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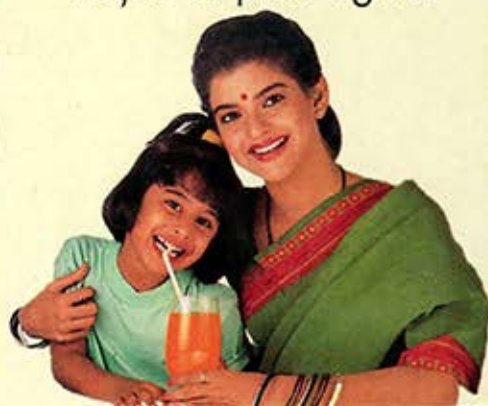




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Parsiana

April 1991

Volume 13 Number 10

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3 Readers' Forum

17 Events and Personalities

21 Matheran's Parsi Hoteliers by Gustasp Irani

29 Women in the *Gathas* and the later *Avesta* by Dr Ali Jafarey

35 Books

38 Milestones

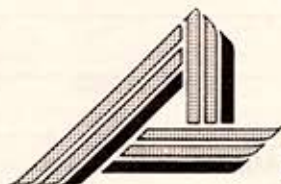
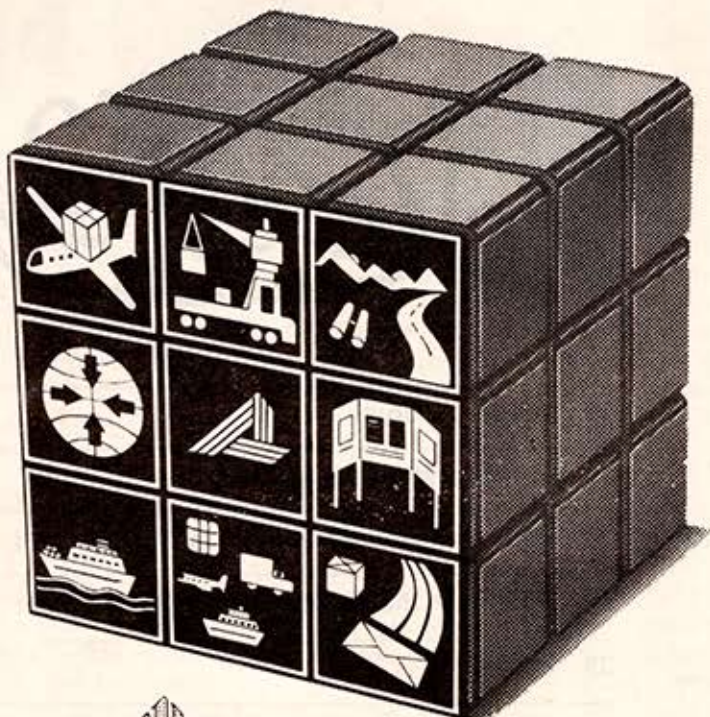
41 In Memoriam

Cover: 'Toy' train enroute to Matheran
Transparency by Pramod Mistry

Parsiana is published by Jehangir R. Patel for Parsiana Publications Pvt Ltd, at C/o H.L. Rochar, Navsari Chambers, ground floor, 39 A.K.Nayak Marg, Fort, Bombay 400001 and printed by him at Parsiana Publications Pvt Ltd, C/o Kaiser-E-Hind Pvt Ltd, 300 Perin Nariman Street, Bombay 400001. Color processing, Comart Lithographers; and black and white processing, Samir Process. All rights reserved.
Phone: 2048730 Fax: 2042922
For editorial enquiries: 2048183
Telex 11-85710 RABO IN
Annual inland subscription Rs 80 for one year (12 issues); Rs 140 for two years

(24 issues). Foreign subscription rates: Seamail Rs 200/US \$ 12/UK £ 7 for one year, Rs 350/US \$ 21/UK £ 12 for two years (please allow six months or more from the time of publication); Air mail Rs 320/US \$ 20/UK £ 11 for one year, Rs 600/US \$ 38/UK £ 20 for two years. For Indian upcountry cheques add Rs 5 for bank charges; for US cheques add \$ 5; for UK cheques add £ 3. Cheques and drafts are to be drawn in favor of Parsiana and posted to GPO Box 892, Bombay 400001 or C/o H.L. Rochar, Navsari Chambers, ground floor, 39 A.K.Nayak Marg, Fort, Bombay 400001

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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"Blessings at the Baug"

The article "Blessings at the Baug" by Mr Noshir Dadrawala (*Parsiana*, January 1991) is interesting and informative. However, he has made a reference to Malcolm Baug only in passing and that too to the Motlibai Wadia Adran and not to Malcolm Hall.

I would like to appraise your readers that no functions are held in the Agiary. However, Malcolm Baug boasts of a very fine hall called 'Malcolm Hall,' where for almost 150 days in the year various functions are held. Beautifully set amidst a lot of greenery, the quaint Malcolm Hall is used, particularly by the residents of Malcolm Baug who number about 1,500, for weddings, navjotes, first birthdays, engagements and anniversaries for a major part of the year.

Besides, the Malcolm Baug Zoroastrian Association, which looks after the welfare of the residents, holds jashans, communal dinners and other functions which are well attended by the residents and outsiders.

The hall is spacious, and the lawns and the hall can cater for a function with a guest list of about 450 to 500 invitees. All other infrastructure such as lighting, catering and music is easily available at very reasonable rates.

The hall is looked after by the N. M. Wadia Charities who charge a nominal Rs 250 for booking and collect a deposit of Rs 1,000 which is refunded a few days after the function is over.

In all honesty, the Malcolm Hall is truly a great boon to the residents of Jogeshwari because of its overall convenience and relatively easy availability and as such eliminates the tiresome journey to the south of the city.

ADI M. TARMASER

"The Purifying..."

I wish to refer to "The Purifying Prescriptions" by Dr Ali A. Jafarey (*Parsiana*, November 1990) in which Jafarey has tried to review, criticize and disprove the scholarly book of Mr Jamsheed K. Choksy, titled *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism, Triumph over Evil*.

Those of us who are aware of Jafarey's work consider him as perhaps the only non-Zoroastrian critic of the Zoroastrian religion and a protagonist of conversion. Inadvertently, his interpretations of our holy scriptures are always contradictory and adverse to those of other renowned scholars, learned dasturs and generally of Zoroastrian beliefs, practices, customs or traditions.

Jafarey states (amongst many insulting and derogatory things against our sacred purifying ritual of nirangdin with the use of *gaomez* — consecrated bull's urine): "Moreover, a deeper study of Muslim purification laws, particularly the doctrinal treatises of the Shiite Mujtahids, would have shown that the *Vendidad*, enlarged and simplified, and freed from bull's urine and depending on 'untainted, odor-free, tasteless' pure water, is a very living law of purification and pollution, particularly in Iran." Obviously, this shows the extent of Jafarey's knowledge and understanding of the most an-

cient and sacred ritual of nirangdin and its purpose.

The 21 words of the *Ahunavar* (*Yatha Ahu Vairyo*) prayer correspond with the 21 Nasks of the *Avesta* — of which the 19th word *Dregabyo* corresponds with *Vendidad*.

Vendidad is the only original Nask in our possession which has survived in its entirety because the priests had no other alternative but to learn it by heart for the purposes of basic rituals and stringent laws of purification.

There is no concrete proof about the time when the *Vendidad* was written — it might have been committed to paper in later times but oral traditions had been carried out for thousands of years before the *Vendidad* was written — and therefore negative evidence to the origin of *Vendidad* given by Jafarey is without any foundation.

The *Avesta* word *gaomez* has been used for bull's urine in the *Vendidad* at several places. In chapter 19 Ahura Mazda asks Asho Zarathushtra to prepare a lawfully consecrated uncastrated bull and take his urine for ablutions. This shows that holy Zarathushtra himself performed the consecration of *varasyaji* (pure, consecrated bull) and the nirangdin ceremony.

It should be noted that the *Vendidad*, as its title suggests, is primarily concerned with the laws against devilish creatures. Hence, it prescribes remedies for annulling the fiendish influence of the ahimanic hordes.

No wonder, Jafarey complains that there is no evidence of *gaomez* in any of our other Zoroastrian scriptures. It stands to reason, one cannot read philosophy from a book of geography. However, let it be known that the *Avesta* phrase *geushmaesmana* (urine of the bull) is used as a means of purification in *Vishtasp Yasht*, paragraph 31.

In his epistles in Pahlavi, the High Priest of Iran, Dastur Dastur Manushcheher Goshnayam states that he had himself performed the nirangdin ceremony in the 9th century AC. What more proof from ancient history does one want?

The consecrated bull's urine prepared in the nirangdin ceremony is the foundation of all holy institutions of the Zoroastrian religion. All holy places like the

atash dadgah, atash adarian, atash bahram and dokhmas are established with the help of full-fledged Zoroastrian priests who have undergone the sacred barashnum ceremony after ritually drinking the consecrated *gaomez* for the purification of their bodies and souls.

All initiation ceremonies like the navjote, navar and marriage, are based on consecrated *gaomez* itself, without which the ceremony is considered improper.

It is stated in the Persian Rivayats sent by the learned dasturs of Iran, "If a man's body is as black as coal, it will shine like the sun if he undergoes the barashnum ceremony, drinks the consecrated *gaomez* and observes steadfastly the rules of purity."

Unfortunately, we cannot purify Jafarey with *gaomez* — he being a Muslim — but I would strongly recommend that he first study his own religion, especially Islamic scripture called *The Ahad Nameh* in which the most holy prophet Muhammad graciously proclaims — "and it was said in the revelation received by me that Paradise more impatiently desires the presence of 'Salman' (Dusturan Dastur Dinyar, Muhammad's preceptor) than 'Salman' wishes to go there. Really he is my intimate friend and adviser to the Prophet of God (may God bless him and assuage him) as well as to (all) Muslims. Salman is one of our family — No one shall oppose this my will, regarding what I have ordered as to protection and freedom of the coreligionists of Salman and their posterity, irrespective of the fact whether they embrace Islam or remain in their ancient (Zoroastrian) creed. Whoever obeys my command will gain the pleasure of God, but those who may disobey God and his Prophet, will be accursed to the day of resurrection."

My compliments and congratulation to Mr Jamshed K. Choksy for his scholarly work which enables us to understand our laws of purification and discount any doubts and disbelief created by persons such as Dr Ali A. Jafarey.

Ervad DARIUS N. SETHNA

"The Parsees"

If the sole or main object of my letter apropos "The Parsees" (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, October 1990) had been to criticize Messrs Harris and Pester, it would have been addressed to British Television Channel 4, and not to the *Parsiana*.

As I thought about the program, I came to realize that these gentlemen had been set a rather difficult assignment for, as complete outsiders, they were confronted with different versions of Zoroastrianism within so small a community. How could they begin to understand the complex situation which exists today, when many Parsis themselves must be confused or are quite ignorant of what it means to be a Zoroastrian? When many Parsis are indifferent to, or have no time for their community or religion, for whatever reason? When the orthodox priests and laity refuse to see, or seeing, will not acknowledge the real cause for our diminishing numbers? When they think that strict adherence to old customs, traditions and rituals will remedy the ills that beset us?

These gentlemen had to make sense of a disintegrating religious community, of which the fast disappearing priesthood is a part. A priesthood which calls itself Zoroastrian, yet whose high priests are adamant that the only words — the *Gathas* — we have of the founder of our faith are nothing more than the utterances of a mystic poet.

How could they produce a clear and significant documentary in such a situation? Unless — unless they had some previous knowledge of what the religion was about. Therefore I ask: Did Mr Harris have any ideas at all about the community, the members of which he was going to interview? Did he have any knowledge, however scanty, of Zoroastrianism? In short, had he done his "homework" on the religion which, in his own words, "has been so important in the formation of ethical and religious ideas that are now identified as part of western civilization, through its direct or indirect influence on other major religions?"

How could these "ethical and religious ideas" be conveyed clearly, when they seemed to be used more as punctuation in a program of 52 minutes, a program which also set out to entertain?

I would like Mr Harris to know that I am very much aware of the attitude of the secular British society towards religion. I am very much aware that most churches in Britain — except for the Catholic churches — are empty, or almost empty. That most individuals are embarrassed even to mention the word "God," except when swearing. But I also know families — of grandparents, parents and children who are regular church-goers. And I am very much aware of a definite trend towards a revival of Christianity:

be this revival evangelical in nature, and therefore sometimes exuberant in its expression, or be it a deep and quiet revival of one's childhood faith. There are also Britons who are being drawn to other religions in a serious way; in a scholarly and/or spiritual sense. They are being drawn to Buddhism, Islam, even to Baháism.

The very fact that a million people tuned in to Channel 4 to watch *The Parsees: The Zoroastrians of Bombay*, indicates that there are people around Britain who are interested and want to know. The Parsis and Zoroastrian Iranis number about six to seven thousand in the U.K. Therefore, who were the others who watched? Were they disappointed? Did they feel let down?

The Parsis and my non-Zoroastrian friends felt as I did. We seemed to have missed many of the points Mr Harris mentioned in his letter, while others made a vague impression.

Concerning the Zoroastrian priests: Mr Harris asks if I would rather that he had kept silent, and not included them in the program; and whether the Parsis were prepared to let "this precious, irreplaceable resource wither away for lack of funds." He goes on to ask: "Is (Ms Divecha) advocating that we should have kept quiet about it? Surely not!"

No, Mr Harris! Certainly not. He says he read my letter a number of times, yet, somehow, he seems to have missed my own criticism of the priests.

Maybe my criticism of Hilla was a bit too harsh and I apologize. I should not blame her as she is the product of the religious climate which exists in Bombay today; a climate which turns Parsis away from that of which they would really want to be a part — a truly Zoroastrian community, a community which was spiritually rich and confident in its faith and way of life, which brought happiness and harmony to themselves and to those who came into contact with them.

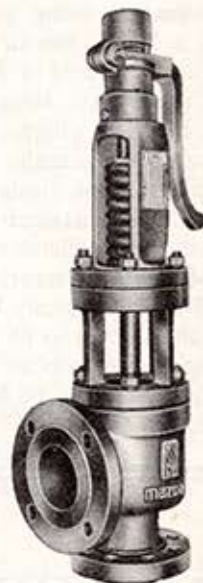
Ms PERIN DIVECHA
Kent, UK

This is further to the correspondence on the BBC Channel 4 presentation, *The Parsees: The Zoroastrians of Bombay* (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, October 1990). My own criticism of the film is that the editor or editors so botched up the three-hour version of Richard Harris and Jan Pester that the result was distinctly unsympathetic and biased.

The film opened with a close-up of

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the plainest of plain women who did not look a Parsi, nor dressed like one, nor spoke like one. She had no idea of grammatical English and ended her speech in confusion and with a giggle! Next followed the distorted and swollen features of a man who we eventually realized was Jamshed Guzder, well-known trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and considered handsome in real life. Malicious again? What pained me further was to see that gentlest and most courteous of journalists, Gustasp Irani, made to look ludicrous standing like a maypole and repeating a long catalog of "firsts." "The first Indian to bring gaslight to Bombay was a Parsi... the first woman to... was a Parsi." Instead of this dreary repetition, it would have been far more lively to have had a glimpse of what some of these people actually achieved, as, for example, a scene inside a Godrej factory at work; a functional aspect of the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital or the Tata Memorial (Cancer) Hospital; or to watch Dr (Ms) Armaity Desai, the first woman and a Parsi to be appointed director of the Indian Institute of Social Sciences, working out a problem with her colleagues and students.

It was the same unimaginative handling of the young priest, Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia, who was shown standing shyly and murmuring something about "purity laws." Yet this same young priest should have been seen in action, explaining with animation the symbolism of the floral arrangements and the ritual implements laid out, as in a jashan, at the India International Centre during the Parsi Festival held in Delhi a couple of years ago.

There was a beautiful shot of a handsome staircase sweeping up three floors of an old tenement building. But the effect was spoiled when a good friend of mine was shown, in shorts and singlet at one moment, and in shorts and sudreh the next, running up and down the staircase like a nimble monkey. What was the point? The crowning insult was to associate Dr Mary Boyce with such a negative, and at one stage a deliberately misleading, presentation. Just because we are a tiny community, difficult to patronize as we successfully establish ourselves anywhere in the world, does that mean we should be held up to ridicule before the public? Yet Harris paid a very handsome tribute to the community when he is reported to have said: "I don't think it is

the role of a couple of ill-informed Europeans to tell the Parsis how to solve their problems. If the most talented community in the world can't find a solution to its own problems, who are a couple of filmmakers to tell them what the solutions are ("The Visitor's Vision," *Parsiana*, June 1990)?"

If the intention of the filmmakers was to depict the problems facing the community, then all such problems should have been brought to the fore and discussed by competent Parsis themselves. Problems of dwindling numbers, housing shortage, lack of educational facilities for our priests, mixed marriages, adoption of children from outside the community, religious reform, could have formed the basis for lively discussion, and in the process, hopefully, educated a public which knows little about the Parsis except the name.

What grieved many of us most was the fact that the BBC is perfectly capable of producing first-class documentaries, provided they set their minds to it. Every moment of the following series was a delight to watch: *The Ascent of Man* by J. Bronowski; Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation*; the illuminating conversation of

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From
Wife Sheroo,
and Children Nowroz, Roopina and Zarir

the American anthropologist, Joseph Campbell (d.1987), in the series *Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth*. Why was not such sympathetic understanding applied to the final edition of *The Parsees: The Zoroastrians of Bombay?*

Ms PILOO JUNGALWALLA
New Delhi

This has reference to the portrayal of the plight of the priests in the TV documentary *The Parsees: the Zoroastrians of Bombay* as narrated by the producer Richard Harris (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, October 1990).

According to the *Vendidad*, Fargard 18 para 6, an athravan is one who throughout the night inquires about the holy wisdom, which is deliverance from distress, producing joy at the Chinvat Bridge, causing one to attain the blessed life, Asha, and the best of best existence.

