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March 1991
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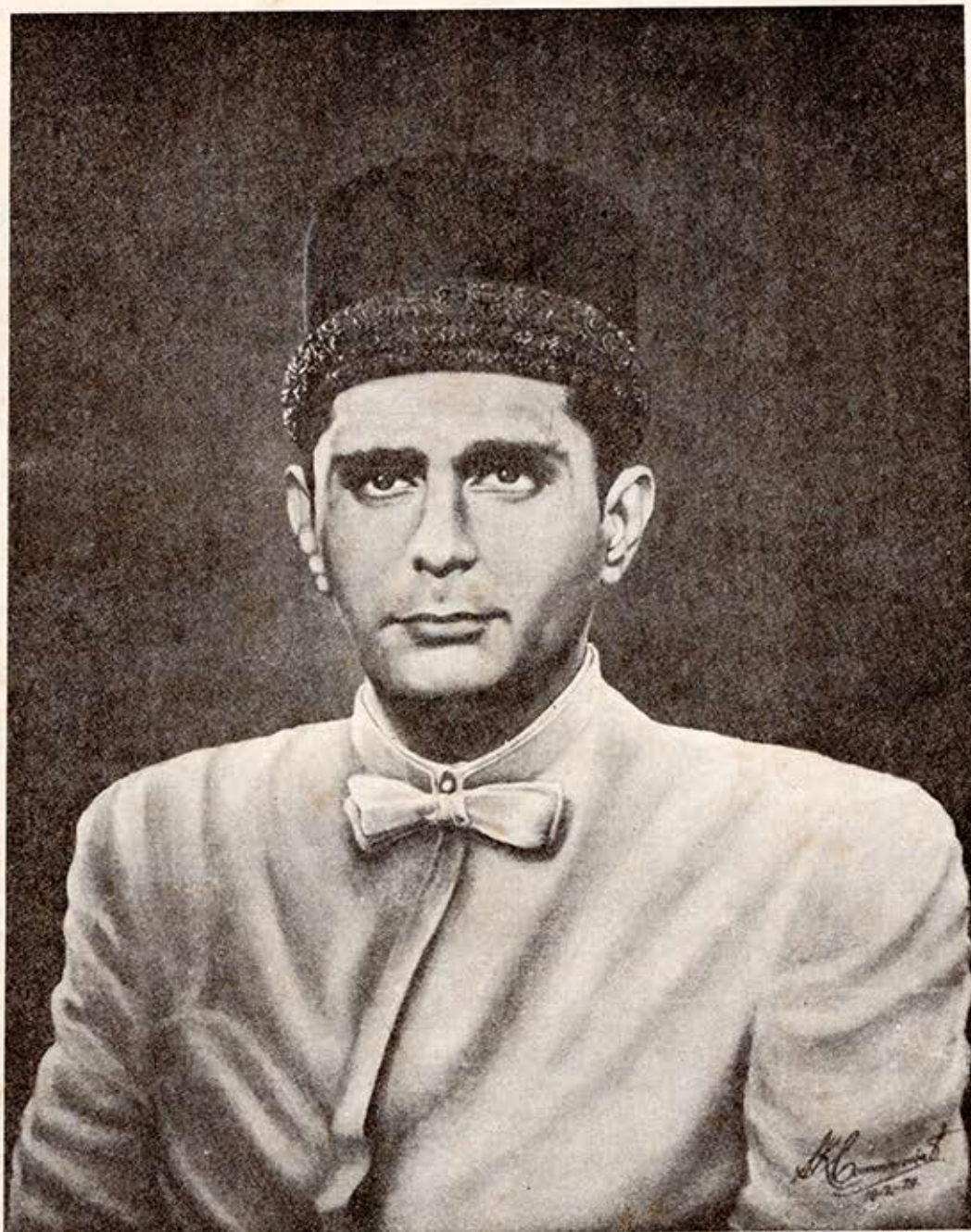
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Cover: Navy personnel at Teen Murti The Cavalry Memorial, New Delhi

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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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"Confronted by..."

I refer to Ms Parinaz Gandhi's report on the executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India in New Delhi on September 22 and 23, 1990 ("Confronted by Controversies," *Parsiana*, December 1990).

On page 24, under the sub-title "Time to report," reference is made to the summation of the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress: "The summation of the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress (WZC) will be finalized after each Federation throughout the world evaluates the report prepared by Aspi Moddie who was on the organizing committee of the Congress. Every Federation will be given an opportunity to submit its views and thereafter the ultimate finalization of the report will be done by the Federation in India, briefed BPP trustee Jamshed Guzder, chairman of the Congress.

When Nargolwala complained that the summation did not carry detailed discussions, Taleyarkhan lamented, 'In some cases even the chairman's views have not been included.' The final report may also include a summary of every paper presented at the Congress."

This is not, strictly speaking, correct. I had made it specifically clear that the summation, as drawn up by Mr Aspi Moddie, was a true reflection of the comments made by each chairman of the session in his report to the Congress on the concluding day of the Congress. The summation does not contain any of Mr Aspi Moddie's own views. The summation was considered at the executive committee meeting (of the WZC) on August 21, 1990 and unanimously adopted as the final draft. The summation had earlier been sent to all the federations for their information and distribution to their respective anjumans in that area.

The purpose of circulating this summation is that the president and office bearers of each federation may read and make comments in case something has been omitted from the statements made by the chairmen. In my covering letter I have made this clear and it has been implied that if they have no comments to offer, the executive committee will go ahead and print the summation.

The question of acceptance of all the views in the summation does not arise. The recommendations in the summation are not mandatory; they are only recommendatory and it is the responsibility of each federation/anjuman to accept, reject or modify them to suit the requirements and conditions prevailing in their area.

From your article it may be implied that the summation will be subject to change, rewording, additions and modifications, which is not correct. J. N. GUZDER

Chairman, Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress

"What ails the..."

In "What ails the community," (*Parsiana*, December 1990) Dr Farokh Udawadia says that "The... Parsee General... has become geriatric." The truth of the matter is that the general Parsis have gone geriatric. Mobed P. D. MAGOL

Karachi

"Lady Tata"

I refer to the caption "Lady Tata" below the photograph on page five (Readers'

Forum, *Parsiana*, December 1990).

As you may be aware Lady Tata was the wife of Sir Ratan J. Tata and belonged to the well-known Parsi Seth family of Bombay.

Mr R. D. Tata was the cousin of Sir Ratan. The controversy following the navjote related to his wife Soonoo (on counter-checking we learn the name was Suzanne), the mother of Mr J. R. D. Tata. The photograph depicts Ms R. D. Tata.

KEKI M. MEHTA

Nagpur

Parsiana erred. Our apologies.

"Karachi..."

"Karachi: the cross-cultural bind" by Ms Parinaz Gandhi (*Parsiana*, September 1990) was very interesting but there are a couple of statements which are slightly misleading and need clarification.

In para one she states that whenever any Indians come to Pakistan, the first question they are asked by their host in Pakistan is whether they have reported to the police. This is true, but it is also equally true that when Pakistanis visit India, we also have to report to the police — so, reporting of Indian nationals to police in Pakistan is not something extraordinary. At the same time, I would like to mention that at least when Indians come to Pakistan, it is not obligatory for them to visit the police in person to report arrival/departure. Whereas in Bombay when



Suzanne Tata: landmark navjote

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we arrive, it is obligatory for every passenger to visit the police station for reporting and at times it takes a few hours before your turn comes.

• Dry fruits — yes we have plenty available, still we miss cashew nuts and we bring plenty from Bombay. Similarly, all dry fruits are available in plenty in Bombay but when Parsis return to Bombay they carry kilos of almonds and pistachios. So once again there is nothing extraordinary for Pakistani Parsis bringing cashew nuts.

• It could be that Parinaz was misinformed about Parsis holding their functions at Hotel Metropole if they are supporters of Minwalla and Cowasjee and Beach Luxury and Avari Towers if they favor Avari. Parsis hold their functions in Metropole — not because they support Minwalla, the Cowasjees have nothing to do with the Metropole — because of the quality of food which is served at Hotel Metropole plus its central location.

F. K. KHAMBATTA
Karachi

"The Controversy..."

In "The Controversy Continues," (*Parsiana*, October 1990) Ms Arnavaz S. Mama writes, "The Dasturs' edict reportedly runs diagonally opposite to the opinion of retired Chief Justice of India, Y. V. Chandrachud..." The Special Marriage Act, 1954 may be special for those who wish to get married outside the religious order and precept of their own community — but we Parsi Zoroastrians have a legally approved Parsi Marriage Act under the Constitution of India, and any marriages performed outside the structure of this Act are not recognised as legal by the Parsi Zoroastrian community, even if performed by two Zoroastrians, leave alone a union of a Parsi with a non-Parsi.

Surely, the learned judge is not implying that the Special Marriage Act (SMA) 1954 stands to abolish our time-honored Parsi Marriage Act?

Obviously due to lack of proper understanding of the Parsi Zoroastrian doctrines, tenets and precepts, the learned judge may have assumed that a Parsi Zoroastrian lady marrying a non-Parsi under the SMA may have some Zoroastrian communal or religious rights.

Surely, the learned judge is not trying to suggest to the Zoroastrian community that a 'Civil Act' (such as the SMA) of the land could overrule our established Zoroastrian religious beliefs, doctrines,

customs, traditions and basic tenets, to suit a few individuals who deliberately violate them?

Ervad DARIUS N. SETHNA

"An injustice at..."

It was good to read the portions of Ms Dina Nayar's letter, "An injustice at..." (*Readers' Forum*, *Parsiana*, October 1990) correctly extolling the holy *Gathas* with particular reference to and admiration for their highly-rated translation by the late respected Dr I. J. S. Taraporewala.

As that great scholar aptly puts it, "These *Gathas* are among the most precious possessions of humanity and they are the very fountainhead of the teachings of Zarathushtra." The *Gathas* (root *ga*, to sing + *tha*, nominative suffix) are Asho Zarathushtra's intensely personal devotional outpourings in the form of metrical chants.

Taraporewala says that the fifth and final *Vahishta-Ishii Gatha* "has been regarded by many scholars to be a 'Wedding Hymn.'" As his erudite translation of the seventh verse of this last *Gatha* is of timeless as well as special topical significance, I exactly reproduce below the entire verse in its two convenient parts, with emphases and explanatory comments supplied by me.

The initial part of the verse states: "But-on-the-other-hand the reward (*mizdem*) of this Brotherhood (*ahya Magahya*) awaits you as-long-as in-the-united-couple (*hakhtayao*) (there exists) essentially the-most-devoted zeal, acting whether for-the-higher or for-the-lower (life)."

It is well-known that *Maga* (variously mentioned eight times in the *Gathas*) means the great *Maga* Brotherhood or Society founded and headed by Asho Zarathushtra at the nucleus of his new religion which was accepted only by the Mazdayasni section of the ancient Aryans. It is equally well-known that the non-Mazdayasni section of the ancient Aryans comprised the opposing Dae-vayasni community (*Daeva* is variously mentioned eleven times in the *Gathas*) which followed a different religious persuasion and did not accept the religion of Asho Zarathushtra. Since the term *hakhtayao* (united couple) is specifically used in meaningful association with *Maga* (the Zarathushtrian Brotherhood), the inference is self-evident and unmistakable that Asho Zarathushtra's conception of the marital union only envisages it taking place wholly and solely within the Mazdayasni community which alone

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owed religious allegiance to the Prophet and his *Maga*. Just as obvious is the inference that the *mizdem* or reward (to be understood in the highest spiritual connotation as specified in the 15th verse of the fourth *Gatha*) flowing from the Prophet's great *Maga* would be bestowed upon those wedded couples who, already subscribing to it as Mazdayasni-Zarathushtrians, also strive with devoted zeal to fully implement its teachings in all spheres of their lives.

The final part of the verse states: "wherever the spirit of-the-follower-of-Untruth prevails, should-you-renounce (*ivizayatha*) this Brotherhood (*Magem tem*), then in-grief (*vayoi*) your final word shall-be (uttered)."

This statement amply reconfirms the earlier inference that Asho Zarathushtra addresses and envisages couples united in wedlock strictly within the Mazdayasni community, for he now pointedly advises them to continue to remain within the *Maga* fold with the warning of grievous spiritual consequences to follow should they be deluded into not doing so. Not to be ignorantly misconstrued as a cheap threat or as an insult to other communi-

ties, this is a profound expression of the universal spiritual law which requires that the religious affiliation determined by divine design at birth be assiduously continued in all respects throughout life.

For those of us who admire and accept Dr Taraporewala's inspired rendition of the holy *Gathas*, the bald injunction of *pak Vendidad* against mixed marriages contracted by women or by men should come as no surprise. An objective and dispassionate analysis of our community should reveal just how many of the futile controversies, ranging from conversion to dokhmenashini, that have bedevilled and disunited the Parsis for close to a century are, in full or part, the direct or indirect fallout of this particular practice.

RONI K. KHAN

Nasik

Your correspondent Ms Dina Nayar has pertinently asked what faith such people (as Dastur Kotwal and his fair-weather friends both in India and the UK) follow (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, October 1990). The answer was, in fact, supplied by Zarathushtra himself in his *Gathas*: *karpanism*. She and other earnest

enquirers may easily ascertain just how much energy our Prophet has devoted, some 3,000 years before, in strong condemnation of precisely such destructive forces of deceit and disruption.

Let them digest the import of the following from the *Vishtasp Yash*: "Ahura Mazda spake thus to the righteous Zarathushtra, and thus did repeat Zarathushtra unto the young King Vishtaspa: Have no bad or unfriendly priests, for bad and unfriendly priests occasion much harm, and your desire to sacrifice unto the Amesha Spentas will be as though the sacrifice had not been offered." The Vendidadists amongst us should have no difficulty in recognizing this supplement to the first karde of far-gard 18.

Not for nothing do these desperate persons now resort to attacking the *Gathas* themselves, for these sacred hymns are wholly incompatible with their version of what they mask under Zoroastrianism! It is not surprising that Dasturji does not find geometry in "a book of poetry," any more than it would be surprising for him to find any uplifting spirituality, noble philosophy or high

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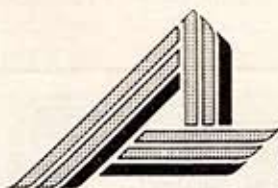
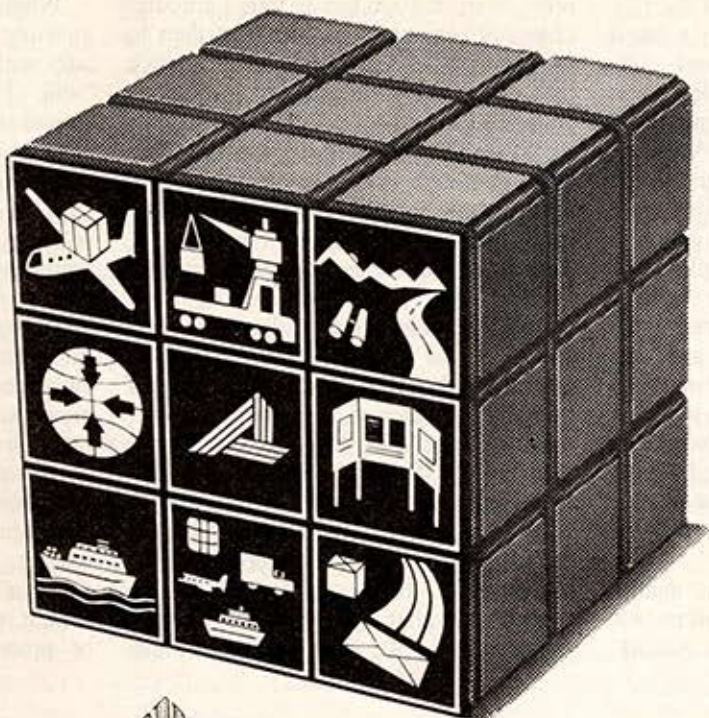
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ethics, when the very purpose of Zarathushtra's teaching eludes him. We notice instead much preparation for the after-world, and priestly intercession, attempted postmortem, for the acceptance of errant souls into *garo-demana*. Having failed to come to terms with the religion of light and life, Dasturji himself has now become the prophet, and Zarathushtra his mouthpiece. His putative followers, the Parsi thunderers ("The orthodox response," *Parsiana*, October 1990), make a considerable din — a sure indication of impoverishment of ideas, tired dogma and obscurantism.

Our apathy and silence, coupled with the conscious stifling of major "controversial" issues, have emboldened these persons to blaspheme against and vent their spleen upon any and everybody who dares not to conform with their closed-minded outlook on everything from racism to religion. Is it to be wondered that the holy *Gathas* themselves are presented as some sinister tool in the hands of the so-called "liberals?"

It appears that Dasturji has no qualms whatever about forcing our sacred texts to suit his argument. One such remark-

able maneuver occurs in his version of the *Fravardin Yasht*, karde 30: an attempt at establishing the second-rate status of women in Avestic times ("If you want to come back, I want to stop you," *Parsiana*, September 1990). May I refer interested readers to this particular object of manipulation first, and then to its earlier kardes 25-29 in brief so that they may judge the old socioreligious situation for themselves?

Dasturji's contention is invalidated by clear reference to Hvovi, Zarathushtra's wife without mention either of her illustrious husband or her father Frashaoshtra, Vishtaspa's minister and early apostle of the faith. Similarly Zarathushtra's daughter Pouruchista (referred to in *Yasna* 53 as "Zarathushtra's youngest daughter") holds pride of place on her own, though married to Jamaspa, another minister, apostle of the faith, first propagator of the *Gathas*! Witness also Hutaosa, wife of Vishtaspa, Zarathushtra's Kavi-protector and first propagandist for the new faith — again no mention of her renowned husband, so lauded in the *Gathas* (together with Frashaoshtra and Jamaspa Hvogva). The Avestic formula,

well known to Dasturji, simply reads, e.g. "*Hvovyo* *ashaonyao* *fravashim yazamaide* [(a.f.y.) — we revere the fravashi of the truth-owning Hvovi]," as also with "*Pouruchistyo* a.f.y.," "*Hutaosayao* a.f.y." (§139).

When, however, it comes to distinguishing between the four Freni-s of a later section (§140), then we indeed have "wife of so-and-so" or "wife of the son of so-and-so" (their fathers-in-law being named, doubtless for their pious achievements in the early days of Zoroastrianism), their married status being shown solely by *nairyao*. Thereafter we have the unmarried pious womenfolk whose righteous souls are venerated — these are simply designated as *kanyao*. In the section immediately following, the worship embraces *all* the pious men and *all* the pious women in *all* countries, painstakingly listed. The insistent appeal to universalism and the full equality of men and women was extended without any qualification save that they be truth-possessing. The expressions used are *naram* and *nairinam*, and if the man is placed first, it is no more indicative of inequality or precedence than is "Mr and Mrs"

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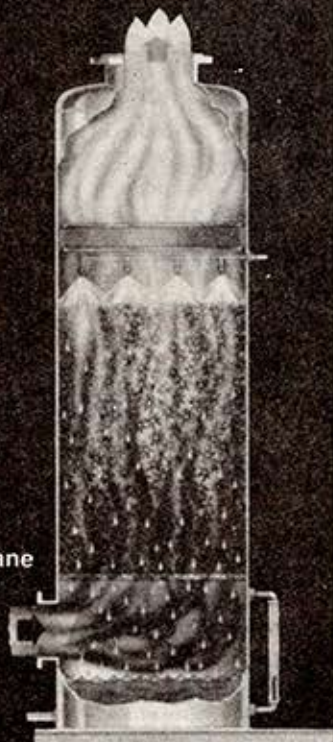
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Dasturji and his prayerful acolytes will also have no difficulty in recalling "nerebyascha nairibyascha zarathushtrahe" from the oft-quoted *Airyema ishyo* prayer immediately following the last *Gatha*: it is Gathic Avestan for the "menfolk and womenfolk of Zarathushtra" whose pious assistance is sought in solemn convocation. Women never were chattel, work- or sex-objects in Zoroastrianism. Our great Prophet had no inclination or use for hair-splitting, distressing classifications. His glorious vision for a regenerated world, *this world* ("atcha toi vaem hyama yoi im ferashem kerenaon ahum — and thus may we be those who shall make this world renewed!"), perceived the need for pure-minded men and women whose utterances and deeds are in consonance with Truth and the Good Mind.

To return briefly to the earlier kardes of the *Fravardin Yasht* where the saintly menfolk are enumerated, we perforce begin with our noble Preceptor himself and his excellent qualities: "A blessing upon us, amidst whom is born the athra-van Spitama Zarathushtra... (whose) good Mazdayasnian religion will come and spread through all the seven *keshvars* of the earth (the whole world)." (The scholarly High-Priest Zadsparm and the *Denkard* were to echo these very sentiments some 1,500 years later, after the Islamic conquest of Iranshahr!) Thereafter the early disciples of the faith are catalogued, systematically grouped by nomenclature prefix (e.g. *Atare-*), suffix (e.g. *-okhsan*), or family affiliation (son of so-and-so). Some early luminaries were singled out for special mention, e.g., the saintly Saena, son of Ahum-stut who enriched the faith with 100 disciples, the Karesna family blest with three sons in whose house tarried the per-

sonification of pious riches, etc. The point being made here is that all of these and the eight Kavi-king list were qualified solely as righteous or truth-possessing.

Dasturji is pleased to poke priestly fun at Behdins John and Tom. Perhaps he will now tilt his jolly "orthodox" gibes at the nominally christianized behdins Russ, Gus, Ronnie, Percy, Freddy, Jimmy and, dare I say it, Filly, being, in case we have all forgotten, sad popularizations for the wonderfully resounding Rostam, Gushtasp, Ruyintan, Pishyotan, Fareydun, Jamshid and, of course, Firoze!

When there exists a section of the priesthood which threatens, insults and terrorizes, what hope is there for the wonderful life-affirming religion of Zarathushtra to waft its darkness-dispelling currents over a beleaguered humanity? To callously and mischievously deny the holy fire ('strengthened through Truth,' says Zarathushtra!) and the proper last rites to those thus singled out on trumped-up pretexts, is to demean themselves and their daena. To effectively proclaim that they are no respecters of the living or the dead, is to forget that they too have to confront the Chinvalo Peretu/Chinvad Pul.

Goodness is born of the wisdom within each man or woman on this Ahura-created earth. Each and every one of us has that little part of Ahura Mazda entrusted to us to enable the making of this a better world for all humanity.

Ms Nayar's plea to all of us should not go unheeded. Parents should indeed exercise themselves and their children in steadily increasing their knowledge of our Prophet's teachings as embodied in the *Gathas*. Nothing is too much trouble, and fulfilment of all our spiritual yearning is assured. Drawbacks and obstacles are there, but with determined selfless persons of goodwill everywhere, their

negative effects can be minimized.

In closing I implore your readers everywhere to quietly meditate upon the implications of the laconic three-liner in *Milestones* (*Parsiana*, October 1990): "Roxan Darshan Shah (26)... July 27 (cremated)" *Ashaonam fravashim yazamaide!*

FARROKH VAJIFDAR
London, UK

Parsis take heart! The fossilized patriarchs of our religion could not have done the community a greater service than by denying Roxan the use of the doongerwadi.

Their views have created a forum for public debate. The hypocracies of our supposedly liberal, progressive community have been exposed. The result will, hopefully, be a change in the right direction.

Perhaps (Dastur) Kotwal and his group should be sent to a reeducation camp while men and women with a better understanding of their religion take their place.

We are grateful to Roxan for being the catalyst for change.

Ms MAHROUK VEVAINA
Calcutta

I feel compelled to congratulate Dr H. S. Adenwalla from Trichur for his letter regarding "An injustice at doongerwadi" (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, November 1990). I wish there were more such enlightened people in our community. Unfortunately today, barring a few, our Zoroastrian faith sadly lacks interpreters of this caliber.

We must learn a lesson from history. When any religious sect of people begin to think that they are the God's chosen few, then they initiate a sure downfall for themselves. The Jews have experienced

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this, at the cost of very tragic circumstances all throughout their history, reaching their nadir during World War II.

True religion is an appeal to the spirit of man. So, it cannot be interpreted by merely using one's mind, or by taking a limited meaning from a few sentences, taken out of context, from a set of prayers. Further, we must remember that much of our holy scriptures have been lost, and that they are written in a language which is extinct today. Also, most of the religious texts, in fact for any religion, are couched in metaphors, and so we cannot understand them by merely taking their literary meaning. If one imbibes the essence or spirit of one's religion, through one's heart, then one can understand the entire religion.

I will try and make myself more clear through a poem:

"When the heart takes up,
leaving the brain behind,
It is only then that we truly find,
the limits of our limited mind.
Oh vain vanity! did you really think,
that you were the doer, of all that you did.
How foolish could you have been —

to make such a useless bid!"

True religion should be a heartfelt experience. No amount of intellectualizing can ever replace it. Most of our Zoroastrian rituals, which have a lot of meaning behind them, have now become meaningless because, except a few, many really do not understand their true significance.

Today, toleration is the need of the day. In fact, toleration is the essence of any religion. By being bigoted and dogmatic, one loses the boat altogether.

In this context, I would like to suggest to any seeker of truth to read a small book, *Message of Zarathushtra*, by one of the few truly enlightened priests of our community, the late Dastur Khurshed S. Dabu. In fact, somewhere in the book, he has written, "having taken a pledge that all good thoughts propounded anywhere and at any time would deserve our allegiance how can we exclude any true and good idea from the field of Zoroastrianism?"

The threat to our religion comes not from those who marry outside the community but from a lack of understanding that we show towards it.

If there are even a handful of truly enlightened people, they can yet save our religion from the crisis it faces today, for one must remember that it needed only 12 simple committed people, even though they were not self-realized, to spread the message of Christ to all the corners of the world.

Preceding Dr Adenwalla's letter, there was one by a 15-year-old girl on the same topic. It pained me to read that a young girl can think along these lines. It does not augur well for our community. I sincerely pray to Ahura Mazda that she does not comprise a true sample of the thinking of our youth today. **Ms ARMAITY H. BHABHA**

It was a treat to read the view so wisely and gracefully expressed by Ms Veera Doongriwalla, a young 15-year-old Parsi girl ("An injustice at..." Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, November 1990). I consider this young girl's angry outburst against marriages between Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians an echo of the unforgettable voice of our forefathers, deserving of support and encouragement from all right-thinking Parsis. If most of

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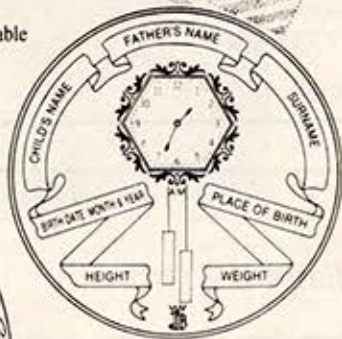
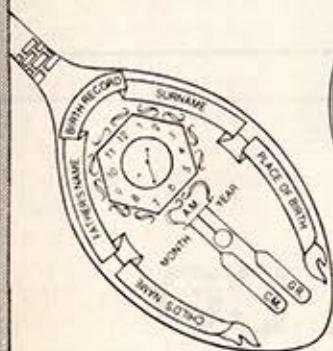
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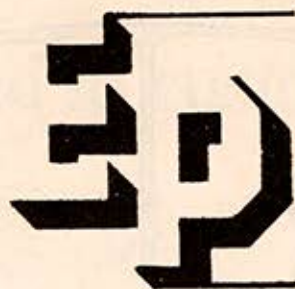
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our youth felt the same way as young Veera, we should have no fear of our community and religion ever dying out.

HOMI F. BANA

Ms Veera Doongriwalla's letter ("An injustice at doongerwadi," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, November 1990), is really appreciable and encouraging, more particularly as she says that even a 15-year-old girl, as she is, knows well that a Parsi girl married outside her religion cannot remain a pure Parsi. This shows Veera's boldness.

J. M. BILIMORIA

I was most distressed to read "An injustice at..." (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, November 1990). That a young girl of 15 should write a letter saying "Even a 15-year-old girl like me knows that if you are foolish enough to marry outside your religion — you do not remain a pure Parsi!" Nothing has horrified me as this statement, from a young person in her teens, in all the correspondence that has been written about the young and unfortunate Roxan. If young children write, or are brainwashed into writing such letters, then I feel there is no hope for the Parsi community to live in this country with its

head held high. It is shameful that our community, after living in India for more than 1,300 years, should talk about the rest of the Indians (who accepted us in their fold when we needed their succor the most and who hold us in high esteem) in this manner.

It is better that we do die out — if these are the views forced down on the future generations of our community.

Dr L. M. Singhvi, the eminent jurist, who is an authority on the constitutional law of India, stated on the television program *Focus* on December 16, 1990, that the law under the Constitution of India is above all other rules and laws, therefore no one, be it the BJP, VHP, RSS, BPP, or fundamentalist Muhammadans, or Dastur (Dr) Kotwal can say, that they will not abide by the law of the land.

The question is not whether the Special Marriage Act of 1954 entitles one to claim the right to enjoy the same privileges and benefits one enjoyed before marriage, but, whether anyone has the right to say that one is not a Zoroastrian after the marriage under the Act, if one has not changed one's religion.

The answer is amply clear in the late Mr Justice Jal Vimadlal's speech made

when he was a trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and reprinted in *The Bombay Samachar* of February 3, 1991.

Dasturji Kotwal says that "if there is a conflict between the legal position and the religious view, the divine law of God must prevail" (*Parsiana*, September 1990). Who made these divine laws in the first place? Man, not God. Dasturji Kotwal must realize that an educated community like ours will not accept any longer, as he says, "the customs and traditions of the Zoroastrian religion which have been prevalent in the past for several centuries," which are unfair to women and are completely outdated in this day and age. He says that they are "traditions and customs;" yet he calls them "the divine law of God." Surely, they cannot be both!

It was a black day for the community when young Roxan was denied the last rites — we will never live it down. We hold our heads down — in sorrow for Roxan and shame for the community.

Ms BHICOO J. MANEKSHAW

New Delhi

The feelings of non-Parsis should not be hurt in any way, with all our talk of 'jud-

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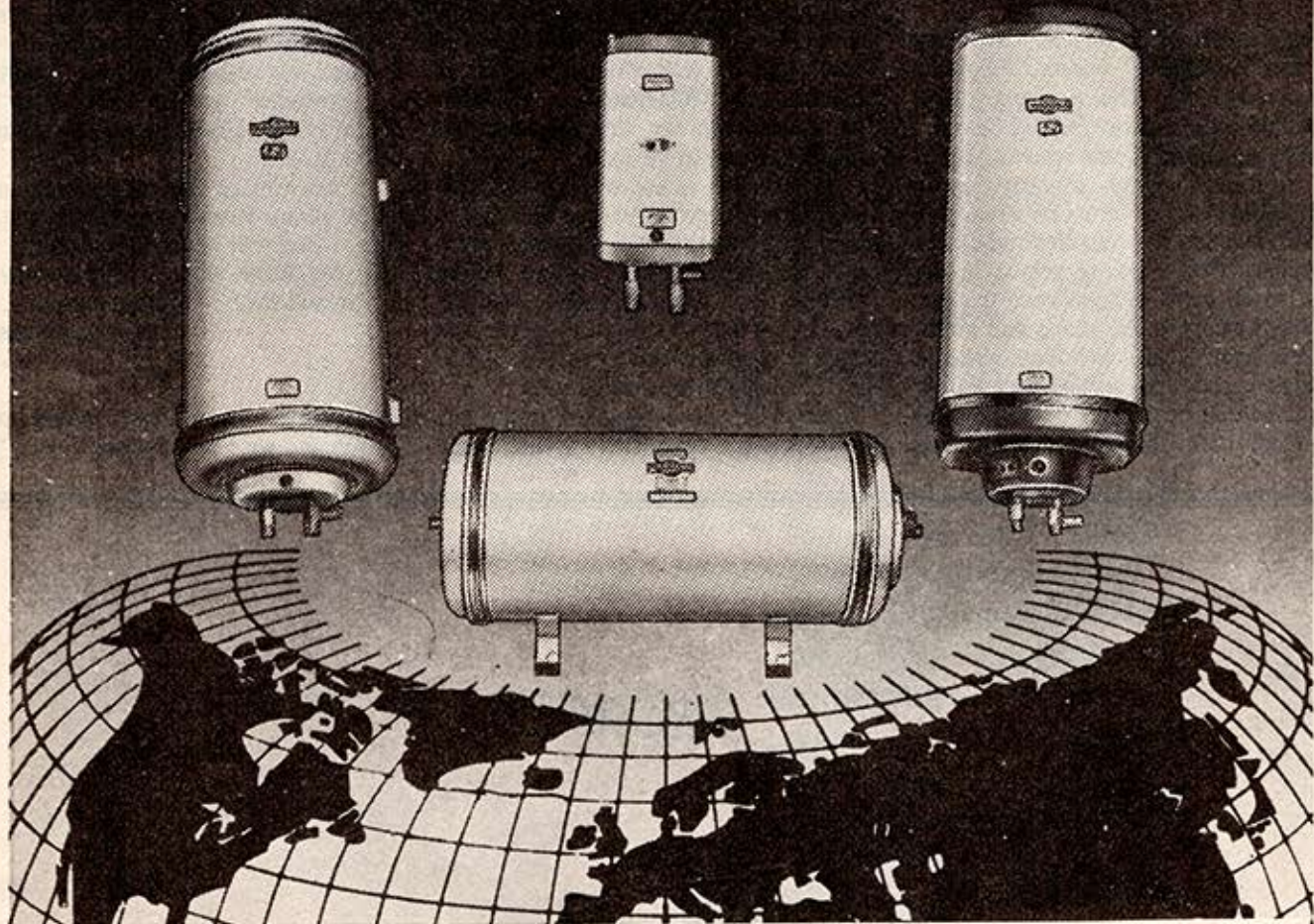


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dins' and purity of race, so that they are aroused to join the fray. India has been home for the Parsis since centuries and it is our bounden duty and heritage to live as 'sugar does in milk' that is sweetening an already nutritious product and not, like salt, making it curdle.

Let us view the situation in the overall teaching of Zoroaster as well as the laws of the land of our adoption and birth.

Ms SOONU JAL

Neemuch

"The divine laws..."

The High Priest on the cover of *Parsiana* (September 1990) has assumed to himself the interpretation of "divine laws" and the mantle of a Grand Inquisitor and decided who is an 'acceptable' Zoroastrian by standards of ritualistic tradition and therefore worthy of being consigned to the dokhma. Such a sacrilegious ukase is then attempted to be reinforced by other high priests in the style of an elitist club and then by 130 mobeds — the proletariat of the club — by signing on the dotted line, or else...

In view of such theo-political maneuvering by the sacerdotal fraternity (meaning the part that signed up), your

editorial on the front page of the same issue is a tremendous contribution to the sanity and wisdom of our community and an appropriate slap in the face of followers of a blind and quaint orthodoxy. Your logic and spunk has met with enormous support of the silent majority of our community. I hope you will not at any time in future feel browbeaten by such one-sided orthodox antics largely derived from the writings of priests and authors, reflecting the political and social exigencies of their time much after the lifetime of Zarathushtra and his *Gathas*.

