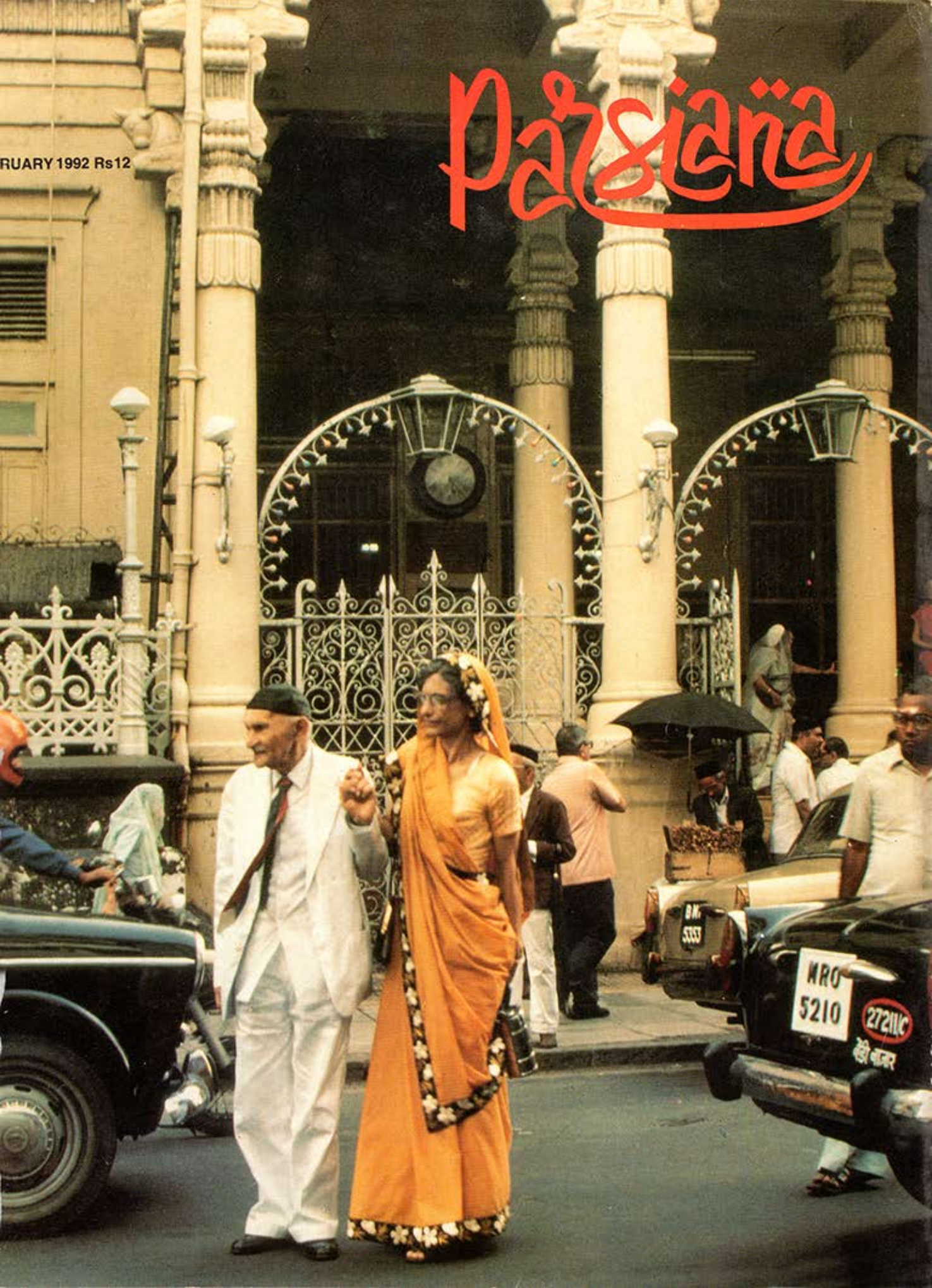


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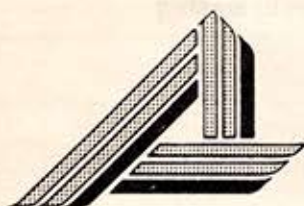
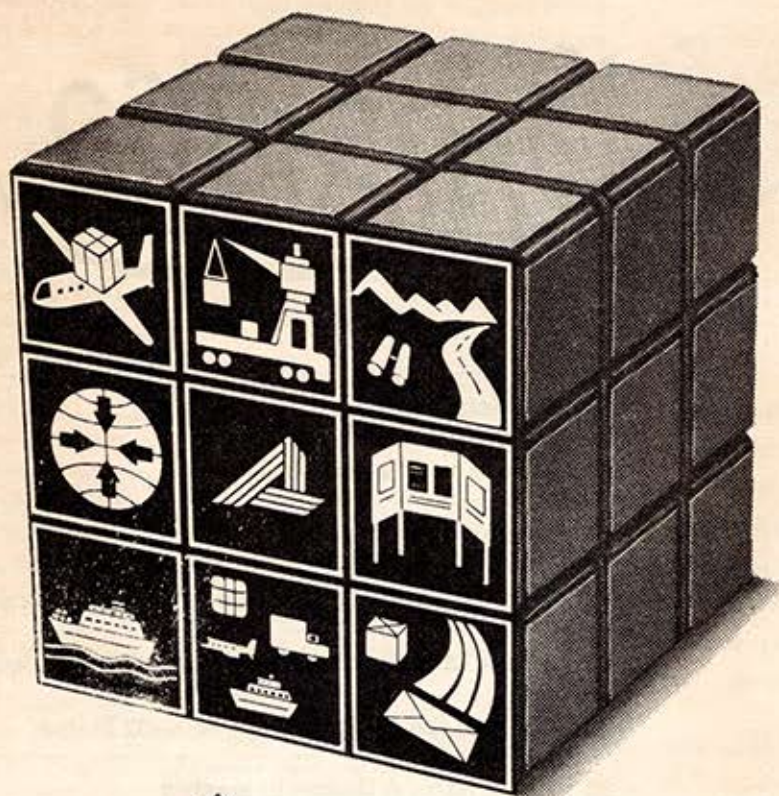
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Photograph by Sooni Taraporevala

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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

BPP appoints ombudsman

In trying to improve the method for allotment of accommodation, the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) have adopted an elaborate merit-rating scheme on the basis of which applicants are rated objectively by a retired senior official of the Bombay High Court. Those scoring the highest points are investigated by the field staff and interviewed by all the trustees. The names of such shortlisted applicants are then put up on the BPP notice board and published in the Parsi Press in order to enable interested, knowledgeable persons to bring concealed evidence to light. Sometimes persons who have been excluded after such scrutiny may have some grievance in the matter.

Since the trustees do not consider themselves infallible and wish to ensure that no injustice is done to any applicant, they have now decided to refer such complaints to Mr Justice Bakhtawar Lentin, a

retired judge of the Bombay High Court, acclaimed for his integrity. Justice Lentin will thus function as an honorary ombudsman on matters relating to accommodation allotment.

Mr Justice Lentin has agreed to entertain the following types of complaints, if routed through the trustees:

- Where an applicant is aggrieved with the decision of the trustees in not allotting him accommodation and his appeal for reconsideration is also decided against him.

Such an application may be addressed to Mr Justice Bakhtawar Lentin (Retd), C/o Trustees of Parsi Punchayet Funds and Properties, 209, Dadabhai Naoroji Road, Fort, Bombay 400001.

- The trustees may refer any complaints regarding irregular/non-allotment of accommodation appearing in the Press, or otherwise brought to their notice, which casts aspersions on the trustees.

It is clarified that no complaint will be directly entertained by Justice Lentin and only the parties concerned will be allowed to make any representation or appear before him. This procedure shall be mandatory.

If a complaint is upheld by Mr Justice Lentin, the trustees will take the remedial measures he suggests. Where Justice Lentin differs from the trustees but the latter have some additional information or other valid reason, the trustees may forward the relevant data for further consideration of the matter.

If, however, the complaint is found to be false, frivolous or vexatious, it shall be within Mr Justice Lentin's discretion to suggest to the trustees to set back the complainant's application for accommodation for a period ranging from one to three years from the date it would become due in the normal course.

Both parties will be bound by the ultimate findings of Mr Justice Lentin.

R. K. ANKLESARIA
Chief Executive, BPP

Calling Tata scholars

In April 1992 the J. N. Tata Endowment for the Higher Education of Indians completes 100 years of service to the student community in India. The Tata Endowment was founded by Jamsetji Tata himself in 1892 to "lift up the best and most gifted" of Indian students by giving them

an opportunity for higher studies abroad. It was the first Tata benefaction by Jamsetji.

All J. N. Tata scholars are requested to send their present postal address at their early convenience to the Director, J. N. Tata Endowment, Bombay House, Bombay 400001.

DINSHAH K. MALEGAMVALA
Director

Parasika

As a child when I was taken to the Prince of Wales Museum by my school I remember a painting hanging on the wall, left of the first floor landing. The painting depicted a Parsi couple. When I grew up, reports came in about the dwindling Parsi population, and the joke going around at the time was that very soon the last Parsi will be the one seen in the Museum.

I visited the Museum after 40 years to see the Parasika exhibition. At the exhibition I searched in vain for that painting nor was it on the staircase landing of the Museum. I contacted Dr Joshi, the curator, and after several visits managed to see the painting. It was in an excellent condition. It is an oil canvas painted by Pestonji Bomanji, Bombay, December 1886.

In the painting, the female, apparently sick, is lying on a big trunk (no Godrej storwels in those days) covered with a Persian carpet, and she is wearing the typical dress of the time. Sari, scarf (*matha banu*), long sleeved shirt (*badian*), the head resting on a pillow, its case tied down with laces (*kas*). The man, sitting on a stool, tending the fire in the incense burner (*afargania*), has a prayer book in his lap and is handling beads (*tasbi*) with his right hand while holding, in the left, a typical corrugated palm fan. He is wearing a black velvet cap with gold rimmed oval spectacles (*à la Cartier*), well ironed pyjama (*lenga*) and leather sandals (*sapa*) which we hardly see nowadays.

During childhood when one of the brood (yes a regular brood, not the lone child of today) used to fall sick, the grandmother would sit next to the sick child in the quiet of the evening, fortify herself with a pinch of snuff, make the child hold the edge of her long sudreh and pray from the *Avesta*. Her sing-song, wobbly tone invariably drowsed the child into a deep sleep. She would put some alum in the incense burner and observe

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the way the alum would swell, predicting therefrom whether the sickness is ebbing or on the increase. Psychology or not, it had an effect: usually the temperature went down!

The painting brought vivid memories of bygone days when religion formed a major part of our upbringing and was a strong factor in keeping the community together. I hope someone would copy the painting and publish it so that every Parsi family can frame it and display it in their homes to remind themselves and the younger generation of their roots. A recording of Chopin, whilst observing the painting, will enhance the feeling of nostalgia.

I request Dr Joshi once again to put Bomanji's painting on display. Z. M. ZEND

Iran and Zoroastrians

An article appeared in *The Bombay Samachar* of November 3, 1991 titled "Where angels fear to tread" with some translation from the *Bulletin of the Islamic Parliament of Iran* which has been quoted by Ervad Darius Sethna ("The purifying prescriptions," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, January 1992). *The Samachar* report makes no reference to the number, month or any citation of the *Bulletin* and thus no one can verify its authenticity. The article has attacked Dr Ali Jafarey, a scholar of high respect.

Since such an article always arouses undue emotions among Parsis and also the Zoroastrians of Northern America, I would like to quote some paras from a very recent book, *The Zoroastrians of Iran — Conversion, Assimilation or Persistence*, 1990 AMS, New York by Janet Amighi:

"When rioters attempted to destroy symbols of Pre-Islamic Iran, such as Persepolis and Pasargade, they were contained by Moslem leaders, Ayatollah Mahallati and others (Beeman 1983). In 1979, Ayatollah Sadughi, speaking in Yazd (a stronghold of anti-Zoroastrianism) proclaimed: 'The Zoroastrians are the roots of Iran, we Moslems are like the branches of a tree. If our roots are cut off, we shall shrivel up and die.' In the same year the nationalist leader, Bachtiar, held an anti-Khomeini meeting in Los Angeles on the day of the Zoroastrian fall festival, Mehragan, in tribute to true nationalism. Thus all major factions, though opposed to each other, either enthusiastically or reluctantly accepted the Zoroastrians as a symbol of Persian nationalism and rejection of their opponents' view (Kesten-

berg-Amighi 1980, pg 229)."

In 1975, 40 Muslims in Abadan, primarily employees of the Iranian Oil Company, declared their desire to convert to Zoroastrianism and form their own anjuman. The Anjuman of Tehran sent them literature about the religion but once again refused to sanction conversion. The Muslims applied for help and Mobed Shahmardan, who had studied and lived in India, came to perform the initiation rite for them. In order to assuage the fears of the Anjuman in Tehran, they called themselves Mazdayasni (an ancient term for Zoroastrians, not well-known among Moslems). Ms Amighi says further, "I had the opportunity to speak with one of the converts when he came to Tehran to acquire more literature for the group... one of his customers said 'We are Iranians, not Arabs, why should we accept the religion which was forced upon our ancestors... Our conversion cannot be stopped,' he declared, 'not by Moslem prejudice nor by Zoroastrian fear' (pg 230)."

"Zoroastrians, like other Iranians, were affected by the spirit of revival of religiosity. Three thousand Zoroastrians attended the 1979 Jashne Mehregan fall festival, a record number. Close to 200 students enrolled in *Fravahar* religious classes. In 1979...80 Zoroastrians underwent the sudreh-pushi initiation rites... These are all record numbers (pg 363)."

"By 1984...the concept of Zoroastrians being 'najes' has been ignored and once again Zoroastrians command respect (pg 366)."

As can be seen from the few quotations I have given (there are many more) even the leading Ayatollahs have spoken favorably for the Iranian roots of Zoroastrianism so the said article of *The Bombay Samachar* telling us that "Zoroastrians... are being looked upon by Iranian Government as the political activist against the interest of the country and perhaps even trying to subvert it" does not jive.

PALLAN R. ICHAPORIA
Womelsdorf, Pa, USA

Jhansi Anjuman's response

We the members of the Zoroastrian community of Jhansi thank our well-wishers for their generous response to our request for aid for repairs to the dharamsala and aramgah (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, May 1991).

Thanks to the aid we received, the boundary wall and old graves at the aramgah have been repaired and white-

washed; the dharamsala has been partially replastered, its roofing repaired provisionally and the toilet walls repaired. The complete dharamsala premises have been whitewashed, electric fittings changed in certain rooms and minor repairs undertaken.

This has entailed an expense of Rs 23,743 which has been met with the above donations plus Anjuman funds. But a lot more needs to be done and we request the readers to extend a helping hand to the community of Jhansi so that we can continue to thrive and not become defunct like some of our neighboring anjumans.

M. ANKLESARIA
Secretary

R. J. DICK
President

Common New Year 1992

The suggestion to have a common Parsi New Year on the next Jamshedi Navroze for Shehenshahis, Kadmis and Faslis from March 21, 1992 ("Shall we unite in 1992?" Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, November, 1991) has come up again and again. Yet nothing has been done, no action taken to educate the common man on its importance, or explain the procedure on how to change over to the Fasli year.

For those who want to change over to the Fasli year, I have made some inquiries with learned scholars. I have been told by one learned person that to change over from Shehenshahi to Fasli a person has to undergo three *nahns*, one after the other, over a period of a month.

A dasturji informed me that there is no such requirement, only you should have faith in the new Fasli year, go to the atash kadeh and offer some sandalwood and ask for forgiveness.

Yet another dastur tells me that it cannot be changed. "Why change?" he says, "continue as you are practising now. We have no authority to change the calendar."

So what does a layman do?

Will some learned scholar, dastur, mobed, please guide and let us know through your columns what is the actual procedure or requirement for change over to the Fasli New Year? It seems to be the only correct one as it is in tune with the seasons.

Besides we will be in agreement with the Zoroastrians of Iran who follow the Fasli year.

ASFANDIAR SOHRAB
Pune

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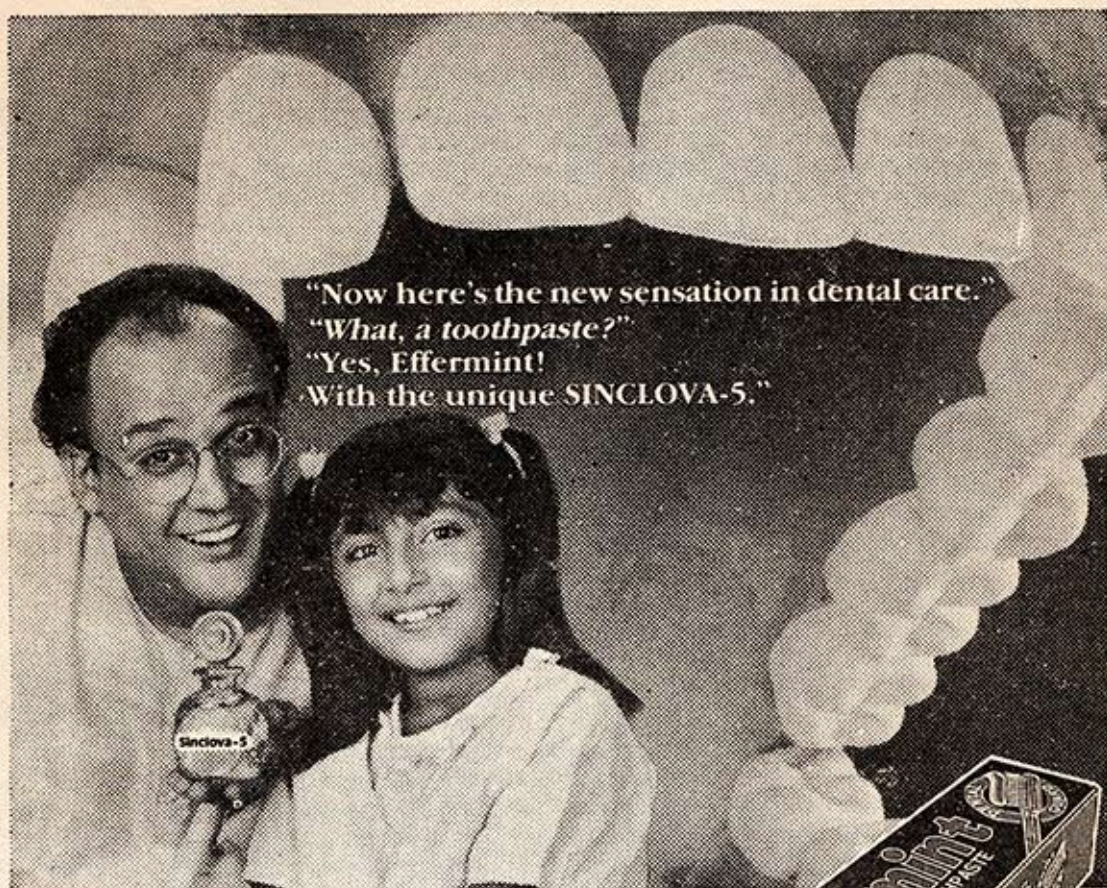


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philanthropists and well-wishers who so generously donated to the cause of giving little Hormazd Nowrojee a new lease of life ("A miracle that he lives," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, October 1991).