Thus the Zoroastrian priest has to lead a hard disciplined life: emphasis is laid on performing ceremonies of higher liturgical order such as yazashna and vendidad ceremony at night, particularly to counter the effect of evil forces which are more powerful at that time. Sons of mobeds shun this hard life and instead prefer to accept easy-going jobs in an office so that their evenings remain free and they are not called upon to keep awake at night. At the same time they serve as part-time mobeds in the mornings so that they get an additional income.

Today we have very very few mobeds capable of performing yazashna and vendidad which form the core ceremonies for four days after death, with the result that the laity, though willing to pay any remuneration, have to do without these ceremonies on this and other important occasions. Members of the community, though themselves lax in the observance of the religion, throng agiaries and atash bahrams for getting performed ceremonies for their near and dear departed relatives. They also give liberal *ashodad* (tip) to these priests to supplement the remuneration paid by the panthaky which may not be substantial. Thus, on the whole, even after performing ordinary ceremonies like afringan, froxi and stum, the average mobed's earnings are not meager and if he works as a full-time mobed and performs ceremonies of higher liturgical order, he has not to look back.

The Cama Athornan Madressa has introduced a scheme for opening an ac-

count in recurring deposit scheme in the name of a student willing to work as a full-time mobed for 15 years so that he gets a tidy sum at the end of that period. Some three to four years back the Athravan Educational Trust had launched a training program for about a dozen students picked up from the Dadar and Andheri Madressas with a view to provide to the community well-trained mobeds not only capable of performing ceremonies of a higher liturgical order but equipped to guide the laity. In the absence of suitable candidates, the program was conducted with practising mobeds. These efforts have failed to provide yozdathregar mobeds to the community. Daughters of athornan families do not like to marry a full-time mobed and instead prefer a behdin, making things all the more difficult for a yozdathregar priest to get a suitable life partner.

Under the circumstances, the presentation of the plight of the priests as narrated by Richard Harris is a gross misrepresentation of the position as it exists today. Unwillingness on the part of young mobeds to lead a hard disciplined life, and not the lack of funds, is responsible for the present pathetic situation.

SOHRAB NAVALSHAW PATWA

I wish to air my disappointment and disgust at the TV documentary on Parsis shown in England. Not knowing its content, we got a group of English friends to view the show with us. I've never seen such tripe or been so ashamed of being a Parsi. My ire was at boiling point. Do we have to use vulgar phrases, dreadful pronunciation and 'loud' commentators to show off our ease in the use of the English language? My friends and I felt that the film did more harm than good to the community in general.

PESU J. VIRJEE
Panchgani

"An injustice at..."

I am disgusted and shocked to think that we (as a well-educated and enlightened community) should be party to despicable behavior ("An injustice at doongerwadi," *Parsiana*, August 1990). The interpretation and actions of our Punchayet, giving in to the Khomeinist priestly trampling on rights of an innocent lady — who with love in her heart married a non-mazdayasni — should be condemned as demonic rather than praised as divine. The priesthood may have mastered repetitive rituals but

have sorely missed the religion.

We are partly to blame for standing by idly, without raising our collective voice. May I congratulate you on your well thought out and well-reasoned article ("Whither good thoughts, words, deeds?" *Parsiana*, September 1990) condemning such a travesty.

J. R. PAYMASTER
Scarborough, Ont, Canada

I have read the article "An injustice at doongerwadi," (*Parsiana*, August 1990) regarding the shameful treatment meted out to the late Roxan and her family. As a born Zoroastrian, from a very staunch orthodox Zoroastrian family of Karachi, I found the entire episode disgraceful and deplorable.

Sir, this is the time to establish the fundamental right of the individuals in our advanced community (for the benefit of our future generation) by taking very firm action in the courts, including the Supreme Court of India, so that no one can take away the birthright of Zoroastrians by their irrational and racist "fatwas."

Due to Court action, children born to Zoroastrian fathers married to non-Zoroastrians are accepted as Zoroastrians. In the same way, children born to Zoroastrian mothers married to non-Zoroastrians, if the parents so desire it, should be accepted as Zoroastrians.

A Zoroastrian lady in such a situation should take the issue to the courts, right up to Supreme Court of India, and every effort should be made to assist her in this. I am confident that the courts' judgement will be in her favor and binding on the community.

In the case of Roxan, the dokhma is more sacred to hypocrites than the agiaries and atash bahrams that Roxan visited as a born Zoroastrian, even after her marriage to a non-Zoroastrian.

It is also well known that some non-Zoroastrians have visited agiaries and atash bahrams in Bombay. Will Dr Kotwal and the trustees of the agiaries and atash bahrams re-consecrate all of them and stop going there till they are re-consecrated?

NOSHIRWAN F. COWASJEE
London, UK

"Conflicting Convictions"

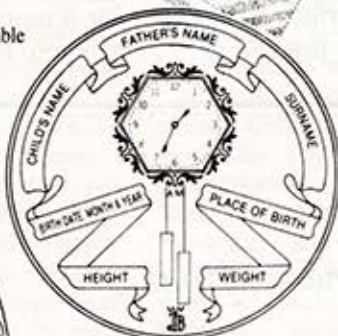
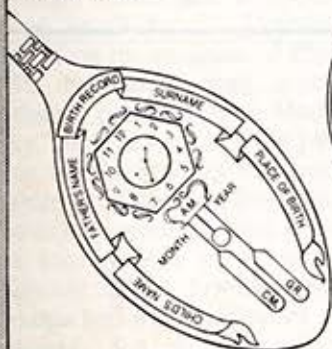
Under the heading "Conflicting Convictions" (*Parsiana*, August 1990) you have printed matters concerning the Zoroastrians of London based on a letter

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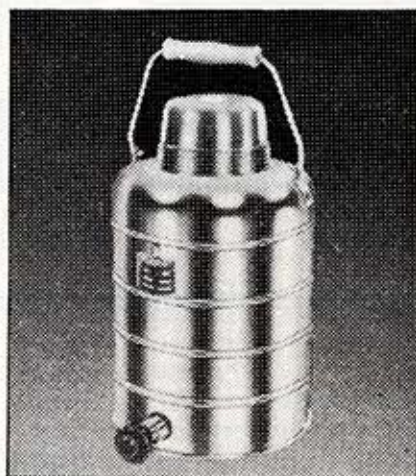
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from the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) president, Mr Zal Sethna, dated July 19, 1990. Certain statements made in Mr Zal Sethna's letter need clarification:

- That 'resolution barring non-Zoroastrian presence in the muktad prayer-room was demanded in petitions signed by around 200 Zoroastrians and the majority decision of the committee members was in response to those petitions.'
- That 'a referendum will divide and split the community and even family.'
- That according to the constitution of the ZTFE, 'only fully paid up members of the Association' can vote on any resolution affecting the Association, and 'a referendum of the community will be ineffective and will not constitutionally bind the Association.'
- That 'the democratically elected committee is empowered to take all decisions affecting the Association on behalf of its members and are duty bound to safeguard the religious beliefs of the Zoroastrian community at large.'

Such claims were made by Mr Zal Sethna and his brother, Mr Darius Sethna in interviews and letters published by

them in *Parsiana* in 1986 and 1987. Similar statements were made by Mr Darius Sethna in his letter published in *The Bombay Samachar* on March 25, 1990. At that time, I had clearly stated in my letters to *Parsiana* and *The Bombay Samachar* (both of which were published) and I do so now, that these statements are totally untrue. Please allow me to rebut these untruths by facts. Mr D. N. Sethna lit the spark of destroying the community in London at the Farvardian ceremony in 1985 by insulting Ms M. Moos, widow of our ex-president Jehangirji Moos, who had regularly attended Farvardian prayers for years on end. (Ms Moos' letter of September 15, 1985 follows.) Then came the instigation to write petitions to the ZTFE committee. These petitions were signed by the Sethna brothers, their family members and friends. The total number of signatures on these petitions was 77.

Even children between the ages of 10 and 17 were asked by a member of Mr D. N. Sethna's family to sign a petition of their own, whilst on a charity walk in the Hyde Park of London. The total number of children signing the petition was 17

(22 percent of the total). In addition, on one petition, two signatures were forged. Two of the signatures on another petition were not signatures at all. Therefore, excluding these signatures the petitions were signed by 56 Zoroastrians representing 1.12 percent of the total Zoroastrian population of 5,000 plus of the UK and 5.6 percent of the total claimed membership of ZTFE.

The infamous resolution, requesting non-Zoroastrians to refrain from attending muktad and Farvardian prayers, was passed by the managing committee on February 23, 1986, when I, the then president, was unable to attend the meeting. The resolution was passed by seven members voting for the resolution out of a committee of 12. In other words, seven members of the committee decided to impose their bigotted views on a community of 5,000 plus Zoroastrians of the UK and roughly 1,000 members of ZTFE on the strength of instigated petitions signed by a meager 56 relatives and friends. From this, your readers will observe, that the boastful claim made above, concerning a democratically elected committee's power to take all decisions, is a very hol-

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low one. It is the 'democracy' of a communist dictatorship.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that Mr Z. N. Sethna and his followers dare not take a referendum of the community for the simple reason that they know in their heart of hearts that they will lose hands down. Indeed, the only way the community in the United Kingdom can be reunited is through a referendum, but Mr Z. N. Sethna and his followers do not have the courage to take that step.

I would like to join issue with Mr Zal Sethna on the claim that the ZTFE committee has the right to decide matters concerning religion by a majority decision. The committee is empowered to administer the affairs of the Association and that in my opinion excludes religion. The Zoroastrian religion is not a matter that can be decided upon by a majority of seven in the committee, or even the entire committee. Till 1985, the religious ceremonies were held for the community at large and no bar was placed upon non-Zoroastrian spouses from attending the ceremonies. This tolerance, which was practiced by our Dasturji Saheb, the late Sohrabji Hormusji Kutar, kept the community united. The folly of the Sethna-led committee majority, which tried to impose its bigotted religious views on the community, has resulted in destroying harmony in the community.

Ever since that episode in 1985, the Sethna brothers and their supporters have been trying very hard but unsuccessfully to rewrite history. It would be a very good thing if these "reborn" Zoroastrians were to study the teachings of Zarathushtra and learn the true meaning and significance of the concepts of "Asha" and "Armaiti."

Finally, I am happy to inform you that the ZTFE computer was transferred from Mr Rusi Dalal's residence for permanent stay at Zoroastrian House after you made statements concerning it in "Conflicting Convictions."

S. F. CAPTAIN
Herts, UK

The President, ZTFE

I would like to bring the following to your attention: On Thursday last I went to attend the prayers at Brookwood for those who have passed on. This I have done for the last 35 years — first with my husband even before he became president and now as he too is buried there.

In all those years I have never given any offence to anybody and nobody,

even our dear High Priest, Dasturji Kutar, has ever objected to my being there — as a matter of fact he even encouraged me to use the agiary at Zoroastrian House.

This last Thursday your bigotted priest Sethna gave orders to the young woman who attends to the arrangements that I should not be allowed in. I was naturally surprised and upset as I had made the long journey. I went to Mr Kumana, who was at that time the only older gentleman there and he arranged that I should sit at the back. As soon as I went in I was again asked to remove myself by another young fellow. I stayed in as I did not want to argue. Only then Mr Sethna himself came out and to my amazement started to argue in the agiary saying I was an "embarrassment to the very devout and sincere Zoroastrians" who objected to my being there and that these prayers were far too sacred to be attended by non-Zoroastrians. I quietly stayed where I was as I feel that all prayers are sacred and sacredness lies in the heart.

Is this what the Zoroastrian religion in England is coming to? A rule of Khomeini sowing more hatred in this troubled world? Where are the "pure" principles gone if this is what your priests are teaching in front of a congregation.

On top of it all I was told that my husband should not have married a non-Zoroastrian. Who is this young upstart to tell a very devoted and sincere Zoroastrian what to do? He is a hundred years behind in his ideas and should leave this country that has given him asylum in the first place and go back where he comes from.

Fortunately my belief in the ultimate good of all religions stands fast and I feel sure that if your prophet Zoroaster would have been there, he at least would not have refused me or any sincere devotee (the right) to attend prayers for those that have passed on.

In this Mr President I would appreciate your and your Committee's comment and I will abide by their decision.

September 15, 1985

Ms M. J. MOOS

An appeal

All are aware of the recent crisis in our community brought on by those involved in the unfortunate predicament of intermarriage.

Their persistent efforts to gain illicit access into our religious framework, consecrated places of worship and eventually

our properties and funds, against all our Zoroastrian beliefs, precepts and tenets, have put the very survival of our community in great danger.

We must bear in mind the famous words of the great scholar of our religion, Prof John Hinnells of Manchester University: "The Parsi community is not just a racial group; it came into existence for religious reasons. Your ancestors did not come to India to save their lives — they could have easily done that by becoming Muslims. They came to save 'their religion.' The Zoroastrian religion is the very reason for the existence of your community. It is your religious heritage that has made you Parsis what you are. Lose your religion and you lose your community's existence."

Therefore, it is not only imperative but incumbent upon all the noble Zoroastrians in positions of authority and trust to primarily preserve and protect the priesthood with the dignity and honor it deserves, for the survival of our Zoroastrian religion and race.

We all accept the fact that it is exceedingly difficult to preserve and maintain the high moral standards, ethics, values, and practices in the present degenerating phase of time; but it is certainly not impossible to try and establish some control and order which may provide the badly needed discipline to strengthen the very spirit and attitude of our noble Parsi-Zoroastrian community.

In order to bring back due respect and dignity to our honorable priesthood we will need to honestly scrutinize and eradicate malpractices and corruption which have unfortunately crept into certain areas of our priesthood and the administration of trust funds.

The religiously unacceptable predicament of intermarriage which contaminates our Zoroastrian community today with evil opportunities for malpractices and corruption should be discouraged and condemned.

Regrettably, some of our trustees, panthaky sahebs, ervad sahebs, mobeds and anjumans fall prey to the evil opportunities created by mixed marriages for the sake of money or some pervert intellectual satisfaction — exploiting this adverse situation by performing illegal religious ceremonies against all Zoroastrian precepts, tenets, religious beliefs and practice such as, juddin navjotes, ashirvad ceremony, geh sarna ceremony and other after-death ceremonies of ex-

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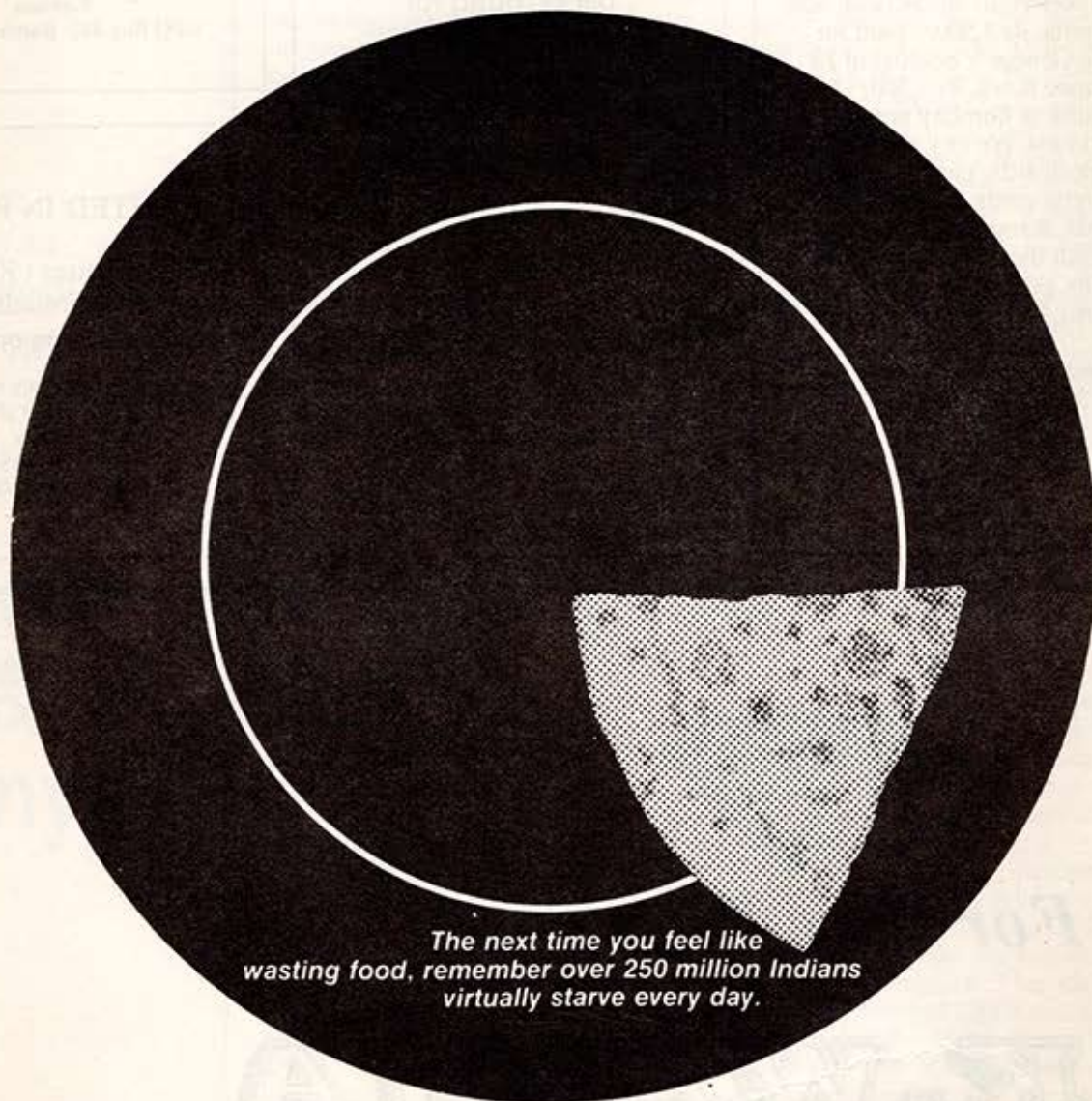


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Zoroastrians (Zoroastrians married to non-Zoroastrians) or non-Zoroastrians.

