (67),
 443, Ajay Niwas, Chira Bazar,
 400002; February 24
Najamai Bomansha Sethna (87),
 Vakil Bldg, 683/A, Parsi Clny,
 Dadar, 400014; February 24
Fardun Pestonji Subawala (68),
 5, Samundar Darshan, 159
 Andheri Varsova Rd, 400061;
 February 24
Manijeh Dinshaw Dudha (88),
 9, Delstar, N. S. Patkar Marg,
 400036; February 25
Lohrasp Pirojsha Kapadia (92),
 Shireen Mans, 60, Sleater Rd,
 400007; February 25
Gulbano Framroze Karva (84),
 P-11, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug,
 400012; February 25
Erachshah Sorabshah Kohiyar
 (87), Soona Mhl, Marine Drive,
 400020; February 25
Dhumbai Phirojsha Mistry (73),
 B/19, N. Contractor Baug,
 Mahim, 400016; February 25
Meherbai Keki Aariya (78),
 Saraswati Ngr, Tulinj Rd,
 Nalasopara (E); February 27
Ala Barjor Kothavala (84),

mother of Vera Jehangir
 Merwanji and Behroz Sarosh
 Mody; February 27
 (body donated for educa-
 tional use)
Dolly Pheroreshaw Gandhi (92),
 Mohemedi Manzil, 150,
 S. V. Rd, Khar, 400052;
 February 28
Homai Darabshah Printer (98),
 Navroz Bldg, 70, Hughes Rd,
 400007; February 28

CALCUTTA

Married
Farina Savak Bharucha and
Rohinton Jal Kapadia;
 February 9

KARACHI

Died
Alamai Pestanji Sethna (89);
 January 1
Zal Shiavax Daver (84);
 January 7
Sherbanoo Darabsha Patel
 (85); January 15
Goolu Kooverji Sethna (80);
 January 16
Jamshed Kavasji Divecha (87);
 January 19
Ramyar Pestanji Kooka (67);

January 25
Sharukh Kaikhushru Yazdani
 (59); January 27

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Married
Hira Kharas and *Farrokh Sinor*;
 December 16, 1989

PENNSYLVANIA

Born
 A girl, *Natasha*, to *Rashna* and
Jehangir Mistry; January 2,
 1990

PITTSBURG

Married
Mahrukh Morris and *Polly*
Ghodawalla; November 25,
 1989

POONA

Died
Freny Jal Kotwal (77), 15,
 Mody Clny, Synagogue St,
 411001; February 2
Darabshaw Edulji Doctor (87),
 305, K. P. Towers, Fatima Ngr,
 411013; February 11
Ruby Kersi Master (56), 813/14,
 Puduniji Comp, Bhavani Peth,
 411002; February 15

Tehmina Pirojsha Mehta (91),
 599, Sachapir St, 411001;
 February 17

Ratanbai Dinsha Masalavala
 (80), 13/14, Pudumjee Comp,
 411002; February 19

Jer Jehangir Contractor (83),
 Bglw No 18, 247/14, B, Deccan
 College Rd, 411001;

February 20
Aloo Chawkidar (82), 23, Mehta
 Bldg, Colaba, Bombay, 400005;
 February 24

SECUNDERABAD

Died
Astad Dinshaw Gorwala (89);
 December 4, 1989

TOTALS (for this issue)
 Births Boys 4, Girls 10
 Marriages 43
 Deaths 91

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

CORRECTION

A boy, *Xerxes*, was born to
Shenaz and *Dara Engineer*, in
 Bombay on December 7, 1989.
 The error of sex and date in
 "Milestones" (*Parsiana*,
 December 1989) is regretted.

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A MISSION



SHAPURJI JOKHI slaved, saved, staked

Arnavaz S. Mama



Jokhi: "a true believer in silent service"

Again and again he was compared to Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy. There was a close parallel in their lives — both were born to poverty in Navsari; both created fortunes from the China trade; both gave unstintingly to charity. But whereas Jejeebhoy got Bombay's governor or the British viceroy to contribute to each cause in equal measure, as noted *The Bombay Samachar's* editor Jehan Daruwalla, Shapurji Fakirji Jokhi made it alone. The 500 flats of Avan Baug in Navsari, built in batches over 15 years, cost two and a half crore rupees. Jokhi footed the bill and let out the flats to Parsis of middle and lower income groups at subsidized rents. Four years later, he was ready to present another 1.5 crore rupees to Bombay's B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital (PGH).

