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**Ishq
mera
mazhab hai.
Rasna Mera Drink
Hai.**



Yesterday at my school drama, I was
like Amitabh Bachchan as in 'Khuda Gawah'.
And everyone clapped and applauded.
And when I came home you know what
Mummy asked? 'So little Ustaad, what
do you want to drink?' You know what
I said? 'Ishq mera mazhab hai,
Rasna Mera Drink Hai.' And then
I drank up the whole jug of
pyaara Rasna...



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Parsiana

March 1993
Volume 15 Number 9

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Parsi calendar reform

In his letter "Moving with the times" (*Parsiana*, December 1992), Mr N. S. Mobedji has talked about the fanatical nature of the andhyarus churned out by the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute (MFCAI), Andheri.

Nowhere is this fanaticism more evident than in the adherence of many mobeds and high priests to a wrong Parsi calendar and their resistance to its reform. A unification of all the three Parsi Shehenshahi, Kaçmi and Fasli calendars would enable their New Year days to converge on the vernal equinox, March 21, when the length of day and night is the same within the tropics. I have already elaborated on this topic earlier ("Shall we unite in 1992?" *Parsiana*, November 1991).

The years 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995 are very propitious for effecting this change because on Jamshedi Navroze on March 21, it is Hormazd *roj* according to

all the three calendars. And yet Dastur Mirza is of the opinion that this unification can be effected only five centuries from now when not only Hormazd *roj* but also Fravardin *mah* fall on March 21 (*Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly*, April 12, 1992). This is what I call bigotry. The dasturs know that the Shehenshahi calendar is wrong with the Parsi New Year coming in different seasons every 360 years; yet they don't want to correct a mistake of their forefathers who forgot to add the Kabisa (intercalation of one month every 120 years).

The least the newly elected Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustees can do is to undo the past mistakes by effecting a common Parsi New Year on March 21. The change has to come. Zoroastrians in North America led by FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) are already moving in that direction. It would be better if the Parsis of Bombay be the leaders rather than followers of the change.

Dr P. D. SUNAVALA

Last week, I met a distinguished Parsi gentleman on his way to Israel through London. After explaining to him the necessity of having a unified Zoroastrian calendar to bring the diverse diminishing community together, he scratched his fat belly and made this flippant remark: "Some say if you have more than one birthday, you receive more than one present." Yes, in this tiny disintegrating community we have three dates for every religious event and not less than three birthdays for our prophet Zarathushtra. To ascertain credibility for our children, perhaps we should seek guidance from the Old Testament as well.

SHAHROKH VAFADARI
Surrey, England

"Doors closed to Darius"

Referring to the views expressed in the Readers' Forum by Cowasji Adenwalla, J. F. Shroff and Rustom Disawalla under "Doors closed to Darius," (*Parsiana*, November 1992), it is time that this community did some clear and logical thinking.

We Parsis are an ethnic group. Zoroastrianism is our religion. One is not synonymous with the other. We have a right, if we so desire, to preserve our ethnic identity; no one, who is not born a

Parsi, can become a Parsi. But, if any one believes in the divinity of Zoroaster, and wants to become a Zoroastrian, no one has the right to stop him.

God can never be the private preserve of a group of heaven-borne people. There were no Zoroastrians before Zoroaster, and so He did convert. The Achaemenians, despite their excellent record of tolerance, betrayed the original religious instinct of proselytizing, as did Darius with the Elamites, Xerxes with the Greeks, and the other Achaemenian monarchs with their non-Zoroastrian Iranian subjects. The Sasanian kings openly persecuted and converted the Jews and the Christians. The devout Khosrow converted the Turks, and Behram converted his Indian bride to Zoroastrianism. The above, is a statement of historical facts. No Parsi, however bigoted, can rewrite history.

A non-Parsi Zoroastrian can, therefore, be denied the use and advantage of funds and benefits reserved for Parsis. But such a one should not, under any law, be denied entrance to a temple, built for the worship of God according to the Zoroastrian faith. I, as a Zoroastrian, have walked into temples, churches and mosques, and marvelled on occasions at the sanctity and atmosphere of some of these beautiful places of worship. Needless to say that I have been a little ashamed and guilty that we deny our Hindu, Mohammedan and Christian brethren the right to enter our agaries.

It is said that a child born of a Parsi father and a non-Parsi mother can become a Parsi, and a Zoroastrian, but a child born of a Parsi mother and a non-Parsi father cannot ever be a Parsi or a Zoroastrian. Did our divine Prophet make this rule, or was it made by our priests and our punchayets? If so, who gave them the right to create, in the eyes of the just, this absurd act of discrimination? A child is much more a mother's than a father's. The identity of a child's mother is beyond dispute; one cannot say the same of its father.

Brave men like Ervad Burjor Pavri should be commended for performing the navjote ceremony of Darius Puz-Surti, and if Darius and the likes of such are denied entry into our consecrated places of worship, every just and right thinking Parsi should refrain from entering these

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places, remembering always that God exists where there is love and harmony and kindness, and not where there is hate and bigotry and discrimination.

If our community dies and with it our beautiful religion, I for one would lay the onus at the door of these sanctimonious diehards who are driving our children and our grandchildren away from our fold instead of welcoming them with open arms.

I am afraid that we, as a community, are getting very sick about all this, and that many of us are no better than the fanatics and religious vandals who have precipitated so much human suffering in this world in the name of religion.

Is it possible that some people may not be able to understand me when I say that sometimes God is very far from religion, and that very often those who profess to protect the so-called tenets of their faith, are not always speaking for God?

Dr HERJI SORAB ADENWALLA
Trichur

I have been following the debate on purity, ritual, desecration of our holy fire, etc. It seems that a certain section of our community often exhort another section to build their own fire-temples as has been done by the Jewish people.

However, if we look at the whole issue with impartiality and clarity, it would seem that the existing fire-temples, according to the very high standards of purity of the former, are already desecrated by the presence of the offspring of Parsi men married to non-Parsi women.

Hence, it would be much more logical and reasonable to leave these existing fire-temples for the worship of those who are not too rigid in their idea of purity and build new fire-temples for the worship of those who maintain that they are equally against the entry in our fire-temples of offspring of Parsi men married to non-Parsi women.

Ms D. MULLA-FEROZE

"The reenthroning of..."

This refers to the reply of the (then) managing trustee Ervad Burjor Antia of the C. B. Banaji Atash Behram to the rejoinder of Mr Adi Doctor ("The reenthroning of the Banaji fires," *Parsiana*, November, 1992).

Before the holy fire was shifted for the first time, the work of cleaning and painting of the building as also repairs such as replacing decayed rafters, corroded gutters and broken window panes,

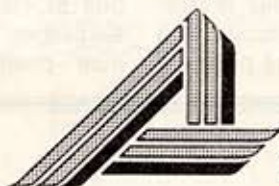
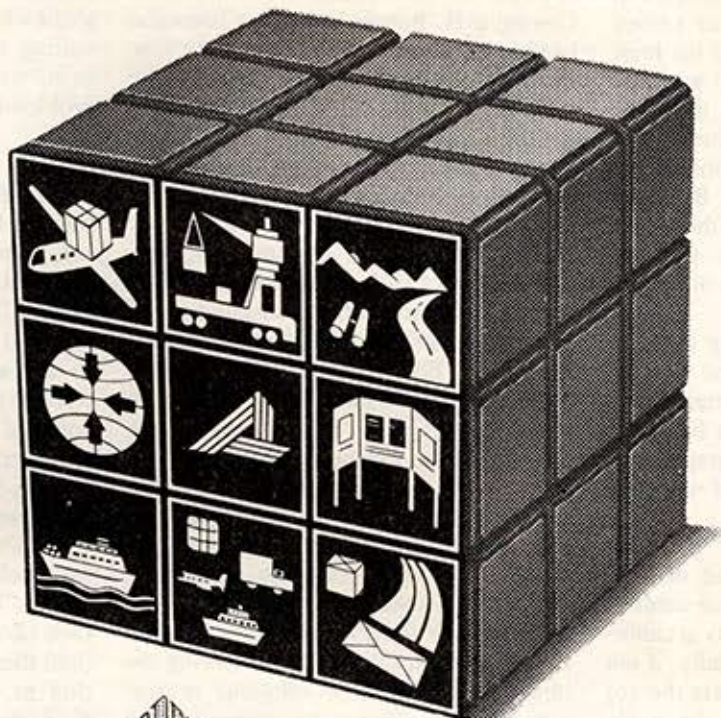
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plastering and many other jobs must have been carried out by Parsi workers and artisans alone.

Some two years back, oil painting of the prayer hall, having fairly high ceiling, adjoining the sanctum sanctorum of the Udvada Atash Behram was carried out by Mr Homi Acidwala and his men. Similar work worth Rs 75,000 was also carried out by them at about the same time at the Navsari Atash Behram. The work turned out was of professional standards. But the trustees of the C. B. Banaji Atash Behram, without giving these men a fair and complete trial, drew the conclusion that their work was not of professional standards.

No sincere efforts are being made to formulate a workforce of Parsi workers and artisans who could undertake such jobs at our agiaries and atash behrams. Instead they are being discouraged and their capabilities and quality of work are being run down.

Nobody could ever dispute the right of the trustees for repairs and maintenance of the building under their control, but they should not allow it to accumulate for 40 long years; periodically, if not the entire building at least parts thereof may be cleaned and painted so that walls do not turn black with soot.

Sheth Cowasji D. Adenwala, who presided over the function organized to celebrate the 143rd anniversary of installation of the Banaji Atash Behram, had stated in his presidential address that the founder of the Atash Behram Sheth Cawasjee B. Banaji had taken immense trouble for consecration of the holy fire: Parsi Zoroastrians were required to take *nahn* in one of the bathrooms constructed for the purpose and change into clothes brought from home before entering the Atash Behram building.

Secondly in the "Athornan-namun" by Mobed Meherwanji Khurshedji Behramkamdin (a Gujarati translation of the record in Persian of the installation of this fire under the leadership of Dastur Jamshedji Edulji JamaspAsa by his brother Dastur Minocheherji), it has been stated, "...this place is...for drawing the bounties of the yazatas..."

We have totally neglected the vision and the perception of the founder and the high priest who toiled so much for the installation of this religious institution. We have distanced ourselves so much from staunch observance of our religion as well as from the task of preserving the sanctity and status of religious institutions that an attempt by devotees who still value the old customs and practices

and insist upon them is regarded as a non-issue while the judgement of the charity commissioner is considered historic. It indicates that we have lost all sense of priorities. Unless and until we revert to the religion and do everything to the extent possible even under the prevailing circumstances to adhere strictly to it, we shall not be able to solve the problems facing the community.

SOHRAB NAVALSHAW PATWA

"In defence of the..."

Mithoo Coorlawala's "In defence of the 'Ahd-nameh'" (*Parsiana*, August 1992) does not get much support from the story of the Chichgars ("You have to leave!") reported under Events and Personalities in the same issue of *Parsiana*. They were expelled from Saudi Arabia on account of their religion. This is surprising considering that among those who fought for the Saudis during Operation Desert Storm were Zoroastrians, including women.

As Dr Mary Boyce observes in her latest book, *Zoroastrianism*, published in 1992, "It may have been from among their (Zoroastrian 'scholar-priests') ranks (and therefore not from the Islamic tradition as claimed by Coorlawala) that a suggestion came of a way to strengthen their community's vital but disputed

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claim to be a people of the book and hence exempt from the choice of conversion or death: that during the Vendidad service the text of the *Vendidad* should be read from a manuscript instead of being recited by heart. The intention may partly have been to take off this extra burden on priests' memories, relatively recently imposed; but it would also have justified a declaration by the Zoroastrians that they, like the Jews and Christians, read from a holy book at a regular act of worship. The usage maintained to this day, represented a striking break with tradition (pg 154)." She adds that the ancestors of the Parsis were not aware of this innovation before leaving Iran.

Boyce provides many references from the *Rivayats* to support her thesis (pg 160). On page 155, Boyce refers to an early Moslem ruler's order "that wherever in his territories any book of Magian authorship might be discovered it should be destroyed" because, per Boyce, "he considered such books accursed."

One wonders about the veracity and genuineness of *Ahd-nameh*, for, if it ever really existed, the Moslems would have governed themselves by it as they have the undisputed reputation to live by the dictates of their religious *farmans*,

perhaps more than any other people in the world and the Saudis perhaps would be glad to do so if one can only prove the *Ahd-nameh* to be a true and genuine tradition. Nevertheless, Coorlawala summarily disregards it as "a separate issue" and misses the truth in so doing.

Coorlawala seems to agree with Prof James Russell that the *Ahd-nameh* represents "later attempts by the conquerors themselves to create a tradition of Islamic toleration and the rescripts of Mohammed and Ali as 'late and inauthentic.'" And yet, in sharp contrast to this, she asserts: "they held only for the times in which they were written, i.e. during the lifetime of the Prophet Mohammed and the early Caliphs. In the years that followed... (it) was rarely performed" which seems hard to believe in view of the indisputable Moslem trait of faithfully following their doctrines, if such existed.

Moreover as Prof Richard Frye and Boyce point out, the earliest of Arab conquerors were regarded by us as Ahrimans and Devs (satans) and "other Arabs harassed Zoroastrians out of religious zeal. Fierce proselytizing is well documented for the north-east -- by the devout but ruthless Qutaiba (Boyce, p. 151)." Prof

Frye describes how Qutaiba thrice proselytized Zoroastrians after conquering Bukhara and how thrice they reneged on it. "The grand mosque was raised where a Zoroastrian temple had stood." For further information, see *Narshakhi, History of Bukhara*, translated by R. N. Frye, Cambridge, Mass, 1954, pp 20-21, 47-48.

Sir Jivanji Modi has long ago dismantled G. K. Nariman's assertion that there was no force used by the early Arab conquerors to spread their new faith in Iranian territories. Even though Zoroastrianism gained a legal status as a "book religion" later on thanks to the innovative genius of our dasturs to perform the Vendidad by reading from a book instead of reciting by rote, "it was unequivocally condemned as a false religion," per Wilfred Madelung of Oxford University (see his "Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran," *Bibliotheca Persica*).

Coorlawala says Salman explored Manichaeism and Christianity, which may be true, but he is also known to have experimented with Judaism. As a matter of fact, Vera Basch Moreen, who is an expert on this topic, describes him as "reputed to have been among many other things a Persian Jewish convert to Islam"

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(*Irano-Judaica*, II, 1990, p. 146).

I fail to understand the analogy Corlawala draws about the Dead Sea Scrolls which were not "so long suppressed" as she claims but lay hidden in caves until discovered accidentally just as the Achaemenian inscriptions.

I end with the hope that she will look at her own "petulant disregard for the facts of history" before accusing a savant like Dr Ali Jafarey. I for one have never known a scholar like him who knows Avestan, Pahlavi, Persian as well as Arabic texts where so much knowledge about our past still lies hidden. At best one has a right to state one's case and support one's thesis by providing reliable references and let the reader discern the truth of the matter.

Dr KERSEY H. ANTIA

Illinois, USA

"AIMZ: for rightful..."

Congratulations to Mr Berjis Desai and the founding members of AIMZ (Association of Inter-Married Zoroastrians). At last, it is a step in the right direction ("AIMZ: For rightful justice," *Parsiana*, August 1992).

There are many Zarthushtis who, surprisingly, like their religion, actually follow its doctrines and principles faithfully and are still proud to call themselves "Mazdayasni Zarthushtis!" As long as there are followers, and as long as these followers obey their religion, there is no reason for the religious doctrines to change.

On the other hand, if some do not want to obey and follow their religion, they should move out graciously and leaving the obedient followers in peace, start a new offshoot of any religion they please. They can make it as "progressive" as they choose, maybe even changing it every decade or century as the social and economic changes of the times deem fit.

We Zarthushtis, the followers of the Mazdayasni religion as taught by Asho Zarathushtra are practising a living religion. If we were not, would it have survived for these past thousands of years?

Mr Farrok Vajifdar (who criticizes Ervad Jal Birdy's beliefs on conversion) and the AIMZ founders and followers must know that in every school, in every classroom, there are some students who are disobedient. If they are disruptive, they leave the classroom and/or the school. Similarly, in every religion, there are some maverick, disobedient individuals. Religions based on Truth, do not

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have to be compromised and changed to suit society and its trends. Truth, if it changes, is no Truth! The very first precept the *Gathas* teach is obedience — obedience to the will of Asha and to the dictate of the immortal, omniscient soul. If AIMZ would like to disobey, they are free to leave and set up their own religion distinct from the Mazdayasni Zarthushti deen. They must come up with a different suitable name for their new progressive doctrine.

AIMZ mistakenly believes that Asho Zarathushtra converted people from religion to religion. The only conversion mentioned and taught in the *Gathas* is from angre mainyu to spenta, from evil to good. The other great religions and their followers are not dravand or followers of druj. Yasna 19 does teach that there are Pancha Ratus and Pancha Takaesha and they all manifested according to the will of Ahunavar. All religions teach the same truth.

If Mr Berjis Desai does not realize that by changing the name of a religion, one does not become spiritually more enlightened but by changing the evil mentality to obedience and enlightenment, one truly converts the evil from within, becoming a follower of Spenta (by following the religion of birth), then Mr

Berjis Desai and AIMZ must know more about Asha and Spenta than Asho Zarathushtra.

Ms PERVIN MISTRY
Ontario, Canada

"Attitudes of Parsi boys?"

I entirely endorse the views of young Javid Soli Canteenwala ("Attitudes of Parsi boys?" Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, October 1992).

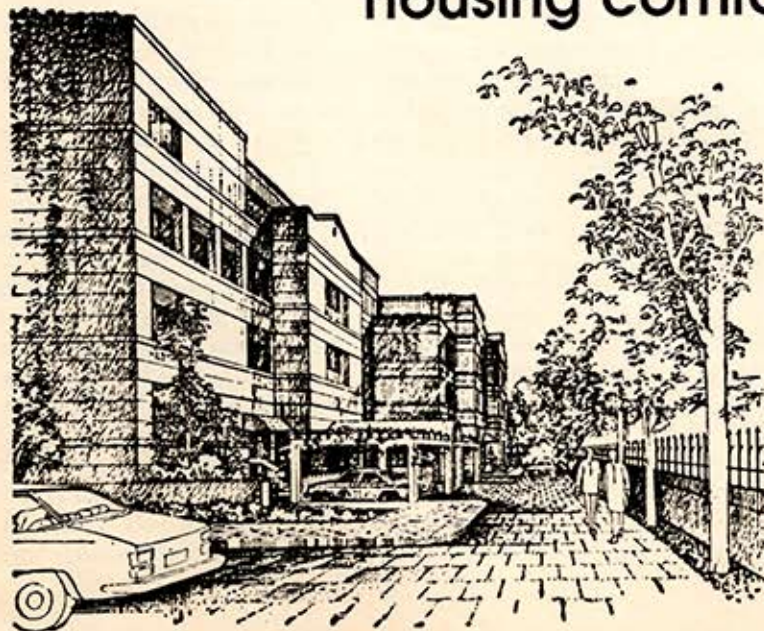
Javid is quite correct when he says that if a child is laid back and complacent, some part of the blame has to be attributed to his elders. Having been a mother for 19 years now, I do agree with him. Parents can certainly influence their children if they take the right action at the right time. It is sometimes pathetic to see young lives being wasted because of lack of parental ability — mind you, I say lack of parental ability, and not 'time.' When a child grows up into an aimless, uninterested adolescent, parents almost always bemoan the fact that they had no time — because in most families today both parents are working. When parents have the ability, they automatically make the time.

It is, however, natural that when both parents are working, they have less time with their children. But the time that is spent together is fruitfully spent — and a

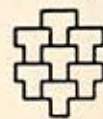
wise parent will see to it that the evening meetings are such that the children look forward to them. Besides, when the parents are involved with their own professions, and yet share their day with their children, the children condone their absence and, in fact, are unconsciously proud of their achievements. There is, in such cases, an unspoken pressure on the children to make good of themselves. Parents' way of life is the best example for a child.

Being on the subject of child-raising (which should be on the priority list of all wise parents, because it is the next generation we are grooming to face the rigors of an ever-changing world), it might not be out of place to share here what my mother-in-law had taught me when I was a new and young mother. She believed it was imperative to inculcate values in a child during the first seven years of his life — because those are the most tender and impressionable years, when the best (or the worst) things take root in a child's mind. Having followed her advice, and having taken the pains — especially during the early years — to make time for our boys (now 19 and 11), talking to them, reading to them, telling them about the innumerable episodes — sad, happy and wise — which have occurred

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through our day, always forwarding an honest view-point to every query — we have, I think, built a sound and lasting system of communication.

One other necessary criterion is to give freedom to children — with some guidelines. Freedom for the child is what green foliage is to the bird.

When the child gets a whiff of the exterior, which can be his when he so desires, his need for safety also increases. He learns to make decisions — and even if he errs, he is cautious not to repeat his mistake, because he knows he is on his own at that moment. The main point is that freedom is invariably coupled with responsibility — and the child emerges an independent, balanced and caring human being, appreciative of his parents' attitude towards him.

It is important that a child's viewpoint need not necessarily be our own. A child's thinking should always be accepted with due respect, because he is developing into an independent individual (not a xerox or mouthpiece of either parent, as many parents dearly want their children to be), and he should, in fact, be encouraged to have his own views. In such a case a child will mature well, and his respect for others' views will deepen.

Elders do play an important role in grooming a child to adolescence and adulthood and finally to choosing a career and a way of life for himself. When a child goes astray, it is not because "he was born that way," but because he did not receive the right guidance at the right time; because his elders did not have the know-how of dealing with him; because they could not say 'no' to him when they should have; and they abandoned him when they should not have; because they never taught him the meaning of accountability.

There is much potential in every child. It is for us to make him aware of his capacity, to open up this great magical world before his thirsty eyes, to guide him along the road, to help him to lead — not to lean, to enthuse him in rising to the great challenge of life.

Ms THIRTY E. BHARUCHA

The right to choose

"Now there is a religious revival in Russia, and educators... are searching for ways to give students an ethic to live by... to provide Russian students with enough information about 'the history of spiritual culture' to allow them 'to freely choose any religion they want.' The

problem is that Russian educators do not know how — or what — to teach about religion. Nor do they have the proper books and materials. To remedy these deficiencies, Aleksandr Asmolov, deputy minister of education, has invited a rainbow of religious groups — Muslims, Jews and Buddhists, as well as Roman Catholics, Russian Orthodox and assorted Protestants — to instruct his teachers and public-school administrators."

Nowhere does the above report in *Newsweek* (January 4, 1993) mention the Zoroastrians. Perhaps this is because we are still living in our own world. As far as I am concerned, Zarathushtra, not only proselytized but carried out conversion. He promoted his belief system. People have a tendency to mix up the meaning of the above two words due to the fact that Islam and Christianity used various means to achieve those ends. My dictionary defines proselytize as meaning to talk enthusiastically about a belief.

An interesting fact you may like to know is that the American Evangelicals are printing one million copies of the *Bible* into Russian for distribution in Russia.

At the Interfaith Council, I put forth a

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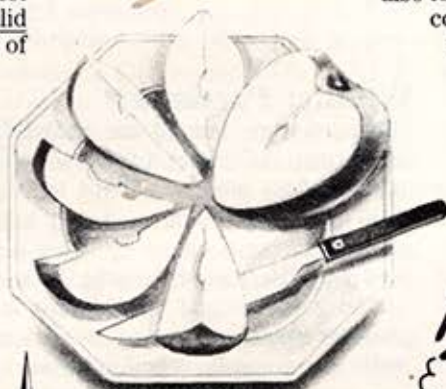
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Dattaram-BI 15/92

question on conversion to a rabi. He said, "The three main groups of Judaism which are orthodox, conservative and reformist accept new converts." He further said that the orthodox would turn down an aspirant three times but the next time around they will accept him. After the conversion, the new initiate is considered better than a born Jew.

In other religions such as Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism, a follower has a choice to join another denomination if he does not agree with the present one.

We, in a similar manner, need a couple of groups to go to when there is a disagreement or when we prefer to have an alternate choice. The type of unity we are talking about is not really unity but disintegration of our community.

BEHRAM DEBOO
Everett, Wa, USA

Help save the Uran dadgah

I have been reading with interest the articles in *Parsiana* on some of the lesser known agiaries in remote places. Recently, on a day trip to Uran from Bombay, we visited the Umrigar Fire-Temple in Mora Bunder (the ferry landing for Uran). This little dadgah has fallen on hard times, as the once flourishing Parsi population of Uran has gradually moved away. The holy fire is still being maintained by a lone family living on the grounds of the fire-temple. But hardly anyone visits there any more, even though once not too long ago parties of Parsis came to Uran and spent the night at the quiet 'sanatorium' on the temple grounds.

Now the buildings have fallen in disrepair. The roof of the fire-temple leaks badly and the pictures of Zarathushtra and other portraits are cracking and peeling because of the rain damage though young Kersi Behramsha Sui and his family work hard to keep the fire going and the buildings and grounds from decaying away.

I think this peaceful little fire-temple, so close to Bombay, once a favorite spot



The languishing fire-temple in Uran

for Bombay Parsis, deserves a better fate. Parsis from Bombay could once again take notice of it, visit the place and perhaps help restore it to a viable condition before it is too late!

I was told by Mr Sui that donations for firewood for this dadgah may be made directly to H. Sidhwa and Son, Firewood Merchants, Ness Baug Compound, Nana Chowk, Bombay 400007, who supply the firewood. Mr Sui can be reached by letter c/o Umrigar Fire-Temple, Mora Bunder, Uran, District Raigad, Post N-A-D, Karanja, 400704.

Dr NARIMAN B. MISTRY
Ithaca, NY, USA

Whither Parsiana?

The publishers and all the readers are aware that the issues of *Parsiana* are three to four months behind for quite some time. Very concerted and honest attempts of course must be being made but I can understand it must be difficult.

The practical and simple idea is to print the next issue as November-March 1993. Price it at Rs 12. For all practical purposes it is only one issue namely for all subscribers, advertisers, etc. But make sure your advertisers and subscribers are informed accordingly.

JIMMY F. KHAN

The Editor replies

Many years ago we had resorted to this technique, but it created a lot of problems with the subscription list as well as the advertisers. We then decided to refrain from following this procedure. The

post office would also take objection as we can only combine two issues into one and that too only once or twice in a calendar year.

We are trying hard to get back on schedule. But due to our limited resources and personnel it remains an uphill task.

Zoroastrian relief

In the midst of the general melee our less fortunate Zoroastrian brethren cannot be overlooked. Our lower and middle-class Parsis

are finding it very difficult to meet their daily needs and unexpected expenses.

Due to your patronage and financial help for the last eight years we've been able to meet their demands for necessities like blankets, linen, sudrehs, kustis, pyjamas and gowns, new and old apparel in very good condition and financial aid for weddings, navjotes, educational and medicinal purposes. Last year we utilized over Rs 50,000 for these purposes.

There is a sudden explosion in the price of all articles, especially the kustis. So we've started a kustis drive and funds permitting, we desire to distribute sudrehs also.

Cheques drawn in favor of Zoroastrian Winter Relief Fund, cash and money orders may be forwarded to Ms Kumi J. Daroovala at 16/1, Rustom Baug, Sant Savta Marg, Bombay 400027 or Ms Shirin N. Manekshana/Dr (Ms) Amy Gustadji, 8/526, Bamji Wad, Mota Falia, Navsari 396445.

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K. S. PATEL

Edited by Amavaz S. Mama

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Events and Personalities

The logic of the seasons

"It is a pity that a religion based on the worship of the divine immutable laws of nature — asha vahishta — continues to observe its high festivals in total variance with the laws of nature." Ervad (Dr) Jehan Bagli was addressing community members gathered at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute on January 28, 1993 on a rationale for unification of calendars.

A pharmaceutical research scientist by profession and a community activist — he was founder president of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec and founder editor of its prestigious quarterly *Gavashni* as also of the *FEZANA Journal* — Bagli has been researching the Zoroastrian calendars for the past many years. The convergence of the Hormazd roj on March 21 according to the Shehenshahi, Kadmi and Fasli calendars during the four years 1992-1995, lends urgency to arguments for calendar reform.

Today the festivals of harvest and returning home — Paitishahya and Ayathrima — are celebrated in February and March instead of September and October. The mid-winter celebration of Maidyarem is celebrated in June and the muktad, a commemoration of the dead just prior to the onset of spring and the New Year, is observed instead in August according to the Shehenshahi calendar. The Rapithwan gah, to be prayed during spring and summer when the sun is at its height in the northern hemisphere, is instead ritualized during autumn and winter and not prayed at all during the rest of the year.

Apart from its convergence with the seasons, the Fasli calendar harmonizes with the movement of the constellations, as Bagli's slides demonstrate. It has an inbuilt intercalation system — one day every four years — that is easy to adopt as it does not involve the life span of several generations. This enables the Zoroastrian rojs and mahs to consistently overlap with the Gregorian calendar year

after year (perhaps a sore point with those who enjoy celebrating two birth-days, anniversaries, etc.).

Bagli traced the inception of the Zoroastrian calendar from the Achemenians onwards. Their 360-day lunar calendar used to be intercalated by an additional month every six years to enable Navroze to coincide with the spring equinox, informed Bagli. The practice con-

By doing so the hitherto one-night ceremony of muktad, Rozan Fravardigan, was suddenly turned into a five-day observance, causing much confusion and distress to the devotional pastoral community, says Bagli. "Adding to... the confusion was the fact that ... no provision was made for intercalation and the religious year started to slip backward by a quarter day every year." Since the solar

year consists of 365¼ days, the quarter day has to be accounted for by an additional day every four



years, one month every 120 years or three months in 360 years.

By 510 AD the day of the spring equinox coincided with the first day of Adar instead of Fravardin and it was apparent to the people that something was wrong: all the ghambar festivals were out of tune with nature and King Kavad I announced an intercalation of one month every 120 years. "This rather impractical mode of intercalation, as expected, never worked," notes Bagli.

Only once, around 1150 AD, Indian Zoroastrians had intercalated one month — an additional Spendarmad — to bring Navroze back to the vernal equinox. This adjustment was not performed by the Zoroastrians of Iran.

The discrepancy between the calendars of the two communities came to light when Dastur Jamsap Vilayati visited India in 1720. The resulting controversy led to a portion of the community in India striking off the month of Adar in 1114 YZ to follow the Iranian reckoning, and they came to be known as the Kadmis. The "status-quoists" were called the Shehenshahis. "As no intercalation has been inserted in either of these since

THE WORLD ZOROASTRIAN ORGANISATION



FASLI, SHAHANSHAHI & KADMI CALENDARS
FOR 1993-94.



Bagli: in harmony with nature
Left: Calendar published by the World Zoroastrian Organisation (above) and the Cowasjee Foundation

tinued until Tansar, the Sasanian high priest, broke with the 1,800-year-old tradition to switch over to a 365-day solar calendar circa 226 AD. The five additional days were named after the Gathas.

that time, we have now two wandering calendars in time instead of one," notes Bagli wryly.

The Fasli calendar was the brainchild of K. R. Cama who in 1906 established the Zoroastrian Fasli Sal Society. While most local Zoroastrians were unable to overcome their emotional bias, emerging intellectuals in Iran like Kaykhsrov Shahroukh, Soroush Soroushian and Sohrab Kyanian were able to convince their brethren of the need to adopt a calendar which was in keeping with natural progression and hence in harmony with Zoroastrian rituals. In 1939 the majority of Iranian Zoroastrians adopted the Fasli calendar, calling it the Bastani or ancient one, says Bagli.

