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Parsiana

August 1990
Volume 13 Number 2

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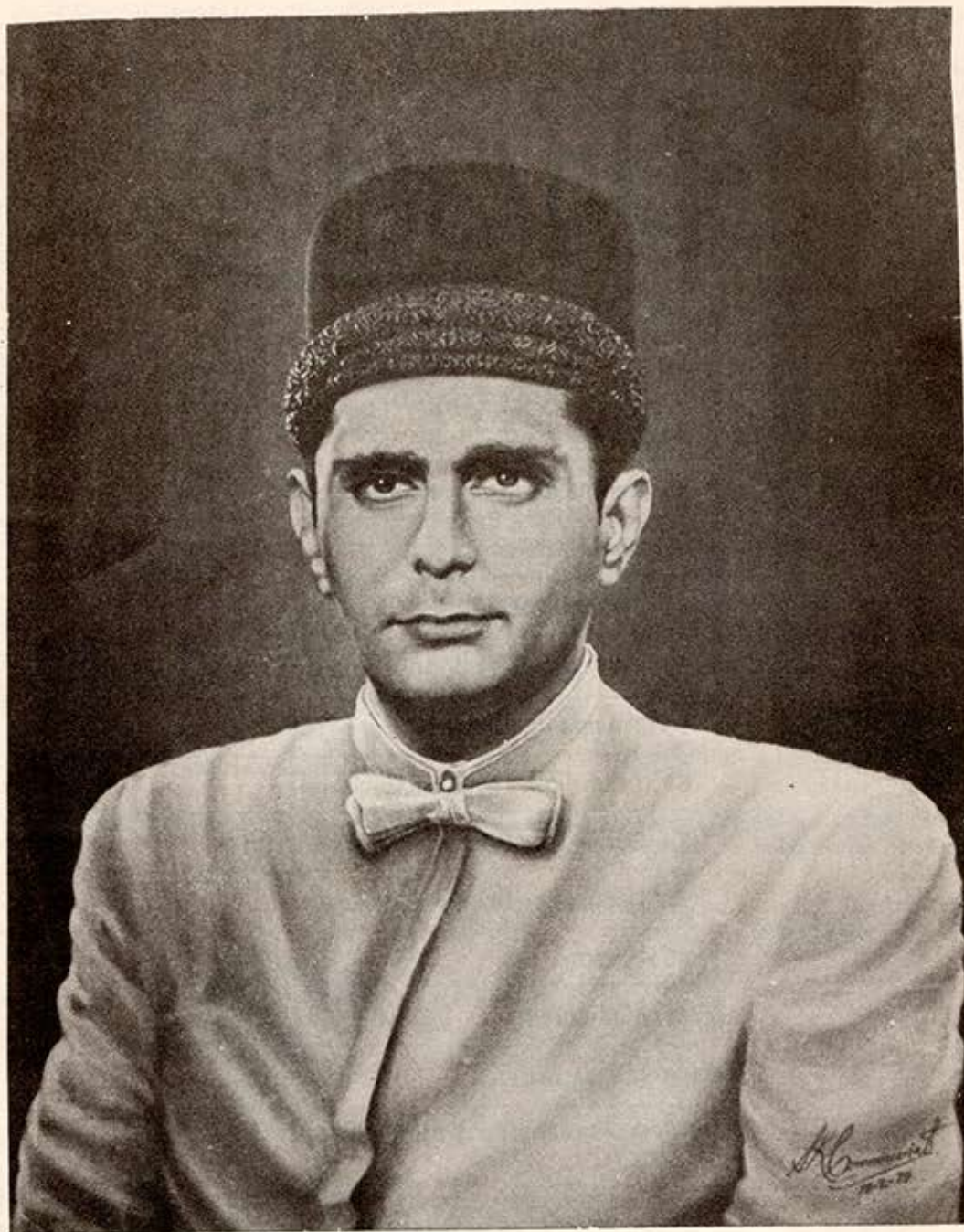
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In Memoriam

Mr Fali Meherji Variava

Director

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Readers' views are welcome on any subject of interest to the community and should be sent to the Editor, Readers' Forum, Parsiana, G.P.O. Box 892, Bombay 400001. Letters are subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity. Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

When a great lady goes

Mehra Masani passed away on April 6, 1990. She was a great lady in many ways. That she was one of the autonomous pillars of a non-autonomous All India Radio (AIR) over 30 years; that she became the internally respected deputy director of the same AIR but retired a year early because a mediocre government could not rise to her level; that she then became the quiet and competent director of the Leslie Sawhny Training Centre in Deolali; somehow all these, the stuff of standard obituaries around status and labels were not the most important things about Mehra Masani. They were happenings, not intrinsic qualities; mileposts, not the runner.

There were other, higher things for which she will be remembered by all who knew her. In an age of feminists railing at MCPs, she carried herself with the quiet confidence of a poised, compe-

tent, insightful person, retaining her charm and femininity. No matter how different her views, she expressed those views with modesty, clarity, and friendliness, always agreeable. She carried her breeding and her education as one to the manner born, never a trace of snobbery. She was kind, gentle, dignified. One can imagine her quiet, solid, admirable contributions to great issues in public policy and organization in government's mass media, as the first director of AIR's External Services Division, as member-secretary of the Chanda Committee Report, as a silent contributor to the Masani Committee Report, as India's refined representative in the delegation to the UNESCO General Assembly in Paris in 1968. Insiders who knew, have paid testimony to it. If we are struggling towards an autonomous corporation in the public media today, after two decades of that media becoming a mouthpiece of government, it is partly because upright people like Mehra laid the groundwork internally, in the best traditions of an anonymous civil service in a new democracy still struggling to be born.

I saw Mehra function as director of the Deolali Centre with people from all walks and stations in life. She was always the great, unpretentious, competent lady, exuding charm and sweetness and graciousness. Yet so workmanlike, so understanding; quietly and competently building one of India's little institutions in citizenship, development and democracy. Over the last years her arthritis crushed her cruelly. She tried everything; nothing really worked. Friends like us suffered with her helplessly, admiring her quiet courage, soldiering on to the end. Her unpretentious life as a good public servant spanned an important age. She could have written a wonderful memoir, of which we have been deprived.

She was a person of whom the Parsi community could and should be proud. And yet, why is it that such as her and A. D. Gorwala do not figure on the honors lists of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India? Why do they go unsung, unrecognized? Does the Federation suffer from "the culture of the sarkar," giving recognition to those who know how to acquire rank and status, ignoring others with real worth? The Federation needs to examine its own stan-

dards, its own functioning, even its own competence to judge real worth. Is its own vision of greatness, of achievement, of human excellence limited? Let them and us think on it, bringing to those questions the qualities of Mehra Masani.

ASPI MODDIE

R. K. Anklesaria, member of the Federation's awards committee and chief executive of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, replies

This refers to Mr Aspi Moddie's letter questioning the Federation's Awards policy.

Under advice of Mr Keki Gandhi, honorary secretary, Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, I am to inform that the sole purpose of instituting these awards is to recognize the excellence achieved by Zoroastrians residing in India, in certain spheres, during a particular calendar year. The nine spheres include sports, adventure, small scale entrepreneurship, education, research, science and technology, professional competence, performing and fine arts, social and community services, study of Zoroastrian history, culture and scriptures, and students.

A panel of experts evaluates the level of excellence achieved by individuals during a particular calendar year. The evaluation is based on the information received with the nominations which are invited through announcements in the *Fed Newsletter*. The recommendations of each panel are placed before a committee, comprising representatives of the Federation and a few other members of our community. The final choice rests with the committee.

As the basis of adjudication is the level of excellence achieved during a particular calendar year, achievements of one or more earlier years cannot be taken into consideration.

The awards were instituted in respect of the years commencing from the calendar year 1986 and at a function held in Bombay in 1988 the awards for 1986 and 1987 were distributed. The adjudication for the awards for 1988 and 1989 will be completed by the time this letter appears in *Parsiana*.

It is apparent from the very rich and deserving tributes paid by Mr Aspi Moddie in his write-up that the achievements of the late Ms Mehra Masani and the late

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Mr A. D. Gorwala pertain to a period prior to 1986 and perhaps that is why even Mr Moddie himself had not sent a nomination in their favor whilst nominating another individual in the sphere of social and community services.

We trust your readers will appreciate from the above the real reason for Ms Masani and Mr Gorwala not having featured in the list of award winners for the year 1986 onwards.

As regards the other observations made by Mr Moddie, the Federation is fully conscious of its limitations. The need to evaluate its own functioning has not only been recognized but a mechanism for self analysis and self criticism was also put into action through a questionnaire drafted at our request by *Parsiana* which was circulated at the meeting of the executive council held in Bombay and the written responses generated at the meeting were handed over to *Parsiana* for evaluation at the meeting itself.

Parsi Sena

I have to inform the general public that I have no connection with an organization called Parsi Sena, either politically or socially. My attention has been drawn to the fact that some of their office bearers have been collecting funds in my name from the general public, especially Parsis.

On my complaint the Bombay police have arrested the general secretary of the Parsi Sena, one Farokh Gustad Patel, and have charged him under various sections of the Criminal Procedure Code for cheating and misrepresentation.

I request all my well-wishers not to entertain or encourage any member of this organization as I have nothing to do with them.

MARAZBAN J. A. PATRAWALA
M.L.A.

An organization known as Parsi Sena made headlines in various newspapers in Bombay in or about March/April 1989, under the leadership of Mr Eric N. Dhatigara and one Mr Farokh Patel.

Mr Dhatigara was all the time saying that he was very well known to Mr Marazban Patrawala, then minister of state for law and judiciary, Government of Maharashtra. It is however interesting to note that Mr Patrawala has issued a public notice appealing to his well-wishers not to entertain any member of this organization.

As far as Mr Eric Dhatigara is concerned, on a complaint made by a Parsi lady, he was arrested by an officer of the

Azad Maidan Police Station and we are informed that a criminal complaint has been filed against him and he has been released on bail.

The organizers of the so-called Parsi Sena are now seen in their true colors and their shady character exposed.

Dr ASPI F. GOLWALLA
Chairman, Bombay Parsi Panchayet

1989: The telling figures

Parsiana, (May 1990) has given figures for births and deaths in Greater Bombay for the year 1989. It is worth comparing the birth rates and the death rates of the Parsi community in Bombay vis-à-vis the rest of the world as shown in the table:

	Rates Per Thousand Population			
	Birth rate		Death rate	
	1960	1989	1960	1989
China	40	19	10	7
Japan	17	10	7	6.5
World	35	26	15	9
Parsi in Bombay	11.5	9.7	13.9	22.4

The figures for China, Japan and the world have been taken from charts drawn in *State of the World, 1989* (A World Watch Institute publication). The figures for the Parsi community for 1960 have been taken from the *1961 Census of India* (Vol 10, Part 10-1D) whereas the figures for 1989 have been calculated assuming the population as 45,000, as given by Peshotan Nargolwala at the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress. One notices from the table the following:

- Whereas the birth rate has been falling rapidly over the years all over the world, in our community it has fallen only marginally from 11.5 to 9.7 over the 30-year period from 1960 to 1990.
- Even in 1960, our death rate (13.9) was marginally greater than the birth rate (11.5) but today the death rate has escalated rapidly (22.4).

The reasons for excessive deaths over births are not far to seek. The regular stream of boys going to the USA who never return, girls intermarrying, together with the never married category and very small families, have caused this dwindling of numbers and aging of the community.

Gone are the days when students used to go for studies abroad under gifts and loans from Parsi trusts and charities and return to keep the community thriving. Today these gifts and loans have no meaning because without financial assistance from American universities to the tune of \$ 15,000 per year, the vast major-

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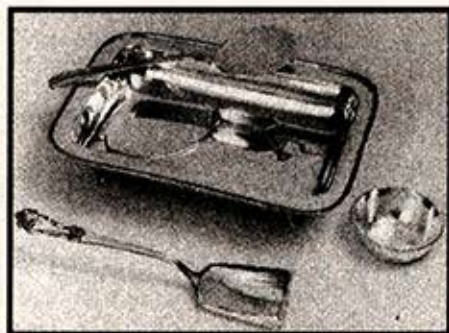
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ity of students will just not be able to go abroad. Our talented boys who go abroad do not realize that challenging jobs are available here. By deciding to settle abroad, they create problems not only for the country but also for the community. It is high time that Parsi trusts and charities change their order of priorities for giving gifts and loans. The money wastefully spent on students going to the USA, who never return, could be more usefully and effectively utilized here as loans to needy couples as an incentive and for the upkeep of their children.

Unless the predisposing factors are rectified, it would be a long way before we could halve our death rate to around ten. Some radical measures are needed now.

D. P. D. SUNAVALA

"The correct position?"

This has reference to M. S. Petit's letter ("The correct position?" Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, April 1990). In different countries, different rulers at different times have had the same name. In some cases, two such rulers are separated by a millenium. A conventionally acceptable mode is to refer to such rulers as so-and-so the first/second/third, etc. At times, an appellation like 'the Great' is used as in the case of Cyrus, Darius, Alexander, Akbar, etc to distinguish a particular ruler from his namesake who may have lived before or after him. Once this fact is acknowledged, what Petit calls "problems" cease to exist. To come to the specific points raised by your correspondent:

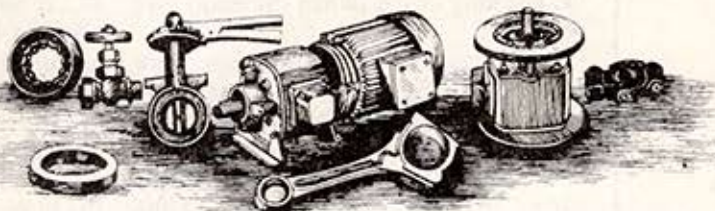
- Darius King of Pontus (39-37 BC) was the grandchild via son of Mithridates VI Eupator (the Great: 121-63 BC). He need not be confused with Darayavahush I (Darius the Great: 522-486 BC) — nine kings of the Achaemenid dynasty and another nine of the Mithridatid dynasty separate these two.

- The "popular belief" that Zoroastrian kings ruled Iran from 10,000 BC is upheld only by some Parsi reincarnationists. Though uncertainty prevails as regards Zoroaster's era, one thing is certain: even Zoroaster's great grandfather was not born in 10,000 BC and hence it would be absurd to hold that "Zoroastrian kings" ruled in that remote antiquity.

There is, however, another "popular belief" according to which all those having Persian names were, and are, Zoroastrians, but there is enough evidence to prove that this is untenable. Quite a few



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Moslems, particularly in Iran and India, had, and still have, Persian names like Jamshid, Bahram, Rostam, Firuz, Jhangir, Pervez, etc. Thus the four kings with popular Persian names were all Moslems. It is a historical fact that they were Yazidids of Shirvan who ruled Soviet Azerbaijan. Faridun (1063-1094 AD) was the son of Faribourz I, Farrokhzad I (c 1155-1171 AD) was the son of Abu Muzzaffar Maunchihr II and Kershasp (1171-1179 AD) was the son of Farrokhzad I. Anushirawan (Noshirwan: 1344-1353 AD) was the seventeenth and the last king of the Ilkhan (Mongol) Dynasty.

• R. F. Tapsell in his encyclopedic work *Monarchs, Rulers, Dynasties and Kingdoms of the World*, New York 1983 p. 400 gives a list of rulers of the 'Arab Shahid Dynasty which ruled Khwarizm/Khiwa from the early sixteenth to the early eighteenth century. According to this list, Isfandiyar (Asfandiyar: 1623-1643 AD) was the son of 'Arab Mohammad I. Both father and son were of Moslem parentage.

There is nothing facetious about these historical facts, though the inference drawn by Petit is off the mark because, after the fall of the Sasanid dynasty in 651 AD when king Yazdagird III was assassinated, there were some chiefs who ruled small districts or provinces before the migration of Zoroastrians, but not a single Zoroastrian king has ever ruled Iran. Otherwise stated, the inference that occasionally a Zoroastrian ruler ruled in Iran in between the seventh and the seventeenth or the eighteenth century AD is because of Persian (instead of the usual and more fitting Arabic) names of certain Moslem rulers of that period.

FARIBOURZ NARIMAN

May I endeavor to satisfy M. S. Petit's curiosity ("The correct position?" Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, April 1990) regarding some historical data references?

• The sixth century BC Darius was indeed the great Achaemenian emperor (521-486 BC). There were two others with that throne name: Darius Okhos (424-405 BC) and Darius Dirazdast (336-331 BC), tragically the last Achaemenid. The actual Old Persian name was Darayavahush — "adhering to the good" — and so great was the great king's fame as empire-builder and tolerant statesman that many a later dynast adopted that august name. We also come across Darius and Cyrus to this day

among others than Parsis and Iranis.

Darius, ruler of the Pontus kingdom (north-east Turkey's Black Sea coast and hinterland) of Persian origin, was such a dynast. He was thought to have ruled c 40 BC. Mithridates (today's Mehrdad, "gift of Mithra") was a popular name for six of that kingdom's Persian rulers. How conventionally Zoroastrian they were is not easy to determine. Certainly inland Pontus boasted a very famous Anahita temple at Zela.

The popular Parsi belief on Zoroastrian kings ruling from 10,000 BC to 600 BC is without foundation. There is no trace, in Iran proper or anywhere in the neighboring lands, of any such long-extended Zoroastrian kingship, and any figure could be mooted to suit the enthusiast's particular whim. Zarathushtra himself can be located in time around 1000 BC in eastern Iran. Our textual tradition yields dates of 600-583 BC (which is never possible according to our fervid thunderers who can, unaccountably, fire off 10,000 and even 30,000 BC!). We must leave them to their individual fancies. On this subject I should stress that it is all-important to know Zarathushtra's message and not be fixated on the age part, leaving, literally a mess! Unfortunately many have thought fit to see the message as irrelevant.

Most Zoroastrians stayed behind in Iran after the Arab conquest. They converted to Islam

- from sheer frustration at the ritually very exacting Zoroastrianism to a fresh, new, undemanding religion free, at that time, from overmuch dogma;
- from the pressures of the harsh civic disabilities inflicted upon them by the new rulers, and
- to escape the crushing jizya (itself an invention of the Sassanian state apparatus).

The numbers who initially migrated to India were from these harshly administered regions, some to escape from the persecutions for their steadfast adherence to the old faith, some to the beckonings of commercial opportunities in Western India and elsewhere. Zoroastrianism continued to flourish until well into the tenth century when, owing to persecutions and forcible conversions, it was gradually confined to the remote regions of central Iran and some pockets in the north.

Our Transylvanian enthusiast may very well have got the names of the Azarbaijani rulers right: after all, many

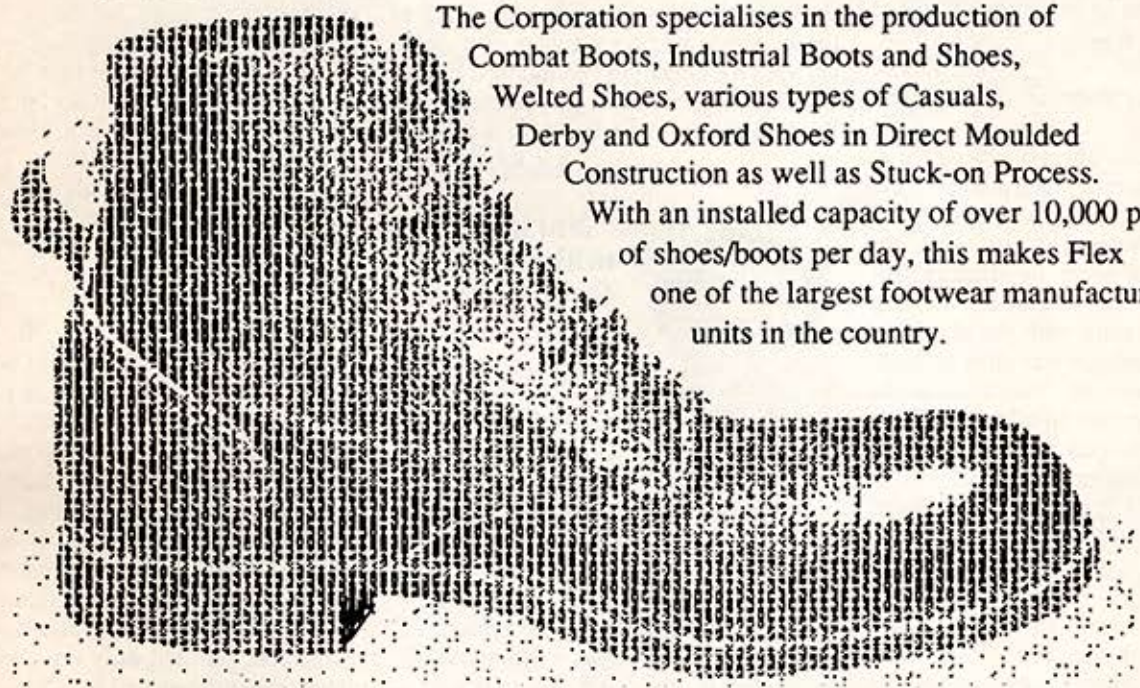
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governors and administrators had fine old Iranian names. Certainly, Faridun/Fereydun, Farokhzat/Farokhzad and, of course, Kersasp, together with Anushirwan/Nushirwan and Khusro were attested at some stage or another among the names of chiefs and administrative heads. But they were not, to the best of my knowledge, kings. To be sure, we come across Tahmasp, Shahrukh and Bahram among the princes of later dynasties, but they were not Zoroastrians. Outwardly, at least, they had professed Islam.

FARROKH VAJIFDAR

Barnes, UK

"Dogs at Doongerwadi"

Ms M. K. Chothia in her letter ("Dogs at Doongerwadi," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, April 1990) suggests we should keep at least 20 dogs at the Bombay Doongerwadi.

First of all let us observe whether it is absolutely necessary to keep a dog for the sole purpose of viewing the corpse in the course of ceremonies. In very, very old days, when there were no doctors and medical science was not there, the dog was the only creature with the ability to notify whether a person was alive or dead. We used to depend on him, because he had two invisible eyes in addition. Now the times have changed, and we no longer need such confirmation.

Besides, Ms Chothia herself admits that the statement, "A dog helps you to cross Chinvat Bridge on chahrum day" is from the *Vendidad* — which was written many years after Zoroaster's time.

It was only a practice which then turned into a custom mentioned in the *Vendidad*. In reality, there is neither a Chinvat Bridge nor a dog helping us to cross it. Our good or bad deeds decide our after life. The *Vendidad* is only a law book.

Now let us deal with the dog of Mr Burjor Italia of Delhi, who used to go on fast "on his own," from his first sight of a corpse until after the chahrum ceremony. In Delhi, there are hardly three or four deaths during a year. The dog, not accustomed to seeing a corpse, might have become upset and refused to take food on sight of a rare corpse once in a few months. In Bombay, a dog sees three or sometimes four corpses in a day, but we have not observed him refusing to take food or drink, due to such sight of corpses.

Ms Chothia herself admits that the cost of keeping 20 dogs will amount to

about Rs 10,000 or more only for the transport of free food from charitable institutions and wedding functions. She has forgotten that to keep these dogs, hygiene and medical care are also essential. In order to keep them healthy, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet would need to keep three or four menials for bathing, feeding and medical care. Besides, the Punchayet has no such ear-marked funds for welfare of doongerwadi dogs.

It is a question, whether our community or its charitable institutions would willingly contribute to revive the very old and defunct practice which has no bearing on common sense. The present practice runs smoothly enough at doongerwadi. Besides, one must consider the safety of the hundreds of persons who visit doongerwadi for attending ceremonies. If dogs become insane and go berserk, the Punchayet would be liable to a penalty.

A. K. KATHAWALLA



"Nariman makes a Point"

I refer to the letter, "Nariman makes a Point," by Mr Keki M. Mehta of Nagpur (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, March 1990).

As the author of the original article on the subject in *The Times of India*, September 1, 1989, please let me state the following:

You would agree that the present-day writers, if they have to write about personalities of the past generation/s — whom they had not the pleasure to know personally — can only base their observations on published sources.

The book, *Men and Supermen of Hindustan*, written by Joachim Alva and published in February 1943 by Thacker and Company of Bombay, carries a lengthy paragraph on page 291 about the late K. F. (Veer) Nariman being a bachelor: "Nariman is a confirmed bachelor and typical demagogue striding our politics. The writer remembers dining with him one night, when the guest of honour was a prominent Madras Swarajist legislator, who perhaps finding no hostess around and ignorant whether his host was in a state of single blessedness or double wretchedness, turned round and bluntly asked, 'Where is Mrs Nariman?' The Back Bay hero rose to the occasion. 'There is no time,' he smartly replied to

the guest, 'to be busy both at home and abroad!' Like Newton, Nariman has throughout remained a bachelor and 'never had the leisure to think about marriage.' The scientist poured out his entire life on the laws of gravitation and the ex-Bombay Congress president is too much wedded to politics, prisons and the police to spare time for the entanglements and vicissitudes of matrimony."

Please note the fact that the book was published in early 1943 while Veer Nariman had died in 1948. On checking with Thacker's in Bombay, I was told that only one edition of the book was published. It's a long time since then but the publishers could not recall having received any representation from the Nariman family to make the necessary correction.

I myself received the first "refutation" about my article nearly six months later when Mr F. R. Nariman, nephew of Veer Nariman, wrote me a letter. Later, we only had a telephonic talk and I pointed out to him the same published source as the basis of my article. But it appeared that F. R. Nariman was not even aware of the publication of the book.

Another point, which F. R. Nariman has made — and which Keki Mehta has not — is about the mention in my article of Veer Nariman "joining the Indian National Army (INA) at Singapore at the invitation of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose" after the public humiliation that Veer Nariman suffered in Bombay as a result of the famous "Nariman episode." F. R. Nariman says that Veer Nariman never joined the INA and had also not gone to Singapore but had only travelled to Malaysia where he stayed for some time with relatives. But here too, my information was derived from various English and Gujarati reports in the Bombay Press of the time and from the records of *The Bombay Gazette*.

In sum, I can only assure the Nariman family that the purpose of my article was to honor Veer Nariman and highlight his career on an appropriate occasion. It was not to deliberately distort facts and hurt their feelings.

DARA KADVA

"Making good, clear..."

Please refer to Mr Aspi Moddie's article ("Making good, clear choices," *Parsiana*, March 1990) and in particular to "systematic contribution from the community at large..."

It is a shame that although six months have passed since the Congress we have not heard or read about any scheme by the

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Parsi Panchayet in this connection. Possibly, the same topic will be discussed at the next Congress.

B.A. PALKHIWALLA

"Chhaiyé Hamé Zarthosti"

With reference to the query regarding the song "Chhaiyé Hamé Zarthosti" (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, March 1990), I have to inform you that the words and tune were composed by the late Phiroz Batliwala.

VISTASP A. BALSARA
Calcutta

Regarding Mr Jal M. Korkhao's enquiry about the tune of *Chhaiyé Hamé Zarthosti* (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, March 1990), the tune is a Western one, from a song, *Bluebell*, dating from World War I. I cannot recall all the words, but the few I do recall are from what my father used to sing. It goes something like this:

Verse: Bluebell the dawn is breaking,
Sweetheart you must not cry;
Bluebell my heart is breaking,
I've come to say goodbye.
Refrain: Goodbye my Bluebell,
Farewell to you;
Just one more fond look
In your eyes so blue.

Verse: There midst the campfires gleaming,
There midst the shot and shell,
I will be dreaming only
Of my own Bluebell.

There is more to it, but I do not remember. I write this in the hope that someone else may be able to bring it to mind.

M.N. MADAN
Darjeeling

Mr Jal Korkhao has requested information regarding the lyricist of *Chhaiyé Hamé Zarthosti* (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, March 1990).

In the tape of Devotional Songs by Mr Kersi P. Mistry, the late Mr Adi Marzban has introduced *Chhaiyé Hamé Zarthosti* thus:

"To the best of my knowledge *Chhaiyé Hamé Zarthosti* was written by the late poet Phiroz Batliwala for a drama of late Mr Kabraji. The tune is from an English song *Bluebell*."