Other institutional beneficiaries of Jokhi's largesse were the Vyara Agiary, Navsari's Sorab Baug and the Zoroastrian Anjuman as well as the Red Cross Society of Hong Kong, as notes the resolution passed at the samast anjuman meeting summoned by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) on March 12, 1990 presided over by Dr Aspi Golwalla, BPP chairman and president of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India. Jokhi's sudden demise due to cardiac arrest in Hong Kong on February 7, 1990, at the age of 77, had shocked the entire community.

"To believe the philosophy (of the religion), to say the prayers, is one thing; to live them is another," noted Surat Parsi Punchayet president Dr Sam Bhacca. "Jokhi never gave lectures; he showed by his own example." Bhacca described Jokhi's classic Navsari characteristics: hardworking, making money,

but thrifty to the point of stinginess, accumulating funds which were siphoned into charity.

The B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital's vice president Homa Petit spoke of the "modest, pure-hearted Zoroastrian who came to (the help of) the Hospital of his own accord because he had seen its crying need... He kept in the background, a true believer in silent service. But he took pride and pleasure in recalling (the help of) Providence in carrying out his charitable work... Shapurji needs no prayer because his whole life was a prayer."

Recalling how Jokhi had written to the Malesar Parsi Anjuman, asking them to keep land in mind for residential buildings, was Avan Baug co-trustee and anjuman president Dara Deboo. Midway through the housing project some one wrote to the charity commissioner complaining that the flats' rents were too high and that the trustees were incompe-

tent. Jokhi said he would stop building, remembered Deboo. Then, realizing that he was reacting to the needling of petty individuals, Jokhi reversed his decision a few days later in the interests of the needy, Deboo said.

Deboo informed how Jokhi had instructed the PGH to keep a very strong construction foundation for the service block he was funding because he had the intention of adding to it. Earlier, when the Federation had sought to honor him, Jokhi had excused himself as an "insignificant" individual, interested only that his creations be maintained, Deboo noted.