Hormazd and his mother Feroza Nowrojee proceeded for open heart surgery to Miami Children's Hospital, Florida. It was scheduled to be performed by eminent pediatric surgeon Dr S. Subramaniam on December 12, 1991.

The Lioness Club of Byculla was successful in mobilizing the funds required for the operation in just one and a half months' time.

Ms HAVOVI GANDHI
President

Conditions of entry

When our forefathers landed in Gujarat many centuries ago, the Hindu ruler allowed them to settle there on the condition that the new settlers refrain from converting the natives to Zoroastrianism. Am I right?

This raises an interesting point: Surely the Hindu ruler's "condition of entry" applied only to Gujarat, and only to that part of Gujarat over which he had control; not to the rest of India, and certainly not to Iran, Pakistan, the USA, the UK, Canada... This ruler has had an incredible influence over us!

JEHANGIR RANDERIA
London, UK

(No such condition was made. The *Kis-seh-e-Sanjan* states five conditions. The king demanded: an explanation of the Zoroastrian religious beliefs and customs, the renunciation of Persian and the acceptance of the local language; the acceptance of the local dress by the women; a renunciation of the use of arms; and the holding of marriage ceremonies in the evening only. None of them pertain to conversion. — Editor)

Repair at Banaji's

The Framjee Cawasjee Byramji (Banaji) Atash Behram was founded nearly 147 years ago, in 1845, to serve the needs of the Parsi community. Sometime back its trustees had appealed to the Parsi Zoroastrians for contribution towards its repair. In response, the trustees had collected Rs 6,33,373 from the community within a short period of time. However, before the work of repairs could be taken in hand, attempts were made by some persons to prevent the trustees from moving the sacred fire to the adjoining premises by approaching the Charity Commissioner.

Their application has been rejected by

the Charity Commissioner, and we are glad to announce that the sacred fire has already been installed in the nearby premises and repairs to the main building have begun.

However, due to the heavy escalation of repair costs in the meantime, the trustees feel that more funds will be required to complete the job. We, therefore, once again request you to contribute generously.

Contributions may please be made in cash or by cheque drawn in favor of the "Cawasjee Byramjee Atash Behram Trusts Repair Fund." Since the Trust is certified under section 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961 donors of amounts over Rs 250 would be entitled to a 50 percent rebate of the donated amount assuming it is within 10 percent of the donor's gross total income.

A donation box for the purpose has also been installed on the premises of the Banaji Atash Behram and donors are requested to make generous use of the same.

K. M. GHERDA
Chairman

A Zoroastrian in Japan

The late Mr Rustom Pirojshaw was a product of the New High School, Bombay. After passing the matriculation examination he had joined the old and renowned firm of Messrs J. E. F. Kavarana and Company, Bombay, which was trading with China and Japan. Soon he became the active partner of the said firm.

He sailed for China at a very young age, and after having stayed for a short time in Hong Kong, he went to Kobe (Japan) where, with his brother Framroze, he established the firm of Vasunia and Company which carried on very lucrative business with China, Japan and India.

Mr Rustom Vasunia had lived in Japan for nearly 20 years, becoming thoroughly conversant with Japanese.

Rustom's father, Pirojshaw was also a well-known merchant of China and was living in Shameen, a British colony near Canton, for many years. His daughter, Ms Daulat H. Doongaji, is the proprietress of the New Activity High School in Bombay.

J. M. BILIMORIA

Memorable teacher

After 80 hard and strenuous years Mr Framroz N. Dandiwalla died on July 26, 1991, unknown, unsung. For 28 years he had served the Grant Road Education Society whence he retired as vice-principal

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in 1986 after the government had given him an extension of five years.

Mathematics was his forte and he helped poor or middle-class children without any discrimination of caste or creed for over 40 years in his home.

Poor Parsi children received free tuition in mathematics till the SSC level until August 1988. Thereafter he fell prey to a long illness until his death.

Born in Billimora, Gujarat, Mr Dandiwalla was educated in the Tata School there and went to M.T.B. College in Surat and took a teaching degree (BT) from Broach.

His memory may be cherished by hundreds of his students. His high ideals and religious outlook may enlighten many a budding heart.

Ms SOONOO J. VESUNA

Writing on the wall

The history of the Parsi Panchayet (BPP) reveals that this apex body was founded and established by some wise and learned men of our community way back in the 17th century when there was hardly any

education at all and women were confined to their homes. The Parsi *samaj* accepted and continued with the system over the years and the Parsi trust funds kept on accumulating over the years.

The apex body and its electoral systems have all by now become outdated.

Adult franchise is now the law of the land. Why then cannot the highly literate Parsi community exercise one person one vote and elect their own leaders to the Parsi Panchayet?

Even the commonest Parsi could participate in this process of election based on one person one vote, and could have his say in the policy formations and decisions regarding the community.

There shall be currents and cross-currents and also orthodox resistances, but when people become blind to the realities of the time and cannot read the writing on the wall, time pushes them into oblivion.

PHIROZE A. BANA

Help leprosy patients

About three million leprosy patients are

driven by society to a life of loneliness and misery. They have none to turn to. Leprosy is completely curable today with modern drugs and that too within six months to two years' treatment. We must shed social stigma as leprosy is like any other disease, capable of complete cure.

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Prof A. R. K. PILLAI

President, Indian Leprosy Foundation

Edited by Amavaz S. Marna

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Events and Personalities



Founding the Jokhi wing

It was a proper New Year's Day. It met all the criteria as defined by president Homa Petit of the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital: a day for remembering, for passing resolutions, making commitments, celebrating...

The morning of January 1, 1992 saw the Hospital grounds ablaze with colorfully attired ladies and gents from Hong Kong, Bombay, California and elsewhere. The object of their presence: to witness the laying of the foundation stone of the Hospital's Mani and Shapoor Jokhi Wing and the official inauguration of the computer facility jointly donated to the institution by Jal Shroff, Ms Tehmi Master, the Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton and Macao and the Mani and Nariman Sahukar Trust.

The Hospital's managing committee took advantage of a large section of the Hong Kong based community being present in Bombay for such events as a wedding, childbirth, etc to schedule the function when 1992 was barely 10 hours old.

As a preamble to the simple ceremonies, the guests assembled in the foyer of the building housing the doctors' quarters and the chronic ward. The committee table draped and decked with flowers and goodies, and the chalk and garland on the door, transformed its normally austere ambience into one of bonhomie and good cheer.

The late Jokhi's promise of Rs 1.5 crore towards the cost of a new wing that would house all the main services — the operation theaters, the intensive cardiac care unit (ICCU), the X-ray and pathology departments, blood bank, physiotherapy, etc — had sparked a dream

The foundation stone site being readied by the Hospital staff while (center) donors (from left) Rusy and Purviz Shroff, Javer and Keki Jokhi watch with interest. Bottom: Patel inaugurating the computer room

shared by the philanthropist and the Petits, notably the late Dinshaw Petit who was then the Hospital's president, as noted his son Homa who has now succeeded him to the chair. "May his (Shapurji's) soul rejoice that his dream and ours is being translated into reality," added Homa Petit fervently.

Petit was particularly pleased to have so many of the Hospital's donors and well-wishers attending at the same time. The managing committee had taken the trouble to keep tabs on their presence in the city. "We have received the bounties of your generous donations (but) never met you all together," said Petit acknowledging their presence with individual garlands and bouquets presented by vice president Ms Aban Petit and others on behalf of the managing committee which includes joint honorary secretaries Phiroze Jhabvala and Hector Mehta, treasurer Adi Vazifdar and other members. Petit pledged "to continue to strive to work the institution for the (benefit of) the poor and needy" and gently urged the assembled gathering to continue their good work by relating a conversation about life and death between friends: 'A good deed on the day before you die enables all else to be forgiven.' 'But how do you know which day you're going to die?' 'You don't!'"

The new building, designed by architect Hafeez Contractor, is to be constructed on the area behind the small lift at the apex of the present L-shaped building (see "Intensive care at 75?" *Parsiana*, November 1987). After the foundation stone on the spot had been laid by Shapurji's brother Keki Jokhi, the gathering proceeded to the Hospital's main office on the first floor, in the ballroom of the original Cumballa Hotel. There, an area flanking the hall on the north side has been insulated and airconditioned to house the Tata Unisys computer that has been gifted by the Sahukar Trust and the Zoroastrians of Hong Kong, jointly and severally (see "A question of survival,"

Events and Personalities, *Parsiana*, November 1991). The ceremonial ribbon was cut by Minoo Patel, trustee of the Sahukar Trust.

It was an auspicious day in other ways too, with two of the donors celebrating their birthdays that day and being invited to cut the cakes with the gathering joining in with a chorus of greetings. Some of the appetising snacks, notably the *sev* (vermicelli) and sandwiches, had been made up in the Hospital kitchen at short notice, informed Ms Petit.

Change of hands in Madras

"Elections have become synonymous with rising tempers and perfection of outwitting techniques, but the Madras Parsis conducted themselves with restraint and dignity and produced two committees of office bearers unanimously," writes Perviz S. Mulla, honorary secretary of The Madras Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman (MPZA). The general body meetings of

both, the MPZA and The Madras Parsi Association, were convened on September 14 last year when a new team of office bearers was elected, reports Mulla.

Nariman F. Moghrelia took over as president of the Anjuman from Minoo Belgamvala who was at the helm for nearly 24 years. Working with him will be Minoo Siganporia, vice president; Perviz S. Mulla, honorary secretary; Kersi J. Shahuna, honorary treasurer; and Russi P. Ginwala and Jimmy Patel, co-opted members.

The Association's all-women committee will be headed by Ms Zavera K. Shahuna, president; assisted by Ms Perviz D. Bhote, honorary secretary; Ms Jersheen G. Madan, honorary treasurer; and Ms Persis F. Dadabhoy, Ms Dhun D. Dalal and Ms Frey B. Byramshaw, co-opted members. To maintain liaison between the two bodies, the honorary secretary of each group is deputed as a co-opted member on the other committee.

"Despite the fact that the Parsis are a minuscule community in this southern outpost of the country and reside at considerable distances from each other, the monthly get-togethers are well-attended. The atmosphere is one of camaraderie and congenial well-being..." further adds Mulla.

Chief Justice Bharucha

Justice Sam Piroj Bharucha's appointment as chief justice of the Karnataka High Court in November last makes him the youngest incumbent at 54 years of age to hold this post, notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of November 3, 1992. Prior to assuming this charge, Bharucha had served as judge of the Bombay High Court for several years.

A law graduate from Bombay's Government Law College, Bharucha started his legal career in the chambers of Marzban Mistry, getting his first exposure as an advocate in the Bombay High Court, according to the report.



The vaulting woman

Bank lockers are full and the waiting list long. A relief for many customers would be the private safety vaults introduced in the city. "Business is good," confirms Ms Farida Aspi Marker, reportedly the first and only woman entrepreneur in this venture. She launched Freeda Safety Vaults Limited in Juhu when her own bankers could not provide her a locker, reads an article in *Island*, October, 1991.

Offering about 400 vaults in varying sizes, Freeda's foolproof security includes a burglar alarm, smoke and movement detectors and vibration sensors. Two armed guards stand vigil outside her

(Above) Following the renovation of the Deolali Agiary at a cost of Rs 2.75 lakh, donated by Rusi and Alu Lakdavalva, a rededication function was organized on October 9, 1991. Participating in the celebrations are (from left) Bomi Netarvala, Bejon Desai, Dhunjisha Netarvala, Rusi and Alu Lakdavalva, and Shrivaksha Shroff

On Sanjan Day, November 23, 1991, chief guest Homi Taleyarkhan presided over the day's celebrations which started with a jashan in the morning after which he visited the Zoroastrian College where he unfurled their flag. Seen from left are: Dr (Ms) Meher Master-Moos, Taleyarkhan, Rohinton Davierwalla and Naval Nariman

premises. At Freeda, the clients are let in only one at a time. In addition to the master key and the separate Godrej key provided for each locker, the client also has an option to fix an extra lock if he so desires.

On completing the entrance formalities, the customer is permitted access to the basement wherein are housed the lockers. In the carpeted air conditioned comforts of the basement, the client can complete his task in privacy. His work accomplished, the customer rings the bell signalling the guard to come and unlock the door. Patrons from all walks of life entrust their jewelry, documents and cash in the care of Marker's safety vaults, notes the write-up.

The tireless teacher

"If you're going to die, please do so on a Sunday, or I won't come to your funeral." Ms Porochist Savak Patel of Jamshedpur, known to have never taken a day off during her career as a school teacher, had so beseeched her mother. This continuous record of service won the Loyola

School teacher a mention in the *Limca Book of Records 1992*, and a recommendation to the *Guinness Book of World Records* too, informs a write-up in the Calcutta edition of *The Economic Times* of October 14, 1991.

So committed was she to her school routine that she even declined the principal's offer to go to Calcutta on school work. The principal finally had to declare a three-day holiday so that Patel, popularly known as Pretty Patel, could undertake the mission to Calcutta, the paper informs.

Leaving her house at 7 a.m. sharp, people in Jamshedpur came to set their watch by Patel's schedule. It was always the same bike she used, taught the same age-group in the same classroom, and even wore the same hairstyle and dresses over the years, reports *The Economic Times*.

Her record of uninterrupted service means that Patel has worked under 11 principals, two of whom were her ex-students. Since her retirement from school at 63 years of age, a daily must with her is

a 15 to 20 km ride on her bike. "The moment I get on my bike, I feel better," acknowledges Patel.

SPOTLIGHT

Lieutenant Farokh Tarapore and his crew Kelly Rao bagged a gold at the Fifth Asian Yachting Regatta held in Hong Kong from October 26 to November 2, 1991. The duo competed in the 470 class thereby getting India her first gold medal in this event at the Asian level, reports the *Indian Express* of November 4, 1991.

Remarkable discipline, human relations and effective management earned Sarosh J. Ghandy, resident director of Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company, recognition as the Outstanding Industrial Chief Executive in the Country, 1991. He was presented the award by the Institute of Industrial Engineering, notes *The Business and Political Observer* of October 3, 1991.

Officiating in the sports arena are Farokh Khodaiji and Rusi Crawford who have been elected vice presidents and Baji Khambatta and Bomi Amalsadwala who have been elected committee members of the Bombay District Table Tennis Association. Aspi Ustad and Adille Sumariwalla have been inducted on the board of the Bombay City District Amateur Athletic Association, notes the *Jamshedpur Times* of October 20, 1991.

CORRECTION

The J. N. Tata Endowment for the Higher Education of Indians was founded by Jamsetji Tata in 1892. The trust was not established in memory of Meherbai, referred to as his late wife in "15 Parsis as Tata scholars," Events and Personalities, *Parsiana*, November 1991. J. N. Tata's wife was Hirabai.

The error is regretted.



Dandiwalla: third term in office

In "APZA's third time trustee," Events and Personalities, *Parsiana*, December 1991, Capt Homi Pirojsha Dandiwalla's photograph was inadvertently printed without half the caption.

The error is regretted.

Compiled by Roxana A. Mirza

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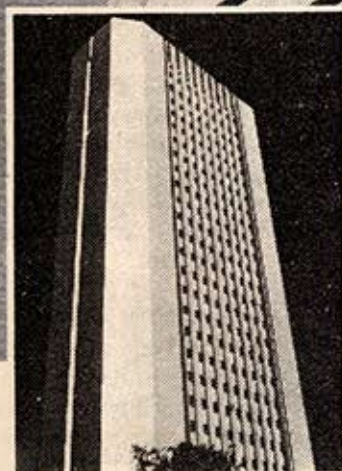
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Atash kadeh ready

The newly constructed atash kadeh, across from the Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Meher in San Jose, is scheduled for a grand opening on March 28, 1992 when the Zarthoshti Anjuman of Northern California (ZANC) and the Persian Zoroastrian Organization (PZO) have planned a joint celebration of Jamshedi Navroze, notes the ZANC newsletter of January 1992.

Anticipating an attendance of between 500 and 700 people, 25 percent of the joint budget of \$ 10,000 will go towards the hire of a gigantic tent, informs the newsletter.

Feroze Bhandara leads the new executive committee of ZANC for 1992-93. His teammates include vice president Yezdi Guzdar, secretary Godrej Kerawala, treasurer Zareer Bhathena and members Peshu Irani, Ms Khursheed Khurody and Ms Nilufer Vania.

