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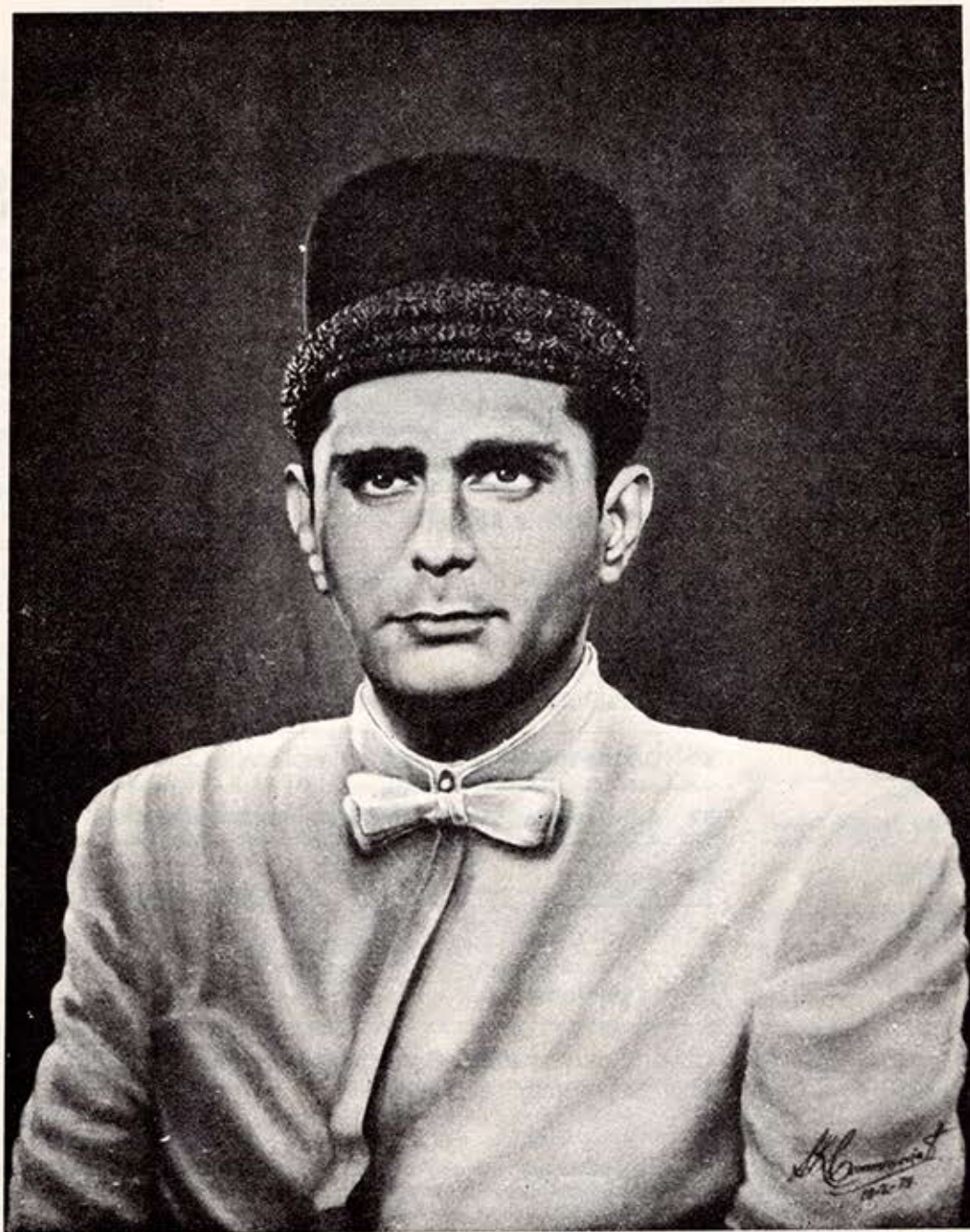
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In Memoriam

Mr Fali Meherji Variava

Director

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"A stab in the back"

According to Dastur Firoze Kotwal (in the matter of Roxan Darshan Shah) the intentions and wishes of the settlers should always be respected and to maintain their *iman* (faith) is the work of the trustees. ("A stab in the back," *Parsiana*, June 1991).

Now, in the first place, what were the intentions of the settlers? Assuming that the settlers intended that the women married outside the religion shall cease to be the beneficiaries, did the settlers take upon themselves the responsibility to rule on issues of faith?

If the settlers did not foresee any such eventuality and were silent on this point, is it legally proper for the trustees to hold that what they do or shall do was, in fact, the intention of the settlers?

Suppose I create a trust for the educa-

tion of poor Zoroastrian boys and do not specify whether I mean Parsi Zoroastrians or Zoroastrian Iranis, can my trustees later on object to a particular boy and say because he is not a Parsi Zoroastrian he is disqualified for the scholarship?

If the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustees are unable to gather the real intentions of the settlers, they would commit a breach of trust if they prohibit the last rights of any Zoroastrian to be performed at the Doongerwadi.

It may be noted that the courts do not rule on pure issues of any religion or faith. It is only when a person's legal right is denied that the court takes cognizance.

DINYAR N. JALNAWALLA
Jalna

"The correct position?"

Mr A. B. Damania's letter from Aleppo (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, June 1991) was most interesting. It raises many questions. Isn't it true that:

- Most of the Aryan tribes who are supposed to be our ancestors buried their dead?

- Some ancient people like the Mongolians, Scythians and Medians exposed their dead?

- In recent times, exposure is seen amongst the American Indians who live on the prairies where the soil is dry and hard to dig for burial. American Indians are the descendants of Asian Mongolians who ventured to the American continent over the frozen Bering Straits over 100,000 years ago.

- Some African tribes and Australian aborigines also practise exposure as they believe that the soul departs more easily if the corpse is left in the open.

- Why is it that a Christian can remain a Christian irrespective of burial, cremation or sea burial? Why is it that for Parsis exposure is part of religion rather than a matter of circumstance and convenience?

- How old are the dokhmas in India — from the first one constructed in Surat to the relatively modern one near the Hanging Gardens in Bombay?

- Can Mr Damania or anybody else find out how old are the funeral towers in Palmyra? Were they used by Zoroastrians or other people?

- How old is the oldest dokhma in the motherland of Iran?

- Why is it that the Parsis who live outside India do not feel so strongly about dokhmas?

- Doesn't cremation pollute the revered element of fire? Or are we taking the modern view that fire burns everything clean? An orthodox Parsi gentleman told us in London that smoking is carrying a 'portable fire' and does not contravene our faith!

SHAIROKH R. VAFADARI
Surrey, UK

"Whither Parsiana?"

Mr Yezdi Panthaki (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, June 1991) seems to be a bit naive in his advice to *Parsiana's* editors and writers. He writes that readers are turned off by reading articles on controversy, fading images and partisan views. He concludes that it would be better if the magazine only reported "in simple terms" with impartiality.

May I ask what good would be achieved by not reporting a burning issue such as "An injustice at doongerwadi" and not to have an open debate in a public forum like *Parsiana*? Would he prefer that we keep burying our heads in the sand and hope that the situation might improve?

A good magazine must report impartially on any issue and report all views. It must do more so in the case of a controversial issue to inform the readers. I believe *Parsiana* tries hard to accomplish these goals. This magazine is the platform for debate and clear thinking that will pave the way to a successful future.

NEVILLE G. M. PANTHAKI
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

"An injustice at..."

Readers' response to the article "An injustice at doongerwadi" shows they are either completely for or against the subject of intermarriage. What is surprising and distressing to find is that it is the younger generation who have highly bigoted views. A letter from a young girl named "Sanaea" (*Parsiana*, July 1991) and an earlier one by "Veera" (*Parsiana*, November 1990) are typical examples.

The older generation and sections of the younger, upcoming generation display sectional and partisan views. The middle generation grew up without religious teaching. Could it be that the recent mushrooming of religious classes, started

to fill this lacuna, are directly responsible for this?

To quote Rabindranath Tagore: "Just as health is a condition of man's whole body, so is religion of his whole nature. Health cannot be given in the same way as money is put in one's palm. But it may be induced by bringing about suitable conditions. Religious teaching, likewise, cannot be left to a school committee to be put on their syllabus along with arithmetic and Euclid. No school inspector will be able to measure its progress. No examiner's blue pencil can assign it proper marks. An appropriate environment must be created in which religion may have its natural growth."

In the quest for absolute truth (another name for God), a human being is always alone. If he is highly conditioned, he can never hope to reach there. Let us make our children aware about our scriptures, but leave the interpretation to them, so that they imbibe its true meaning, according to their own rate of growth. Let us be balanced in our approach. God has given each one of us *Vohuman* or the good mind, and a free will to choose between good and evil. Let us make the religious environment so fertile and rich that the seed of inquiry can take proper root and grow in the direction of Light.

Ms ARMAITY BHABHA

There have been many quotations in *Parsiiana* to support one's point of view. Some of them have been quoted out of context, others have been misinterpreted; for example the one in the letter by B. H. Minochehr-Homji ("An Appeal," *Parsiiana*, April 1991), in which he refers to the words of a scholar of our religion, Prof John Hinnells of Manchester University.

The quotation I refer to is: "The Parsi community is not just a racial group; it came into existence for religious reasons. Your ancestors did not come 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."

How is it possible for anyone to misunderstand the above quotation? In every sentence Prof Hinnells emphasizes the importance of our Zoroastrian religion and not our race.

B. H. Minochehr-Homji then exhorts

"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."

The last four words show how little he understands the nature of religion, as well as the quotation from Prof Hinnells.

The "nobility" of Zoroastrians in positions of authority and trust is indeed very questionable, as the correspondence in *Parsiiana* and *The Bombay Samachar* has shown. As to whether all priests deserve to be treated with "dignity and honor" — well, that depends on the inherent dignity and honor of individual priests. If all priests had deserved such respect and honor our community would not be in the position it finds itself in today.

In the past it was the religious and spiritual which enriched and strengthened the Parsi community. They may not have known more than their prayers, stories from the *Shah Namah*, episodes from the holy Prophet's life and something of our history (a mixture of facts and legend). But the spirit of Zoroastrianism was handed down in the practice of Zoroastrian principles in their social and communal life; in their business practices and in whatever the nature of their employment may have been.

Since few Parsis have been guided or encouraged to study the *Gathas*, and greater emphasis has been placed on the practices, observances and customs, the latter have become more important to them than the understanding of the religious and spiritual concepts, the essence of Zoroastrianism.

It is far easier to hold on to the practical aspects of a religion such as rituals, observances, customs and traditions — which eventually become routine and lose whatever religious and spiritual significance they had — than things of the spirit, such as thoughts, ideas, concepts and visions which are kept alive only in the heart and mind yet nourish the spirit of a community. Once these spiritual elements are allowed to weaken and fade into the background of a community's so-called "religious" life, they can be lost forever, so that the future generations may never learn of them at all. This is what has happened to our community: a fact which the orthodox refuse to acknowledge or understand.

If these self-styled "devout priests" truly desire the survival of the spiritual identity of the community let them not lose the religious and spiritual signifi-

cance of what Dr Kotwal regards as mere "mystic poetry."

In her letter ("An injustice at..." *Parsiiana*, December 1990) Ms Farida Antia asks, "If a politician has a right to speak on politics and a lawyer to speak on law, why should a scholarly priest not have the right to give his opinion on Zoroastrian religion?" She ends with voicing her appreciation that at least a priest had the courage to speak out, and she assures us that she and the community will firmly stand behind him.

No one denies a priest the right to speak his mind. But when a priest dictates as to who can remain a Zoroastrian and who cannot, he begins to dictate to Ahura Mazda Himself as to who may worship Him and who may not which is diametrically opposed to the spirit and message of Asho Zarathushtra.

This is not the first time that the "orthodox," in giving their point of view, have assumed and implied that they speak for the whole community; but judging from the volume of correspondence and by listening to what others have to say, it is obvious that such is not the case. These people seem to be quite incapable of thinking for themselves or listening to others, and are therefore unable to form a correct assessment of what they read or hear. In this lies the danger Prof Hinnells also spoke of — that either side should fail to listen to the other.

As for the politician and lawyer Ms Antia mentions — well, if they fail to do their jobs properly, they can be thrown out, or few will employ the lawyer; but what can be done about a priest within the "Zoroastrian" context?

As for "a priest who had the courage to speak out..." Well Ms Antia, he is only one of the 130 very vociferous priests who have been most outspoken. So vociferous, so strident have these voices been that you, and others like you, have failed to hear those which have contradicted their views, but in far quieter and more civilized tones.

I remember the voice of one priest who spoke with the voice of wisdom: he spoke with dignity and gentleness. There was no mistaking his "dignity and honor;" there was no doubt about his scholarship. He certainly needed courage to speak out when he did. But the rabble shouted and booed, and pelted him with eggs and tomatoes. They were not worthy of such men.

I was struck by the spirituality I saw in his face and in his demeanor; the

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sweetness of his expression, his serenity. I was in my late teens then. But then spirituality and goodness have never had an easy ride among the Parsis these last six or seven decades. Have they? A few others have tried to speak with the voice of truth, but not many have had the sense to listen and appreciate what was being said, or why.

How long will false pride about our "racial purity," and ignorance about our good religion continue to blind the orthodox, causing confusion and illwill amongst our truly endangered species? For according to the terminology used by the devout priests and their supporters, we Parsis have been reduced in biological terms to genes, and in religious terms to performing zombies — without a mind or the many attributes of a soul, deprived of our will and choice, our personal accountability and responsibility, our spiritual freedom to strive for the highest good.

Ms PERIN DIVECHA

Keni, UK

that they can arrange accommodation in colonies managed by the Panchayet and Wadia Charities if they are paid money. They also claim that they can get irregular occupation of flats regularized by trustees.

It is often alleged that they would be paying part of the money so received to some or all the trustees.

Members of the community are warned to beware of such persons who are confidence tricksters. It is hereby very clearly and emphatically brought to everyone's notice that allotment of flats is done strictly on merit and trustees cannot allot flats out of turn, except for valid reasons. If any person makes a false claim of arranging allotment, it should be immediately brought to the notice of the trustees, Bombay Parsi Panchayet, 209, D. N. Road, Fort, Bombay 400001.

Dr ASPI F. GOLWALLA, ERUCH B. DESAI,
JAMSHED G. KANGA, HOMI P. RANINA,
JAMSHED N. GUZDER, MINOO R. SHROFF,
Dr (Ms) MEHROO D. BENGALIE

now three and a half years old, is physically weak and underweight, but his mental prowess and intellect are above average. When Dr G. B. Parulkar, cardiac surgeon and former dean of KEM Hospital, examined him in October 1990, he said: "It is a miracle that he still lives, in spite of all these cardiac defects." He stated that these defects are so serious and so complicated that Hormazd's only salvation would be an operation performed in USA or Canada where a total correction of these defects would be possible because of the latest technology, advanced hospital equipment and good post-operative care.

In December 1990 Hormazd was examined by Dr Navin C. Nanda, a leading US cardiologist who had come to Bombay for a conference on cardiology. Dr Nanda has opined that open-heart surgery under Dr Pacifico, a renowned pediatric cardiac surgeon at the University of Alabama Hospital will help save Hormazd's life and give him an almost normal life span as well as improve the quality of his life.