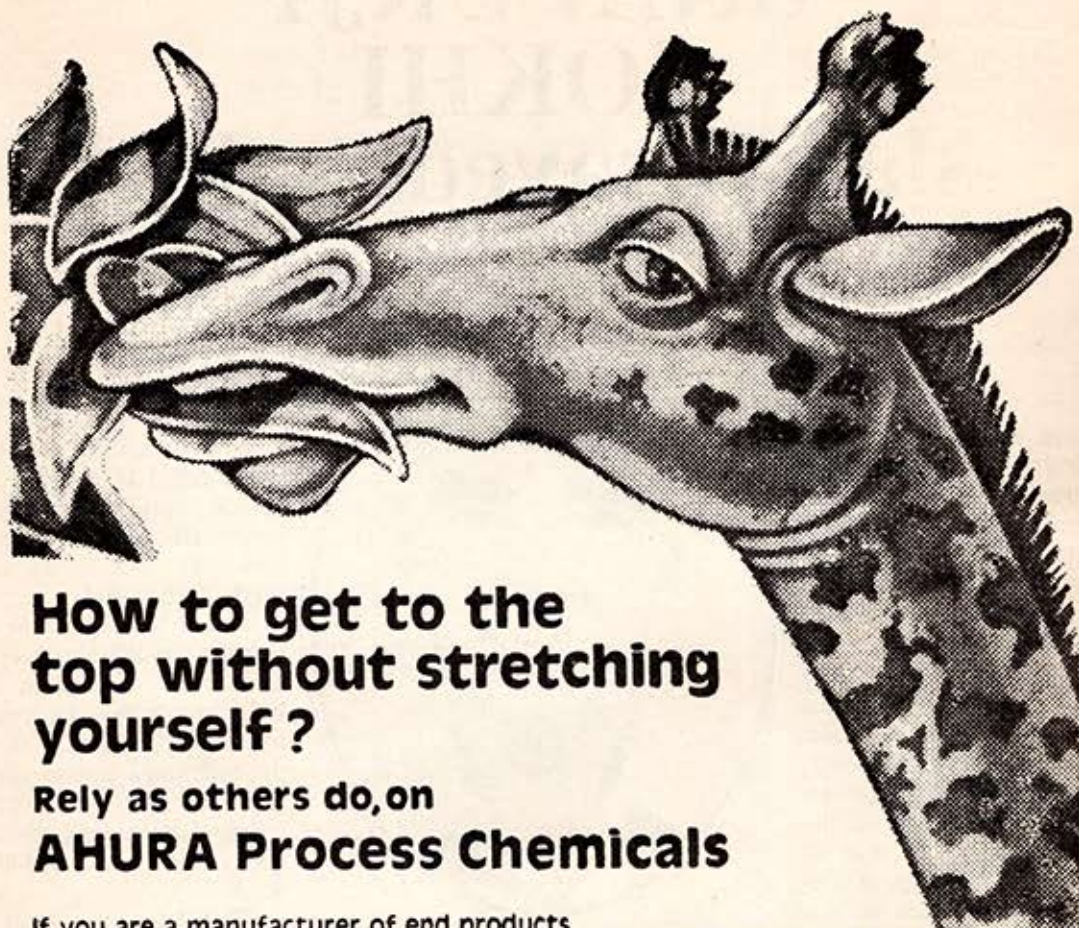
Cherishing an ivory Zarathushtra Jokhi had presented him, BPP trustee Jamshed Guzder recalled Jokhi's first visit at his (Guzder's) Neville House office. The informal, bush shirt clad Jokhi waited to see him like any other community member. Though they met only four or five times altogether, Jokhi's friendliness was memorable, said Guzder.

Life-style

Looking like a "Japanese or Chinese (with) slanting eyes, short, brown, robust... Shapur mama (maternal uncle) was mama to everybody," says Bakhtavar Sachinwalla, granddaughter-in-law of Jokhi's sister Dinamai Sachinwalla.

He was one of a dozen siblings — the family now numbers almost 100 in Bombay — says his niece Prof Perin Daruwalla. It remained "fairly homogenous" because of Shapurji. He came laden with gifts for everyone, recalls Daruwalla — and there would always be a big family dinner when he was in town.

A very staunch orthodox Zoroastrian



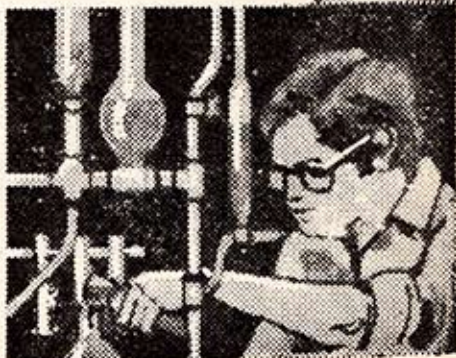
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of the Ilm-e-Khshnoom school, Jokhi believed implicitly in the Magav Sahebs of Mount Demavand (elevated souls residing in secret caves in Iran, not normally visible to humans) and was content to lead his life according to the inspiration which he believed came from them. After 11 months of rigorous imprisonment under the Japanese during World War II, he alone, of the lot he was with, was acquitted. Emaciated, battered, the reprieve when all hope was lost further strengthened his faith, as notes Russey Bhesania, a writer from Bordi, in his Gujarati biography *Sakhavat na Shahenshah, Shapurji Fakirji Jokhi*. Jokhi's faith in the Magav Sahebs is enshrined in a tablet at Avan Baug whereon are inscribed the names of all these Ustads, as informs his brother Sorabji.

Apart from the Red Cross, Jokhi's philanthropy was confined to the community, his servants and business associates and their children, informs his nephew Pheroze Anklesaria. "He would never forget anyone who had done anything for him."