At the annual ghambar on November 10, 1991 outgoing president Erach Tarapore reviewed the two-year term of his executive committee which succeeded in forging "a warm working relationship with the PZO." The construction of the atash kadeh had proceeded apace and Tarapore had many grateful words for the Parsis of Surat: the Surat Parsi Punchayet for sending them a large *afarganyu* and bell for the agiary; a *chipya* (tongs) and *chumuch* (long handled flat spoon) contributed by Ervad Jehangir Tureli; a smaller *chumuch* and *aanni* (metal stand) from the family of the late Maneck Gheyara. "Without the warm and unconditional support of the Surat Parsi Punchayet (SPP) and other Parsis in Surat to whom we are just a group of Parsis trying to keep our faith alive in a new land, we would not be able to obtain many of these items today," said Tarapore and announced a donation of \$ 201 from ZANC to the SPP. The donation was made possible because ZANC's general funds had grown, thanks to the sponsorship of the ghambar last year by Singapore perfumer Dadi Balsara and his wife Christina, informed Tarapore.

The emerging conviviality between the Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrians has highlighted the need for more communication between the communities. ZANC's January newsletter seeks Farsi-English trans-

lators to translate the PZO's Farsi newsletters so that Parsis can attend social events planned by the PZO.

Chicago navjotes

There were 11 navjotes performed at the Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr in Chicago in 1991 — the highest number in any year to date, informs the February 1992 newsletter of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC). This number does not include the navjotes performed by ZAC mobeds at other locations.

Rohinton Rivetna, president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) and ex-president of ZAC, aims to start a Zoroastrian boys scout group in Chicago, notes the newsletter. A similar group, begun in Toronto last April, is said to be functioning well (see "Toronto's Zoro Scouts," Zoroastrians Abroad, *Parsiana*, June 1991). A project of this nature presupposes commitment from interested individuals and their parents, notes Rivetna.

ZAC is preparing to host the fifth annual general meeting of the North American Mobeds' Council (NAMC) beginning April 17, 1992, informs its January 1992 newsletter. ZAC had earlier been expected to host the NAMC in 1990 but had decided to opt out and the meeting had then been held in New York (see "Rebuff to Mobed Council?" Zoroastrians Abroad, *Parsiana*, October 1989).

A dinner where Chicagoland Zoroastrians can meet and mingle with the visiting mobeds is scheduled for the following night.

The Gatha Translation Fund — being maintained by ZAC at the behest of Dr Keikhosrow Harvesf of Florida, Dr Rostam Sarfeh of California and Dr Mehraban Sharvini of British Columbia — has collected \$ 16,678, announces the newsletter.

A grand gold raffle has been underway since November 30, 1991, notes the December 1991 newsletter. A means of collecting funds for ZAC's myriad activities, the raffle features a quarter ounce gold coin as its first prize, a one-tenth ounce gold coin as the second and a one ounce

silver coin as the third. With tickets priced at one dollar, every Zoroastrian family in the area was urged to buy at least 10 tickets each by raffle coordinator Rusi Gandhi. The grand draw will be one of the highlights of Chicago's Jamshedi Navroze of 1992.

Mid-1991 ZAC acquired a full-time mobed when Ervad Jamshed Ravji and family migrated to Chicago. Prior to moving to North America, the family had spent several years in Mombasa, informs ZAC's newsletter of June 1991.

Coping with more people

"Our planning is to complete all the detailed drawings, specifications, approvals and tenders for quotes by early March 1992," notes president Sam Vesuna of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) in its October 1991 newsletter. He is referring to the \$ 30,000 project to expand the capacity of the main hall of the Mehraban Guiv Darbe Mehr at Willowdale, Ontario. The plans to increase the capacity by 40 percent, including additional parking, have been drawn up by ZSO honorary architect Dinshaw Kanga and were unanimously approved at the last annual general meeting, writes Vesuna.

Though the Guiv family has promised a large contribution, the rest of the cost will need to be borne by ZSO members.

Improvements and expansion to the property have been variously financed over the years. For example, Vesuna notes that while the community bore the cost of the extension to the prayer room, some other major improvements and expansion were "mainly financed from the Wintario Grant."

ZAC's new team

Cowas Patel continues as the president of the Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC). Viraf Bodhanwala and Khushroo Lakdawala also continue for another term as treasurer and program chairperson respectively.

Ms Aban Commissariat, joint secretary on the earlier committee, moves up to vice president. Ms Rhoda Lakdawala and Ratan Munshi are the two incoming joint secretaries and Darius Gandhi is the youth coordinator.

As they were the only contestants for the respective posts by the nomination

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deadline of October 31, 1991 they were automatically deemed elected, according to election officer Nawzer Tavaria whose note was published in the ZAC newsletter of November 1991. Earlier, Tavaria had framed an elaborate body of rules for the election scheduled for December 14, 1991, and published it in their October newsletter.

Pakardao, the *natak* (play) sponsored by ZAC earlier in the year, was not only well received by the Zoroastrian community but by other Gujarati speaking communities in the area, notes ZAC's August '91 newsletter. The Dinyar Contractor star-rer had been planned as one of the many fundraisers for a future youth center for Zoroastrians, according to then joint secretary Ms Aban Commissariat.

Hence ZAC expects to sponsor *Surti James Bond*, another Contractor comedy, on May 30, 1992 at the Aviation Auditorium in Redondo Beach, informs their January newsletter.

Though Yogesh Shah of Yogi Enterprises has been bringing Contractor and his cast to the US for the past five years, the ZAC sponsored performance in '91 was their first appearance in Los Angeles, according to an article by Commissariat in *L.A. India*.

"How do you think Asho Zarathushtra feels looking down upon us, and observing two communities that don't live far from each other and yet do not make an attempt to see each other? To think that our ancestors at one time were neighbors, best friends, people living in a community helping other families, sharing food, water and shelter, Zoroastrians helping one another just to strive and make it through another day.

"If they did it in the past, we can do it now. So let's come together and make this attempt our best effort. If you are interested in joining our unity movement and having a fun time, meet us on Saturday, February 22," reads a notice in the January newsletter. Though no names have been mentioned, a "unity movement" is underway in the area to build bridges between the two groups.

Sudreh-kustis for sale

The Traditional Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Anjuman (TMZA) has been receiving a good response to its sale of sudrehs and kustis, according to its July 1991 newsletter. Priced at \$ 2.50 each for members and \$ 6 for non-members, the sudrehs for

men and women are available in three sizes with 24, 26 and 28-inch widths.

The TMZA donates a free kusti "to a deserving Parsi in India" for each kusti it sells, notes the newsletter. The kustis are priced at \$ 17 and \$ 23 for members and non-members respectively.

Topis too bear similar dual prices for members and non-members: red velvet ones for \$ 5 and \$ 7 each and white cloth ones for \$ 3 and \$ 6.

Though sukhad is available at jashan time, it is reserved for members only. The Anjuman also takes orders for a small afarganyu with a cover and a tray for \$ 15.

"We are alike..."

The Parsi/Irani divide seems to have afflicted the community in Melbourne, Australia. A special message in the Zoroastrian Association of Victoria (ZAV) newsletter, *Rathaeshitar*, of November 1991, from president Ms Arnavaz Chubb invokes "the name of Ahura Mazda, the compassionate and bountiful" and notes, "Of late, many Zoroastrians from Iran have not been taking an active part in the functions of the ZAV..."

"We are a small community in Melbourne and it is important that we should remain together for the greater benefit of each other. Though there are cultural differences between the Iranians and Parsis yet we are from the same stock. In our prayers and in many other aspects we are alike..."

"Kindly reconsider and join in all festivals and prayer meetings of ZAV..."

Best of Bombay in NSW

Tirandaz and Hoomayun Kermani, members of the Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA) of New South Wales, have launched a new restaurant, Best of Bombay, in picturesque Mosman, informs Kersi Meher-Homji, editor of the Association's newsletter *Manashni*. Offering lunch (Wednesday to Friday) and dinner daily, the appetising Indian cuisine has service to match. "I've previously written glowing praise about the Bombay Heritage Restaurant in Willoughby. I am equally enthusiastic about his new establishment..." noted a review in *The Sydney Morning Herald* of August 27, 1991 quoted in *Manashni* (September-October '91).

Edited by Arnavaz S. Mama

MATRIMONIAL

Matrimonial alliance invited from good-looking, fair, homely, Parsi woman or widow, aged up to 35 years, for a good-looking Parsi widower, settled in Hyderabad, aged 43 years, having monthly income above Rs 6,000/- and own bungalow. Apply in confidence with photographs (returnable) and family background to:

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"Have we really interacted?"

Jehangir R. Bisney

Fraternization and motivation were the dual objectives promoted at the Fifth All India Zoroastrian Youth Conference in Nagpur

Excellence is God and the spirit of excellence is to rediscover the lost God within oneself, impressed Russey Karanjia, editor of *Blitz*, in his inaugural address. Excellence is going from a lower level to a higher level, from concrete to abstract and from practical to philosophical, opined Dr Shrikant Jichkar whose string of educational qualifications earned him a mention in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. "Excellence is the spirit of wanting to do what you want with sacrifice," commented karate expert Pervez Mistry. "Excellence is a preeminence which makes life and living life better," remarked tax consultant Soli Dastur.

"The Spirit of Excellence" was the theme of the Fifth All India Zoroastrian Youth Conference organized by the Forum of Young Zoroastrians (FOYZ), Nagpur. Nearly 240 delegates from 26 towns and cities had converged in Nagpur, the city of oranges in the heartland of India, from November 4 to 6, 1991 to rekindle the flame of excellence in all walks of life.

A major development at this Conference was the launching of the Federation of Zoroastrian Youth Associations (FOZYA) with its present registered office at Secunderabad. Membership is open to youth wings of anjumans and youth associations of Zoroastrians duly and properly formed.

Under the leadership of a no-nonsense president Ms Khurshid Dalal, counsel Shiraz Gimi, an organizing committee consisting of Ms Taubenda Bhagwagar, Rukshad Bhagwagar, Sohrab Kanga, Cyrus Watchmaker and their band of enthusiastic volunteers, the Conference offered varied fare: speeches by eminent speakers, workshops, an open session at the end, and a lot of entertainment.

The Conference commenced with a

prayer by the Nagpur head priest, Ervad Bamanshaw Sanjana. Following the lighting of the inaugural lamp by chief guest Russey Karanjia, Rukshad Bhagwagar, chief co-ordinator of the Conference, mentioned that he had two objectives in mind — to make the dele-

the words of wisdom of a young but brilliant man, Dr Shrikant Jichkar, whose academic degrees — IAS, IPS, PhD, MBBS, LLB, MA in six subjects, etc — enabled him to find a place in the *Guinness Book of World Records*.

Speaking on the topic "Excellence in academics and politics," 36-year-old Jichkar, the youngest member in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, said, "Though I studied for so many degrees to gain the essence of various fields, it does not make me an authority on the subject in which I have achieved the degree... Age is no bar for achieving excellence," emphasized Jichkar. Differentiating the two ways in which knowledge could be sought, he advised the youth to pose questions in the form of *jigyansa* which would enable them to enhance their learning as against questions in the form of *pariksha*, trying to test the other person's intelligence.

If Jichkar was all brain, the next speaker Pervez Mistry, the karate expert, speaking on "Excellence in sports and adventure," was all power, stamina and concentration. Recalling the history of martial arts, he said that Kerala was the cradle of this art. Added Mistry, "Karate is for health and happiness, peace of mind, as a sport or a way of life." Mistry's short talk was followed by his video presentation on martial arts. "Is it true that sportsmen are born and not made?" enquired Homi Gandhi of Delhi. In martial arts which required a lot of training, this does not hold true, replied Mistry.

The morning of November 5 began with Soli Dastur, an eminent tax consultant and senior advocate of the High Court and Supreme Court, speaking on "Law as an instrument for achieving excellence." He categorized law into four divisions: as a career; as a teacher; as a motivator for

THE SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE



gates more determined and motivated, and creating friendship and fellowship.

"I am pleasantly surprised to see so many youth and this gives me confidence in the youth," said Karanjia. The Zoroastrians felt like orphans once the British left India, recalled Karanjia, a member of the Rajya Sabha. "We must get back the zeal and pioneering spirit," he added. He then released the Conference souvenir. With its jet black cover designed by Sohrab Kanga of FOYZ, Nagpur and edited by Ms Diana Hormusjee, the souvenir contained the Maharashtra chief minister's message, the FOYZ president's message to the delegates, a handful of articles, a list of donors and a load of advertisements.

The audience was then entertained by

change; and in its abstract form.

"Law exposes you to life," he informed and added, "A lawyer has to be a psychologist." Dastur mentioned that a lawyer has to solve his clients' problems which may be legal, self-created or personal. "No experience in life will not be useful to a lawyer," emphasized Dastur. Great academic brilliance is not required to be a lawyer; what is required is a resolution to succeed. But "law is a jealous mistress," said Dastur, as its pursuit meant late evenings, no weekends and various other compromises.

"Law is the corner stone of everything we do. Law requires integrity and the courage to stand up," he stressed. In favor of a uniform civil personal law in India, Dastur argued, "If persons who go abroad accept the law of that country, then why not in India?" Lamenting that in India there are laws but no enforcement, Dastur said, "We are not law abiding because our legislators have no respect for the law."

The brainchild behind the success story of the Diner's Club credit card, Ms Perviez Aggarwal addressed the delegates on the topic "What are entrepreneurs made of?" Presently the managing director of DBS Corporate Services Limited, Aggarwal advised, "An entrepreneur has to enter the business at the right time and leave at the right time." An entrepreneur starts a business where there was no one before. Entrepreneurs are mercurial characters. Said Aggarwal, "Success breeds more success." Describing her business success as "luck and pluck," she felt disappointed that Parsis had lost their self-confidence to succeed.

In the short question-answer session that followed, Cyrus Aibara from Nagpur asked, "You had the initial capital to start your business. But what about those who do not have the money?" Aggarwal replied that it wasn't necessary to have one's own money as it could be arranged from banks or financial institutions.

It was now the turn of Minoo Shroff, financial consultant to the J. K. Group of Industries and trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) to speak on "Ex-

citing horizons for Parsi entrepreneurs." Though not an entrepreneur himself, Shroff considered himself a catalyst of entrepreneurs. "I am a great believer in the country's destiny," said a confident Shroff. Shroff predicted that the future was exciting. Suggesting landscaping, agriculture, poultry farming, broiler and egg business as the potential business areas, Shroff warned that the first three to four years of any new business would be a slog. He said, "There are no shortcuts in business and one must not compromise on quality." In response to a question posed to him, Shroff said that since independence the other communities in India had moved forward faster than the Parsis and we were unable to keep pace with them.

entrepreneur for tomorrow — beyond mediocrity." Chairman and managing director of Real Value Appliances Pvt Ltd, manufacturers of Ceasefire, Engineer said that the man in demand is the one who gets things done. Entrepreneurship is not necessarily an invention, it requires being entrepreneurial in everyday life, he believed. According to him, "Only a dream or idea does not take you anywhere. Conversion of the idea into acceptance is important. The ability to constantly innovate and look for human dissatisfaction is the essence of entrepreneurship."

Engineer, an optimist, defined luck as that moment in time when opportunities meet preparedness. Environment and experience molds a person; education and knowledge are also important.

"Learn to share money, power and ego satisfaction," advised Engineer. On behalf of his company, Real Value, he then offered to help prospective Parsi entrepreneurs by funding one venture every two years with a condition that the funded venture, if successful, would similarly fund another venture once every two years.

Just like the previous youth conferences, the afternoon sessions attracted a small audience. Jamsheed Kanga, IAS who is trustee of the BPP and a father figure for FOYZ, Nagpur in the organization of this Conference, led the discussion on "What are the rights of Parsi women marrying outside the community?" Giving a brief on the history of conversion, Kanga mentioned that there were two opinions -- firstly, that conversion did take place and a second opinion that Mazdayasnis became Zoroastrians and thus the Mazdayasni Zoroastrians could not be regarded as converts. Citing the legal case of Petit v/s Jejeebhoy, Kanga went on to state the religious view on this subject. He quoted passage 64(18) of the *Vendidad* which the religious scholars interpreted as the mixing of the

seeds of the clean and the unclean, which displeases Ahura Mazda.

To deliberate on this subject further, four workshops of about 25 delegates each were organized. Each group leader was to mention the final outcome. Sur-



Top: Invitees to the youth meet (from left) Shroff, Kanga, Soli and Armaity Dastur
Below: Enjoying the final dance

The last morning saw 33-year-old Phiroze Engineer articulate on "The Parsi en-

prisingly, unlike the majority opinion in the previous two conferences, most of the delegates in Nagpur felt that it was unfair to be prejudiced against the Parsi lady and her children in the event of a mixed marriage. They were of the opinion that the children of a mixed marriage where either of the parents is a Zoroastrian, should be brought up as Zoroastrians if the parents so wished.

Another debatable topic "Should Parsis get special rights and privileges?" was scheduled for the second afternoon. Gev Avari, MLA and ex-MP, speaking on the subject, mentioned that there were two schools of thought: One, we have been surviving for all these years, then why should we ask for special rights? Two, if the government is willing to help the minorities, we should accept it. Avari felt that it was not wrong to demand a special minority status in services and education. He mentioned that a distinction should be made between reservation and minority status where a special consideration is shown to a minority community which is small in number. Kanga opined that at least one seat should be reserved in the Rajya Sabha for a Parsi.

Later the delegates, numbering about 50, were divided into two groups to deliberate on this topic. The final outcome showed that about half the number of delegates were in favor of a special right in education and jobs, and the other half were against. However, most of them felt that a representation in Parliament was necessary.

On the subject of education, a workshop on "Opportunities for studies abroad" was led by Dr (Ms) Dina Dalal, counsellor, foreign education counselling service.

