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Cover: Pestonji Bomanjee's painting *Naughty Girl*

Parsiana extends its thanks to the house of Tatas for the loan of the cover transparency and to the trustees of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India for granting us the permission to reproduce the painting on the cover as well as the picture accompanying the article on Pestonji Bomanjee in this issue. Our thanks are extended to Zend M. Zend for guiding and assisting us in the project.

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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

BPP assistance

The trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) have initiated a scheme to help those families with a third child born on or after July 1, 1993.

Applications are invited from eligible parents from all over India in whose family a third child has been born on or after July 1, 1993, giving all information including full name and address, total number of family members staying with the applicants, date of birth of the third child, total family income, any special reason in support of the need for assistance to the third child and the nature and extent of help expected.

Monetary help is also being given, after due investigation to those applicant families who have one or more children and of whom one or more is kept in a day-care centre, irrespective of the family income limit. All those interested may apply with

full details regarding number of children, family income, details of the name and address, etc of the day-care centre concerned and fees being paid towards the service.

Applications for either purpose may be addressed to the undersigned at 209, Dr D. N. Road, Bombay 400001.

R. K. ANKLESARIA

Chief Executive, Bombay Parsi Punchayet

'Ahd-nameh authentic'

No sane, honest, intellectual and knowledgeable person would ever dare to call Omar Khayyam, one of the outstanding philosophers, scientists, mathematicians and astronomers Iran is proud to have produced, a "drunkard lecher" ('Ahd-nameh authentic?' Readers Forum, *Parsiana*, October 1994). It will be a very cheap slander thrown at the very basis of Iranianism, dear to every Irani, be he/she an atheist, Bahai, Christian, Jew, Muslim or Zartoshti.

His subtle poetry, a masterpiece of expressing his doubts and disbelief in the then current religious theologies and beliefs, cannot be comprehended by persons

of surface knowledge who may or may not have read the so-called translation by Edward Fitzgerald.

One had to be acquainted with some of his 16 treatises to understand his poetry. It was his towering personality that made Sultan Jalaluddin Saljuqi restore the true Fasli calendar of Zartoshti origin in place of the Muslim calendar in the Saljuq empire.



Master poet Khayyam

Photo: Iran Culture House

Dr ALI A. JAFAREY

California, USA

The Editor replies

Parsiana apologises to Dr Jafarey for allowing Ms Pervin Mistry's statement to slip into print without proper verification.

Unknown to Zoroastrians

Mr Dara Kadva has posed a query before

the readers of *Parsiana*: Why didn't the Achaemenians under Darius the Great conquer the Arabian Peninsula and spread Zoroastrianism in that region ("Unknown to Zoroastrians," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, October 1994)? I am not a historian, but I think the answer is simple. Except for the thin coastline, almost the whole Peninsula is a desert, with a torrid climate. What is the point in conquering a sandy desert? It is like sending an army into the Sahara desert.

Oil was unknown in those days, else there would have been some incentive in grabbing the Peninsula. I understand that today almost all the homes and cars in Saudi Arabia are air-conditioned, but this is possible more because of the wealth of the oil sheikhs.



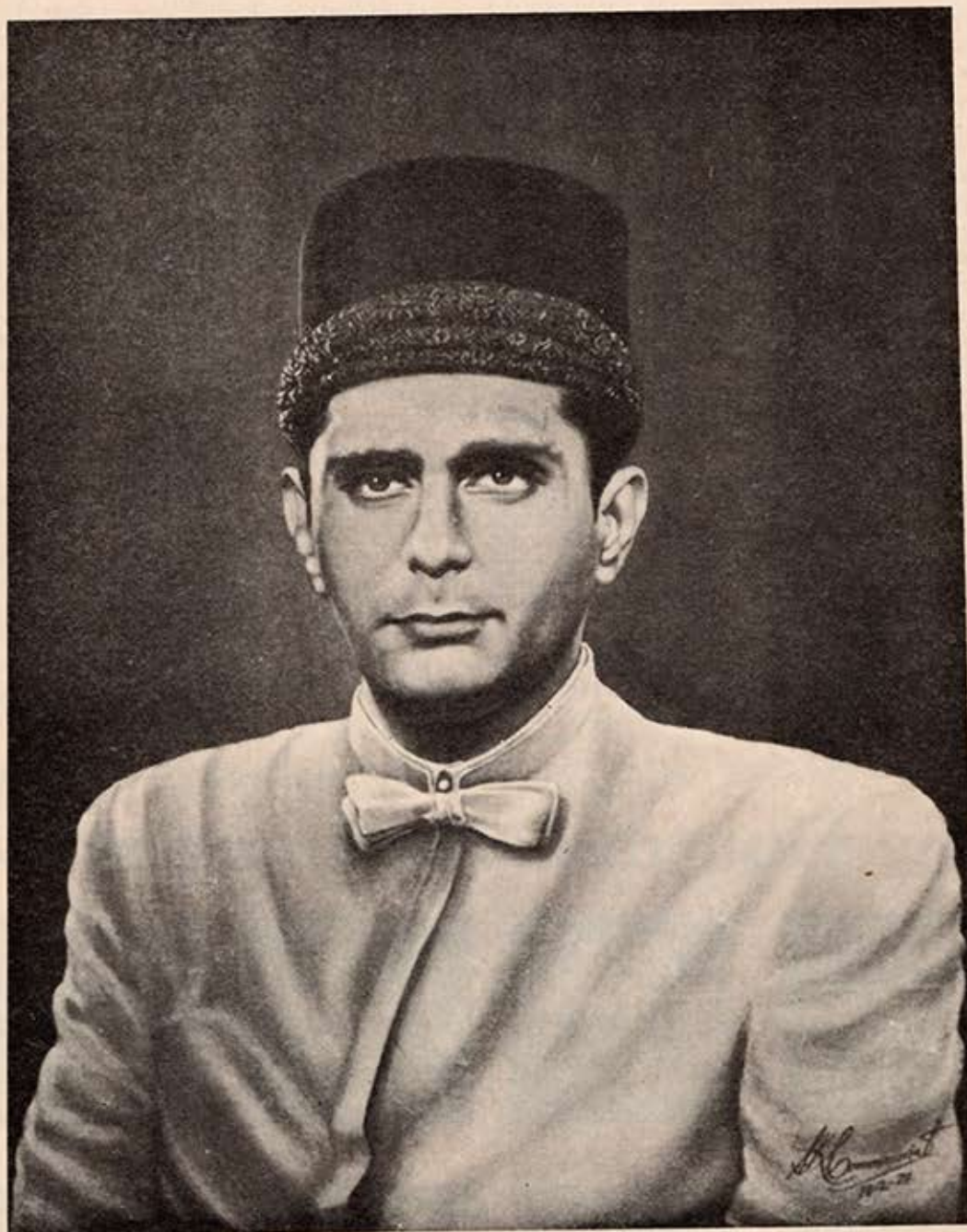
A relief of King Darius (on throne) from the treasury at Persepolis.

Photo: Persian Mythology

Does Mr Kadva think that the huge army with the latest weaponry that the Americans sent to Saudi Arabia in the Gulf War of 1991, in which half a million Iraqi soldiers and civilians were massacred, was meant to protect the interests of the Kuwaitis, or to protect their own oil interests in that area? The answer becomes obvious when one knows that USA imports 50 percent of its oil, of which 27 percent is from the OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) countries.

Dr P. D. SUNAVALA

This refers to "Unknown to Zoroastrians" by Mr Dara Kadva (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, October 1994). The Arabian Peninsula has been under Iranian influence right from the Achaemenian to modern times and there are plenty of evidences to prove it. It requires a full research article which I intend to publish one day, but here,



In Memoriam
Mr Fali Meherji Variava
Ex-Director

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I will summarize a few points in response to his request.

May I first refer to certain points mentioned by Mr Kadva? A sort of "inherent" antagonism between Arabs and Iranians prevents the people of the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf to include Iranian domination of Arabia in the "reconstruction" of their "history." Moreover, with the exception of Bahrain and al-Ahsâ, the Saudi coast opposite to Bahrain, Kuwait and the Emirates was too poor to be of any significance before its recent sharp rise on account of oil riches. The language of the Shahuh, original inhabitants of the cape of Musandam at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, is a dialect of archaic Persian, a proof of past presence of Persians in that region. The cape was annexed by the British and passed on to the Sultanate of Oman. Bandar Abbas and Bandar Shahpur are comparatively of recent prominence. There were, instead, other ports, now lying in ruins, along the Iranian coast of the Persian Gulf. Bushahr and Minab, both still inhabited, are two of the bygone.

Evidences found on Falaika island in Kuwait and Dilmun (modern Manamah or the largest island in Bahrain) belong to pre-Christian, and not Christian times, the

times of the Babylonians (in modern Iraq) and the Elamites (in southwest Iran). Alexander did not begin his so-called expedition to India from the upper Persian Gulf but entered the Indian sub-continent from Peshawar after traversing the north-east part of the fallen Achaemenian empire. His stay in Punjab and Sind was brief because of the wearisome resistance put up by Indians. He had to call a retreat via Baluchistan to western Iran and then Babylon, where he died, some scholars say, because of a festering wound, received in a battle with the Indians. A part of his army is reported to have retreated on board quickly improvised ships from the Indus delta through the Persian Gulf to Babylon. The Kuwaiti story is purely a fabrication to lend a prominence to their otherwise passive past.