When questioned about the authenticity of our proliferated ritualism (not evidenced in the *Gathas*), we are 'advised' that for understanding geometry, you don't look for answers in poetry. Conversely then, if we look for an understanding of our social, sociological, customary or community problems, we should not have to look to Madressa-trained ritualists for an answer. We should go to our scholars for a logical rationale, as they do not depend for their bread and butter on orthodoxy or liberalism.

It is therefore time that we unravelled the strange mixture of religious tradition

from social custom. Let the former be the purview of the priestly class and the appointed custodians of our places of worship, and the latter be the exclusive purview of elected trustees of the Panchayet. If the trustees do not have the capacity of solving even the social problems and conflicts, then they should not aspire to this time-honored position. They should be able to lay down our civic laws, if necessary in consultation with scholars, and not run to take cover under the *jama* (ceremonial robe) of the high priests.

One does get tired of being told what is alleged to be "divine law" or "time-honored tradition;" or that it is "against the commandments of the Zoroastrian religion" to perform the navjote ceremony of children born of mixed racial marriages. Could we quote these so-called laws and commandments? If they are not supported by the *Gathas*, they are obsolescent and redundant and mostly the product of proliferating ritualism over the historical millennia of Zoroastrian theocracy in Iran and our floundering efforts in India. Let us pray with Dastur Dhalla (*Homage unto Ahura Mazda*, pg 277): "Let me discern the signs of the age I live in. Let me be in harmony with it... Let not unthinking and

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blind traditionalism retard and arrest my progress."

HOMI B. MINOCHER HOMJI

Ontario, Canada

"The divine laws of God must prevail," elucidating Dastur Kotwal's views (*Parsiana*, September 1990), was horrifying to read. Kotwal claims that he and priests of his ilk have the sole right to arbitrate on matters of religion. By whose authority? Divinely inspired or self-styled? Religious texts, like statistics, can always be interpreted to suit the individual. For many years successive South African governments quoted the *Bible* as God's will to enforce apartheid.

Consider a practical aspect... A considerable number of Parsis have married non-Parsis. Many such men hold high positions in business and industry. How many jobs will such men give to Parsi youth? How much of a helping hand will they extend to struggling Zoroastrians when high priests spew hatred on them?

A number of Parsi girls have not found Parsi boys to marry. Are they then to remain barren spinsters or marry outside and be excommunicated by some priest with delusions of grandeur.

The Parsi community is dying. Demographic projections show a grim future. The inexorable logic of arithmetic related to declining numbers cannot be denied and Kotwal has no answer. Can anybody seriously believe, like Kotwal, that some miracle will take place to dramatically increase the Parsi Zoroastrian population? It is for the community to do everything possible to augment numbers, but it is doing exactly the opposite.

Spurred by fanatics and megalomaniacs, the Parsi community is racing, lemming-like, to its own destruction. It may be appropriate now to recall James Dupont: "Whom God would destroy, He first sends mad."

Col SAM N. MEHTA (Retd)

Noida, Uttar Pradesh

The two articles reflecting Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal's opinions on interfaith marriage and matters of religious "orthodoxy," (*Parsiana*, September 1990) were very moving. I was deeply saddened and outraged to see such unjust and cruel thoughts emanate from the mind of an honorable Dastur.

Dastur Kotwal views the *Gathas* not as a guide to our religion, but as a "doctrinal source which contain the metaphysics of the religion." If I am not mistaken, he fails to realize the practicality and applicability of these subtle and

straightforward teachings to everyday life. Are we not taught to "Hear the best with our ears and ponder with a bright mind, then choose..." (Y30.2)? Isn't the emphasis on intelligence? Has Asho Zarathushtra not repeatedly reminded us to reject concepts and thoughts that defy reason? Isn't the achievement of perfection (harmonious society) by upholding the truth (Asha) through *humata*, *hukhta* and *hvarshata* and renewing this world, the bottom line of His teachings?

So, how can one achieve the preservation of a community by adhering to illogical precepts that are archaic and contrary to the fundamental teachings of our Prophet? Handing down outrageous decrees not only alienates certain members of the community but also generates a great deal of anger and disbelief among others. Mobeds and dasturs need to realize the sensitive position they hold in our community and should not let personal interpretations of scriptural matters get in their way of responsible leadership.

Dr Kotwal quotes the *Vendidad* in a number of instances to defend his position. It appears to me that he holds the *Vendidad* in higher esteem than the very words of Asho Zarathushtra. If we are to accept the *Vendidad* with its ancient purity laws and civil codes (some of which are deemed obsolete in the wake of advances in health sciences and modern social values) as the core of our religion while dismissing the enormous value of the *Gathas* as "metaphysical," then we may no longer call this religion Zoroastrianism, but rather "Purityism!"

I do realize that Dastur Kotwal's cause to preserve the continuity of the Parsi community is a noble one. However, the means are not justifiable or practical for this endeavor.

What makes our religion unique and dynamic is the fact that Asho Zarathushtra never laid down any "rules" that may become outdated through passage of time. The *Gathas* provide us with a framework for advancement. His teachings were ahead of His time, and they will always remain ageless. What better time than now to start serious dialogue between the priesthood and the laity in order to avoid misunderstandings that will eventually lead to sectarian divisions — a plague-like division that has befallen so many other creeds.

A. MAKKI

Dayton, OH, USA

"Whither good thoughts..."

This refers to the unsavory remarks made

against Dasturji Kotwal on the stand adopted by him with regard to pristine Zoroastrianism ("Whither good thoughts, words and deeds?" *Parsiana*, September 1990).

Dasturji Kotwal has been maligned by a certain section of the Parsi community who do not know the A, B, C of Zoroastrianism but who profess to have studied the religion and are 'altruistic' enough to "educate" the Parsis on the principles of Zoroastrianism. Where such 'Parsis' are concerned, "ignorance is pure bliss" becomes an understatement.

However, with due respect to Dasturji Kotwal's views on Zoroastrianism, I fail to understand why navjotes are permitted to be performed in open-air baugs and not in the agiary attached to the baug. If our prayers cannot be recited in the presence of non-Parsis, this means that all navjotes/weddings performed in baugs are meaningless.

Ms PERVIN BHARUCHA

Your editorial "Whither good thoughts, words and deeds?" (*Parsiana*, September 1990) is most welcome. Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal and his supporters, throughout their writings, interviews and talks have emphasized 'age-old customs.' Questions on *Gathas* are swept aside with remarks like "*Gathas* are sacred hymns... Would you find geometry in a poetry book?" etc. The members of our community are not so dumb as to swallow such a statement.

Our sacred *Gathas* contain the very essence of Asho Zarathushtra's teachings which our ancestors followed and, thereby, became great throughout the world. They were known for their honesty, justice, truthfulness, care for all creations of Ahura Mazda. Because our forefathers, who came to India as refugees, practiced these virtues in their daily life, we were honored by our sister communities. Not because our rituals made the dokhmas sacred or holy, not because one applied *taro* so many times a day to the body.

May we ask, where are the following age-old customs? In Parsi homes, in Surat, up to and including the 17th century, non-Parsi boys and girls were employed full-time. They were taught our prayers and their navjotes performed and they were taken into our religion.

Up to 1880, a Parsi corpse was taken from home after sachkar and all religious ceremonies had been performed, to doongerwadi with the face open. Because often the sight was painful due to

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flies, rain, etc, the then president of the Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha wrote to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet suggesting to make arrangements to cover the face.

For 1,100 years, anyone could see the face of the Parsi corpse after sachkar. Now in 100 years, it has become an "age-old custom" and no non-Parsi is allowed to see the face after sachkar. Such ridiculous 'firmans' divide the community.

As late as 1918/19, a *mathabana* (white cotton scarf) on a Parsi lady's head was 'age-old custom.' Do we see any *mathabana* today?

Up to only 100 years ago, Parsis used to have two living wives. The then British Government brought the law that Parsis can have only one living wife. Has any Parsi dared to defy this law?

Today, our Parsi sisters, married to non-Parsis, are being terrorized: every effort is made to rob them of their inherent right of worship as practicing Parsi Zoroastrians. The worst type of cruelty — the denial of last religious rites — was inflicted upon a young Parsi Zoroastrian girl who practiced her religion with dedication to the very last. As if this was not enough, Dr Kotwal has boosted the cruel act.

Only about two or three years ago, two outstanding, honorable, distinguished Parsi Zoroastrian gentlemen were given great honor at a glittering function by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, claiming them with pride as our own. Both these gentlemen are married outside the community.

With great pride, we write, speak and even have shown in a movie, how after the marriage of his daughter, Asho Zarathushtra holds both equal, not one less than the other.

It does not befit our religious leaders and the akabars to inflict this discrimination upon our women. As members of our community, we strongly protest against this attitude.

Whoever really and sincerely cares for the community should follow the tenets of the Zoroastrian religion as found in the *Gathas*. Then the community will not be divided.

Customs have changed, will change and must change.

Ms HOMAI FRAMROZE BODE

Apropos "Whither good thoughts, words and deeds?" (*Parsiana*, September 1990), no doubt the Zoroastrian religion preaches good thoughts, words and deeds

but so do all the religions in one form or the other because it forms part of the moral code preached by all religions. But the devil within us often leads us to the wrong path and at that point of time the moral force developed by practising one's own religion in daily life as preached by the Prophet helps over a period of time in overcoming the influence of evil.

The prescriptions for developing the moral force preached by various religions are different and it is this aspect of the religion which distinguishes one from the other. Hence a Zoroastrian must wear a proper *sudreh-kusti*, carry out *kusti-padyab* as and when stipulated, recite *Avesta* prayers, get ceremonies performed for near and dear departed souls, practise rituals, traditions and time-honored customs, etc. If a Zoroastrian does not wear *sudreh-kusti*, doubtless he or she does commit a wrong and for which he or she would undergo suffering. But he or she does not cease to be a Zoroastrian. However, the act of mixing the seeds upsets the divine order — the plan of Ahura Mazda to merge the entire creation unto Himself after due process of spiritual development and hence with the act of mixing the seeds, a Zoroastrian

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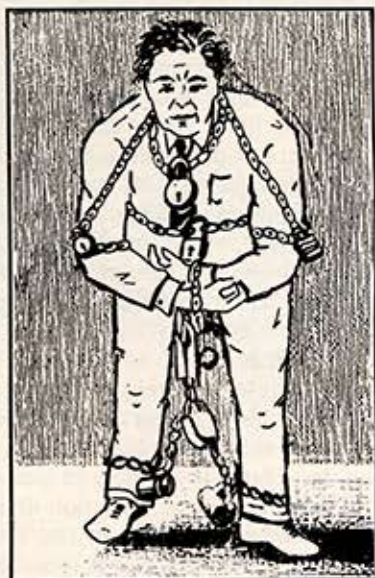
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ceases to be in tune with the Prophet's divine institutions set up in nature and the soul suffers. Hence such an act has been condemned in the scriptures in unequivocal terms.

The salvation of the community lies in reverting to the practice of the religion as stated above because then only shall we develop moral strength to practise good thoughts, words and deeds in its true sense.

SOHRAB NAVALSHAW PATWA

I was greatly enthused to read the pros and cons of the issue of Parsi Zoroastrian boys and girls marrying a non-Parsi (non-Zoroastrian) in *Parsiana* (September 1990).

I must compliment the editor for his viewpoint which has a lot of merit of its own, but at the same time I would compliment Dastur (Dr) Kotwal for expressing his personal viewpoint on the issue so emphatically.

Now it is for us Zoroastrians to "Listen with (our) ears to the highest (truths) consider (them) with (our) mind illumined, before deciding between the two paths, man by man, each for his own self" (Dr I. J. S. Taraporewalla's translation of *Yasna* 30.2).

For me, a proud Parsi born of Zoroastrian parents, the religion of Zarathushtra is a universal religion of truth and righteousness open to all human beings, and not an ethnic religion giving limited and exclusive right to a few (about 1,30,000 from a total population on this earth of more than 2,600,000,000).

If I were a young boy or girl, and if I were to choose a partner with whom I would be spending more than 60 to 70 percent of my life, I would rather choose one who is compatible with me, specially with my intelligence, who respects me, my parents, and my religion, rather than one who, though born of my religion, has no respect for me, my parents or my religion and has no compatibility to help me achieve my life goals.

It is true that Parsis, as a community guided by their leaders, religious or otherwise, have a right to accept or reject a person into their fold before birth, after birth or after death but that can only be according to man-made laws and not divine laws. Zoroastrians believe in one God, Ahura Mazda. Hence, does it mean that divine laws of one type were made for 1,30,000 people and other laws were made for 2,599,870,000 other human

beings?

Till a century or two ago, a daughter of an athornan family could only be given in marriage to an athornan family and a mobed could not take a behdin girl as a wife, which may still be followed by some families. Have we not modified or accepted the change in the custom or tradition? Do we adhere to custom-tradition strictly, or modify to suit conditions prevailing? It is not necessary to make a change for the sake of change, but I see no harm in making one, where necessary, if a majority of the fold, conservative or liberal, agree.

Another very interesting point brought out in the interview with Dastur Kotwal was "*Chhokri bahar panné tau teni kriya ma shun bolai* (when a girl marries outside the community how do we take her name in the ceremonies)? Along with behdin John? behdin Tom?" What is wrong with Tom, John, Hari, Shanker, Chen or Mustafa? Which divine law or writings specify that it should be Kaikhshru, Rustom, Behram only. There are Jehangirs among Parsi Zoroastrians, Moguls and Muhammadans. Names are man-made social entities. I know of a Parsi girl marrying a Parsi boy Yazdi,

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who was miserable all her life, and I know of a Parsi girl marrying a non-Parsi boy Hari, who has been happy and respected by her husband as a Zoroastrian. In such cases, why can't we say juddin Hari, to satisfy everyone?

For nearly 100 years, my family has gone under the supposedly non-Zoroastrian name Morris. Does it make any member of the family less of a Parsi Zoroastrian?

Unlike our Zoroastrian brothers in Iran, we Parsis have had equal rights and the freedom to enjoy our golden heritage in the land of non-Zoroastrians for the past 1,300 years. They were forced to make changes in their customs and traditions; let us not get into that kind of a situation. Let us do them willingly ourselves.

JEHANGIR MORRIS
Monaca, Pa, USA

Migrating to Australia?

The office bearers of the Australian Zoroastrian Association of New South Wales (NSW) receive a large amount of mail from hopeful Zoroastrians who wish to emigrate to Australia. This involves considerable cost in postage on both sides

as well as time and human resources at our end.

I would like to emphasize that Australia is undergoing a horrendous economic time with high unemployment, burgeoning inflation and a severe recession at the present. This has resulted in serious loss of job opportunities. Several recent highly qualified migrants have had to wait three to four months before securing a job, with high resultant hardship.

I would like to strongly suggest that those young Zoroastrians who are thinking of emigrating to Australia should defer doing so for the next 18 to 24 months to avoid hardship.

The following are some suggestions to follow:

- Make sure your qualifications are fully accepted in Australia and that your job classification is such that there is a shortage of jobs in your vocation. This information could only be provided by The Australian High Commission in New Delhi as the situation is very volatile and changes frequently.

- Housing is very expensive in Sydney, with the average rental between AS 150 and AS 120 (approximately between Rs 2,290 and Rs 1,800) per week for a totally unfurnished flat. Please note that there are no paying guest facilities in any Zoroastrian family as often both the partners have a full-time job to hold down. Very cheap hotels range from AS 30 to 50 per day without food. Unless you have your immediate family or very close friends, you would have to make arrangements immediately for housing.

- It is very advisable that before deciding to migrate to Australia both, or at least one partner, should visit Australia on a holiday and judge for themselves the suitability of the country.

- Unless you have immediate family members resident in Australia, you should have at least AS 10,000 (approximately equivalent to Rs 1,52,500) with you on arrival in order to tide over till you can get a job.

- In case of a family emigrating to Australia, it is very advisable that only one member first arrives in Australia, gets a job, organizes housing and then calls for the rest of the family.

It would seem that I am painting a very gloomy picture, but it is a true fact. Please do not be over-optimistic and think that anything would be better than the situation you are in. We very much want our Zoroastrian community to prosper and increase in our new land, but now is not

the time. Be patient and wait till the economic situation improves.

PURVIZ D. KOLSAWALLA

President, Australian Zoroastrian Association of NSW

Shah Namah's millennium

India has issued commemorative postage stamps to honor famous poets like Rabindranath Tagore, Mohammad Iqbal, Mirza Ghalib, Kabir and world celebrities like Leo Tolstoy, Bertrand Russell, Karl Marx and others. A commemorative stamp was also brought out by India on October 12, 1977 to celebrate the 2,500th anniversary of Cyrus the Great.

It would be appropriate similarly to honor Firdausi, Iran's renowned national poet who wrote the *Shah Namah* (The Book of Kings) 1,000 years ago, thereby strengthening the cultural and historical bonds between India and Iran. Organizations like the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, Iran League, Indo-Iran Cultural Society could jointly submit a request to the Government of India to consider issuing a stamp to commemorate the *Shah Namah's* millennium.

MARZBAN J. GIARA

Bai Cawasji High School

Bai Dhunmai Cawasji High School was established in 1934 by the late Mr Dinshaw Cawasji for the education and welfare of poor and middle-class Parsi girls. The school is situated at Khandala on a ridge overlooking the magnificent hills and valleys of the Sahyadri ranges.

Today the school is a cosmopolitan, co-educational trust school, ably administered by a board of trustees under the chairmanship of Mr Kali D. Cawasji, the son of the founder. The school has 700 students (400 day scholars and 300 boarders) from all walks of life, and they live and learn together. This school has facilities for indoor and outdoor games. Students participate in various competitions organized by inter-school associations, district level associations, the Rotarians and the Lions. It is commendable that the participants always secure a place amongst the prize winners. The school has 100 percent results at the SSC board examination. Students are encouraged to study independently, to read widely, to think for themselves and to discuss matters of interest and importance amongst themselves and with staff members.

Though strict discipline is maintained, there is a family feeling on the campus and morale is high. It is a matter of regret

continued on page 62

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In the matter of the late Ms Roxan Darshan Shah...

The BPP trustees decide to conditionally permit Parsi women married to non-Parsis the right to the use of the Towers of Silence

By a five-to-two vote the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) have decided to permit the consignment of the bodies of Parsi women married to non-Parsis in a Tower of Silence "specifically earmarked for the purpose." Family members of the deceased would have to submit an affidavit that states she "continued to follow the Zoroastrian religion till her demise."

The decision was taken following the controversy that arose over the death of young Roxan Darshan Shah in a car accident and the subsequent refusal of the BPP trustees to permit her body to be interred in the dokhmas.

Parsiana publishes the statement issued by the BPP trustees on April 29, 1991:

In the matter of the late Ms Roxan Darshan Shah...

The board once again discussed at great length this matter and considered various views expressed by the cross-section of the Parsi society, including:

a. The three Head Priests Dasturji (Dr) Hormazdyar K. Mirza, Dasturji (Dr) Kaikhusroo M. JamaspAsa and Dasturji (Dr) Firoze M. Kotwal.

b. The legal luminaries and other interested persons including the opinions expressed by Mr Justice Y. V. Chandrachud, ex-Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India as per his opinion dated October 27, 1990 obtained by the trustees.

c. The view expressed by trustee Mr Eruch B. Desai as per his note to the trustees dated February 4, 1991.

d. The views expressed by trustee Mr Homi P. Ranina as per his notes dated January 28, 1991 and April 8, 1991.

e. The views expressed by trustee Mr Jamsheed G. Kanga as per his note to the trustees dated February 5, 1991.

Chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla informed the board that Mr J. G. Kanga, who could not attend the meeting as he was indisposed, had informed him over the telephone that he himself had given a note on the subject dated February 5, 1991 and he concurred with the views of Mr Justice Chandrachud and Mr Desai.

The trustees taking into consideration the following viz, that:

a. In none of the opinions expressed by the priests and Parsi scholars have they referred to any authoritative pronouncement from the relevant texts to the effect that on such intercommunal marriage the Parsi female would automatically renounce her faith. In fact, some of the priests and scholars including (the late) Dasturji Khurshed Dabu and Prof Kaikhosrov D. Irani have expressed a contrary view.

b. The funds and institutions under the management and control of the trustees were founded, no doubt, only for the members of the Parsi community which includes inter alia the children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers, who have been duly and properly admitted into the religion, as held in the case of Sir Dinshaw M. Petit vs Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy (Bart) of 1909 reported in 11 Bombay Law Reporter, page 85, and the Parsi ladies who marry outside the community and who continue to follow the Zoroastrian faith do fulfill this test.

c. There is no express provision anywhere in the relevant trust deeds to the effect that such ladies who have married outside the community and who continue

to follow the Zoroastrian faith would be debarred from availing of the trust facilities. True, the intention of the founders of the trust was to extend the benefits to only those who are born into the community and born of a Zoroastrian father and such ladies are born into the community and are of Zoroastrian fathers.

d. In Bombay the bodies of ladies similarly placed have in a few cases in the past been confined in a separate resting place and, in other areas, some unused dokhma which has fallen into disrepair is used for disposal of such bodies as was said to be done at Surat.

e. The predecessor trustees in the earlier part of the 18th Century had admitted into the Parsi fold children of Parsi fathers by alien members as per the aforesaid judgment in the case of Sir Dinshaw M. Petit vs Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy (Bart).

f. As held in the aforesaid case of Sir Dinshaw M. Petit vs Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy (Bart), a custom that has been built up by passage of time has the effect of overriding a tenet of religion.

g. Subsequent to the aforesaid judgment in the case of Sir Dinshaw M. Petit vs Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy (Bart) delivered in the year 1909, for a long period of more than 80 years, the children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers have been admitted into the fold, thereby setting at nought the tenet of the religion that on marriage to an alien, a Parsi Zoroastrian renounces the faith, assuming that there is such a tenet.

h. For a long period of time, our predecessor trustees had also allowed the facility at the Doongerwadi to the Parsi ladies married outside the community, with the only difference that their bodies were

placed in a separate resting place and not in the regular dokhma, and a custom has also built up by allowing the Parsi girls married outside the community to enter the Doongerwadi bunglis and partake in the prayer ceremonies.

i. To hold at this stage that a Parsi girl who has married outside the community would not be entitled to the Doongerwadi facilities would also tantamount to the trustees denying the facilities referred to in (h) above to them which would seem untenable apart from setting the clock back.

j. As per the High Court decision in the case of Roshan Chagla and others vs the trustees of the Parsi Punchayet, Parsi ladies married to non-Parsi gentlemen, and who continued to practise the Zoroastrian faith, have been enrolled on the Electoral Register on the basis that they continue to remain Parsi Zoroastrians.

k. There is great force in the contention that the denial of the facilities to such ladies married outside the community would result in breach of trust on the part of the trustees.

l. Two of the High Priests of our commu-

nity, Dasturji (Dr) Hormazdyar K. Mirza and Dasturji (Dr) Kaikhusroo M. JamaspAsa, have also observed in their letter dated December 29, 1990 to the trustees that even under the Constitution of India, the community has every right to practise our religious traditions and customs, and the custom has now been as pointed out above.

m. In the event of a litigation which is likely, it would be difficult in view of the aforesaid, to deny such ladies the facilities available to the members of the Zoroastrian community.

It be and is hereby resolved by majority [Mr Homi P. Ranina and Dr (Ms) Mehroo D. Bengalee dissenting]

a. that any Zoroastrian female who marries outside the Zoroastrian fold under the Special Marriage Act, 1954 or any other legislature which permits the parties to retain their religion prior to such marriage and who continues to follow the Zoroastrian faith be permitted the use of Doongerwadi facilities on her death on the basis of an affidavit made by her husband, or any of her parents or her brother or sister or other close relations to the effect

that she continued to follow the Zoroastrian religion till her demise, in spite of such marriage as aforesaid;

b. the body of such female married outside the community after the performance of such ceremonies be consigned to a dokhma specially earmarked for the purpose by the trustees.

c. it be clarified that the trustees will not be obliged to arrange with any priest to attend and perform her funeral ceremonies and her relatives alone will be obliged to arrange for the same.

d. The chairman of the board of trustees and in his absence, the senior-most trustee, either himself or in consultation with any of his colleagues on the board, may in case of emergency, give all suitable directions to all concerned, and settle any question or difficulty which may arise incidental to the above, but within the limitations and the spirit of the resolution hereby passed.

The dissenting notes of trustee Mr H. P. Ranina (January 28, 1991 and April 8, 1991) were taken on record. Trustee Dr (Ms) Mehroo D. Bengalee's note dated April 12, 1991 was placed on record.



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Events and Personalities

Housing guidelines

With an eye on the declining numbers, 45 percent of all new allotment of community housing will be reserved for younger couples — 22.5 percent for couples engaged to be married and 22.5 percent where the wife is below 40 years of age. These are two of the six major categories recognized by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) for allotment of housing, according to its revised guidelines for eligibility forwarded to *Parsiana* by BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla in January 1991.

Of the remaining 55 percent, 15 percent will go to victims of house collapse. Those currently residing in zopadpatties or in morally deprived areas and BPP staff members in need of housing get five percent each of the total. Of the residuary 30 percent, 10 percent will be allotted to people who have been living in sanatoria for over four years.

The data sheet, to be submitted by the applicant, will rate his chances under five major heads: His reason for seeking accommodation, with its 10 subsections — house collapse cases with/without temporary shelter, municipal ejection notice, need to vacate staff quarters, engaged to be married, married with wife below 40 years of age, married but living apart from family because of lack of accommodation, living without own accommodation as paying guest or with friends and relatives or in sanatoria or transit camp, house under repair or living in a zopadpatti or an unhealthy area — will fetch between 25 and 12 points, the highest being for a house collapse or destroyed building with no avenue for shelter (25 points), the least (12 points) for cases currently housed in unhealthy areas or a zopadpatti.

The marital status of the applicant will fetch him/her 10 points if married with three or more dependents and only five if single, with less than three dependents. The nature of the applicant's present accommodation would net 10 points for a paying guest, five points for a subtenant, and 25 for those living in sanatoria and transit camps for more than four years. The congestion levels in the present accommodation would allow for a maximum of 15 points more, i.e. if there are nine persons or more in a one-room-kitchen flat or 13 persons in a two-room-kitchen flat. Less than five persons living in a one-room-kitchen flat or nine persons residing in two rooms and kitchen are not within recognizable levels of congestion.

May 1, 1990 has been set as the cut-off date for the applications. Those who have been on the waiting list for 20 years or more will get a bonus of 25 points. The bonus decreases proportionately to a minimum of five points for those who filed their application three years ago.

However, the revised guidelines make an application for Punchayet housing an inheritable commodity, only one of the sons being able to avail of the extra points due a longstanding application if the others are willing to provide the BPP a no-objection certificate.

As a measure of appreciation, applicants who have earned national or state recognition would be awarded a bonus of 15 and 10 points respectively on their housing application.

No Zoroastrian with a family income of over Rs 4,500 — which includes basic plus dearness allowance — would be considered eligible for allotment of Punchayet accommodation. However, the BPP has notified by a subsequent letter of March 26, 1991 that income limits

for allotment of flats to be constructed hereafter at Godrej Baug will be pegged at Rs 7,500 per month. The revision has been necessitated by anticipation of higher municipal taxes leading to higher rents in the new blocks currently being built. In every category a 20 percent reservation has been earmarked for those with a gross family income below Rs 1,500. Owning a car is another disqualification.

Families seeking exchange of accommodation would be favorably considered, subject to availability. The swap may be desired to a lower floor for reasons of health or to a larger flat (from one room plus kitchen to two) if the son of the house is married or engaged to be married. If the applicant resides in a non-Punchayet flat, he/she would be required to provide a no-objection certificate from the current landlord to the BPP nominating another candidate to fill the vacancy. Such a transfer to a larger accommodation would also be considered in the case of families where the wife is below 40 years of age.

The community is expected to register any objection to the BPP's tentative list of allottees within a fortnight of it being put up on the Punchayet's notice board. Allottees, before taking possession of a flat, are expected to provide an affidavit detailing that they do not possess a car, do not have rental or ownership accommodation elsewhere in the name of the applicant or any of his dependents, and that the total family income is below Rs 4,500. He must further state that if the information provided is proved to be false or incorrect, he will be liable to civil and criminal action instituted on behalf of the BPP.

Cases where the application was made



At the release of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Memorial Volume on November 5, 1990, governor of Maharashtra C. Subramaniam (second from right) presents a copy to mayor Chhagan Bhujbal as Godrej Dotivala, editor and compiler of the book looks on

prior to December 1986 and not routinely renewed every three years as prescribed, or where the new questionnaire form has not been filled and submitted, will not be merit rated according to the revised guidelines. However, a request to the trustees may be considered on merit. In any case, the trustees reserve the right to relax the norms and/or to give extra merit rating points for immediate relief in extraordinary cases according to clause 10 of the revised guidelines.

Amavaz S. Mama

Jamshedpur's *Manashni*

"The ultimate success of a newsletter (lies in) not how well the editors and reporters write, but in how many people enjoy reading what is written," notes Ms Silloo E. Surti, managing editor of *Manashni*, the newsletter of the Jamshedpur Parsee Association (JPA).

In its first issue in December last, *Manashni* carried news of JPA activities and reported on the progress of its different projects. Information on its members too features in the four-page newsletter which has also kept its pages open for contributions from readers. Published by Pesi E. Tarapore, others involved in this production are executive editors Ms Dinaz P. Tarapore and Ms Silloo N. Dotivala with design and layout by Jamsheed S. Dalal.

The quarterly will be circulated free of cost to every family associated with the Jamshedpur anjuman and an extra copy will be made available on payment of a nominal charge of five rupees per year, according to the publication.

"The Parsis of Jamshedpur are a well-knit community and such a publication should strengthen this bond of fellow feeling. Eventually, I hope *Manashni* will



Mehta: donning the robes as vice-chancellor of Bombay University

Photo: Godrej Dotivala's Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Memorial Volume

reach other anjumans so that they may learn more about us," writes Tata Iron and Steel Company Limited (TISCO) chairman Russi Mody in his message to the community as president of JPA.

Working under him will be the JPA's new team as mentioned in a release from the Association: Dr Jamshed J. Irani and Sarosh J. Ghandy, vice presidents; Eruch F. Surti, chairman; Pesi E. Tarapore, honorary secretary; Jehangir Ardeshir, honorary assistant secretary and Firdaus Vandrewala, honorary treasurer.

Patriotic Pherozeshah

Let a postage stamp be issued in honor of the 'Uncrowned king of Bombay' Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. Let his rooms at Jhulelal Building where meetings were held to deliberate on the formation of the Indian National Congress (INC) be declared a national monument. These suggestions emanated at a function com-

memorating the patriot's 75th death anniversary. The meeting on November 27, 1990 was convened under the joint auspices of the Navsari Parsi Association, The Iran League, the Athornan Mandal and the Jashan Committee at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute where the Minister of State, Government of Maharashtra, Arun Gujarathi presided, informs a press release.

Eminent speakers like Bombay University vice chancellor Dr (Ms) Mehroo Bengalee, Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustee Eruch Desai, corporator Rustom Tirandaz, philanthropist Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy and president of the Navsari Parsi Association Ms Shera Vajifdar paid their tributes to Mehta. In their speeches they referred to the 'Lion of Bombay' serving the city's Municipal Corporation for 42 years; of his being elected its president (equivalent to today's Mayor) for a record four terms; of his statue standing at Bori Bunder; of his fearless efforts to make Bombay the urbs prima in India; of his fight for local self government which earned him the title of the 'Father of local self government in India'; of his association of 48 years with the Bombay University and his emphasis on liberal education suitable to Indian conditions; of his work for the Parsi community...

The principled fighter was also one of the founders of the INC and elected its president at its sixth session in 1890, informs a brief biography of Mehta compiled by Vispy Dastur, convenor of the evening's program. Mehta had studied at Ayrton School and the Elphinstone College for his arts degree. After his Masters exam he proceeded to England to study at the bar. Dastur quotes his approach: "Immediately after I began my career I had to make a choice between entering public service. I mean official government service and entering the service of the public... But I unhesitatingly chose to enter into the service of the public."

Unmatched records

Unparalleled feats as listed in the 240-page *Limca Book of Records (LBR) 1991*, show 54 Zoroastrian individuals and 13 Zoroastrian owned/started establishments as trailblazers. The first edition in 1990 reportedly remained a best-seller for four months which made the publishers, Bislei Beverages Limited, bring out a second edition this year featuring Indian records in different spheres. The *LBR* is meant to promote a spirit of enquiry, competition, endurance and adventure

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besides fostering a culture of excellence, states the second edition.

The maximum number of Zoroastrians, 31, feature in the sports category. Of these, seven have outshone in cricket.

Piloo Reporter was one of the two first official neutral umpires in test history. For scoring 152 runs and 102 not out on debut in the 1952-53 test in Baroda, against Baroda, Nari J. Contractor made it to the *LBR*. Russi Modi of Bombay holds the unique distinction of scoring the most hundreds in a row, in successive matches and in a season besides having scored the maximum number of centuries in successive innings, while Polly Umrigar scored over a double century (223) against New Zealand in the first test at Hyderabad in 1955. In 1933-34, at 41 years and 27 days, R. J. D. Jamshedji was the oldest player on the Indian team which played against England. Farokh M. Engineer along with R. G. Nadkarni holds the eighth test record partnership of 143 runs against New Zealand in the 1965 series in Madras. Ms Diana Eduljee has taken 114 wickets since her test debut in women's cricket in 1975.

The 143-year-old Parsee Club also features in the book for being the first Indian cricket club and the first to have toured England in 1866, when it played 28 matches but won only one.

Yachtsmen too have made their mark. Lt Cdr Sohrab Jamshed Contractor with Afsar Hussain won a bronze medal in the Enterprise Class in the 1970 Asian Games in Bangkok. Fali and Jamshed Unwalla took a silver in the 1982 Games in the Enterprise Class. Lt Farokh Tarapore and Zarir Karanjia were the first Indians to win a gold medal in the Fireball Class in the 1982 Asian Games. They won all their seven races.

Ms Persis Madan holds the 100m and 200m backstroke and 200m and 400m individual medley national records in the 1982 national meet amongst women swimmers.

In cycling the two sisters Armin Palkhiwala and Jasmin Arethna have made international news. While Armin won a silver in the 1,000 m time trial in the 1982 Asian Games in Bangkok, younger sister Jasmin bagged a bronze in the 1,000 m sprint and 100 m time trial at Seoul in '85.

In weightlifting the Daroga brothers, Neville and Vispy, made their mark. Neville holds the 1987 national record in the over 110 kg category while Vispy



was conferred the Arjun Award in 1983.

The squash category mentions Darius Pandole as the youngest junior squash champion. The Pandole family has reportedly given three generations of players to the game: Pheroze, son Dinshaw, and grandsons Darius and Farokh.

In athletics, sprinter Adille Sumarwalla for being a 1986 Arjuna awardee and in shot put Ms Bhakhtawar Khambatta for holding the 1982 women's national record, made it to the *LBR*.