A break from the scheduled talks and discussions came in the form of an excellent slide show and commentary on the "African Odyssey" by Ms Meher Heroyce Moos. The evenings were enlivened by different programs. *Those were the days*, a beautiful presentation by the Nagpur Parsi Gymkhana and the FOYZ had the delegates watching in rapt attention the days of the daglis, ijars, garas, old cricketing gear, an antique cycle and much more. A trip to Orbit Gardens on the outskirts of Nagpur for a variety entertainment by delegates from different cities, firework display, campfire and dinner was another favorite besides the customary dinner and dance held at the Billimoria Brothers' Dharamshala Hall on the last night.

An eye-opener for many youths was the open session, following the valedic-

tory session. Chairman Jehangir Bisney from Secunderabad, who had attended all the four previous youth conferences, was in charge of channelizing discussions. Monica, the Hindu wife of Rukshad Bhagwagar of Nagpur thrilled the audience by mentioning that she had no problems blending with her husband's family.

Ms Taubenda Bhagwagar, a former airhostess with Air India, spoke on her experience of leaving a lucrative and glamorous job and the city of Bombay to settle down in Nagpur with her husband.

Commenting on the importance of media, Bisney informed the audience that *Parsiana* must be protected and requested

the delegates to launch a membership drive for *Parsiana* in their locations and get advertisements for them. However, Porus Karanjawalla from Ahmedabad felt that since the majority of the Parsis in his city had orthodox views, they would not agree to the liberal views of *Parsiana*.

Before the delegates parted company, asked Bisney, "At the conference have we really interacted?" Youth Conferences are mainly held for two reasons — interaction and imparting knowledge, he explained. Further, delegates who attend these conferences, widen their mental horizon, make new friends and make themselves better persons.

Youth perceptions

Some other youths have also submitted their impressions of the Fifth All India Zoroastrian Youth Conference. The excerpts that we are carrying reflect their sentiments.

Bhopal's Mehernosh Dhunjibhoy writes: One cannot say whether the collective gathering and interaction which took place amongst the young Parsis for three days in the first week of November can justifiably be termed as a 'conference' because 'conference' raises in mind a picture of a serious, gloomy, monotonous gathering of people having officious discussions in a dry manner. The activities at Nagpur were anything but that.

Entrepreneurship seemed to be the predominant theme in the conference and the factor of hard work was succinctly conveyed by Phiroze Engineer in an apt statement that "24 hours of experience can never be gained in 23."

To the pleasant surprise of everyone, including the participants themselves, the discussions were, to put it mildly, not just charged with strong emotions and high spirits (no, not of the inebriating kind), but had strong undercurrents of logical, honest and refreshingly introspective ideas. Also, it may not be out of context here to state that the real benefit of refreshing ideas and opinions of this kind can be derived not by confining them to mere discussions and debates but by actually integrating them into our daily life and behavior.

Jamshedpur's Mediomah Patel writes: This was my first youth conference. I was quite impressed by it. The topics of discussions were pertinent and there was healthy participation. There was no "holier than thou" attitude. Moral, fanatical

and other intangibles thankfully took a back seat during the discussions.

I could not attend any of the workshops. The workshops were held simultaneously with the discussions which I found more stimulating to attend. One problem however was the counting of votes after group discussions. It was unfortunate that the group leaders chose to give statistical data (how many in favor and how many not, etc) rather than going into reasons their groups might have generated along the discussions. Knowledge sharing should have been emphasized.

At the open house session, it would have been preferable to allow participants to speak on any relevant subject instead of directing the flow.

Mhow's Ms Arnaz Bhote writes: The workshops were conducted on topics like careers in civil services and armed services, opportunities for studies abroad, etc. These closed sessions were really very interesting as all of us had a chance to put forth our views.

The theme around which the conference revolved was "The Spirit of Excellence" — exhibited by ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

The arrangements made to make our stay comfortable were very good (all the delegates were housed at the MLA Hostel, a five-minute walk from the Conference venue — the Jawahar Vid-yarthi Griha). The organization was superb, the food delicious and the hosts' hard work has definitely paid dividends. Each and every one of us has returned home with good memories from Nagpur, in the hope that in future we too will be able to host a youth festival as efficiently as they did...

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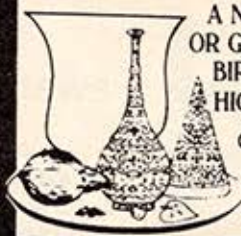
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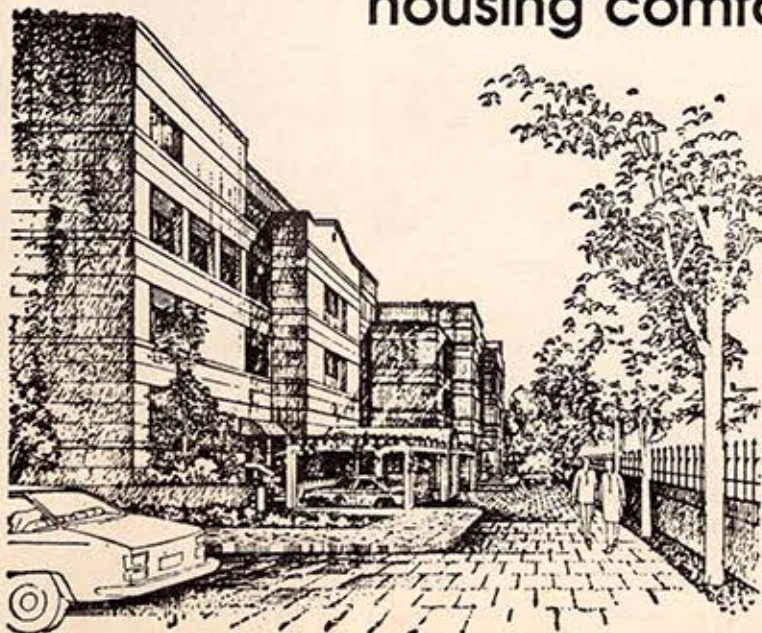
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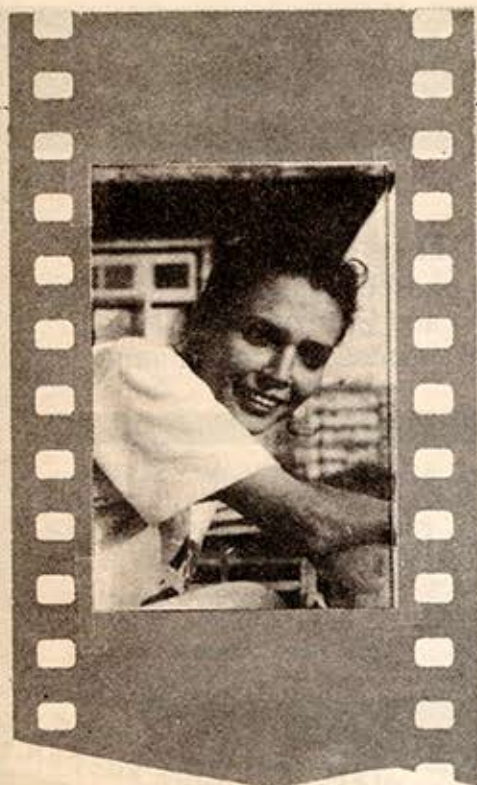


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TARAPOREVALA'S scoring scripts

Winner of the best scriptwriter award at the Venice Film Festival 1991, Sooni Taraporevala's present preoccupation is with an internationally funded epic on Gautam Buddha

Gustasp Irani

"Films are often seen as a medium for actors and directors. What's nice about the award is that it makes people realize that films are written by people." Emerging from the wings is Ms Sooni Taraporevala, winner of the best scriptwriter award at the Venice Film Festival 1991 for her text for *Mississippi Masala*. "An award is always nice to receive," laughs Taraporevala, and especially this one since it came as a surprise. "At Venice they had Golden Bells and Silver Bells and weird kinds of awards. But I did not know that they had something for 'best scriptwriter,'" she says, that is till one of the bells started ringing for her.

Freckle faced and bright eyed, Taraporevala, like her scripts, can be light-hearted and serious at the same time. "No," she protests, "I don't think my scripts are autobiographical in a very direct way." Though her writing may not be a reflection of her life, the underlying philosophy is similar — serious moments dealt with humor and objectivity. "People read things into my writing; I've seen it happen at discussions on *Mississippi Masala*. I believe that the text, the final product, stands by itself and is open to interpretation," adds Taraporevala.

The above, she believes, is also true of the film *Salaam Bombay* — her first

effort at scriptwriting, which propelled the Mira Nair-Taraporevala, director-scriptwriter team to international fame when it won an award at the Cannes Film Festival of 1988 for being the best first feature film by a young director. "I knew *Salaam Bombay* would be good. But then, it took off beyond our wildest expectations. It has become part of cult cinema. It has taken on a life of its own that goes beyond you," she says. The paradox of creator and creation aside, the movie telescoped Taraporevala into the big league itself — Hollywood. She has done the script for *Johnny Be Good*, a film on a black homeless kid in Hollywood, and for *A Brothel in Nevada* for actress Demi Moore of *Ghost* fame. In addition she has scripted a 30-minute film on the fall of Vietnam, presenting the Vietnamese point of view. She is reportedly working on an internationally funded epic on Gautam Buddha for Italian director Bernardo Bertolucci of *Last Tango in Paris* and *Last Emperor* fame.

A script, according to Taraporevala, is the starting point of any movie. "It is a movie on paper before it is shot. It's like a play," she observes. There is a distinction between the two forms though. "In a play the written words are holy and you can't fool around with them. In script-

writing you can forget about your words being holy," she laughs. Often during rehearsals, actors complain: "I just can't say those lines." "I don't see why they can't," Taraporevala protests and then rewrites those "damned" lines anyway.

But she is open to suggestions. She refers to her interaction over the script with Denzil Washington who played the lead role in *Mississippi Masala*. "I have great respect for him as a person and actor and most of his suggestions were most helpful. He was a thorough professional in his work." Yet she did not incorporate all he had to say; in particular there was a scene towards the end of the film where Washington felt that his role was too weak. "I had to fight him on that because I thought that scene belonged to Sunita (the girl who plays Washington's lover in the movie)."

It is all part of scriptwriting, says Taraporevala, incorporating, without compromising oneself, the views of the director, the producer, the actors and others involved in making the film. It is for this reason that most Hollywood script contracts require that three drafts be submitted. "You've got to realize that the filmmaking process is a collaboration. It's like getting together an army. You've got to raise the finances, get together the

actors, the crew... Mira is very good at it," and Taraporevala leaves her and her other directors to their own devices once her script is done. "I disappear once the rehearsals (are under way) and the final script is submitted," she states, though with *Salaam Bombay*, her first child, she stayed with the unit right through.

Unlike India's Bollywood where one sees the names of different people on the posters taking credit for story, dialogue, script, etc., in the West the scriptwriter must do the entire job. The starting point of any undertaking is research which for *Salaam Bombay* and *Mississippi Masala* took about two months, examining the lives and environment of the people the movie was to be eventually structured around. The next stage is writing the first draft which took Taraporevala six weeks of continuous writing, in both cases. She does most of her writing late at night. "That's probably because I grew up in Bombay and that is the only time when it is quiet. People call up at 11.30 a.m. when I am still sleeping and think I am a lazy

*Taraporevala captures the Parsi
ambience in this photograph*

"In scriptwriting you can forget about your words being holy"

bum. My schedules are different from the rest of the world's," says Taraporevala.

Like most forms of writing, scriptwriting too is a lonely process. The main difference is that there are expectant and anxious filmmakers in the wings waiting for those words which they could translate into visuals on celluloid. "In a script it is easy to write 'rain' or 'storm' or put in an extra character or two which you probably can't do in a novel," says Taraporevala, adding, "But it's a different story when that one word costs the producer an X number of dollars. That's the scriptwriter's revenge."

In *Mississippi Masala* there are 79 speaking parts which means a minimum 79 characters. How many of them are

part of the revenge? Taraporevala laughs. "For Mira, none. We have been good friends for 15 years." They first met at Harvard University where they were studying on scholarships. For years they had tossed around the idea of doing a film together including one on Nair's childhood in Orissa. It was during a meeting at Hyderabad while attending a film festival that they decided to do a film on the kids living on the streets of Bombay. It was a street that would lead to fame and acclaim.

Taraporevala, by her own admission, did not study scriptwriting in any formal way. Her BA in liberal arts from Harvard in 1980, MA from the New York University Film School in 1982 and her stint as a still photographer on her return to Bombay all seemed to gel together for scriptwriting. "And luck," she adds. "I know as a photographer that you have to be in the right place at the right time and at the same time you've got to be prepared to take that photograph." Taraporevala's career in photography (she did extensive work on the Parsis) did not focus but her attempt at scriptwriting clicked.

On her return from the USA she de-



voted her time to capturing the nuances of the community on film. *National Geographic*, she informs us, gave her a whole lot of film to do a feature on the Parsis but nothing ever came of the venture. (The shot outside Bombay's Anjuman Atash Bahram on the front cover of this issue is from Taraporevala's collection of photos on the community.) "I am bad at doing photo stories. My photographs are single image shots. My collection is quite personal and full of idiosyncracies," Taraporevala admits. Can we expect a film on the Parsis soon? "No," states Taraporevala who is too close to the community to be objective about it. "The image of this (community) is much more fantastic than anything I can translate onto the screen," she states.

She advises Parsis to see *Mississippi Masala* which is more than a simple story about discrimination of whites against blacks or whites against Indians. The story, in brief, is about an Indian family from Uganda who have resettled in the USA and run a motel in Mississippi. It is great fun till the black carpet sweeper and their daughter fall in love; then the true color of racism emerges. "We as Indians can be as 'racist' as anyone else and the film examines our attitudes to this prob-

"We as Indians can be as 'racist' as anyone else"

lem... What we are really saying is: 'Keep away from our women,'" says Taraporevala, noting: "I might add that they (the characters) could well have been Parsis. I don't think Parsis know what racism means. They see it very much as part of the system; that Parsis are superior to other Indians." She points out that when a Parsi marries a Westerner it is okay but if he should marry a Hindu or a Muslim it is frowned upon.

"An ungrateful Parsi is like a black turnip," Taraporevala quotes an old proverb and re-examines it. "Then why are we so ungrateful to the country which gave us sanctuary for so many years?" This is also true of Parsis settled in the West. "Once they go abroad they cease to think of themselves as Indians and see themselves as free-floating Zoroastrians which I find very odd..." Having said that, I'm not a Parsi hater," Taraporevala clarifies. "I

don't have that in me. It's just certain attitudes I can't stand. There is a lot of good in the community. We need to critically re-examine ourselves."

Looking back at her childhood as she breezes in and out of Bombay to Europe, to the States or to wherever her talent is required, Taraporevala, as yet single, zooms in "with love and gratitude" on her English teacher at Queen Mary's School, Ms Rati Wadia, who encouraged her to write no matter how "weird the topic..." I think parents and teachers are very important when you are growing up. I have parents (Freny and Rumi) who encouraged me all the way and the most wonderful grandparents a girl could have," acknowledges Taraporevala. She traces the migration of her family: from Udvada to Tarapore (from where the surname originated), to Manori (where they traded in fresh fish), to Malad, to central Bombay, where her grandfather and his brother were the first in the family to obtain a college degree. "My granduncle never left Sleater Road and he knew all about the world through the books," says Taraporevala. And, "even though I am in the film business, I feel sad that kids today are losing out on reading because of TV and video."

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"Things fall into place"

Arnavaz S. Mama

The organizing of some of the largest Zoroastrian functions in Bombay has been the concern of community activist Ms Homai Modi

"When Dastur (Dr Maneck) Dhalla arrived at a social or religious gathering, everybody stood up."

That is one cherished memory of the two years that community activist Ms Homai Modi spent in Karachi as a young girl. The other is of hearing the assembled Parsis sing *Chhaiyé Hamé Zarhosti* for the first time. Both were to form a leitmotif in the later life of the erect, controlled woman who has helped organize some of the most prestigious community events of the past decade. The recollection of community discipline and respect for authority remain etched in her mind, surfacing during the interview in the emphasis on propriety and obedience.

The joint honorary secretary of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute (KRCOI) has just seen the completion of a year-long celebration of the Institute's platinum jubilee, climaxing with *Parasika* -- the Zoroastrian Story at the Prince of Wales Museum (POWM). Three years earlier she had helped the KRCOI host the International Congress on Indo-Iranian History and Culture. She was the joint honorary secretary of the Fourth and Fifth World Zoroastrian Congresses organized by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) at the behest of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India and, in between, as chairperson of the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital's fund raising committee, had helped that august institution collect much needed funds amounting to the tune of over eight lakh rupees in its 75th year. In recognition of this in-

tense commitment, Modi had been conferred the Federation's Shiavax Nargolwala Memorial Award for excellence in social and community service.

Apart from these periodic highlights,

maintain the bunglis and other structures like the nasakhana and the *bodga* (where nassessalars change out of the garments they wear inside the dokhmas) which were recently redone. Quality paint work was executed by Naval Davar's sons Fali and Hormuzd at concessional rates, she informs. The committee has just finished renovating one part of the Bhabha bungli thanks to funds forthcoming from the family and other donors, she says. Much more funds are required for all that always needs to be done at doongerwadi -- masonry, carpentry and electrical repair; the doongerwadi accounts are always in deficit, she adds.