Regarding Iranian influence, Darius the Great (522-486 B.C.) is the first to provide us with the earliest picture of Arabs on his bas-reliefs. His empire in the south-west extended to the Arabâya (part of the Peninsula), Maka (present Oman and a part of the Emirates) and Ethiopia. Dressed in their long robes (*dishdashah*), the Arabs are shown carrying gifts of a camel and textiles for the King of Kings on the Nowruz function

at Persepolis. Darius was the first to dig a canal connecting the Nile and the Mediterranean to "the sea extending from Persia" (modern Arabian Sea with the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf). He also sent a naval expedition to survey the water route from the upper Indus, east of Peshawar, to its delta and therefrom to Persian ports. Darius' son, Arames, was the commander of the Arabian and Ethiopian regiments. The present Arabian Sea was one of the busy maritime waterways of the Achaemenians.

The Parthians and the Sassanians (224 B.C. to 630 A.D.) had their capital in modern Iraq and their empire extended in the west to the southern coast of the Persian Gulf from Kuwait, al-Ahsâ and Bahrain. The Sassanians had a temporary foothold along the Oman-Hadharmaut-Yemen littoral region. They sent a few expeditions inside the Peninsula to punish marauding bedouins. The Arabian Sea was called *Daryâ-ye Pars*, Persian Sea. Iranian war and merchant ships dotted the Persian Gulf and the high seas. The rest of the Peninsula was mostly desert with a few oases and economically not worth holding it under a costly sway. Today's bustling Riyadh was a far-flung oasis.

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The Achaemenians called the Arabs by their known name, *Arabāya*, but the Sassanians used *Tāzīk*, later *Tāzi* in Pazend and Persian. *Tāziān* is plural. Some derive the name from *tāz* or *tāzh*, tent, therefore tent-dwellers, nomads; others from *tāzik/tāzi*, swift, fast, because they thought that Arabs rode fast horses and had fast running dogs; others from *tāz*, to run fast, to raid, hence invaders, raiders; and still others say that they were *tāzi* because the Sassanians were more acquainted with the major tribe of Tā or Tāe. Whatever the derivation, it means an Arab. Incidentally, *Tāzi* and *Tāzik* has no connection with the *Tājiks*, the Iranians of Central Asia, a name given by early Turks to their ruling race who had their "crown-wearing" kings and princes. It is derived from *tāj*, crown. Tajikistan is a recent name coined after the creation of the Soviet Union to give a republic to Tajiks among Turkish people.

When the eastern part of Arabia (al-Ahsā and Bahrain then collectively known as "al-Bahrain") was overrun by Muslims, the conquerors asked Prophet Muhammad how to treat local Zoroastrians. He replied, "Treat them as the People of the Book," a statement which made the Muslim conquerors of the Sassanian empire

treat all Zoroastrians the same way. The People of the Book, while surrendering to the Muslim army, were given three choices: Submit to Islam; pay *jazyah*, a special tax, and live under Muslim protection; or face death.

Lastly, while reciting the *nirang* of *Sarosh Yasht Vadi*, Parsis pay a special tribute to Arab Zarthoshtis of the Persian Gulf who might have helped some of the ancestors of modern Parsis in landing on the Gujarat coast. It says: "*Tāziān-e basteh-koshtiān, Zartoshtiān, nīkān o pākān-e haft keshvar zamīn Sarosh Izad panāh bād* — May Sarosh Yazad protect the koshti-girdled Arabs, (other) Zarthoshtis, and the good and pure (people) of the seven climes of the earth!"

The "Unknown to Zoroastrians" of the petty present was well-known to Zoroastrians of the proud past.

Dr ALI A. JAFAREY
California, USA

"Twist in the tale?"

Please allow me to answer the criticism in Mr Rogers' book review "Twist in the tale (*Parsiana*, October 1994)?"

Mr Rogers' "crash of cymbals" epithet for the "high drama" is a matter of opinion.

To my mind, the book's description of

the holy union between Zarathushtra's parents has nothing in it to be described as "nuggets of sex." It is a simple statement of a fact of life, put as spiritually as possible. This union has been compared to the "exemplary friendship as exists between the sun and the moon." This Mr Rogers chooses not to mention. In any case I do not know if there is a different method for procreating "divine" birth as compared to "ordinary" birth. I believe that the Law of Asha Vahishta applies to all (unless one believes in a virgin conception as in the case of Holy Mary — I do not).

As for the other "nugget of sex" let me stress here that all prophets, gurus, holy men have had sexual desire to begin with but all of them overcame this very powerful driving force to cross the threshold into spiritual awakening. Zarathushtra was no exception. For a man to struggle so greatly to break all material bondage (to leave home and family to be closer to God) and attain divinity does require superhuman effort.

In this matter too the law of Asha Vahishta is supreme. Ahura Mazda too is bound by this law. All this has not gone across to Mr Rogers — here I have to admit my effort is somewhat lacking.

**With Best Wishes
from**

Mr Rusy M. Shroff, M.B.E.

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As regards the name of the assassin who is said to have murdered Zarathushtra (or any other name), my question is, are names all important?

I do not wish to comment on the fact that Zoroastrianism is silent on the subject of reincarnation. Twenty-three scholars may have commented on the subject. While admitting that I am a firm believer in reincarnation I had no intention of starting another discussion.

As regards my statement "Sufism is Zoroastrianism in code," an explanation may take several books (none of which I could write). Please, however, do read any book by Mr Jatindra Mohan Chatterji on the subject. Zarathushtra was referred to by several Sufi poets who were hesitant to openly declare their fondness for Zarathushtra and had to veil their admiration.

Let me, however, thank you Mr Editor and Mr Homi Rogers for having done a review on my humble effort. My future efforts (I would not call them "barbs in my quiver") will also be sent to you.

CYRUS S. MEHERJI
Calcutta

"Stand up and be counted"

I absolutely agree with the views of Ms G. R. Mehta ("Stand up and be counted," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, October 1994).



The Dinshaw Maneckji Petit Gynaecological Hospital is now part of the College of Nursing (above)
The Sai Baba temple at Shirdi

To a person like me and my kind, our Zoroastrian religion is the most easy to understand, accept and practise. No, not the one that our dogmatic pillars of religion preach but what Lord Zarathushtra said: "Good words, good thoughts and good deeds." And indeed, that's all it takes to be a good Zoroastrian. If we take the above teachings in toto then it conveys respect and love for all the religions of the world, be it preached by Christ or Sai Baba.

So I ask, what's wrong to be a follower of Sai Baba or to go and attend a novena at Mahim Church? After all, all these roads lead to the same destination whichever be the route you traverse.

So people like us, who are ardent followers of Sai Baba, Satya Sai Baba and Mother Mary, may be, by this very reason, better practising disciples of Zarathushtra.

Let this religious bickering stop and let's concentrate on increasing our tribe.

Ms RODA D. HAKIM
Vadodara

"Past Ideals..."

I look forward to reading *Parsiana* and was particularly glad to find a feature on the J. J. Group of Hospitals ("Past Ideals... Future



The Dinshaw Maneckji Petit Gynaecological Hospital is now part of the College of Nursing (above)
The Sai Baba temple at Shirdi

Hopes," *Parsiana*, September 1994) but, as an old nurse who had worked in the J. J. for many years, I was disappointed to find no mention of nurses.

The following is only for your information, most of it from notes written by Sir Stanley Reed, Editor of *The Times of India* to Col Vajifdar and others. It indicates, I think, the interest of lay people in an essential component of service in the J. J.

In the '80s of the last century some sisters of the All Saints Community undertook the nursing in a few wards in the J. J. Hospital. In 1903 Ms Crowe, wife of Chief Justice Crowe of the Bombay High Court, collected a sum of Rs 1,25,000 which formed the nucleus of the fund of the Nursing Association. The first secretary was Sir Stanley Reed with the following members: The Hon Mr Justice Crowe, Sir Jamsetjee

Jejeebhoy, Baronet, Sir Dinshaw Petit, Baronet, Mr N. Wadia, CIE, The Hon Mr Justice Chandavarkar, Mr Fazalbhai Visram, CIE and Mr Rustom P. Jehangir, Mr Sassoon J. David and Mr Vijuphakandas Almamoram, three IMS officers of the J. J. Hospital. In the early 1890s, three sisters of the All Saints Community and three English nurses started training Indian women for nursing. In 1891 the Sir Mancherjee Bhavnagri Home to provide accommodation for nurses in training, was built from his donation. In 1901 Bai Jerbai Wadia gave a sum of Rs 14,000 to assist in the building of a home for trained and untrained staff.

Sir Stanley Reed concludes by writing that the J. J. could not have accomplished a fraction of the work without the devoted work of the All Saints Sisters. For many years they kept the flag flying with trifling financial assistance. Then, when funds were larger, they maintained the high character of their service by their moral influence and skill. My association was with Sister Caroline, Sister Eleanor Mary and Sister Josephine than whom no finer body of workers could be found.

Ms T. K. ADRANVALA
Lonavala

"Lucrative lessons"

"Lucrative lessons" (*Parsiana*, July-August 1994), gives a detailed account of the efforts made by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustees to raise the initial part-time commercial classes conducted in the premises of Sir J. J. Benevolent Institute to the present status of a full-time college of commerce at 14, Nanabhoy Road, the premises belonging to the BPP.

This transformation became possible thanks to the surplus income available from Sir J. J. First Baronet Madressa Fund. The BPP trustees made a 'cy pres' application in 1951 to the Bombay High Court to utilize the surplus annual income of Rs 12,000 from the Madressa Fund for the purpose. The annual expenditure of the college when it started in 1953 was Rs 17,000.

The then Madressa principal opposed the move but to no avail. Whilst the relative preference for commercial over religious education is a matter of opinion, the fact remains that the surplus income of a fund for religious education was used for a commercial one.

SOHRAB NAVALSHAW PATWA

"Does anybody know?"