Bagli had presented his paper originally at the Eighth North American Zoroastrian Congress at Vancouver in 1992. Through an informal vote at the end of the presentation the 400-strong audience voted overwhelmingly (approximately 10 individuals dissented) that the community switch to a united Fasli calendar in North America.

The interest generated by the North American experience prompted the Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal (KZBM) to invite Bagli to speak on the subject and 1,000 persons braved the January cold and unseasonal rain to applaud him,

as informs KZBM honorary secretary Ms Toxi Cowasjee: "Everybody more or less wants to adopt the unified calendar but the stumbling block are the mobeds."

"Preceding Bagli's lecture was a tableau *Grandma, Tell Me Why?* on the days of the Zoroastrian calendar, produced and directed by Ms Farishta Dinshaw, who helps her mother and sister run The Friday School for Little Zarhostis," writes Ms Sunnu Golwala from Karachi. "As each child, dressed up as a day of the Zoroastrian calendar in befitting costume, walked past center stage, Grandma gave a brief explanation on the Amesha-spand or Yazata that the day represented."

"The little children's effort, Farishta's guidance to them, Dr Bagli's study on the subject and convincing presentation made most of us feel that the unified calendar can be a gift we could give to our posterity... (However) the Karachi mobeds do not have the authority to make the changeover, but need to seek approval of an elected committee headed by two Dasturs in Udvada." The next day, January 17, about 25 people met Dr Bagli informally in the hope of finding a solution to please all concerned. "Unfortunately nothing was achieved," notes Cowasjee though the following day Bagli visited the Mama Parsi Girls' School where he treated the Zoroastrian chil-

dren, the boys sent from the BVS Parsi School and Zoroastrian teachers, to a question and answer morning.

Since then the KZBM has distributed The Zarthushtrian Calendar 1362 published by the Cowasjee Foundation to every Zoroastrian family in Karachi and likewise in Lahore, Islamabad and Quetta, informs Cowasjee in a subsequent letter dated March 16. Accompanying the calendar is a simple questionnaire which requires a Yes/No response on "Do we need a unified Zarthushtrian calendar?" It also seeks to know the number of people in the family. If even 50 percent of the recipients respond to it, it "will give some idea of how people think regarding the one-time change," writes Cowasjee. In the meantime the Informal Religious Meetings is urging its leaders to "follow the seasons" and buy their Fasal Sal Diary.

A similar session in Calcutta was well attended and gauging by the substantial coverage in the anjuman's newsletter *Calcutta Gavashni*, fairly successful. Writes the reporter on a personal note, "The first thing I did after listening to Dr Bagli's lecture was to check out the sentiments of my very traditional mother-in-law. Her spontaneous agreement to right a wrong means she is prepared to sacrifice sentiment for logic at her advanced

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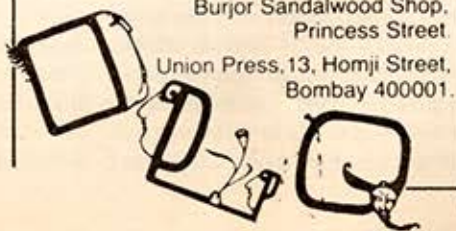
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age so that the youth may benefit."

The *Calcutta Gavashni* also published suggestions on how the change can be effected in easy stages starting March 1993: all new events like births, deaths, marriages be recognized according to the Fasli calendar; ditto for the ghambars and the Rapithwan *gah* jashan; old events like past deaths, etc be ritualized according to the Shehensahi/Kadmi calendars "until such time as they naturally disappear from the remembrance of the new generations." A questionnaire has also been circulated to elicit the community's opinion.

On his way back to the US, Bagli was to speak on the subject to audiences in London. Though *Parsiana* has received no feedback on his talk there, Shahrokh Vafadari has forwarded a copy of the multilingual pocket diary based on the Fasli calendar published by the Zoroastrian Welfare Foundation of London. The London-based World Zoroastrian Organisation has published, on the other hand, a combined Fasli/Shehensahi/Kadmi calendar for 1993-94. In both, the jashans and ghambars have been clearly delineated.

Though the conservatives in Bombay may continue to resist change at least until the high priests give a clear signal, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) is ready to accept the rational Fasli calendar as then BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla noted at the function. Bagli, who had had a discussion with Dastur (Dr) Hormazdyar Mirza earlier, noted that the high priest recognizes that something needs to be done and had said that "the community in North America could go ahead with the change because the climate there was comparable to Iran's."

Arnavaz S. Mama

Young Rathestars past 50

Over 600 deserving Parsis in Bombay were treated to a ghambar luncheon organized by the Young Rathestars (YR) in March 1993. "The idea behind this ghambar (was) to enable the less fortunate members of the community to celebrate Navroze with their family," informs Ms Silloo Mahava who serves on the association's managing committee. The sponsorship cost of this luncheon, Rs



20,000, was reportedly borne by Ms Dhunmai Mistry in memory of her late husband Minocher.

The next welfare project to be undertaken by the 50-year-old YR movement is the distribution of foodgrains to around 400 families during the monsoons. Funds permitting they will also distribute sudrehs and kustis to the poor members of the community.

Sudrehs and kustis the YR had also distributed to the poor Zoroastrians living in abject poverty in rural areas. Along with officials from the World Zoroastrian Organisation they visited nearly eight villages in Gujarat last September where they distributed provisions and toiletries.

Beneficiaries in rural areas helped by the Young Rathestars (above). Lawyer: discovers his own voice



Funds and utility items for such programs they gather through door-to-door collection drives. Among the association's other activities "to eliminate to some extent the poverty that faces so many of our community" is the organization of an exhibition cum sale where, by providing a market, Zoroastrians are encouraged to set up small businesses, states a press release. Blood donation drives are also a regular feature.

On the social front, camaraderie is promoted among the members through entertainment programs, excursions, bonny baby contests and Christmas parties.

Dawn breaks for Gary

On MTV's prime slot reserved for the rare rockers, Rohinton Rustom Lawyer, better known to his fans as Gary Lawyer, features regularly with his *Nights On Fire*. "India's answer to Jim Morrison seems to have 'broken out' all over Asia," it was mentioned in the Eye-Catchers column of *India Today*, referring to his appearances on Star TV's music channel.

Soon after the MTV break, his latest album, *The Other Side of Dawn*, "hit the stands with a bang," according to a write-up in the *Blitz* of January 30, 1993 which pronounced him as "a star in the wings." Working on this album for nearly two years Lawyer is said to have finally collaborated with American musicians to get the album recorded and mixed in New York. It is on the prodding of his American producer who wanted Lawyer to discover his own voice in this album that the singer hopes to dissociate himself from the Morrison tag that had stuck to him after his earlier two albums, *This Cannot Wait* and *High Standards*.

Even when recording for jingles and other small gigs Lawyer says that a dream that kept him going was his belief that he could make it to the international scene.

The power of Dahm

A message addressed to "those who wish to increase goodness and happiness in the world": pray *Dahm Yazad Ni Nirang* daily. So advocates the introduction to the eight-page transliteration of the *Nirang*. While some copies of this publi-

cation have been brought out in English others have been printed in Gujarati.

The *Nirang* is taken from the *Ijashni* prayer in which the Yazata Dahm is propitiated. A very powerful Yazata and the upholder of righteousness, Dahm counters evil forces, according to a press release sent by Ms Siloo Limboowalla. Such an invocation to restore peace and tranquility in the world would be beneficial not only to the person who recites it regularly, but to the community and to humanity at large, the booklet promises. "The efficacy of the *Nirang* improves when it is recited in the midst of beauty and natural surroundings," the reader is informed.

Towards the end of the booklet is a plea to all coreligionists to collectively "mobilize the spiritual energies in the cosmos" by reciting five *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*s and three *Ashem Vohus* every morning at 9. "Negative and chaotic conditions in the world" would thereby be dispelled.

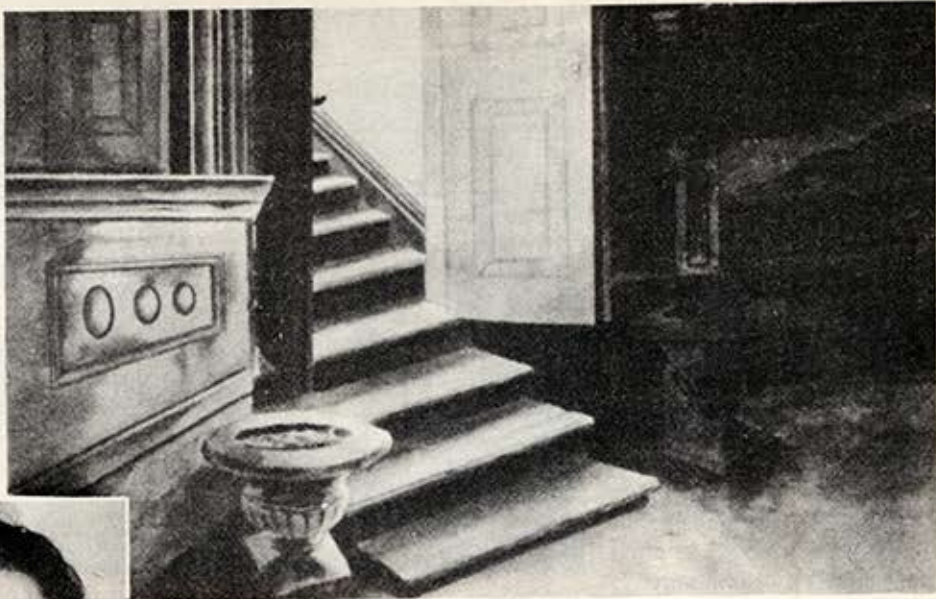
This booklet in memory of Ms Soonu Jimmy Hodivala is available free of cost. Zoroastrian Studies, which helped in the compilation of the information, will distribute copies from the Cama Oriental Institute Building, Bombay Samachar Marg, Bombay 400023. Alternately they can be had from Gifts and Things, Bombay Swadeshi Stores, P. M. Road, Bombay 400001.

Rana's liberating art

"Doing a painting is then an act of liberation," declares Behram Rana referring to the effort that he gladly puts in at the end of a full day's work at Larsen and Toubro to create new paintings for each successive exhibition. The 21 exhibits on display at the Taj Art Gallery from February 9-15, 1993 took him nearly three years to complete, he informs.

Landscapes, figures and abstracts mark Rana's array of canvases in water and oil colors. His "most praiseworthy effort this time," as noted a review in the *Mid-Day* of February 10, "is a group of abstracts. They have very subtle color orchestration and are full of an admirable vibrancy."

But equally popular among the viewers were Rana's landscapes, particularly, *Tomorrow, same place, same time* that conveys a sense of anticipation with a



vacant bench making its presence felt among rows of trees in the background. The artist's personal favorite though is *Temple magnificent* which shows a formation of rocks symbolizing a roadside temple with a statue of Lord Ganesh lodged within it.

In addition to corporate houses like Larsen and Toubro, Voltas, Roche, Rana's paintings also adorn the walls of airline offices, banks and a hotel. Besides India, Rana's work can be seen in Bangla Desh, UAE, Germany and Australia.

As senior visualizer of Larsen and Toubro, Rana acknowledges that he has received a lot of encouragement and support from his company officials like Holck-Larsen and N. M. Desai. In fact to mark the inauguration of the current show was organized a discussion on the role of industry in promotion of art.

The sixth exhibition over, Rana has

Rana with his painting in acrylic Home Sweet Home

already started work for his next show which will be held after three or four years. He would then like to book two galleries such that his abstracts are on display at one gallery, and his landscapes and still lifes in the adjoining one.

Vagrant vulture

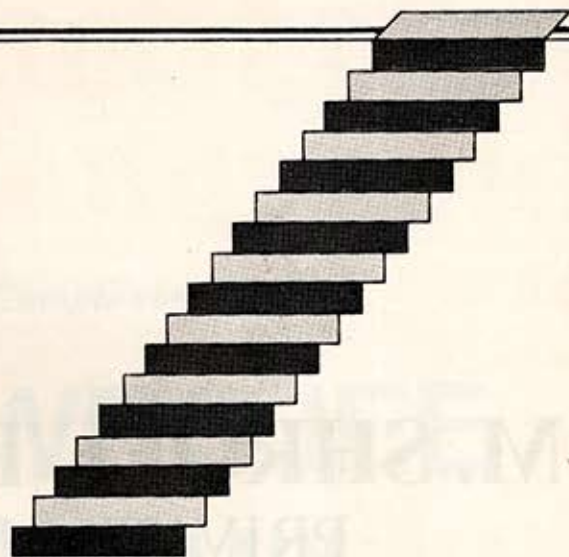
A hearse was sent for from Bombay's Towers of Silence. But it was not to carry a dead Parsi to his final resting place but to transport a live vulture to doongerwadi where it could nest with others of its own species.

For nearly a week this vulture had sought refuge in a tree at Tardeo "leaving for an unknown destination every morning and returning with the office goers every evening," as reported in *The Times of India* of February 15, 1993. Keeping a tab on the bird was the Gowadia family whose experience with the bird was related to *The Times'* correspondent.

When it first alighted on the Gowadia doorstep the family tried offering it water. But instead of accepting the hospitality the suspicious bird flew at them, compelling them to beat a hasty retreat, as per the report. Maintaining a long-distance vigil over it for a week thereafter, the family finally sought the assistance of the doongerwadi staff who lured the vulture with the help of a long stick, wrapped it in a white sheet and ceremoniously carried it back with them.



Compiled by Parinaz Gandhi



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The case for acceptance

Zoroastrian scholar
Dr Ali Jafarey
has co-founded
The Zarathushtrian
Assembly to
propagate the
Prophet's message

Arnavaz S. Mama



"We are carrying on the work of K. R. Cama, Dastur (Maneckji) Dhalla, Dastur (Khurshed) Dabu and Dastur (Framroze) Bode. We are not innovators. We're doing what they started."

Dr Ali Jafarey was referring to the work of The Zarathushtrian Assembly (ZA), a body dedicated to the propagation of Zarathushtra's message, which he co-founded in Los Angeles in March 1991.

The polyglot scholar was visiting India in December 1992, on the invitation of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman and the Gathas Society of Pune, after more than a decade. He has been in the eye of the storm for much of that time. With first-hand knowledge of Avesta, Pahlavi, Persian, Arabic and a variety of European languages, Jafarey has been professing the Zoroastrian faith in the teeth of his detractors who have used his very name against him. To the dismay of his orthodox critics he has challenged the "time-tested" ritualist formulas of the *Vendidad*, arguing against its authenticity as the embodiment of the Zoroastrian faith, pointing out with seemingly endless patience how it differs in form and spirit from the *Gathas*, the enunciation of

Zarathushtra himself.

On the evidence of the *Gathas* Jafarey maintains that Zarathushtra "founded an entirely new religion and did away with cultic beliefs and practices." This clear view, which is echoed in an increasing number of independently thinking Zoroastrian minds, runs counter to the traditional concept, zealously preached by the clergy, that Zarathushtra was a reformer within the prevailing Mazdayasni faith.

And, in adherence to his interpretation of the *Gathas* Jafarey has committed, in orthodox minds, the final "horror" of establishing an organization ready to "accept" anyone, irrespective of lineage, who finds in Zarathushtra's teachings an answer to the problems of human existence. The Assembly "does not 'convert' anyone but only 'accepts' as members those adults who, after due study (of the *Gathas*) and discernment, choose the Good Religion by their (own) free will, perform the navjote, profess themselves as Zarathushtrians and apply for membership," Jafarey had clarified ("Spreading the Good Word," *Parsiana*, June 1991).

The Assembly has about 200 mem-

bers, says Jafarey. He numbers such reputed names in North America as Dr Farhang Mehr, Prof Kaikhosrov Irani, Adi Davar and Ms Dina McIntyre among its founder members.

When The Assembly held the navjote ceremonies of an engineer in telecommunications and another, a doctorate in aviation management and education, "the audience, more non-Zarthoshtis than Zarthoshtis, was simply overjoyed to see the ceremonies... We have a group of old and young dedicated persons, all well-educated, understanding and of good standing. We envisage a bright future for the Good Religion," Jafarey had written in a letter.

The Assembly has defined nine committees — membership, education, cultural, youth, publications, public relations, program, finance and supplies — under which it would function, as Jafarey had informed *Parsiana* in a letter. The Assembly's first anniversary function was attended by more than 404 individuals in place of the 200 who had been expected, he said.

"We have no intention at all to affiliate ourselves with or interfere in the ethno-ethical affairs of the 'traditional' Zoroastrians, particularly the Parsis. Ours is a completely separate movement aimed at the restoration of the Gathic teachings and that ... has nothing to do with the later institutionalized form of the religion..."

"Ours is not a reform movement. It is a restorative movement. Let me make myself clear. The Assembly does not want to introduce a reform inside the present 'ethnic' Zoroastrian community, particularly by making it open to those who want to join it. The reformation movement was started by 'born' Zoroastrians almost a century ago and it is in progress. It is gaining speed among the Parsis in North America and Europe. The Iranis, whether in Iran or North America are already the followers of a reformist movement of their own. In North America, the two (communities) are drawing closer despite the somewhat exaggerated reports of cultural differences, differences which are being smoothened by the dominant American culture..."

"The restoration automatically means modernization and keeping in (tune) with

the progressing world. We have all Gathic rites — navjote, marriage, memorial service, honoring, ghambars, congregational prayers, and others — of course, shorn of their irrelevant additions and archaic modes, freed from the priestly monopoly, and conducted in Avesta with English or Persian rendering. The Gathic simplicity has made the ceremonies more meaningful and fully intelligible. We do not have any hereditary priest system but knowledgeable ministers, males or females, who take Gatha classes and perform, or help in performing, ceremonies. A minister is generally needed at congregational rites, especially in temple halls. But the minister is not a 'must' at every rite. It may be performed by any person who has learned and knows what to do...

"The Assembly has taken another step. It has restored the Gathic form of leadership — the ratu.

"Of all the titles for a religious leader, The Assembly chose ratu, because it is the only one used in the *Gathas* of Zarathushtra. The term ratu has been used five times in the *Gathas* and approximately 40 times in the later *Avesta*. Derived from *eret*, meaning 'to do right,' it means the righteous leader, a good guide, worthy of being chosen to teach and lead. He or she is a religious teacher (*daeno-sach*) whose actions promote the living world... Age and sex did not matter. Righteous record of competence was the criterion.

"As far as The Assembly is concerned, with the exception of *aethrapaiti* (Gujarati *ervad*) which may well be translated into 'school master' (and not the notion given to it in India), titles such as *athravan*, *magopat*, *moted*, *dastavar* and *dastur* lie outside the Gathic period, and therefore, The Assembly will not have any institutionalized/hereditary priesthood.

"One of the reasons to create the position was to meet the State law requirement of a religious head (priest/minister) of The Assembly as a religious organization... The ratu will be more of a teacher and guide, and less of an officiant. I was chosen the first ratu. Others, men and women, will be trained and installed in accordance with the growing demand."

Determined to spread the knowledge of Zarathushtra's teachings worldwide, Jafarey has been seeking to establish the Assembly's chapters in London and Paris, Toronto and Denver, Bombay and Pune.

According to Jafarey, The Assembly's overriding concern is religious education — elementary classes for adults and children, secondary and tertiary classes to imbibe the *Gathas* stanza by stanza, teachers' training etc. Production of video tapes in English and Persian for dissemination in towns outside Los Angeles is on the anvil.

"Differences exist in all religious tra-

"Restoration means modernization, keeping in tune with the progressing world"

ditions. But in other communities the standard book is prescribed and accepted. Zoroastrians suffer through their own literacy," muses Jafarey, adding, "Most of the available literature on Zoroastrianism does not truly portray the good Gathic religion. They are therefore misleading."

And when there are more than 20 translations of the *Gathas*, the result can be devastating. The Assembly is said to be publishing the second edition of the *Gathas* in Persian as also a history of the Zoroastrian religion to provide a chronological perspective. A recording of the *Gathas* by the late Daraius Bagli, head priest of Delhi, tapes recorded by Iranian mobeds, recordings of Hindus chanting the *Vedas* are used as source material for The Assembly's congregational prayers, informs Jafarey. But the *Gathas* are essentially songs and Jafarey informs that an expert in Iranian music is working on how they can be sung. Simultaneously three poets are working on translating the Prophet's words into Persian songs which could be sung together by the congregation. "Music has its own vibration — soothing, miraculous," he observes. Direct participation is encouraged and a basic ideal of The Zarathushtrian Assembly membership is to ensure that each member is trained to speak on the religion.

Currently the space that The Assembly has been able to rent restricts participation to about 50 individuals. Hence a larger hall accommodating up to 250 people is a priority on The Assembly's agenda.

Jafarey informs that he has been approached by a publisher to supervise a two or three-volume encyclopedia on the Zoroastrian religion to be written largely by Zoroastrians themselves. In this connection Jafarey hopes to approach all Zoroastrian scholars in India and elsewhere as well as a few western scholars close to the Zoroastrian spirit like Alan Williams, Shaul Shaked and others.

Hitherto a regular on the North American Zoroastrian lecture circuit, Jafarey spent Xmas eve 1992 in Delhi speaking at the India International Centre on what atash symbolizes in the *Avesta* and the *Gathas*. Perhaps in deference to the hostile and vocal minority no organization in Bombay invited Jafarey to speak, being even "ignored by the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute," he noted. Despite the vituperations hurled against him, Jafarey's responses have been singularly free of malice.

Earlier, in an open letter of September 1991 Ms Pervin Mistry of Mississauga, Canada had noted,

"In the *Time* magazine (September 23, 1991), concern is expressed for the survival of knowledge and tribes who have survived for millenniums only to be lost and annihilated due to the injection of foreign cultures.

"The *National Geographic* (July 1991) comments on the tribe of Birales in Africa who face extinction as the Birale men marry outside women to increase their numbers. In fact, due to this practice of inter-marriage, the resulting children retain neither the culture nor the language of their fathers.

"Our Zoroastrian religion has survived for millenniums through conquests and the destruction of its sacred, valuable books. By 'acceptance' or by 'conversion' why are we committing a religious and cultural suicide?

"The only conversion mentioned in the *Gathas* is the inner conversion, the conversion within of Anghre Mainyu into Spenta Mainyu. There is no spiritual conversion in converting the name of one's religion.

"The only individuals Zarathushtra converted, according to the *Gathas*, are the Turanis into Iranis and we know that the Turanis were the evil sorcerers. Zarathushtra enlightened them about the white side of Nature and taught them about Spenta, Asha and Ashoi.

"Without an insight into esoteric philosophy or astronomy, propagation of falsehoods regarding 'demography,'

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'conversion,' and 'acceptance' will prove fatal to our religion.

"I sincerely hope you realize the consequences you and other ZA supporters are responsible for by preaching conversion and acceptance. This dissemination of falsehood on the part of the ZA is tantamount to a spiritual suicide for our community and religion."

Iranian born Jafarey who received his education in Karachi, learning Avesta-Pahlavi under Dr Manek Pithawalla and religious interpretation under Dastur Maneckji Dhalla, is fond of both Iranian and Parsi communities and happy that relations between the two are improving, especially among the youth. Thanks to a common language — English — and the pervasive American environment, the two are "getting closer and closer," he notes with satisfaction. One of the main divisive forces between the two communities has been the calendar with the two communities celebrating the same festivals on different days. "If the calendar becomes one — the chances of the adoption (of the Fasli calendar) are great. I think both mobed councils (in North America) are in favor — it will help to

bring them together." The language barrier however may persist for middle aged and older Iranians. They are "not fluent in English (and tend to) make their own Persian speaking groups," notes Jafarey.

"Zarathushtra's religion... did away with cultic beliefs and practices"

According to this swarthy Iranian there is "hardly any difference between Iranians and Tajiks whose inclination towards their ancient Iranian roots is strong." The Kurds, on the other hand, were a Zoroastrian sect "cut off from the mainstream during the Sasanian period because they lived outside the empire. The years have changed them into what they are." As an example of the impact of environmental forces Jafarey cites the case of the Ethiopian Jews with black

fuzzy hair who had even forgotten their Hebrew. "Israel has brought them in and is educating them," he informs.

"We had Chinese, Turkish and even Japanese Zoroastrians. There are 1,20,000 Yazidis of Zoroastrian origin in Iran, Syria, Turkey... They want Zoroastrians to reeducate them into being Zoroastrians," says Jafarey on the strength of his conversations with four Yazidis in high positions about 30 years ago in Tehran, though he "never saw them again, never saw the proposed translation" of his book on the *Gathas* into Kurdish.

Intent on bringing the small, far-flung, bridling Zoroastrian community together, Jafarey would like the World Zoroastrian Organisation to concentrate on being a world body, educating and bringing the community closer. In his opinion this could best be effected by a kind of universal federation with a bi-cameral system of functioning.

Above all, Jafarey wants to avoid wasting energy in fighting controversies. "My conscience doesn't say 'Play up dirty'... I want my mission to succeed, not myself..."



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Parliament of religions

If there is any single theme that needs to be addressed by the Parliament of the World's Religions 1993, it is the role of the religious conscience of the world face-to-face with the critical issues of poverty, violence and environment damage, says Dr Daniel Gomez-Ibanez, executive director of the Council for the Parliament of the World's Religions.

Ibanez was explaining the issues that would be explored by the Parliament at its centenary celebrations, due to convene in Chicago August 8 to September 5, 1993, to a group of Zoroastrians gathered together at the invitation of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute at its library hall on February 9, 1993. Here to invite outstanding Indian participation at the Congress, Ibanez was hosted in Bombay by the Zoroastrians, in Delhi by the Sikhs and in Calcutta by the Ramakrishna Mission.

More than 200 organizations are expected to contribute to the Parliament's success. The participants will include not only the representatives of different religious missions but also leaders of institutions such as UNESCO, Amnesty, Planned Parenthood, Greenpeace and others. Though these organizations had earlier felt that "religion was irrelevant or a part of the problem, they have since realized that they can't do much unless solutions are rooted in ethics," notes Ibanez.

The Parliament of the World's Religions had been initially hosted by Chicago in 1893 as part of the World's Columbian Exposition. It was the centerpiece and the most remarkable of the many congresses that covered subjects such as government, jurisprudence, finance, science and literature "to bring about a real fraternity of nations and

unite the enlightened people of the whole earth in a general cooperation for the attainment of the great ends for which humanity is organized," as notes the press release.

That 17-day Parliament in 1893 had brought together 400 people representing 41 denominations and religious traditions, its sessions attended by audiences numbering 4,000 or more. The historic event marked the first formal meeting between representatives of the major religions of the world and the inception of interfaith dialogue. It was the occasion when Swami Vivekananda had first propounded the philosophy of the Vedas to a spellbound western audience.

This legacy led some Chicagoans of different faiths to come together in 1988 to plan the centennial of the Parliament and the Council was incorporated as a non-profit organization dedicated to celebrating the event. The Council's objectives included the promotion of understanding and cooperation among Chicago's religious communities and institutions, an assessment and renewal of the role of religions of the world in relation to personal growth and global challenges, the encouragement of programs to carry the spirit of the Parliament into the 21st century.

Ibanez thanks Rohinton Rivetna, president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) for the Zoroastrian commitment to the Parliament. Under Rivetna's leadership the Zoroastrian Association of Chicago is preparing to host the Zoroastrian representatives to the Parliament.

Dastur (Dr) Hormazdyar Mirza, Dastur (Dr) Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa and Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal head the list of 31 Zoroastrian participants at the Parliament announced so far. Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama and Dr Karan

Singh are some of the other names mentioned by Ibanez as likely to attend.

Though all participants are expected to honor the provisos of supporting the general aim of understanding, dialogue and civilized discourse, the organizers are aware that they may have some very passionate people to deal with.

Workshops, presentations, seminars on more than 180 topics is what the Council's volunteer labor force has planned. There will be 30 to 40 things happening simultaneously, informs Ibanez, and it's all organized on donations. Anticipating that the world media will be focussing on the Parliament, Ibanez hopes that everyone will endorse a declaration of global ethics and agree on action to cooperate beyond 1993. "It is the fundamental beliefs of Zoroastrians that make them very open to such suggestions," he adds.

Representatives are expected to explain how their religious tradition has responded to the unfolding of science and technology; what wisdom it offers to alleviate poverty and injustice; what answers are available to enable peoples of different faiths, cultures, race or gender to relate to each other in the face of tension and violence; what alternatives can it provide for peaceful coexistence between peoples and between human beings and the forces of nature.

The Council's earliest members were "all representatives of minority groups — Buddhists, Bahai's, Zoroastrians... Roman Catholics formed the largest single group of Christians. Since then a large number of gatherings have brought together representatives of many communities," says Ibanez. The status of Asian religions in North America is rising not only because of increased immigration but also because they're becoming better organized, adds Ibanez.

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FEDERATION Goes to M.P.

Nearly 100 Zoroastrians of Madhya Pradesh interacted with a similar number of Zoroastrians from the rest of India at the Federation meeting in Ratlam

Parinaz Gandhi

"This is the first time in the history of this Hall that so many Parsis have gathered here." Ratlam Anjuman president Tehmtan Anklesaria's observation reflected the happiness of his small anjuman of 64 members to join hands with the other Madhya Pradesh (MP) anjumans of Mhow, Indore and Neemuch to play hosts to the executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India on January 30 and 31, 1993. For the host anjumans, Ratlam was also a convenient meeting point to convene their inter-city or 'mini Federation' meet during these two days.

Nearly 15 anjumans were in attendance at Ratlam with the twin occasions providing an opportunity for around 100 Zoroastrians from different corners of India to acquaint themselves with the 100-odd Zoroastrians from MP. Such get-togethers can be very enriching, believed Anklesaria who reinforced his message by stating that if two persons have one rupee each which they exchange, both will continue to have one rupee. But at such meets, an exchange of ideas between two persons will result in both having two ideas eventually.

After Dastur Hormazdyar Mirza lit the inaugural lamp and delivered an educative discourse on religious fundamentals, the audience was invited to interact with the Federation's council members. Starting the Federation meeting with an open session was thus a substantial departure from the usual format as the self-introductions and matters arising from the minutes were taken up for discussion

only in the post-lunch session.

The president as also four of the five vice presidents of the Federation were not present at Ratlam. Hence the onus of chairing the meeting fell on Dr Sam Bhacca, president of the Surat Parsi Panchayat (SPP) and the lone VP in attendance, who urged the gathering to emulate the example of those political leaders and social workers whose photoframes adorned the walls of the G. D. Anklesaria Rotary Hall.

To promote trade within the community in India, the Federation will be launching a wing akin to a chamber of commerce. Professionals, businessmen, etc will be roped in for this project which will start with the publication of a Zoroastrian business directory that can provide the necessary data base. The task has been entrusted to Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP) trustee and Federation's joint honorary treasurer Jamshed Guzder, and the anjumans have been asked to do the necessary spadework.

The relentless efforts of the Federation workers to salvage the defunct community properties in Cambay, Junagadh, Surendranagar and Nadiad have finally earned rewards. The Federation's coffers will be richer by Rs 4,51,000, announced Bhacca, which they can channelize for other community-use programs.

The best youth and a large happy family are two new dimensions to be added to the Federation's list of awards for excellence, having recently found sponsors. Norms for these awards will be finalized shortly.