For further information Mr K. P. Mistry may be contacted at A2/24, New Khareghat Colony, Babulnath Road, Bombay 400007.

Ms M. R. ANTIA

According to a 1932 publication of *Navjote Shikshak* (eighth edition) compiled by Ervad Burjor Bajan, principal of

the Athornan Boarding Madressa, the ditties of *Chhaiyé Hamé Zarthosti* were composed by "Firoze" and set to the tune of *Goodbye! My Bluebell*.

HOSHAH BHARUCHIA

Membership rules

It is enshrined in the constitution of the Poona Parsi Panchayat that a Parsi married to a non-Parsi cannot become a member. But, a Parsi having a Parsi *rakhat* (concubine) is permitted to join their elite club! A devout Zoroastrian therefore who attends all religious functions, visits the fire-temple, helps fellow Parsis and Parsi causes in all ways possible, cannot become a member of the Panchayat merely because he, a born Parsi, would rather live an honest married life with a non-Parsi wife than have a Parsi *rakhat*. Paradoxically, the same Parsi Panchayat eagerly takes donations from the Tatas, the Wadias and the Petits all of whom, though married outside the Parsi community, continue their benevolence towards the community. I have not heard of any panchayat turning down their charity on the grounds that the donor is married outside the community.

The Poona Parsi Panchayat rule goes against the tenets of all civilized religions of the world which treat the institution of marriage as sacrosanct and frown upon honest men living in sin with a *rakhat*. One wonders why this is so? Is it that, in the past, the trustees of the Parsi Panchayat had their little women stashed away and wanted to protect their position? Even if this was true a few decades ago, why is it that the present trustees have refused to change the rule?

I am informed that two of the enlightened trustees moved their fellow trustees to change this archaic and manifestly stupid rule but met with a blank "no" from the rest at the end of a bitter voting battle.

You may well ask, "Is such an association worth becoming a member of? Would I not be better off outside it?" Yes, one could shrug one's shoulders, turn one's back to it and stay out of it. That certainly would be the easy way out. But if we did this every time that blind people stood in judgement, who would take up the cudgels on the side of truth and honesty?

There are over 7,000 Parsis in Pune but only about 900 are members of the Panchayat. The educated, enlightened Parsi stays away from the Parsi Panchayat. If rumors are to be believed, one particular family has over the years mo-

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nopolized the board of trustees with two, and at times three, of its family members brought on to the board one way or another.

What is it that makes the post of trustee so sought after? Is it the inherent power of the post or the vast sums of money and landed property in its funds which can be used (or misused) on projects supposedly for the welfare of the lower and middle-class Parsis?

Not that any such project has seen the light of day in the present or in the last decade. The Poona Parsi Panchayat has even gone to the extent of excluding the Zoroastrian Youth Association (ZYA) members from its board. All know of the excellent work that has been put in by the ZYA over the last five years to draw the Zoroastrians of Pune together and revive the community. Yet the Panchayat has made it a point that the ZYA cannot nominate its representative as a full member on the Panchayat board. The demand for youth representation is only fair since 45 percent of the community is below 45 years of age. But this group remains unrepresented in Pune.

And yet the Parsi Panchayat sanctimoniously speaks on behalf of the whole of the Parsi community of Pune. How can that be? I appeal to the many intelligent, educated, enlightened Parsi men and women to come forward in large numbers, become members of the Panchayat and take over the reins of control from these people who have been trustees for the past 15 years or so.

Remember Parsis, you get the Panchayat you deserve. If you want something better, you must be prepared to do something to bring in enlightenment and purpose in this organization that is said to speak on behalf of all Parsis of Pune, and pull it out of the mire it is in today. Otherwise the Poona Parsi Panchayat will continue to be the Poor Parsi Panchayat it is today. Cmdre L. S. MEHTA, IN (Retd)

Pune

Poona Parsi Panchayat president M. C. Kaikobad replies

The trustees of the Poona Parsi Panchayat are governed by their constitution which defines the eligibility of membership. Cmdre Mehta's application for membership was considered at length and was

rejected as per the norms laid down in our constitution. Hence this outburst.

The trustees of the Poona Parsi Panchayat do not in any way interfere in the personal lives of its community members nor do they encourage the system of concubine or *rakhat*. The article has been published to mislead the community. Nowhere in the constitution has it been stated that a Parsi/Irani *rakhat* or a Parsi/Irani Zoroastrian having a Parsi/Irani *rakhat* is eligible for membership. This is a twisting and gross misrepresentation of facts.

An article based on the above letter by Cmdre Mehta had appeared in the local *Maharashtra Herald* dated July 4, 1990. The said article was discussed in our board meeting. The article being defamatory, it was decided to refer it to a legal advisor for legal action against the author and publisher.

Percy

Percy, the film aired on Doordarshan on April 8, 1990 showed the Parsi community in very poor light.

As a Parsi, I wish to question the direc-

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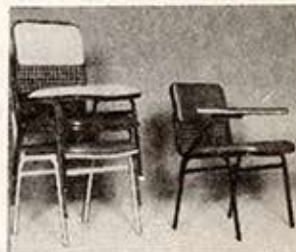
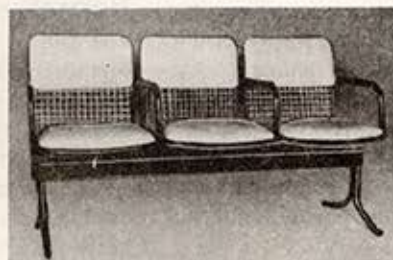
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tor Pervez Merwanji's reason for producing a film which portrays us as a spineless and aimless community.

Why is it that Parsis ridicule their own kind? Why are we always, in all films, portraying Parsis as idiotic and sick in mind? Don't other communities also have their problem individuals? They do not make films on them, thus making a mockery of their sect. Does the Parsi community comprise only of individuals like Percy and his mother? Don't we have a better class of people?

If we have to portray an individual, why not an individual who can inspire?...And we have many of these — not only our past leaders, who were giants amongst men, but, also today's Parsis who are on top in their respective fields of art, music, dance, industry, sports, law, etc.

Why not show that music changed Percy's life and he threw off his shackles, stopped being a mama's boy and became a new man? This could have inspired the youth, instead of making a negative impression.

It also appears that every Parsi film must have a navjote or wedding scene, and an absolute must is a funeral scene. Furthermore, which other communities portray their personal habits about the digestive tract on the screen? It was not funny or humorous. It was downright crude and vulgar!

And what about the other communities? What opinion would they have of us after viewing a film such as this? Today we are a highly respected minority, but such a film makes us a laughing stock in their eyes.

Our community has people from various walks of life. If you must show poor Parsis and how they live, it is also fair to show how the other half lives and their achievements.

Films have a great impact on people, especially the youth. Parsi youth when they see this film can never be inspired or proud of themselves. Here was a fine opportunity to inspire the youth of our community; unfortunately, this opportunity was totally lost.

Ms GULISTAN VISPY ENGINEER

Director Pervez Merwanji replies

The premiere telecast of the film *Percy* was severely butchered by Door-darshan's transmission faults, with the result that the viewer got a disjointed view of the film.



Percy is not a film about Parsis. Though it is based on a short story by Cyrus Mistry about a Parsi youth and set in a Parsi milieu, the theme of the film is universal. In fact I tried to keep out Parsi sociology as much as I could.

Percy and his mother are good and honest people, though poor, trying hard to make ends meet. Percy is neither idiotic, nor sick. He is lonely. He has aspirations, he dreams of his past, fantasizes — it is one way for him to cope with his problems in life. Away from his mother in office, he is responsible and authoritative.

The film is faithful to the original story in its truthful depiction of the Parsi middle class. What does Ms Engineer mean by asking me to show a "better class of people" in the film? Perhaps wealthy Parsis living in apartments costing almost a crore of rupees would like to wish away the less economically fortunate members of our community. Are we to pretend that they don't exist? In every other film made till now where there are Parsi characters, they have been shown as ridiculous caricatures, cardboard cut-outs or their depiction has been exploitative.

Nowhere in the film *Percy* have Parsis been shown in a negative light. There was never any such intention. Yes, there are scenes of gentle humor, even if it dwells on personal bowel habits — but never a trace of vulgarity or crudeness. Surely we have not lost that lovable trait of laughing at ourselves! I would like to

Kurush Deboo as Percy: fantasy as a mode of coping with loneliness

add that all the non-Parsis without exception who have seen the film have appreciated it highly. If Ms Engineer would instead like to see a film about the greats in our community who have done us proud, she is most welcome to commission me to make such a film and of course she should finance it!

Percy is the first film in the history of Indian cinema to be made in the Parsi-Gujarati dialect. It was the opening film of the Indian Panorama section of the Calcutta International Film Festival, 1990. It then won the National Award for the Best Feature Film in Gujarati. It was shown in the market section of the Cannes Film Festival. It has been bought by Channel Four Television, London. The film has now been invited to the Mannheim Film Festival in West Germany. I hope that soon audiences in Bombay and Gujarat will be able to see *Percy* in cinema theaters. That is of course all dependent on the National Film Development Corporation, who are the producers of the film.

Patuck scholarships

The aim of the Bai Dinbai F. S. Patuck Memorial Scholarship Fund is to help Zoroastrian women take short-term job-oriented courses after which they can support themselves and their dependents.

The courses include: diploma in teachers training (both Montessori and kindergarten), handicraft, home science, nursing, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, nutrition, studies in computer science, typing, shorthand, telephone operating, beauty and hair dressing and librarianship. This scholarship is not given for degree-oriented courses in arts, science or commerce.

Young girls from lower and middle-class families from Bombay and the mofussil can avail of this opportunity for help. In 1989-90, 22 girls received scholarships amounting to Rs 36,400.

For further information contact the Honorary Secretary, Bai Dinbai F. S. Patuck Memorial Scholarship, C/o Sri Zarhosti Mandal, Sir Ratan Tata Institute, 35, Hughes Road, Bombay 400007.

Ms B. S. TARAPORE
Administrator

Edited by Amavaz S. Mama

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Events and Personalities

Malicious prank?

Xeroxed handbills inviting all and sundry on July 12, 1990 at 11 a.m. to the launching of the "first ever Zoroastrian crematorium at Doongerwadi" were distributed recently in some agiaris and at the Bhikha Behram well. The innovation was attributed to the Committee of Economic Revival (CER), Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla, trustees Jamsheed Kanga and Jamshed Guzder, BPP chief executive Rustom Anklesaria and joint secretary Ms Gool Tata, and the editor of *The Bombay Samachar* Jehan Daruwala. The location of the incinerator was mentioned as "behind Hodiwalla Bungli."

Commented *The Samachar* of July 10, "Some cowardly persons who do not have the courage to come out openly have started this irresponsible and malicious campaign in order to whip up religious hysteria in the community." *The Samachar* also published a refutation from Golwalla: "No such proposal is contemplated by, or is before, the trustees of the BPP nor have they ever favored such a concept at Doongerwadi." In a further letter to the Press dated July 12, Golwalla advised community members not to be misled by the propaganda and to accost the trustees in person with any anonymous allegations that may be in circulation.

The nonevent — belonging to the genre of macabre Parsi jokesters who used to delight in dampening private celebrations by sending the hearse for community members who were alive and well — was an attempt on the part of Parsi orthodoxy to malign community progressives, noted the *Mid-Day* of July 13, attributing the observation to Daruwala.

Trustees' attendance

During the three months April, May and June, 1990, there wasn't a single occa-

sion when all seven Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustees met at a formal board meeting, according to data provided by the BPP's chief executive Rustom Anklesaria at *Parsiana's* request.

Three of these meetings found six trustees in attendance and another two when five trustees were present. At two other meetings, there were only three and four trustees present, it is reported.

The 'cyclonic' navjote

The two Bombay priests, Ervad Jemi Charna and Ervad Yezdi Panthaki set out for Visakhapatnam with the intention of investing the sudreh (symbolizing advantageous path) and kusti (signifying direction in which one has to tread that path) on young Pouruchaspe Kapadia. Little did they expect that in the process of showing the path to Pouruchaspe, the grandson of the Visakhapatnam Anjuman president Sorab Kapadia, their own course would be beset with difficulties.

That was the week when a severe cyclonic storm had hit the Andhra coast, disrupting all transportation and communication links. The navjote scheduled for May 13, 1990 in Eden Gardens at The Apsara Hotel could not be performed on that day as the priests who had left Bombay four days earlier could not make it to their destination in time. Relating the experience, Panthaki mentioned that what would ordinarily have been an overnight journey, seemed to continue indefinitely.

Everytime the train was diverted "there was no surety whether we would reach any destination or get stranded between flooded rivers on the way," said Panthaki. The journey took them through Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, back to Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa... Finally at Titilagarh they were made to alight and wait for any chance train that might come.

After a suspenseful wait there came a

train which terminated at Rayagada in Orissa as it could not proceed further. When alighting at the platform they joined thousands of other stranded passengers and flood victims who had already converged there trying to brave the winds blowing at 200-250 kmph, "furious enough to overturn a train." With no shelter, no food and no potable drinking water either, the priests and seven others in the navjote party, including Pouruchaspe's maternal grandmother, spent half the night there. Here, the entourage accommodated in their midst a Punjabi couple and their six-month-old child who were proceeding to the Vizag naval base with heavy luggage to take up the next assignment there.

Language was another problem. But they were fortunate to have an Oriya stranger offer them one room in his farmhouse until they could find lodging elsewhere for the two additional nights they had to spend in that town.

The optimists, however, were determined to make it to the navjote. Willing to take another risk, they managed to convince a Sardarji to rent his personal jeep even though the driver was most reluctant to venture out. "The party had to cross the flood ravaged broken culverts and bridges by foot in the midst of swirling waters... Discouraged by the flooded bridges, the driver refused to ply further after reaching them to a nearby state transport (ST) bus stop. Ultimately one ST bus did take them to Visakhapatnam, well past the scheduled navjote time. The ceremony was postponed to the subsequent day, May 14.

Meanwhile, a new venue for the navjote was fixed with great difficulty as government officials had thronged the area to conduct flood relief work. "Due to scarcity of everything, even the flower arrangements could not be made and only few petals of flowers collected from private gardens were available for *tandarosti* (showering blessings on the

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newly initiated child)," mentions Panthaki.

The rains abated on the navjote day but it was only after another eight days that the Bombay party got the return train home. For the seven Zoroastrian families settled in Visakhapatnam and all those involved in the organizing, this navjote was an unforgettable experience. In the booklet, *The Navjote Ceremony and Sudreh-Kusti*, specially compiled for the occasion by Sorab Kapadia, a quotation from Edward Clode, drawing an analogy with the Zoroastrian spirit, reads, "To ride the whirlwind and command the storm was no easy thing..."

The election question

By dismissing the appeal suit filed by the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and Hyderabad (PZASH), the additional chief judge of the city civil court I. Sivasamba Murthy upheld the earlier judgement declaring the appointment of Bezun Dittia as trustee of the anjuman invalid. The city civil court's verdict, delivered on June 25, 1990, was carried in the Secunderabad dailies of June 29.

The first assistant judge M. Mastan Rao had in 1988, on an application by

gone into appeal a second time in the High Court of Andhra Pradesh. Until they receive a new verdict they have sought an interim suspension on Murthy's judgement, Chinoy informs *Parsiana*.

Three officers honored

Three daring officers from the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Rustom Dhunjishaw Bengalee, Darius Cawasji Bilimoria and Hoshang J. Jal, were commended at a felicitation function organ-



Award winning Revenue Intelligence officers: Bengalee (above right) receiving certificate from Dandavate; Bilimoria (below left) and Jal

Ms Roshan D. Chinoy, decreed that Dittia's election was invalid. He took into consideration the petitioner's complaint that two nominations — of Dittia and doctor-scholar-author Bahman Surti — were considered by the managing committee but only Dittia's name was placed before the general body elections of PZASH in 1982.

While the appeal suit was pending in the city civil court, Dittia, a retired IAS (Indian Administrative Service) officer, continued to officiate as president of PZASH and simultaneously as vice president of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India.

The anjuman body has reportedly

ized in New Delhi on May 19, 1990, it is reported.

Bengalee was presented the President's Commemorative Certificate for Meritorious Service for 1989-90 by finance minister Madhu Dandavate. During his 30-year career with the Intelligence Service, Bengalee has been credited with making the highest number of seizures. Gold, electronic goods, textiles, drugs and other luxury items worth crores of rupees have reportedly been hauled by the senior intelligence officer. Often at the risk of his own life he would nab notorious criminals and has succeeded in detaining 27 ace smugglers and seven foreign agents under the National

Security Act, notes his bio data. In the past the highly decorated officer had won the President's awards for distinguished and meritorious service and also citations from the Directorate General of Police, Greater Bombay, for "bravery shown above and beyond the call of duty," as reads the citation.

Also connected with India's premier intelligence service is Bilimoria who was conferred the Finance Minister's Award, reports the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of June 10, 1990. On three earlier occasions he had been presented commendation certificates for successfully nabbing smugglers with contraband goods. A science and law graduate, in 1976 he had been selected for the customs and excise officer's post and six years later was actively implementing the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) in the Enforcement Directorate at the time of the 1982 Asian Games in New Delhi.

Among the relatively new entrants to the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (Bombay Zonal Unit) is Jal who was awarded a commendation certificate, reads the *Jamé*. Since his entry in 1987, Jal has carried out dangerous operations in the drive against smuggling, tax evasion and illicit traffick in foreign exchange, drugs and psychotropic substances. A commerce and law graduate, Jal had earlier worked as an inspector with the customs and central excise department, further adds *Jamé*.

New post for Billimoria

Financial and management consultant, Hoshang Shavaksha Billimoria took over as managing director of Tata Press Limited in May this year, notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of May 6, 1990. A director of other Tata companies viz Tata Services and Tata Unisys, Billimoria is also on the board of Carona Limited, Thomas Cook (India) Limited and several others.

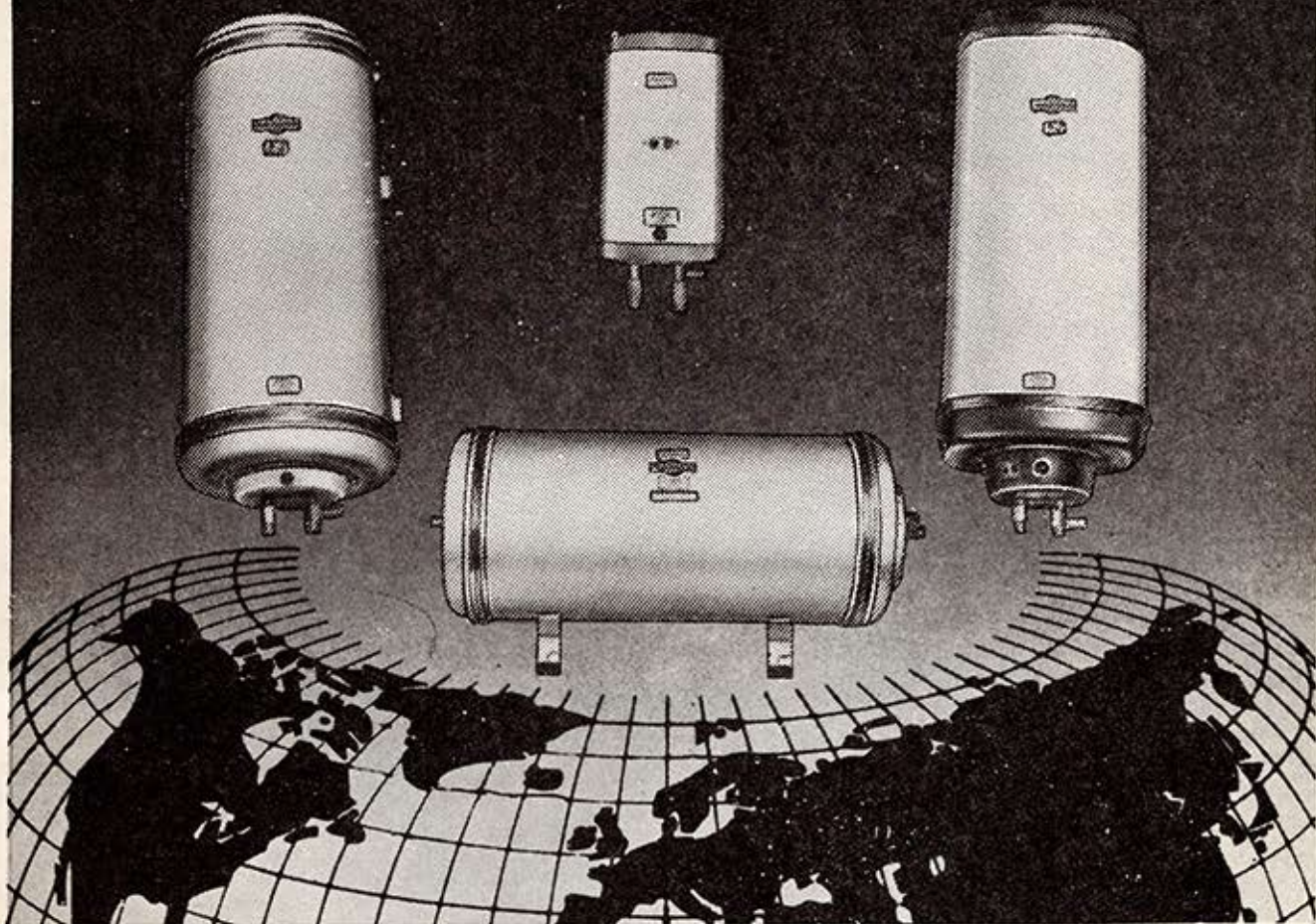
For nearly 12 years he was associated with S. B. Billimoria and Company as audit principal and consultant on corporate and financial management, market surveys, in-company training programs, feasibility studies and executive selection, notes his bio data.

Prior to that he was with Whinney Murray and Company, now Ernst and Whinney, reportedly one of the largest chartered accountancy firms in the UK. Being promoted to the post of a qualified chartered accountant a year before he

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graduated, he was one of only three premium employees in the London office.

Thirty-eight-year-old Billimoria has known several firsts during his academic career. His education was at St Xavier's School and later at the Bombay Univer-

sity from where he graduated in commerce. He is on the board of governors of the Institute of Internal Auditors (India) and was past president of its Bombay chapter. Rotarian Billimoria's other interests include photography and aquatics, further reads the bio data.



From left: corporate consultant Billimoria, banker Javeri and karate exponent Mistry

city from where he graduated in commerce.

He is on the board of governors of the Institute of Internal Auditors (India) and was past president of its Bombay chapter. Rotarian Billimoria's other interests include photography and aquatics, further reads the bio data.

Grindlays' GM

The newly appointed general manager, management services, of ANZ Grindlays Bank, Nani Javeri's responsibilities include supervising the credit and human resources functions, notes *The Times of India* of May 5, 1990.

Javeri has had 17 years of experience in credit functions and while at the Grindlays Bank headquarters in Melbourne, was with the human resources division, notes a press release. Forty-four-year-old Javeri had, for some time, worked in the Bank's London branch too.

Prior to studying for the London Institute of Bankers examination, the banker had graduated in history and economics from St Stephens College, Delhi. His other interests include billiards, reading and western country music, further notes the press release.

Mistry trains UN force

The United Nations (UN) security personnel based in Vienna, Austria, were given a special month-long training in unarmed combat by Bombay's karate ex-

pert Sensei Pervez B. Mistry, notes *The Times of India* dated June 5, 1990. Personnel from the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Atomic Energy Security Force are believed to have benefitted from Mistry's coaching.

During his stay in Europe the karateka also demonstrated *atemiwaza*, the art of paralysing an opponent with a single technique, reports the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of June 10. The findings of a research study on behavioral patterns among sportsmen — jointly conducted by Sensei and his co-student Dr Cherian — were published in a magazine that was circulated in the UN office. It was one of Mistry's former students, UN security officer Jimmy Irani, who introduced him to the international body, adds the *Jame*.

A founder member of the All India Karate Federation (AIKF), for the last 25



years Mistry has been running the Academy of Martial Arts that he established, it is reported.

Dentist in the chair

Chairing an international conference on "Dental Education and Dental Health — the need for a change in perspective" in Japan in end March was noted Bombay orthodontist Dr Keki Mistry, notes a press release. Countries of the Asian Pacific

region decided to organize this workshop with a view to improving knowledge of dentistry among the new generation of dental surgeons. It was reportedly for the first time that government representatives concerned with education, deans of dental faculties and officials from dental associations availed of a common platform to deliberate on dental education and oral health.

In May 1990 Mistry was invited to London as an observer/advisor on a proposed health initiative program for Commonwealth countries. Subsequently the decision to constitute a Commonwealth Dental Association was taken. Mistry has also been invited to address a joint meeting of dental deans and educators at the World Dental Congress scheduled to be held in London in September 1990, further reads the release.

Zenia breaks Asian mark

The first Indian woman to run the 100 m in under 12 seconds and in the process better the Asian record was ace sprinter Ms Zenia Ayrton, notes *The Times of India* of June 14, 1990. At the Third Asian Junior Track and Field Meet held in Beijing from June 13 to 16, the athlete clocked 11.95 seconds to win the bronze in the 100 m run. She was also included in the 4 x 100 and the 4 x 400 m relay squad selected by the Amateur Athletic Federation of India.

Earlier, in May this year, at the Fifth National Junior Athletic Meet in Muzaf-



Mistry (left): imparting dental knowledge Ayrton: accolades for 'Track Princess'

farpur, Bihar, Ayrton became the 'Track Princess' when she completed a sprint double, reads the *Jam-e-Jamshed* dated May 27, 1990. She won the 100 m race with a timing of 12.3 seconds and the 200 m in 24.9 seconds. This being the last time that the 'Track Princess' competed at the junior national level, she was a trifle dejected at not being able to improve on her 200 m record of 24.7 seconds, reports the *Jame*.

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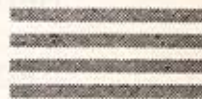
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Rana's 'Still Life'

"Life here is captured not in its frenzied moments of passion but rather in its interludes, in the far longer periods of perfect stillness." This was the mood conveyed by artist Behram Rana in his exhibition titled "Still Life" at the Taj Art Gallery from May 8 to 15, 1990.

In this, his fifth, exhibition in Bombay, the artist managed to sell nearly 80 per cent of his 42 paintings on display, he informs. Forty-seven-year-old Rana claims

Artist Rana with his water color painting, Still Life



to derive his inspiration from the environment in which he functions.

Presently a senior visualizer in Larsen and Toubro Limited, Rana paints in his free time during lunch breaks or after office hours. A graduate from the J. J. School of Art, Rana first began painting with water colors before he switched to



oils. His paintings are in the collection of Larsen and Toubro Limited, Air India, Bank of America and also in the United Arab Emirates and Bangladesh, it is reported.

Veteran tennis player

At the Open Veterans' Tennis Tournament, top-seeded Dara Billimoria won the single's title, notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of April 15, 1990. He beat his rival

in two straight sets at the meet organized by the Cricket Club of India (CCI) and sponsored by ANZ Grindlays Bank in mid March 1990.

At the Western India Tennis Championships held in Nagpur, Billimoria, nearing 60 years of age, lost the single's title to Hiralal Das but with his colleague succeeded in winning the doubles' title against Das and his partner by a comfortable margin.

"I want to give back to tennis at least a small percentage of what it has given me," says Billimoria who was manager-cum-coach of the Maharashtra State Lawn Tennis Association (MSLTA) that participated in the Western India Championships. He also serves as executive committee member and counsellor of the MSLTA, further reports the paper.

The avid tennis player makes it a point to daily frequent the Bombay Gymkhana and the Wodehouse Gymkhana for practise sessions, notes *Jamé*.

Musical trio

Western classical music lovers were treated to an "enjoyable evening" when soprano Ms Dilshad Khambatta, violinist Zubin Behram-Kamdin and pianist Ms Mehroo Jeejeebhoy performed at the

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Young Talent Concert in Bombay. The program on April 11, 1990 was organized by the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) and the Time and Talents Club, and sponsored by VST Industries Limited.