Performance of such unauthorised and blasphemous religious malpractices and the abuse of our entrusted Parsi-Zoroastrian funds and properties, which is absolutely detrimental to the entire Parsi Zoroastrian race of people, should be instantly curtailed and eliminated.

We plead with all those concerned to kindly unite together to fight and remove these evil tendencies before it harms us and our very Zoroastrian identity.

B. H. MINOCHEHR-HOMJI

Gen Secy, The Bombay Zoroastrian Jashan Committee

Of labels and contents

The ethic of the *Gathas* is the least ritualistic. The only sacrifice required is that of good deeds. Besides it is only through our thoughts, words and deeds that we prepare our post-mortem (after life) destiny. Indeed our daena or spiritual double becomes ugly or beautiful according to our life's deeds.

Who is the better Zoroastrian? He who practices the most rites, nirang, kusti, ceremonies, etc, or he who tries to practice daily better thoughts, words and deeds? Who was the better Christian, Emperor Charlemagne who forced the Saxons to receive baptism or death, or a humble man full of charity and love like Francis of Assisi who followed Christ's teaching?

I would not like readers to believe that I am against rituals. No, I feel that rituals may have a part in many people's lives, such as in daily prayers and important events. The Zoroastrian veneration of the sacred fire remains, in the whole world, the last living evidence of the original victory of Paleolithic man over nature in learning how to keep natural fire and afterwards how to light it. It remains too the last evidence of the prehistoric veneration of man for the first universal cosmic element.

Ritual must always be the means and not the end to reach a better spiritual life. Let us take care that, in considering the label greater than the spiritual content of a religion, we do not fall into complete nonsense. If we consider as Zoroastrians only those who have received the navjote, we must also face the fact that there is not one historical evidence that the Achaemenid emperors had ever been introduced into the Zoroastrian faith by navjote. I'd say that it does not matter whether one is Protestant or Catholic so long as he/she is a true Christian, a Parsi or a Zarthoshti so



Prospective priests of the community trained at the Athornan Madressa (circa 1975)

long as one is a true Zoroastrian, and above all merits the universal title of man as homo spiritus, spiritual being.

Prof PAUL DU BREUIL
Paris, France

Collecting expressions

Parsiana should start collecting colorful Parsi sayings like *Sharam na koovama pari geeo* or *dhadree ne tap avich*, etc. Readers could provide their own favorites.

For the sake of posterity, we should collect these and keep them. If you print them on a separate page, those who wish to collect them can just tear the page out and keep.

We should also start a strong campaign for a common calendar for the Faslis, Shehenshahis and Kadmis. Of course, the Fasli calendar should be adopted.

M. H. K. MANEKSHAW
New Delhi

The Athornan Madressa

On the first death anniversary of our beloved father Pestonji Belgaumvalla, my sister and I were informed of the Athornan Boarding Madressa at Dadar where young boys learn to be the future priests of our community. We were told that we could pay for a lunch for the school children as an act of charity.

On our arrival, we were received by the principal Ervad Rustom Noshervan Panthaki who showed us around the school premises. And wonder of wonders, a little boy mobed, maybe 12 years old, asked us for the names of our be-

loved absent ones and in front of the 'kebla' in the small room recited the prayers in a loud and ringing voice, full of emotion, with such clarity of words that we were absolutely thrilled.

Then came the lunch. The boys washed their hands, cleansed themselves and again after a short prayer loudly and beautifully recited by that same little boy, they ate their lunch.

We have nothing but praise for this wonderful institution and its intense desire to serve our community. We found the principal, Ervad Panthaki, a very devoted and affectionate human being who had nothing but praise for the benefactors of this institution, and to Ahura Mazda for time and again helping them out of many a sticky situation. One could see the twinkle in his eyes as he spoke of his boys as if they were his own flesh and blood. God bless them all.

I would say that we gave little and received much in return — much more than we could ever imagine.

Ms GOOLOO R. MEHTA

Subscriber blues

Your publication of *Parsiana* is very irregular. If this is the trend, you will lose your present readership and I am one who will not renew later on. If you cannot issue a monthly, make it bimonthly. You cannot, for example, bring out the Navroze issue in the month of May or June. That is ridiculous. Your magazine is not educative, nor religious. You should have an editorial in every issue discussing the community's problems. There should be a page on Zoroastrian history and teachings for the youth. So many pages about federation meetings is not necessary. You can reduce it to half. Articles on babalism and superstitions should be discouraged.

Y. A. BONSHAH

Edited by Amavaz S. Mama

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Events and Personalities

Exit JRD, enter Ratan

"Ratan is young, others are old. He is also very intelligent and experienced. He has also been working with the Tata group for nearly 30 years now. He is a great believer in modern technology and strategic planning... Ratan has done a very good job at TELCO (Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company) of modernizing production facilities and diversifying the product range... He has also been responsible for reactivating Tata Industries which has set up a number of interesting companies in high-tech areas." These were the reasons cited by J.R.D. Tata who stepped aside from the chairmanship of Tata Sons Limited, the group's holding company in favor of his successor Ratan Naval Tata, as quoted in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* (April 20-21, 1991). Several business magazines in India did a cover story on the Tatas when the leadership changed.

Eighty-six-year-old JRD who had been treated at Bombay's Breach Candy Hospital for angina pains early this year, will, however, continue as chairman emeritus of Tata Sons so that the company can benefit from his "guidance and counsel," according to a communique from the Tatas. Under JRD's leadership the Tata companies not only made rapid strides in the fields of production, sales and profitability but also in the field of human welfare, the *Indian Express* of March 26 reports. To JRD goes the credit for starting the country's first airline — Tata Airlines — which after nationalization was renamed Air India.

"The trust of the investor in the Tatas is total," notes Daksesh Parikh in *The Illustrated Weekly*. "Any project with the Tata name invariably finds the requisite funds. Even if the Tatas were to float a company for the construction of a five-star hotel on the moon, one suspects that the project would not fall apart merely for the want of sufficient funds," Parikh continues.

With such a reputation to live up to, in addition to contending with dynamic

professionals within the Tata empire — Russi Modi, chairman of Tata Iron and Steel Company, Darbari Seth, chairman of Tata Chemicals and Tata Tea, Nani Palkhivala chairing Associated Cement Companies — Ratan faces a formidable challenge. His plans to "refound and restructure the Tatas into groups of industries or into one large entity" in the interest of optimum coordination, as quoted by *The Business and Political Observer* (March 26, 1991) has reportedly evoked resentment from some of the senior Tata personnel. Ratan's past fumbles with NELCO, TELCO and Empress Mills is believed to have taught him that business "must move with opportunity and not just with fancy planning." Under Ratan, Tata Industries has been managing several new companies — Tata Telcom, Tata Keltron, Tata Honeywell, Hi-tech Drilling, Tata Finance, Tata Industrial Finance Company, Tata Elxsi (India) and Matrix Materials. Relying on high technology, these companies will deal with computers, process systems, biotech and advanced materials. Referring to Ratan's stewardship, Sharokh Sabavala, senior director of Tata Industries, commented: "He not only visualized what we should get into, but also implemented his vision."

The publicity-shy Ratan has introduced a new style at Tata House — he "doesn't have a retinue of men carrying his bags and *khana dabbas* (lunch boxes)

around for him... When a car door needs to be opened, he opens it without waiting for others to create a fuss," *The Weekly* further reports.

As reiterated JRD in an interview with Mukarram Bhagat, resident editor of *The Economic Times*, "The Tata group of companies are run by professionals at the highest levels of management who firmly believe in the trusteeship concept laid down by Jamshedji Tata, as also by Mahatma Gandhi. We all believe that we are trustees, not owners, of very important national assets and we work for social objectives... This is an unbreakable binding force."

National honors for three

Excellence in their chosen careers won three Parsis — Khusro Faramurz Rustamji, Fali Sam Nariman and Dr Rustom Phiroze Soonawala — recognition from the Government of India. They were included in the list of national award winners announced on the eve of India's Republic Day on January 26, 1991.

Rustamji, in the civil service category, was awarded the Padma Vibhushan. Seventy-five-year-old Rustamji who had served as director general of the Border Security Force (BSF) for nine years has been presently appointed member of the National Integration Council. In the past he had served as member of the National Police Commission, reads his bio data. During his asso-



Ratan Tata (left): takes over the reins of the Tata group from his predecessor J.R.D. Tata



On the national merit list (from left): Rustamji, Nariman and Soonawala

ciation with the Indian police, among the important portfolios he held were as security officer to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, inspector general of police, Madhya Pradesh, and special secretary, ministry of home affairs.

As the head of the BSF, a new paramilitary force that he was asked to raise for border protection, his services were lauded by the then Prime Minister Ms Indira Gandhi who commended the BSF for bearing "the immediate brunt of the enemy onslaught... and the support they gave to the army." The internal role of the BSF, as explained by Rustamji in his article "The birth of the BSF," has helped in the handling of rioting and disorder. It reduces calls on the army and also supplements the limited police strength in the country. Rustamji is currently adding force to the Bombay Dyeing and Manufacturing Company Limited where he serves as director.

Senior advocate of the Supreme Court of India, 62-year-old Nariman, a leading figure in jurisprudence, was awarded the Padma Bhushan. He is presently vice chairman of the International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce, Paris, notes his curriculum vitae. He has also held posts and memberships on various other international judicial bodies like the London Court of International Arbitration, International Commission of Jurists, International Council for Commercial Arbitration, etc. Former additional solicitor general of India, he resigned the day after emergency was declared in June 1975.

Representing India at several international law meets, Nariman has also been selected by the Indian government to work on a high-powered expert committee on company law and monopolies and restrictive trade practices, the Press Commission of India and the Delhi Legal Aid and Advice Board. He has submit-

ted written contributions and papers on subjects like the constitutional law of India, democracy and human value, right to property, protecting the rights of minorities in society and problems of public policy, further adds the curriculum vitae.

The Padma Shri list includes the name of Soonawala for distinguishing himself in the field of obstetrics and gynecology. A member of the advisory panel on contraception to the ministry of health and family welfare of the Government of India, the 62-year-old gynecologist also serves on the scientific advisory committee of the Indian Council of Medical Research and the executive board of the World Federation for Voluntary Surgical Contraception, his bio data informs.

Credited with having trained over 12,000 doctors and conducted over 40 training programs, Soonawala has modified the technique of vaginal sterilization and designed instruments to make the operation simple and safe, his bio data informs. He was selected to represent India at international meets and has been invited speaker at over 60 seminars connected with planned parenthood, female fertility and reproductive biology.

He is senior consultant in obstetrics and gynecology at Bombay's leading medical institutions like Jaslok, Breach Candy, Masina and the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital, and has been, for the past five years, concentrating on training doctors for tubal reconstructive surgery following sterilization, and designing instruments and modifying techniques in his field of specialization, further reads his bio data.

Spate of house breaks

Parsi households in south and central Bombay seem to be the cynosure of burglars. In the months of February and March, four Parsi families were robbed of their possessions. The total loss of

valuables in the different homes ranged from Rs 5,000 to over a lakh.

Sixty-seven-year-old Ms Maki Manek Daruwala, residing in Bakhtawar on Narain Dhabolkar Road, was forced to part with her cupboard keys from where her jewelry estimated at Rs 1,15,000 was looted, reports the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of February 3, 1991. This happened on the morning of February 2 when two strangers followed her domestic into the house, tied her up with curtains and gagged her while she looked on helplessly as they escaped with her belongings.

In the Fort locality it was the house of Rustom and Freney Kanga on 8/A, Pitha Street that was robbed. Four strangers armed with a gupti knife threatened Freney with her life on the night of February 23 which compelled her to surrender her jewelry worth about Rs 70,000 and Rs 20,000 in cash, reads the next day's *Jamé*.

Thieves broke into two Parsi households in Tardeo. On February 7, 87-year-old Rustomji Sorabji Baria, staying alone at Ava Mansion, was robbed of five gold buttons by two armed persons who forcefully entered his house and later gagged him with a towel as they searched the place for valuables, mentions a write-up in the *Jamé* of February 10.

The Panthaki family, residing at Reward at Tardeo were the victims of the next loot: two armed men forced their way into the flat on March 16 and as Hoshang and his sister could not offer any resistance, they walked off with Rs 80,000 worth of valuables, reports the *Jamé* of March 17.

In all these cases police complaints have been filed but no arrests seem to have been made. Meanwhile the threat of robberies in other households continues to loom large.

SPOTLIGHT

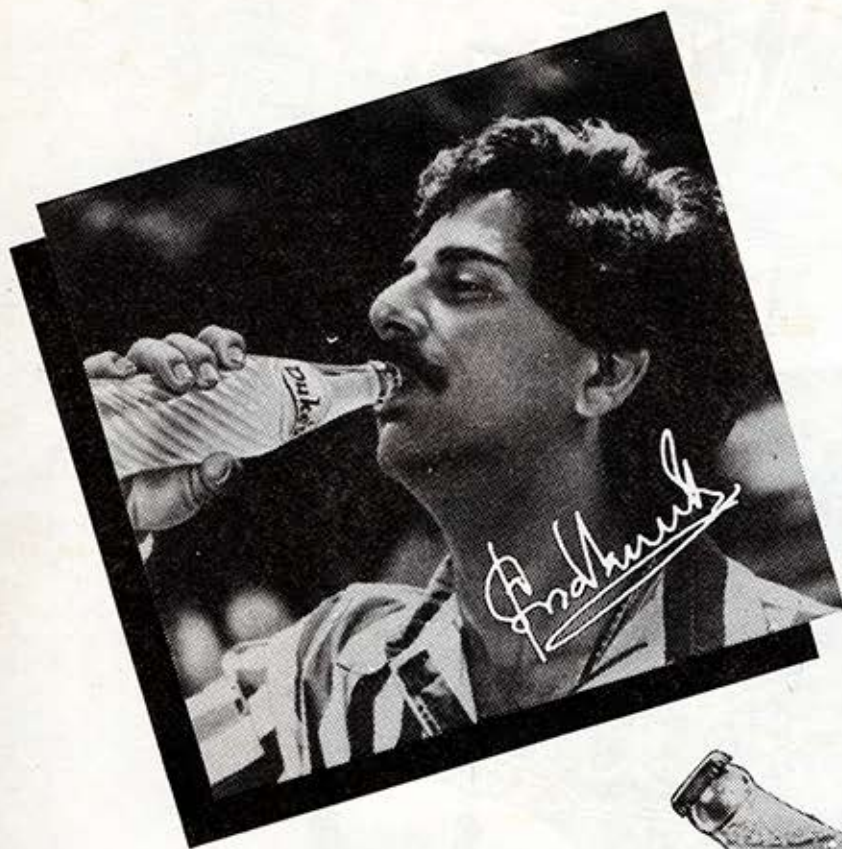
The President of India R. Venkataraman appointed veteran journalist Russi K. Karanjia member of the Rajya Sabha early this year to fill the vacancy created by an outgoing member, notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of January 13, 1991.

Named senior vice president — consumer products, marketing — of Godrej Soaps Limited is Hoshedar K. Press, notes a press release.

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

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The 'toy' train chugs along the special meter track up the mountain, through the One Kiss Tunnel, plunges into the forest that slices the sunlight into beams, and a puff of cold air suggests that we are almost there. As we draw closer to our destination we find ourselves journeying back into the past. Matheran then meant month-long vacations, barbecue fires throwing sparks into star-laden skies, picnic excursions through trails in the thicket as we bounced painfully and ungainfully in the saddle, the body aches the next morning, lazy afternoons as monkeys bounced on the roof overhead,

swapping comics with other guests who would grow to become lifelong friends, the old familiar hotel proprietor who doubled as a holiday management consultant...

Matheran now has changed and the reality is more acute with the Parsi hoteliers. Once the hotel trade at the hill station was largely Parsi dominated; now only four Parsi-run establishments remain: Lord's Central, Shirin, Cecil and Brightlands Resorts. "We are still here because we were able to adapt to changing circumstances and yet we have only survived; we have not grown," says

Jimmy Lord of Lord's Central Hotel. Tourists today want to cram everything into a three-day weekend.

Probably the greatest change, for the hoteliers at least, has been the change in the composition of the clientele visiting the hill station which is reflected in their dietary habits. "When I came here in 1962," says Adi Davierwalla of Shirin Hotel, "I used to go personally to the station every day to solicit business.

Above: Heading in the 'toy' train for the cooler confines of Matheran

Photos: Pramod Mistry

Eighty-five percent of the visitors then were non-vegetarian. Now ninety-five percent are vegetarian. If I have to survive I have to go veg too." In 1990 he finally built a separate vegetarian kitchen.

Ms Khorshed Irani of Cecil Hotel was probably one of the very first hoteliers to recognize and respond to the changing culinary habits of the visitors pouring into the hill station. "In 1968, I went totally veg as an experiment. If it worked, well..." says Irani. It was a bold step, for Irani admits: "I did not know the ABC of veg cooking. My Gujarati clients would come and help me out in the kitchen. Later, they would send me cookbooks and recipes by post. Now I am number one where veg meals are concerned." Today she caters to the 'pure-vegetarians' too — the Jains who eat no onions, potatoes or roots of any kind. Five Rajasthani Brahmin cooks, under her supervision, conjure up a variety of dishes that delight the palate. But Irani has not only changed her menu, she has also changed her name. To her guests she is Meenabehn.

Brightlands Resorts tripped, stumbled, but before it could become another statistic on the list of hotels which were once Parsi run, young, enterprising Adi Bharucha and his wife Hutokshi took over the management of the establishment two years ago. To them Matheran hotel management means treading the middle path between vegetarian and non-vegetarian menus. Separate kitchens, separate dining rooms, an ideal blend for those who want a little, or lots, of both. "Gujarati women are mainly vegetarian but Gujarati men, on holidays at least, are more adventurous. They take pride in being chicketarians (eating only chicken among the non-vegetarian preparations) or eggetarians," says Bharucha.

Lord's Central Hotel, however, established a niche for itself by being different; the proprietors remained primarily non-vegetarian. "We have not got onto the vegetarian bandwagon. We are in a class of our own. The non-vegetarian visitor, the Parsi, the foreigner, the Christian... there is virtually no other place for them

to go," says Lord. Commenting on the vegetarian menu found in most Matheran hotels, he states: "It's largely Gujarati vegetarian." It is also a comment on the type of people visiting Matheran — largely Gujarati.