In the table tennis category, Farokh Khodaiji was ranked twenty-eighth in the world by the International Table Tennis Federation in 1967 and Ms K. Chatterman was one of the four who gave India her first Commonwealth Championship medal.

Representing India in three international competitions and bagging the first international medal in judo has earned Cawas Billimoria a name in the *LBR*.

The motor rallying section lists Jehangir Nicholson at 73 years as the oldest competitor when he completed the Eighth Himalayan Rally in 1987.

Pesi Shroff for being the youngest jockey to win the most races in a season and Ms Ayesha Captain for being the only woman jockey have been listed in the horse racing category. The Poona-walla Stud Farm in Poona has also made it to the *LBR* for being the biggest stud farm in terms of the number of horses raised.

A separate category, 'All in the game,' features versatile sportsperson Ms Shireen Khushroo Kiash who has the unique distinction of being the only one to have represented the country in three different games — hockey, basketball and cricket, and Jal Pardivala for being a recipient of the Olympic Bronze Order.

Arts and entertainment is another category where Parsis have excelled, par-



ticularly in the sub-category cinema where the first talkie *Alam Ara* was made by Ardeshir Irani, and Pirojshah Mistry and B. Irani were the first music directors. Ardeshir was also the first to make an Indian film in English.

J.B.H. Wadia's *Court Dancer* was the first film to be made in three languages and his *Naujawan* was the first songless film. Madan Theatres' *Indra Sabha* holds the record of having the maximum number of songs (71) in a film. Theirs was also the first Indian film co-produced with

another country. The first cinema hall and the first multi-purpose banner are also credited to Madan Theatres as also the first silent film to run for 25 weeks. Regal Theatre in downtown Bombay, founded by Framji H. Sidhwa and K. A. Kooka, was the first air-conditioned theater in the country.

Ms Persis Khambatta who made it to Hollywood, Firoze Rangoonwalla who has written the maximum number of film books and the late actor-producer-director Sohrab Modi who won the Dadasaheb Phalke award in 1979, have also earned a mention in the *LBR*. The first dramatic club was the Parsi Natak Mandali established in 1853 in Bombay.

In the sub-category music, western music maestro Zubin Mehta holds the world record for having the longest innings as conductor of an orchestra. Others mentioned in the music category are Ms Coomi Wadia, conductor of the Paranjoti Academy Chorus which is the only Indian choir to win an international competition, and Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji for his longest piano composition, running into 500 pages of manuscript in three volumes.

In communications, Furdoonjee Murzbanjee gets a mention in the print category for launching the *Mumbai Samachar*, the oldest extant newspaper.

Ms Cornelia Sorabji is mentioned in the 'legalia' category for being the first woman advocate and Manackjee Rustomjee merits a mention in the same category for being the first Indian sheriff of the Calcutta High Court.

In awards and honors, Dara Khurody and T. K. Patel shared the Ramon Magasaysay award for community leadership in 1963.

The sciences category has the names of Rustom Jal Vakil and Ardaseer Cursetjee Wadia. Vakil was the first Indian to be awarded the International Albert Lasker Award of the American Public Health Association and Wadia was the first Indian to be elected fellow of the Royal Society of London.

The Indian economy and business chapter features Nani Ardeshir Palkhivala for making the maximum number of speeches on the union budget and Cawasji Dawar for establishing the first cotton textile mill. Instrumental in setting up Kelvinator of India Ltd is Jamshed Desai, managing director of the company whose refrigerators were one of the largest selling products of 1989-90 with a sale of Rs 226.57 crores.



Featuring in the Limca Book of Records (from left) Top row: First all-Parsi Indian cricket team to tour England, Farokh Tarapore and Zarir Karanjia. Second row: Engineer, Eduljee, Persis Madan, Armin Palkhiwala, Arethna and Neville Daroga. Third row: Vispy Daroga, Darius Pundole, Sumariwalla, Billimoria, Nicholson and Shroff. Fourth row: Pardivala, Ardeshir Irani and J.B.H. Wadia

Founder of Tata Airlines, India's first airline that was later renamed Air India, J.R.D. Tata had chaired several other companies in the Tata group. Among these rank: Tata Iron and Steel Company Limited which showed the highest net profit of Rs 112.15 crores in 1987-88 and Tata Tea which runs the first and largest tea estate spreading over 1,372.85 hectares under cultivation. Tata Power Company with a capacity of 5,765 mw of power makes it the largest private sector power company. Tata Air Mail service, started in 1932, was the first regular air mail service. The first five-star hotel was also founded by the Tatas in 1903.

The distinction of being the first pilot on the first commercial flight of Tata Airlines from Karachi to Bombay in a one-seater Puss Moth on October 15, 1932 goes to J.R.D. Tata whose achievement has been listed in the transport chapter. Tata also holds the record of having received the highest civil aviation award — The Edward Warner award.

The largest travel agency, mentions the LBR, is Travel Corporation (India) Ltd (TCI) under the directorship of the Katgara brothers Nari and Adi, with an annual turnover of Rs 57 crores.

Airfreight Private Limited under Jamshed Guzder and son Cyrus is credited with being the first airfreight service.

The human story chapter lists unusual accomplishments by Edul Palamkote who had earned himself the name of the "Man with the Iron Grip." He was the first Indian to tear into shreds two telephone directories. He could snap heavy iron chains and stop a 10 hp motorcycle with his teeth. Ms Behroz Nadirshah Daruwala is credited for being the most versatile adventure sportsperson.

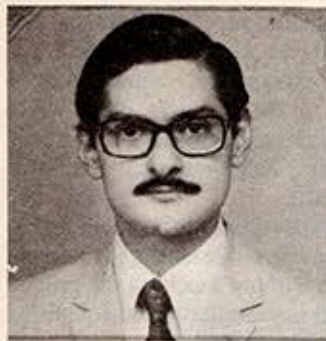
The Armed Forces section features names like the first Field Marshal, Sam Manekshaw and Param Vir Chakra recipient, Lt Col Adi B. Tarapore.

There are several classifications like the freedom struggle, hobbies and collections, literature, football, dance, navy and air force where Zoroastrians do not feature at all. In cases where it was not possible to identify from the names whether the person concerned was a Zoroastrian, their names have not been listed by *Parsiana*.

One such entry where the identity could not be ascertained was that of "Behram," a member of the Thuggee sect in Awadh who strangled over 900 victims with his scarf between 1790



The Limca Book of Records mentions (from left) Top row: J. F. Madan of Madan Theatres, Bombay's Regal Theatre and Mehta. Second row: Coomi Wadia, Murzbanjee and Sorabji. Third row: Rustomjee, Nani Palkhivala and Desai. Fourth row: Tata, Nari Katgara and Adi Katgara. Bottom: Jamshed Guzder



Top row: Cyrus Guzder, Palamkote, Manekshaw and Sohrab Modi

Bottom row: (Left): Dhalla at the Assembly of the World's Religions (in Parsi dress) and Bagwadia (right): resourceful executive

and 1840, mentions the *LBR*.

For global fraternity

At four international conferences in 1990, in different parts of USA and Europe, did Dr Homi Dhalla from Bombay participate as a Zoroastrian representative, notes a press release.

"God and God-Equivalents" was the theme of the scholars' meet in Assisi, Italy where Dhalla presented a paper on "The Other Names of Ahura Mazda." The important role of children in Zoroastrianism was stressed by Dhalla at the UNICEF-sponsored Conference of the World's Religions for the World's Children at Princeton, USA.

As in years past, once again at the Assembly of the World's Religions, in San Francisco, where about 700 religious leaders, teachers and scholars participated, Dhalla represented Zoroastrianism, the release notes. Dhalla recited Zoroastrian prayers before a fire vase, Dr Farhang Mehr, professor of international relations at Boston University, presented a paper and Ms Jeroo Chavda gave an Indian dance recital on the occasion. The purpose of the Assembly was to encourage mutual respect and understanding among the various religious traditions and to initiate cooperative action that could

serve the whole of humanity, the release further informs.

There was yet another International Meeting of Prayers for Peace at Bari, Italy when Dhalla, as a Zoroastrian representative, lit the lamp of peace. Both he and Dr (Ms) Meher Master-Moos, founder of Mazdayasnie Monasterie, spoke on the concept of peace in Zoroastrianism and recited Zoroastrian prayers with their English translation.

Master-Moos also showed the video film *Message of Zarathushtra* at the conference. She then proceeded to Switzerland and London to give lectures and conduct seminars on Zoroastrianism. On returning to India, Master-Moos summoned an interfaith prayers for peace meeting for more harmonious conditions in India, it is noted.

Auditing her way up

"It is up to the women executives to exhibit their effectiveness and indispensability which should make the management realize that women are resources that the company can ill afford to let go," stressed Ms Shireen A. Bagwadia, the newly elected president of the Bombay chapter of the Institute of Internal Auditors — India.

Bagwadia, who is the chief internal

tary.

In her two decades of service with Voltas, Bagwadia has worked her way up the corporate ladder. She started as assistant confidential secretary in the personnel department and after getting acquainted with various other nitty-gritties of the Voltas system of functioning, consequently qualified herself for a promotion to the managerial cadre, reads her bio data.

Prior to joining Voltas she was with the National and Grindlays Bank. Her studies for a commerce degree from Sydenham College and subsequent degrees in arts, law and CIA (Certified Internal Auditor) as also a diploma in personnel management were largely self financed, working and studying at the same time. During her college days she was also a good sportswoman representing her college in athletic meets and hockey tournaments. Her other interests include gardening and cooking, further mentions her bio data.

Of insurance and exports

The Export Credit and Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) under the chairmanship of Jamsheed Kanga showed a profit of Rs 35 lakhs last year, notes a report in the money and banking section of *The Eco-*



Patel (right) receiving trophy from Hameed Jaffrey of Petrosil Oil Company at the Gulf Autocross in December (Below) Kanga: boosting India's exports



conomic Times of November 29, 1990. Their recovery last year followed a period of losses in the preceding two years.

Even though only 16 to 17 percent of the total insurable exports are covered by the ECGC, Kanga is convinced that the figures compare favorably with those of other countries. Nevertheless the chairman, who was former Secretary for Industries to the Government of Maharashtra, is gearing his marketing setup to make more exporters take to insurance cover.

The ECGC premiums are perhaps the lowest in the world since the aim of the Corporation is to help boost exports, maintains Kanga. Though originally maximum premium income came from long-term business (five to 15 years), of late it is short-term policies (up to 180 days) that are gaining popularity. The risk for ECGC is definitely lower but so is the income from short-term policies, Kanga told the paper.

Losses in Africa had severe repercussions on ECGC. Hence, it no longer ex-

tends insurance cover for exports to Uganda, Zambia, Nigeria, Tanzania and Mozambique. They are striving instead to use the funds blocked in these countries to buy goods there and bring them back to India or elsewhere with the assistance of leading Indian export houses like Tata Exports.

Hoshie H. Malgham of Tata Exports sounds a note of hope: Trade can be revived as there is a lot of scope for developing industries.

Masters of motorsport

"You had to see...these dare-devils work up so much speed in the short stretches to the turns and twisting barriers," noted a press release. The venue was the National Sports Club of India, the event, the Gulf Autocross sponsored by Petrosil Oil Company Limited and organized by Sportsraft on December 16, 1990 when Kaizad Patel emerged the fastest rider of the day.

Patel participated in three races. Even though he had a fall in one of the races, it did not "deter Kaizad from taking risks. He was just superb..." on his 125 cc Kawasaki KH bike, reads *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of December 21. His uncle Kersi was declared the winner in the 265 to 360 cc class. At the same meet Ms Farah Vakil was declared the fastest lady driver. Among the other drivers who were declared winners were Farokh Commissariat who stood first in two events, and second in one, Sam Katgara who stood second in two events and Hormazd Sorabjee who stood second in one, the paper further reports.

A new challenge for the speed specialists was the Gulf Autocross sponsored motor gymkhana race in October last which tested the competitor's skill for slow riding. Kaizad once again emerged the winner in the scooters class while cousin Neville came second. In the motorcycles class, Kersi came in first with Kaizad second.

The 56 competitors at this meet had to go as slow as possible and yet maintain their balance without touching the ground which would have otherwise disqualified them, the release notes.

A fine innings

His completion of 50 years as a cricketer probably makes Melhi Dinshaw Irani the oldest active cricketer in the world playing competitive cricket, reads a tribute to the sportsman in *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* (*The ADC*) dated December 6, 1990. Sixty-plus Irani was presented a silver salver and a citation by the Bombay Gymkhana a few months back for being the oldest playing cricketer.

The first of his cricket matches was at the age of 10 when he represented his school, St Xavier's, in 1940. He then went on to captain his school team, his college, St Xavier's, team and the Bombay University team. Besides, he has also played for Indian universities and for Bombay in the Ranjit Trophy Tournament, *The ADC* notes. Though he never got a chance to be selected on the national team, Irani's commitment to the game continued, believing, "some get the break, some don't, that's cricket."

Formerly an ace left-handed opening batsman, these days Irani plays mainly as a wicket keeper. His only regret is that he has not been included on the touring veteran's team, adds *The ADC* write-up.

On the fast track

At the last Himalayan Rally, Ms Farah Vakil, in her first international event, won the Coupe des Dames prize along with her navigator Ms Renuka Lalwani, notes *The Independent* dated November 27, 1990. Of the 77 participants only 33 succeeded in completing the race. Vakil's overall ranking was 29th, the paper reports.

Driving a Maruti Gypsy, the 26-year-old rallyist had only one major problem when the transmission oil seal broke. A punctured tyre and stones hurled at her car, she accepted in her stride. Luckily for her it was only after the final stage that her car engine and fuel pump gave trouble, further reports the paper.

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka



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"Zarathusti: My Past, Our Future"

The emphasis of the Seventh North American Zoroastrian Congress was on channeling experience to establish a harmonious community in North America

Niloofer J. Madon

"They have told me to put together something which could be the financial engine for the community, something where we could have business networking, where professionals could be members, where the monies made in this type of an organization could be used for the education of Zoroastrian children by way of scholarships..."

Dr Meherwan Boyce, chairman of the Seventh North American Zoroastrian Congress (7NAZC) held in Houston, Texas, August 31 to September 3, 1990, was referring to a concrete result of the gathering. Although the proposed body's name is yet to be formalized, it could be a manifestation of a Zoroastrian chamber of commerce, an idea rising phoenix-like at many a Zoroastrian meeting over the past decade.

A concurrent network of Zoroastrian professionals in the social sciences from all over the world "to promote the current thinking in the social sciences and the humanities relative to matters of racism and sexism — paramount issues in the religious controversies today," was suggested by Houston sociologist Yezdi Rustomji.

The Congress steered clear of any decisions on major issues which agitate the community. "There are differences which we have to live with," noted Boyce, pinpointing conversion as the major divisive issue between the communities in the old and the new worlds. Boyce conceived of the role of the Houston Congress as essentially one of cementing the community together.

Spotlighting education as the need of the hour, program coordinator Farrokh Mistree emphasized, "It's not the Sunday school type of education" but the knowledge that an adult can internalize before taking a position on issues. According to Mistree, the Houston Congress was a step along the line of preparing an "informed proletariat" in North America that could eventually debate and decide on the issues agitating the community — an exercise that currently, according to Mistree, "would be divisive." He emphasizes that the pressure is on each one of us "to gain that wisdom, put in the effort, put in time, put in that which is necessary to make ourselves comfortable with what we are doing — not (be content) with the limited knowledge that we have..."

To that end Mistree advocates creating a cadre of "articulate people (to) sift the knowledge — not just from one side but from all sides and then educate our anjumans and community and use that knowledge to see if we can harmonize our different positions and proceed, because in harmonization is happiness. If we take a decision now... we are always going to have half the group that is not happy and I don't think that is the way we can build harmony and prosperity and good feeling among the community."

The Emerald City on the Bayou, as Houston is fondly known, was host to Zoroastrian delegates from North America as well as Europe and the Indian subcontinent during the four-day proceedings at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. The organizing committee of the Zoroastrian

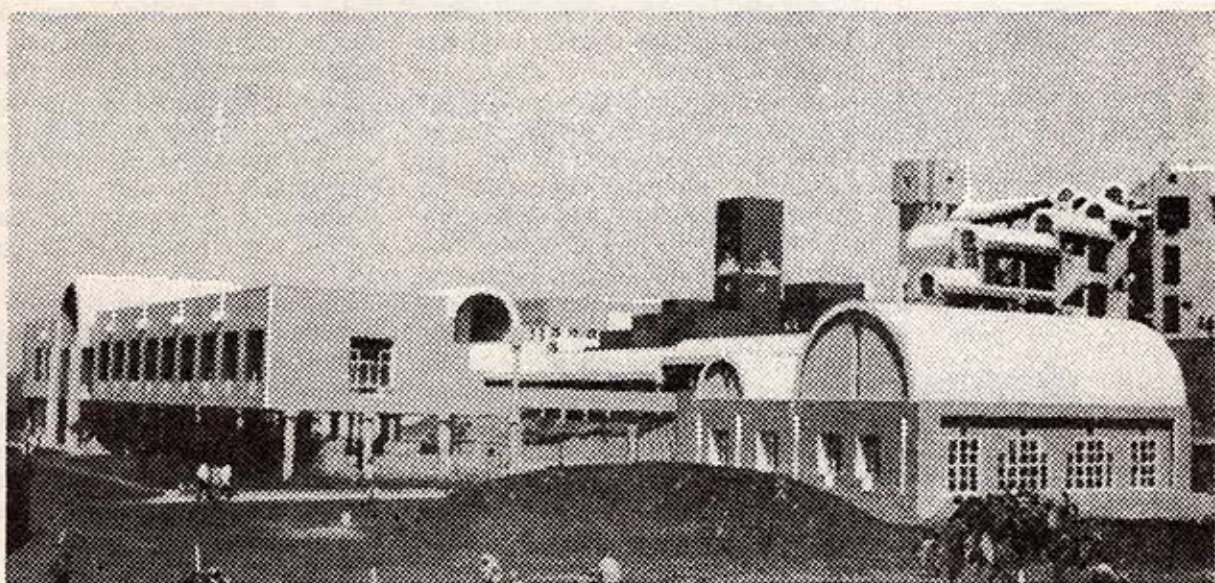
Association of Houston (ZAH) wanted the Congress to create a forum for Zoroastrians to learn about their past (religious, ritualistic, cultural and historic), understand their present position in North America, and prepare for the future "in this new land, by identifying and nurturing the talents, strengths, creativity and gifts of each Zoroastrian." The theme of the Congress — "Zarathusti: My Past, Our Future" — placed "the focus on 'my past' because each person has come from a different part of the world and 'our future' (as) collectively we are looking at being something in North America," explained Mistree.

The business sessions of the Congress began with Kersi Engineer, chairman of the ZAH, giving a welcome address followed by an invocation by Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal, High Priest of the Wadia Atash Bahram, Bombay. Aaron Rustom, president of the Zoroastrian Youth Group of Houston and Rohinton Rivetna, president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) added their own words of welcome. The lighting of the *diva* by the community heralded earnest work.

The 7NAZC boasted two innovative sessions: "Our present and future in North America" presented in the form of an intergenerational dialogue and an examination of "Zarathusti Women: Past, Present and Future," by an all-female panel.

The dialogue between five teams of parents and offspring was chaired by for-

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mer Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) president Minoo Treasurywala, retired director of finance and administration with the Hydro Electric Power Commission of Mississauga, Toronto. As they explored the topic from both points of view, the session focussed on the questions that troubled the youth and the explanations their parents put forth. Thus, mother Aban and daughter Nerina Rustomji of Houston talked about "the nature of the family and the meaning of family loyalty... and the transfer of eastern values to western family lifestyles;" father Rohinton and daughter Zenobia Rivetna of Chicago talked about the fact that Zoroastrians who came to America for economic reasons have succeeded fairly well and "almost as a gift" have discovered the need to be religious. They discussed values, the creation of an appropriate infrastructure including programs and a home environment conducive to the success of their motto: 'succeed we must and succeed we shall.' When it was the turn of Parvez and Susan Varjavand from California and their son Behram from Houston, Susan, who is a convert to Zoroastrianism, talked about what part of the religion appealed to her the most. Then the family focused "on the extent to which these impressions need to be supplemented to achieve a complete understanding of the religion."

Mother Dolly and daughter Natasha Dastoor from Montreal, Canada discussed the need of the youth for strong role models and the parents' own dilemma as they find that the "old, tried and true techniques of parenting" do not seem to hold good "with the contemporary challenges posed by their offspring's independence and social behavior." Mother Magdalena Rustomji and son Aaron Rustom of Houston talked about acculturation, wherein values of both cultures — Zoroastrian and North American — are taken into account and the best of each are passed on to the next generation.

The session "Zarathusti Women: Past, Present and Future," chaired by Dr (Ms) Dolly Dastoor, secretary of FEZANA and assistant professor of psychiatry at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, was aimed at preparing a future in which Zoroastrian women could play a significant role, as noted the souvenir.

A founding member of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO), and its chairman since 1980, Dr (Ms) Shirinbanoo Kutar spoke on "Evolution of Zarathusti Women — A Personal Perspective." The paper dealt with achieve-

ments of women of Iran, India and Pakistan as well as the work of Maneckji Hataria in Iran. It also included the education of Parsi Zoroastrian women starting from 1857 to the early twentieth century in India.

Ms Jennifer Rose, a doctoral student at Columbia University, New York, read a paper on "The Traditional Role of Zoroastrian Women — A Legacy For Today." Rose outlined some of the sources for determining what may be regarded as the traditional role of women, and then concentrated on specific areas wherein the traditional role of women is seen to have fostered the promotion of Zoroastrianism. She also suggested contributions which women could make to the future development of the community.

Dr (Ms) Avan Billimoria, chair of the psychology department at Chicago State University, read a paper on Zoroastrian parenting. She called on the need to make children aware of the inherent beauty and logic of their faith and be taught to practice the tenets instead of blindly parroting words they do not understand. "They will then find pride in their religion and be secure in their Zoroastrian identity while living and working with others of diverse backgrounds and creeds," Billimoria noted.

Dr (Ms) Vera Mehta, secretary-general of the International Association of Schools of Social Work at Vienna, Austria, focussed on the need for greater contribution from Zoroastrian women "in raising human consciousness and realization through service for humankind."

"Zoroastrianism And Other Religions," chaired by Dr Kaikhosrov D. Irani, professor of philosophy at the City College of New York, aimed at highlighting the "commonalities and dissimilarities between Zoroastrianism and Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Bahaism." Khojeste Mistree, founder of Zoroastrian Studies, Bombay, dealt with Hinduism; James Russell, associate professor of Middle East languages and cultures at Columbia University in New York with Judaism; Jamsheed Choksy, a junior fellow working on his doctoral thesis in history and religions of the Near East and Inner Asia at Harvard University, with Buddhism; Alan Williams, lecturer in comparative religion at the University of Manchester, with Christianity; Dr Ali Jafarey, board member and trustee of the Ancient Iranian Cultural Society now in Los Angeles, with Islam; and Dr

Farhang Mehr, professor of international relations at Boston University, with Bahism.

"With the demographic degeneration of the Parsi population in India and Pakistan and the upsurge and unity in North America, it is conceivable that...the global Zoroastrian focus may move from Bombay to North America, and FEZANA, in turn, may provide a world Zoroastrian democratic leadership," speculated Homi Minocher-Homji, president of ZSO. Minocher-Homji's paper was a part of the session on "Zoroastrian Demography, Beliefs, Identity and Unification in North America" chaired by Dr Farhang Mehr.

Lawyer Ms Dina G. McIntyre identified our spiritual roots as the way of life which Zarathustra propagates in the *Gathas* and advocated the idea that "rituals and reason are not mutually exclusive, but are complementary aspects of the human experience, each with its part to play in nurturing the religious needs of a community."

Psychologist Dr Kersey Antia, honorary High Priest of the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago, spoke of the "Universality of Zoroaster's Message:" its rele-

vance to our own times and progeny. "When we doubt, we can, and should, only turn to his own very words as contained in the *Gathas*," advised Antia.

Four sessions were held concurrently. "Coping in North America" was the

"The global Zoroastrian focus may move from Bombay to North America"

theme of a rap session for Zoroastrians under 25. "Listening to one's peers is often the best, and sometimes, the only way to learn from and value true experience," noted moderator Aaron Ruston in his summary of the session. For this session, Mehran Sepehri, director of Progressive Technologies in Los Angeles and part-time professor at the California State University in Northridge, chaired a session titled "Why Marry a Zoroastrian? Doing the Right Thing for the Wrong

Reasons!" The dialogue tried to answer such questions as: Is marriage within the religion a privilege or a burden? What are the obstacles preventing the youth from matching up with the right Zoroastrian? Other such questions addressing the problem of finding the right mate in North America were also deliberated upon.

Noshir Jesung, vice-president of the Traditional Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Anjuman of California, chaired the session titled "Focus on Religion," a session highlighting the synergism between thought, ritual and religious practice where "The Evolution of Zoroastrian Thought" was presented by Prof Irani, the "Consistency of Zoroastrian Rituals Through the Ages" was demonstrated by Khojeste Mistree and a lecture demonstration by Dastur Kotwal on the jashan ceremony and on the afringan concluded the session.

The session on "Zoroastrian Business Network" was chaired by Dr Boyce. It was aimed at highlighting "the necessity to form an economic and cultural tie which could help business and professionals of the Zoroastrian community in North America and throughout the world," as per the session summary. Pa-

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pers by Bomy Boyce, a marketing consultant and a founding member of the ZSO, Minoo Dastoor, manager of the Environmental Technology Program at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena; Adi Davar, senior vice-president and board director of International Development Specialists Inc and International Development Training Institute; Kaemerz Dotiwala, founder and president of Tex Fuels Inc; Kymus Ginwala, president of Northern Research and Engineering Corporation; and Nes Lakadawala, chief executive officer of Blanchard-Ness Limited, examined concepts of small business, professional network, banking and their integration.

"Zarathushtra's Religion — of the Ways and Means" was discussed from the perspectives of clinical geriatric psychologist Dr (Ms) Dolly Dastoor of Douglas Hospital, Montreal; professor of education and psychology Dr Mehraban Khodavandi of Lakeland College, with professor of sociology Yezdi Rustomji of the North Harris County College who also functions as coordinator and counselor at the College's Life Skills Center, in the chair.

FEZANA, the WZO, London, and the North American Mobeds Council gave an overview of their respective organizations at the session on Zoroastrian networking.

An open session titled "Let the Zarathushtri Speak," chaired by Minocher Homji, presently director and vice-president of FEZANA, aimed at giving the participants of the Congress a chance to air their views. Six persons were selected at the "total discretion of the chairperson" and were given four minutes each to have their say. The remaining time was allocated to others selected at random from names drawn out of a *pugree* (traditional headgear). Thereafter the session chairpersons made their reports giving action items for the next Congress, followed by the closing ceremonies wherein Dr Boyce thanked and Dastur Kotwal blessed the delegates and passed on the *diva* to FEZANA for the next Congress — in Vancouver in 1992.

The substantial intellectual fare was relieved by a judicious sprinkling of faith, festivity and fellowship. Thus the first day had been reserved for getting acquainted, for registrations, a committee meeting of FEZANA, tours of Hous-

ton and in the evening, an Iranian banquet organized by Fereshte, Houshang and Yazdani Khatibi featuring Persian music, food and friends. Dinner was followed by Dr Boyce's welcome address and a talk on "Our Iranian Heritage" by Mehr. The Iranian Refugee Committee and the Department of State Representatives received special thanks from Kaemerz Dotiwala, past president of ZAH. A special award presentation — the key to the city of Houston given by the mayor to noted conductor Zubin Mehta — prolonged a music and dance performance and dancing into the wee hours of the night!

The following evening was reserved for a banquet and the presentation of the 7NAZC awards. Jamsheed K. A. Marker, former Pakistan ambassador to the USA and Distinguished Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington DC, gave a talk on "Leadership and the Zoroastrian Community." Soprano Ms Sonia Behrana followed with a music recital accompanied on the piano by Keith Chapman. Zubin Mehta, then in his twelfth season as music director of the New York Philharmonic, spoke about the achievements of the Zoroastrian com-

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munity in North America. Marker and Mehta gave away the seven awards: the Student Award for an outstanding Zoroastrian high school or college student to Neville Meherji Billimoria of Lombard, Illinois; the Young Zoroastrian Award for a Zoroastrian under 30 years of age who has excelled in his/her field of endeavor to Sarosh Viraf Kanga of Bollingbrook, Illinois; the Community Service Award for a Zoroastrian who has devoted his/her time and service to the furtherance of the Zoroastrian community to Ms Sabar Eruch Patel of Toronto, Canada; the Humanitarian Service Award — rechristened the Jamshed Pavri Humanitarian Service Award in homage to the late Zoroastrian stalwart — for a Zoroastrian who has devoted his life to various humanitarian causes for the Zoroastrian community to the husband and wife team of Ervad Meheraban and Khannum Paridokht Zarathosty of Vancouver, Canada; the Lifetime Achievement Award for a Zoroastrian who has achieved international prominence and is looked upon as a community leader to Zubin Mehta of New York; the Excellence in Professional or Business Achievement, for a Zoroastrian considered to be a world leader in his pro-

fession or business to Dr Meherwan Boyce of Houston, Texas; and the Outstanding Zoroastrian Award, for a Zoroastrian who has achieved excellence in his profession and who has devoted much of his energy in promoting Zoroastrian causes (an all encompassing Zoroastrian) to the husband and wife team of Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna of Hinsdale, Illinois. Jehangir K. Shroff, of J. S. A. Consulting Engineering, was the president of the awards committee and a panel of five judges had evaluated the 41 nominations received.

Dr Kotwal with more than 30 priests conducted a jashan ceremony at the Rothko Chapel, a 20th century sanctuary where all may meditate and pray. Not committed to any one religion, the Chapel, where the Zoroastrian Association of Houston has held community gatherings since 1985, imposes no particular traditional environment. After the ceremony Kotwal explained the steps and rituals.

To orchestrate the Congress the ZAH had formed an organizing committee of about 40 members under the chairmanship of Dr Meherwan Boyce, with 14 sub-committees. In addition, Farrokh Mistree

was appointed program coordinator, Sarosh Collector, treasurer, Magdalena Rustomji, committee secretary, Bomy Boyce, Canadian coordinator and Ms Katie Irani, medical director. Said Boyce, "The first thing we had to do was to decide what the agenda of the Congress should be, who the speakers were going to be." The speakers were selected "in a very democratic, open fashion with the idea that we would find the most appropriate people to give that particular lecture as opposed to saying, 'that person is a big shot, well, we must have him,'" added Mistree.

The objectives of the Congress were identified in March and the letters went out inviting the speakers. The program was slightly modified and adjusted in April and consolidated some time in May. The papers started arriving in July and all was set for the Congress by the end of August, detailed Mistree. In a letter to Boyce, Dr (Ms) Vera Mehta lauded the Congress' innovativeness, creativeness, objectivity.

"We raised around \$70,000 to have this Congress. All the money was raised through ads — the Tata group from India, Dadi Balsara's Perfumes of Singapore and airlines such as Lufthansa, Air India

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gave us major ads... A lot of business people took a number of small ads. The hotel also cooperated and gave us discounts. Personal donations were given by Zubin Mehta and Jamsheed Marker... We had no government help or anything like that so all of the money had to be collected from scratch," Boyce said. Entrance fees also helped defray the costs of the Congress. Adults were charged \$101 and students \$51.

Next on the agenda is the compilation of a report on the Congress. A longer term goal is to edit and compress the video tape of the proceedings so that a compact version may be available to the public at large at a nominal fee.

"Throughout the Congress there was an air of fellowship and happiness and that was extremely rewarding and that made me feel very, very good," noted Boyce after it was all over. Added Mistrree, "The beauty of the Congress... was that (it) had more slickness and content (than earlier congresses). It was really done with panache... and for the development of that slickness I think two people should get most, if not all, the credit...Zarine and Meherwan Boyce."

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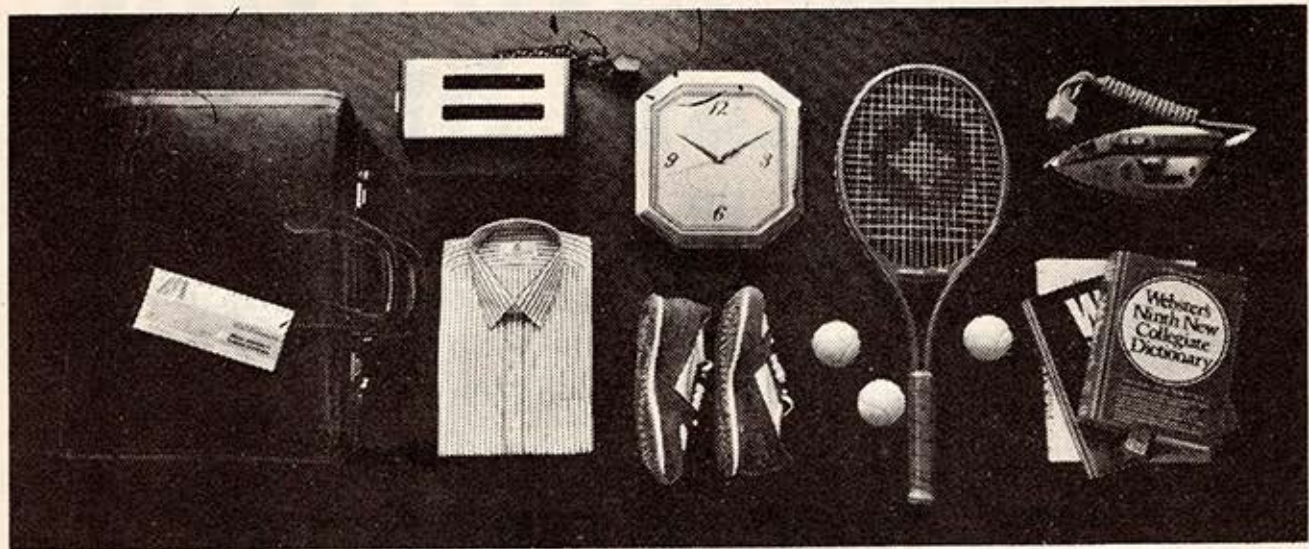
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Parsi Collegians: Low grades on religion

Gustasp Irani

*A study of Zoroastrian undergraduates
by sociologist Dr Sam Taraporevala reveals that
they are intellectually ignorant of the faith*

"The community is illiterate on religious issues. If Parsis are to survive, they will have to do something about their ignorance and almost total lack of knowledge about Zoroastrianism." Grim words, but they sum up the feelings of Dr Sam Taraporevala, lecturer in sociology at St Xavier's College, who prepared the thesis *Religiosity in an Urban Setting — a Study of Parsi College Students in the City of Bombay* for his PhD degree. The research work is significant as for the first time the religious attitudes, knowledge and practices of the Bombay Parsi collegians have been probed scientifically. It is significant on another count for it shows that the community is standing on the brink of an abyss, intellectually and spiritually impotent, as it stares extinction in the face. It gives the lie to the oft-touted refrain of the diehards

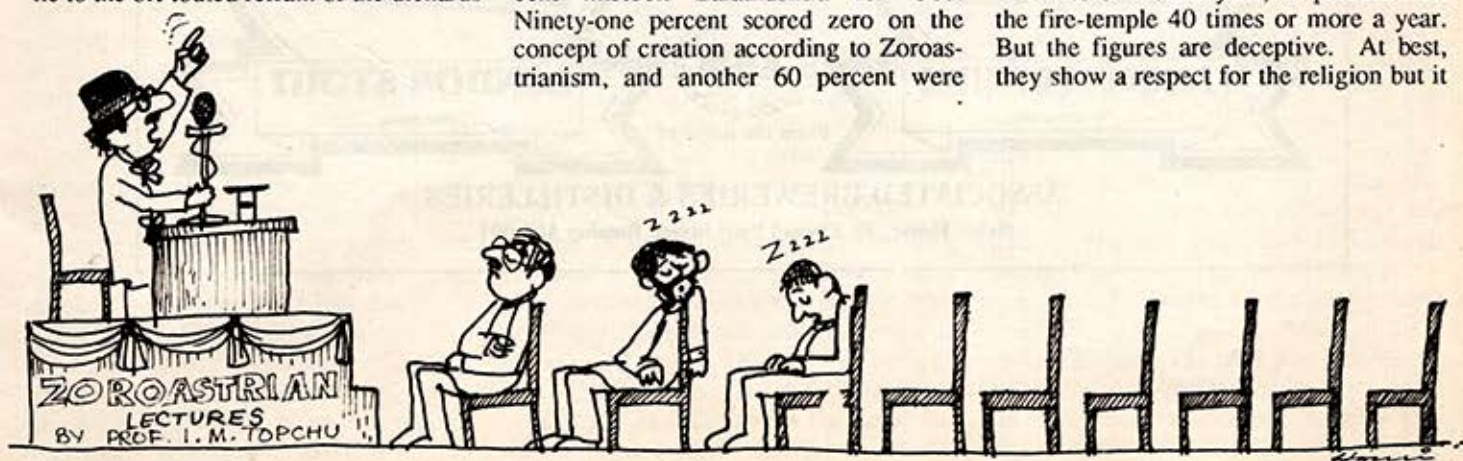
who brush aside the grim reality with "quality not quantity."