Khambatta's rendering of 13 songs from composers like Mozart, Schubert, Tchaikovsky, etc showed that she could sing "with spontaneity and interpret songs with style and perception," noted critic Adi Doctor in his review in the *Mid-Day* of April 20, 1990. "Dilshad's voice may be a little thin and lacking in volume in the lower register but she had competent technique and displays a feel for what she sings," noted Sheryar Ookerjee in *The Independent* of April 18.

Though Behram-Kamdin played with sensitivity a piece by Prokofiev, the impression he conveyed that evening was that "his heart was not in the work."

Jeejeebhoy was commended for her "tonal control throughout," helping the two youngsters perform with a "good degree of aesthetic understanding."

Welcoming and informing

If planning to visit Delhi, avail of "the comfortable boarding and lodging facilities" at the Mengusi Parsi Dharamsala on Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg at very rea-

sonable rates, informs Brig Adi K. Sahukar in a letter to *Parsiana*.

The Dharamsala in Delhi is located close to Delhi Gate and at a convenient distance from the central shopping area, an industrial complex and places of historical interest like the museum and art gallery. Though prior reservation is recommended by writing to the manageress Ms Dhun Bagli at the Mengusi Parsi Dharamsala, Delhi Gate, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110002 or phoning her on 3818651 or 3317228, in case of unexpected last-minute visits, the booking position could be checked with her even after reaching the Delhi airport or railway station, writes Sahukar.

If seeking information on career openings, Sahukar recommends the use of the Career Information Guide, published by the Rotary Club of Delhi South under the auspices of the Directorate of Vocational Service.

The booklet provides information on different openings in the armed forces, medicine, engineering and technology, computer science, management, commerce, education and journalism, and public relations with relevant details on qualifications and institutions where such coaching facilities are available.

Those interested in a copy of this

booklet can write to Sahukar at Straw Products Limited, Link House, 3, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110002; telephone number 3311112 or 3321186.

SPOTLIGHT

Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) Marazban J. A. Patrawala has been appointed chairman of the Privileges Committee for the fifth time, creating a record in the history of the Maharashtra State Legislature, notes a press release.

Rusi S. Cooper has been reelected president of the executive committee of the Bombay and Nhava-Sheva Ship-Intermodal Agents' Association for the next two years, notes *The Economic Times* of April 14, 1990.

At the Artist '90 talent contest, the first prize in the make-up category went to beautician Ms Dolly Tarapore of Up-To-Date Saloon, Byculia, reads the *Mid-Day* of March 28, 1990. The contest was organized by the Association of Beauty Therapy and Cosmetology, India.

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

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Conflicting convictions

Despite increasing activities, incompatibility of ideas continues to vitiate the atmosphere in the United Kingdom

Arnavaz S. Mama

"The Birkbeck College of the University of London, through their chairman Lord Combermere, approached me as President (of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe: ZTFE) to start Zoroastrian study classes for citizens of the UK which the managing committee has approved. The classes will start in September 1990 at Zoroastrian House. Dr (Ms) Rashna Writer is formally appointed as the first teacher to take these classes. For the first time in this country, Zoroastrianism will be taught as a subject to any one who wishes to learn about Zoroastrian history and faith."

The information is part of a letter to *Parsiana* from ZTFE president Zal Sethna dated July 19, 1990. Sethna also notes that the ZTFE has launched study classes for Zoroastrians on a permanent basis with a syllabus covering Zoroastrian history, doctrines, traditions, rituals, prayers and the Avesta language. The recently formulated Zoroastrian Education Team (ZET) comprises teachers, students, mobeds and members of the ZTFE managing committee, notes Sethna, placing the weekly class attendance at 100 students.

In an appreciation of global implications of Zoroastrian demography, the ZTFE is said to be making a "conscious effort to bring closer together those Zoroastrians residing outside London...as well as those living in Europe." Thus community members in Birmingham, Manchester, Leicester, Coventry and other parts of the UK as well as in European cities, notably Paris and Venice, and in parts of Germany, are being contacted. A meeting with community members in Paris "uplifted the spirits of the Zoroastrians (there)," writes Sethna, adding, "They do not feel isolated any more. They can depend on (the) reli-

gious and social services of our Association." ZTFE's paid up membership — including both life and ordinary members — numbers 1,000, writes Sethna. There is also a non-fee paying old age pensioner (OAP) membership, it is stated.

On the social front, Sethna says that youth weekends are being planned at Zoroastrian House in London where "youth from all over England are invited by the Association to provide an opportunity for them to meet and enjoy each others' company." Other activities in the offing are a gara competition, cooking classes where Parsi/Irani dishes are taught, classes for learning to stitch sudrehs and weave kustis. The managing committee's aim is to provide the community with opportunities to learn about the faith and traditions so that "Zoroastrianism may once again be established in every Zoroastrian home by the grace of Ahura Mazda," adds Sethna.

Mahiar Ardeshtir, Shahriar Mahani, Meherwan Sepai and Filly Maravala were the four voted to the managing committee at the ZTFE's annual general meeting on November 19, 1989 — the last two being reelected, informs honorary secretary Rusi Dalal. The ZTFE's annual report for the year 1988-89 informs that £ 11,000 were raised/promised over the next four years in aid of the needy Zoroastrians of Bombay and Gujarat at the Zoroastrian charity gala organized by the youth at Zoroastrian House on May 7, 1988. Also noted is that Iranian Zoroastrians regularly attend Zoroastrian House functions and had organized a variety entertainment of Persian music, dance and culture. The evening's proceeds of £ 800 were donated to the ZTFE. The report also acknowledges the organizing and indexing skill of Far-

rokh Vajifdar which has rendered the slumbering Zoroastrian House Library operative.

The report refers to the need for larger premises and reiterates the Association's "cherished dream of establishing an agiary or dadgah." However, two other claims in the report have drawn flak:

"The net assets of the Association have increased by some £ 75,000 in the last three years, due to the prudent management of the finance committee, the trustees and the brokers, to whom we are very grateful."

An open letter to ZTFE members from ex president Shahpur Captain dated November 11, 1989 states, "Nowhere in the accounts you will find the expression 'net assets.' So why is it used in the report?" Captain further observes "Since April 1, 1986 the finances of the Association have deteriorated by £ 29,039 being declared 'losses' of the Association. In my view, the true losses are at least £ 34,000. In the last three years, the committees have never even considered what action to take to stem (the) losses." Captain who had resigned in 1986 (in protest against a ZTFE resolution, taken in his absence, barring non-Zoroastrian spouses from attending the muktad ceremonies and the Farvardian jashan) but had been reelected to the committee in 1988, asks, "If the Association's finances have improved by £ 75,000 as claimed, then where was the need to call two special general meetings to increase fees?" He also refers to a computer worth £ 1,700 bought in 1988 and questions its alleged placement in Dalal's residence. Captain maintains that he was not only outvoted on his opinion that the Association's property should be held in Zoroastrian House, but his dissenting view has not been recorded in the min-

utes despite a repetition of the request at three meetings of the managing committee.

Another statement in the annual report of 1988-89 which is at variance with the claims of the opposing group in London is that "growing numbers of Zoroastrians...attend the muktad and Farvardian prayers (which) is an indicative feature of a vibrant Zoroastrian community." The report also notes that on September 11, 1988 "a large crowd of over 200 Zoroastrians attended the Farvardian prayers at Brookwood Cemetery." Noshirwan Cowasjee, who has been spearheading the campaign to restore to non-Zoroastrian spouses the right to attend muktad ceremonies and the Farvardian jashan as they had done prior to the embargo in 1986 (since then they may sit only in the room adjoining the hall where prayers are said, clarifies the ZTFE position paper dated November 7, 1989), assessed the attendance at the ZTFE's Farvardian jashan on that occasion at 153 adults in his letter to community members dated October 19, 1989.

In the position paper the committee defended its resolution barring non-Zoroastrian presence in the muktad

prayer room on the basis that the action was demanded in "petitions signed by around 200 Zoroastrians and the majority decision of the committee members was in response to those petitions." (In his letters Cowasjee has challenged the authenticity of these petitions, claiming that several signatures were those of young children.) It rejected Cowasjee's demand for a referendum on the issue because "a referendum will divide and split the community and even families," and further noted that according to the memorandum and articles of association of the ZTFE, "Only fully paid up members of the Association can vote on any resolution affecting the Association, hence a referendum of the community will be ineffective and will not constitutionally bind the Association." It further notes that "The democratically elected committee is empowered to take all decisions affecting the Association on behalf of its members and are duty bound to safeguard the religious beliefs of the Zoroastrian community at large."

Cowasjee's letter of October 23, 1989 to the community raises other points about the muktad ceremonies that may be as applicable to anjumans and asso-

ciations elsewhere: that the attendance dropped from 1,067 in 1988 to 771 in 1989 (thereby contesting the official ZTFE stand); that the time for reciting the names of the deceased increased from 15 minutes in 1986 to 60 minutes in 1989. "A payment of £ 15 is required for reciting four names. What about the poor who cannot afford to pay?" asks Cowasjee, covering one aspect of the ceremonial recital. He then informs that during the hour-long recital he observed the majority talking, reading circulars, newspapers, etc, comparing shopping notes, walking out for fresh air or refreshments. He also notes that on one occasion while the 1989 muktad ceremonies were in progress, two officials of the managing committee were busy on a fund collection drive. "What we are doing is asking our priests to get on with the prayers and merely supplying our physical presence. This is not religion but mere religiosity."

Observes Captain in his above-quoted letter, "Religious fanaticism brought countries to a position of near bankruptcy and destroyed social cohesion," and asks, "Do we as an association and a community wish to go that way?"

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"BEING PARSI GIVES OBJECTIVITY"

Arnavaz S. Mama

Bapsi Sidhwa views the community through the eyes of a novelist

"In our countries the written word still carries a lot of weight. In the West, people throw the book away after reading it," says novelist Bapsi Sidhwa. In the course of a freewheeling interview with *Parsiana* on December 28, 1989 Sidhwa shared a number of observations, particularly about the community as a whole and its experiences in Pakistan, her home base, and the US where she has been teaching creative writing and reviewing books.

The Pakistani Parsis are "thriving, prospering," says Sidhwa. "There is still a strong entrepreneurial spirit. Those going abroad... are doing so in fairly good style." Probably the climate in India is much more competitive than in Pakistan where Sidhwa says Muslims prefer to employ Parsis because they have a reputation for honesty. Sidhwa ascribes this favored status to the community's restricted numbers — 3,000 in Karachi and 92 in Lahore. "If we were 60,000, we might have come in for attention and envy!"

Sidhwa says she was shocked to discover that Americans do not consider Zoroastrians among the South Asian minorities, but feels that Parsis are much better off in India and Pakistan than in North America: "I can't speak of Indian Parsis but those reasonably well off have a better quality of life in Pakistan. (There is time for) human interaction, for leisure..." The community in the US consists of splinter

groups of Iranis and Parsis. According to Sidhwa, the Iranis are "very touchy, get offended very fast. (It is) very difficult to work with them (yet) they socialize a lot with Parsis." Socializing is a part of our Zoroastrian heritage, feels Sidhwa. In contrast, the Americans lead isolated lives: "There's only mom, dad, kids and TV" and "they definitely tend to look down upon us."

Referring to the "very utopian dream of Parsis that America will be (their)

their culture is akin to American and British culture, but once there, they realize that their dreams have misfired. When they stick together (there's) a network to fall back upon. (Otherwise, there are) too many cases of Parsis dying in isolation, being found only after three or four days." She recalls a family from Lahore that left soon after Partition, now scattered — isolated, unhappy individuals in North America.

In the context of the Parsis' declining numbers, Sidhwa refers to the experience of children of Parsi fathers who see their non-Parsi mothers almost ostracized by the community and begin to resent their faith. "If the community accepts the mother (into the religion) a lot more (of the children) would remain Zoroastrians." People argue that children should be counselled into marrying within the fold, says Sidhwa who recounts how she had prevailed upon her daughter, who wanted to marry an American in Lahore, to give up the idea. "But without friends and connections, you cannot find anyone suitable." Though mother and daughter dutifully made a trip to Bombay, Sidhwa found it a "humiliating experience. I wouldn't want to put any daughter of mine through that experience again!..."

"We are also becoming fundamentalist — arguing and quarrelling about little things." She refers to the controversy in London about non-Parsi spouses no longer being allowed to attend the



PHOTO: SHANTANU MITRA

land," Sidhwa says, the Parsis "think they're going to mix with the whites." But the average American whites think differently. "Traditionally and culturally (we) can't interact with them... Parsis feel

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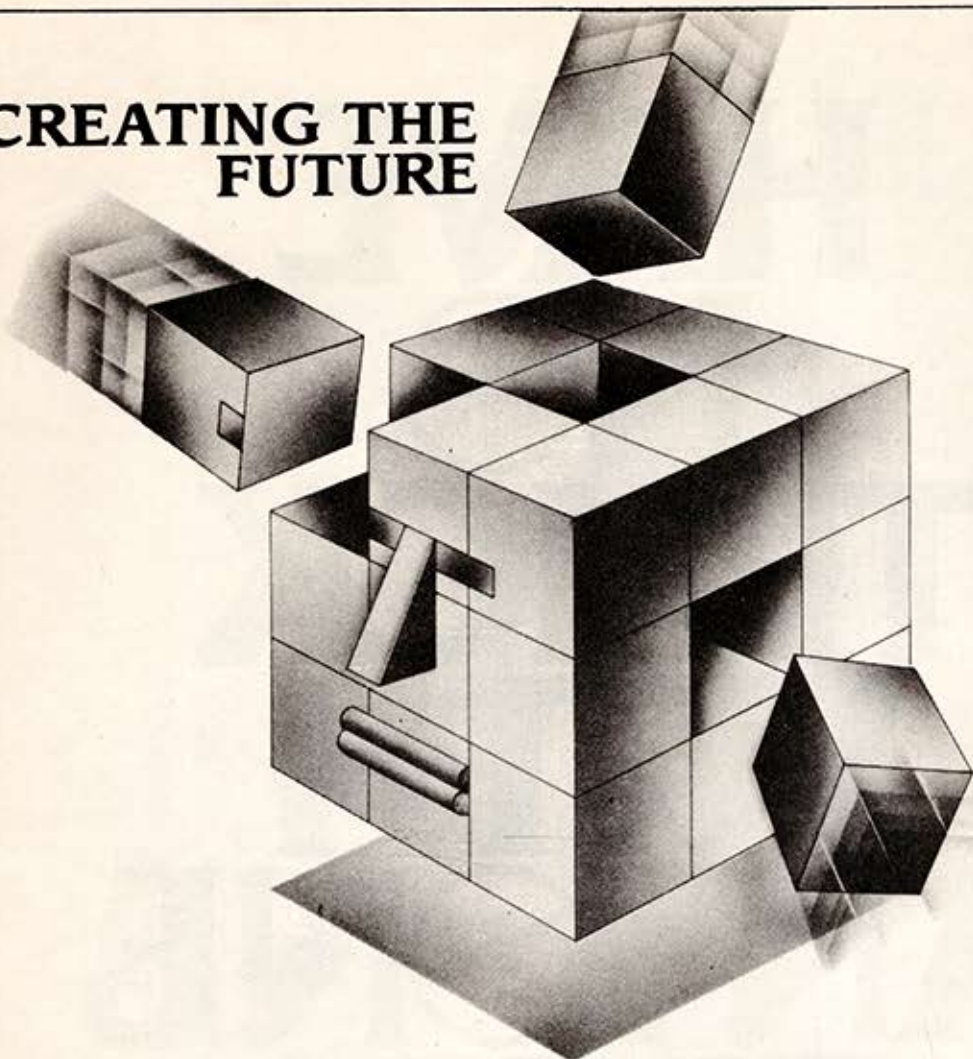
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muktad ceremonies and Farvardian jashan on grounds of ritual purity since the past three years, an attitude which Sidhwa describes as "suicide for the community." As Sidhwa reasons it, "Parsis haven't gone in for much literature; their concepts and thought processes have become archaic. The anachronism is particularly apparent among those "with strong western pretensions (who) still keep up with piano playing and learning the ballet!"

Those going abroad may pioneer new rules, feels Sidhwa, but they may be too few to affect the community. The reforms should come where the community is concentrated as in Bombay or Karachi.

In Lahore, since the past two years, a handful of men and women living around the agiary have been looking after the fire. A few months ago they managed to acquire a mobed from Singapore after an intensive search and, she adds, he gets a free house and a very good salary. Née Bhandara, Sidhwa's father's family can trace their roots in Lahore over more than 200 years, she says — "a little Parsi family tucked away in Muslim society." At Partition there were more than 300 Parsis in Lahore, but now a lot of families have

shifted to Houston, Australia and other places. Sidhwa recalled Lahore's Navroze get-togethers for a day of sports which did not exclude the inevitable Parsi preoccupation — a good meal cooked and served by Parsis. "Last year, for the first time,

"Parsis' concepts and thought processes have become archaic"

there were no young people to hold sports with." So this year they combined the young and the old and organized sporting events "which even middleaged women like me could indulge in."

Sidhwa's secluded upbringing required her to pass the matric privately and "picked up everything while I just lived in my books as a child." She claims she was an ordinary housewife when she started to write 18 years ago. The first book to be written, *The Bride*, recalls the fate of a girl orphaned by the dementia of Parti-

tion, adopted by the lone Pathan who survived that particular bout of carnage and raised in Lahore, the "Paris of the East." The girl's second nightmare began on her marriage to a tribal Pathan and her flight from a life and code of conduct she could neither comprehend nor accept. The tale, told in a bare 245 pages, was prompted by a story Sidhwa had heard while on a holiday in the inhospitable North West Frontier Province. But the book collected rejection notes. Its "locale and timing were too remote from what Americans are used to," says Sidhwa.

Nonetheless a second book followed — *The Crow Eaters*: a rambunctious account of a pioneering Parsi family in Lahore, uncannily highlighting the unintended humor in Parsi life-styles and habits — which was initially published in Pakistan. Within three months it was also published by Jonathan Cape and St Martins Press in the US, followed by paperback editions.

"Parsis are ideally suited to reflect their environment because wherever they are, they're slightly marginalized," says Sidhwa. Her latest novel, *The Ice-Candy-Man* (see review by Geeta Doctor on

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page 92) is a view of life in Lahore where she grew up, as seen through the eyes of a Parsi child, reflecting the great convulsion of Partition as it must have appeared to Bapsi as a child — an amalgam of horrific history and daily trivia: "The Parsi child is a useful ploy because she sees the world without prejudice, sees people as people. Being Parsi gives objectivity. It has been termed unique because harrowing scenes... burst into the comedy of *The Crow Eaters*. As soon as I write about Parsis everything bursts into fun and humor. (We're) basically fun-loving, gregarious people (who've been) brought up in the tradition of Parsi *nataks* (plays) which, despite being crude or vulgar, were great fun."

Even in India and Pakistan where the Parsis interact with other communities, "come out in their own voice... not (only) mimic the West, we are not entrenched in the indigenous milieu." The resulting objectivity is "very necessary to the author (as it) creates strong tension." When one is "not absolutely happy, (the state of mind) is conducive to creativity. (It seeks) an outlet, bursts

into fiction writing, music... In the US, the loss of a sense of identity is common to Hindus, Muslims and Parsis. The emigrant experience of parents and commu-

"Last year, for the first time, there were no young people to hold sports with"

nity interactions with other minorities and host societies" finds a ready market for publishing.

The works of Indians and Pakistanis living abroad are being published by the universities, says Sidhwa. "To live in Pakistan and be published there is a miracle." The seven to eight years that Sidhwa spent collecting rejection notes was an unhappy, frustrating period for her. "You get embittered when you're not read," she confides. The publication of *The Crow Eaters* in Pakistan "gave it worth. Young writers should first be pub-

lished in their own country. It gives their career a boost," she advises.

Sidhwa was in India at the invitation of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations, thanks to noted journalist Khushwant Singh. However, her Bombay stay was not altogether pleasant. That very day she had lost her handbag with pens, money and credit cards in a taxi, in the course of a shopping expedition. Fortunately her passport and green card were safe at the Oberoi Towers. And Sidhwa took it all in her hospitable, gracious, gregarious stride...

Bapsi's husband Noshir is involved in business in Houston. And while she was there with him, reviewing books for *The Houston Chronicle*, people at the University of Houston "got to know there's a new writer in town" and she got into teaching creative writing there. She also conducts creative writing programs for graduates at Columbia University.

With two daughters and one son — of whom only the younger daughter is unmarried — Sidhwa attributes her fulfilling life to destiny. "I couldn't have done it on my own... Definitely Fate, what else?"

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The Pavri Memorial Fund

The Jamshed K. Pavri Memorial Fund (JKPMF) has been established in memory of the late community chronicler, long-term

honorary secretary of the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia and father figure to all Zoroastrians in the New World. Initiated by his wife Roda and son Yezdi with a deed of gift of \$ 10,000, the Fund will be administered by the Vancouver Foundation, a non-profit, non-governmental public charitable foundation whose board of directors consists of 12 distinguished British Columbians, including the chief justice of the province, informs a note from the Pavris. The Foundation holds as a perpetual endowment the capital gifts, bequests and assignments of more than 420 trust funds, they inform.

The investment income from the JKPMF will be distributed in equal measure to the late Pavri's four favorite charities/activities: the Canadian Red Cross; Operation Eyesight Universal, Calgary to be directed to Operation Eyesight for work in India; the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia for the purchase of literature on Zoroastrianism for the library of the Society and to promote study of Zoroastrianism among children, youth and adults; the Canadian chapter of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) to provide assistance to a worthy student studying Zoroastrianism at the university level (until this chapter is established, the amount due to it will continue to revert to the corpus of the endowment).

"With the Vancouver Foundation managing the money, not only will there be accountability and security of funds and easy availability of receipts for the contributors, but a considerable saving of administrative expenses (as) the administrative fee that the Foundation charges against an endowment is only about 2.5 percent of the income accrued to it," informs the Pavris' missive.

Welcoming contributions in any amount, the Pavris' directive states that cheques, drafts or money orders must be

made payable to "Vancouver Foundation, J. K. Pavri Fund" and addressed to #230, One Bentall Centre, 505 Burrard Street, Vancouver B.C. V7X 1M3, Canada. An accompanying slip must bear the date of contribution, the donor's name and address, amount and the currency in which it is remitted. Receipts issued directly by the Foundation will be valid for taxation purposes depending upon the law in the donor's own country, the letter notes.

Parsis as image builders

"There are many factors which constitute our image. What we think about our image and what the public perceives could be two entirely different things," noted computer expert Maneck Bhujwala, past president of the Zarthushu Anjuman of Northern California (ZANC) in his address delivered to the first Pacific regional convention of the National Federation of Asians of Indian Origin.

"Today the nation's economy is relatively prosperous. Tomorrow may bring a depression. If we neglect building the right image today, we will not have the majority support when we need it most," Bhujwala told the assembled Indians at the Hyatt Hotel at Palo Alto, California and recalled the "alienation, harassment, violence and officially sanctioned discrimination" which Indians suffered in Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Malaysia, England and the Fiji Islands because they neglected their image. The violence of the Dotbusters (anti-Indian teenaged gangsters who mugged Navroze Mody to death in New Jersey in 1987) was nearer home, he reminded.

Recounting the arrival of Parsis in India and the fabled sugar and milk episode of the initial landing in Sanjan, Bhujwala went on to illustrate the successful integration of Parsis in India via the adoption of Indian dress, language and customs and the pursuit of hard work, honesty and charity and urged Indians in the US — whom the American hosts do not distinguish as Parsis, Buddhists, Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, Marathis, Gujaratis — to send "a clear and resounding message... that we are Americans first and we will work hard for America's prosperity and (that) we want to be equal partners in this enterprise called the USA."

Compiled by Amavaz S. Mama

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Maachi: the throne

Gustasp Irani

To the devout, the ritual feeding of the sacred fire at the change of the *gah* is a fuller expression of gratitude

The sun slides off the sky; a ball of golden red dipping behind a curtain of molten water. The sleepy township of Udwada prepares to retire for the day. Two mobeds, seemingly bowed by the weight of their flowing grey beards, hobble past a goat scratching its back against the iron gate of a quaint one-storied building. The road leading to the Iranshah is deserted: no beggars, no sandalwood peddlers, no *patasa*-biscuit handcarts; only a litter of pups sucking desperately at their impatient mother's teats. Inside the Iranshah Atash Bahram, there are no electric lights; only *divas* (lamps), rows and rows, cradled in bulbous and bowl-shaped glass lamp shades suspended by chains and pulleys from the roof of the hall. In the soft glow of this quiet divinity, the shackles, the woes of our daily life, melt away. We slip into the right frame of mind for the *maachi* we are about to offer in thanksgiving for a boon granted.

In the inner sanctuary by the entrance, sits the mobed; his aged limbs stretched out on an easy chair. His only companions, his thoughts and the sacred fire he tends. It is a faint glow now, but the presence of the fire fills the empty, luxuriously carpeted room. The mobed acknowledges our presence, rises and scuffles to the sanctum sanctorum to perform a *maachi* at the behest of the laity. It could be an offering of devotion, a plea for divine favor, a thanksgiving for a boon granted... "Anything you want," says one dastur scholar, "but generally it is an offering of thanksgiving."

Then commence the rites. First the preamble: the leveling of the ash on the surface of the *afargan* (fire holder), the dusting, the washing of the marble pedestal on which the *afargan* stands. Next the mobed offers the *maachi* — nine large sticks of sandalwood placed in layers over the glowing embers that burst into brilliant flame, the red-yellow tongues reflected in the polished brass bars set into the masonry that cordons off the holy of holies. The mobed freezes for a moment before the fire, his white-gloved hands outstretched: one holding the ladle that kisses the lip of the *afargan*, the other clutching the metal tongue of a suspended bell. He strikes. First once, then three sequences of three bells each. There is something mystical and primeval in the ritual. A playful child devotee stands still in awe, then softly creeps up to lean against her mother, the two silhouetted in the crackling glow of dancing flames as the pealing bells reverberate.

"*Maachi* in Gujarati means throne. Every *gah* (the five parts into which a Zoroastrian day is divided) we perform this ceremony in which the *badshah* is enthroned. We call the Iranshah (fire) the *badshah* — the king," says Dastur Kaikobad Phirozeji, High Priest of the Udwada Atash Bahram. In Udwada, nine sticks of sandalwood are used to construct the throne. The first two are placed while the mobed is facing east, the next two while facing south. These form the four legs of the throne. The next four form the seat and are placed

with the mobed facing west, and right on top is placed a single stick, the backrest.

In all the other atash bahrams in India the throne is constructed with six plus one extra stick of sandalwood. These seven sticks, according to a dastur scholar, represent the seven Holy Immortals, the Hama Spentas. "There is no special significance as to why the Udwada Atash Bahram uses nine sticks and the others seven. It's just a matter of a difference in customs and ceremonies that exist from atash bahram to atash bahram," says Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal, High Priest of the H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram, Bombay.

However, many of the Udwada priests feel that the difference is significant. "The Udwada fire has come from the ninth heaven," says Ervad Jamshedji Andhiarujina, an Udwada priest. An atash bahram fire is consecrated from 16 different fires, Andhiarujina explains, 15 being earth fires and one heavenly, namely fire from lightning.

When the Udwada Atash Bahram was being consecrated by the first Parsi settlers in India, Dastur Neriosang Dhaval is believed to have led a team of 16 mobeds to the Barot hills. Here he made them stand in eight pairs facing north, south, east and west and the four corners thereof. He stood in the middle by the side of a stone-carved *afargan* which had been filled with dry sandalwood. As the sun set, the congregation of priests started to pray a special *nirang*. Dark clouds massed overhead and, soon

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List of atash bahrams in India

The list of atash bahrams in India is as follows [the year of consecration in brackets, provided by Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal, High Priest of the H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram, Bombay]:

1. Udwada (Uncertain though popularly believed to be consecrated in 790 AD)

2. Navsari (1765)
3. Dadyseth, Bombay (1783 — Kadmi)
4. Modi, Surat (1824)
5. Vakil, Surat (1824 — Kadmi)
6. Wadia, Bombay (1830)
7. Banaji, Bombay (1865 — Kadmi)
8. Anjuman, Bombay (1895)

enough, a shaft of lightning slashed across the sky and straight into the stone carved *afargan* where the sandalwood burst into flame. "The other atash bahrams use ordinary lightning, the lightning for the Udwada fire came from heaven itself — the ninth heaven," says Andhijarujina.