Mr Homi Ardeshir Kharas asks how his name was derived ("Does anybody know?"

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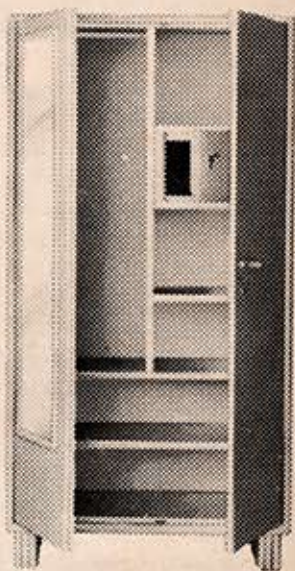
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Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, May 1994).

There is a book in Gujarati *Parsi Vishayo* (subjects) written by Sorabji M. Desai. On page 50 under "Kharash" in the chapter on surnames, he states, "the surname, it is said, is derived from the profession of cane-weaving. It is also said that it comes from the profession of grain-grinding (flour mills)."

Hence Mr Kharas seems to be on the right track, when he asks further in his letter, "Is it true that most of the flour-mills in Surat were once owned by a Kharas?"

I suggest that he should write to Mr Ratan Marshall, C/o the office of the Surat Parsi Charity Funds and Properties, R. M. K. Parsi Panchayet Bldgs, Dr Jamshedji Laskari Road, Shahpore, Surat, 395003.

Mr Marshall is not only a scholar in Gujarati, but he also knows the history of the Parsis of Surat, so I am sure he will throw more light on the subject.

HOMIF BAGWALA

The Spineless Parsis

Since the past two years I have been taking up, through the press, the case on behalf of the poor Parsi residents of Dastur Meher Road, Pune, who are harassed each year for a period of nearly a month during the Ganesh festival. The Ganesh pandal on this road completely engulfs the houses of these residents to such an extent that they can neither enter nor leave their houses through the front door, and thus, like monkeys have to resort to jumping in and out of their houses through a rear window. During this period, those who can afford to, lock up their houses and go away to stay somewhere else.

Besides the above, the erection of this pandal also obstructs the easy passage of the hearse and other vehicles entering the Parsi funeral rites place located on the opposite side, causing great disturbance and inconvenience to the community whenever there is a funeral during the festival period.

At my request, the *Indian Express* and some non-Zoroastrian social organizations had taken up the case very strongly, both through the press and also directly with the municipal and police commissioners. However, to enable them to file a writ in the Bombay High Court for a stay order, the affected residents of this road were asked to file a writ complaint (they were asked to just sign on a draft already prepared by me), which they refused to do for fear of being

harmed by the pandal organizers later on. I then approached the trustees of the Poona Parsi Panchayat (PPP), who are supposed to be the guardians of the Parsi community in Pune and to look after their interests, but even they refused to intervene in the



The K. R. Cama Oriental Institute's library: a veritable diamond mine

matter, again from fear of being abused or harmed by the majority community followers of Ganesh.

The pity is that while the press and the non-Zoroastrian organizations were wanting something concrete in their hands to move the High Court, for which some of them were even prepared to defray the legal cost, our valiant Parsi residents, and still more the courageous board of trustees of the PPP, were mortally afraid to do so. I also took up the matter with the Government of India's Minority Commission, but without a complaint from either the Parsi community or its Panchayat, they were unable to be really effective, although one of its members, Admiral Rusi Ghandhi, did write to the police commissioner and others on this issue.

If the Parsis will not fight for their rights even when bullied and harassed by the majority community, and their own panchayet also refuses to support or intervene on their behalf, where else can the members of the community turn except perhaps to the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India. But then, that body is even more toothless and gutless than the anjumans it coordinates.

Brig NOSHIR B. GRANT (Retd)

A heritage to conserve

Know thyself, for self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control lead men to sovereign power. Our community has been fortunate in having ancient and modern authors, belonging to different creeds and distant

countries, writing about our glorious past and present. Greek and Roman writers, as well as French, English, American and specially German savants have informed us about our forefathers and our faith. Which Parsi can deny the debt of gratitude

we owe to the ancient bard Firdausi or his recent co-patriot Poura Davoud? Recently, while struggling to read through Dr Martin Haugh's *Essays on the Religion of the Parsis*, Jackson's *Persia Past and Present*, and Kulke's *The Parsees in India*, it was a flabbergasting experience to read their footnotes referring to hundreds of ancient and modern writers, quoting from Greek, Latin, Avesta, Pahlavi, Pazend, Persian, Sanskrit, Arabic, German, French, Italian and English as well as Gujarati writers.

How can we show our deep gratitude, except by making our future generations aware of these treasures? We are fortunate to have in Bombay a number of libraries. But probably the richest collection of records of our race and religion is in the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute. May the young people of our community, both young men and women, realize the worth of this veritable diamond mine and use it.

BEHRAM RUSTOMJI

Whither, Parsiana?

As a regular subscriber to *Parsiana* I have noticed that you publish very few articles on today's young generation. Most of the articles are on old people or on those who are no more. Why don't you publish articles on famous youngsters like Ms Jasmine Bharucha and Zubin Balaporia? Also on young entrepreneurs like chocolate maker Ms Meher Gandevia and sports people like Ms Zenia Ayrton, Adille Sumariwalla, Mickey Mehta, makeup man Mickey Contractor? Hope to see nice articles on these young people. Not only on Pervez Damania and J. R. D. Tata.

Please feature more articles on food because Parsi people love eating good food. I liked your article on Smokin' Joe's pizza parlor and their pizzas are delicious.

RUSTOM WADIA

The Editor replies

We appreciate Mr Wadia's interest in suggesting story-ideas for *Parsiana*. We would like Mr Wadia to know, however, that we had a cover story on Ms Zenia Ayrton (March 1986) and feature articles on Zubin

continued on page 39

Reaching for the Sky



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Events and Personalities

Following Kumud's death

"No one knows when death (will) strike; but it is advisable to be ready for (it)." So saying, Babubhai Shah had approached the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) in 1990 requesting them to extend their cooperation in the event of his wife Kumud's (née Coomi Nanavati) demise. Four years later when Kumud succumbed to liver failure at the age of 77, she was as per her wish permitted to have her last rites at the Doongerwadi.

The husband had, in accordance with the BPP stipulation, lodged an affidavit to the effect that his wife continued to profess the Zoroastrian religion. While Kumud's case was not the first instance of a woman married outside the community being consigned at the Doongerwadi, it had gained wider publicity as Babubhai had publicly acknowledged the assistance he received from the BPP administration, the Doongerwadi staff and Ervad Jal Balsara who arranged for the ceremonies for the first four days and thereafter the muktad prayers at Bandra's Tata Agiary.

Support for the Shahs' stand and the BPP's attitude came from *The Bombay Samachar* and the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO). This led to a spate of correspondence in the press with writers like Rusi Gae pushing for the removal of discrimination against women married out. Presently their next of kin have to attest that they had not forsaken their religion, their bodies are required to be consigned to a separate dokhma and the onus of arranging for priests and prayers lie with their families. Ms Homai Bode wanted the Association of Inter Married Zoroastrians (AIMZ) to pursue the cause of non-Parsis who are denied an opportunity to see the face of the Parsi dead after the sachkar has been performed.

Similarly Babubhai too has in a letter to the AIMZ appealed to them to fight for this reform. He, in particular, felt deprived, when after spending nearly 50 years of married life with Kumud or Cooma as he

used to fondly call her, he was denied the chance of sitting in at the ceremonies or seeing her face towards the end. He has also suggested to the AIMZ that they should not have membership fees which could deter some prospective members and should instead focus on mustering strength; he even offered to underwrite the cost of their administrative machinery.

For other charitable causes, too, Babubhai has pledged handsome donations. The WZO's newly conceived mediclaim scheme to benefit the underprivileged received the first donation of Rs 1,11,111



Babubhai and Kumud Shah

from Babubhai, who donated the sum in memory of his wife. He further donated a sum of Rs 2,00,000 to establish The Kumud (née Coomi) Babubhai Shah Memorial Fund within the WZO Trust for Women and Children.

The couple had no issue of their own but Babubhai considers himself fortunate to have enjoyed a happy and prosperous married life, so he now wishes to bequeath to charity during his lifetime. Coomi and Babubhai fell in love during World War II when both of them were working for the censorship department, censoring mail that went out from India. Thereafter for a while Coomi worked as a teacher in Girton School and subsequently assisted her husband with his firm Charles Lambert and Company that supplied books for professional courses. Even after her marriage, Babubhai

informs us, she continued to frequent agiaries and atash behrams in Bombay and other parts of India.

Sanjan Day Celebrations

For 90-year-old Dr (Ms) Gulamai B. Kabraji, Sanjan Day 1994 (November 22) was a march down memory lane. Probably the oldest Zoroastrian present in the gathering of 600 who thronged this ancient port town where the community's ancestors had been given refuge over 12 centuries ago, Dr Kabraji represented a tenuous link with the place's historic past. She had been here on the first Sanjan Day held 73 years ago.

"I was 17 then," reminisces Dr Kabraji in a frail voice, recalling that historic day in 1921 when in the company of greats like Vimadalal, Punegar, the Boyce brothers, her own brother Jehangir, then secretary of the jashan committee, and her sister Motamai, she had marched down the streets of Sanjan singing the *Sanjan March*, and unfurled the flag.

Over seven decades later, as the *stambh* (column) put up by public subscription is made ready for the Platinum Jubilee celebrations, Dr Kabraji's presence provides the gathering with a sense of belonging — and stirrings of a glorious past. She referred to the day as *bhagyashali* (auspicious), expressed the hope that "our flag may ever keep flying high" and even rendered the Cassinath-composed *Sanjan March* which generations of Parsis have marched to, hearts bursting with pride.