And he gave of himself. If anyone died, "he was in charge of the bathing, the sachkar and carrying the body," notes his younger brother Keki who

worked with Jokhi in Hong Kong and accompanied his body to Bombay. "*Khaara maa pahelo ej utre* (He would be the first one to jump into a grave to lower the body for burial)," says Sorabji. The latter recalled how, sometime in 1960-61 while on a holiday in Kashmir with Lala Tours, someone came to say a Parsi had died in a hotel. Together with his brother Framroze, Jokhi took on the task of arranging the funeral and burial of the man.

Staunchly against intercommunity marriages, Jokhi did not approve of a relative who had married a non-Parsi, informed his brother. Highly traditional, Jokhi saw to it that the body of his beloved wife Manijeh, who died of blood cancer in Hong Kong, was flown to Bombay to be interred in the dokhma and had left standing instructions with his brother Keki to do the same by him. Hence the funeral was held in Bombay on February 10, the day of the chahram, because of delays in transit. Despite that, "the body did not spoil. There was almost a smile on his face," notes Keki.

A renowned student of Ustad Jamshedji Kanga's gym in Navsari, Jokhi maintained his fondness for physical culture to the end of his life. As Javer,

Keki's wife, reminisced, Shapurji "liked two things in life — to walk and to drink." Afternoon and night he had to have his tot. The family laughed at the memory of Jokhi's happiness when the late V. P. Naik, then chief minister of Maharashtra, lifted prohibition about the time of his niece Freny's wedding (circa 1964). And wherever he went in the city, be it Hong Kong or Bombay, he would walk. "He never took a cab, never travelled first class. Grant Road to Ballard Estate he would go walking," recalled Anklesaria. "I could not keep pace with him," ruefully admitted nephew Nariman Daruwalla.

Jokhi had a raconteur's gift of the gab. Javer described him as "*Vaato no raja* (King of stories)." Perin Daruwalla recalled the anecdotes from Zoroastrian, Christian and Hindu scriptures with which he kept her children engrossed — "for hours together," added Anklesaria.

A very cheerful man, with his own brand of very keen, very down-to-earth humor, he was very secretive about his wealth and humorously avoided questions, his family noted with amusement. He went all over the world (by ship because he was afraid of flying and resorted to it only when passenger ships

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stopped plying, informed Sorabji) and even attended the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II but only because of his wife, added Sorabji. Otherwise he was loath to spend on himself. "Paisa khali waste nahī karvāna (No need to waste money)" was an aphorism by which he lived.

Though the family fully supported his charity drive, "We said, 'Navsari ma kon rahésé (Who will settle in Navsari)?' We were surprised — today there's a waiting list," says Daruwalla. Avan Baug initially began with the notion of a dispensary. It grew unplanned — "He just kept getting contiguous plots of land," says Daruwalla — on the basis of the inspiration he received. When he bought the initial land, he did not have the resources to build, notes Bhesania. The BPP resolution notes how his profits increased each time by twice the amount he forwarded to Navsari for Avan Baug's construction. The colony also contains a dadgah.

Early years

Born to Avanbai and Fakirji Jokhi on January 11, 1913 in Navsari, Shapur knew the travails of poverty early in life. He never forgot his humble origins nor

the favors of those who helped him in various ways. Having failed the pre-matric, the athletic Shapur was forwarded by his coach Kanga to Hormusji Gotla for an interview and between them they saw the 17-year-old onto a ship to Hong Kong in 1930. He had a small trunk of clothes and a treasured book on Khshnoomist thought called *Khudané malvano marg* (The path to God) by Dinshaw Powwalla. And who should prove to be his first mentor in Hong Kong but Powwalla himself, notes an astounded Bhesania.

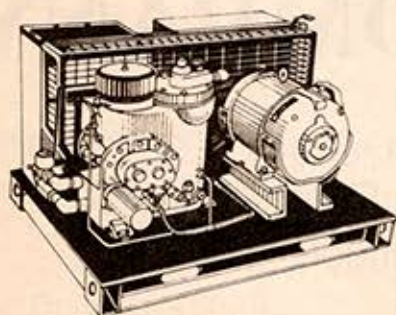
Working his way up in Parsi-owned businesses first with Gotla and Company, then with Ruttonjee and Sons, he learnt the ropes well enough to found his own business in partnership with the late Keki Parekh in 1937, dealing in import and export of silk and provisions. Apart from the rigors of the War, the business grew with Jokhi's diligence until 1952 when S. F. Jokhi and Company was founded and brothers and nephews sailed forth to join him in Hong Kong. It was, however, the ivory trade in which Jokhi made his fortune.