"Legend," says Kotwal as he dismisses the story. The other dastur scholars concur; there is no documentary evidence to support the story.

Details of the 16 fires that constitute an atash bahram fire (see box, "Consecration of an atash bahram fire") can be found in *The Persian Revayats of Hormazyar Framarz and Others* by Ervad Bamanji Nusserwanji Dhabbar, a book that records responses given by Iranian Zoroastrian priests to queries sent to them by their Indian counterparts on what constitutes proper Zoroastrian religious rites. In the last quarter of the fifteenth century, Nariman Hoshang records that the fire of lightning cannot be used in the preparation of an atash bahram though it can be utilized in the prepa-

ration of an atash adarian. However, in the mid sixteenth century, when Kamdin Shapur listed the 16 different fires that had to be used to build an atash bahram, the fifteenth was listed as the fire from lightning. In his footnotes the author adds: "In India all the atash bahrams have been consecrated with the fire of lightning, among other fires."

J. P. F. Shroff records in his essay *Consecration of Iranshah Atash Behram at Sanjan*, how, at the time the H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram was being built in Bombay (1830), word was spread amongst the Parsis that a fire from lightning was needed. A leading Parsi resident of Calcutta, Naoroji S. Bangali, on hearing that a tree in a distant suburb of the city had caught fire after being struck by lightning, rushed there to collect the fire which he kept aglow with a constant feed of sandalwood. Later he arranged to have the fire transported by land from Calcutta to Bombay.

The other notable difference in the *maachi* ceremony of Udwada and the other atash bahrams is in the striking of

Consecration of an atash bahram fire

"The ritual formulated for the consecration of the sacred (atash bahram) fire seems to have been developed from certain passages in the eighth chapter of the *Vendidad*," writes J. J. Modi in his book *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*.

The list of fires enumerated there is as follows: "Fires used in burning of a corpse, in burning filth, in burning dirt, the fire used by a potter, a glass-blower, a coppersmith, a goldsmith, a silversmith, an ironsmith, a steelsmith, a baker, a furnace-worker, a tinsmith, a shepherd, a military man or soldier and a neighbor."

Subsequently, Modi lists "different fires now collected in practice." He

does not explain why, how and when the differences in the two lists occurred. The second list is as follows: Fire used in burning a corpse, from a dyer, from the house of kings or ruling aristocracy, from a potter, a brickmaker, a *fakir* or an ascetic, a goldsmith, a mint, an ironsmith, an armorer, a baker, a brewer or distiller or idol worshipper, a soldier or traveller, a shepherd, from atmospheric lightning and the household of any Zoroastrian.

An atash adarian fire, according to Modi, comprises four fires from: the households of an athoman or priest, a military man, an agriculturist and an artisan or trader.

The atash dadgah comprises of only one fire, any household fire.

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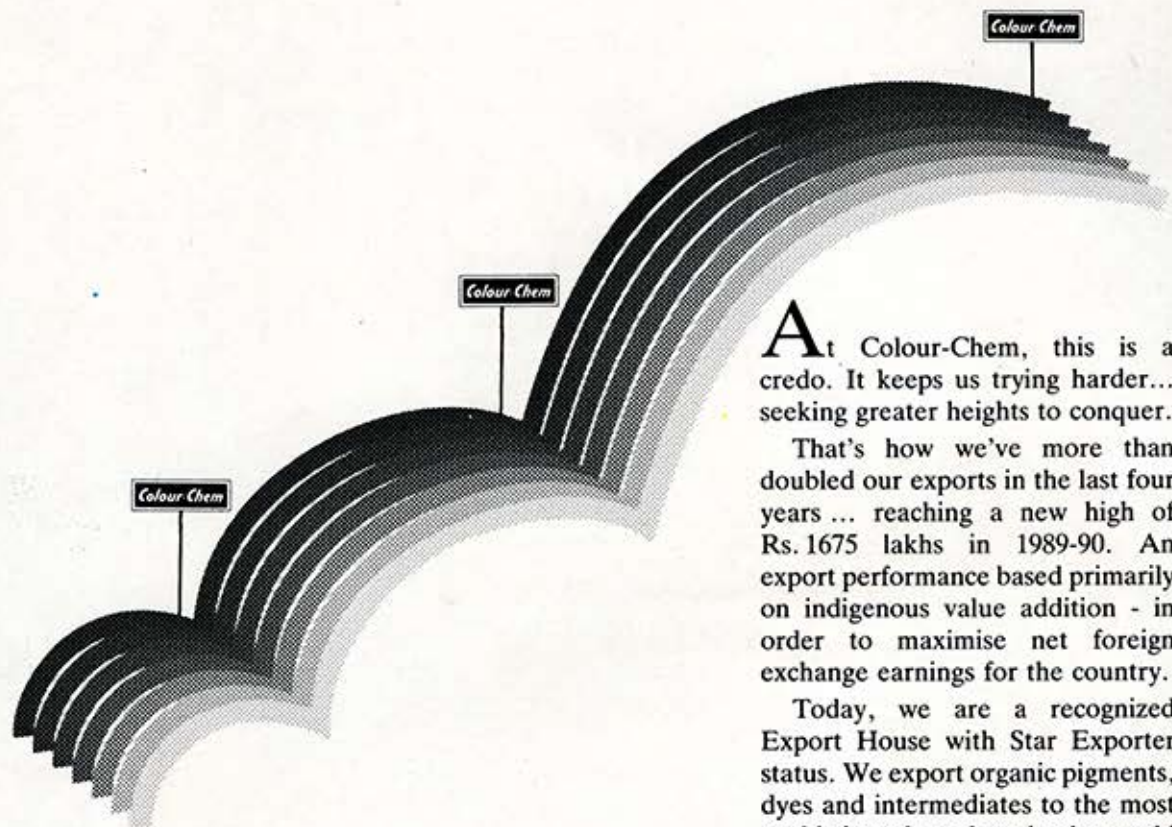
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the bell. "It is only in the Udwada Atash Behram that the mobed first gives one stroke of the bell without praying anything. He only thinks of the Almighty," says Kaikobad. "Only then does he start praying" with the recitation of "Dushmata, duzukhta, duzvarshia (bad thoughts, bad words, bad deeds)," striking the bell three times as he recites each word. The *maachi* ceremony in other atash bahrams commences with these words. The resonance of the bell is supposed to drive away all evil. One normally does not make a wish when the

bell is struck. "You must concentrate on the Almighty and the victory of good over evil," says Kaikobad. He clarifies, however, that there is no hard and fast rule as to what constitutes the proper response as the bell rings.

"You do not make a wish during a *maachi* because it is the ceremony by which the holy fire is replenished with divine power," says one Udwada mobed. According to him, as devotees pray before the fire they keep drawing on its store of divine blessings which is replenished at each *maachi* ceremony. Hence,

How to get a *maachi* done

'Don't make a vow to perform an Udwada *maachi* unless it is very necessary," people caution you against treating a *maachi* lightly. The reason is simple: a vow made must be kept and the demand for the Udwada *maachis* is so great, it is difficult to find a free slot — there are only so many days in a year and five *gahs* each day.

The Udwada Anjuman is the governing body which decides for whom a *maachi* may be performed at its Atash Bahram, says Ervad Jamshedji Andhiarujina of Udwada. Requests have to be addressed to them at least three months in advance. If there are more applicants than *maachis* on any specific day, lots are drawn to decide the five lucky ones.

Normally, however, one writes to a resident of Udwada to secure a *maachi* for oneself. The reason for this is that a person living in Udwada can check to see the days when a *maachi* slot may be free, or the applications few so that the chances of succeeding in the lottery are better. The Anjuman charges only registration fees and the ceremony is performed on one's behalf only when one hands over the registration slip to the mobed tending the fire. The cost of the sandalwood used in the *maachi* and the *boi* charges to the priest, who performs it and prays the *Tandarosti* at the end of the ceremony, is borne by the devotee.

Obtaining a *maachi* slot at the H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram in Bombay is simple, but only relatively so. According to Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal, High Priest of the Atash Bahram, one should approach the *boiwalla* at least three to four weeks before the date when one wishes to have the ceremony performed. There is no charge for allotting a *maachi*. A person asking for the *maachi* must sup-

ply the *boiwalla* with the sandalwood: either half or a full kilogram of it. Currently the cost of sandalwood is around Rs 350 per kilogram and one normally pays the priest performing the ceremony Rs 35 or more.

At the Anjuman Atash Bahram, the allotment procedure is different. Every year, on three predetermined Sundays in September and October, applications from community members desiring to have a *maachi* done in the coming year are accepted. The full year's quota is normally filled in on these three Sundays. However, one may always take a chance and see if there is a single slot going abegging. "If you are lucky, you might find a few midnight *maachis* free," says a priest closely linked to the Atash Bahram.

The Anjuman Atash Bahram has also started a scheme whereby a person may make a payment of Rs 2,000 for the privilege of having a *maachi* offered annually for a period of 21 years. The interest from Rs 2,000 covers the cost of having the *maachi* performed. The Wadia Atash Bahram has reportedly started a similar scheme.

Maachis may be also offered at an atash adarian. However the demand for a *maachi* at an atash bahram is greater and more so at Udwada. For those unable to get a *maachi*, at the Udwada Atash Bahram in particular, there is always the option of performing an *aar maachi*. Here, the devotee approaches the *boiwalla* directly to construct a sandalwood throne for the Almighty after the regular *maachi* has been performed. In this ceremony there is no tolling of the bell and only a *Tandarosti* is prayed. "It is a kind of consolation *maachi*," says Andhiarujina.

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says the priest, it is a ceremony of thanksgiving during which you do not draw power from the fire but restore it.

Scrap the belief/theory, say the high priests. "It's all wrong. The power of the holy fire never decreases; in fact it increases as more people pray in front of it," says Kaikobad.

The tolling of the bell has another significance too. "Very likely the tolling sound announced the change of guards on duty," writes the late Dastur K. S. Dabu, High Priest of H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram, Bombay, in his book *Handbook of Information on Zoroastrianism*. Says Kotwal: "In rural Iran the people used to pray five times a day. They would stop whatever they were doing and pray every time the *gah* changed. They had no watches then and it was only from the tolling of the bell that they knew that the *gah* had changed."

A day is divided into five *gahs* or parts. The first, from sunrise to 12 noon; the second, from 12 noon to 3 pm; the third, from 3 pm to sunset; the fourth, from sunset to midnight and the fifth from midnight to sunrise. All time is calculated on local time. The *gah* in which the *maachi* ceremony is performed is important because accordingly the number of *Atash Nyaishes* prayed by the mobed after striking the bell could vary from 11 to 6.

"In an atash bahram a *maachi* must be compulsorily performed at the change of every *gah*," says Kotwal. It may also be performed at an atash adarian but here the ceremony is optional. An atash bahram, he points out, is the holiest of fires and is also known as a fire of victory. "You will notice that on the walls of any atash bahram there are swords, shields, maces...weapons of war. They symbolize the victory of good over evil." The depiction of these weapons of war, according to Kotwal, probably goes back to ancient Iran when the coronation of each new king was marked with the consecration of an atash bahram in his honor. Naturally, the symbols of his authority — the sword, the axe and other weapons — were enshrined with the fire.

The legend of Dastur Neriosang Dhalval's miraculous lightning bolt aside, there is no documented record of how the Iranshah was consecrated. Says Kotwal: "In the records of the ceremonies and rituals in Udwarda, you will not find any evidence of how the atash bahram fire was consecrated." However, he states that the fire was not brought from Iran.

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Dastur (Dr) Hormazdyar Mirza, High Priest of Udwada, in his book *Outlines of Parsi History* quotes extensively from the *Kisseh-e-Sanjan* to establish the undisputed fact that the fire was built in India and not brought by the fleeing forefathers from Iran. The *Kisseh-e-Sanjan* does, however, record that the settlers in India sent emissaries to Khorassan, Iran, to bring back the *alat* or tools of ceremony required to consecrate the fire.

When? The dates are confused. The issue involves the date of landing of the first Parsis in Sanjan. Popular belief holds that the refugees reached Sanjan in 785 AD and established the Atash Bahram five years later. Kotwal believes that the actual landing took place around 936 while the building of the Atash Bahram must have taken more than five years.

The historic records of the establishment of the second atash bahram in India is readily available. Built in Navsari, it is significant for, according to Kotwal, it established the basis on which subsequent atash bahrams in India were consecrated. At the time, scholars and dasturs sat together and searched the scriptures

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and all the available literature to determine the correct Zoroastrian procedures for building an atash bahram.

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AN INJUSTICE AT DOONGERWADI

Arnavaz S. Mama

By refusing a Parsi Zoroastrian lady the right to consign her body to the towers of silence, the Punchayet trustees have sparked off a major controversy

The high profile that the name Roxan Darshan Shah has acquired in death might have dazed the shy, retiring, 25-year-old girl. Her tragic death on July 27, 1990 in a car accident on the Bombay-Poona Road propelled her into a major community controversy when her parents, in deference to her wishes, attempted to consign her body to the towers of silence and were refused. They had no option but to have her cremated.

That rejection of her inherent rights set off a legal and emotional tussle that saw the community divided between the orthodox and the liberals as only once before in the past 20 years. The last time a similar confrontation occurred was in 1973 when Dr Aspi Golwalla and Shavav Vakil, then cotrustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP), entered the dokhma and Vakil wrote about the unhygienic conditions prevailing there.

At the crux of the refusal by the Punchayet to consign Roxan's body to the towers was the allegation that she had renounced her religion by her marriage to Darshan Shah, scion of a business oriented Jain family. That allegation turned out to be a false one as she was married under the Special Marriage Act of 1954 which does not require either party to give up their religion. "After marrying under the Special Marriage Act they went through a symbolic ceremony," said Roxan's father, noted surgeon Dr Adi Nazir. "They went round the fire four times, not seven. Neither husband nor wife took any vows. The (BPP) trustees said 'It was presumed that she'd renounced Zoroastrianism and taken up Hinduism.' Their 'reliable sources' were

not spelt out. None of them had the dignity to check with the parents of the child," he added.

When BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla was informed, he allegedly took recourse to a so-called BPP resolution passed in 1974 that stated, according to Nazir, that a Parsi lady married to a non-Parsi cannot be admitted to doongerwadi for the last rites. In fact, the resolution refers to non-Parsi Zoroastrians being denied the right to sit in the *bunglis* while the prayers were being recited, amongst other things. The resolution had been passed when the orthodox movement was at its strongest following an incident in which the American daughter-in-law of Major (Dr) Adarbad Irani sat for the *geh sarna* ceremony in the *bungli*.

To add insult to injury, Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal, High Priest of the H. B. Wadia Atas Bahram, gave a written opinion on the subject in which he alleged, among other things, that according to the *Vendidad*, "to marry outside the fold is next to adultery." This raised a storm of protest from the liberal lobby who took up cudgels against Kotwal, primarily through *The Bombay Samachar's* "Parsi tari arsi" Sunday column.

The editor of *The Samachar*, Jehan Daruwala, attacked Kotwal, labelling him "obscurantist and fanatical" and his ideas as "mischievous...intolerant...arrogant... If things are left to the discretion of Dr Kotwal and persons of his ilk, he may perhaps begin to issue permits to heaven for the true Zoroastrians according to his own distorted concept," *The Samachar* commented.

The Punchayet trustees in turn convened a meeting of the orthodox groups — the Athornan Mandal, the Bombay Jashan Committee, the Iran League, the Dadar Jashan Committee and the Council of Vigilant Parsis (COVP) among them — who congratulated the Punchayet on its stand. They also suggested that the Punchayet rescind its tentative proposal to admit in future the bodies of Parsi-Zoroastrian women married to non-Zoroastrians.

The Bombay Samachar broke the story in its issue of July 29, 1990 under the title, "Inhumanity in the name of religion." The following Sunday it published a letter from Vakil, legal advisor to the House of Tata and former BPP trustee, stating, "The act of denying dokhmenashini to a Zoroastrian lady married to a non-Parsi is an inhuman act, unjustifiable at law." The trustees responded with another gaffe in their response published by *The Samachar* on August 12: "It was not possible to take a snap decision..." they pleaded.

Presciently, *The Samachar*, in its August 5 issue, had already reproduced the High Court verdict of Justice Sawant dated February 15, 1981. Sawant had overruled the lower court and upheld the right of Parsi women married to non-Parsis but professing the Zoroastrian faith, to have an equal say in Punchayet elections with the rest of the community, without filing the discriminatory affidavits the Punchayet demanded. Since the BPP had nine and a half years to mull over the impact of this judgement, which they had not contested and under the shadow of which the 1981 Anjuman

Committee elections had been conducted, they could have judiciously reformulated their policies to obviate the need for any "snap decision."

On behalf of the Nazir family, solicitor Dinsoo Zaiwalla wrote an official letter to the Punchayet stating that "the Zoroastrian rites to which (Roxan) was entitled were denied to her and therefore the trustees need to explain;" charging that "the trustees (had) failed to apply their minds," and requesting "a copy of the purported resolution repeatedly mentioned by Dr Golwalla." Zaiwalla further noted, "To Dr Nazir and his family the damage is already done and I wonder how it could be reprieved. But, he feels that to remain silent when there is duty to speak is more than default and there would be many similarly placed ladies as Roxan to whom this pain could be avoided... What do the trustees propose to do henceforth or would you still insist that a Zoroastrian body be consigned to the sacred fire which would be against the principal tenet of the Zoroastrian religion?"

In response, the trustees revealed that the much mentioned resolution was the familiar set of "rules" yellowing on the walls of every *bungli* of the doongerwadi: "Resolved that the *bunglis* are meant for the exclusive use of Parsi or Irani Zoroastrians. From the time the *sachkar* ceremony is started until the time the *charum* ceremony is completed, no non-Zoroastrian shall be permitted to be present in the hall of the *bungli* or in its retiring rooms."

The letter signed by Golwalla "for self and on behalf of cotrustees" also noted, "The trustees have taken a tentative decision that in such cases ladies of the community who have married outside the Zoroastrian fold under the Special Marriage Act only will be allowed the doongerwadi facilities provided the trustees are satisfied that she continues to follow the Zoroastrian religion."

In his acknowledgment to the Punchayet, Zaiwalla's letter dated August 8 notes, "The trustees themselves have, in the letter of August 2, 1990 published in *The Bombay Samachar*... asserted that they were unable to take a snap decision. How are the trustees then going to make enquiries and what sort of enquiries are they going to make to satisfy themselves within three to six hours of death whether the deceased continued to follow the Zoroastrian faith... or would it be

again an arbitrary spot decision?"

Trustee Eruch Desai's article in the *Jam-e-Jamshed's* Navroze edition of August 24, 1990 (reproduced by *The Bombay Samachar* on August 26) refers to the problem of ensuring that the women continue to be Zoroastrians after marrying into another community.

Referring to Justice Sawant's direction to record the statement of the advocates of the concerned Zoroastrian women married to non-Parsis regarding their clients continuing to profess the Zoroastrian faith and a subsequent letter

"Instead of apologising they are trying to cover up by a series of falsehoods"

from the concerned attorneys in this behalf to the BPP, Desai notes, "In the case of the use of doongerwadi facilities, such a statement in court would be out of question. A good solution could be the affidavit of a near relative to confirm that the lady concerned...has not renounced the Zoroastrian faith."

Kotwal's letter dated August 22, in response to the BPP's request for directions, notes, "I am concerned to read...that the trustees have taken a tentative decision to permit the mortal remains of a Parsi lady married to a non-Parsi to be consigned to the towers of silence if she had got married only under the Special Marriage Act and not undergone the nuptial ceremony or rites under other religions... The Zoroastrian religious tradition has always been that a girl upon her marriage not only takes the name of the husband, but is deemed to have embraced his religion." To substantiate his argument Kotwal then refers to the change of nomenclature when a *behdin* girl marries into an *athoman* family or vice versa! "To marry outside the fold is next to adultery, since the marriage is not solemnized according to the rites and customs of the Zoroastrian religion," writes Kotwal, citing the authority of the *Vendidad*. For a woman so married to claim to be a Zoroastrian is "hollow, hypocritical and full of pretensions" because "a woman marrying outside the community cannot observe the rules of purity as laid

down by the Zoroastrian religion."

Here it is pertinent to note that while Kotwal castigates all inter-community marriages, the BPP discriminates only against Zoroastrian women married to non-Parsis while Zoroastrian men married outside the community, together with their children if initiated by the *navjote* ceremony, enjoy the same rights as Zoroastrians married by the *ashirvad* ceremony. They justify this practice on the grounds of the Daver-Beaman judgement of 1910, according to which the term Parsi denotes a patriarchal race.

The BPP received a number of letters supporting their stand, as Golwalla informed *Parsiana*. So the Punchayet decided to host a joint meeting with representatives of various religious and quasi-religious bodies on September 5 to ascertain their views. Among those who attended the meet were K. N. Dastoor and B. K. Mistry, Ervad Peshotan and Ervad Rooyintan Peer, Jehangir Shroff, Aspi Dadachanji, Cowasjee Dinshaw, Noshir Dadrawala. BPP trustees Golwalla, Jamshed Guzder, Desai and Homi Ranina represented the Punchayet. The meeting was minuted, informed Mistry who commented, "The COVP was the most vocal because its representatives knew all the legal points." Mistry proposes to move the court to "undo the harm" done by Justice Sawant's verdict.

Another reliable source who was present at the meeting informed *Parsiana* that everyone was of the opinion that a Parsi woman married to a non-Parsi cannot be interred in the *dokhmas* and requested the trustees to revoke their interim decision, but the trustees successfully side-stepped the issue. The meeting lasted for an hour but no decision, as such, was forthcoming. It appears that the BPP has not been able to find a single instance on its records when a body was thus refused. In its search for support, the BPP is said to have asked the orthodox representatives to send as many letters to *The Samachar* as possible and to endorse a copy to the BPP.

History on this issue is clear. In the case of Ms Soonabai Underwood, married under the Special Marriage Act of 1872 (which required the contracting parties to abjure their religion) the body was consigned to the *chotra* (a sparsely used square enclosure where 'doubtful' cases are consigned) in 1918 by the discretion of Dr Sir Jivanji Modi, then secretary of the Punchayet. Ms Zarine Ali Khan who had married under the Special

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Marriage Act of 1954 was interred in the tower on the intervention of the redoubtable liberal solicitor Rustomji Gagrati who threatened the BPP with court action. Ms Mithibai Guevret who had married a Frenchman in the American Church had retained her Zoroastrian faith. According to the legal opinion of Sir Dinshaw Mulla dated September 3, 1924: "She is...still a Parsi by race and a Zoroastrian by religion and entitled to all the rights of property which a member of the Parsi community has in law, unless it be shown that either according to the tenets of the Zoroastrian religion or according to the custom of the community, she ceased to be a member of the community on a marriage with one outside the community. I think it will be impossible to prove either of these."

Being assailed by similar doubts, in 1956 the BPP had sought the joint opinion of Sir Jamshedji Kanga and Sir Nusserwanji Engineer who noted, "It cannot be denied that if a Parsi lady lives with a non-Zoroastrian as his (common law) wife but without going through the ceremony of a marriage she does not lose the benefit of (community) institutions. One cannot shut one's eyes to the radical change which has taken place in recent

years in both political and social outlook... There is another serious difficulty in the way of denying the benefit of institutions... to a Parsi lady who contracts marriage with a non-Zoroastrian but who, nevertheless, continues to profess the Zoroastrian religion. (According to) the Bombay Prevention of Excommunication Act, 1949...to deny to (such) a Parsi Zoroastrian lady the benefit of (community) institutions would amount to excommunication. The Act not only provides that such excommunication shall be void and of no effect, but provides penal consequences if any person does any act which amounts to or is in furtherance of the excommunication of any member of a community (*History of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet 1860-1960* by Sapur F. Desai, pg 104)."

It is high time that the community, led by the Punchayet, sheds its ambivalence in this regard, in the greater interest of harmony and justice.

A father remembers...

In the course of an interview with *Parsiana* on August 16, noted surgeon Dr Adi Nazir recounted the events of that fateful July 27, when his pretty firstborn daughter, mother of two boys aged five

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and two, succumbed to a freak accident nine kilometers from Lonavala at 3.30 pm:

"I got the message at 4.45 pm and drove down with an ambulance and two friends to bring her back. We left at 5.45 and reached at midnight. Meanwhile a family representative went to doongerwadi to book a *bungli*. We never thought she'd be refused admission. When the booking was done, it was explained that she was married to a Jain under the Special Marriage Act but had not renounced her religion and was a practicing Zoroastrian. They accepted the booking.

"After some time, maybe an hour or two later, a Mr Poonavala phoned to say that they'd have to cancel the reservation unless it was confirmed by a trustee of the BPP. So the family members phoned Dr Aspi Golwala. He categorically stated that a resolution has been passed which states that a Parsi lady married to a non-Parsi can't be admitted to the doongerwadi for the last rites. Because of that they could not accede to our request.

"It was explained to Dr Golwala that she was married under the Special Marriage Act and that she was a practising Zoroastrian and used to go to the agiary

continued on page 108

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TRAVELS IN IRAN: 1

The land that time forgot

Even in the late nineteenth century,
many a ruined monument attested to Iran's great past

Manekji Limji Hataria

Starting with this issue, Parsiana will serialize Manekji Limji Hataria's book, *Rishale Ej Har Shiyate Iran* (published by Union Press in 1865), in six instalments. The Gujarati original, rendered into English by Jamshed M. Bilimoria, has been abridged, edited and recollated by Parsiana (courtesy, K. R. Cama Oriental Institute to whom the translation manuscript was gifted).

The author went to Iran in 1854 at the behest of the Society for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Zoroastrians of Persia (otherwise known as the Amelioration Society), to report the conditions prevailing there at first hand. He returned only once to India, for an 18-month spell, at the end of the first 10 years. The book is largely a publication of the speeches he then made to acquaint the Parsis in India with the wretchedness of their Iranian coreligionists and to seek help to further the cause of Zoroastrian amelioration in Iran. Having devoted the rest of his life to the task, Hataria died in Iran in 1890, mourned to this day by Iranian Zoroastrians who almost worshipped him as their savior (see "The redeeming of a community," Parsiana, May 1990).

The ancient Zoroastrians, who lived within the boundaries of Iran, called the country *Iran-Mino Nishan* (sign of heaven) because of its pleasant climate and the fertility of its soil. Iran is also known as *Baag-e-Behesht* (garden of paradise) because of its unique climate. The mountains of Iran, the springs of sweet water flowing therefrom, the pasture grounds and the animals reared

thereon, the milk of those healthy animals, the fruits and flowers of many varieties make human life stronger and longer: even today it is so.

The geographical position of Iran in the center of the great land mass enables the country to command the neighboring lands; in ancient times, the Iranian Empire

had extended to the Ural Mountains in the west and to China in the east. The country had many arts and industries and its prosperity was unsurpassed in the annals of history. Even today no country of the world appears to have reached that level of prosperity. Moreover, in those happy and prosperous days of Iran, the inhabitants observed the rules of piety and purity of body, mind and soul. There were no superstitious beliefs and thus they could live a long and healthy life.

Every Parsi knows today that kings of various Zoroastrian dynasties ruled over Iran thousands of years ago. But we have no record of what happened to their mighty palaces, forts and other monuments. Even those who remained in Iran and suffered oppression at the hands of the Arabs had not the faintest idea of these things. Most of the monuments and palaces were destroyed by the Arabs. They were either broken down or burnt. The great library, which was a treasure house of ancient culture and literature, was burnt by the Arabs.

To travel in many parts of Iran was not safe under the Arab rule. Permission was required for going from province to province and their spies and soldiers follow the travellers and watch their movements and note down their conversation. The traveller had



*The portal of Xerxes
at Persepolis* Photo: A.V.H. Jackson's
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to be on guard all the time. No arms were allowed to be carried. The task of research in Iran is a Himalayan task and will never be completed. Many westerners have interest in Iranian history and culture and their research work is continuous. There is a reason for this. They have got means and they are supported and encouraged by their governments. This facility we Parsis of India do not get.

