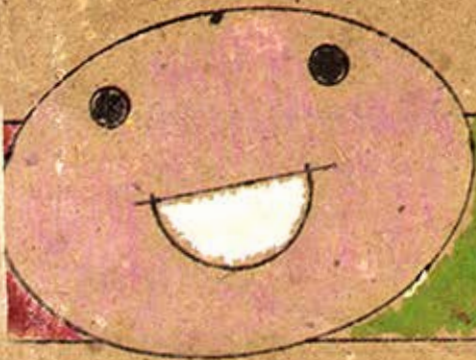


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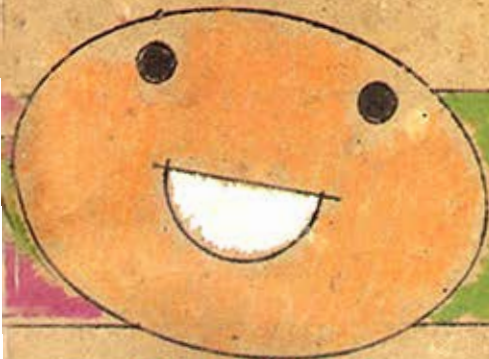
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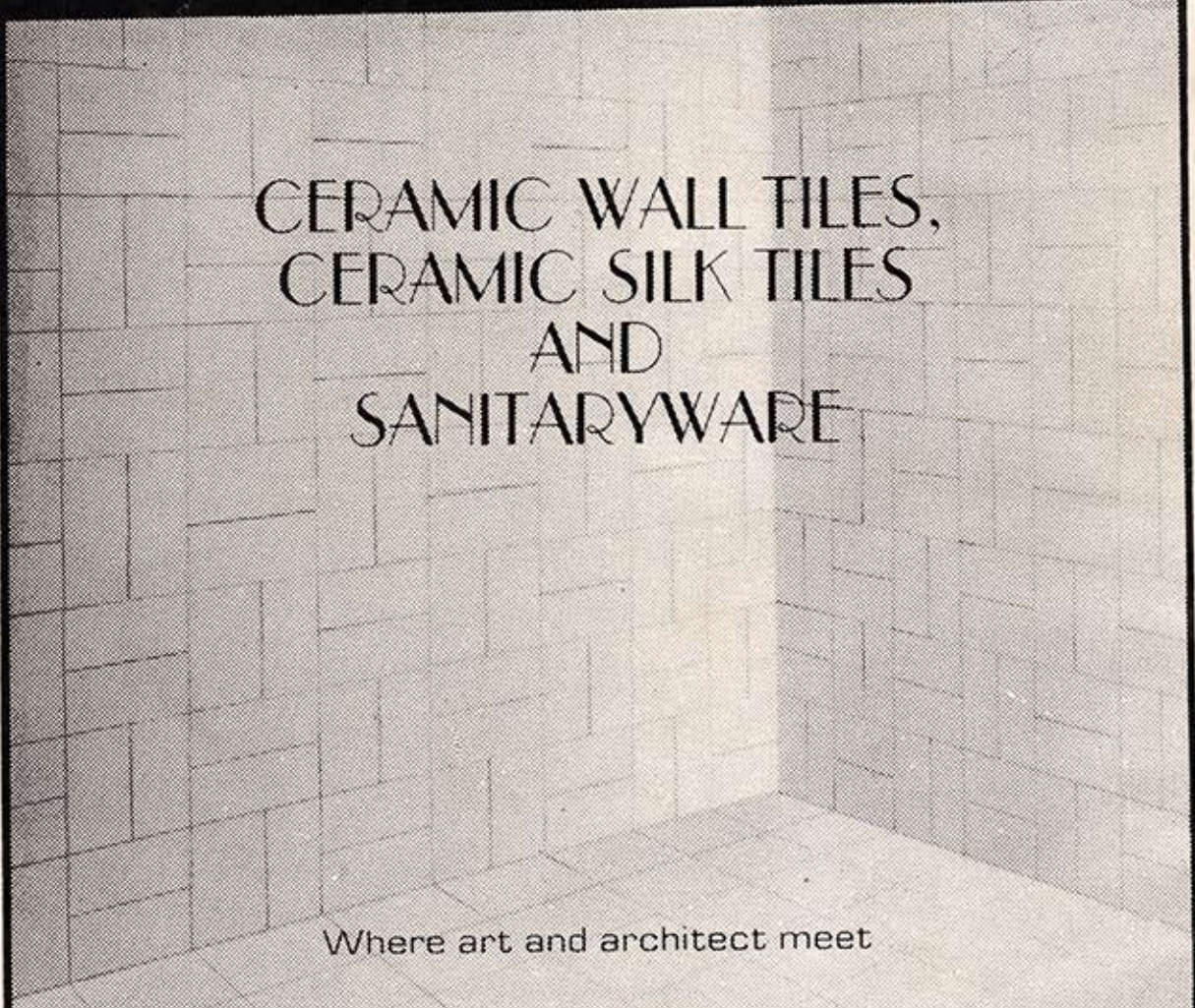


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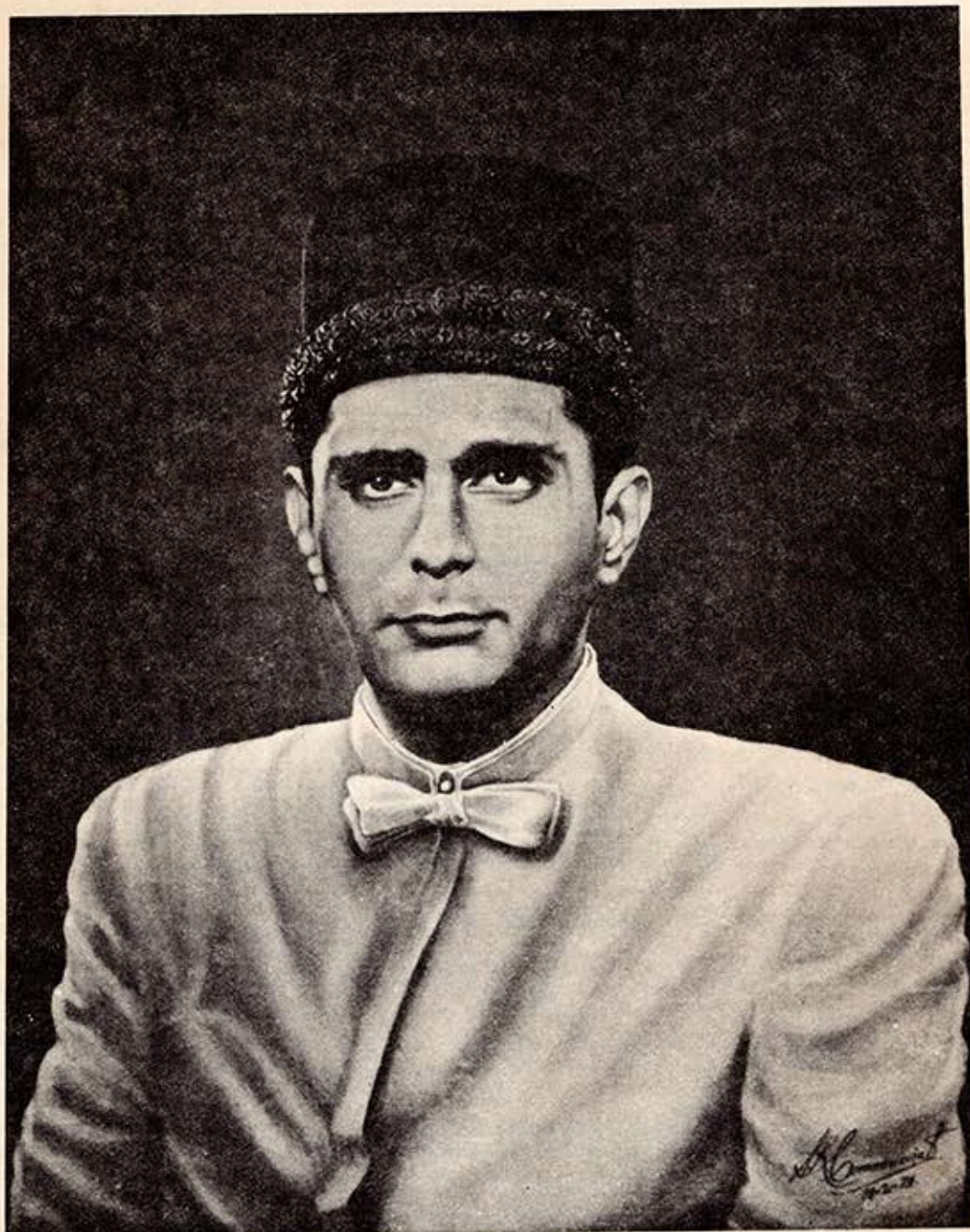
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In Memoriam

Mr Fali Meherji Variava

Director

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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"The BPP vs the BMC"

We have now received a written reply to the effect that the news item which had appeared in the *Indian Express* and some other Press regarding the Parsi agiaries ("The BPP vs the BMC," Events and Personalities, *Parsiana*, November 1991) is not based on any information or briefing of the Press by any source of the Bombay Municipal Corporation; further that they have examined the position and have found that these five agiaries located in south Bombay are in existence over the last 50 years and more and the Corporation has neither the plans nor the intention to take any action of removal or demolition of such existing old structures as in this case.

Dr ASPIF. GOLWALLA
Chairman, Bombay Parsi Punchayet

Minority grievances

The Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), Indraprastha Estate, Ring

Road, New Delhi 110002 is conducting an all-India study on financial, non-financial and sundry other grievances of minority-managed educational institutions on behalf of the Minorities Commission, Government of India.

In the interest of educational upliftment of all minority communities, like Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, Buddhists, all interested bodies/individuals may communicate with or send their suggestions to the director, IIPA, or the undersigned.

Education is a lever to development. Let us not miss this significant opportunity in the great national task of minorities' development.

Dr R. N. THAKUR
Project Director

"At the centenary..."

It was refreshing to see an article on Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsi Charitable Institution ("At the centenary signpost," *Parsiana*, October 1991).

The list of the school's principals will not be complete without a mention of Ms Driver's predecessor, Mr P. B. Bamboat. Mr Bamboat's selfless and dedicated service to the school should be properly recorded and recognized. Under Mr Bamboat's leadership, the school achieved a record of a 100 percent success rate in the 1969-70 Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations.

Also, proper recognition should be accorded to Mr Kalvachwalla, the school superintendent for a long time. Mr Kalvachwalla dedicated his entire life to the school and enjoyed very special respect from all students.

TEHEMTON F. MIRZA
London, Ontario, Canada

"Women venerated and..."

Dr Jafarey's article "Women venerated and victimized" (*Parsiana*, April 1991) is indeed very scholarly. In the same respect I would like to point out a very significant way the women were treated in the period after the fall of the Sassanian Zoroastrian Empire during sixth to 10th century AD when there was a surge of Zoroastrian awakening. During this period *Rivayet-i-Hemit-i-Asawahistan* was written in the Pahlavi language in about the 10th century AD.

The right granted to women as written in this Pahlavi *Rivayet* is quite unique as can be seen from the following questions

and answers given there:

In question-5 (*Pursisn-5*) about family guardianship (*dudagsalar*), responsibility and procedures, etc, the answers are given by several sub-sections of which the following are worth noting:

Answer-5 (*Passox-5*) — subsection 26 — "*dudag kadagbanug gadar grifan pad agahiha ud danisn-i-awan salaran hast — ka oh gired*" — (transcript differs slightly from B. T. Anklesaria, as I read it). Translation: Answer 5 — "The head woman of the family (can) take a lover with the full disclosure and knowledge (authority) of the community" (My translation).

Answer 5 — subsection 24 says — "Taking of the lover by head woman of the family (*dudag kadagbanu*) is considered lawful."

Do we see that Zoroastrian society of 10th century Iran (when massive conversion to Islam was rampant) was tolerant to women even by the present standard, giving them equal rights, including being allowed to take lovers?

Opinions about this by other Zoroastrian scholars may be printed in *Parsiana*.

Dr PALLAN ICHAPORIA
Womelsdorf, Pa, USA

"The Purifying..."

I am once again compelled to refer to the article "The Purifying Prescriptions" by Ali A. Jafarey (*Parsiana*, October 1991).

What amazes me is the extent of care *Parsiana* and Jafarey have taken to disguise his true Muslim identity.

Parsiana notes: "Sethna had dubbed Jafarey a Muslim" — simple common sense would reveal that anything walking on two legs with a name like 'Ali Jafarey' could only be a Muslim. Where is the question of 'dubbing' him as one?

I now quote from *The Bombay Samachar* dated November 3, 1991: "According to a report from the Central Bureau of Information in northern California, a group under the title 'The Assembly of Friends of Zarathushtra' has been formed and has received considerable support from the Anti-Revolutionary Iranian escapees (non-Zarathushtis) residing in America. A Moslem by the name of 'Dr Ali Akbar Jafarey' who has a doctorate degree in literature and history from India and had an administrative job in the past regime has assumed the responsibility of this group." (This paragraph from *The*

Bombay Samachar is part of a verbatim translation of the *Bulletin of the Islamic Parliament of Iran*, as noted in *The Samachar* report — Ed.)

The first thing to note from the above information is that this Moslem Ali Akbar Jafarey has a doctorate from India in literature and history — and not in Avesta or Zoroastrian religion as we all are made to believe. (*Parsiana*, October 1991, pg 28 notes that Jafarey "obtained his doctorate in Persian literature from Karachi" — Ed.)

The second thing that becomes blatantly obvious is that this self-proclaimed Muslim scholar is involved in a highly dangerous political operation and using the Zoroastrian religion to achieve his political objectives.

Thirdly, his motive is to distort, manipulate, misinterpret and convert the Zoroastrian teachings to suit his Muslim Iranian 'Assembly of Friends of Zarathushtra' and make it acceptable for them 'to swallow the pill' when he illicitly converts them — possibly at substantial pecuniary gain.

Dr Ali Akbar Jafarey refers to *Yasna* 30.2 where Asho Zarathushtra clearly states... "and with illuminated minds weigh them with care before you 'choose'

which of the 'two paths' to tread."

The choice given is only between two paths — the good path and the evil path. It has nothing to do with forsaking one's own religion just because one prefers to follow another religion. Like one cannot choose one's parents, one cannot choose one's religion — one is born into it by the master plan of the cosmos as per the design of one's destiny.

One who pollutes, contaminates and adulterates the order of nature, by forsaking his/her religion of birth — by intermarriage or by conversion as propagated by Ali Jafarey — commits the paramount crime of creating disorder in the functions of nature, which reflects today in our so-called modern ways of life.

Now let us examine the jugglery of half-truths and untruths that Jafarey is capable of conjuring against our most noble Zoroastrian faith. He states: "I give the translation by James Darmesteter in the *Sacred Books of the East*, Volume XXIII:

'Zarathushtra said: O young King Vishtaspa!... 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."

[The translation, as noted by Jafarey is from the *Vishtasp Yasht*, first brought to the readers' attention by Ervad Darius Sethna's statement: "Let it be known that the Avesta phrase *geushmana* (urine of the bull) is used as a means of purification in *Vishtasp Yasht*, paragraph 31" (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, April 1991) — Ed.]

Once again, what is amazing is that a publication like *Parsiana* which is supposed to be a Parsi Zoroastrian magazine hopefully published in the interest of the Zoroastrian religion and the Zoroastrian community, highlights without verification — "In his rejoinder to his critics the author (Ali Jafarey) notes that in the only reference to the use of *gaomez* (bull's urine) outside the *Vendidad*, Zarathushtra advises King Vishtaspa against its use." What a shame! (The quotation from Darmesteter's rendition of the *Vishtasp Yasht* is accurate — Ed.)

When Dastur (Dr) Firoze M. Kotwal was consulted on this matter, he has given the following explanation for Ali Akbar Jafarey to ponder over — and the misled Parsi Zoroastrian community to take note:

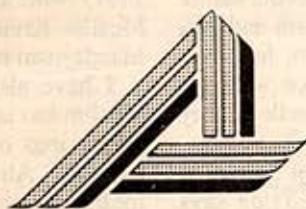
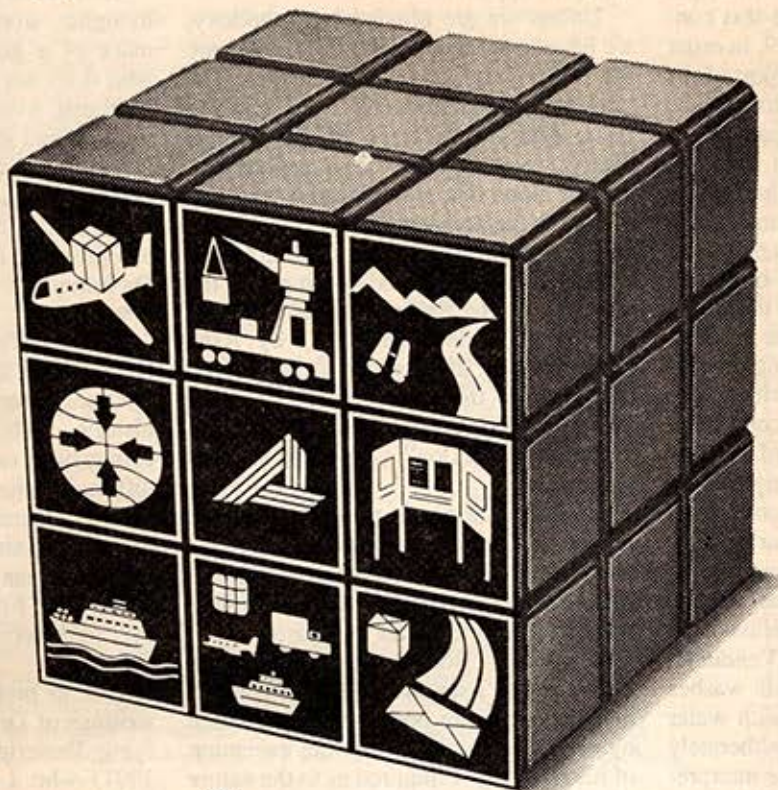
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"The Avestan sentence *apo noit mass-mana geush zasta* ('Wash thy hands with water, not with *gomez*') as translated by Prof J. Darmesteter is a quote from the larger and more comprehensive text contained in *Vendidad*, ch 8, para 39. In order to comprehend properly the purport of the above quote, one has to consider the whole matter beginning with para 37 to 39, and not just a sentence in para 39. The three passages (37 to 39) allude to the method of purifying an unclean man in three stages of purification after he has come in contact with a corpse on which the ritual of *sagdid* ("gaze by the dog") has not been performed. The unclean man has to undergo the cleansing process in three stages: he should be purified with *gomez* only for the first and second time, and not with water. For the third time, he should be cleaned with water only and not with *gomez*, to which the quote from *Vishtasp Yasht* alludes. Prof Darmesteter has made this abundantly clear in footnote 5 to his translation when the erudite scholar states that 'this is an allusion to the *Barashnum* Purification (*Vendidad*, ch 8, para 39). The unclean man washes himself with *gomez* first and with water last.' This footnote has been deliberately suppressed by Dr Jafarey whose interpretation of the Avestan text of the *Vishtasp Yasht* is both unscholarly and mischievous. Its Pahlavi translation and commentary by the learned Dasturs of Iran do not substantiate Dr Jafarey's baseless contention (see B. N. Dhabhar's *Translation of Khordeh Avesta*, pg 372-74)."