The Federation's membership count is up by one with the recent addition of the Borivli and Suburban Zoroastrian Association.

The next meeting of the Federation will be held in Bombay on June 5 and 6, 1993. However it was the announcement of the hosts of the subsequent meeting that met with jubilant cries, "Baroda says yes, Baroda says yes." Baroda will be hosting a Federation meeting for the first time on December 18 and 19, 1993.

"The Federation is the collective wisdom of the community. It is a forum where representatives of different locations come and exchange views and problems," the Federation's honorary secretary Keki Gandhi gave a brief introduction to the all-India body's workings. "The strengths and weaknesses of the Federation are the strengths and weaknesses of its constituent members," he reminded, adding, "Our community has very good advisors. Put yourselves in the shoes of the trustees and office bearers of the Federation and let us know what you would do if you were in a position to do something."

Barring a couple of concrete suggestions to the effect that babul trees should be planted on lands available with the punchayet, and school education/creches should be financed for the convenience of young couples, the rest chose to use the open session to get clarifications from Mirza on religious issues: Why can't there be one final authority on religious matters? Why can't the priests ad-

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vice the laity with one voice? What kind of inducements do priests need? How can they be made to serve smaller anjumans? Why can't the community adopt one calendar? Can an aramgah and dokhma coexist in light of the narrow dokhma at Indore which seems to trap many vultures who are unable to take flight once they descend therein?

According to Mirza: "In our religion the high priest is not the judge. Ahura is the sole decider... Each anjuman is faced with circumstances peculiar to it. Let the anjuman members sit together and decide... Everything depends on faith... Looking to present conditions ceremonies must be as simple as possible. Pray whatever you know. The usual belief that priests *behest ma pohocharsé* (will reach you to heaven) is not true. *Behst maa tau khud javanu* (It is through self-effort that one goes to heaven)."

In his speech Mirza had said, "Life, according to our religion, is a blessing, duty and struggle." He then advocated turning to the *Gathas* for advice on upliftment of the soul. "Our aim is to develop powers and utilize them in the service of God... We have three types of duties — to Ahura Mazda, to self and to others... Work is also worship. Zoroastrianism teaches us that this world is imperfect, our understanding is imperfect; but we have been taught optimism too. Faith in God, hard work and character are the three factors that have helped us progress."



Tehmtan Anklesaria
 (top) and Masani

Youth valuation

"Registration increases year after year at the seminars but the attendance at proceedings is decreasing," pointed out Porus Karanjawalla, vice president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Youth Associations (FOZYA), to highlight the fact that the annual all-India Zoroastrian meets may need to be organized differently. To justify the financial costs, Karanjawalla advocated a reappraisal: Should the frequency be reduced? Should the activities planned be more in the nature of a festival than a seminar? Should the criteria for enrolling participants be amended?

The knowledge gained by the youth at such meets should benefit the anjumans they represent, reiterated Gandhi. Further it was up to the organizers to ensure that factionalism did not arise, he clarified when referring to a letter critical of the annual youth meets. At the time of the 1992 Federation meeting in Bombay youths from 16 locations were present, he added, indicating "that there is complete harmony between the anjuman and the youth in those areas."

Surat's newly formed youth wing had conveyed their willingness to host the 1994 youth meet provided they get the sup-

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port of the SPP trustees. Said Bhacca, "We will surely support. But the trustees haven't even been informed yet. I hope they won't communicate to us in 1995!" In the absence of any other youth wing coming forward to host the 1993 meet, Delhi was chosen as the next venue though Dadi Mistry clarified that his offer was subject to his board's approval.

Gandhi was keen that the Federation's awards for excellence be distributed at the next youth meet so that the youths can be inspired to put up a similar performance. Guzder offered to finance a new award to be instituted for "the best youth" and an additional award for sports. Another award for "professional competence" will be contributed by G. K. Panthaki of Air Command India Limited, himself a past recipient of a Federation award. For the youth award, FOZYA has been delegated the task of suggesting norms and guidelines. In the meanwhile joint honorary treasurer of the Federation, Peshotan



Federation delegates outside Ratlam's Anklesaria Rotary Hall

representative Percy Tadiwala. Indore Anjuman sought to involve the youth by appointing one of the youngsters, Ms Shanoor Irani, as the anjuman secretary.

Reaping rewards

Distinct from the comfortable and closeted existence known to city dwellers is

Nargolwala, has in his personal capacity forwarded the monies to start an award for a "large happy family."

The Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) youths who consider themselves the pioneers in the hosting of youth meets were recently active at the Dadabhai Naoroji centenary celebrations where they manned the bookstalls and exhibits on display. Prior to that they had arranged a program for some Bombay youths who had gone to Delhi to widen their social contacts. The Baroda youths are active with their blood donation camps and religious lectures as reported their youth

the isolated life-style of some Zoroastrians in villages like Sadadevi, near Vandsa. Cut off from modern modes of transport, the bus-stop nearest to them lies at a walking distance of almost five km. Seven such families were helped to shift to other areas as part of the Federation's rural welfare project jointly undertaken by the BPP, the SPP and the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO), reported Bhacca.

Despite their poverty, the rural Parsis show an implicit faith in their religion with honesty being their hallmark, observed Dadi Mistry. With improved



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At a Federation session
in Ratlam

technological knowhow, their productivity has increased. From the surplus generated they show a keenness to repay the loans extended to them as was evinced recently when three recipients came forward with small instalments of Rs 1,100, Rs 500 and Rs 65.

There is a certain amount of self-help being generated by this rural welfare project and Rs 30,00,000 expended in aid so far, is considered well-spent. As 70-80 percent of a farmer's costs are borne on weeding, Phiroz Illavia of Mhow recommended that the community should avail of the natural farming methods being imparted by one gentleman named Saveh who does not charge any tuition fees for his advice but in fact offers a free meal to those who approach him. Many youngsters are benefitting from the training at The Tata Marginal Farm Management Institute and the lucrative yield has already lured some to return to the villages.



Assets lost and found

The Federation would see a burgeoning of its funds by Rs 4,51,000 following years of tireless efforts to prevent loss of community assets in Junagadh, Nadiad, Cambay and Surendranagar. Even though the expenses incurred on retrieving this income was borne by the BPP and the SPP, both the punchayets magnanimously refused to seek reimbursement from the Federation.

The Mhow anjuman has voluntarily decided to entrust the Federation with the necessary authority to take charge of its affairs if the anjuman should ever cease

to exist. As conveyed Mhow's Dr Behram Masani, "To ensure the future safety of community properties, Mhow has decided to co-opt the Federation as joint custodian of Mhow anjuman properties." The other anjumans were called upon by Masani to emulate Mhow's example rather than to leave the Federation to handle a fait accompli.

The Federation's attention was drawn to regions of Sohagpur, Hoshangabad, Harda where in the absence of any living Parsis, encroachers were making an ingress. As for the Khandwa property the Federation's legal proceedings were stalled when the person in whose name the case was filed backed off. Tehmtan Anklesaria and the Federation are now awaiting recognition as bonafide impleaders in this case.

Disparate legal ramifications

The maximum fee payable to obtain a probate in a metropolitan city is Rs 15,000. "In Madhya Pradesh, there is no maximum probate duty. It could be lakhs of rupees," pointed out Masani to

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indicate the need for a parity to eliminate the time and money that is wasted on obtaining this document. But before seeking any change BPP trustee and Federation's joint honorary secretary Eruch Desai advised that the history and motive of the legislation be ascertained.

Another inconsistency in the workings of state machineries is that some of them have no provisions for registering a marriage under the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act (PMDA). This has resulted in certain Zoroastrians being denied the progressive provisions of the PMDA and the Indian Succession Act as applicable to Parsis. Such a lapse not only makes the priest performing the ceremony liable to imposition of fine or imprisonment for non-registration of marriage, but it also means additional injustice when for instance the parent is not permitted to claim a share in the estate of his/her deceased child. Desai recommended that the BPP should approach the High Courts of these states and convince them to authorize the BPP to register such marriages and issue certificates whereby the parties could be governed by the PMDA.

Parsis contracting a marriage under the Special Marriage Act should enjoy the benefits of the succession laws governing Parsis. It was agreed that a petition be made to the government to this effect. However, it is still to be decided as to what stand to adopt if the married partner is a non-Zoroastrian. Would the applicability of the Parsi laws prove detrimental to the interests of the non-Zoroastrian spouse and the children? Would it tantamount to encouraging intercommunity marriages? A recommendation would be made after studying the personal laws of different communities.

Boost by the BPP

With two students from the 1991-92 batch having secured admission to medical studies, two into paramedical courses, and seven into the engineering stream, the BPP is happy with the outcome of the educational scholarships extended by them whereby students who have scored more than 75 percent marks in their school leaving examinations are extended aid in the form of fees for specialized coaching classes, as outlined the BPP's chief executive Rustom Anklesaria. He then went on to add in his "personal capacity" that instead of spending three and a half crores on Bharucha Baug's housing project, "if the funds had been diverted as loans for self-employ-



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ment and education, would it not have reaped better returns? One of the curses is that we have become a service people instead of a business community," he added.

Since the time he has joined the Punchayet, and even after 1,100 new flats have been allotted in the last 10 years, there continue to be 3,500 names on the waiting list for BPP flats, has been Rustom Anklesaria's observation. Despite all efforts by the BPP, complaints are unceasing. He was particularly wary of uncooperative tenants who refuse to voluntarily accept a marginal hike in the pittance rent they pay for the luxurious flats they occupy and yet would have no reservation for subscribing to cable service and incurring similar expenditure. Some had even purportedly threatened that if pestered for increased rent, they would henceforth delay payment of the prevailing rent!

Housing as a priority with the BPP has also been questioned in light of the recent research findings by Dr Sandhya Rani which once again reinforce that housing is not correlated to fertility. The sample constituted 100 allottees of BPP flats and 500 non-allottees, all in the child bearing age-group. It emerges that under 25 percent of the allottees cited lack of independent accommodation as their major reason for postponing marriage. Further 79 percent of the allottees report that there has been no increase in the number of children following the allocation of a house. While the concept of an ideal family included two or three children, actual statistics showed 1.07 live conceptions. The first child was usually conceived within the first two years of marriage. Thereafter the couples postponed having a second child. Clearly emerging is a need for day-care centers, yet not many avail of the BPP's day-care scheme — initiated on the recommendation of the Federation which has contributed Rs 17,000 towards its progress — under which costs incurred by a deserving family on a day-care facility are partially borne by the BPP.

Ahmedabad's Hafez Dalal recommended that the BPP should consider giving loans for housing such that there is a rotation of funds. Added Farokh Rustomji of Delhi, "Give priority in housing loans to Parsis living outside Bombay" to induce Parsis to move out of the megapolis.

One Parsi benefactor overseas has already contributed Rs 88 lakhs for the BPP's building activities. He has offered

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From left: Guzder, Shroff and Noshir Jal

to further give Rs 1,75,00,000 towards purchase of land now that the BPP has exhausted the vacant lands in its possession. This large-hearted donor who prefers anonymity, himself living a frugal life, would on his trips to Bombay be found walking or using the BEST bus service in preference to any other mode of transport, reported Rustom Anklesaria. As summed up Desai, among the various activities that the BPP undertakes for the community — from the cradle to the grave — “housing remains our greatest activity irrespective of the criticism we receive.”

Fare thee well

For steering the Federation ship for over 10 years Dr Aspi Golwalla was bid a fond farewell in absentia on the eve of his retirement as BPP trustee and chairman. Credited with being a “great believer in giving others the initiative to work,” Gandhi appreciated “his gentle, unobtrusive, almost unnoticeable way of functioning. He was always unwilling to impose his views on others. Tolerant (as



he was) of others' inefficiencies and audacities, I would not have been able to do anything (for the Federation) had it not been for Dr Golwalla.”

Co-trustee Minoo Shroff was prompted to add, “As a management man I have found him never to be late for a meeting, never to be absent, never to excuse himself due to another pressing engagement... An autocrat he was not.” Referring to his leadership that evoked cooperation rather than dissension, Desai acknowledged, “Today Jimmy (Guzder) and I are friends here and outside. But that was not the case before Golwalla

was chairman.”

The earlier decision to appoint Golwalla as a permanent invitee to the Federation was re-endorsed by the body.

At a time when communal antagonism is incited at the slightest instance, the mis-reporting of a statement purportedly made by Rohintan Daviervala, president of the Sanjan Memorial Column Local Committee at the Sanjan day celebrations in November last, roused the ire of the Muslims. The agitated Muslims convened a protest meeting to refute the in-

ference that they had attacked a fire-temple in India in the early part of this century. To ensure that no resentment is harbored by the Muslims, following Daviervala's denial of the statement the BPP corroborated that Daviervala could not have made such an irresponsible remark. Their clarification noted that the Parsis and Muslims have enjoyed a harmonious stay in Sanjan for several years and that it was never their intention to offend any Muslims. The Federation body endorsed the contents of this letter as reflecting the sentiments of the entire community.



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On the basis of another Press report that a Parsi couple was summarily asked to leave Saudi Arabia on grounds of professing the Zoroastrian religion, the BPP had taken up the matter with the concerned consulate office in Bombay, mentioned Rustom Anklesaria. The BPP has been assured that further enquiries will be made into this case to enable the consulate to offer a reason for the couple's deportation. According to the consul, religion alone could not have been the deciding factor.

Sponsorship commitments for one or more issues of the *Fed Newsletter* for the coming year have come in from the BPP, SPP, DPA, Mhow, WZO, Guzder, Shroff and Desai.

Representing the Zoroastrians of India at the Parliament of World Religions to be held in Chicago in August-September 1993 will be Bombay scholar Dr Homi Dhalla. Nearly Rs 35,000, i.e. 50 percent of the costs of his trip will be contributed by the BPP and the Federation.

Sixty-nine-year-old Dady Patell's adventurous drives on his moped across the length and breadth of India has earned the admiration of the Federation which has promised to pay him Rs 2,000 towards the cost of his 4,500 km goodwill mission from Jamnagar to Pang Sau. Guzder promised another Rs 2,000.

For holding "one of the most enjoyable and fruitful meetings of the Federation that we have attended" Desai lauded the MP anjumans. He was particularly appreciative of "the toils, tears and sweat that went into the holding of this meeting." To Mistry, "This meeting would be a unique one in the annals of history where for the first time the youngsters and elders were shoulder to shoulder dancing with each other. (When the local orchestra was invited to entertain the gathering with an hour of pre-dinner music on January 30, the camaraderie established during the day resulted in the venue of the Federation meeting being converted into a dance floor at night.) This is a sure sign that we are a growing community and not a dying (one)." The



Above: Bhacca (left) and Gandhi
Below: Desai (left), Rustom Anklesaria

gratitude conveyed to the hosts was reciprocated by Tehmtan Anklesaria who said, "After every five years the Federation can bank upon us to host a meeting."

Those attending the Federation meeting were: Dr Hafez Dalal and Porus Karanjawalla from Ahmedabad; Dr A. E. Contractor from Ajmer; Pervez Mehta from Bardoli; Savak Patel, Baman Cama and Percy Tadiwala from Baroda; Minochaer Bharucha from Bhavnagar; Jamshed Guzder, Eruch Desai, Minoo Shroff and Rustom Anklesaria from Bombay; Dadi Mistry, Farokh Rustomji, Noshir Captain, Ms Nergish Nargolwala and Keki Gandhi from Delhi; Edulji Dumasia from Dumas; Ms Dinoo Illavia and Ms Shanoor Irani from Indore; Ronny Dick from Jhansi; Phiroze Majra from Matheran; Dr Behram Masani and Phiroz Illavia from Mhow; Hoshang Wania and Farroakh Govadia from Nargol; Ms Dolat Bhamgara from Navsari; Noshir Jal and Ms Nilofar Jal from Neemuch; Tehmtan Anklesaria from Ratlam; Nariman Balsara from Saronda; Ms Mani Clubwala from the South Zone; and Dr Sam Bhacca from Surat.

The guest speakers were: Dastur Hormazdyar Mirza, Prof Dinyar

Pestonjee, Dr Behram Anklesaria and Ervad Pervez Mithaiwala. The Press was represented by *Parsiana*. Since this meeting coincided with the inter-city meet of the MP anjumans, there were large delegations from these areas. Also present were youth contingents from Ahmedabad, Baroda, Indore, Mhow, Ratlam and Surat.

Guest speakers

Look beyond the nose

"We need to have a scientific outlook about ourselves; a searching outlook; a critical outlook... to look at the realities facing the community," advocated Prof Dinyar Pestonjee, professor of organizational behavior at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. Enquire into the social forces

that acted upon us, the consequent behavioral changes, the assimilation, the decline in numbers. "These are all simple questions, nothing emotional. The only problem is that we don't want to look beyond the nose," he remarked to the Zoroastrians assembled in Ratlam.

"We like to gloat over stories of kings and queens. These myths and dreams constitute a part of the community psyche. We keep thinking we are great but there is nothing to show for our greatness. We keep thinking our forefathers ruled the world. But we have nothing to rule over and are in fact being ruled over. You don't become great by thinking you are great. It is for others to think that you are great. How did this great empire vanish? That's what we don't like to look into because it is a discomforting idea.

"We don't know what's happened to us for quite a long time. In fact our community has taken the utmost liberty with history. No one seems to know anything with any precision. How old are we is a question that remains shrouded in mystery." We should not be confusing history, which is a chronicle account in the form of a story, with historicity which is a scientific study of history, he cautioned. "We see the mythical golden past and the reality based difficult

continued on page 82



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"Trustees have to be dynamic"

As he starts his second term as BPP trustee Jamsheed Kanga discusses past achievements and future plans

Gustasp Irani

"If I win, I lose; and if I lose, I win," joked Jamsheed Kanga about his prospects of being re-elected during the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustee elections held on March 13 and 24, 1993. "Being a trustee is a big responsibility. It means you have to put in a lot of time and effort and no matter what you do, there will always be people who will damn you," he explained the apparent paradox in his earlier statement. Yet when the results of the contest were announced it was apparent in the celebrations that followed that many Parsis did appreciate Kanga's contributions to the community and the BPP, and that Kanga himself quite savored his victory.

Kanga's scepticism and joy are understandable for during the election run he was the victim of a malicious slur campaign, a character assassination attempt. "This was a particularly dirty election. Certain people used methods I never imagined were possible. There have been other trustee elections that were heated, like the (Homi) Ranina-(Fali) Poncha contest; a battle fought on issues. But this time....," Kanga shakes his head in dismay.

Personal hurt aside, Kanga believes that the unwitting victim of the slur campaign was the office of the BPP trustee itself. "What really frightens me is that it will deter good people, who can really help the community, from standing for trustee elections," Kanga observes. To forestall such a possibility the trustees decided to hand over the case to the police so that people would think twice before resorting to such tactics again.

The office of the BPP trustee, according to Kanga, is a very powerful one. "It

is viewed by some as a means of elevating their social standing or promoting their personal careers. To others it is a very effective position from which they can work for the good of the Parsi community," says Kanga, adding that when people seek the office for personal gain they are more susceptible to using means that compromise its dignity.

Dignity of office aside, Kanga believes that the Parsi community today needs trustees "who are more than do-gooders. They've got to get the job done. They've got to be dynamic. In the good old days, when the community was affluent, a BPP trustee did not get too involved in the problems of the community. But the average Parsi needs help today and a trustee must play a more direct role in his affairs."

Kanga believes that the various senior positions he held in government service for 35 years, including a stint as the Municipal Commissioner of Bombay, have equipped him with the skills and contacts required to deal with the complexities of administering the vast properties of the BPP, as well as the expertise to tackle problems faced by the community. "I was able to assist the BPP in a positive and substantial manner, resulting in the completion of the largest construction program in the history of the BPP," says Kanga.

From getting government clearances and permits for BPP's massive housing projects, including the one at Godrej



Jamsheed Kanga with wife Firoza

Photo: Gustasp Irani

Baug, to protecting individual Parsi houses and assets during the recent communal riots in Bombay through his contacts with local leaders, he has been able to assist the community at all levels. "The fact that I got the highest number of votes shows that the community recognizes and appreciates what I have done and can do for it," says Kanga.

Similarly, he has won the appreciation of his co-trustees who thought it fitting to put down in writing their recognition of his contributions to the housing project at Godrej Baug. And on his earlier offer to resign when he was the Municipal Commissioner of Bombay, because he found he did not have much time to spare for BPP affairs, he was advised against doing so by his colleagues.

His offer to resign, Kanga points out, is proof enough that the belief that trustees are loathe to vacate their posts is more myth than reality. "I shall be retiring soon and will have more time to devote to the BPP. I believe that I can still contribute significantly, but it does not

mean that I will not do other work too," he clarifies.

According to Kanga, the single most important task of the BPP is to provide housing for the community and in this field the apex body has done outstanding work in the last 10 years. "During this period we have built about 870 to 890 flats, of which 700 are ready. We have reached a stage where we do not have any land left to build upon," says Kanga.

The job ahead is to purchase more land in the suburbs for future housing projects and towards this end the BPP has established the Housing and Land Committee where experts in the field discuss problems and submit recommendations for the trustees to act upon. "This is another thing we have initiated: we have brought together experts from various fields to work for the benefit of the community, and not just in matters of housing," says Kanga.

Commenting on the controversy regarding the merits and demerits of the Spenta ownership flats project of the BPP, Kanga observes: "It is easy to be wise by hindsight. But you must realize that at that time the BPP had the land but not the money. If we had not used these lands we might have lost them to the government. The profit from Spenta was the seed money for other extensive housing projects." While Kanga concedes that only rich Parsis could afford to buy the Spenta flats, the profits from that project were ploughed back to build housing for the poorer segments of the community on land that was lying idle and in danger of being lost. "It was like selling a piece of jewelry to raise money for a pressing need. If the resulting benefit outweighs the loss of your jewel, you know that your decision was the right one," says Kanga.

The new housing units present their own problem: who gets a flat and who doesn't? Enter the merit rating system. Kanga explains its concept: "In the past trustees had no way of rating the different needs and they based their decisions on their personal perception of these needs. What we did was to identify the different needs so that some kind of comparison was possible." Some of the needs identified are: congestion in present living quarters, medical grounds, the need to get married and bear children, years of waiting for a flat, etc. Points are given for each category and totalled up. The higher the points the better the chance an applicant has of getting the nod. But first

the BPP sends out a representative to verify that the facts given are correct; and a public notice in the Press invites Parsis to lodge their protest, if any, against any of the proposed allotments. Kanga agrees that the merit rating system may not be perfect, but believes it is far more objective and rational than the subjective allotment system that existed earlier.

And so, after years of waiting, an applicant is finally allotted a flat in Godrej Baug at a monthly rent of Rs 1,200. The question often being asked is: Can a poor Parsi afford such a high rent? Probably

"No matter what you do, there will always be people who will damn you"

not, agrees Kanga. The problem, however, is that Godrej Baug stands on a prime location where the municipal taxes are pegged at a high level. Rs 800 of the Rs 1,200 the BPP receives in rent go in taxes. The solution? Exchange. That is, according to Kanga, the trustees allow persons who cannot afford high rents to exchange their allotted flats with tenants of flats in other older BPP colonies where the rents are lower. This flat exchange mechanism ensures that the poor of the community get the housing they need without being burdened with rents they cannot afford to pay. "About 70 percent of all flats allotted in Godrej Baug are exchanged," says Kanga.

One unexpected facet of this election campaign, according to Kanga, was that no ideological issues, apart from brief references to the dokhmas, were discussed. "No questions were asked about religious matters. Surprisingly, not a single reference was made to Roxan Shah and we had thought that it would be one of the major issues of the election," says Kanga.

Clarifying the matter, Kanga states: "The Roxan Shah case was never a religious issue. It was not a question of whether it is right for a Parsi to marry a non-Parsi; it was a question of whether such a person could use the dokhmas. It was a legal matter relating to property administered by the BPP, and not a religious issue." He goes on to add: "In my 11 years with the BPP, not a single reli-

gious issue came up before the trustees."

Not surprisingly, then, the focus of the trustee elections was largely on property matters. "Wherever we went we were confronted with local problems that concerned the people of that area and that colony," says Kanga. An offshoot of the new election system, according to him, is that with constituency-wise representation in the elected body of the Anjuman Committee, trustees will have to take local problems and issues more seriously. "Earlier, if someone approached a trustee with a problem, the question asked him was: What was his mandate? Now when a group of people, who are the elected representatives of an area approach a trustee, the solution he offers will have to be (pertinent to the constituency). The new system has its problems, but I believe that (constituency-wise) representation is a positive development. Its full impact has still to sink in."

Kanga regrets the BPP decision to call a halt to the annual meeting between the trustees and the Anjuman Committee, but explains that after the seven-year term of the old elected body expired, the exercise had become irrelevant. If there was one area in which the trustees failed, it was in their public relations department, Kanga states. For despite all the good that the BPP has done for the community, it appears to receive more brickbats than bouquets. "We started to bring out our own bi-monthly newsletter but the community does not seem to take it seriously. We definitely need to do something to improve our image," says Kanga.

The BPP image aside, Kanga sees in his re-election a vindication of the fact that Parsis do appreciate the good work the BPP in general, and he in particular, have done. More needs to be done and Kanga pledges to get on with the task ahead, scars of the dirty election campaign notwithstanding. Kanga's wife Firoza (he has two daughters, Shireen and Farida) informs us that during the heat of the campaign they would receive a number of anonymous phone calls — threatening and abusive. Mercifully, after the contest was over these calls stopped.

Now when the phone rings, often enough it is a Parsi in distress and Kanga, in his capacity as a BPP trustee, a retired IAS officer, a former Municipal Commissioner of Bombay and with his contacts in state and local government departments, is ready to help in whatever way he can.

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Gustasp Irani

At first glance one might assume that 76-year-old Ms Silloo Kavarana, frail and grey-haired, fits the stereotype of an elderly Parsi lady in a white sari, happily absorbed in her devotions before an agiary fire. But Kavarana, the newly elected trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP), breaks the mold. Her spirituality radiates outwards: it reaches out sympathetically to aid the less fortunate in whatever way she can. If her elfin smile is charming, her gentle eyes wear a steely gleam of determination.

It was this quiet determination that gave her the courage to plunge into the murky waters of Parsi politics and stand for trusteeship. Not that she did not have her reservations at first ("They were pressing me to stand for so many years"), but once committed she met the task with dignity. When the election game turned malicious and slanderous charges were hurled at her, she refused to turn the other cheek. But she also refused to allow her supporters to fight dirty. For instance, when one of them got carried away in his allegations against a rival, Kavarana corrected him: "No. That's not right," she said, denying him the indulgence of portraying the foe as a devil, and setting the record straight. "I made it very clear: the election must be fought on what we have done and what we can do. If there was any personal attack on any candidate, I would step down. And I meant it," she observed.

Probably the most difficult part of Kavarana's campaign trail was the problem she had projecting her own virtues. At the volatile Dadar Parsi Colony meeting (see "Kudos for Kanga and Kavarana," *Parsiana*, January 1993) Kavarana was the only participant who did not extend the five-minute limit each candidate was given to speak. She spoke for a minute and a half: a long speech was not neces-

sary because her actions spoke loud and clear.

For several years she has championed deserving causes, both Parsi and non-communal. She is a member of the managing committee of the F. D. Petit Parsi Sanatorium, The Sir Ratan Tata Industrial Institute, Stri Zarhosti Mandal and the Red Cross Society. She has been actively involved in transforming the Parsi Ward at the J. J. Hospital from a neglected unit into a caring one. She has helped raise funds both locally and from abroad for a number of deserving causes like, for instance, the construction of 16 flats for mobeds at Godrej Baug. She has helped find gainful employment for those in need. The stream of young Parsis who seek her assistance and guidance, be it to secure a job or to finance higher education, soon discover that her gentleness is tempered with firm decisive action.

Few, if any, were surprised at Kavarana's victory in the trustee elections. In the celebrations that followed the announcement one could feel the genuine warmth in the people who converged to congratulate her; goodwill emanated even from candidates who had stood against her.

The cheering over, Kavarana is all set to pursue her priorities. "The reason I eventually decided to stand for the trustee elections was because I felt I could help the poorest of the poor in the Parsi community. By being in the BPP I feel I will be able to do something for them," says Kavarana. But she stops short of detailing her program for the simple reason that she still does not know how the BPP functions, or what it has to offer. Her first and immediate task, as she sees it, is to study and understand the operations of the BPP and only then does she believe she will be able to



Photo: Gustasp Irani

Shortage of housing is not the main problem of the community; low tolerance is, maintains the new BPP trustee Silloo Kavarana

I'm on a
London
Diet
and
I love it!



function effectively. "I will give it whatever time is necessary and I will keep on doing my other work," she says.

According to Kavarana there appears to be a communication gap between the BPP and the poor of the community: the trustees do not truly understand the trauma of deprivation, and the deprived do not know what benefits they may legitimately claim. "I am not talking of doles. I don't like them, but I know they are necessary. What I'm referring to is

"A trustee has nothing to do with religion. The priests must decide"

opportunity," says Kavarana. Her perception of opportunity is wide and embraces education, medical aid, employment and more. Her task as a trustee, as she sees it, will be to bridge the communication gap between the BPP and the poor Parsi; that is, to bring opportunity and need together.

"And I am not a rubber stamp of the CER (Committee for Economic Revival)," she asserts. "I will do what I think is right and not what others want me to do." Kavarana's association with the CER has been close right from its inception. "Before joining the CER I attended their meetings and saw that they were good people trying to do good for the community," says Kavarana. Once committed, she almost immediately found herself among the group's core figures and functioned as its conscience.

"Tell me what wrong has the CER done?" Kavarana asks. According to her, the group was instrumental in raising funds for the mobed building at Godrej Baug; its volunteers had worked to restore dignity to the Parsi Ward at the J. J. Hospital; members of its youth wing visit the doongerwadi regularly and help the khandhias and nassessalars there without compromising their dignity; and group members have always stepped forward to help raise funds at home and abroad for deserving causes. "One thing we also do is keep quiet," laughs Kavarana, a twinkle in her eye.

The CER's greatest millstone is that in its early days, 11 years ago, it got stuck with the label of being a breakaway reformist group, a reputation which Kavarana believes does not reflect reality. "We are all proud to be Parsis and

proud to be Zoroastrians, and we all want to preserve our community and religion no matter what some people might say," she clarifies. If the rebel myth persists it is only because it is the one straw the opponents have to whip CER with.

Religion to Kavarana is a very personal matter and she upholds it as a devout practising Zoroastrian. What happens when religion becomes a community issue, and she as a BPP trustee must deal with it? "A trustee has nothing to do with religion. The priests must decide and we must do what they tell us to do," Kavarana answers.

What does concern Kavarana though is the fact that Parsi girls are increasingly marrying outside the community. She believes that many of these girls, given the choice, would have rather married Parsi boys but often enough they did not meet the right one to match their expectations. Not that she is finding fault with the young males in the community; she knows of many who are settled and doing well in their careers. Kavarana hopes that through the BPP she might be able to correct this imbalance by creating a greater awareness among Parsi youth about education and career opportunities.

And accommodation? "Everyone seems to blame all the problems of the community on housing. According to me housing is not the problem. The real problem today is that Parsis have no tolerance. Earlier there were many more Parsis, they had large families, but they managed to live together. Now our numbers are fewer, the families are smaller and still everyone wants his own independent household," says Kavarana.