The general portrait of the Bombay Parsi collegian that emerges from the 424-page thesis is one of a student who takes pride in his religion, practices its ritual precepts but almost totally lacks knowledge of his faith — a brittle outer crust encasing a void. Statistically, 73 percent of the respondents expressed "great pride" in the Zoroastrian heritage and another 19.5 percent "some pride." Yet, when probed on the characteristics of God as conveyed by the Zoroastrian religion, slightly over half (50.79 percent) were not in a position to answer the question. The study showed that only 10.58 percent seemed to be relatively well informed and another 38.36 percent only partially informed while another 10 percent mistook Zarathushtra for God. Ninety-one percent scored zero on the concept of creation according to Zoroastrianism, and another 60 percent were

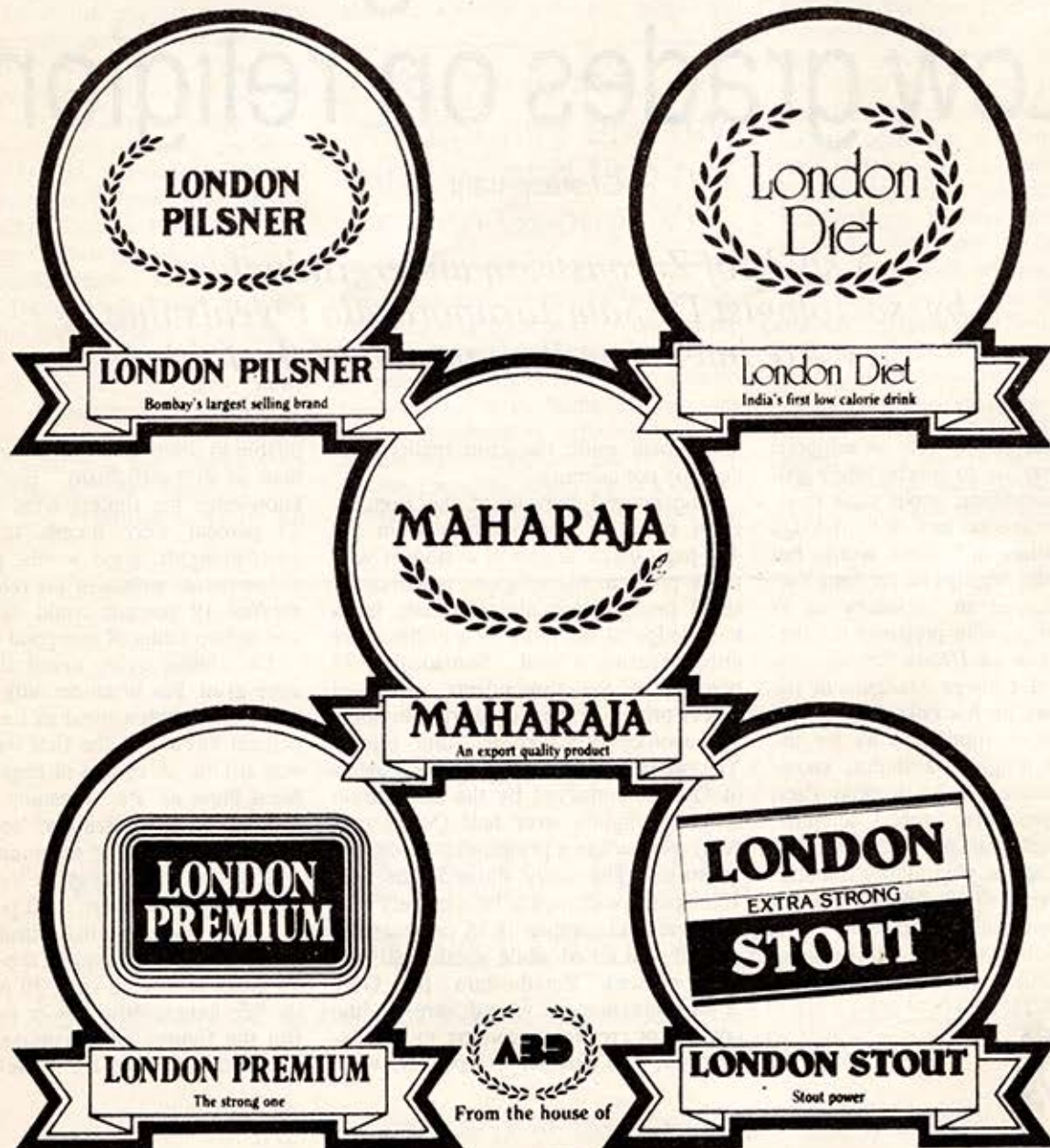
unable to score when defining the role of man in Zoroastrianism. Even on basic knowledge the figures were distressing: 27 percent were unable to recognize good thoughts, good words, good deeds as the corner stones of the religion while another 19 percent could identify only one or two items of this good trinity.

On almost every count the findings were grim. For instance: only 64 percent knew the Prophet lived in Iran, only 3.7 percent knew that the first Parsi landing was at Diu. A couple of respondents defined Parsi as 'Par' meaning 'by means of' and 'si' as referring to 'sea.' Funny, but the joke is on the community.

It is the same story in the ritualistic aspect of the religion: 90 percent were full-time wearers of the sudreh and kusti, about 60 percent frequent the fire-temple 11 times or more a year, 30 percent visit the fire-temple 40 times or more a year. But the figures are deceptive. At best, they show a respect for the religion but it



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is respect that does not stem from deep-rooted conviction and understanding. Taraporevala observes: "As you analyse the data more deeply you find that 70 percent do not know the meaning of the kusti prayers. Unless you understand what you are saying, you are not going to get deeper involvement."

"Proud?" Taraporevala asks. "How can you be proud of what you don't know much about? It is pride that can be easily ruptured. It is something that should worry people interested in the survival of the community and religion."

There is a flicker of hope though as three-fourths of the respondents indicated that they would like to know more about the religion. Not surprisingly, those who scored well showed greater keenness than those who did not. In fact one-fourth of those who scored below average were smug with what they considered "a working knowledge of Zoroastrianism." To most however it was a case of the spirit is willing but ah... In Taraporevala's words: "They say they are interested and yet they are not willing to make the effort... Have you ever been to the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute's library? It's almost always empty. They organize regular religious lectures but only a handful of diehards attend. We have the facilities, the books, but how many students have made the effort to use them or for that matter how many parents have made the effort at all?"

Yes, blame the parents, blame the priests, blame the elders. According to Taraporevala, the rot runs deep and the collegians only reflect that malady that affects the community. "If parents are ignorant they have little to offer their children... Priests who *gaapcha maro* (skip lines in their prayers) and beg in

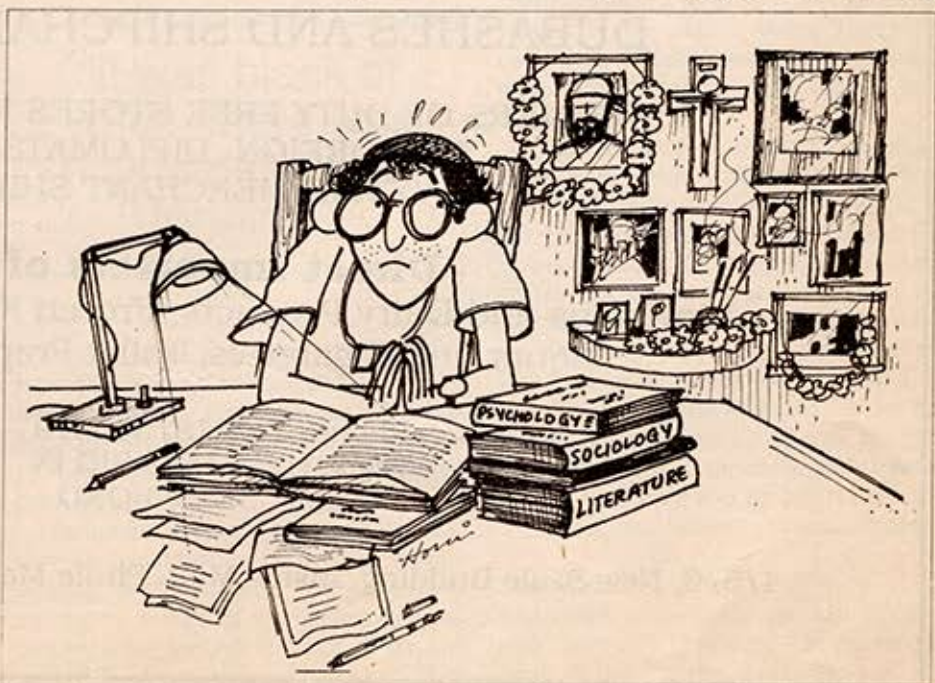
agiaries, create a bad impression on young minds. I don't blame the priests, please," Taraporevala pleads. "They are living with their own problems." But as Taraporevala observes, these same collegians will grow up to be the parents of tomorrow, the backbone of the community of the future.

The remedy? Taraporevala draws upon the findings of his research. "There was a strong correlation between the place of residence and religiosity. Those who lived in Zoroastrian dominated areas — baugs and colonies — were more religious than those who lived in cosmopolitan areas. This was more so with boys." Since the bulk of Parsis live in Zoroastrian dominated areas, Taraporevala sees the baugs and colonies as logical places to organize religious classes. Actually, religious instruction was being imparted at certain baugs even before Taraporevala undertook the study. He emphasizes however, "The religious classes should have a dual approach, including both the parent and the child. Unless the parents are involved, their children's interest will flag." But he warns against over-zealous members of the family who could, and have, pushed their children to the extreme of anti-religion.

Taraporevala singles out the Zoroastrian Studies religious classes for special mention: "Most of those who have scored well have attended religious classes conducted by Zoroastrian Studies." He also mentions an interesting highlight of the research relating to mul-

tiple allegiance or in other words, the involvement of college students with other religions. "You find less multiple allegiance among those who are strongly committed to Zoroastrianism and more multiple allegiance as their commitment to their own religion declines. There is a correlation, though not total." There is also another correlation between area of residence — Zoroastrian dominated and cosmopolitan — and multiple allegiance. In Zoroastrian dominated areas where religiosity is higher, multiple allegiance is also greater.

Christianity, according to the survey, has the largest allegiance when measured in terms of knowledge of the faith. The source of this knowledge is simple enough to trace — the Christian schools where the respondents studied. Knowledge of Hinduism and Islam follow in that order. The extent of multiple allegiance is reflected in the fact that three-fifths or 112 respondents state that their homes contain pictures or objects which are of significance to religions other than Zoroastrianism. Of these, 70 percent indicate that these pictures and objects are revered by the entire family. The image of Sai Baba figures in 76 households, Christ and his virgin mother Mary, in 38 and 24, Laxmi, Ganesh and Krishna in 36, 35 and 14 households respectively. Many households have more than one non-Zoroastrian image. Dig deeper and the data shows that two-fifths or 76 of the respondents visit non-Zoroastrian places of worship for prayer. The Novena



Never mind the handicap

"Hello." Dr Sam Taraporevala greets you as he walks into the room. His hand reaches out but stops short of your own. Only then do you realize that those light brown eyes are sightless. Taraporevala was born blind, so also was his brother Jal. Their parents, Mediomha and Armaity, however, met the setback with determination. Lack of vision was not going to hold their children back. And the children responded gallantly. Sam obtained a PhD in sociology and is a lecturer at St Xavier's College, Bombay. Jal obtained an MA in economics and political science, an LLB and a PhD in political science, and is the foreign affairs analyst at *The Independent*, a Bombay daily. "We have always excelled," says Sam with quiet pride in his own and his brother's achievements. His bio data reflects it — eleventh in the entire University in his BA; first in his sociology group in his MA; a long list of merit awards.

Sam traces it all back to a grim, brave decision taken long ago by his parents: "They put us into an integrated school instead of a special school for the blind." But more; in many ways they were the eyes of their sons, reading incessantly to them, newspapers, text books, notes. And they were always there to add that little bit more — love. "We have a very supportive and loving family. We have been a very happy family," says Sam. Not surprisingly, his PhD thesis is dedicated: "To my parents with love and gratitude." To complete the family portrait, add a sister Farida, a teacher at the J. B. Petit High School for Girls, Bombay.

Sam views his blindness with quiet realism: "It is my handicap. Everyone has some problem or the other. If you are going to brood over it, you are not going to get anywhere. If the problem can be solved then fine, solve it. If it is a problem that is going to stay, then get on with life."

prayers at St Michael's Church at Mahim and Sai Baba temples are popular devotional places. Adds Taraporevala: "Multiple allegiance encompasses not just Zoroastrianism and a single other faith, but involves a greater number of religions."

Taraporevala however offers no rationale for this phenomena. "I can only speculate." He passes no judgement too. "To each his own belief." It is a reflection of the hard-nosed professionalism of the professor, the sociologist, a man of reason who works with facts. It is important to recognize these aspects of the man for they make the findings of his study more compelling.

Least one is tempted to dismiss the findings, Taraporevala clarifies that the sample is statistically very well representative of the Bombay Parsi (undergraduate) collegiate population. The 10 percent random proportional stratified sample was selected from colleges of Bombay located in south and central Bombay and the western suburbs of the city where the main pockets of the community are found. Taraporevala records that in all there were 1,888 Zoroastrians enrolled in these colleges, 1,078 or 57.1 percent female and 810 or 42.9 percent male. They

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were divided into 30 groups comprising of each class, eleventh and twelfth standard, first, second and third year of each discipline, arts, science and commerce; each sex, male and female. In all, 194 individuals were selected for the study of which a very high number of 189, needless to say with the persistent follow-up of Taraporevala, responded. The study itself was done between July and October 1985 and the thesis submitted, after exhaustive analysis, in December 1987.

But first there was the toil and sweat that preceded the actual research work. This started in 1983 when Taraporevala undertook the task of educating himself on the religion. It was a two-pronged approach — reading and interviewing. Numerous books on the subject were consumed. High priests, Ilm-e Khshnoomists, scholars, teachers and individuals interested in religion were interviewed. "Based on my work I drew up certain yardsticks. Mind you, I was dealing with a diverse cross-section of views and opinions. Any point of view was accepted as correct." In February 1985 the pilot study was ready, then vetted so that the questions asked were not misunderstood.

Think that was hard work? Then consider the fact that Taraporevala was born sightless — blind (see box).

By the way, if Taraporevala were to be a sample unit in his own research work before he undertook it, how would he

Over-zealous members of a family can push their children to the extreme of anti-religion

have fared? "I would have got very low marks. Average, at best," he confesses.

Taraporevala's treatment of his research project was a "multiple dimensional approach to religiosity." In this approach the religious inclinations of an individual are viewed under five different heads: Ideology/beliefs, experiences/feelings, intellectual and informational dimension, ritualistic dimension and consequential dimension or the social impact

of personal religious beliefs. His research work covered the first four dimensions; the first two clubbed together in a single chapter and the other two meriting a chapter each. The consequential dimension was not attempted. "It merits a thesis all on its own. One needs time and funds to undertake such a project. I'd love to do it. I'd love to do a lot of things."

Additional chapters titled "Religiosity Explored," "The Parsis — the community under focus," "The Multiple Allegiance Dimension" and a "General Synthesis" round off the work. Many of the colleagues who formed a part of the study would benefit immensely by reading the chapter on "The Parsis" — a compact, concise, fluid summary of their religious and social history. The other chapters too would make interesting reading. Says Taraporevala, "The study in a way confirms what people earlier surmised was true. It gives an unbiased picture of the problems that confront the community. I'd advise Parsis to go through the research work, pick up points and work out strategies. Something needs to be done. But who decides? Our community loves controversies..."

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Caravans from Yazd

Starting work as menial labor, the early Irani settlers in Bombay went on to become proprietors of restaurants and partners in other business ventures

Gustasp Irani

Slowly the caravan inched southwards, deeper into the heart of the arid, barren and seemingly lifeless deserts of South Central Iran where the days were scorched by a relentless sun and the nights were freezing. Tagged onto this weary train was a group of Zoroastrians from Yazd, all their earthly possessions strapped onto donkeys that they led on foot. Driven by poverty and religious discrimination, they fled Iran to brave endless expanses of sand and rock and the cutthroat knives of bandits and dacoits along the way. It was a flight of hope, for across the stretches of desert, sea and time, the promised land — India — beckoned.

From the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a steady stream of Zoroastrians from Yazd and Kerman made the hazardous journey, first by foot and on donkeys to the port city of Bandar Abbas from where they set sail for Bombay. By the late 1920s buses and trucks replaced the donkeys. Then an alternative overland route opened in the 1940s when the railways linked Iran and India across what is now Pakistan. Finally, by the late 1940s, the Irani migrants were arriving by air.

But the adventures of the early migrants are now part of the community's folklore. "The journey then took about two months and was full of danger. It took real courage to walk across the desert," an Irani states in wonderment. Time has romanticized the pain and struggle.

Faridun Zarhosti, ex-partner and founder of Asiatic Travel Service, was 17 when he first came to India in 1923, trudging over the desert stage of the journey on foot. "We travelled with caravans for protection against bandits," he recalls. Food, fuel and provisions for the trip were strapped across donkeys that were not ridden but led. It took 14 days to go from Yazd to Shiraz, another nine from Shiraz to Bandar Bushehr from where he set sail for Bombay — another six days. "The sea voyage was aboard a passenger ship which sailed directly for Bombay. We were lucky," says Zarhosti.

Not all were that lucky. "We came on a cargo ship," says Jamshed S. Kowkabi (Kermani), retired sales executive of Associated Breweries who made the journey in 1929 at the age of six. His widowed mother and five children, the eldest only nine years old, huddled on deck for 14 days as the ship made a port call at Karachi before proceeding to Bombay. Mercifully for them, mechanized vehicles had replaced the donkey over the Kerman-Bandar Abbas sector. However, the fact that it took two days to cover the distance says a lot about the state of the buses and the roads they plied.

"There were no tar roads then," says Boman R. Kohinoor (Irani), retired sales tax consultant and partner of the restaurants Bastani and Co at Girgaum and Britania and Co at Ballard Pier. He migrated from Yazd in 1932 at the age of eight, yet distinctly remembers "the bus

we travelled in... We would come to the smallest slope and it would stop and all passengers were made to get down so that it was light enough to go up." The passengers had to climb on foot the treacherous uphill gradients which in Iran are known as *taughe zagh*.

Once they reached the southern port city, the migrants had to deal with the British. Though the British never did colonize Iran, they were the overlords who ran the country, recalls Aspendiar T. Azarmi (Irani), partner of Asiatic Travel Service and Leopold Cafe and Stores at Colaba. The British issued the passports, visas and travel documents at a price approximately equivalent to Rs 25. It was their ships that ferried the migrants across for another Rs 25, adds Azarmi who migrated from Yazd via Bandar Bushehr in 1930 when he was 12.

Later it was the British railway lines that pierced into Iran from India, now Pakistan, but only as far as the border town of Zahedan. To reach the railhead in 1945, 11-year-old Ardesheer K. Faramazoni, now partner of Mocambo Cafe on P. M. Road, Hutatma Chowk, caught a bus from Yazd to Kerman. From Kerman to Zahedan his party hitched a ride on a truck as there was no regular bus service on this route. The four kids in the group were perched atop the truck and, to make sure that they did not fall off, they were strapped to kerosene drums secured up there. There were no wayside inns, no service centers. "We

The Irani Tea Shops

The origin of the Irani restaurants in Bombay is obscure; it lies blurred in the realm of hearsay. According to one version it can be traced back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century when the first Zoroastrian migrants from Yazd and Kerman came to Bombay. Those simple, illiterate farmers had formed a loosely organized social club of sorts. In the evenings, when the day's work was done, they would meet together to exchange notes, groan, reminisce about their villages and families back home and have a little refreshment — tea. Soon the task of providing the refreshment fell upon a particular individual who charged his co-religionists a fee for his service. With time he started to sell his wares to the local residents of the area, adapting the Iranian tea, a weak brew without milk, to suit the local taste by making it stronger and add-

ing milk... Thus was conceived the first Irani restaurant.

That the Irani restaurants were soon to become a distinctive feature of Bombay is an indisputable fact. The black chairs, the round marble tables; in almost every nook of the city they started to mushroom. "In those days there was no *pagri* system, you only had to pay the rent," says Aflatoon Shokri, partner of Kyani and Co. Though at today's prices, the rents may seem low, they were indeed steep then. "The daily turnover of our shop used to be Rs 18 to Rs 22," says Rusi Yazdegardi, partner of Cafe Mondegar.

The restaurants also served as training grounds for Irani migrants coming in from Iran. The training was hard and the remunerations poor, but the Iranis were a hardy lot used to poverty. More important though, the young Iranis toiling at these jobs learned the language. They also learned the trade and the economics of branching out and setting up their own restaurants.

One of the first tasks the Irani labor had to learn while serving at tables was to distinguish the religion of the clients frequenting the restaurants. In the early days

tea was served in three types of cups — *Gulabi* or pink for Christians and Zoroastrians, "fancy" or cups with floral designs for Hindus, and *safed* or white for Muslims. If they guessed wrong, they were abused: "(Expletive) Can't you see I am a Muslim and you bring me tea in a fancy cup?" According to Behram H. Erahmand, partner of the Brabourne Restaurant and Beer Bar, the three-cup era came to an end when Mahatma Gandhi, on one of his visits to Bombay, appealed to the restaurants to stop this practice of religious distinction.

Meanwhile, as the number of restau-



stopped at a pool of water crawling with insects. What could we do? We were thirsty, very thirsty. We filtered the water with our hankies and..." Faramazian does not complete the sentence, only shakes his head as he recalls the journey. He is a man of few words whose ready smile masks a lifetime of toil and struggle. From Zahedan the train journey took them via Qatar, Karachi, Amritsar and Delhi to Bombay — seven days in crowded third-class compartments towed by steam engines that belched black soot into the air.

When Aflatoon K. Shokri, partner of Kyani and Co at Girgaum migrated in 1948 at the age of 15, the bus service from Yazd extended all the way up to Zahedan. But Shokri's trip was not without incident. It was September, monsoon time, and one of the railway bridges had been washed away. The party of Irani Zoroastrians was soon being ferried across the water in a small boat. While midstream, disaster struck. The boat got caught in a strong current and careened off into a spin. "We gave up hope," says Shokri, "we started to pray our *Ashem Vohu* and *Yatha Ahu Vairyo* aloud." Ahura Mazda must have heard their

prayers for the boatman showed enormous presence of mind. With one end of the rope fastened to the boat, he dived into the water and tied the other end to a tree... The one week rest at the Parsi Dharamshala in Karachi was most welcome before the party of Irani migrants pushed on for Bombay.

A year later, in 1949, 12-year-old Rustom G. Kushesh, who was to later become the partner of National Restaurant at Chowpatty and Tosa Bakery at Fountain, boarded a flight originating from Tehran, and hopped across the skies to Kerman, Zahedan, Karachi and... As the plane prepared to land at Bombay, one of its engines caught fire. Kushesh's journey ended with an emergency landing. "We were pushed out of the plane. There were fire engines everywhere," he recalls. There are other things about that day that he also remembers; it was November 29, Diwali day, and the first thing he found as he emerged from the airport building was a Re 1 note on the ground. Kushesh looks back at his arrival and states: "It was a day of good omen."

He might have been voicing the hopes and aspirations of all the Irani migrants

who over the years streamed into India as they fled religious discrimination and poverty in Iran. Religious discrimination took many forms. For instance, according to Dinshaw S. Kermani, partner of Kermani Transport Service, who migrated from Kerman in 1929 when only eight years old, "A Zoroastrian could not ride in front of a Muslim. He had to get down from his donkey and bow." However, a major social reform instituted by Reza Shah, founder of the Pahlavi Dynasty, was to minimize religious discrimination to a degree. "He ordered that everyone, a mullah or whoever he may be, must be dressed in khaki with a Pahlavi cap which was really a French peaked cap," says Kermani. But he is quick to qualify: "Social discrimination is only part of the story. The real reason why Irani Zoroastrians came to India was poverty."

"You've got to realize that Yazd and Kerman were very poor provinces of Iran. Even the Muslims there lived in poverty. It was not only the Zoroastrians, but also



Bastani and Kyani restaurants are outstanding landmarks on Girgaum while Cafe Mondegar sits at the head of Colaba Causeway. Erahmand at the gulla of Brabourne Restaurant

rants grew, so also did their menu. Some of them grew to be the best eating houses in town outside the restaurants run by the Taj Mahal Hotel. "Our waiters wore uniforms. We were a Grade I restaurant of our time; not that they had any grading

system then," says Boman R. Kohinoor of Britania and Co of which he is a partner.

No one knows how many Irani restaurants there were — 400, 450, 500... However, by 1972 there were around 165 Irani restaurants, according to Jamshed S. Kowkabi, retired sales executive of Associated Breweries, who sold beer to 120 of these and maintained a full record of all. Irani restaurants were the first to convert their premises into beer bars once prohibition was lifted, states Kowkabi. Today there are only 65 Irani restaurants left in Bombay and of these 40 are beer bars.

The decline in their numbers, paradoxically, is attributed to the remigration of Iranis to Iran when the country was booming during the Shah's reign. A number of restaurant owners liquidated their Indian assets and returned to the land of their forefathers. Another reason for the decline in numbers of Irani restaurants, according to Ardeshtir K. Faramazian, partner of Mocambo Cafe, was that young Irani Zoroastrians born in India "would rather sit in a bank than at a gulla (cash counter)."

Come, let's discuss that over a *pani-cum-chai*!

the Muslims of these regions who migrated to India," says Kohinoor. Though there were a few rich and prosperous Zoroastrian traders, most members of the community were self-sufficient farmers with small land holdings. Whatever wheat and barley they grew was for home consumption. Fruits, mainly pomegranates, watermelons, melons, peaches and plums were sold in the market for otherwise they would rot. Irrigation was by canals that were fed by the melting snows from the surrounding hills. The annual winter rains were crucial for in drought years known as *Khosk Sali*, the hills were stripped of snow and the canals ran dry.

Pressure also started to build upon the land as the population of the Zoroastrian community in Iran grew. According to estimates by Manekji Limji Hataria, the strength of the Zoroastrians in Iran in 1854 was about 6,900. By 1920, according to Zarhosti's estimate, there were about 14,000 to 15,000 Zoroastrians in Yazd alone. Says Zarhosti, "There was not enough land for everyone. They had to migrate to other places: Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz..."

And Bombay, where they had to deal with a culture shock of sorts. It hit them

in their stomach first and set fire to their mouths. Yes; the Indian spicy food was a major problem but there were pleasant treats for the palate too. One migrant remembers: "The first time I tasted white bread was on board the ship. I liked it. I thought it was made of milk." It was also the first time that he was confronted by a banana and it foxed him; he did not know it had to be peeled first and then eaten!

Spicy food, however, was a small matter compared to the other problems that loomed ahead of them. They arrived with no education, no city skills, little or no money and did not know a word of English, Gujarati or any other local language — they spoke Farsi or the Zoroastrian dialect of Dari.

Says Kowkabi: "My mother was married when she was 12. She was 22 when her husband died and she had five children to look after. She was cheated of everything she had in Kerman so she took us and set sail for India." He is visibly moved by the memory. Their first stay in Bombay was at the Irani dharamshala located at the corner of Hughes Road where the building Adarbad now stands. This dharamshala was the refuge for many Irani migrants. Other Parsi institutions

helped out too. The Bombay Parsi Punchayet gave her a monthly dole of Rs 5 to subsidize what she earned working as a servant in a rich Parsi household. The two Petit orphanages for boys and girls gave four of her children a fully subsidized education. The eldest child, then aged nine, did not go to school. He stayed back to look after and help his mother. He started out in life, as many other Irani boys did, as menial labor in an Irani restaurant.

Behram H. Erahmand, partner of Brabourne Restaurant and Beer Bar at Girgaum, landed in Bombay in 1936. He too had started his life as a laborer in an Irani restaurant. His job was unspecified, he had to do whatever he was told: swab floors, help in the kitchen, serve the tables, wash soiled utensils, anything and everything.

The hours were long, from 5 in the morning to well past midnight. The young Irani boys slept on the floor of the restaurant at night. "They would throw water on us if we did not get up on time," recalls one Irani migrant who went through the grind. Salaries were paid once a year. Tips earned at the table belonged to the owner and had to be handed

over. All meals were provided by the restaurant, but were meager. "All we ever ate was *dal-roti* (lentils and unleavened bread); mung *dal*, tur *dal*, masur *dal*... One day I asked if I could have an egg and the owner said: 'You did not come to India to eat eggs. Get to work.'" And work they did, year round, Sundays and holidays included. They only got one day off in the year — Nowroz. The memories hurt; they well up and one Irani breaks down momentarily. His voice chokes and tears spill down his face. He snatches a duster from a passing waiter and wipes his face. He changes the topic and talks about the pay cut he took to attend night school.

Most of the migrants attended night school. Some were enrolled in regular schools but dropped out due to poverty. Says Azarmi: "I had to stop going to St Xavier's School because I could not afford the fees which were Rs 4 per month." He started to work as a laborer at the Leopold Cafe and Stores. "I was paid only once in the full year, an annual salary of Rs 300." Slowly, he worked his way up to become a partner in the shop. Later he broke free of the stereotype Irani restaurant business and earned a partnership in the Asiatic Travel Service which had been established in 1946 by the Zarhosti family. That was the year the Zarhosti brothers had gone to the office of Air India's commercial director Bobby Kooka to ask him for a concessional ticket for an Air India flight they planned to take. "No concessions. Open a travel agency and I will give you a commission," said Kooka. As a result, a godown used by the family for their import-export business was converted into a travel agency office. When Zarhosti left to resettle in Iran in 1954 he first gave Azarmi power of attorney to run his agency and in 1960 offered him partnership in the business.

Kermani too made a transition from the Irani restaurant business to transport — trucking. He too dropped out of school as he lacked the resources to pay his fees and became a delivery-cum-odd-job-boy with Strand Bakery, reportedly the first bakery in the country to have an electric oven. From there, he moved to an Irani restaurant, clock repair... and he fell in love and got married. His marriage was the turning point in his life, the motivation to make the jump from salaried employment to self-employment. In 1945, he went to Nasik and bought an old army truck at an auction for Rs 1,500. "I still



*Kermani Transport Service fleet.
Asiatic Travel Service office*

remember that truck — BMT 9333," says Kermani. "I first employed a driver till I learnt to drive it myself." And later, he would drive the truck to Nasik, to Poona, to Ahmednagar, to Satara, to Solapur... anywhere where goods had to be delivered. Then he bought himself another truck. And he set up a garage. And he specialized in converting trucks from petrol to diesel engines. And he bought a godown in Bombay and Surat and started the Kermani Transport Service. Today 20 family-owned and 80 contract trucks ply under his banner.

Kohinoor attributes his sales tax consultancy firm to a conspiracy of circumstances. The conspiracy started in 1946 when sales tax was first introduced in India; the Bombay office of the department was located over his restaurant Britania and Co. Irani restaurant owners coming to the department for accounts would stop by at Kohinoor's restaurant

and plead with him to sort out their sales tax problems with the officers who frequented his restaurant. Kohinoor helped out as a friend but soon he had 60 different files of 60 different restaurants piled up in his restaurant. His partner protested: either run the restaurant or attend to the sales tax work. Kohinoor took the plunge and set up his consultancy. Two years ago he handed over the firm to his son and returned to running his Irani restaurants.

There is a branch of first generation Irani migrants who stayed with farming when they landed in India. They transformed the swamps of Dahanu in north Maharashtra into rich orchards (see "Shield the field," *Parsiana*, October 1987). But it was the Irani restaurant that was the backbone of the rehabilitation of the community in India (see box). "The Iranis who came from Yazd and Kerman were illiterate farmers who did not know the language of India. What else could you expect of them?" asks Rusi Yazdegardi, partner of Cafe Mondegar near Regal Cinema. Born in India and educated here, he recalls the talk he had with his father after his graduation. His father told him of his journey across the deserts of Iran, of how he could not afford the sea passage to Bombay so he had to make the journey overland, riding goods trains whenever he could; of how at Karachi he could no longer stomach the spicy Indian food and spent precious two annas to buy 50 eggs that would sustain him till Bombay; of how he labored as a menial help in an Irani restaurant; of how... "This same man who landed in Bombay a pauper, illiterate and with no knowledge of the local languages, became a partner in Pyrkes Restaurant (in downtown Bombay which has since been closed). He had a staff of over 80 who called him '*bada seth*.'" It was more than the life story of an adventurer; it was the story of the courage and spirit of a tribe of people.