Expenses are estimated at Rs 10 lakh for the operation and hospitalization in USA. A break-up of expenses and doc-

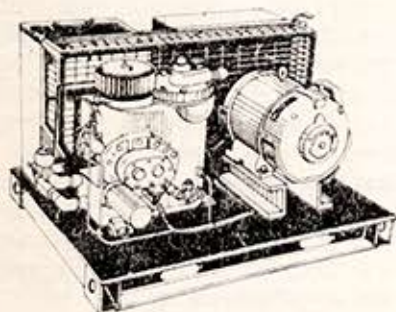
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Beware of tricksters

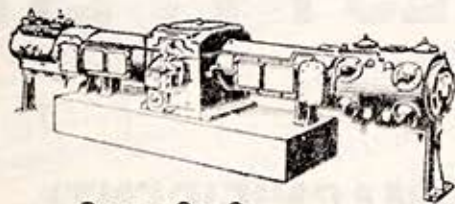
It has come to the notice of the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet as well as the R. N. and N. N. Wadia Charities that some unscrupulous persons are claiming

"A miracle that he lives"

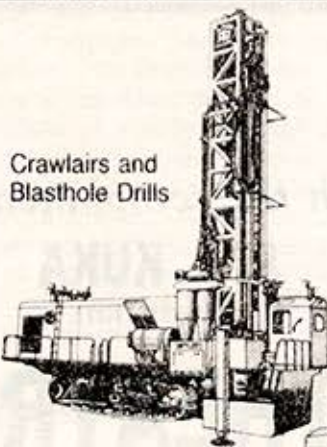
My son Hormazd is born with serious heart defects such as a single ventricle, parachute mitral valve, transposed great arteries and several others. Hormazd,



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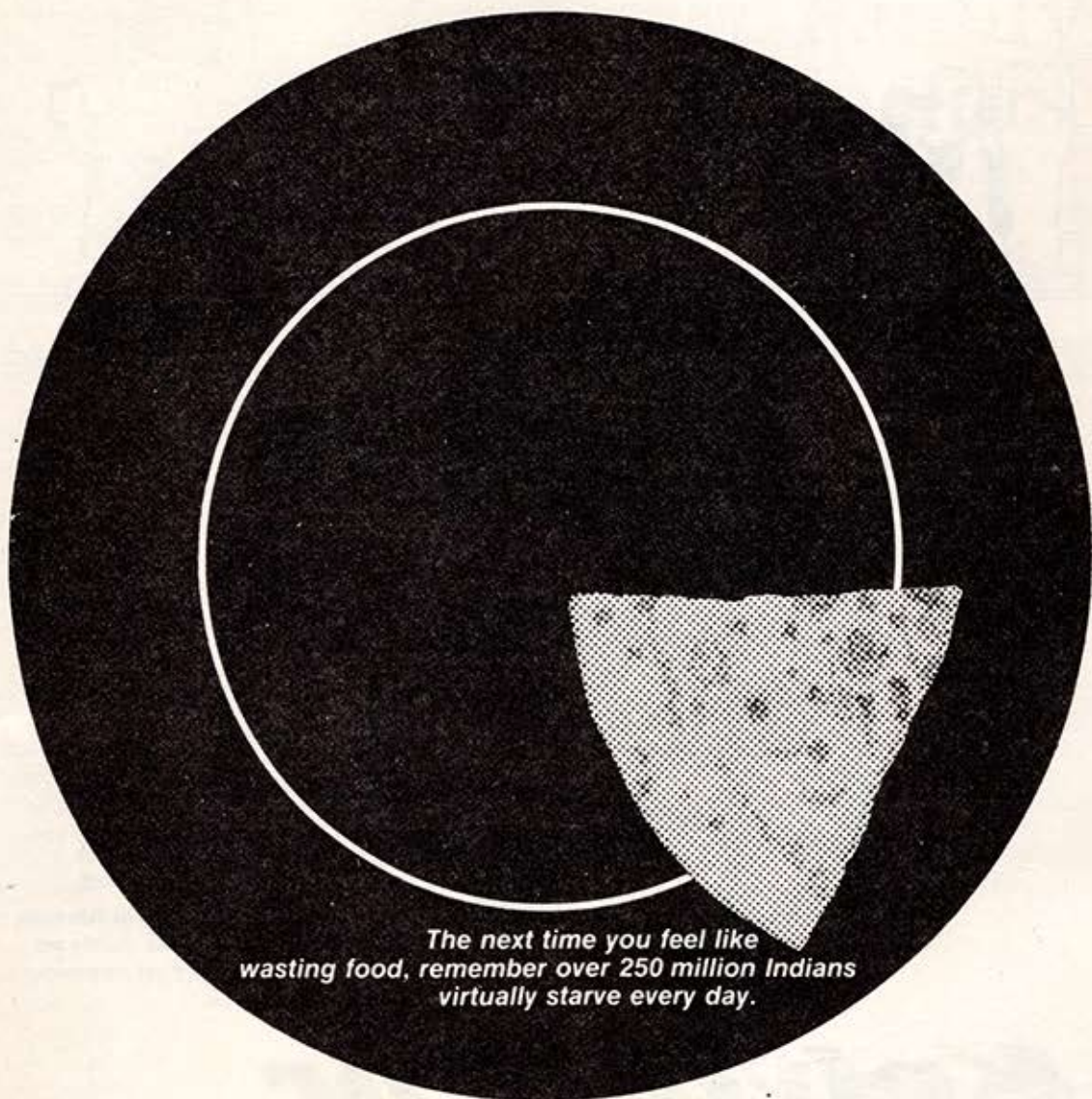
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Events and Personalities

Thana land dispute solved

After three years of legal battle and negotiations, a compromise was finally reached entitling the trustees of The Thana Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman (TPZA) to have a say in the allotment of 25 percent of the 80,000 sq feet land in Thana belonging to the Cowasji Behramji Divecha Trust, reads a press release from the Anjuman.

Forty-eight self-contained flats in the proposed seven-storeyed building will be made available to Parsi Zoroastrians at a price of Rs 550 per sq foot of built-up area, the details are provided in the press release. This building, to be constructed by Radhika Builders who bought the property from the Divecha Trust, will include 12 flats of three-room-kitchen, 30 of two-room-kitchen and six flats of one-room-kitchen. The trustees/managing committee of the Thana Anjuman with whom the allotment rights vest will give weightage to couples getting married and persons expected to surrender their company accommodation on the event of their retirement.

The Godrej Foundation which had assisted the Thana Anjuman in its legal battle against the Divecha Trust at the charity commissioner's level and also at the Bombay High Court level will be permitted to nominate allottees for 24 flats. Further, members of the Anjuman who had personally incurred more than Rs 3,000 towards the litigation costs were to be treated as promoters and permitted preferential allotment, the release further informs.

The Anjuman has decided to charge every member allottee Rs 4,000 towards the cost of fighting the litigation and a further donation at the rate of Rs 10 per sq foot, proportionate to the area of the allotted flat.

Ever since it had come to the notice of the members of the Thana Anjuman that the Divecha Trust had applied to the charity commissioner for permission to sell the property to Radhika Builders, the

TPZA members and some other individuals like Zareer Jehangirjee had been resisting the sale on the grounds that the property was meant for use of the Parsi Zoroastrian community, and particularly for those residing in Thana and Bombay, the release adds. They managed to get a status quo order from the charity commissioner, later confirmed by the Bombay High Court, injunction Radhika Builders from developing the property.

After the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India stepped in as intervenors, the joint charity commissioner sanctioned the sale subject to certain conditions, one being that the builders sell 25 percent of the built-up area to members of the Parsi Zoroastrian community. Not happy with this order, once again an appeal was made in the High Court. Finally negotiations with the assistance of Homi Taleyarkhan, former member of the Minorities Commission, and the advocates and solicitors of the different parties, resulted in the TPZA being granted allotment rights over a portion of land they so determinedly strove to prevent from being lost to the community.

Mistry on Booker list

The voice is mellow as it caresses the words and characters from the pages of the novel *Such a Long Journey*; it modulates over the direct speech passages, imitating the nasal screech of an overly protected Parsi youth or the thunder of a virago or the sing-song cadence of the hero's Parsi Gujarati-English. Rohinton Mistry, the Bombay-born, Canada-based Parsi author, read selected passages from his novel at a function sponsored by The P.E.N. All-India Centre, The Indian Institute of World Culture and Stage Two Theatre

Society on August 1, 1991 at the Theosophy Hall, Bombay, during his recent and brief visit to the city.

Mistry's latest novel, *Such a Long Journey*, has been shortlisted along with five others for the prestigious Booker Prize that includes a gift of £ 20,000, reports *The Economic Times* of September 29.

Mistry's writings are full of his Bombay Parsi roots which he readily shares with his audience. But when it comes to talking about himself, he is a closed book. "Will it mean the wrath of the entire Parsi community will descend upon my head?" he responds as we seek an interview. He then takes the back door exit with: "I'm here for only five days. I will call you if I have the time." The call, as expected, never did come.

His reluctance to speak surfaces again during the post-reading session when the audience is invited to field questions. His answers are crisp, often briefer than the questions.

Asked if his writing is autobiographical, Mistry replies: "It is as much biographical as all fiction is biographical. Reliving (one's experiences) is not equal to an autobiography." Similarly he does not see his writing in the narrow perspective of a portrait of the Parsi community. His characters, his hero Gustad Noble in particular, transcend their origins. "These typical Parsi characteristics we see in him, they (his readers in Canada

and abroad) see him in a more universal light. They see things we miss. Gustad is a noble man with universal appeal. It's easy to miss the forest for the trees."

Mistry does not feel particularly handicapped writing about Parsis in an Indian setting. Ac-

Mistry: "engagement with Bombay"



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cording to him the general scope of novels have changed. "Once upon a time we felt that all great novels had to be set in London or New York. Now we realize that Bombay works as well as London or New York." Bombay, he states, will be the location of his next novel too. "I don't know more than that," he says but he does know that his "engagement with Bombay" will not be forever.

The change of location, when it does come, will be not unlike Mistry's transition from short stories, a collection of which were published by Penguin under the title *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (see "Home is where the 'Baag' is," Books, *Parsiana*, January 1989), to the novel. Says Mistry of his shift in literary emphasis: "It was to see if I could write a novel or (to see) if I was doomed to write short stories forever." He laughs.

We see flashes of Mistry's humor, terse glimpses of the generous and subtle sprinklings we find in his books. When asked if he believes in magic as employed by one of the characters in the book whose world revolves around the supernatural, Mistry laughs: "Of course I do. Life is difficult enough. If it works, let it work."

Mistry does not view himself as a messiah of sorts, spreading awareness of Parsis and Zoroastrianism through his writing. "I think there are a lot of experts on Zoroastrianism," he observes, excluding himself from the list. "Should Parsis take more interest in their religion?" Mistry focuses an ambiguous reference by one person from the audience to a passage which he has read in which his hero Gustad finds solace in the hypnotic chanting of prayers at the doongerwadi. He further clarifies, "Gustad is sitting there (at the doongerwadi) and what he experiences is a universal involvement. I think the chanting of *mantras* will have the same effect on a Hindu."

Sensing Mistry's reluctance to talk, the volley of questions peter out. "Can you read more?" someone asks and Mistry readily accepts the offer to share more of his characters and writing with us and less of himself. For that we have to refer to the handout wherein a brief life sketch of the author is given. It reads: "Mistry was born in Bombay in 1952. He emigrated to Canada in 1975 and began working at a bank. While at the University of Toronto, he won two Hart House Literary Prizes and, in 1985, he won a Canadian Fiction Contributor's Prize. That same year he left the bank to

devote himself to his writing." Gustasp Irani

The combination twins

Dr (Ms) Firoza Parikh, obstetrician and head of the Infertility Management and Assisted Reproduction Department at the Jaslok Hospital and Research Centre, along with Dr (Ms) Kamal Alimchandani, has been credited with a new breakthrough in infertility treatment in India. The twin girls born to the Srinivasan couple on June 24, 1991 were reportedly the first case of successful conception in India from a combination of IVF (In Vitro Fertilization) and GIFT (Gamete Intra-Fallopian Transfer), notes a write-up in *The Times of India* of June 26. It was after seven years that the Srinivasan couple was able to conceive. This combination technique is believed to show 25 percent success as against GIFT which records 20 percent and IVF, 18 percent, the news report specifies.

In addition to being expensive, this procedure is considered very stressful for the patient since it involves taking 150 stimulatory injections. While normally there is a single egg produced by a woman every month, the combination method used by Dr Parikh involved picking 10 female egg cells by ultrasound. Four of these were put back in the woman's uterine tubes along with the husband's sperm and their mobility enhanced by laboratory techniques. So far it was the GIFT method in use, the write-up informs. The remaining eggs were fertilized in a petri dish and one embryo from there was put back in the uterus. Thus was combined the IVF technique. The other embryos lie frozen in the laboratory in case the procedure needs to be repeated, details an article in *Business India*, August 5-18, 1991.

The Jaslok Hospital already has over 300 couples seeking treatment for infertility, barely nine months after the Infertility Management Centre was set up, notes the *Business India* write-up. All couples have to be necessarily screened and counselled before offering them treatment.

Arethna's new record

Nine times national women's cycling champion Ms Jasmin Rohinton Arethna won the 1 km time trials for women by setting a new record of 1 minute, 23.07 seconds, reads a write-up in *The Daily* of April 25, 1991. She was chosen to captain the 25-strong Maharashtra team at the 46th National Cycling Champion-

ships held at the renovated Vallabhai Patel Stadium in Bombay in April last. The other Zoroastrians participating at the meet where the main sponsors were Balsara Hygiene and Mahindra and Mahindra, were Ms Sheraz and Aastad Palkhiwala, Kerman Framna and Ms



Arethna: retains national championship title Photo: Homiyar Mistry, Homz Prints

Monaz Siganporia.

Riding an Italian Colnago bike, Arethna was of the opinion that the standard of the competitors was better this year, the paper notes. Twenty-three-year-old Arethna who works with Tata Housing Limited has also had international exposure in cycling.

Oil industry doyen is 75

Dr Burjor Pirojsha Godrej has been to the oil and soap industry what Sir Jamsetji Tata was to the steel industry in India, noted chairman of the Federation of Association of Small Scale Soap and Detergent Manufacturers of India, Popatlal Shah, in his felicitations offered to the doyen on the occasion of his 75th birthday.

The function held on June 22, 1991 at the University Department of Chemical Technology was organized by the Oil Technologists' Association of India (Western Zone), notes a press release. In a special souvenir brought out on this occasion, encomiums were paid to Godrej by some eminent figures in the oil industry. Additionally an interview with Godrej acquaints the reader with his philosophy and pioneering efforts in India.

While Ardeshir Godrej, the founder of Godrej Soaps, is believed to have produced the first pure vegetable oil toilet



(Left) Burjor Godrej with salver presented by Sethna
(Right) Lawyer, with identification badge, receiving award from Chandra Shekhar

soap, it was his nephew Burjor who is recognized as the first person to introduce deodorant soaps in the country and to manufacture soaps from fatty acids. A senior managing director of Godrej Soaps Limited today, Burjor holds a number of patents for the use and production of alpha-olefins (a detergent intermediate), as mentioned Dr Homi Sethna, sheriff of Bombay and chairman of Tata Oil Mills Company Limited (TOMCO), who was the chief guest at the function in Godrej's honor.

Besides his pioneering efforts in the soap-making industry, Godrej is also known for his diverse interests in horticulture and comparative philology, particularly Indo-European languages. Godrej had studied in Germany at the Technical University of Berlin, Charlottenburg in the pre-war years which gave him a fluent command over the German language. He had also been deputed honorary consul general of Austria, notes a press release.

Vijay Rattna for Lawyer

Demand for beer in the country keeps increasing and with it the popularity of Associated Breweries and Distilleries (ABD) whose partner Ms Zeenia Lawyer was honored with a Vijay Rattna in April last, by the then prime minister Chandra Shekhar, notes the *Mid-Day* of April 15, 1991.

The popular manufacturers of beer like London Pilsner and London Diet have,

under Lawyer's guidance, started rendering technical assistance to other breweries to meet the escalating demand for this drink. The award was in recognition of this effort. Venus and Dasappa, two Bangalore-based breweries, will be among the new distilleries that will manufacture beer under the supervision of ABD.

With their advanced testing and quality control facilities ABD are able to maintain their own as also their collaborators' quality, notes a press release.

Labor bears fruit

The litchi trees grew but bore no fruit. Nevertheless Darabsha Cawasji Patel was determined to acclimatize the litchi trees to the coastal environment of Gholvad. He kept experimenting until he saw the fruits of his labor.

His success at cultivating litchis in Maharashtra and his pioneering efforts in the field of horticulture won 88-year-old Patel a silver plaque and a cash purse of Rs 11,000 on Krishi Din (Agriculture Day) celebrated on July 1, 1991, notes a press release sent by Ms Shirin Wadia.

Not only did Patel succeed in bringing the litchi plant from the cooler confines to the more temperate climate, but he also sought to popularize the fruit through his personal interest in marketing and sales. His self-earned knowledge, he willingly shared with other culti-

Patel:
popularizing
litchis



vators too.

The prosperous tiller, whose farms now keep expanding under his sons and grandsons, had once contemplated forsaking farming in favor of a career in Bombay when a cyclone ruined his orchards. But it is said that while at the railway station he changed his mind at the last minute and decided to start afresh in Gholvad.

Cinema (in)sights

At a function organized by the Press Club of India in New Delhi in May last, cinema critic Firoze Rangoonwalla was felicitated for the publication of his two books *Cinema Mystique (India)* and *Bimal Roy — Life and Works*. The Delhi Doordarshan also took the opportunity to interview Rangoonwalla, notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of May 12.