It must be borne in mind that the ancient Iranians were far superior and civilized than the people of today. They had various arts and crafts which provided them with their livelihood. Their trading activities were boundless. They traded with the countries of the East and the West and always kept good relations with others. On the whole the Iranians were peace-loving people; but when occasion required it, they fought to the fin-

that most of the constructions were perfect and contained every facility for life.

Their battle arms were very strong and unique. Modern science of today is filled with awe at their equipment and their constructions. From all this we can definitely say that the ancient Iranians were far advanced in all walks of life. We wonder at some of the modern scientific inventions, but these were known to the ancient Iranians.

The author, having been there person-

Top: Sasanian sculpture at Naksh-e-Rustom in the vicinity of Persepolis where Darius, Xerxes and two other kings lie buried

Photo: A.V.H. Jackson's Persia Past and Present

Bottom: A ruined Sasanian fire-temple (circa second century AD) restored at Neiser



ish. In art and architecture also they were pioneers. Their edifices, buildings, palaces, forts and other monuments were not built of bricks, stones and mortar, with wood and iron as is done today. They were mostly carved in mountains, particularly at great heights. There were reasons for that. Iran is a mountainous country and there is very little place for building extensive monuments. Also, the ancients had the foresight to know that some day their country might be invaded or overrun by some enemy. To safeguard their own position their forts were constructed on relatively inaccessible mountain tops; and so too were their palaces, courts and towers of silence. On examination it is found

ally and having seen almost every place in Iran, is in an advantageous position to give an account of its ancient glory. Many western travellers also have made a study of the ancient monuments but the author lived and researched there for nearly 10 years and has gathered much information.

On March 31, 1854, the author-traveller left Bombay and by sea route came to the Isle of Ormaz where he found an observatory which exhibited a device to study the movements of nine planets. This was constructed by the ancient Iranians. The ancient lighthouse near the Isle of Ormaz still stands to caution ships entering the harbor. Proceeding further, one comes to Abashi, Kism, Ashidor, Langa and Minab ports from where one can proceed straight to Bushaire. All these places show some traces of the ancient Iranian greatness. Further from there, on the other side of Mount Godare Manhoor, stands the city of Dehrish. A river flows through the mountain crevices and on the top of the mountain there is an old fort in a ruinous condition. On the side of the mountain there are pictures engraved which contain Naksh-e-Zohak, Naksh-e-Ardehsir Babak and Naksh-e-Shapoor Shah, etc. These are very vividly inscribed. Far below in the valley is to be seen the huge statue of Shapoor Shah. There are several cubicles carved in the mountain which show that people who came there must have resided there for some time. Further in the wilderness there are inscriptions of the world-famous hero Rustom and Ash Kaboos and Shaaraab-e-Behram and some other inscriptions and tablets. Between Gajroon and Tang-e-Toorkan there are other mountains of which Kuh-e-Hoosang is well-known. The mountain top was the place for the disposal of dead bodies. There are inscriptions of old heroes of the past, their dresses, arms, way of fighting, etc on Mount Barme Dalaak.



On the way from Shiraz to Firozabad, some old towers of silence are to be seen as also several forts in ruinous condition. There is a very important and noteworthy inscription showing Prophet Zoroaster teaching his good Zoroastrian religion to Shah Gustasp and his children. It shows how Shah Gustasp and his

progeny accepted the religion. Another inscription depicts the war between Asphandiar-e-Ruinton and Arjasp. At the foot of the mountain there is an old atash kadeh whose edifice is still unbroken. Near Shiraz, in the suburb named Khapar, there is an old tower of silence of Hakim Jamasp. There are many other ruined monuments which testify to the ancient Iranian glory. Near Nalook-e-Daraab, in a lonely mountain, there is an atash kadeh with a golden dome which is still in a good condition and not ruined. There is another atash kadeh in the ruined city of Sarvasthan. Beyond Shiraz, in Istekhar there are fire-temples, towers of silence and other ruined edifices. The most noteworthy are the Takht-e-Jamshid and Takht-e-Tagdish, Dokhme Jamshir, Dokhme Faridoon, Dokhme Zarhosht, Kaabe Zarhosht and Naksh-e-Rustom. There are inscriptions of the coronation ceremonies of many Iranian kings and of the appointing of their successors. In villages further north, there are other ruined monuments, forts, towers of silence, etc.

On the way from Mard-e-Seemurg-e-aab to Yazd, there are many inscriptions depicting King Yazdegard Shariyar and

his children. There are ancient ruined cities of Daaredoor, Davroon, Dodrog, Refla-Sanjan, where many ruined edifices are yet to be seen. There are forts and libraries and domes of old atash kadehs. The Kille-Kaaoos is noteworthy. In the open spaces around Kerman and Yazd, there are signs of the past glories of Kayanian and Sasanian kings. Moving forward from there, one comes across Haft Azar, Aakha, Navdosaan and other old cities now in ruin. The cave named Gaare-Yazdan is worth seeing. The sight of all these provide testimony to the power of the evil Arab sword.

To the north-east of Kuh-e-Jamavand there are the old cities of Tabriz and Gajveen Sultanis. The old palace of King Jamshid of the Peshdadian clan — Takht-e-Jamshid — and Takht-e-Suleman are other historical places. Here on the mountainsides there are inscriptions, in Khilakhi script, which are difficult to decipher. Other ruined cities are Shannadez, Haavan Dhaoon, Sharooshabaad and Asphandabad. There are forts carved in mountainsides at great heights.

To the north-east of Mount Demavand, in the city of Kangavaar, there is an old

atash kadeh which was a favorite of King Kobad. In the north there are many forts and towers of silence. Forts were probably constructed there for the defence of the country against the Turanian invasions across the northern border of Iran. In the northern mountains there are many inscriptions—like the coronation ceremony of King Lohrasp performed by King Kaikhushroo, inscriptions of Khushroo Parvez, Takht-e-Shirin, coronation of King Asphandiar, Farangiz, hero Rustom with his horse Rekha in a magnificent manner, wars and hunting exploits of Khushroo Parviz, etc.

In the mountains near Jaenda, the mighty palace and ports of King Yazdegard Shaheriyar are to be seen in a ruinous condition. There are inscriptions of Arab invasion and their fight with Iranians. On the top of a mountain there is a tower of silence named Kilah-e-Dawood. It is so high on the mountain that probably the Arab destroyers could not see it or could not reach it.

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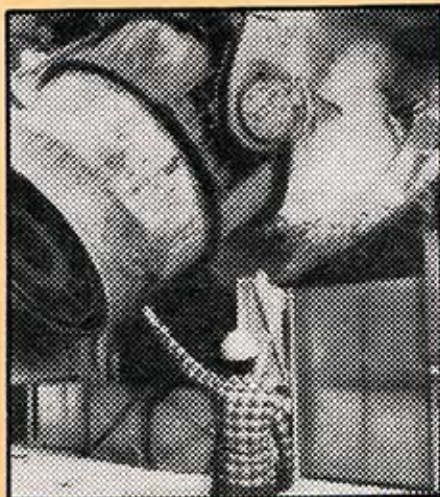
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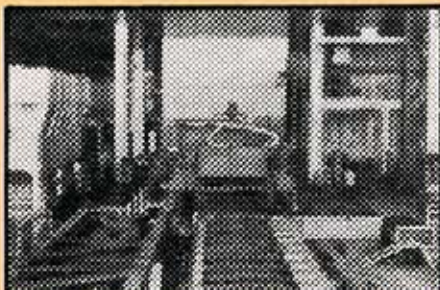
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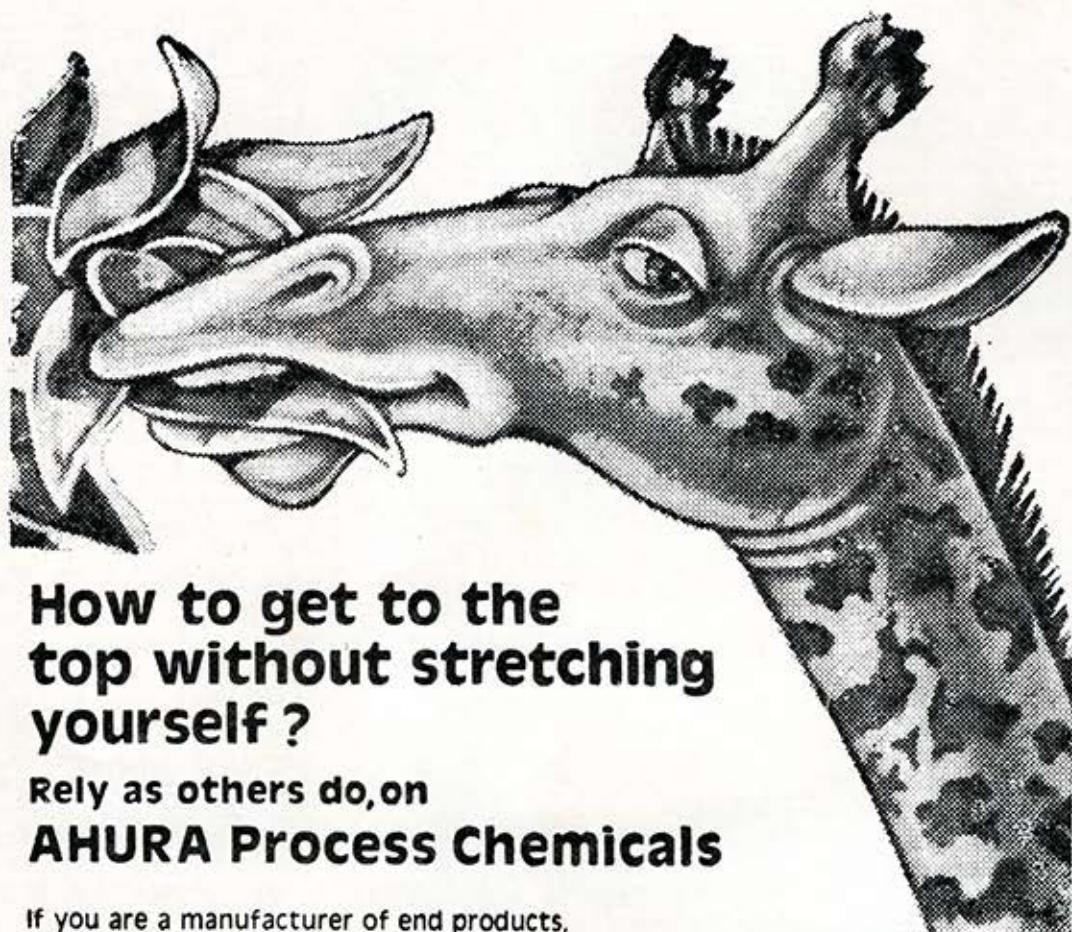


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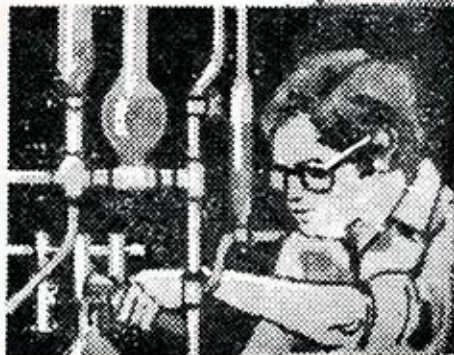
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TAXING GIFTS

The article examines the provisions of the new Gift Tax Bill as applicable to community trusts

Homi P. Ranina

Would Zoroastrian religious and communal charitable trusts be liable to gift tax under the new Gift Tax (GT) Bill, 1990?

Under the Bill, gift tax is chargeable to the person (or institution) receiving the gift and not to the donor. Taxation at the prescribed rates (see box) would not only cripple religious and communal charitable trusts but donors would be reluctant to give when a substantial part of their donations would be siphoned off to the government by way of tax.

However, there are several exemptions:

- Charitable trusts which have obtained a certificate under section 80-G of the Income Tax (IT) Act, 1961 (under which the donor is exempt from IT up to 50 percent his donation) have been exempted from the payment of GT under section 5(1)(viii) of the GT Bill. Further, under section 5(1)(ix), any temple, mosque, gurdwara, church or other place which is notified by the central government under section 80-G(2)(b) is exempt from GT in respect of any sums received as donations for renovation or repair.
- If any property is settled upon trust, the income from which is to be used in connection with such notified temple, mosque, etc, the amount would also not be liable to GT under the new Bill.
- Religious or communal charitable trusts will also not be liable to GT if they receive donations from a non-resident external account in any bank in India or in convertible foreign exchange remitted from outside India in accordance with the provisions of the Foreign Exchange

Regulation Act, if the donor does not reside in India.

Definitions

Fortunately, the meaning of the word "gift" as given in clause 2(xvi) of the new Bill is different from what it was under the old GT Act, 1958. Under the new clause, "gift" is defined as "the transfer by one person to another of any existing movable or immovable property, made voluntarily and without consideration in money or money's worth, and includes the transfer or conversion or any property, referred to in section 4, deemed to be a gift under that section but does not include receipts which are income within the meaning of the IT Act."

Receipts which are income within the meaning of section 2(24)(ii-a) of the IT Act, 1961 include voluntary contributions received by a trust created wholly or partly for charitable or religious purposes. Section 12 of the IT Act also provides very categorically that any voluntary contributions to such trusts shall be deemed to be income derived from property held under trust. This applies irrespective whether the said trusts were set up before or after 1962.

Also, under section 11 of the IT Act, the trusts have to spend at least 75 percent of the voluntary contributions so received for charitable purposes in order to claim exemption under that section. The following conditions must also, necessarily, be met:

- The property from which the income is derived should be held under trust or

other legal obligation.

- The property held for charitable or religious purposes is restricted to the benefit of the public and no part of the income or property of the trust may be used, directly or indirectly, for the benefit of the settlor or other specified persons except to the extent permitted in the case of pre-1962 trusts.

Further conditions apply to the charitable trusts created on or after April 1, 1962. Thus, the trust should not be created for the benefit of any particular religious community or caste, that no part of the income should directly or indirectly benefit the settlor or other specified persons, and that the property should be held wholly, and not in part only, for charitable purposes. The last two conditions also apply to religious trusts created on or after April 1, 1962.

- The exemption is confined to the part of the trust income which is applied to charitable or religious purposes, or is accumulated for application to such purposes within the permissible limits.

In the case of property held wholly for charitable or religious purposes, the accumulation may not exceed 25 percent of the aggregate of the income from the trust property together with voluntary donations deemed to be income under section 12. To secure exemption of an accumulation in excess of 25 percent of the trust income for a purpose of the trust, a notice should be given to the assessing officer in the prescribed manner and the accumulated income should be invested or deposited as provided in sec-

tion 11(5). In no case, however, may the income be accumulated for more than 10 years. The same rules govern those trusts where only a part of the property is held for charitable or religious purposes and the trusts have been created before April 1, 1962.

- The exemption applies only to that part of the income as is applied — or is accumulated for application — to charitable or religious purposes in India (with two exceptions listed under section 11(1)(c) covering trusts specifically created for international welfare and charitable trusts founded prior to April 1, 1952).
- Where the trust property consists of a business undertaking, the conditions set out in section 11(4) and (4-A) should be complied with.
- The trust should get itself registered with the commissioner within the time prescribed by section 12-A(a). The commissioner has discretion to entertain an application for registration filed out of time.
- The accounts of the trust should be audited for any accounting year in which its income exceeds Rs 25,000 and the audit report should be furnished along with the return of income.
- The funds of the trust should be in-

dharamshala), or if it is donated to another charitable trust, or if it is utilized to pay back a loan taken for the purposes of the trust or to give loans for studies in the course of fulfilling the educational purpose of the trust. In the last case, in the year in which such loans are repaid, they would constitute income of the trust for the purpose of applying the provisions of section 11(1) and (2).

Exemptions

From a reading of the aforesaid essential conditions for exemption of income under section 11, it is apparent that all public religious trusts and all pre-1962 communal trusts, like the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, would also be exempt from tax if all the other stipulated conditions are met.

Trusts which are covered by section 10, namely, educational institutions, hospitals like the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital, etc would also enjoy the benefit of exemption from IT in respect of all voluntary contributions received by them. Further, such voluntary contributions received by them would also be exempt under the new GT law so long as the donors do not earmark their donations towards the corpus of the trust. Such earmarked donations are excluded

When one charitable or religious trust contributes to another trust or to any person, the recipient cannot be made liable to GT under the new Bill because the trust making the contribution cannot be said to transfer any property "voluntarily." This is because a religious or charitable trust is enjoined by the settlor and the donors to apply its funds for charitable purposes and to support the stipulated class of beneficiaries, for example, students, poor patients in need of medical attention, and generally the poor and needy.

In other words, since the transfer of property by one person to another has to be made "voluntarily" under the definition of gift provided under clause 2(xvi) of the new GT Bill, any application of income by a religious or charitable trust, in the furtherance of its objects, cannot be deemed to be a gift made within the meaning of this clause. Hence, the recipients of charity cannot be made liable to GT under the proposed Bill.

Welfare

It is possible, however, that the assessing officer may not understand the true connotation of the word "gift" as defined in clause 2(xvi) and may attempt to levy GT. It is, therefore, eminently desirable that the government should amend the Bill in order to prevent litigation, by providing that recipients of charity, whether from a communal or a non-communal charitable or religious trust, are not liable to pay GT if the total quantum of gift received by them exceeds Rs 20,000 in a previous year.

It is also necessary that charitable and religious trusts which are not certified under section 80-G be exempted from paying GT on all donations received towards the corpus of the trust. Such trusts should be permitted to build up their corpus as the welfare of the people is the cornerstone of national policy and one of the directive principles of state policy enshrined in the Constitution of India. Any law which is an impediment to this objective is not only unethical, but indefensible.

Taxation rates under the proposed Gift Tax Bill

GIFTS:

- Less than Rs 20,000
- Between Rs 20,000 and Rs 50,000
- Between Rs 50,000 and Rs 2,00,000
- Above Rs 2,00,000

TAX:

- Nil
- 20 percent of the amount exceeding Rs 20,000
- Rs 6,000 plus 30 percent of the amount exceeding Rs 50,000
- Rs 51,000 plus 40 percent of the amount exceeding Rs 2,00,000

vested or deposited in the permissible forms and modes only.

Income may be held to be applied for charitable purposes when it is finally allocated to and earmarked for a beneficiary, though the actual payment may be made later. Credit entries in the account of the donee, supported by withdrawals by the donee, may amount to application of the income.

Income is applied to a charitable purpose if it is adjusted against the amount so applied in a prior year in excess of the income of that year (for example, out of the corpus), or if it is used for acquiring a capital asset for fulfilling a charitable purpose (for example, constructing a

from the definition of "income" under section 12 of the IT Act and, therefore, GT would be chargeable on such corpus donations under the new GT Bill, unless the trust is approved under section 80-G.

It must be emphasized that donations received by way of "box collection," that is, from anonymous donors, would be outside the purview of the new GT law since they are treated as voluntary contributions under the IT Act and, therefore, are in the nature of income under section 2(24)(ii-a) read with section 12, provided that at least 75 percent is spent during the year of receipt and not more than 25 percent is accumulated for a specific purpose.



Tax consultant and advocate at the Supreme Court of India, Homi P. Ranina is a trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital and other community organizations. He is also director of several industrial and commercial concerns.

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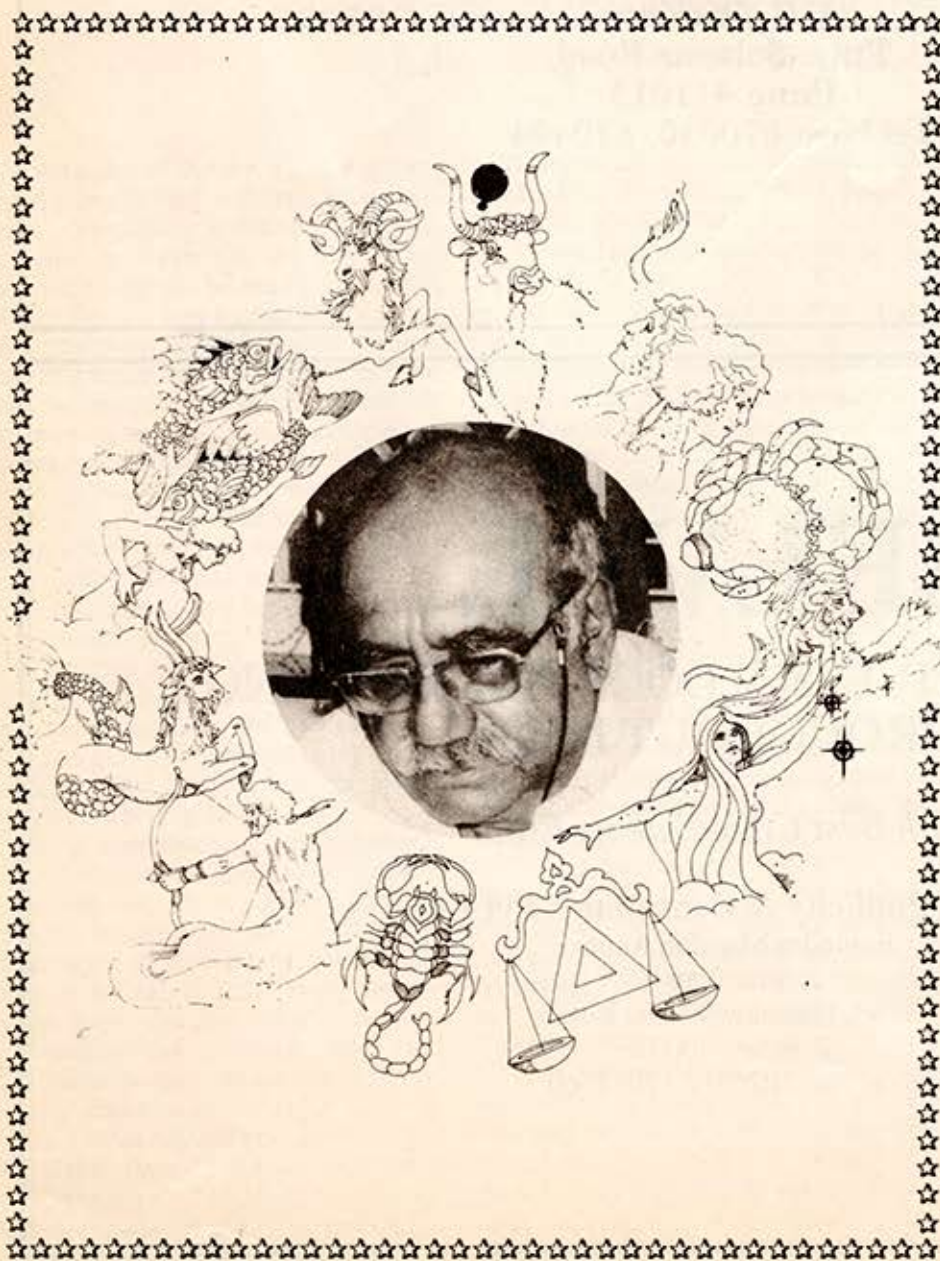
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Sunny forecasts

Parinaz Gandhi

Foreteller Bejan Daruwalla insists that the twenty-first century will be the greatest ever



A film producer patiently waits his turn. "Baba you don't mind if I keep you waiting for some more time?" enquires fortune-teller Bejan Daruwalla, full of concern for his clients. Needless to say, the producer will wait for he has come to consult the specialist who will advise him on the propitious *moorat* (inauguration) time for his next film. It is Daruwalla's words, the seekers believe, that can bring light to their day, fortune at their command, promise for their future. And to hear his predictions, they will come, and come again, for once his predictions come true, they would prefer to take calculated risks than random chances.

The popular Poona-based astrologer is invited to Bombay for special consultations. But after two months of stay in Bombay, working even on Sundays, the numerologist is not able to determine how long his sojourn in Bombay will continue. He sits in the dimly lit dining area of Hotel Balwas on March 22, 1990, his favorite abode in Bombay, as the lone table lamp casts its light on the object of scrutiny, whether the palm, the *kundli* (horoscope chart), the reference book. The visitor narrates his problem while the "podgy pundit" — a label he has acquired from his wife — busies himself, refilling tobacco in his pipe. Then after one deep puff, he applies himself to arriving at a prediction.

What method does he rely on? "I use seven different methods (palmistry, numerology, tarot, I-Ching, ephemeris, intuition and Ganesha's grace included) then take out an average. What is common has a great chance of coming right," says Daruwalla whose list of accurate predictions reached out to V. P. Singh's victory in the parliament elections in India, Benazir Bhutto's victory in Pakistan, the release of Nelson Mandela and even Sanjay Gandhi's death. "The charting of the horoscope is by astronomy; factual. Its interpretation is an art even though there are solid rules and guidelines by which one can go," Daruwalla explains.

The prediction of many an astrologer has gone off the mark but Daruwalla has managed to build up a reputation of being correct on many of the landmark happenings. The reason? "You've heard of the killer instinct. When a big prediction comes up, maybe (the others) have an attack of nerves and while I being an old geezer of 58 years and having made only big political predictions, maybe my

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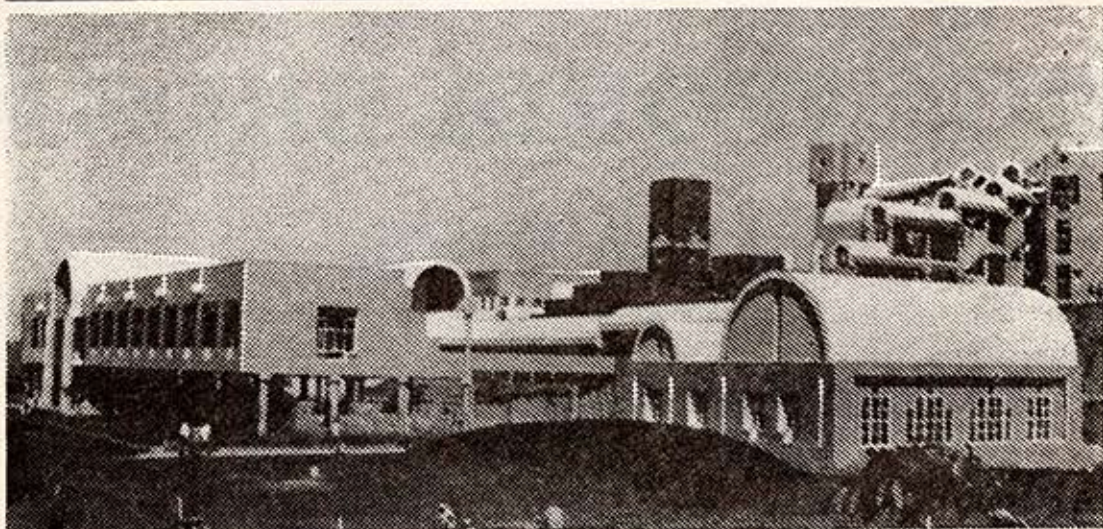
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nerves stay cool and maybe I have, for all my podginess, my sweet ways and pudding face and pot belly, a terrible killer instinct that makes one go for the meat of the matter," says the jovial forecaster.

"Even if there is a horoscope, my degree of accuracy is 75-80 percent," the astrologer candidly admits. "There have been cases when I have gone wrong. I am fallible as a human being. But then I give no excuses; no armory of protection or defence. Even if I were to go right always, the charm and magic of life — the challenge — would be over. To me this challenge is the essence of living. I already have name, fame, money..." he states. "Further, we (speaking on behalf of the others in his profession) have our own destiny too, you know," Daruwalla acknowledges.

Viewing his role in society as "demanding, taxing, responsible," Daruwalla continues, "I get tremendously involved in my job. There is no objectivity. I get shaken when I see death. And though I love to protect, if I see death coming, I have to say it, to forewarn, but in a tactful way like asking the person 'Insurance karaviyuch ke (Have you got

yourself insured?)" Never mind the grey areas, the astrologer claims to be "absolutely in love with (his) work."