Earlier Matheran was the resort for the Europeans and Parsis. After H. P. Malet discovered the hill station in 1851 the Europeans flocked here to holiday and flee the scorching heat of the plains. The Parsis followed, to make a business by serving and catering to the Europeans' needs. Rugby was the first hotel in Matheran, opened in 1890, and was meant exclusively for the Europeans. It was run by Parsis, the Chinoys, who, the story goes, politely turned away a wealthy Parsi gentleman saying there was no room for him, but welcomed his European valet.

However, as the Europeans did not have a permanent commitment to the country, few bought land or built upon it. The Parsis did. Affluent members of the community soon started to build holiday retreats for themselves. Even today, according to Davierwalla, of the 250 plots of land registered in Matheran, 180 belong to Parsis. Now most are dilapidated, rundown and abandoned, but they are monuments to an era not long past when the hills were alive with the sound of Parsi Gujarati. "Matheran was a Parsi hill station," says Lord. "In those days it

evening, around 4 o'clock, they would ride down to the Parsi Gymkhana to play cards, billiards, have a drink or plan the next day's picnic. The Gymkhana was the focal point of the community's activities."

Hotels accepted bookings during the vacations for not less than 30 days. Year after year the same families would meet at the same hotel. The hotel owner knew his guests as personal friends. He organized skits, sing alongs, picnics, entertainment programs, games, competitions... He was more than a hotel manager he was a friend and entertainment manager. "People came because of you, not because of your hotel," recalls Lord.

Then in the late 1960s, improved communications and modern technology started to take its toll on the hill resort. "Airlines took people to Kashmir and Europe. Air conditioning made it no longer necessary to go to cooler hill stations for the summer," says Lord. Inflation too propelled hotel rates out of reach of the average Parsi. Lord confesses: "Today, even I can't afford to go to my own hotel with my entire family."

Thirty-day bookings are now part of the good old days, fondly remembered. Hoteliers must now be content with three-day weekend bookings. In fact, the concept of season is also changing. Along with the traditional school vacations — summer, Diwali and Christmas — season time now includes all weekends. Off-season time is weekdays and monsoons.

For the weekends the hoteliers thank the construction of the motorable road from Neral to Dasturi, three kilometers outside Matheran. And for the road they thank the twice former minister of railways George Fernandes who, as a union leader in 1974, disrupted all rail traffic in the country by calling a nationwide strike of railway employees. Hence,

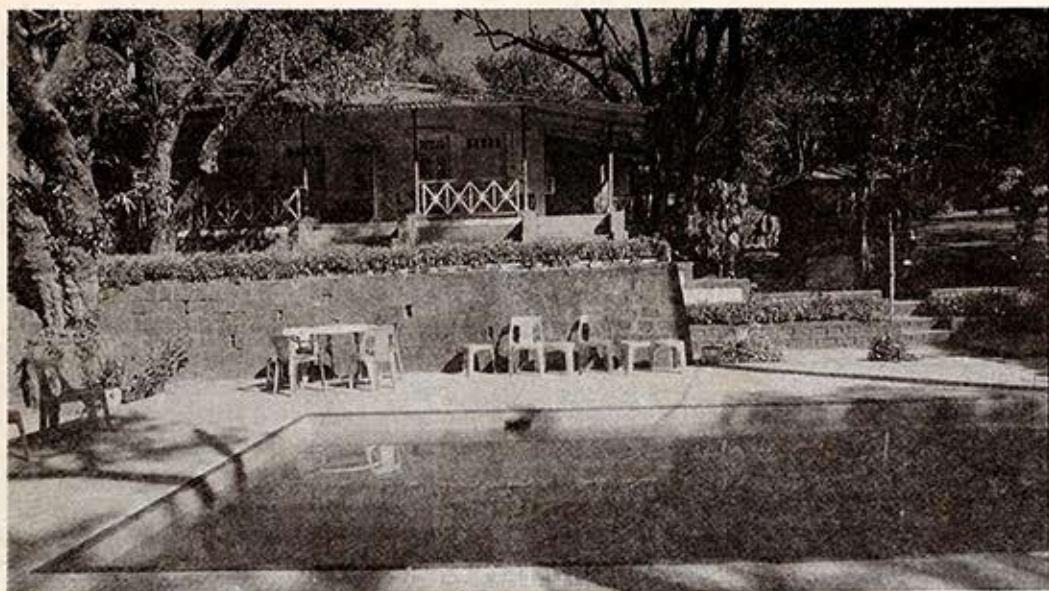
between May 3 and 21 that year, peak season in Matheran, the 'toy' train came to a standstill. Since it was the only transport link between Matheran and the rest of the world, the isolation of the hill station was complete.

To build or not to build a road? The

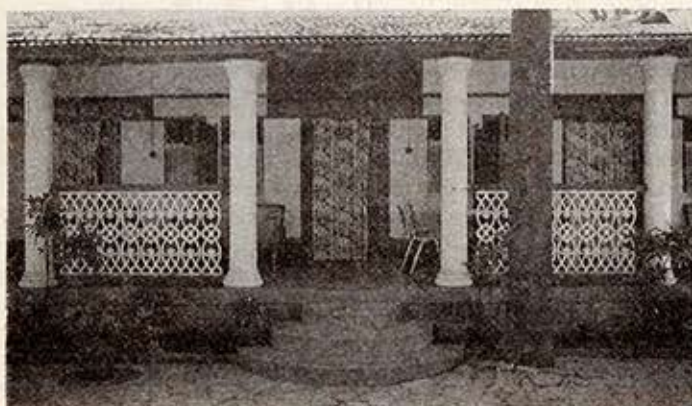


Shirin Hotel: marketing strategy aimed at the visitor's stomach

was considered a point of prestige to go for one's vacations to a good hill station like this one. Those who did not have their own bungalows stayed in hotels." Adds Davierwalla: "All the bungalows had their own stables. It was a matter of pride to have your own horses. In the



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*



(Top) Brightlands Resorts: introduced the swimming pool to Matheran
(Below left) Lord's Central Hotel enjoys a unique location
(Right) Cecil Hotel patronized by vegetarians Photos: Pramod Mistry

burning issue was resolved. All residents of the resort town, rich and poor, master and servant, man, woman and child rallied together and, in a spirit of self-help, started to build the road. "For the first time in my life I was doing hard labor. I was carrying *gamelas* (containers) of sand and rocks," recalls Davierwalla.

The effort was worth it, for travelling time between Neral and Matheran was reduced from one-and-a-half hour by train to half an hour by road. For the Davierwallas, the road is even more significant. "Would you believe it, my wife works in Central Bank?" says Davierwalla, "Every day she travels from Matheran to Dadar and back." Dadar? Bombay? "Yes. Dadar, Bombay," he confirms.

Yet, when does one say enough to a good thing? The residents of Matheran

find themselves divided, and bitterly so, on the issue of extending the road right into the town. A road to destruction? Yes, say Lord, Irani and Bharucha. No, says Davierwalla whose stand on the issue is determined by a personal problem: "I am a heart patient," he rests his case. The pro-road lobby which claims 75 percent support of the local residents, including the president of the Matheran Municipality Council Ms Surecha Y. Chavan, has already won concessions to permit vehicles into the town in case of emergencies. They argue that an extended road will result in more visitors.

The anti-road lobby feels a motorable road would strike at the very heart of the hill station. It is the only place in India where vehicular traffic is prohibited and has 52 kilometers of unpaved roads for riding and trekking. "Take that away and you destroy Matheran," says Bharucha. Once Matheran becomes like any other hill station in India, people will stop coming here, he reiterates. Adds Lord: "The four-wheeler vehicle and the four legged animal just don't blend. In a

clash, the technological monster will eat up the horse." Then, of course, there is the problem of pollution. The solution, as they see it, is in introducing a number of shuttle trains between Dasturi, where the existing motorable road ends and the railhead in the center of town. But according to Devavrat Mehta, managing director of the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC), the Indian Railways have turned down the proposal on the grounds that it is not economically feasible.

The other issue is whether Matheran, with a local population of 6,000, is equipped to handle the influx the road promises to bring in. According to the entry tax records, about two lakh people visit the hill station every year and the floating population during peak season touches 7,000. Officially, there are 30 hotels and innumerable small lodges. These cram as many people as possible. Actually some of the small rooms are available at rates as low as Rs 10 per day. Yet, it is not uncommon to find visitors sleeping in the open and on the station

platform during summer for want of accommodation. Water shortages were a regular feature till two years ago when a pumping station brought the precious liquid from Ulhas River in the valley. Says Lord: "During the peak season there are so many people here, you don't know what to do with them. We want people to come here during the off-season. Will the road achieve that?"

It is a question that matters to Math-eran hoteliers for most close down their establishments completely during the three monsoon months. "Of the remaining nine months we go full for two-and-a-half to three months and with that we've got to see through the full year," says Irani.

Bharucha, however, sees no need to shut operations during the rains. Two years ago his was one of the first hotels that stayed open during the wet months. In 1990 he offered special rate monsoon packages which included free transport (an important consideration since the schedules of the 'toy' trains are uncertain and determined by the weather). "A taxi will pick you up from your home in Bombay and bring you all the way up to Math-eran. Or if you prefer, you may come up on your own" and get reimbursement for a first class ticket fare, says Bharucha. Risk the monsoon package; Matheran in the rains has an enchantment of its own. Enveloped in thick mist, the panoramic views from the mountain top are blotted out. We start noticing the subtle details: tufts of grass sprouting from the smallest cracks in rocks, the desperation with which the new cycle of life emerges. "Monsoons are a magnificent period and people are starting to come during this period now that they know that a good hotel is open," says Bharucha.

The enterprising spirit of Bharucha is evident in his Brightlands Resorts. He is the first one to have a swimming pool, admittedly small, but as he observes: "It makes a hell of a lot of difference. People need to keep busy... we've got to entertain them." As part of his entertainment program he invites music bands from Bombay to play for his clients, newly opened boutiques are welcomed to hold fashion shows at his premises. Additionally, they organize treasure hunts, beauty contests, fancy dress parties, camping excursions, barbecue nights and, of course, offer the video. Defending the increasing popularity of the idiot box, he states: "Why talk only of Matheran? People go abroad and watch the video... They come here on

a holiday to enjoy themselves and part of their enjoyment comes from seeing a movie on video." Another exclusive feature at Brightlands, according to Bhar-ucha, is their own stable of horses. "We have our own riding instructor who is probably the best in Matheran."

The Bharuchas have also refurbished one wing of their hotel with modern amenities like marble baths. The other wing continues to be a little rustic,

They politely turned away a wealthy Parsi gentleman but welcomed his European valet

spruced up "with a little rouge and lip-stick," says Bharucha. The hotel has 34 rooms and can accommodate up to 100 people. Their rates, including board, range between Rs 300 and Rs 360 (the upper range includes stay in an air-conditioned room) per head per day with special off-season discounts. The meals are more than substantial, they are enormous, says Bharucha, "If you don't fill a Gujarati's belly he will not return the next time."

Parsis, like Gujaratis, love to eat too and Davierwalla has worked out a marketing strategy for his Shirin Hotel aimed at the visitor's stomach. "If I survive today it is due to my food. People come to my Hotel because they know I will feed them well." To substantiate his claims, he shows us a cutting of a *Bus-see* column highly recommending his culinary prowess. He ignores our protests and orders a plate of cheese toast. "Parsis love to eat," he declares and unashamedly adds: "I myself am a glutton. I'd rather eat and die than starve and live. I told my doctor so." The pity is that Shirin Hotel can accommodate only up to 30 people at a time in its seven rooms. The charges are Rs 225 per head per day with off-season discounts up to 10 percent.

After years of holding out, the Davier-wallas finally recognized the need to set up a separate vegetarian kitchen, an expensive proposition, as any construction work must be, in Matheran. "A bag of sand that costs Rs 90 in Neral (nearest railhead on the plains below), costs Rs 650 here," says Davierwalla. Transport

costs, we hear, add rupees to everything sold at the hill station. "The cost of living in Matheran is about 20 percent higher than Bombay," says Dr Nariman M. Doctor, a general practitioner who has made the hill station his home. If Davierwalla's vegetarian kitchen highlights the high cost of construction, there is another cost that hoteliers and properties must live with year after year — monsoon protection costs and post monsoon repair costs. Two hundred and fifty inches of rain per year can mean a lot of damage to property.

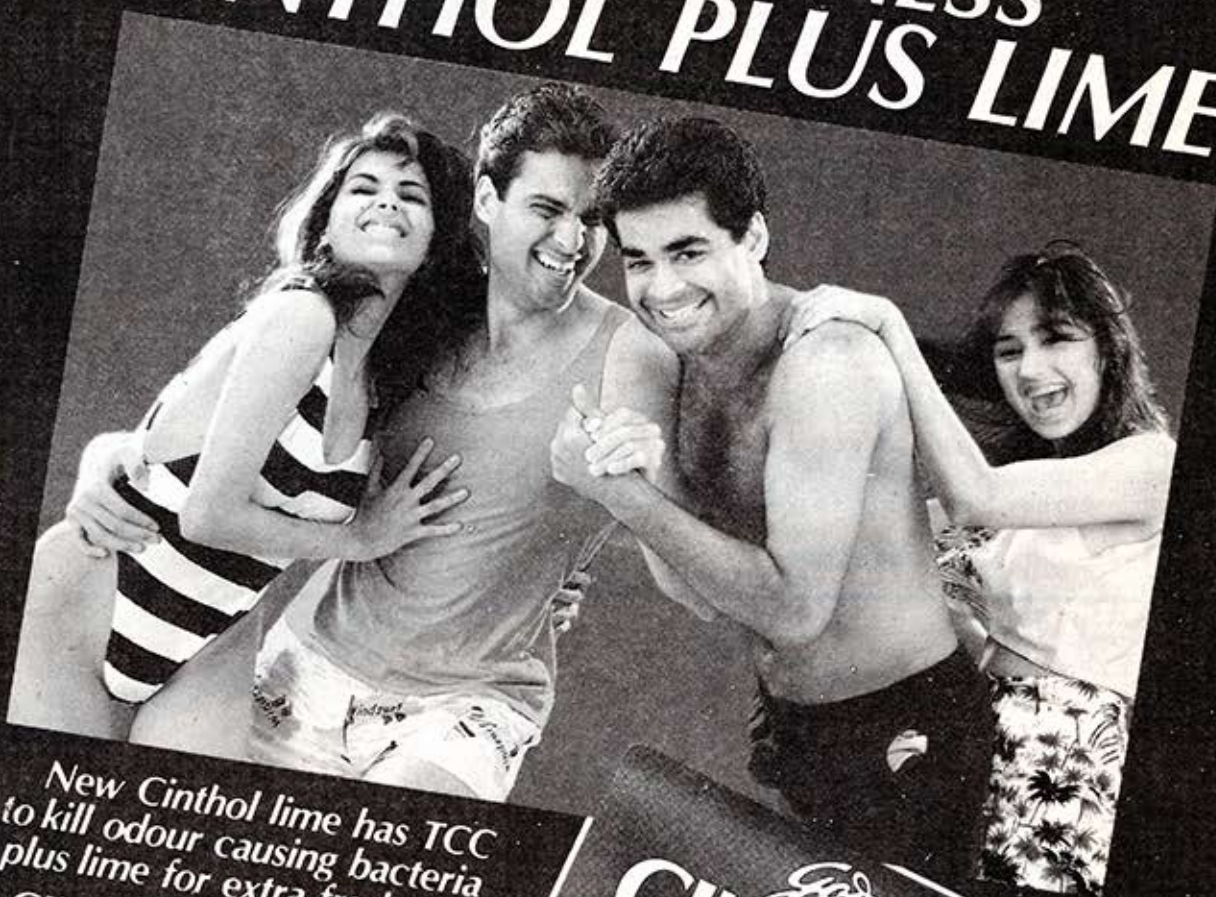
Irani recalls that when her family purchased Cecil Hotel in 1958 the clientele comprised mainly of foreigners and Parsis. Now she gets very few Parsis because of her exclusively vegetarian menu. Her 25 rooms can accommodate up to 150 guests but she restricts her guest list to 100 only. "To look after 100 guests I get up at 4.30 in the morning and get to sleep at 12 midnight," she says. The fruit of her efforts show as the phone rings — a call from Bombay, two foreign ladies on the line. The message: "We are calling to say we love you." The two ladies, Irani explains, had scheduled their Matheran visit for three days; they stayed for 20. "They only ate vegetarian food for 20 days and they did not tire of it." Her rates: Rs 200 per head per day, with off-season discounts of Rs 50. "I have one flat rate," says Irani "All my guests are VIPs."

If there is one hotel in Matheran where the man is the establishment, it is Jimmy Lord of Lord's Central Hotel. Jimmy, regular guests from those good old days recall, was the hotel. Once their booking was confirmed they could be assured of a wonderful holiday. Every-day there was a program of dance, sing alongs, variety entertainment... even picnics with the entire hotel in tow. With the average duration of his guests' stay cut from 30 days to three, Lord finds his flair and his style being cramped. He rues the invention of the TV and video. "People come all the way to Matheran and sit in front of the idiot box. They might as well have stayed in Bombay."

Yet you can't keep a good entertainer down; something is always happening at Lord's Central Hotel — vegetable sculpture demonstration, magic shows... Recently the Hotel was handed over to the students of the Catering College, Bombay to run for two weeks — reportedly the first time any Indian hotel dared such an experiment. Says Lord: "It was a learning

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experience for them, it was a learning experience for me: there was a lot to learn from them too." It is amazing that a person whose Hotel has featured in foreign magazines should be open to learn from students.

There is another feature that makes Lord's Central Hotel unique in Matheran — its location. It is the only one that has a panoramic view of the valley; by accident rather than design. "Hotels in Matheran were not designed as hotels," says Lord, "they evolved." His own consists of a cluster of buildings which included a photograph shop and bakery which were converted into a dining hall and 23 rooms. In all, the hotel can accommodate up to 60 people. The rates range from Rs 300 to Rs 500 per head per day with off-season and mid-week discounts up to 20 percent.