Closer home we saw the same courage and spirit reflected in the life of our grandfather. Around 1885, at the age of 14, his family landed in Bombay — paupers. On the footpaths of the city, they built a tin shack where they lived and sold tea. Later, he and his brother were to become the leading builders of their time in Bombay and between themselves, constructed over 40 buildings in the city, including the four around Khodadad Circle which were named after their father — a landmark as integral to the city as the Irani restaurant.

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The Gallant Decades

Arnavaz S. Mama

Naval uniforms and starched *daglis* glistened against the background of turf and stone, relieved by the somber olive of the army and the khaki of the air force. "Mindful of the valor of former days," beribboned, sword-girdled men offered silent tribute to coreligionists and others slain in long forgotten battles, even as the evening shadows lengthened. Wreaths encircled the Teen Murti Cavalry Memorial in New Delhi as serving officers headed by Admiral J. J. Nadkarni, chairman of the chiefs of staff committee, Lt Gen Faridoon Billimoria on behalf of the Indian Army, Air Commodore Teestart Master on behalf of the Air Force, and Rear Admiral Keki Pestonji on behalf of the Navy, proffered floral homage followed by family, ex-colleagues and civilian organizations like the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, the World Zoroastrian Organisation, and individual anjumans and punchayets.

Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) president Lt Gen Adi Sethna had chosen the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the posthumous award of the Param Vir Chakra (PVC) to Lt Col Adi Tarapore of The Poona Horse to enlighten the community on the service, bravery and valor of Parsi officers in various fields of action. The wreath-laying ceremony was thus the culmination of a day of remembrance and gratitude which had begun with the recitation of the *Afreen-e Buzorgaan* ("We meet today to honor famous men, our fathers who begat us," to paraphrase it in the words of the Bible) at New Delhi's Bhiwandiwalla Hall in the morning of September 22, 1990. Several non-Parsis in civies had been visibly moved by Sethna's recitation of Parsi bravery. They were Tarapore's colleagues from The Poona Horse.

The citation accompanying the award notes how Tarapore, assigned the task of delivering the main armored thrust for capturing Phillora in the Sialkot sector of Pakistan during the Indo-Pak War of 1965, was driving forward between Phil-

lora and Chawinda when he was suddenly counter-attacked by the enemy's heavy armor; how Tarapore, at the head of his regiment, defied the enemy's charge, held his ground and gallantly attacked Phillora with one of his squadrons supported by an infantry battalion; how he remained unperturbed throughout this action and, when wounded, refused to be evacuated. On succeeding days he led his regiment to capture Jassoram, Wazirwali and Butur Dograndi, taking a toll of 60 enemy tanks at a cost of only nine Indian tank casualties, before he succumbed instantaneously to a splinter that pierced his temple, as informed Col Girdhar Singh. "The valor displayed by Lt Col Adi B. Tarapore in this heroic action which lasted six days was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Indian army," notes the citation to India's high-

est decoration for military bravery, equivalent in every way to the Victoria Cross of pre-Independence days. "We, the regimental officers and men of The Poona Horse, are known and respected because there was one Parsi gentleman who commanded us in war and won the PVC," rhapsodized a nostalgic Col Girdhar Singh who had been Tarapore's second-in-command.

Taking a historical purview of the community's exploits, Sethna spoke of the Parsi force under Ardeshir many centuries ago who fought, unsuccessfully, alongside the king of Sanjan and fell with him when Sanjan was sacked by Alaudin Khilji in 1255; of the Parsi Auxiliary Unit raised in 1805 when the British feared an invasion by Napoleon. In normal times educated Indians had not been permitted to bear arms, said Sethna. It was only during World War I that the British began to recruit Indian doctors when Parsi members of the Indian Medi-



est decoration for military bravery, equivalent in every way to the Victoria Cross of pre-Independence days.

There have been only 17 awardees of the PVC in the 43 years since Independ-

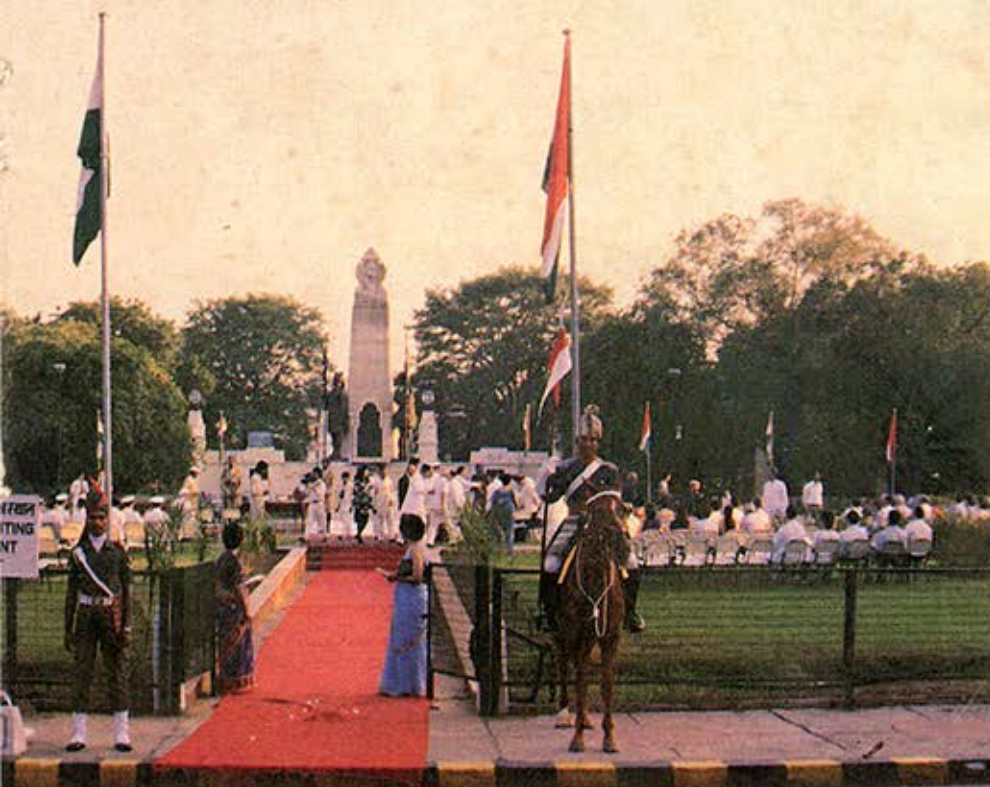


An exceptional chapter in Parsi history was recalled at ceremonial functions in Delhi attended by veterans and serving officers of the armed forces

cal Service (IMS) acquitted themselves fully.

Many an intrepid cadet joined up between the two World Wars, noted Sethna: Aspi Engineer, who was to become chief of air staff and ambassador to Iran in later years, earned the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) in 1938 for his gallantry on the North West Frontier; Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, among the first batch of cadets at the Indian Military Academy, was to distinguish himself in Burma where he was awarded the Military Cross; Jal Cursetjee who joined before World War II was to become chief of naval staff in later years; Jal Cama joined as a *sawar* (a jawan in the cavalry -- the horse cavalry in those days) and rose to become a colonel.

Recalling the opportunity offered to Indians to enter officer ranks during



Top row (left) Parsi naval officers in full regalia; (right) Regimental officers of The Poona Horse. Below (left) Ex-servicemen in daglis and 'ribbons'; (center) The ceremonial red carpet preparation for the wreath-laying ceremony at Teen Murti Memorial; (right) DPA trustee Nari Tarapore and Sethna



SELF-RELIANCE IN STEEL PLANT ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY

Pioneer in steel plant consultancy in India, DASTURCO has been closely involved in the planning, design and engineering of steel, mining, mineral and allied projects for both the public and private sectors. It is consultant to several foreign governments, UNCTAD, UNIDO, World Bank and other international agencies.

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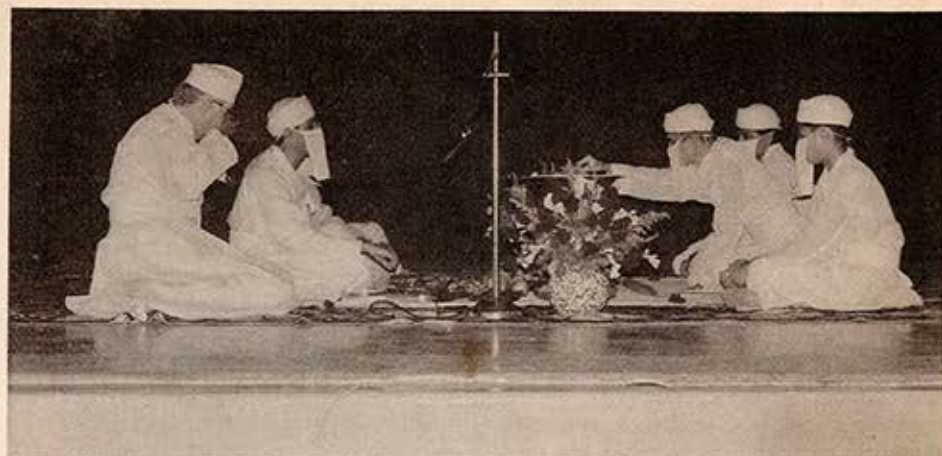
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World War II, Sethna underlined how Parsi youth of that time were encouraged by their mothers to join up in large numbers: "*Jao, yatha ni madad thi jao, fateh karo* (Go with God and may success be yours!)"

Sethna's roll of honor included many a famous name: Capt J. M. Cursetji of the IMS was the first Indian to be decorated with the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) in the Gallipoli campaign, the second highest gallantry decoration in the British forces, and the first Indian to reach the two-star rank of major general during World War II; Capt Bharucha, also of the IMS, was awarded the DSO in Mesopotamia; Jangoo Satarawalla, awarded the Military Cross (MC) and made Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) would later rise to be Lieutenant General; Soli Nazir of the Army Medical Corps won an MC in Burma; Minoo Engineer, Aspi's brother, won the DFC in Burma, the Mahavir Chakra in Kashmir in 1947-48, the Param Vishisht Seva Medal (PVSM) during the Chinese aggression in 1962 and the Padma Bhushan in the 1965 Indo-Pak War. He is possibly the most highly decorated officer in India, says Sethna.

Capt Dara Mistry was awarded the Mahavir Chakra posthumously for his gallantry at Nowshera, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in 1948; Lt Col Jimmy Nadirshaw was awarded the Vir Chakra for leading his Gurkha battalion in action. "During that period Parsis were where the action was:" Noshir Grant, later to become brigadier, was building the road through the Banihal Pass to keep the line open to the Kashmir Valley; General Master was DMS (Army) and became India's first director general of the Armed Forces Medical Services and "left an indelible mark on medical administration in the country;" the first indigenously made rocket engine was fired by Cawas Sethna; he and Sarosh Dastur, later to become an air vice marshal and chairman of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, worked on rocket propulsion at the Air Force research and development and defence production centers; Major Jamy Dorabjee, with his Assam Rifles, escorted the Dalai Lama into India on his escape from Tibet.

Parsi officers acquitted themselves with outstanding gallantry in the 1965 Indo-Pak War. Some died, many more served: In addition to Tarapore, Byram Masters was killed while rallying his troops "far more forward than a brigade



commander need have been," saving Chhamb; Major Sam Doctor, F/Lt Farookh Bunshaw, F/Lt Jal Mistry winning a posthumous Vir Chakra, also laid down their lives. Among those who survived the operation with a Vir Chakra were F/Lt Adi Gandhi and Lt Col Bajina.

The Bangladesh campaign of 1971 was orchestrated by General Sam Manekshaw. Possibly Manekshaw's greatest success came months before the actual campaign when he refused to allow his military judgement to be swamped by political pressure and insisted on choosing his own time for the campaign and he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan and elevated to the rank of field marshal, said Sethna. Vitally involved in the campaign was Khushro Rustamji, chief of the Border Security Force. Also involved were three cousins, each of whom rose to three-star rank as army commanders and air commander-in-chief: Minoo Dotiwala at Bagdogra commanding the Air Force Station; Faridoon Billimoria commanding the 2/5 Gorkha Rifles and Sethna himself — Padma Bhushan, PVSM, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal (AVSM) — at the headquarters of Eastern Command. Capt Rusi Gandhi commanding the INS Mysore was awarded the Vir Chakra and later rose to be Vice Admiral and chairman of the Shipping Corporation of India and later still, governor of Himachal Pradesh. Major General Rusi Khambatta's contribution in the Rajasthan Sector was recognized with a PVSM.

Edul Dhatigara, later to rise to the rank of air marshal and vice chief of the air staff, won the Shaurya Chakra for counter-insurgency operations in Nagaland in the 1960s and in 1981 Second Lieutenant (now Major) Cyrus Pithawalla was awarded the Ashok Chakra — the highest gallantry decoration for action when not engaged in war

Conducting the Afreen-e Buzorgaan

— for counter-insurgency operations in Manipur. In 1988 Brig Farrokh Bulsara led the 50 Parachute Brigade to the Maldives; Majors Yezdi Elavia and Parvez Pavri are currently on UN missions in Nicaragua and Iran/Iraq; Brig Rustom Nanavati is guarding the passes in Siam; Rear Admiral Keki Pestonji received the AVSM in 1990 and Gp Capt Fali Major was awarded the CAS's Commendation Card...

Bravery of a different kind was demonstrated by a young Parsi second lieutenant who refused to open fire on an Indian crowd in Bombay in 1942 during the Quit India Movement. For political reasons he was permitted to resign rather than be court martialled. The information came to light when state papers became open to public scrutiny after 40 years. The officer has chosen to remain anonymous, said Sethna. "For some time there were hardly any fresh entrants, but fortunately a small trickle has started coming in," said Sethna, adding a special welcome to Second Lieutenant Kaizad Bhaya. Two other second lieutenants were called off at the last minute because of the operational commitment of their units.

Retired Parsi officers, invited by the DPA on behalf of the Federation to participate in the function, had been instructed to pin their service ribbons and decorations on their *daglis* — a command requiring some ingenuity to execute as *daglis* and heavy medals were not made for each other. Among those who honored the summons was a bemedalled Noshir Santook, ex RAW (Research and Analysis Wing — the intelligence arm of the defence services). That the invitation had touched a sympathetic chord was evident in the turnout of the veterans, ca-

maraderie and nostalgia vying for predominance. Then Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh had been billed as the chief wreath layer that September day. Called away to a conference instead, Singh had been replaced by Nadkarni. Another notable absentee was Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, away in Sarawak at the time. The wreath laying had been preceded by a brief recital of prayers by a Parsi mobed, a Hindu pandit and a Sikh granthi. The poignant notes of the last post, a two-minute silence and a final reveille, sounded by the regimental buglers, ended a ceremony that was rare and memorable for most civilians.

Though "many a brave man is remembered not by medals but in the memory of those who fought with him, it is indeed a matter of pride that all our officers of the three-star rank, of all the three services, have been awarded the PVSM, some being the recipients of Padma Bhushan," said Sethna. "It is not because they are Parsi that they have been so honored, but because they are good officers, good Indians who have done their service and their country proud..."

READERS' FORUM *continued from page 24*

that many students of the Parsi community do not avail of the excellent education and facilities of the Bai Dhunmai Cawasji High School. The fees are very reasonable: Rs 1,000 per month charged to boarders is inclusive of lodging and boarding, school term fees, toiletries, medication, tuck, postage, dhobi charges, birthday sweets and a complete set of exercise books. Tasty, nutritious food is provided and students are free to eat as much as they want. Milk with a nutritional supplement is provided to all boarders daily at no extra cost. Meat, fish and chicken are served regularly, and eggs daily. Considering the high cost of living, the facilities provided, and the care taken by the school for the welfare of the students, the fees charged are negligible.

Dr (Ms) KETAYUN R. A. J. MADON
Principal, B. D. Cawasji High School
Khandala

Martyrs' Day

January 30, 1991 was observed as Martyrs' Day and coincidentally, I am reminded of an episode which happened way back in the early '40s when Mahatma Gandhi visited the steel town of Jam-

shedpur to address a public meeting. Some of us young boys accompanied by our leaders, Mediomah Madon and Keki (mamaji) Dastur who were very popular freedom fighters of Jamshedpur, called on Mahatmaji who advised Mediomah that he should surrender his Bihar State Legislature Assembly ticket offered to him as a Congress candidate to Dr Rajendra Prasad. Furthermore, they were advised to propagate their freedom activities in the surrounding Adivasi districts of Chota Nagpur.

Mediomah willingly agreed to abide by Bapuji's request, but unfortunately, during their freedom campaign, our leaders were arrested and sentenced to jail at Hazaribag where some of their followers would visit them clandestinely. Amongst those young men was one firebrand named Minu Nariman Dastur (Dr).

Ironically, "Martyrs' Day" was also observed as Leprosy Day and it is sad to report that Mediomah contracted leprosy during his term of imprisonment and, shortly after his release, passed away in Jamshedpur.

SOLI M. KOTWAL

Calcutta

Edited by Arnava S. Manna

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Joining the Forces?

Seventeen Zoroastrian officers rate the armed forces as a career option

Arnavaz S. Mama

"As the rising sun after a rainy day" is how one young Zoroastrian officer views his present career in the armed forces. Indeed, 16 of the 17 Zoroastrian officers of the armed forces who responded to *Parsiana's* questionnaire when they met in Delhi recently (see "The gallant decades," pg 58) said their careers had fully (and, in some cases, more than fully) lived up to their expectations. The questionnaire attempted to gauge their attitudes towards life in the military services and the reasons for the decline in the number of Parsis now seeking to join.

The respondents included Lt Gen Faridoon Billimoria, Maj General D. D. Doctor, Brigadiers Adi Irani, Soli Jambusarwalla, Noshir Grant and Russi Bajina, Col Sam Mehta, Capt Hormuzd Jangalwala and Second Lieutenant Kaizad Bhaya of the Army; Air Marshal Minoo Dotiwala, Wing Commander Pervez Mehta, and Group Captains F. H. Major and Dhunjishaw Marker of the Air Force; Rear Admiral Keki Pestonji and Commodores Jal Postwalla, Khurshed Sanjana and Loveji Mehta of the Navy. Billimoria, Pestonji, Postwalla, Pervez Mehta, Major and Bhaya are currently in service.

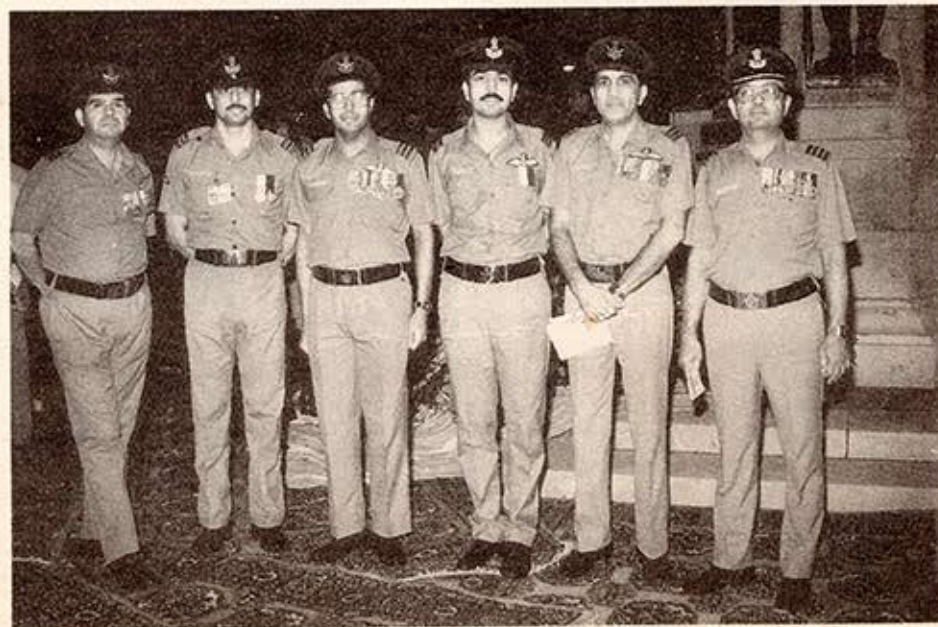
The officers were requested to inform why they had opted for the defence services as a career, whether it had been easy for them to join, how they viewed their career today, whether it had lived up to their expectations and if it had enabled

them to serve the Parsi community in any way. They were also asked to comment on what they considered as the main stumbling block to Parsi boys joining the profession, whether it was possible to overcome it and what were the modes of enthusing youngsters to join. The gentlemen's views on the community's status in general and suggestions for reversing the demographic decline had been sought, as also their opinion about the defence services as a career option from the standpoint of the individual as also its relative benefit to the community vis a vis the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), the Police, the academic and other professions.

Only two of the officers — both from the Army — had joined as a matter of family tradition. Among the rest, two were enthused by auxiliary organizations like the Indian Air Training Corps and the

University Officers Training Corps (UOTC) and two were fascinated by life at sea. Three joined because World War II was on — one of them after doing his MBBS, another because he was to go to UK to study for a legal career but "no students took law in 1939!" Inspiration from and admiration for soldiers enthused the rest while one responded to a recruitment drive at his engineering college.

Six of the 11 retired officers said it had been easy for them to join. Of the five who considered that the British were choosy and wanted educated Indians in the officer cadre, two cited selection figures: two from among 150 in 1939; 10 from among 1,400 in 1954 (as compared to 300 or 400 from among 15,000 who apply, as noted a retired senior officer who had served as commanding officer of the National Defence Academy in later



In the higher echelons of the armed forces Parsi presence is still effective, as witness the naval officers (above) and the air force officers (below) who attended the ceremonial wreath laying at Teen Murti, The Cavalry Memorial, New Delhi

years). "It is never easy to join the forces if you don't have the aptitude," notes Major.

Though almost all felt that a services career had done them as well as their children a lot of good, few could report active involvement on behalf of the community beyond setting a role model to those youngsters with whom they came into contact. Two exceptions were senior officers who were able to help Parsi boys through selections, occasionally.

Why, if the profession is so psychologically and financially satisfactory, are Parsi boys not entering it in numbers? Most of the respondents attributed the shying away of Parsi boys from the armed forces to parental attitudes — especially of the mothers who tend to hang on to the children — and the attachment of the community to their life in Bombay city. "The youth are scared to leave their parents and vice versa," says Bhaya. "They have a hang-up about leaving their mummies," adds Major. "Women (in Bombay) are strong in their opinions — withhold young men from imagined dangers and a demanding career," notes Pestonji. "The parents want children about them all the time. They are very insular in their attitudes: life begins and ends with Bombay... consider themselves Parsis first rather than Indians," maintains Billimoria. The youth lack "the spirit of enterprise to take up a challenge... the same block prevents young marriages and early children. Other minor blocks are that they create imaginary demands," opines Jambusarwalla.

Parental pressure to secure a bachelor's degree before making a final career option tends to get the boys time-barred, according to Dotiwalla who adds that unwillingness to take calculated risks — there are chances of being rejected even at the end of the training period — makes Parsi boys steer clear. Lack of educational and physical fitness was underlined by several respondents. "The lack of a will to sacrifice comfort in order to rise in life," the preference for the "comforts of permanent residence rather than transfers and service in field areas," are other reasons cited.

The education of parents and a change in their attitudes was perceived as most essential if the community was to reestablish itself in the armed forces. Between the age of nine and 13 years was considered the best time to inculcate favorable mental attitudes in children, to create a love of the outdoors, a desire for

an adventurous life, to want to learn to stand on their own and not be overly attached to the family. One suggested the arranging of three-day visits to ships, active training establishments and operational airfields; another the establishment of a coaching school exclusively for Parsis to prepare the boys to pass the entrance exams on the lines of a couple of institutions run commercially in Delhi. A third suggested educating parents repeatedly regarding the requirements of health and education for the armed forces so that a child, who shows such an aptitude, may be brought up accordingly.

By the time the boys were at the 10 plus two level, the time for influencing them was generally considered as past. Indeed, as Jambusarwalla noted, "Do not try to tell them to join the armed forces.

with the achievers netting the respect they deserved. As the colonel phrased it, "There are a number of eminent Parsis but they are ageing."

Asked their suggestions for overcoming the demographic decline, the replies indicated their perception of the problem as leading back to the same overall handicap of attitudes: positive if the youth can "shed their inhibitions of food and surroundings," notes Major; "get into the mainstream," advises Billimoria; "join the Army. The soldier charges instinctively!" adds Irani; "Find a leader (40 to 60 years old) whom the community respects, with the ability to know what's right and wrong and to ensure that what is right is implemented," suggests Jambusarwalla. Almost all concur on the need to motivate, educate and inculcate posi-



Lt Gen Faridoon Billimoria, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Army Central Command and president of the Gorkha Brigade which adopted the INS Khukri, the first missile corvette to be built at the Indian Naval Dockyard, presenting the Brigade's regimental plaque to Cdr Aspi Marker during a ceremonial function on board

The aim should be a happy, satisfactory life. The armed forces can provide an avenue to it."

Views on the community's status today were, however, extremely disparate, ranging from "bad" to "very high!" The perception seemed correlated to the officer's rank. Thus, the higher ranked respondents, whether serving or retired, felt that the response to the community from members of other communities was very satisfactory. At the lower echelons, the perceptions were almost the reverse. The implication seemed to be that each respondent reflected his own experiences

tive thinking. Only two gentlemen referred to the need for housing — one of them even suggested the shifting of dokhmas and adoption of cremation to create housing on prime property! — and two others suggested the acceptance of the children of Parsi women married to non-Zoroastrians.

Four of our 17 respondents placed the IAS as the profession most likely to help the community; six preferred military service; one favored self-employment. The rest felt that a youth's own preferences and abilities should be the deciding factors.

Beyond the call of duty

Lt Col Adi Tarapore's colleagues in The Poona Horse
relive the glory of their 1965 campaign

Arnavaz S. Mama

It is his first mess night. Solemnly the young second lieutenant (2/Lt) of The Poona Horse kneels before the Param Vir Chakra (PVC) — the gunmetal decoration that is one of the celebrated Regiment's proudest possessions — and raises a toast to the memory of the hero whose exploits have earned the regiment undying glory: Lt Col Adi Tarapore. Thereafter he salutes Lt Col Tapp whose Victoria Cross (VC) preceded Tarapore by 128 years. The young initiate is partaking in a ritual that has grown around these legends.

India's highest award for gallantry in battle, the PVC replaced the VC which is the highest British decoration. It is awarded by the nation with great restraint and those who earn it display nearly superhuman bravery in circumstances of extreme duress. Indeed, in the 40 years since it was instituted (in 1950) there have been only 17 PVCs in India (including Sri Lanka) six of whom are alive today, according to Col Girdhar Singh who had been Tarapore's second-in-command (2/C). "The PVC (medalist) is a God-sent class. (Their deeds are) beyond the call of duty," adds Singh.

In early 1965, Tarapore's unit had just completed a training session and was in the middle of a normal dance party in Babina, a family station which is the headquarters (HQ) of the Armoured Corps 16 miles from Jhansi. A message

from the Army Central Command in Lucknow, routed to them through their Brigade Commander, crackled: Be ready to go to war. War was anticipated but



Lt Col Adi Tarapore PVC

not yet declared, recalls Girdhar Singh. By 4 a.m. the next day they were on the advance train towards the Pakistan border. "We went to a place near Amritsar. Adi was calm, collected, solid like a rock... Even when leaving the family there was no fuss, no emotion... His whole life was the glory and tradition of

The Poona Horse." Twice their sector of operations changed. "There was utter confusion, as is normal in war. It is a question of who survives the chaos," notes Singh matter-of-factly.

The action

The Poona Horse, under Tarapore's command, was given the task of capturing Phillora in West Pakistan. The enemy's crack armoured division, consisting of highly touted Patton tanks by the score, "was poised for the kill." The Poona Horse, Tarapore at the head, crashed through the steel cordon and established itself in enemy territory for the final assault on Phillora and the enemy unleashed a fierce counterattack with a barrage of mortar and heavy gun fire.

The first casualty of the war was the one-tonner truck which served as the adjutant, Capt (now Maj Gen) Surrinder Singh's office, the nerve center of their functioning. "We got bombed and shelled like hell, but Tarapore wouldn't close his bloody cupola (protective covering)! You must be seen to command troops! He won't close down, so Surrinder Singh and Girdhar Singh had to stay open also!" tells Girdhar Singh.

"During this action on September 11, 1965 Tarapore was seriously injured on the right hand. His tank was ambushed by a Pakistani recoilless gun (RCL) mounted on a jeep and hidden in a sugarcane field. The tank was badly dam-

aged... but he maneuvered it to engage the RCL gun and blasted it to bits. Then, abandoning his tank, he dashed across to another... For two days and nights they remained as enemy artillery targets, met the onslaught of enemy counterattack and yet crossed the Sialkot-Chawinda-Narowal railway line and established the Jassoran pivot." The proud story of a Regiment, led by a man of exemplary courage, was related in a Government of India press release on the occasion of the announcement of the gallantry awards by the President on October 16, 1965.

"On the night of September 15, the Garwal Battalion of Infantry was told to cross the Akhar Railway Station which lay between us and Pakistan. We had been moving for the last four days, attacking and fighting and going from one place to another. Tarapore, being the seniormost combat leader, was to lead this group and go into Pak territory. He had to give some orders after 2 a.m. He wanted that everyone should sit properly to hear the orders. He wanted to instil confidence... We crossed the railway embankment... By 3 o'clock one of the squadrons of the Sikhs had gone behind the enemy and was in the DFSOS (Direct Fire SOS). They were in serious trouble and had lost a lot of tanks. So Tarapore says, 'Follow me, we'll go and help them.' We went there and he came out of the bloody tank to tell those chaps to carry on fighting, not to worry. Only a very brave person can do this. I thought, 'He must be mad,' but all PVCs are mad! His tank was hit and the young Capt Amarjit Singh Bal was wounded. He abandoned the tank, carrying Bal with him and was rescued by Surrinder (Singh). His maimed tank was pulled into Pakistan and displayed as a war trophy in Karachi," informs Girdhar Singh. This was followed by a lull and Tarapore, a great tea drinker, was savoring a mug of tea on his tank, the enemy within firing range barely 2,000 yards away, when, according to Girdhar Singh, a shell exploded and a splinter pierced his temple, killing him on the spot.

Radio Pakistan announced the death of "Fakr-e-Hind (pride of India) Tarapore" as a great victory. The Pakistani national daily *Dawn*, in its editorial, similarly used the title *Fakr-e-Hind* for Tarapore, informs his daughter Zarin Boyce. Now it forms the proud prefix of The Poona Horse: "The enemy called us this, which means we have earned it," as Zarin relates it.



Daughter Zarin, brother-in-law Hosi Buhariwalla and wife Perin with the urn of Tarapore's mortal remains. The ashes lay in state at the Buhariwalla residence until they were transported for the final emersion on a gun-carriage, with full military honors, through the streets of Poona

"Under his inspiring leadership, the Regiment had made Phillora a literal graveyard of Patton tanks, destroying 60 of them for a loss of about nine... The tank battles of Asal Uttar and Phillora will go down in the annals of military history, the first for its strategy and

"It was black or white, there was no shade of grey for him!"

clever deployment, and the second for sheer dash and gallantry. These fierce tank battles even surpassed those of the North African War between Generals Montgomery and Rommel, including the famous battle of El Alamein," notes the press release.

Tarapore's PVC is said to be the first that the commanding officer of an armoured regiment has been awarded among the armies of the Commonwealth and only the second instance of anyone being so recognized in a tank action.

The only other case was the award of the VC to a British officer in World War I. Recommending him for the nation's highest honor, his Brigade Commander K. K. Singh summed up Tarapore's valor in the words "wounds meant no pain, death meant no terror and life meant no charm." Noted a squadron commander involved in the action under Tarapore's command, "I have never worked with a more clean-hearted and honest man (than) he."

Until Tarapore's Phillora campaign, the most glorious event in the history of The Poona Horse had been the Battle of Khooshab of February 8, 1837 when The Poona Horse, then a regiment of horse cavalry as the name denotes, under the command of Lt Col Tapp, together with the Third Light Cavalry, had charged the Persian Forces under the command of Gen Shuja Ul-Mulk. The battle had begun at daybreak and by 10 a.m. the Persian forces were completely routed, earning the Regiment and its commander the Victoria Cross, informs the press release.

The man

Anecdotes and asides provide insights into Tarapore's character. On the second or third day of the action, Brig K. K.

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Top: Regimental officers of The Poona Horse and their wives flank Zarin Boyce (center) and her daughters behind the PVC citation and photograph of Tarapore, after the wreath-laying at Teen Murti

Right: President Radhakrishnan presenting the PVC to Perin at the Republic Day parade

Singh had instructed Tarapore to get medical aid for his injured hand, but he came back from the hospital. "A normal person would have used it as an excuse. But in his heart of hearts Tarapore did not want to leave," relates Girdhar Singh.

"Before we crossed the border the gentleman Parsi officer had told me — because I was his 2/C — 'You will do three things for me if I'm killed in action.' Tarapore wanted his body cremated, his 'rosary' given to his daughter Zarin and his pen and diary to his son Xerxes. 'His Parsi God must have told him he was going to die. Because you don't go to war to die; you go to save yourself,' states Girdhar Singh.

Brig (then 2/Lt) Gurdial Singh recalls telling Tarapore at one stage, "You're too far forward. Please withdraw" and Tarapore's response, "No, Goody, I will not leave you alone. If we have to die, we will die together. But only after we've knocked the hell out of the Pak tanks!"

There are several versions about Tarapore's cremation. According to Girdhar Singh, they had to carry the body for two days because there was no time to burn it. Eventually it was cremated by them



within Pakistan territory and the ashes secured by subterfuge because the Pakistanis would not have given them if they had known whose they really were. According to another source, both sides tacitly observed a mini ceasefire while the cremation was completed. According to a third source, the body was taken back and cremated by a senior NCO (non-commissioned officer) and the ashes brought to Poona... The plethora of stories contribute to the legend.

One of three children, Tarapore was the third generation to serve the Nizam of Hyderabad. An average student academically, he was star athlete, gymnast, boxer, swimmer (Zarin remembers him "gliding through water" in later years), cricketer and tennis champ of the Sardar Dastur Boys' School in Poona

and an intensely loyal friend.

When Adi joined the Hyderabad State Army Officers' Training School at Golconda, about 15 miles away from his family residence, it had no residential accommodation for cadets. So Adi cheerfully cycled the distance back and forth every day. Though his heart was set upon joining an armoured regiment, he was commissioned into the infantry. He would have continued there had it not been for a certain incident, as relates his brother Noshir. While his battalion was being inspected by Commander-in-Chief Maj Gen El-Edroos, Tarapore's company was routinely training at the grenade-throwing range. One of the new recruits panicked and failed to lob the grenade correctly, resulting in its falling within the danger zone. Adi picked it up and threw it away to safety, but it burst on leaving his hand and he was peppered with flying shrapnel. The General, who had witnessed the incident, sent for him after he had recovered from the accident to congratulate him in person. Adi seized the occasion to express a desire to be transferred to an armoured corps. The General acceded to his wish and ordered his transfer to the First Hyderabad Imperial Service Lancers.