Interestingly, also present at the function was Ms Roda Khodaiji, daughter of Jehangir Khodaiji, the conductor of the band that had played the march in 1921. (A group photograph of the band can still be seen in the Boyce Dharamshala, situated in the *stambh's* courtyard, whose verandah formed the dais for the morning's proceedings).

Barring the presence of these two ladies, Sanjan Day 1994 was bereft of the usual stellar glitter. Homi Taleyarkhan, who regularly attends the function traditionally held on the second day (*roj*

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Bahman) of the fourth month (*mah Tir*) in the Zoroastrian calendar, was absent, as he had to chair a conference in Bombay. Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw who was invited had to "reluctantly forego the pleasure," he stated in a message to the organizers, "as he would be out of the country." Jamshed Guzdar, president of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP), who had used the Sanjan Day platform in 1993 to announce the BPP's policy of sponsoring the third child, was also out of the country, attending a world convention of travel agents. And the high priest of Udvada, who normally heads the jashan which starts the proceedings and delivers a religious discourse, also could not attend because of failing health. In his absence, the 15-mobed jashan held in the adjacent Vimadlal pavilion was presided over by Framroze Kavasji Sidhwa, secretary of the Udwada Samast Anjuman.

The jashan-bhashan-bhojan function was not, however, without its golden moments as speeches ranged from sloganeering to philosophizing to poetics. Khurshed Bhada, who referred to the column at Sanjan as our *nishaani* (symbol) and *vaarso* (heirloom), wanted the gathering to perceive the atash atop the column as a *mashaal* (torch) which would "show our children the path when they are floundering." Rustomji Mulla, a devotee of Ervad Nadersha Aibara, prayed that the community be blest with *nek buddhi* (good sense) and not be influenced by *parkoni manyata* (beliefs of other faiths). "Place your total faith and trust in our religion's *manthra* (prayers)," he pleaded, likening our prayers (even when uttered without knowing their meaning), to medicine gulped down as per a doctor's prescription.

The history and relevance of Sanjan was also briefly touched on by Bhada and Rohinton Davierwala, president of the Sanjan Day Celebrations Committee. Bhada provided a historic backdrop to the diaspora of the community from Iran, while Davierwala cited the twin purpose of holding these celebrations annually in Sanjan: it enabled the community to remember their *upkaar* (gratitude) to Jodi Rana and thank the wise and kind king for giving us refuge, as well as thank our forefathers for bringing the community to Sanjan's hospitable shores from where "we progressed and prospered."

The speakers expressed the need for the community to keep alive the spirit of Sanjan and all that the memorial column here embodies. A special plea to help in setting up a corpus, from the interest of which

future celebrations could continue to be held, was made by Davierwala. A modest target of three lakhs has been set for the corpus, which was started in 1993 by an instantly-rising-to-the-occasion Guzdar who pledged an initial contribution of Rs 25,000. Homi Palsetia expressed the view that even a larger amount totalling Rs 10,00,000 could be raised as corpus if 1,000 Parsis donated Rs 1,000 each towards the fund. In the meanwhile the corpus, amounting to Rs 85,000, remains untouched, and funds for the current celebrations were raised from donations, which included Rs 7,000 from a magnanimous Guzdar, an equal amount from the BPP, and an unsolicited Rs 5,000 from Babubhai Shah, who with his wife, the late Kumudben (née Coomi Nanavati), had visited Sanjan twice. For him the essence of the place is that "all of us can live together with love."

But will such annual festivities and feasting provide the community with a true sense of identity and belonging? Kersasp, an Iranian from Quetta, begs to differ. "If the purpose of the corpus is to provide funds for food and festivities, I'd say let's pull down the *stambh* and end the farce," he says vociferously. "We should get instead, a band of Zoroastrians drawn from all walks of life to form a chain by holding hands round the column with a dastur in the centre, and pledge to lead a true Zoroastrian life."

One need not dismiss this as polemics, for when such a proposal is blended with practicality, as Davierwala's suggestion of building homes for Zoroastrians "not on ownership, but on rent," the glorious Sanjan of our past could become the Sanjan of our future.

A vegetarian lunch, consisting of *akuri-rotli* and *dhan-dar* with *sekta-ni-singh no patio* (curried drumsticks) prepared by volunteers from the Surat Parsi Panchayat, and supplemented with jalebis and glasses of *chhas* (buttermilk) donated by the Narimans of Parsi Dairy Farm, brought the function to a close.

Homi Rogers

Allahabad's future

"The Allahabad Parsee Zoroastrian Anjuman (APZA) will continue to prosper as long as there is discipline... and principles of cooperation, mutual thinking and respect, kindness and hard work remain dominant in the hearts and minds of its members," noted Capt Homi Dandiwalla who was re-elected president of the Anjuman for the fourth consecutive three-year term. "It is not only my responsibility but the responsibility of all members to see

that APZA has a bright future," reminded Dandiwalla. Despite his three recent heart attacks Dandiwalla accepted the post as he believes that "there should be no self-consideration in community service." Assisting Dandiwalla will be Dossu Ghandhi who was unanimously elected vice president early this year.

The magnanimity of the APZA was reflected at its annual general meeting on July 19, 1994 when the members unanimously agreed that Rs 501 would be gifted to anyone whose navjote was performed in Allahabad; Rs 200 per month would be paid to a couple who gives birth to a third



Dandiwalla: fourth term as president

child in Allahabad; Rs 1,001 towards the film *Voice of Zarathustra* produced by Homi Sethna and Rs 301 to Dady Patel who executes goodwill missions on his moped, as per the report received from the anjuman.

The fire-temple in Allahabad is serviced by a parmobed. But the community there, being dissatisfied with the cleanliness he maintained and his non-presence at the fire-temple during essential hours, convened a meeting where his plus and minus points were discussed. He was asked to undertake his responsibilities with greater dedication and commitment.

During the year, the small but active body also bid farewell to four members of Maj Adi Chinoy's family who were migrating to Dalhousie following his recent transfer.

In their individual capacity, too, members of the APZA try to keep the torch of Zoroastrianism aflame. In October last Ms Meher Dinyar Dhondy, an educationist, participated in an all religion meeting at Phulpur where she elaborated on the Zoroastrian religion, its reverence for nature and its emphasis on right action. She participated in yet another meeting hosted by the Ramkrishna Mission which was observing the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's visit to Chicago to participate in an interfaith meet.

Parsi fiesta

"We Parsis, despite the goodwill we enjoy, have remained too low profile in recent times. So I thought, if we can have a Goan food festival and a Baisakhi festival, why not a Parsi food festival? After all, I had the

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Garas galore at the Parsi Fiesta

Mistry and Ms Jaloo Bhe-
sania enthralled the audience as also a costume exhibition showcasing the tra-

required resources to organize it." Diniar D. Mehta, of Dini Travels fame and the brain behind the Parsi Food and Trade Fair, was quoted thus in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of November 13, 1994.

Popularly called the Parsi Fiesta and promising to be a fun, food and trade festival, the three-day fair was held at the Wilson College Gymkhana Grounds at Marine Drive between November 18 to 20. Realizing that just a food festival would not be very feasible, Mehta expanded his scope to include trade as well. He hoped that big Parsi houses would see this as an opportunity to come forward and "put up a consolidated show that showcased the best of the community from food to customs to trade," reads the *Jamé* write-up. But community business houses turned Mehta down. "They were not at all keen... Except for the Damaniyas, all the interest shown for the stalls and sponsorship came from the non-Parsis," rued Mehta. Other major sponsors included Thums Up and Ritz.

Inaugurated on the morning of November 18 by Homi Taleyarkhan, former member of the Minorities Commission, 33 priests reportedly performed a jashan on the gymkhana grounds. Apart from the Parsi Dairy Farm and RTI savories, there were stalls selling homemade papads and masalas as well. Also on display were artifacts, kitchen appliances and clothes right from children's dresses to T-shirts to salwar khammezes. But the crowd puller at the fair was the latest vehicle of the Tatas — the Tata Sumo.

On the entertainment side the festival had a variety of activities: classical music performances by tabla maestro Dr (Ms) Aban Mistry, vocalist Farokh Bardoliwala and upcoming singer Soli Kapadia, classical dances by Ms Jeroo Chavda Khambata, and a modern jazz rendition by Zubin Soorty. Yezdi Karanjia and his troupe specially came in from Surat to amuse the audiences with their skits and gags, mentions Mehta. A gala fireworks display, courtesy Damania Airways, was slated for the second day. A garba nite by Kersi

ditional Parsi dress right from the old days to modern times. There were competitions too: bonny baby, rangoli, best grandma-grandpa, garas and kor ni saris.

According to Mehta, about 55-60,000 people attended the gala event. On the second day the crowd puller was Kapadia who sang a mix of Gujarati and filmi songs. "Soli jaré gava lago, tahré bairao potana stalls choriné ané samajva dorya (When Soli started singing, all the ladies left their stalls and ran to hear him)," says Mehta. Some of them didn't take a single penny to perform for us, adds a grateful Mehta. Doing his bit of charity, Mehta gave four stalls gratis to various organizations.

Passes for the program each night were priced at Rs 50 but due to the largesse of a Parsi gentleman (who does not wish to be named), the entrance to these programs was free.

Though he knew that a function of this kind will not be a profitable venture for him, the enterprising 42-year-old businessman's spirit has not dampened. He nevertheless wants to organize such fiestas annually for a longer period -- "maybe say for a week." On the cards for the future will be Navroze Extravaganza. On the eve of Navroze next year, Mehta hopes to put up a one day event which will feature the Parsi cuisine along with light entertainment. It will have a Nowroze table all laid out with an explanation for each item on the table along with its significance, Mehta explains.