His book *Cinema Mystique (India)* was released at the International Film Festival in Madras earlier this year at the hands of K. Balachandra, director of the film *Ek Duj Ke Liye*, mentions the report. While *Cinema Mystique* recounts the personal experiences of the author in the film world, the book on Bimal Roy provides an insight into the life and works of the noted producer/director of films like *Do Bigha Zameen*, *Sujata*, *Bandhini* and *Devdas*.

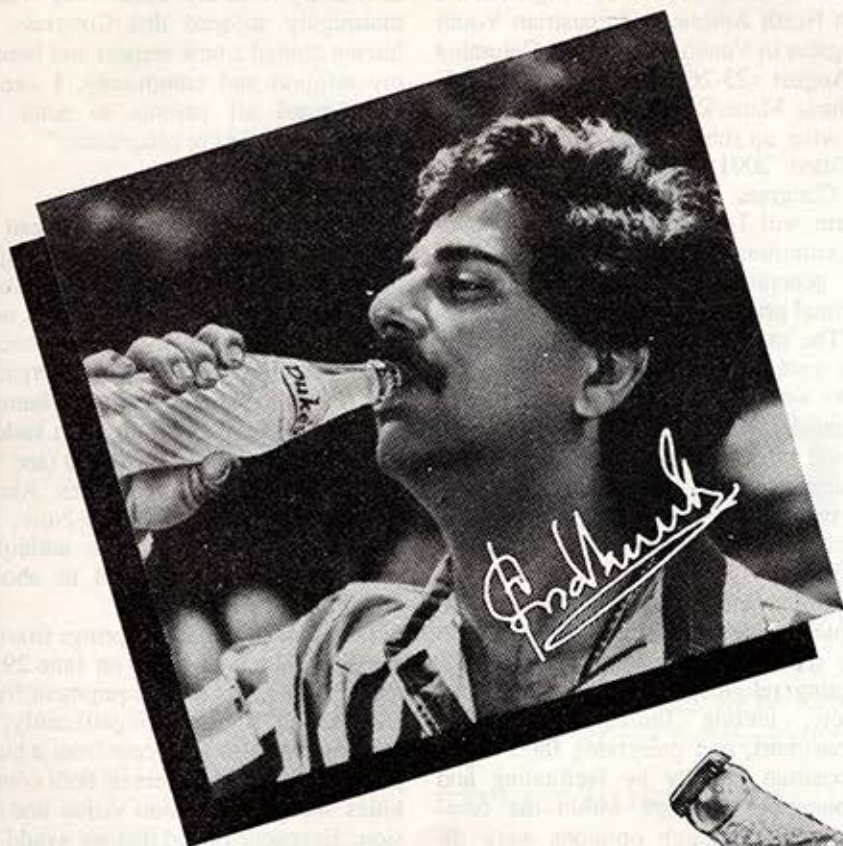
SPOTLIGHT

Vice president of the Philatelic Congress of India, Vispi Dastur has been appointed national commissioner for the Granada '92 International Philatelic Exhibition to be held in Spain next April, notes a press release.

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

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Medical Benevolent Fund

The increasing number of appeals for the funding of medical treatment in the West has prodded the London-based World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) to establish the Medical Benevolent Fund. The news release signed by WZO president Shahpur Captain targets the fund, initially, at £ 1,00,000. Appealing to donors worldwide Captain notes that between June 10 and July 31, 1991 receipts have amounted to £ 5,312.

The amounts raised by donations will be capitalized, invested and only the income thereof utilized to help defray the medical costs of deserving applicants. "We do not expect to fund the total cost of any applicant," notes Captain. Each case "will be scrutinized by the WZO managing committee in London with the closest liaison with WZO members in all parts of the world," he adds.

A bound register recording the names and addresses of donors, the date, amount and dedication of the donations, will be located at the registered office of the WZO — AMP House, 2 Cyprus Road, London N3 3RY — and will be available for perusal on request, informs the press release. The donees will be similarly listed by name and country of residence, date, amount and purpose of assistance.

The Fund will probably begin dispersals after January 1, 1992 when income has begun to accrue.

Congresses in Vancouver

"Looking Ahead to the 21st Century" will be the theme of the Eighth North American Zoroastrian Congress scheduled for September 4-6, 1992 in Vancouver, informs its chairperson Ms Bella Tata. Sponsored and organized by the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia, the panel of organizers includes vice chairperson Mehraban Zartoshty, finance director Farrokh Namdaran, planning and hospitality director Ms Perviz Madon, program director Ms Soonoo Engineer, public relations director Ms Kashmira Dastur and secretariat director Ms Shirin Sethna. The Congress' mailing address is 401-840 Broughton Street, Vancouver, British Columbia V6G 2A1, Canada and contact phones (604) 681-5250 and (604) 421-7591.

About 250 Zoroastrian youth met, socialized and learned about their religion at the Fifth North American Zoroastrian Youth Congress in Vancouver, British Columbia in August (23-26) this year, notes Ms Shehnaz Maneck Bhujwala of California in a write-up submitted to *Parsiana*.

Titled "2001: A Zoroastrian Odyssey," the Congress included such topics as: Where will I be in 2001, Memory and concentration, Path to my destiny, Bridging generations, Navjote ceremonies, Spiritual prayer, Achieving goals, etc.

"The main discussions of the conference were restricted to young adults, but, elders were also given an opportunity to exchange their views with the youngsters. Formal talks were limited to brief welcome and farewell talks by the organizers, and two speeches describing the essential beliefs of the Zoroastrian faith," notes Bhujwala.

Divided into groups of eight to 10 people, young Zoroastrians discussed issues such as conversion, intermarriage, adapting religious practice to American society, uniting Iranian and Indian Zoroastrians, and preserving the Persian Zoroastrian identity by facilitating and encouraging marriage within the community. "Although opinions were divided almost equally on some issues, the participants handled it in good spirit," comments Bhujwala.

A comedy skit, a dance item, and the navjote of four children relieved the tedium of sustained discussions. A bus tour of Vancouver city, a dinner cruise around the harbor, barbecue dinner and dancing programs provided entertainment and socializing for the youngsters. "And, every evening, there were informal parties which cemented the bonds of new friendships," adds Bhujwala.

Daughter of past president Maneck Bhujwala of the Zarthoshti Anjuman of Northern California, 16-year-old Bhujwala, born and raised in Pasadena, concludes, "Reflecting on the Congress, I realized the need to have organized youth social programs in local Zoroastrian communities. It was delightful to observe the closeness of the Chicago youth who were attending the conference. Unless we arrange for our youth to meet each other, with interesting youth

oriented programs, they will eventually drift away from our community. Having thoroughly enjoyed this Congress, and having gained a new respect and bond for my religion and community, I strongly recommend all parents to send their youngsters to future congresses."

Atash kadeh progress

"Construction of the atash kadeh can now proceed," announces Erach Tarapore, president of the Zarthoshti Anjuman of Northern California (ZANC) in its newsletter of August 1991. Now reconciled, ZANC and Persian Zoroastrian Organization (PZO) members had jointly launched upon a project to build an atash kadeh at an estimated cost of \$ 1,20,000 (see "The narrowing gap?" *Zoroastrians Abroad*, *Parsiana*, September 1990). Now, with \$ 54,000 in the kitty, the anticipated shortfall has been reduced to about \$ 10,000, writes Tarapore.

Tarapore's jubilation springs from two sources. The fund raiser on June 29 netted \$ 16,103 plus some equipment for the atash kadeh. But, more significantly, "the evening was also a success from a human point of view. Members of both communities shared a common vision and mission. Everyone hoped that we would continue to build this relationship in the years to come."

The ZANC newsletter also announced the purchase of 24 burial lots at the Los Gatos Memorial Park at a cost of \$ 970 each. Meant for the use of all Zoroastrians, the purchase was financed from the cemetery funds donated by the Guiv Trust, informs Tarapore.

"Jimmy Lashkari must be God's littlest, but most effective quarterback," writes Ms Helen Brosio, in the *Contra Costa Times* of July 22, in a tribute to the mighty 10-year-old whose courageous four-year fight against cancer ended on July 20, 1991. But not before the sports fan and "football hero" had taught the community around him "daily lessons in courage, faith, gentleness and kindness. Jimmy never complained despite the surgeries, the chemotherapy, the pain," in the words of Brosio who is an instructional assistant at the Donald Rheem School, Moraga. Jimmy's enthusiasm for

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football had earned him a 49er jacket signed by well-known quarterback Joe Montana. Another football star, Steve Young, had called Jimmy "the hero."

"A lively toddler entertaining people around him by his imitations of Michael Jackson," by the age of four the son of Goolu and Dinyar Lashkari had developed a keen interest in football and sports, notes the ZANC newsletter. A continuous blood donation drive had been sustained by the community in the hope that Jimmy would pull through. Even so, he attended school during the last weeks of the academic year while other children applauded.

"Those of us who were fortunate enough to know him well were touched by his courageous spirit and his winning smile," notes the newsletter dedicated to his memory.

Pakistani Parsis

At present there are about 70 Parsis in Lahore, 26 in Rawalpindi, eight in Multan and five in Peshawar, notes an addendum at the base of the Lahore directory forwarded to *Parsiana* by Ms Freny Bomanji of Multan Cantonment. Since the 1987 directory speaks of 115 members, the community in Lahore has dwindled by over 39 percent in four years. Some have expired, others have left to resettle in the UK and North America.

There were nine marriages in Lahore — the highest in recent years as normally there is one marriage in three or four years, informs Bomanji — and four deaths in the last two years. During this period one Zoroastrian died in Multan.

By now the Lahore Parsee Anjuman has faced a mobbed problem at its agiary twice over. Each time the ladies and gentlemen of the Anjuman take turns to mind the fire, adds Bomanji. For the present, Ervad Rustom Pavri, ex Hong Kong, is providing good service, she notes.

The Lahore Parsee Anjuman was formed in April 1935, informs the directory. Earlier the anjuman had built a block of flats where 11 families reside in the prestigious Gulberg Colony. Named after the late Dr Edulji Bharucha, a noted benefactor, the construction had been financed by donations from Zoroastrians in Lahore and elsewhere.

The Gulbagh Trust maintains the aramgah and prayer room donated to the community by Edulji Burjoreji Setna in 1877. The Bai Avabai Cooper Agiary dates back to 1893 when Ardeshir Burjoreji Limbuwalla Cooper opened it at

his residence for the use of the community in memory of his wife. By 1905 he had bought a piece of land on Rattigon Road and constructed a new dar-e-meher to enshrine the atash dadgah. By 1913 he had maintained the fire for 20 years before handing it over to the community. A trust was founded to maintain it thereafter. By 1971, deteriorating conditions in the vicinity had made it imperative to shift the fire to a new dar-e-meher in Gulberg Colony.

Even into the 1960s and 1970s new trusts were springing up. The Bhandara foundation was initiated in 1966 in memory of the late Peshotan Bhandara. It helps other organizations with donations both within and beyond Lahore.

The same year the Dinshaw B. Challa Trust was set up by Challa in memory of his wife to help needy, deserving individuals of all communities. In 1923 Challa had bought a 20-canal plot whereon he had constructed and stocked a library and gifted it to the Lahore Cantonment. His trust continues to contribute towards it.

In 1975 the late Savixa Jarriwalla willed his entire estate for the benefit of students, the aged and the infirm. Outright donations and monthly stipends are controlled by its six trustees.

The Lahore Parsee Club, reformed in 1971 at the Edulji Bharucha Flats, is the focus of community tournaments, dinners, new year's eve dances and other functions, though the dwindling number of resident youth has slowed down its former tempo.

One of the guesstimated two Parsi Zoroastrians in the service of the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), Syria based Dr Ardeshir Damania writes to inform *Parsiana* of an honor bestowed upon the other — ICARDA's office administrator in Quetta, Pesi Amaria. On September 5, 1991 the Lions Club of Pakistan met in Lahore to bestow its prestigious Melvin Jones award on Amaria. Additionally, Amaria was presented the Best Lion of the Year award by the Governor of Baluchistan at Quetta, writes Damania.

"ICARDA is one of the 15 international centers sponsored by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) whose main donors are the World Bank, USAID, UNDP, governments of developed economies, and other donor organizations such as the OPEC Fund. These 15 centers are dis-



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persed around the world to serve the needs of farmers based principally in the third world through the national agriculture improvement programs. The CGIAR system employs some 7,000 employees worldwide," adds Damania.

At 20, Karachi's Ms Cyra Noshirwani is already a fashion designer and impresario, as informs a write-up from Ms Sunnu Golwalla. Noshirwani's second fashion show, Catwalk '91 at the Beach Luxury Hotel on St. Valentine's Day (February 14, 1991) was an extravaganza of color and glitter that netted the young designer a two-minute standing ovation from the audience, notes Golwalla.

Creations, encompassing the needs of the very young (under three) to the seductively young, were presented as music, dance and tableaux interspersed with promenades on the catwalk. There were casuals and party clothes, pants and salwars, cottons, lace and sparkle in shades of pink, blood red, whites and blacks, blues and yellows, Pink Panther, Tom and Jerry, Pretty Woman — a kaleidoscope to gladden the eye, as informs Golwalla. Commentator Ms Azermin Jamasji declaimed the virtues of each creation from a script prepared by Ms Delara Jamasji.

Bon appetit!

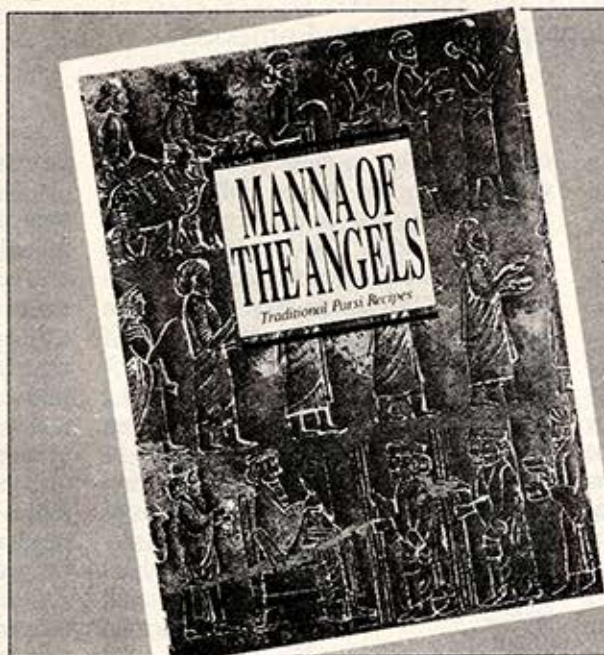
The Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal (KZBM) has served up *Manna of the Angels* — a treat for gourmets everywhere. The 214 glossy art paper pages present an array of dishes — the gamut of traditional Parsi cookery from eggs, *rotlis* and rice to *eeda pak* and *khajur ni ghari* and include all the mouthwatering staples that Parsis grew up relishing in undivided India.

The recipes totalling 135, including several variations on a theme, are presented under 11 different heads. For example, there are three different *akuris*, three versions of *dhansak* and as many of fish *palao* to tickle the palate in a variety of ways. For the pickle and chutney enthusiasts there are 19 to choose from, including *bafenu* and *gajar-sookha meva nu* (*lagan nu*) *achar*. There's *eeda pak* and *badam pak*, but no *vasanu*.

The sepia and green color scheme of the jacket mirroring the ancient frescoed walls of Persepolis, continues within as

single color illustrations on the same theme, enlivening the pages. The recipes are systematic and easy to follow. Tips on substitution, conversion charts and hints on basic techniques make life easier for the beginner.

In his foreword, Virasp Mehta of the Informal Religious Meetings traces the advent of Parsis in India: "Parsi *babarchis*



(cooks) were a class of their own. According to a census of Parsi professions in 1864 there were 111 in the field of gastronomy and 1,641 in the field of cooking. Within the next 50 years professional Parsi cooks disappeared from our homes and they were replaced by Goanese *mistris*, Surti *lalyas* and Muslim *khansamas*...

"Cooking with professional expertise has not only brought extra income into Parsi homes but it is said that this art once saved a Natak Mandli which went bankrupt in London. In 1885, the then famous Victoria Natak Mandli ventured to perform Parsi *nataks* (plays) in London. Somewhere a slip was made and having failed to get a proper licence to perform *nataks*, the Mandli was fined heavily and it was left with little or no money to buy the passage home. In the troupe there were some who could cook. They rolled up their sleeves, prepared delectable Parsi sweets and sold them on London streets for their passage to Bombay.

"All honor to those gentlemen who replaced their histrionic art with the art of gastronomy, but greater honor shall always be for those diligent Parsi ladies who made copious notes of recipes and

managed to compile them in the latter part of the 19th century. Prominent amongst them was Meherbai Jamshedji Nusserwanji Wadia who brought out two hefty volumes in Gujarati, called *Vividh Vani*, containing 2,050 recipes."