Since now we are all aware of the real motives and purpose of Dr Ali Akbar Jafarey, we must leave him to carry on with his own political pursuits — but not at the cost of abusing the Zoroastrian religion and endangering innocent Zoroastrian lives.

Ervad DARIUS N. SETHNA

Kudos to Dr Ali Jafarey for his dignified and scholarly refutation of Ervad Darius Sethna's criticism of his item on the use of *gaomez* ("The Purifying Prescriptions," *Parsiana*, October 1991). Anyone who has read about our religion and its history will agree with most of what Dr Jafarey has said. The Ervad cannot just dismiss Dr Jafarey as a meddler. The fact is that it is non-Parsis who have made deep scholarly studies into our religion and its history and revealed to the world its grandeur — research which few Parsi scholars can boast of. It behoves the Ervad to be dignified and restrained and not malign or vilify a scholar who is so dedi-

cated to our religion. After all even Zarthushttra himself held a discourse in the court of King Vistaspa and did not shout his opponents down.

Unless we are blinded by orthodoxy, we have to agree that only the *Gathas* are the direct message of Zarthushttra. The prayers and ceremonials were evolved later. And the message of the *Gathas* clearly states that it is your actions and actions alone that will earn you your due reward in the next world.

"That Path, O Ahura, of Vohu Mano, which Thou hast pointed out to me — the teaching of the Saviors — namely that (every) good deed (inspired) by Asha alone reaches afar, which (teaching is) designed for the clear-sighted, (leading) to the Reward, O Mazda, of which Thou art the destined Goal" (*Yasna* 34.13, *Taraporewala*).

We have a symbolic pocket in the front top of our sudreh to remind us that we have to collect our good deeds in that. In *Arda Viraf Nameh* (original Pahlavi text, translated into Gujarati by Dastur K. J. JamaspAsa — Bombay 1902), in chapter 32 we read, "I saw the soul of a man (in hell) whose entire body was being bitten by noxious creatures, with the exception of his right leg. I inquired as to the nature of his sins to which Holy Sarosh and Angel Adar replied that on earth, he never did any good deeds, but once with his right leg he had pushed a bundle of hay towards a bull (tied to a stake)."

Dastur Hormazdyar Kayoji Mirza in his book *The Zoroastrian Religion* says on pg 138, "Among these spiritual elements, Avesta *urvan*, Pahlavi *ruvan*, 'soul,' is the spiritual self of man, and it is, therefore, responsible for the action done by man in this life. After a man passes away, the soul remains in this world for three days and nights pondering and brooding over the actions done during its lifetime in this world. The soul experiences joyfulness for good deeds done, and misery for bad deeds. At the dawn of the fourth day, the soul travels to the spiritual world. The *daena* 'religious conscience' or *kerdar*, 'representation of action (in life),' confronts the soul in the form of a maiden. If the soul's actions in life were good, pious and benevolent, the *daena* appears blissful and cheerful, and the soul experiences heavenly bliss. On the other hand, if the soul's actions were wicked, the *daena* appears frightful and scolding, and the soul experiences misery and distress as never before. The soul appears before a heavenly tribunal, and divine jus-

tice is administered on the principle (*Yasna* 43.5): Bad unto the doers of bad, good blessing unto the doers of good."

If I read my religion right, good thoughts, words and deeds are the hallmark of a good Zarhosti and anybody who does not practise these is not a true Zarhosti, even though he is born to the religion and says his prayers daily. Conversely anyone who practises these precepts is a good Zarhosti even though he is not born to the religion and does not say any prayers. By this test I would say that Dr Jafarey is a better Zarhosti than the Ervad.

Finally I fully agree with Dr Jafarey's advice in the last para. We Parsis are very ignorant about our religion and past history. While discussing the topic of conversion, two elderly Parsi women at different times made the same query, "Did not Zarthushttra convert somebody in the beginning? The Muslims?" I wonder how many other Parsis think similarly. And I don't blame them. Nobody ever told them.

HOMI BAGWALA

I want to protest against the action and writings of Dr Ali A. Jafarey ("The Purifying Prescriptions," *Parsiana*, October 1991) who I understand is a Pakistani Muslim having little knowledge of our Mazdayasni religion.

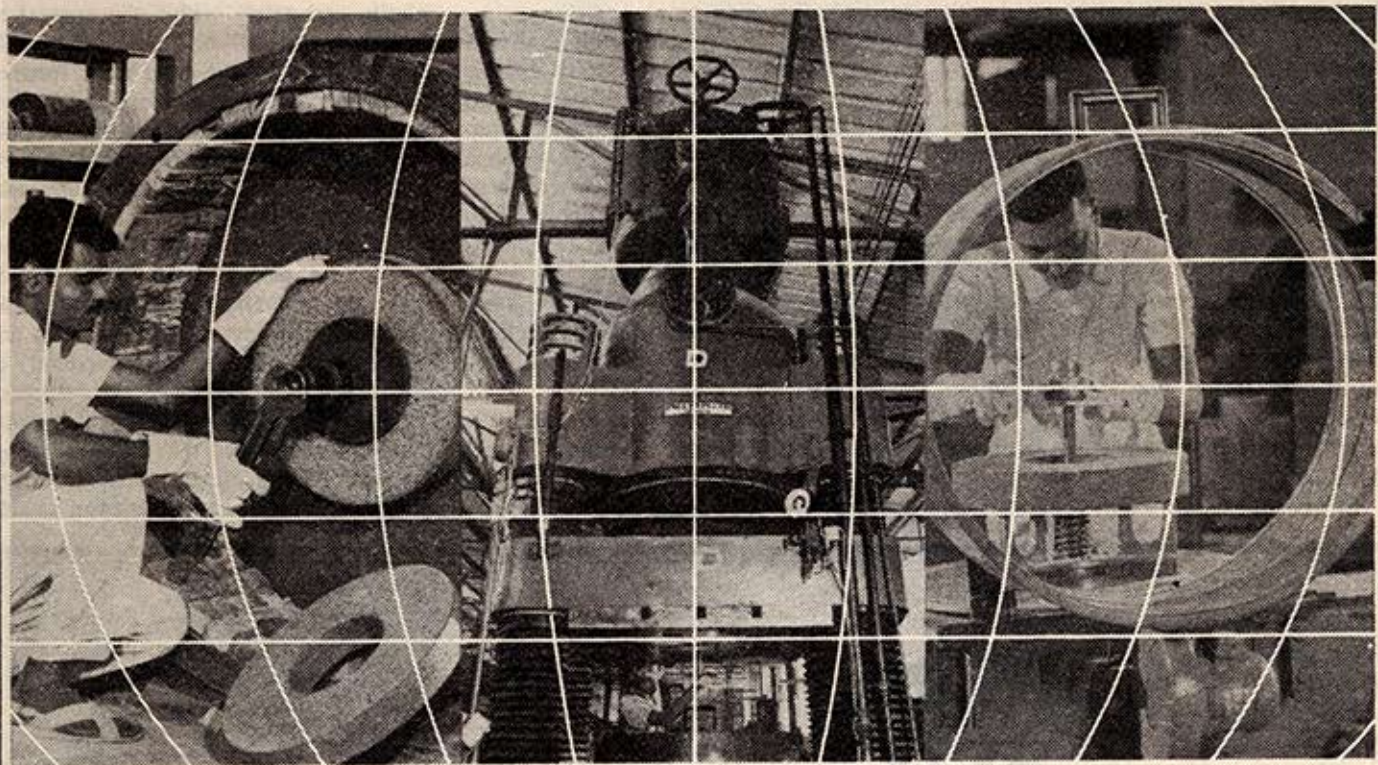
I have also to inform you that this Muslim has taken upon himself to convert others into our Mazdayasni Zoroastrian religion. Ahura Mazda will punish him for this action.

I am surprised that *Parsiana* seems to promote the actions and the blasphemous writings of this Muslim.

BAHADURSHAH K. DALAL

Although serious religious education or comment has unfortunately never really been *Parsiana's* area of expertise, the saving grace used to be a by-and-large impartial stance when this newsmagazine ventured to dive into religious waters. For some time past, however, one regretfully observes a steady shift away from that sensible editorial policy, with a distinct tilt in coverage and patronage towards the heterodox (mis-called "reformist") lobby. The probable turning point was symbolized by the very title "An injustice at doongerwadi" which *Parsiana* (August 1990) used for its reporting of the Roxan Darshan Shah tragedy. That title plainly inferred a "full stop" and was therefore a judgement pronouncement, instead of correctly ending in a "question mark" to

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duly recognize the reality of community opinion being sharply divided on what was certainly a controversial subject. Whither the objective attitude and balanced journalism we had come to expect?

The partisan tilt is coming to a head with *Parsiana's* visibly enthusiastic "adoption" of Dr Ali Akbar Jafarey as some kind of in-house religious mentor, strikingly evidenced by granting him the signal and disproportionate luxury of nothing less than a full-fledged article ("The Purifying Prescriptions," *Parsiana*, October 1991), conspicuously aided with *Parsiana's* own annotations, to defend himself against criticism that had appeared in the form of just a letter (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, April 1991).

It is necessary to remind readers that Dr Jafarey is quite a controversial figure here and overseas, and that his persuasive style and professorial tone should not beguile us into taking for gospel all he has to say. A glaring example that must urgently be set straight is his persistent attempt to twist the meaning of *Yasna* 30.2 out of context and woo the unwary into swallowing the story that Asho Zarathushtra himself advocates a choice of religion.

In his article, Dr Jafarey informs us

that his "religious preference" (i.e. his apparent "conversion" from Moham-medanism to Zoroastrianism) was made "so easy" for him, thanks to "the divine choice given by Asho Zarathushtra" in *Yasna* 30.2 of the holy *Gathas*. To try to justify his notion, he then proceeds to provide us its excellent translation by the late Dr Irach Taraporewala: "Hear with your ears the Highest Truths I preach, and with illumined minds weigh them with care, before you *choose* which of *Two Paths* to tread — deciding man by man, each one for each..." (italics mine).

We must indeed weigh with illumined minds the true letter and spirit of our Prophet's sublime words if we are to avoid spiritual howlers, and the first step in this direction is to accurately place *Yasna* 30.2 and its famed declaration of human free will (freedom of choice) into the context specified by Asho Zarathushtra alone. A look at just two verses on either side of *Yasna* 30.2 should be more than sufficient to establish its correct context (translation by Dr Taraporewala; italics mine):

•The preceding verse (i.e. *Yasna* 30.1, which is the first verse of chapter 30 and indicates its scope) states: "Now unto ea-ger listeners will I speak of the *Two Spir-*

its Mazda did create..."

•The succeeding verse (i.e. *Yasna* 30.3) states: "The first created were the *Spirits Twain...* in each thought and word and deed these two are ne'er agreed; — one's *Good*, the other *Bad* [here, Dr Taraporewala provides the following footnote: 'Known in Zoroastrian Theology as Spento Mainyu and Angro Mainyu (or Ahriman)'] and of these Two the Wise do choose aright..."

Can it be any clearer that the "choice" between the "Two Paths" is placed wholly and solely within the context of the "two spirits" or "twin mainyus?" Spento Mainyu is the good spirit, force or mentality, while Angro Mainyu is its evil opposite. Accordingly, the corresponding "two paths" are the path of good and the path of evil, and Asho Zarathushtra asks us to choose between these two. He exhorts us to exercise our powers of discrimination, through our own freewill, to make the wise choice between good and bad, truth and untruth, righteousness and unrighteousness. Man's freedom of choice is thus an ethical decision between the forces of light and darkness, a moral choice between the right and the wrong. By what mental jugglery, leap of imagination or contorted argument can so sub-



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limely simple a matter be torn out of its specified and exclusive context of the twin mainyus and dished up as a "choice of religion" to suit personal convenience or pet preconceptions?

The attempt to transpose the freedom of moral choice between good and evil into a license for religious floor-crossing is sanctioned neither by *Yasna* 30.2 nor by elementary spiritual common sense. Those who persist in spreading the misconception that the divine choice given by Asho Zarathushtra is intended for religious preference should realize that this is tantamount to saying that all religions besides Zoroastrianism are treading the path of evil in the clutches of Angro Mainyu.

In the final analysis, it is not what Jafarey or Khan or anybody else says that matters — all that counts is what Asho Zarathushtra himself has to say, and this we should find out by and for our own selves, "man by man, each one for each." To this end, I am providing at my own expense 10 xeroxed sets to *Parsiana* of Dr Irach Taraporewala's excellent translation (out of print, I believe) of all 11 verses of *Yasna* 30, in full confidence that *Parsiana*'s office will kindly co-operate in this small but valuable public service by passing on one set each to the first 10 readers requesting a copy. RONI K. KHAN

Nasik

I wish to refer to Brig N. B. Grant's letter "The Purifying..." (*Parsiana*, September 1991).

One would safely assume that Brig Grant, being an army officer, must be fully aware of the fact that there are certain rules, regulations, traditions and disciplines which have to be followed and observed by one who is in the army — regardless of how he feels, approves or disapproves of the same.

Similarly, one who claims to belong to a particular religion or sect, also has to follow and observe certain rules, regulations, traditions and prescriptions as per the practices of that particular faith — regardless of whether one approves or disapproves the fundamental tenets or any part of it.

Surely Brig N. B. Grant could not have walked about in a naval uniform being in the army — no matter how strongly he felt about wearing a nice clean white naval uniform.

Thus, it is obvious that people like Brig Grant, who disapprove of their own religious customs, traditions and rituals should leave that particular order of their

religion and form their own new religion to suit themselves.

I suggest that Brig Grant join the 'Cama Cult' (so-called reformists) and with the help of self-proclaimed prophets like Ali Jafarey, Kersey Antia and Ms McIntyre create a new Order of Reformist Zoroastrians — with their own places of worship, resting places for their dead and rules and regulations to suit their needs. The WZO may provide a perfect platform to launch such an enlightened faith.

J. COLAH

The relevance of religion

I follow avidly your reader correspondence and your own articles on 'reform.' I am not a theologian but time is the great reformer. I am 58 now but let me, tongue firmly in cheek, mention two memories of 45 years ago in Bombay.

I spent summer holidays 'up country' with a cousin and his grandfather. Each time any one went to the toilet, grandfather hovered with a shout and checked that we did our kusti prayers. There were no nights; just nightmares. The old man slept lightly. And was automatically awake at any hour to insist a toilet visit meant lights on, hands washed and kusti done (loud enough for him to hear).

The other memory was on visits to find one of the ladies on a separate bed, reading but without touching a newspaper and so on. Scheduling a wedding date could have used a computer. The 'dates' of so many ladies had to be checked, plotted, forecast so many months in advance, with allowances for irregularities. And yet each wedding 'missed' some of the key ladies.

I was solemnly told — rather shouted at — that exceptions or deviations would lose any Zoroastrian his/her Zoroastrian birthright. Today, I wonder what happened to these strong 'practices' of our faith. Weaker bladders, smaller homes, more working women, the good fortune to get a 'baug' for any day at all — what else!!!

So please imagine the sadness with which I read of Roxan Darshan Shah's passing and the foolish theological arguments of what comprises a continuing Zoroastrian. My daughter — coincidentally also named Roxana — is most happily married. Her husband brings great joy, happiness and credit not just to Roxana but to both families. That he is of a different faith makes no difference to the couple or to the families. We realize their children will not be accepted as Parsis in Bombay (this too will change, I per-

sonally feel). But my daughter was born a Parsi Zoroastrian, remains and continues so. I do not think any one can interpret dogma to take her birthright away.

And with tongue even more firmly in cheek, may I hope it will not take the many years of my two instances for practical 'reform' to become natural.

MANEK DAVER

Tokyo, Japan

Parsiana is an interesting, funny, illuminating and sad window to the community into which I have married. I am a convert to Zoroastrianism and since my husband is a Parsi, I wish to learn everything about the people, the culture, the worldwide community and the religion which will be my children's inheritance.

Far from wishing to dilute rituals, traditions and prayers as some intolerant bigots think incomers like myself want to do, I want to see, know and help to rekindle the foundations of what I believe to be the greatest and loftiest religion the world has ever known. I would like it if half the people in the world or more became convinced of the truth and exciting possibilities of the teachings of Zarathushtra.

The Prophet gave us all the foundation for a better way of living and any fool can see that the world needs that. What has happened to make Parsis so selfish and blind to the virtues of their own religion that they want it to die with the communities of India and Pakistan? How sad it is to read how these self-proclaimed Zoroastrians fight over the moribund body of their own religion!