The association between the Museum and the Institute is a long-standing one. Curator Ms Kalpana Desai and director Dr Sadashiv Gorakshkar of the POWM had not only presented papers at the International Congress but had participated in its organization. And KRCOI representatives are frequently on the Museum's invitation list for exhibitions hosted by them, informs Modi. It had been Desai's suggestion that the Institute hold an exhibition on Parsis, said Modi, and the KRCOI's platinum jubilee seemed to her to be just the occasion to project the K. R. Cama name in that way. When Gorakshkar too seemed amenable to the concept, Modi mooted the idea to the Institute's trustees -- president Jehangir Shroff, vice president Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Dastur (Dr) Kaikhushro JamaspAsa, Capt Hormazdiar Desai, Noshir Cama, Munchi Cama and Adi Ripon Daruwalla.



funds generation, the collection and appraisal of applications and final allotment of flats goes on as a part of the work of the Raymond Committee, of which she is a member. The BPP's matrimonial bureau expects her to help arrange their functions and picnics. Some time each week has to be reserved for meetings of the Doongerwadi subcommittee of which she is a part. The committee seeks to

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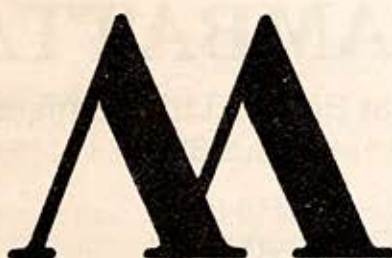
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Initially the gentlemen were not enthusiastic, admits Modi. The question of finance was crucial and the trustees were not in a position to contribute. But, continues Modi, "they had faith enough in me to embark on (the) project," so Modi and her friends swung into action, collecting resources. Modi's reward was a spectacle that "clicked with a lot of people" leading to a demand for the exhibition's perpetuation. However, midway through the year-long celebrations, Aspi Moddie, chairman of the celebrations committee resigned and the exhibition itself led to much disharmony behind the scene.

The great granddaughter of Jamshedji Madan, the pioneer film distributor of Calcutta and Sir Cowasji Katrak of Karachi, Modi, née Minocher-Homji, had a strict, traditional upbringing with mandatory piano and ballet lessons. With an ingrained respect for authority, Modi feels that the community must respect its high priests — "the office if not the person" — because then "something within becomes geared to respecting people better." Commenting on the community's extreme individuality and lack of self-discipline, Modi asks, "If we are all black sheep, where are we going to get the white sheep from? And if a white sheep comes, will we get better or will we just kill the white sheep off?"

Modi tries to tread the middle path.

"Living in an orderly manner your outlook on the world changes"

"There are times when one needs to be liberal; there are times when one needs to be conservative. One must learn to adjust," she says, refusing to be typecast.

"Living in an orderly manner as God has created, your whole way of life, your outlook on the world, changes. You automatically learn what all the great religions have come to teach...You learn to live a different kind of life...You don't get bogged down with trivialities," says Modi, noting her fondness for philosophical and religious literature and the need for meditation.

Quite at a loss to explain her success at organizing a variety of events, Modi says, "I always feel that if my motives are correct and I start out with my prayers, things fall into place." The tone is humble. As an example she related the background to the KRCOI's International Congress in 1989. With the Institute in deficit, she had "the temerity to suggest that I do it." But along came Rusi Bhamgara to arrange comfortable accommodation for the visiting scholars at the Garware Guest House; Dr (Ms) Katy Dalal who provided food at rock bottom prices and free teas twice a day through the four days of the Congress; and dinner invitations to all the visitors on three nights — one from a non-Parsi whom Modi did not even know! Smiling at the memory Modi notes, "That's how we do it — with very little money and a lot of goodwill!"

Modi's debut as organizer was made during her undergraduate years at Jai Hind College. When she joined the institution the Young Collegians' Zoroastrian Association (YCZA) had been started by Nadir Modi and Khurshed Sheriar who were both professors there. Her trusteeship of the Association was cemented

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with her marriage to Nadir (the marriage, with three children, was to end in a divorce) but the group, whose membership had almost reached the 500 mark, began to decline drastically so that they could no longer afford to hire a hall and meetings with four to five members attending had to be held in their small flat at Tardeo, she recalls. When the family shifted to Modi Lodge at Gamdevi, Modi says they slowly rebuilt the membership to weekly get-togethers of nearly 400 individuals.

By then, *Chhaiyé Hamé Zarthosti* had become a recurring refrain in Modi's mind. The two verses from a song in a play — the third verse is never sung because it's a part of the play, informs Modi — "had moved me tremendously and I tried to look out for the song when the YCZA came up again." Strumming at it on the piano, singing it after every function, by the time of the YCZA's silver jubilee in 1977 the two-verse pamphlets had been printed and distributed at their functions so that people could memorize it. "(The late) Adi Marzban was there (at the jubilee celebration at Allbless Baug), and he mentioned in the *Jamé* that we had

made it a national anthem to the tune of Blue Bells of Scotland. We tried to explain that there was none other..." Marzban tried to find someone to compose a proper anthem, recounts Modi, but nothing came of it. In the meantime the YCZA boys who had acquired small bands and were performing at navjotes and weddings, began playing it as a part of their repertoire. The official status of the song was established when the BPP called on the Modis' group to sing it at the Third World Zoroastrian Congress, 1978.

YCZA activities included excursions and hikes to the Bahrot Caves, treks, picnics, debates, fancy dress as well as lectures on religion, on mental health to counter drug addiction and VD. There would even be an annual jashan by the navar maratabs within the group, recounts Modi. A number of YCZA members were present at Bombay House to attend the first Zoroastrian Studies (ZS) lecture organized by Khojeste Mistree. It led to the holding of the first ghambar. Modi doesn't remember "whose idea it was -- Khojeste Mistree's or Ketu and Freddie Mehtas" but Modi was invited to organize it, which she did, with the help

of the YCZA. The second was organized under the YCZA banner with ZS help, she recalls.

The first two ghambars were held on the lawns of the Cricket Club of India (CCI), with catering by Bomi Patel. The first was a roaring success. The second chaotic with black-marketing in tickets and stampeding crowds. But it taught Modi to organize the *paats* (seatings) with entry chits assigning first, second or third sitting to the diners even as they entered the grounds.

Five or six more ghambars followed, but the location shifted to the Parsi Gymkhana grounds which were provided free of cost. "We got tremendous help from (the late) Framroze Pavri. He never took a single pie, not even out-of-pocket expenses," Modi recalls gratefully. Another source of support was the catering team of Freny and (the late) Rohinton Godiwalla who "not only charged the lowest possible rates but threw in an extra *vani* (course) on the house," the lady reminisces.

The success of the ghambars led to the holding of similar functions by the ladies

continued on page 44



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A lesson in leasing

Gustasp Irani

*The success of Faruk Irani's
First Leasing Company
resulted in a flood of leasing companies*

As manager of the corporate branch of Citibank, Bombay, the career of Faruk M. Irani was full of promise. It was a position most people would have cherished. Having worked with the leasing section of Citibank in Hong Kong, Singapore and the Philippines, Irani had a compelling vision — to introduce leasing in India. Irani proposed that the bank promote a similar venture in India. "They thought it was premature. I did not, so I resigned," recalls Irani. He then started a venture, new and untested in the country. In 1973, Irani was instrumental in forming the first leasing company in the country.

He recognized that he needed organizational backing to translate his vision into a reality and this he found in A. C. Muthia of the Madras-based M. A. Chidambaram group of companies. Irani put more than his expertise on the line; he signed a promissory note of one lakh rupees to cover the costs of setting up the company office. "I came prepared to put my own money on this new venture," he states. The First Leasing Company of India Limited (FLC), of which Irani is the managing director, was established and registered on September 10, 1973 in Madras.

First is more than part of the company's name. Apart from being the first leasing company in India, it was the first of such companies to be over-subscribed by more than 50 times when it went public in 1980, the first leasing company to declare a bonus issue and the first in the industry to get an AAA credit rating.



Irani: in a high risk industry

And there is an international first too. "Nowhere else in the world was a company launched with the sole purpose of introducing leasing," says Irani. In the West, he explains, the industry evolved out of other considerations. "In the US, leasing had a re-birth after World War II," he states. Airlines wanting to purchase high cost aircraft could not get banks to finance their purchases as they could not meet the conditions that these banking institutions required before granting them the loans they needed. So these airlines approached other companies and corporate bodies with the proposition that they buy the aircraft and then lease these out to them, the airlines.

In India the story was slightly different. "How did leasing get a foothold here with the vast banking network and where the market is full of financial institutions like the Industrial Development Bank of India, the Industrial Finance Corporation of India, the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India, the Unit Trust of India..." Irani answers his own question by pointing out that these institutions finance up to only 75 percent of the value of a purchase. "For instance for a Rs 10-crore equipment the banks will finance only Rs 7.5 crores. The borrower would have to put Rs 2.5 crores of his own money. We (the leasing companies) turned around and said that we will take the entire risk. We will purchase the equipment for Rs 10 crores and lease it out to you." Further because leasing companies do not require

security, since the leased out asset technically belongs to them, they save time in documentation. "We should grant one crore rupees within three weeks as against three months that banks would take to document and process a similar account," says Irani. Businessmen recognized a good deal when they saw one.

The simple principle on which a leasing company operates, according to Irani, is hire-purchase. The fine tuning of the operations allows for depreciation, interest rates, opportunity costs, tax and other considerations. One understanding is that the lessee purchases the financially depreciated asset at the end of the lease period. Technically, if a party is unable to meet his commitments, the leased asset or equipment is repossessed by the leasing company. "So far we have not had any aircraft or oil rigs on our hands," Irani laughs.

It is to avoid this eventuality of repossessing special purpose equipment that leasing companies prefer to deal with general purpose, durable assets: computers, cranes, even cars, refrigerators and household appliances. Tatas, Mafatlals, Johnson and Johnson are only some of the big names that are clients of the FLC. "We are referred to as a congeneric activity; in effect we are a financial service organization," says Irani.

The success of the FLC was to lead to a flooding of the market with leasing companies, but not before FLC won a court ruling (another first) — thanks to the efforts of eminent jurist Nani Palkhivala — that permitted them to claim investment allowances. In effect, it allowed leasing companies to claim certain crucial allowances which would make them financially viable. "Once we won that concession it was the green signal for others to enter the market. What happened was that it was a kind of gold rush. Four hundred leasing companies got registered in the early 1980s," says Irani.

Most of the new companies pointed to the success of the FLC and went to the stock market to raise money to finance their operations. "At that time I made a representation to the Reserve Bank of India pointing out that this was a high risk industry. People were learning leasing at the public's risk rather than their own." Irani proposed that promoters of leasing companies should demonstrate

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their ability to run such institutions before going public.

The warning was prophetic in a way for out of the 400 new companies, today only about 15 remain as leasing companies, the rest having diversified into other activities or... "The problem was that they did not do their homework well," says Irani.

FLC did, and for seven years before it went public in 1980 when it was oversubscribed by 53 times. "At that time it was very unusual to be that highly oversubscribed," says Irani. Today from an initial investment of Rs 2.5 lakhs, it has an equity base of Rs 17 crores. Its assets are about Rs 150 crores, the revenue last year was Rs 33 crores and cash profits Rs 19 crores. In November 1991 the company script was quoted at around Rs 45 on the stock exchange. And being "the first leasing company to get two AAA credit ratings from the ICIRA (Industrial Credit and Information Reporting Agency)" has put them in an enviable position in the industry — the top.

Looking back at his career, Irani cannot hide a hint of awe at the course it took. "The last thing I expected to do was become a banker," he says. "I was into pure economics and philosophy; my feet were off the ground. I wanted to become a part of the planning commission of India." His career plans took a turn when his late father Meherji was struck by cancer. He had to abandon his plans to join the London School of Economics and opt for a management position with Citibank immediately after graduation from St Xavier's College, Bombay, so that he could be close to his father and mother Gool during those trying times.

It was a career choice that many of his community opt for. While the Parsi bank clerk is a much abused tribe, Irani demonstrated that banking and finance can be a dynamic and rewarding career. "The Parsi bank clerk should not think his job is the end of the world," he says. He advises them to join evening classes or correspondence courses so that they may join the management cadre. "The Parsi is still highly regarded for his integrity. There is such a fund of goodwill that people will

encourage a Parsi to advance. All it takes is one hour every evening. The Parsi bank clerk must take the first step; that's all there is to it -- that first step."

Irani's other concern is that the Parsi community is not officially accepting children of Parsi ladies married to non-Parsis into its fold. "My own conviction is that religion is learnt from the mother. If you lose her, you lose the child and we are depriving ourselves of waves of children because of this," says Irani, adding,

"I believe that the mingling of Parsis with non-Parsis will, like evolution, lead not to degeneration but regeneration of the community."

The Parsi

community in Madras, according to Irani who has been residing in this city for the past 19 years, is about 300 strong and doing well. There has been a growth in the numbers but more a result of migration than of an increase in the size of the families. "There is a lot of opportunity for Parsis in Madras. If Bombay Parsis are prepared to move they will be in demand in a city like Madras. Parsis are highly respected here," says Irani. And housing will not be a problem. A comfortable two-bedroom apartment can be had for a monthly rent of Rs 2,500 -- without a *pagri* or deposit payment.

The language is no barrier, according to Irani. Everyone, even the domestic help, speaks English. "You can get by with only English. I don't speak Tamil," he confesses. His wife Sherna and his daughters Farah and Lia do.

Irani does not see any Irani-Parsi divide, not at least in the two communities settled in India. "There is no difference between the two. The only difference is in the timing (when the two landed in India) and in our prayers. The differences are too small to matter. What is important is that we worship the same God," he observes.

The interview over, we settle down for a cup of tea at the pavilion of the Bombay Gymkhana. The waiter taking the order is offhand and we see a flash of the famed Irani temper. The waiter snaps to attention. Irani is a perfectionist of sorts. His visit to Bombay is brief and exhaustive. He has no time and energy to waste; these assets are saved for his company.

"People were learning leasing at the public's risk rather than their own"

Scriptural study – prospects and pitfalls

Faribourz Nariman

Varnehade Avesta (Avesta writing) by Peshotan Dastur Jamshedji Jamaspasa, Bombay 1846. Enlarged second edition — Bombay 1990 (nine plates) by Hormazdyar Dastur Kayoji Mirza. Available from Dr Mirza, 4, Babulnath Road, Bombay 400007. Pp: 148. Price: Rs 110.

The prevailing trends are such that the young in every community do not readily take to scriptural studies. Whereas other communities, because of their numerical strength, may not feel the crunch produced by these trends, the Parsis just cannot afford to ignore the dangerous portents involved. Unavailability of certain books, dictionaries, etc., plus the scarcity of proficient teachers are other factors which accentuate these portents. The dangerousness increases tenfold when the high-ups in some institutions, established with the aim of encouraging scriptural studies, revel in playing politics by adopting a hostile attitude towards some of our internationally reputed religionists. It need hardly be added that such an attitude dissuades the young aspirants from taking to scriptural studies.

The precarious position is given another perverted twist by some twilit mystics who pompously sermonize: "Thou shalt not study Avestan, nor shalt thou read a translation of our scriptures." Our ancient heritage is becoming less and less comprehensible as the study of Old Persian, Avestan, Pahlavi-Pazand is more and more neglected by members of our "progressive" community. In the absence of well-equipped religionists, the sacred texts are reduced to so many levers eminently suitable for manipulation by interlopers and those desirous of protecting their vested interests.

The apprehension of a mortal threat to Avestan studies — and consequently to the future generation — tends to produce concentration on the roots of that cherished way of preserving and enhancing

scriptural studies. And hence this work. Given not to mobilizing populist parochialism or to suggest pseudo-mystical interpretations, Mirza found in Jamaspasa's old work solid ground through which to help a student of Avesta.

As the title page and the foreword indicate, Jamaspasa published the first edition of the book way back in 1846. This lithographed edition has been ably revised and enlarged by Mirza who has taught scriptural languages for nearly 50 years. He sets about his task in a scholarly manner. Fifteen pages of his preface are packed with information concerning this unique publication, the author and his life-sketch, purpose of the publication,

Our ancient heritage is becoming less comprehensible

etymological intricacies, origin of the Avesta script, Pahlavi writings, Manichaean writings, language studies in ancient Iran, priestly activities in India, etc.

Jamaspasa's original work in Gujarati has been translated into English by Mirza who has taken care to embellish the second edition with linguistic and phonetic notes, a table of conventional and modern phonetic terms, a glossary of Gujarati terms, an appendix containing the genealogy of the Jamaspasas and nine plates illustrating the Iranian scripts.

On one hand, the original work gives a fair picture of the state of Avestan studies about 15 decades ago. It reveals the old practice according to which a Zoroastrian child used to recite a singular assemblage of characters of the alphabet (eg *ka ka kakaiya, kha kha khakhaiya,*

etc) at the time of the navjote ceremony (based on an old Middle Eastern tradition which considers every letter of the alphabet as sacred), a practice which the Sanjana mobeds (of Udwada) have kept up till today. When, about 35 years ago, a high priest interpolated *Kemna Mazda* after *peresat Zarathushtra ahurem mazdan* and started compelling the child to recite the same at the time of the navjote, other high priests and mobeds of diverse clans took exception to this innovation. At that time two Bhagariya mobeds, for whom the innovator was a demigod, came out with a counter attack! They maintained that, over the years, their counterparts in Udwada "were asking the young initiates to recite meaningless words." Obviously, the intention behind the charge was to sidetrack the main issue — innovation. Of course, high priests of diverse clans and knowledgeable laymen denounced the innovation in no uncertain terms. Today, barring a couple of followers of the innovator, almost all the mobeds perform navjotes as per the accepted custom. With his scholarship and methodology, Mirza has tried to elucidate the singular assemblage so ably that it merits the attention of scholars and young aspirants alike.

In general Mirza has accomplished a task which he is uniquely qualified to undertake. The work is a classic demonstration of the value of linguistic research and the way a well-charted study can serve not only the discipline as a whole but a confluence of disciplines. It is of immense value to the thoughtful student, helpful to the budding scholar, but of no use to those in search of aids to pseudomystical rigmaroles.