Tolerance, or rather the family unit, according to Kavarana, is the foundation of a good life; all other things follow. She deems herself fortunate that this was an integral part of her life both before and after marriage. Her family came first, social work followed. She explains that it was only after her husband Kaikhushru died and her two children had grown up and settled — her son Farokh is the vice president of Tata International in Zug, Switzerland, daughter Guloo Austin (the son-in-law is a Parsi despite the foreign-sounding name) is a speech therapist in Canada — that Kavarana decided to devote time to helping others. That was in 1969 when she joined the Red Cross. Little did she realize at the time that the road she had embarked on would lead her to becoming the custodian of the interests of poor Parsis.

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"A compendium of exclusive Indian records... the *Limca Book of Records* (LBR) has become a national data base, a single source reference book for any Indian subject," claims the foreword to the 1992 pocketbook edition. Of the 4,000 plus entries in this twice revised compendium, more than 80 relate to accomplishments by Zoroastrians. While a majority of entries feature in the earlier editions too (see *Parsiana*, March 1991), 24 of the new entries concern records held by Zoroastrians.

It is in the cinema section that six feats are mentioned. Elphinstone Picture Palace in Calcutta was the first cinema hall started by J. F. Madan in 1905. Further the Elphinstone Bioscope Company of Madan and his sons was the first established banner which controlled production, distribution and import of films, in addition to their chain of theaters all over India and Burma. *Satyawadi Raja Harishchandra* made by J. F. F. Madan and released in 1917 was the first full-length silent film made in Bengal. *Zarina*, starring Jal Merchant and Zubeida, had the maximum screen kisses before the kiss came under an unwritten ban. The Wadia Brothers bought over the rights of the Indian talkie version of *Thief of Baghdad* and presented it as *Sulemani Shetran* making it the first Indian adaptation of a Hollywood film. The first crime film based on a true life story of a criminal was Homi Master's *Kaala Naag* made for Bombay's Kohinoor Company in 1924.

Making their mark in the armed forces arena were Air Chief Marshal Aspi Engineer who served as chief of the air force from December 1, 1960 to July 31, 1964. The late Admiral Jal Cursetji was the naval chief from March 1, 1976 to February 28, 1979. Another entry in the navy category concerns Capt M. N. Mulla who was on the only Indian naval ship lost in battle. While on a submarine hunt, *INS Khukri* was struck by three torpedoes causing it to sink with 18 officers and 176 men. Mulla is credited for refusing to abandon the ship when he had every chance to escape. The earliest military invasion has been traced to the hordes of Cyrus (558-530 BC), the founder of the Achaemenian empire who is said to have destroyed the famous city of Kapisa, near the junction of the Ghorband and Panjshir rivers north-east of Kabul.

REMARKABLE RECORDS

Of the nearly 4,000 entries in the Limca Book of Records, more than 80 pertain to accomplishments by Zoroastrians



Of the three new entries under the sports head, two concern boxing. In 1984 Aspy Adajania became the first Indian to officiate on the jury of the Olympic Games at Los Angeles while Khurshed P. Kuka was the first international referee/judge to serve at five Olympics since 1955.

The first regular cricket tournament was played between the Parsis and the Europeans. It started as an annual series of two matches in 1892. The next team to join was of the Hindus, followed by the Mohammedans, and eventually 'the rest.' Ultimately the tournament was abandoned when Mahatma Gandhi objected to its communal nature.

On the industrial front Cowasjee Nanabhoy has been mentioned for establishing the first textile mill in 1853 in Bombay. Listed as the largest seller of soap is Godrej Soaps' Cinthol which holds 18 percent of the market. Ingersoll Rand managed by Jamshed Setna is sec-

ond in the list of companies in terms of bonus declared as percentage of equity -- 98 percent -- as also for its 74 percent foreign holding of equity capital.

In the medicine section, accomplishments by two Zoroastrian gynecologists are referred to. The birth of twin boys through the GIFT (Gamete Intra Fallopian Transfer) technology used by Dr Faram Irani in 1990. And the birth of twin girls through the adoption of the combined technique of IVF (In-vitro Fertilization) and GIFT by Dr (M) Firuza Parikh, head of the department of infertility management and assisted reproduction at Bombay's Jaslok Hospital.

Besides gaining fame for his geological studies of the Himalayas, Darashaw N. Wadia is mentioned in the awards category for being the first Indian to win the Lyell Medal of the Geological Society of London, the Back Award of the Royal Geographical Society, the Leopold von Plakette Medal of the German Geo-

logical Society. He was also the first geologist to be elected fellow of the Royal Society in 1957.

The parliament section begins with the mention of Dadabhai Naoroji, the first non-white to become a member of the British House of Commons. He was also the first Indian to be elected as a Liberal MP in London from Central Finsbury in July 1892 by a bare majority of three votes. Naoroji is also credited for being the first Indian entrepreneur in England to take on the partnership of a British firm.

The first woman to set foot on the icy continent of Antarctica in January 1977 was Ms Meher Moos who has merited a mention in the adventure as well as oceanography section. She was part of an American tourist group on an expedition from Cape Town to Cape Horn.

Under the posts and telegraph head there is reference to Darabshaw Mistry for his largest collection of stamps (over



1. J. F. Madan
2. Setna
- 3 & 4. Twins delivered by Irani
- 5 & 6. Mistry exhibits his stamps
7. D. N. Wadia
8. Adajania
9. Cursetji

20,000) on wildlife, some of them dating back to the 19th century. He was also the first to hold an exhibition of wildlife stamps in 1961.

In the photography section the J. J. School of Art shares the distinction with the Madras School of Art for being the first to offer courses in photography.

The remarkable distinction of never absenting herself or taking even a single day's leave during her entire teaching career in 34 years goes to Ms Porochist Savak Patel, better known as Pretty Patel. As a school teacher at Loyola School, Jamshedpur, she has seen a change of 11 principals, the last two being her ex-students, as notes the record in the education category.

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The guarded fighter

At the centenary function in Delhi in honor of Dadabhai Naoroji, speakers recalled the deeds of the man who dedicated his life to Indian nationalism

Ava Khullar

The graciousness of the backdrop — the tasteful stone architecture, the welcoming lawns and gardens of Delhi's India International Centre (IIC) — befitted the occasion: a function organized to honor Dadabhai Naoroji, political activist and social reformer, who was tireless in the cause of Indian nationalism a hundred years ago.

The old warrior had been firmly against honors and titles. Once, getting wind of a rumor that his name had been suggested for knighthood, he immediately wrote to the Governor of Bombay: "My work has been for duty and not for titular honor. I would regret it if the suggestion is considered." The only title he valued was the one that the people of India affectionately gave him: the Grand Old Man (GOM) of India.

One was pleased that the function on December 20, 1992, jointly organized by the Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) and the IIC, offered more than the usual tributes to Dadabhai. Ladies in priceless garas stood in the reception line awaiting the Vice President of India, K. R. Narayanan and the VVIPs that only Delhi can provide in such abundance. The tasks of ushering in the guests and observing the se-

curity formalities were entrusted to the DPA youth. Thick tuberoses and red rose *torans* festooned the hallway and the day's proceedings began to the tune of *monajats* — invocation songs — sung by Delhi's Young Farohars.

Lt Gen Adi Sethna, the indefatigable president of the DPA, had roped in some of our best historians, journalists and intellectuals (conversant with the period on which Dadabhai has left his mark) to speak on the occasion: Dr Bipin Chandra of the Jawaharlal Nehru University; Prof Ravinder Kumar, director of the Nehru Centre and Prof B. R. Nanda, historian and former director of the Nehru Centre; Prof S. R. Mehrotra of the Maharishi Dayanand University of Rohtak whose research on Dadabhai made him claim that while "India was Dadabhai's daily thought, Dadabhai has been my daily thought for the last 30 years;" journalist M. V. Kamath; industrialist Sohrab Godrej; N. R. Pai, secretary of the Dadabhai Naoroji Trust; veteran Congressman Vasant Sathe who loves his dhansakh like an old friend of the Parsis;

erstwhile Maharaja of Kashmir, philosopher/poet Dr Karan Singh; and others. The Delhi meeting differed from other commemorative functions honoring Dadabhai in that it went beyond merely highlighting his achievements. Pains were taken to give us a well-rounded portrait of a truly remarkable man.

Food for thought was balanced with a feast for the eyes, provided by a small but elegant exhibition arranged by Dadi Pudumjee which captured the ambience of a Parsi home of that era. On show were panels relating events and sayings from Dadabhai's life, copies of some of his correspondence with eminent persons, some rare books dealing with that period, and a TV documentary on Dadabhai screened continuously in the exhibition room. Dadabhai's personal effects, his glasses, inkwell, visiting cards, etc did not arrive in time from Bombay, due to some problems, and the exhibition had to make

Farokh Rustomji, Narayanan, Dadi Mistry (partly covered), Sethna and Singh viewing the exhibits



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do with substitutes. A special commemorative issue of *Dipanjali*, dedicated to Dadabhai, was released by Narayanan. Unusual insights on the GOM are included in this publication, assiduously compiled by Brig Adi Sahukar. And this occasion, like the earlier ones organized by the DPA at the IIC, included a contributory Parsi lunch, served in the relative seclusion of the Rose Garden. While it was the Cordon Bleu chef Ms Bhicoo Manekshaw who was involved with the catering of the meal, it was Ms Dhun Bagli, manageress of Delhi's Mengusi Dharamshala who carted the snacks from Bombay.

A rewarding experience

As the inaugural session gave way to working sessions, one before and one after lunch, the experience proved rewarding. An early discourse provided a historical perspective on the era in which Dadabhai had lived and worked, then went on to his ceaseless crusades to improve the social and economic situation in the country. His writings, speeches and letters, his association with various organizations and the causes he championed, all had one objective: to lighten the burden of the poverty-stricken masses and to bring some measure of dignity into their lives. And though all standards today are being eroded and we live in a moral wasteland, Dadabhai's example cannot fail to inspire us.

The year 1992 marked the centenary of Dadabhai's entry into the House of Commons in England as the first Member of Parliament from India. It was a significant event because Dadabhai pleaded forcefully, in the Mother of Parliaments, the highest forum of those days, for fairness and justice towards his fellow Indians from a British administration which, he claimed, ruled from a basic ignorance about India. Dadabhai had faith in the inherent fairness of the English and believed that if the truth about the disastrous British policies in India was exposed, they would acknowledge their mistakes and change. "When once an Englishman sees his mistake, he has the moral courage to rectify it," he once said.

Born in 1825, Dadabhai passed his formative years in Maharashtra and

Gujarat at a time when the British were, bit by bit, conquering and establishing themselves in Western India and Bombay was growing into an important commercial and political center. In contrast to Calcutta, which was the seat of British



Sethna, Narayanan and Singh: releasing the Dipanjali special on Naoroji

political power and its commercial hub until 1911, Bombay developed indigenous skills. Trade, entrepreneurship and the liberal professions flowered here, and colonial modernization was not dominated by British power. In this powerful indigenous thrust towards modernity, the Parsi community, though the smallest, was in the forefront, the other communities being the Gujarati Bhatias, the Khojas and the Marwaris. By 1850, the first enterprising breakthroughs in industrialization were visible with the establishment of the textile industry. From that base sprang other entrepreneurial activities such as light consumer and chemical industries and later the heavy industrial sector of iron and steel ventured by the Tatas.

Another important development in the modernizing process at this time was the establishment of liberal institutions of learning in Bombay, the Elphinstone and Wilson Colleges. Dadabhai was among the first batch of students at the Elphinstone. These young men, under the influence of liberal western education, formed literary and other societies concerned with reforms of their own communities, the civic problems of Bombay city and with scrutinizing the political order established by the British. Dadabhai took part in all these activities.

The drain of wealth

As industrialization spread in western India, the perception of the nature of British control over India changed. Dadabhai saw how wealth generated by the hardworking peasantry in the countryside was drained away in the form of oppressive taxes. He also perceived the British bureaucratic authority, through which colonial rule in India operated, as unresponsive to the aspirations of the people. Dadabhai, who had started as a social activist in his college days, turned to the political scene and espoused the national cause. He not only saw that indigenous industry had to develop for India's wealth to grow, but also that it had to be distributed equitably in order to enable her people to live with dignity. The answer was self-government, within the paramourcy of British rule.

The main concern of Dadabhai's endeavors was the country's economy. The heart of colonialism, as he saw it, was the subordination of the Indian economy to British interests. Dadabhai had been acutely aware of the change in the condition of sweat weavers (employed for long hours at low wages in unhealthy conditions) from 1801 to 1822. While in 1801 India exported 1,634,000 pieces of cotton goods, earning for India £ 1,630,000 and imported goods worth only £ 16,000, by 1822 the situation was reversed. India exported a mere 367,000 pieces and imported goods worth £ 1,000,000. It was this need to find markets for mass-produced British goods in the colonies that sounded the death knell of indigenous industries in India. This impoverishment of sweat weavers along with other peasants and craftsmen touched Dadabhai deeply. Having been brought up from childhood by his widowed mother in strained circumstances, he understood poverty and empathized with the peasantry in the countryside.

Thus Dadabhai came out with his Drain Theory which showed how the surplus created by the hardworking peasant, the craftsman and the trader in India was syphoned off to Britain. He was a thinker who grasped the significant fact that the heart of any developmental structure is the creation of surplus. He continually fought against the expropriation of this

surplus by the British. He saw this as a contrast to India's earlier foreign rulers — the Afghans and the Mughals. These earlier rulers came as foreigners, but once they started to rule, they ruled as Indians and for Indians, and not as foreigners who took away India's wealth to a foreign economy in Central Asia or wherever. The British, by contrast, remained "foreign" rulers throughout.

In the period that Dadabhai lived, the extremist feature of nationalism had not as yet raised its head, and the moderates believed in fighting for self-government within British paramountcy. So in this respect Dadabhai was classified a moderate, but he was anything but moderate in his economic critique of the colonial regime. And the British feared his ideas, for they undermined Indian faith in British rule. A distinguished British civil servant once wrote that Dadabhai's profession of loyalty to the British was like the man in charge of the French guillotine who said: "Monsieur, will you be kind enough to put your head under the guillotine."

The political aspect

It was this overwhelming concern about the impoverishment of his homeland that made Dadabhai turn to the political platform as a means of educating both the

British rulers and the Indian people into a true understanding of the situation and into seeking remedies to cure it. It led him to stand for election to the British House of Commons, which he entered with a margin of only three votes. It led him to be a founding member of the In-

**He dipped his pen
in ink and wrote 20
letters each day of
his working life**

dian National Congress, over which he presided for three terms. In both these forums he spoke and wrote and fought tirelessly for the cause of India and its people.

Again his main thrust here was against the drain of economic surplus and he was instrumental in setting up the Welby Commission to go into the expenditure in India and how the drain could be checked. Dadabhai's mind could grasp the most complex realities, and his political instinct was to place them in simple terms before the people. When he talked about

India as the *soné ki chiria* (the golden goose) which the British were bleeding to death, the concept was easy for even a simple Indian peasant to grasp. When he argued that the interest of Lancashire textile workers and the interest of Indians was the same, that if India was impoverished, the market for British goods would shrink and thus impoverish British workers, the point was carried home. In his critique of British colonialism therefore, he went to the heart of the matter and united the people on a common platform, namely to fight against exploitation.

In his political stand, he guided the Congress to fight for one goal — that of self-government, and insisted that they should take up only those issues that united Indians vis a vis the British, and not issues of spiritual and social reform which divided Indians.

Dadabhai the man

The day-long proceedings at the IIC brought out many facets of Dadabhai's career and, as a footnote to the more serious deliberations, some touching incidents from his eventful life.

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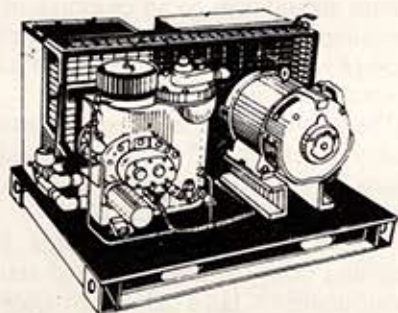
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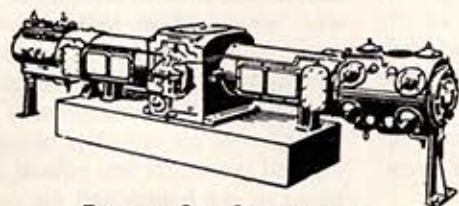
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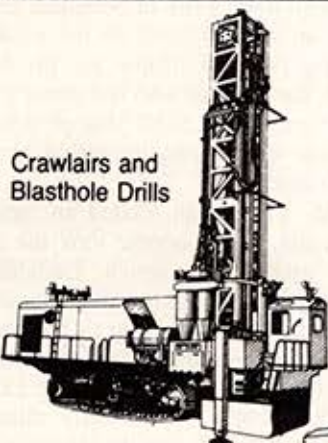
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ing and recounting facts at appropriate times, his humaneness and utter absence of rancor — he never said or wrote an unkind word about anyone — which is a rare quality in a man in political life, were all fondly related. But the kingpin that held all these sterling qualities together was his ethical rectitude.

The indomitable strength of the man came from his impeccable moral credentials. So highly respected was he that even radical youths who moved towards extremism in the nationalist struggle, listened to his advice with respect, as they did to no other leader of that age.

Dadabhai was married at the age of 11 to a girl of seven, and though his wife was no match for his towering stature, he remained ever considerate and faithful to her. One story tells how rumors spread while he was working in England with Cama and Company that he was having an affair with another woman. So disturbed was he that without a word to anyone, he caught the earliest available ship to India, a journey which we may recall took two months in those days, round the Cape of Good Hope. Reaching his home at night, he knocked on the door to the surprise of his family. His reason for this visit? Concern for his wife's feelings and to reassure her that the rumors were false. The act may appear idiosyncratic today, but one cannot but admire the acuteness of his feelings for others.

His relish for facts made him go through voluminous reports and files in the little six feet by eight feet room in which he worked, without a secretary, or a typewriter or even a pen with free-flowing ink—these were later inventions. He dipped his pen in ink and wrote in long-hand, as many as what has been computed to be 20 letters each day of his working life! In fact these letters read like a who's who of those times. He wrote to governors, politicians, leaders (British and Indian), to his eminent contemporaries, to private individuals, newspapers and their editors, educating, goading, encouraging them to fight for the causes he believed in.

In fact, he damned the British with facts and figures, and not with threats and abuses. When he related that the British had spent 21 million pounds to fight the Afghan war when the per capita income of an Indian was Rs 20 per year, his point about economic exploitation could not be more convincing. His obsession with not wounding anyone's feelings was irrational enough to make him destroy a trunkload of letters written to a friend.

Dadabhai did not wish to make the correspondence public, in case he had unwittingly uttered an unkind word about someone!

Dadabhai was hero-worshipped by thousands even though the greater part of his life was spent in London, and he did not mix with the populace. How did this happen? The answer is given in the obituary appearing in *The Times of India*, July 3, 1917: "Dadabhai was the first Indian who devoted himself entirely to furthering the secular interests of his motherland, to the total exclusion of all thoughts

People took the dust off the ground on which Dadabhai had walked and sprinkled it on their heads

of a personal career. The people of India have always held in high honor the ideal of renunciation. Because Dadabhai Naoroji lived a life of complete renunciation in order to carry on the work of securing political justice for his countrymen, the millions who had never seen him felt for the Grand Old Man of India a passionate enthusiasm bordering almost on hero worship."

M. V. Kamath related an incident in Calcutta, where people took the dust off the ground on which Dadabhai had walked and sprinkled it on their heads, because they looked up to him as a man who had given their life a meaning. And when he addressed the Lahore Congress, 12,000 people sat patiently through his speeches which, in the absence of the modern gadgets of microphones and loud-speakers, they could not possibly have heard; indeed, they only came for his darshan. Just by being with him, they believed they absorbed some of his greatness.

This was the man then, kind and humane to a fault, but unbending and firm in the face of a wrong. It was not for nothing that his full name was Dadabhai Naoroji Dordi. 'Dordi' means a twisted rope, which even if burnt, will not give up its twist. This aspect of his personality came through in his 13 months as the

Diwan of Baroda, 13 months which aged him 13 years, as one speaker commented, when he fought, on matters of principle, both the Maharaja of Baroda and the British resident, two of the most powerful men in the state. And when he revisited Baroda some years later, people lined the streets to show him their affection; nay their adoration.

A permanent memorial

The daylong deliberations at the IIC would not have been conclusive without establishing some kind of a permanent memorial to the man. Dadabhai's admirers in Bombay had started the ball rolling with the concept of a Dadabhai Naoroji Institute for Languages, and a bungalow in Bandra was likely to be donated to house the institute. Delhi gave more shape and body to the concept. Suggestions were invited from the floor, but paucity of time brought forth only a few ideas:

- Dadabhai was a parliamentarian in the Mother of Parliaments. Considering the poor quality of the present crop of people's representatives at all levels, it was suggested that the institute could have as one of its objectives the education of these representatives on how to become responsible leaders.

- Recording the history of Dadabhai's times should also be an objective of this institute, and the application of the philosophy that underlined Dadabhai's concept of unity in diversity.

- The institute, with small study centers in other cities, should develop respect for facts through a journal in which issues could be discussed objectively.

More ideas would have been forthcoming from the intelligent and enthusiastic audience, but a cultural program was due to commence.

Looking back on all that was said that day, the continuous refrain that Dadabhai was "above all an Indian" seems to be overdone. Admitted that the causes he espoused and the battles he fought were, as an Indian, for the betterment of India. But we are, after all, creatures of our upbringing and the moral and ethical values imbibed in our homes and the cultural and religious influences of our group. That Dadabhai was what he was, a man of immense integrity and uprightness, humane and charitable, was a result of his Zoroastrian background at a time when Zoroastrian values were a matter of faith with the old Parsis. Because Dadabhai was above all a Zoroastrian, he was a true Indian.

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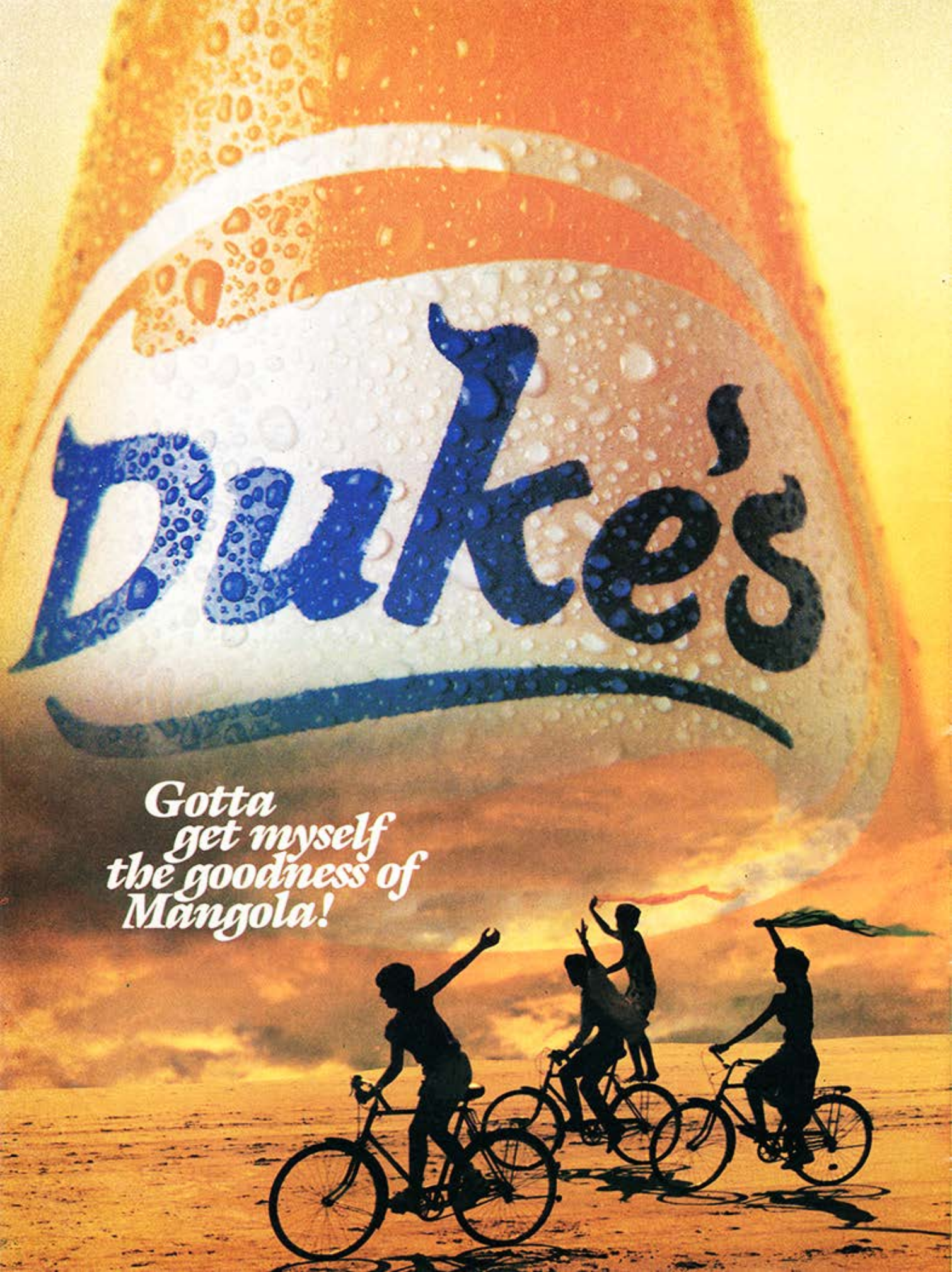
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In the tradition of Dadabhai Naoroji

Despite their Western upbringing four of Dadabhai Naoroji's grandchildren strove to free India from the British yoke

Parinaz Gandhi

"The best roses I have ever grown were during the term I served in jail." Ms Khorshed Naoroji's associates remember this forthright remark she would uninhibitedly make when recalling her eventful life. And accompanying this statement would be a certain measure of satisfaction, not only for transforming the sewerage landscape but more importantly being sentenced to imprisonment for the cause of national freedom.

Such singleminded determination to fight the British yoke Khorshed shared with her three elder sisters Goshi, Perin and Nergish. These four grandchildren of Dadabhai Naoroji, now deceased, were fired with the same brand of nationalism that was so characteristic of the Grand Old Man. Their education abroad, their mannerisms, their life-style made them more akin to the British. Yet it was the Indian ideals they upheld.

"You could see nationalism oozing from her eyes," says long-standing associate Ms Ushaben Mehta, president of Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, remembering the months she had spent with Khorshed as détenus at the Yerawda Jail during the Quit India struggle of 1942. With her sophisticated upbringing Khorshed occasionally faced language problems when interacting with other inmates, and could

not identify with their sitting and eating habits. Even then she harbored "a deep love for the country and its people."

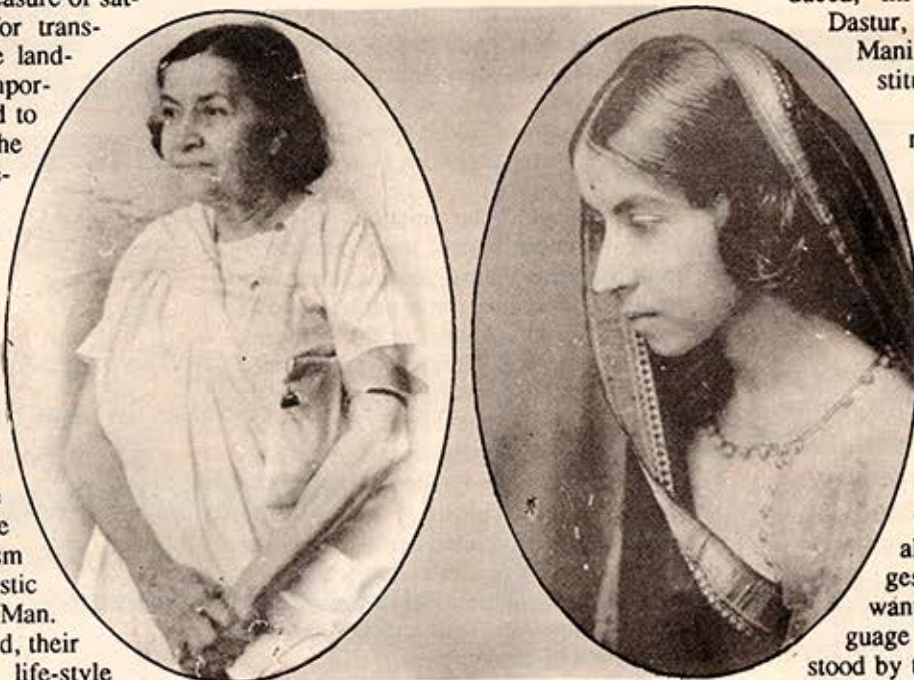
She had musical talent too. While some remember the spinster excelling at the piano, others associate her with

Shortly before her arrest she was actively propagating civil disobedience among the workers of Tata Steel at Jamshedpur. To sympathize with the national movement the workers would keep the machines running but no steel would be produced, informs Dr (Ms) Aloo Dastur, honorary director of Mani Bhuvan Research Institute.

"Khorshed was the most aggressive in nationalism" among the four sisters, is the common verdict. But while she tended to keep aloof, Perin was a favorite with the masses despite her reputation for a hot temper. The Hindustani Prachar Sabha which is presently in its 50th year was started by Perin along the lines suggested by Gandhiji. They wanted to promote a language that could be understood by the common folk—neither Sanskritized Hindi, nor

Persianized Urdu.

Before coming under Gandhi's influence Perin is said to have had no qualms about resorting to violence for the cause of India's freedom, reminisces Ms Sita Poovaiah. She had shared with Perin and the dynamic social worker Ms Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay the travails of participating in the salt satyagrah movement at Chowpatty; the Khadi Prachar drive when they would go from



The patriotic 'Captain sisters' Goshi (left) and Perin Photo: Gandhi Seva Sena

Western vocal music. More often than not the elitist Khorshed would be found reading and writing. She was most attuned to the stalwart Gandhian freedom fighter Abdul Gaffar Khan having fought by his side on the North West Frontier spreading Gandhiji's message of peace and non-violence among the Pathans.

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house to house promoting khadi, often having the door slammed in their face; and picketing at the commercial markets in Bombay where some shopkeepers would be sympathetic and others openly hostile.

Whether as president of the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee or an active member of the Rashtriya Stree Sabha (RSS) of Bombay where sister Goshi was president, Perin's fiery temperament could not be curbed. Not only had she earned the confidence of revolutionaries like Madame Bhikhaiji Cama and Veer Savarkar but of several other workers too whom she had known during her frequent sojourns in jail as a political prisoner.

"Stern and unbending" are the memories associated with Goshi though she has also been credited with being "lovable and easily approachable." She was particularly known for her "humane administration." Goshi was one of the founder members of RSS whose first president was Ms Sarojini Naidu. Later Goshi took over as president. When RSS came to be declared illegal, they changed the name to Desh Sevika Sangh (DSS). When DSS too was banned they called themselves Gandhi Seva Sena. A school, a workshop for women and a provision store were among the activities undertaken by them.