What about those who prefer to believe, "Que sera, sera (what will be, will be)?" The soothsayer has no hangups about astrology "alone being the key," to all problems. He recognizes astrology as one of the keys. "You may be an agnostic, sceptic, fine. I have no desire to convert anyone to astrology. One lesson astrology has taught me is tolerance. People come in all shapes and sizes and are so exciting. Therefore an astrologer faces a different challenge each time."

His well-established clientele feature kingpins from the business, political and tinsel worlds. "My horoscope says that I'm at my best with film stars, industrialists and journalists," says Daruwalla in the *Mid-Day* of January 23, 1990 and with his characteristic humor continues, "I know why. Jupiter is the planet of knowledge, astrology and wisdom, and Mercury is the planet of communication. Both planets are firmly entrenched in my chart. So where do I excel? With editors. And what's the final result? Not that I'm superior to any other astrologer but that it's my destiny to write for more papers

than any other astrologer because that fool of a Parsi led by Ganesha has a unique and powerful combination in the eleventh house of friendship and gains. Now doesn't this mean that fortune favors fools?" Among the periodicals that he regularly contributes to are *Mid-Day* and *Bombay*. He has also been invited to contribute to papers like *Star*, the Pakistan evening paper, and *Gulf News*, of Dubai. "General forecasts can only come correct up to a point," concedes Daruwalla.

Writing for newspapers and magazines may be in his cards but authoring a book doesn't seem to have come that easily. Laboring on his book for the past 15 years, according to *Bombay* magazine, his publication was due for release in May last. To be brought out under the Jaico banner, the book was to feature a three-year annual forecast for 1990, 1991, 1992; a combination of Chinese and Western astrology; forecasts by numerology; characteristics of the sun signs; a weekly forecast for all signs for 1990; the history of jewellery; and a guide to astrological gift-giving.

"India has quite a few astrologers comparable to the best in the world," believes Daruwalla who then goes on to



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explain the difference in the Indian and Western schools of astrology. "Astrology is rooted in the Indian psyche," he maintains. Indian astrologers believe that seven days are named after seven planets plus they take into account Rahu and Ketu. Western astrology also takes into consideration planets Neptune, Pluto and Uranus which are shown to play an important role. Therefore, according to them, "there are 12 planets and the combination and permutation of these 12 planets and their clusterings" that decide one's fate.

At all times, Daruwalla is conscious of the need for "underplaying any feeling of bigness. As soon as there are ego problems, you get heavy and so does your intuition," insists the foreteller who says that because he had "this psychic ability, he has never had to make a special effort to predict. Perhaps I have not given it its due." Though he may offer a talisman to his clients, a Jewish influence on his thinking, and may officiate as a priest at some Hindu religious ceremonies -- "the Hindus give to their *gyotish* the same respect due to a friend, philosopher and guide" -- he avoids *tantras* (incantations), spirits and necromancy like the plague, he informs.

"Nostradamus was any day superior to Bejan," Daruwalla acknowledges, however the Indian astrologer retains his

right to disagree with Nostradamus' gloomy prediction for the next century. Maintains Daruwalla, "There may be blood bath, war...but the twenty-first century will be the greatest ever." He also sees a lucky phase ahead for the Parsi community, beginning the middle of this year because Jupiter will enter Leo, the sign equated with Zoroastrianism, and stay there for a year. "The push it will give will last for a long time," Daruwalla is sanguine.

More specific enquiries about the lucky phase for Parsis did not generate any definite response. He referred to the adaptability of the Parsis, their feeling of security in India, the identity crisis they experience probably because of the Western influence, and the Panchayet trying to do its best for the community. The uncertainty of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet anjuman committee and trusteeship elections leaving many issues unresolved, this would have been an opportune moment to ask him to predict the date for the elections. But we let this subject pass.

He was then on the topic of "a Parsi girl being definitely a shade superior to the Parsi boy, better equipped to face life... of the need for Parsis to accept people from other religions... of removing the stigma against women married outside the community..." when sud-

denly, his eyes alight, excitement audible in his voice, he proclaimed, "I have got it. Around 1996-97 latest, do what the Parsis will, they will have to be liberal. By the turn of the century the Parsis should have made a very happy about-turn in their dogmas and orthodoxy. It's not that we've fallen backward or we have regressed; others have progressed." He clarifies that he would be loath to start a controversy, but this is what he foresees.

The practice among the community of initiating major endeavors on auspicious *rojs* "couldn't only be old wives' tales. A *roj* must have been a major influencing factor in life," he declares.

Daruwalla makes no secret of the fact that his "faith in Lord Ganesha is unshakable. At the same time I'm proud to be a Parsi (In fact his credibility increases because of his Parsi background, he says). I wear the *sudreh* happily; go to the fire-temples also. There is no iota of fanaticism." Additionally he also worships Amba, Hanuman. "On Tuesdays I am a vegetarian," the astrologer informs.

For the last 10 years Daruwalla has taken up astrology as a full-time profession. Prior to that "he had two strings to his bow -- teaching and astrology." For 27 years he was a professor of English, first in Bombay and later in Ahmedabad. A postgraduate in English, from the age of 24 or 25 he started practising astrology part-time he says. "At the age of 14 I was reasonably good, by 21 I was an expert."

"An only son, born rich," Daruwalla informs that his father Jehangir, a superintendent of seven mills, was the only one in the family besides him who could recognize his intuitive faculty. As for the rest, "to each his own" is the philosophy adopted.

The next halt for the fortune-teller, who is required to travel twice or thrice in the year, in the course of his duties, was England and America. He was looking forward to this trip where he would combine work with holiday.

As to his ability to invoke good fortune and preempt ill-luck, the pundit says, "Destiny is, let's say, at least 55 percent important and what you can do with your life is 45 percent. You can always chop, change and alter the 45 percent but the basic destiny will remain, the basic being, birth, death and marriage. It's like saying that if you have an umbrella on a rainy day, at least your head will be saved."

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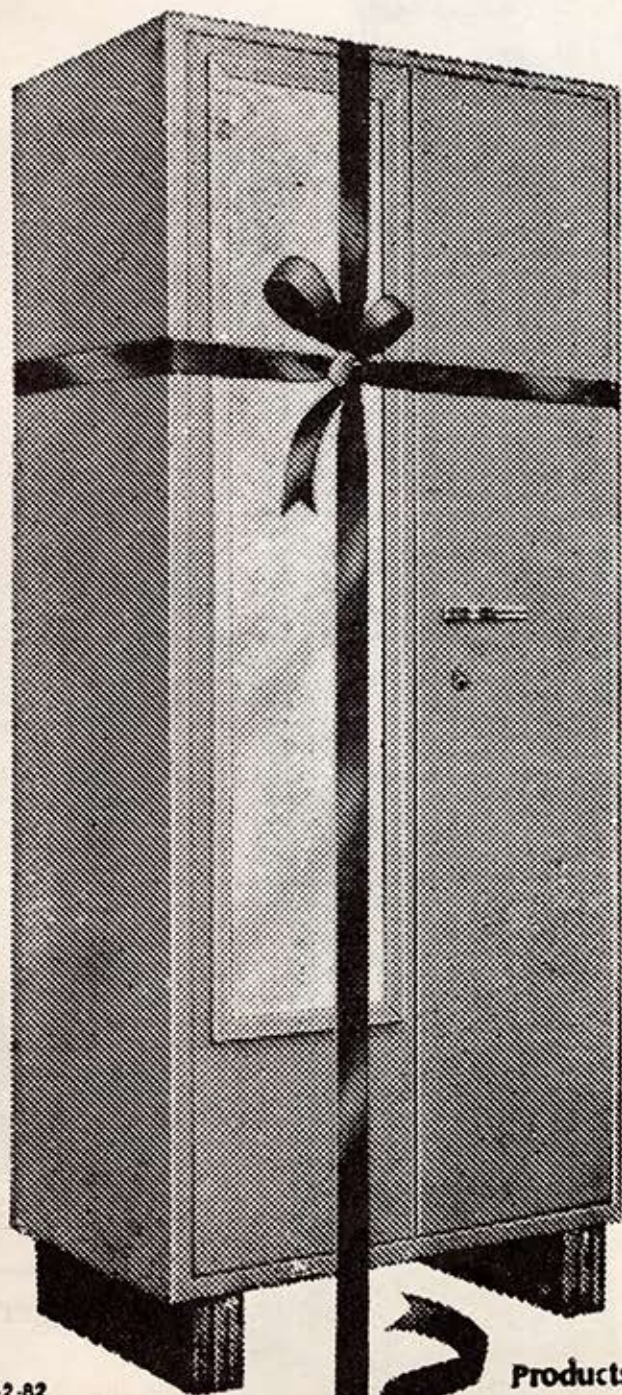
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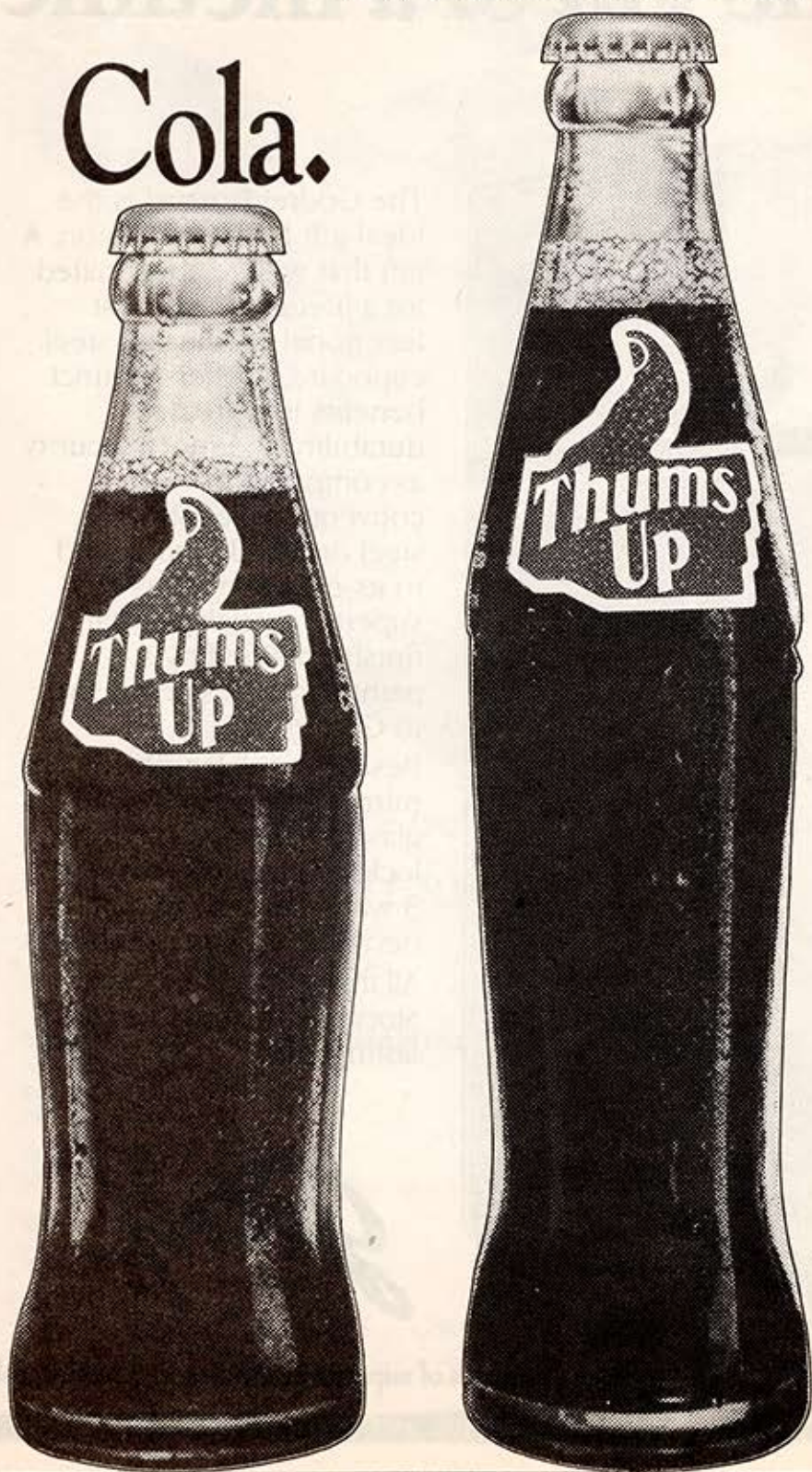


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Bhico J. Manekshaw

"Poultry is to cooking what canvas is to painting." Brillat Savarin.

Chicken is one of the best and easiest ingredients in a cook's hands. Be it boiled (correctly, of course) roasted or baked, served hot or cold, whole or in portions, with or without sauces, curried or sautéed -- it can be successful, always.

The universal, classic roast chicken, is to my way of thinking, the 'mère' of most continental chicken dishes. One can always judge the quality of a good cook or a restaurant by the roast chicken they produce.

In India, the best yield in quality and quantity is from a 950 gm chicken. At most, one can go up to 1 kg in weight. After that the chicken gets fibrous; between 800 and 900 gms, the chicken is all right for grills. But for chickens less than that in weight, one pays more for bones than flesh.

ROAST CHICKEN (serves 6-8)

Chickens (2 x 950 gms -- with skin)

Light stock (2 cups -- made with chicken necks, stomachs, hearts, one sliced onion, one sliced carrot, a few black peppercorns and salt, cooked for no more than 20-30 minutes.)

Salt

Pepper

Parsley or tarragon (a sprig or ajwain -- 2 tsp)

Butter (100 gms)

String (a piece about 6 inches long)

See that the skin of the chicken is not torn. Push back the skin of the neck before cutting off the neck. Wash the chicken well. Make a light stock of the ingredients mentioned above. Turn on the oven to 400°F (200°C or gas mark 6). Fold back the skin of the neck and flip the pinions at the back to keep the skin in place. Put a small knob of butter, salt, pepper and a sprig of parsley or tarragon, or ajwain in the hollow of each chicken.

To truss the chicken make a half knot with the string and loop it on to the tail.



Then push the legs and thighs of the chicken towards the body, over the tail and tie the legs to it to keep them in position.

Place the chickens, breast up, in a roasting tin after rubbing with pepper and rest of butter. Add one cup of stock along with the necks, vegetables, etc and put the tin with the chickens in the pre-heated oven. After 15 minutes, baste well with stock in pan and put back in the oven. After another 15 minutes baste the chickens again and sprinkle with salt. Very gently, turn the chickens on their right side with two wooden spoons so that the skin is not pierced. Baste well, add rest of stock and liver and leave for another 15 minutes. Then turn the chickens on their left side, baste and cook for a further 15 minutes. By now the chickens should be golden brown and crisp and the time should be an hour from the start of the baking. Pierce the chicken in the thigh with a thin skewer or needle to test if the chicken is done. If the liquid that comes out is clear, it is done. If the liquid is pink, allow to cook for about 5-10

minutes more but turn the chickens on their breasts. When done, leave to 'rest' in a warm open oven so that the juices may retract into the tissues.

To carve, remove the string, press the thigh outwards and away from the body and cut at the joint. Try and remove the 'oyster' which lies on the back of the carcass at the joint of the thigh bone. (In the days when the chicken was carved on the table by the man of the house, the 'oyster,' if not carved with the thigh, was given to the one he loved best or to the youngest at the table.) The thighs and drumsticks can be served as one piece or cut into two at the joint. Chop off the ankle joints. Next cut off the pinions, then place the knife between the carcass and the wing bone, and bring it right down through the joint and remove the side of the breast. Turn the chicken on the other side and remove the other side of the breast. With a pair of scissors cut off the center breast piece in one piece. (In larger birds which one gets abroad, the breast is sliced off from either side of the breastbone in 2 or 3 slices).

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Keep the chickens warm on a serving dish. Quickly scrape off all the coagulated roasted bits into the gravy and bring to a boil, adding a little water if required. It should be half a pint for the two birds. Strain. Spoon a little of the gravy on to the chickens and serve the rest in a warm sauce boat.

Note: This is one of the most successful ways of roasting a chicken. The using of two wooden spoons is not an idiosyncrasy. We were told at the Cordon Bleu School of Cookery to handle a roasting chicken like a new born babe! Under no account should the skin be torn, so that it remains moist from the inside and crisp from the outside.

To make the gravy richer one can add a spoon or two of cream. Or mash the liver and add to the gravy. I would not thicken it with flour.

Serve roasted potatoes and buttered vegetables or a ratatouille and fresh mixed tossed salad alongside. Do not mar the fine flavor by serving strong flavored vegetables.

POULET AU PORTO (serves 6-8)

This is a delightful dish from Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. It is not meant for serving at parties where ill-mannered people turn up at 10 p.m. when the invitations are for 8.30 p.m.!! Because this dish cannot wait.

Chickens (2 x 950 gms -- roasted as above but with 1½ cups stock instead of 2 cups)

Mushrooms (¾ kg -- trimmed and kept whole if small or halved if large)

Butter (15 gms)

Lime juice (1 tsp)

Water (100 ml)

Salt (to taste)

Cream (¾ pint ie. 15 liquid ozs)

Cornflour (30 gms -- mixed with two tbsp. of the measured cream)

Salt and pepper (to taste)

Spring onions or shallots (small Madras onions used for sambar -- 1 tbsp -- chopped)

Dry port (100 ml)

Lime juice (1 tsp)

Cognac (100 gms)

Bring the water to a boil with butter, lime juice and salt in a stainless steel, enamel or *kallaied*-pan (well tinned copper vessel). Add mushrooms, cover and cook gently for about 10 minutes. Strain off the cooking liquid and set aside. Add cream and cornflour mixture to the mushrooms and simmer for 2 to 3 min-

utes. Season correctly. Keep aside.

Remove chickens from the roasting pan along with all but two tbsp of the gravy with the fat. Add spring onions to the roasting pan and simmer for two minutes. Add port and reserved mushroom juice. Reduce the liquid to ¼ pint over high heat. Add mushroom mixture and cook for a further 1 or 2 minutes till the liquid thickens a bit. Add lime juice and seasoning.

Quickly carve the chicken and put into a fireproof casserole along with the remaining gravy and heat thoroughly on a low flame. Ignite cognac and pour over the chicken. Shake the casserole until the flames subside. Add the mushroom and port mixture over the chicken. Baste the chicken with the mushroom sauce. Cover and keep on a very low flame for 5 minutes before serving. Sauté potatoes or a well seasoned risotto and a crisp lettuce salad with a lime dressing go well with this dish.

Note: This dish should not be kept waiting for more than 5-6 minutes after it is cooked. You can roast the chicken in advance and sauté the mushrooms beforehand, but after the port has been added the chicken should be ignited and the sauce mixed immediately and served.



GAI TOM KA (serves 4)

Thailand is famous for its satay of beef and chicken. Here is a delicious chicken and coconut soup also called Galangal Soup. Galangal is the root of the ginger family and is used as a flavoring. It can be removed before serving or left uneaten. The Indian ginger can be used as substitute.

Chicken stock (475 ml)

Lime leaves (2 -- chopped)

Lemon grass (6-8 leaves -- chopped)

Ginger (1 inch piece -- peeled and sliced)

Fish sauce (a poor substitute is soyabean sauce -- 4 tbsp)

Lime juice (3 tbsp)

Coconut milk (150 ml)

Chillies (2 small -- red or green -- crushed)

Chicken breast (150 gms -- finely shredded)

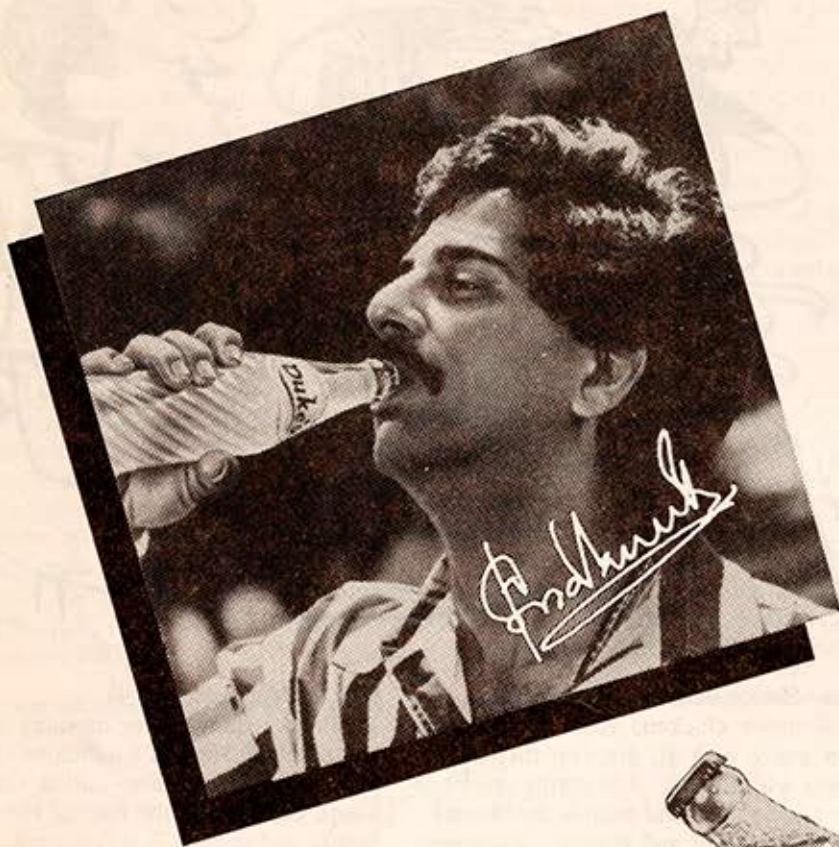
Coriander leaves for garnish (chopped)

Boiled rice for accompaniment

Heat stock in a stainless steel pan, with lime leaves, lemon grass, ginger, fish sauce, lime juice and salt. Bring to a boil. Add chicken breast and coconut milk. Cook over high heat for 3 to 4 minutes. Add chillies and cook for a few seconds more. Then remove from fire, garnish and serve with rice.

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Note: The chillies can be added a little earlier if a spicier soup is required, but that would subdue the delicate flavor of the soup.

HE-T'OU CHI TING (serves 4)

(Walnuts with cubed chicken)

A recipe from the court dishes of China created by Chen Tung Kuen -- a famous Soochow cook at the Imperial Court of Emperor Chi'en Lung.

Sesame oil (6-8 tbsp)

Walnuts (12 -- shelled)

Chicken (600 gms -- chopped into ½ inch cubes)

Cornflour (2 tbsp)

Spring onions (1½ tbsp -- chopped along with the green stems)

Ginger (3 tsp -- chopped)

Soy sauce (4 tbsp)

White wine or sherry (2 tbsp)

Sugar (1½ tsp)

Salt (to taste)

Heat oil to smoking point. Fry walnuts for ½ minute and remove immediately. Add salt to cornflour and roll chicken in it. Fry over high heat for 2 minutes. Drain off excess oil leaving about 1 tbsp in the pan. Add spring onions and ginger and stir fry for a minute. Add rest of ingredients with the walnuts. Stir fry for another minute and serve hot, with stir fried vegetables or noodles.

POLLO AL LATTE (serves 4-6)

Chicken or rolled loin of pork can be made in this delightful Italian way.

Chicken (1 x 950 gms)

Milk (1 ltr)

Butter (60 gms)

Oil (20 gms)

Ham (lean -- 50 gms -- chopped)

Salt

Pepper

Onion (1 small -- chopped)

Garlic (3-4 cloves -- chopped)

Coriander seeds (1 tbsp -- dry, roasted and coarsely crushed)

Basil (or majoram -- a few leaves -- chopped)

Fennel (sauf -- 1 tsp)

Melt butter with oil and lightly fry ham and onion. Drain and stuff the chicken with it along with garlic, coriander and herbs. Truss the chicken and rub with salt and pepper. Reheat oil and butter and brown the chicken on a medium flame. The pan should be just wide enough to fit the chicken. Heat milk in another pan and pour over the chicken. It should cover the chicken. Keep the chicken simmering steadily -- it should

not boil. A film will form on top. Do not break it. Simmer for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Then break the milk skin, scrape the sides of the pan and mix well. Remove chicken and joint it. Pour the sauce over it (it should be about a cup).

Parsley potatoes, buttered whole french beans or caramelized carrots with baby onions and a crisp salad may be served alongside.

KOTOPOULO FRICASSEE

(serves 2-4)

(Greek chicken with egg and lemon sauce)

Chicken (1 x 950 gms -- cut into 4 joints)

Butter (60 gms)

Oil (50 gms)

Onions (2 medium -- finely sliced)

Carrots (2 -- sliced)

Celery (1 stick -- trimmed and chopped)

Dill leaves (2 tbsp -- chopped or ½ tsp seeds -- small sauf)

Water or chicken stock (not chicken cube -- 300 ml)

Salt

White pepper

Avgolemeono Sauce

Cornflour (30 gms)

Water (2-3 tbsp)

Eggs (2 large)

Lemons (1½ or 4 limes -- juiced)

Wash chicken pieces, dry well and sauté in melted butter and oil. They should not brown. Add rest of ingredients and simmer till the chicken pieces are tender. Keep aside for 5 minutes after taking off from the fire before starting the sauce.

Mix cornflour and water till smooth. Beat eggs and add to cornflour and beat again till well mixed. Add lemon or lime juice. Mix well. Add a spoonful of the chicken sauce into the lemon sauce, mix well, add 2-3 spoons more, mixing well after each addition. Now pour this over the chicken and rotate the pan with the chicken till it is completely amalgamated. Put back on a low heat and cook slowly till the sauce has thickened a little and the cornflour has cooked. Do not boil.

Place the chicken pieces on top of boiled rice or noodles. Pour the sauce, along with the vegetables, over them and serve with a crisp salad.

SOUTHERN FRIED CHICKEN

(serves 8)

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has her own way of preparing it with different garnishes but all serve it with a cream sauce.

Chicken (2 x 950 gms)

Salt

Pepper

Flour (100 gms)

Oil (part bacon fat or lard optional — enough for ½ to ¾ inch layer in a heavy frying pan)

Milk (½ cup)

Cream Sauce

Flour (2 tbsp)

Milk (1 cup)

Cream (1 cup)

Salt

White pepper

Joint the chickens, wash and dry. Mix salt and pepper with flour. Heat oil till hot. Dip one chicken piece at a time in milk, then in seasoned flour. When all the pieces are coated with flour, place them in the frying pan in hot oil. Brown chickens evenly on all sides.

Cover the pan and cook on medium heat, checking occasionally to see that the pieces do not burn or get stuck. Or put the chicken pieces in a casserole with a little of the oil and cover and cook in a preheated medium oven till done. Drain and keep hot on a platter.

Take about 2 tbsp of the oil and put in a pan. Add flour for the sauce and make a roux. Add hot milk and bring to a boil. Add cream and simmer till slightly thick. Pour over the chicken and serve with fried bacon or ham and corn fritters. Some also serve fried bananas or no garnish at all.

CHICKEN KIEV (serves 6-8)

Kiev is known as the 'Mother' city of all Russia: there was a Kiev when Moscow was a wheel track in the forest. It is from this famous city that we have this popular dish.

Chicken breasts (4 whole — fresh — each weighing 200-250 gms with the bones, and the wing bone attached)

Butter (170 gms — chilled)

Salt

Pepper

Flour (75 gms)

Eggs (3)

Breadcrumbs (170 gms — dry white)

Oil (for deep frying)

For garnish: fried potato matchsticks

Put the whole breast, skin side down on a board. Bend it so that the center, spoon-shaped bone comes up. Pull it out. Divide the breast in two from where the bone was removed. Turn over and peel

off the skin gently. With a sharp knife, start removing the ribs from the flesh: press the flat of the knife against the bones and gently pull off the flesh, scraping it off the ribs. Scrape flesh down from the wing bone. Slice the fillet attached to each breast and place it on the breast. Repeat this deboning with rest of the breast pieces.

Spread a damp double sheet of grease-proof paper on a board, and lay the prepared breast pieces on it. Cover with another piece of damp, grease-proof paper, keeping the wing bones out so that they do not tear the paper. Now pound them with a mallet or a rolling pin till they are about 1/8 inch thick.

Cut butter into 8 long equal parts and shape them into long cylindrical shapes about ½ inch thick and about 2 to 2½ inches long to fit into the prepared breasts. Wrap each into a square of grease proof paper and chill till stiff and firm.