Well-known for his Dini Travels' trips to Udvada and conducted tours all over the country and Nepal, the entrepreneur is now considering the organization of tours to Iran and Tajikistan, according to the *Jamé*. At the moment Mehta is negotiating the purchase of a new luxury air-conditioned bus for corporate clients. But on each Behram roj, the coach will travel to Udvada for "those wanting a more comfortable journey," the *Jamé* reports.

Roxana A. Driver

Three golds for Mehta

At the eighth Asian Veteran Athletics

Championships held in Jakarta this year, Calcutta's Ms Prochy Mehta won three gold and three silver medals, reports *The Statesman* of October 12, 1994.

In the 400m run where she won a gold medal, Mehta even set a new meet record clocking 1:04.67 seconds as against the old mark of 1:05.3 seconds. In her gold in the 200 m she recorded a timing of 28.9 seconds. Her third gold was in the 4x100 m relay where she anchored the quartet, according to the news item in *The Statesman*.

Mehta's performance in the 100m sprint where she clocked 13.76 seconds earned her a silver. Another silver came in the 80 m hurdles where her timing was 15.52 seconds. Her participation in the 4x400 m relay qualified her for yet another silver, mentions the write-up.

Gold shoot

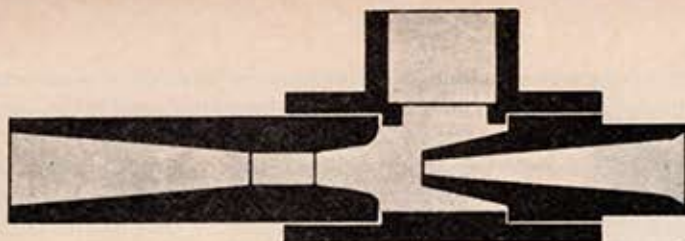
The lone Zoroastrian entry at the 38th National Shooting Championships at Kanpur in November last was Darius Marshall, who won a gold in the veterans event. Representing the Calicut Rifle Club, Marshall scored 236 out of 300 points in the .22 free rifle 50 m event, according to a write-up in the *Malayala Manorama* of November 18, 1994. In the years 1988 and 1989 Marshall had also won a gold, while in 1990 and 1993 he had to content himself with silver medals at the national competitions.

The Ordnance Factories Sports Control Board did a remarkable job in organizing the event, according to Marshall. The highlight of the colorful inaugural ceremony was the mass PT display by children from five army schools. In the awards presentations they tried to emulate the protocol observed at the Olympic Games. The only team to participate from Kerala was the Calicut Rifle Club since the other clubs had not received intimation from the National Rifle Association of India. The state body, the Kerala Rifle Association, is nearly defunct, mentions a press release.

In the submarine arm

Associated with Indian Naval Submarines for nearly 11 years, Lt Cmdr Aspi Cawasji recently assumed command of *INS Shishumar*. A part of the frontline squadron forming the teeth of the Indian Navy today, *Shishumar* is considered one of the most sophisticated conventional submarines in the world with state of the art technology, weapon systems and wire guided torpedoes, according to a press release.

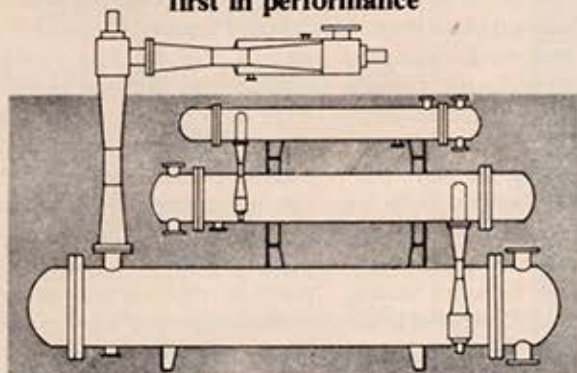
Cawasji is the "only Parsi in the Indian Naval Submarine arm," mentions a family



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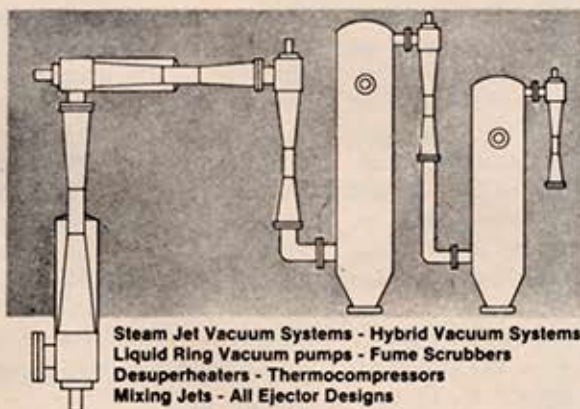
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source. Ever since he was commissioned in the Indian Navy in 1981 he had wanted to be included in the "Silent Service" which has for its motto, "Run Silent Run Deep."

An outstanding alumnus of the National Defence Academy at Khadakwasla, among the distinctions Cawasji has received are: the Best All Round Cadet in *INS Mysore*,



Marshall (left)
and Aspi Cawasji

Best Midshipman in *INS Beas*, and a first rank in the sub lieutenant's professional courses. His curriculum vitae also refers to his specialization in anti-submarine warfare for two years in Kiel, West Germany and subsequent postgraduation from the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington. His elder brother Parvez is a brigadier who was recently conferred the Vishist Seva Medal.

"Cream of the community"

Of the 135 students selected as J. N. Tata Scholars for the year 1994-95, 11 were Parsis, three of whom were females. The youngsters representing "the cream of the community" will, according to Dinshah Malegamvala, director of the J. N. Tata Endowment for the Higher Education of Indians, "soon learn to run their lives and plan their studies independently. They are coming out in the world at a particularly opportune time when multinationals have started coming to India. By the time they complete their studies in a couple of years, hopefully they (will) have opportunities for direct recruitment on international standards of remuneration with the multinationals..."

The disciplines in which this year's lot of Parsi scholars will pursue studies abroad are: architecture (Vistasp Bhagwagar and Kershasp Dalal); engineering (Marzban Palsetia and Fredy Chinoy); finance (Kaiomarz Suntoke and Firdosh Patel); law (Zal Andhyarujina); medicine (Dr (Ms) Azmy Bharucha); molecular genetics (Dr Minocher Battiwalla and Ms Tanaz J. Mistry) and social work (Ms Dinaz P. Sidhva).

A graduate from the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi, Bhagwagar has joined the Oxford Brooks University on a full scholarship from the British Council

for an MA in urban design. His graduation topic was "Centre for Zoroastrian Culture in Ahmedabad" for which he conducted a feasibility study and extensive research in ancient Zoroastrian architecture. Besides being a good orator he is also good at writing and painting.

Dalal too will be specializing in urban design in the course of his master's study in architecture at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA). Ranking first in the final semester of the BArch program at the Sir J. J. College of Architecture, Bombay, he has represented his college in inter-collegiate festivals/conventions winning prizes in painting, sketching, collage, cartooning and quizzing, and has also competed at the regional and national levels.

Palsetia will be joining the State University of New York at Buffalo to do his masters in electrical engineering. He will be specializing in communications and signal processing. While he was a student at Bombay's Sardar Patel College of Engineering one of his areas of research was Image Enhancement and Classification Techniques.

A graduate from the Manipal Institute of Technology, Chinoy will be specializing in telecommunication systems, optical fibres and other communication systems as part of his masters studies at the State University, Rutgers, New Jersey. His interests include debates, dramatics, athletics, scouting and the National Cadets Corps of which he was an active member.

After his graduation in commerce from Bombay University, Suntoke earned an MMS degree in financial management during which he took a rigorous course of mathematical and statistical studies. He has joined the Case Western Reserve University to do his MBA in finance, and thereafter his doctorate. A keen sportsman, Suntoke has been a member of his school and college football, volleyball and basketball teams.

Patel, who did his MCom from Bombay with banking and finance, has gained admission to the Rice University, Texas to study for an MBA degree in finance. In addition to academics Patel was also active in social service projects of the National Service Scheme dealing with anti-drug campaigns, road safety drives and literacy campaigns.

Following his graduation in economics from the Bombay University, Andhyarujina has chosen to graduate in law from University College, London. He will be a third generation lawyer — his grandfather was a very respected senior lawyer, his father

Tehemton is currently the advocate general of Maharashtra and his mother Silloo did her masters in law from Harvard. Well read in history, physics, literature and current affairs, Zal also writes on some of these subjects. A keen sportsman, he plays badminton, squash, rugby and also holds yellow belts in judo and karate.

An MRCOG degree is what Bharucha hopes to add to her name, having joined the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecology, London. She enjoys the distinction of securing the first rank at the Bombay University's MD examination as also at the diploma in obstetrics and gynaecology and the FCPS examination from the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Bharucha has also worked as a lecturer at the Topiwalla and Nair Hospitals in Bombay and has had an opportunity to present papers at national and international conferences. She has also participated in intercollegiate athletic meets.

Battiwalla has been admitted for a PhD course in medical and molecular genetics at the Indiana University Medical Centre. While he has been offered a tuition waiver of \$ 8,500, he has to raise funds for his maintenance at the rate of \$ 10,500 per year, which he hopes to manage from a job as a research assistant. Earlier he had qualified for a summer course in genetics at the all-Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore after a rigorous all-India competition.

Also interested in molecular science and genetics is Mistry who hopes to gain admission for her masters study in one of the universities in the US. After obtaining a first class in BSc in microbiology, she is currently doing her masters in science.