The quality of paper and printing suits the purpose. Some printing errors here and there do not mar the overall value of the work. Considering the escalating costs of paper and printing, together with the fact that diacritical marks are used almost throughout the English portion of the book, the price appears to be reasonable. It is gratifying to note that the trustees of the Baug-e Iranshah Trust decided to sponsor the publication. It would be better if trustees of other trusts could arrange to emulate this example and decide to sponsor scholarly publications in the near future.

Of myths and men

Piloo N. Jungalwalla

The Epics of the Kings in Ancient Iranian Traditions by Arthur Christensen. Translated from the French by Farrokh Vajifdar. Published in 1991 by K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, 136, Bombay Samachar Marg, Fort, Bombay 400023. Pp: 77.

At the request of Zoroastrian anjuman abroad who ask for books on Zoroastrian history, legends and religion fearing their children would grow up ignorant of their cultural and religious heritage, the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute of Bombay commissioned Farrokh Vajifdar of London to translate, from the French, the 77-page booklet on *The Epics of the Kings in Ancient Iranian Traditions* by the Danish scholar, Arthur Christensen. This book contains the Ratanbai Katrak Lectures delivered by Christensen and published in Paris, 1934. Although this little classic is dated, it contains historical material not easily available elsewhere. Farrokh Vajifdar's English translation is both readable and enjoyable.

There are four chapters in all. Chapter I deals with the early epic and its religious and national background as found in the Pishdadian and Kayanian epochs. The exciting story of the first man and first king, Yama/Yima, is vividly presented. This is followed by the legend of the demon, Azhi Dahak, and his conqueror, Thraetaona. Next comes the story of the curly-haired, mace-armed hero, Kershasp, the Aryan Hercules. The exploits of Haushyana (Hushang/Hoshang) and Takhma Urupi, "master of men and demons who traversed the world from one pole to the other for 30 years on the back of the evil spirit who had been changed into a horse," (Yt 19.26-29) are related with gusto. Christensen omits the vivid detail about Shah Hoshang in whose reign there was such widespread happiness and plenty that "the plants and the waters laughed" (Yt 19 and *Shah Namah*). The description of the pre-Zoroastrian epics closes with a list of the various kings whose names are

prefixed by the East Iranian title, Kavi or Kava. Several of these are also found in the *Vedas*.

Christensen now describes the origin of man as told in the legend of the first human couple, Mashyagh and Mashyangh, born from a plant, the rhubarb. This itself germinated from the semen of the primordial giant, Gayomard, Gayamartan (gaya — life, and martan — death, in other words, mortal man). These legends and the sad story of the murder of Eray by his two brothers Salm and Tur are placed in the Arsacid period.

"The religious tradition never loses sight of the cosmic background," writes Christensen. "The eschatology is the period of convergence of the events of three milleniums between Gayomard and Zoroaster (Christensen, p.15)."

The legendary history of Iran enters a new phase in the Sassanian epoch culminating in the royal chronicle of the *Khvadhaya-namagh* (Khodai Nama), the Book of Sovereigns. This is considered a "literary monument of Iranian antiquity embracing the history of the Iranians from the beginning to the times of Khushro II (590-628) translated several times into Arabic during the first centuries of Islam (Christensen, p.15-16)."

The author points out that the "recollection of the Seleucids had been completely effaced, and the period of the 'tribal chiefs,' that is, the Arsacids, is only a void filled with a few names, the greater part of which are not historic (Christensen, p.19)." But he also points out that the "most famous from among the Arsacid kings appear disguised as the great vassals of the Kayanians (ibid.)." The first chapter concludes with a reference to the Sistanian kings and heroes, Dastan-Zal and Rustom.

Chapter II deals with the kings and heroes in the narrative literature of the Sassanian period. Various popular works in Pahlavi, translated into Arabic, are

cited. Among these are the *Zamasp-namagh* or the *Jamaspi*, a book of prophecies much loved by both Parsi and Irani Zoroastrians of an earlier day; the *Vision of Ardagh Viraz*, or *Arda Viraf*, so freely quoted from by our grandparents; and the *History of Yavisht-e-Fryan*, an early legend of the gnostic variety. The exploits of Ardashir I, founder of the Sassanian dynasty, embodied in the *Kar-namagh-i-Ardasher*, and the book on the game of chess, *Chatrang-namagh* or *Viz-arishn-i-Chatrang*, are both incorporated in the bulky *Khvadhaya-namagh*. Special mention is made of the *Ayadghar-i-Zare-ran* because it relates incidents from the war between Kava Vishtasp, patron of Zarathushtra, and Arjasp, king of the Chionities. Emile Benveniste, the French scholar, was the first to point out that this text is in verse.

At this point Christensen digresses for nearly six printed pages into the question of Arabic and Iranian prosody. What intrigues the reader is the casual mention of various stories and romances about which one wants to know more. For example, the *Drakhu assurigh*, or Assyrian tree, belongs to the type known as the "literature of controversy." The Assyrian tree and a goat argue as to who is superior. One is consumed with curiosity to know who won the argument: the date palm or the goat? The answer is in the *Journal Asiatique*, 1930. Here again Benveniste recognizes that the text is in verse and rearranges the whole accordingly. Three popular epics mentioned can be traced to the family of Vishtasp, the patron of Zarathushtra. These are: the *Paikarnamagh*, or the book of battles; *Rustom and Spandiyadh*; and the *Kay-Lohraspnamagh*, Lohrasp being the father of Kava Vishtasp. Among the many romantic tales of the period, Christensen selects *Vis and Ramin*, *Vejan and Manijagh*, *Frahadh and Shirin*, and the tragic story of *Rustom and Sohrabh*. The exploits of the popular general Vahram Choben, are embodied in the *Vahram Choben namagh*, but of the other popular general, who, like Vahram Choben, revolted against the king and usurped the throne, nothing remains except the title: *Book of Shahrvaraz and Khushro Abharvez*. By far the most loved and sung among popular heroes was however, Vah-

ram V, surnamed Gor, the onager or wild ass. He is a type apart, writes Christensen, "intrepid warrior, hunter without equal, irrepressible personage, toper, great lover of music and of all kinds of entertainment (Christensen, p.35)."

Besides Iranian heroes, there were others of foreign lineage. A Pahlavi book on Nimrod, king of Babylon, was translated into Arabic. Strangest of all, the "accursed Alexander" becomes, in the *Alexander Romance*, transformed into a glittering hero! In the Greek *Lay of Aristotle*, he is made fun of, a story much relished by the Europeans of the Middle Ages.

There were also free Pahlavi versions of a number of Sanskrit works, including the *Panchatantra* which was translated by the physician, Burzoe, under the title, *Kalilah and Damnah*.

Moreover, the "seven treasures" of Khushro II are commemorated in ballad and song by various Arab and Persian authors.

This chapter closes with a reference to a significant new type of hero, the common man of lowly origin, who rises to lead his people to overthrow tyranny and regain their freedom. Kavagh the blacksmith had sacrificed 17 of his 18 sons to the serpents of Azhi Dahak. But he refused to sacrifice his last and youngest son. Leading him by the hand, he marched into the throne room of Dahak, and shaking his fist at the tyrant, he raised his leather apron on the point of a spear vowing he would find Faredoon (Thraetaona), the rightful heir to the throne, and unseat the tyrant. He did so. For generations, the apron of Kavagh was displayed as the royal banner, the *Drafs-i-Kavayan*. Persian princesses vied with one another in embroidering it with pearls and diamonds, rubies and sapphires. Its jewelled splendor shone like the Sun as the Iranian arms marched to battle. It was this banner that fell into Arab hands at the Battle of Nihavand (641 AC). The Sassanian dynasty died never to rise again, except for a brief period in the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi.

We now turn to Chapter III which is devoted to "The Model King." The ancient Iranians had a very clear idea as to the duties of a model king as we see from the *Shah Namah*. He must rescue his country from an evil ruler, reorganize society ravaged by evil rule, and above all, he must shine as a spiritual guide, a sage whom his people can look up to. This conception of the good ruler was embodied, towards the end of the Sas-

sanian epoch, in a literary genre known as *andarz/handarz*, and *pandnamagh*. The word, *andarz*, is still in current use in Urdu. We ask a cook to put in a pinch of this or that into the dish he is preparing, "by *andarz*," meaning by approximation. This type of literature is characterized by pithy sayings, wise saws, and counsels given by a father to a son or by a ruler to his people on his deathbed or at a time of

The model king is he who makes the two strings of heroism and wisdom resound in harmonious accord

political crisis. About 15 *andarz* are extant in the original Pahlavi. Christensen chooses the *Karnamagh* which depicts the life and sayings of Ardashir-i-Pabaghan, the founder of the Sassanian dynasty, for discussion. He compares this text with the account of Ardashir Papakan as found in the *Khvadhaya Namagh*, the latter being more historical and in keeping with the inscriptions left for posterity by this king.

It is, however, of absorbing interest to read the *Letter of Tansar/Tosar*, the *Testament of Ardashir* and the three inscriptions of Karder/Kartir in order to relish *andarz* literature at its best. Christensen writes:

"Tansar is a historical personage. He was *herbadhan herbadh* or supreme chief of the fire-temple officials under the reign of Ardashir. It is he who on Ardashir's orders, having gathered together the scattered texts of the *Avesta*, made a revision of these which were then made canonical (Christensen, p.43)." A cursory analysis of Tansar's *Letter* follows together with a few quotations from the *Testament of Ardashir*. Although Karder was also *herbadhan herbadh* like Tansar, and followed him, and was equally powerful, nothing is said about his three inscriptions as these were being studied at the time of writing (1934). Mention is made, however, of the *Pandnamagh of Vuzurghmihir* of which a Pahlavi text exists. The chapter closes with a brief reference to three extracts on "the science of weaponry." The first extract deals with military strat-

egy in battle, the second concerns archery and the third describes the best way of striking the ball with a stick in the game of polo.

Chapter IV, the concluding chapter of this little booklet, deals with the royal legends as found in the Greek writings of that age. Herodotus, Ctesias and Xenophon are discussed. Legends, such as that of Zariadres (Zarir, brother of Kava Vishtasp) and Odatis (Hudata), based on the love story of Kava Vishtasp and Katayun, daughter of the King of Greece, as related in Firdausi's *Shah Namah*, are also mentioned, not omitting the *Romance of Esther* and the *Book of the Wisdom of Ahikar*. These last two may be read in the *Jewish Apocrypha* in the chapters on "The Book of Esther" and the "Book of Tobit."

In the half-page conclusion which ends the book under review, Christensen makes two observations. Almost all the historical legends reflect the monarchic spirit in the epic and narrative literature of ancient Iran. In the Middle Iranian period, the feudal spirit becomes attached to the epic literature. The Iranian epic of antiquity is compared to "a musical instrument with two strings which are heroism and wisdom. The model king is he who makes the two strings resound in harmonious accord (Christensen, p.77)."

Although this work is of extreme value to all Zoroastrians who want to know something of their cultural heritage, it is more than 50 years out-of-date. May I suggest there be a follow-up in two further publications:

- A volume containing *The Letter of Tansar*, translated into vivid, idiomatic English, with an excellent introduction, by Dr Mary Boyce, published in Rome, 1968, under the auspices of UNESCO and the Rome Oriental Series; the *Testament of Ardashir*, as printed in the *New Cambridge History of Ancient Iran*, general editor, Ehsan Yarshater; and the three inscriptions of Karder of which the first two were translated into French by Made-moiselle L. Chaumont and Professor Philippe Gignoux; the third into English by the American scholar, G. C. Cameron. All three were published in the *Journal Asiatique*, 1960; 1972; 1978. They should be in English in order to be widely read.

- The second volume could be devoted to the legends and romances mentioned by Christensen.

What a treasure house of history and legend, heroism and wisdom, the two proposed volumes would be.

Runaway Raj

Burjor K. Karanjia

Once Upon a Raj by Gustasp Irani. Published in 1992 by Disha Books, an imprint of Orient Longman Limited, Kamani Marg, Ballard Estate, Bombay 400038. Pp: 164. Price: Rs 50.

In the story of India's independence movement, princely India is a closed and somewhat irrelevant, but by no means forgotten, chapter. The image, albeit distorted, in the public mind is of eccentric, high-living, low-thinking rajahs and their whimsical ways, of bejewelled wives in teeming harems pining for the royal summons, of the vulgar display of wealth and the pursuit of pleasure for pleasure's sake, of neglected and submissive subjects, of court intrigues, interstate blunderings and shady shindigs.

Gustasp Irani in his extremely readable *Once Upon a Raj* pulls this image sideways and all ways, further distorting it, even beyond the bound of credibility, much to our merriment. Here we have a rajah whose world revolves round his mango orchard; whose main consultant or, rather, oracle in affairs not only of state but of the heart is his pet Poodles. And there are rival princes who take the line of most resistance by begging for their states to be invaded — on a commission basis too, the commission being one quarter of the invaded state's revenue — so as to enable them to evade their responsibilities to their subjects. Bearers of ill tidings are made to swallow the paper bearing these and seem to thoroughly enjoy these repeated feastings.

There are elephant chases, tiger hunts, gypsy caravans, palace alligators, the Indian rope trick thrown in and, to add a touch of suspense, a stolen diamond, and of farce, a weighing-in-gold ceremony. The Prince to be thus weighed prior to his wedding is made to wear special accessories so that he is several times heavier than normal. Frowning on all this and in no hurry to get married, the Prince is consoled by his father, the Rajah: "As the Grand Vazir says, it will cheer you out of your depression. It will also keep the peasants in control; prosperity breeds

discontent. Right, Poodles?"

The plot revolves round Prince Vir blackmailed into returning to India from London, leaving his heart very much behind, to play the groom in a marriage of political convenience. Prince Vir, desperate to escape the fate decreed for him by,



While smiling helped the average person's appearance, it did nothing for him

believe it or not, his father's pet Poodles, hits upon the ruse of stealing the Chashme-e-Noor diamond, second in value only to the fabled Koh-i-Noor, and then restoring it to its rightful owner, winning as reward permission to forfeit marriage and return to London.

The best-laid plans o' mice and men

gang aft agley — in the instant case, largely due to the machinations and blunderings of: Inspector Hawkins who is quite a caricature of the British official in India; the Grand Vazir, henpecked, to whom intrigue is the breath of life; and Prince Bhayankar who, true to his name, is an overblown character with a tally of 250 tigers killed and a fondness for beating up human beings.

Irani enjoys himself poking fun at his characters. "Early in his childhood," he writes, "the Grand Vazir had accepted the fact that while smiling helped the average person's appearance, it did nothing for him. He could never forget the day he smiled in front of a mirror and frightened himself. His great big nose hung like a great big axe over two great grinding saws that were his teeth. Then and there, the Grand Vazir had decided to spend the rest of his life without smiling. But accidents do occur. The Grand Vazir smiled, and Prince Vir turned away quickly..." The sight of Prince Bhayankar "normally affected his prey in two ways. One, the hapless victims froze like rabbits caught in the glare of headlights, and meekly awaited their doom. Two, they responded as Prince Vir did, and urged their feet on to greater effort."

In this bizarre world, even elopements take place in princely style: "To be fair to the Princess, this was the first time she had eloped, and she was not well versed in the subtleties of such an adventure. She wanted her entire wardrobe and every member of her royal retinue with her. She also insisted that all her four mothers be present at the wedding ceremony. The final compromise arrived at was four large wooden chests of the princess's clothes and personal effects, four maids in attendance and time enough for the runaway bride to bid farewell to her four mothers." Their exit, comments Irani, is "as secret as a blast of trumpets."

Irani's narrative skill makes up for the sometimes stilted dialogue and even for the characters who are so caricatured that they tend to be one-dimensional. But then, they have a single purpose to serve, and they serve it well, carrying the narrative lightheartedly forward to its convenient end with Prince Vir returning to London, a bachelor still and eligible. All in all, a delightful romp, at a laugh a page.

This month *Parsiana* publishes the intercommunity marriages registered both at Old Customs House and at the MHADA office in Bandra (East) for the eight-month period of May to December 1991. Civil marriages between Zoroastrians have also been listed. However, names that could not be identified as Zoroastrian have been omitted from the list.

According to the registers scanned, one intercommunity marriage, registered in Bandra in March, has been reregistered at the Old Custom House in December. *Parsiana* carries the marriage again.

There were five civil marriages between Parsis as against 32 intercommunity marriages registered at Old Customs House and one civil marriage against 19 intercommunity marriages registered at the MHADA office.

In the case of marriages between Zoroastrians in Bombay, the brides ranged in age between 22 and 36 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 26 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 25 and 41 years, averaging at 29 years.

As against 30 births in January recorded in these columns, there were 94 interments at doongerwadi. Twenty-nine Zoroastrians succumbed to heart disease, 12 of them being over the age of 80. Other killers in order of intensity were old age/general debility (12); pneumonia/lung disease (11); brain disease (10); diabetes (seven); cancer (five); hypertension and kidney failure (three each); tuberculosis, dehydration, nervous disorder and septicemia (two each). Asthma, bronchitis, hypovolemic shock (sudden fall in blood supply), myasthenia gravis (marked fatigability of voluntary muscles) and gastro-intestinal obstruction claimed one victim each. The oldest to die were two 95-year-old men; the youngest, a youth aged 22.

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

mans 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. In the breakup of deaths according to illnesses, especially of the elderly, death is often due to a combination of several diseases.