Though the union with Manijeh, a Navsari girl too, was happy, there was no progeny. "He refused to adopt anyone,"

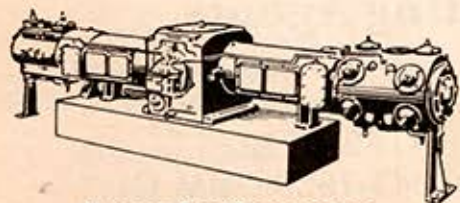
says Keki who became his closest helper, "almost like a son," sitting across Shapurji at the "same antique table" ever since he first reached Hong Kong. Though Shapurji retired from the day-to-day cares of business in 1985 after Manijeh's death, he was wont to go each day and spend a few hours with Keki in the office, but made no attempt to interfere, cajole or criticize, says the brother. To the end, every day irrespective of the weather, Jokhi would have his walks up and down the steep gradients of Hong Kong, and his cold water baths resulting in "pneumonia a couple of times," as notes Keki.

Jokhi, who believed in astrology, read a lot and was guided by forecasts, had the ability to locate hidden items and know the purpose of a visitor, says Daruwalla. Any thought or idea he got, even at night, was noted down. He also had an inkling that time was running out on him, as noted several family members.

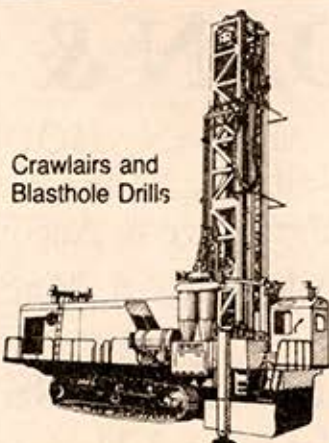
A trustee of the Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton and Macau, Jokhi was a good friend of the late Jamshed Pavri of Vancouver. He was interested in plans to rebuild the Zoroastrian building at 101 Leighton Road in Hong Kong.



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Loath to begin a second project before the first was completed, Keki notes how Avan Baug was dedicated to their mother; then Sorab Baug, the old community property in Navsari, was renovated with a new hall and dharamshala in the name of his wife Manijeh; later 300 to 400 thousand rupees of the cost of the Vyara Agiary ("We are from Vyara, originally"), which was demolished and reconstructed, was borne by Shapurji. When he was operated in the PGH for hernia, "evun méhmar jóya kartata (he observed the state of affairs)," says Keki. Jokhi undertook to finance the new wing of the Hospital which is

planned to house the operation theaters, the pathology and X-ray departments and other service facilities. "There is talk of beginning the project in March but (these things) take time. Originally we were thinking only of building in the name of Manijeh, but now Shapurji's name will also be added. Once it is finished *tau mara bhéja parno bhar ochho thasé* (a load will be off my mind). We'll fulfill his wish without question," promises Keki.

Shapurji is survived by brothers Framroze, Sorabji, Nariman and Keki, and sisters Dinamai Sachinwalla and Nergish Chichgar.

clients to suit their different circumstances," his personal memoirs described his preferences. Though in his candid style Nanavati confessed that some of his fellow solicitors considered this "babu's (clerical) work," he enjoyed it nevertheless. In fact, his grasp of conveyancing prompted the Law Society to invite him to deliver lectures to articulated clerks. The cyclostyled copies of the lectures were later to become a reference book "without a printer or a publisher," as recounted Nanavati in his memoirs.