Manna (priced at Rs 400) was launched at a special function at the Karachi Parsi Institute by novelist Ms Bapsy Sidhwa on June 29, 1991. The occasion was used to make a public acknowledgement of "the untiring dedication of the Mandal's eldest, quietest, sincerest, most knowledgeable and ultra-efficient worker, Ms Allan R. Billimoria (nee Gheyara)... Inspired by Allan hundreds of our old and young mothers, wives, sisters and daughters have made the KZBM an altar of service," notes a write-up from social worker Behram Rustomji. One of those so inspired, adds Rustomji, is Ms Hutoxy Cyrus Cowasjee, the Mandal's joint honorary secretary who has edited and compiled the book.

Ms Perviz Viraf Daroga, the incoming president of the Mandal (its ninth president to date) welcomed Sidhwa. In a gracious gesture, copies of the book were ceremonially presented to designer Ms Tannaz Minwalla, artist Ms Michelle D'Silva and adviser Saheedullah Baray, informs Rustomji.

The KZBM started as a small group of far-sighted ladies on November 11, 1912, drawing up a constitution with the help of Karachi stalwarts Nusserwanji Mehta, Ardeshir Mama and Dastur (Dr) Maneck Dhalla, notes Cowasjee in an introduction to the book. With "*Seva ané Sakhavat* (service and charity)" as the motto, the ladies began to teach arts and crafts, held lectures for general enlightenment of the community. Cooking classes and competitions used to be a regular feature till the end of the 1940s. Now these popular classes have been revived and the book compiled as a result of the general enthusiasm among its present 581 lady members, 43 having contributed to the book in a variety of ways.

Appropriately, the cover design features minions bearing gifts to Achaemenian potentates. What greater tribute can modern Parsis pay to those they cherish than the gift of good eating?

Compiled by Amavaz S. Mama

At the centenary signpost

Text: Noshir Dadrawala • Photographs: Varghese Fernandez

"The dream of a generous man.
Many years have come and gone
But the spirit still lives on
Benefiting from the past,
Working now to face the future.
Hold the dream and make it last."

The school song wafts across the spacious classrooms, passages and imposing stairway of the Gothic brick and lime masonry of the 100-year-old Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsi Charitable Institution (BJPC). The cool Arabian Sea breeze lends freshness and serenity to an atmosphere charged with nostalgia.

Laboriously and virtuously — the school motto — is not only a goal but a way of life at the Institution, according to the principal Ms Roshen Driver. "This is reflected in the faith parents, especially non-Parsis, place in this school," she says, adding, "Today the image of the school compares favorably with any other educational institute in Bombay." Driver however laments the Parsi community's lack of interest in the school: "If the title 'Saint' had been prefixed to the school's name, Parsi parents would have made a beeline for the Institution."

"Our school offers the best all-round education, free meals and a number of scholarships. Yet Parsi parents have a passion for Anglo-Indian schools. It is a pity. While other communities take advantage of our charities the Parsi community fights shy!" despaired Ms Khorshed Deboo, a trustee of the Institution.

"In 1954 when Morarji Desai was minister for education," says Nanabhoy Jeejeebhoy, chairman-trustee of the Institution, "he had passed an order that schools catering to the needs of any one community would not be eligible for grants-in-aid. At that time the trustees of the Institution decided to forgo the grant and continue to run the school for the benefit of Parsis only as per the wishes of the founder. However times changed and by the mid-eighties the trustees had no

other option but to make the school cosmopolitan." The Junior College, mentions Driver, was commissioned in the year 1975, and in 1986, the portals of the Institution were opened to all other communities. "We had to take this decision



Byramjee Jeejeebhoy's liberal endowments

after a lot of hesitation," noted Deboo. "Fourteen years ago I was catering to the needs of 480 Parsi students in three shifts," said Ms Khorshed Dolasha, the school's kitchen supervisor. "Today," she continued, "the number has been reduced to just 180 including the Parsi students of the Junior College." According to Dolasha the free lunch served to Parsi students includes mutton *dhansak*, fish curry rice, etc, etc, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. On Tuesdays and Thursdays there is usually lentils or vegetables served with bread.

According to champion weight lifter Vispy Daroga, a former student of the school, "I owe much of my fame today to the principal, trustees and staff of the school." Daroga was grateful to the school for encouraging him in sports and looking after his nutritional requirements: "I used to get an additional quota of milk and vitamin tablets."

The quality of students seeking admission in the school keeps improving year after year, feels Ms Tehmina Damanwala who has been associated with the school for more than 17 years. Damanwala who teaches food science in junior college and work experience in the IX and X standards, notes, "My main

task in the school involves maintaining overall discipline... the students of BJPC today compare favorably with any other school in the city."

The year 1972 was a turning point in the destiny and image of the school. "I used a strategy of making the boys feel ashamed rather than strike terror and fear in their hearts. Boys who are habitually untidy and ill-mannered never really change with punishment. However the presence of the fairer sex in the classrooms changed their attitude. Almost miraculously they seemed more dignified and well behaved," noted Driver.

Ms Sheroo Tavadia who has been connected with the school for over three decades and is presently the general supervisor, observes that although the boys of the school are less disciplined than the girls, the former are much easier to handle. "The students are now fully occupied with extracurricular activities like games, project work, competitions and





Now coeducational and cosmopolitan, the Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsi Charitable Institution and Junior College encourages students to think creatively

have very little time for mischief," she says. Scouting, social service, computer science, aerobics, karate, judo and horse riding are other activities introduced by the BJPC.

The school band, which represented Maharashtra state at a rally arranged by the Central Government, had been appreciated by the then Vice President of India M. Hidayatullah, says Driver. She also claims to have introduced rifle shooting, job-oriented courses like electronics, environmental studies and helped build three well-equipped separate laboratories for physics, chemistry and biology. To Driver also goes the credit for creating a full-fledged library with nearly 5,000 books on all modern subjects, of which 25 percent are classics of English literature.

Dara and Gulshan Patel, whose son Sarosh passed the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Board examination with 86.8 percent marks, "strongly advise Parsi parents to admit their children in this school and take advantage of the various benefits."

Nawroze and Mehroo Mamlatdar whose son recently passed the SSC ex-

amination with 85.4 percent marks conveyed that their son would pursue his Higher Secondary Certificate studies in the science faculty in the same school.

The Institution's present board of trustees include chairman Nanabhoj Jeejeebhoy, managing trustee Rustomjee J. R. B. Jeejeebhoy, Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, Rustom N. B. Jeejeebhoy, Ms Jer A. Dhondy, Ms Katy F. Mehta and Ms Khorshed Deboo. The staff, besides the principal, includes 29 teachers all of whom are qualified educationists. There are just two Parsi teachers. The classes have no divisions and the total number of students including the junior college comes to 750.

Learning to think

In June 1991 the school introduced a pilot project, programmed to improve the students' ability to think for themselves and improve all-round performance. The project was initiated at the request of Ms

Khursheed Khurody, a young social activist with a flair for working with the youth and bringing about social change.

Explaining the need for this project Khurody said, "The entire system of education in India is focused towards one goal -- passing the examination. This kind of text book orientation undermines the student's ability to think creatively and intellectually."

Using the BJPC Institution as a laboratory to experiment with her innovation, Khurody invited noted surgeon Dr Adi Nazir to speak to the students of Std XII on "Safe sex and the use of contraceptives." The students "are biologically mature but socially and emotionally suppressed. It is very important for them to face adolescence with the right sex education," said Khurody. The talk on sex education was followed by talks on the "Danger of AIDS" and the "Hunger Project." Between talks by professionals and experts Khurody acts as a facilitator for intellectual discussions and debates on corruption, terrorism, frustration, etc. The topics are analysed and no text book definitions are entertained. Students are given the opportunity to express their in-



*Facing page:
Schooling under the roofs
of this palatial structure
built in 1908*



*From left:
Principal Driver; the kindergarten
class and the electronics workshop
introduced at the School*

ner feelings and encouraged to put aside their fears and inhibitions. Said 17-year-old Vivek Sethia, a student of Std XII, "Till now, on our way home in the bus we used to discuss Hindi films and who was the best hero on celluloid. Now this has all changed. Our discussion in class about the world around us now spills over in the bus and we continue to think and talk intellectually." "Khursheed," interjected Ms Nina Lala, another student of Std XII, "helps us to discover ourselves and express our thoughts with clarity." Wilson Rogrigues of the same class felt the facility of this program should be extended to all other schools in Bombay. "It opens up a whole new world before us," he said.

Doing a self analysis Khurody said "the program breeds excitement and also helps to bring out grudges. I am so far handling only Stds VI, VII, IX, X, XI, XII and they are all very responsive and enthusiastic."

Besides debates, creative writing (a few weeks ago students of Std VI were made to write a love story involving a poor boy, a rich girl and her dominating father), talks on topics hitherto considered taboo, Khurody organizes cooking competitions. "It really draws out the culinary instinct in the students," she said. Students, according to Khurody, create all kinds of *pakodas* (fritters), juices and sandwiches.

What will happen to the program when Khurody's vacation in Bombay ends and she returns to the United States to pursue her studies in European literature and history? Khurody's response is positive, "It will go on. Counsellors like Ms Diana Marfatia (coordinator of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet's school counselling and holiday youth programs) will keep it alive. The experiment has succeeded and it would be a shame if it died out."

Centennial activities

"As part of the development project for the centenary year the school will be equipping an electronics laboratory," said Damanwala. "In the meantime," informed Driver, "Nanabhoy Jeejeebhoy has already made a grant of Rs 1.5 lakhs for the development of a computer laboratory."

The centenary year, ushered in on September 12, 1990 with the navjote of one poor Parsi student of the school followed by a jashan, prize distribution program

and dinner, ended on September 12, 1991 with the navjote of two deserving Parsi students of the school, felicitation of the Institution's trustees and teachers, and a musical concert, the Preeti Sagar Nite.

In between on November 24 and 25 the school had organized a "Centenary Fair" in the school compound, followed by a "Bonanza" on December 31 at the



Grant Medical College grounds. Then came the "Centenary Sports" on February 9 in which every student of the school participated and a splendid performance (March 9) at the Patkar Hall on the life of Sir Byramjee Jeejeebhoy.

The founding footsteps

"It is not so much for his political and commercial activities as for his munificent charities that the name of Byramjee Jeejeebhoy, the founder of the school, is cherished to this day," states Nanabhoy. The youngest of Jamssetjee Jeejeebhoy's four sons, Byramjee was born on June 16, 1822 and educated at an elite private school. In recognition of his qualities and by way of appreciation for the services he had rendered to the city, the Government of Bombay appointed Byramjee a Justice of the Peace in 1855. About a decade later, he was made a fellow of the Bombay University. In 1868, he was nominated an additional member of the Bombay Legislative Council where his career was marked by devotion to public interest and an untiring solicitude for the welfare

of the people. In 1876, Her Majesty, Queen Victoria conferred on him the companionship of the most Exalted Order of the Star of India, (C.S.I.) and when the Queen assumed the title of the Empress of India on January 1, 1877, Byramjee was one of the small number of citizens invited to take part in the Durbar ceremony held at Delhi, where he was presented



Time for fun and relaxation at the recreation hall

with the Durbar Medal by His Excellency Lord Lytton, Viceroy and Governor General, informs the school's *Golden Jubilee Volume* (1941).

Noted Nanabhoy, "He aided deserving causes but contributed even more generously to help the spread of education. He liberally endowed the Government Medical Schools at Ahmedabad and Poona, the High School at Thane and the Anglo-Vernacular School at Bhiwandi. Byramjee also extended generous help to the Gujarat Provincial College, The Parsi Girls' Schools Association, the Bombay Native General Library and the Alexandra Native Girls' English Institution. But his crowning act of benevolence which also was his last, was the establishment of the Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsi Charitable Institution." "Barely a fortnight prior to his death," said Ms Jer Dhondy, "he created a trust, transferring in the names of his grandson Rustomji Nanabhoy Byramjee Jeejeebhoy, Sorabjee Shapurjee Ben-

“Our discussion in class about the world around us now spills over in the bus”

galee, Khan Bahadur Rustomjee Jamasjee and Pestonji Nusserwanji Wadia, four percent promissory notes of the Government of India of the value of Rs 3,50,000 for establishing an institute for the education of the children of his poor coreligionists.”

“The Trust and the intended charity,” continued Nanabhoy, “could have been rendered null and void since Byramjee died within a fortnight of executing the deed. According to the Succession Act then in force, the son and grandson of Byramjee could have allowed the charity to be defeated and claimed their personal right over the promissory notes, but to their eternal credit they waived their rights and did not invoke the provisions of the Succession Act.” The Institution was opened on September 12, 1891, the first anniversary of Byramjee’s death, with 214 students on its rolls. The figure rose to 320 by the end of the year.

The first difficulty with which the trustees were confronted was the absence of a suitable building. “After a great deal of trouble,” said Dhondy “they were able to rent the late Mr Dossabhoy Pesikaka’s house opposite the Marine Lines Railway Station.”

The school, according to Driver, began with primary and middle sections. High school classes were added in 1895. The school’s present palatial structure opposite the Charni Road Railway Station was erected in 1908. The style of the building is modern Gothic, with a gable roof over the second floor in the center and also gable roofs over the end wings. The marble figure in the central finial is the goddess of learning with a lighted torch in one hand and a book in the other. According to the *Golden Jubilee Volume*, the Government had given a grant-in-aid amounting to nearly a lakh of rupees towards the building of the new school-

house. The work of erecting the building commenced in March 1906 and the opening ceremony was performed by Bai Avabai Byramjee Jeejeebhoy (the granddaughter-in-law of the founder) on March 15, 1908. The founder’s grandson Rustomji, Sorabjee S. Bengalee, Khan Bahadur Rustomjee Jamasjee Ashburner and Pestonji N. Wadia were the first trustees of the school. According to the *Golden Jubilee Volume*, the founder’s grandson Rustomjee’s sporadic donations to the school totalled Rs 1,50,000. He also contributed Rs 12,400 for founding several prizes, scholarships and sports funds. “The Bhojan Fund which was created in 1914 has a corpus of about 11 lakhs. Milk is provided daily.”

Line of principals

According to Driver, Bomonsha Bejonjee Kotwal enjoyed the distinction of being the first headmaster of the Institution. A

Banaji whose unusual academic achievements secured for him a fellowship in the Elphinstone College and who was later nominated a fellow and a senator of the Bombay University. Next in the line of distinguished headmasters were Kaihashru Ardeshir Enti, K. S. Aiyar, the school’s first non-Parsi headmaster and a pioneer of accountancy and commercial education in India, Pallonjee Dorabji Pavri, the first to introduce a system of circulars, meaning to build up intercourse between parents and teachers, physical education and supply of free milk and nourishing meals to the students of the school and Framroze Meharwanji Dalal who instituted a provident fund scheme for the staff of the school. The school’s first lady principal, Roshen Driver, joined the institution in 1970.

Sitting relaxed amid an assortment of files and books in her spacious and airy principal’s office, Driver seemed to over-

flow with ideas and creativity. “When I joined the school,” she said, “the school’s reputation was at a nadir. It was brimming with dropouts no other school was willing to take. It was a herculean task re-vamping the place. The first thing I did was to introduce a system of proper khaki uniforms.”

According to its joint honorary secretary Dr Eruch Daruwala, the Old Boys’ Union performs a jashan every year in the memory of the founder, supplies text-books on loan to poor students, provides

medical relief, organizes excursions, offers scholarships, freeships and much more.

For the ageing Nanabhoy, according to Driver, “the BJPC Institution is a ‘*pathar no dikro*’ (a son in stone).” What will become of it in the year 2001, we ask Nanabhoy? His response: “The spirit of the founders will guide its destiny.”



Waiting to return home

graduate in arts from St Xavier’s College, “his students reposed complete trust in his benevolence and his solicitude, despite his stern discipline,” notes a tribute to the principals of the BJPC Institution published in the *Golden Jubilee Volume*. Kotwal was succeeded by Framji Kawasji

The shadow of suicide

An account of Feroze Laskari's tragic death in New York on his wedding day

Rustom D. Wadia

The year was 1927. It witnessed an unhappy incident on a bright summer Saturday in the city of New York. There were then approximately 12 Parsis in the whole city of five million New Yorkers, the foremost industrial and commercial emporium in the world. Even among that miniscule number of Zoroastrians, there were three millionaires, one Rolls Royce, and one Indian restaurant. The accepted leader among us was Pheroze Saklatwala, a Wall Street oil magnate, and the brother of Hon Shapurji Saklatwala, the second Indian member of the British Parliament. The first, of course, was Dadabhoy Naoroji, now long deceased.