Converts like myself don't dilute the religion but bring a new zeal, a new enthusiasm, like fresh fuel on a sinking fire. When the ashes cool they are mingled and indistinguishable, the old wood and the new.

Ms TEE GOLVALA

London, UK

It saddens me to hear about the internal bickering and arguments about religion and those marrying out of the religion and the resultant ostracism of the Zoroastrians concerned.

The Zoroastrians involved get so fed up with arguing with the mobeds that they just say "to hell with you and your religion." No wonder the number of Zoroastrians is diminishing. You cannot have your cake and eat it.

Lt Col (Dr) BEHROOZ IRANI

Northumberland, UK

Edited by Amavaz S. Mama

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Events and Personalities

Youth Federation born

Fifteen youth wings are the founding members of the newly formed Federation of the Zoroastrian Youth Associations (FOZYA), informs its first president Jehangir Bisney from Secunderabad. Conceived at the youth festival in Secunderabad in 1990, the all-India body finally took birth at the Fifth All India Zoroastrian Youth Conference in Nagpur on November 5, 1991.

"To encourage and promote increasing contact, cooperation, cordiality, unity and solidarity amongst the Zoroastrians in general and Zoroastrian youth in particular," is the first aim spelt out in FOZYA's memorandum. FOZYA's 11 aims and objectives are modified versions of the 23 enshrined in the memorandum of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI). In addition to promoting fraternity, FOZYA will focus on solving youth problems, safeguarding executive and legislative privileges, spreading knowledge of Zoroastrian religion and culture, and improving the general welfare and fabric of the community. FOZYA will not however "engage in agitational activities to ventilate their grievances," it has been certified in the memorandum.

The autonomy to member anjumans, the membership criteria clauses and the zonal constitution of the executive council make FOZYA conceptually akin to the FPZAI though the modalities may differ. However, unlike the FPZAI which encompasses Parsi Zoroastrian anjumans of India, thereby including both the race and the religious connotations, FOZYA has dropped the racial connotation from its title. FOZYA's definition of a Zoroastrian is "a person who has been initiated into the Zoroastrian religion through the

performance of the navjote ceremony and who continues to profess the Zoroastrian religion."

Membership to FOZYA is open to duly constituted Zoroastrian youth associations and duly formed youth wings of anjumans on an annual subscription of Rs 50. Zoroastrian youth associations registered outside India will be admitted as liaison members on annual payment of US \$ 20, according to their rules.

The seven-member first executive council consists of president Bisney, vice president Porus Karanjawalla of Ahmedabad, honorary secretary Ms Mehernavaz Parakh of Hyderabad, honorary treasurer Sarosh Palkhiwala of Poona, and members at large Rukshad Bhagwagar of Nagpur, Porus Debara of Agra and Homi Gandhi of Delhi. The council is empowered to coopt five members at the most. In addition to the six bodies represented on the council, the other groups enrolled with FOZYA are from Ahmednagar, Bhopal, Calicut, Jabalpur, Jamshedpur, Jhansi, Madras, Surat and Thana. Presently FOZYA's registered office is care of Bisney, 46, Shama Apartments, 138/1, Prenderghast Road, Secunderabad 500003.

Memorable competition

The competition proved to be a challenge not only to the 138 participants but also to the 16 members of the organizing team who conducted the first Shrivastav Nargolwala Inter-School Cultural Competition. It was the youth committee of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) which shouldered the responsibility of the evening's events on September 20 last year to keep alive the memory of the late Shrivastav Nargolwala, the erstwhile dynamic president of the DPA for over 25 years,

notes a press release from the Anjuman.

The six teams that participated were judged on their performance in three events — debate, JAM (Just a Minute) session and choreography. The interesting topics taken up for debate were 'All women want women's liberation until the waiter brings the bill' and 'To cure a headache, cut the head. Is it the best alternative?' In the JAM session, the competitors were judged on the humorous content of their extempore speeches, the fluency of their delivery and their use of the crucial one minute. Color vibrancy and movement were provided in the choreography event when the teams had to dance to the music provided and coordinate their steps to epitomize a student's school life — the theme intimated in advance.

The schools were permitted to participate in all the three events or two of them. On the basis of their overall performance, the Shrivastav Nargolwala Rolling Trophy went to Spring Dales School Dhula Kuan, The Army Public School came second and St Columba's School, third. Prizes in the form of dinner coupons gifted by Holiday Inn, Ashoka Hotels and Nirulas were presented by Ms Nergish Nargolwala, widow of the late stalwart. The panel of judges included TV personality Bhaskar Bhattacharjee, stage actor Amir Raza Hussain, ballet teacher of the Delhi School of Music Ms Gilleen Ryan, and social scientist Ms Ava Khullar, the release informs.

Under chairperson Ms Sanaya Nariman and chief organizers Homi Gandhi and Rohin Marker, the enterprising youths organizing the show pooled in their efforts to raise Rs 23,800, largely by way of advertisements in the souvenir brought out on the occasion. The coopera-



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tion from the senior members of the Anjuman has also been acknowledged. The surplus of nearly Rs 4,000 will be used to set up a youth fund under the control of the DPA Youth Committee, adds the release.

Luncheon donation

First they ate. Then it was time to donate. At a luncheon co-hosted by Ms Perin and Eruch Munshi and Ms Mehroo and Lovji Cama in New York, members of the community were treated to a hearty repast after which they were requested to donate generously. From the proceeds collected, one-third, Rs 71,263, was donated to the Udwada Anjuman, gratefully acknowledges Dastur Kaikobad Dastoor. The funds will be used for the priests, the nassessalars and the laity in Udwada, he informs.

The other anjumans to benefit from the largesse of the North American Zoroastrians were Surat and Navsari.

The generosity of certain groups like the Zoroastrian associations of Greater New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Greater Boston Area and the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman have in particular been recorded by Dastoor.

Congress compendium

"The fruitful and happy bridges between Indian and international scholars" that were erected at the International Congress of Iranologists in early '89 were sought to be restrengthened with the publication of the proceedings by the organizers, the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute (KRCOI), last year. The contents will serve to refresh the memories of those present at the meet; and the others could benefit from reading about the insights shared at the Congress.

Titled *International Congress Proceedings*, the 282-page book features the 24 papers presented at the four-day proceedings in their entirety, from the inaugural address to the valedictory session. Eight pages of color photographs recapture the highlights of the deliberations. Additionally some black and white photographs and illustrations serve to visualize the contents of the papers.

The book is available on sale at the KRCOI library for Rs 120. The library, considered a treasure house on ancient Avesta, Pahlavi and Persian books and manuscripts, is regarded as the chief asset of the Institute which strives to promote scholarship.

Judicial elevation

At 44 years of age, Sarosh Homi Kapadia has already been appointed judge of the Bombay High Court, and that too without any prior judicial posting in the lower courts. His earlier law practice for 16 years in the Bombay City Civil Court, Bombay Small Causes Court, Motor Accidents Tribunal, Bombay High Court and also the Supreme Court, qualified him for this appointment made by the President of India R. Venkataraman in October '91.

He has appeared on behalf of public sector corporations like banks, the municipal corporation, the Bombay Electric and Supply Transport (BEST) and in matters as diverse as labor, constitution, rent, taxation and land revenue. Kapadia has benefited from the tutelage of the late advocate Firoze Damania who had played a significant role in mold-



Kapadia (left): Bombay High Court appointment

Registrar (right): Bihar snooker champ

ing Kapadia's career, reads his curriculum vitae. Prior to that it was the legal luminary Rustom Gagrut who had encouraged him to join the legal profession and whose advice he sought when confronted with the intricate nuances of law.

After completing his schooling from St Mary's, Kapadia had joined Jai Hind College. While in his first year he had also taken up a job to ease the family's financial burden. Working as a clerk with B. J. Private Limited, his employers, particularly the managing director Nanabhoy Jeejeebhoy, acknowledges Kapadia, encouraged him by subsidizing his college fees and exposing him to various trust matters whence his involvement with law commenced.

Snooker smart

Unseeded Zubin Registrar of Jamshedpur

gave a remarkable performance at the Fifth World Under-21 Snooker Championships in Bangalore, last July and became fourth seed for the knock-out stage. The junior and senior Bihar state champion, Registrar was among the 28 members of the Indian team who got a chance to test their skills with world professionals at the 14-day event, according to a write-up in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of July 21, 1991. The other Zoroastrian to participate in this meet was former all-Parsi champion Merzi Kalaniwalla of Bombay.

Registrar looks "even younger than his almost 21 years and yet he has made it big on the national snooker front," writes Ms



Silloo Surti from Jamshedpur.

Giving a recap of his achievements in the snooker field, Surti informs that Registrar's first major tournament was the National Snooker Championships at Srinagar in 1989, followed by the Karnataka State Billiards and Snooker Championships in 1990 and more recently the Bangalore meet. He plans to go to the UK in mid-92 to practise with Steve Davis, rated the world's best snooker player. Zubin's Indian coach is former world champion Om Agarwal.

Working for Tata Steel's sports and welfare department, Zubin says he owes his success to practice, "and not fooling around while on the table." His other interests are tennis and speeding in his Maruti, informs Surti.

Godrej's 'dream homes'

"Go home to a holiday resort. Everyday!... Picture life away from the noise and pollution of city living. Think of the most modern amenities available. Piece it together with a large dose of privacy you desire. And you have a home of your dreams..." reads a brochure advertising Eden Woods, the residential garden complex in Thane promoted by Godrej Properties and Investments Limited.

Located off Pokhran Road Number 2, about five km from the Thane railway station, Phase I of this project involving 400 garden houses is ready with 50 flats al-



When the Union Home Minister S. B. Chavan visited the office of The Bombay Samachar on October 22, 1991, the proprietors, the Camas, presented him with a cheque of Rs 50,000 to be utilized for the earthquake victims of

Uttar Pradesh, notes a press release. Seen on the occasion are (from left): Munchi Cama, B. M. Gogate, Noshir Cama, Chavan, Rusi Cama, Mehrwan Cama, Mahipatbhai Shah and Hormuz Cama.

ready occupied. Confidence reposed in the Godrej name has enabled the new company headed by Adi Godrej (managing director of Godrej Soaps) to now undertake Phase II of the project. Ninety-two flats in the second phase are already sold and the next 124 were to be available

to the public effective January 15 this year, informs Ashok Patil, general manager of the new firm. Parsis too have shown an interest in these flats, he adds.

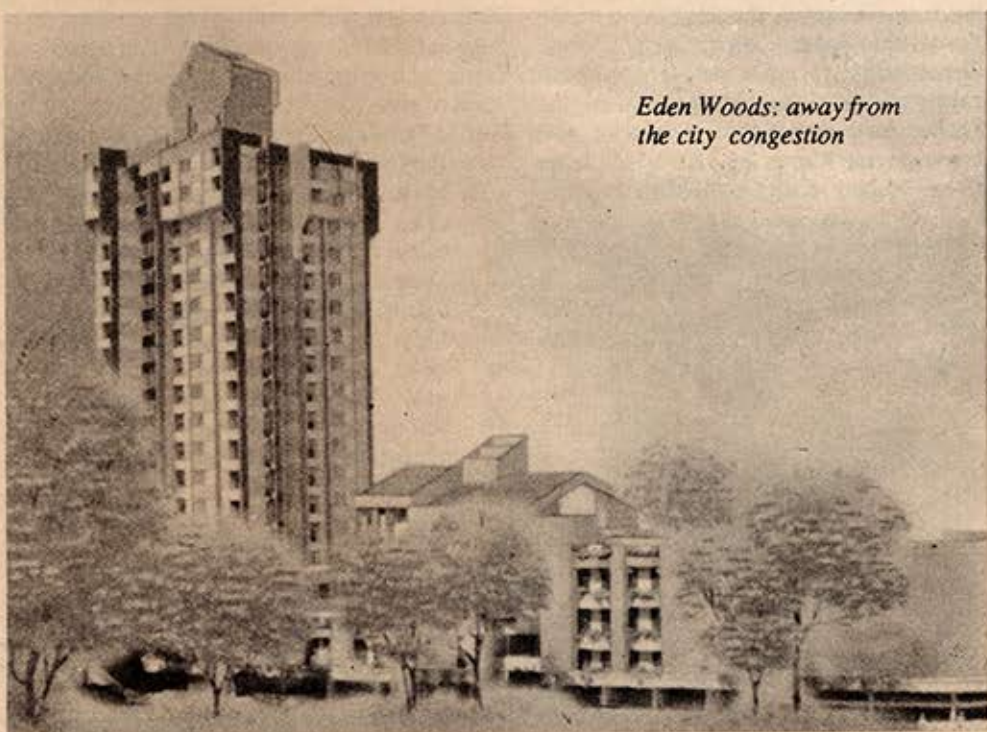
Envisaged as one bedroom flats of 560 square feet and two-bedroom flats of 860 square feet, the ground rate is Rs 700 per square foot with an escalation in the rate by Rs 5 for the higher storeys. To ease the financial burden on the buyer, payments can be made over 10 installments beginning with five percent paid as deposit on application and the final nine percent paid on occupation of the flat.

Phase II boasts of features like an intercom facility from foyer to individual flat for more security, an efficient drainage system as also a sophisticated fire-fighting system, a club house with lounge area, card rooms and a pantry, an auditorium, a sports complex with badminton courts and a health club. A landscaped garden and a swimming pool will be added to attract buyers. Chestnut Plaza, a modern shopping and commercial center, as also amenities for children in the form of a creche, a primary and secondary school will be initiated within the complex, the brochure announces.

The firm has employed Patell, Batliwala, Manohar and Associates as their architects, Dubon Project Engineering

continued on page 40

Eden Woods: away from the city congestion



Iran's Zoroastrians

A regional breakdown of the total 90,520 Zoroastrian population of Iran in 1988, officially released by the Iranian census authorities, has been published in Persian by the Vancouver based *Pak-e-Mehr*, October 1991.

The English translation, courtesy Dr Ali Jafarey, places the maximum number in Tehran (24,240) and then, in receding order, Khorasan (10,575), Mazandaran (6,417), Isfahan (5,702), Pars (5,385), Eastern Azerbaijan (5,064), Gilan (5,005), Yazd (4,685), Kerman (3,882), Khuzistan (3,332), Central State (2,404), Western Azerbaijan (2,221), Bakhtaran (Kermanshah) (1,709), Chahar-mahal Bakhtiari (1,514), Zanzan (1,483), Kurdistan (1,058), Bushahr (Bushire) (1,032), Sistan (1,007), Hormozgan (862), Hamadan (722), Boveir-Ahmadi and Kahgiluyeh (592), Semnan (260), and Luristan (179). A further 1,190 are listed under the miscellaneous category.

Prayers on cassette

A set of three audio cassettes of daily prayers together with their Farsi and English renditions are being distributed by the Kankash-e-Mobedan (the Council of Iranian Mobeds). The first consists of *Ashém Vohu, Yathâ Ahu Vaéryu, Sroush Vâj* and *Avestayé Koshti*. The second contains 101 Names of Ahura Mazda, *Tan Dorosti, Peymané Deen, Vispé Setayesh, Setayeshé Yekta Khoda, Bérassad, Khorshid, Mehr* and *Atash Niyayeshes*, and the five *Gahs*. The third includes *Ovrmaid, Adibehest, Sroush* and *Vérâhrâm Yashis*.

The mellifluous Avesta recordings are by Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary who performed the task in honor of his parents and his parents-in-law. The Farsi and English translations have been compiled by Mobeds Ardeshir and Firouz Azargoshasb respectively, recited feelingly in English and Farsi by Ms Nielufar Varjavand. Compiler Mobed Fariborz Shahzadi and Mobed (Dr) Shahriar Banki edited the tapes.

The cassettes are being distributed free by the Kankash but donations are welcome to enable them to proceed with fresh programs to help the Zoroastrian community in North America. Further information could be had from the Council of Iranian Mobeds, P O Box 22911, San Diego, CA 92192, USA.

Describing itself as the religious arm of the Zoroastrian community, the Kankash is at pains to disclaim any competition with other Zoroastrian institutions. "Our programs are open and meant for all our Zoroastrian brothers and sisters. Also, our meetings are open to the Zoroastrian community who are welcome to attend any of the meetings we hold at the California Zoroastrian Center in Westminster, California," notes the Fall 1991 *Payk-e-Kankash*, the Council's publication.

Earlier the Kankash had published the *Khordeh Avesta in English* — a hardcover edition mailed free of charge to anyone who asked, as notes the *Payk*. A Zoroastrian textbook in English, *Zarâthushti — Know your Religion, Culture and Background*, is awaiting a sponsor to bear the cost of a 1,000-copy print run so that the book could be availed of freely by Zoroastrian youth.

Mobed Bahram Shahzadi holds Avesta classes at the California Zoroastrian Center for residents of Orange County. Residents of Los Angeles County are provided for by Mobed Fariborz Shahzadi. The Kankash's youth camps — a bi-annual event — continue to prove popular. The four-day camp last June was attended by 32 youngsters, according to the *Payk*.

This issue of the magazine also features an appeal made by Ervad (Dr) Jehan Bagli in *Gavashni*, the newsletter of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, for all Zoroastrians to unite under the Fasli calendar when the Hormuz *roj* of the Shenhshahi and Kadmi calendars also converge on March 21, 1992. A letter from Mobed Bahram Shahzadi notes,

"The Iranian Mobeds Council also feels that unifying into one Fasli calendar is the most plausible, sensible and meaningful way to put order into the confusion that has been generated over the past 800 years."

Vancouver congress preview

A tentative program of the Eighth North American Zoroastrian Congress, due to be held in Vancouver in September this year, has been published by the *Pak-e-Mehr*, though the speakers are not mentioned. With "Looking ahead to the 21st century" as the theme, the program includes two major topics: "Adopting a unified calendar" and "Modern psychology and our religious practices." The focus on education is expected to be treated under three different heads: "Educating the community," "Religious leadership in the 21st century," and "Interacting through interfaith and multicultural activities." "Our vision of Zoroastrians in Canada and the USA in the 21st century" is also expected to be spelt out.