Sidhva is hoping to join the University of Edinburgh for a PhD in social work. After graduating from Nirmala Niketan in 1987 she joined the one semester post-certificate MA program in research methodology at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. She is particularly interested in working with the physically handicapped as also the terminally ill patients and their families.

In addition to these scholarships, the Tata Trusts have also introduced travel fellowships beginning this year in collaboration with the J. William Fulbright (Foreign Scholarships) Board. As per the agreement signed between these two foundations, Indian academics and professionals will be provided opportunities "to carry out research, teaching and other professional activities in American educational institutions," reports the press release sent by Malegamvala. The agreement was



(Above) The signing of the agreement between the Tata trust and the J. William Fulbright Board (from left): Dr Joseph Brenning, Dr Christopher Benninger, Bhabha, Lavakare and Malegamvala. The '94-'95 Tata scholars: Top row (from left): Bhagwagar, Dalal and Palsetia. Second row (from left): Chinoy, Suntoke, Patel and Andhyarnjina. Bottom row (from left): Bharucha, Battiwalla, Mistry and Sidhwa

signed by Malegamvala on behalf of the Tata Trusts and Dr P. J. Lavakare, executive director of the United States Education Foundation in India. On the occasion, the chairman of the Tata Trusts, J. J. Bhabha, referred to the key role played by the distinguished American social scientist Dr Clifford Manshardt in the establishment of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and in serving as the first director of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust between 1936 and 1941.

D. Naoroji scholarships

Within a year of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) announcing the institution of Dadabhai Naoroji scholarships for two Zoroastrian students, commitments from other individuals and trusts have assured a similar grant of Rs 2,000 per annum to seven other scholars. Students not over 16 years of age who have secured a minimum of 75 percent marks at the school leaving examination with a record of excellence in academics, sports and social service, can qualify for this scholarship as per the BPP norms.

Funding for the additional scholarships was promised by the Bhumgara Charitable Trust, Vispi Engineer, Fali Bomanji and his wife, and C. K. Sidhwa.

Of the 48 applications received this year, 16 were shortlisted by three principals on the

educational advisory committee. These chosen 16 were then subjected to an interview and the final selection was made by a panel of judges comprising Vispi Engineer, Prof (Ms) Katy Antia and Farokh Khodaiji. Accordingly Ms Tarana Billimoria and Ms Dilnavaz Bamboat, both from the arts stream, were named Parsi Punchayet scholars. Ms Tina Pithawalla and Shahveer Aga, pursuing science, were chosen as the Bhumgara Charitable Trust scholars.

Engineer, who sponsored two scholarships himself, was also instrumental for bringing in two scholarships from Sidhwa and one from the Bomanjis. Thus Arzan Bagli and Rushad Kapadia from the science faculty were selected as the Vispi Engineer scholars; Ms Mehernaz Damania from the commerce faculty as the Mr and Ms Fali Bomanji scholar; and Homiyar Buhariwalla and Marzi Patel from the science stream as the Mr C. K. Sidhwa scholars.

The law for...

She knew how the law reads; she also knew how the law operates. In early 1994 Dr (Ms) Thrity Patel was in the news for bringing out a significant work, *Personal Liberty Under The Constitution of India*. Recently she was in the news when on a trip to Delhi she was physically assaulted by a rickshaw driver who

was in cahoots with a local constable, as reported in *The Times of India* of November 7, 1994.

Nagpur based Patel was on a visit to Delhi to chastise her publishers for allegedly depriving her of her royalty against the sale of her book. She was returning to her base when along the route the rickshaw driver claimed the vehicle had stalled and started pushing it. He then asked her how much she would pay him. She offered him the fare as per the meter reading plus a substantial tip. But the unsatisfied youth kept demanding more.

The rickshaw driver then approached a constable who tried to prevail upon Patel to oblige the lad. She refused to yield where



Patel: "better to be humane"

upon they agreed to go to the police station. As she was walking along the youth caused her to fall on some stones. She was wounded and bleeding, and the driver tried to push her under some passing vehicles. However, despite a fractured elbow and skull injury, Patel proceeded on her way.

When asked why she did not file a complaint with the police, Patel is reported to have said that there are times in life when it is better to be humane and let a culprit go scot free rather than book him and ruin his life forever!

Compiled by Parinaz Gandhi

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Latin in London

London-based Freny and Noshir Umrigar are the only Indian couple participating at international Latin American dance competitions

Parinaz Gandhi

"Dance keeps us young. It keeps us together. It is like a therapy for us." Responding to our queries, Freny Umrigar explains on behalf of her husband Noshir and herself the driving force that propels the London-based pair — the only Indian and possibly the only Asian couple — to participate in international dance competitions. Between rehearsals at the Framjee Cawasjee Institute in Bombay we are informed that they are looking forward to performing in the city the next day, December 10, 1994, after a lapse of some decades.

Watching them rehearse their lithe Latin American dance movements around the floor it is evident that dance to them is not only a joyous activity, but also a pursuit of perfection. The music system at the practice session is testing their patience. Standing poised and ready to make a scintillating entry, by the time the almost inaudible strains of music reach their ears they realise they have missed the vital cue. The same

continued on page 31

The Umrigars: winning together





Portrait of an artist

He was the doyen of Indian artists a century ago. "Ah, the Indian Rembrandt!" had been the verdict of the director of the National Portrait Gallery, London, on first seeing the work of Pestonji Bomanjee who excelled at scenes of Parsi daily and religious life, as well as at portraits painted for several public institutions in his native Bombay.

In a long life that spanned from 1851 to 1938, the artist celebrated the ethos of the community he was so proud to belong to, with such memorable pictures as *Parsi Priest at Prayer*, *Naughty Girl*, *The Leisure Hour*, *Feeding the Parrot* and *Praying for the Sick*. His oils were executed in the style of the old masters of Europe.

While the richly mounted works won a profusion of awards and widespread acclaim, Bomanjee's fame rests as much on the romance of the interesting era whose product he was.

"We were one happy family," he was to later say, referring to the healthy, convivial times that groomed him in art education. Having joined the J. J. School of Art at 13, the aspiring young artist trained under no less a personage than principal John Griffiths himself. It was a wonderful relationship between master and pupil, strongly marked by mutual trust and cooperation. Nor did the student's zeal and ability go unnoticed by John Lockwood Kipling, illustrator and sketcher father of the famous

writer Rudyard. He soon became mentor to Bomanjee who often played with little Rudyard in the sprawling school courtyard. The painter could also remember Rudyard occasionally visiting his father in modelling class.

Art at the time enjoyed such prominence that schools imparting instruction in it were considered veritable temples of worship. To quote Ms Doris Gerrard from her obituary piece in *The Times of India* on the painter: "With the passing of the years and of the men who have won fame, the place of their youth gains dignity and

Above: Bomanjee's oil painting, Praying for the Sick

A famed artist of the 19th century Pestonji Bomanjee specialized in depicting scenes of Parsi daily and religious life

Meher Marfatia

atmosphere, and standing under the trees looking up at the school one imagines that the charm of the building grows with every passing year... The spirit of the artists who have loved its environment still clings to their old surroundings."

The drawings of a host of prominent academic artists of Bombay who were contemporaries of Bomanjee — Mancher-shaw Pithawala, Abalal Rahiman and Mahadev Govind Dhurandhar — bear the unmistakable imprint of British art teaching. They signalled the rise of a new class of Western-educated "gentlemen artists," yet by no means did that prevent their being actively encouraged to help restore ancient Indian art. The Ajanta project initiated by Griffiths offers clear evidence of this trend.

As the principal's most promising Indian student, Bomanjee led this expedition to the caves. Aimed at being a consciousness-raising exercise and an object lesson in Indian ornamental art, the trip proved a pioneering effort. Heading the skilled band of painters who had to work at copying the magnificent frescoes on Ajanta's ceilings and walls, Bomanjee had to wrestle with innumerable problems including obtaining proper light in the caves' interior and the absence, then, of simple tracing paper (he decided to improvise, using oiled tissue paper to trace a range of murals).

It was while with the group at Ajanta that Bomanjee painted his wife Jilobai — she would join him there during the cooler months — in a celebrated picture which now rests in the reserve collection of The Prince of Wales Museum of Western India in Bombay, alongside some of his other beautiful oils.

The crucial Ajanta project absorbed Bomanjee for years, from 1872 to 1884. Unfortunately, little remains of the work which had been undertaken with such energy and perseverance. Most of it was lost when a major fire at South Kensington destroyed the records. Following the disaster Griffiths tried to engage Bomanjee once more for a series of copies on a smaller scale, but the painter quickly declined. "I was quite satisfied with standing

on ladders copying for 12 years," he politely explained.

Bomanjee's family formed the subject of much of his output. Brothers, sisters, four daughters and three sons besides an assortment of aunts and uncles, appear to have provided ample scope for situations woven around them all, to finally result in some of his best work. Jilobai features in quite a few frames. An outstanding insta-



Pestonji Bomanjee's self-portrait

nce is the manner in which she is portrayed in *The Leisure Hour*. This 1883-dated painting shows her sewing (that was her favorite hobby) in traditional attire, right from the *mathubanu* (white cotton scarf) crowning her head to the velvet *sapaats* worn on feet placed on a wooden *paatla* (low wooden stool). She looks out of her window on to the street scene below as she stitches, her face registering an expression of utmost repose and contentment at the pleasure afforded by her activity.

The artist's almost fastidious attention to authenticity of detail emerges in every picture; perhaps nowhere is this more noticeable than in the intricacies of the cap

and clothes adorning *The Naughty Girl* of 1887.