While Rustom S. Gae, senior advocate and retired law secretary to the Government of India, referred to Nanavati as his "mentor or guru," Keki Mehta, partner of Payne and Company, in a written tribute acknowledged, "I came to know through the grapevine about Nanavati's conveyancing notes which were considered necessary and essential reading for the examination... In those days when there was no xerox machine and typing was prohibitively expensive, I copied out the entire notes myself, all 400 pages of them and I also made several additions thereto... I was quite touched to learn that (when he) was in the process of revising his notes, he wanted to go through my handwritten notes and additions. This speaks volumes about his great modesty and fine qualities... I realized the great handicap Dhanjisha had to suffer during the major part of his career (he had almost lost his vision) and I marveled at his courage, cheerfulness and patience."

Nanavati's treatise on the Estate Duty Act ran into three editions while the Act was in force and he even wrote a 100-page manual titled *Income Tax Sections Rearranged*. He had never had an occasion to study income tax for his law examinations but had gained experience on the job when he was appointed solicitor by the central government. This job entailed giving opinions on matters referred to him by the Income Tax authorities in Bombay and to act on behalf of the government in income tax references which were heard in the court.

Nanavati admitted that while he was a student of law, his ambition was to become a sub-judge and live comfortably on the stipend of Rs 200 per month, as was the starting salary of sub-judges then. It was on the advice of Dinshaw Mulla, one of the founders of Mulla and Mulla that Nanavati became a solicitor, joining the same firm as an articulated clerk in 1911 and passing his solicitor's exami-

Nanavati's deeds and decrees

Died: Dhanjisha Hoshangsha Nanavati, 99, the first Parsi to be appointed solicitor to the Government of India and a legal luminary whose expertise was in the field of estate duty, conveyancing and income-tax, on January 26, 1990 at Bombay's Breach Candy Hospital following a short illness.

In August 1947, coinciding with India's independence came the announcement that Nanavati had been appointed solicitor to the Government of India. He was the second Indian to be conferred this distinction and the first to be appointed from Bombay to succeed Dhiren Mitra of Calcutta. Reportedly, the arrangement was to appoint to the post a solicitor from Calcutta alternately with a solicitor from Bombay for a term of five years each. Recorded Nanavati in his personal memoirs, "I found that the ministries were relying implicitly on the opinions given by the solicitor in respect of all matters referred to him, and the opinions were recorded and placed before successive solicitors as precedents." To match this prestigious appointment, the Law Society presented him with an address as did the staff members of Mulla and Mulla and Craigie Blunt and Caroe, the legal firm where he had begun as an articulated clerk and risen to be a partner.

"Your extremely devout and self-restrained nature with your first-rate scholarship, highly religious character...

would, we are sure, lend weight and dignity to the office which you have been called upon to occupy," read the address by the Mulla and Mulla colleagues, printed on satin silk and delivered in a silver casket. Even when he was extremely preoccupied with legal matters in Delhi, there wasn't a day when he did not set aside an hour for his prayers, remembers his son Hoshang, now a partner at Mulla and Mulla.

"I enjoyed going through deeds a hundred years old or more and seeing how the title of the property in question devolved decades after decades. I also enjoyed drafting trust deeds and wills for

Nanavati: commanding legal position



nation three years later. His nearly 66 years of association with Mulla and Mulla finally ended in 1977. Barring a rare case, Nanavati concerned himself with civil matters and among the notable Parsi clients that he had attended to were Sir Cowasji Jehangir and his wife Lady Hirabai. It seems that in those days the judges and advocates used to don their usual community head dresses: Dinsha Daver and Dinshaw Mulla used their pugree, Bohmanji Wadia, his pheta, Jamshedji Kanga, his priest's white turban...

Accompanying Nanavati at every stage was his wife Homai. "Due to my weak eyes she always had to remain my companion, to help me not only in my daily routine but also in my professional work. Even when we went to Delhi I took special permission from the government to allow her to assist me with the files," Nanavati had written.

The respected solicitor related how a virtue like truthfulness influenced his career in a profession that is meant to uphold the principles of justice: "I liked being present for the first machhi ceremony of the day where the priest would put sandalwood into the fire to the accompaniment of prayers and the ringing of the bell... I would stay in the fire-temple for about half an hour. It was during one of my visits to the fire-temple at around the age of eight or 10 that I made a resolve never to tell a lie, a resolve that I am glad to say, I have more or less never broken to this day."