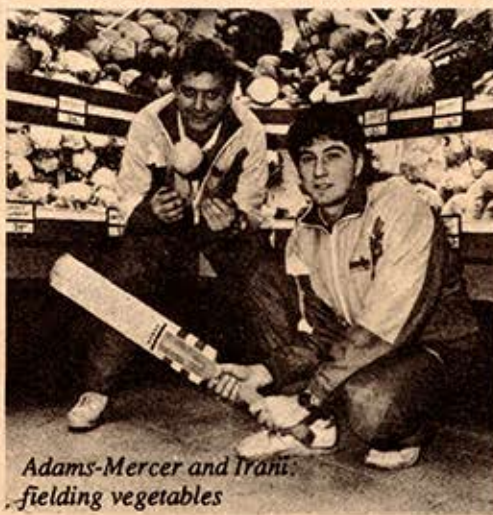
Zoroastrians in Kansas

The Zoroastrian Association of Kansas (ZAKA) was formed last April 13, according to the first issue of their newsletter reproduced by *Pak-e-Mehr*. A jashan performed by Ervad (Dr) Kersey Antia of Chicago lent added grace to the occasion, especially for those who have been away from such religious activities for a long spell of time.

Ms Farahnaz Zaery, a graduate dentist from the University of Missouri in Kansas City has undertaken to devote her time to taking religious classes for children in her own home. Captioned color slides have been prepared by ZAKA to help her in her community task along with the *Avesta* and other books, informs the newsletter. Already, "the children's curiosity and their questions have been particularly interesting and challenging," adds the write-up.

Man of the series

Since his debut as the youngest cricketer ever to sign on as a professional for his county, Lancashire (see *Zoroastrians Abroad, Parsiana*, January 1989), Ronnie Irani has grown into a promising all-rounder who was



Adams-Mercer and Irani, fielding vegetables

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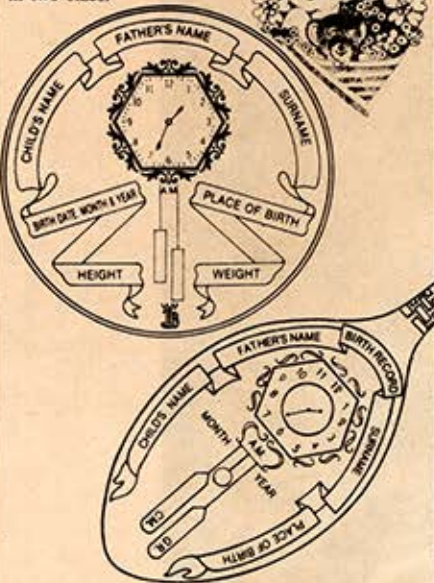
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declared the "man of the series" in the Third Bull Under-19 Test series of three matches against Australia played in England last September. The selection was made by Brian Taber, former Australian wicket-keeper who was manager for the Australian team. The series ended in a draw thanks to Irani's 106 not out — his first test century — in the final match which seemed to be headed for an Australian victory. The information is contained in a number of local dailies and Karachi's *Parsi Sansar ané Lok Sevak* of November 30, 1991.

Reporters covering the Third Bull Under-19 Test had high praise for Irani: One referred to him as a "top order batsman and seam bowler," another spoke of "the pugnacious manner in which he carried the fight to the spinners (which) made compelling watching. He used his feet, his height and his power to punishing effect." "Irani's innings was one of the few bright spots for England in an otherwise disappointing second day of the deciding Bull Test..."

To while away the dull winter months Irani teamed up with businessman Fil Adams-Mercer to run "Fruit and a vegetables for health" shops in Newport Street, Astley Bridge and Walkden. The partners opened three shops in three months and were planning to open 20 more in North Manchester this year, informs a local daily of December 11, 1991. Irani, 20, who has toured Australia, Tasmania, Singapore and Hong Kong on the cricket circuit, considered "lifting spuds at 2 a.m. enough training at the moment." According to a write-up from the family, Irani could be going to South Africa with his Lancashire county cricketers in March or attending his parents' silver jubilee celebrations in Bombay on March 21.

Inspirational prayer

The third edition of the *Contemplation on sudreh kusti prayer* by Naval Maneckji Magol, published by the Informal Religious Meetings Trust Fund of Karachi in 1990 was recently received by *Parsiana*.

"Devotion is the first requisite. Mere uttering of a few formulas with the lips, while the heart does not pulsate with devotional fervor, is no prayer." The words from Dastur (Dr) Maneck Dhalla's *Zoroastrian Theology* quoted by the author in the first paragraph of the preface sets the tone of the small 28-page (un-numbered), mimeographed publication.

"To inculcate love and faith and feel

continued on page 27

MATRIMONIAL

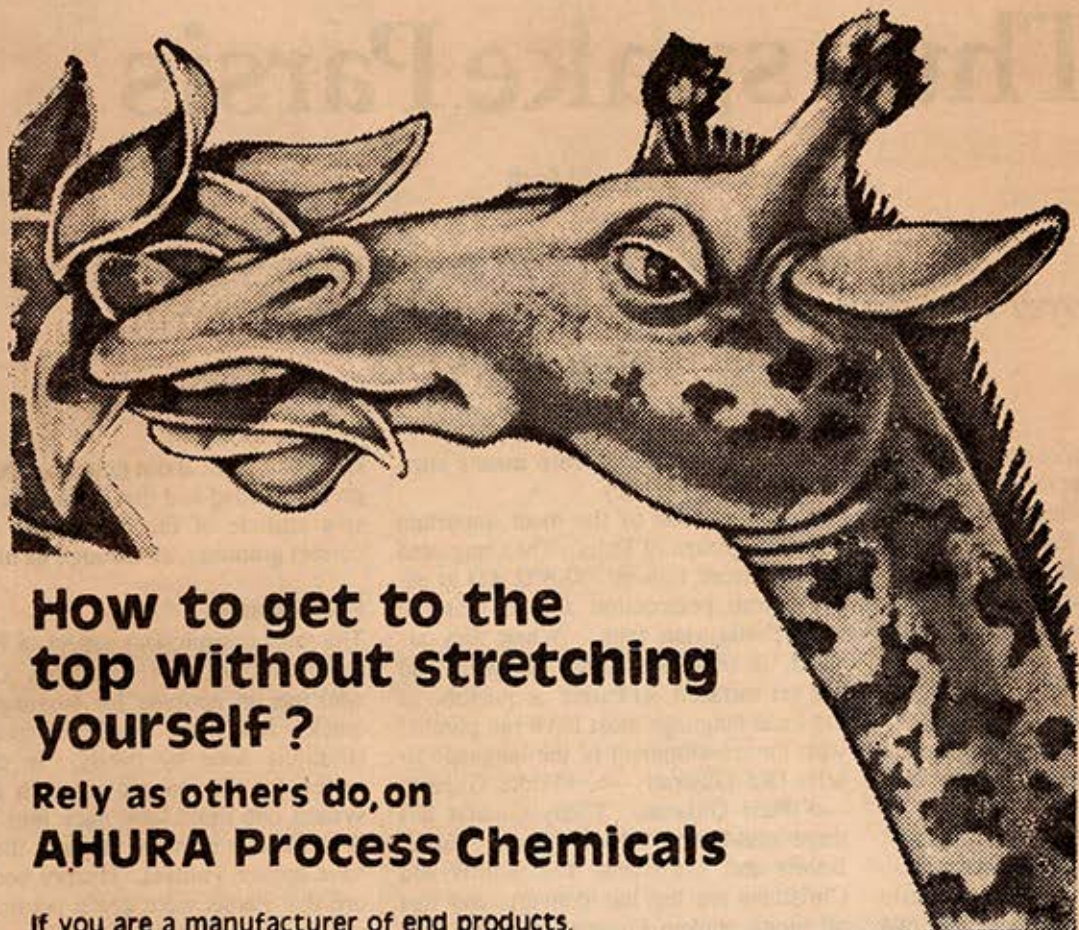
Calcutta based brother of a good-natured, pretty, fair, slim, Parsi girl, 29 years, 5 ft tall, graduate, working as a secretary in a multinational firm seeks correspondence from parents of youths, aged 30-35, good-natured, educated, well-settled with accommodation. Please send your replies with photograph (returnable) to:

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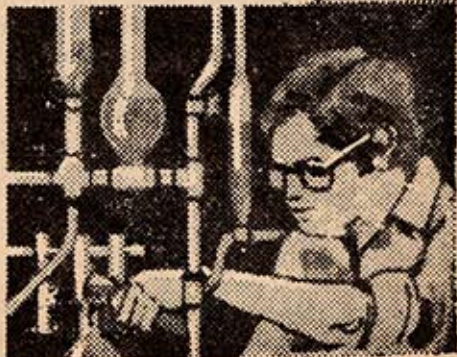
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Graphic A-182

Thus spake Parsis

Dr Bharati Modi

*Though disrespectful towards
correct grammar, the vibrance of Parsi Gujarati
has fascinated linguists*

The beginning of the paper goes way back to the mid 1950s! It was then, when I was surrounded by all the Manis and Maneks, Pilloos and Aloos, and Zareens and Jhangus of St Xavier's College of Bombay, that my interest in Parsi Gujarati (PG) was aroused. I wondered what it was that made a Hindu Gujarati enjoy the company of Parsis so much. I realized that apart from the Parsi spirit, full of optimism and exuberance for life, it is their language that is responsible for my love for them!

I was very curious to know about the peculiarities of PG. Unfortunately, 30 years passed by before I could seriously work on this language. There are two reasons why I did commence research in this area: One is totally non-academic, born out of natural human curiosity and the second is purely academic. Being a Gujarati and in the field of linguistics, it is important for me to study this dialect before it becomes extinct — to catch the bus before it is too late. [Here the PG of Bombay Parsis is considered to be the representative dialect of Parsis. Elsewhere (the largest number next to Bombay is mainly in Gujarat), being in a negligible minority, their dialect shows the signs of 'dilution' of its main features.] Most Parsis may not like the word extinct but scholars and writers of Gujarati who have given some thought to this aspect will agree with my observations.

For this paper I have discussed only two issues of common interest: What are the characteristics of PG that make it so different from Standard Gujarati (SG) and why is it different? What makes me conclude that it is 'dying'? (Here the term

'dying' in a technical sense means attrition, leading to death.)

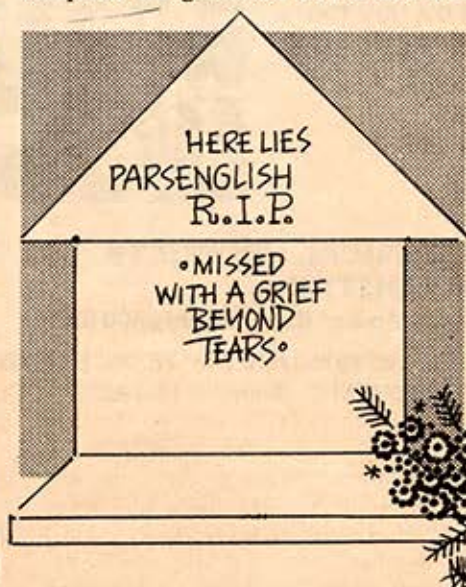
Parsis are one of the most important minority groups of India. They migrated to India from Iran in 700-800 AD to escape Arab persecution and to preserve their Zoroastrian faith. When they arrived, the new Indo Aryan languages had not yet surfaced, so Parsis' acquisition of the local language must have run parallel with the development of the language itself: Old Gujarati → Middle Gujarati → New Gujarati. Today Gujarat has three non-Hindu ethnic groups: Parsis, Bohris and Christians. The Bohris and Christians are the late converts and had all along spoken Gujarati prior to their conversion. But Parsis love to talk and they have created a wonderfully lively dialect of Gujarati.

For this non-technical paper I have not compared the grammars of PG and SG.

Only one point about grammar should not go unrecorded and that is the general passive attitude of the community towards correct grammar, all through its history.

Sound system

The most conspicuous aspect of PG is its sound system. A non-Parsi Gujarati, who has an aptitude for languages, will quickly notice the wonderful sound substitutions done by Parsis. In order to search for the reasons for such a sound system one must look back into history. When Parsis came to Gujarat, they must have spoken Pahlavi. History books record that Parsis were given permission to stay in Gujarat by king Jai Rana on two conditions, one of which was that they give up their language and take the local language. But, in any case, even without this condition, the consequences would have been the same because no community can settle in a foreign land without establishing linguistic affinity, although the shift from their own language to the other must have taken a long time. We don't have any written record of that period. The available Parsi records which are all religious were done in a later period and are written in Old Gujarati (OG). This language was similar to the language used by Hindu writers of that period. But there are some indications which show that sounds were changed. It is obvious that these written records were the work of scholarly priests who must have taken care to write correctly in OG. The sound differences in these works indicate that they had not acquired Gujarati sounds as yet.





Linguists, sociologists and biologists have put forth a theory of second language acquisition which says that the second language is acquired fully by children who are below 12 years i.e. before brain maturation; and children who are fully exposed to the native speakers by full socialization.

It is easy to imagine that the orthodox Hindu vegetarian upper class might have disallowed full socialization. Parsis were very enterprising and had gradually established big farming complexes where the lower class Gujarati speakers (Dubla community) worked as laborers. They also worked in their homes. As a result Parsis might have had a great deal of linguistic interaction and exposure to these people. Interestingly enough there are a lot of sound similarities between PG and Dubla Gujarati (DG).

All the retroflexed sounds (sounds spoken with tongue curling) of SG were totally new for Parsis. Normally, second language learners try to substitute the new sounds with the sounds similar to their native ones. Parsis have adapted the tongue position which is neither retroflexed nor dental but denti-alveolar (i.e. between the two positions).

Shifting the sound position in the vocal cavity and removing six retroflexed sounds totally from the main language has given this dialect a totally different shape.

Moreover there was an enormous

amount of simplification in the structure of language. A very large Sanskrit vocabulary, having specific sound sequences, was also deleted from PG.

Gujarati dialects of south Gujarat are marked by a 'breathy voice' which results out of the 'h' sound. Parsis have interestingly acquired this feature and they even indicate this by writing 'h' when the intonation is breathy.

One very conspicuous feature of spoken PG is (evident mainly in women's speech) spasmodic breathing which adds a very nice rhythm to the speech. This is connected with the sharp variations in pitch levels, making the spoken sequence musical.

Parsis are highly expressive and use various gimmicks. One of such devices is doubling of medial consonants in order to lay emphasis e.g. *taru kappal*, *ghannij moti*, *majjanu*, etc.

Uptil now I have described only the sounds of PG. For a common man it is these substituted sounds that make PG. No doubt the substitutions are extremely amusing and enjoyable. Non-Parsi Gujaratis have thoroughly enjoyed PG ever since the media made it possible for them to listen to PG: it may be Bombay radio's *Buddhi dhwasak mandal* or it may be Firoze Antia's plays or Adi Marzban's plays. But for a researcher there are many more factors which make PG attractive.

There are a lot of sound similarities between Parsi Gujarati and Dubla Gujarati

Highly creative

Parsis are highly creative at a linguistic level. The speakers have a tremendous capacity to make PG lively, by using wonderful analogies, by constantly reduplicating the words, by using abuses and curses, and by using unusual idioms. For example:

Analogies -- *Sukda suran jevu nak, majeni lily darakh jevi*;

Reduplicative/Repetitives-- *levaili luaili, kaasta karajia*;

Abuses -- in modern writings -- *dukhar muvo, muvo andhro bariyo che -- beshtar margho*;

Abuses -- in old writings -- *hetanni jani, kali kutarni vandri*;

Idioms -- *bardani ni bewar kari nakhi, varas vachiya*.

These are just a few examples, out of my very large data.

"Persianization"

Now I would like to pinpoint the reasons for the decline of PG. I have attempted to focus on a stage of PG dating from the last 150-200 years. The main data available to me is 150 years old i.e. after Parsis began printing and publishing: they were the first to start a Gujarati printing press and newspaper; the first to publish a Gujarati encyclopaedia; the first to write books on various fields of knowledge. They wrote on every single subject possible in PG. A stage came in the history of PG when in all likelihood it would have developed into a 'fully equipped' dialect.

At this time Parsis as a group dominated all professions which required knowledge of English (Hinnells: 1981).

This created a lot of interaction with English amongst the Parsi writers. They borrowed literary forms from English and wrote in PG. But while writing they realized the dearth of vocabulary in PG and resourcefully they drew upon their Persian scholarship borrowing more and more Persian vocabulary. Thus they were slowly shaping the dialect which would have flowered into a very good variety of SG.

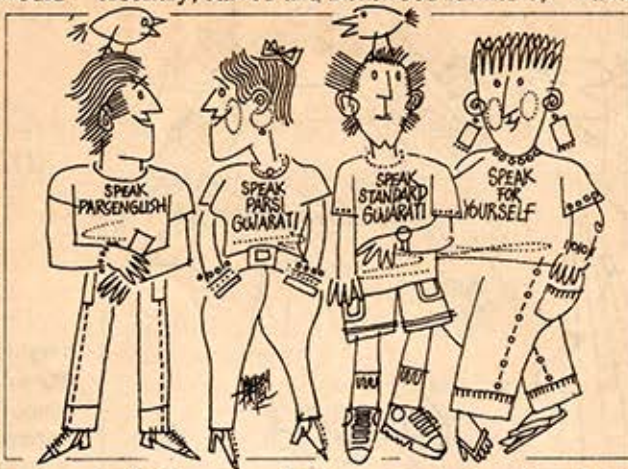
The question to be asked is why did this development of Parsi writings and Persianization of the dialect stop? Without going into technicalities the main reasons for this could be: the unusual formation of the dialect; the general apathy of Parsis towards SG; the infiltration of English; the dwindling numbers.