The irony of the situation was that while Perin and Goshi were considered to be working against the law, their husbands, as solicitors, were supposed to be fighting for the law. The three sisters, Goshi, Perin and Nergish were married to three brothers from the Captain family because of which they would often be referred to as the Captain sisters. Nergish's participation in the freedom struggle was limited as tuberculosis is said to have substantially emaciated her. While in her case it was not a conscious decision to stay away from political activity, their spouses however deliberately opted to maintain a distance.

As happy as the Captain sisters and Khorshed were to answer the call of patriotism, their other siblings — Mehera, Jal, Kish and Sarosh — were committed to other vocations. The eldest, Mehera, was a doctor running the state hospital for women in Kutch. In the same region Sarosh served as attaché to the police commissioner. They were held in great esteem by the royal family of Kutch with Mehera being fondly called "maasi (aunt)" and Sarosh being the favorite



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companion for the ladies from the royal household on their outings when the zenana code (which prohibited interaction between males and females) was in force.

The Naoroji family practically grew up with the royal family, informs Ms Dossibai Bhujwala, providing an insight into their early days: Dadabhai Naoroji's son Ardeshir was the chief medical officer at Mandvi in Kutch. His sudden death at a young age left his widow Virbaiji with seven children — and an eighth on the way — to look after. In the interests of his bereaved daughter-in-law, Dadabhai used his contacts to get her appointed as companion to the royal family. With the passage of years, the bonds between the families grew stronger, so much so that some of Dadabhai's personal effects and caskets were ultimately entrusted to the royal family.

Jal and Kish were both employed with the Tatas. While not much is known about Jal, Kish was a good friend of J. R. D. Tata and some of the amusing correspondence exchanged between the two is carried in R. M. Lala's biography of JRD. Kish has been variously described

as a "believer in horizontal worship on Sunday mornings," "an amazing character not bothered about files or procedures but given a job he would get it done," and "a superb public relations man." Knowing his fondness for golf JRD once wrote to him: "Do you find that the in-

They were fired with the same brand of nationalism that was so characteristic of their grandfather

ability to see the ball past your waistline, coupled with an equal inability to bend from the waist, interferes with your game? If so may I suggest a portable mirror on wheels?" Kish's repartee was, "I am asking the Corning Glass Works, who, I believe, made the 200-inch mirror for the world's largest observatory at Palomar, to make a portable mirror on the lines laid down by you!"

For the national cause Kish and Jal are known to have extended monetary support. But otherwise the interests and pursuits that preoccupied them bespoke the Western influence. In fact the entire family is said to have kept themselves apart from the Parsi community too. They would not let communal boundaries restrict their vision.

The reason for this could partly be attributed to their heritage from Dadabhai Naoroji, the man whose ideology governed many Indian families irrespective of caste or creed. Poovaiah narrates her father's reverence towards the imposing photo frame hanging in their family homestead — of the old man with a flowing white beard and a purple cap — which had never failed to intrigue them as children. When the Poovaiah sisters came in contact with the Captain sisters it was as though shared ideals had brought together even the next generations in these families. Common loyalties was one drawing factor, the other was their association with Gandhiji, and finally there was the awakening of national consciousness that had altered so many lives.

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In her parents' footsteps

Arnavaz S. Mama

Coming from a family of social workers Armaity Desai is the first recipient of the Katherine A. Kendall Award of the International Association of Schools of Social Work

"You are going to Deonar? To meet the *goswallas* (butchers)?!" an incredulous friend exclaimed. Most Bombay Parsis know the source of the community's meat supply; few Bombay Parsis know that the abattoir shares the unhallowed suburb — one of the last to have the curfew lifted after the January riots — with a secluded neighbor, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS).

It was only after some persuasion by phone and mail that *Parsiana* was granted an interview by the self-effacing director of India's premier social science institute. The lady's many commitments — as vice chancellor and president of the Association of Indian Universities for the year 1992, as council member of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, as founder and president of the Asian Regional Association for So-



Desai (inset) and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences

Illustration: Mario Miranda, *The Creation of Wealth*

"My father tried hard to build the BPP into a real development trust, but the perception is not there"

cial Work Education, et al — absorb her totally. Add to that her involvement in ameliorating the plight of the riot victims.

Dr (Ms) Armaity Desai's spacious, functional office is at one end of the sprawling TISS campus — a series of low slung structures designed to blend into the environment. Its rough hewn walls and huge picture window absorb the outdoors. A wall plaque speaks of the immanence of trees and women to human existence.

"What I am is what my parents were. They had a very liberal world view and they created it in me." Desai's warm, affectionate recollections of her father Sapur, one of the most dedicated secretaries of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP), and her mother Tehmina, one time principal of the Tata Girls' School in Navsari, color her thoughts and highlight many of her responses in the course of the interview on February 26, 1993.

Barely a few months earlier Desai had received the foremost international award in her chosen field of social service education, the Katherine A. Kendall Distinguished Service Award conferred by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) at their 26th International Congress in Washington DC. The signal honor of being the very first recipient of the award from among a list of social work educators throughout the world sits lightly on the smiling, middle-aged lady. The bun, bindi and cotton sari are the outer accoutrements of the apostle of integrated living in a multi-communal urban environment.

"Any kind of over-concentration is bad, whether it is economic, religious, governmental or any other," notes Desai who is worried that the most likely result of the Bombay riots will be a tendency to greater ghettoization in the city. The baugs have been detrimental to the Parsi ethos, believes Desai. Parsis who live in the baugs have no conscience left, she says: "Rich people continue to live (in residences created for the poor). Let them at least pay higher rent!" Desai informs that she has been offered accom-

modation in Godrej Baug by a donor from his quota with her retirement years in view. She has politely but firmly declined. "I don't want to live in a ghetto atmosphere," she explains, preferring to hold on to a flat in a propped-up old building repaired by the Government of Maharashtra Housing Board.

"Our priorities are all wrong," says Desai "We are more worried about the tower of silence, just as the BJP (Bharatiya Janta Party) is more worried about mosque and temple, than about living conditions. Unfortunately," she concedes, "education doesn't change things," citing the example of BJP leader L. K. Advani and our community with 100 percent literacy. "(We) should be able to think independently... (but) the world is going through a spell of revivalism. Maybe that's what's happening. It's a throw back rather than a movement forward."

Emphasizing the value of enlightened leadership, Desai cites the example of Prince Karim, the present Aga Khan, who has liberalized the Ismailies to a large extent, removing the barriers that other Moslem communities suffer from. "I think our leaders think one thing but are afraid to speak out. At the (World Zoroastrian) Congress they are not ready to talk about controversial issues. But it is only through conflict that progress comes. From conflict comes crisis and that will produce change — not otherwise."

Considering the Punchayet as an "enabling body" to help the development of thought, Desai believes that the BPP should permit the growth of ideas, opinions and eventual change, "not consider themselves the bastion of ancient thought." Nor should the Punchayet trustees be afraid to promote new thought. "Our mandate to them is to lead us, not block us. The leadership role is a creative role — not standing in one place. If they do that, other things will follow."

Nor is Desai in favor of conservative Parsi attitudes on marriage, adoption or conversion. "Other people have a much better appreciation of our religion... If a person wants to embrace the religion, neither you nor I have the right to deny

him or her an entry. God is nobody's personal property. If you don't want to share the wealth, keep it (the charities) separate, though I'm not for it. But why mix up religion with the material things of life?" she questions.

"Religion is passed on by the mother to her children. If our religion is going to be preserved, it will be the women who'll do it, not the men. Women marrying out have equal rights. Why deny them?" By doing so we are committing suicide as a community, she feels, adding, acerbically, "If we are doing it by choice it's alright."

That childless Parsi couples are denied the right to adopt a child is a major source of unhappiness to Desai. What needs to be passed on down the generations is the value system and the value system is passed on by nurture, not nature, emphasizes the social scientist. "Even to explain to a non-Parsi becomes difficult. People say 'You are so modern in other ways, why are you so backward in this respect?'" Desai concedes that initially, keeping the community to itself was a social need, "but in the global village is this the attitude?" We do not convey true Zoroastrian values that way, she feels.

"On the other hand, others have a high perception of our integrity, the sincerity with which we work. We still have a key role in the professions. These are our strengths. They won't change by girls marrying out and it's the same whether the girl or the boy marries out," declares Desai.

Recalling the value system in their own home, Desai notes how her father believed religion was mainly service to others. "He was not an agiary goer... He didn't believe in rituals at all. Even Zarathushtra's picture was not in our house for years... He believed only in the essential values; held on and perpetuated them. I am grateful that he nurtured those values in us," she says, noting that her father had no objection to the inter-communal marriage of his son (managing director Xerxes Desai of Titan Watches). "The children may decide on their religion when they grow up. But they have the value system," she adds.

Referring to the community's negative demographic trend Desai notes that there is a chance that it could be reversed if the community's policies are reversed. "Housing is not our problem. Enormous numbers of Parsis are marrying out of the community; otherwise there are childless couples. There is too much inbreeding leading to sterility, mental retardation... We need fresh blood." According to Desai the community needs to accept the offspring of Parsi girls with husbands of other communities as also non-Parsi children adopted by Parsis and brought up as Zoroastrians. There is no other way. "I (as a woman) have equal rights under the Indian Constitution. How can (my community) deny me access to my religious place? These are patriarchal attitudes which must be changed. And (the change) will lead to increased numbers," she assures.

Reminiscing about the old Parsi spirit of adventure, Desai says, "When they came to Bombay, they didn't come to a bed of roses." But now the community wants employment located in this metropolis or has its sights set on migration to the west. To encourage young people to get out and try their luck in other parts

of India, Desai suggests greater publicity of individuals who have established themselves outside the mainstream so that their achievements can inspire others as also the creation of a network to lend a helping hand to a young man or woman willing to step out.

Parsis in the police have become a rarity, there are less and less in the army, and hardly any in the IAS. The tendency "to retire into undemanding jobs (away) from the mainstream of life in the country," is not new, according to Desai. She recalls how upset her mother used to get when dealing with applicants for the Dinbai Patuck scholarships which help Parsi ladies take short, non-academic, career-oriented courses. Most applicants wanted to go in for typing and stenography. No one wanted to go in for teaching or social work. "There are very few Parsi vice chancellors because they haven't made a name for themselves as professors — they say they make more money in business management. We're still strong in medicine and law. But how many male social workers are there? Rare." The Parsi presence is concentrated, limited to a few professions, she says.

Are Parsi boys mama's boys? "They always were -- from my time!" she laughs. She found the Jewish families in the United States very compatible because they have the same problem: the women are aggressive, the boys not so. "They lack the desire to make life through their own creative efforts." Another community sharing this problem are the Sindhis says Desai: "Sindhi women are not finding compatible partners."

According to Desai the fault lies with the one-track Parsi parents with a strong goal orientation to the material needs of life, to the neglect of spiritual and aesthetic requirements. She recalls a family where the young man had a strong musical inclination but the family was intent on making him into a chartered accountant, counting success only in terms of money, ignoring the nonmaterial aspects of human fulfilment.

Desai argues that a change in attitudes is called for. And to do so we need to reach the young when they are really young. Since the children are spread over so many different schools the only way is to organize summer camps as they do in the US, she advises. There the

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children learn to work with their hands, appreciate values other than what they get at home. Seven, eight, nine-year-olds learn to be rough and tough, with college students as group leaders with approximately seven children per group. "Make it into a two-week program. Expose children to other things (like) painting, modelling (for which) individual classes may not be affordable. I would even say, make it (a mix of) 50 percent Parsis and 50 percent non-Parsis," she suggests.

To counteract the old regressive attitudes Desai believes that the publication of thought provoking literature will eventually lead to a change in ideas as people begin to perceive more than their immediate environment: "Writing and speaking all the time about the same thing finally has an impact." As an example of the kind of thinking that needs change Desai refers to the popular superstition that still shrouds the menstruating woman. On one occasion when she spoke of taking her family's muktad vase for normal use she was solemnly advised against the idea: it would lose its purity if a menstruating woman touches it. Undeterred, Desai stopped to explain how

menstruation, far from being a defilement, was the source of fertility, children and community growth. At the end of it her advisor's hitherto staunch belief had been shaken, if not overcome. "These attitudes create barriers. We miss the wood for the trees. They must be vanquished. There are two groups (of Zoroastrians). One leaves because they can't bear all this, the other remains and perpetuates these myths. Then we can't change!"

Grieved at the deaths and murders of lonely, aged Parsis, Desai advocates the provision of adequate services for the aged whose absolute numbers, and as percentage of the community, are growing. Such services should be sensitive to the old peoples' need for independence, she cautions. Eschewing large homes which "take away the sights and sounds of the outside world," Desai advises the creation of clusters of individual units where the aged incumbent can cook or eat out. Accepting the fact that such places are expensive to create and maintain, Desai suggests that organizations can be created for the purpose to which lonely aged people could entrust their savings in return for a judicious mixture

of independence and institutional care.

Another void which needs to be addressed, according to Desai, is the creation of a bureau to train domestic help which working couples would be happy to pay for. The prototype Desai has in mind is the Guild of Service established by the late Ms Mary Clubvala Jadhav in Madras. "Then Parsi women may want to have more than one child. It means a qualitative improvement. The images a working woman creates are very good... When I was very young domestic help was easy to find. My mother could contribute a lot outside the home, which is very important. We have started a Day Care Centre (on this campus). We call it the 'working parents' center.' Young fathers come with babies in their arms — I believe in equality and I must practice what I believe. Their mind is on the job because (they know that) the child will be well taken care of."

Also, the growing post-retirement period, an offshoot of increased longevity, can be more productively utilized, says Desai. TISS has courses for volunteers which retired people can take. "We then link them up with welfare organizations looking for retired professionals. Why

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can't they help to tutor children in the Cowasjee Jehangir or BJPC schools? My father tried hard to build the BPP into a real development trust, but the perception is not there. There is a tendency to be one-tracked."

A TISS alumnus, Desai spent the first 25 years of her working life with the then newly established College of Social Work at Nirmala Niketan (NN) — and enjoyed the pathbreaking early years in building up social work education and in contributing to new areas of social work practice. Seven of those years were spent obtaining her masters and doctoral degrees in social work at the University of Chicago. At TISS besides furthering the development of social work education the accent also shifted towards working on higher education at the national level.

While both institutions train social workers, NN's accent is on basic integration of social work skills while TISS provides for specialization. There is some difference in curricular patterns, though core courses are the same and out in the field both institutions are doing the same type of work. TISS also has a substantial accent on research, contracting for 60 to 70 research projects annually with various organizations, government ministries and international organizations like the World Bank (WB), UNICEF, WHO and many others. (TISS is the WB's eyes and ears at the Maharashtra end of the Narbada project.) TISS curricula sensitize Government of India forestry officers to the life and behavior of tribals. The Institute provides refresher courses for IAS and IPS officers.

"With our ethos of social work, social development, social change, we should have our feet on the ground," says Desai, her gentle tones belying her trenchant comments and unorthodox vision. Her professional social work staff in field action projects are involved in various programs. For instance, in the Special Cell for Women in Distress at the office of the Commissioner of Police, they sort out problems of harassment and violence against women. Men at the inspector/subinspector level are more responsive when given opportunity in seminars/workshops to discuss and bring out their point of view. "We set standards for others," Desai notes matter-of-factly.

The establishment of the Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work at Nagpada in 1936, with 20 students, marked the first of the nation building

activities of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust. The project was proposed and brought to fruition by Dr Clifford Manshardt, who became its first director. The Institute acquired its present name in 1944, reflecting the thrust towards an ongoing study of the social problems of the country. The contribution of TISS faculty and students to the refugee camps of the blistering post-Partition years was recognized by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru when he inaugurated the new Deonar campus. Since 1964 the Institute has been recognized as a "Deemed University" primarily funded by the University Grants Commission.

TISS' Golden Jubilee in 1986 was celebrated with the establishment of a Rural Campus, 65 km away from Sholapur. TISS asked for an area of poverty, low rainfall, drought-prone area which is not close to an industrial growth pole, says Desai, and the Government of Maharashtra was happy to provide 100 acres of barren plateau in Tuljapur Taluka, Osmanabad District, where TISS staff have planted trees to develop the quality of the degraded land, and are trying to raise funds to construct the buildings. What they do not want is an "island of prosperity in the midst of poverty." Hence, the focus is on community development work in Tuljapur Taluka villages. There are socioeconomic programs for women and also watershed development, soil conservation, training in local self-government to the elected women in the zilla parishad samiti and gram panchayat to equip them to fill their 30 percent quota in the panchayats more effectively. "If women's leadership develops, it will have a lot of effect on the community at the grassroots level," notes Desai with satisfaction. Currently there are six social workers, a rural engineer and a horticulturist on a permanent basis. The team is on the lookout for a woman doctor with, preferably, a community health background, informs Desai.

"TISS is a good place to work. The Governing Board leaves us free to grow. Universities normally constrict growth with their senates and executive councils. We don't have those hassles here," says Desai.

Desai's involvement with the IASSW, a body which began in the 1920s, dates back to the 1960s. With others in the region, she was involved in forming the Asian Regional Association for Social Work Education in 1974, remaining its

president till 1979. Ms Katherine Kendall was the IASSW's first full-time secretary general. The Association decided to honor her by establishing the award and inviting her to present it. An 83-year-old American, Kendall "walks faster than I do, hops off buses and trains, is sharp in her thinking," describes Desai who initially came to know her in the course of her doctoral studies in the US. Desai is looking forward to hosting Kendall when the latter arrives in November to attend the meeting of the Asia and Pacific Association for Social Work Education as the organization completes 20 years of work. In the west women are predominant at the grassroots level, men predominate in teaching and administration. This is true in India too -- TISS accepted.

Desai's parents had taught her not to follow the beaten path but to be creative. "I owe a great deal to them. My father was an administrator; my mother was a teacher; both were social workers. In some ways I enjoy all three professions... a combination of them all in the roles I play."

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FEDERATION GOES TO MP

continued from page 48

present. Philosophically there is nothing like the present because, the moment I speak, it goes into the past and I move into the future."

It is natural for minority communities that feel threatened to regard certain things as their personal possession and ward off any intrusion. But what often happens is that even when there is no perceivable threat, such an attitude continues, he lamented.

"Is there enough justification to feel alarmed at what is happening to the community? I always find concern voiced about numbers. I've never been bothered about numbers because numbers alone don't determine what will be the contribution of the community. Our demographers should have concern for the mental health of the community. We refuse to look at things which are more significant... Our food habits have contributed to a lot of health related problems among us."

How much cultural assimilation have Parsis been subject to? When the minority group lives shoulder to shoulder with the majority, the food and dress habits of the majority group take over. And especially those distanced from the main-

stream of Parsis have to establish that they are like the others and yet unlike the others which is a very challenging task in the absence of emotional and psychological cushioning from their community. He then cited the case of his three brothers and himself who all wear the sudreh but two of whom don't wear the kusti. "Are they less of a Parsi?" he questioned. Referring to his own experience when twice he was called upon to offer death prayers in Varanasi even though he is not an ordained priest, he reasoned, "When you are in very small numbers you do your duty as a fellow human being whether you are qualified or not."

Seeing around him the amount of energy and mental powers the Parsis waste on petty disputes prompted him to ask, "Is there no social scientist who would like to look at this aspect?... Is the community a worthy social group of which we can be proud?"

Leave the youth in Zarathushtra's hands

When addressing the members of "the world's largest family," Dr Behram Anklesaria stressed that Parsis should view themselves as "one large undivided

family" rather than as "the smallest community." But then, quarrelling would not be allowed! He was speaking to the gathering in Ratlam not in his capacity as a reputed gynecologist of Ahmedabad but "as a Parsi... sometimes bewildered, sometimes confused, but always happy to be a Parsi."

The strength of the Parsi community in India has reduced by half in the same number of years that the dominant population has doubled, he pointed out. There are three "treatments" available: back to the ghettos; back on doles; back to Zarathushtra. While the first option implied living an isolated existence, the second showed an undue dependence on others. To him, it was the third option that mattered. "For our community, only two words are important: 'youth' and 'Zarathushtra,' he believed.

"Zarathushtra would have been the ideal prophet in this twentieth century... We seem to have locked away Zoroastrianism in inaccessible fire-temples. There is something very wrong in this thinking. It is time we change the (Parsi) Zoroastrian tradition" which accepts children of men married outside the community as (Parsi) Zoroastrians but refuses offspring of women married out. "The only way to revive the community is to expose the

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REVIVAL OF ZOROASTRIANISM IN ITS ANCIENT IRANIAN HOMELAND OF TAJIKISTAN & CENTRAL ASIA



Upper: Group Photo of Tajik Delegation with Bombay Hosts at Z.C. Lecture Meeting (March 1992). Lower: Tajik Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdullajanov with Prof. Dr. Meher Master-Moos & Mrs Shirin G. Framarzi (at Indian Merchant's Chambers meeting 17-Feb-1993 Bombay)

It all began with the historical charm of the Shahnamah of Firdausi, the national poet of Tajikistan. In 1991, when the Tajik Friendship Society President **MADAME MAISARA KOLONOVA** invited the Zoroastrian College President, **PROF. DR. MEHER MASTER-MOOS** to visit Dushanbe as their official Guest of Honour. And this led to the blossoming of the ties between the Iranian origin Persian speaking people of Zoroastrian ancestry in Tajikistan, and their Parsee counterparts in India; through the Zoroastrian College inviting a delegation of Tajik Scholars to celebrate NOWROOZE in the traditional manner, with the Parsi/Iranian/Zoroastrian Community in India. In March, 1992, a year ago.

The first official delegation to come to India to revive these ancient ties consisted of a specially selected group of 7 persons, the finest of Tajik Scholarship - Prof. Dr. **DODIKHODU MAESTIPISH**, Avesta Professor and Vice President of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman of Tajikistan, Dr. **RAHMON ULMASOV**, Vice President of the Tajik Friendship Society, Dr. **ALEXANDER SUBBOTIN**, Member of Parliament, Dr. **PULAT PULATOV**, Director of the Tajik Technical Institute; Dr. **ISUF JAKOB**, Archaeologist, Dr. **AKHROZ MUKHTAROV**, Historian and the Intourist Interpreter **MS. LATOFAT ZAGUROVA**. The Zoroastrian Community throughout India rose magnificently to the occasion to welcome these honoured guests who were fêted and well received by the host organisations in all places. The **DELHI PARSIS ANJUMAN**, under the able Chairmanship of **GENERAL ADI SETHNA** and Mr. **DADI MISTRY**, Mrs. **DHUN BAGLI** and others hosted the delegation at the Delhi Parsi Anjuman Dharamshala and arranged for anjuman cum public reception in the Dharamshala Hall, a visit to Delhi University and special city tour thanks to the courtesy of Mr. **BEHRAM DUMASIA** of T.C.I. Delhi

who was presented with the Tajik style Sudreh and cummerbund by Archeologist Isuf Jakobov; and the Scholars spent much time in the Meherjirana Library and other places of historical interest. In **BARODA** Mr. & Mrs. **SHAVAK** and **GOOL PATEL** generously hosted the delegation to a visit to the Gaekwad's Museum and lunch meeting with the Baroda Parsi Anjuman Members. The Delegation members were very happy with the reception of the **DAHANU IRANIAN ZOROASTRIAN ANJUMAN** and **D.Y.Z. ASSOCIATION** members organised by Mrs. **MANI B. IRANI**, Mr. **BEHRUZIRANI**, **POLAN** and **GULBANU IRANI**, Mrs. **PEROZA TAFTI**, Mr. **KEYOMARZIRANI** and others; and were delighted by the beautiful beaches, the warm hearted hospitality and the charming play enacted by school children on the life of Prophet Zarathushtra.

The Delegation visited the **ZOROASTRIAN COLLEGE** near Sanjan and presented books for its Research Library. At **UDVADA** they were specially pleased to meet the Zoroastrian priests and see the old traditional way of life; and many books of ceremonies.

The main events of the visit were centered in Bombay where homestay and hospitality was graciously arranged by Mrs. **SHIRIN GUSTADJI FRAMARZI**, Mrs. **GOOL** and **LATE AIR MARSHALL ENGINEER**, Mr. & Mrs. **ZAL** and **ROSHAN CONTRACTOR**; & Mrs. **AMY K. MASTER**, and a tightly packed programme of activities was hosted and co-ordinated by Dr. **MEHER MASTER MOOS**; together with Mr. **YAZDAN BONSHOI**, the members of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman, Mrs. **HOMAI FRAMARZIAN**, of Mocombo Cafe, Mrs. **NAWAS** & **HOMI MARKER** & **DADAR PARSIS ANJUMAN** Committee, Mr. **EDIL KATRAK** of the People to People International Bombay Chapter, Mr. **SORABJI GODREJ** and the Godrej Company & family, **INDIAN MERCHANT'S CHAMBER**, thanks to Padmasree

HOMI J. H. TALEYARKHAN, the **RUSSIAN CULTURAL CENTRE** through Consul **FYODOR ROZOVSKY**, the Iran League through Mrs. **MERA SHROFF**, the **IRANI** family members of Leopold Cafe, Mrs. **HUTOKSHI Y. DUDHWALLA** & the Turel Family; Mr. & Mrs. **DINAR & SHIRAZ MEHTA** of Dini Travels, Ervad **NOSHRWAN KANGA**, Panthaky Sahab of Manekji Seth Aglary, Ervad **RUSTOMJI PANTHAKY**, Ervad **RAMIYAR KARANJI** & Dadar Athornan Madressa, Prof. **SAMDOCTOR**, Mr. **RUSTOM DEGAMWALA**, Mrs. **SHIRIN M. COOPER**, Mrs. **JERRY KUMANA**, Mr. **ASPIRANI**, Prof. **MEHER PAVRI**, Mr. **NSRAO**, **BYRAMAVARI** and family of Karachi and specially, Ms. **SYLLA KOTIWALLA**, & the **ASIATIC TRAVEL SERVICE**, who ably undertook all the arduous task of the travel arrangements. The **TIME AND TALENTS CLUB** had kindly organised a Tajik Music Ensemble program, which could not take place. The **FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ANJUMANS**, chaired by Dr. Aspi Kotiwalla, invited the Delegation to attend its Federation meeting; and Bombay Doordarshan covered the Delegation visit to India, — an event which took place for the first time after the downfall of the Sassanian Empire, and the independence of the erstwhile U.S.S.R.

The Tajik people (unlike their Parsee brothers and sisters in India, who have mostly forgotten both their Persian language and culture) are proud of their Iranian ancestry; and Persian is still both their mother tongue and official language. Homage to Firdausi and other Tajik-Persian poets is part of their culture, and every school child learns Shahnamah history. Whilst Parsees, thanks to the tolerant Hindu environment in Sanjan/Gujarat succeeded in preserving the Zoroastrian Religion and especially its sacred ceremonies & established Fire Temples in India, in its original homeland the followers of the faith of Prophet Asho Spitam Zarathushtra were hard pressed to survive, and the faith was preserved in remote mountain villages in the Penjikant, Zarafshan, Badkhashan and Pamir regions under very difficult conditions after the downfall of the Sassanian Empire. These lands of trans-Oxania, situated between the Syr Darya and Amu Darya Rivers in the mountain regions of Central Asia known as the "Taj" or "Crown" of the World historically formed part of the Zoroastrian Empires of the Sogdian and other periods; and till today some of the people have preserved the Sogdian form of the Zoroastrian faith; wearing long-sleeved cotton sudreh garment (with "boyu" button, and proper gussets for girdeau and gireban); and woolen kusti, without fringed ends, knotted in front, tied thrice around the waist. In Persian the word used for priest is "Magupat", "Magu", "Magav" and this terminology is still in use in the Penjikant region, where "Padan" "Baresam", sudreh and kusti, and Homa ceremony for extracting the Homa juice (& use of Persian script Khordeh Avesta) are still evident among the village population.

THE FIRST WORLD AVESTA CONFERENCE IN DUSHANBE

In October 1992, an historic event took place in Dushanbe, the modern Tajik capital, after a thousand years. This historic conference was organised by Madame **GOLROKHSOR**, President of the Tajik Cultural Foundation. The Zoroastrian College delegation from India/Pakistan, consisting of Dr. **MEHER MASTER-MOOS**, Mrs. **SHIRIN G. FRAMARZI**, Mrs. **HOMAI BILIMORIA**, Mrs. **JERRY KUMANA**, Mr. **HOMI D. SETHNA** and Mr. **RUSTOM DEGAMWALA**, 2 Zoroastrians of London, Mr. **SHAHROKH SHAHROKH** & Mr. **JAL AMROLIA**, AND 2 Zoroastrians of Iran, attended this Conference which was officially opened by the Vice-President of Tajikistan on 15th October 1992.

The Z.C. delegation was accorded a right royal reception by the Mayors of Khujand, Penjikant, Ura Tyube and other places in Tajikistan; and taken by Madame **MAISARA KOLONOVA** & Dr. **PULATOV** to visit the ancient historical & archeological excavations sites as well as the Varoh village in the Penjikant/Zarafshan mountains area; where one of the villagers obliged the Delegates, by opening up his shirt to display his full length long sleeved old style sudreh and kusti to the delegates; and other villagers informed the delegates that their grandfathers were "Magupat" and discussed on the performance of the Homa-juice extraction ceremony method still in use by them. Though cutoff from the rest of the world, the villagers were highly enlightened, and some spoke French and English. When asked what they would like from India, they indicated they would be most pleased with books on Zoroastrian religion/Avesta prayers preferably in Persian script. The Tajik people are seeking to revive their ancient faith of their forefathers; and they are looking to the support of their Zoroastrian brethren in India and other countries in their endeavours.

In February 1993 the new present **TAJIK PRIME MINISTER ABDUMALIK ABDULLAJANOV**, and an official Govt. Cabinet Ministers Delegation of 49 persons visited India — Delhi & Bombay. They met some of the Z.C. Tajik Friendship Group Members, at a function specially organised at the Indian Merchants Chamber, thanks to Padmasree **HOMI J. H. TALEYARKHAN**.

The **ZOROASTRIAN COLLEGE** entered into a Collaboration Protocol with the **TAJIK TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY**; and the Tajik students are now enabled to study for their research degrees in Zoroastrian religious education.

Are you interested? Would you like to help sponsor a Zoroastrian or a Tajik or a Central Asia/Iranian Student at the Z.C.? Would you like to visit Tajikistan on the next Delegation visit? If so, please write to the Z. College at the Mustafa Building address.

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youth. Put them in Zarathushtra's hands and leave them alone... love them but do not oppress, guide them but do not dictate..."

Bombay Pasi Punchayet trustee Eruch Desai had a query: "Our population was at its peak when there were no intercommunity marriages. Do you think our community will grow if we spread out and accept children of mixed marriages?" Responded Behram Anklesaria: "Times have changed. Are we going to stick to old values? Can we expect our children to be nuclear physicists on the one hand and on the other to be lectured by the Punchayet as to who they should marry? Darwin's theory on the survival of the fittest also applies to our community. We did not need to open up then. Today we do."

One man -- one religion

Parents are concerned about their child's school education but unfortunately they do not show the same anxiety for their child's religious education, regretted Ervad Pervaz Mithaiwala of Bombay. "Did you go to the principal of the school seeking admission for your child or did the principal approach you?" Mithaiwala questioned the assembly on the morning of January 31. "Similarly should you be endeavoring to seek religious education or should knowledge be expected to come to you?" he continued in Gujarati.