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

ALLAHABAD

Died

Shenaz Homi Dandiwalla (30) on January 25, 1992

BOMBAY

Born

A boy, Ashish, to Zarine and Phiroze Taraporewala; November 20, 1991

A boy to Maharukh and Hoshang Katki; December 31

A girl to Kashmiri and Sarosh Bala; January 2, 1992

A girl to Neeta and Kurush Irani; January 2

A boy to Farzaneh and Abadan Irani; January 3

A boy to Tehmi and Burzin Morris; January 3

A boy to Rukhanda and Rohinton Italia; January 5

A girl to Roshan and Aspi Kasad; January 5

A boy to Ruzbeh and Daraius Mehta; January 5

A girl to Anahita and Faraz Joshi; January 6

A girl to Havovi and Farokh Patel; January 7

A boy to Firuza and Cyrus Amaria; January 9

A girl to Yasmin and Firdaush Laskari; January 10

A girl, Shahrinaz, to Viloo and Mehernoz Maloo; January 10

A boy to Mahanaz and Naozar Bhomisha; January 12

A boy to Shirin and Hormaz Mehta; January 13

A boy to Viloo and Vispi Tumboli; January 13

A boy to Rashna and Dinyar Rustomji; January 14

A boy to Dinaz and Mahiyar Balsara; January 15

A boy to Kerban and Rayomand Hira; January 15

A girl to Aneeta and Sanjeev Malhotra; January 21

A girl to Kashmiri and Garshasp Irani; January 22

A girl to Teshnumaity and Jehangir Irani; January 22

A boy to Shirin and Bomi Engineer; January 24

A boy to Shanaz and Homyar Limbuvalla; January 24

A boy to Feroza and Neville Bachana; January 25

A girl, Sara, to Navaz and Jehangir Daruvalla, sister to Yazad; January 25

A boy to Shiraz and Mehernosh Mehta; January 25

A boy to Meherzin and Cyrus Turel; January 25

A boy to Hutoxi and Ruzbeh Bhagwagar; January 27

A girl to Jacqueline and Berzis Marolia; January 27

A girl, Nilufer, to Rashna and Khushroo Amroliwalla; January 29

Married

Maniz Zend and Ashok Bhimra; May 19, 1991

Tanaz Keki Kotwal and V. Suresh; May 25

Tina Minocher Mistri and Himanshu Kishore Sutaria; May 26

Perviz Keki Khambatta and Sabyasachi Sunilkumar Banerjee; May 27

Minnie Premkumar Madan and Hormazd Keki Kotwal; May 27

Bakhtawar Sam Hiloo and Kartikay Saini; June 2

Soonu Homi Pavri and Kaiomarz Firoze Mistri; June 7

Shireen Adi Master and Kayomerd Eruch Cooper; June 20

Amrita Gopalkrishnan Nair and Sorab Darabsha Ghaswalla; July 4

Afrid Homi Bulsara and Farhad Jehanbux Bhadha; July 6

Kavita D. Jethwani and Burzin Jal Somandy; July 10

Zarin Guzder and Thomas Julius Miller; August 4

Shahnoor Jamshed Sumariwalla

and Mehernosh Rustom Mehta; August 5

Jasmine Keki Dolasa and Dharmesh Kirit Mody; August 8

Rashida T. Vapiwala and Ronnie J. D'Souza; August 14

Hoofriz S. Mistri and Gyanendra Varma; August 14

Nargis Boman Khavar and Pradeep Ajit Gidwani; August 21

Shashikala Ramchandra Jadhav and Marazaban Ardeshtir Jafarabadwala; August 29

Agnes Cecelia Williams and Faredoon E. Billimoria; August 30

Mazarene Jimmy Bagwalla and Abdul Aziz Ibrahim Memon; September 1

Shireen R. Kermani and Vivek Narain Mathur; September 7

Neepa Viren Kapadia and Heinz Firoze Mirza; September 8

Sobeen Russi Doctor and Piroj Maneck Elchidana; September 16

Cashmira Eruch Jhabwalla and George Manoj John; September 19

Tanaaz Bejon Baldawala and Sanjay Gopal Keswani; September 20

Margaret Chang and Kersi Maneckshaw Vaid; September 25

Firuza Jal Shroff and Sunil Hasha Bada; September 26

Shakuntala S. Gamadia and Nadir Bhikhaji Karanjia; September 27

Rashida Taherbhai Burmawala and Astad Ardeshtir Ravji; October 1

Yasmin Vasi and Ronald Netto; October 3

Sophia Andrade and Cyrus Savak Kapadia; October 4

Farida Patel and T. J. Venkateshwaran; October 21

Zarine Lord and Sanjay Jasjit Singh; October 25

Priscilla Philomena Sequeira and Kersi S. Bamboat; November 1

Savita P. Waghela and Neville Godrej Hathiram; November 11

Ruby M. Daruwalla and Iqbal Salehbhai Kapasi; November 11

Dipika Dasgupta and Rohinton Sorabji Kharwanwala; November 11

Adriane Bredemeyer and Dallas Tehmul Todywalla;

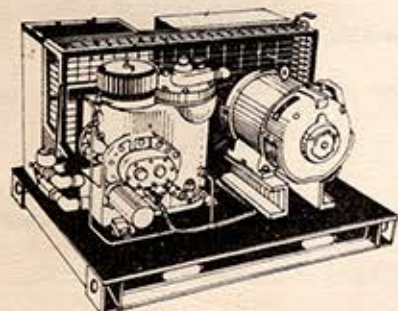
- November 16
Vera Burjor Mithaiwala and Lancelot Ronald Cardoz; November 20
Kermeen Phiroze Chhapkhanawalla and Ashish Jayant Sonak; November 23
Shernaz R. Raina and Homiyar Tehmuras Bhungara; November 24
Roshan Noshir Todiwalla and Arun Balakrishna Rane; December 1
Meenaz Jal Nagpurwalla and Rossano S. P. Pereira; December 4
Daisy Edulji Padshah of Navsari and Adi Behram Sethna; December 7
Binaifer Fali Gordon and Prakash Shyamlal Devidasani; December 9
Pinky Ronny Mistry and Samir Rohit Maniar; December 9
Zarin Dadi Sarkari and Prakash Chetan Mirchandani; December 9
Delna Keki Golwala and Sanjay Ramesh Sanghavi; December 18
Shenaz Dinshaw Patel of California and Aspi Fareedon Bharucha; December 20
Armin Fareedon Mehta and Marzban Rustomji Bilimoria; December 21
Maharukh Ardeshir Taraporwalla and Ramakrishnan R.; December 22
Judith Shirley Fernandes and Farad Darayus Bhatena; December 23
Ashish Noshir Kermani and Zubin Pilloo Jaorewalla; December 23
Shiraz Dara Bhesania and Adil Ratanshaw Kandawalla; December 24
Kerman Jal Hansotia and Nitin Murlidhar Nadkarni; December 24
Goolrukh Minocheher Damania and Atul Anand; December 26
Khurshid Boman Mistry and Pervez Nadirshaw Bhesania; December 26
Kermeen Bomanjee and Ardendu Bose; December 27
Soonnu Dadi Bharucha and Dinshaw Jamshed Katrak; December 27
Nisha Yashvant Mukatiwala and Zubin Kotwal; December 27
- Dolores D'Silva and Homiyar Dadiba Malesra; December 27
Swaran Kanta Kapoor and Hoshi M. Tavaria; December 27
Dipa Rameshchandra Shah and Minocher Eddi Darukhanawalla; December 28
Shiraz Dara Mehta and Rohinton Dali Tampal; December 28
Jasmine Gustadji Shroff and Darayus Sam Mistry; December 29
Tanveer Taher Nataiwala and Zubin Russi Balaporia; December 30
Pauruchisty Darayus Batty and Zarir Faramroze Vaid of Valsad; January 1, 1992
Ashraf Gushatb Bastani-Allahabadi of Poona and Farokh Jamshid Falahati of London; January 3
Dhun Godrej Illava and Behram Edulji Palamkote; January 3
Dilnavaz Minoo Bilimoria and Vistasp Cavasji Mehta; January 5
Kashmira Rusi Choksy and Jimmy Barjor Gandhi; January 6
Mithra Esfandiar Atashband of Hyderabad and Behram Framroze Kerawalla; January 7
Beroze Pervez Mistry and Firoze Adil Mistry; January 10
Sharmin Minoo Patel and Khushroo Burjor Moudawalla; January 10
Beroze Homi Taraporewalla of Navsari and Behram Minoo Vakharia; January 10
Anahita Marzban Umrigar and Firoze Jehangir Mondegar; January 11
Rashna Noshir Bhandara and Camaji Farrokh Cama; January 12
Jerroo Shiavax Chavda and Noshir Russi Khambatta; January 13
Maharukh Jehangir Balsara and Homi Dara Doctor; January 14
Pooraan Farrokh Cama and Jamshed Jal Bunshah; January 15
Viloo Keki Kanga and Khusrui Shiavax Mistry; January 15
Perlene Nozer Daroga and Rustom Boman Irani; January 16
Kashmira Hoshang Mohta and Mehernosh Firoze Kalwachwala; January 18
- Roxana Homi Kaka and Aspi Adi Mirza; January 18
Arnaz Homi Mehta and Cyrus Firoze Panthaki; January 18
Pervin Burjor Bharucha and Khushroo Kali Wadia; January 19
Hutoxy Fali Jokhi and Percy Kaikhushroo Daver; January 21
Meher Dara Wadia and Tehmasp Homi Parekh; January 21
Parizad Edul Punegar and Yazdi Jehanbux Pesuna; January 23
Zarin Rustam Karanjia and Bomi Firoz Daruwala of New Delhi; January 24
Jasmine Jehangir Irani and Yezdi Homi Sarkari; January 26
Persis Pesi Udwadia and Firdosh Adar Sidhwa; January 26
Pervin Dali Dastur and Shahrugh Sirus Irani; January 28
Rukhsar Jal Bhagat of Surat and Vispi Darab Mistry; January 28
Rashne Soli Dadyburjor and Mahiyar Dadi Panthaki; January 28
Feruza Phirozshaw Kamdin of Ahmedabad and Yezdi Phiroz Elavia of Rajpipla; January 30
- Died
Hilla Rustomji Panday (70), residing at 4/4, 24, Hughes Rd, 400007; December 31, 1991
Najamai Hormasji Bharucha (90), E/5, Nowroz Bag, Lalbaug, 400012; January 1, 1992
Homi Jehangirji Damania (68), Union Bldg, 54, Sleater Rd, 400007; January 1
Cavas Nesserwanji Balsara (65), 41, Shandilya Villa, Worli Sea Face, 400025; January 2
Piroz Nawaraji Bharucha (56), X-40/10, Godrej Qrs, Vikhroli (E), 400079; January 2
Goolbai Nariman Bhiwandiwalla (86), E, Bhiwandiwalla Terr, Dhobitalao, 400002; January 2
Kati Bijou Nadirshaw (75), Wimbridge Hse, 20/D, N. Bharucha Rd, 400007; January 2
Soli Cawasji Sarkari (80), Nasserwanji Bldg, 157, Alibhai Premji Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; January 2
Ezem Noshir Billimoria (22), Piroja Mans, Sir Ratan Tata Rd, Tardeo, 400034; January 3
Alamai Burjorji Bulsara (86), Crasto Bldg, 294, Dr Cawasji Hormusji St, 400002; January 3
Bahadur Jehangirji Bulsara (58), 276, Princess St, 400002; January 3
Edi Phirozshaw Dharwar (76), 86, Devchhaya, Near Haji Ali, Tardeo Rd, 400034; January 3
Sam Munchershaw Randelia (69), E/7, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculia, 400027; January 3
Khorshedbanoo Jalejar Writer (90), Hormaz Baug, Kashinath St, 400034; January 3
Shirinbai Ardeshir Dotiwala (88), A/4, Fair Field, Ramakrishna Mission Rd, Santacruz, 400054; January 4
Jal Phirozshaw Bhesania (85), L.I.C. Bldg, 327, Frere Rd, Fort, 400001; January 5
Bomanshaw Ruttonshaw Talati (78), 16, Dubash Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; January 5
Eruch Peshotan Dastoor (86), Sunbeam, S. V. Rd, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; January 6
Boman Vafadar Irani (40), Mohanlal Mehta Market, Grant Rd, 400007; January 6
Jehangir Sheriar Irani (44), 401/B, Dilip Apts, Gunpowder Rd, Mazgaon, 400010; January 6
Edulji Fareedonji Madon (82), 668, Desai Bldg, Katrak Rd, Wadala, 400031; January 6
Jimmy Behram Malegam (68), 43, Photographer's Lodge, Rest Camp Rd, Deolali, 422401; January 6
Nowroz Sorabji Panthaky (85), 81, Kapadia Hse, Trinity St, Dhobitalao, 400002; January 6
Dolly Homi Marker (70), Soonaiji Ter, Gwalia Tank Rd, 400036; January 7
Noshir Pirozshaw Patel (64), Ready Money Bldg, 786, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; January 7

Kaiki Edulji Dubash (82),
B, Yusuf Mans, Khetwadi Back
Rd, 400004; January 8
Jal Jehangir Khodaeji (79),
27, Station Ter, Sleater Rd,
400007; January 8
Nergis Keki Mogal (67),
271/A, Shanti Sagar Annexe,
Carter Rd, Bandra, 400050;
January 8
Burjor Kaikobad Mory (55),
A/5, Illava Bldg, Mori Rd,
Mahim, 400016; January 8
Jerbanoo Cawasji Patel
(Poonjiajee) (85), Rustom Mans,
562, Lady Jehangir Rd,
Matunga, 400019; January 8
Khurshed Beharamgor
Anklesaria (74), 153,
Jaswanti Niwas, Mody St, Fort,
400001; January 10
Maneckji Jehangirji Contractor
(88), 5/C, Meherzin,
Wodehouse Rd, Colaba,
400005; January 10
Dhanbai Nawroji Daruwala
(62), 5/153, Vijay Ngr,
MHB Bandra (E), 400051;
January 10
Soli Framroze Engineer (72),
20, Il-Palazzo, Little Gibbs Rd,
Malabar Hill, 400006;
January 10

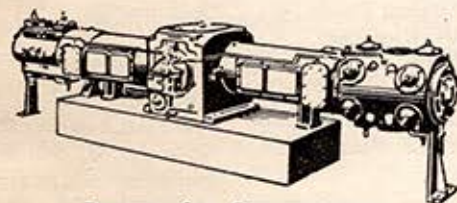
Bomi Rustomji Zaiwala (54),
5/19, Panthaki Baug, Andheri
(E), 400069; January 10
Rustom Hormusji Irani (67),
Room no 15, 189, Hirabai Petit
Bldg, Opp Grant Rd Stn,
400007; January 11
Piroja (Pillamai) Minocher
Mehra (75), 171, Baj Bldg,
Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004;
January 11
Goolbai Rustomji Mistry (85),
T/6, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd,
400039; January 11
Piroja Minoo Press (77),
146/B, Patel Bldg, Lower Parel,
400013; January 11
Khurshed Rustom Balsara (80),
158/D, Hill-View, Hill Rd,
Bandra, 400050; January 12
Khurshid Soli Bamji (66),
Minerva Mans, Near Super
Cinema, Grant Rd, 400007;
January 13
Sorab Byramji Bharda (88),
B/7, White Rose, 4, Perry Rd,
Bandra, 400050; January 13
Ardehsir Kavasji Desai (74),
1402, Mazagaon Towers,
Mathar Pakhady Rd, Mazgaon,
400010; January 13
Banoo Dinshaw Mistry (84),
C/o Ms A. R. Poonegar,

51, Rubaik, 14th Rd, Khar,
400052; January 13
Jerroo Burjorji Umrigar (70),
Hormuz Bldg, Sussex Rd,
Victoria Garden, 400027;
January 13
Manie Noshir Wadia (79),
Hormaz Bldg, Sleater Rd,
400007; January 13
Phiroze Dinshaw Konkrawala
(64), 11, M. Sheth Bldg, 262,
Tardeo Rd, 400007; January 14
Dinbai Homi Shroff (87),
Sanjana Bldg, Forjett Hill Rd,
400036; January 14
Soli Meherjibhai Karva (68),
Pateti Block, 610,
Jame-Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny,
Dadar, 400014; January 15
Navajbai Navroji Bhathena
(76), Room no 14, X/107,
Pirojshaw Ngr, Vikhroli,
400079; January 16
Tehmina Phirozehaw Dubash
(90), E/39, Cusrow Baug,
S. B. Rd, 400039; January 16
Allen (Aloo) Naoroji Gandhi
(72), Avabai Mans, 788,
Jame-Jamshed Rd, Parsi
Clny, Dadar, 400014;
January 16
Homi Shavaksha Kapadia (68),
9, Oscar Apt, 17th Rd, Khar,

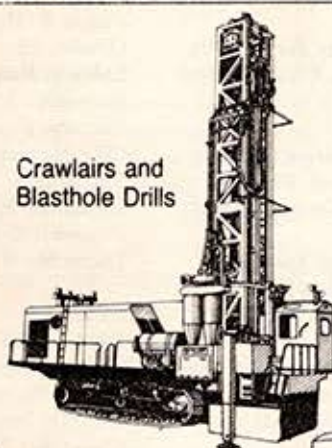
400052; January 16
Daulat Kaikhashru Shroff (77),
46, Dinbai Sethna Bldg,
Sleater Rd, 400007;
January 16
Sheroo Rustomji Tavadia (66),
Goolbai Sorabji Chinoy Home,
692, Dr Dinshaw Master Rd,
Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
January 16
Thriti Ardehsir Variava (82),
Boman Hse, Homji St,
Fort, Bombay 400001;
January 16
Dhunjishaw Rustomji Banaji
(73), D/35, Station Ter, Sleater
Rd, 400007; January 17
Dina Rustomji Bilimoria (74),
New Mistry Bldg (Dina
Mans), Balamram St,
Grant Rd, 400007; January 17
Dhunjishaw Dorabji Dastoor
(67), C/2 Petit Block,
Avabai Petit St, Balamram St,
400007; January 17
Aloobai Behramji Vakharia
(77), 26, Maison Belvedere,
107, Queen's Rd, 400020;
January 17
Shera Nariman Cooper (78),
680, Corner View, Katrak
Rd, Opp Wadala Market,
400031; January 18