The history of the Lord family is interwoven with the history of Matheran. "My family has been here ever since Matheran was discovered," says Lord. "My grandfather was a pioneer. He set up tents when hotels did not exist. Later, he ran a number of places, none of which belonged to him. My father was a profes-

sional photographer and artist." Those were the good old days when almost every hotel in Matheran was Parsi run: Rugby, Regal, Hope Hall, Alexandra... As other communities rushed in to cash in on

"People came because of you, not because of your hotel"

the boom in domestic tourism, a number of new hotels sprung up but the Parsis sold out.

Today the boom is reflected in the spiralling price of land which can cost, according to Bharucha, between Rs 10 to 20 lakhs a plot depending on its proximity to the market. These prices rule even though the lease on almost every plot of land has expired and no transfer can be officially registered till the government resolves the issue of new lease rates. Residents expect the matter to be settled soon, but also expect that the new rates will be between 50 to 100 times

the old rates.

High land prices, however, have not dampened the hotel boom. In fact, today Matheran finds itself being propelled into a luxury hotel culture with the establishment of The Byke, a three-star resort. Plans were afoot to build another in the same class. Significantly, both the new hotels are planned on properties that once belonged to Parsis. One is located on the property known as Byke House. It was built by Malet who discovered the hill station and was later owned by the Wadia family; the other, on the property known as Red House, which was owned by the Marzban family. How well the star hotels will fare is open to speculation. As one catering college student observed: "You can't sell a hotel here; you've got to sell the place, sell Matheran."

In the changing scenario at Matheran, the four surviving Parsi-run hotels represent the spirit of the community: Lord, the grand old man of Matheran; Bharucha, the young enthusiastic entrepreneur; Irani, a remarkable lady with a remarkable ability to adapt; and Davierwalla who, with sheer tenacity and power, holds on.

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Women venerated and victimized

While men and women were considered on par in the Gathic period, since the Avestan times the woman's position has been declining

Dr Ali A. Jafarey

The Gathic doctrine places man and woman on a fully equal status in all religious and social affairs, more than what is observed and practiced in modern "advanced" societies. But in the post-Gathic period, particularly when the entire indigenous population of the plateau was completely governed by age-old hard-to-die customs, things took a turn. Women were not regarded as equals by certain factions of the very late Avestan people. Chronologically the *Avesta* speaks about a woman's decline in favor of an egocentric man of authority, but never to a revolting degree. Taboos could not rob her of her position. There is not a single sentence in the *Avesta* that would belittle woman. Even the *Vendidad* does not make any derogatory remarks about her. She continued to be venerated in all the daily prayers on par with man. And she continued her normal life as *nmâno-pathni*, the mistress of the house.

"We venerate the righteous woman who is good in thoughts, words and deeds, who is well-educated, is an authority on religious affairs, is progressively serene, and is like the women who belong to the Wise God.

"We venerate the righteous man who is good in thoughts, words and deeds, who knows well the religion he has chosen, and who does not know blind following.

"It is these people who, with their actions, promote the world through right-

eousness (*Aiwiśruthrem Gah 9* and *Visparad 3.4*)."

Much has been said and written about man and woman. Some tell the truth. Others are empty claims. While enough has been stated about man's ascendancy, much more through might than right, woman's role has not been depicted the way it should be. The reason is obvious: man is the author of most of the statements! These statements show that woman has been from the lady paramount of society to a mere chattel at home. While "mother" has been acclaimed by some to be the highest source of love and the best training for progress, "woman" has been accused by others of being the cause of downfall and the origin of pollution. Even on the eve of the 21st century when women are said to have won complete equality with men in advanced countries, comparative statistics of women holding high positions in administrative and other key posts is sadly low. On the other hand, a glimpse of publicity stunts still depict her as no more than a showy object exploited for commercial profits.

To fully comprehend the position of woman in the *Avesta*, we should first look at the topographical position of the land where the Zarathushtrian religion rose, spread, met other religions, and had its worst setback. It is the Iranian Plateau. It is a vast highland averaging 1,220 meters above sea level, ringed by mountains, green valleys and bleak des-

erts. It lies between the Caspian Sea, the Aral Sea, and the plain to the north, the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea to the south, the Indus Valley and the Pamirs to the east, and the Mesopotamian Valley to the west. It has had three major religious changes: Pre-Zarathushtrian, Zarathushtrian, and Islamic. Our subject covers the first two.

Pre-Zarathushtrian

The pre-Zarathushtrian period has two phases: Pre-Aryan cults and Aryan beliefs. Archaeological evidence shows that the pre-Aryan or the indigenous civilization was mostly confined to proto-town settlements located at distances all over the plateau. The people of these settlements were generally self-sufficient, yet they maintained trade links with each other. The trade network between Mesopotamia and the Indus civilization interlaced them all together in cult and culture. Women dominated religion and society in central and eastern parts of the plateau, but were dominated by the patriarchal cult of male priests in western parts. Here they were reduced to serve the male priests and pilgrims as temple prostitutes, equal to the so-called *devadâsis* in India. This meant going to temples only during the period they could sexually serve men. Menstruation kept them away from the temples, an act which is the source of the menstrual taboos still observed by many tradition-bound communities.

The Aryan mass migration changed the entire plateau. Pastoral and agricultural in profession, and superior in number, strength and speed, these people soon spread over all the available virgin lands. They seem to have bypassed and generally circumvented old settlements because we have no stories preserved by the Aryans of their conquest, occupation and subjugation of non-Aryans. The change brought in a gradual Aryanization of the entire population through assimilation. It is obvious that they were influenced by the natives too. Many customs, especially those brought in by the women married to the newcomers, were adopted without any evident opposition.

The *Avesta* has no creation myth to tell how the first man and woman were created. It simply says that Ahura Mazda created, among other things, the living world of mankind and other animals. Therefore, the earliest mention of woman is made when Yima Khshaeta (King Jamshid of the Persian epics) was divinely warned of the coming ice age and was directed to lead a group of 1,900 "men and women" of "the greatest, best and finest" species along with cattle, sheep, dogs, birds and blazing fires inside a spacious cave complex and save themselves (*Vendidad* 2.1-43). Archaeology has shown that human beings survived the cold spell, which covered parts of Eurasia between 8,000 to 12,000 years ago, by taking shelter in caves and the fire kept them warm.

But a casual mention cannot give us a true picture of woman in the ancient Aryan society. However, the high regard in which the female deities were held, and other Avestan and Vedic evidences show that women enjoyed a fairly high position in the moderately patriarchal society.

Zarathushtrian

It is with the advent of Asho Zarathushtra that the position of woman in society

emerged clear. The *Gathas* and supplementary texts in the Gathic dialect are explicit on the subject. The famous stanza of "the choice of religion" gives equal rights to both: "Hear the best with your ears and ponder with a bright mind. Then each man and woman, for his or her self, select either of the two (the better and bad mentalities). Awaken to this doctrine of ours before the Great Event (of Choice) ushers in (*Yasna* 30.2)." To those who make the right choice and join the Good Religion, he says: "Wise God, whoever, man or woman shall give me what You know to be the best in life — rewards for righteousness, power through good mind — I shall accompany him and her in glorifying such as You are, and shall, with them all, cross over the sorting bridge (*Yasna* 46.10)." Yet in another stanza he lauds: "The Wise God knows best any person of mine for his or her veneration done in accordance with righteousness. I shall, on my part, venerate such persons, passed away or living, by their names, and shall lovingly encircle them (*Yasna* 51.22)." It is this stanza which is later paraphrased in the famous *Yenghe Hâtâm* formula, also in a late Gathic dialect: "The Wise God knows better every man and woman among the living for his or her veneration done in accordance with righteousness. We, on our part, venerate such men and women."

Furthermore, the *Gathas* present an inspiring message for couples about to be married. Of his three sons and three daughters, Zarathushtra selected his youngest daughter Pouruchista to give his advice and blessing. He wanted her to have a person "who is steadfast in good mind, and united with righteousness and with the Wise One" and advised her to "consult him with your wisdom," be progressively serene and munificent. She assured her father that she would "emulate and choose" him in such a way that her act would be an honor for the father,

the husband, the settlers and the family. "As a righteous woman among the righteous people," she committed herself to wisely serve the Good Religion more than ever. Pouruchista moved her father to leave an ever-fresh word for all newlyweds: "These words I speak to the charming brides and to you, bridegrooms. Do bear them in mind. Comprehend them with your conscience. Master the life which belongs to good mind. May you each win the other through righteousness." Zarathushtra tells them to remain united and strengthen and promote the universal fellowship of the Good Religion (*Yasna* 53.3-7).

The last blessing given by Zarathushtra near the end of his successful mission of 47 years put the finishing touches to his divine task: "May the fellowship come for the support of the men and women of Zarathushtra, for the support of good mind, so that the conscience of every person earns the choice reward — the reward of righteousness — a wish rewarded by the Wise God (*Yasna* 54.1)."

The *Haptanghâiti* of seven short *yasnas*, next in importance to the *Gathas*, further clarifies woman's position in Gathic society. Advocating learning, practicing and preaching, it says: "The more a man or a woman knows the truth, the better. He or she should zealously practice it and preach it to others so that they practice it accordingly (*Yasna* 35.3)." It venerates the "womenfolk... who belong to You, God, on account of their righteousness (*Yasna* 38.1)." Indeed it venerates the helpful, law-abiding, righteous people, "born in whatever land,

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both men and women, whose good consciences are growing, have grown, or shall grow... good men and women (who are) incremental, eternal, ever-growing, ever-growing... who live a life of good mind (*Yasna* 39.2-3)."

Zarathushtra prayed: "May good rulers, and not bad rulers, rule over us with actions of good understanding and serenity (*Yasna* 48.5)" and his immediate successors rightly added: "May good ruler, man or woman, rule over us in both the (mental and physical) existences (*Yasna* 41.2)."

It was this extraordinary love and respect shown by Asho Zarathushtra to his men and women that created the tradition of commemorating outstanding men and women on the Memorial Day, the *Farvardgân*, or *Muktâd*, at the end of the year. The *Farvardin Yasht* and ancient texts of *Avesta* venerate the names of 261 persons, 16 of whom are married women and 11 are maidens. This gives us a much higher proportion of women in the front lines of a religious order than in any other religion in its early stage, or even today. Keeping in mind the universality of the Zarathushtrian message, the *Yasht* then turns to human beings of

every land and states in separate paragraphs: "We venerate righteous men... we venerate women... of Aryan countries... Turanian countries... Sairimyan countries... Saini countries... Dahi countries... and of all countries... the righteous men and women, who (were) foremost in accepting the divine doctrine and first to listen to the divine teachings, who

Woman has been accused of being the cause of downfall and the origin of pollution

won for the cause of righteousness, who have been successful in establishing homes, districts, settlements, countries, who have been successful in learning the thought-provoking message, who have been successful in improving their souls, and who have been successful in obtaining all that is good (*Yasht* 13.149-151)."

The *Erpatistan* is a book for the priestly class. It has not reached us in full

but fortunately has the part dealing with women officiants at rituals. It belongs to the time when every person was engaged in his or her living profession, generally agriculture. One could only leave the job if another person was available to take it over without a possible loss in property. Man and woman both officiated, whenever invited, as priests in a ritual. If invited to officiate at a function, husband and wife had to consider who was more needed to attend to the profession so that the other was spared to proceed to the ritual scene. Women were at liberty to go to officiate at a ritual without the prior permission of their husbands. The officiant, more needed to attend to his daily profession, could only be absent for a total of six nights in traveling and officiating at the ceremony. It may be noted that those willing to become priests had to undergo a three-year rigorous course of learning, memorizing, comprehending and expounding the *Gathas* and the *Haptanghaiti*, till then the only guiding "principles of life" and the only prayers used in rituals.

The *Visparad* is a booklet devoted to the seasonal festivals of *ghambars*. It shows that eight officiants, each respon-

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sible for a specific function, took part in the ritual. In addition to the eight priests surrounding the holy fire, there are the representatives of all the religious and social units of the locality standing "prepared" to participate. The Zoatar, the chief officiant, summons each of his or her seven colleagues as well as the representatives of the priestly, warrior and prospering professions, and the representatives of the house, district, settlement, the youth devoted to further the religion, the teaching priest in the district, the roving preacher outside the district, and the house mistress. It is then that the woman and man of extraordinary talents, mentioned in the stanzas quoted at the beginning of this essay, are summoned to participate. We may note that a woman is called *hush-hâm-sâsta* (literally, well-instructed in religious lore) and *ratu-khsh-tahra* (rite-authority). The latter title is used for Ahura Mazda as the supreme authority (*Visparad* 11.1) and the *Gathas* as the foremost authority of all scriptures on *ratu*, rightful rituals (*Yasna* 54.2, 55.1, 71.11, *Visparad* 11.1, *Afarin-e Gatha* 2-3, *Vendidad* 19.38).

As a principle, the *Gathas* are addressed as prayers to God and as guidance to mankind. Yet, as we have observed, the Gathic texts go a little further to mention both men and women so that it is fully understood that both the sexes enjoy equal rights in every spiritual and physical phase of human life. No priority or supremacy is given to any of the two. The two are free to emulate each other in union, to win each other in righteous service.

Later Avestan period

We have left the pristine Gathic era and the immediate post-Gathic period behind. Centuries have passed. Changes have set in. Certain Gathic concepts have been personified under a new term *yazata*, meaning the venerated, the revered. *Daenâ*, conscience, religion, *Chistâ*, perception and *Ashi Vanguhi*, good reward, all feminine, are among them.

The *Din Yasht* in honor of *Chistâ* and the *Art Yasht* in honor of *Ashi*, provide us with the names of two stalwarts of the Good Religion. They are Hvovi, wife of Zarathushtra, and Hutaosa, wife of Kavi Vishtaspa. In the *Din Yasht*, *Chistâ* is approached by Hvovi. She, "the righteous, the knowledge-seeking, wished (to join) in good share with the righteous Zarathushtra in thinking, talking and act-

ing in accordance with the religion (*Yasht* 16.15)." It shows that she wanted to marry Zarathushtra to serve the religion, an act her daughter Pouruchista followed later on. In the *Art Yasht*, it is Zarathushtra who prays to *Ashi Vanguhi* to grant him the boon that "the good, independent Hutaosa think, talk, and act in accordance with the religion so that she believes in and comprehends my Mazdayasni Religion and brings good fame to my community (*Yasht* 17.46)."

Ashi Vanguhi has the *Art* or 17th *Yasht* in her honor. She is, in her *yazata* role, what Lakshmi is to Hindus, deity of wealth and prosperity. Contrary to Anahitâ, of which we will speak later, she is not offered any animal sacrifices but is simply praised to grant boons by pre-Zarathushtrian and Zarathushtrian kings and heroes. She is highly aggrieved to see three women — a woman who delivers her husband a child conceived from a stranger, a maiden seduced to bear a child without marriage and a barren *jahika*. *Jahi* or *jahika* is generally rendered as "whore." But contexts in which the term is used show that ordinarily it should mean a male or female vagrant. Other instances show that when applied to a woman, in addition to being a vagrant, she is said to be barren, "past-her-menopause," and engaged in witchcraft (*Yasht* 3.9, 12, 16; 8.59; 14.51; 17.57-58). *Ashi Vanguhi* bars "impotent men, past-menopause women, children, and virgins," from partaking her libations (*Yasht* 17.54). It means that the participants are told that she accepts only able-bodied men and women of mature and reproductive age in the rituals performed in her honor.

Although composed posthumously, the two *yashts* not only echo two important events in the promotion of the religion, but also reveal the importance of women in the mission. They show that women still enjoyed high status although the martial phase of the Good Religion had begun with the ascendancy of the conquering warriors and the advent of epical *yashts*. The epical *yashts* are mostly dedicated to pre-Zarathushtrian deities (*Aredvi Sura*, *Tishtrya*, *Mithra*, *Verethraghna* and *Drvaspa*) and although edited and augmented to suit the Zarathushtrian environment, they have pre-Zarathushtrian material in them.

Here, the first thing one sees is the dominating figure of *Aredvi Sura Anahita*. Originally a female river goddess with a probable name of Harahvaiti/

Sarasvati, she is known in the later *Avesta* by her titles as *Aredvi Surâ Anahitâ*, freely rendered as the "Unpolluted Heroine Humidity." She is depicted as a beautifully attired lady whom kings and heroes of pre-Zarathushtrian days approached with ritual sacrifices of hundreds of animals for helping them in accomplishing certain tasks. The description runs: "*Aredvi Sura* (is) maiden, independent, tall, upright, well-shaped and beautiful. Her beautiful white arms resemble the forelegs of a mare. She wears a crown of gold with hundred stars, octagonal in shape, a shining circle, with ribbons flowing and flying. She has square-shaped golden earrings. Her lovely neck is adorned by a gold necklace. Her breasts (are) made prominent by her tight belt glittering with ornaments. She wears a costly gold-embroidered gown with many folds. Her fur coat of one hundred female beavers shines like gold and silver woven together. Thus attired, she rides a chariot with reins in her hands. Her chariot is drawn by four white horses of the same breed. They are the wind, the rain, the cloud and the hail." She is called the

healer; promoter of herd, home, country and the world; purifier of male seed and the female womb; facilitator of childbirth; increaser of milk in breasts, and above the Guardian of Waters (*Yasht* 5.1-132). Strangely enough, it is this female *yazata* who prohibits women from par-

The *Avesta* has no
creation myth to tell
how the first man
and woman
were created

taking the offerings made in her honor, and all those who pray to her for boons are male. However, her high popularity among male mighties reveals the feminine position.

Drvaspâ (literally Mare-health) is another female deity. Although she is the guardian of the animal world, she too accepts sacrifices of hundreds of animals from the kings and heroes approaching her for boons. A description of the wives

and daughters, given in the *Drvaspa Yasht*, reveals how the upper-class women lived. The wives reclined on beautiful coaches with beautiful cushions. They were well-attired, with square-built earrings and gold necklaces. Their daughters had thin waists and were beautiful in body. Their shape was wishfully pleasing to those who look at them (*Yasht* 9.1-32).