Feroze Laskari, a very likable young man in his early 20s, had come to New York after working at the Ford Motor Company factory in Detroit, Michigan as an assembly line mechanic. From the noise and drudgery of a factory life, he had come to New York, a city of glamor, adventure and opportunity. He promptly found a job as a sales clerk in the only Indian gift shop in New York, the House of India. It was owned by a Punjabi named Verma Singh. It was there that I met Feroze, one of the dozen or so Parsis like myself. Naturally, we became very close friends and often dined together in the only Parsi restaurant in New York. The restaurant was located on a side street off Times Square, the very center of New York's world renowned shopping district, drowned in the fantastic glamor of blinking electrical advertising signs.

It was not long before Feroze Laskari found a very attractive Hungarian girlfriend. She was a well educated, serious minded and professionally well-paid fashion designer. To my mind they appeared well-suited to each other. Both

were hard working and lovingly fond of each other, as a young couple should be.

In the first week of June 1927, an invitation was sent out by Saklatwala to all the resident Parsis in New York to meet at his spacious residence with the sole purpose of forming a Zoroastrian Asso-

*All members
of the newly formed
Association
were cordially
invited to
Laskari's wedding
to his American
girlfriend*

ciation. I received the invitation and was delighted to attend the meeting on a sunny Saturday afternoon. Present were most of the Parsi students from Columbia University, one importer of spices and pickles, Jchangir Khambatta, one wealthy owner of an art gallery, Nasli Heeraman-eck, another wealthy Wall Street financier, S. R. Bomanji. Including myself, a budding electrical engineer, and the affluent host, Pheroze Saklatwala, we were a baker's dozen.

It is of consequential importance to note that in the above list of staunch Parsis, nine out of 10 were married to American or English wives of Christian faith. Despite this fact, it is creditable to

note that our inherent proud Parsi community spirit drew us together that afternoon to form a Zoroastrian Association in New York City — in reality, a social club.

It so happened that our host, Mr Saklatwala had also graciously invited Dastur Maneck Dhalla, the High Priest of the Karachi Parsi Anjuman, who was in New York to receive his doctorate degree in Avestan literature from Columbia University. It was a happy coincidence that the High Priest was here to give his blessings on this auspicious occasion. Little did any of us know then that it would also prove to be a celestial miscalculation and would end, in a colossal tragedy, the life of my young friend Feroze Laskari. It is the inscrutable way in which Nature works sometimes.

With unanimous consent, the Zoroastrian Association of New York came to light for the first time in America. A proposal was made and accepted that Saklatwala be appointed chairman with permission to select a co-chairman and a secretary of his choosing. He promptly appointed me, Rustom D. Wadia, as secretary, *protem*, which I accepted.

Before the meeting ended on a cordially enthusiastic note, a surprise announcement was made by Saklatwala. With his arm around my dear friend, he stated that at noon the following Saturday all members of the newly formed Association were cordially invited to come to Laskari's wedding to his American girlfriend. He further stated that he was sure that our Dasturji Dhalla would be present to add his blessings on the occasion.

Saturday noon came and a few of us Parsis went uptown near Columbia University to await the arrival of our High

Priest in front of Feroze's apartment in order to accompany him inside. But to our horror, we arrived to see policemen and a hospital ambulance with medical equipment outside the apartment. The apartment lobby was in turmoil. There was no Dastur, but instead the horrifying news that my friend had committed suicide by swallowing carbolic acid. A note was left, which the police retained but the contents of the note indicated that our High Priest had flatly refused to take any part in the wedding ceremony. We were all left speechless by this tragedy. It was a case of the sanctimonious practice of the Zoroastrian religion, by a learned priest, having dealt a mortal blow which no amount of logic, common sense or human decency can justify. Only bigotry can account for or justify such tragedy.

Funeral arrangements were made to bury my friend in a local cemetery on Long Island. Among the few Parsis who came to the cemetery in a small procession of hired limousines was Dastur Dhalla. In the car our Dastur regretfully told us that he had refused to take part in Laskari's wedding ceremony, thus unwittingly causing the colossal tragedy of a young Parsi's untimely death.

I do not believe that the sanctimonious practice of any manmade religion is justified in usurping the right of Nature over life and death.



Resident in the USA for the past 68 years, Rustom D. Wadia, 92, retired as a New York restaurateur (Rajah Restaurant, Ceylon-India Inn) in 1985. A qualified electrical engineer, his early professional life had been spent with the General Electric Company and the Edison Company, working as a design engineer.

The liberal Dastur (Dr) Maneck Nusserwanji Dhalla, had spent four years at Columbia University, New York, studying under the famed Iranologist Prof A. V. H. Jackson. In 1929, as part of its 175th jubilee celebrations, the University conferred an honorary D. Litt. on Dhalla.

In his Autobiography, as translated into English by Gool and Behram Rustomji, Dastur Dhalla provides a different scenario. According to Dhalla it was the end of 1929:

"On New Year's eve a sad event took place midst the 11 Zoroastrians living in New York and the unfortunate circumstances in which it happened made us

very unhappy. A youth of a respectable family of Bombay had come here to study. He came to see us thrice. He was a kind and humble young man. Twelve or 13 days after our acquaintance we heard that he was to marry an American girl in a Church on New Year's Day. A day before the wedding he was to accompany his bride-to-be to purchase the trousseau.

"They had arranged that the girl should meet him at four o'clock at the University subway station, whence they would proceed for their shopping. As arranged the girl arrived at four and exactly at the same time for some unknown and inexplicable reason that unfortunate young man swallowed some acid and committed suicide in his own apartment.

"That night a Bengali youth came to us and informed us that the deceased was a friend of his and that they boarded together. He wished to cremate the corpse early in the morning. Personally I preferred cremation to burial yet I refused to sanction such a move and told him that it was just possible that by doing so, the feelings of the relatives of the deceased residing in Bombay may be hurt, hence no one had the authority to take such a step.

"On hearing this the man lost his temper and began to prattle as he pleased. Venting his anger upon me he said that India was full of old-fashioned and outmoded people like me, hence the country had come to such a sorry state. His excessive impatience to cremate the corpse as quickly as possible made us rather suspicious of his motives. My wife asked him that since he was a friend of the deceased, he must be aware of the cause of his suicide. The dead man was ready to wed, then what had driven him to take this drastic step at the last moment?

"To the many replies he tried to give to those queries, he added that the deceased was not marrying the girl for love, nor for her wealth or her beauty. My wife then questioned that if he was not marrying for these three natural reasons then why had he decided to wed? He replied that the deceased, the girl and he himself — only those three knew the answer to that question. 'And God is the fourth,' my wife gently intervened.

"With disdain he stated that he was not so foolish as to believe in the existence of God. Without even wishing us farewell he stalked out of the room. Eventually the body was buried. Later the police scented foul play and tried to investigate but nothing came to light."

With
best wishes
from

Farah
&
Tanya

"The Purifying Prescriptions"

In his rejoinder to his critics the author notes that in the only reference to the use of *gaomez* (bull's urine) outside the *Vendidad*, Zarathushtra advises King Vishtaspa against its use

Ali A. Jafarey

There is a growing understanding among Zoroastrians, both Parsis and Iranis, that the *Gathas* are the most sacred scriptures and their study the most enlightening experience. All other writings, Avesta, Pahlavi and Persian, are held in high regard only as a socioreligious heritage of Iran. While appreciating and lauding the authenticity of the book *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism, Triumph over Evil* authored by Mr Jamsheed Choksy, I had enumerated its salient points, and then pointed out, what I believe, are certain shortcomings in the book with a view to drawing the attention of the learned author to them. If accepted, they may be included and/or discussed in its second edition ("The Purifying Prescriptions," *Parsiana*, October 1990). This would make it more comprehensive. However, I have a strong feeling that Ervad B. H. Minochehr-Homji had not read Choksy's book when he labeled my review a "blasphemous article" on the *Vendidad* (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, February 1991).

To Ervad Darius N. Sethna I am grateful for first tarnishing my image for the reader and then presenting his scholarly rebuttal (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, April 1991). He has also arbitrarily graced to relieve me of the divine choice given by Asho Zarathushtra and making the religious preference so easy for me (*Sethna had dubbed Jafarey a Muslim*)*. However, some 54 years ago, I read Asho Zarathushtra's thought-provoking words and made my choice: "Sraota geushaish vahishta, avarenata sucha manangha, avarenao vichithahya narem narem khvakhyai tanuye... (Yasna 30.2) Hear with your ears the Highest Truths I preach, and with illuminated minds

weigh them with care before you choose which of the two Paths to tread — deciding man by man, each for each..." (Dr I. J. S. Taraporevala's translation). I am sure Ervad Sethna has recited the 72 chapters of the *Yasna* numerous times in his life, but I wonder how often he has paused and pondered over this and other similar passages in the *Gathas*.

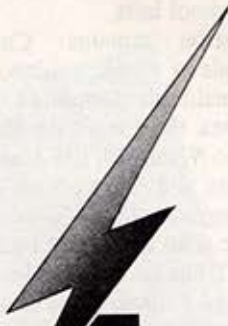
I would have gladly listened to his advise on Islamic studies but what can I do? I know comparatively much more about Islam and its scriptures than Ervad Sethna does about Zoroastrianism. It is with my profound knowledge of Islamic laws and rites, full comprehension of the ever-enlightening Good Religion, and sufficient bookish knowledge of Zoroastrianism that I wrote "that the *Vendidad*, enlarged and simplified" survives in the "doctrinal treatises of Shiite Mujtahids." Again, it is with the same knowledge that I dismiss the so-called *Ahad Nameh* (it should be spelled *Ahd*, meaning treaty and not *ahad* which means one) as a very late fabrication by the Iranians to win some favor from their belittling Arab overlords. (*Sethna had urged Jafarey to study the work according to which Muhammad's preceptor was Dasturan Dastur Dinyar, alias Salman Farsi, to whom and to whose coreligionists Muhammad had promised protection and freedom.*) The "treaty" is a favorite subject for some Zoroastrian scholars to quote in their writings but there is hardly any Muslim ulema who knows about the very existence of such a "scripture!"

As far as Salman Farsi is concerned, he was not "the most holy prophet... Muhammad's preceptor" as Sethna wants us to believe but a simple follower who joined Muhammad in Medina, some 12 years after he had proclaimed his pro-

phethood in Mecca, migrated and established himself in Medina, more than 200 miles north, and had won a large number of followers in and around the two cities. In search of a more satisfying religion, Salman had earlier embraced Christianity and then went over to Manichaeism but finally settled with Islam. History knows of no "Dasturan Dastur Dinyar" (said to be Salman's true name and designation) who abandoned the luxuries of the gardens of his theocratic Iran and traversed the sands of the pagan Arabia, to teach Muhammad to found a new religion that would eventually bring about the downfall of the Zoroastrian empire, and to sign a treaty that would remain unhonored on paper for the scholars of today!

I agree that the *Vendidad* corresponds to the 19th word of *Ahunavar*. But this is what the Pahlavi book *Denkard* of the 9th century AC tells us. It classifies the *Vendidad* among the *Datik*, the legal category as against the scriptures listed among *Gathic*, the religious and *Hadhamansrik*, the semi-religious categories. The *Denkard* also says that the 21 Nasks were discriminatingly selected from the vast collection of what was salvaged of the devastated scriptures over a period of 500 years from the reign of the Parthian King Vologeses I (51-78 AC) to the date they were canonized by the Sassanian Emperor Chosroe I (Anushiravan the Just, 531-579 AC). It means that they were canonized no earlier than 1460 years ago. Its position as the 19th nask was, obviously, a Sassanian act. (*According to Sethna the Vendidad was carried by oral tradition for thousands of years.*) We hardly know the contents and the format of the *Avesta* prior to Alexander's invasion and devastation. All scholars, Zoroastrians or not, agree that the *Gathas*

*All italic statements in parenthesis by *Parsiana* editorial



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are the only extant composition of Asho Zarathushtra, and that every other part of the *Avesta* was either composed in pre-Zarathushtrian eras or in post-Zarathushtrian stages. Many will also agree that, as attested by the *Avesta*, the Gathic texts, known as *Staota Yesnya*, well-preserved in the 70-chapter *Yasna*, were the only texts recited at the jashans described by the *Vispered*, the *Mihr-Yasht*, the *Nirangistan* and other scriptures. The questions posed are: When was the collection formed and canonized before the reign of Anushiravan? Where was the *Vendidad* positioned? Regarding the estimated date of the *Vendidad*'s composition, I simply gave what has been written by the scholar whom Ervad Sethna will never call a critic. My own opinion, expressed in another essay, is that its roots lie deep and remote in pre-Aryan Iran.

I missed to see the sole mention of *gaomaeza* outside the *Vendidad*. However, I would have been more grateful if Ervad Sethna had translated the sentence (in the *Vishtasp Yasht*) in which it is used. The Avestan text is given in Westergaard's edition but dropped by Geldner in his edition. Since I do not have the Avestan text here at my instant disposal, I give the translation by James Darmesteter in the *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol XXIII: "Zarathushtra said: O young king Vish-taspa!... Wash thy hands with water, not with gomez, and let thy son, who will be born of thy wife, do the same. Thus thy thoughts will be powerful to smite him, who is not so (friendly to the law); thy speech will be powerful to smite him, who is not so...; thy deed will be powerful to smite him..." I leave the interpretation to Ervad Sethna.

Whether books of philosophy or more, the Avestan parts outside the *Vendidad* richly contain epic, legend, history, geography, flora, fauna and many other subjects of diverse natures. (According to Sethna "one cannot read philosophy from a book of geography.") They mention sky, earth, sun, moon, stars, haoma plant and its extracted and consecrated juice, zaotira libation, baresman twigs, firewood, incense plants, water, watershed, stream, river, lake, pond, milk, meat, cow, bull, stag, dog, wolf, jackal, frogs, ants... (I can go on adding to the list). Many are apparently of less importance. Yet the "vital" purification agent and the "most holy" ceremony without which none of the other ceremonies were supposed to be properly valid was left out. Why?

There is no need to come down to the 9th century AC to provide a proof of an Iranian Dasturan Dastur performing the nirangdin ceremony. No one denies the purification rite with bull's urine. It did exist among the "Vendidadic" school. It exists, and it will continue to exist as long as this school lasts.

The question remains: Can any scholar provide a single evidence from the *Avesta* outside the *Vendidad* (I mean the Gathic texts, the *Yasna*, the *Vispered*, the *Yashts*, the *Niyaishes*, the *Afaringans*, the *Aerpatistan* and *Nirangistan*, and the remaining fragments) that it was practiced by those who composed these parts of the *Avesta*? The solitary evidence produced by Ervad Sethna, if translated correctly, points to the other direction: Wash with water and give up the gaomez! In addition to this lone instance in the negative, the lack of evidence in the non-Vendidadic *Avesta* is a good proof that there was another school which did not perform gaomez purification rites, and which believed in water, mentioned over and over again, as a sufficiently good purifying agent. The Sassanian theocracy belonged to the Vendidadic school of Zoroastrianism, and their legacy survives.

Ervad Sethna should not regret at all that he cannot purify me with gaomez. Let me assure him that I would not approach him or any person else for such a rite even if I was invited to. But what about Irani Zoroastrians? I better repeat what I gave in my review, and this time after a better check up. "The use of bull's urine, consecrated or not, has practically disappeared in Iran...Navjotes, marriages and other ceremonies which have washing as a prerequisite, have it in the simple form of a soap, shampoo and water bath... (Persons) of 60 years of age and under have hardly seen or experienced the potent purifier." Now it is up to the Ervadji to state whether he and his colleagues consider "all initiation ceremonies like the navjote, navar and marriage" of the "born" Irani Zoroastrians, except those who have had it in India, as "improper" or exceptionally valid. (According to Sethna *gaomez* is an indispensable part of the ceremonies.) The same question may be asked about the growing number of Parsi and Irani residents of North America and Europe (I am told, even in India and Pakistan) who take pomegranate or any other fruit juice instead of nirangdin.

But before he does so, he better satisfy himself and many others by writing

to the Mobeds Council in Tehran, Iran, to verify my statements about the present procedure in Iran and among Iranian Zoroastrians abroad, and then give the verdict.