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Erach Edulji Mehta (94), A/8, Mehta Bldg, Captain Clny, Tardeo, 400034; January 19
Maneck Nariman Mogrelia (56), 209, P. D'Mello Rd, Fort, 400001; January 19
Jehangir Dhunjishaw Banker (90), 614, Girgaon Rd, 400002; January 20
Goolbanoo Manekshaw Gandhi (92), R. Dalal Est, Bombay Central, 400008; January 20
Goolbai Minocher Jyotwalla (80), Moosa Manzil, N. Petit St, Grant Rd, 400007; January 20
Homi Pirojshaw Marfatia (79), 139, Bora Bazar St, Fort, 400001; January 20
Rati Jal Bapasola (83), Breach Candy Hse, Breach Candy, Warden Rd, 400036; January 21
Jer Homi Katrak (76), Bina Apts, Andheri (E), 400069; January 21
Pavesh Firoz Mehta (59), Room no 11, Prema Ashram, Haryali Village, Vikhroli, 400079; January 21
Piroja Jamshed Wadia (91), 3, Jer Mans, Off Turner Rd, Bandra, 400050; January 21
Peloo Boman Bugwadia (86), D/1, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; January 22
Nariman Ardeshir Lalkaka (95), B/17, Zaver Mhl, Marine Drive, 400020; January 22
Jehan Ardeshir Tamboowala (68), Mon Repos, 637, M. Joshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; January 22
Ratti Keki Mody (72), B. Yusuf Mans, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; January 23
Aloo Rushamji Pavri (72), H/15, S. B. Bharucha Baug, Andheri (W), 400058; January 23
Darabshah Cooverji Soparivala (83), A-4/37, Mehta Block, New Khareghat Clny, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; January 23
Najamai Nadirshaw Printer (96), 7, Ketty Ter, Sleater Rd, 400007; January 24
Hormusji Nanabhai Bamboat (80), 213, Enterprise Apts, Forjett Hill Rd, 400036; January 25
Arnavaz (Alice) Maneckshaw Cooper (90), Gemfrina, 630, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny,

Dadar, 400014; January 25
Pirojsha Dadabhoy Gazdar (77), 7/2, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; January 25
Kaikhushroo Dinshaji Randeria (89), 12, Petit Parsee Sanatorium, Cumballa Hill, 400026; January 25
Ardeshir Eruchshaw Unwalla (73), C/11, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; January 25
Banubai Pirojshaw Boocha (87), 8, Daruwalla Bldg, Tata Blocks, Bandra, 400050; January 26
Rusi Jal Diventry (54), 12, Lentin Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; January 26
Homi Bejonji Daver (63), L/10, Dalal Est, Lamington Rd, 400008; January 27
Jehangir Ardeshir Khambatta (86), 1, Baria Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; January 27
Dina Kawas Patel (70), 286/C, Phiroz Irani Chawl, Shopari Baug, Parel, 400012; January 27
Jehanbux Faramroze Anklesaria (70), Dhandadina Bldg, Jehangir Daji St, Grant Rd, 400007; January 28
Roda Faramroze Banker (80), 3, Sir J. J. Bldg, Chikalwadi, Tardeo, 400007; January 28
Banoobai Faramroze Gotla (94), 5, Kashinath Bldg, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; January 28
Sheriar Dinshaji Anklesaria (67), A-2/21, New Khareghat Clny, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; January 29
Boman Rustomji Bhandara (81), 27/A, Anand Ngr Hsg Soc, Mahim, 400016; January 29
Kuverji Barjorji Bhathena (95), 146/B, Patel Bldg, N. M. Joshi Marg, Lower Parel, 400013; January 30
Manijeh Godrej Mugasheth (77), 116, Monalisa, St John Baptista Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; January 30

CALCUTTA

Married

Rukshana Bilimoria and Homyar Gardin of Jamshedpur; December 28, 1991

Died

Homi Behramshaw Medhora,

husband of Jolly and father of Nowzer and Dilbur Pradeep Vora; December 10
Baby girl of Mr and Mrs Pervaz Kaikobad (9 hrs); December 14
Keki Rustomji Bulsara, husband of Dolly and father of Dinaz and Khurshed; December 24
Khorshed Narielvala, wife of Pesi and mother of Pervin Phiroze Tarapore; December 31

KHARAGPUR, West Bengal

Died

Soli Rustomji Kavarana, husband of Kuma and father of Dinyar and Deenaz Viraf Mirzan; December 23

SECUNDERABAD

Born

A girl, *Farah,* to Mr and Mrs Sam Bhagat; August 20
 A girl, *Farah,* to Mr and Mrs Neville Wadia; September 18

Married

Maya Adi Arya and Lim Homi Banaji; November 24

Died

Dina Fali Dittia (65); October 4
Burjor R. Mehta (78); October 15
Sohrabji Rustomji Karaka (83); November 3
Sohrabji Faramroze Mahwa (73); November 8
Sheramai S. Italia (77); December 30
Dhunmai K. Boi (92); December 30

SURAT

Died

Dinamai Pirojshaw Patel (81), Mohta Mohallo, Rustompura, 395002; January 13, 1992
Cooverbai Bhikhaji Elavia (80), Gam Illav, Via Kim, Dist Bharuch, 392001; January 23
Ketybahen Dinshawji Daruwalla (67), Par Mohallo, Nanpura, 395001; January 27

CHICAGO

Died

Roshen Umrigar; November 26, 1991

KARACHI

Died

Coomi Rustom Khursigara (59); October 4
Nusserwanji Hormusji Mistry

(71); October 7
Rustom Kaikobad Kakalia (85); October 12
Jerbai Byramji Kotwal (94); October 12
Mehra Sheryar Bhadha (79); October 14
Jerbanu J. Bajina of Bombay (80); October 15
Thrity Noshirwan Mistry (64); October 20
Rustom K. Limboowala of Bombay (83); November 22

MUSCAT

Born

A boy, *Zubin,* to Dinaz and Firoze Vandrewalla; July 4

ONTARIO

Born

A girl, *Nadia,* to Shahrzad and Sorab Irani; September 5

Married

Khorshed Balsara, daughter of Moti and Russi and *Darin Tooth,* son of Shirley and Clifford; October 19

SEATTLE

Died

Nariman Nawroji Guzdar of Calcutta, husband of Perint; and father of Rohinton, Pervaz and Yezdi; December 17

SYDNEY, Australia

Born

A girl, *Simoneil,* to Lalérookh and Jimmy Sarbh; December 9

TANAGAL, Nepal

Died

Jehan Hoshanji Contractor, husband of Dhan and father of Pasmiana, Yasmine and Hosi; December 26

CORRECTION

A girl, *Benaisha,* was born to Veera and Rohinton Mehta on November 22, 1991. It was mistakenly printed as twins (girls) in *Parsiana*, December, 1991. The error is regretted.

TOTALS (for this issue)

Born: Boys 20, Girls 17
 Married: Parsi 48
 Intercommunal 52
 Died: 121

Compiled by Roxana A. Mirza

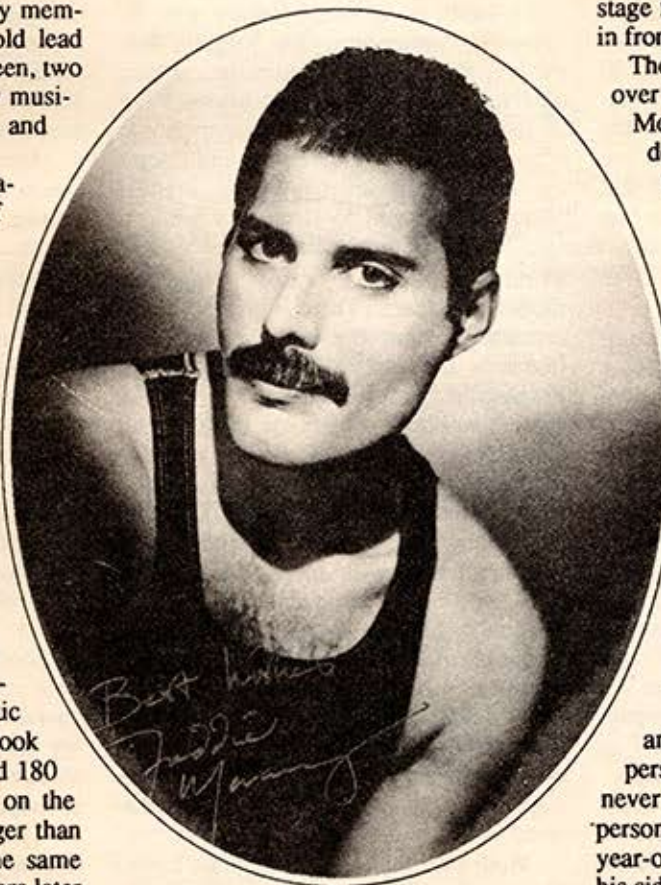
"Not since the murder of John Lennon has the passing of a rock musician aroused such extravagant expressions of popular grief," states *The Sunday Times*, London, which reports that scores of taxis switched off their 'For Hire' lights as they drove past the home of Farokh Balsara whom the world knew as Freddie Mercury. Floral tributes at his funeral, conducted according to Zoroastrian rites, were estimated to fill five hearses. Tributes poured in from all parts of the world including, among others, from Boy George, David Bowie, Elton John, Phil Collins and the Spanish opera singer Monserrat Caballe who is dedicating a song to him in her new album. Present at the West London Crematorium, Harrow Road, were the parents and family members of the flamboyant 45-year-old lead singer of the pop music group Queen, two Zoroastrian priests and his fellow musicians, Roger Taylor, Brian May and John Deacon.

Born in Zanzibar where his father worked as the head clerk of the British Court, Freddie's mercurial rise to fame started when he joined a group called Wreckage in 1971 and renamed it Queen. Recalls fellow musician May: "Even though he was penniless, Freddie always looked like a star and acted like a star." According to reports, the group got its first big break in 1973 when it was asked to fill in for David Bowie on the popular TV program *Top of the Pops*. In 1975 Freddie gave the group its greatest hit with *Bohemian Rhapsody*, a six-minute opus laced with operatic movements which reportedly took three weeks to record and featured 180 voices. Its stint as number one on the British popularity charts was longer than any other song in 18 years. The same song created another record 16 years later when it shot to number one on its re-release after Mercury's death on November 24, 1991. According to a report in *The Times of India*: "Elvis Presley, John Lennon, Buddy Holly and Jim Reeves had posthumous number one hits, but not with previous chart-toppers."

Bohemian Rhapsody also launched

Mercury's moment of truth

Gustasp Irani



"Even when he was penniless, Freddie always acted like a star"

what was to become music video when the song was picturised in order to spare the band the ordeal of performing it on TV during its extended stay on *Top of the Pops*.

Ten years later, in 1985, in 17 minutes, the Queen hijacked a world TV audience at the Live Aid concert. "Other artistes shambled on and did what they could. Queen rehearsed solidly for two weeks and did their theatrical best," states *The Sunday Times*. According to Bob Geldof who organized the concert to aid the famine stricken people of Ethiopia: "They were absolutely the best band on the day. They got the idea of playing for 17 minutes perfectly. They had the best sound, they played the best and it was the perfect stage for Freddie. He could prance about in front of the whole world."

The Queen are reported to have sold over 100 million records in 20 years and Mercury's assets at the time of his death at his four million dollar mansion at Kensington are estimated at \$ 58 million.

Music aside, Mercury earned notoriety for the wild costume parties he hosted. At one, a naked person popped out of a dish of raw liver served to the gathering. Guests to these parties came expecting to be greeted with the unexpected: dwarfs, strippers, and, on one occasion, waiters with only body paint. These parties were the showcase for Mercury's outrageous lifestyle. An avowed bisexual, he is reported to have had a string of lovers — male and female.

But for all his public flamboyance, Mercury remained a private person who, according to reports, never gave a proper interview. The only person he was reportedly close to was 36-year-old Mary Austin who remained by his side even after their romance ended in 1977. And for all the time the spotlight shone on him on and offstage, Mercury's past was shrouded in darkness; he did not even acknowledge his roots.

His uncle (mother's brother) Nariman Khory, a Bombay based industrial relations consultant, defends his nephew: "Rightly or wrongly, he believed that to

succeed as a pop singer it was okay to be black but not brown. So he did not advertise his Indian origin." Khory recalls what was probably Mercury's first public performance as a child. The family had gone for dinner to Bertorelli Restaurant at Worli and the live band had struck up *How Much is that Doggie in the Window*. Seeing Mercury humming along, one of the band members invited him to join them. While other kids might have cringed, Mercury got up on stage and sang. "After the song, he was all flushed and shy but while he was singing you could see that he had a stage presence even at that age," says Khory. This one flash of bravado aside, Khory remembers his nephew as a shy boy who was very aware of the fact that his front teeth stuck out of his mouth very prominently.

Buck tooth. That's what they called him at St Peter's High School, Panchgani, where he studied as a boarder or so says Mohammadi Dholkawala, his classmate and presently proprietor of Garden Hotel at the hill station. According to Dholkawala, Mercury was a quiet studious boy who topped the class till the eighth standard. In the ninth, he and some other boys formed a beat group and that year he failed. That was the last they saw

of him till his pictures started appearing in the Press.

Dinshaw Kapadia, Mercury's cousin and a lawyer residing at Dadar Parsi Colony, states that Mercury would spend his holidays with them. Kapadia remembers him as a very reserved and caring boy and believes that he retained these attributes despite the wild image he flaunted to the public.

This concern surfaced briefly before the end when Mercury, suffering from broncho-pneumonia, revealed to the Press that he was afflicted by AIDS. In his disclosure he stated: "I felt it correct to keep this information private to date in order to protect the privacy of those around me... The time has now come for my friends and fans around the world to know the truth and I hope that everyone will join with me, my doctors and all those worldwide in the fight against this terrible disease." The next day he died.

In death, as in life, Mercury was involved in controversy. Ms Virginia Bottomley, Britain's health minister, among others, hailed his heroism in his handling of the disease. Several newspapers ran editorials and letters praising and damning him. "More than anything Freddie Mercury belonged to Britain; a wink, a

quip, a stiff upper lip. And brave enough to suffer in silence rather than salve his soul with mass media mercy. This is one Queen, God will save," writes Julie Burchill in the *Daily Mail*, London. In the same paper, John Junor protests: "Heroism? What was heroic about Mercury's squalid, wildly promiscuous homosexuality, his sleazy procession of one night stands?"

Back in Bombay too, controversy plagued him. Relatives had arranged for his after-death prayers at the R. N. Rustomframa Agiary at the Dadar Parsi Colony. But a few days later, the Agiary trustees, in a letter to *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier*, stated that they had stopped all prayers as they were "misinformed by the relatives that he (Mercury) was a Parsi." Mercury's uncle Khory observes: "He may not have worn a sudreh or kusti, but how many Parsis settled abroad do? The point is he did not convert to any other religion. He was always a Zoroastrian."

Embroidered in disharmony in life and death, the paradox of Mercury was that his life centered around harmony — his music.

Mercury is survived by his parents Jernanoo and Bomi Balsara, and sister Kashmira.

"THINGS FALL INTO PLACE"

continued from page 30

of the Dadar Parsi Colony and the institution of the Ava Yazad *parab* functions — each an essay in creating community consciousness — avers Modi.

Escalating costs have rung down the curtain on the ghambars "because (we) haven't the finance if something goes haywire" and donations are declined because there are "lots of people with uncharitable minds." Besides, the Municipality now charges Rs 10,000 per day for the use of the Parsi Gymkhana grounds even when the Gymkhana levies no charge. "It wouldn't be possible (to pay) without pricing tickets at Rs 300-400" in contrast to Rs 20-25 in the earlier years.

But the ghambars showcased Modi's ability to organize on a large scale and the BPP roped her in twice as secretary of the World Zoroastrian Congress. Undertaking the secretarial work for all the committees along with joint secretary Ms Gool Tata, Modi's main concerns were the organizing of the evening functions, especially provision for catering, entertainment, etc. Modi feels that the Congresses achieved, albeit for a short while, "a oneness with the community

worldwide...People came together, rubbed shoulders. There was a feeling of camaraderie...but the high hopes I had (towards the end of the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress) that something more concrete would come of it, didn't happen." Modi was referring to the idea of forming the Inter-Regional Zoroastrian Congress Council (IRZCC) with permanent headquarters in Bombay to maintain liaison with Zoroastrian associations worldwide, build and maintain information on Zoroastrian demography, migration patterns, etc. "What I envisaged was a body like a world federation -- not a competitor to the WZO — with all associations joining hands to do what the community required on a worldwide basis e.g. standardization of religious education."

Modi sees the lack of religious knowledge reflected in the day-to-day problems of living — in the lack of truthfulness ("The majority of the applications for housing do not give the correct data"), the deterioration of the community's fabled work ethic ("Honest hard labor is unfortunately not there; people don't want to put things into the community pot"), the diminution of a sense of

caring. "Religion teaches you to look up to (and after) your elders. People used to really take care of parents and grandparents" adds Modi, contrasting it to the current state of affairs when people have no time to bother about such things. Chance statements reflected Modi's fond memory of her happy relationship with her parents-in-law. The interview with *Parsiana* was deferred while an aunt lay terminally ill in hospital.

Modi also helped the Youths' Own Union (YOU) at the time of some of their functions, particularly the navjotes of poor rural children that they used to organize. These too have become a memory for, as Modi asks, "Where are the children?" The aging of the community is evident in the functions Modi organizes: her helpers are almost all in their late middle age or beyond. Says Modi, "I have no access to the youth now."

Despite these institutional allegiances Modi has maintained grace and a decorous charm, working desperately against deadlines, smiling through her frustrations. In her own words, "All human beings have a state of development within themselves -- ready for one thing and not for another..."

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