Sprinkle chicken with salt and pepper. Place a piece of prepared butter in the center. Beat eggs and brush the edges of the cutlets with it. Fold over one side of the cutlet to cover the butter. Fold in the tip towards the center. Twist the wing bone to seal the top end, to prevent the butter from escaping. Now fold over the other wide side and press firmly to seal the edges, at the same time shaping the cutlet. Roll the cutlets in flour, then in beaten eggs and lastly in breadcrumbs, assuring that each layer has completely covered the cutlet. Refrigerate for 2-3 hours or overnight.

Just before frying, egg and crumb the cutlets again and fry in deep hot oil (frying thermometer should register 360°F) for 3-5 minutes till they are golden brown. If the oil is not hot enough, the cutlets will not fry; if it is too hot, the surface will brown quickly but the chicken may remain raw. Fry 4 cutlets at a time, remove with a slotted spoon and keep warm on a platter lined with brown paper in a 350°F oven with the door open. Fry the rest and serve immediately so that when the diner's fork pierces the crisp golden coating of this classical dish, he or she is greeted with a spurt of hot melted butter.

Serve with fried matchstick potatoes. (I prefer our *sali* (shoestring potatoes) to the matchstick potatoes — this was how it was served to us when we were young in our homes — and it looked much better than matchstick potatoes. Perhaps the Russians do not know how to make our

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PAPETA MA MURGHI (serves 6-8)
(Like my mother-in-law used to make)
Last but not the least, our very own *Papeta ma Murghi*! I cannot remember if I have given this recipe before, and if I have, forgive me. Because whenever I think of some of the best chicken dishes of the world, my mind automatically goes to this dish and like the Negro courtier in Akbar's court, in whose eyes his child was the most beautiful in the kingdom, I feel the same about this dish which the whole Manekshaw clan learnt from my mother-in-law. A silent salute goes to her. All the Manekshaw men tell their wives that what they now produce is not the same as in their youth in Amritsar! Usually I don't agree with most of their statements -- but with this one I do. Alas! Where is the full-flavoured, *charbidar murghi* (well-fattened chicken) of yesteryear? And where is pure ghee of the Punjab? And even

where these are still available, the prices are such that one can hardly afford them. Besides, one is constantly being told that it is not good for one's health, and reminded to mind the cholesterol! Today one has to work miracles to make the blotting paper-tasting broiler taste like chicken.

Chicken (2 x 950 gms -- jointed)

Garlic (18 cloves)

Ginger (2 inch piece)

Green chillies (3-4 -- slit)

Ghee (75-100 gms)

Salt (to taste)

Potatoes (6-8 -- large)

Grind ginger and garlic together. Rub the paste on the chicken and leave for an hour. In the meanwhile, peel potatoes and cut them in half lengthways. Heat oil in a pan and lightly fry potatoes till half cooked. Remove from pan and add chicken. Sauté for 5 minutes, adding salt to taste. Add ½ cup water, cover pan, pour a little water on the lid, if you have the lovely old-fashioned *kallaied tapelies* and *dhakans* (traditional, tin covered copper vessels with lids) and simmer till

chicken is half done, adding water whenever necessary. Add potatoes and slit green chillies and continue to cook till both chicken and potatoes are completely done, and a thick gravy of about a cup remains. The potatoes must be well cooked so that they easily break at the touch of a fork.

Since I cannot make the dish 'like it used to be in Amritsar,' I add 2 tsp of dry roasted and powdered cumin seeds and 1 tsp of turmeric powder. Nor do I half fry the potatoes, but add them to the dish about 10 minutes after the chicken has been added.

My eldest grandson Rohaan, who has just turned 8, tells his mother, "but Mummy, you can't make *papeta ma murghi* like *mamai* (maternal grandmother) does!"
Bon Appetit!

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

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The ritual of blessing

The two reviews of Joseph Peterson's compilation,
The Afrinagan Service, by
 Dastur (Dr) Hormazdyar K. Mirza and Dr Ali A. Jafarey,
 reflect two differing points of view

The Afrinagan Service: The Zoroastrian Ritual of Blessing compiled by Joseph H. Peterson, 1989. Pp: 212

This advance (pre-publication) copy, contains Avesta and Pazand texts in transcription with translations of most of the texts, and ritual explanations and directions.

The compiler, in his preface, states the purpose and goal of the publication:

- "This description of the Zoroastrian Afrinagan ritual was initiated as a tool for teaching English-speaking students the correct pronunciation and ritual details."

- "One goal of this project is to preserve the rituals with as much accuracy as possible."

Further, the compiler states "the eventual goal of encouraging standardization" of rituals, and normalization of Pazand text "in a very few cases."

In so far as the rituals and their explanations are concerned, the proposed book may be regarded as a collection of diverse views and conflicting opinions found in various sources. Some times such explanations are vague and even bewildering, which can hardly be understood.

The transcriptions and translations of Avesta texts are generally acceptable since they are based on already published materials. Evidently, the compiler has made changes in the published translations at his sweet will. Hence in some cases his translations are mere paraphrase in florid and high flown language. The following examples are from pages 38-39:

- Av. *ashavan*: "Asha-sanctified:" "Asha-one;" "Asha-believing"
- Av. *verethrem*: "resistance"

- Av. *jaghmushtemam*: "who is best able to reach"

- Av. *ratufritim*: "goal of satisfaction"

- Av. *haithyaverezam*: "who perform their duty;" "performing its duty"

In translations, very often rules of grammar are set aside. Generally, one long sentence follows the *fravarane* formula with various *khshumans*, but in translations it is broken up into various disjointed sentences; and this is done in all Avesta texts. Other remarkable translations:

- Av. *aibigaya*: "that furthers life"

- Av. *uzareshta*: "rise up"

- Av. *ashaone*: "of Asha"

- Av. *athro*: "To Atar"

- Av. *karsho-razam*: "well-balanced"

So far as the Pazand texts are concerned, the compiler is on more slippery ground. Very often both transcriptions and translations are faulty; in some cases transcriptions are wrong but translations are correct. Some examples are given below from only one shorter text, *Di-bache*, paragraphs 2-4, pages 66-67:

- In paragraph 2: eight words are not translated

- *namchisti adar* (two words): "whatever name." Both transcription and translation are wrong. The word is *namchishthitar* (one word) "more by name, more specially." It is an adverb in comparative degree.

- *xajaste*: not translated

- *xujistah*: "well spent"

- *ke ra*: "in each"

- *sahiyari*: "year." Both translation and transcription are wrong. The same word occurs in *Nam Stayishn* (pages 62-63), where it is correctly *sheharyari*, "sovereignty," because it is borrowed from Dhabhar.

- *yezisni karda hom*: "I may solemnize and execute my hymns of praise." *Yezisni* is a popular form for *yazishn*; and in this context it is the *Yazishn* ceremony with recitation of 72 chapters and offering of libation, and not vague "hymns of praise." *Karda* is wrong. The correct sentence is *yazishn kard hom* "I performed *Yazishn* (ceremony)." The verb is in the preterite first person singular form, and it cannot be translated as done by the compiler.

- *drun yazata hom*: "I may offer darun." This again is wrong. What is *yazata* in this context? Even in popular recital it is correct *yasht hom*. The sentence is *dron yasht hom*, "I performed *dron* (ceremony)."

- *myazda hame rainam*: "myazd which I shall accomplish at all times." The correct sentence is, *Myazd hame rayenam* "I am performing *Myazd* (ceremony)."

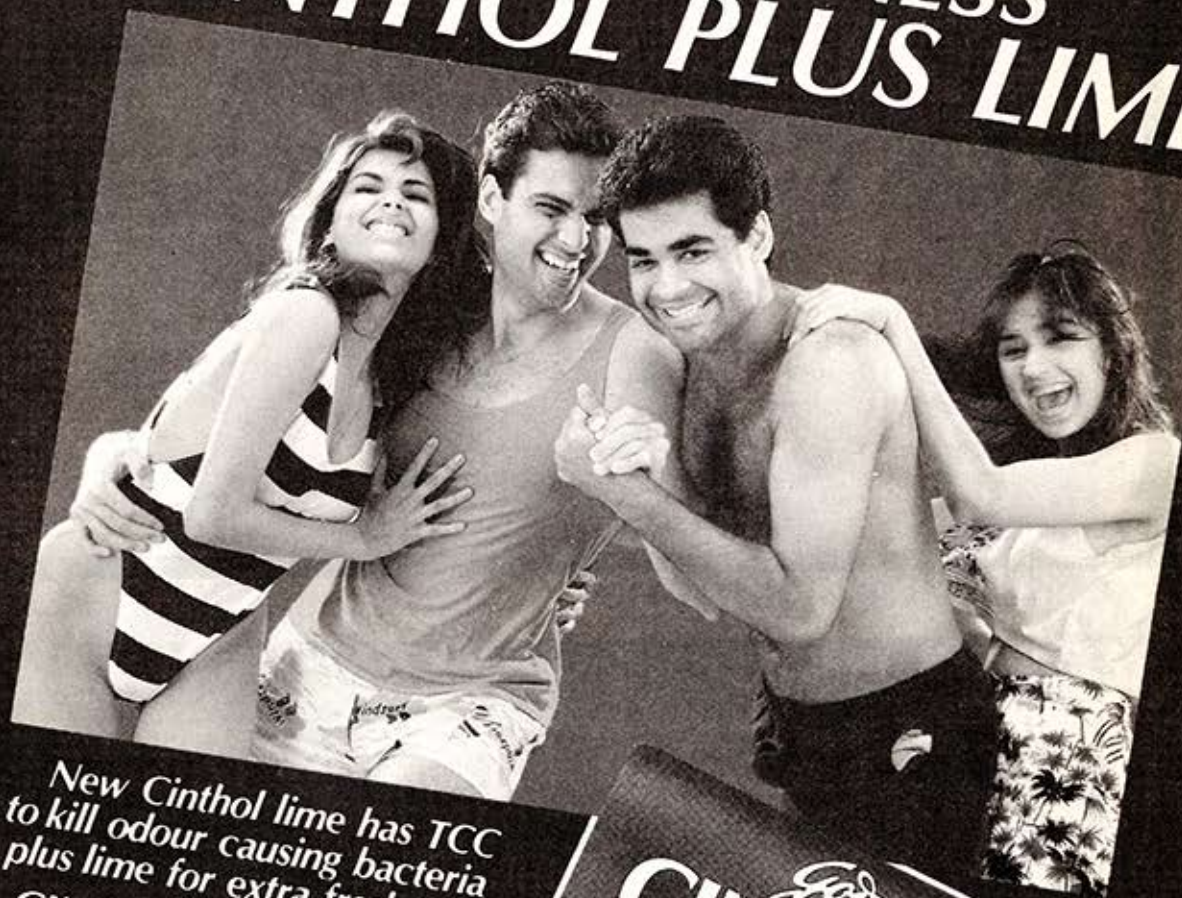
The last three sentences indicate the original order of performing these three ceremonies: *Yazishn*, *Dron* and *Myazd* (Afrinagan). In this case, the *Zoti* after performing the first two ceremonies announces the beginning of the third. The verb is in the present continuous tense first person singular. It cannot be translated as done by the compiler. The same three sentences at p.170-171 are differently translated. This order of the three ceremonies mentioned above is observed even today in the initiation ceremony of Navar. Further, the same order is mentioned in the *Afrin of Rapithwin* (page 180).

Some other instances are briefly noted below (paragraphs 7-8):

- *avaza*: "strength." Transcription is wrong. The word is *oj Av aojah* "strength."

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- *nam chisti*: "respectfully." This is one word wrongly broken up. *Namchishiti*, "by name, name by name, specially."
- *zenderawan*: "blessed souls." Wrong. It is "living soul."
- *asat vastra*: missing in translation.
- *gustasp shah luhurasp Shah*: "Shah Gustasp and Shah Lorasp."
- *mobit shapur mobit sihyar*: "Mobed Shapur and Mobed Saheryar."
- *mobit harmaz yar ervat ram yar*: "Mobed Harmazyar and Ervad Ramyar."

Regarding Persian *Rivayats*, quoting Dhabhar's translation the compiler states (pages 10, 12, 13, 16): "Kaus Kamdin stated..." "According to Kamdin Shapur..." "Bahman Punja says..."

In these cases, the compiler wrongly assumes that the Zoroastrians mentioned here are the writers of the respective *Rivayats*. The opinions and explanations given in the *Rivayats* are those of the Zoroastrians of Iran. In these *Rivayats*, none of the three Zoroastrians mentioned says anything in the matter of religion. They only carried the questions to Iran and brought answers from Iran to India.

In the matters of recital of sacred texts and performance of ceremonies, one requires constant practice and experience, besides language study under expert supervision. One cannot explain or understand the intricacies of these subjects merely by reading books. Such books, written by an expert, after proper study and experience, may serve as a guide, but they cannot play the role of a preceptor. The books, written and compiled without proper study and experience, would perpetuate faulty readings and other shortcomings.

It is necessary to state specially that, in the matter of all the observations in this review, there is not a single controversial item. All statements contain well settled facts, universally accepted.

On the strength of what has been stated and quoted above, one can with justification conclude that the compiler has no knowledge of the relevant languages — Avesta, Pahlavi, Pazand, Persian. Total absence of language studies is quite evident. In these circumstances can one lay a claim to "the correct pronunciations," as done by the compiler? How can one claim standardization and normalization?

One would with regret conclude that the compiler's ambitious purpose, as stated by him, would not be fulfilled, and his laudable goal would not be attained

by the proposed publication. One wonders what useful purpose will be served by publication of the proposed book, except perhaps ostentation!

(This review was undertaken at the request of the Editor and it was handed over to him in December 1989.)

Hormazdyar K. Mirza

In 1982, American engineer Joseph H. Peterson spoke of his belief in the Zoroastrian religion in subdued words to an applauding audience at the Fourth North American Zoroastrian Congress in Montreal. A year later his navjote, performed by two Parsi and two Irani mobeds, caused an uproar among the Parsi community in India (*Parsiana*, March, April, May 1983). For two more years he read with tight lips all that was written about him and the two Parsi officiating priests in various papers (the Irani priests were completely ignored by the Parsi community in India). Then he retired in isolation as if he did not exist for the cause he had so dramatically symbolized.

Occasional news about Peterson revealed that, firm in his faith, he was busy with his self-imposed task of transferring all the Avestan texts, and the most frequently occurring words in them, on to a computer file. Now, seven years after the Montreal episode, he has, as silent as ever, come up with *The Afrinagan Service*, a book he has "compiled" on a word processor in 212 pages, xeroxed it in many copies, and bound it in plastic, only to present it to his friends and those who ask for it.

The brief Preface of two paragraphs states: "This description of the Zoroastrian Afrinagan ritual was initiated as a tool for teaching English-speaking students the correct pronunciation and ritual details." True to this statement, Peterson has given in a unique collection of seven chapters and two tables: *Padyab-kusti*, the short *Gahs*, *Sarosh Baj*, full five *Gahs*, *Atash Niyayesh*, *Nam Stayish*, the *Dibache*, 11 *Afrinagans* (blessings recited in Avestan), eight *Afrins* (blessings recited in Pazand), and *Tan-darosti*. The two tables give the number of *Ahuna Vairyas* to be recited with each Afrinagan, and the Pazand *Khshnumans* or dedications for each Afrinagan.

The key to pronunciation "follows Prof W. W. Malandra, *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion*, Minneapolis, 1983." It comes as close as possible to the Parsi way of pronouncing Avesta,

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Pazand and Neo-Persian texts. The Iranis should find it a little strange. The Introduction provides details of each service to the reader in simple language. *The Afrinagan Service* has the translation on the left and the text on the right for the following 179 pages. The "References" at the end give a fair list of all the books available in English on the services.

The Preface, brief as it is, says in a modest tone that this book "is not intended to supercede materials already in use for that purpose, nor should it be considered an authorized version. There are still many issues that need to be addressed, and all comments are welcome. Many of these issues are not necessarily problems in the sense that variations in practice can be reported without attempting to evaluate their religious merit. Choices had to be made for which usage is placed in the body of the text, and which variants are relegated to footnotes. I can only state from the outset that this is unavoidable.

"One goal of this project is to preserve the rituals with as much accuracy as possible. At the same time, I would like to present enough background material to examine variants with the eventual

goal of encouraging standardization within the community. Rituals, I believe, serve many functions: social, psychological, dramatic, educational, and of course purely religious and cosmic functions. In addition to judging them on those terms, one can also judge them historically."

The author has chosen the Afrinagan service perhaps because it "is central to the outer or public ceremonies of Zoroastrianism. It generally invokes blessings for the entire congregation... It also commemorates the departed members of the community. Thus, it serves an important social function in addition to its religious function." He mostly uses Geldner's standard vulgate edition of the *Avesta* (K. F. Geldner, *Avesta, the Sacred Books of the Parsis*). Yet, whenever required, he also turns to other manuscripts and writings to complete his work. For the translation part of the book, he follows A. H. Bleeck (*The Religious Books of the Parsees*), Prof Mary Boyce (*Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism*), J. Darmesteter (*Sacred Books of the East*), Ervad B. N. Dhabhar (*Translation of Zand-i Khurtak Avistak*), Dastur M. N. Dhalla (*The Niyaishes or Zoroastrian Litanyes*), G. Kreyenbrock (*Sraosha in*

the Zoroastrian Tradition), W. W. Malandra (*An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion*), and F. Wolff (*Avesta, die heiligen Bucher der Parsen*).

The North American Council of Mobeds, the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZ-ANA), the religious and educational committees of every association in North America and abroad, and those who believe that Zoroastrianism is a religion of rituals, have been advocating the compilation of such a book since long. Here then is the desired project already in its best possible form. It has the phonetic texts, a fair translation in good American English, details that will enlighten the laity and also many a mobed, and by a man who, unlike most of the converts, believes in spirituality and continuity of the traditional rituals. Here it is to save many planning bodies the duplication of a fait accompli. All that the learned mobeds of North America can do is to hold a meeting to consider the book in its entirety, give suggestions for improvement and have it published as a standard text. If Peterson was not "accepted" by some in the community, his devotional work can well be.

Ali A. Jafarey

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Sweetness at noon

Geeta Doctor

The Ice-Candy-Man by Bapsi Sidhwa. Published by Penguin UK. Pp: 227. Price: £4.

At the heart of every Indian child, there is an ice-candy-man calling. He wanders in on hot afternoons selling the longed-for, but always forbidden, pleasures of ice, scraped up and scooped into a popsicle, that he expertly douses with equal parts of syrup and colored essence. As every child also knows, lurking in the heart of this icy sweetness are the germs of every dreaded childhood disease.

Bapsi Sidhwa's evocation of a Lahore childhood, seen through the eyes of a precocious child called Lenny, is as sweet and enticing as the popsicles that the meltingly named hero of her novel sells. It could be argued that he is not really the hero, but his very name conjures the secret world of Lenny's childhood.

As the story begins, Sidhwa re-creates the comfortable lifestyle and apparently unassailable security of a Parsi family living in Lahore before Partition. Lenny's is a serene childhood even though she has been afflicted with polio at a very young age. It is almost as if the limp slows her down to observe people and situations around her more closely. At least it gives her a specialness, even within the specialness of being a Parsi. There are delightful vignettes of family life, the interludes between Lenny's beautiful mother and gruff father, that are unselfconsciously erotic in their tenderness, the squabbles between Lenny and her younger brother Adi and their first intimations of the conflict ahead which they experience when they hide under the dining table of an adults' party.

Besides this, Lenny also has the presence of her extended family around her. There is her wonderful godmother, with her impossible nagging alter ego named Slavesister, and her slightly porcine cousin who obligingly initiates her into the mysteries of adolescent sex and also encourages her to put a finger into an open electricity socket. Lenny's chief characteristic is a curiosity to observe, unclouded by guilt. It is an attribute she shares with Sidhwa, whose gift seems to

lie in looking back at the past without a desire to moralize. Children too are singularly amoral. They accept situations as they come. Sidhwa re-creates this state of looking at the world without embarrassment with a sangfroid that is, at times, startling. What are we to make of a little girl who enjoys clambering onto her father's lap as he sits on the commode every morning? Or as she watches with detached fascination the first waves of Sikh-Muslim separatists marching through Lahore, holding aloft "a naked child, twitching on a spear between (the) shoulders" which leads her

It is a passionate account of Partition told through the cooling mists of Parsi humor

to ritually dismember her best doll in imitation of the cruelty, until she breaks down in sobs.

The positioning of Lenny's cool, calm universe in the midst of the flames of Partition gives the book its intensity. It describes the ordinariness of the horror as it seeps into the lives of people who have nothing to do with the hatred and the pain but who will have to hate and destroy in return because they have no choice. Sidhwa tells the story in the most oblique manner possible. Not only does she reflect it through Lenny's eyes but even the main protagonists are the unseen creatures who inhabit the fringes of Indian society. It's probably true that most Indian children from privileged homes have access to a netherworld of servants and their friends, whom their parents will neither know, nor care to know, about. Sidhwa seems to re-create this secret world with an immediacy and poignancy that elevates Lenny's beloved Ayah to the status of a rich ripe goddess, surrounded by a pantheon of admirers formed of casual acquaintances, the *mas-sagewala* or masseur, the gardener from

the Government house, the keeper of the lion at the Lahore zoo, the Pathan who brings her pistas from Kabul and of course the droll, ubiquitous Ice-Candy-Man with the caressing toes who has a way of looking for Ayah's soft spots. Each one of them represents a different community, or has a personal history that will be put to the test in the caldron of communal upheaval ahead of them and, to some extent, they are caricatures. Even the Ice-Candy-Man's transformation from the lighthearted lover to the dreadful nemesis of the Ayah's fate, in which Lenny plays a tragic part, is too sudden to be entirely convincing. But the range of characters is fascinating and Sidhwa gives them enough touches of humanity for us to be deeply involved, as each one of them stands up, turns and twists, in sudden conversions or convulsions of belief, and is carried along or destroyed by the river of flame that runs through the country.

It is a passionate account of Partition told through the cooling mists of humor — Parsi humor one would like to say. Is humor a special weapon that minority communities such as the Jews and the Parsis have evolved to keep themselves from being sucked down into the bogs of history? One cannot say; but there are abundant examples of it rippling through the novel. Even as the leaders of the small Parsi community lecture the others on the meaning of Mahatma Gandhi's civil disobedience movement and the salt satyagraha, someone in the crowd grumbles, "Who does this Gandhi think he is. Is it his grandfather's ocean?"

I'm afraid that Gandhi comes out of Sidhwa's portrayal looking decidedly absurd with his obsession with enemas and the bowel movements of his followers. In one chapter Lenny is taken to see Gandhi by her mother and, as Lenny recounts it, the entire conversation is taken up with the subject. Gandhi even admits to administering the enemas himself to his female followers, explaining that he is like a mother to them. Lenny observes, "Gandhiji is certainly ahead of his times. He already knows the advantage of dieting. He has starved his way into the news and made headlines all over the world." How would Lenny know at that time that he was ahead of his time, one wonders. Later on the narrator as Lenny, or vice versa, concludes the chapter with another perplexing aside. She describes Gandhi's power as

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being a very feminine hypnotic force and then adds, that beneath it she detects the ice, that leads to all the madness of Partition. Mohammedali Jinnah, by way of contrast, is portrayed as so intelligent and well turned out that he even manages to marry a beautiful Parsi girl of noble blood. We are told of how he is broken-hearted when she dies at the age of 29, which may be true enough, as a reading of Stanley Wolpert's *Jinnah of Pakistan* will show. It's also a fact that both Jinnah and his wife had separated long before the event and it is more likely that it was the ice in her husband's heart, that led Rutie Petit Jinnah to her tragically early end.

Sidhwa's viewpoint on these two conflicting personalities is a peculiarly Pakistani one. Long after Partition, when this reviewer was studying in Karachi, a very common epithet of abuse in the Pakistani Press, to debunk Hindus, was "pulse eating, gas filled babus." Sidhwa continually plays upon this image among of her Muslim characters. She even manages to add her two bit worth of commentary on what she feels was an unfair

Sidhwa's gift seems to lie in looking back at the past without a desire to moralize

portrayal of Jinnah in David Attenborough's film, *Gandhi*. Such insights tend to hamper the smooth movement of the novel.

Finally there is also, to Indian ears, the slight sound of ingratiation, the desire not just to amuse but to entertain and to draw the approval of a Western audience. This is a common enough quirk of a person used to the colonial yoke, but is no longer necessary or evident in the younger writers of the sub-continent today. It makes *The Ice-Candy-Man* a little cloying at times. But it's well worth the risk of too much sweetness to savor the thrill of Sidhwa's temptation.

Bapsi Sidhwa was born in Karachi and brought up in Lahore. An active social worker among Asian women, she represented Pakistan at the Asian Women's Congress held in 1975. She has published two other novels, The Crow Eaters and The Bride. Sidhwa divides her time between the United States, where she teaches, and Pakistan.

Reality defies description

Buddhahood by P. D. Mehta. Published in 1988 by Element Books Ltd, Longmead, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 8BR, UK. Pp: 187. Price: £ 7.95

The book *Buddhahood* is a collection of essays authored by Phiroz Mehta who, for over a period of 30 years, has been contributing articles to *The Middle Way*, the quarterly journal of the Buddhist Society. Many of the essays were originally lectures delivered under the auspices of the Society.

In this book "the reader will find sound advice from one who has actually striven to lead the holy life as a householder amidst the hurly-burly of modern urban life," notes an introduction by editor John Snelling.

A retired school teacher, Mehta has for several years served as a lecturer and organized summer schools and group meetings. In addition to authoring four books, he has also written numerous articles.

Instead of reviewing this book, *Parsiana* preferred to carry edited excerpts from the book where the author (PM) has been interviewed by John Snelling (JS). The author's background, as also his philosophy is conveyed in this passage.

JS: Phiroz, could we begin with your early years in Ceylon (Sri Lanka): how did religion affect your life then?

PM: I was brought up as a Zarathustrian...but I went to a school where there were boys of various different religions and I naturally got interested in talking with them... I was always interested in deeply religious matters, particularly in the meaning of immortality: whence did we come and whither do we go after death? Later on we had a Theosophical friend in our family who used to come and see us, and I got very attracted to the idea of the unity of religions as far as the fundamentals are concerned. That was how I came to read about other religions and to study them and practise meditation...

JS: Was Zarathustrianism free of the dogmatic element: that it was the only true religion?

PM: I think so, very largely. Of course, most Zarathustrians believe it is the *best* religion, and the later scriptures call it that; but this seems to be a universal characteristic of all the religions...

JS: How did you first come across Buddhism?

PM: Just by reading books. I noticed that it differed substantially from Hinduism, which had, for instance, the notion of a personal entity, the *jivatman*, which comes back into incarnation life after life until final liberation is attained; whereas Buddhism, of course, has no such thing as an *atman* in its teachings. I noticed that very carefully and couldn't reconcile the two views at all...

JS: What school did you attend?

PM: I started at the Government Training College in Colombo, a secondary school of a very high standard that was later amalgamated with the Royal College...

JS: You had a disposition towards science, I believe?

PM: Yes, particularly chemistry...

JS: This was in fact what you studied in Cambridge?

PM: Yes, I did natural sciences...

JS: What impact did Cambridge make upon you?

PM: I loved it right from the beginning, both the academic and the social sides. I was accepted by the other undergraduates... particularly due to my music. An Indian who could play Beethoven sonatas, Chopin and Liszt on the piano!...

JS: Did music and science ever eclipse religion in your life?

PM: No, religion played the greater part in my life always.

JS: Following Cambridge, I suppose you embarked upon a career?

PM: Yes, I studied under Solomon, the great pianist, for eight-and-a-half years. I gave one or two little recitals here and there but nothing great until in 1934 I

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went to India and gave my first public recital in Lahore... I (married) Silvia, daughter of Dr J. H. Shaxby... in England in July 1939. When World War II broke out, I applied to join the R.A.F. (but was rejected because)... I contracted severe neuritis, which lasted five years.

JS: If the R.A.F. was out, what other vocation did you find for yourself?