The male *yazatas*, *Tishtrya* and *Vere-thraghna* bar "the robber, the *jahi*, the person who does not chant the *Gathas*, and the antagonist to this religion which is divine and Zarathushtrian" from partaking their libations.

Finally, the last phase of our essay. The *Vendidad* or better *Vidaevadâta*, literary "the Law against the Daevas," is mostly devoted to pollution and purification rules. Although its composition is ascribed to the Parthian period (250 BCE to 224 CE), its contents show that some of the rites go well beyond the Zarathushtrian era. Menstruation and stillbirth are among the major pollutants, and they concern women only who have to experience menstruation more than 50 times a year. Otherwise, man and

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woman are only defiled by coming into contact with a corpse. A woman, polluted and polluting as she was considered during her menstruation, was placed under quarantine and segregated from other members of the family. She was given rationed food. At the end of her period, she had to wash herself ritually with bull's urine and water to regain a purified status in order to resume her normal domestic and social contacts and works. A woman with a stillborn child had to undergo a much more rigorous purification rite over a longer period (*Vendidad* 5.45-62, 15.1-7).

It may as well be added here that the way in which menstruation is not men-

Man and woman
both officiated,
whenever invited,
as priests
in a ritual

tioned in other parts of the *Avesta*, even by the *yashts* which specify those who should be barred from participation in the libations offered in their honor, one has to accept that it was taken as a natural phenomenon and did not pose a problem to the purely Aryan society.

It is the *Vendidad* which states a *jahika* mixes in her the seeds of the faithful and the unfaithful, the worshippers of Mazda and the worshippers of Daevas, the wicked and the righteous (*Vendidad* 18.62). The *Erpatistan* quotes the passage in a varied form in its Pahlavi commentary. It shows her mixing the seeds of a "a Mazdayasna and Daevayasna (1.5.9)." In other words, a *jahika* is a prostitute who sleeps with men of opposite classes and creeds. She is a vicious person whose look "dries up one-third of waters, plants, and a righteous man's good thoughts, words, deeds and strength." But while the *Vendidad* prescribes a summary death for *jahika*, nothing is mentioned about any punishment for those who sleep with her.

Furthermore, there is nothing in the Avestan texts that would prohibit and discredit a marriage between a Zarathushtrian and a non-Zarathushtrian. Does it mean that no mixed marriages took place? Iranian history, particularly from the Achaemenian down to the Sassanian times, shows otherwise. Zarah-

thushtrian kings, chiefs, and following them, other notables did marry outside. Another answer is that the outsider joined the community. It does not seem to have posed a problem.

While the Gathic and other Avestan texts use *nâiri*, *gena*, *ghnâ* for "woman," the *Vendidad* is fond of *nâirika*, a diminutive form of *nâiri*, obviously in a contemptible sense.

Seducing and impregnating a maiden outside marriage was considered a heinous crime. However, the *Vendidadic* society was broadminded enough to declare that "if a young woman, belonging to a family or independent, married or not, conceives by a man," she should not feel ashamed and should not resort to abortion because "it is murder committed by both the man and the woman." The man was commanded to support her until the child was born and then support the two for seven years. If he, for obvious reasons did not, then the community took care of the mother and the child. Generally, old women helped in abortion by means of drugs "which kills in the womb... or produces miscarriage." The scripture also prohibits the use of drugs to stop the issue or shorten the menstruation period. A lengthy period of issue was considered a sickness and the woman advised to be treated and cured (*Vendidad* 15.9-19, 45).

The marriageable age for both the sexes was 15 years all along. However, while the *Gathas* show that a woman chose her husband through sound consultations, the *Vendidad* reveals that it was the father or the brother who gave the girl away to a righteous man seeking a wife (*Vendidad* 4.45; 14.15).

Whatever the past, time has come to turn to the Gathic doctrine to comprehend the woman's true and rightful status. It is direly needed in order to re-establish the "fellowship of the men and women of Zarathushtra... highly regarded by Ahura Mazda" in a progressing world. It will place Zarathushtrian women ahead of others and that too without resorting to any "liberation" movement. The *Gathas* are the resort. Let us all, men and women, turn to them.

Dr. Ali A. Jafarey, author of 11 books in Persian and English on the Zoroastrian religion, had studied Avesta and Pahlavi under Dr. Manek Pithawalla and Dastur (Dr) M. N. Dhalla. He obtained his doctorate in Persian literature from Karachi. Since 1963 he has served as trustee of the Ancient Iranian Cultural Society, first in Tehran and now in Los Angeles.

Pherozechah Mehta: the lofty liberal

B. K. Karanjia

Sir Pherozechah Mehta Memorial Volume edited and compiled by Godrej N. Dotivala. Published in 1990 on behalf of the Mayor's Fund Committee by Suresh J. Chube, Municipal secretary, Bombay Municipal Corporation Building, Mahapalika Marg, Bombay 400001. Pp. 339.

The picture that emerges from Homi Mody's *Sir Pherozechah Mehta -- A Political Biography* is of a multi-faceted and talented personality who left his mark not only on the city of his birth, Bombay, but on the whole of India as well, and for all time to come. The *Sir Pherozechah Mehta Memorial Volume*, lovingly edited and scrupulously compiled by Godrej N. Dotivala, and released on the occasion of Pherozechah's 75th death anniversary, is in a sense a valuable complement to Mody's biography. In it several hon'ble judges elaborate on the qualities that made Pherozechah an outstanding advocate; a veteran municipal councillor and a mayor dwell on his immense contribution to make Bombay India's first city; noted educationists and social reformers deal knowledgeably and sympathetically with his rather unorthodox views on education and social reform that were way ahead of his time; and the ubiquitous tribe of politicians give their seal of belated approval that, in opposition to the emerging extremist trends, Pherozechah continued to be a liberal, and applaud the fact that, born and bred a Parsi, Pherozechah was an Indian first and last.

But it is the personal and recollected anecdotes with which this commemorative *Volume* is replete that not only make for fascinating reading, but make Pherozechah come alive as a most redoubtable and yet lovable personality. As a young man, ambitious to become a barrister in London but lacking the means to do so, he applied to the dewan of the Maharaja of Mysore to loan him part of the money for the purpose. He called on the dewan at

Bhavnagar after making the necessary application and was told to wait. He waited for some time but, having to return to Bombay the same evening, he sent his apologies to the dewan and said he would come some other time. But the dewan would have none of it and insisted that Pherozechah dine with him.

This is how Jehan Daruwala, editor of *The Bombay Samachar*, describes what happened next: "The dinner over, Pherozechah fidgeted nervously and asked, 'Sir, what about my problem?' Haridas asked, 'What problem?' 'My application for financial aid,' said Pherozechah. 'Oh,' said Haridas, 'that, young man, is already taken care of. You will get the funds for your journey and studies.' Flabbergasted, Pherozechah mumbled: 'But Sir, I have no security to offer.' 'Security!' said Haridas, 'Your face is your security. There is only one stipulation. In future, when the State of Bhavnagar needs your services and if you feel like giving it, that will be the time to repay your debt.'"

As luck would have it, many years later, Pherozechah got the opportunity to repay the debt. The State was involved in litigation with the Government of India which marshalled a battery of British barristers. Pherozechah fought the case single-handed — and won!

A man of lofty ideals, Pherozechah also had extravagant tastes and liked to live in style. Justice Sohrab D. Vimadlal describes how once he had got into a roaring practice, whenever he went out of Bombay he travelled in style with his own valet and sometimes even his own barber. Recalling an incident told him by Sir Jamshed Kanga, Vimadlal writes: "I understand that when some Indian clients, not knowing his extravagant tastes and style of living, took him on a case to a distant mofussil town by train, and lodged him in what he found to be poor surroundings, he



bellowed to his valet to pack the bags again, saying he would return to Bombay by the night mail. Promptly, the frightened clients exerted themselves, and secured for him luxurious and appropriate quarters."

Pherozechah was therefore Bombay's uncrowned king in more senses than one. "Yet for all this," writes Justice Bakhtawar Lentin, "Pherozechah never lost the common touch. He was intensely human. He cared. He never donned the garb of hypocritical asceticism. He dressed elegantly. He liked his creative comforts. He enjoyed civilized refreshment before dinner and a good cigar after."

Pherozechah would brook no nonsense. He always stood on his rights. An example of this occurred in 1905 when the Prince and Princess of Wales were to visit India. On the eve of the royal visit, the Government of Bombay announced the names of dignitaries to meet the Royal Highnesses, omitting the names of the president and the commissioner of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. An outraged Pherozechah threatened a total boycott of the royal visit. The Government got cold feet and there was an interesting sequel. This is how former Bombay mayor B. K. Boman-Behram describes it: "The Government sent the chief secretary to Pherozechah's residence. Pherozechah told him coldly: 'I shall be in my office

room at 12 o'clock. Come and see me there.' This was perhaps meant as a deliberate slight to (the) Government in return for the affront to the Corporation. The chief secretary went and waited in Pherozeshah's office. On arriving, Pherozeshah asked: 'What is your business?' The chief secretary replied: 'The Government wishes me to tell you that they will alter all the arrangements and give you the place of honor.' 'If that be so, you better go back. I will ask the Corporation to meet me in an hour,' said Pherozeshah. The chief secretary requested Pherozeshah to send word, 'yes or no.' He added: 'Only one of these two.' Pherozeshah went down to the Corporation meeting at which the councillors were assembled in an angry mood. He pacified them and they agreed with him, and the word 'yes' was sent to the Government. The visit duly took place and Pherozeshah read the address to the Royal Highnesses with the Governor and officials standing in the wings. Their Highnesses were so pleased that they invited Pherozeshah to come and see them in private."

A similar incident occurred when it was proposed to erect a statue of King

George V in front of the Bombay Municipality office. Baburao Shete describes Pherozeshah's reaction: "What business has he to be placed in front of the Corporation building?" roared Pheroz-

**He travelled in style
with his own valet
and sometimes even
his own barber**

eshah Mehta. 'He had done nothing for this city.' And naturally, the resolution was defeated by the Corporation. 'Do you want your own statue to be erected there?' taunted someone. 'Why not?' asked Pherozeshah. 'It may happen. I have served this city for 30 years.' Ultimately it did happen. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta's statue was placed by unanimous vote on the spot where King George's was to be."

The commemorative *Volume* recounts the great things Pherozeshah did in the spheres of law, municipal government, education, journalism (he founded the *Bombay Chronicle*), social reform and

politics. But the overriding impression one forms after reading the many and varied tributes of his admirers and followers, not the least of whom was Mahatma Gandhi, is that the man was greater than anything he did. His concern was constant for his community and sister communities, for the city of his birth and the country. He was an educationist who was far ahead of his time, a great liberal who was also a true patriot, in an era when patriotism had not yet begun to look askance at liberalism. His writings and speeches — his gift of words that was the most preeminent of his gifts — reflect the man he was: aggressive but eminently fair, hard-headed and great-hearted, jovial with an almost irreverent sense of humor, boisterous but withal serene, a man who asked for and gave no quarter, who did not sutter fools gladly but at the same time was most generous when praise was deserved.

Dotivala's *Memorial Volume* is further enriched by several photographs of historical and personal interest, a collection of Pherozeshah's speeches and writings, and a bibliography. All in all, a worthy memorial and a most readable book.

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Primer for Parsis

Dara Kadva

Parsis Ancient and Modern and their Religion by Faredun Kavasji Dadachanji. Published by the author, 4 Kattrak Parsi Colony, M. A. Jinnah Road, Karachi 3. Third edition, Pp. 200.

An average Parsi these days has only a general idea about his religion, including our ancient history in Iran. This very same average Parsi is going to feel surprised if he is told that some of our illustrious padshahs — like Jamsheed, Faridun, Kaikobad, Kaykaus and Kay Khushru — lived in the period before the birth of Prophet Zarathushtra. The legendary Rustam-Sohrab episode also preceded the advent of the Prophet. The only common denominator in our entire ancient history is that it is enshrined in the *Shah Namah* of Firdausi Tusi. Not many know that His divine message was first accepted by King Vishtasp mid-way during the Kayanian dynasty; that the first Ader Meher (fire-temple) of our religion was consecrated by Vishtasp at Burjin.

These and many other basic facts about our religion and community are mentioned in the book, *Parsis Ancient and Modern and their Religion* by F. K. Dadachanji. It is not a new book, having been first published in Karachi in 1980. This is its 200-page third edition which incorporates an update about modern Parsis. Strangely, it mentions no price.

If an ill-informed Parsi decides to acquire a detailed knowledge of our religion and history, this book is not recommended because its elucidation is too brief and does not provide all the answers. The five royal dynasties of ancient Iran — Peshdadian, Kayanian, Achaemenian, Parthian and Sassanian — have been completed in just 50 pages in Part I of the book entitled "History of Iran," while Part II on "Modern times" takes up more than 100 pages. This could

have been avoided. It dwells at length on who Dadabhoy Naoroji or Sir Pherozeshah Mehta were and their grand contribution to the freedom struggle, on how J.R.D. Tata guided the House of Tatas to number one position in Indian industry, on the community's contribution to the various other social, business and literary fields... Part III on "Religion" deals with the concept of God, forms of worship, ethics, etc, but occupying barely 20 pages, it does not satisfy one's curiosity about the religion.

I am intrigued therefore by Dadachanji's assertion in his preface to the first edition that the book is "primarily meant for Parsis — particularly the Karachi Parsis and its student community — and may be found interesting and informative by non-Parsis too."

Given the difficulty faced by writers to discuss an ancient religion, much of whose history books have been destroyed or are untraceable, it could still have been possible for Dadachanji to be particular about details and avoid various inconsistencies. The book mentions the period of rule of only Achaemenian and Sassanian dynasties while offering no dates for the other three dynasties. The tenure of individual padshahs is also mentioned for some and not for the rest. Historical data in this regard is definitely available and could not have been beyond the reach of a researcher/writer like Dadachanji.

Further in one chapter, Dadachanji says Darius the Great's army "entered Thrace, Macedonia, Athens and Eritrea in 500 BC." The first three are in Greece while Eritrea is in the Horn of Africa and is presently a part of Ethiopia. By land, it could not be reached without first crossing Egypt and Sudan, which logistically is a difficult task for any army even in mod-

ern times. I am sure the author meant some other area in the Mediterranean but has wrongly mentioned Eritrea.

I would have preferred if the author had discussed how and why the Parsis left Iran, how they preserved the atash padshah during the sea voyage and how from Diu to Sanjan and then to Udwada the holy fire was consecrated at the Iran-shah. But these points are not discussed even in passing.

The only other point I would like to discuss is the foreword by Justice Dr Javid Iqbal wherein he quotes his father, the late Allama Iqbal, as saying that "had the Parsis maintained their contact with Iran and retained their knowledge of the Persian language, they would have certainly realized that the Persian cultural tradition in its spirit remained essentially Zoroastrian despite Hellenic and Islamic influences." Obviously, Dr Iqbal wrote this when the Pahlavi Dynasty was in power, which took pride in the ancient history of Iran and celebrated historic events like a 10-day holiday on Jamshedi Navroze. The late Shah had organized an international extravaganza in 1976 to mark the 2,500th year anniversary of Cyrus the Great. But, after the arrival of the Islamic Revolution, the ancient history and traditions have been sidetracked. Now March 21 each year is known only as Navroze, not Jamshedi Navroze as before, and is only a one-day holiday. The regime has also banned cafes from holding *Shah Namah* discourses by claiming that they are frequented by drug addicts.

There is a great need for books on our ancient history and I do hope that, taking a leaf from Dadachanji, Parsi authors in India will also come out with detailed accounts.

MILESTONES

This month's list of those married in Bombay includes civil marriages between Zoroastrians. Also featured are intercommunity marriages registered at the Old Customs House between August 1990 and January 1991. This month, for the first time, *Parsiana* has also tapped the registration center for intercommunity marriages at the MHADA office in Bandra (East). However, names which could not be satisfactorily identified as Zoroastrian have been omitted.

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged from 20 years to 36 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 21 years and 41 years, averaging at 29 years.

From among the 75 Zoroastrians who died in Bombay in March, 22 succumbed to the major killer: heart disease. Pneumonia and lung disease followed claiming 13 lives while old age and general debility took 11 victims. Five fell prey to cancer, three each to anemia and diabetes and two each to septicemia, liver disease, kidney failure and

encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Asthma, tuberculosis, atherosclerosis (deposition of fatty substances in the arteries), Alzheimer's disease (a degenerative disease of the central nervous system characterised by premature senile mental deterioration), brain disease, gastrointestinal bleeding and diarrhoea were the isolated cases registered last month. There was one reported case of drowning. One youth aged 27 and two aged 35 years were also lost to the community. The highest age at death: 98 years.