On duty in Palestine, as the Nizam's contribution to World War II, the Lancers were under the command of

a British officer whose social deportment left much to be desired, being often rude and always commenting adversely on the fighting capacity of the Indian soldier and, on one occasion, being insulting to the Nizam himself. Tarapore took strong objection and said, "You have insulted my country and my king — and I do not mean George VI." "This created quite a flurry — the regiment was kept in isolation, all the ammunition was withdrawn and the matter was sorted out only by the visit of General El-Edroos to General Montgomery," writes Noshir Tarapore.

Lt Gen Adi Sethna relates a later story which Lt Gen Khajuria had told him about Tarapore. Tarapore was Khajuria's 2/C (second-in-command) at one stage but had strong reservation about his CO (commanding officer) and would refuse

to speak to him except in the course of official duty. After two years of ostracizing Khajuria thus, Tarapore realized that he had been mistaken in his judgment and, of his own volition, apologized and ceremonially shook hands! According to Sethna, Tarapore was an "officer transformed when he went into action." The jawans of his time, who had served under British officers and valued their correctness and sense of fair play, used to say "Yeh to bilkool Angrej officer hai (This officer is positively an Englishman)!" informs Girdhar Singh.

Zarin remembers growing up in a very happy family. She describes her father as "very, very 'propah'... he was such a stickler, it was black or white, there was no shade of grey for him!"

A passionate reader of history, Tarapore had found a role model in Napoleon. On his desk used to sit a statuette of the legendary French general. Tarapore would talk to his children about Napoleon's immense contributions to France, including the Code Napoleon which still underpins the country's administrative and judicial systems.

Though the circumstances of his life

and career precluded regular attendance at agiaries, Tarapore was said to be a staunch Zoroastrian, doing his kusti twice a day and longer prayers on a weekly basis.

The epilogue

Zarin cannot forget the month of intense grief following her father's death, nor the transformation of grief into pride, with

**"You have insulted
my country and my
king — and I do not
mean George VI"**

the announcement of the PVC on October 16. It was an extremely emotional moment as she, a scant 16, together with her 14-year-old brother Xerxes, watched President Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan present the posthumous decoration to their mother Perin on January 26, 1966. Gently the President patted Perin's hand in sympathy, as tears coursed down her

face, remembers Zarin.

By 1982 Perin knew she was dying of cancer and the family decided that the PVC that Tarapore had earned at such enormous cost, should not lie forgotten in a drawer a generation hence. Its most zealous keeper, they concluded, would be The Poona Horse.

Accordingly, with a scant five-day notice from the family because of Perin's deteriorating health, the Regiment prepared to receive its heritage. From all over India officers and jawans of The Poona Horse congregated to witness the historic ceremony — simple, unpretentious, sincere. The jawans brought their children and grandchildren asking *mataji* to bless them. Perin succumbed to cancer in 1984. Zarin says her own daughters realized the worth of their grandfather's contribution only when they witnessed the ceremonies at New Delhi in 1990 (see "The Gallant Decades," pg 58).

A man of few words but an intensely affectionate person, Zarin notes how his brother officers still reminisce about Tarapore: "They always have such jolly stories, told with such affection. They are not laughing at him but with him..."

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Move over please, Field Marshal!

Aspi Moddie

Though Parsis produced three chiefs of staff in the armed forces, the community's involvement in defence seems transitory

For most of a thousand years, there is only one record of Parsi military action — the defence of Sanjan in 1305 AD on the appeal of the Hindu chief, when Ala-uddin Khilji sent an army to Gujarat under Alp Khan. When his 30,000 men arrived under the walls of Sanjan, one Ardeshir collected 1,400 Parsis (the one and only Parsi volunteer battalion!), joined the troops of the Rana and gave brave battle. They were defeated, and then began the migration with the holy fire to Bahrot, Bansda, Navsari, and ultimately to Udwada.

That was a flash in the military pan. During most of those centuries, the Parsis were given to agriculture, artisanship and trade. Gone was the military fire of the Ardeshirs, the Shapurs and the Noshirwans. "As to their seeming reluctance to accept military service," writes Mlle Delphine Menants in *Les Parsis* (translated under M. M. Murzban), there was a theory put forward by certain European authors that "it proceeds purely from religious motives, on account of the homage they were supposed to pay to fire, which would prevent them from handling a canon or shouldering a gun!" In his *History of the Parsis*, Dosabhai Framji Karaka repudiated such a theory.

Ironically, since the 1970s, the Parsis have taken pride in a strange congruence when, in a short period, the chiefs of the three armed services were Parsis, and one became a field marshal, India's first. Since then, Parsi officers retired from service have lamented the lack of attraction of the armed forces for young Parsis. In career planning efforts, attention has been drawn to this recent lack of interest,

after the constellation of the three at the top, and more in senior positions in the last generation. I was witness to one such amusing effort at the youth meeting in Pune in 1989, preparatory to the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress. Brig Noshir Grant reserved a whole half day of the two-day program for a visit to the National Defence Academy (NDA).

On account of the traditional passion for food, a prolonged lunch delayed departure by over an hour. The delayed journey to the NDA was marked by casual, youthful, 'civvy street' fun and games and singing, a continuous cackle and noise at the back of the bus to the embarrassment of the good Brigadier. When we arrived at the gates of the NDA, the potential troops had to be reminded that they were entering a different world. The patient Brigadier rose, and said firmly, "Gentlemen, (there were ladies too), this is the National Defence Academy!" Quiet and order was restored, despite gross unmilitary unpunctuality.

Yet, a century ago Parsis were clam-

oring to enroll as, what was then called, "volunteers." On June 30, 1877 a public meeting was held in the Town Hall of Bombay by the sheriff, Kharshedji Fardunji Parekh, on the requisition of 23 Europeans. The Governor, Sir Richard Temple, presided over the question of raising a corps of European volunteers. Mr (later Sir) Pherozeshah Mehta disapproved of any invidious distinction and moved an amendment to that effect. The Governor explained that, according to law, a native volunteer corps could not be formed, but if they passed a resolution to that effect, consideration would be given. On May 13, 1878, the Parsis of Poona petitioned Lord Lytton, the Viceroy. On June 17, His Excellency in Council replied that he had "no objection to the admission of Parsis, or any other native subjects of the Empress into the Volunteer Corps." Then followed a patriotic military rush. However, when one of the first of the petitioners, Kavasji Dorabjee Mess-agent applied for admission into the Bombay Voluntary Rifle Corps, he was advised to apply to the GIP Railway Volunteer Rifle Corps — a subtle nuance! Mr D. F. Karaka still protested that "there are certainly no Indians more eager than Parsis to share in defence."

In later years, Parsis in Quetta, Karachi and Poona were admitted freely into the Corps of European Volunteers. A Dinshaw Dosabhai Khambatta was enrolled in 1894 as a lieutenant in the Poona Volunteers. By 1906 he was a Major, and was specially deputed to attend the coronation of George V with 63 British officers in 1911. He retired in



1913, as a much decorated lieutenant colonel. Pretty good for the times.

In 1883 the Baluchistan Volunteer Rifles became "the cradle of Parsi volunteering," and later, Parsis formed one-third of the corps. By 1900, their strength in Poona was nearly a half, and one Dorabji Padamji was "one of the best shots in India, the champion shot of the Bombay Presidency." So much for an abhorrence for firearms for religious reasons! Away from the imperial inhibitions in India, Rustomjee Khurshedji Cooper was admitted into the Queens Westminster Volunteer Corps in London on September 16, 1860. Yet another, Jehangir Dorabji Ghaswala was enlisted as a private and promoted to corporal in the European Second Battalion of the South African Light Horse in the Boer War. He was shot through both knees in the battle of Colenso, on November 15, 1899 — no case of weak knees! Then Rustam Jivanji J. Modi, bar-at-law, "was the first and only Parsi and Indian member of the Hon'ble Artillery Company of London." From the bar to the gun was only a change of weapons. In World War I Parsis served in Mesopotamia and in Europe. R. A. Necmochwalla of the Poona Volunteer Rifles got into the Fifth Royal Dublin Fusiliers as a "color-sergeant" (no reference to the present connotation of 'color'!).

And so the story goes. But even in 1896 (as in the late twentieth century?), there seemed to be one serious reservation. The historian then wrote, "The most serious consideration which prevents a Parsi from enrolling himself in the army seems to us to be the insufficiency of emolument." Then Hindu and Musalman Indian soldiers got seven rupees a month, whilst a Parsi cook or domestic servant got twice that. "How can a Parsi soldier then manage to live and bring up his family on seven rupees a month?" The indefatigable D. F. Karaka asked why Parsis should not be given commissions in the army like Germans and other Europeans? In his *History* he writes, "We have not the slightest hesitation in saying that Parsis would be found to be as good and brave soldiers as Anglo-Saxons, while their loyalty and attachment to the Government would always be above suspicion."

On the whole business of drawing distinctions, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, supported by Dadabhai Naoroji, had the last word. He considered Parsis "natives to the back-bone." Alas, in all societies, some natives consider themselves more equal than others!

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SECUNDERABAD-HYDERABAD

A record 140 delegates from 24 cities and towns deliberated on the theme "Action Please" at the fourth All-India Zoroastrian Youth Festival

Roxanne Kavarana

"Forty-eight hours before the Fest we were in a dilemma, 36 hours before we were tense, 24 hours before we were somewhat better and 12 hours before we knew we were finally going through with it." Sarosh Parakh, better known as the compere of the fourth All-India Zoroastrian Youth Festival, summed up the mood of the organizers, confronted as they were with hurdles.

In fact, the Twin Cities Zoroastrian Youth League (Secunderabad and Hyderabad), led by Jehangir Bisney, its president, seriously contemplated putting off the three-day event just two days prior to D-day — October 26, 1990. By then the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy was out on the streets and the repercussions were already being felt. A *Bharat-bandh* call was given for October 24, the day most Fest delegates were scheduled to embark on their journey, and communication modes, especially trains, were expected to be paralysed. To add to that, the by-now infamous "kar-seva" of the Ayodhya complex was to begin as scheduled. October 30 hung like a sword of Damocles not just over the country's destiny but also over the fate of the Fest. In such an uncertain situation, the organizers reasoned that most delegates, because of their own or their parents' fears (the latter seemed more likely), would not be able to make it to the Fest.

Says Bisney: "When the *bandh* was announced, many of us wondered whether all our pain and toil of six months would be washed away. We were on the verge of postponing the Fest, but I prevailed upon our members to go ahead with it. That was one of the most important and crucial decisions I have ever taken, and which proved to be cent percent right." But not before frantic phone calls were made to the Bombay group leader, Shiraz Khambatta, who as-

sured them that the nearly 35-strong delegation was definitely on its way, come what may. That gave them the green signal since, as Bisney put it, "If Bombay had backed out, the Fest would have fallen through. Our hopes rested on Bombay because it had the largest group."

The enthusiasm displayed by the outstation delegates, some even travelling from as far as Patiala and Dehradun, in wanting to come for the Fest was evident: the Calcutta team took a train that was already nearly half-a-day late; Jhansi turned up towards the end of the first day when all hope of their presence was given up; the Bombay and Surat delegates had to wait not just for the long-distance trains but also for the crippled local services to start on the *bandh* day in order to travel all the way to Kalyan, outside the city, to take the Secunderabad-bound train; Nagpur and Ahmedabad, after cancelling their tickets, decided otherwise. So they bought fresh tickets and made it!

Was it worth all the effort? Only the next three days would tell.

Come Secunderabad and a typical Hyderabad welcome of roses greeted the record 140 delegates from 24 cities and towns. (There were nearly 50 local delegates.) No matter how late one's train arrived, the organizers were there to receive each team, even past midnight. Prominent among them were the general secretary of the Youth League Mehernavaz Parakh, vice-president Diniyar Marshall, joint secretary Tanaz Wadia, treasurer Farhad Hirji Khurshed, and others like Kerfegar Aria, Navaz and Berjor Bulsara, Sarosh Parakh, Diana Mistry, Dynshaw Italia, Hoofrishi Bisney, Kerman Katrak and Mehernosh Dittia.

Although everybody was cocooned in a very Parsi world, to deliberate on the theme of the Fest — Action Please — the

nation's events tagged along. Thus, the fourth All-India Zoroastrian Youth Fest began with a collective rendering of the national anthem, a gesture which brought the organizers many accolades.

In his inaugural address, Maneck Goiporia, chairman of the State Bank of India, exhorted the youths to wake up and face the challenges as the Parsi youths of yore were known to do. "Parsi youngsters," he lamented, "are no more prepared to live out of suitcases as their ancestors did." Clutching security close to their hearts, there are fewer of them willing to slog it out and take risks. In other words: there are fewer success stories.

He asked them not to lose heart at their lack of numbers. "Small," he noted, "is not insignificant." But he cautioned: "Our young people should not only have the desire to learn, to excel, but also to be good human beings." In the race towards modernity, traditions are often sacrificed, giving rise to various dilemmas for Parsi youths caught between the two... An adequate knowledge of religion backed up by its daily practice can do wonders," opined Goiporia.

Senior member of the minorities commission, Homi Taleyarkhan, asked the youths not to be despondent. Praising the pioneering spirit of the community,

Facing page:

(Above left) Goiporia lights the inaugural lamp

(Above right) At the workshop to discuss the formation of a youth federation (from left): Parin Vakharia, Gandhi, Jehangir Bisney and other delegates

(Below left) Hoofrishi Bisney presents a memento to Krishan Kant

(Below right) Guest speakers at the inauguration (from left): Taleyarkhan, Maneckshaw and Goiporia

Youth Fest: "Action Please"

he said, "We are still playing an outstanding role in spite of our dwindling numbers. We are still appreciated and held in esteem by others." He added that we are not a dying community and expressed optimism that the youth will overcome cynicism and play a leading role in society.

Taleyarkhan called for efforts to increase the population of Zoroastrians who, according to him, are practising "family planning in reverse gear."

If so far it was all advice, the chief guest -- none other than Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw -- was all experience. It would be no exaggeration to say that his was the speech of the Fest. His charming manner and powerful personality, aided by his thundering words and tongue-in-cheek quips, left an indelible mark on his young audience who gave him a standing ovation. It was also one of those rare occasions at this Fest when the full youth house was present -- and

heard a speaker with rapt attention! With the Field Marshal holding center-stage, back-bench distractions like 'cross and knots' and 'join the dots' waited for another day. So, too, volleyball and shopping.

"Wherever I go, everybody complains about the youth. I find that the nation's youth are frustrated... The trouble is with my generation," so began Manekshaw, in a refreshing departure from the common line of argument. Said



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he: "What we Indians lack is leadership, discipline and character." The Field Marshal then went on to expound: "Leaders are not born, they're made. Give me a man with reasonable common sense and decency and I'll make a leader out of him."

What makes a good leader? At the top of the scale, Manekshaw listed professional knowledge and competence. In fact, "professional knowledge," he observed, "is the sine qua non of leadership." But the ability to decide, to make up one's mind quickly is as important. He ridiculed the 'I've-been-thinking' attitude.

A leader is also one who does not hesitate to mete out punishment fairly. According to Manekshaw, "no man likes being punished yet he will accept punishment stoically if he knows it is fair and meant for all." This is moral courage. By the same logic, a 'yes man' is a dangerous person because he is used by his superiors. "He should be boycotted," advised the Field Marshal.

But Manekshaw's leader is not superhuman; he is not devoid of fear. "Fear is as natural as hunger or sex," he said, adding, "When your mouth is chattering,

when your knees are knocking and you're about to make your own geography, that's when the real leader comes out." That's an experienced army man taking about how he led the Indian forces to victory in the 1971 Indo-Pak operations.

His leader also has the gift of the gab, an essential ingredient if he is to effectively and comfortably communicate

**"Parsi youngsters
are no more
prepared to live out
of suitcases"**

with his team, he said. Not forgotten is a sense of humor.

Discipline for Manekshaw is synonymous with punctuality -- no surprise coming from an army man. "Lack of punctuality is not conducive to decent living in society. Therefore, it is an interdisciplinary act. Character is the ability to know oneself and one's worth," he said.

And now for his quips:

• "One can never acquire sufficient pro-

fessional knowledge. And yet our (nation's) leaders think they know everything.

• "I've produced a Manekshawism -- if you want to be a bloody fool, be one quickly.

• "If a man is not scared, he is either a liar or a Gorkha.

• "If you want to see loyalty, see our central government.

• "Caesar, Napoleon, Wellington had one facial feature in common -- they all had long noses, like me! As also Catherine de Medici, Golda Meir and Indira Gandhi."

From chiseled, venerable noses, the scene shifted to the seven official sessions with eminent personalities speaking on topics of contemporary relevance to the community, especially the youth. The first such session, chaired by Hyderabad's Mehernosh Dittia, was addressed by Minoo Shroff, well-known financial consultant and Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustee. Speaking on opportunities in the 1990s, Shroff stressed self-employment and identified two major areas-- rural employment and the service sector. Though the eighth five-year plan has decided to concentrate (50



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percent of the total resources) on rural development, the real potential area is the service sector. According to Shroff, "We do not know our strengths" -- there is enormous scope in poultry, horticulture, food processing and flower nurseries which Parsi youths can tap.

He lamented the vanishing tribe of Parsi hoteliers "who until recently had a hotel in every decent hill station in India." It is unfortunate that when tourism all over the world is the fastest growing industry, Parsis are choosing to sell off their hotels and move to other fields.

Tourism is not all. Rural marketing, said Shroff, is a highly ignored field. Parsi youngsters should spread their net wide since the urban market is more or less stagnant now, whereas the rural one is growing at an average of 15 percent per year. Get away from the cities, from total security, was Shroff's clarion call to the youths. "Spread your canvas wider. We have the advantage of credibility, of being dependable. Hence, we should exploit those services where personal rapport is needed," he said. He urged the youths to take up plumbing, carpentry, painting, interior decoration, computer software, servicing consumer products and durables, hoteliering, sub-

broking, financial broking and insurance.

Shroff decried the lack of community influence in the last three fields. "Thirty to 40 years ago, all the tall men in investment counselling were Parsis." Now, you hardly see a Parsi broker -- in a field

**"What we Indians
lack is leadership,
discipline and
character"**

which is relatively easy. "All you need to do is a course in investment counselling, be an apprentice and then make money while working from your home," he observed. He criticized the lackadaisical attitude of the community's youths and exhorted them to struggle. "Let's not live in the past... This talk of no guidance and no money is useless... Tell me a success story of one who has not struggled. Success comes before work only in the dictionary." Citing an example, he said that out of 1,000 applicants for self-employment loans, only two or three are Parsis.

In the open session that followed

Shroff's speech, the audience was informed that in the last six months no Parsi has come forward to seek aid from the Minorities' Finance Commission.

Taleyarkhan announced that the Manipal Medical College was prepared to consider admissions for minorities, including Parsis, from next year with 75 percent cut-off marks. Pondicherry Medical College would similarly consider 70 percent cut-off marks. However, in both cases, the applications should be made well in advance.

Mahrukh Minocherhomji of Poona complained that insufficient funds were given by the BPP to those wishing to go abroad for further studies, to which Taleyarkhan questioned the wisdom of Parsi charitable trusts giving funds when the tendency among Parsi youngsters is not to return to India after their studies. Eruch Desai, BPP trustee and head of its Foreign Education Committee, decried the 'go West' mania among Parsis but opined that young girls and boys should be encouraged to have foreign exposure as it would give them a wider perspective. He was quick to add, of course, that they should return to the country and the community.

"Is anything wrong in Parsis thriving

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abroad?" countered Keki Gandhi, honorary secretary of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, to the thundering applause of the young audience.

Bisney chaired the session on the subject of Parsi laws of succession and marriage and the need for a law on adoption which solicitor Eruch Desai dealt with at length. Substantial time was devoted to the history and concept of the Adoption Bill. As currently acceptable to the community (most read this as the Parsis in Bombay), the Bill provides that the adopted child may inherit everything from the parents except the right to be a Zoroastrian. Until the Bill becomes a concrete legislation, Desai advised the parents to make a will immediately in the interests of the child they wish to adopt.

He said the BPP trustees had forwarded a proposal to the Federation that like the Hindu law a legislation should be passed whereby a Parsi can adopt only a Parsi child. As at the last Federation meeting in Delhi in September, Desai reiterated that there were very few cases of adoption among the Parsis. Hence, said Desai, "in the larger interests of the community, which is largely against conversion, and in the absence of a viable alternative, let sleeping dogs lie." In other words, let the status quo remain.

Referring to the case of Roxan Darshan Shah (a Parsi Zoroastrian girl, married to a Hindu under the Special Marriage Act, whose body when denied admission to the Bombay Towers of Silence, triggered a controversy within the community), he said Dastur Firoze Kotwal was not being flippant when he recently described parties to intercaste marriages like Roxan's as living in sin or adultery. The revered priest was only referring to adultery in respect to the Zoroastrian religion which, according to him, only accepts the ashirwad ceremony as the basis of a marriage. A wedding not solemnized by this ceremony is no marriage, he believed. Hence, the attack on Kotwal was uncalled for, maintained Desai.

On this topic, Desai advised the trustees to obtain an affidavit from the girl that in spite of a civil marriage she continues to profess the Zoroastrian faith. The trustees have a right to be satisfied, he observed.

After Desai's marathon session, which lasted hours, the 'chowki' dinner and the sound and light show at the residence of Iqbal and Bilkiz Alladin were anticipated

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with delight. On the instructions of the organizers, the delegates turned up in their traditional Indian finery. Gujarat's mirror-work *ghagras* and skirts vied with Parsi saris while the males rushed to buy kurtas or borrowed them from those having an extra to spare. Unfortunately, the weather gods decided to make their presence felt once again after a brief lull (unseasonable rains had made the organizers change the venue of the sessions at the last minute from the Zoroastrian Club to the indoor precincts of the Chenoy Dharamshala, where most delegates were housed). A heavy downpour washed out the *son et lumière*, making the delegates rush to the drier confines of the Alladin porch. Until the house was thrown open to them, the youths, amid jostling and pushing, sang the by-now popular (but with a touch of lewdness) number at the fests: "Open the door/darling open the door/why are you angry so..." Once inside, they lapped up the delicious Hyderabadî haute cuisine; never mind if it was not served 'chowki' style.

The next day started with an impromptu workshop of the group leaders of each city to discuss the formation of a Federation of Zoroastrian Youth Associations of India (in line with the 'Action Please' theme of the Fest). Under the able assistance of Keki Gandhi — whose association with the youth fests dates back to the inaugural gathering in Delhi four years ago — a draft constitution was approved. A final one would be later sent to youth associations for their approval. It was also recommended that each city form a youth association and get it registered. Secunderabad (and Hyderabad) was chosen as the administrative office for the proposed Federation.

In a departure from previous fests, youth groups from each city were asked to submit in advance a report highlighting their activities in the preceding year and the proposed plans for the following year. These reports were read out by the group leaders with Gandhi giving a critique after each report, and Agra's Porus Debara, a veteran of youth meetings, in the chair.

If the Delhi Fest climaxed with a visit to the President of India R. Venkataraman, the Secunderbad one was graced by Andhra Pradesh Governor Krishan Kant who addressed the gathering.

A hurried sight-seeing trip to the Salarjung museum and the zoological park was also part of the program. After

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dinner, delegates from some cities put up an enjoyable entertainment fare with Bombay's brief satire on the functioning of the BPP, and a qawwali 'contest' between males and females (a copy of the one staged during the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress) coming out on top. Fittingly, two Bombayites — Shiraz Khambatta and Khushru Sarkari — were declared the best female and male artiste, respectively.

The most hectic turned out to be the last day. The first of the four sessions had Bombay social worker Mahrukh Mobedji speaking on social welfare attitudes and practices in the community, with the host city's Navaz Bulsara in the chair. Mobedji lashed out at the management of community trusts. "The custodians of our trusts know very little... whether they're benefiting the community or weakening it." What is their goal, she asked.

"It should be the object of all charity to render itself progressively unnecessary, at least in the case of the applicant helped," she added. Stressing that all charity must maintain the individual's dignity, self-respect and personality, Mobedji decried the present system of

indiscriminate distribution of doles where people "are treated like beggars." Such charity, which makes individuals more and more dependent on community funds instead of putting them back on their feet again, is self-defeating. Unfortunately, this abounds in the community. Patch-work, short-term direct solutions that do not search for the root of the problem, are the rule of Parsi charity, Mobedji deplored.

She asked the youths to revive the spirit of enterprise and not seek the aid of trusts indiscriminately. "You can't expect the punchayet to give you houses... and cars... and people to marry. Let us work for it," she said. But does the community have the will to solve its problems?

As a follow-up to Mobedji's statement that in "our religious ethical system lies the answer," Bazun F. Dittia, president of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and Hyderabad, suggested the BPP send learned priests from Bombay to other cities to train and suitably qualify the local priests, so far starved of such intellectual input.

Then came a barrage of questions for Ervad Ramivar Karanjia of the Dadar

Madressa. Gold medallist in Avesta-Pahlavi at the bachelor's and master's levels, Karanjia traced the role of the priests down the ages, with Bombay's Shiraz Khambatta as chairperson. But when the questions flew from the young audience, they pertained not to Karanjia's walk down history lane but to the living present. "Why aren't behdins welcomed into priesthood if there is a shortage of priests in the community?" asked Hormazd Sidhwa, himself an aspiring priest. Where are the enlightened priests we can look up to, another delegate queried. "We know so little about our religion, yet where do we go for an answer? There are so many interpretations," lamented yet another.

Daraiyus Bharucha from Bombay tried to pin down Karanjia into accepting the no-small responsibility of leading the community's youths. "You are the only young priest we know who is suitably qualified to guide us. We look up to you for leadership on religious matters," he told the learned priest, a regular at fests. But Karanjia was non-committal. When Bharucha, who is incidentally a Zoroastrian Studies (ZS) member, Navil Marker from Mhow and a few others fired a vol-

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ley of questions regarding the priest's "contradictory" views on the Roxan Shah case, Karanjia admitted he agreed with the views of the high priests in this regard. He added that it was unfortunate that the community had no central leadership. Hence, one should seek guidance from the high priests. The majority decision of the community is the most important, he added.

After this intense probing, the audience settled down to hear ZS founder Khojeste Mistree's talk on the relevance of Zoroastrianism in the twentieth century. Sarosh Parakh chaired the session. Although a strong proponent of 'I'm a Zoroastrian first and then an Indian,' the rise of religious fundamentalism in the country was not lost on Mistree. It is not religion per se which is destructive, but the wrong application of religion, he clarified. It is not religion which has ripped India apart today but what is happening in the name of religion.

He asked the youths to be proud to be Zoroastrians because "our religion has the answer better than any other religion, because it gives you an intellectual perception which no other religion offers." This is not being bigoted, he said, using the analogy of monogamy: "Why do you

have one wife and live with her all your life and not choose 50 wives? Am I being bigoted by being married to one woman? I choose to do so because I'm happy and able to grow with that person." Ditto for religion.

Zoroastrianism, stressed Mistree, does not only stand for good thoughts, good

Parsi hoteliers until recently had a hotel in every decent hill station

words and good deeds, as most people say. "The community has just latched on to this slogan. Surely, every religion teaches this," he said. So, what does Zoroastrianism propound? "Happiness is my birthright," he replied. (No apologies to Lokmanya Tilak, though!)

But everything within limits, warned Mistree. It was a pity many more youths were not present to hear him because they had boogied away the previous night, a fact which was not entirely lost on Mistree. "It was nice... all the people

dancing away last night. That's also part of our religion... it tells you to be happy, it tells you to experience joy. But anything in excess is wrong, anything in deficiency is wrong." The limited audience now knew what was coming. To their claps Mistree added: "So if you went dancing all night and then didn't show up for the talk, that's also wrong!" We have seen that before at previous youth fests.

From all-night dancing to another world, Mistree said that although most Parsis believe in reincarnation, it does not exist in the original religious texts. He referred to a *Parsiana* survey wherein 25 of the 29 scholars consulted substantiated this. Reincarnation has cropped up only in the past 120 years in the scriptures, he said. It was solidly resurrection (one body, one soul, one spirit) till then. "How else do you justify muktad (prayers for the peace of the departed souls)? Reincarnation does not make intellectual sense," he replied to a query.

Mistree explained the jashan ceremony and said his organization was willing to impart religious education, even outside Bombay. It was known during the course of the Fest that ZS has made considerable progress in this since it first made such an



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offer at the Poona Fest in 1989.

Much of what Bapsy Dastur, Bombay-based solicitor and ZS member, said on "contemporary Zoroastrianism — a youth perspective" overlapped with Mistree's. The chairperson was Farhad Hirji Khurshed. As at the Pune Fest, Dastur spoke from experience, making many youths feel one with her. She recalled how her heart misses a beat every time she steps into an agiary and sees "powdered up people" who have smeared *ra-khya* (ash) all over or when she sees Parris "stroking the length of Zarathushtra's picture... Do you become less of a Zoroastrian by restraining yourself from doing this?" she asked.

Dastur spoke for the youths when she observed that they want "informed action" from an authoritative source. She has the ability to rally people around but many eyebrows were raised when, while referring to the Roxan Shah controversy, she announced: "The case of those marrying outside the community is similar to painter M. F. Husain coming barefoot to Bombay's Willingdon Club. Naturally, they will be refused entry." Dastur questioned the hullabaloo raised over the issue, saying the youths were more bothered about other issues than over controversies like intercaste marriages. A lot of the youths are not asking about the controversy or do not even know about it, she added.

The much looked-forward-to open general session was scrapped for lack of time... and enthusiasm. Yes, towards the end of the program, there were less than 50 youths attending. Maybe too much was crammed into the last day.

The valedictory function was followed by a grand dinner and dance. Dynshaw Italia's music had the delegates dancing till the wee hours of the morning. Bombay bagged all the prizes but one in the dancing and costume competition.

The Fest should have aptly ended on this merry note. But Mr Trouble decided to raise his head once more. A 40-wink sleep and everybody woke up to find the peace of Hyderabad shattered — curfew meant uncertainty about train schedules. So, the story was repeating itself. Nevertheless, some made it home on time, some made it late and... some even had to hang on in Secunderabad till suspended rail service was resumed. For the diligent team of organizers, sapped of all energy now and wanting a welcome break, it felt like beginning all over again.

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BARODA beckons

Zoroastrian strength is increasing in Baroda with a corresponding rise in the youth figures

Gustasp Irani

The Baroda Parsis offer news, good news — their numbers have grown. In a community plagued with dwindling population figures, the Parsis settled in Baroda stand out as achievers. According to the foreword of their *Directory of the Parsi Zoroastrian Residents of Vadodara* published in 1989, the total population of the city has grown from 739 in 1982 to 955 in 1989 and the number of families over the same period rose from 203 to 277. Age-wise too, the statistics are encouraging: in 1982 only 12 percent were below 10 years of age, now the figure is 23 percent. The growth pattern is also reflected in the assets of the Vadodara Parsi Panchayat (VPP). While in other parts of the country, Parsi dharamshalas and institutes are going to seed for one reason or the other, the VPP has built a new hall and added a second floor to their B. N. Seervai Parsi Dharamshala building. But yes, there are issues that trouble the community: the chief ones being dokhmenashini and intercommunity marriages.

But first, the growing population. Despite the encouraging figures, Shavaksha F. Patel, president of the VPP, assures us that it is not due to couples having more children. "The average size of the family is still about 3.5 to 3.7. Parsis generally do not have more than two children," he says. According to him, the growth has taken place because of migration of both the young and the elderly

into the city. The young are lured by business and job opportunities; the old by the comparatively cheaper real estate prices that make it possible for them to retire in urban surroundings.

The rapid industrialization of Baroda has created boom conditions: Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Limited, Gujarat State Fertilisers Corporation... the list of industrial units, big, medium and small, that have set up shop in this one-time capital city of Baroda State, is large. Says Patel: "There are many job opportunities for qualified persons. A Parsi need not settle for the job of a bank clerk; let him look around for other opportunities." He estimates that the total population of Baroda has grown from about three lakhs, 20 years ago, to around 20 lakhs today. In comparison, the growth in the number of Parsis is minuscule. It ought to be much more especially since housing is cheap compared to Bombay. Recently a Parsi family bought a two-bedroom ownership flat for Rs 2.75 lakhs in one of the better areas of the city. "Housing is not a problem as it is in Bombay," says Patel, adding: "The Parsis in Bombay want everything to be done for them by the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP). The main weakness of our community is our dependence on the Panchayat. If other communities can manage their own housing, why not the Parsis?"

Though the problem of housing does

not bother the Parsis of Baroda, the issue of intercommunity marriages does. Crouched into the population statistics are the names of non-Parsi spouses. "From 1980 to '82, within two years, about 22 marriages took place outside the community. We were very perturbed," says Patel.

According to Ervad Hormazdiar J. Bhesania, panthaky of the Panchayat managed Umrigar Agiari for the last 14 years, 50 percent of all Parsi marriages in Baroda today are outside the community. "Even if it is an all-Parsi marriage, very rarely will you find a Baroda girl marrying a Baroda boy. More often the matches are with someone from Bombay or somewhere else." The young, bearded, soft-spoken priest displays considerable sensitivity when performing the navjotes of children of Parsi fathers and non-Parsi mothers. "We try not to insult the non-Parsi mothers; after all they are the parents of the children," says Bhesania. No, he does not perform the navjote of children of Parsi mothers and non-Parsi fathers, but he observes: "As the community's numbers decline we must look at our customs afresh."

Homi P. Chothia, ex-trustee of the VPP adds, "I don't know of a single case of a girl married out of the community who wants her children's navjote done. But if the non-Parsi father agrees, then, in my personal opinion, we should accept these children into the religion." The

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Pirojsha Godrej Hall adds a new dimension to the Seervai Dharamshalla. Below: Umrigar Agiari Photos: Pramod Mistry

catch phrase is 'in my personal opinion.' Patel clarifies the position of the trustees of the VPP in these matters: "If a Parsi girl married to a non-Parsi wants her children's navjote to be done, the Panchayat will not get involved. It is a personal matter that the individual must decide upon."

The same policy of non-interference extends to the issue of dokhmenashini versus cremation in Baroda. Says Patel: "In any Parsi community the majority view is most often orthodox, so a trustee must respect this sentiment irrespective of his personal views. That's why in Baroda we believe that the trustees should not come in the way of religious customs as no one really knows how these customs came into existence. We leave it to time, for time solves all problems." Patel cites a number of examples to illustrate how Parsi customs have changed with the passage of time. For instance, the practice of keeping a fire burning at all times in every Parsi home, or the segregation of women in a separate room during her menstruation, are practices that most Parsis let lapse with time. Then there is the practice of having khandhias carrying the dead to the doongerwadi until the task was done by the horse-drawn carriages and later by motorized municipal hearses though, of course, the horse and the hearse couldn't be given a *nahn* (purificatory bath). Incidentally, the VPP has their own hearse. "Change is bound to come," asserts Patel, "let time, not the trustees, decide how things should be."

Recently the issue of dokhmenashini in Baroda came to a head when the relatives of a Parsi lady had her cremated.