It is the children who will be the future torchbearers of the Zoroastrian religion. Inculcate in the children the habit to visit the fire-temple daily and impress upon the children the need to stick to their own religion as one man cannot follow two religions. "Whatever you wish can be fulfilled with faith in your religion," he continued. While there is a certain element of religious awareness, the athornans, he felt, were not showing the same religious fervor as the behdins.

Explaining certain key concepts of the Zoroastrian faith Mithaiwala noted that Ahura Mazda, Zarathushtra and the atash padshah constituted the trinity in Zoroastrianism. "If you don't go to the Udvada Atash Behram even once in your lifetime your *jeevan phera* (this incarnation) is futile," he believed. To continue with the practice of wearing the sudreh-kusti he sought to explain its potency: If armed with spiritual garments "you go out on an amas (when no moon can be sighted) night, no evil force will touch you." Finally he cautioned, "If you leave your land, property, wealth, you can always get it back again. But once you leave your religion you won't ever get it again."

Should the Zoroastrians in India focus on preserving the "Parsi caste" or the "Zoroastrian religion?" questioned Mhow's Dr Behram Masani. He then quoted the famous Urdu poet Iqbal who sought that each should uplift his own soul such that instead of an individual beseeching favors from the Almighty, God asks him what he would like to be:

*"Khudi ko kar buland itna
Ki har taqdir se pehle
Khuda bandé se khud puchhé,
'Bata téri raza kya hai?'"*

The talk had prompted Federation's joint honorary secretary Keki Gandhi to frame a questionnaire of 10 teasers requiring the use of one's rational mind for the answers: "Do I belong to Zarathushtra or does Zarathushtra belong to me? Am I Zarathushtra's follower or will I act as his jailor...?" Though he clarified that he was speaking not as secretary of the Federation, but in his personal capacity, the audience wanted him to carry this questionnaire in the *Fed Newsletter*.

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In vogue WITH Xerxes

"You can be a fisherwoman and still be an elegant fisherwoman." The statement sums up the fashion philosophy of designer Xerxes Bhathena, a name familiar to the leading ladies of the Indian screen: Parveen Babi, Dimple Kapadia, Sridevi, Madhuri Dixit... Xerxes also spells terror — initially — to aspiring socialites who go through their paces at the six-year-old Orchids (billed as India's first finishing school) where he begins as a stern dictator and concludes as everyone's dream lover. During and after the course however he continues to reign as their final arbiter on fashion.

"In the beginning I just hit them. Then I soften quite a bit." A roguish smile lights up the fair, high-domed face and frequently alternates with the vehemence of strong opinions; the substantial, stocky presence fills the cozy mezzanine office atop a choice little showroom called Xerxes off Bandra's Carter Road. But Bhathena's prized creations are not on view. His mother likes to run the shop and the garments that line the walls below are for her to sell, he says.

One who claims to love interacting with women, Bhathena believes "making a woman a doormat is wrong. Why not women be allowed three husbands?" he asks with a straight face. At Orchids "we are definitely trying to make women aware of what is happening in their lives." The school began as a grooming class largely patronized by upper middle-class Gujarati/Marwari families. There are very few Parsis because middle-class Parsi upbringing includes the social graces, says Bhathena. In the course of the intensive interaction family problems often surface. "Some of them are disasters," says Bhathena. The school staff have found themselves faced with stories of marital rape and emotional maladjustments which they have tried to help by appropriate contacts with psychologists or lawyers. Being better educated, the Zoroastrians do not seem to need such aid, he adds. Though he makes no claim to be a social worker, Bhathena says he gives more attention to those who are



From costume designer for films to prized exporter, Xerxes Bhathena has placed his stamp on the Indian fashion scene

Arnavaz S. Mama

backward in the language or who don't look so well. "It gives me a lot of pleasure when a girl says (the course) helped," beams Bhathena. The course is now increasingly being sought by hotels and clubs for the benefit of their staff, he informs.

A leading costume designer in Indian films for 10 years, Bhathena's creations graced the stars of *Namak Halal*, *Sagar*, *Mr India* and innumerable others. Unfortunately in those days (the 1980s) the Indian film industry had no award for costume designing, he rues. The Puff outfit for Godrej refrigerators' model was also designed by Bhathena — his only advertising oriented creation, he says.

The careening lifestyle led to a heart attack after which Bhathena abandoned films to pay more attention to his export lines — mainly salwar kameez outfits and full length gararas, fanning out from London to Durban, to California and Vancouver. Each market has its idiosyncracies, he says, Durban and Vancouver being more selective. Bhathena, whose favorites are silk and chiffon fabrics in black and white creations, has nonetheless to bow to commercial considerations and use the synthetic fabrics and colors in demand. The Indian designer has to pocket his professional pride if he hopes to survive commercially, says Bhathena. Unlike Ghivency or Chanel or St Laurent who experiment with actual fabrics before arriving at the seasonal presentations, the Indian designer needs to be satisfied with sketch pad and

pencil. Trials have to be implemented with cheap substitutes where the end result can be a gamble. But it keeps the costs down and the price range competitive. His first bridal sari was a recent affair — an off-white creation of self-embroidered silk with three slashed insertions of sequined lace in the pallav for a tall, willowy Parsi bride with a budget to match.

Bhathena's farflung buyers need frequent visiting and, while abroad, he uses his time to take up short courses in hairstyling, beauty and makeup techniques to remain in touch with the total interna-

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tional fashion picture.

An alumnus of Boys' Town, Nasik, who graduated in history and English from the National College in Bandra because he couldn't make the grade for Sir J. J. School of Art's precious 80 seats, Bhathena considers himself largely self-taught. Biographies and autobiographies of famous artists and designers line the rear wall of his office, providing the leavening to his own creativity. Opportunity knocked in the form of a sales job in Burlington's, the well-known boutique in Bombay's Taj Mahal Hotel. Burlington's André Kapoor has a prominent place in the collage that covers part of the wall beside Bhathena's desk. "I was grasping... I would sit with the cutter when there were no customers. I had even got admission into the Miami School of Fashion. Clothes seeped into my life," he recalls. While Bhathena had risen up the Burlington ladder, designing its exhibits for Pret à-Porté — the prestigious international designers' exhibition held twice a year in France — he could not avail of the Miami admission for lack of funds. A consolation prize came his way in the form of a job as fashion editor in *Time Out in Bombay*,

but that magazine folded after three issues in 1979, reminisces the designer. By then he had met Parveen Babi and she had inducted him into films.

The Indian designer must pocket his professional pride to survive commercially

As a designer Bhathena says he works to his own dictates and that of his client. In films, however, the director has the overriding say, the clothes reflecting the social milieu and historical period as well as the idiosyncracies of the character.

On the modelling ramp's upper reaches Bhathena singles out three Parsi females today — Sheree Meheromji, Colleen Khan and Mehr Jesia whom he eulogizes as "definitely the greatest model in recent years, a dream on the ramp, a photographer's dream..."

Bhathena had designed for Jesia when she had represented India at the Miss Universe contest in 1986. According to Bhathena, a good model needs a gait that is charismatic, a face that can be innocent, sophisticated or vampish. Like Jesia, a model should be able to emote with the designer, he adds.

Unlike its outstanding fashion models, Bhathena shudders at the dress sense of average middle-class Parsi women, comparing them to the erstwhile Yugoslavians of a couple of years ago "with a very nice watch and extremely synthetic fabrics." While Parsi women can be "finicky in the house to the point of irritation," Bhathena believes they tend to neglect their own attire, their "interest in fashion being restricted to being extremely conscious of what is happening at Marks and Spencer! The Parsis have somehow become very lethargic," says Bhathena, blaming the malaise on the community's fondness for watching TV and video. An evident result is economic decline.

Bhathena's career and ideas present an enigma. His middle class upbringing could hardly have predicted his subsequent fashion career. Nor does his suc-

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cessful, cosmopolitan image prepare one for his emergence in middle age as "a staunch Parsi" who claims he "will not let the children of Parsi women married out enter the agiary." (He admits however that within his own circle he has seen more peace and amity in these families than in the normal Parsi marriages.) The surprise is greater when he reveals that his grandparents had chosen to be cremated, his grandfather even dispensing with after-death ceremonies. He is perturbed because "now my parents want to be cremated (but) I want to go to the Tower of Silence." Though he theoretically approves of people choosing to bequeath their bodies for medical research, he adds, "I'm a little too vain to have my body cut up."

Bhathena says he had wanted to be a film critic at one time "though I couldn't write for nuts. At the age of 19 I was a *bayela*, spineless. Even then I knew about camera angles and what's wrong (with a particular frame)..."

"Parsi boys are mama's boys because they're dependent... Somehow we're pushed back in the arts faculty. There are no appreciation classes which we can attend (to learn the finer points of art or music)... Perhaps I'm a go-getter. I want to know everything. Reading about Coco Channel and her life was unbelievable."

Bhathena is distressed that Parsi trusts do not offer scholarships to fashion designers, artists or potters to study their craft abroad. He has had several non-Parsi assistants who got financial support from their communities to seek professional training abroad and haven't looked back. However Bhathena notes dourly, "Not one Parsi boy has come wanting to be my assistant." But he cites Mickey Contractor's wizardry as a makeup artist and recalls how "Mani Rabadi had created a great stir in the costuming field. But the spirit of being a fighter wasn't in her. If someone owes me money I will get it out by hook or by crook."

Bhathena's advice to the fashion conscious female is "Don't ape anybody. A woman should have a great capacity to criticize herself. By trial and error develop your own style. There's a designer within yourself."

Bombay remains Bhathena's favorite city. The recent riots were a source of despondency: "If only three out of 22 workers come, you can't work. If I have to leave this city what am I going to do?"

But as he himself notes, "I'm a gypsy. I have to be doing 10 things at a time!"

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The green blue chip

The Parsi Dairy Farm's teakwood scheme promises over 300 percent appreciation at the end of 20 years

Homi Rogers

Money does grow on trees. Literally. At least, that's what Parsi Dairy Farm (PDF), Bombay's most reputed milk-and-dairy products outlet, would like investors in their new teak trees project to believe. As would over 150 odd companies that have sprung up over the country (86 have been registered in Madras alone), proliferating faster than the timber their trees are expected to yield after 20 years.

It is a business fraught with risks, at least for the investor, but the mood at most of the promoting companies is upbeat. And Dairyland Plantations (I) Ltd (DPIL), a company promoted by the 75-year-old PDF, is no exception. Naval Nariman breezes around his farmhouse at Varwada, 26 kms away from Vapi on the Bombay-Ahmedabad National Highway, where 300 acres have been set aside for teak plantations. With typical Parsi bonhomie he confidently predicts that the land on which he grew and prospered ("look at my size," he guffaws) would surely yield wood far exceeding his own girth. But since the yield is not measured by the girth of trees, Nariman converts the output to 20 to 25 cubic feet of teakwood from each mature tree after a period of 20 years. In financial terms, going by the current market value of teak

at about Rs 600 to Rs 650 per cubic foot and the increasing rate over the past few years, this translates to an income of Rs 50,000 upwards after 20 years, on a modest one-time investment of Rs 1,000 per

tree: an annual average return of between 300 and 400 percent.

"And this, mind you, is a very modest estimate," Nariman informs us, sinking into a chair, while rain clouds play hide-and-seek outside the

restaurant-cum-dairy-farm set up by the brothers near Talasari, on the Maharashtra-Gujarat border in Thane district. The district has long been considered one of the best spots in the country for growing teak trees, and the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM) has teak plantations here dating back to 1974.

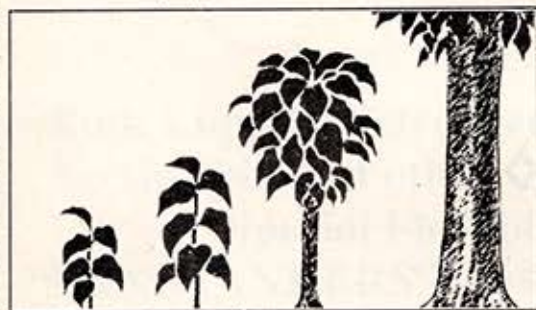
The commercial growing and marketing of teak, however, has never before been exploited by private bodies on the same scale as during the last year. While most companies hold out the promise of making their investors *lakhpatis* after 20 years, and visualize phenomenal returns, DPIL has gone in for not just the financial benefits but, as Urvaksh Nariman, executive director of DPIL which has floated the Green Gold Scheme puts it, "for environmental gains too." This is the benefit stressed and the platform used

by the Narimans to attract investors. "Mother Nature wants Rs 1,000 (in actuality, though, she is asking for Rs 5,000) from you," proclaims their ad brochure. "In return," it continues, "she'll give you cleaner air, a healthier environment, a more balanced ecology." And the clincher: "And Rs 50,000 as a special thank you."

"It was environmental consciousness that prompted us to set up a teak plantation," claims Nariman. "The scheme happened later." What is left unsaid is that besides the financial aspect, the PDF may have also felt it a safe way to secure their vast lands: over 250 acres which, judging by the security guards present in the area, could be threatened by the adivasis in the neighboring countryside. The Narimans have instituted many social service schemes for these Warli tribals, including feeding them every day, but cannot wish away the possibility of the tribals being averse to their extensive landholding.

However, with the proposed tree cover of approximately 2,000 trees to every hectare, the younger Nariman's dream of increasing forestation and contributing to environmental preservation is laudable. And to make it financially feasible (read profitable) what can be better than an ecologically friendly teakwood scheme — "projects of the like having shown a success rate of 97 percent." The PDF had all the factors going for it: a solid reputation which would attract investors from all communities, a location in the best teak-growing area of Maharashtra and, like its milk, an honest-to-goodness approach where "we don't promise you the sky and deliver the earth."

The Green Gold Scheme investor, succinctly described as a Grinvestor, is one who pays a minimum of Rs 5,000 for a unit of five teak trees at Rs 1,000 per sapling. "It is costlier than other schemes where a tree is offered at prices around Rs 600 or Rs 700, but then people are assured of our quality," argues Nariman. He assures us that only premium grade teak saplings will be planted and nurtured under the careful scrutiny, control and supervision of forestry experts, using the latest techniques of irrigation, periodic fertilization and fumigation. His statement is backed by opinions held



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by investors. Mayur Shah (45), a stockbroker, has already invested in the Scheme, and plans to expand his portfolio after a site visit because he is confident that "Parsis won't cheat us."

Some other teak plantation companies offer incredible returns ranging from 50 to 70 cubic feet of teakwood. But the moot question is, would the tree yield that much? Agricultural experts opine that the chances of a teak tree yielding 50 cubic feet of timber after 20 years is almost nil. D. N. Tiwari, director general of the Indian Council of Forestry Research, Dehradun, claims that "in natural forests, 20-year-old teaks yield only immature wood which has almost no commercial value." According to K. Subrahmaniam, regional manager of FDCM (who have 1.25 lakh hectares of teak plantations across the state, making it one of the major teak-growing state corporations in India), "the annual average growth a teak tree may attain is two centimeters in girth, and around 70 centimeters in height. That means a 20-year-old tree may attain a girth of 40-60 centimeters." FDCM is hence projecting only around three cubic feet of timber in 20 years — one-seventh of what DPIL is



*Executive directors of Dairyland:
Urvaksh Nariman (left) and Meher Patel*

projecting to its investors. The DPIL is willing to give credence to this argument maintaining that it has, for this very reason, projected a figure — 20 to 25 cubic feet after 20 years — half that cited by other companies.

Many other doubts remain in the minds of investors. F. T. Khorakiwala quizzes the promoters on how they will divide the spoils after 20 years — that is assuming that the trees grow to a commercially viable girth. The application form (surprisingly, it doesn't state anywhere the names of the directors) indicates that DPIL shall cut the trees 30 cms above ground level after 20 years, and

deliver the same to the Grinvestor either as trees, or its realized sales proceeds. The definition of a tree is vague and Nariman, too, is not specific about it today. He probably wishes to play it by ear when the time comes, in a way that best suits the interests of all concerned. Rawat, a potential Grinvestor, joins forces with the elder Nariman in assuring fellow investors that "bawaji has his name to uphold, and will definitely give us a fair deal."

It is the current spiel, and prospective investors themselves mouth it for DPIL, which helps the Scheme in inching its way to its proposed target of planting 30,000 trees. Within two months of the Scheme's opening we are informed by Panchal, an accountant with PDF, that over 2,000 units (i.e. 10,000 trees) have been sold to the public. The figure speaks creditably for people's faith in the Narimans, more so because the Scheme has been launched only in Maharashtra and Gujarat. Further, as Panchal informs us, NRIs are not allowed to invest in agriculture, real estate or plantation schemes and thus, while many a community member settled abroad may have become a Grinvestor, the opportunity to

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hold such a share is restricted.

Many other factors are also limiting the investments. Contrary to the note in the DPIL prospectus that the Scheme will be insured by the General Insurance Corporation (GIC) under their Crop Insurance Scheme, the GIC refutes the claim, and has even issued a notice that neither it nor its subsidiaries are in any way liable for losses to investors.

Then, assuming that things go as planned over the magical 20-year period laid down by all schemes, what will be the real price of teak in 2012 AD when the markets will be flooded with teak from all the plantations? Today, the price of teak is high, because demand outstrips supply. But will teak remain, 20 years hence, all that hot a property for furniture making?

There could also be changes in government policy, which may include a blanket ban on the cutting down of all trees. The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission (MRTPC) is also investigating whether the offers of teak plantation companies fall under the purview of unfair trade practice as defined by the MRTP Act, and may propose to stop investments in these issues. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is similarly thinking of issuing guidelines to prevent investments in teak plantations.

The teak being grown at Varwada, admits Kalsi, the on-site expert in charge of the project, is no special genus of teak: certainly not the legendary Burma teak, or even its poorer country cousin, the Assam teak variety. "You could call it Varwada teak," he concedes after constant prodding on its pedigree. It remains questionable how Varwada teak would stand against Raka teak from Jalgaon, or Sterling teak from Tirunelveli. Again, will the teak tree really give as grand an yield as its flattering botanical name, *tectona grandis*?

Twenty years is a long way to go, and, as they proverbially say, time alone will tell. Till such time then, there are many more gentlemen farmers "investing in Mother Nature," and depending on prayers instead of ploughs. One Parsi wag, suitably impressed by the DPIL plantation yet confused by the many 'cons' (as in pros and cons, that is) in this business, remarked, "*lagé tau tikko*,... (praise be the windfall, if it clicks)!" His bi-lingual pun represents the feeling of most investors. And, probably, of even the promoters. To which we can only add a cautious note: Touch wood.

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Through her chain of seven Danai bookshops Jeroo Mango intends to revive an interest in reading

Homi Rogers

Ms Jeroo Mango is keen on spreading *danai*. That's the Persian word for knowledge. Yes, it is also the name of the chain of bookshops set up by Jeroo, the seventh of which opened in Bombay's up-market suburb of Khar on October 18, 1992.

It is Jeroo's first venture into the open market and a brave one, considering the competitive element in a trade with low profit margins and a clientele continuously wooed away by satellite and cable television. But then, the shrinking readership is exactly what Jeroo is addressing herself to. "I am sure Indians will become ardent readers if exposed to the fascinating world of books."

Jeroo has had this exposure all her life. At her spacious house on Bombay's Juhu beach, tomes of books lie cheek by jowl with beautiful artefacts and lithographs on her wall unit. André Malraux rubs shoulders with J. K. Galbraith, while a well-thumbed *Age of Voltaire* snuggles against a copy of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. "Books were my best friends right from childhood," says Jeroo, mouthing a time-worn cliché, but meaning every word of it.

Her father, Kekashru Dhunjishaw Bilimoria was an avid reader and, as Jeroo recalls with pride, the family atmosphere encouraged her and her two brothers and sister to devour books. "We would turn to them with the same frequency — and intensity — with which children today switch on the video," laughs Jeroo. "It really does not matter what you read as a child, provided you love to read. It is impossible to start the reading habit later in life. It must be in-

culcated at an early stage." And in her latest shop she has set aside a large section for children's books, "a most neglected area otherwise."

For Jeroo, the inculcation was early. Born in Bijapur, the South Indian town famed for its Whispering Gallery in the Gol Gumbaz monument (whose enormous dome is second in the world only to St Peters in the Vatican), books were part of her life. At different phases, the choice of authors and subjects changed. As did the places... Bombay, where her father was the first Indian police commissioner of the city after Independence; Rajkot, where her brother Rusi was born; Valsad, where Jeroo spent quiet summers with her retired grandfather, Rai Bahadur Dhunjishaw at his farm; later Belgaum, Pune and even Jaipur. On hindsight, Jeroo gathers that it was this constant travel necessitated by her father's job that broadened her vision and exposed her to the customs and festivals of her land. "Perhaps I imbibed its cultural heritage more deeply than the average Parsi whose exposure to the country is limited to Bombay and Pune," avers Jeroo. And this may well account for her success as the first — and probably only — person in India to own and manage a chain of bookshops in hotels around the country.

But, as Jeroo retells it, the break came about fortuitously in 1970 when the Kirloskars, clients of her first husband the late Navroze Vakil who was a senior partner in the legal firm of Little and Company, were setting up a hotel at their home base of Pune. Her four children had grown up and Jeroo had free time on her hands. So, when a friend suggested

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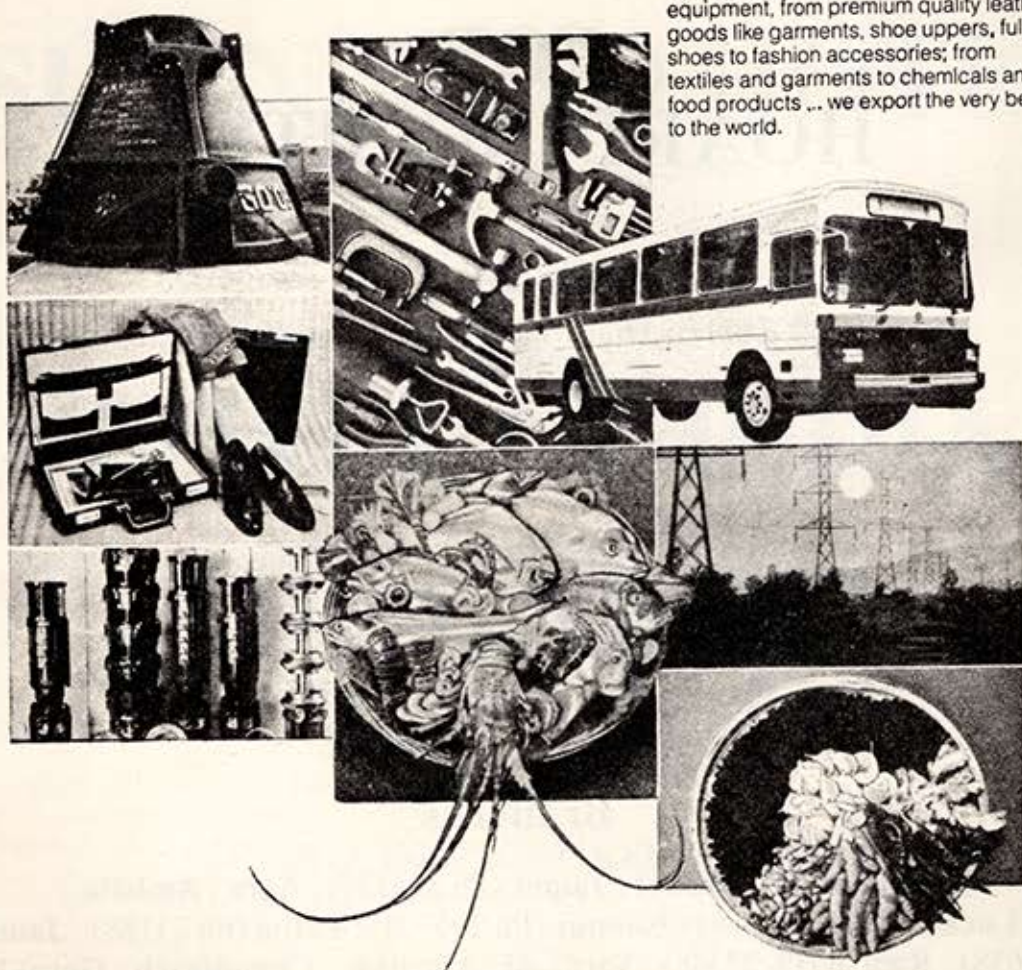
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that she combine her ongoing love for books with a little business, it was settled. Jeroo, through her husband, got a small hole in the wall bit of shop (barely 120 sq ft) at Kirloskar's Blue Diamond Hotel "at a nominal rent and without paying any deposit." And the first in a chain of Danai bookshops was on, with sales of just around Rs 100 per day. Today, some 20 years later, "our annual turnover is well above the crore mark," informs Jeroo with justifiable pride.

The name Danai for a bookshop is most apt. "Actually," recalls Jeroo, "it was suggested by Shrivax Kothavala, a friend in Pune." However, for long — despite the diphthongs and logo letterings reminiscent of Persian calligraphy (à la *Parsiana*) — people remained ignorant of the meaning of the name. "They mispronounced it as Diana, and some even thought I was Madame Danai, hence the name," laughs Jeroo. Actually, as Jeroo herself was to discover after her second marriage to A. D. (Tony) Mango, the consul-general for Greece in Bombay, there is a nymph in Greek mythology by that name.

Two years later, she duplicated her Pune outlet with a bookshop at Bombay's Air India building. It, however, had to be closed down by 1974, for the concept of the building changed from the proposed terminal to a set of offices. But by then the lady had learnt to book profits. So, while the Bombay Danai downed shutters, her most prestigious shop at Taj Coromandel in Madras opened. "It is the best shop in my chain... a veritable goldmine," insists Jeroo. At 400 sq ft it is also — along with the next shop to be commissioned at Bombay's Centaur (Airport) Hotel — her largest hotel bookshop. With alternating frequency, Jeroo opened the next few Danais at Madras (in the Park Sheraton in 1983), and Bombay (Juhu Centaur, 1986), and once again at Madras in the ITC-managed Hotel Sindhoori. Six jewels in the Danai diadem, discounting the stillborn or short-lived attempts at the Centaurs at Delhi and Srinagar. And Jeroo 'Danai' Mango could well claim to be the uncrowned empress of the travellers' bookshop trade.

But not content to rest on her laurels Jeroo, who still enjoys a good game of

tennis (she was the all-India tennis champ in 1964), is all game and set to deliver another ace: a split level book-and-music shop outside the confines of a hotel. "I wanted to venture into the open market, which is more challenging," rea-



Danai's seventh outlet

sons Jeroo, who has invested "considerably" (insiders place the figure at round Rs 90 lakhs) in her new venture. She is already poring over catalogs to select the best of literature published the world over; and her son Ardeshir, who is settled in England and writes for publications there on literary — and culinary — matters, keeps her posted on the latest happenings and supplied with hefty publishers' manuals. Jeroo has also visited many antiquarian bookshops and scrounged around to pick up rare and out-of-print books, including a well-illustrated work which she claims is selling briskly at all her shops, *The Parsees and Muslims of Gujarat*.

The music, confesses Jeroo, is to lure non-readers into her fancifully designed (by Uday Joshi, who has worked with Charles Correa) web. "More people will come for the music. But stray to and stay with the books, I hope." Ragas and reams may not yield huge profits, not as much as a boutique or a beauty parlour, but if Jeroo has one more passion besides books and tennis, it is music. "I love operas. I spend hours watching them on video," she reveals. Then, with marketing savvy, she adds, "I shall concentrate on CDs, more popular than tapes and records."

Not that Jeroo is sold on bestsellers in either music or books. On the contrary, her avowed aim is to introduce people to serious literature, something she could not achieve through the confines of her

hotel bookshops where the staple fare is travel guides and coffee table books. In the new spacious (900 sq ft) Danai, Jeroo promises to keep on display the works of a host of new writers, including some of her own current favorites like Umberto Eco, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Haruki Murakami. "My son Ardeshir has introduced me to a new set of writers... The plot now has ceased to matter. What keeps me entranced is the sheer beauty of the language. Rushdie's work, for instance."

"Rushdie has spawned quite a few clones among the new breed of writers from within the community," comments Jeroo, while praising Rohinton Mistry, who has been picking up a fair amount of awards for his *Such a Long Journey*, his first novel set in a Parsi milieu. "Firdaus Kanga promised much with *Trying to Grow*, his first novel, only to disappoint with his second work," continues a well-read Jeroo. "And it is a long time since we have read something by Adil Jussawala," she muses, munching on her diet biscuits with sugar-free cups of coffee.

Does she see anything wrong in writers born of the Zoroastrian faith basing their novels on semi-autobiographical strands, we query. "No," says Jeroo, adding that his ethnicity cannot be held against a writer. Nobel Laureate Mahfouz based most of his works on the Egyptian community, and Marquez drew upon the mystique of Latin America. "Of course, it does assume a different proportion when one ridicules one's community throughout the work; but then the self-lampooning, if done with a fairly catchy style, can set the turnstiles working," Jeroo remarks, referring to Ms Bapsy Sidhwa's seminal work, *The Crow Eaters*.

While Jeroo is not apologetic about the position of the community in modern literature, she is so about the present state of the community. "I feel very strongly about the practice whereby the children of a Parsi father and a non-Parsi mother are allowed into the faith, but debarred in the case of the reverse relationship," states Jeroo. Both her married sons, Behram and Ardeshir have wed girls from outside the faith (a third, Noshirwan, a sports journalist with the Times of India group is yet unmarried).

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Her daughter Shireen recently wed Sam Miller of BBC, "a starred first — something very rare — from Cambridge University in history," gushes Jeroo about her son-in-law. She also claims to have strong views on Zoroastrian females married outside the community being denied funeral rites as per Zoroastrian customs. "Given some time," Jeroo adds when considerably prodded, "I do pro-

**"What keeps me
entranced is the
sheer beauty
of the language"**

pose to address myself to this crisis confronting the community," and find common cause with the recently founded Association of Inter-Married Zoroastrians to which Ardeshir B. Dubash has invited her.

Jeroo does not attribute the problem of mixed marriages to the paucity of talented or intelligent boys within the community. Or vice versa. "It's just that as a very small community, the chances of finding a like-minded partner from within is greatly reduced," she argues. Jeroo asserts that she is proud to be a Zoroastrian, and would like to be reborn as one, though, she concedes, "in a more open atmosphere."

Even now, if there is one forthcoming project dear to Jeroo, it is her proposal, which she lays before us, to publish an up-to-date English translation of Mademoiselle Delphine Menant's book on the Parsis. The two-volume tome had been republished by M. M. Marzban in 1917 as *The Parsis in India*, and a copy of this enlarged, copiously annotated work fascinates Jeroo.

As one fond of art and serving on the Prince of Wales Museum Committee and a director on the board of Vakil and Sons, the printers, and Vakils, Feffer and Simons Ltd, the publishing company, Jeroo would have the right credentials to present the community with a new and well-illustrated version of a book which was a classic of its time and the suggestive force for the construction of the memorial at Sanjan. "Do you think I could at least break even on this project, and sell around 1,000 copies?" Jeroo queries, inviting *Parsiana* readers to respond to her at Danai, Khar Danda, 14th Road, Khar, Bombay 400052.