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

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

BOMBAY

Born

A girl to *Nergish* and *Vispy Katila* on January 31, 1991
A boy to *Aban* and *Firoze Andhyarujina*; March 2
A girl to *Havovi* and *Yezdi Cobla*; March 2
A girl to *Rati* and *Darius Billimoria*; March 3
A boy to *Tushnamaiti* and *Percy Sasuri*; March 5
A boy to *Havovee* and *Sheriar Irani*; March 8
A girl to *Shirin* and *Behram Dotivala*; March 15
A girl to *Anupam* and *Shahrook Munsiff*; March 16
A boy to *Shernaz* and *Farokh Wadia*; March 16
A boy to *Firuz* and *Rumy Patel*; March 17
A girl to *Jolly* and *Sarosh Doctor*; March 19
A girl to *Aban* and *Jamshed Bapasola*; March 20

A boy to *Kamal* and *Zubin Mistry*; March 20
A boy to *Havovi* and *Hoshedar Vachha*; March 21
A boy to *Goolleshtan* and *Dinyar Elavia*; March 22
A boy, *Burzen*, to *Yasmin* and *Tehmtan Engineer*; March 22
A boy, *Kayzad*, to *Zarin* and *Rohinton Mistry*; March 24
A boy to *Benaifer* and *Neville Taraporewalla*; March 25
A girl to *Roshan* and *Kaizad Bhatena*; March 28
A boy to *Dilbar* and *Lohrasp Kalyaniwalla*; March 28

Married

Delnavaz Mazdayasna and *Afshin Kohinoor*; August 30, 1990
Farida Gustad Divecha and *Kishor Jaywant Salunke*; September 1
Farida Master and *S. Jayaswal*; September 4

Zarangiz A. Aftabi and *Anilkumar Misra*; September 30
Winnie D'Costa and *Mehli Nariman Balsara*; October 4
Poorwa Ramesh Dave and *Kurush Phiroze Sarkari*; October 8
Jasmine Mehli Wadia and *Mihir Gangadhar Kulkarni*; October 14
Pearl Meherji Mistry and *Shashikant Tiwari*; October 19
Pallavi Sudhakar Kasar and *Zarsis Soli Driver*; November 5
Lina Joseph Pinto and *Keraj Dara Mody*; November 9
Lily Framroze Bhagat and *Patrick Leslie Seeneey*; November 11
Sonal Vasantkumar Parikh and *Vispy Rustomji Medhora*; November 12
Nergish F. Kanga and *Balgopal T*; November 12
Tanvir Shaikh and *Sharookh Jimmy Balsara*; November 16
Derineh Homee Cooper and *Mandhir Daljeet Rai*; November 27
Veera J. Bhaisa and *Ashish S. Sawkar*; December 2
Maharukh K. Daruwalla and *Kamlesh K. Sheth*; December 2
Rashna Hosang Dhabhar and *Ravikumar Ramakrishna Iyer*; December 8
Sonia Vij and *Percy Bomi Vasunia*; December 10
Poonam Tickoo and *Mehrnosh P. Master*; December 12
Maria Elaine Nazareth and *Peshotan Nadir Modi*; December 20
Daisy Joshi and *Rahul Jall Cowasji*; December 27
Zia Jamshedji and *Thomas Laal Kainer*; December 27
Tina Balsara and *Vikrant A. Vaswani*; December 29
Nergish Adi Patva and *Suraj Hariram Dulani*; December 31
Pushpalata Rama Krishnan and *Gev Kersasp Khambata*; December 31
Katy Ratan Karanjia and *Rusi Jehangir Kermani*; January 1, 1991
Shireen Narinder Nayar and *Kaikobad Behram Mistry*; January 4
Virginia Winnie Fernandes and *Neville Murzban Unwala*; January 5
Rashné N. Rustomji and *Carl A. Athayde*; January 6

Shernaz Jehangir Mistry and *Kaizad Bomi Heerjee*; January 7
Bernadette Devraj Dabhade and *Shahpur Pheroze Ratnagar*; January 9
Binaifer A. Doctor and *Bomi V. Patel*; January 11
Katy Shapoor Lakdawalla and *Sudhir Premchand Gyanchandani*; January 18
Zerina M. Daruwalla and *Hosi Ratanshaw Mistry*; January 19
Meher Homi Guard and *Christopher Francis De Souza*; January 21
Binaifer Edul Havaladar and *Jawaharlal Girish Gala*; January 22
Dinaz Hormazjee Uddhanawala of Udhna, Surat and *Kersi Dinshaw Shroff*; February 3
Kashmira Freddy Buhariwala and *Aspi Faramroj Pardiwala*; February 16
Veera Homi Panthaki and *Mahiyar Soli Moos*; February 18
Daisy Pervaz Daruwalla and *Eric Kaikhushroo Marfatia*; February 22
Pervin Behram Bhada and *Daraius Jehangir Dadachanji*; February 23
Ava Dara Zaiwalla and *Jamshed Adi Lalkaka*; February 26
Maharukh Ratan Bhesania and *Khushru Tehmuras Manekshaw* of Kathmandu; February 26
Mahbanoo Minoo Mirza and *Sohrab Jamshed Faroodi*; March 1
Sanobar Keki Randeria and *Rohinton Adi Katrak* of Hosham, USA; March 1
Kashmira Pirojshaw Dumasia of Ahmedabad and *Percy Gustad Patel*; March 2
Ruzbeh Hoshang Amroli and *Daraius Baji Mehta*; March 3
Meher Homi Sethna and *Kavas Ratan Dadabhoy*; March 4
Behroze Minoo Pithawalla of Solapur and *Adi Homi Gara*; March 4
Amy Naval Shroff and *Zarir Dinshaw Darbari* of Bular; March 5
Hutokshi Pesi Shaw and *Kurush Firoz Elavia* of Houston; March 7
Maharukh Percy Dadrewala and *Hoshang Homi Katki*; March 7

Avaan Rustom Dadachanji and Aspi Dara Marolia of Poona; March 7
 Dinaz Lovji Porbunderwala and Cyrus Savak Sarbhanwalla; March 8
 Kamal Minoo Mogrelia and Rustom Framroze Titina; March 9
 Hutoxi Rusi Cooper and Zubin Shahruck Contractor; March 10
 Pervin Pesi Jaorewala and Rohinton Dadi Vesuna; March 10
 Roshan Kaikhushru Bulsara and Parvez Rusi Bharucha; March 11
 Aban Hoshang Mistry and Nari Dickey Chothia; March 11
 Shahnaz Aflatoon Irani and Farzad Sheriar Jehani; March 11
 Roshni Rustom Nargolwala and Phiroze Parvez Panthaki; March 11
 Nilufer Mehli Wadia and Kaiyomerz Cawas Palia; March 12
 Nilufer Jal Langdana and Cyrus Homi Siganporia; March 14
 Parinaz Feradoon Kohiyar and Jamshed Purvez Chinoy; March 16
 Gulshan Dadi Mistry and Adi Bomanji Rustomji; March 17
 Persis Dinshaw Patel and Behram Jal Vania; March 18
 Maharukh Behram Khambata and Adi Dorabji Sadri; March 19
 Shireen Adi Hormasji and Dinshaw Russy Kavarana; March 21
 Rukshana Jimmy Banker and Marzban Keki Elavia; March 22
 Meher Homi Dastoor and Noshir Adi Marfatia; March 23
 Pervin Sam Vasania and Kersasp Hoshang Karanjia; March 30
 Shiraz Kersi Master and Kerman Hormuzdiar Rana; March 31

Died
 Tehmi Edulji Billimoria (81), residing at Oceana, Netaji Subhash Rd, Marine Drive, 400020; February 28
 Khorshed Cawasji Calagopi (81), F. Bhiwandiwalla Ter, Dhobitalao, 400002; February 28
 Khorshed Sorab Doctor (94), Sudama Kutir, Cumballa Hill, 400036; March 1

Shirin Edulji Kaka (82), 3/7, A. H. Wadia Baug, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; March 1
 Dina Dinshaw Patel (82), B/402, Sea-Shell Apts, Seven Bglws, Andheri (W), 400061; March 1
 Hilla Bejonji Workingboxwalla (81), F. S. Parukh Dharam-shalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; March 1
 Bachubai Jeejeebhoy Fitter (87), Readymoney Block, 781, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 2
 Pilamai Rustom Major (90), New Kanga Bldg, A. K. Marg, 400036; March 2
 Fredoon Framroze Pastakia (79), 62/B, Diamond Court, 40, Nepean Sea Rd, 400006; March 2
 Behram Berjorji Unwala (68), Gazdar Hse, B. Desai Rd, 400026; March 2
 Erach Navroji Dastur (80), Tehmi Ter, 805, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 3
 Kolan Naval Manjra (65), 723, Dinshaw Master Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 3
 Savaksha Cursetji Pardiwalla (98), 281, Sidhwa Bldg, Princess St, 400002; March 3
 Pestonji Naoroji Sukeshwalla (85), Room no 14, Malegam-walla Bldg, Mahim, 400016; March 3
 Maneck Pestonji Cooper (90), 16/3, Wadia Bldg, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; March 4
 Banoo Homi Munshi (74), 18, Mehta Bldg, Panthaki Baug, Andheri (E), 400069; March 4
 Banoo Dhunjisha Ratnagar (68), C/20, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; March 4
 Aloo Eruch Vevai (68), 17/A, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; March 4
 Dossabhoy Framroze Avari (81), 162, Mistry Bldg, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; March 7
 Phiroze Rustom Bhandara (68), Shanti Ville, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; March 7
 Daulat Dinshajee Kavarana (64), Keravala Bldg, 789, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 7
 Shirin Nariman Rabadi (71), 21, Dubash Block, Khareghat Clny, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; March 7
 Nariman Jehangirji

Confectioner (71), 595, J. S. S. Rd, 400002; March 8
 Homai Pestonji Gazdar (71), 130, M. Karve Rd, 400020; March 8
 Piroja Manecksha Master (74), 127, Shiraz Ter, Tardeo, 400034; March 8
 Cyrus Sarosh Shastri (27), IA/11, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; March 8
 Putlabai Nadirsha Kapadia (89), Dhun Bldg, 312, Lamington Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; March 9
 Neville Keki Haevae (35), Room no 29, Haji Habib Bldg, 30, Naigam Cross Rd, Dadar, 400014; March 10
 Keki Sorabji Masalawala (72), Mahimwalla Bldg, 12, Khetwadi Main Rd, 400004; March 10
 Jaiji Byramji Mody (78), 15/4, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; March 10
 Homi Jal Aga (35), Gaum Elav, Dist Surat, 395001; March 11
 Fali Jahangir Cooper (61), 15/7, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; March 11
 Piroja Ardeshir Mistry (85), M/6, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; March 11
 Sorabji Hormusji Pochkhana-walla (86), 683, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 11
 Nadirshaw Bhikhaji Patel (90), 4/23, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Parel, 400012; March 12
 Dara Nariman Sarkari (52), Room no 3, Mani Bhuvan, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; March 12
 Byram Sorabjee Irani (86), A, Shantivan II, 604, Raheja Township, Malad (E), 400097; March 13
 Shapur Gustasp Irani (75), C, Bhiwandiwalla Ter, Dhobitalao, 400002; March 13
 Hiranbai Framroz Bhagat (76), Dhanbai Villa, Dhanbai Wadi, Irla Lane, Vile Parle (W), 400056; March 14
 Homi Maneck Dadachanji (79), 35, Sanchesy Hse, 4th Khetwadi Lane, 400004; March 14
 Behram Nariman Daruwalla (78), D/2, Chitrapur Hsg Soc, Rd No 27, Bandra (W), 400050; March 15
 Coomi Piroshaw Jamooji (88), Dossal Mans, 795, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 15
 Nadir Bapuji Mistry (88), 610,

Rajni Mhl, 9/95, Tardeo Rd, 400034; March 15
 Maneckshaw Sorabji Pooniwalla (76), Dosabhoy Mans, 796, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 15
 Dadi Darabshah Batliwalla (68), 9, Patel Chmbs, Gunbow St, Fort, 400001; March 17
 Gool Dara Doctor (82), Raj Mhl, Altamount Rd, 400026; March 17
 Bommy Darabsha Batiwala (54), Orient Hse, 666, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 18
 Katty Noshir Hathiram (68), 8/A, Gilder Lane, Marzban Clny, Tardeo, 400008; March 18
 Sohrajji Jamshedji Kotwal (91), P/36, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; March 18
 Perin Cooverji Patel (80), 13, Sleater Rd, 400007; March 18
 Rusi Burjorji Daver (68), Silverett, 122, Rd No 27, Sion (E), 400022; March 19
 Pirojshaw Maneckji Dhalla (93), 1, Lady Meherbai Tata Bldg, S. V. Rd, Bandra, 400050; March 19
 Aaloo Adi-Edulji Mistry (73), Dadachanji Bldg, Marzban Clny, Dr Nair Rd, 400011; March 19
 Meherwanji Kaikhushroo Dalal (82), Meher-Muncher Mans, 512, R. P. Masani Rd, Matunga, 400019; March 20
 Aranavaz Ardeshir Ichhaporia (40), Room no 71, Kashinath Bldg, Cadel Rd, Mahim, 400016; March 21
 Dhun Shiavax Kotwal (78), Jaiphal Ter, 29, Forjett St, 400036; March 21
 Tehmurasp Pestonji Panthakey (72), 12, Sorab Bharucha Rd, Colaba, 400005; March 21
 Aloo Firoze Baliwala (60), 26, Sohmag, Katrak Rd, Wadala, 400031; March 22
 Gul Bilimoria (60), Shanti Sadan, French Bridge, 400007; March 22
 Khorshed Kaikhushroo Mistry (70), 22/F, Bomanji Dhunjibhoy Bldg, Nawab Tank Rd, Mazgaon, 400010; March 22
 Eddie Eruch Padder (58), Dorab Tata Bldg No 2, Tata Blocks, Bandra, 400050; March 22
 Homai Shavak Tata (80), 29, Jaiphal Ter, Forjett St, 400036; March 22
 Minoo Jalega Driver (60), F/20, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd,

400039; March 24
Jal Jehangirji Pacca (75), 2, School Bldg, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; March 24
Piloo Mancheshaw Charna (76), 14/A, Surya Kiran, Cumballa Hill, 400026; March 25
Nergish Maneckji Antia (70), C/31, Meherzin, N. Parekh Rd, 400005; March 26
Khorshed Jamshedji Katrak (87), 601, Rendezvous, 120/121, Master Vinayak Marg, Bandra, 400050; March 26
Villamai Dara Mehta (80), 303/A, Silver Sands, Yari Rd, Versova, Andheri, 400061; March 26
Savak Sorabji Bhesania (60), 1/12, A. H. Wadia Baug, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; March 27
Sorab Jamshedji Coachmen (86), 22/C, Nawab Tank Rd, Sakarwadi, Mazgaon, 400010; March 28
Coomi Kaikhusroo Driver (95), Santosh Bldg, 100, Dadasaheb Phalke Rd, Dadar, 400014; March 28
Faramroze Rustomji Karai (83), Room no 2, Maneckji Petit Bldg, Gilder Lane, Lamington Rd, 400008; March 28
Sherbanoo Framroze Billimoria (97), Sylmoyn, 3, Carmichael Rd, 400026; March 30
Fardoonji Khursetji Irani (98), 19, Malegamwalla Bldg, Khareghat Clny, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; March 30
Homi Jeejibhoy Patel (60), Karani Mans, 780, Joshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 30
Homai Barjor Dastur (75), 16, Abbas Bldg, Jalbhai St, Charni Rd, 400004; March 31
Phiroze Savaksa Oomrigar (76), 18, Clinic Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo Rd, 400007; March 31

BURNPUR, WEST BENGAL
Married
Homai Sabavala and Marzban Cavas Bilimoria; March 24

CALCUTTA
Born
 A girl, **Tashan**, to **Shirin** and **Cyrus Mehta**; March 21

Died
Keki Faramroze Medhora; February 5
Katy Homi Engineer, sister of

Cawas, Freny, Nargis and Khorshed Nariman; February 23
JAMSHEDPUR
Married
Meena Monga of Bombay and **Faramroze Cavas Bugli**; November 5, 1990
Bakhtavar Mistry of Bombay and **Rumi Burjor Battiwala**; November 8
Zarine F. Kalwachwala and Soli P. Baria of Surat; December 7

Died
Sheroo F. Todiwala (65), Room no 9, Parsi Hostel, Straight Mile Rd, 831001; October 10
Perin C. Mehta (73), 20, Circuit Hse Area (E), 831001; December 26

POONA
Married
Meher Aga, daughter of **Arnavaz** and **Rohinton** and **Pheroze Pudamjee**, son of **Amy** and **Nusli**; March 18, 1991

Died
Tehmina Edulji Thanewala (84), 1/17, Gita Soc, Synagogue St, 411001; March 7
Jehangir Kaikhashru Adranvala (85), father of **Shireen** and **Rustum** and brother of **Tehmina**; March 9 (body donated for educational use)
Jehangir Fardoon Irani (80), 676, Taboot St, 411001; March 17
Dhunjishav Eduljee Mithaiwalla (69), Central Apts, Convent St, 411001; March 17
Soona Aspandiar Irani (85), 486, Rasta Peth, 411001; March 19
Sheriyar A. Irani (60), 2067, Jan Mohmed St, 411001; March 28

SURAT
Died
Tehmina Bomansha Contractor (70), Popat Mohallo, Nanpura, 395001; February 15
Hutokshi Nadirsha Patel (24), Gam Suwali, Taluka Charpari, 395003; March 1
Goolbai Hormusji Patel (89), Gam Elav, Taluka Hasot, Dist Bharuch, 392001; March 4
Dinamai Sorabji Cooper (73), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; March 6
Minocher Dosabhai Rao (77), 67, Sugam Sasapatti, Adajan, 395009; March 13

Mehra Minocher Khambatta (74), Vanki Bordi, 395003; March 26
Nariman Gustadji Pajnigara (70); March 30

AUSTIN, TEXAS
Married
Supriya Sarma and Firoz Dara Antia; December 29, 1990

AUSTRALIA
Died
Perin Minocher Wadia; February 3, 1991

CHICAGO
Born
 A boy, **Kayan**, to **Farhiz** and **Farahad Sidha**; November 4, 1990
 A girl, **Tanaz**, to **Kashmira** and **Rumi Jamsetjee**, sister to **Roshni**; February 12, 1991

HONG KONG
Married
Tehnaz Homi Gotla and **Michael John Crook**; November 17, 1990

KARACHI
Born
 A girl, **Tania**, to **Mailing** and **Farhad Mavalwala**; November 20

Died
Minoo J. Dubash (68); January 4, 1991
Lovji K. Spencer (90); January 11
Pirosha Byramji Daruwala (67); January 13
Jamshed Cowasjee Karanjia (68); January 16
Pilamai Maneckji Mirza (8C);

January 16
Keki Jehangirji Tampal (76); January 20
Thrity Byramji Divecha (62); January 21
Cooverbai K. Medora (74); February 1
Mucca Darab Sachinwala (79); February 1
Freny Framroze Karanjia (55); February 5
Jeroo Pirozsha Nicolwalla (56); February 9
Farida Feroze Mehta (87); February 11
Lalokh Jamshed Irani (86); February 16
Mehramai Cyrus Minwalla (85); February 19
Mani Framroze Nadodwala (70); February 23
Mithamai Framroze Jimwala (87); February 28

SYRACUSE, USA
Born
 A boy, **Phiroze**, to **Farida** and **Neville Divecha**, brother to **Ashraf**; February 2

TORONTO
Died
Tehmina Shroff, mother of **Najoo** and **Keki**; February 12

VANCOUVER
Died
Sam Confectioner; January 1

TOTALS (for this issue)
 Births: Boys 14, Girls 11
 Marriages: Parsi 50
 Intercommunal 51
 Deaths: 113

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

THE PARSIANA BOOK OF IRANIAN NAMES

The Iranian names of boys and girls along with their meanings which originally appeared in Parsiana have now been reprinted in an attractive 24-page booklet.