A concluding counsel: Experience has shown that unfair criticism, condemnation, calling names, personal attack, blasphemy and outcry may stir up a storm which eventually subsides. They do not prove preventive or curative. Has the outcry against Joseph Peterson's navjote stopped the acceptance movement, or is it on the move and gaining momentum, particularly among those involved in mixed marriages? Did the boycott of a high priest in North America stop him from participating in the jashan performed at the Seventh North American Zoroastrian Congress in Houston in 1990 in which the boycotters were also present? Is the verdict against mixed marriages working? Is the controversy regarding the late Ms Roxan Shah going to solve the problem to the satisfaction of the conservatives? Will the policy of "cry wolf" and tarnishing the image of certain individuals yield the desired result?

My piece of advice is that the learned dasturs form a council similar to the Council of Mobeds in Iran, select a Dasturan Dastur from among themselves, make the Council the highest authority the community badly lacks, establish close relations with the councils abroad. Do not waste time in creating and feeding controversies. Devote enough time to publish books on the religion and a "standard" translation of all the ceremonial prayers. Explain their relevance to the actions and occasions they are recited for. Enlighten the elite, educate the indifferent and floating members of the community who are turning more and more to Sai babas and matas and other cultic practices, make them knowledgeably and actively participate in religious affairs instead of stationing them as silent, sometimes absentminded observers, and then watch the result! It will, I am certain, require much less energy and effort than what is blown up for emotional motions.



Ali A. Jafarey, who studied Avesta and Pahlavi under Dr. Manek Pithawalla and Dastur (Dr) M. N. Dhalla, obtained his doctorate in Persian literature from Karachi. He has authored 11 books on Zoroastrianism in English and Persian.

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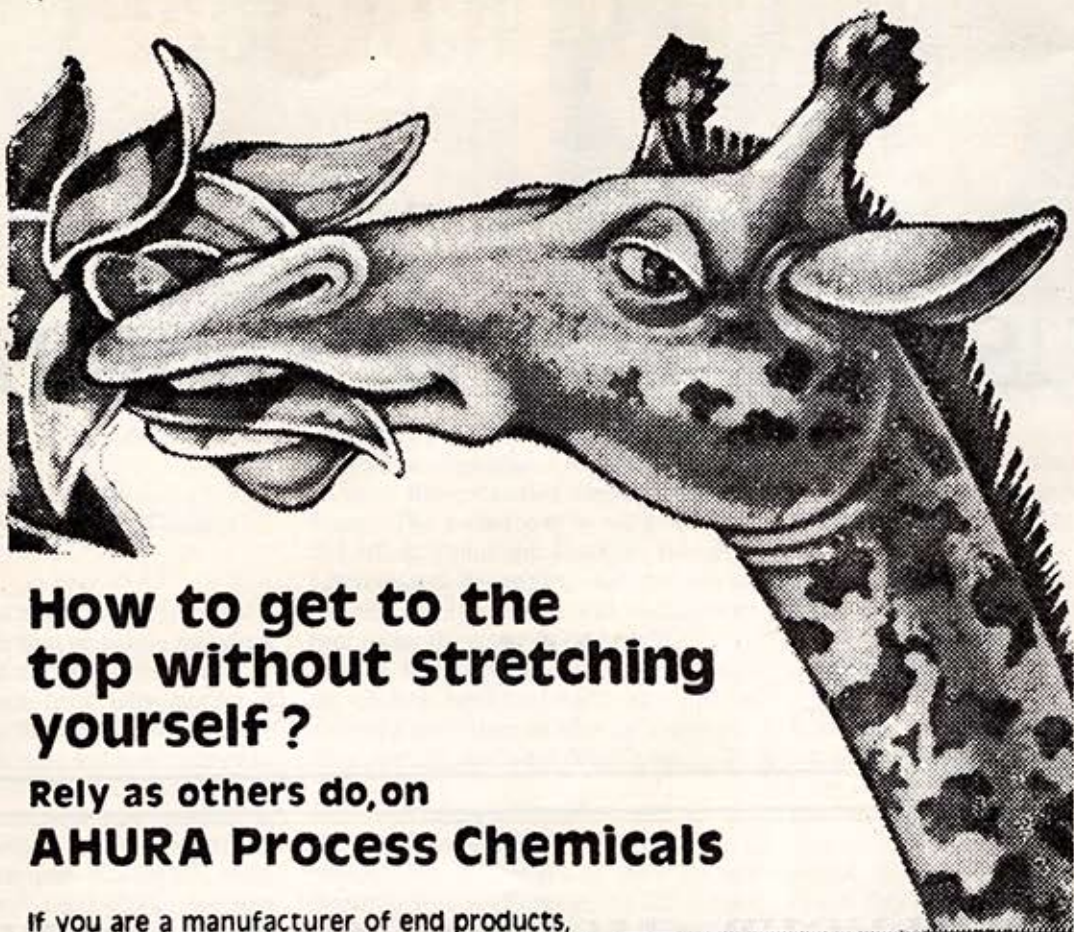
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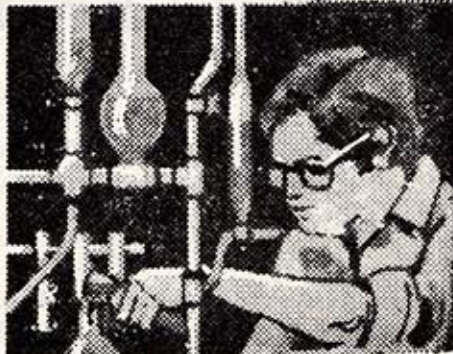
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On the trail of death

Yasmin Tavaria's struggle has resulted in the court directing the Bombay Municipal Corporation to monitor the functioning of nursing homes and hospitals

Gustasp Irani

"The court directs that all the registered nursing homes/hospitals/institutions be visited and that the progress report should contain the findings in respect of the breaches, if any, and the action taken or proposed to be taken..." In so directing the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC), Chief Justice P. D. Desai commended the public interest writ petition



filed by Ms Yasmin Tavaria and the Medico Friends Circle (an organization of doctors and health activists) demanding that the Corporation enforce the Bombay Nursing Home Registration Act of 1949. "This writ petition has served the purpose of activating the concerned authorities who seem to have woken up and taken certain steps in the direction of implementation of the various provisions of law," Desai observed in the preface to his order of April 26, 1991.

As a result of the Chief Justice's directives the functioning of all private medical institutions operating in the city have come under the strictest purview of the law as never before. Yet the person who was largely responsible for this, Tavaria, deputy sales manager of Bharat Petroleum, had not visualized that she would have to don the robes of a champion of social justice when she started out on her campaign to redress a personal grievance. "Initially I had no idea that I would have to fight the Municipality. But as things developed, I figured that I must. I found all doors closing on me and that was the only option left," states Tavaria.

Tavaria's campaign is rooted in tragic circumstances — the death of her father Erach Tavaria on August 5, 1989. She believes that his death was the direct result of his being administered mismatched blood while recuperating at the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital (PGH) from injuries sustained in a road accident.

The PGH concedes that while 15 cc of mismatched blood was "probably" administered to the patient, it was not the direct cause of his death which was more a result of his age, 78 years, and poor physical condition.

Tavaria however decided to resolve the matter legally by taking the PGH to court, and this, with the blessings of her mother. "My father was very gentle; my mother, determined like me. She was the one who said we should fight no matter what the expense," says Tavaria. The expense proved to be enormous in terms of time and effort.

On the third day after her father's death Tavaria filed a written complaint with the Gamdevi Police Station against the PGH authorities. "Six months went by and no follow-up action was taken," she says. So she took her case to the Maharashtra Home Secretary who sparked the police into action by issuing a notice to which he demanded a reply in a month's time. As a result, the police started their investigations and consequently issued warrants for the arrest of three staff members of the PGH who were thereafter released on bail.

But that was only the tip of the proverbial iceberg for Tavaria soon discovered that things would not move unless she personally aided them along. "Every step of the way I had to keep pushing or everyone would have conveniently forgotten everything," she observes. One discovery Tavaria was to make was that private hospitals and nursing homes were virtually unaccountable to anyone. When she approached the Maharashtra Medical Council she was informed that they could take action only against doctors registered with them but had no authority over medical institutions such as hospitals and nursing homes. Further, according to Tavaria, the Council was powerless to take action against the doctor who administered the mismatched blood to her father as he was not an allopath doctor but a homoeopath, and hence not registered with them.

At the Homoeopathic Council it was much the same story. They promised Tavaria to ask the doctor concerned for a detailed report on his version of the affair and then take appropriate action against him if necessary; but as regards the Hospital there was little they could do. "Private hospitals were going scot free. They could function as they liked and there was nothing anyone could do about it," says Tavaria.

Or so it seemed till she dug around and discovered that there was a Bombay Nursing Home Registration Act of 1949 which empowered the Municipality to register and monitor the functioning of all privately run hospitals and nursing homes within its jurisdiction. In actual fact, however, Tavaria found that the Municipality failed to exercise its authority beyond the mere act of registering the institutions and even here they often failed in their task. "It came to light that

continued on page 36

"Signatures in stone and steel"

The late Adi Davierwalla's contribution to modern Indian sculpture is depicted on celluloid by Homi Sethna

Shirin Mehta

Homage to a Sculptor, veteran filmmaker Homi Sethna's newly released documentary on Adi Davierwalla, is a personal outburst. The short 14-minute film is an unabashedly awed personal statement.

Sethna admits to being "thunder-struck" by Davierwalla's sculptures when he walked casually into a 1979 posthumous retrospective of the artist's work at the Jehangir Art Gallery. Within hours, Sethna had managed to get his entire film crew together and spent the next two nights committing every nuance of the sculptor's work to celluloid. The result: a simple, sensitive, strangely moving record of the sculptor's work and life.

Regrettably Sethna learnt that there was no footage available on the brilliant artist's life but luckily he discovered a personal friend and long-time admirer in critic Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni who provided the informative script. Nadkarni paints the picture of a gentle and helpful man, a man of few words. The reticent sculptor would probably have been relieved to find that *Homage* refuses to probe into his life so much as his work. Opines the filmmaker, "This is not an in-depth study or biography. It is a visual-aural interpretation of Adi's work as it affected me."

The camera moves evocatively and chronologically through the volume of Davierwalla's work — from the romantic and graceful wood sculptures of his earlier days, to marble and stone creations which gain a movement and elasticity all their own, to the metaphysical abstraction of his most crucial phase in welded metal and sculpture. Here the camera itself seems to soar with the sheer largeness and grandeur of the works which were filmed later at Larsen and Tourbo, Indian Institute of Technology,

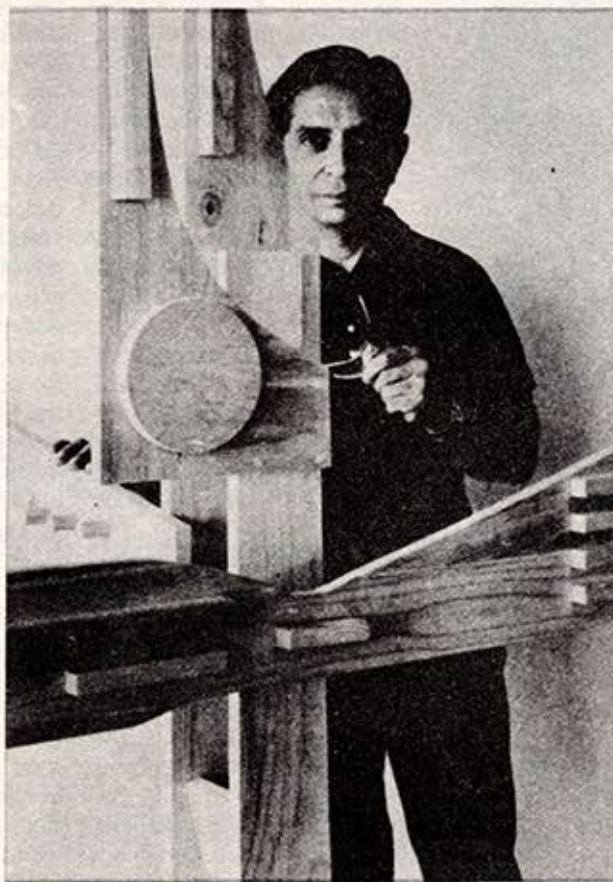
and outside a housing colony off Scandal Point (Breach Candy, Warden Road). They seem to dwarf the buildings they are juxtaposed against, making them indeed, "... his signatures in stone and steel: over-

years to devote all his time to sculpture. He was married to a colleague in the pharmaceutical firm in Bombay where he worked. A self-taught sculptor, who remained always true to his material, he

worked in the period that followed India's Independence, constantly struggling to resolve and harmoniously incorporate into his creation the conflicting influences of Indian and western sculpture. "Meticulous about shaping both his work and his life, he was moved forward by a sense of mission," notes the commentary. "Right from the beginning we see in Adi's work carved or sculpted shapes and figures which seem to be trying to stretch their limits and reach out to the unattainable heights above them."

Among the things we are not told is that Davierwalla's creations were widely exhibited in India, Europe and America. According to an obituary write-up in an earlier issue of *Parsiana*, his sculptures were on display at the Asiatic Biennale held in Middleheim, Belgium, a few months before his death. The article continues to list the notable awards he received, among them, the gold medal of the All India Sculptor's Association, the bronze and silver medal of the Bombay Art Society, the first prize

in the Bombay State Art Exhibition and the prize for sculpture at the annual exhibition of the Lalit Kala Akademi in 1965. He was also selected for a one year John D. Rockefeller Fellowship, having given up an earlier opportunity to try for the prestigious Fellowship due to the tragic death of his great patron, nuclear scientist Homi Bhabha, in an air crash. However, his visit to the US in 1968, as a Rockefeller Fellow, according to Nadkarni, was "a traumatic experience



Davierwalla: the essence is laid bare

flowing with the music of his soul."

The documentary glosses over the facts of Davierwalla's life and while one may argue that there is much left out — the thought that shaped his work, his own reflections on his work, his method of sculpting or the tragedy of his death — the essence of the man is laid bare. This much we are told: A trained chemist, Davierwalla gave up chemistry after 16

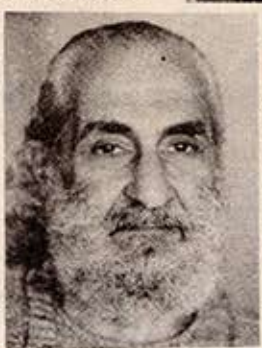
for him." Adds the critic and friend, "There his inventive mind was fascinated by the discovery of a new material: perspex. Already his work had taken a highly cerebral direction, away from his beginnings, and one waited for him to settle down and project the new insights he had gained abroad." Sadly this was not to be for on October 14, 1975, Davierwalla was struck down by cancer, a fact that the film sensitively omits, for

"How is this relevant to his work?" Sethna asks. However, the Lalit Kala Akademi monograph on Davierwalla had noted as early as 1971, "Even should Davierwalla stop working at this point, he has rendered to modern Indian sculpture the services of two or three artists."

While the camera also captures objects of everyday use like a straight-backed chair or an unusual table sculpted by the artist, it becomes apparent that the themes that preoccupied Davierwalla's mind right through his life were drawn principally from Biblical lore or Greek mythology. The screen throws into sharp focus an iconic Christ's face steeped in compassion; a wooden Icarus, its surface brilliantly worked into tortured wavy lines; an Oedipus tormented by his terrible revelation. "There is great poetry in the different versions of the crucifixion," notes Nadkarni. "But only in retrospect can we appreciate the spiritual urge that lifted all these works above the merely earthly."

No wonder then that the filmmaker approaches his subject with a feeling close to veneration and a humility which indeed are a hallmark of Sethna's best work. Sethna, who had only a nodding acquaintance with Davierwalla though his wife, the noted weaver Nellie, knew him better, discovered the man and artist mainly through his diaries and detailed sketchbooks which have been reproduced in the documentary. "Drawing books filled with sketches led to the innermost workings of his mind; what he felt about man, life and the universe." His last words as noted by him in his sketchbooks seem to prophesy his tragic and untimely death at 53. A few days before his death he wrote, "At this period I do not know what will happen hereafter. Scared of death? Yet why should I be? It is the only thing in life one can never know of oneself."

Made in 1980, financed entirely by



Sethna with Nellie: creative reflections

Sethna himself, the documentary was put up to the Films Division for purchase in 1985 when it was approved. But due to a lack of funds, it was acquired by them only in 1989 and was finally released on February 8, 1991. While one hopes that this is only the beginning and that Sethna will thrill audiences with more works of the same genre, it seems unlikely. Says the staunch and articulate defender of the much neglected documentary with his usual candor, "No, I am not working on any more films in this vein because no one is willing to finance anything."