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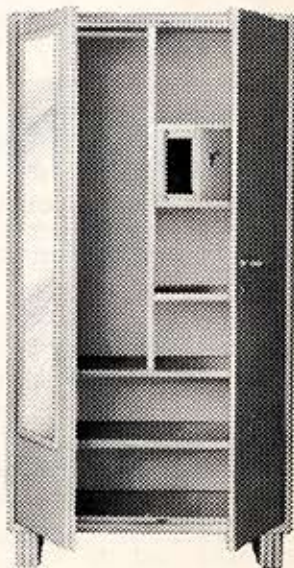


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Of a man and an era

Burjor K. Karanjia

Dadabhai Naoroji, Britain's First Asian MP by Zerbano Gifford. Published in 1992 by Mantra Publishing Limited, 5 Alexandra Grove, London N12 8NU. Pp: 48. Price: Not mentioned.

First in the lively *Makers of History* series by Mantra, *Dadabhai Naoroji — Britain's First Asian MP* was published to pay fitting tribute to the Grand Old Man of India on the centenary of his becoming the first Asian MP in Britain. It is also appropriate that the book is written by Ms Zerbano Gifford who, as an advisor to the leader of the Liberal Democrats in the UK, was not only deeply concerned with ethnic minority involvement in British life, but played a leading role in organizing the successful centenary celebrations in London.

Very early in life, Naoroji realized that if things were to change in British-ruled India, and the drain of Indian wealth to Britain was to be halted, he had to deal with the British political system

with its heart in London. The effective way to do this was to stand for election to the Mother of Parliaments.

This move of Naoroji's was widely welcomed in India. In fact, on April 13, 1886 *The Hindu* announced: "As an authority on Indian economics, there is none equal in India." In Britain, the response was mixed. One newspaper reporting on Naoroji's unanimous selection by the local Liberal Party in Holborn wished him "pronounced" success, wryly adding, "although his name is difficult to pronounce."

Naoroji's first attempt to be elected to the House of Commons, however, failed. At the subsequent nomination for his second attempt Naoroji won 49 votes as against R. Eve with 45, and F. Ford with 23 votes. But then, an objection being raised that the vote had not been taken properly, another meeting was called for a second vote. Naoroji protested and re-

fused to attend the second meeting in which Eve, who had stood second, emerged victorious. A long drawn out dispute lasting over three years followed, with Naoroji spending as much time to get his original nomination validated as in meeting voters in what he still expected would be his constituency. Ultimately, the matter was settled when Eve decided to fight from another constituency and Naoroji was confirmed as the candidate from Finsbury Central.

This incident revealed an outstanding trait of Naoroji's character. His father's old family name, subsequently dropped, was *Dordi*, which means a rope made of coir. Naoroji once remarked: "You may burn a *dordi*, but you can never take the twist out of it. So it is with me. When I form a decision, nothing will dislodge me from it."

In the meantime a sensational development meant to discredit Naoroji, turned the tide in his favor. This was a remark by Lord Salisbury, formerly Secretary of State for India, deriding Naoroji's candidature with the words: "However far we have advanced in overcoming prejudice, I doubt if we have yet got to that point of view where a British constituency would elect a black man."

This remark outraged everyone, including Queen Victoria herself who promptly reprimanded her Prime Minister. Florence Nightingale wrote encouraging letters to Naoroji from her sick bed. The well-known social worker Josephine Butler lent him her support for his "uncompromising friendship of womanhood." One of the founders of the trade union movement, Keir Hardie, helped Naoroji get the support of working class voters. M. A. Jinnah, then in London, wrote to his sister, "If Dadabhai was black, I was blacker. And if this was the mentality of the British politicians, then we would never get a fair deal from them."

More confusion followed when another of the four original contenders, Ford, announced that he would be standing as the Liberal candidate. Rather than give up, Naoroji was prepared to have two Liberal candidates contest even if that meant losing the seat to a Conservative. Ultimately, Ford withdrew and with

typical British sportsmanship agreed, along with Eve, to support Naoroji's candidature to prove that their earlier opposition to him had been neither personal nor racial.

Among others who helped Naoroji win, which he did over the Conservative candidate by just three votes, were Mahatma Gandhi, and Jinnah, who was then working as Naoroji's secretary, Mancherjee Bhownagree who was to become the second Indian MP in 1895 and the Maharaja of Baroda who lent 20 of his horse-drawn carriages for electioneering purposes. The Cama family, who had first enabled Naoroji to come to London, sent 100 guineas to the Lord Mayor of London's charity for the poor. On hearing of this gift one newspaper wrote: "There are some things among the Parsis that we should do well to follow."

In his maiden speech Naoroji said, "My election (from) an English constituency is a unique event. For the first time during more than a century of settled British rule, an Indian is admitted to this House as a member." He went on to declare: "So long as India is satisfied with the justice and honor of Britain, so long will her Indian empire last... I hope that the connection between England and India — which forms five-sixths of the British empire — may continue with benefit to both countries."

Even at the venerable age of 67, Naoroji was an active Parliamentarian, being present for 90 percent of the divisions of the House of Commons. Dadabhai often spoke frankly and forcefully on matters relating to India. He repeated

his belief in the drain theory, saying that if Britain took less wealth and expertise out of India, both countries would benefit. One of his longest campaigns was to get more Indians admitted into the Indian Civil Service. Eventually, as a result of his tireless campaign, the Governor General picked nine Indians annually to join the 60 people for entry into this most coveted service which forms the backbone of Indian administration even today.

Among Naoroji's other achievements which Gifford faithfully recounts (even after he lost his seat in Parliament), was to have a Royal Commission appointed in 1900 to investigate the drain of Indian wealth to Britain on the occasion of the worst Indian famine in 25 years. He told his audience that he was not looking for famine relief but for the future prevention of famine. It was Naoroji again who first encouraged a Parsi family, the Tatas, to launch the Tata Iron and Steel works with Indian backing.

Naoroji was also a pioneer in agitating for women's education. Along with friends, he actually went to Parsi homes in the Fort area and pleaded with parents to allow their daughters to be educated. Their response was very disappointing and even frustrating. Naoroji would often be turned out of the house unceremoniously and bluntly told that Parsis did not want their daughters to be memsahibs!

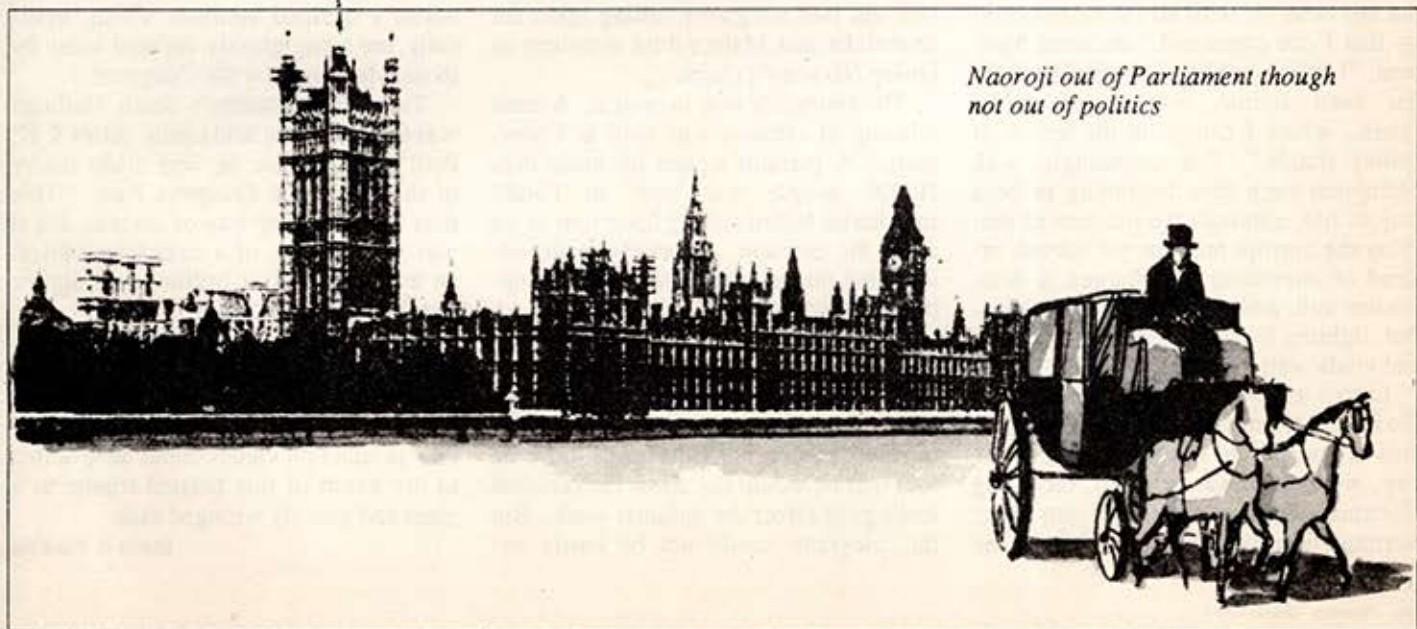
As the climax to his resplendent career, Naoroji was made president of the Indian National Congress for its 22nd session held in Calcutta and attended by a

record number of 1,500 delegates. In his speech Naoroji changed his call from Home Rule to Swaraj but insisted that only peaceful methods should be used to end British rule in India. He also quoted the British Liberal Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman: "Good government could never be a substitute for government by the people themselves."

The classic work on Dadabhai Naoroji remains Sir Rustom Masani's monumental biography entitled *The Grand Old Man of India*, running to over 500 pages. It rebounds to Gifford's credit that in the short space of just 50 pages she vividly presents his many-sided activities and conveys the essence of the man.

At his death on June 30, 1917, Sir Narayanrao Chandavarkar summarized his life with this eloquent tribute: "In his career, in all he did, in all he suffered, and in all he taught, he was the prophet Zoroaster's religion personified. Because he was the man more than anyone else of pure thoughts, pure words and pure deeds..."

Gifford's *Dadabhai Naoroji...* has forewords by the British Prime Minister, John Major, by Labor leader Neil Kinnock and Liberal leader Paddy Ashdown. The book is beautifully produced and embellished with innovative and often nostalgic illustrations by Petra Rohr-Rouendaal. In fact, the book is so well produced that it becomes a prized possession. And one looks forward to the next book in the *Makers of History* series, on another heroic figure, Nelson Mandela.



Naoroji out of Parliament though not out of politics

The estrangement of Nariman

Veer Nariman — A Profile by Hormazdyar Shahpursha Dalal. Published in 1992 by the Trustees of the Parsi Punchayet Funds and Properties, 209, D. N. Road, Fort, Bombay 400001. Pp: 33. Price: Not mentioned.

It is a sad commentary on our sense of history that, as H. S. Dalal says in the preface to his *Veer Nariman — A Profile*, there is not to this day "a single complete work on this silent dedicated figure" who played a vital role in India's freedom struggle. It therefore fell to Dalal to attempt "to capture the image of a bold, honest and selfless man within this small canvas."

Indeed, the canvas is too small to do justice to a remarkable personality who grew from being a fighter for students' rights into a leader of men. The trustees of the Parsi Punchayet, Bombay, deserve to be congratulated for having undertaken to publish brief but informative biographies of illustrious men and women of the community, some of whom like Khurshed Framji Nariman have been almost forgotten. Dalal's biography, while being informative, raises certain questions that will have to be answered when a serious, unpoliticized history of the freedom movement is written.

Nariman achieved national standing when he fought and won the long drawn out case pertaining to the reclamation of a portion of the Back Bay and the proposal to build chawls for the poor under the Industrial Housing Scheme. "Without any reserve, with all the responsibility that I can command," declared Nariman, "I openly make a charge that there has been serious wasting of public funds... which I can go to the length of calling frauds." Not surprisingly, with corruption even then beginning to be a way of life, although the practice of deifying the corrupt had not yet started, instead of answering his charges, a defamation suit was filed against Nariman. But, fighting his own case, Nariman won and vindicated his stand.

Later, as president of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, Nariman organized the salt movement in the city, winning praise from all, including Mahatma Gandhi. This did not deter Nariman from vehemently criticizing the

Mahatma's spiritual methods: "I believe I am voicing the almost unanimous opinion and sentiments of the whole political India when I challenge this position and unequivocally declare that not one in the millions will be found to agree with the 'Mahatmic view.'"

Such outspokenness was characteristic of the man, but it made him several



Nariman: bold and outspoken

enemies. Perhaps it also cost him the leadership of the Congress Legislative Party, which went to a lesser known Congress legislator, B. G. Kher. The situation took an ugly turn with the revelation that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had sent out two telegrams calling upon the Karnataka and Maharashtra members to ignore Nariman's claim.

The entire city rose in protest. A mass meeting of citizens was held at Chowpatty. A petition signed by more than 20,000 people was sent to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru calling upon him to set aside the election. Workers, trade unions, the minority communities, all supported Nariman.

Nariman, who at the start had behaved with exemplary discipline as a member of the Congress, confessed in a dignified press statement that he had been "hurt" by the decision. At the same time he said that he would not allow his personal feelings to affect the national work. But the telegrams could not be easily ex-

plained away. Nariman came to believe that Sardar Patel had indeed intervened against him for reasons best known to him, and he said as much to the Mahatma.

A subsequent "enquiry" held at the suggestion of Gandhi and with Nariman's tacit acceptance, came to the conclusion that "the charge against Nariman in respect of the election in 1934 is proved and that made by Nariman against the Sardar is not proved." Gandhi in his concurring note said: "My analysis of the situation is that Mr Nariman overestimated his hold on legislators and felt the keenest disappointment over his defeat... His advisors and the newspaper propaganda kept up the illusion."

Was it really an illusion? Studying the events leading to the dispute and going through the entire correspondence between Nariman and Gandhi, one gets the uncomfortable feeling that while the truth has no doubt been revealed, it is by no means the whole truth — which, as indicated earlier, must be left to the historian of the future to unravel.

The vindictiveness with which Nariman was punished lends support to this doubt. He was stripped of all offices and made to give an abject apology. His immense services to the country and his sacrifices in the cause of freedom were forgotten. For Nariman had dared to do the unforgivable — criticize the Mahatma's spiritual methods which, ironically, are being grossly violated today by those who swear by the Congress!

True, after Gandhi's death Nariman was taken into the fold again. After S. K. Patil's resignation, he was made leader of the Municipal Congress Party. This may have been by way of amends, but it was in the nature of a consolation prize, an anti-climax to a brilliant and almost dazzling political career.

Dalal has done his research well, though the manuscript could have done with some editing. A few photographs and a more generous regard to the booklet's production values could have added to the worth of this belated tribute to a great and gravely wronged man.

Burjor K. Karanjia

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Dispassionate scholarship

Faribourz Nariman

Sasanian Zoroastrianism by Hormazdyar K. Mirza. Published in 1992 by the Delhi Parsi Anjuman, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110002. Pp: 16. Price: Not mentioned.

Though it is true that the number of Iranists has rapidly declined over the years, it is equally true that there is no dearth of Parsi interpreters of Zoroastrian tradition and Iranian history. Such interpreters belong to two groups: the heterodox and the pseudo orthodox.

The heterodox group maintains that for 'true religion' we must look to the Gathic times, anything or everything belonging to later times may be rejected if the same is found to be incompatible with the fond beliefs of the higher echelons of the group. Members of the pseudo orthodox group have their own fond beliefs which they read into the scriptures and Iranian history like their counterparts in the first group.

The extremism of the assertions of members of both the groups is the cause of confusion, for extremism is Ahimani (demoniac). Zoroastrianism embraces the mean (Pahlavi *patman*) which is synonymous with wisdom. The texts divide wisdom into two types: *asn-khrat* (innate wisdom) and *goshosrut-khrat* (acquired wisdom). Members of the first group seem to be lacking in both. The scholars in the second group can lay claim to acquired wisdom but, in the absence of innate wisdom, the same remains ineffectual.

Such a state of affairs would lead any normal person to inquire as to who can be regarded as well-equipped to be an interpreter of tradition and history. A short answer would be, an orthodox who is in possession of both innate wisdom and acquired wisdom. And in this sense, no better person than Hormazdyar Mirza can be found in our community to fit the bill.

In about 16 pages Mirza has managed to say a few words about Alexander's conquest of Iran followed by the spread of Greek religious, literary and cultural ideas, the receding of the latter in the first century, the signs of revival thereafter, the rise of Buddhism, Zurvanism, Manichaeism and the prevalence of heresy and scepticism in Iran. While dealing with these themes, the author informs us about the *Avesta* in Sasanian times, the Pahlavi translation of the *Avesta*

prayers and ceremonies, theology in Sasanian times (including some misunderstanding on the part of the Sasanians), heaven and hell, eschatology and divine justice. Here we find observations on Zoroastrian ideas of *ristakhiz* 'rising of the dead' and *frashgird* 'renovation,' but the same are without any feigned spiri-



Mirza: faith is shattered by misdeeds

tual travail as is usual with some Parsi theosophists. In fact the latter would be disappointed to find no mention of reincarnation.

A short note on the *sudreh* and *kusti* provides education for many present day Zoroastrians and the same remarks apply to another short note on Sasanian family life. "Generally," says Mirza, "monogamy prevailed in Sasanian society, but there are instances of males marrying more than one wife." This may distress some pseudo orthodox who maintain that bigamy was not ever practised by Zoroastrian males. Similarly the heterodox advocates of mixed marriages would be pained to learn that such marriages "were vehemently condemned."

Kartir, who saved Zoroastrianism from heresy and sectarianism, finds his rightful place in the section entitled 'moral and ethical principles.' The topic of changes in ceremonies is ably dealt with in the next section which is fol-

lowed by 11 sections dealing with different facets of the system of disposal of the dead. In the last section, the author briefly touches upon 'changes in all ages.' A few sentences illustrate his balanced stance: "Whether we like it or not, changes have taken place... in all ages, but that has not shattered our faith. Changes will continue to take place in a similar manner and with similar results. Faith is shattered by misdeeds and false show in the name of religion." The remarks aptly recapitulate what has been said elsewhere in the booklet.

The author has paid consistent attention to traditional texts and documentary evidence and has methodically assessed the significance of every facet of the subject matter. And the result is the booklet which gives us useful insights into various aspects connected with Sasanian Iran. A booklet which highlights both continuities and changes with dispassionate scholarship.

The Delhi Parsi Anjuman deserves to be congratulated for bringing out this work. Since the president of the Anjuman Lt Gen A. M. Sethna has thought it fit to say "a word about Dastur Mirza" in his foreword, one wishes he would have added that for some time Mirza was a professor in S. B. Garda College, Navsari (Gujarat University) and that, for over three decades, he rendered yeoman service to our madressas in Bombay, first as a professor and later as the principal of the J. J. Madressa and as fellow of the Bombay University.

A few printing errors which have crept in could have been easily avoided. All the same, there can be no doubt that the booklet will prove to be highly educative for laymen in India and abroad.

More rhyme than reason

Homi Rogers

Life and other Poems by Nadir Godrej. Published in 1992 by Maneck Davar for Sterling Newspapers Ltd, 920, Tulsiani Chambers, Nariman Point, Bombay 400021. Pp: 51 + vi. Price: Rs 50.

"Nadir Godrej would possibly have been the first Indian writer to go into reprint without selling a single copy of his book of poems," jests Shridhar Raghavan, an

assistant editor at *Gentleman* magazine, also published by Sterling Newspapers Ltd which released Godrej's book last year. Raghavan is referring to the fire that broke out in the building where the publishing office is located and the books are stocked. It is a sparkling apology for a slightly soggy and bent copy of *Life and other Poems*.

In a way, the book's physical manifestations charmingly reflect its orientations and genesis. The fire and water treatment meted out to the 30 published poems (which include five in French) seem an apt continuation of the metaphoric fire

and water that Godrej seems to have undergone on the matter of fundamental religion. "I had many arguments about religion," confesses Godrej in his acknowledgements, penned not in verse but in prose, as his role model Vikram Seth has done for his works.

Some of these arguments with friend Claire Smith, a "fundamental missionary" (whatever that is) reflect Godrej's keen and analytical mind. Sample his query in *My Friends and God*:

"Isn't it odd

I don't see God

Here by my side

Where does he hide?"

and an impassioned poser in *Christmas*:

"Do we really need God above

Our fellow man to truly love?"

But despite the questioning approach and a plea for a religion based on love and understanding, Godrej's work seems passé, a fact which even the contemporariness of the 16-line composition on Ayodhya cannot disguise:

"It seems that now a mosque does stand

Where once a temple stood

And for this little piece of land

We lose our brotherhood."

For though the thoughts expressed are well-intentioned, they mouth the same platitudes that philosophers and preachers have been repeating over the centuries. And Godrej rarely, if ever, breaks new poetic ground, or charts out an evocative or memorable language to express these thoughts.

The book is hence a cornucopia -- not bouquet -- of Godrej's ruminations on "many things -- but not of cabbages and kings," all written in traditional rhyme. It

includes a poem on Saddam, a farewell poem to his Russian teacher Lyudmila Sergeevna, on divided Europe, a few attempts at love poems, and a couple of *National Geographic*-based poems on

"gerenuk" (an antelope that browses on leaves) and Maui (an island in the Pacific). There is even a seven-page dissertation on *The Influence of Pushkin on Vikram Seth* followed by notes running into five pages. At one place Godrej informs us:

"For often I prefer to read
Than watch TV and go to
seed."

With all its diversity, Godrej's *Life...* strikes one

as a collection of personal statements.

Consider his two poems on Ms Roxan Shah, of interest to Parsi readers, who may recall how the denial of Zoroastrian funeral rites to her became a cause célèbre in the community. And this is how Godrej starts his *Elegy to Roxan*, who, as per his acknowledgements, he counts among his friends for her "constant encouragement to him:"

"Roxan you were our daily dream

Your light a powerful, steady beam.

...And now we have all lost the light

And Darshan's in a sorry plight."

As for Godrej's criticism of the denial:

"Alas! you were denied last rites

By stupid men and petty fights,

Their resolutions banning towers

The tragedy's not yours but ours."

It is difficult to find poetry among the poems, and Godrej compounds their mediocrity by including in this collection two poems delivered by him by way of introduction at business conferences, and one a vote of thanks! Yes, it could be fun (or even funny) to hear a vote of thanks delivered in rhyme, but lines like "And thanks to Renu Seetharam For her efficiency and charm" are best consigned to college bulletins.

The author of *Life...* has a poetic sensibility, a fine ear for meter and a good sense of rhyme. But, unless Godrej decides to broaden his canvas, deepen his vision, work on his imagery, he will remain to us *aapro* Godrej *seth*, but not another Vikram Seth.

"Pardon us, dear Nadir; the indictment is terse:

'Life...' is no 'crowning glory' -- it's plain verse!"



Godrej: traditional rhyme

With
best wishes
from

Farah
&
Tanya

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This month *Parsiana* publishes intercommunity marriages registered both at the Old Customs House and at the MHADA office in Bandra (East) for the six-month period September 1992 to February 1993. Civil marriages between Zoroastrians have also been listed. However, names that could not be confirmed as Zoroastrian have been omitted from the list.

There were 10 intercommunity marriages registered at the MHADA office and 25 at the Old Customs House plus three civil marriages between Parsis.

The age of Zoroastrian brides — as listed in this issue — ranged between 19 and 41 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 27 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 21 and 60 years, averaging at 30 years.

There were 28 births in Bombay in February as compared to 73 deaths. Twenty-four Zoroastrians fell prey to heart disease, whereas old age and general debility claimed 12 patients. The other killers were pneumonia and lung disease (eight), cancer (seven) and brain disease (four). Three victims succumbed to kidney failure and

two each to septicemia and hypertension. Isolated cases of urinary tract infection, brain stem herniation, bronchitis, diabetes, asthma, ulcer, tuberculosis, enlarged prostate, nervous disorder, hypotension and anemia were also registered. A still born baby girl was also lost to the community; a centenarian breathed his last.

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

BOMBAY

Born

A boy, *Yohan*, to *Dilnaz* and *Farhad Khatao* on January 22, 1993
A boy to *Dilnavaz* and *Kersi Engineer*; January 27
A boy to *Almitra* and *Neville Billimoria*; February 1
A boy to *Shiraz* and *Pervez Contractor*; February 2
Twins (girls) to *Thrity* and *Bomi Patel*; February 4
A boy to *Zahida* and *Darayes Appoo*; February 6
A girl to *Goolrookh* and *Rustom Mehta*; February 6
A boy to *Freny* and *Karl Munshi*; February 6
A girl to *Sobeen* and *Piroj Elchidana*; February 7
A girl to *Khurshid* and *Viraf Siganporia*; February 7
A boy to *Roshan* and *Phiroze*

Contractor; February 8
A boy to *Nilufer* and *Freddy Tukina*; February 9
A boy to *Feroza* and *Maneck Unwala*; February 10
A boy to *Jasmine* and *Jamshed Dubash*; February 12
A girl to *Parveen* and *Phiroze Engineer*; February 14
A boy to *Dinaz* and *Nozer Kanga*; February 16
A boy to *Hutoxi* and *Fali Avari*; February 17
A boy to *Khurshid* and *Aspi Kotwal*; February 17
A girl, *Khushnuma*, to *Hutoxi* and *Bomi Randelia*; February 18
A girl to *Dilnavaz* and *Rohinton Karai*; February 19
A boy to *Thrity* and *Farokh Bhanja*; February 20
A girl to *Vanessa* and *Kershaw Colabawalla*; February 20
A boy to *Farida* and *Rohinton*

Daruwalla; February 20
A boy to *Dinaz* and *Maneck Sahiar*; February 22
A boy to *Tenaz* and *Navzer Langrana*; February 23
A boy to *Sunita* and *Percy Balsara*; February 24
A girl to *Daisy* and *Minoo Gandhi*; February 25
A girl, *Cherizeh*, to *Rashna* and *Adil Ghadiali*; February 25
A girl to *Havovi* and *Hoshedar Vachha*; February 26

Married

Cuckoo Minoo Gandhi and *Ajit Sharma*; September 11, 1992
Monalisa Joy Mathew and *Rohinton Behram Irani*; September 14
Persis Hoshang Bilimoria and *Bharat Jaykumar Udeshi*; September 29
Aimee Cavas Pavri and *William James Anthony Rego*; October 6
Anindita Dhan and *Parsius R. Karma*; October 20
Manashni T. Mistry and *Rajendrakumar Ramdayal Patva*; October 22
Susan Lin and *Hormuz Firoze Siganporia*; October 29
Jeroo Farrokh Mulla and *Mahendra Sinh Rathore*; October 31
Varsha Vishwas Dhumal and *Pharok Soli Lala*; November 6
Reshma Ramesh Trivedi and *Ashad Tehemton Udwadia*; November 10
Goolshan Darayas Bhiwandivalla and *Tehmursp Neriosang Panthaki*; November 19
Rohini Jeewan Shewale and *Rustom Homi Tarapore*; November 21
Myra Menzie and *Burjor Dhunjishah Shroff*; December 6
Anahita Dara Khajotia and *Aziz Abbas Lookman*; December 11
Sifra Nissim Samuel and *Jamshed Bakhtavar Lentin*; December 15
Padmaja Savithri Bandaru and *Arsis Minoo Boyce*; December 19
Vispi Russy Lal and *Vikram Oberoi*; December 19
Laila Pesi Wadia and *Tullio Nicolo Valente*; December 20
Soonoo Phiroze Talati and *Minoo Darabsha Contractor*; December 21
Joy Ruzbeh Mehta and *Dan Steinbrocker*; December 22
Anita Romolo Francorsi and *Anosh Keki Shroff*; December 25
Pramila Daryani and *Naval J. Mullani*; December 28
Niloufer Ghasvala and *Ashok Chandrakant Shah*; December 29
Marukh Burjorji Mistry and *Minoo Hormusji Balsara*; January 1, 1993
Roshna Homi Dastur and *Parminder Singh Thapar*; January 2
Sheela Eva Hegde and *Zubin Sam Batliwala*; January 3
Freny Homi Mukadam and *Homi Jamshed Patel*; January 3
Nina Rajanikant Chavda and *Darius Dinshaw Engineer*; January 4
Cheryl Ann Pereira and *Jal Homi Daruwalla*; January 5
Nandita Margaret Paul and *Percy Homi Pavri*; January 7
Gulshan Darabshaw Aspar of *Kalyan* and *Keki Sorabji Patel*; January 9
Anaita Darius Udwadia and *Hemanth Hegde*; January 10
Ruby Homi Ghandhy and *Zubeen Dara Nallaseth*; January 10
Anjana Hariram and *Farhad Jamsheed Taraporvala*; January 16
Rukshana Khodu Shelangi and *Feroze Cavas Titina*; January 17
Jasmin Eruch Kharas and *Rayomand Behram Gazdar*; January 18
Jennifer Fernandes and *Monzam Phiroze Murzban*; January 18
Kashmira Manchershaw Mistry and *Darius Maneck Patel*; January 19
Ruby Amrolia and *Anand Malshe*; January 21
Anahita Xerxes Desai and *Hari Rajpal Singh Bhinder*; January 22
Nina Adi Doctor and *Percy Minoo Daruwalla*; January 24
Maharukh Dinshaw Irani and *Ratan Rustom Daruwalla*; January 24
Behzad Viraf Dhalla and *Histas Homi Randeria*; January 24
Geeta S. Londhe and *Adil Firoze Mistry*; January 28
Roshni Dadiba Tata and *Adil Dinshaw Siganporia*; January 28