Personal anecdotes about the artist are duly supplied by surviving members of his large family. So, granddaughters Aloo Polson and Gool Vachha provide some insights into the private man behind the public persona of the popular painter. Bomanjee loved children tremendously. His own turned out artistically inclined —

while son Eruchshaw's forte was portraits, Ardeshir taught drawing and painting. Eruchshaw's children Dady and Tehmi, in turn, also wielded a deft brush.

Ardeshir's daughter Aloo displays a commemorative volume produced by Bennett Coleman and Company to mark the royal tour of the Prince and Princess of Wales to India in 1905-06. She points proudly to the color drawings of nawabs and maharajas etched by Bomanjee. "Look at them!" she exclaims, her fingers circling the pearl and emerald-bejewelled neck of a Mysore ruler. "After being used to such realism I simply cannot accept the abstract modern art of today."

A now aged Vachha nostalgically recalls how her grandfather would sit her down beside him and counsel her, sharing with her what he considered were important tenets to live by. "Never forget two things. Always remember favors done to you but not those you do. And know that death is inevitable, so be prepared to welcome it when it comes."

His tryst with it occurred peacefully enough, in his sleep, at the ripe age of 89. In the wake of Bomanjee's death glowing tributes were heaped on him in the premier publications of the day.

One, particularly, succeeded admirably in capturing the essence of the man. Beneath a picture showing the silken-bearded artist dressed in his usual black coat and white trousers contemplating his easel and palette, was printed: "The old veteran Parsi artist, Mr Pestonji Bomanjee, commanded awe and respect from artists in Bombay by his simple and unostentatious personality... He kept working till the last, and in that he was a shining example to younger artists."

Jewels of India?

Fun and frolic rather than hard headed debate characterized the Eighth All India Zoroastrian Youth Seminar in Ahmednagar

Homi Rogers

By some fortuitous circumstance the medieval town of Ahmednagar, at the heart of the Maharashtra dust bowl, has been the crucible of many Parsi enterprises. Nearly two centuries ago, Kaikhushro Nusserwanjee came here vending 'soda-water' to the British army led by General Wellesley (later to become the Duke of Wellington) and settled down to form yet another successful and multi-ventured business firm, Cursetjee Nusserwanjee and Sons. And just a little less than a decade ago, the Damania started breeding high quality chickens here, before branching out into more visible avenues of business like aviation, shipping and financial leasing.

It hence seems natural that Ahmednagar should provide a catalyst once again to entrepreneurship in the community by hosting 300 youths from 16 far-flung places in India at the Eighth All India Zoroastrian Youth Fiesta cum Seminar, from November 25 to 27, 1994.

At sessions and socials, the message was clear: Zoroastrian youths were ready to revive entrepre-

neurship among themselves. Repeatedly they stated — not necessarily as flattery to the sponsors and hosts of this three-day meet — that they would like to emulate the spirit and success of the Damania. But while the spirit of striking out on one's own prevailed, the soda that

Ahmednagar's first Zoroastrian, Cursetjee (as Kaikhushro was better known to his British patrons), had vended seemed to have lost its fizz on socio-religious matters. Delegate after delegate voiced publicly such time worn clichés as "the substance of our legacy has made us survive so long," and reiterated the credo of resisting change, a strategy that is driving the community to racial suicide.

Definitely the mood at the three-day seminar was religiously upbeat. And staunchly traditional. It could be so witnessed right from the time the delegates trooped in suitably attired for the three mobed inaugural jashan at the 147-year-old Plantin (an Anglicized form of the Parsi surname Kerawala, we guess) Agiary, freshly whitewashed and painted for the occasion. It was to so continue during the inaugural function when, as if to symbolize the message that age must impart enlightenment to youth, the lamp was lit by 96-year-old Ms Hamabai Cama, one of Ahmednagar's oldest citizens. And religiosity permeated the meet from the opening plenary session to the debate and question-and-answer time on the second day.

The chord that our road back to Eden was paved with sacrosanct teachings was struck in the very first hour. Delegates speaking on



Top: Keki Gandhi addressing the audience
Below: Yasmin Charna leading Cama to light the inaugural lamp and Parvez Damania with Shroff

the subject, "Our legacy should be that we make it better than it was when we got it," reaffirmed with hardly a dissenting voice that our prayers should be recited with their original *manthranis* ("never mind if we don't understand their meanings"); that they be "learnt through oral transmission, and not printed texts;" and that "the sudreh-kusti must be worn at all times, and with pride." (That we spotted many delegates, especially in the seminar's after-hours, not wearing one, is another matter, presumably.)

Percy Dordi of Borivili, a suburb of Bombay which has its own Zoroastrian association — Borivili and Suburban Zoroastrian Association — referred to the delegates assembled as "pillars of a new generation" and gave a clarion call to "keep aside our rebel ego, follow our Zoroastrian tenets, and have a central leadership that would inculcate the lost sense of identity." Ms Prochi Bhesania of Gujarat, to whom the jury awarded the first prize for this session, felt that the Parsis did not have a legacy when they came to India, "but created one." "Our legacy could be our distinctive noses," she stated, adding a physical attribute, to everyone's delight, to the intangible heritage of "being sincere, loyal, dedicated, hard-working, truthful and fun-loving." "Everlasting is our pride in being a Parsi," she claimed before a cheering house assembled under a shamiana on the grounds of the Ahmednagar Club. "And, that's what we must hold on to."

Of the 25 delegates who spoke on this subject, few mentioned how we could better our legacy, though all felt the need to. Ms Anahita Powwalla, representing Bombay's Young Collegians' Zoroastrian Association (YCZA) felt that the contribution of our forefathers would take "a superhuman effort" to improve on, and that even to survive "in the backlash of deterioration... we should return to conservatism at breakneck speed." A code of conduct should be evolved, Powwalla felt, on subjects like conversion and mixed marriages, and "all Parsis must accept it, and follow it...even in blind faith, as faith alone is valid in matters of religion, and human intellect is flawed."

Thus for the majority of speakers our legacy lies in our past, "in what we inherit" as Ms Shiraz Khambata of Bombay put it, and our efforts to cherish and preserve it. "Move with the times, but not so fast as to forget our religion and our customs," cautioned Kaizad Farhadi, a delegate from Dahanu.

These sentiments of youth were most appreciated by co-chairman of this session, Professor Khurshed C. Sheriar, educationist and co-founder of the 43-year-old YCZA. Sheriar, who all through four decades of association with the youth

has felt that "youth power is to be watched, not guided," noted in his summing up that the session had given new confidence to him and members of the community, as "youngsters are thinking like us (the older generation), dreaming of their legacy," and investing their "faith

in our religion and its customs," as well as in the Gujarati language. The learning of it is part of our legacy too, reminded Shahzad Mogrelia of Madras, who even rued the fact that none of the delegates spoke in Gujarati.

A fine discretionary note was, however, sounded by co-chairman Minoo Shroff, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustee and chairman of the Damania board, who had kindly consented to be present for the seminar and chair its two sessions over two days. Shroff dwelt on the Parsi tendency of considering themselves greatly superior to others, a privileged class. "Be more tolerant, respectful to people," he advised, regretting that humility is now sadly absent in the community. "Don't kick the ladder by which you ascended," remarked Shroff, and asked the young to strive for excellence and work with a role model in mind to improve their legacy.

Keki Gandhi, secretary of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI) echoed Shroff's feelings in decrying the "community's contempt for sister communities," a possible hangover from our days of the Raj, when "we rose to prominence as a result of British patronage." Gandhi felt that the community could improve its legacy by not restricting its philanthropy to within the community, but like Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy

or Jamsetji Tata doing charity that would be of use to the entire country.

But will the youth, foreseen by Professor Sheriar as tomorrow's leaders, rise to the challenge? While to Mogrelia the Parsi legacy of non-interference in affairs of others is laudable, and Cyrus Jogina of Agra and Nauzer Khan of Surat find the silver screen's portrayal of Parsis "deplorable" and "very embarrassing," the elders' perception of our behavior towards other communities is different. Vispi Bhadha of YCZA may feel that "we don't deserve to be called Zoroastrians anymore" (to boo! boo! from all present) because "today we believe more in taking than in giving," but Ms Ava Vaid, YCZA fellow-member, feels that "taking is an equally appreciative virtue, which we should make a part of our legacy while striving to improve it." Ms Scheherzade Irani from the host city clinched the matter with, "our legacy is like a log of wood: like carpenters, we have to carve the best furniture from it, suitable to our times."

The topic the delegates were asked to speak on the second day (November 26) was, "Entrepreneurs are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, they make them." A score of Zoroastrian youth from different cities defined the concept of entrepreneurship. Ms Havovi Bhanja from Pune described the need for entrepreneurship to increase industries and, consequently, the standard of living. The young Zoroastrians apparently understood the need to innovate and determine their own future, much in the way many of their illustrious forefathers had done. But, according to Mahiyar Dastoor from Bombay, "what is lacking is not opportunity, but motivated people." The community at present can count on its fingertips the number of entrepreneurs who have stuck it out in the past few decades and, lamenting this fact, more than one speaker cited only the Damania as an example of the new and successful breed.

By a happy coincidence young Parvez Damania (35), the motivating force behind funding this three-day meet in his home town, entered the seminar grounds with a second consecutive award from Hotels and Food Service for his airlines, at the very moment that Ms Ferine Kavina of Ahmedabad was citing the Damania quote, "If we could do it, everyone here can do it."

Damania himself spoke — extempore — at the end of the session, briefly and

"There are no black-and-white answers to everything in religion"

from the heart. In his gut-wrenching speech (one could see his mother seated on the dais holding back her tears), Damania told the gathering how with the assistance of scholarships from Parsi trusts he, who was not born in riches, raised the money to go abroad to study agriculture; and how on his return, with brother Vispi, he set up a farm at Karjat for breeding chickens with a loan of Rs 2.81 lakhs.