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DINSHAW PETIT

the genial gentleman

Arnavaz S. Mama

At 87, he jested about being the longest surviving Petit: "The record so far is 82. I've bettered it by five years!" He jested about his legal profession, relating an epithet on a lawyer's grave: "He lies still." Even the final months of pain could not efface the smile from the pallid face nor the gentle humor that had been Dinshaw Hormusji Petit's hallmark.

President of the board of management of the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital (PGH) for the past eight years, Petit had served the Hospital in various capacities for nearly half a century. As treasurer during the World War II years he had negotiated the military requisitioning of the Hospital for a compensation of over Rs 21,000 per month and, when it was derequisitioned in 1946, successfully rented it to the Aga Khan Diamond Jubilee Committee, obtaining over Rs 1,20,000 for use of the Hospital premises for about a month plus the cost of repair and rectification required before the premises could revert for use by the PGH once again. In 1948, as honorary secretary, he convinced the managing committee to build Extension A on the second floor of the Hospital building — loosely known as the 'nursing home.' Thereafter, for over 20 years, Petit functioned as the PGH's vice president. The resolution passed at the condolence meeting held at the Hospital described him as "a man of gentle manners and mild disposition (who) exemplified in his person old-world courtesy and gentlemanliness. Ever considerate of others, controversy never touched his person... His association with the Hospital was

characterized by gentle guidance, winning manners with the donors and true courtesy with all with whom he came in contact. He visited the Hospital as a patient more than once in recent years and he won the affection of the staff by his sense of humor and unfailing courtesy."

A resolution of the board of trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet records Petit's participation in India's freedom struggle. The resolutions of the board of directors of the Zoroastrian Cooperative Bank, the Khareghat Colony Welfare Committee, the executive committee of the Western India Automobile Association, the Kasturba Sevashram at Maroli and the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman record Petit's services and mourn his passing. The *Jam-e-Jamshed* complimented Petit's "foresight and keen sense for spotting talent that made him invite Dr Homi Mehta to join him as joint honorary secretary (of the PGH) in which capacity both these able men worked for 10 years." "It is significant... that Dr H. S. Mehta and Dinshawji (Petit), who had worked together for (40 years) passed away within a short period (19 days of each other)," noted *The Bombay Samachar*.

"Simple...caring...humble...helpful..." the flood of letters from prominent as well as little-known people refer to Dinshaw Petit's many "little deeds of kindness and of love." Several beneficiaries and fellow professionals attested to his skill as a solicitor, buttressed by his personal integrity.

Dinshaw had taken law in deference to his uncle Manockjee Kavasji Petit

who had suggested that with the legalities surrounding the family's textile mills, a lawyer in the family was required. As luck would have it, the year Dinshaw graduated as a solicitor, the Petit mills went into liquidation.

Beginning his legal career at the Examiner Press Building, Dinshaw acquired a reputation for quiet work. He was "never ambitious, never one to push himself," says his wife Mitha Petit. Reluctantly, in consonance with family pressures, Dinshaw Petit accepted the unexpected invitation of Ardeshir Soonawalla, senior partner of the prestigious firm of solicitors Smytham Byrne Lambert, to join as a partner, relates Mitha. Any kind of nastiness or unhealthy competition were alien to Dinshaw's nature and when Ardeshir Soonawalla passed away, Dinshaw remained only long enough for Soonawalla's son to graduate as a solicitor before handing over the reins and returning to his peaceable office at the Examiner Press!

(It was Petit who with gentle persuasion and quiet humor oversaw the agreement between Dr Pestonji Warden and the new publisher of *Parsiana* in 1973. He never charged any fees for the transaction though it took considerable amount of time.)

Dinshaw Petit's grandfather was Kavasji, the eldest of the first Sir Dinshaw Petit's six sons (plus eight daughters). Sir Dinshaw's youngest son was Bomanji, the man after whom the Bomanji D. Petit Parsee General Hospital is named.

Proud of his Petit heritage, Dinshawji, as he was generally known, did not approve of the Hospital being referred to only as the Parsee General Hospital. It did not however prevent him from relating with a substantial dose of humor how — and why — the First Baronet, in appointing his successor, bypassed Kavasji in favor of his second son Framji: Kavasji had 11 children, too many to be able to maintain the baronetcy in style! (Incidentally, both Kavasji and Framji predeceased their father and the baronetcy devolved on Framji's son Jijibhoj who became the second Sir Dinshaw Petit. The Bomanji Petit branch is now extinct.)

Dinshaw Petit's official connection with the Hospital began in 1938, as notes the Hospital's *Diamond Jubilee Souvenir* and ended with his death on November 21, 1990. However, some of his earliest memories related to the Hospital — notably the crowds when The Governor of Bombay Lord Sydenham inaugurated the institution in 1912. While the Hospital is named after Bomanji Petit who donated the land worth over five lakh rupees at the time plus an additional Rs 50,000, the project had been the brainchild of Bomanji's son Jehangir, a first cousin to Dinshaw's father Hormusji. Jehangir displayed great fondness for Dinshaw, treating him as a part of his own family. Indeed, Dinshaw had said that he used to join Jehangir for a holiday twice a year —

in Mahabaleshwar in May and in Mathuran in December — as Jehangir owned palatial bungalows in both places. A dedicated philanthropist, Jehangir inducted Dinshaw on his team, both at the PGH and at the Sakarbai Petit Hospital for Animals and Dinshaw's recollection of Jehangir verged on filial devotion.

It was again at Jehangir Petit's house that Dinshaw's sister Mithu, then 21 years old, first met Mahatma Gandhi and became converted to the Gandhian way of life and service. The influence invaded their branch of the Petit family and the household stock of wines and liquors was poured down the drain in line with Gandhi's teetotalitarian concepts. Dinshaw's own favorite libation remained "doodh nu puff."

Under Mithu's persuasion, Dinshaw remembered going to Maroli to participate in the "no-tax campaign," speaking out against the Government's tax policy. He was duly locked up but his active involvement with the freedom struggle ended on the fourth day when, instead of being sentenced, he was put on a Bombay bound train. "Perhaps they thought I would be troublesome," he had chuckled at the recollection. All along Dinshaw maintained proud memories of his sister who stuck to her Gandhian ideals, using her personal wealth to build an ashram at Maroli, teaching and tending adivasis until the end and final burial there.

Dinshaw had an equally long innings at the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) from which he retired as president a few years ago and was elevated to the status of president emeritus.

Feeding crows and sparrows, dogs and cats was a daily activity. His daughter-in-law Aban recounts how every morning there were two lunch boxes packed — with sandwiches for Dinshaw, crumbs for the birds and scraps for the cats. Once when a favorite cat was missing, Dinshaw went up and down his office block making tender enquiries about her until she was located, unharmed, in a filing cabinet in Dinshaw's office, Mitha and Aban laugh at the memories.

Despite the hurly-burly of professional life, the vagaries endemic to the Petit family — which he could recount with tender humor and a flair for detail — and his own involvement with several prestigious institutions, the butt of Dinshaw's jokes was invariably himself. No generation gap seemed to come in the way of his rapport with people of all ages and walks of life and his genial companionship with his wife Mitha, son Homa, daughter-in-law Aban and granddaughter Sherina seemed an oasis of charm in the rat race and cantankerousness of the society of our times.

Dinshaw Petit is survived by his wife Mitha, his son Homa and daughter Freya Weiss.

HOMI MEHTA A will to serve

It had been business as usual on November 6, 1990. Dr Homi Mehta, joint honorary secretary of the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital (PGH) and its medical superintendent, had finished his day at work, including the institutional round of the Hospital in his wheelchair. "He was in the Hospital until about 2 p.m... and expired suddenly at about 4 p.m. at home. It was a fitting end to a life of strenuous exertion extending over four decades," notes the resolution carried



at the condolence meeting convened at the Hospital.

Almost an institution himself, Mehta (90) had been a very successful police surgeon of Bombay (a civil service appointment) and professor of forensic medicine at the Grant Medical College who joined the PGH in its darkest hours in 1950. Funds were disastrously low, owing of the Hospital had been closed and faced the threat of government requisitioning and there were very few patients in the Hospital: The general consensus was to wind up the Hospital as noted an article in the Hospital's *Diamond Jubilee Souvenir*.

The Government had granted him special permission to take on the task at the PGH concurrently with his other positions. Current PGH administrator Erach

Kapadia remembers the pomp of his government position with an official car, outrider and motorcycle escort and the traffic police standing to attention. The Hospital resolution records how "his services endured over a period of 40 years without a break. The Hospital, which had passed through vicissitudes, acquired a measure of steadiness when he took the helm of affairs in his hands."

There was no alternative to Mehta's policy of seeking donations from the community. It was to his credit that the apathy and hostility he encountered during his initial forays were to turn into a steady stream of goodwill. Indeed, the latest production of the Parsi Medical Amateur Association, *Manchoo Macbeth*, in memory of the late Mehta, is said to have netted the Hospital nearly five lakh rupees — such was the power of his name over the pursestrings of the community.

As notes the tribute in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of November 11, 1990, "From

1954 to 1964, Dr Mehta and his dedicated team gave hours upon hours of service to raise this Hospital's stature. To augment the finances of this Hospital he staged shows and fairs and with utmost humility, approached his beloved Parsi community with a 'begging bowl.' Parris, having immense faith in the man, doled out generously whenever he sought their help."

The Hospital was his life — "he was wedded to it," noted Homa Petit, then vice president of the PGH, at the condolence meeting. "Nothing could deter him from doing things for the Hospital," added Kapadia.

"If his legs refused to carry him, he used the wheelchair. If ordinary transport was not sufficient for bringing him from home to the Hospital, he would use the ambulance," *The Bombay Samachar* attested to his dauntless spirit.

Though Mehta's "unimpeachable integrity" was duly appreciated, since some time there had been a feeling that the nonagenarian was out of step with the times. Phiroze Jhabvala, joint honorary secretary of the PGH for the past 24 years, noted pointedly that Mehta had

done "a lot of work, but such as he thought what had to be done and how it should be done..."

In the old days labor was cheap and Mehta was willing to oblige donors by accepting people they recommended until the Hospital had reached the appalling figure of 270 non-medical ward staff for 300 patients, informs Kapadia.

His domineering presence helped to get things done but it resulted in the weakening of the collective decision-making process. As a result, some services deteriorated and labor relations suffered, noted a fellow committee member.

A man of deep loyalties, Mehta often went out of his way to do things for people who mattered to him. He considered himself a disciplinarian and, personally, would take no advantage of his position, but he could not enforce the same level of conduct on those he took a fancy to.

A conflict in the late 1960s between Mehta, then in his heyday, and a majority of the members of the executive committee including those who had inducted him into the Hospital, had led to Mehta's dissenters being voted out because of his

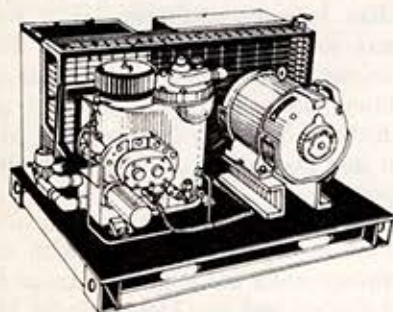
sway over the vote bank.

"During the last decade, it was evident that the ever-increasing burden of administration of such a large Hospital, its manifold problems, were more than a single person could handle. And yet, he wanted to go on and on," *The Samachar* commented on "the spirit (that) was indomitable and unconquerable."

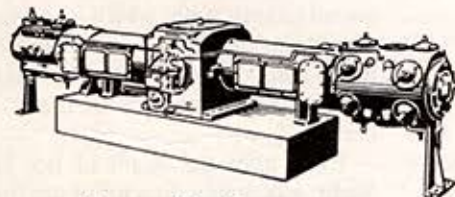
Be that as it may, the community saw Mehta as the most potent force behind the august institution. Thus, the *Jamé* tribute pointedly notes. "Even though, with the passing of age, his detractors wanted him out, his community, especially the poor, would just not hear of it. The reason? Simple. To Dr Homi Mehta, rich or poor made no difference at all. His daily visits to the wards were not restricted to rich patients' rooms only. The health of the poor and free patients was also of great concern to him and if he made enemies in the bargain, then the loss was never his. Today he stands like a colossus in the eyes of a grateful community..."

Mehta is survived by his sisters Mani and Tehmina, and brother Eruchshah.

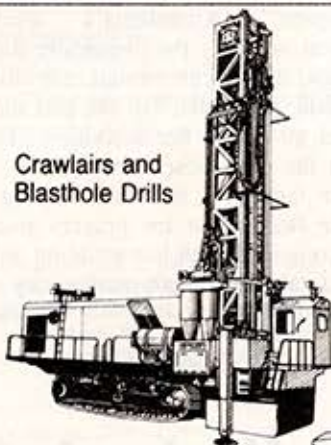
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Devoted to the disabled



Died: Piloo Dorab Khambatta, 68, social worker committed to blind welfare on January 4, 1991 in Bombay following cardiorespiratory failure.

Raising funds for the industrial homes for the blind and finding jobs for those with visual impairment were the main areas to which Khambatta applied herself during her decades of association as honorary secretary of the National Association for the Blind (NAB). Actually Khambatta's involvement with relief measures for the blind dates even prior to the formation of NAB in 1952.

She had played a leading role in the organizing of the First Provincial Conference for the Blind in 1948 and the First All India Conference on Work for the Blind in 1952. It is as a result of these meets that the Maharashtra state and the national government decided to focus on the education, vocational training, rehabilitation, employment and welfare of the blind, remembers her colleague Capt Hormazdiar Desai in his tribute to her.

When the famous handicapped personality of remarkable grit Ms Hellen Keller visited Bombay in 1956, it was once again Khambatta who assisted in the organizing of her program in the city such that maximum attention could be directed to the socioeconomic integration of the disabled in the country, Desai remarked.

First it was the National Association for the Blind that conferred on her the prestigious Rustom Merwanji Alpaiwalla Award for outstanding voluntary work. Then followed the N. D. Diwan Memorial Award as outstanding voluntary worker for the disabled from the National Society for Equal Opportunities for the Handicapped.

Towards increasing the self-dependency of the handicapped did Khambatta endeavor while she served as honorary secretary of NAB in charge of different portfolios like finance, public relations, and employment and placement. "She was instrumental in placing a very large

number of blind and the visually impaired in congenial and remunerative employment," informs her associate. She tried to ensure that the blind were given wages on par with the sighted workers and in return their production and efficiency was also comparable. It is said that she would have no compunction about calling on busy industrialists and impressing on them their civic and social responsibilities to employ the disabled.

Many a blind person from the Zoroastrian community acknowledge her help and her willingness to go out of the way to get funds from public charitable trusts for their and their family's education, employment, medical, housing and other needs.

Known to do "the fullest justice to any cause which she had undertaken to champion," Khambatta's assistance reached not only the physically disabled but also those with mental, emotional or domestic problems. Till the end she continued to pursue her activities. In fact, when the cardiorespiratory attack struck her on January 4, she was readying to go to the fire-temple for prayers since the day coincided with her wedding anniversary as also the death anniversary of her husband Dorab.

Parinaz Gandhi

Vajifdar's penchant

Died: Perin Nadir Vajifdar, 86, Gujarati newspaper serial writer, novelist and dramatist, on August 22, 1990 in Bombay.

Most often it was fiction though occasionally Vajifdar would choose to write on subjects of everyday importance and

on issues like women's welfare. Her writings in Gujarati were looked forward to by the readers of *Jam-e-Jamshed*, *Kaiser-E-Hind*, *Sahaj Vartaman* — publications to which she contributed not only in her real name but using pseudonyms too like Roshan, Perviz and Dinsoo, notes a tribute in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of September 30, 1990.

Very popular were her serials *Amar asha* and *Amiri no andhkar* which were subsequently published as books. There were several other serials that Vajifdar had written — *Adil*, *Toranj*, *Tutela tar*, *Khedut ni beti*, *Jungle na gulab...* As a playwright, her dramas *Kalankit*, *Dhakhara* and *Yasmin* were most appreciated by the Bombay theatergoers. Her play *Jadav Ranana darbarma Parsiono aagmaan* was staged for the audience at the Second World Zoroastrian Congress, adds the write-up.

In addition to her writing connections with *Jamé*, she also had family loyalties being a sixth generation descendant of *Jamé's* founder Furdoonjee Murzbanjee (her maternal grandmother Shirinbai Darbari was the great granddaughter of Murzbanjee).

Bhavnagar-born Vajifdar's school education was at Jamnagar. Among the games that she most enjoyed was chess and is in fact credited with being the first Indian lady to participate in a world chess tournament in London in 1927. She was also interested in crafts like knitting and embroidery and had published two books on these subjects which ran into two editions, mentions the *Jamé* report.

Besides her writing work she involved herself in organizing talent search competitions under the joint auspices of *Kaiser-E-Hind* and the Meher Garba Mandal, according to the information forwarded by Rustom Mirza. Some other organizations with which she was connected are the Parsi Lekhak Mandal and the Young Men's Parsi Association in addition to committees of many a local body.

Even after the death of her husband Nadir, who was a director of the firm May and Baker, Vajifdar involved herself in different activities. Almost till the end, the octogenarian's reading and writing continued. Actually, barely a couple of months before her death, a friend remembers Vajifdar's request to forward one of her articles to a publication. She had felt too strongly on the subject to abstain from a written response!

P. G.

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