The formation has to be understood as a process of simplification of SG. Scholars have been researching such formation of new dialects/languages all over the world. From amongst the various descriptions none seems to adequately describe PG. I have proposed a term 'creoloid,' meaning a form which has resulted from the natural evolutionary processes of a socio-cultural group. The PG speech form developed its own expressions and patterns. It displayed tremendous amount of life by the constant use of intensifiers (repetitive forms, gemination of consonants, etc); abuse words used freely (showing their open, frank temperament); abundant references to food and drink (showing their love of the good life); continuous creation of analogies and idioms (showing their lightheartedness). The speech style took a dimension which gave an important clue to their social group membership, thus helping them to retain their identity.

There is a tragic paradox in the situation of this dialect: the very factors that helped to preserve their identity and for which they formed such a specific dialect style became detrimental to the life of the dialect. The community's general apathy towards the fountainhead i.e. SG; the conspicuous lack of grammar consciousness in their writings; the fact that they never had any borrowing-lending relation with SG; and their typical ethnocentric tendency barred them from becoming a part and parcel of the Gujarati Hindu ethos.

The year 1860 onwards a new spirit of anglicization was added to the basic apathy towards SG. The gusto with which

they had begun writing and publishing started subsiding after 1900. With the forceful infiltration of the dominant language, English, their scholarly interest in Persian began to dwindle. No aspect of their life remained untouched by westernization — from material culture to the culture of mind (from Wedgewood crockery, carved and Bentwood furniture,



to Shakespeare, Beethoven and pianos). By 1930, Parsis were less and less inclined to read PG. This was discouraging for PG writers. English had become their language of prestige, power and status. So PG writers confined their writings to newspapers and humorous plays or write-ups.

By 1940 the community had reached its apex in every field. No other community in the country held a position comparable to that of the Parsis. However, this period affected the source of their cultural roots — their Parsi-Gujaratiness (which, to a great extent, was the spirit of Gujaratiness. If Zoroastrians had settled in any other part of India, they would not have been the same.)

After 1940 the Parsi family started to shrink and consanguinity, which had surfaced in the form of genetic disorders, started to increase. Today the community appears to be dissipating itself.

After 1970 it can be said that PG is close to death. Its attrition is also distinctly different in nature compared to the other language/dialect deaths. The observed death can be proved with some valid observations from my data.

The data shows extremely reduced linguistic competence amongst the speakers. The competence was tested from their inadequate Gujarati vocabulary. Parsis above 65 years of age have a larger vocabulary than those below 40 years of age. Speakers below 25 years of age have such a large English vocabulary that only

the skeleton of the sentence structure remains Gujarati. Children below 15 years of age don't want to learn to read/write Gujarati and compared to their parents and grandparents, they are just the 'semi-speakers.'

The PG of the younger generation, of the semi-speakers or 'Parsenglish' (I have called their Gujarati as 'Parsenglish'), is considered normal amongst Parsis. The Gujarati spoken by one of my informants (55 years of age) is more fluent than that of many of her age. Yet she could not recall Gujarati equivalents for simple words such as: try, boring, quiet, family, love, follow, silence, laughter, decision, shock, regular, successful. For many semantically distinct words PG speakers use the same word e.g. clever, smart, otherwise — *hoshiyar*; hear, listen, understand — *samajh*.

Such "semantic collapse" and the inability to produce stylistic variations may go deeper into the non-verbal conceptual world of the speakers. PG is used in fewer and fewer life situations. So much life has been drained out of PG that if they do not use Parsenglish, they would cease to communicate in PG!

Soon all young Parsis will cease to speak PG and even their Parsenglish will move towards English. This shift is more evident in the last 10 years where a number of attempts have been made to publish religious writings in English. This then is the surest, definite and unmistakable sign of shift — when a language ceases to be used in everyday situations, it ceases to live. Nature alone cannot survive without culture.

Theoretically, the death of PG can be foreseen. Gujarati will lose one of her most beautiful dialects. A variety of ethnic dialects enriches a language. Gujarat will surely be the poorer without it. Every aware Gujarati will grieve the disappearance of PG for PG is (was) like a valuable pedigree to Gujarat.

Dr Bharati Modi is head of the department of linguistics at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda from where she has also earned her doctorate. With phonology as her area of specialization, she has presented papers, including one on Parsi phonology, at international meets.



A new Anjuman Committee by August?

Arnavaz S. Mama

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet has accepted the Bombay High Court verdict requiring the election of a new Anjuman Committee this year



After being overdue for four years, the elections to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) Anjuman Committee are to be held this year. Constituency-wise elections for 800 plus elected members of the BPP's Anjuman Committee must be completed on or before August 31, 1992 according to a decree of the Bombay High Court. Within two months thereafter the Punchayet is committed to organizing the trusteeship elections as the terms of chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla and trustee Jamsheed Kanga have expired since October 1988 and October 1991 respectively. Until such time they will continue at the post. The new scheme trims the trusteeship tenure from 10 to seven years.

The protracted litigation (since March 1985) regarding the amendments to the scheme originally framed in 1910 seems to have ended with the ruling by Judges Ms Sujata Manohar and Dr Bhagwati Saraf on December 17, 1991. Henceforth donors of Rs 15,000 and above will be entitled to register as donor members of the Anjuman Committee if they apply for registration within 180 days of effecting the donation. However, they will be able to vote for trustees as members of the Anjuman Committee only after a period of five years or after the next Anjuman Committee election following the donation, whichever is later. The "hold" clause has been incorporated to avoid packing of the donor register by partisans just prior to the election of a

trustee. It was this trend, just prior to the trusteeship election of 1984, that had initially led to litigation wherein the BPP trustees had committed themselves to a suitable revision of the scheme.

The donor register will include those who had donated Rs 5,000 and above to BPP charities under the old scheme as well as those who donated Rs 7,500 and more between February 6, 1987 and December 17, 1991 when the latest order became effective. These donors are now also subject to the 180-day limit for registration and the five-year moratorium.

The number of elected members will be determined by the total number of donors on the donor register on November 30 preceding each general election. The election will be held every seven years as before.

The present trustees will be entitled to complete the unexpired residue of their 10-year terms. In the event of a difference of opinion among the trustees, the decision of the majority "will bind the rest and shall be adopted and acted upon."

The definition of "Parsi" according to the new scheme assumes a male or female over 21 years of age professing the Zoroastrian faith "who shall, if so required by the trustees, have filed in the office of the BPP an affidavit that he/she has not renounced the Zoroastrian faith by reason of a marriage to a non-Zoroastrian or otherwise."

The essentials of the disputed points had been worked out before the appeal bench of Justice Sawant and Justice Ms Sujata Manohar on October 13, 1988 and been duly advertised. However when the appeal came up for orders as scheduled on December 2, 1988, doubts were raised about the status of those who had donated Rs 7,500 under the scheme framed by Justice Hosbet Suresh in 1987 by which they had earned only an indirect right to vote at trusteeship elections. (Suresh's scheme, under the umbrella of clause 98 of the original scheme, had radically departed from the amendments suggested by the BPP. In their stead he envisaged a curtailment of the Anjuman Committee to a total of 200 members of which 100 were members directly elected by the community and 100 represented donors including all those who had gifted Rs 50,000 and above plus the representatives of those who had donated between Rs 5,000 and Rs 50,000 to Punchayet charities. Though the BPP initially accepted Suresh's verdict, the aggrieved donors challenged the scheme as abrogating their vested right. When the appeal was accepted for hearing, the BPP trustees, by a majority decision, joined the appellants.)

The issue was further compounded by the fact that many of the Rs 7,500 donors had failed to register within the 180-day time frame prescribed by Suresh. It was now argued that while they may not have been interested in an indirect vote, they

were entitled to know that their direct right to vote had been restored. The Court has accordingly allowed a further month for them to register after the appearance of a single public notice in two Gujarati newspapers.

Determined to complete the hearing and pass the order before the court recessed for the Xmas break as per the directions of the Chief Justice, Manohar refused to be drawn into the history of the scheme or of a reassessment of points where the major parties involved seemed to have reached agreement: "Either we (accept) the scheme as proposed or let the existing scheme continue. I'm not going to frame a scheme for you."

The BPP's lawyer Murzban Bharucha was anxious to complete the nitty-gritty of converting the donors of Rs 7,500 from indirect to direct voters. He asked the judges to extend the five-year moratorium to these cases.

Rusi Sethna who represented Ms Mani Dalal of the CER (then known as the Committee for Electoral Rights), the original petitioner of 1984 who was an intervenor in the present case, argued,

"What is in appeal is the scheme sanctioned by Justice Suresh..." Sethna's case was that the disgruntled donors had not responded to the BPP's original advertisements wherein it had been stated that the scheme "will be settled according to the decision of the court." "The appellants decided not to appear. Had they been keen, they would have inspected the papers... Your Lordships have the right to say 'Appeal not sustainable,'" pleaded Sethna. But the judge noted, "We'd rather decide the appeal on merit."

In answer to Sethna's persistence on the "degree of sanctity of the order of the judge in chambers (Suresh's decree)" as envisaged in clause 98 by the drafters of the scheme in 1910, Manohar asked, "Tell us why you don't want us to sanction (the currently reamended scheme)."

Sethna sought an upward revision of the donation earning the right of vote at trusteeship elections to over Rs 50,000 to allow for the decline in the value of the rupee since the Rs 5,000 limit of 1910; a four to one weightage for elected members on the Anjuman Committee and enumerated the difficulties and prob-

lems of constituency-wise elections.

But the court voiced its reservations: "However good your (Sethna's) case may be, if the community is not behind you..." and again, "The trustees have tried to carry the community with them as far as possible..." As Manohar's order notes, "These modifications are supported by a majority of trustees who have put the modifications before us as also by other parties who are either appearing before us or are allowed to intervene... except... Mr (Rusi) Sethna... (who) has contended that we should not accept these modifications which are limited in nature... He (has) submitted that the scheme should be radically altered by us in keeping with modern times."

"We do not propose to accept the invitation extended to us by Mr Sethna to radically alter the scheme for the election of the trustees of the Parsi Punchayet of Bombay... In our view clause 98 (of the original scheme of 1910) does not give to this Court a completely free hand to frame a fresh scheme altogether... In our view this would not be a correct interpretation of clause 98..."

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"Safeguarding the rights, privileges, benefits..."

Arnavaz S. Mama

The Association of Inter-Married Zoroastrians has been formed to protect the social and religious rights of the Zoroastrian partner

Zoroastrians married to members of other communities are banding together under the banner of the Association of Inter-married Zoroastrians (AIMZ) in an effort to safeguard their rights and privileges as Zoroastrians. The AIMZ aims "to assert, establish, agitate for, protect and safeguard the rights, privileges, benefits of and available to Parsi Zoroastrians married to any person who is not a Parsi Zoroastrian including to take all steps and proceedings for speedy and effective implementation and enforcement of all such rights, privileges and benefits," as notes their letter of appeal. Its cosignatories are Ms Meher P. Amarsey (née Tata), Ms Smita V. Crishna (née Godrej), Adi B. Godrej, Berjis M. Desai, Ms Vera A. Mahajan (née Sidhva), Ms Meher D. Rafaat (née Cursetji), Ardeshir B. K. Dubash, Ms Khursheed M. Narang (née Sidhva), Gayo Pedder and Kavas Petigara.

The AIMZ's approach will be completely secular. Its objective is to ensure "the rights of a modern, democratic, forward looking community to its members," says Desai, a solicitor by profession.

The Association is a direct result of the controversy that arose following the death of Ms Roxan Darshan Shah (née Nazir) when the Bombay Parsi Punchayet refused to allow her body to be consigned to the dokhma in July 1990.

Since that date the issue of the rights of Zoroastrian women married outside the community have been endlessly debated and in April 1991 the Punchayet, by a majority decision, agreed to earmark one of the dokhmas in Bombay, currently in disuse, for the interment of such cases. However, an affidavit needs to be filed that the lady in question continued to profess Zoroastrianism to the end. The resolution has been faulted by the liberals for categorizing such cases separately from the rest and by the conservatives for going too far and thereby undermining the sanctity of Zoroastrian religious customs.

According to Crishna and Narang, there are currently about 25 members of the Association. The target number, according to Desai, is 1,000 members. Membership forms are being circulated in Bombay and in other Zoroastrian associations around the world.

Desai speaks of a two-pronged action plan: to generate favorable public opinion through articles, seminars, talks, etc and to correspond with the trustees of the Punchayet and the fire-temples. "If any legal right is denied, we'll contemplate legal action," he notes.

The Association has two classes of membership — ordinary members and associate members. Ordinary members include all those who are married to non-Zoroastrians and their children over the age of 18 years. The managing commit-

tee will be elected from among them. Associate members are all those who, regardless of religion, sympathize with the AIMZ's aims and objectives. They are debarred the right to stand for office or to vote.

Membership of the Association implies a onetime life membership fee of Rs 1,000 for ordinary members. Associate members pay Rs 300 per individual or Rs 500 per couple. There is no annual fee.

In their letter and in person, the members are conscious of "the need to avoid, to the farthest extent possible, any bitterness or rancor in a small and dying community." But there are times, they say, "when to remain silent amounts to a lack of moral courage and the erosion of a sense of justice and fair play."

Though the Roxan Shah controversy generated a lot of sympathetic public opinion towards these ladies, some of them are discovering that the recent publicity they have received has, on occasion, worked against them. A case in point which Desai cites though he considers it an isolated incident is the experience of a member, Ms Roshni Anand, who was recently stopped from going to the agiary which she had been visiting for a long time.

The current legal position is that entry to fire-temples, etc depends on their trust deeds. Nearly 70 to 80 percent of these state that the use of the precincts is lim-

ited to 'Parsi Zoroastrians.' Some however only use the term 'Zoroastrians.' But all those involved in the controversy are born of Parsi Zoroastrian parents and have had their navjotes performed and are therefore entitled to the use of all such facilities. As Desai says, "It's a basic legal principle that marriage does not amount to apostasy (renunciation of the religion)." He notes that 99.9 percent of such unions undergo a civil marriage.

Nor, says he, does it matter whether the Zoroastrian partner is a man or a woman. Though some members of the orthodox lobby have been suggesting that men with non-Zoroastrian wives should be treated on par with Zoroastrian women who have married out, Desai points out that would amount to retrograding on 80 years of practice. (The judgement in the Parsi Punchayet Case of 1910 had decreed that Parsi men married to women of other communities and their progeny continued to be Parsis.) The law of the land treats both men and women equally, so "there is no way they can discriminate."

One outstanding associate member of the AIMZ is the liberal solicitor Rustom

A. Gagrut who "has been consistently guiding us," say Crishna and Narang. The ladies emphasize, "We are Zoroastrians; we haven't renounced our religion." Nor do they want to "rock the boat." They maintain that the stand they will take will be based on moral and legal

**"Sometimes,
to remain silent
amounts to
a lack of
moral courage"**

ground and not on the basis of religion because there are so many conflicting opinions/interpretations regarding religious injunctions.

How do their non-Zoroastrian husbands feel about the issue? "My husband is always very open. He feels as we feel," says Crishna. Narang refers to the agreement she had with her husband before they were married — that she "wouldn't be the traditional Indian *bahu*

(and wouldn't) have to change her habits, living conditions or food." Not all girls make this clear from the start and some Parsi girls married to men of other communities do have problems, she adds. Referring to her own marriage and that of her sister Vera, Narang says, "We weren't rebelling or making a point; we believe in principles and human beings. Religion is not the deciding factor. I wouldn't accept the attitude of some Zoroastrian men towards their Zoroastrian wives." Crishna endorsed the sentiment: "It's your way of thinking rather than the religion" that matters.

In Narang's words, there is "need for change. Every single living religion changes and adapts. Then why this insecurity among the conservatives? Religion is supposed to teach us how to lead a good life. Our religion respects all living things. How then can some human beings be considered impure?"

AIMZ forms are available from M/s Desai, Berjis and Chinoy, advocates and solicitors, Bombay Mutual Building, second floor (above Citibank), 143 Sir P. M. Road, Bombay 400001 during normal working hours.

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inspired while reciting the sudreh kusti prayer, an intelligent, rational and devotional appreciation of its contents is necessary," notes Magol and proceeds to give the gist of each of the kusti prayers before further elaborating on a "contemplation" of the main ideas. For example, the 12 words of *Ashem Vohu* are expanded into a contemplation of the happiness that follows the divine law of Asha, the need to aspire to what is right for its own sake, the urge to understand and obey the will of Ahura Mazda and thereby remain virtuous and chaste, pure of thought and word and doer of good deeds.

Mistry's Journey

Canadian and US newspapers lavished high praise on Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and, when he was awarded the Governor General's award for fiction on December 3, 1991, *The Toronto Star* announced the news above its masthead. Mistry received the \$ 10,000 award plus a specially bound copy of his work at the hands of Canadian

Governor General Ramon John Hnatyshyn in Toronto, beating four other nominees.

Mistry, described by Val Ross in *The Globe and Mail* (December 4, 1991) as "grave and soft-spoken" was one of 14 winners of the Governor General's literary awards — an annual presentation launched in 1937 covering seven categories including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama, translation, children's literature and children's literary illustration in English and French.

Philip Marchand described the evening in *The Toronto Star*: "The awards ceremony itself, held in Toronto's Winter Garden Theatre, was a statement about Canadian literature, or attitudes toward Canadian literature."

"The set on the stage, for example, included Queen Anne chairs, theatrical drapery and tall, neo-classical window frames surrounded by... house plants. It suggested that Canadian literature is a highly decorous, genteel affair, suitable for consumption in conservatories."

"The impression of decorum and gentility was reinforced by the strains of Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos* sounded

every time a winner went up on stage to receive an award."

In an earlier review of the book, Marchand had referred to Mistry's style as "sparse, workmanlike, homely prose," his main purpose "the telling of a tale of moral conflict," the tone of the novel as "documentary realism laced with humor." In its review *Time* (April 8, 1991) had alluded to Graham Greene, Chekhov, Arthur Miller, Nadine Gordimer in discussing "the exceptionally vivid and often heartbreaking" novel. "Mistry draws his people with such care and understanding that their trials become our tragedies," noted *Time*'s Pico Iyer. "By the end of the novel, Bombay — filthy, ramshackle, dangerous — may seem a microcosm of the nation, but in both, Mistry compellingly shows you, stoicism and integrity sturdily hold on," commented *The Sunday Times* of March 10, 1991.