Daisy Fali Vachha and *Percy Rustom Naterwalla*; January 29
Jasmine Jamshed Irani and *Farokh Rumi Tatary*; January 29
Rushna Bomi Mistry and *Khusharoo Rohinton Forbes*; January 30
Sunnu Darabsha Mahuvawalla and *Mehernosh Vafadar Irani*; January 30
Nilufer Bilimoria and *Puneet Bhalnagar*; January 31
Tanaz Edul Sethna and *Meherwan Rusi Daruwalla*; January 31
Zenobia Adi Vakil of *Dahanu* and *Homyar Behli Naterwalla*; January 31
Nilufer Mehali Kavarana and *Yazad Pervez Damania*; February 1
Perces Sohrab Meherhomji and *Hormuz Aspy Bulsara*; February 2
Kashmira Bomi Daroga and *Aspi Loveji Dadina* of *Thane*; February 2
Khushnood Lovejoy Meher-vanjee and *Adil Eruch Vakil*; February 4
Lanavaz Shapur Subedar and *Ratan Jehangir Cooper*; February 5
Hilloo Rustom Pavri and *Burjor Fali Mehta*; February 5
Kashmira Shapur Irani and *Neville Kersi Patel*; February 5
Mahazarin Darabsha Kapadia and *Zen Tehemtom Bharucha*; February 6
Tanaz Dorab Tata and *Rohinton Jamshed Contractor*; February 7
Parinaz Naval Cooper and *Zareer Noshir Gandhi*; February 7
Dinaz Dara Engineer of *Poona* and *Burzin Dolly Navsariwalla*; February 8
Khushnum Dinshaw Naterwalla and *Cyrus Edulji Raimalwala*; February 8
Rozana Jal Rivetna and *Nozer Edulji Raimalwala*; February 8
Meher Jangoo Mandroina and *Cyrus Fali Tarapore*; February 8
Azma Tahir and *Minoo Dastoor*; February 9
Hutoxi Rusi Medhora and *Farrokh Rusi Powwalla*; February 9
Parizad Meherji Makati and *Hoshang Jamshed Randelia*; February 9
Eileen Phiroze Murzban and *Rasheed Sorab Ardeshtir*; February 11
Mehernaz Minoo Khambatta

and *Yazdi Jal Bhot*; February 11
Jasmine Burjor Dalal and *Kali Dinshaw Cawasji*; February 11
Marjusha Manodhar Raut and *Sharookh Bomansha Daruwalla*; February 11
Thrity Cawas Kabir and *Fareedon Murzban Umriger*; February 11
Sillu Jimmy Bhagwagar and *Kurush Behram Sanjana*; February 12
Shirin Behram Contractor and *Rohinton Rashid Wadia*; February 12
Sunnu Dali Jasoomoney and *Kersi Homi Patel*; February 13
Farida Bamansha Daruwalla and *Kurush Aspiandiar Irani*; February 14
Nilufer Soli Mistry and *Kurush Nader Shroff*; February 14
Anita Bel Dhallia and *Mehernosh Ardeshtir Talati*; February 14
Aban Tehmuras Bhungara and *Sharookh Godrej Appoo*; February 15
Armaity Ratanshaw Kapadia and *Cyrus Eruchshaw Katrak*; February 15
Bakhtavar Freddy Daruwalla and *Homi Bomi Mistry*; February 15
Roxana Murzban Umrigar and *Rohinton Phiroze Bhadha*; February 16
Avan Ratan Bhathena and *Cyrus Naval Mistry*; February 16
Jeroo Homi Jalnawalla and *Kaizad Beji Bhaya* of *Ahmedabad*; February 18
Khurshid Adi Sanjana and *Jamshed Burjor Jussawalla*; February 18
Shirin Nariman Chaina and *Sarosh Farokh Tarapore*; February 18
Meher Homi Minocher and *Firoz Jal Bardi*; February 19
Ruby Adi Balivalla and *Homi Sorabji Pastakia*; February 19
Delna Mahiyar Jamaji and *Jimmy Rusi Mistry*; February 20
Sima Asfandiar Azarmeher of *Tehran* and *Bijan Khodabandeh Yazdani-Buicki* of *California*; February 22
Arzan Keki Irani and *Farhad Esfandiar Ostavari*; February 23
Nina Dara Zaiwalla and *Edul Fali Dhondy*; February 23
Yasmin Pervez Bhathena and *Gev Bezon Aga*; February 25
Shernaz Behram Bhagwagar and *Aspi Noshir Bulsara*; February 25
Shernaz Rustom Sutaria and

Cyrus Hoshang Sarkari; February 25
Benaifer Soli Kerawalla and *Yazdi Jal Sopariwalla*; February 25
Roshan Bahadur Bulsara and *Kersi Hormusjee Toddywalla*; February 27
Gulanar Dinshaw Irani and *Kayomazeh Behmard Felfeli*; February 28
Farida Noshir Elavia and *Hoshang Homi Vandriwalla*; February 28
Feruz Noshir Andhyarujina and *Fredy Keki Vapiwalla*; February 28
Vinifer Minoo Daji and *Aspi Tehmuras Wadia*; February 28
Died
Firoze Nauzer Kanga (77), Beau Rivage, Warden Road, 400026; September 24, 1992 (cremated)
Cavas Framroze Kharas (71), Alimohamed Mans, Grant Road, 400007; December 20 (cremated)
Rustomji Khurshedji Aibara (93), residing at 18, Surti Chmbs, 2nd Dhobitalao Lane, 400002; January 31
Boman Pallonji Lalkaka (84), 6-A, Readymoney Bldg, 786, Lady Jehangir Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 1
Najoo Sorabji Mehta (87), 655, Firdausi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 2
Tehmina Sorabji Bharucha (84), Contractor Bldg, Kashinath St, 400034; February 3
Mehera Meherji Bhathena (82), 4/23, A. H. Wadia Bldg, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; February 3
Roshan Homi Dastur (60), 4, Dhunjishaw Daruwalla Bldg, Tata Blocks, Turner Rd, Bandra, 400050; February 3
Dara Furdoonji Dhondy (83), 8, Jairaj Peerbhoy Bldg, 28, Forjett St, 400036; February 3
Maneck Jal Dubash (74), E-35, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculla, 400027; February 3
Shera Cawas Karkaria (83), Contractor Bldg, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; February 3
Jivanji Edulji Mistry (82), Jivanji Mistry Hse, 162, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; February 3
Dhun Manchershah Sidhwa (79), C/o M. D. Dastur, 625/1, Nariman Bldg, Dhobitalao, 400002; February 3
Shahjehan Shavakshah Kolsawala (81), Wimbridge

Hse, 16, Sleater Rd, 400007; February 4
Keki Phirozsha Lali (79), 10/A, Tata Clny, Sir Ratan Tata Rd, 400034; February 4
Amy Bapuji Mulia-feroze (69), 10, Zaveri Bldg, Opp Albless Baug, Girgaum, 400004; February 4
Vicaji Jehangirji Seervai (82), A, Pipewalls Bldg, S. B. Singh Rd, 400005; February 4
Baby girl of *Khurshid Mehernosh Avasia* (stillborn), E/32, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculla, 400027; February 5
Minocher Manekji Dhallia (93), Panday Sanatorium, Wodehouse Rd, Colaba, 400005; February 5
Cyrus Adarji Fouzdar (60), D/14, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; February 6
Minoo Meherwanji Khambatta (84), 203/A, Lokhandwalla Complex, Off Link Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; February 6
Behramji Sorabji Motiwalla (70), D-25/003, Yogi Krishna Soc, Yogi Ngr, Exar Rd, Borivli 400091; February 6
Nariman Ardeshtir Aria (80), 15/A, Shellim Hse, 12th Khetwadi Cross Lane, 400004; February 7
Jal Pirojshaw Deboo (82), Baj Bldg, 171, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; February 7
Najoo Homi Soonawalla (64), D-18, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; February 7
Rustom Sorabji Wadia (78), Meher Homes, Opp Rly Stn, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; February 7
Banoo Ardeshtir Driver (93), 10 Station Ter, Sleater Rd, 400007; February 8
Pirojshaw Dorabji Italia (79), 530, Kanchwalla Bldg, Chira Bazar, 400002; February 8
Behram Nusservanji Taraporewala (67), 443, Ajay Niwas, Chira Bazar, 400002; February 8
Gover Fareedon Patel (Irani) (85), New Mistry Bldg, Bala-ram St, Foras Rd, 400007; February 9
Minoo (Minocher) Rustomji Patel (70), C/o F. K. Bhathena, A/14, A. S. Mistry Bldg, Dr Shirodkar Rd, Parel, 400012; February 9
Nariman Hirjibhoy Divecha (100), Coover Cottage, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; February 11
Piroja Dinshaw Irani (65),

10/13, Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; February 12
Pestonji (Bapoo) Dhanjibhai Kapadia (88), B. Bhatia Co-op Soc, Princess St, 400002; February 12
Aloo Limji Batliboi (76), Gilder Villa, 17, Perry Cross Rd, Bandra, 400050; February 13
Kaikhshro Jamshedji Commisariat (93), 291, Bawla Bldg, Tardeo Rd, 400007; February 13
Pheroze Jal Malegam (66), Edwin No 1, Perry Rd, Bandra, 400050; February 13
Jamshed Dorab Nagarwalla (78), La Citadelle, Queens Rd, 400020; February 13
Pervez Jal Soonawala (59), 16/A, Belle-View, 85, B. Desai Rd, 400036; February 13
Manijeh R. Balsara (79), Zoravar Mans, Queens Rd, 400020; February 14
Jer Byram Kanga (68), Sett Hse, 31, Agiary Lane, Off Bazar Gate St, Fort, 400001; February 14
Mini Burjor Patel (57), 15, Saraswati, Veer Savarkar Ngr, Vasai (W), 401202; February 14
Dhun Keki Wadia (80), 678, Noor Mhl, Katrak Rd, Wadala, 400031; February 14
Jehangir Pestonji Hirananeck (85), 347-C, United Chmbs, Charni Rd Jn, 400007; February 17
Bomi Behramsha Khambatta (62), C/o 4, Batliwalla Bldg, Khan Est, M. M. C. Rd, Mahim, 400016; February 18
Homi Ardeshtir Mistry (61), F/8, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; February 18
Darabsha Edulji Naterwalla (81), 4/3, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; February 18
Khushru Aspiandiar Senior (Irani) (89), A/12, Nandan Co-op Hsg Soc, Veer Savarkar Marg, Mahim, 400016; February 18
Jaiji Kaikhushroo Bhesania (92), 275/S, Albless Bldg, Zoroastrian Clny, Tardeo Rd, 400007; February 19
Jal Shapurji Billimoria (75), 21, Cuffe Parade, Colaba, 400005; February 19
Manek Nariman Postwala (85), 4, Queen's Court, M. Karve Rd, Churchgate, 400020; February 19
Nergish Padam Tarapore (71), B-2, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; February 20
Dinshaw Kaikhushru Antia

(66), 22/A, Wellington Ter, Wellington St, 400002; February 21
Khoshed Kekashru Bugli (89), 275-D, Soona Bldg, Zoroastrian Clny, Chikalwadi, 400007; February 21
Nergish Nariman Chichgar (72), C/o R. D. Vandriwalla, A. Durlabh Bhuvan, Jalbhai St, 400004; February 21
Noshirwan Erachshah Cooper (85), 787, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 21
Banoo Rustamji Ghyara (67), Chotani Bldg, 52-D, Proctor Rd, 400007; February 21
Menu Ardeshtir Irani (80), C/o Homi J. Kermani, 665, Band View, Lady Jehangir Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 21
Rutty Nusserwanji Sadri (83), H-13, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; February 21
Dolly Ardeshtir Saklatwala (73), Lady Dorab Tata Bldg No 1, Tata Blocks, S. V. Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; February 21
Piloo Behram Sukhia (49), M1/52, Merwanjee Cama Park, Cama Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; February 22
Dadiba Bejonji Kairak (80), 12, C. M. Banaji Bldg, Forjett St Cross Lane, Gowalia Tank Rd, 400036; February 23
Parvez Darabshaw Randeria (53), Dinshaw Bldg, Parsiward, Doodh Naka, Kalyan, (Dist) Thane, 421301; February 23
Kerbanoo Kaikaoos Bhagwagar (94), 611, J. B. Dalal Block, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 24
Homai Ardeshtir Irani (72), 174, Irani Bldg, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 24
Dinshaw Jamshedji Mahudavala (81), N-4, Cuffe Castle, Cuffe Parade, Colaba, 400005; February 25
Homi Dadabhai Taraporewala (83), 14/1, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; February 25
Cooverbai Behramshaw Gamat (86), 11, Ali Manzil, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; February 26
Rustom Dhunjishaw Karani (80), 12, Ness Baug Annexe 3, Nana Chowk, 400007; February 26
Alloo Sheheriarjee Karanjia (71), B-42, Gool Mhl, Sleater

Rd, 400007; February 26
Ranimai Sohrabji Tata (86), 11, Khareghat Clny, N. S. Patkar Marg, 400007; February 26
Shiavax Dinshawji Variava (86), Queen's Chmbs, Queen's Rd, 400020; February 26
Mehran Manekshaw Langrana (88), A/11, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculia, 400027; February 27
Homi Ratan Batliwalla (81), Acropolis, Middle Colaba, 400005; February 28
Dosu Pirojshaw Desai (50), C/o T. N. Nanavati, A. Mom Apts Co-op Hsg Soc, Yari Rd, Versova, 400068; February 28
Nozer Dinshaw Wadia (64), Bhanu Khush, Malcolm Baug, 37 and 38, Jogeshwari, 400102; February 28

CALCUTTA

Born

A girl, *Snaya*, to *Sheena* and *Farhad Master*; October 8, 1992

Married

Yasmeen Pedder of Bombay and *Jehangir Vatcha*; February 18, 1993

Died

Shirin Darab Driver, mother of *Jehangir Faredun Dalal*, February 27

JAMSHEDPUR

Died

Behram Savaksha Patel; January 13

POONA

Died

Phiroza Maneck Karanjiwala (70), C/o Contractor, Bhaveshwar, Nepean Sea Rd, Bombay, 400026; February 2
Dorab Savakshaw Patel (86), Above Sunnydale, Dastur Meher Rd, 411001; February 16

SURAT

Died

Villoomai Bahadurji Sherdiwala (77), Puniman Marg, Godedod Rd, 395003; February 1
Homai Hormuzdshaw Tadiwala (83), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; February 1
Meherbai Darabshaw Aibada (82), Block No 14, Gujarat Hsg Soc, Rander, 395005; February 8
Kekashru Nusserwanji Tadiwala

(75), Bharband Wad, Rani Talao, 395003; February 8
Darabshaw Nusserwanji Variava (80), Parsi Wad, Saiyedpura, 395003; February 13
Dosamai Kuverji Bhathawala (78), Khadi Mohallo, Bhatha, Dist Surat, 394510; February 24

COZUMEL, Mexico

Died

Niloufer Mike Hagen, mother of *Nicole* and *Eric*; February 2

HAMILTON, Canada

Died

Manek Panthaky (43), husband of *Pam* and son of *Sheroo* and *Dinyar*; February 17

KARACHI

Born

A girl, *Taronish*, to *Dilshad* and *Firdous Irani*; October 21, 1992
A girl, *Tanaz*, to *Anita* and *Rustom Asli*; October 25
A boy, *Fram*, to *Yasmin* and *Sheroy Haveliwala*; December 14
A girl, *Deenesh*, to *Meena* and *Pervez Bhesania*; January 9, 1993

Married

Dilnaz Eruch Aga and *Zarksis Byram Avari*; September 17, 1992
Dilnavaz Minocher Sethna and *Kaikobad Mehervan Rustomji*; September 18
Yasmin Kaikhushru Katila and *Aspi Homi Sethna*; November 12
Shahnaz Kaikhushru Izdiar and *Yazdi Burjor Sethna*; November 14
Naznin Espandiar Irani and *Hoshedar Rustom Firozpurwala*; November 23
Aban Ratan Ankleseria and *Adi Eruch Kapadia*; December 11
Farzana Ardeshtir Nadirshah and *Kairasp Kavas Noshirwani*; December 25
Parvin Jehangir Karanjia and *Murzbah Rustom Ogra*; December 25
Juliet Minoo Aibara and *Julien Cyrus Patloo*; January 10, 1993

Died

Pulamai Naoroji Kabraji (97); December 11, 1992
Shirinbai Ardeshtir Irani (80); December 12
Kaikhushru Jamshedji Kapadia (88); December 17
Khurshed Dadabhai Mama (77);

December 17
Minoo Faramji Cooper (55);
 December 18
Khorshed Fakirji Golawalla
 (91); December 18
Eruchshaw Bomanji Mehta
 (90); January 27, 1993

MELBOURNE

Born
 A boy, *Danesh (Bahram)*, to
Aban and Shapur Irani;
 January 9

MISSISSAUGA, Ontario

Married
Shirin Modarai, daughter of
Pehdokht and Jamshid and
Farzad Ardishiri, son of *Bibi*
 and *Mahyar*; September 20,
 1992

NEW JERSEY

Died
Jal Mehta (50), husband
 of *Navaz* and father of
Rouzan and Navroze;
 December 26

NEW SOUTH WALES

Born
 A girl, *Shara*, to *Binaifer*
 and *Karl Irani*; January 30,
 1993

NIAGARA FALLS

Married
Benaifer Kermani of *Olney*,
 Illinois, daughter of *Nargis*
 and *Shahrukh* and *John*
Patric Devine; October 25,
 1992

PALM HARBOR, Florida

Born
 A boy, *Jamsheed*, to *Mahrukh*
 and *Feroze Motafram*;
 October 20

QUEENSLAND, Australia

Died
Xerxes Captain (27), son of
Jilloo and Shahpur; January 10

SANTA CLARA, California

Born
 A girl, *Tasha*, to *Meher* and
Afshad Mistri; December 15

TAMPA, Florida

Born
 A boy, *Cyrus*, to *Anahita* and
Hoshedar Tamboli; January 9,
 1993

TORONTO

Born
 A girl, *Zinnia*, to *Meher* and

Daraius Batliwalla; September
 21, 1992

Married

Mahbanoo Khosravi, daughter of
Shahnaz and Ciroos and *Farzad*
Behboodi; October 10
Goolrukh Hosie Surti and *Gerry*
Yantha; November 21

Died

Pervez Wankadia; September 21

TULSA, Oklahoma

Died
Edalji Dhunjisha Anklesaria,
 husband of *Manijeh* and father of
Maneck and Dhun;
 December 25

VANCOUVER

Married
Nazanin Mehin and *Cyrus*
Pourooshab of Chicago;
 November 21

VIRGINIA

Born
 A girl, *Laurel Allison*, to *Susan*
 and *Behram Dalal*, sister to
Jason; November 25

WASHINGTON STATE

Born
 A boy, *Farzam*, to *Fariba* and
Behruz Shokri; October 22

Compiled by Roxana A. Mirza

The telling figures

The number of community marriages in Bombay showed a decline of 110 in 1992 over the preceding year's total of 370. Simultaneously, intercommunity marriages were down from 88 in 1991 to 67 in 1992. However, the 260 community marriages in 1992, a leap year, need not necessarily be perceived as an alarming trend: In the course of the last three decades there were four leap years when the totals showed a substantial drop over those of the immediately preceding and succeeding years. Three leap years during this period however did not register a similar departure from the norm.

The percentage of intercommunity marriages in 1992 is therefore seen to have risen to 26 (if calculated as a ratio of intercommunity marriages to community marriages -- 67:260) and 20 (if calculated as a ratio of intercommunity marriages to the total number of marriages -- 67:327). The respective 1991 figures were 24 percent and 19 percent.

The 1992 birth count of 316, we have arrived at on the basis of information supplied by the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital, the Breach Candy Hospital, the Parsi Lying-in Hospital and the

Masina Hospital. It includes offspring of intercommunity marriages irrespective of whether the father or mother is a Zoroastrian. As the Bombay Municipal Corporation no longer cites religion on the birth certificate, we have no official count of the total number of community births in the city. However if we were to take the average of the Greater Bombay birth figures from 1981 to 1990, the count comes to 557.

While the actual birth count shows a decline of three over the 1991 total of 319, deaths in 1992 have mounted by 72 over the 1991 count of 886. If the 1992 death toll of 958 (we had access to records maintained by the doongerwadi and the Chandanwadi crematorium though not to those of the three other crematoria in Bombay) were to be compared with the estimated births, 557, in the same year, we will notice that the strength of the community in the city has gone down by nearly 400.

We list below the 1992 figures:

Born: Boys 169, Girls 147
Married: Parsi 260
Intercommunal 67
Died: Interred 950
Cremated 8

TOTALS FOR 1992 AND 1993

	Bombay			Other Indian cities			Foreign cities		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
BORN									
Boys	18	169	23	—	7	—	5	28	2
Girls	12	147	22	1	6	1	7	32	2
MARRIED									
Parsi	68	260	114	1	5	4	12	16	1
Intercommunal	35	67	14	—	6	—	2	10	—
DIED									
INTERRED									
Male	44	444	95	4	77	19	9	46	3
Female	30	506	69	6	92	9	4	30	1
CREMATED									
Male	1	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Female	1	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

A: Total numbers in this issue

B: Running totals for 1992 (February 1992-February 1993 issues)

C: Running totals for 1993

These figures pertain to information provided to or collected by *Parsiana*. They do not represent the total number of births, marriages and deaths in the Zoroastrian community in India and abroad.

The Marker family tragedy

Parinaz Gandhi

Back to Secunderabad the Marker family was heading. Back to their respective vocations where Noshir as managing director of Markwel Hose Industries Private Limited had to gear up for the export of his products, where wife Sanobar, formerly on the *Parsiana* editorial team, was committed to the different charitable causes that she supported, and where their school-going children Tushna, Erachsha and Rostam had their academic careers ahead of them.

Suddenly their lives came to a tragic end on January 16, 1993 when the Maruti 1000 by which they were travelling collided with a tanker near Khopoli on the Bombay-Poona Highway. While it is believed to have been instantaneous death for the couple and the two sons, daughter Tushna, according to eyewitness reports, breathed her last on the way to the hospital.

The tragic incident coincided with the week when communal riots in Bombay had the police and hospital staff working overtime. Even then Noshir's bereaved family in Bombay gratefully acknowledges the assistance from the police who ensured that all personal belongings were returned and arranged for ambulances for the bodies to be brought to Bombay where, after the necessary formalities were completed, they were interred at Doongerwadi. The funeral rites for the deceased were performed at the Allbless Bungli in the presence of a large number of friends and sympathizers who had gathered to condole the untimely demise of the well-loved Marker family.

"Dr Noshir Marker was an active member of the managing committee of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and Hyderabad (PZASH) and had given his sound advice and service



Noshir and Sanobar Marker with children Tushna, Erachsha and Rostam

in the conduct of the affairs of the Anjuman. Sanobar was a gentle, kind lady who was ready to extend her help to all and was a silent social worker. Dr Marker did a lot of charity without anyone knowing about it. Their children were sweet, well-mannered...popular in school and had a lot of friends who will miss them." This resolution was passed at a condolence meeting jointly organized by PZASH, the Zoroastrian Stree Mandal, Secunderabad-Hyderabad, the Zoroastrian Club, Secunderabad and the Bai Ratanbai J. Chenoy Parsi High School, Secunderabad on January 25, 1993.

As a committee member of the Zoroastrian Stree Mandal that is involved in the upliftment of the less fortunate

Parsis, "Sanobar took an active and keen interest in all the Mandal activities and carried out her duties with enthusiasm," acknowledge her colleagues. Hailing from the well-known Chenoy family of Secunderabad, Sanobar was also trustee of several Parsi foundations in Secunderabad, schools, medical clinics and other charitable welfare causes. The Bai Ratanbai J. Chenoy Parsi High School where as trustee she "took personal interest in the well-being (of) the children and the staff" now considers itself "orphaned by her death."

Prior to migrating to Secunderabad Noshir pursued the medical profession in Bombay. For a while he was working with a government homeopathic institution and served as resident medical officer at the Masina Hospital. He started under well-known homeopath Dr Sarosh Wadia and subsequently had the opportunity to work under Dr Dinyar Gamadia and Col D. R. Bharucha. "In the early '70s he was drawing a princely remuneration of Rs 250 per month," according to a family source. Yet, the high cost of setting up a private practice he was not able to justify, believing that his Hippocratic oath does not permit him to recover the costs from his patients. So he decided to forsake his medical career (although he continued to treat family, friends, employees) for a thriving business that he established from scratch.

Availing of the government concessions and incentives to start industries in backward areas, he chose the region Patancheru (60 km from Secunderabad) where he established a factory for the manufacture of hydraulic high pressure

rubber hoses under the trade name of Markwel. Whether chemical or textile or heavy engineering or shipping industry, it was the Markwel hoses that were put to use by government and private concerns, his elder brother gives a brief recap of Noshir's business achievements. Noshir's study of this manufacturing process in the United States led to his hoses being regarded as a good import substitute within India. His hoses were to have made a mark on the European market too. Barely three weeks before the disaster he was in Italy to finalize negotiations under which an Italian firm was to send their machinery to India and the production under Noshir's supervision was to have been exported to the European market, recalls an associate.

Pressures of work had contributed to 49-year-old Noshir's heart problem three years ago but his infectious "genial and jovial" nature stood him in good stead. He would be in Bombay at least four to six times a year, sometimes alone, sometimes with the family who never tired of vacationing in Mahabaleshwar, remembers a cousin. And if the flights were booked or out of gear as in January last when the Indian Airlines pilots were on strike, the family would drive down to Bombay.

Before taking up residence in Secunderabad, Sanobar was teaching at Bombay's Wilson College, tutoring students in English. She also worked as sub-editor at *Parsiana* for a while where she is remembered as a soft-spoken, self-effacing colleague. An interest in English 45-year-old Sanobar retained even while at Secunderabad, being actively associated with the Poetry Society of Hyderabad.

All the three children were students at the Hyderabad Public School with 16-year-old Tushna studying in standard XI, 14-year-old Erachsha in standard IX and 10-year-old Rostam in standard VI. While the elder two children took an avid interest in environmental issues, Rostam was keen on sports, particularly swimming, competing in aquatic events at inter-school meets. "Charming and friendly" are the attributes proffered by Ms Armin Wadia, secretary of the Zoroastrian Stree Mandal, to describe the Marker children who "took leading parts in all social and cultural activities of the Parsi community... (They) were an asset to the community and their loss is one which our small community could ill afford."

Noshir is survived by his mother Ner-

gish, brothers Keki, Farokh, Adi, Aspy, Jimmy and sister Dhun Palia. Sanobar is survived by her parents Firooza and As-tad Chenoy, and brother Sam.

Gem of a geologist

Died: Dr Ratan Nadirshaw Sukheswala, 81, former president of the Earth Science Society of India and vice president of the Mining and Metallurgical Society of India, in Bombay on June 3, 1992 following Parkinson's disease.



A geologist who studied the Deccan trap rocks extensively, Sukheswala had come up with unusual findings describing some of the rock types and the fossil-fauna off the bed at Bombay's Worli area. He was the first to discover a tortoise fossil, points out Sam Sethna former vice principal of St Xavier's College, in his tribute to Sukheswala carried in the *Indian Geological Magazine*. "The geoscientists who came in contact with him always found him...willing to discuss their problems and help them find a solution," notes an associate.

Sukheswala's research findings have found a place in publications like *Current Science*, and periodicals of the Geological Society of America and the Mining, Geological and Metallurgical Institute of India. As a postdoctoral research fellow it was at the Columbia University that the geoscientist broadened his mental horizons, notes a life sketch.

With St Xavier's College Sukheswala had an enduring commitment. He graduated from that institution, later went on to take up the post of lecturer in the geology department there and subsequently headed it for nearly two decades. During his tenure he was instrumental in introducing a postgraduate degree course in geology at the Bombay University. Even after retirement from active service, as professor emeritus he continued to guide and teach postgraduate research students.

In recognition of his dedication the Benemerenti Certificate and gold medal from Pope Paul VI was awarded to him in 1968, the centenary year of the College. This distinction which carries a gold cross, a certificate and a box of jew-

els was conferred on him for his meritorious service to a Christian institution. While the gold cross the family still cherishes, the box of jewels Sukheswala insisted on returning to the College during his lifetime, mentions his son Pervez.

The academically inclined Sukheswala had a storehouse of books and periodicals on life sciences which were gifted away after his demise.

Until 1989 when he met with an accident whilst riding his scooter Sukheswala continued to be active with his research work. After the accident he had to forego the evening walks that he enjoyed a lot and with the onset of Parkinson's disease he was more or less confined to the house thereafter.

Always happy to return to his roots, he would make three to four trips a year to Bulsar, his hometown, where he was born and did his schooling at the R. J. J. A. V. School and the Bai Avabai High School. Many a local resident is said to have been helped by Sukheswala.

The geologist is survived by his son Pervez and daughter Dhun Nariman Deboo.

P.G.

Following death by accident

Before a body can be interred at the Bombay doongerwadi or consigned to the crematorium, there are certain formalities that have to be completed in the event of death by accident. The matter first needs to be reported to the police station in whose jurisdiction the accident took place. Irrespective of whether postmortem examination has been carried out by an authorized agency, it is mandatory to obtain a No Objection Certificate from the coroner's office situated within the J. J. Hospital complex.

Depending on the merits of the case the coroner will decide on the necessity of conducting a postmortem examination. If a postmortem examination has been done on a body, the coroner issues a warrant sanctioning the disposal of the body. Where postmortem examination is not deemed necessary, his office issues a letter of authority permitting the body to proceed to its final resting place.

In case of death outside the city limits, even if a body is to be brought to Bombay after completing the procedural requirements, it is imperative to obtain a clearance from the Bombay coroner.

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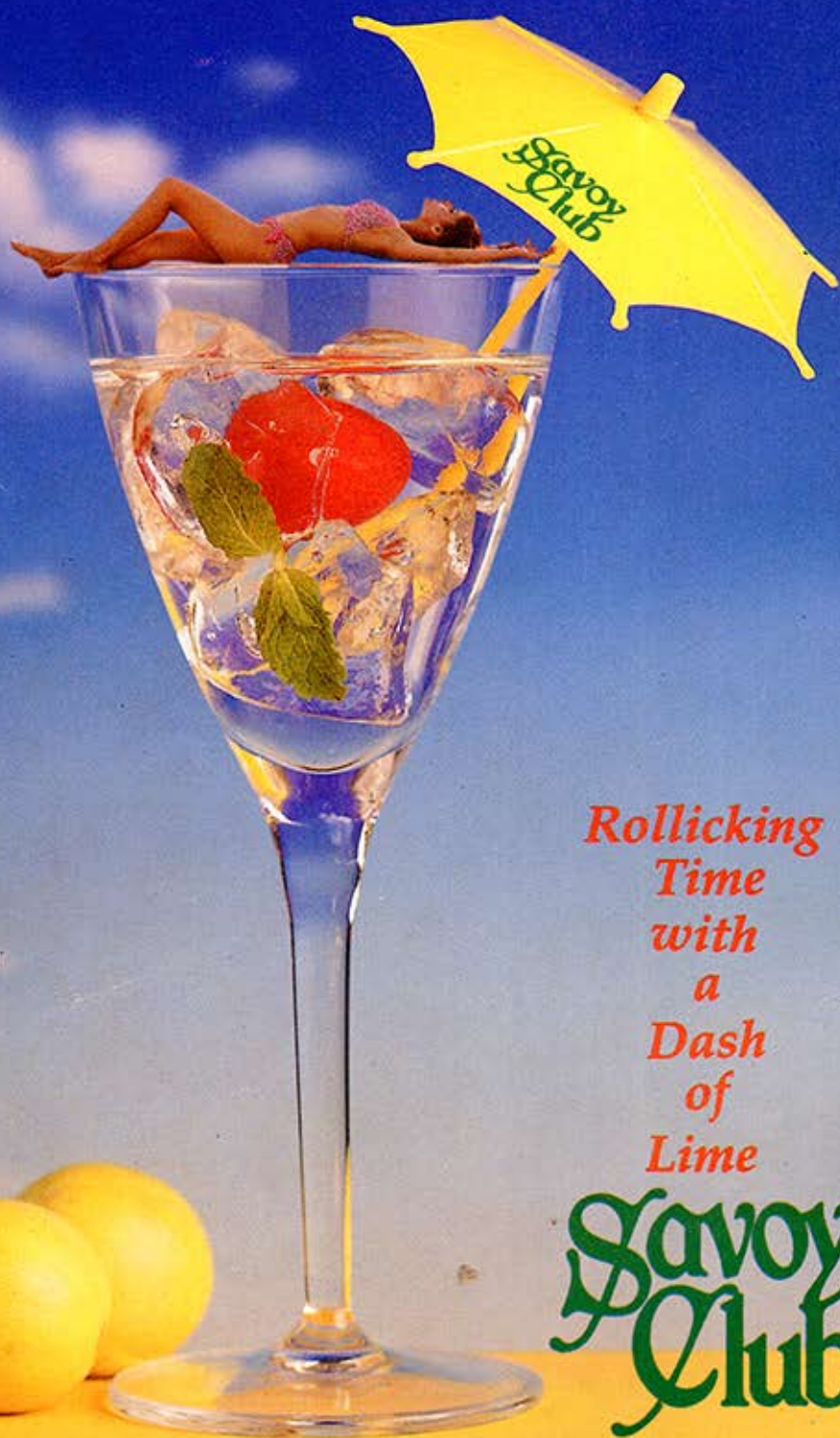
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