PM: Lecturing... John Fleure, professor of geography in Manchester University... suggested that I might be usefully employed writing and lecturing on Indian culture and philosophy. He therefore got a group of people in Manchester University who were holding an extramural conference to invite me to give a lecture on the theme of Race, Religion and Politics in India... Inside three months I was lecturing every day of the week, by request, giving in all hundreds of lectures during the War years. After the War... began my school teaching career. In later years I confined myself to chemistry because that was the subject I knew really well...

JS: To return to the religious side of things: did you ever have a teacher or belong to a group?

PM: No, I never had a special guru or any such thing. It was all my own study, my own practice, my own observation. That is how I have now come to talk and lecture on the topic of holistic consciousness... You know, there are those who use the phrase: 'Don't struggle hard. Leave it to God.' There's a great deal of wisdom in that... Just leave it to that which is transcendent and the Transcendent will do the needful, provided you have the good sense to let it do so. We also have statements like: 'If you take one step towards the Divine, the Divine moves leagues towards you.' That is a fact because we are so completely inter-related and interactive with the Totality that whatever we do produces a response from Totality...

JS: The question comes up now and again whether this Totality is indifferent to man, or whether it cares about his fate.

PM: These are incorrect ways of expressing the matter. You see, whenever we talk like that, as, for instance, the theists do when they say, 'God cares for us and wants us to do so-and-so,' then it is all nonsensical talk. Talking in theistic language has great limitations, for the God cited is invariably a (human) creation.

JS: Is it then possible to say anything about Ultimate Reality — or are all such attempts futile?

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PM: It defies description. All description is necessarily limiting, because all language represents the sphere of the finite, temporal and mortal. Since we are ourselves existential beings, let us be content with tending the existential in the right way... (There is no sense saying) 'I want to reach Nirvana; I want to find God; I want to be a Buddha; I want to be a yogi.' All that is egotistic nonsense! One might as well say, 'I want to be Shakespeare.' If a fellow is endowed with little mastery over language and lacks Shakespeare's remarkable insights, he's talking nonsense if he says that...

JS: Would you say that past lives prepare a being for the future?

PM: There is no such thing as previous or future lives for any identifiable entity.

JS: But surely there must be predetermining factors preceding remarkable occurrences?

PM: The existential being — that is to say, the organism — comes into existence via a tremendous process of evolution... passing through the stages of the reptiles, the mammals, the primates and man himself. We inherit all this. But when a

sperm fertilizes an ovum, there is a rearrangement of the genes in such a way that the person who comes into being is totally different from either parent and from anyone else who ever lived or will live...

I know, of course, that there are people who believe rigidly in karma as inevitable, absolute consequence...whereas the Universe does display elasticity in its functioning. There is the element of chance... We want to impose our concept of justice on everything... Our systems of justice are ones of retributive justice: paying out to others for what they have done. But real justice, the real karmic process, is a healing process: a making whole; an activity which moves towards holistic consciousness. If something happens to my liver, I don't go and cut it out and throw it away. Sometimes I may have to according to the lights of modern science, but that, of course, is not true healing...

Zarathushtra taught that right at the beginning. The fifth attribute of Ahura Mazda is *Haurvatat*, which means health, wholeness, holiness, complete-

ness; and with it is associated *Ameretat*: immortality. But, of course, Zarathushtra never explained that immortality is to be understood and realized here while we are alive.

Zarathushtra was also the first teacher to teach that the evil-doer will suffer hell for all time after death and that the good-doer will be in heaven for all time. Now, I ask, 'How is it possible for a limited, finite human being so to live that he produces an infinite consequence?' Quite impossible! These are absurd teachings and I've said so in my book on Zarathushtra.

To live a good life just from fear of hell is the wrong way altogether. Fear has never succeeded in making whole, in making holy — never! I think in the past people clung to the notion of hell as a means of maintaining the social order. You just simply terrified the populace with this thing... Perfectly ridiculous nonsense! Finish with the fear of hell and simply live the pure human life. Human life means the religious life in the true sense... You will find happiness and fruition thereby.

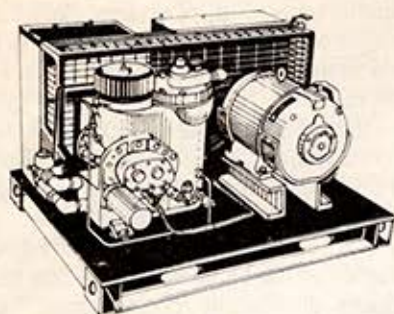
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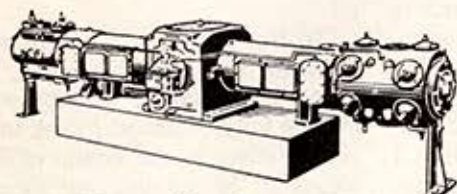
In fact, Tatas have gone so far as to turn the entire town of Jamshedpur into a model in community living. There are wide roads, tree-lined avenues, hospitals and family clinics, and schools which any community would be proud of.

TATA ENTERPRISES



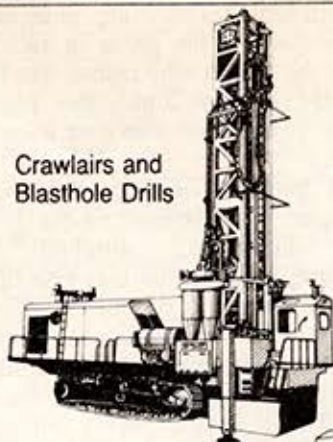


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MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides in Bombay — as listed in this issue — ranged between 23 and 33 years, the arithmetic mean (the total of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 27 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 23 and 54 years, averaging at 33 years.

As compared to 81 deaths in Bombay there were 19 births in the month of July. Heart disease claimed 19 lives, pneumonia and lung disease, 15, old age and general debility, 13. Cancer claimed five victims while kidney failure, brain disease, hypertension and diabetes took four lives each. Two patients each succumbed to bronchitis, septicemia and liver disease. Among the isolated cases registered last month were: ulcers, asthma, Hodgkin's disease (a neoplastic disease that is characterized by the progressive enlargement of the lymph nodes, spleen and liver and by progressive anemia), gastroenteritis, Guillain-Barré Syndrome (inflammation of the nerves resulting in paralysis), epilepsy, atherosclerosis (deposition of fatty substances and fibrosis in the inner layers of the arteries) and nervous disorder. The youngest to die was a 38-year-old man; the eldest, two 96-year-old women.

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled from information supplied by various newsletters and announcements 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.

BOMBAY

Born

A boy to *Kashmira and Sarosh Dubash* on June 28, 1990

A boy to *Zarine and Shaharukh Gandhi*; June 29

A boy to *Farida and Dadi Unwala*; July 1

A boy to *Aban and Phiroz Dubash*; July 5

A girl to *Tenaz and Firdosh Karwa*; July 7

A girl to *Dilshad and Homiyar Subedar*; July 9

A boy to *Arnavaz and Joseph Thomas*; July 9

A girl to *Minnie and Rohin Dotiwala*; July 10

A boy to *Dolly and Dara Patel*; July 10

A boy, *Danesh*, to *Shirin and Kersi Khambatta*; July 14

A girl to *Viloo and Adil Mistry*; July 14

A boy to *Benaifer and Hoshang Billimoria*; July 15

A girl to *Jessica and Jasper Kateli*; July 15

A boy to *Benaifer and Sanjay Mallik*; July 16

A girl to *Mahrukh and Cyrus Khajotia*; July 19

A girl to *Behroze and Cyrus Palsetia*; July 20

A boy to *Pervin and Aspi Panthaki*; July 20

A boy to *Anaita and Daraius Katila*; July 23

A boy to *Sabrina and Gev Khergamwala*; July 23

A boy to *Hoofriz and Kayomarz Dotiwala*; July 25

A boy to *Kamal and Pervez Dotiwala*; July 25

Married

Manek Keki Nagporwala and Aspandiyar Barjor Daboo; April 8

Hutoxi Jal Dumasia and Darayus Jamshed Mistry of Nasik; May 17

Firuzi Adi Daruwala and Ardeshtir Noshir Batliwalla; June 2

Persis Manchi Baliwala of Ontario, Canada and *Cyrus Savak Banker*; July 9

Huafriah Jal Tata and Farokh Behram Irani; July 9

Viloo Shorab Irani and Sohrab Eruch Rudina of Bangalore; July 12

Freny Rustomji Siodia and Karl Sohrab Munshi; July 26

Behnaz Burjor Motiwala and Firdosh Jamsap Irani; July 27

Pervin Ardeshtir Irani and Rashid Khodabux Rabbani of Poona; July 29

Firoza Jamshedji Gay of Baroda and *Porusp Faramroze Tarapore*; July 30

Died

Erach Phiroza Irani (40), residing at Petit Chawl, Thakurdwar, 400002; June 29

Rusi Navroji Bharucha (58), Shirin Mans, Sleater Rd, 400007; July 1

Dhunjishaw Shapurji Poonawala (88), 1, Pushpa Vihar I, Colaba, 400005; July 1

Hirabai Nariman Amrolia (82), 7/B/4, Tata Clny, Tardeo Rd, 400034; July 2

Phiroze Hormusji Mahwa (75), 12, Malcolm Bldg, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; July 2

Marzban Hormusji Patel (87), 1/24, Dhunbai Wadi, Dadabhai Rd, Vile Parle, 400056; July 2

Shirinbai Jalejar Adajania (79), Malegaonwala Bldg, Mahim, 400016; July 3

Perin Framroze Cooper (77), Neel Kamal Bldg, Proctor St, Grant Rd, 400007; July 3

Gulistan Rusi Billimoria (69), 30, Sethna Bldg, Thakurdwar, 400002; July 4

Motan Framroze Karai (80), Khalakdina Ter, Gowalia Tank, 400036; July 4

Behram Rustomji Mistry (72), Navyug Chmbs, 165, Lamington Rd, 400007; July 4

Jehangir Pestonji Bhathena (81), A, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculla, 400027; July 5

Khorshedbanu Cawasji Cooper (94), 60, Shival Motilal Bldg, 400008; July 5

Roda Phiroze Meherji (65), Sidhwa Bldg, 281, Princess St, 400002; July 5

Shera Savak Oomrigar (96), 9, Carnation, Kadeshwari Marg, Bandra (W), 400050; July 6

Dosa Jal Nanji (74), A/604, Nestle, Lokhandwala Complex, Andheri (W), 400058; July 7

Ruttonshaw Pestonji Bhathena (95), C/604, Laxmi Nivas, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 8

Minoo Khurshedji Canteenwala (58), RBIII/7/5, Railway Qtrs, Koliwada, Sion, 400022; July 8

Gooloo Jimmy (Jamshedji) Jeejibhoy (62), 51/B, Paradise Apt, 44, Nepean Sea Rd, 400026; July 8

Hilla Kekobad Patel (78), 63, Ocean Crest, 85, B. Desai Rd, 400036; July 8

Kersi Framroze Hatara (65), 204, Ivory Towers, Juhu Koliwada, Santacruz (W), 400054; July 9

Meherbai Kaikobad Karkaria (92), 86, Ardeshtir Dadi St, Khetwadi, 400004; July 10

Jehangir Pirojshah Balsara (75), B/25, Meherzin, Wodehouse Rd, 400005; July 12

Peshotan Framroze Raimalwalla (67), Sethna Bldg, Meherbai Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; July 12

Dina Bejanjee Surtee (76), 51, Hill Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; July 12

Firdosh Maneck Vajifdar (40), Wadia Agiary, Lalbaug, 400012; July 12

Piroja Pestonji Wadia (80), Taher Bldg, Jalbhoy St, Charni Rd, 400004; July 12

Rustomji Ratanji Contractor (81), 183/A, Maker Towers, Cuffe Parade, 400005; July 13

Kaikhushru Jamshedji Dastur (63), 104, Kavrana Bldg, Marine Lines, 400020; July 13

Shirin Burjorji Desai (89), B, Simla Hse, Nepean Sea Rd, 400036; July 13

Lily Cawasji Engineer (77), 347/C, United Chmbs, Grant Rd, 400007; July 13

Khorshedbanoo Ardeshtir Patel (93), Gulab Simo Vihar, 759, Rd No 7, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 13

Naval Hormusji Patch (80), Advile, 34, Ridge Rd, Malabar Hill, 400006; July 13

Piroj Maneckji Daruwala (71), 1, Master Bldg, Mori Rd, Mahim, 400016; July 14

Mehernosh Minoo Ichhaporia (38), 4, Siddhi Vinayak Apts, Mulund (E), 400081; July 14

Keki Byramsha Pardiwalla (65), 4/30, A. H. Wadia Baug, Parcel Tank Rd, 400033; July 14

Jehangir Khodadad Sasaki (73), 204, Old Sitaram Bldg, Princess St, 400002; July 14

Pesi Bomanji Mistry (76), F. S. Parukh Dharamshala, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; July 15

Sapal Framroze Bhandari (62), 11, Mody Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; July 17

Jehangir Jamshed Mistry (68), 5/2, Nasvanji Tata Bldg, S. V Rd, Bandra, 400050; July 17

Roshan Maneckshaw Sethna (77), 9/5, Sorab Bharucha Rd, Colaba, 400005; July 17

Tehmursip Pallonji Wadia (83), 12, Surti Chmbs, IInd Dhobitalao Lane, 400002; July 17
Hormusji Jehangirji Jasumani (78), Room 13, M. P. Contractor Chawl, Byculla, 400027; July 18
Nasservan Navroji Bharucha (89), B. Shirin Mans, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; July 19
Kavas Jamshedji Boga (77), 651/5, Karanjia Bldg, Dhobitalao, 400002; July 19
Dinshaw Jehangirji Makhania (66), F. Dalal Est, Bombay Central, 400008; July 19
Jeejeebhoy Nanabhoy Marshall (95), 71, E1 Cid, 13, Ridge Road, 400006; July 19
Darabsha Sorabji Bharucha (81), Petit Sanatorium, August Kranti Marg, 400036; July 21
Ruby Rustomji Bharucha (70), 12, Ratan Tata Bldg, C. J. Clny, Tardeo, 400034; July 21
Freny Mino Bhathela (68), 95, Eruch Villa, Almeida Rd, Bandra, 400050; July 21
Roshan Fareedoon Delkhah (40), 135/13, Sindhi Soc, Chembur, 400071; July 21
Boman Behram Irani (77), Wagla Cooper Bldg, 12th Khetwadi Lane, 400004;

July 21
Namdar Kaikashroo Irani (65), 66, Mistry Park, Warden Rd, 400036; July 21
Dina Nariman Kelawala (76), 13, Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; July 21
Minoo Rustomji Mistry (75), 3/32, A. H. Wadia Bldg, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; July 21
Tehmina Dossabhoy Sahukar (88), 14, Petit Block, Marzban Clny, Gilder Lane, 400007; July 21
Gool Hormasji Vesuna (72), 676, Fareedoon Ter, Katrak Rd, Wadala, 400031; July 21
Naval Dinshaw Banker (63), Wimbridge Hse, 20, Sleater Rd, 400007; July 22
Jamshed Sorabji Billimoria (82), Brightlands Glow, 195, Turner Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; July 22
Khodaram Aspandeyar Hushmendi (75), 401, Wavelash, Perry Cross Rd, Bandra, 400050; July 22
Faramroz Sorabji Keravala (82), Palia Mans, 622, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 22
Maneck Khurshed Antia (73), 12, Shangrila, Colaba Post

Office, 400005; July 23
Kali Kaikhushroo Divecha (76), 903, Cumballa Crest, 42, Pedder Rd, 400026; July 23
Homi Dhunjishaw Haladhwal (79), 11, Wadia Bldg, Malcolm Bldg, Jogeshwari, 400102; July 24
Perin Noshirwan Kershaw (63), 12/A, Rustomjee Bldg, 17, Sleater Rd, 400007; July 25
Sorab Ratanshaw Bilimoria (73), 1/34, A. H. Wadia Bldg, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; July 26
Najamai Bomanshaw Mehta (92), Zenith Mans, 11, Nuserwanji Petit St, Balaram St, 400007; July 26
Hirabai Dhunjishaw Wadia (85), 6, Geetanjali, S. V. Rd, Borivli (E), 400066; July 27
Homi Kaikhushroo Bharucha (74), 16, Sethna Bldg, 216, Princess St, 400002; July 28
Adi Manchershaw Captain (81), 17, A. K. Nayak Marg, Fort, 400001; July 28
Fardunjee Hormusjee Daruwala (69), Daruwala Chawl, Nargardas Rd, Andheri (E), 400069; July 28
Eruchshaw Sorabji Engineer (92), Dubash Bldg, Kashinath

St, Tardeo, 400034; July 28
Rustom Hormusji Engineer (82), Serenham, 661, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 29
Nergish Khurshed Gandhi (53), 220/E, The Reward, Tardeo, 400007; July 29
Homi Jehangir Patel (75), Kanga Bldg, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Dadar, 400014; July 29
Shirin Minoocher Soonawala (86), 1/A, Sagar-Sangeet, 58, S. B. Rd, Colaba, 400005; July 29
Jerbai Eruchsa Bengali (85), 511, Kanak Vihar, Adenwalla Rd, Matunga, 400019; July 30
Khodaram Khodadad Bonyanian (89), 302/A, Kishan Bldg, Gun Powder Lane, Mazgaon, 400010; July 30
Manijeh Hormuzdar Bharucha (96), 67, Rajat Apts, Mt Pleasant Rd, 400006; July 31
Avi Behram Cassinath (58), 69/F, Amadi, Breach Candy, 400026; July 31
Sorabji Rustomji Gamadia (47), Windsor Chmbs, Cawasji Patel St, Fort, 400001; July 31
Roda Munchersha Nalawala (82), 19/A, Rustomji Bldg, 17, Sleater Rd, 400007; July 31

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CALCUTTA**Married**

Sheena Chakhaiyar and Farhad Master; July 6

Died

Dorabji Ardeshtir Panthaki; March 23

Manek Keki Coachman (68), mother of Parvez and Nargez Viraf Marfatia; July 13

POONA**Died**

Dhanjishaw Rustomjee (67), 15, Elpheston Rd, Dapodi, 411012; July 8

Bahadur Feroze Antia (66), 3/33, Guruprasad Hsg Soc, 24, Bund Garden Rd, 411001; July 9

Boman M. Pithawala (83), Bldg 1, Ardeshtir Irani Rd, Nanapeth, 411009; July 9

Tehmi Pesi Engineer (78), Chidraahi Apts, Salisbury Park, 411001; July 11

Shirin K. Katrak (96), 2/15, Canopus Apts, Boat Club Rd, 411001; July 11

Phiroze Jamshed Mehta of Allahabad (53), 203, Sidharth Towers, Fatima Ngr, 411013;

July 21

Jehangir Hormasji Kaikobad (86), 19, Mody Clny, Synagogue St, 411001; July 29

Rustom Munchersha Daruwala (78), 36, Welsley Rd, 411001; July 31

SURAT**Died**

Dhunmai Burjorji Karanjia (82), Vaki Bordi, 395003; July 4

Nergishbanu Ardeshtir Vesuna (70), Nilappa Apts, Kalapesi St, Nanpura, 395001; July 5

Najoo Jehangir Meherji (68), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; July 12

Banoo Mancherji Ghadialy (89), Wadia Hse, Maachli Pith, 395003; July 14

Keki Dinshaw Kadva (80), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; July 27

BIRMINGHAM, UK**Born**

A girl, *Natasha*, to *Shenaz* and *Malcolm Batki*; June 7

CAMBRIDGE, UK**Died**

Minocher Shavakshaw Oomrigar (77); March 21

CHICAGO**Married**

Cathy Godfrey of North Carolina and *Cyrus Bamji*; June 3

Died

Ardeshtir R. Vajifdar (71), father of Pesi, Gool and Yasmin; June 8

DETROIT**Married**

Betsy Tavadia and *Pesi Sanjana* of Chicago; June 8

KARACHI**Died**

Tehmina Rustamji Gamwala (83); May 3

Khorshed Fakirji Ghaswala (75); May 4

Homi Khurshedji Bharucha (65); May 7

Dhunmai Maneckji Cooper (93); May 26

Rohinton Hormusji Dosabhoy (56); May 29

KENT, UK**Died**

Firoze S. Dorabjee (78), 5, The Birches, Farnborough; May 15

LONDON**Born**

A boy, *Dinyar*, to *Nilufer* and *Kobad Byramjee*; March 7

A boy, *Cyrus*, to *Roshan* and *Mehernosh Khorshidchehr*; March 21

Married

Ruby Shahiwalla, daughter of *Dhun* and *Rusi*, and *Firoze Nari-man Kapadia* of Bombay; April 14

SUSSEX, UK**Died**

Cawas Jehangirji Bam (67), husband of *Freany*; May 10

TOTALS (for this issue)

Births: Boys 16, Girls 8

Marriages: Parsi 12

Intercommunal 2

Deaths: 106

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

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Taraporewala's im-print



Died: Arjasp Framroze Taraporewala, 88, long-standing president of the Madras Parsi Zarthosti Anjuman and also the Madras Parsi Association, and publisher of four editions of the *Khordeh Avesta* in

Hindi, on April 15, 1990 at his residence in Madras following old age and debility.

"Even during his last days he was so worried about the future of the community and wrote us a very moving letter requesting us not to postpone our agiary celebrations if he should pass away," remembers Ms Mani Clubwala, joint honorary secretary of the Jal Phiroj Clubwala Dar-e-Meher Eightieth Anniversary Celebrations and Fund Raising Committee. For 27 years he had served as trustee of the Dar-e-Meher and in its eightieth year celebrations his name headed the list of patrons.

"His generous and silent contributions...for a period of 60 years...not only to the Parsi community in Madras and elsewhere but to the poor and down-trodden and other institutions," were recollected in the condolence resolution in his honor passed at the meeting jointly convened by the Madras Parsi Zarthosti Anjuman, Madras Parsi Association and the Jal Phiroj Clubwala Dar-e-Meher. For 10 years he was the president of the Anjuman, for nine years its vice president, and for three years its honorary secretary. As the first honorary treasurer of the Madras Parsi Association, an offshoot of the Anjuman, organizing social and sports activities for its members, his involvement with this institution spanned several decades, serving as its president for 20 years. During his tenure as president, Clubwala, who was then the secretary, remembers, "Whenever there was a loss in any function we held, he would pay for the deficit... or he would quietly buy tickets for all those who could not afford..."

His philanthropy extended to other

causes: the F. B. Taraporewala Memorial Fund, named after his father, that was jointly founded by his family members and the proceeds of which go towards the maintenance of the Dar-e-Meher and awards for excellence in education, sports, gallantry, etc. The Hormusji Naoroji Trust, on which he had served as trustee, helped with scholarships for technical and industrial training of Zoroastrian students, informs a family source. He was also connected with the Guild of Service and the Madras School of Social Work.

"From childhood he had great faith in his religion and prayers and never missed a prayer or a jashan till the time he (was incapacitated)," recalls his sister Dilla Nalladaroo. The four editions of his Hindi transliteration of the *Khordeh Avesta* were considered "a labor of love." As he explains in his preface, "Because every child in India is compelled to learn Hindi... this book will be useful for Parsi children who cannot read Gujarati and to whom pronunciation in Roman script will be difficult... It is only when the children acquire from their early years the habit of regular *bandagi* (prayers) that they will realize the tremendous power of our holy *manthravani* (incantations)."

Taraporewala was not new to the printing line. He had had considerable experience with the setting up of Aspy Litho Works and Perina Printers that undertook litho press and letter press printing jobs. He was better known in business circles by the name A. F. Byramshaw. A founder member of the Madras Printers' and Lithographers' Association, he served as its president for several years, notes a write-up detailing his achievements. Before joining the printing business Taraporewala had been associated with his father's business as a motorcar dealer and subsequently took up military contracts during World War II.

The Tarapur-born Taraporewala had spent a major part of his life in Madras where he studied at the Christian College School and the Madras Christian College

from where he graduated in philosophy.

A widower for the last 37 years of his life, since 1974 he started concentrating more on his social work activities and for the last nearly 10 years opted to retire from his business, handing over the reins to his nephew Byramshaw.

He is survived by his sister Dilla Nalladaroo and brother Purvez Byramshaw.

Tuning in to Masani



Died: Ms Mehra Rustom Masani, 76, first director of the External Services Division of All India Radio (AIR) and subsequently director of the Leslie Sawhny Training Centre in Deolali, on April 6, 1990 in Deolali following a prolonged bout of rheumatoid arthritis.

"Mehra Masani seemed to symbolize what the radio stood for... a new medium of expression geared to all that is best in the intellectual and artistic world," wrote her colleague P. C. Chatterji in *Pulse*, Number 118, the newsletter of the Leslie Sawhny Programme (LSP). As director of the External Services Division she is credited with having provided the "backbone" in the form of The General Overseas Services in English which is on the air for nearly 12 hours a day. "It was she who was responsible for working out the staff structure and program content which has remained largely constant ever since," informs Chatterji.

Her familiarity with the workings of the broadcasting setup was so well-known that she was appointed member secretary of the Chanda Committee that oversaw the performance of AIR. In addition, she labored over the Masani Committee Report that attempted to formulate norms for manpower requirement for different AIR programs. When she was

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the deputy director general, she had the privilege of being the first AIR official to be included in the Indian delegation to the UNESCO General Assembly in Paris in 1968, the write-up lists her achievements.

For nearly 40 years Masani was associated with the AIR. After obtaining a master's degree from the London School of Economics she began her career as program assistant in Bombay in the late '30s, rising to the rank of station director in 1949 and finally retiring a year prematurely around 1970, the highlights of her professional life are mentioned in Chatrji's reminiscences.

Management consultant Aspi Moddie recalls his impressions of Masani: "She carried herself with the quiet confidence of a poised, competent, insightful person, retaining her charm... No matter how different her views, she expressed those views with modesty, clarity and friendliness." Compliments Moddie, "If we are struggling towards an autonomous corporation in the public media today...it is partly because upright people like Mehra laid the groundwork."

Masani's book, *Broadcasting and the People*, published by the National Book Trust during the Emergency, makes a plea for an autonomous broadcasting setup and for freedom of information. Through the book she is said to have

conveyed her "interest in broadcasting as a tool for education, both general education and education for democracy."

It is towards building an institution in citizenship, development and democracy, run by the Leslie Sawhny Programme, that Masani devoted herself in the later years. Named after the late Col Leslie Sawhny, the husband of Rodabeh R.D.Tata and a champion of civil liberties, it spreads the message of liberalism through camps and seminars. Participants include tribals, students, professionals and others. As director of the Training Centre in Deolali "she inspired discipline, leadership and integrity," notes a write-up in *Pulse*. "Her presence made all the difference to the Centre," notes Russi Lala, director of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, in a condolence letter. "One felt secure with her because she had values and principles apart from a warm heart," he adds.

Remembered as being tall and elegant with a mop of thick black hair, she reportedly maintained that poise until the last 10 years when arthritis started crippling her. Even then, she never complained, but bore it all with patience and dignity, mentioning her colleagues.

Masani is survived by her brothers Minoo, Keki and Pesi.

Written by Parinaz Gandhi

AN INJUSTICE AT DOONGERWADI *continued from page 58*

and was operated at the (B. D. Petit) Parsee General Hospital after marriage, but he held on to his resolution business. Tehemton's wife (noted surgeon Dr Tehemton Udwadia's wife Khorshed is Nazir's sister), my mother-in-law Mehra Mehta and Keki Khambatta, my wife's cousin, all tried, but Golwalla responded like this to everyone. Now it transpires that there is no such resolution!

"Instead of being big enough to apologise and bring everything to an end, they are trying to cover up by a series of falsehoods..."

"Roxan married in February 1984. We had no reservations at all. We were all very happy about the man — he's an excellent boy (from) an excellent family.

"Roxan probably had a premonition of death. A child of 25 does not speak of death, but she had mentioned once or twice that she'd like to be interred in the dokhma. If she'd given up Zoroastrianism why should I want Zoroastrian rites? I'd prefer to have Hindu or Muslim or Christian rites. That's where they are going wrong..."

Dastur Kotwal's letter and an editorial on the subject will be published in the September 1990 issue of Parsiana.



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