So it was no surprise to the literary world of North America that Mistry's *Journey* was shortlisted for Britain's Booker Prize — £ 20,000 sterling and increased sales for the winning book plus literary prestige — which "is second in renown only to the Nobel Prize for litera-

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ture in the English speaking world," as notes Marchand. Mistry lost out on the Booker to Nigerian novelist Ben Okri. Hence *The Toronto Sun* titled the Governor General's award "Long Journey's happy ending."

Mozart and a Zoroastrian

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's first serious opera features a Zoroastrian, according to Dorab Patel, ex justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, writing in the newsletter of Karachi's Informal Religious Meetings (November/December 1991). The opera, titled *Mithridates*, is based on the life of Mithridates II (123-87 BC) of the Arsacid dynasty of Parthia whose rule extended from the frontiers of India to the western border of Mesopotamia, informs Patel. The Arsacids had defeated the Greek rulers of the Selucid dynasty which had succeeded to the former Achaemenian Empire on the death of Alexander of Macedonia.

The article commemorates the 200th death anniversary of Mozart, the child prodigy who created 41 symphonies, 21 piano concerti, 18 piano sonatas and several comic operas like *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Magic Flute* and others, beloved of generations of music lovers, in the course of 36 short, penurious years of life.

Rise and fall of Jamshid

An enactment in six scenes depicted the rise and fall of King Jamshid of the Pishadian dynasty famed for the peace, happiness and longevity of his golden age in primordial Iran. The pageant was presented by the Friday School for Little Zarathushtris at the Hotel Metropole, Karachi, last September, informs Ms Sunnu Golwalla.

The virtuous king eventually fell prey to human pride and was undone by that single great vice. Reduced to beggary and flight, Jamshid was killed by Zohak who then held Iran in a grip of tyranny until Kaveh the blacksmith raised his apron as the rallying flag of revolt and helped Jamshid's great grandson Faridun shake Zohak and ascend the throne of Iran.

The episodes from Firdausi's *Shah Nahamah* were preceded by a commentary and accompanied by a backstage choir of 11 young voices, writes Golwalla. Zavare Tengra, Adil Tarapore, Ms Narges Kakalia and Ms Roohshan Divecha were the characters Jamshid, Zohak, Princess Samnaz (Jamshid's friendly neighbor) and Kaveh accompanied by a cast of 46 Little Zarathushtris. Ms Mahrugh Bhiladwalla related the major episodes in Firdausi's career.

The lyrics had been composed by Virasp Mehta of the Informal Religious Meetings, a literary body of quiet, scholarly people, writes Golwalla. Ms Anita and Ms Lyla Bamjee directed the pageant. "The costumes were craftily created from colored paper and everyday clothes" by Bai Virbaiji School Montessori teacher Ms Proachi Bharucha; the stage settings were by Ms Phiroza and Khurshed Birdie. Tenor Nadeer Contractor filled in as Jamshid's 'voice.'

The Friday School has been held at the house of Ms Arnawaz Marazban Dinshaw over the past 13 years, with her daughters Farishta and Diana writing and illustrating short stories on the religion for the use of the children — a community service in which the Dinshaw family participates fully, informs Golwalla.

Compiled by Amavaz S. Mama

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Voices in harmony

The baton and the hands wave their magic, plucking notes from the singers' throats. The eyes, intense and large, follow the proceedings, almost pleading, imploring with the singers not to mar the musical enchantment that is being woven. Then, from somewhere tucked away from our untrained ears, rises a note of discord. The baton slices through the air and brings the exercise to an abrupt halt. "Why do you evaporate. Sing the full note," she reprimands the offending voice. The baton is raised and the voices surge and mingle to fill the hall with harmony again. The enchantress is Ms Coomi Wadia, currently celebrating her 25 years as conductor of the Paranjoti Academy Chorus and we are watching her rehearsals at the hall of the J. B. Petit High School for Girls in Bombay.

"*Ema su. Aagal oobhi rahi né haat hilaia karéeh* (What's so great! All she does is stand in front and move her hands about)." This comment, passed by one of Wadia's own relatives, made her clarify the misconceptions surrounding the role of a conductor: "A conductor is not just standing there and moving her hands about." According to her, the composer writes the music, the conductor interprets it. "The conductor breathes soul into the music. The same piece, and two conductors may interpret it in two different ways," says Wadia, an accomplished pianist who won the Palamkote Awards in both her exams — the Associate, and Licentiate of Trinity College, London (ATCL and LTCL).

She illustrates her point by comparing the task of a conductor to that of a professional actor. Take one passage from Shakespeare, "ask him to read the lines and then ask someone who has just learnt English to read it and you will see the difference. That's what a conductor must do, he must know what those notes on

that sheet of paper mean just as an actor must know what the words mean," and accordingly direct the tempo, the dynamics, where to put the commas and punctuation marks, the nuances.

Wadia tells us of a competition in Spain in which the Paranjoti Chorus had participated. In all there were 16 troops from all over the world and all were required to perform two compulsory pieces. One was a 16th century composition in Spanish and here, according to Wadia, the conductors had something to fall back upon — "the interpretation of the period." The second composition, however, was more demanding as it was modern and no one had a clue about how the composer intended it to be performed. "You saw 16 different interpretations of the same piece by 16 different choirs," says Wadia. And yes, her version was one of the few that were correct. It was a fruitful experience in other ways too for the Paranjoti Chorus won the overall silver medal at the competition.

The award aside, Wadia specifies intuition as a necessary quality in a conductor. It is an intuition that goes beyond seeing notes and recognizing them, an intuition that, according to Wadia, cannot be learned. "It is a gift you are born with," and Wadia acknowledges her divine gift by invoking the names of Ahura Mazda and Behram Yazad before the start of every rehearsal or performance.

"No matter how often you perform a piece, there is a difference every time... And no performance, no matter how much you rehearse, is perfect," says Wadia. Only a recording with editing and re-recording can be perfect but then the listener knows what to expect, which, and Wadia's eyes lose their luster, is its greatest defect. Live performances, by

*Coomi Wadia
completes
25 years as
conductor of the
internationally
acclaimed
Paranjoti
Academy Chorus*

Gustasp Irani



comparison, with all their blemishes are more dynamic, more stirring. "You (the conductor) see how the audience is reacting, the acoustics of the hall, and change things on the spot. For example when you sing in a European cathedral... over 10 storeys high, you have to allow for the echo. You slow down the tempo or you will end up with a jumble of notes," says Wadia.

Wadia prefers to establish a strong rapport between herself and her singers when she is up front on the podium and for this reason she insists that they learn the notes and words by heart. It assures that they do not have sheets of music between them. "This way I have 100 percent of their attention. I don't need grand gestures. I communicate with my face, my eyes. For instance if someone strays I can get him in line with a slight movement of my finger which the audience may not see," says Wadia. Technically, according to Wadia, there is little or no difference between conducting an orchestra or a choir except that, since the former must perform with their music before them, the conductor's gestures are more pronounced so as to get their attention.

In India there is the added challenge of dealing with musicians who are primarily amateurs — at least a large number of the Paranjoti choir members are.

"Abroad most musicians are professionals and the conductor does not have to teach them the notes. Here my first task is to see that they get the notes right," says Wadia. Then there is the task of teaching them the meaning and the right pronunciation of the words they are singing. "We perform songs in all languages, from English to Sanskrit, to Kanada, to Hungarian, to Spanish..." says Wadia.

The Paranjoti choir has, in its own way, added new dimensions to the East-West blend of music with songs specifically written for it in the Indian languages and set to music which is essentially Western. "Indian classical music has no

"When you sing in a European Cathedral over 10 storeys high, you have to allow for the echo"



The Paranjoti Chorus with Wadia (taking a bow) at the Sister Cities Festival in Stuttgart in 1981

harmony; it has only a melody line. Western music is based on harmony. In a choir you have different people singing different notes which together make harmony." Yet she stresses that though the music may be written with western musical notations its essence is Indian. Raga, shlokas and poetry in the Indian languages — Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Sindhi, Malayalam — are used to create this East-West blend which is true in its form and not a 'mishmash' of cultures.

Since the Paranjoti Chorus is primarily an amateur outfit, anyone may join its ranks. "People come as young as 16 or 17 and some as old as 40. Occasionally I have even had young lads of eight join (her son being one)," says Wadia. The only test an aspirant is put through is to see if he or she is tone deaf. The test is simple: Wadia plays a tune on the piano and the aspirant must sing it back for her. The real test, however, is the rehearsals. "If he is able to get interested in choir music he will stay; if not, he will drift away" says Wadia.

Rehearsals are held twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday evenings between 6.30 and 8.30 at the hall of the J. B. Petit High School for Girls. The late hours are to accommodate the singers who come from all walks of life, including accountants, journalists, doctors, lawyers, stu-

dents and the occasional unemployed. One thing they all have in common is a love for music and the desire to sing; they look forward to the rehearsals rather than view them as thieves of their time.

"I do not demand 100 percent attendance and I do not expect it," says Wadia who is aware of the fact that her singers have other commitments to keep. "There have been people who have had babies and returned to me after years of absence." Wadia may be a

perfectionist but she is also a realist. "If I am going to give one performance in Bombay I can't expect the same level of commitment as before a concert tour when we may have to give 30 to 40 performances," she states. Before embarking on a tour, and the Paranjoti Chorus has been on many, including international ones, the rehearsals are held five times a week and since the incentives are greater, the attendance is proportionately higher. Yet not all the singers get to go — only the best are selected. But be it a single performance in Bombay or a world tour, there is a bottom line that Wadia will not compromise on: "I will not perform with

a choir that I feel is not prepared."

To reach an acceptable level of preparedness, nothing short of the right note is allowed to slip by at the rehearsals. "I can't let wrong notes pass. And don't say I am making you conscious. Of course, I have to make you conscious of it if you sing a wrong note," she reprimands one singer and a little later we find her sharing a joke with the same person. Then they are singing once more; the sopranos, the altos, the tenors, the basses knitted by the baton into a beautiful tapestry of music. Often she sings along, and at one stage blows a kiss to her choir. "That was good," Wadia declares as the last note fades. "This choir needs gravity," Wadia declares. Then with a hint of a smile adds: "What goes up, must come down." A little later she is dead serious. "You can't just sit there and wait for inspiration. You've got to work for it."

The opportunity to perform on stage is probably the greatest reward for a performer. "The pay off is to see the appreciation of the audience; to see them respond to your singing." Clapping is the obvious way that this appreciation is manifest but often it is the silent teardrop that makes it all worthwhile. "Often we see tears in the eyes of our audience and then we know that we have really touched them," says Wadia. She refers to a moving concert when a critic had written that they had transplanted him out of his ordinary environment to something sensationally different. That, according to Wadia, is the final goal of any performance.

For the Paranjoti Chorus, this reward is all the more significant for all the singers are honorary members who are not paid in monetary terms for their efforts. Receipts for concert performances are used to meet the outfit's operational costs, like hall hire charges, rentals for the rehearsal hall, buying music scores and the other administrative inputs that go into running the choir.

Often the choir performs free to finance a cause. On October 31, 1991 they performed at the President Hotel for an international gathering deliberating on housing for the terminally ill cancer patients. Prior to that, on August 4, the Paranjoti Chorus performed at the Afghan Church in Bombay to raise funds for the restoration and repair of the grand old monument.

Often, the Paranjoti Chorus is the musical ambassador of the country. In 1961 it went on its first European tour which was received with great enthusiasm, and

it repeated its success in the subsequent tour of 1966. These two tours were under the baton of Dr Victor Paranjoti who had conceived and founded the choir group in 1956 under the auspices of the Bombay Madrigal Singers' Organisation from which he broke away in 1958 and thereafter renamed the choir after himself. After Paranjoti's death in 1967, Wadia carried on his tradition of excellence in the international arena. In 1974, its third European tour, the choir won the first prize for overall musical excellence at the IX International Choral Song Festival in Poland. At a similar international festival in Spain in 1977, it won two second prizes: one, for folk music and the other for classical music. Then in 1981 the Choir was invited to the First Choral Festival of the sister cities of Stuttgart 'Partnersingen,' when seven choirs from all over the world and six from the host city participated. In 1989 Wadia took part in the First Symposium of Choral Music and was on the committee of judges at the XIV International Choir Festival at Porto Alegre, Brazil. That year the choir embarked on their greatest undertaking: a tour around the world that took them through Japan, the USA, Germany, Austria and Holland.

"It is more than merely singing and performing abroad; we have carried a different image of India abroad," says Wadia. "It is one thing to go abroad and do an Indian dance. We are talking here about Indian musicians singing their (Western) music and singing it well and on par with them. It has a tremendous effect... There we stand in saris and Nehru jackets and in walks a five-foot nothing lady and performs their music. It amazes them. Then we perform our Indian music and it thrills them."

One of the Indian compositions, *Jalakamaladala*, has been particularly well received all over the world. What makes the song more significant is that it is written by Wadia's husband Nariman who, along with their son Sorab, an accomplished pianist, sings in the choir.

When Wadia, who joined the choir from its early days as a soprano and later officially wielded the baton in Paranjoti's absence, took over as conductor after his death, there was a brief moment of domestic discord. Members of the choir left in protest. Wadia dismisses the event as not worthy of mention. Her task was to build up the talent around and her success today is probably the best answer she could give to her detractors of years gone by.

The growing success of the Paranjoti Chorus can also be gauged by the fact that tickets to performances even in India are hard to get. The composition of the audience too has changed, from predominantly Parsi and Christian to a more cosmopolitan one; a change that is reflected in the composition of her choir too.

Wadia looks back on her years of singing and she is unable to single out any one performance as the highlight. "Each performance has its moments," she states. What about the time when she was selected to conduct the finale of the 1981 Choral Festival of Stuttgart when all the 13 choirs sang together and nearly 700 musicians performed under her baton? "No. It was no different from any other performance," she observes.

International harmony was the guiding light of Paranjoti. "When we go abroad we don't go as professionals or through agents. We have direct contact with choir groups in the host city and we stay with them in their homes and not in hotels," says Wadia. She tells us how members of a German and Polish choir group met at her home in Bombay. This meeting led to an exchange of choir groups and then, when Poland was going through difficult times, each member of the German choir group adopted a member of the Polish group and would send them weekly food parcels. "International harmony through international music, that has been our motto," says Wadia.

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In The Company Of Shiamak Davar

Jeroo Irani

*As it gains in popularity, the dance
troupe is invited to entertain
city, national
and international
audiences*

The school hall crackles with youthful energy as nubile young girls in snug leotards and bronzed young men in trendy tights twirl and whirl, seemingly on a collective high. A young man in T-shirt and shorts puts the group through its paces like a master puppeteer manipulating his puppets. He seems to pull the strings with a special pizzazz, all the while rasping commands... backward, forward, backward, forward...

We are watching the six-foot tall Shiamak Davar conduct one of his jazz dance and exercise classes for the young and not so young. "My exercises have been designed to relax every part of the body; what I teach is a mixture of yoga, jazz and modern dancing," he says, his every movement marked by the fluid grace of a dancer. While members of his troupe do not seem like they would be potential candidates for the chorus line of a Broadway musical, their enthusiasm for the side skips, hip sways and arm circles is unmistakable.

Their inspiration is doubtless Davar himself, an ebullient performer who loves to sing, act, dance and choreograph his own shows. Davar has performed in India, the Far East and the Middle East and most recently, Impact '91 showcased the talents of Davar and his troupe, The Company. The lithe young dancer exudes a healthy glow and seems to be charged with unstoppable, bottled up energy when we interview him later in his ground floor office at Beau-lieu, Harkness Road. In the course of the

discussion, he frequently uncoils himself from the sofa to leap up with a panther-like grace to demonstrate the difference between classical ballet and jazz dancing. "Ballet is more defined, leg oriented and the arms move perfectly. Modern dance breaks all the rules of ballet while jazz dancing is a style developed by jazz musicians. It also has elements of the Broadway style and through the ages has drawn from Gene Kelly, Fred Astaire and more recently, Michael Jackson..."

"Indians are not used to western dance," says Davar. "Abroad, by the time a child is five, he or she starts to learn ballet. Here training is more likely to start at 18 or 20 when the body has become stiff." With his toned up frame weighing a mere 70 kgs, Davar demonstrates how western dance makes every part of the anatomy flexible — from the legs to stomach, spine, lower back. While some of his students do come with the intention of losing weight, "I am not running a gym," he cautions. "The idea is to train the body."

To spread the fitness gospel, 31-year-old Davar conducts classes at Davar's College (which was started by his grandfather Sohrab Davar) in personality and grooming, providing tips on body language, how to use the body, how to walk,

exercise and generally fine-tune God's gift.

Davar, who studied at the Pineapple Dance Center, London, and took courses at the London Contemporary Dance Theatre, and the Guilford School of Acting and Dance, London, scoffs at the aerobics instructors who have mushroomed in Bombay: "Very few have any body awareness."

Best known for his role as Emcee in the musical *Kabaret*, Davar has choreographed and participated in three national events of significance in the last two years: the French Festival in India, in Bombay in 1989 when he was the assistant show choreographer and dancer; the opening and closing day events of the 8th Asian Track and Field Event, Delhi, with 1,000 school children and 100 dancers from his own dance classes; and, in 1990 when he directed, choreographed and performed with 60 of his dancers on one of the five stages for Nana Chudasama's I Love Bombay Festival. The occasion was graced by the then Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar who initially disapproved of the western style of dancing but later confessed that he had enjoyed watching the gyrations of the whirling dervishes immensely, reports Davar.