Nanavati was born in Surat in 1890. "Hitler and Charlie Chaplin were born in or about the same year" he enjoyed telling everyone. One of nine children, his early education was at the hands of the *mehtaji* (native teacher) Lal Shankar, who used to tutor him at their residence in the vernacular language. Thereafter he went to the Elphinstone Institute to complete his school education, the Elphinstone College for his BA degree and the Government Law School for his law degree.

In his younger days he enjoyed playing a game of tennis and later it was racing which he found pleasurable, especially working out forms that listed the probability of a horse's success. His friends too would approach him for tips though he confessed, "I cannot however say that in the long run I was not a loser." And even though waltzing was frowned upon in those days, he enjoyed dancing and music in equal measure. When it came to holidays, his favorite haunt was Matheran.

Nanavati did not live to complete his century. But on the completion of his ninety-ninth birthday, Mulla and Mulla organized a special function to felicitate him. As noted Nanavati when referring to his life span, "It is a far cry from the days of my childhood when I ran to the window to see a motorcar pass by the road... When you come to a stage when people touch your feet it is time to think of the past, not the future." And, with the help of a quote he ended his memoirs: "Of all the ages what is a century but the shrug of God's shoulder."

He is survived by his sons Eruch and Hoshang.

Parinaz Gandhi

Patel's patras

Died: Navroji Nadirshah Patel, 77, reputed caterer of Bombay, on January 18, 1990 following cardiac arrest.

Though the engagements he accepted were only for functions within the Parsi community, among those he impressed with his food were dignitaries like the then Prime Minister of India Rajiv Gandhi, maestro Zubin Mehta and his New York Philharmonic Orchestra, as note snippets carried in the Bombay dai-

Patel (right) with Rajiv Gandhi



lies which the family has preserved as a mark of remembrance of the toil and the accolades that followed.

At important community events like the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress which was held in Bombay in January last, it was Navroji Patel and Company which was entrusted the responsibility of feeding the fastidious community members who had turned out in thousands to

attend the social function.