"In any Parsi community the majority view is most often orthodox"

The crux of the matter is that not enough birds frequent the dokhmas. To disprove this claim innumerable references are made to the occasion when Ervad Manecksha J. Kudianawala, panthaky of the Contractor Agiari died and the sky was filled with birds. Says Chothia: "I remember observing that our mobed must have been such a pious person because

there were so many vultures. There must have been 50 to 60 birds that day." Yet, even the strongest defender of dokhmenashini will concede that this case was an exception.

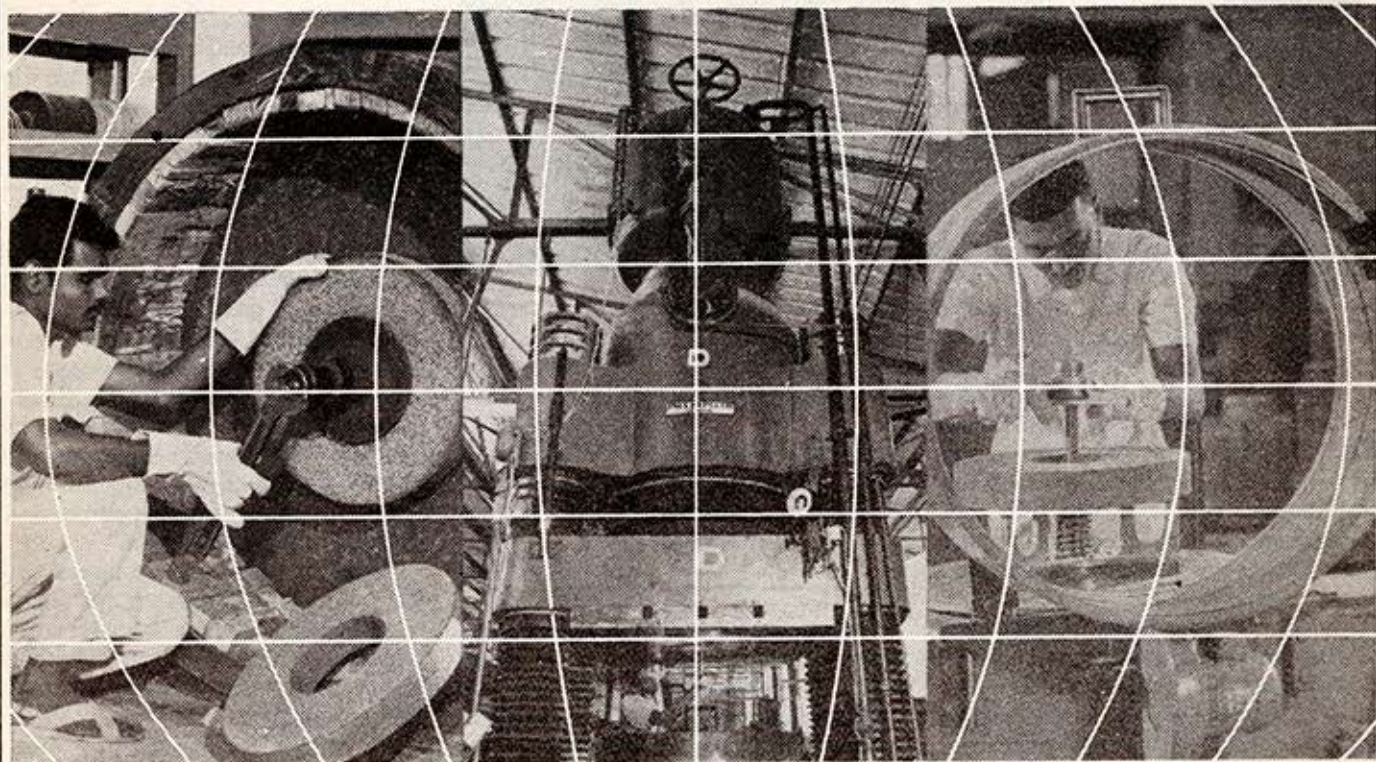
Bhesania laments: "What can the poor birds do? They can't keep waiting endlessly for some Parsi to die. They have got to go and eat somewhere else. In 1989 there were seven deaths in a single month and none for the rest of the year." He adds: "Personally I think that the trustees should consider instituting an aramgah if there are not enough birds; it's better than cremation."

The manager of the B. N. Seervai Dharamshalla Murzban Khajotia reacts strongly to the idea of cremation: "It was in order to save the fire that we Parsis fled Iran. We can't defile what we pray over and worship." He defends the use of the dokhma even if there are no birds around. "The purpose of exposing the dead body is to dry it in the sun; it's not put out for birds to eat. It makes no difference if they eat it or not."

However, the birds are indeed eating the bodies in Baroda, states Shapurji Khambhadia, Baroda's only official nassessalar-chasniwalla and odd-job man. "Sometimes it may seem that the bodies are not touched, but actually they are eaten. The birds eat the soft parts first: the stomach, internal organs and the thighs," Khambhadia explains why volunteers may wrongly believe a body has not been consumed. In Baroda, volunteers must



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necessarily carry the dead into the wells. After the task, the priest gives them a *nahn*. There is nothing rigid in the ceremony; each individual volunteer decides for himself if the rituals are necessary or not. In one case, a volunteer decided that the *nahn* was not necessary but his wife thought otherwise. She obtained a bottle of *taro* (consecrated bull's urine) from the priest and emptied it on her unsuspecting spouse as he bathed. The second time around there was no *taro* handy so she doused him with a bottle of dettol!

A more crucial question is finding a priest to say the death prayers for someone who has been cremated. In the case of the lady whose body was consigned to the electric crematorium the local priests refused to perform the ceremonies, but Bhesania arranged for a friend to come down from Bombay and say the necessary prayers. "I will not pray for anyone who has been cremated. This is not a dictate of the trustees; it is my own conviction," says Bhesania.

Sharukh Mirza, the Bombay priest who obliged his friend, wore his arm in a sling some time thereafter; the result of an accident on his way to Bombay Central Station from where he boarded the



Seervai Dharamshalla: popular with tourists Photo: Pramod Mistry

train to Baroda. He dismisses the suggestion of divine displeasure over his deed, but confesses that this is the first and last time he will pray for anyone who has been cremated. "Never again," says the

young resident of Bombay, "what happened here... well, it happened." He explains that in Bombay, cremation is practiced more by the rich Parsis. "The problem is the result of not allowing the face of the dead to be shown to non-Parsis. Since the rich have many non-Parsi contacts and friends, they don't come to the doongerwadi but opt instead for the crematorium," he observes. "The trustees must resolve this matter; it is causing more Parsis to stop using the dokhmas."

The trustees of the VPP have had no occasion to dictate what the right customs and rituals should be. However, in non-religious matters they have shown active participation. Recently they doubled the accommodation available at their Dharamshalla when they inaugurated the eight-room Cyrus Daver Memorial Block. The project was made possible from a donation of two lakh rupees by Jal Daver of Bombay in memory of his late son.

The Dharamshalla charges a nominal Rs 10 per head per day. For room with attached bathrooms (two on each floor) the charges are double. Meals are supplied by the manager Khajotia and his wife Ruby. In 1988-89, 566 Parsis from

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all over India used the facilities, according to the annual report of the VPP. "There is no seasonal traffic here," says Khajotia. "We get guests all year round, mainly from Bombay. They come for navjotes, weddings or death (ceremonies). The Dharamshalla is used for rejoicing and for sorrow." Meals too are reasonably priced: Rs 5 for breakfast and Rs 12 for dinner or lunch.

Khajotia also does the catering for community functions like navjotes and weddings. A *patra-nu-bhonoo* of chicken, fish, meat pulao and ice cream costs between Rs 40 and Rs 45 per *patra*. "Unlike Bombay, we don't have a soft drink system," says Khajotia. Also, unlike Bombay, special care is taken over the vegetarian section since a large number of invitees are orthodox Gujaratis. According to Khajotia's estimates, the Baroda Parsis average about four to five navjotes and one or two weddings per year. His catering business takes him to Navsari, Surat, Bharuch, Ratlam, Indore and other places around Baroda. And what about his Dharamshalla guests when he is out of station? "My wife manages the Dharamshalla then."

The Dharamshalla that he manages is



Trustees Patel (left) and Cama

more than just a dharamshala — it is a dharamshala cum hostel, he reminds us. Of the total of 16 rooms, four (two on each floor) are reserved for Parsi students from outside Baroda who are charged a nominal Rs 250 per six-month term — a price which includes electricity, water, linen... Hostel accommodation is also offered to Parsis on temporary job transfers and assignments. We meet two of the grateful hostel students: Ronnie Palia who tells us that his is the only Parsi

family left in Dharangadhra and Khushroo Satarawalla who informs us that there are only three Parsi families left in Jodhpur although it even boasts a dokhma.

The origins of the hostel goes back to the time when the then Pro Vice Chancellor of M. S. University, Nasserwanji Vakil, drew the attention of the VPP trustees to the plight of outstation Parsi students who were generally living in appalling conditions as paying guests. The VPP galvanized funds and a collection of Rs 2.5 lakhs was made. "We named the rooms after the donors," says Patel, "and by the same token we retained the name of the old B.N. Seervai Dharamshalla."

Old Dharamshalla? Yes, 150 years old and dilapidated. In 1874 the VPP demolished the structure and sold the land for Rs 50,000 which was used to start construction of the new Dharamshalla building at Hirabaug on land donated by Hirabai Contractor of Baroda. In her will Contractor also donated two other properties to the Panchayat: the family house that now houses the Panchayat Agiari; and the plot adjacent. The Agiari like the Dharamshalla was relocated in 1963 and is still referred to as the Umrigar

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Agiari. The original fire, about 150-year-old, was housed in an old, rundown building in the heart of the city when the property was sold for Rs 10,000.

The other property owned by the Panchayat is the 10-acre plot of land around the dokhma. The dokhma has no name though the *Directory* records that it was founded in 1843. "There is no record of its origins. It may have been purchased by the Panchayat or donated by the government," says Patel. About half of the land is given out for agriculture. "It is a no-profit, no-loss agreement," notes Chothia. "The idea is to keep a man there so that he can look after the property." And still, encroachment is a problem. Chothia, a retired forest officer, has been trying to grow babul trees on the land but since there is no wall or fence around it, cows stroll in and destroy the saplings.

Recently the VPP added another building to its assets when on March 21, 1988 they inaugurated the Pirojsha Godrej Hall located at Hirabaug. The Pirojsha Godrej Foundation donated Rs 2.5 lakhs towards its Rs 8.5 lakh cost of construction. The balance funds were collected through donations. Patel refers specifically to the assistance of the BPP and the trustees of

the Surat Parsi Panchayet, "If efforts are made, funds can be arranged. Land and property is investment for the future. For a good cause you do get donations, but you've got to show performance," says

Very rarely do Baroda girls marry Baroda boys

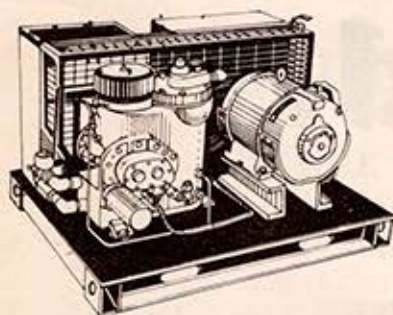
Patel. The new Hall has an indoor badminton court and indoor games facilities. It is also rented out for public functions. According to Khajotia, Parsis have to pay rental charges of Rs 300 while non-Parsis pay Rs 1,200 to use the facility. In addition, there is the Agiari and Dharamshala managed by the Pestonji F. C. Contractor family trust.

According to Patel, a sum of Rs 35,000 expended on the construction of the Godrej Hall is still outstanding. "It is our major liability at present," he says. Audited accounts of the Panchayat are placed before the community every year at the annual general meeting. According to the accounts for the year 1989,

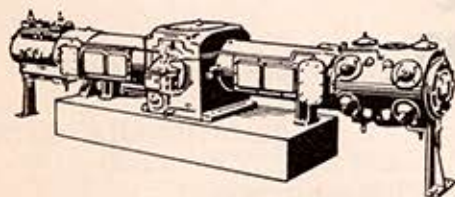
the total annual income was Rs 3.12 lakhs with the Panchayat helping 19 poor Parsi families in cash and kind during the period. Ms Goolbanu S. Wadia who served as trustee of the VPP for 29 years, 14 of which were as president before she resigned because of her advancing age, points out that though the Baroda Parsis have always been a fairly affluent community they have their share of the poor who cannot be ignored.

Should any section of the community feel ignored, they have an occasion when they can redress their grievances — the elections of the trustees. Though membership on the Panchayat is family based (annual subscription Rs 20 per family), voting rights are given to all members of the family over 21 years of age. "Even girls married to non-Parsis have the right to vote," says Patel.

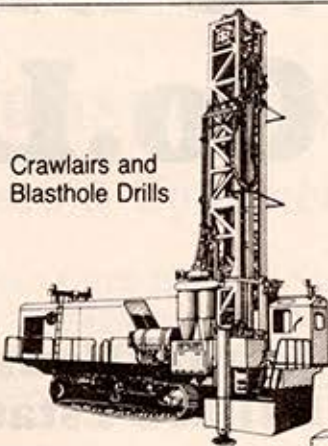
A trustee's term has been reduced from five to four years, mentions Boman R. Cama, trustee of the VPP. "After four years every trustee resigns, even if he was elected mid-term," says Cama. He clarifies that should a vacancy arise within the last year before the elections are due, there is no need to go through the election process; the sitting trustees



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may co-opt anyone to fill the seat. On the question of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India's recommendation to co-opt youth trustees, Cama observes: "We will consider it. However we do have a trustee still youthful enough to fill the youth category."

In April 1990 the term of the trustees expired. Nine candidates contested the seven seats. In the preceding election, some candidates withdrew their names to allow for unanimity. This time around too, two candidates sought to withdraw but their papers reached too late. The Baroda Parsis did get to vote this time. They elected as their trustees Patel, Cama, Ms Mehroo Palkhiwala, Kersy Kavina, Jal Patel, Aspi Vajifdar and Jimmy Havewala.

The elections however were not fought on party lines. "There may be differences of opinions but these are for the individual families and persons to resolve. The Parsis of Baroda have kept clear of politicizing issues," notes Cama.

BUZY in Baroda

It is an uproarious affair, a deafening din as kids have good wholesome fun. On the ground floor of the B. N. Seervai Parsi Dharamshalla premises, the third get-together of the Baroda United Zoroastrian Youth (BUZY) is in progress. At the center of the commotion is a young man with blindfolds on, wielding a stick as two teams scream conflicting directions at him. The object of the game is to see if the young man can hit the suspended bucket with the stick. He could well represent BUZY, a little in the dark, groping, seeking direction, with a lot of enthusiasm, promise and hope.

"Let's hope it is not just a flash in the pan," says Ms Roxanne Kavarana, a young Baroda girl working with *The Times of India* in Bombay, who got the ball rolling. As the Baroda representative at the fourth All-India Zoroastrian Youth Festival held at Secunderabad and Hyderabad in October 1990 she conveyed to the trustees of the Vadodara Parsi Panchayat (VPP) the recommendation made at the Festival that all cities without a youth organization should make efforts to start one. She recalls

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how it all started: "It was at a wedding reception. Ms Arnawaz Havewala, wife of one of the trustees, and I went around spreading the word that we were going to hold a meeting of young Parsis the next Sunday at the Dharamshalla."

Kavarana returned to Bombay, but the guantlet was picked up by the Parsi youth of Baroda. On Sunday, December 9, 1990 the first meeting of BUZY was held. Thirty young boys and girls attended this meeting where an ad hoc committee of 10 volunteers was appointed to steer the fledgling association. Immediately they swung into action: "We visited every single Parsi home in the city and the next Sunday 67 youth attended our meeting," Kersi Mistry, committee member and a young Central Bank of India officer on posting in Baroda, says with undisguised pride.

With the rapid development of events, guidelines for membership were loosely drafted: Only persons between the ages of 10 and 35 and only those wearing a sudreh and kusti were eligible to join. "We ask no questions about how the child's navjote was performed. As long as he or she is wearing a sudreh and kusti, he or she may attend. You've got to

realize that in almost every (Parsi) family in Baroda someone or the other has married out of the community," says Havewala, principal of a girls' high school, who formulated the basic guidelines. Finalizing the full constitution of BUZY will be the task of the youth. "We are only helping them get started. To keep it going will be their responsibility," adds Ms Hutokshi Shroff who helped Havewala get BUZY afloat.

The desire to minimize adult interference stems from past experience. Eight years ago, the Baroda Parsi Youth Association closed shop when it became a hotbed of community politics. "Once things got started, adults got into the act and started their meddling and politicking. We don't want a repeat," says Havewala.

But the old defunct body left behind a legacy of Rs 17,000 which will be transferred to BUZY, according to Aspi Vajifdar, businessman and trustee of the VPP. "Great," the young committee members cheer when they hear the figure. Their enthusiasm spills over. They talk about future plans, of attending the next youth festival in force, of probably hosting the following one, of organizing religious classes, holding social events, of...

Membership fees are Rs 10 per youth, per month. However, the fees for children of 10 poor Parsi families in Baroda will be paid by BUZY itself. Beyond membership fees and eligibility rules, little else has been formulated by way of a constitution. "We plan to draw up our constitution through discussion," says Ms Binaifer Bavaadam. "Of course there will be differences of opinions, but that is not going to hold us back," says Percy Daruwalla. Adds Minoo Gandhi: "We are not doing this to satisfy our egos; we are doing this for the community. Our personal opinions aside, we will support the majority decision of the committee wholeheartedly." Other committee members are Ms Binaifer Gazdar, Khushroo Satarawala, Percy Tadiwala, Mehzabin Bharucha, Ms Nancy Patwa, Ronnie Palia and Vispi Umrnwala.

Will they succeed? Jimmy Havewala, retired PRO of Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Limited and trustee of the VPP, has enormous faith in the youth of Baroda and the community. "If you repose trust in youth, they will remain loyal to your trust — it's only natural," he observes.

G.I.

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GIFTed Babies

The GIFT method of conception could counter male infertility among Parsis

Gustasp Irani

GIFT, to a student of medicine, stands for Gamete Intra-Fallopian Transfer; to a layperson, the childless couple in particular, it is a gift of life. The Thakers of Bombay knew full well the pain, the hope, the anxiety, the desperation and the longing of a childless couple. They approached Dr Faram E. Irani, the gynecologist running the Southern Cross Clinic at Prabhadevi, Bombay. On August 30, 1990 they became parents of twin boys. Other babies have been born with the assistance of GIFT; there are other gynecologists in Bombay and India who also offer this treatment. However, the birth of the Thaker boys is significant for it was the first time that twins have been born in India through this process.

"GIFT, unlike IVF (in vitro fertilization) or test tube babies, is a natural process," says Irani, 33, his bold black moustache prominent on his fair features. "Christians and Muslims who are opposed to unnatural birth methods accept GIFT." In this process, according to Irani, external assistance is kept to a minimum (see box). Ripe female eggs are removed from the ovary, externally brought in contact with male sperms and reintroduced into the fallopian tube where fertilization under normal conditions takes place. The patient checks into the clinic in the morning and goes home by evening. Within 10 days, it can be determined if fertilization has indeed taken place and from there on, it is like any other normal pregnancy; nine months of waiting, the anxieties, the labor pains, the first wail of the new born child... But wait. The success rate of GIFT is only 21 percent. "The chances of successful fertilization under natural cir-

cumstances is 25 percent," observes Irani. Whereas GIFT costs between Rs 10,000 and Rs 15,000 each time the process is used, irrespective of success or failure, the natural process is free.



GIFT is probably the answer when under certain circumstances the male sperm and female egg are unable to meet in the fallopian tube where fertilization takes place. The most common cause of infertility is the male deficiency factor (low sperm count) which accounts for 30 percent to 40 percent of all cases.

GIFT in such cases is ideal for when sperms are unable to journey up to the fertilization zone on their own steam, a little help is welcome.

"The male deficiency factor is very common among Parsis which is what you would not expect as Parsis do live healthier lives than the average Indian. Yet it accounts for the full 40 percent of infertility in the community or more," observes Irani. A low sperm count, according to

him, can be the result of tension, childhood illnesses like smallpox, mumps or typhoid and accidents in the genital region among other factors.

Clinically, a course of hormone tablets can improve sperm count. The patient can help himself by worrying less, and cutting back on his consumption of alcohol, cigarettes and betel nuts. Tight fitting clothes are out as also synthetic underwear. Cold water baths help and even more, ice packs applied to the genitals... And yes, lest we overlook, early marriages do make a big difference. "Parsis tend to marry late and that could be one factor for the high incidence of low sperm count in Parsi males," says Irani.

Late marriages also account for another infertility factor among Parsis — fibroids in the uterus. "The function of a uterus is to produce something. If it does not produce a baby it produces fibroids," says Irani. Here GIFT is not the answer, but removal of the undesired growth is. Parsis, according to him, get married late and wait for years before even considering having their first child. Irani's advice to the community: "Don't wait. Start working on having a baby straight away after marriage. If there is no conception within a year, consult a specialist." The reasons are simple. After 35, the chances of conception diminish considerably and after 40, menopause is just around the corner. In fact, Irani does not recommend GIFT for a woman who has crossed 40.

Age is tied up to yet another infertility factor common among Parsi females — deterioration of the ovary, the egg production chamber. If the ovary cannot produce healthy eggs, then GIFT is of little value. Also common among Parsis



Thaker twins conceived by the GIFT method
(Above): Irani

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is what Irani refers to as endometriosis. Here chocolate colored cysts, or dark blood globules, form in the ovary. In such cases the cysts are removed from the egg to which they are attached and only then is the egg mixed with the male sperm and reintroduced by the GIFT method.

The good news for the community is that instances of tubal factors, or blockage in the fallopian tube, are low. Should a Parsi or anyone else for that matter have such a problem then GIFT is not the answer; IVF, or test tube babies, is.

Yes, Irani undertakes the test tube baby procedure too, and all the other tasks that routine gynecology requires, including attending to normal pregnancy cases. Being on call at unearthly hours to deliver babies and enduring the screams of women in the throes of labor is part of his daily work. But he does admit: "I am better known as a GIFT specialist."

He qualified as an obstetrician and gynecologist from Bombay University and honed his skills at a number of insti-

tutes of higher learning including the Howard and Georgeanna Jones Institute for Reproductive Medicine, East Virginia Medical School, USA and Monash University and Queen Victoria Medical Centre, Melbourne, Australia with special emphasis on the GIFT technique. He has also written and co-authored a number of papers for national and international consumption. Between 1985 and 1988 he worked with Dr Rusi Soonawalla before setting up his own Southern Cross Clinic in 1989. The Clinic is a self-contained unit including an operating area. There are four rest rooms where patients may rest before and after GIFT implants or routine tests.

Does Irani entertain abortions? "After GIFT, I do not do abortions; it is a matter of principle. On one side you are giving life, on the other you are taking life. I am pro life," says Irani. If an abortion case involving a Parsi couple should come his way, his pro-life stance is more pronounced. "Our population is declining; even one life counts. I strongly advise Parsis not to abort. Keep the baby or give

it up to a good Parsi home for adoption."

Should he get a case where the male sperm count is zero, he is willing to use the GIFT process using a donor's sperm. "I will ensure complete anonymity. Depending on the couple, I will select a suitable donor who will not know what his sperms are used for and the couple will in turn not know who the donor is. All they will know is that the donor is a Parsi; that much I will guarantee," says Irani.

It is not a hollow promise, for Irani is strongly opposed to intercommunity marriages. "I will not even consider the question," he replies to a query if inbreeding among Parsis could be one reason for their high infertility rate. Despite our pushing, he brushes the issue aside, unanswered, unconsidered.

The doctor is opposed to intercommunity marriages on two counts: One, people who marry out of their community, any community for that matter, spend half their energies fighting people opposed to their union. "If I have succeeded, it's because I have the full support of my wife (Gulistan), my parents

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and my in-laws." He would like his two sons Ness, aged nine and Jehan, aged four, to marry in the community. The other problem with intercommunity marriages is that it dilutes the Parsi identity. To Irani, the threat of dilution of community identity is more real than the problem

of declining numbers.

To stay off extinction for a little longer, Irani believes that the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital should consider the feasibility of installing a GIFT unit on its premises. Of course, the pros and cons have to be weighed. Since the average in-

fertility rate in any society is 10 percent, among Parsis whose total population is an estimated 70,000 it works out to 7,000 people or 3,500 couples. The actual number could be even less given the high percentage of aged and unmarried people in the community. The five lakh rupee capital investment in equipment plus operational costs could be probably used more beneficially on other life-saving, life-support equipment. As an alternative, charitable trusts and organizations could consider subsidizing couples who could benefit by GIFT facilities available at private clinics which, because of their wider use, can minimize cost overruns.

For those who are unable to conceive for no apparent clinical reason, the dent in their bank account could be alarming. Such cases account for 10 percent to 25 percent of all infertility. According to Irani, in such cases, GIFT is ideally suited. An inexpensive alternative is a change in attitude towards sex. "When sex life revolves around the calendar, it takes the fun out of the act. It becomes sex for pregnancy sake and not sex for sex sake," says Irani. Often when such couples give up hope they suddenly find that a baby is on the way. That too is a gift of life. But with Parsis, with late marriages, excessive family planning and declining numbers, GIFT may be a better answer.

Fertile facts

GIFT (Gamete Intra-Fallopian Transfer) is based on one simple principle: getting the female egg and the male sperm together in the right place at the right time. In a normal pregnancy the female egg, when ripe, moves from the ovary to the fallopian tube. Here it meets and is fertilized by the male sperm which has journeyed up the vagina. The fertilized egg then moves to the uterus where it grows into a baby.

In the case of GIFT, to improve the chances of success, the mother-to-be is given a course of tablets and injections to stimulate the ovary to produce a larger number of ripe eggs which are closely monitored by ultrasound and laboratory tests. When the eggs are ripe, as many as three to seven may be extracted, mixed with sperms and reimplanted in the mother. "It is possible that all the eggs may fertilize. A couple should be pre-

pared to accept quadruplets!" says Dr Faram Irani.

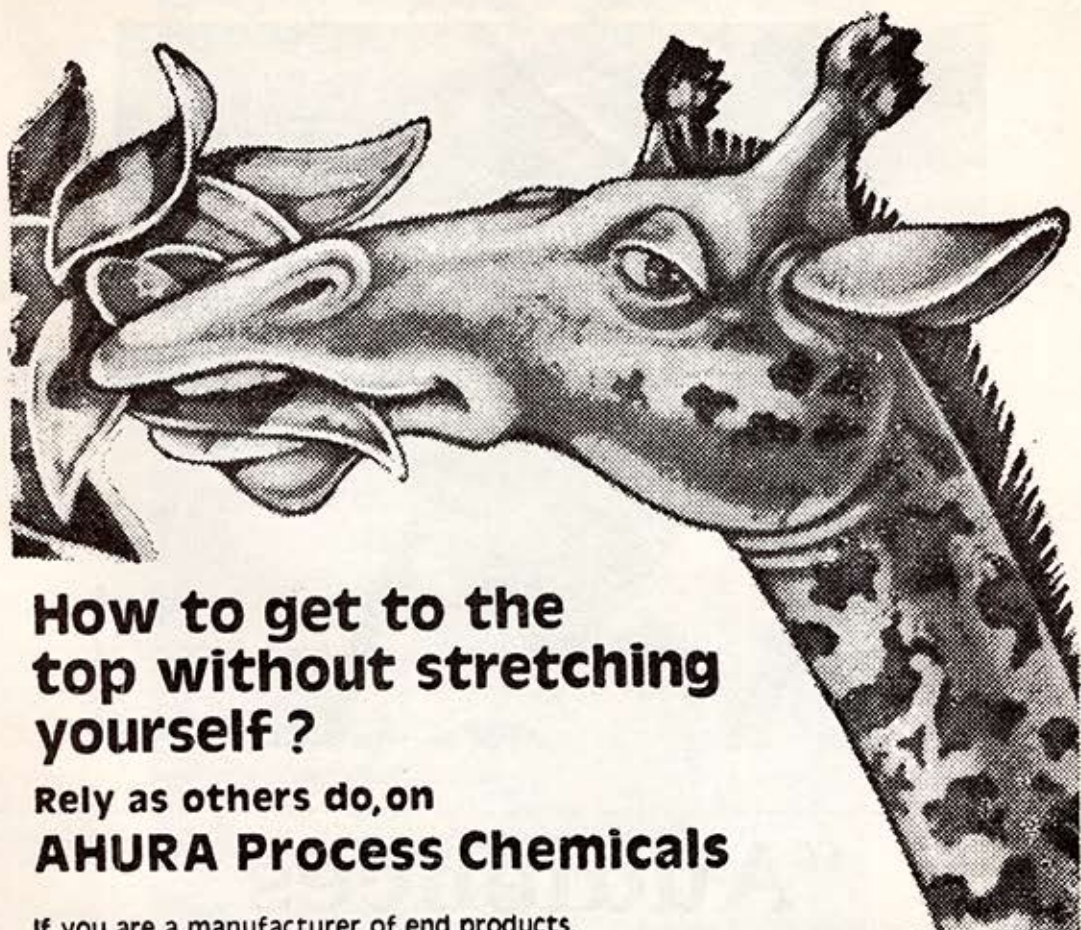
The operation itself is brief, 45 minutes, and done under general anaesthesia. The eggs are removed by laparoscopy, loaded along with the sperms into a catheter and reintroduced into the fallopian tube. A two-inch scar in the abdomen region, below the navel will testify to the operation having been performed.

The success rate of GIFT is 21 percent which, according to Irani, is good. "There is a certain thing such as nature's law. The chance of successful fertilization under natural circumstances is 25 percent," observes Irani. In other words, a couple should expect to conceive within four months of trying. Allowing for variance they may keep at it for a year after which they should consult a specialist who could probably solve their problem with the GIFT of a child.

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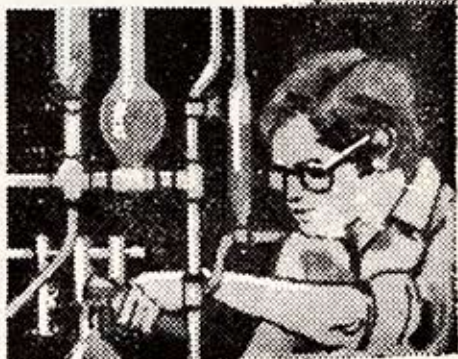
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ERNA J. VATCHAGHANYAN

“Audiences want to be entertained”

A good play, every day in Bombay, is actor-producer Hosi Vasunia's dream

Geeta Doctor

“Do you mind if I take a leak?” asks Hosi Vasunia, the moment we sit down in the chilled recesses of the Sea Lounge at The Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay, the slight rasp in his richly timbered voice making it sound like a naughty joke.

“Not at all,” I reply, “Do you mind if I join you?” There's a brief moment of shocked silence, before I hasten to add, “I mean in the ladies room next door.” It could have been a scene from one of his plays. Hosi Vasunia appears to be very much the rogue male, socking it to the unwary female with equal parts of devastating charm and assured arro-

gance. He has a trick of lowering his head and looking at you like a rhino about to charge — perhaps it has something to do with his increasing avoirdupois — and just as suddenly changing his mind. The corners of his mouth have two small wings that lift his smile up and away into a “I can knock their pants off anytime” brilliance. It's amazing to see it at work. A lady from across the room stops by at our table to tell him how much she has enjoyed his performance, a revue dedicated to the memory of Adi Marzban. All at once the sun is shining all over our table, there is a sound of

trumpets blowing, as Vasunia responds with a smile. As she departs, he lowers his guard just enough to confide, “That's what it's all about to be a star. If there is such a thing as a star system in the theater today, it's only from me that it started.” He says it in his finely matured cherry brandy voice that is redolent with a flavor of cream, sprinkled lightly with iron filings. It's going to be very difficult to concentrate on what he is saying. I realize that part of the charm in listening to him talk is the timing: He makes a statement. Pause. A slight smile hovers at the corners. Then the punchline. A

winged smile of victory!

A sense of timing has catapulted Hosi Vasunia to the top of the chart ever since he appeared as the appalled, apoplectic father of the mildly homosexual son in *Ah Norman*. Though Bomsy Nicholson was the cutie-pie of the show, Vasunia carved a niche for himself in the naughty, frothy, "who's sleeping in my bed" comedies of the seventies. It's to his immense credit as an actor that he parlayed his basically "straight" roles — as distraught father, cuckolded husband, or fuddy-duddy dentist-boss — into rib-tickling triumphs that have given him a permanent place in the limelight. To use an example from ballet, the male dancer is often just an anchor who twirls the prima donna about. In Vasunia's case, he is so good as the anchor that his very presence gives a certain credibility or authority to the mad whirl of comedy spinning around him. It is with him that the audience identifies.

For those who imagine that this just happened by chance, he sets the record straight. "I have always had an abiding interest in theater, particularly during my college days when I was at Sydenham College, winning prizes in intercollegiate competitions. I have gone through the

whole repertoire. It was in the 1970s that I was first asked to do a play by Ms Roshan Kalapesi, *Cyrus the Great* (to celebrate the 25th century of the founding of the Achaemenian empire) and then *Princes*, a play written by Gieve Patel, that was directed by Ms Pearl Padamsee.

"Then came *Ah Norman* in '72-'73. It broke all the records. It was the longest running English play. When I first did the role of the father, the make-up man had to age me for the part. When we revived the play after Bomsy came back in '82, we made it a musical. We found that a whole new generation who had not seen it the first time came to see it. And it's still the longest running play in English in India...

"After *Norman* I was doing a whole lot of plays and this gave me the idea of forming my own company — Hosi Vasunia Productions — where I could be free to experiment with new themes and new directors." He had people like Alyque Padamsee and Pearl to direct, and actors like Vijay Crishna, Homi Daruwala and Ms Meher Jehangir in plays as diverse as *All the King's men*, *Mass Appeal*, *St Joan* and *Agnes of God*.

"I do have an ego. I want to make English theater popular. To make a per-

son cry would be a very easy thing. To make you laugh is much more difficult. I mean really laugh. In today's life, audiences want to come and be entertained. You have to work at it. I think that what I am looking for is the basic excitement of the theater. As long as I feel it is alive, it is relevant to me. And let me tell you that it is because of the comedies that people come to see serious theater. Adi Marzban's bedroom farces and comedies increased the number of people seeing English plays for sure. If we do a serious play the number of people might range from 5,000 to 10,000; if we do a comedy it goes from 5,000 to 50,000. A popular production generates the money that you need to do a serious play like *Agnes of God* where we've lost money. It's no use putting on a good play and not make good money."