Who are Davar's role models and from where does he derive his inspiration? The dance exponents (ballet, modern and jazz dancing) Mikhail Baryshnikov, Gene Kelly, Eleanor Powell, actors like Robert de Niro, Al Pacino, gospel and jazz sing-

ers like Aretha Franklin, Barbara Streisand, Ella Fitzgerald, etc. But dancing is not Davar's sole passion. He likes to sing and write his own songs as well. "I have written a song on Mother Theresa," he informs us and has been approached by HMV and Magna Sound to make an album. "My aim is to go international, win a Grammy award and ultimately set up a musical theater school for acting, dance and singing in Bombay. The performing arts is everything for me," he gushes. Davar, who has a distinctly non-MBA approach to his budding dance-for-fitness "empire," muses, "It's great to be paid for doing what is one's passion."

The young performer who bears a faint resemblance to actor Sylvester Stallone has modelled for several print media and

Davar (below) and with his team of performers: spreading the fitness gospel



television commercials, choreographed and participated in numerous fashion shows as well. He has had the good fortune of converting early childhood amusements into a profession. Davar studied the piano, but briefly. He abandoned the keyboard when his piano teacher rapped him sharply on the knuckles for misbehavior. "It was an excuse. She was a sweet old lady and I wish fervently that I had continued the lessons. Today, I play by ear," he says, adding with candid good humor, "My first musi-



"It's great to be paid for doing what is one's passion"

cal *Tommy* was the biggest flop." It was followed by *Grease Lightning*, *Bottoms Up*, *They're Playing our Song*, all in which he sang, acted and danced. By the mid 80s, he had started to choreograph pop/rock shows for Doordarshan, and later for the Dynasty Culture Club. In January '89 he formed The Company, with a nucleus of 12 dancers. "Now we are 20 strong and still growing, aspiring and performing as a team."

While Davar seems to take each day as it comes, in his blueprint or master plan he accords importance to "being good and doing good." In his scheme of things, putting up shows for charitable causes is very important — for instance causes like AIDS awareness, Helpline (an organization which helps people in crisis situations), anti drugs, for the terminally ill and for animals. "I love animals," confesses Davar who is passionately fond of his pet Elsa who is half Alsatian and half Labrador. With his Company, Davar had even performed at the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress in Bombay in early 1990.

Do his strong charitable inclinations have anything to do with his being a Parsi? "All religions and ethnic groups are the same for me. When I feel like I pray at a church, a fire-temple, a mosque.

I believe in all the prophets. I don't believe in chauvinistic statements like 'Parsis/Hindus are the greatest.'" Davar talks of his faith in his guru Sai Baba of Shirdi and his belief in life after death. In this connection he mentions Khorshed and Rumi Bhavnagri as his spiritual guides. (Since the loss of their two sons in a car accident in 1984, the Bhavnagris have resorted to 'automatic writing' to communicate with the dead.)

On an even more esoteric plane, Davar talks of his belief in UFOs (unidentified flying objects). "I saw one when I was 17 years old. I called several people and told them about the sighting. I was dubbed as the 'ghelo (mad) idiot,' someone who is always theatrical and eccentric. Subsequently, the sighting was confirmed by others and reported in *The Times of India*." No, Davar has not spied any more space ships recently, but he firmly believes in them. Suddenly he discontinues, looking embarrassed. "Interviews are so narcissistic. One only talks about oneself." He reels off the names of the people he is indebted to — his supportive parents Puran and Nanabhoy, his guru Sai Baba, the Bhavnagris, his grand aunt Mary Wadia... He breaks off to grin impishly, "That sounds like my Grammy award acceptance speech, doesn't it?"

Reaching for the Sky



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The age of Zoroastrian brides — as listed in this issue — ranged between 19 and 70 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 22 and 72 years, averaging at 29 years.

As per the data available to *Parsiana* from four hospitals, there were 28 births in comparison to 89 deaths in Bombay in December last year. The major killer last month was heart disease claiming 31 victims of whom 11 were above 80 years of age. Old age/general debility was the next killer taking 15 lives. Nine patients fell prey to cancer, six to pneumonia/lung disease and four each to liver disease and hypertension. Three patients succumbed to diabetes and two each to kidney failure and brain disease. Bed sores, pyrexia (high fever), gastroenteritis, nervous disorder, anemia, epilepsy, asthma, burns, bronchitis, multi organ failure, tachycardia (excessively rapid action of the heart), and blood poisoning were

some of the isolated cases registered last month. A 30-year-old woman perished in an accident and an 18-year-old boy hung himself to death. A seven-month baby boy and a 38-year-old man were also lost to the community. The oldest to die was a 97-year-old lady.

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. For example, the birth figures for Bombay are supplied by four hospitals; births in suburban hospitals and private nursing homes are not included unless individuals send us information together with a copy of the birth certificate.

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

BOMBAY

Born

A girl, *Delna*, to *Tanaz* and *Kersi Vaghaiwala* on October 3, 1991
A girl to *Hufrish* and *Behram Nagporwala*; November 30
A boy to *Zenobia* and *Yazdi Marolia*; December 1
A girl to *Ava* and *Kersasp Bhot*; December 2
A boy to *Nergish* and *Ratansha Gilder*; December 2
A boy to *Firoza* and *Kaiwan Dadrewala*; December 3
A boy to *Rati* and *Farhad Forbes*; December 4
A boy to *Poornima* and *Rohinton Inspector*; December 5
A boy to *Ruxana* and *Themton Kalyaniwala*; December 6
A girl to *Khusmde* and *Maneck Patel*; December 6
A boy to *Avaan* and *Jamshed Vakharia*; December 7
A boy to *Amy* and *Homi Boga*; December 8
A girl to *Parizad* and *Adil*

Mistry; December 8
A girl to *Shernaz* and *Kersi Vaid*; December 8
A girl to *Jasmine* and *Iqbal Singh*; December 9
A girl, *Friyana*, to *Ereen* and *Mehernooz Pithawala*; December 9
A girl to *Kashmira* and *Kaikobad Writter*; December 10
A boy to *Dilshad* and *Firdaus Irani*; December 13
A boy to *Rukshana* and *Jimmy Colabewala*; December 17
A boy to *Jasmine* and *Dinyar Bhagat*; December 18
A boy to *Shireen* and *Dinshaw Kavarana*; December 18
A boy to *Jiloo* and *Kaiyoze Billimoria*; December 19
A girl to *Kashmira* and *Soli Lentin*; December 21
A boy to *Nilofer* and *George Taylor*; December 21
A boy to *Hutokshi* and *Kurush Elavia*; December 22
A girl to *Manizeheh* and *Firdosh Felahati*; December 22
A girl to *Dinaz* and *Hormazdiar*

Santoke; December 24
A boy to *Freny* and *Behruz Cardmaster*; December 27
A boy to *Binaifer* and *Aspi Rutnagar*; December 27
A girl to *Jeroo* and *Rusi Forbes*; December 28

Married

Sina Dinyar Khosraviani and *Kersasp Sherry Irani*; November 1
Navaz Soli Katki and *Rohinton Behramshah Dadina*; November 2
Prochi Rusi Mistry and *Firdaus Kersasp Khambata*; November 14
Zenobia Noshir Vajifdar and *Shahrookh Bomi Davar*; November 18
Persis Cavas Bilimoria and *Danesh Aspandiar Irani*; November 19
Faranak Dali Paowwala and *Sohrab Shaporji Irani*; November 24
Hutoxi Piroze Khan and *Darayas Ratansa Panthaki*; November 25
Khurshid Tehmuras Patel and *Farzin Ratan Karma*; November 26
Veera Keki Wadia and *Aspi Ardeshtir Patel*; November 26
Rukshana Eruch Bhathena of *Kalyan* and *Burzin Faredoon Panthaki*; November 28
Armin Dali Vandrewala and *Cyrus Rusi Wadia*; November 28
Hutoxi Kersi Irani (Sumondy) and *Yazdi Minoo Captain*; November 29
Havovi Keki Pastakia and *Khushroo Behram Bharda*; November 30
Navaz Pesi Shroff of *Bangalore* and *Sarosh Rusi Gotla*; November 30
Benaifer Minoo Mehta and *Zarir Behram Kerawalla*; November 30
Maharukh Jimmy Jamadar and *Vistasp Noshir Chhapgar*; December 1
Najoo Rustom Mehta and *Behram Phiroze Dhabhar*; December 1
Hutoxi Minoo Engineer and *Percy Minoo Fitter*; December 1
Mahnaz Eruch Bokdawala and *Cyrus Rusi Kharadi*;

December 1
Carmelle Pervaz Poonawalla and *Malcolm Kersi Patel*; December 1
Arnaz Parvez Hakim and *Phiroze Fardoon Soonawalla*; December 1
Tanaz Jamshedji Patel and *Freddy Jal Sopariwala*; December 1
Hutoxi Dinshaw Amroli and *Jimmy Firoze Vazifdar*; December 1
Nilufer Jal Sethna and *Homiary Percy Dadrewala*; December 2
Vehdaiti Cawas Amroliwala and *Neville, Firoze Gheewala*; December 2
Dilshad Aspi Cooper and *Jamshed Noshirwan Kershaw*; December 2
Firoza Homi Khambatta and *Kerman Dhunjishaw Marker*; December 2
Maharukh Noshir Devgadhwala and *Ruzbeh Nawroze Sutaria*; December 2
Vahbiz Kersasp Kanga and *Kersi Jehangir Bharucha*; December 3
Maharukh Pervaz Daruwala and *Vispi Hoshang Marshall*; December 3
Meher Dorab Choksey and *Hormuze Phiroz Tata*; December 3
Jasmine Rustom Cooper and *Pesi Dadi Wadia*; December 3
Maheen Serosh Irani and *Merzban Nadirsha Commissariat*; December 4
Ghaver Keki Kodla and *Gave Eruch Palkhivala*; December 5
Niloufer Minoo Shroff and *Noshir Jamshed Mistry*; December 8
Sharmin Erach Damania of *Daman* and *Sheriar Khushroo Shelangi* of *Florida*; December 8
Mehnaz Jimmy Wadia and *Raymond Fali Tavadia*; December 8
Gulshan Kaikhushroo Rana and *Abad Ardaeviraf Wadia*; December 8
Shiraz Hoshang Daruwala and *Kersi Fevoze Patel*; December 9
Kashmira Soli Bharucha and *Ruzbeh Nariman Bharucha*; December 10
Sharon Sorab Khajotia and *Homi Behram Khajotia*; December 10

Navaz Maneck Bulsara and
Sarosh Nariman Palkhiwala;
December 10
Armaity Sorab Chhor and Adale
Mahyar Patel; December 11
Zarine Nari Patel and Khushroo
Sorab Darukhanawalla;
December 12
Annahita Meherwanji Irani and
Rohinton Bomi Kapadia;
December 12
Parizad Jimmy Billimoria and
Astad Minoo Sethna;
December 12
Khurshid Minocher Karadia of
Navsari and Farshid Dinyar
Fataki; December 13
Gitanjali Sarosh Mody and
Sorab Jimmy Sidhva;
December 13
Sheroo Sorabji Kapadia and
Yezdi Pesi Poonawalla;
December 14
Behroze Dinshaw Billimoria and
Mehernosh Dara Billimoria;
December 15
Havovi Nariman Daruvala and
Zarir Nariman Chhor;
December 15
Samanaz Jehangir Irani and
Mickey Keki Mehta;
December 15
Shahnaaz Noshirwan Mavji and

Khurshed Behram Patel;
December 15
Firuzi Pesie Billimoria and
Jamshed Jal Rao; December 15
Farida Pervaz Mistry and Zarir
Soli Bharucha; December 16
Nilufer Hoshang Vesuna and
Freddy Dinyar Tukina;
December 16
Dilber Kersi Irani and Percy
Savak Bhathena; December 17
Armaity Sam Bastawalla and
Rohinton Pirojshaw Chiniwala;
December 17
Kashmira Sorab Irani and Cyrus
Meherwan Irani; December 17
Dilnavaz Meherwan Irani and
Jehanbux Sam Irani;
December 17
Tanaz Darayash Mehta and
Freddy Jimmy Karbhari;
December 17
Amy Jehangir Jussawalla and
Shapur Nowroji Adajania;
December 18
Kamal Firoz Kotwal and Firoze
Jamshed Darbary of Poona;
December 19
Veera Rusi Kappawalla and
Dicky Dara Karbhari;
December 19
Daisy Kersi Powvalla and
Noshir Jamshed Lala;

December 19
Behroze Adi Elavia and Yezdi
Sam Cooper; December 20
Dilnavaz Boman Bakhurdari of
Thana and Mehraboon Jamshed
Irani; December 20
Rati Dorab Nazer and Bhiku
Eruch Sethna; December 20
Havovi Nadirshaw Katila and
Kaizad Maneck Bharucha;
December 21
Aban Dinshaw Mistry and
Neville Rusi Darbary;
December 21
Shirin Keki Chinoy and
Mehernosh Jehangir Palia;
December 21
Khurshid Minu Pardiwalla of
Pardi and Navroz Godrej
Jadashapurna; December 22
Manek Rutton Tata and
Khushrav Erach Nariman;
December 22
Navaz Bejonji Bhandari and
Farhad Sorab Patel;
December 22
Zenobia Homi Homavazir and
Dinshaw Kersi Billimoria;
December 23
Zeena Dara Vaid and Kurush
Dhanjisha Cooper;
December 23
Tanaaz Sam Hilloo and Jimmy

Jehangir Irani of Karachi;
December 24
Dolly Piroj Dhabhar and
Farrokh Kersi Patel;
December 24
Mahtab Sam Irani of Poona and
Burzin Rumi Daruwalla;
December 25
Anahita Farokh Irani of
Secunderabad and Jehangir
Behram Bhanja; December 26
Meher Homi Palsetia and
Kurush Palanji Dastoor;
December 26
Jasmine Dhanjisha Elavia and
Jamshed Themuras Dubash;
December 27
Hilla Hosang Bhesania and
Khushveer Bomi Engineer;
December 27
Armin Jal Patel and Hoshang
Soli Buhariwala; December 28
Niloufer Noshir Dubash and
Noshir Rustom Dastur;
December 28
Niloufer Noshir Sidhwa and
Marzban Burjorji Hodiwala;
December 29
Khurshed Rusi Bhungara and
Navzer Adar Dumasia;
December 30
Roxy Dara Patel and Rustom
Keki Jokhi of Hong Kong;

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December 30
Nargis Dhunjishah Guard of
 Thana and *Tehmtan Rustomji*
Mistry; December 30
Firoza Jimmy Fitter and
Hamavand Rayomand Shroff;
 December 30
Sanobar Keki Dastur and Cavas
Jamshedji Bomanji;
 December 31

Died
Rattonsha Ardesir Achhadwala
 (80) residing at B-8, Shams
 Palace, 98, Hill Rd, Bandra,
 400050; December 2
Rusi Eruchsha Patel (75),
 3-B/17, Tata Clny, Tardeo,
 400034; December 2
Jer Kaikhushroo Shroff (69),
 Shirin Mans, Tardeo Rd,
 400034; December 2
Benzonji Shahporji Velati (92),
 F/41, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd,
 400039; December 2
Dadiba Bapuji Daruwalla (70),
 Kharade Bldg, Taluka Karjat,
 Dist Raigad, Neral, 410101;
 December 3
Mithan Hoshang Daruwalla
 (78), C/6, Ness Baug, Nana
 Chowk, 400007; December 3
Goolbai Bejonji Engineer (86),
 India Hse No 3, Kemp's
 Corner, 400036; December 3
Dinyar Adi Umrigar (38), 1,
 Phoolwadi, Lalubhai Park Rd,
 Andheri (W), 400058;
 December 3
Bapsy Soli Buhariwalla (61),
 Vispi Villa, 85, Hill Rd,
 Bandra, 400050; December 4
Pirojshaw Dosabhooy Sukhesh-
wala (79), 187, Abdealy
 Chmbs, Lamington Rd, 400007;
 December 4
Fakirji Dinshawji Daruwalla
 (75), 17-E/45, Rustom Baug,
 Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027;
 December 5
Shahpur Boman Irani (63),
 Talati Bldg, Khetwadi Back Rd,
 400004; December 5
Frenie Shavaksha Major (84),
 Mehta Bldg, M. Pasta Rd,
 Dadar, 400014; December 5
Meherbai Hormusji Mistry (81),
 7, Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd,
 400007; December 5
Motamai Tehmuras Randelia
 (87), 5, Cawas Turner Bldg,
 Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007;
 December 5
Noshir Jehangirji Dubash (88),
 Dubash Est, Nepean Sea Rd,
 400006; December 6
Kavas Kekobad Elavia (58), 20,
 Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd,

400007; December 6
Sheryar Framroze Jehani (Irani)
 (75), Pheroza Mans, Gunbow St,
 Fort, 400001; December 6
Keki Jamshedji Kodia (62), C/o
 M. B. Bajina, 20, Wadia St,
 Tardeo, 400034; December 7
Coomi Dinshaw Baria (68),
 Chaturbuj Bldg, Princess St,
 400002; December 8
Baba Rumi Homi Gae (seven
 months), 635, Mistry Bldg,
 Dhobitalao, 400002;
 December 8
Roshan Khodadad Irani (62),
 4/A, New Dubash Bldg,
 Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007;
 December 8
Fali Cawasji Anklesaria (60),
 Khambatta Hse, Khambatta
 Lane, Byculla, 400027;
 December 9
Mehroo Fali Rabadi (82), Jaiji
 Ter, 9, Sleater Rd, 400007;
 December 9
Mani Jamshed Mirza (65), A,
 Shirin Manzil, Balaram St, Grant
 Rd, 400007; December 10
Putla Jehangirsha Commissa-
riat (78), 2/10, Kashinath Bldg,
 Tardeo, 400034; December 11
Tehmina Pirojsha Elavia (93),
 F/15, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug,
 400012; December 11
Jalejar Ratansha Engineer (85),
 6, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd,
 Byculla, 400027;
 December 11
Tehmina Edulji Jokhi (78),
 N/27, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug,
 400012; December 11
Minoo Pirojsha Kavarana (73),
 Banaji Bldg, Forjett St Cross
 Lane, 400036; December 11
Nargish Dhunjishaw Vania
 (78), Hendre Bldg, Sleater Rd,
 400007; December 11
Adi Burjorji Mistry (73),
 275/O, Oomrigar Bldg,
 Zoroastrian Clny, Tardeo Rd,
 400007; December 12
Rustom Jamshedji Vakharia
 (76), Vellard View, Pedder Rd,
 400026; December 12
Sorabji Bhikhaiji Bhada (77),
 C/o Mehroo Mody, B, Ness
 Baug, Nana Chowk, 400007;
 December 13
Eruch Jehangir Kotwal (83),
 87, Shirin Manzil, Chandanwadi
 Cross Lane, 400002;
 December 13
Naju Burjorji Madan (71), 101,
 Baktawar, 163, Colaba Rd,
 400005; December 13
Nari Jamshedji Patel (83), K/4,
 G/3, Meherwanji Cama Park,
 Cama Rd, Andheri (W), 400058;