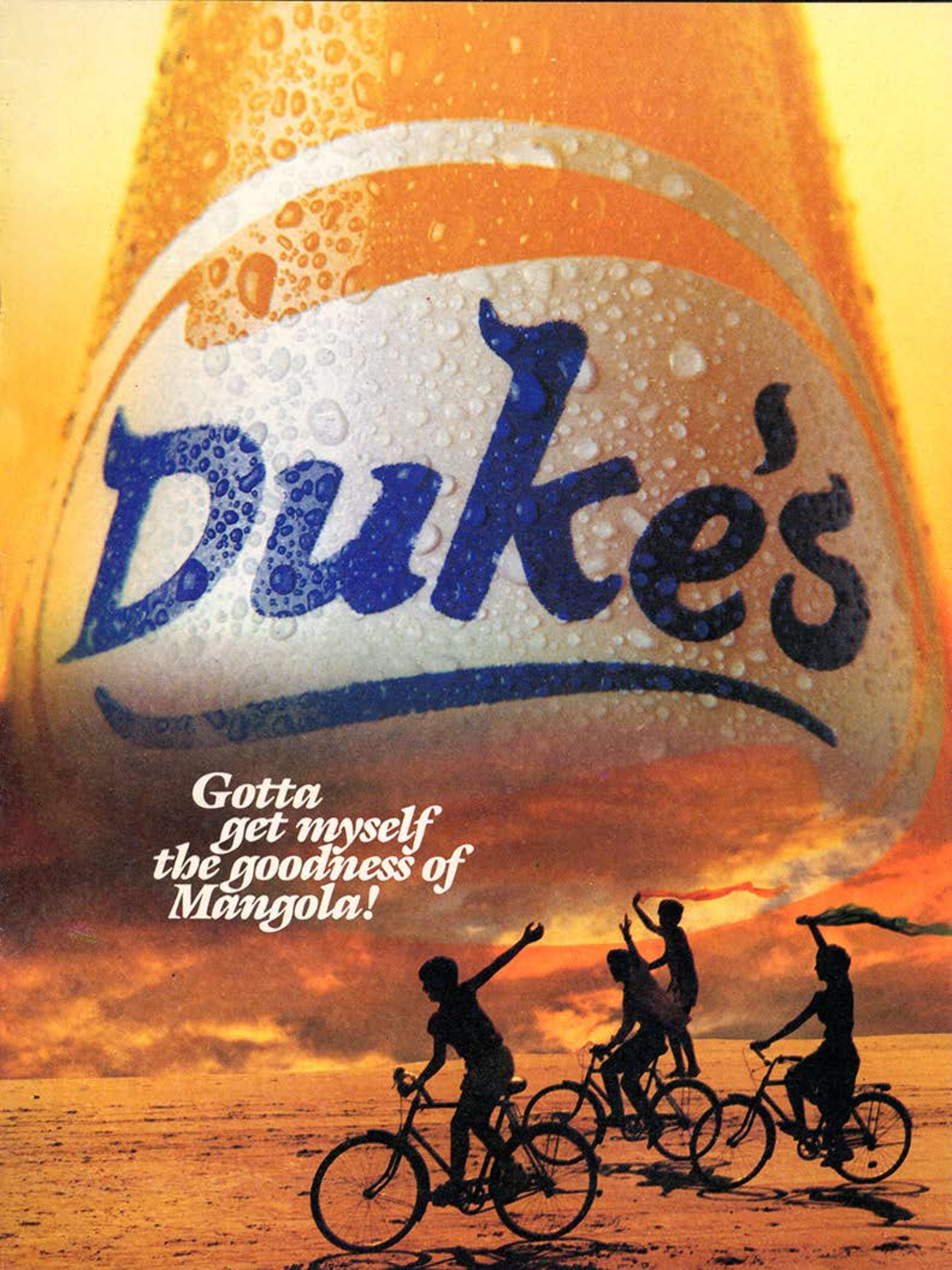
He was willing to accept catering assignments from the affluent as also the poorer members of the community, notes a reference made to Patel in the *Jamasp ni Jilloo* column in an issue of *Jam-e-Jamshed* following his death. In fact on certain occasions when free navjotes were performed for children of poor families, Patel would send free meals to especially create a festive atmosphere for them, remembers his daughter Freny Zaveri. Loath to see any surplus food go waste, he would always send it to the poor and the destitute. And he would go out of his way to send his exclusively catered food to the aged inmates of the Parukh Dharamshalla on Hughes Road knowing how much they looked forward to his treats, Zaveri adds.

Right from planning the menu, ordering the supplies, handling the labor, supervising the cooking to making the rounds of the rows of tables where guests were feasting on his *patra nu bho*nu (traditional repast laid out on plantain leaves), Patel enjoyed every aspect of his business. His sense of humor and patience helped him face difficult and embarrassing situations which he would gleefully recall for the amusement of others, notes a family member. Patel is even believed to have gamely accepted a bundle of prize bonds (one of the national investment schemes) as compensation from a client who claimed he had received it as *parbida* (monetary gift in an envelope) but preferred to pass it on.

A religiously inclined person, Patel, remembers his daughter, would always offer sandalwood at the cooking hearth at the end of every successful function.

For nearly 50 years Patel was involved in the catering business that was started by his father Nadirshah on a small scale. Together with his wife Khorshed, the enterprising couple steadily expanded the business until they were patronized by the most selective clients — catering assigned to Navroji Patel was an indication that the hosts had good taste! Later it was his sons Maneck and Bomi who joined him in running the business under the name of Navroji Patel and Company. And with Maneck's 12-year-old son Kaizad already showing an aptitude for the business, the family is hopeful that the catering venture will thrive. They take pride in announcing that they are "heavily booked till 1992."

Navroji is survived by his wife Khorshed, daughters Freny Zaveri and Firoza Musa, and sons Maneck and Bomi. P.G.

A large, condensation-covered glass of beer, likely a Mangola, dominates the upper half of the image. A vibrant rainbow arches over the glass. The word "Duke's" is written in a large, blue, stylized font across the middle of the glass. The background is a warm, orange-hued sunset or sunrise sky.

Duke's

*Gotta
get myself
the goodness of
Mangola!*



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