Vasunia's family was one of the old China-Japan hands who used to bring the famous Chinese silk embroidered garas to India, and export sandalwood. They

Clockwise from top left :Vasunia with Amjad Khan in *Loot*, Meher Jehangir in *Are you lonesome tonight*

(Photo: Fali Palkhivala) and Ruby Patel in *Mary, Mary*



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Versant Vasunia

"I have a theory that all Parsis are born actors," proclaims the veteran thespian Hosi Vasunia. His own climb up the histrionic ladder he attributes to: a Spanish Father who introduced him to theater during his school days at St Xavier's; a little bit of training from Adi Marzban; and largely his own endeavor. Maturing as he has from frivolous roles to in-depth enactments, Vasunia now believes on concentrating "on acting which is not fooling."

Reviewing his own performances, in his own productions, it was his role in *A flea in her ear*, directed by Ms Pearl Padamsee, that Vasunia considers particularly fulfilling. And for the Elvis Presley admirer, "A play very close to my heart is *Are you lonesome tonight*," projecting the life and travails of singer Elvis. This is a musical "I've identified a lot with, got emotionally involved with," he adds. His farce *Charley's Aunt*, where Vasunia plays the female role to entertain his audiences, was very well received not only in India but also in Kenya and Sri Lanka last year. In fact, his was the first Indian troupe invited to take English theater to these countries, claims Vasunia.

But after so many repeat performances of *Charley's Aunt*, the pro-

ducer himself, "finding it a little boring," is contemplating upon his next productions — perhaps, *The man who came to dinner*, or the musical *Fiddler on the roof*. "I have a good voice for that (title) role," says Vasunia. "The only thing needed is my own self discipline — to give up smoking and get into training for six months."

Even more than his own productions, Vasunia's time and energy these days is expended on building up the Dynasty Culture Club that he launched in 1989 jointly with producer Ronnie Screwvala and Ms Dolly Dave. To offer the promised choice of 30/40 cultural programs in a year to their elitist members, the organizers are constantly on the lookout for good shows.

In addition to the talented Parsis who are into theater — acting as well as training — there are many others from the cosmopolitan Bombay population whose creativity Vasunia appreciates. Rather than fear competition, Vasunia welcomes new productions for "it lessens my work to program more things for Culture Club." And, assures Vasunia, as long as talent abounds in the city, theater buffs can expect that the stage will not be bare...

Parinaz Gandhi

had an office in Kobe before the war, and even returned to the place afterwards. While he was still young the family settled in Hong Kong for a while. After his college education in Bombay, he worked with Esso which was still an American company in those days, replete with the glamor attached to a foreign oil company. Since his job meant travelling around, he did not find the time for much serious theater. He is now running his own leather export business.

His dream is to have a situation where a person can get to see a good play any day of the week, just as he or she might in Broadway or West End. For most of the performers acting is a hobby, with the majority working for the sheer love of it, in their spare time.

Why is he concentrating on the English theater? "For one thing, I can't speak other languages — Marathi, Gujarati — fluently enough... English theater is 90 percent Parsi," he says. "I don't know why it is. It is a hidden talent, a thespian talent that we have all got

in our blood. It's extraordinary. You find beautiful voices, a natural talent for singing or dancing. It's just there. Because of this, even though there are now so many different (theatrical) companies, it is a very incestuous relationship that we share."

Among the hurdles he's had to encounter are finding a place to rehearse, "where you can come after a hard day's work regularly, for three to six weeks. One thing you tend to give up is partying; you always land up late for any party even during weekends and you are constantly apologizing..."

"But if there is anything I'd like to say it is that Parsi parents should not feel that if they let their children, their daughters, act on the stage, it means they will go astray. We are made up of very normal, well-balanced people. We would look after these people, as we would look after our own family. We need more people to come into the theater today, and by that I don't mean the audience. We need young talent."



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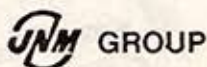
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Warm Starters and Sweet Endings

Bhico J. Manekshaw

Exotic soup and dessert creations to titillate the tongue

I have been often told that I do not think of vegetarians when I give recipes for *Parsiana*. Therefore, this article is dedicated to them. But, I am sure that the non-vegetarians would also enjoy the dishes as they are unusual and delicious. The potato soup with sesame seeds is excellent and warming on a cold evening. The sweet potato, leek and apple soup has a flavor that all connoisseurs of good food will enjoy. And, the baked pumpkin soup is a conversation piece for parties! Calling Sarosh, my nephew, in Houston, and all you non-pumpkin eaters: don't wrinkle up your noses just because it is pumpkin! Try it, it is really out of the world. One of the desserts is my creation, Gateau Santorini, for a very dear and lovable friend who was too shy to let me name it after her, so we decided to call it Gateau Santorini after the Grecian island where we had had a lovely holiday together. The second one, Gateau Apricot, is one of the most delicious gateaux we did at the Cordon Bleu Cookery School.

POTATO SOUP WITH SESAME SEEDS (serves 6)

Leeks (2 large) or spring onions (6 — chopped with a little of the green)

Butter (50 gms)
Oil (1 tbsp)
Potatoes (1½ kg — sliced)
Hot water or chicken stock (1 ltr)
Hot milk (1 ltr)
Cream (120 gms)
Garlic (2-3 cloves — crushed)
Salt and pepper (to taste)
Garnish
Dry roasted sesame seeds (2-3 tbsp)
Coriander leaves (1 tbsp — chopped)
Melt butter with oil. Add leeks and cook till soft. Add potatoes and saute for 2-3 minutes. Add hot water or stock and garlic and simmer till potatoes are soft but not over-cooked. Add milk, cream and seasoning. Mix well but do not puree the potatoes. It does not matter if the potato slices are broken, but they should not be mashed. Spoon into soup bowls and sprinkle with sesame seeds and chopped coriander or parsley.

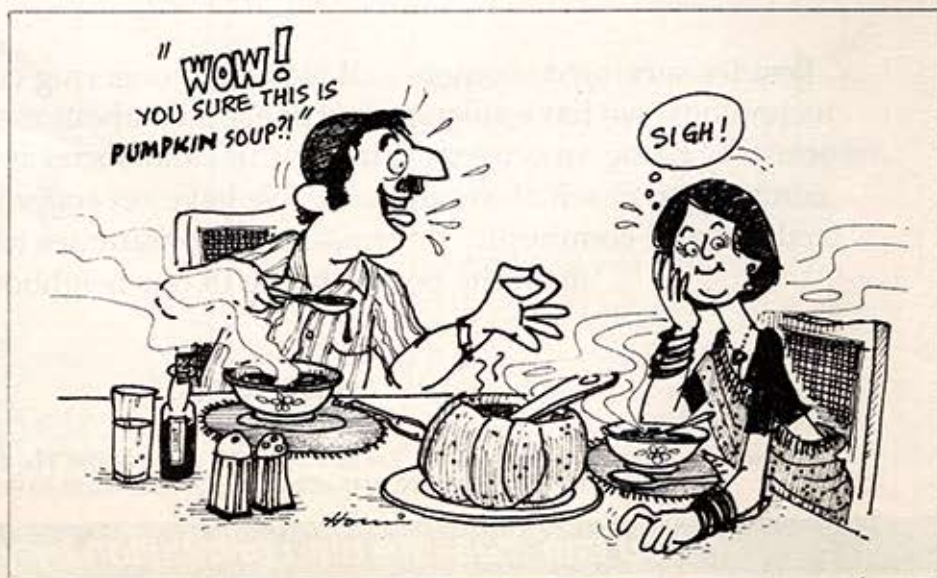
SWEET POTATO, LEEK AND APPLE SOUP (serves 6)

Sweet potatoes (1 kg)
Chicken stock (2 cups strong, preferably) or water (vegetarians could use Maggi's veg cubes)
Lime (½ — sliced)
Leeks (6 — medium sized) or spring onions (8-10 — cleaned and chopped)
Apples (3 — green, sharp and hard. The apple should be on the raw side and not sweet.)
Garlic (3 cloves — crushed)
Ginger (½ inch piece — crushed)
Milk (1½ cups)
Cream (1 cup)
Salt and pepper (to taste)
Garnish
Butter (30 gms)

Apple (1 green — chopped)
Leek (1 — chopped)
Peel sweet potatoes and chop roughly. Bring stock to boil, add sliced lime and potatoes, and cook over high heat till potatoes are tender. Remove lime and liquidize. Heat butter, add leeks and cook over low heat till tender. Add garlic and ginger, and apples. Simmer for 3-4 minutes. Add potato puree with milk. Mix well. Simmer for about 10 minutes. Soften leeks and apples in butter. Just before serving, reheat the soup, add the garnish and cream.
Note: Do not boil soup after the cream has been added.

BAKED PUMPKIN SOUP (serves 6-8)

(Oven temp 350°F 150°C Gas 4)
Cinderella's pumpkin (3 kg)
Bread crumbs (250 gms — fresh)
Parmesan or cheddar cheese (150 gms)
Milk (1½-2 pints)
Garlic (3 cloves — chopped)
Onion (1 large — chopped)
Salt and pepper (to taste)
Chilli sauce (couple of drops)
Wash pumpkin and dry. Cut the top off and keep aside. Remove all seeds and strands. Lightly slash the inside surface with a knife without cutting through the outer skin.
Mix enough breadcrumbs with salt and pepper and grated cheese, onion and garlic and fill the pumpkin. Add milk to cover. Allow to stand for a while and add more milk if necessary to fill to the top. Add chilli sauce. Seal the top of the pumpkin with flour and water paste. Put the pumpkin on a greased baking tray and bake in the preheated oven for 45 minutes to an hour. You will know that the soup



Reaching for the Sky



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is ready by pressing the pumpkin. If it is soft to the feel, it is ready.

Carefully put the pumpkin on a serving platter, lightly rub the pumpkin with oil to give it a shine and bring it on the table. Remove the seal paste. When the 'lid' is opened, scoop out the inside with a soup ladle and serve. And sit back — and wait for the kudos!

GATEAU SANTORINI (serves 8)

(Oven temp 375°F 190°C Gas 5)

Sponge

Flour (90 gms — plain)

Salt (a pinch)

Eggs (3)

Castor sugar (115 gms)

Lime (1 — juice and rind)

Prepared cake tin 8 inches in diameter and ½ inches deep

Sift flour with salt thrice. Whisk eggs with an electric beater till frothy. Gradually add sugar and continue to beat till it is thick and mousse-like and has doubled in volume. (If you beat with a hand beater, place the bowl with the eggs and sugar mixture over a bowl of hot water without the bottom of the bowl touching the hot water and whisk till thick and mousse-like, then remove from hot water and continue to beat till the mixture is cool.) In both cases, the mixture, when ready, should form a 'ribbon' when the whisk is lifted from the mixture.

Then add juice and rind of lime. Next add flour gradually with a cut and fold movement. Spoon into prepared tin and bake for 20-25 minutes. Then remove from tin onto a wire rack and cool completely. In the meanwhile make the filling.

Lemon Curd

Castor sugar (225 gms)

Butter (115 gms)

Limes (4 large — grated rind and juice)

Eggs (3 large — beaten)

Salt (a pinch)

Put all ingredients in a stainless steel double boiler and cook till thick, taking care not to allow the water in the pan to boil. Do not allow the mixture to boil as it will curdle. Cool and use.

Gooseberry Sauce

Gooseberries (½ kg)

Sugar (115 gms)

Salt (a pinch)

Butter (60 gms)

Lime (1 — juiced)

Cornflour (1 tbsp — mixed with 2 tbsp of cold water)

Mix gooseberries, sugar, butter and salt together. Put on a slow fire in a pan, stirring all the time with a wooden spoon till the sugar has melted, crushing the gooseberries slightly. Simmer for 10 minutes till the juice runs out of the gooseberries. Bring to a boil. Add the cornflour mixture and boil rapidly till the mixture is slightly thickened. If you want a thicker sauce, you can add more of the cornflour mixture.

Garnish

Lime-flavored cream (115 gms — whipped)

To assemble the gateau

Split the cake in half. Fill with lemon curd and cover with the other half. Cover cake with whipped cream. Cut into eight portions and place each portion on a half plate. Spoon the sauce over and serve or pour the sauce over the gateau and serve.

APRICOT GATEAU (serves 8)

(Oven temp 375°F 190°C Gas 5)

Sponge

Plain flour (90 gms)

Salt (a pinch)

Eggs (3)

Castor sugar (130 gms)

Prepared 8-inch cake tin

Filling

Cream (5 ml)

Sugar (a little)

Brandy (1 tbsp)

Topping

Dried apricots (250 gms — soaked overnight)

Apricot jam (1 bottle)

Lime (1 — juiced)

Salt (a pinch)

Brandy (1 tbsp)

Sugar (2 tbsp)

Cloves (2)

Cinnamon (¼ — inch piece)

Pralin

Almonds (60 gms — unblanched)

Castor sugar (60 gms)

Place almonds and sugar in a small heavy saucepan. Place pan over a very slow fire and allow sugar to dissolve slowly. Do not stir. As the sugar caramelizes, stir the almonds with a skewer or a metal fork to make sure that they are toasted through. When the whole is a rich brown, turn that on a well-oiled plate and let it cool. When set, remove from plate and crush pralin with a rolling pin and use.

Use the ingredients listed to make the sponge as in the previous recipe. Cool and split into two. Keep aside.

Simmer apricots with enough water to cover, 2 tbsp sugar and cloves and cinnamon. Cool and carefully remove seeds, keep the apricots whole. Break open the seeds, and remove the kernels. Blanche them in hot water for about 10 minutes. Cool and remove the skin. Keep aside. Put all the jam in a pan with 2½ ml of the water in which the apricots were cooked. Allow it to melt and pass through a sieve. Add brandy and a pinch of salt and keep aside. Make pralin. Crush and keep it aside.

To assemble

Whip cream and cover one split half of the cake. Cover with the other half. Brush apricot glaze over the top and let it set for a few minutes. Place apricots on top and cover completely. Brush again, heavily this time, with the glaze. Brush the sides of the cake with apricot glaze or a little of the cream. Cover the sides with pralin and decorate with a few blanched apricot kernels.

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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MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides in Bombay — as listed in this issue — ranged between 19 and 37 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 26 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 25 and 41 years, averaging at 30.

Last month's major killer was heart disease claiming 20 victims from among the 72 Zoroastrians who died in Bombay. Fourteen patients fell prey to pneumonia and seven to old age and general debility. Diabetes and cancer (four each), liver disease, hypertension, brain disease and kidney failure (three each) and tumors (two) were the other killers. Isolated cases registered this month: asthma, septicemia, bronchitis, high blood pressure, senility, leukemia, circulatory failure and anemia. A 36-year-old male who committed suicide and a stillborn baby girl were also lost to the community. Ninety-seven was the highest age at death.

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

If readers have any births/marriages/deaths they would like published, some proof to ensure the veracity of the report would be required. We are sure our readers would appreciate this requirement and cooperate with us.

BOMBAY

Born

A boy to *Kamal and Bomi Damania* on February 2, 1991
A girl to *Binaifer and Kersey Bhesania*; February 5
A boy to *Jasmine and Behram Irani*; February 5
A girl to *Nina and Sharookh Mehta*; February 11
A girl to *Maharukh and Yazdi Elavia*; February 12
A boy to *Pourlohi and Boman Dhabhar*; February 14

A boy to *Pervin and Zahir Irani*; February 14
A girl to *Daizy and Jal Irani*; February 15
A boy to *Jeroo and Maneck Bhathena*; February 18
A boy to *Pervin and Kairus Dadachanji*; February 18
A girl to *Fidelia and Rustom Dubash*; February 18
A boy to *Naheed and Hormazd Sorabjee*; February 19
A girl to *Pervin and Farokh Dotiwala*; February 20
A girl to *Keshmira and Porus Paghdwalla*; February 20
A girl to *Thrity and Sorab Ginwalla*; February 21
A girl to *Annahita and Shapur Paghdwalla*; February 21
A girl to *Nazneen and Feroze Katila*; February 22
A girl to *Smita and Shiroy Daruvala*; February 23
A boy to *Dilnavaz and Cyrus Heerjee*; February 23
A boy to *Irandothu and Rashid Shahlori*; February 23
A boy, *Huzwak*, to *Sheranawaz and Kekobad Battiwala*; February 27

Married

Dilnavaz Fali Battiwala and Mehnoor Nariman Khambata; January 24
Havovee Noshirwan Engineer (Sadri) and Hormuz Jehangir Sethna; January 27
Keshmira Minoo Tarapore and Kerman Gustad Master of Poona; January 31
Nilufer Tehmian Karanjia of Nasik and *Rohinton Kersey Dalal*; February 1
Mehernavaz Behram Kermani and *Viraf Minocher Ghadiali*; February 1
Farida Godrej Irani of Poona and *Ardeshir Homi Khushrushai*; February 1
Anahita Dara Mistri and *Farokh Faramroze Tarapore*; February 1
Shernaz Minoo Bamboat and *Sammy Jimmy Marfatia*; February 2
Arnaz Jal Kootar and *Jamshed Farrokh Antia*; February 3
Yasmin Shapoorji Surti and *Sharook Dhanjishaw Kapadia*; February 3
Farzana Purvez Chinoi and *Kali Rustomji Bordiwala*; February 4
Mahrukh Dara Patel and *Zubin*

Noshir Sutaria; February 4
Shireen Kekoo Gandhi and *Kurush Noshir Jungalwala*; February 5
Veera Sorab Ghandhi and *Ruzbeh Naval Barsivala*; February 7
Goolshun Burjor Bajan and *Viraf Noshir Variava*; February 7
Farida Darabshaw Khambatta and *Rohinton Dadiba Daruwalla*; February 8
Daulat Rustom Irani and *Adi Dinshah Irani*; February 8
Diana Adi Tarmaster and *Kersi Jamshed Tamboly* of Middlesex, U.K.; February 9
Ava Jalejar Lahewala of Surat and *Kersasp Firoz Bhot*; February 10
Nagzin Sam Randelia and *Farhad Hosi Dhanhoora*; February 10
Mithra Phiroze Mondegarian and *Shahzad Behram Kalantary*; February 10
Binaifer Aspi Doctor and *Bomi Vicajee Patel*; February 10
Shernaz Hosang Sidhwa and *Kersi Rustomji Vaid*; February 10
Perizad Eruch Dalal and *Phiroze Hoshang Dalal*; February 11
Firuzeh Sohrab Dubash and *Kaikhushroo Burjor Vacha*; February 15
Minkoo Nowzer Mehta and *Zerxes Noshirwan Subedar*; February 16
Kashmira Cawasjee Elavia and *Viraf Tehemurasp Avari*; February 17
Khushnaaz Keki Kharas and *Zubin Manackshaw Mogrelia*; February 17
Faryal Bomi Chesson and *Homi Adi Katgara*; February 18
Franak Phiroze Karai of Poona and *Rumy Rusi Keshwalla*; February 19
Khursheed Pervez Daruwalla and *Gev Behram Bharucha*; February 21
Mahrukh Rohinton Mobedji and *Hoshedar Jimi Cooper*; February 21
Sanobar Rusi Randelia and *Jimmy Ratanasha Umrigar*; February 21
Manizheh Mehraban Falahati and *Firdosh Kaikashru Felfeli*; February 23
Homai Dhunjishah Fitter and *Dara Jehangir Akolawala*;

February 25
Tanaz Noshir Bhathena and *Karl Sheri Vaghchhipawala*; February 25
Binaifer Fali Turel and *Firdosh Keki Homavazir*; February 26

Died

Arnavaz Homi Karkaria (75), residing at 9, Ness Baug Annexe 1, Nana Chowk, 400007; January 31
Dilawar Adi Baliwala (41), Tara Mans, 220, Khetwadi Main Rd, 400004; February 2
Merwanji Maneckji Engineer (82), Karani Mans, 780, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 3
Jala Darabji Gowadia (76), C/o D. B. Dadachanji, Seth N. Tata Bldg no 1, Bandra, 400050; February 3
Dolat Burjor Kapadia (78), H/14, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; February 3
Najamai Kaikhushru Mistry (81), 6/A, Bldg no 1, Dhanbai Wadi, Dadabhai Rd, Vile Parle (W), 400056; February 3
Jimmy Dady Mody (77), Bueno-Vista, Windy Hall Lane, Colaba, 400005; February 3
Framroze Rustomji Choksi (83), A/17, United Chmbs, Grant Rd, 400007; February 4
Lowjee Sorabji Hodiwalla (79), 3, C. D. Sethna Bldg, Golanji Hill, Parel Village, 400012; February 4
Dara Nariman Karanjia (51), 573, Umrigar Bldg, Chira Bazar, 400002; February 4
Maneck Sorabji Pavari (85), 16, Happy Home, Forjett Cross St, Gowalia Tank, 400036; February 4
Roshan Maneck Cawasmanek (74), 403/25, Adarsh Ngr, Prabhadevi, 400025; February 5
Jer Hormasji Golimar (70), Fatma Villa, Juhu Tara Rd, Santacruz, 400054; February 6
Perin Boman Irani (71), Flat no 8, Radha Bldg, 44, Pavwalla St, 400004; February 6
Adi Jahangir Cooper (65), Happy Home, Forjett Cross St, 400036; February 7
Homi Ratanji Umrigar (69), Vishramalaya, 152, Sion Rd, Sion (E), 400022; February 7
Gaimai Darabshaw Masters (96), 6, Wadia Bldg, Babulnath Rd, 400007; February 8

Framroze Darabshaw
Paymaster (70), Dhan Bldg,
 Dadar Cross Rd, Dadar,
 400014; February 8
Darayus Muncherji Shroff (36),
 41/42, Cozy Home, 251, Pali
 Hill, Bandra, 400050;
 February 8
Minocher Rustomji Tanksal-
wala (86), G-2/6, Shapur Baug,
 V. P. Rd, 400004;
 February 8
Adeser Maneksha Damania (60),
 25/4, Sethna Bldg, Old Khar-
 eghat Clny, 400007; February 9
Khorshed Jamshed Majoo (75),
 Jamasji Apts, N. Bharucha
 Marg, Grant Rd, 400007;
 February 9
Jerbai Maneksha Bajana (86),
 10/5, Rustom Baug, Victoria
 Rd, Byculla, 400027;
 February 10
Hilla Dhunjishaw Engineer (88),
 G-1/11, Shapur Baug,
 V. P. Rd, 400004; February 10
Mondegar Khashru Irani
(Mondegarian) (75), 46,
 Mary Land, Worli, 400018;
 February 10
Dolly Jal Patel (65), 695,
 Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
 February 10
Behramji Palanji Sui (76),
 Umrigar Agiary, Mora Bunder,
 Raigad, Dist Uran, 400702;
 February 10
Hillabai Cawasji Poonjiayi (97),
 Master Patel Chmbs, Cinema
 Rd, 400020; February 11
Godrej Behramji Mandviwalla
(53), Kaka Bldg, 648, Firdausi
Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
 February 12
Perin Feroze Sanjana (69),
 E. Fazalbai Mans, New Marine
 Lines, 400020; February 13
Manekshaw Ratanshaw
Tavadia (76), C, Captain Clny,
 Tardeo, 400034; February 13
Tehmina Homi Chacha (89),
 Flat no 19, 51, Contractor Bldg,
 Near Victoria Garden, 400027;
 February 14
Framrose Kuverji Asli (81),
 9, Gool Mhl, N. Bharucha Marg,
 400007; February 15
Navalsha Dhanjishaw Elavia
(91), Modi Hse, 9, Padamsi Rd,
Near Dreamland Cinema,
 400004; February 15
Jerbai Behramji Keswalla (86),
 B/14, Captain Clny, Tardeo,
 400034; February 15
Putla Rustomji Messman (83),
 Shirin Manzil, Walton Rd,
 Electric Hse, 400039;
 February 15
Framroze Shapurji Sukhia (93),

Botawalla Bldg, 56, Bomanji
 Master Rd, 400002;
 February 16
Dady Jijibhoy Billimoria (78),
 2/20, A. H. Wadia Baug, Parel
 Tank Rd, 400033; February 17
Khorshed Nariman Buchia (62),
 D-89/90, Bhiwandiwalla Ter,
 Dhobitalao, 400002;
 February 17
Aloo Nariman Forbes (79),
 R/16, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug,
 400012; February 17
Naja Sorabji Gazdar (83), 15/A,
 Shirin Manzil, Sleater Rd,
 400007; February 17
Framroze Kaikhusroo Mistry
(71), Veera Hse, 247,
Dr Cawasji Hormusji St,
 400002; February 17
Gool Dadabhoy Elchidana
(76), Tehmi Villa, 798, Jame
Jamshed Rd, 400014;
 February 18
Hiraji Bomanji Gandhi (88),
 Vinadlal Bldg, 731, Parsi
 Clny, Dadar, 400014;
 February 18
Banoo Jehangir Lelinwala (70),
 220/E, The Reward Bldg,
 Tardeo, 400007; February 18
Minoo Cooverji Taraporwala
(68), Maneknagar, Tumsar, Dist
Bhandara, 441904; February 18
Godrej Naoraji Unwala (79),
 606/609, Mercury Apts,
 Hiranandani Complex, Samarth
 Ngr, 400058; February 18
Aren Jehangir Balsara (75),
 3, Petit Block, Jamshedji Petit
 St, Grant Rd, 400007;
 February 19
Framroj Cawashaw Choksey
(85), Seervai Bldg, Wimbridge
Comp, Sleater Rd, 400007;
 February 19
Rustom Jehangir Cooper (75),
 N. E. Dinshaw Bldg, 2,
 Babulnath Rd, 400007;
 February 19
Bachamai Eruchshaw Engineer
(75), 785/A, M. J. Joshi Rd,
Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
 February 19
Banoo Rashid Irani (70), 3/27,
 Tata Co-op Hsg Soc, Parel,
 400012; February 19
Russa Sorabji Ginwala (73),
 Rehmat Manor, Sophia College
 Lane, Warden Rd, 400026;
 February 20
Jimi Navroji Guzdar (86),
 Baug-e-Sara, 16, Nepean Sea
 Rd, 400006; February 20
Phiroza Faramroz Mehta (75),
 Sidhwa Bldg, 221, Princess St,
 400002; February 20
Rustam Sorabjee Mevawalla
(79), 15, Mantri Residency,

Aundh, Pune, 411003;
 February 20
Dina Homi Bardoliwala (63),
 11/A, Jehangir Baug, Juhu Rd,
 Juhu, 400049; February 21
Sorab Ardeshir Alamshaw (81),
 Zenith Mans, 10, Nusserwanji
 Petit St, 400007; February 22
Sonabai Nariman Gimi (75),
 Avan Lodge, 40, Waterfield Rd,
 Bandra, 400050; February 22
Sam Hosangji Dastoor (60),
 X31/11, Godrej Clny (Creek
 Side), Vikhroli (E), 400079;
 February 23
Freny Ardeshir Madon (64),
 Mota Mans, Tardeo, 400007;
 February 23
Shirinbai Cawasji Mahuvewalla
(86), N/10, Dalal Est, Lamington
Rd, 400008; February 23
Sohrab Rustomji Avari (90), 3,
 Haji Habib Bldg, Dr Ambedkar
 Rd, Dadar, 400014; February 24
Phiroz Jehangirji Dotiwala
(79), Family Hse, 793, Jame
Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar,
 400014; February 24
Adi Dinshaw Motafaram (81),
 34, Hughes Rd, 400007;
 February 24
Bachamai Munchershaw Harvar
(80), 10, Modi Hse, Masjid St,
Fort, 400001; February 25
Jahangir Homi Karbhari (70),
 J. J. Dharamshala, Shanker
 Fufatu Rd, Nagpada, 400008;
 February 25
Rattan Cawasjee Mehta (64),
 3, Mehta Ter, Dadi Santok Lane,
 Dhobitalao, 400002;
 February 25
Diana Pesi Shroff (68), Sharda
 Sadan, 7, Kohinoor Rd, Dadar,
 400014; February 25
Hosang Darasha Bharucha (50),
 Spencer Lodge, New Kant Wadi,
 Perry Cross Rd, Bandra, 400050;
 February 26
Baby girl of Dilnavaz Hormus
Goolestar (stillborn), Pushpa
Niwars, Uranwala St, Grant Rd,
 400007; February 26
Firozshaw Vikaji Wadia (75),
 Old Wadia Chawl,
 Chandanwadi, Princess St,
 400002; February 26
Bachoo Homi Engineer (71),
 Orient Hse, 666, Parsi Clny,
 Dadar, 400014; February 27

CALCUTTA

Born

A boy, *Jamshed*, to *Trista*
 and *Cyrus Madan*;
 November 8, 1990

Married

Bapsy Dinshaji Sadri and

Kersi Jalejar Colabawalla;
 January 11, 1991
Ira Rajendra and Pervez Sherosh
Kaikobad; January 28

POONA

Died

Maneck Ardeshir Cama (77),
 K. P. Tower, Fatima Ngr,
 411013; February 3
Sillo Darabsha Chindhy (66),
 1970, West St, 411001;
 February 9
Nariman Sorabji Saugar (79),
 4/402, Pundol Apts, 160, M. G.
 Rd, 411001; February 14
Dady Ardeshir Sethna (90),
 River Crest Apts, 14/A, Boat
 Club Rd, 411001; February 19
Dina Cawas Sethna (86),
 La Shanz, Boat Club Rd,
 411001; February 23
Dinbai Pirojsha Surtia (95),
 Khodadad Mans, Ma Parvez Rd,
 411002; February 25

SECUNDERABAD

Born

A girl, *Peenaz*, to *Mr* and
Mrs Meherwan Asundaria;
 October 16, 1990
 A boy, *Nashwan*, to *Mr* and *Mrs*
Astad Bokdawala; October 23
 A boy, *Cheraag*, to *Mr* and *Mrs*
Behroze Salzeh; November 27
 A girl, *Nazneen*, to *Mr* and *Mrs*
Keki Irani; December 16
 A girl, *Shernaz*, to *Mr* and *Mrs*
Rohinton Bhathena;
 December 24

Married

Fashutuna Rohinton Debara
 and *Sam Phirozshah Bhagat*;
 December 17

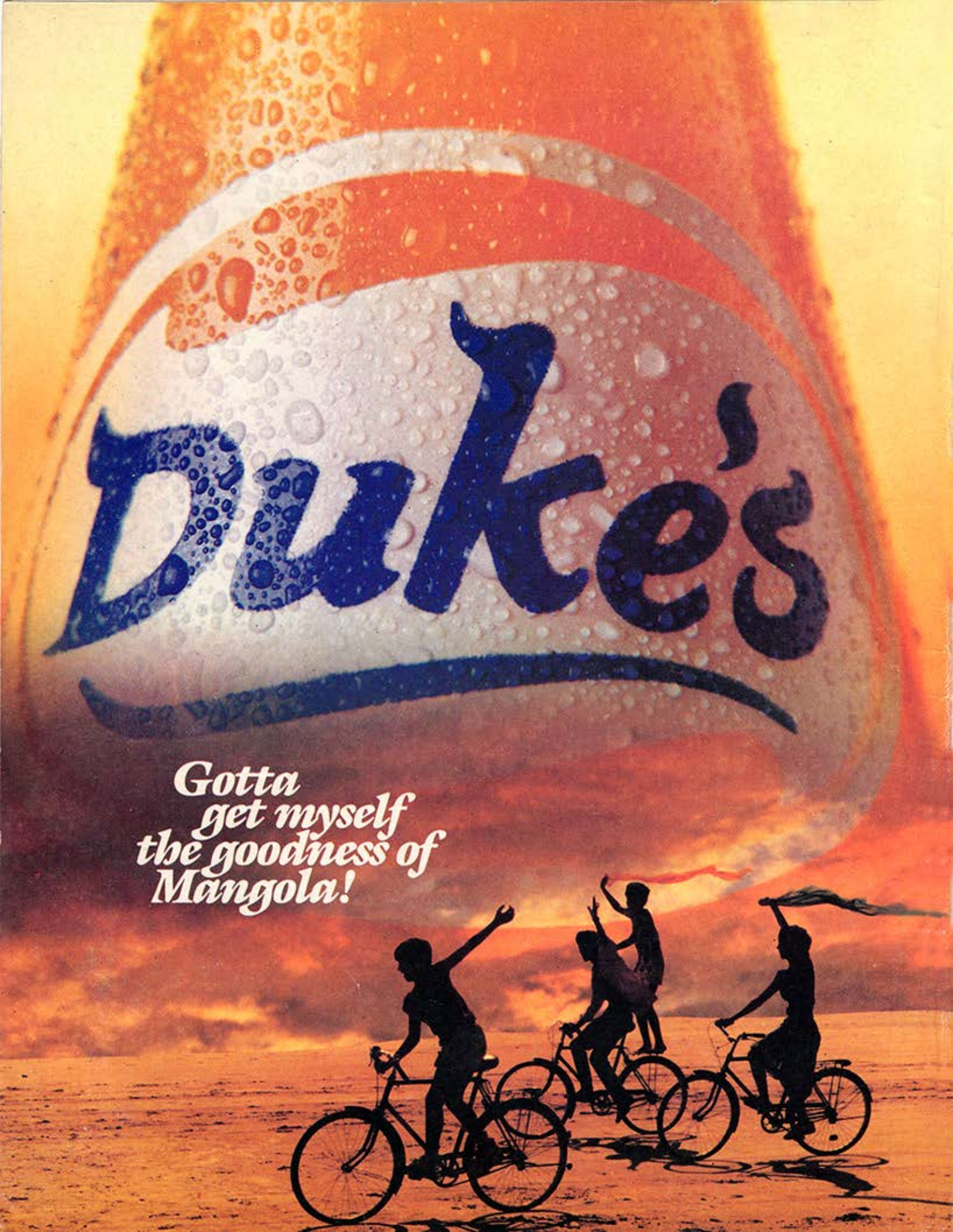
Died

Hormusji N. Italia (85);
 September 8
Keikhushroo S. Irani (84) of
 Warangal; October 10
Jalejar S. Bankwalla (71);
 October 23
Jinnie P. Gharda (79);
 November 9
Dina Sohrabji (90);
 December 13
Goolbai D. Mehta (100);
 December 21
Jehangir Billimoria (78);
 December 23

TOTALS (for this issue)

Births: Boys 13, Girls 14
 Marriages: Parsi 39
 Intercommunal 1
 Deaths: 86

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

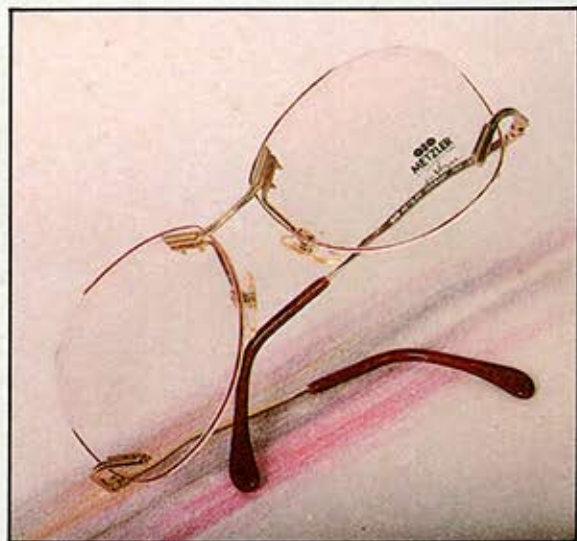


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Mangola!*



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