December 13
Sheran Pestonji Patel (83),
 Fatma Villa, Pandya Lane
 No 2, Santacruz (W), 400054;
 December 13
Dhanmai Darabshaw Bha-
roocha (89), Wilson Bldg, Next
 to Chitra Cinema, Dadar,
 400014; December 14
Bachamai Pallonji Marolia
 (91), Petit Widows' Chawl,
 Mody St, Fort, 400001;
 December 14
Rohinton Sam Daver (18),
 Crown Mans, Forjett St,
 Gowalia Tank, 400036;
 December 15
Piroja Jamshed Kotwal (79),
 403, Silver Casket,
 Mount Mary Rd, Bandra,
 400050; December 15
Freny Shapurji Mehta (87),
 Sanghrakha Hse, 558, Adenwala
 Rd, Matunga, 400019;
 December 15
Jaloo Homi Dubash (80), 220,
 The Reward, Tardeo, 400007;
 December 16
Hilla Ratan Gai (65), 627,
 Dubash Bldg, Homavazir Rd,
 Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
 December 16
Gulbai Kaikhashru Gutta (91),
 B, Wassiamull Bldg, Grant Rd,
 400007; December 16
Addi Khodadad Irani (50), 1/14,
 Ravi Soc, Lam Rd, Deolali,
 422401; December 16
Coomi Jal Avari (82), Contrac-
 tor Bldg, Kashinath Rd, Tardeo,
 400034; December 17
Percy Minoo Avari; December
 17 (cremated)
Framroze Merwanji Billimoria
 (72), Sai Sadan Soc, Khopat,
 Thane, 400601; December 17
Dossan Eruch Daruwalla (77),
 Oomergaon Bldg, Dr Ambedkar
 Rd, Parel, 400012;
 December 17
Pesi Nadershah Commissariat
 (67), 3, Baria Bldg, Gamadia
 Clny, Tardeo, 400007;
 December 18
Mehru Framroz Working-
boxwalla (89), 5, Vijay Nivas,
 Sleater Rd, Grant Rd, 400007;
 December 18
Firoj Sorabji Balsara (80),
 Hendre Hse, Sleater Rd,
 400007; December 19
Tinaz Farokh Balaporia (30),
 Haji Habib Bldg, Dr Ambedkar
 Rd, Dadar, 400014;
 December 20
Minoo Shavaksha Dalal (70),
 Readymoney Bldg, Sir Ratan
 Tata St, Tardeo, 400034;

December 20
Minu Jehanbux Dastur (81), 31,
 Paul Rd, Bandra, 400050;
 December 20
Jerbai Sorabji Pithawala (89),
 P. N. Godiwala's Widows'
 Chawl, Gunpowder Rd,
 Mazagaon, 400010;
 December 20
Sam Nariman Billimoria (56),
 Flat 22/23, 41/43, Police Court
 Lane, Fort, 400001;
 December 21
Aimay Jamshedji Darukha-
nawalla (97), 11, Mody Bldg,
 Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007;
 December 21
Fredoon Gustadji Patell (72),
 Halima Manzil, Opp Temple
 Ter, Forjett St, 400036;
 December 21
Dinyar Bomanshaw Aibara (64),
 4/32, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg
 Soc Bldg, Parel, 400012;
 December 22
Shirinbai Jamshedji Bhatporia
 (76), 36, Mistry Bldg, Sun Mill
 Rd, Lower Parel, 400012;
 December 22
Pestonji Ardesir Golwalla
 (74), 9, Katy Ter, 7, Sleater Rd,
 400007; December 22
Dhunjishaw Maneckji Mehta
 (79), Botawalla Bldg, Tardeo
 Rd, 400007; December 22
Nariman Burjorji Singaporewala
 (87), M/15, Bharucha Baug,
 S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058;
 December 23
Khorshed Jamshed Bharucha
 (62), C/900/1800, Kurla Camp
 Rd, Ulhasnagar, 421005;
 December 24
Merwanji Dinshaji Dumasia
 (95), F. S. Parukh Dharam-
 shalla, Hughes Rd, 400007;
 December 24
Perin Behramshaw J. Patel
 (87), 706, Pirojshaw Bldg
 (Soonamai Hse), Gowalia Tank
 Rd, 400036; December 24
Homi Nusserwanji Vakharia
 (84), Alpaiwalla Bldg, Stn Rd,
 Mahim, 400016; December 25
Noshir Kaikhushroo Bisni (77),
 A/4, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd,
 400039; December 26
Jeroo Soli Daruwalla (50),
 18/A, Yasmin Apts, Perry Rd,
 Bandra (W), 400050;
 December 26
Khurshed Dinshaw Dastoor
 (82), Empress Bldg, Nusser-
 wanji Petit St, Grant Rd,
 400007; December 26
Jahangir Allayar Irani (45),
 Batliwalla Agiary Comp,
 Tardeo, 400034; December 26

Bhikhaji Hormasji Kamakhan (87), 65/12, Godrej Clny, Pirojshanagar, Vikhroli, 400079; December 26
Tehmi Rusi Medhora (69), 2/28, A. H. Wadia Baug, G. D. Ambedkar Marg, 400033; December 26
Maneck Dadabhoy Pastakia (83), 611, Pateti Block, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; December 26
Framroze Dinshaji Gorimar (81), 11, Railway Hotel, Raja Ram Mohan Roy Rd, 400007, C/o Ami B. Tantra, Mancharam Bldg, 394, Grant Rd, 400007; December 27
Dhunmai Dhunjishaw Mehta (85), 7/5, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; December 27
Baimai Dhanjisha Turner (72), Banajee Bldg, Forjett St Cross Lane, Gwalia Tank, 400026; December 27
Burjor Jehangir Dalal (71), 801, Beach Apts, J. P. Rd, Versova, 400061; December 28
Behram Jamshedji Dhabhar (68), Village Khorchhi, Dist Pune, December 28
Shapurji Ardeshir Narietwala (87), Dharbhanga Mans, 11, Carmichael Rd, 400026;

December 28
Perviz Jehangir Pestonjamas (76), B/51, Meherzin, Colaba, 400005; December 28
Viloo Hormasji Wadia (57), C/o Banoo F. Rustomji, 54, Vijay Chmb, Tribhavan Rd, 400004; December 28
Tehmina Naoroji Mobedjina (Mobedji) (91), Jyoti Est, Proctor Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; December 29
Jehanbux Edulji Randelia (81), B/2, Avabai Petit Lane, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; December 29
Dinamai Kaikhshroo Dholoo (76), 2/15, Sir C. J. Clny, Tardeo, 400034; December 30
Keki Pirojsha Patel (54), B/7, Kerawalla Bldg, Tata Clny, Bandra, 400050; December 30
Baman Rustomji Shroff (46), Hormuz Bldg, Dadoji Kondeo Marg, 400027; December 30

CALCUTTA
Died
Meheramai Manchershaw Medhora; November 19
Najoo Kapadia, wife of Jal and mother of Rohinton, Hoshang and Firoze; November 21

POONA
Died
Savak Nadir Chenoy (73), 5, Bund Garden Rd, 411001; December 5
Peshoton N. Driver (81), 9, Grace Ter Soc, 600, Sachapir St, 411001; December 12
Sheriyar Khushru Irani (86), 4/4 Ardeshir Baug, Ma-Perviz Rd, 411002; December 14
Feroza Ardeshir Irani (28), 908, Synagogue St, 411001; December 26
Erach Sorabji Narietwala (72), Shagrill Apts, 31, Bund Garden Rd, 411001; December 29

SURAT
Died
Cooverbai Nariman Kelawala (80), Athugar St, Nanpura, 395001; December 5
Burjorji Ratanji Nalawala (73), Juna Gam, Songadh, 394250; December 7
Darabsha Dinshawji Variava (68), Variava Hse, Lal Gate, 395003; December 9
Bachamai Khodabux Engineer (80), Baharkote, Vejalpur, Parsi Wad, Bharuch, 392001; December 14
Vispi Firoze Elavia (18), Gam

Rajpipla, Dist Bharuch, 393145; December 18
Noshirwan Nariman Contractor (73), Gulshan, Parsi Wad, Saiyadpura, 395003; December 20
Khodabux Sorabji Engineer (83), Baharkote, Vejalpur, Parsi Wad, Bharuch, 392001; December 20

ATLANTA, Georgia
Born
A boy, Sohrab, to Niloufer and Zerkis Boga; November 11

CALIFORNIA
Born
A boy, Grant Cyrus, to Ann and Farouk Arjani; August 29

OTTAWA
Died
Rustomji Dinshaw Batliwalla, husband of Khorshed and father of Benifer and Dinshaw; September 15

TOTALS (for this issue)
Born: Boys 19, Girls 13
Married: 91
Died: 104

Compiled by Roxana A. Mirza



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Merwanji's penchant for pictures

Parinaz Gandhi

His love for cinema was total. While in school, he is said to have bunked classes if a particular film interested him. Before he could complete his degree course in sociology and anthropology, he opted out of college to pursue a career in films. When the Film and Television Institute of India refused him admission to their course in direction, he studied for a diploma in editing. Even subsequent to his recognition as a director of a landmark feature film in Gujarati, *Percy*, he would assist other directors with sound and camera work. And before 42-year-old Pervez Merwanji could complete his envisioned cinematic projects, on September 8, 1991, when holidaying in the UK, he succumbed to jaundice that had gradually afflicted the other systems in the body.

Under the banner of Vajra Films that he formed in 1980, he had worked on short film assignments for some business houses before bringing out *The Way of the Malabar Warrior*. This 35-minute color documentary on kalari payat, the ancient martial art form of Kerala, was the official Indian short film entry at the Ninth International Film Festival. Then came collaboration for some other ventures like Anand Patwardhan's *Hamara Shaher* and the TV serial *Rakshak* before undertaking *Percy* with which he made his debut as director of a feature film.

The story line of *Percy* had gripped Merwanji. His persistence with Cyrus Mistry, the author of *Percy*, to submit a screenplay was rewarded after two years. Thereafter for 18 months he was com-

mitted to projecting the relationship between a dominating mother and a repressed son in a Parsi milieu. "I knew he was serious about the film. Whatever he did, he was totally committed to," commented Mistry. The proof of this dedication was the national award it won for the best feature film in Gujarati, for its selection as the curtain raiser to the Indian Panorama section at the Calcutta International Film Festival, for winning the Intercultural Dialogue prize, the second highest recognition at the Mannheim Film Festival, and the purchase of this film by Channel Four Television, London.

Following the acclaim for *Percy*, there was "a sense of vacuum" in Merwanji's life, noticed his comrades. In particular, the indifferent treatment that he reportedly received at the hands of the National Film Development Corporation, the co-producers of this film, is said to have upset him immensely. "You have to be very thick-skinned in this business (films) and Pervez was not; he was very sensitive," noted Patwardhan in an ar-

ing anything in return," added Aggarwal. Whether it be giving cardiac massage to a stranger who had collapsed on the street or rushing an accident victim to a hospital and sorting out formalities with the police on behalf of an unknown casualty, as recalls Kurush Deboo who had played the title role in *Percy*, "Pervez was a man who knew his mind." A hot-tempered perfectionist he was believed to be, yet he was also viewed as one who "relied on his conscience rather than on society for value judgement."

With a *kara* round one wrist, cigarette in the other hand, attired in a loose kurta, Merwanji did not look an archetypal Parsi. However his remarkable depiction of the idiosyncratic ways of the Parsis in his film *Percy* was a view which not all members of the community could appreciate. "He did not believe in institutionalized religion," states his wife Suzanne. "Religion was very personal to him." There was one phase in his life when Tibetan Buddhism fascinated him. He spent one summer in a Tibetan monastery in Sikkim studying their religion there.

His concern for the environment was evident in his documentary features and science films where he worked as script writer, director and cameraman during his years as accredited correspondent of Television News Features, a television news agency. His subjects ranged from rodents and reptiles, to sandalwood and spices, from farming to fireworks, civics and politics.

"Pervez had a vast fund of knowledge, arcane information on nature based on personal, not bookish knowledge," said Mistry. He had recollections of Merwanji

guiding him through long country walks when he was invited to Merwanji's country house in Mount Abu where the dialogues for *Percy* started taking shape.

Bombay-born Merwanji's school years were spent at St Mary's, Mount Abu, Cathedral High School, Bombay and the Doon School in Dehra Dun. A couple of feats that he had recorded in his curriculum vitae were his inclusion on the school expedition that scaled the



Merwanji (right) explaining a scene from *Percy* to Deboo. Photo: Jaggi Gupta

ticle in *The Independent* of September 28, 1991.

"Avant garde, experimental, eccentric" were the terms used by freelance journalist, and his friend from their days at the Doon School, Yogi Aggarwal, to describe the cinematographer. "Pervez would help a lot of people without expect-

unclimbed peak of Jaonli, 21,670 feet high in the Garhwal Himalayas, and during his college days at St Xavier's, Bombay, spending one summer hitch-hiking from England to Afghanistan, starting out with Rs 5 in his pocket.

Photography and western music were Merwanji's prime interests. His sensitivity extended to providing relief not only to humans but to all creatures. One of his pet fantasies as related by his friends was to see a baby crow he had rescued and nurtured grow up to recognize and hover round him...

Merwanji is survived by his wife Suzanne and son Punya.

Upliftment of the blind

Died: Khurshed N. K. Jussawala, 86, educationist for the blind, in Jalna on September 11, 1991.

The Victoria Memorial School for the Blind, where Jussawala was principal for over 30 years and instrumental in building its renown, was the first high school for the blind in India. It was the same institution that the internationally renowned Helen Keller viewed as compa-

rable to the best in the world, and the one chosen by the government to establish the first regional teachers' training program in western India.

"To him every blind person was an individual (whose)... human dignity and



Jussawala: respect for human rights

human rights had to be respected," noted social worker Hormazdiar J. M. Desai in his write-up detailing Jussawala's mission in life. Committed as he was to developing the potential of the visually impaired students, Jussawala took a keen interest in the school's vocational training. Especially the school's massage section, which was upgraded to a physiotherapy

center, is said to have produced some eminent physiotherapists of India.

There was a need to systematically train teachers who in turn could impart knowledge to the visually handicapped, believed Jussawala, himself a graduate in arts and teaching from the Bombay University. He thus founded the National Association for Instructors of the Blind of which he was the first president and additionally served as honorary secretary (education) of the National Association for the Blind for several years.

At national and international conferences on education for the sightless, Jussawala's was a familiar face, presenting papers and even chairing important sessions. An additional distinction bestowed on Jussawala was the United Nations Fellowship to study for a six-month period the special education of the blind.

Even after his retirement, from his base in Jalna, Jussawala continued to retain his interest in welfare work, especially the training of instructors for the blind. Three years ago he was conferred an award by the All India Confederation of the Blind. Subsequently he was also nominated for the Rustom Merwanji Al-paiwalla Memorial Award which he declined to accept believing it should, instead, inspire a younger social worker.

Jussawala is survived by his daughter Aban and sons Dinyar, Fredoon and Sheri. P.G.

EVENTS AND PERSONALITIES *continued from page 15*

Private Limited as their structural engineering consultants, Paktron Systems Private Limited as their electrical consultants and Associated Industrial Consultants (India) Private Limited as their public health consultants, further informs the brochure.

Double wins

The only participant to record a double win at the athletic meet organized by the Bombay City District Amateur Athletic Association on October 13, 1991 was Ms Delna Avari of St Mary's Gymkhana, reported *The Times of India* the next day.

She completed her 300 m run in 47.24 seconds and the 800 m run in two minutes, 54.5 seconds in the girls under 17 age-group. The other Zoroastrians who made their mark at this meet at the Priyadarshini Park were: Homeyar Mistry and Firdosh Mehta who came first and second respectively in the 300 m run for

men, Hanoz Maneckshaw who came first in the 1,200 m run and third in the 300 m run for boys under 20, Hoshedar Neemuchwalla who stood second in the 1,200 m run for boys under 20, Farhad Munshi who came first in the 300 m run and third in the 1,000 m run for boys under 17, Vaspan Kavasmaneck who stood second in both the 300 m and the 1,000 m run for boys under 17 and Yohan Wadia who was the first to cross the finishing line in the 200 m run for boys under 14.

St Mary's Gymkhana athletes "had it easy on the first morning... as both the prominent athletic clubs, the Bombay Young Men's Christian Association and Tracktrotters' athletes failed to show up for the meet," *The Times* adds.

SPOTLIGHT

The jazz band Divya with key board maestro Dinshah Sanjana and his wife, vocalist Sandhya, was slated to perform at

the John Coltrane Festival in Los Angeles, according to *India Today* of September 15, '91. After their debut album *Madras Cafe*, the band has toured Denmark, Poland and the USSR.

Kavas J. Bharucha has been appointed director (finance) of Colour-Chem Limited, reports *The Daily* of September 1, 1991.

Facing competition from students of 27 schools who participated in the Bombay Harbour Junior Chamber Inter-School Elocution Competition, 12-year-old Ms Dilshad Khushru Patel of Avabai F. Petit Girls High School won the first prize, notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of September 29, 1991. The subject of her presentation was "Laughter, the best medicine."

Compiled by Roxana A. Mirza



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