Sethna had once aspired to become a lawyer and had spent nine months in his father's firm of solicitors before he discovered himself disagreeing with the fundamentals of law. However, Sethna, with his background in theater — as early as school he had won an all-Bombay trophy for acting — got a professional assignment in theater in 1943 and used this as a stepping stone to come out of law and into theater and films. However, he soon realized that "theater itself was not going to work since professional theater just did not seem to take off." So he joined the Army Film Centre of the British Government where he apprenticed for nine months before being commissioned a lieutenant. He directed and made films for the Centre from 1944-46 after which he left for England to gain practical experience in the studios there. "I did everything," he remembers, "from the hack-work to the conceptual work and learnt everything there was to learn about

filmmaking." Towards the end of his stay in England, Sethna was working in a studio making government documentaries where John Grierson, "the father of documentaries," was head at the time. In 1951 Sethna returned to India.

"Don't ask me how many films I have made," he says, "I really do not recall." Making documentaries for over 40 years, his career is almost as long as the Films Division itself where he started off by lending his voice and writing commentaries for news reels. He soon left the Films Division to do "independent, unhampered work away from the stifling bureaucracy of a government organization." And the recent release of *Homage* offered audiences the opportunity to view some of these works as well. One notices the same humility in his documentation of the unknown artisan, whether he is involved in the intricate hand painting and hand printing of kalamkari, in the traditional skill of the pottery maker or the minute art of the wood carver. An articulate anti-nuclear pacifist, Sethna's film highlights the tragedy of a nuclear winter with footage on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Somewhat apart in execution from all the above is *Happiness Unto Others*, a 22-minute documentary on the historical backdrop of the Parsis and their contribution to Indian life. This work is obviously close to his heart and Sethna is quick to defend it against any criticism. Does *Happiness* tend to rest on its haunches, content in the past glories of the Parsis, skimming only superfluously over the present? Says the ever-articulate Sethna,

continued on page 40

Inner dissection

Makarand Paranjape

Mirrored, Mirroring by Gieve Patel. Published in 1991 under the New Poetry in India series by Oxford University Press, YMCA Library Building, Jai Singh Road, New Delhi 110001. Pp: 47. Price: Rs 50.

There is a quiet self-assurance about Gieve Patel's third collection of poems, *Mirrored, Mirroring*. The lines are spare and taut, details whittled down to the barest minimum. It is as if the poet has no need for extra words; his expressive overtures here are frugal and minimal.

This compression in style certainly has a close connection with the themes of the poems. The concern with the human body — its imperfections, its traumas, its capacity to suffer — and with the nitty-gritty of our biology persists:

Overpowered once
by the odour of genitals
I contemplated the possibly
odourless body,
quite in its prime, possessing
every delight
one might wish for,
but odourless,
or even, in marshier areas,
delicately jasmine-scented.
The notion was unpleasing.
Return, rather, to sulphurous steams,
to scarcely bearable
volleys of suggestion
a hair's breath from decay.

Or:
Doctors and tailors are lucky men,
Sticking their fingers up
Everywhere. Teachers come next,
Nuzzling close to the taught,
Peering from over a shoulder,
Deep down into a chest: this intimate
Sublimity in a goat's pen.

As in the earlier poems, here too Patel looks at the body dispassionately, almost with clinical clarity. There is keen awareness of the smell of mortality, but that doesn't result in disgust.

Likewise, Patel's observations and meditations on his self and family, on landscapes and cityscapes, and on human beings in distress continue. *From Bom-*

bay Central shows trains waiting like good pets, "chained patiently to platforms." *Never Did* is a longer poem in three sections; autobiographical, it takes us through the poet's reminiscences of school right up to the dissection chamber in medical college. *Simpleton, Speeding, and Aegis* are reflections on nature. And *Slummy Story* observes a "corpulent and epileptic girl" in her convulsions.

But what makes *Mirrored, Mirroring* different is an overwhelming preoccupation with two related themes: God and death. The very first poem in the collection, *The Difficulty*, sets the tone:

It is difficult
even to say,
'God,'
one is so out of practice.
And embarrassed.
Like lisping in public
about candy.

At fifty!

Another half-a-dozen poems are offered as variations on this theme. The most important of these is the title poem, *Mirrored, Mirroring*. Beginning with a visit to the zoo, it ends with the speaker finding his true image in a dog:

Furiously
I will wag my tail,
Shake my butt,
Rump my rump,
arch my back in every which way dimension,
and
Yaaoooooul, yaaoooooul,
It seems I've found
Someone to like!

Typical Parsi self-hatred? In *Hill Station*, which I consider to be the best poem in the collection, an elaborate parallel is traced between fornicating monkeys ("A mount, three little thrusts, Climb down, and back to the lice") and two tourist couples, including the poet and his wife:

The monkeys, us,
And the lurid couple.
O sweets of Nature,
Not for me to bestow or dispel,
Each ecstatic thrust is
Freely contaminate with an appetite for lice,
Comics, and many more such distractions.

If the poet has an uneasy relationship with God, he is more comfortable thinking about death. "When it's time," he'd like to be "carried away" on a "third-class carriage/with open windows/on a day/not/too crowded." In *Turning Aside* he sees death as a settling down "to

sweet quietude."

Overall, this is an impressive collection of poems, not spectacular, but solid. It shows a mature poet turning in upon himself to dissect, as it were, the stuff that his life is made of. Anxiety, irritation, compassion, self-loathing, exultation — all these remain, but are subsumed by a general sense of confidence and poise.

Family factors

Burjor K. Karanjia

Keys to Happy Family Life by Dasturji Khurshed S. Dabu. Originally published in Gujarati in 1959, this book was translated into English by Marzban J. Giara and published by him in 1991 on behalf of Dabu's students. Copies available from Giara, Dhunmai Building, 667, Lady Jehangir Road, Parsi Colony, Dadar, Bombay 400014. Pp: IX+63. Price: Rs 15.

Some years ago when I had an occasion to call on Dasturji Khurshed Dabu, the liberal High Priest of Bombay's H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram, to clarify certain doubts in my mind about a book I was writing, I was struck by a quality in him that is unfortunately rare in our priesthood: the quality of enlightenment. As we got to talking about religious and other matters, I discovered that having lived up to the Zoroastrian precept of good deeds, good words and, most difficult of all, good thoughts, he exemplified something that was even rarer, a man totally at peace with himself.

No doubt a contributory factor to this was that his own was the happiest of marriages. Married at the callow age of 18, his wife lost her eyesight soon after marriage. For 27 years thereafter, until she expired, he attended to all her needs with a devotion that was truly exemplary. This sacrifice, though it wasn't at all a sacrifice for him, colors his views on what makes for a happy marriage in his delightful little booklet *Keys to Happy Family Life*. The precepts he expounds in its pages are not only made credible but are ennobled by practice.

We may not agree with all his views as, for example, that marriages arranged by elders with the advantage of experience have greater chances of success than love marriages. He derides the wasteful



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expenditure on navjote and wedding celebrations as "a mockery of God's gifts." He pleads for an intelligent attitude to death, believing that wailing and breast-beating have a harmful effect: "The main thing to bear in mind is how the parents behave at home at the time of death. For that is the pillar of our children's psychology. Where there is loud wailing, such practice is harmful to the house. Even the thought of any error or injustice in God's creation should not spread in the family. In life's ups and downs there is always a divine plan of wisdom."

Even when we disagree, however, it is often not so much because of anything wrong with his views but because of a lack in ourselves. Since marriages are no more made in heaven, Dasturji Dabu advocates patience, tolerance, understanding in a married couple's day-to-day life, and righteousness, always righteousness.

He elaborates on different virtues-- Humility: "I became a double graduate, professor, principal, and yet I have not acquired the common sense or natural wisdom of my wife."

Contentment: "There is no mishap in poverty. Kings have embraced poverty discarding the throne. Real poverty is in absence of good qualities. He who is of good conduct has unlimited wealth."

Self-discipline: "There was a time when, if receipt of my scholarship amount was delayed, I used to survive on peanuts and stop the meals coming to college. After I started earning also, at the month's end when cash was running low, thrift was practised. Never borrow from anyone is a rule still observed."

The cultivation of right values: "In this life a degree can be a stumbling block or a curse. The boast of scholarship is not

useful in running a home. That requires cooperative effort with humility."

True service: "They also reach God who dedicate themselves to serve. The thought of pleasing God by lots of prayers is not right."

Equality of treatment between the sexes: "If today a man resorts to adultery with a prostitute, no complaint is made against him, because as per law there is no restriction against a prostitute! But if a married lady is found taking even slight liberties, then hell is let loose."

An added attraction in the booklet are the quotable quotes at the end. If Dasturji Dabu was himself responsible for them, then he must also have had a refreshing sense of humor. One of the quotes reads, "The arithmetic of a good wife: She adds to her husband's happiness, subtracts from his cares, multiplies his joys and practises reduction in expenditure." As against this, there is another quote: "A wife is an addition of care, subtraction of pocket money, multiplication of expenses and division of friends." Or again: "Before going to war, say a prayer; before going to sea, say two prayers; before marrying, say three prayers."

Keys to a Happy Family Life are a collection of Dasturji Dabu's writings that originally appeared in his column "Nari Jagat" (woman's world) in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* newspaper. The articles have been translated into English by Marzban J. Giara who considers them to be "a treasure house of worldly wisdom" and recommends that the booklet be presented as a wedding gift. It is probable that most married couples will find Dasturji Dabu's precepts idealistic, unworldly and difficult to put into practice. Difficult, yes, but as Dasturji's own marriage proves, by no means impossible.

ON THE TRAIL OF DEATH *continued from page 31*

between 1987 and 1990 some private hospitals were not even registered with the municipal authorities. It only shows that the hospitals and the Municipality were not bothered," she states.

It was now no longer an issue concerning a single institution — the PGH — but confrontation with the entire

The Maharashtra Medical Council could take action only against doctors registered with them

medical machinery and the Municipality. "People advised me: 'You can't fight the Municipality,'" says Tavaria, but that did not deter her. Along with the backing of the Medico Friends Circle, she took her case to the High Court. Here, however, her petition was rejected on the grounds that it did not qualify as a public interest litigation as Tavaria had a personal grievance against the PGH and had also filed a damage claim (of five lakh rupees) against the institution, according to a report in *The Times of India*.

Tavaria, undaunted, went into appeal and her plea was admitted by the Chief Justice whose subsequent directives to the Bombay Municipal Corporation has resulted in a major overhaul in the functioning of all medical institutions in the city.

Tavaria, meanwhile, did not let her crusade prejudice her practicality. Recently, when her mother suffered a heart attack, she admitted her to the PGH. Subsequently Tavaria herself was admitted to the same Hospital. "We went there because our doctor advised us to. We have implicit faith in him," she states.

And the PGH responded magnanimously for, according to Tavaria, the nursing she and her mother received was courteous and attentive. Even a senior trustee of the Hospital paid them a courtesy call. Tavaria admits she perceives greater efficiency today than when her father was admitted in 1989, but there is still room for improvement. It is for this reason she has not softened her resolve to pursue her fight to the end. "It is better the Hospital is made to gear up than be forced to close down," she states.

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The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 19 and 32 years, the arithmetic mean — the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides — being 26 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 25 and 35, averaging at 29 years.

As compared to 33 births there were 66 deaths in Bombay in September. Heart disease was the major killer, claiming 17 lives of which seven were above the age of 80, while pneumonia and lung disease took 10 lives. Five patients each succumbed to old age and general debility, septicemia, brain disease, cancer and diabetes. Head injury (three victims) and kidney failure and asthma (two patients each) were the other killers. Isolated cases registered last month were tuberculosis, jaundice, dementia, gastrointestinal bleeding, hypertension, haemorrhage, fracture, paralysis and kyphoscoliosis (excessive backward or lateral curvature of the dorsal spine). A 65-year-old man was stabbed to death. Two youths, aged 16 and 25 years, were lost to the community. Highest age registered at death: 96.

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 causes.

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.

BOMBAY Born

A boy to *Shernaz and Bomi Boyce* on July 8, 1991
A boy to *Hofrish and Rumi Sethna*; August 3
A girl to *Pervin and Jimmy Captain*; August 21

A girl to *Farida and Minoo Mistry*; August 30

A girl to *Jasmine and Farokh Bharucha*; September 2

A boy to *Mahnaz and Zahir Contractor*; September 2

A girl to *Sonia and Percy Vasunia*; September 8

A boy to *Ferozy and Sam Chapgar*; September 11

A boy to *Hoofrish and Sarosh Dastur*; September 12

A girl to *Banoo and Riard Jasubhoy*; September 12

A girl to *Mehru and Soli Karanjia*; September 13

A girl to *Kashmira and Porus Daruwala*; September 17

A boy to *Armin and Rohinton Shroff*; September 17

A boy to *Wahbiz and Cyrus Engineer*; September 18

A girl to *Yasmine and Hooshman Irani*; September 19

A boy to *Syrine and Bomi Khandhadia*; September 20

A boy to *Mehru and Beheram Madon*; September 21

A boy to *Roshan and Daneshvar Samya*; September 22

A boy to *Roshan and Rusi Bhada*; September 23

A girl to *Kashmira and Zubin Contractor*; September 23

A boy to *Shahen and Feroz Jubani*; September 23

A boy to *Laila and Rakesh Lamba*; September 23

A boy to *Meher and Perzion Zend*; September 23

A girl to *Valerie and Zarir Baliwalla*; September 24

A girl to *Maharukh and Kaiyomerz Sattha*; September 24

A girl, *Thea*, to *Bakhtawar and Cyrus Shroff*; September 24

A boy to *Gulshan and Porus Daruwala*; September 25

A girl to *Goolrukh and Rustom Mehta*; September 25

A boy, *Xerxes*, to *Hutoxi and Vispi Panthaki*; September 25

A boy to *Arnaz and Firoz Shroff*; September 25

A boy to *Hufrish and Darayas Sarkari*; September 26

A boy to *Phiroza and Percy Sigamporia*; September 26

A girl to *Dinaz and Aspi Avari*; September 27

A girl to *Bakhtavar and Hoshang Italia*; September 28

A boy to *Jeroo and Ness Buhariwala*; September 29

A boy to *Ketayun and Mehernosh Parekh*; September 29

A girl to *Maharukh and Aspi Wadia*; September 29

(75), F/18, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; September 4

Nergish Burjorji Antia (84), C/9, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; September 5

Sohrab Rustomji Katrak (62), E/5, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculia, 400027; September 5

Allahyar Karamalla Rahmani (67), B Type Bldg, Contractor Baug, Mori Rd, Mahim, 400016; September 5

Kali Jehangirji Wadia (66), 326, Karim Bldg, Grant Rd, 400007; September 5

Jerbai Nanabhai Patel (89), 6/11, Khan Est, Stn Rd, Mahim, 400016; September 6

Maneck Shapurji Bengali (82), B/25, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, 400027; September 7

Ratanshaw Dhunjishaw Marker (86), 66/D, Gowalia Tank, 400036; September 7

Dolly Rustomji Mirai (50), M. F. Pandey Sanatorium, Colaba, 400005; September 7

Tehmasp Cooverjee Dangore (72), 6/2, Seth N. Tata Bldg, S. V. Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; September 8

Dhanjisha Ratansha Daruwala (65), C/26, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculia, 400027; September 9

Phiroze Hormusjee Maju (73), Karanjia Bldg, Grant Rd, 400007; September 9

Jer Jamshed Desai (82), 31/D, Nand Dham, Bhuvsaheb Parag Marg, Dahisar (W), 400068; September 10

Goola Tehmuras Fitter (86), Banaji Bldg, Forjett St, 400007; September 10

Nadersha Ardeshar Mistry (79), F/22, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; September 10

Khurshed Noshirwan Jussawala (86), C/202, Poonam Apts, Dr Annie Besant Rd, Worli, 400018; September 11

Dhurnmai Framroze Kanga (82), B/41, Jivan Sudha, Juhu Lane, Andheri (W), 400058; September 11

Amy Roos Kapadia (82), Navroze Mans, Tardeo Rd, 400007; September 12

Hirjee Nariman Kotwal (83), 725, Khurshed Mhl, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 12

Gulbai Edulji Buchia (89), 618, Bhiwandiwalla Ter, Girgaum Rd, 400002; September 13
Darabshaw Dinshawji Golwalla (83), 17/A, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; September 13
Meherwanji Maneckjee Cooper (92), A/35, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; September 14
Sarvar Sheriyar Irani (80), 19, Jer Bldg, 6th Khetwadi Lane, 400004; September 14
Piloo Jamshedji Dadinath (68), 36, Mistry Bldg, Sun Mill Rd, Lower Parel, 400012; September 15
Rashid Rustomji Soonawalla (78), 13, Mehar Ali Mans, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculla, 400027; September 15
Frannie Bejon Boywala (91), 43, Jal Darshan, Nepean Sea Rd, 400036; September 16
Adarbad Marzban Irani (74), Q/14, S. B. Bharucha Baug, Andheri (W), 400058; September 17
Rustomji Hormasji Panthaki (70), Village Saronda, Via Sanjan, Dist Bulsar, 396001; September 17
Jehangir Bomanji Engineer (86), 5/A, Contractor Bldg, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; September 18
Adi Pirojsha Madon (65), Elysium Mans, Walton Rd, 400039; September 18
Ratan Sorabji Contractor (79), B, Wassiamal Bldg, Grant Rd, 400007; September 19
Adi R. Patel (77), Shanti Daan, Home for the sick and dying, Missionaries of Charity, Borivli (W), 400092; September 19
Zubin Baman Billimoria (25), B, Rustom Palace, Tardeo, 400007; September 20
Adi Manchershaw Elavia (59), 347/C, United Chmbs, Grant Rd, 400007; September 20
Rumi Hoshang Jabbar (16), B-7/2/12, Doodh Sagar Co-op Hsg Soc, Goregaon (E), 400065; September 20
Minoo Sorabji Sarkari (70), Albless Bldg, Opp Charni Rd Stn, Thakurdwar, 400004; September 20
Piloo Meherwanji Jaorewalla (59), K/10, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; September 21
Adi Cawasji Leninwalla (85), 123/B, Chamarbaugwalla Bldg, Parel, 400012; September 21
Mehra Shavaksha Naterwalla (82), Palm Spring, Cuffe Parade,

400005; September 21
Homi Bomanji Irani (82), Parsee Salsette Association, Parsee Pan-chayat Rd, Andheri (E), 400093; September 22
Homi Kekobad Soonawala (79), Sanjana Bldg, Forjett Hill Rd, 400007; September 22
Dhun Minoo Achhadwalla (58), Patel Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; September 23
Tehmina Framroze Austin (78), 32/3, Tata Hsg Soc, Parel, 400012; September 23
Ratamai Ratansha Kotwal (Panarwala) (76), Amy S. Sanjana, Vithal Bhavan, 6th Khetwadi Lane, 400004; September 23
Minocher Dhunjeebhoy Mistry (85), 2, Old Adenwalla Bldg, Mahim, 400016; September 23
Fareedoon Ratanshaw Karbhari (68), 251/16, Adarsh Ngr, Worli, 400025; September 24
Mehli Faramroze Munshi (61), Mehta Bldg, Captain Clny, Tardeo, 400034; September 24
Nergish Rustomji Sethna (69), 785, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 24
Khursetjee Jamshedji Jejeebhoy (96), 36, Irani Bldg, Charni Rd Junction, 400007; September 25
Nariman Pestonji Mody (74), 23, Tata Ngr, Chunabhatti, Sion, 400022; September 25
Dinamai Jalejar Elavia (79), 72, Bai Hirabai Petit Bldg, Opp Grant Rd Stn, 400007; September 26
Nargis Ardeshir Munsiff (68), A, Mota Mans, Opp Bhatia Hosp, Tardeo, 400007; September 26
Rati Perojshaw Sethna (70), Presswala Bldg, 190, Lamington Rd, 400007; September 26
Shirinbai Framji Bhatena (83), 3, Motibai Bhuvan, Proctor St, 400007; September 27
Meherji Byramji Ghaswala (59), 618, A/I Girgaon Rd, Dhobitalao, 400002; September 27
Gaiyomard Cawasji Mehta (88), 786, Ready Money Bldg, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 27
Framjee Dinshaw Parakh (82), 1, Ready Money Bldg, Tardeo, 400034; September 27
Edul Naswanji Avasia (63), J/4, Captain Clny, Haji Ali, Tardeo, 400034; September 28
Tehmina Hirajee Kerawalla (77), 4, Jassawala Sanatorium,

Jehangir Baug, Juhu, 400049; September 29
Rati Hormusji Randeria (61), 5/11, Mody Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; September 29

CALCUTTA

Died
Adi Pardiwala, husband of Homai and father of Keki, Rohinton, Freny Lobo and Pilloo; September 5
Shirinbai Rustomji Bhesania (92), mother of Bomi and late Dhunmai Adi Medhora; September 11
Minoo Phirojshaw Aibada (69); September 13

MADRAS

Died
Savak K. Tarapore (69), brother of Firoze; August 24

NAVSARI

Died
Jerbanoo Vandriwalla, mother of Shahrukh Dadabhoy; June 5

SURAT

Died
Minocher Ardeshir Patrawalla (77), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; September 10
Jamshedji Tehmurasji Panthaki (75), Parsi Wad, Gam Dumas, Dist Surat, 395003; September 14
Dhunmai Dosabhoy Ichhaporia (84), Bharucha Hse, Bibini Wadi, Saiyedpura, 395003; September 22
Cawasji Kaikhushroo Dalal (84), Malesar Mohallo, Rustompura, 395002; September 29

CALIFORNIA

Born
A girl, *Anahita*, to *Meher* and *Nauser Tavaria*; May 12
A girl to *Rooki* and *Khushroo Fitter*; June 11
A girl, *Delna*, to *Ernaz* and *Mahyar Irani*; July 13

Died

Jimmy Lashkari (10), son of Goolu and Dinyar and brother of Karl; July 20

CONNECTICUT

Married
Zarin Noshir Medhora and *Sandip Jagdish Kapur*; May 18

HOUSTON

Born
A boy, *Kayaanoosh (Kian)*, to *Pearline* and *Sarosh Contractor*; May 21
A girl, *Mitra*, to *Nazneen* and *Kershaw Khumbatta*; May 21

MANCHESTER

Died
Pervez Merwanji (42), husband of Suzanne and father of *Punya*; September 8

MARYLAND

Married
Shehernaz Joshi and *Farhad Verahrami*; August 10

Died

Dinshaw Minwala (92), husband of *Nergish* and father of *Hoshedar*; August 22

MISSISSIPPI

Born
A boy, *Trevor*, to *Jill* and *Kaizad Tamboli*; July 28

MONTREAL

Born
A girl, *Daisy*, to *Sanobar* and *Dinyar Daver*; June 9

NEW YORK

Married
Anahita Rustom Seth and *Dilaawar Jal Mistry* of North Caldwell, New Jersey; June 23

ONTARIO

Died
Najamai Kaikobad Karkaria, mother of *Gulshan*, *Aban* and *Roshan*; June 6
Noshir Patel, father of *Khushroo*; June 12

VANCOUVER

Died
Jal F. Dastur (92), father of late *Roda Dhun Mehta*, *Piroja Fareedoon Amroli* and *Nani*; August 26

VICTORIA, Australia

Born
A girl, *Amy*, to *Savar* and *Sharookh Bhathawalla*; July 2

TOTALS (for this issue)

Births: Boys 23, Girls 22
Marriages: Parsi 10
Intercommunal 1
Deaths: 84

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

Wania's visionary work

He was at the operation theater at Karachi's Anklesaria Hospital, concentrating on the delicate eye surgery case before him, when a massive heart attack caught him unawares. But the experienced ophthalmic surgeon, Dr Jamshed Hormuzshaw Wania knew what had to be done; the events that led to his demise were recounted in prominent Karachi newspapers. He immediately arranged for a substitute to take over before being admitted to the intensive care unit. During the brief interludes of consciousness over the next 12 hours before the second fatal attack struck, his enquiries concerned the progress of his incomplete operation and his keenness to get his eyes donated on his death.

Instrumental in arranging the first ever donation of two human eyes from the Sight Conservation Society in New York to Karachi as a Christmas gift on December 25, 1960 and in the conception of the eye donation movement in Pakistan, Wania was also the first among the physicians and surgeons of Pakistan to donate his eyes for corneal transplant on his demise on June 19, 1991, wrote Iftekhar Husain, president of the Pakistan Eye Bank Society.

After his death, his eyes have restored vision in a 14-year-old youth as also a 60-year-old man. And during his 62-year lifespan, the thousands of operations he had performed, including some delicate ones stretching over several hours, brought light to several others with failing eyesight, continued Husain. His patients included not only senior bureaucrats and business tycoons but several from the poor strata who were given free surgical and medical treatment.

Among his most celebrated patients was the late General Zia-ul-Haq, former president of Pakistan. As recounted by Hamdan Amjad Ali in the *Daily News Weekend*, when President Zia invited Wania to Islamabad, the ophthalmologist opted instead to treat him at his own clinic

in Karachi. Impressed by Wania's professionalism, the President even agreed to abolish the taxes and excise duties levied on equipment imported for the treatment of complicated eye ailments, thus benefitting several eye hospitals in Pakistan.

Wania's life "was dedicated to restoring the sight of the blind," remarked Darraius Kandawalla, vice president of The Zoroastrian Association of Pakistan that convened a condolence meeting in his memory on July 27, 1991. "In this endeavor he constantly acquired new knowledge... so that those who came under his care would receive the latest treatment available in the field of ophthalmology," he continued. One of his



Wania: sight saving measures

own techniques, labelled "Wania's Operation," finds a mention in a Japanese publication on *Recent Advances in Lacrimal Surgery*, notes a write-up by Faresteht Gati in the *Parsi Sansar ané Loke Sevak*.

The credit for bringing Pakistan ophthalmology on the world map goes to Wania, recognize his peers. Having participated in over 60 international conferences on ophthalmology, presented papers for international publications, and associated himself with several international bodies, among his most recent appointments was as president of the Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology. He also enjoyed the distinction of being appointed fellow of the Society of Eye Surgeons, of the International College of Angiology, of the American College of

Surgeons and the College of Ophthalmologists, UK. Among the national bodies he was affiliated with were as founder member of the Ophthalmological Society of Pakistan and as president for several years of the Pakistan Medical Association, his bio data lists his accomplishments.

He was ever willing to impart his knowledge to others. Besides serving on the faculty of the Aga Khan Hospital and Medical College, the MCP Institute, and other local training centers, he was also a visiting professor at the University of Chicago. Many students are known to have been helped by him with stipends, in addition to many more for whom he stood as guarantor (even though he may not have known them personally) for he was determined to see them further their careers.

His own education was at the Bai Virbaijee Soparivala Parsi High School, D. J. Sindh Science College and the Dow Medical College in Karachi before he proceeded to the UK and USA to gain experience in hospitals there. While in college he was a good swimmer, as also a tennis and badminton player, even having had an occasion to represent Sindh in an all-India badminton championship. Since his return to Karachi in 1958, the different medical institutions he served were the Spencer Eye Hospital, Masoomen General Hospital, Aga Khan University Hospital, Layton-Rehmatullah Eye Hospital and the Muslim Association Eye Hospital. One of his most enduring commitments was to the Bamonshah Minocher Homji Parsi General Hospital where he was appointed honorary medical director, recounted Kandawalla.

"He had a quick temper and he spoke his mind though he had the rare gift to forgive," noted Gati. Regarded as a man of principles, he is known to have been vociferous in his fight for the just cause and his denunciation of the shenanigans within his community. But once he was inside his consulting room, his entire demeanor was transformed. Full of sympathy and consideration for his patients, he is remembered for having the rare gift of greeting each patient with a cheerful smile.

The ophthalmologist is survived by his wife Shireen, son Hormuzshaw and daughter Niloufer.

Vajifdar's civic connections

Died: Shera Noshir Vajifdar, 73, freedom fighter and municipal councillor, on May 25, 1991 at Bombay's B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital following cardiac arrest.

The contacts that she had established during her years of active struggle for India's Independence, Vajifdar used in later life to promote her social work activities. Herself a Congress worker who was conferred the freedom fighter's award in 1965, as noted a write-up in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of September 1, 1991, among the leaders with whom she is supposed to have come in close contact are Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and President Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan. She once very narrowly escaped being imprisoned by the British for attempting subterfuge.

Among the causes she is credited with having espoused, during the five years she served as councillor of the Bombay Municipality from 1957-61, was provision of quarters and uniforms to nurses in municipal hospitals. As a member of the Mayor's Fund Raising Committee for several years thereafter, she continued to promote different civic projects. When municipal sanctions were sought by different Parsi organizations and business houses, it was often Vajifdar's assistance that was sought, remembered Vispy Dastur in his reference to her at the condolence meeting on August 5, 1991, convened by the Youths Own Union in honor of some Parsi activists.

Poverty and tribulations she had experienced during her young days, hence she was always sympathetic to the cause of those who had to study under the street lights or those who had to run around for employment openings, remembers Jal Tata, chief accountant, Tata Services. She started a night school for the down-trodden and as director of Sahkari Bhandar tried to promote cooperative distribution networks, notes the *Jamé* tribute detailing her bio data.

Vajifdar completed her schooling from Young Ladies at Bombay and her commerce graduation from Sydenham College. Believed to be the first Parsi lady to do her MCom from the Bombay University, the subject of her thesis was the fe-



Vajifdar: alleviating others' woes

male labor situation in pre-Independence India in which connection she had to visit different industrial zones in the country. She was widowed at a young age, and even though she had to earn her own living she found time to apply herself to community issues.

Founder member and president of the Navsari Parsee Association for over two decades, Vajifdar used that forum to uplift the condition of the poor residents of her birthplace, improve the amenities for the priests in Navsari and Udwarda, promote socialization among former Navsari residents now staying in Bombay, and felicitate outstanding dignitaries who had their roots in that town, recalled Sam Bajan who has served as secretary and treasurer of the Association.

Last year she was active in organizing a commemoration program in connection with the 75th death anniversary of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, the celebrated mayor of Bombay, mentioned Dastur. Another institution that was very dear to her was the Godavara Agiary managed by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet. When the trustees sought to relocate the fire from the Agiary in the interests of saving costs and reaching a wider range of worshippers, she was one of the handful who opposed the move with a vengeance until the trustees were forced to relent. To see a postal stamp issued on the *Shah Namah* theme, remembered Dastur, was one of her chief ambitions towards the end, but one which remained unrealized.

Written by Parinaz Gandhi

READERS' FORUM *continued from page 6*

tors' certificates will be furnished on request. At the moment I do not have adequate funds to support my dear son in his hour of need with any sizeable contribution, as I am presently not living with my husband but with my parents in Bombay.

Time is of the essence. If the pressures in his heart change he will become inoperable. As the days go by, he is experiencing more and more difficulty in breathing and constantly makes a panting noise. The color of his nails and veins is also becoming more and more blue. In fact doctors have advised that I must get him operated before the year is out. Please help me save my son's life.

The Lioness Club of Byculla, a service oriented organization, has come to my rescue and will help in the collection of funds.

Cheques may be drawn in favor of "Lions Club of Byculla" and sent to Lioness Havovi Gandhi, President, Lioness Club of Byculla at P-18, Cusrow Baug, Colaba, Bombay 400005. Donations to the Club are exempted under Section 80-G of the Income Tax Act.

Ms FEROZA NOWROJEE

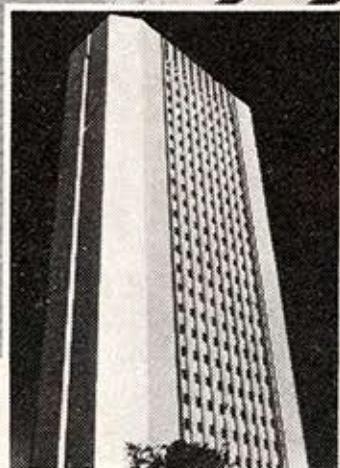
Edited by Amavaz S. Mama

"SIGNATURES IN STONE AND STEEL" *continued from page 33*

"Show me men of that caliber in any community today. There just aren't any that can compare with the Parsis of yesteryear."

Sethna is obviously a devout Zoroastrian and Parsi, deeply involved with the tenets of his religion. A Noah-like figure, comfortable in his large white sudreh and *lehenga* (loose trousers), he rushes in to put on his kurta as a visitor is announced. He sits at the large bay windows of his highrise apartment which offers a stupendous view of the sea, surrounded by the crafts and artefacts collected by him and Nellie over the years. He admits that the most peaceful and fulfilling moment of the day for both of them is being right there watching the sun setting and saying their evening prayers to the glow of a city twilight. Perhaps, after the sun has set, Sethna will continue to sit there on his old wooden *jhoola* (swing), contemplating upon his latest and deliberately independent project — an interpretation of the *Gathas* — or perhaps reflect on the stupendous works of Davierwalla.

Reaching for the Sky



Two landmarks in Bombay – the Commerce Centre of the World Trade Centre Complex and the new Reserve Bank Building.

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