"If you dream, you can succeed," stated Damania, expressing the hope that at the next conference he would get to hear more Parsi youths telling him, "I've started my own business," rather than just indulging in talk, in seminar after seminar.

Before the session broke for the usual hearty (thanks to the hospitality of the sponsors) lunch, Damania had gauged the mood of the youth. The Parsi trusts are there to help you, he indicated, and the goodwill a Zoroastrian enjoys with other communities who trust a Parsi and respect his inherent honesty, is there to help in getting loans from banks. What probably holds the community members back from becoming entrepreneurs is the fear of failure. To the question raised by Khushru Sarkari of Rustom Baug, Bombay, "whether the community will back us when we fail," Damania's reply was brief and telling: "Even if you fail, at least you have tried." After all, the keynote sentence for the three-day meet was: "Success is a journey, not a destination."

Interestingly the seminar, tailored to promote this spirit, dedicated the first afternoon to screening films on leadership (so essential to entrepreneurship) culled from various sources. The equipment, however, let us down and after a few false starts we could only watch a Damania corporate philosophy short, and a film version of a speech delivered by Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw. The speech, though bristling with wit and wisdom, was no new stuff, at least to delegates who had attended the BPP-organized Holiday Programme for Youth (HPY) in 1993, or read it in *Parsiana*, ("Our hopes lie in you," *Parsiana*, May 1993). Nevertheless, it was an interesting revision as Manekshaw outlined the qualities of a leader such as professional knowledge, the ability to take a decision and stand by it, justice and equality, loyalty, moral courage, discipline, tact, great sex drive (ahem!) and long noses (ahem! ahem!).

One of the qualities of a good leader/entrepreneur is surely the capacity to inspire team spirit within his group. Unfortunately, the delegates at Ahmednagar were divided into groups that did not jell perhaps because the youth were accommodated not in one place but in four hotels. None of the two sessions and the debate were organized or conducted on team lines. As a result, social interaction — most visible during meal-times — was restricted among members of the same hotel room or city, or a seminar attended in the past. This insularity was most manifest at the campfire organized on the final night when no team came forward with a group event that cut across the divide, and the judges (we guess) perforce had to award a team prize to young residents of a Bombay baug, who displayed their clannishness by putting forth a well-rehearsed, previously set up (judging by the costumes, audio, etc) 'drag' show.

Equally absent were the "interesting interactions" that Mehernosh Mehta, speaking on behalf of the Ahmednagar Anjuman at the inaugural function, hoped the seminar would spark. This could partially be the result of the sponsors' (Damania's) and organizers' (Ahmednagar Anjuman) prudence in restricting subjects of discussion to those of a non-controversial nature. The 'interactions' hence came only in such doses as the organizers felt the gathering would be able to 'sustain.'

A fair amount of excitement was injected in the debate by Dr Nozer Sheriar, 32, the Professor's son, when he suggested an alteration in the subject which read 'Parsis: Jews of India or Jewels of India?' to 'Parsis are the Jews and Jewels of India.' While Dale Bhagwagar of Nagpur thundered that the clubbing of the two communities was unfair "and extremely demoralizing to Parsi youth," the proposition brought out the religious and socio-economic similarities between the two communities. What carried the day was the fact that though Parsis may not consider themselves — despite the few common traits and historic resemblances — Jews, the jewels bit warmed many hearts. The opposition stated that the sparkle of the jewels is fading

(Homi Gandhi, Delhi), that "jewels are hard and strong, but we run away when there is a fight on the streets" (Jehangir Bhadha, HPY), and that a race that never assimilated itself into the mainstream of the country where its members resided, was unlike the Parsis.

"Forget the jewels, where are the Parsis?" queried Bombay's Jimmy Balsara, to a house that lapped up his rhetoric; and it equally applauded Roco Mistry's chauvinistic argument: "India may not have heard of us, but we are all jewels, for as Parsis we are a cut above the rest." Mistry (adjudged the best speaker) buttressed his remarks by quoting how Parsi charity doesn't die, and how each community member by rejecting 'minority status' has affirmed his Indianness, and is therefore a jewel.

The organizers of the religious session held on the second afternoon (November 26) once again made a prudent choice by selecting young Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia, vice principal of Bombay's Athornan Madressa at Dadar, to field questions on religious matters asked by the gathering. Karanjia (whom anchor-woman Ms Zarine Commissariat

"We should share our thoughts at such seminars with young people of other faiths"

continued to wrongly address as 'dasturji') answered with rare poise and equanimity a host of questions ranging from the banal to the esoteric, without ever getting into polemics or philosophy. His approach was marked by its non-controversial nature ("there are no black-and-white answers to everything in religion"), practical approach ("women do not go to the top of the doongerwadi because in olden times when corpses were removed from houses, not bungalows, it was essential that someone remained back in the homes"). He provided concessions to modern times instead of upholding antiquated values and practices ("the electric crematorium is the best option when doongerwadi is not available") and ("there is no religious compulsion to perform muktad on a separate table during the first year of demise").

That he was greatly assisted in his task by Commissariat, mistress-of-ceremonies turned question-master is another matter. Commissariat, who was swamped with question slips being constantly fed

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to her by volunteers kept on their toes by an eager audience, seemed to exercise a fair amount of censorship, as experienced by us when a few pointed queries raised on matters such as Neville Wadia's navjote never made it to 'dasturji' for reply. The number of questions seemed to far outnumber the replies at the end of the two-hour marathon session, prompting Dr Viraf Kapadia, a BPP delegate and unsuccessful candidate for trusteeship in 1993, to remark in the open-house session that more time should have been provided for this activity. Keki Gandhi volunteered to deal with the unanswered queries himself through his *Fed Newsletter* ("if I send them to the high priests, we will get all different answers"), and requested the organizers to hand over the lot to him. The offer, to the best of our knowledge, was not taken up.

The brief open-house session that preceded an equally brief valedictory session provided a glimpse into how delegates viewed the seminar. Hormus Irani of the Zoroastrian Youth Association of Thane (ZYAT) was of the opinion that we should share our thoughts at such seminars with young people of other faiths. Ms Diana Irani of Pune opined that

debates should be made more interactive, somewhat like group discussions with audience participation.

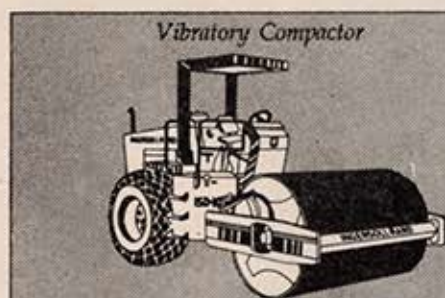
No report on the meet can be complete without a few words on the social part of it. Meherwan Ghai, Parvez Damania's lieutenant for the three-day do, tells us his brief was to see that "a jolly good time" was had by all. So, out went the "lecture-baaji," to be replaced by the Damanias' *savoir-faire*, to ensure an enjoyable, comfortable time. Hence, for the first time since the inception of these annual seminars, the word 'Fiesta' was incorporated in the proceedings, and there was thus ample fun-n-fest: dances to a live band every night that spilled into the wee hours of the morning; games of skill/intellect which drew more on the delegates' worldly rather than spiritual knowledge. Even a variety revue of Parsi gags and skits was enacted by Cyrus Dastoor and his troupe, specially called in from Bombay.

On the last night (November 26) the Ahmednagar sky was lit with a magnificent fireworks show executed for over 15 minutes by the Moranis. And this was topped by a Sunday (November 27) morning picnic at a soaring monument on the outskirts of the city, said to have been the *hamam* (bath-

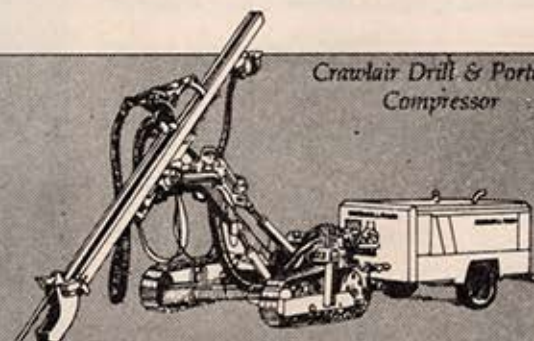
ing place) of Ahmednagar's famous warrior queen, Chandbibbi. Here, in the shadow of history, "the nicest batch of young Zoroastrians I have ever come across," to quote Commissariat, effected last minute exchanges of names and addresses. Protestations were made to stay in touch, possibly to fulfil Keki Gandhi's remark in his valedictory notes that a "life-long association of man-wife (could be) a positive fallout of the seminar."

For the immediate present, though, judging by the sentiments expressed, it seems that Ahmednagar had lived up to its historical import. In the city that Chandbibbi had stoutly defended over half a millenium ago, and in whose fort Nehru had written *Discovery of India* during his incarceration, the Parsi youths assembled had given the message that like the indefatigable queen they would strongly defend their faith against the ravages of "self-centered coward reformists" as YCZA's Powwalla called them, and practices like "late and inter-religious marriages that are leading to disaster," as per Ms Arnaz Mehta of Delhi.

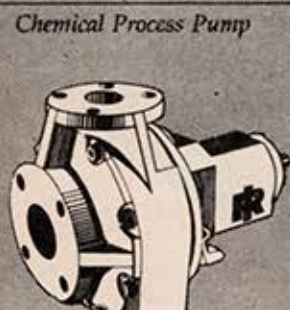
That was the distillation of the Ahmednagar soda. That was the (re)discovery for the community.



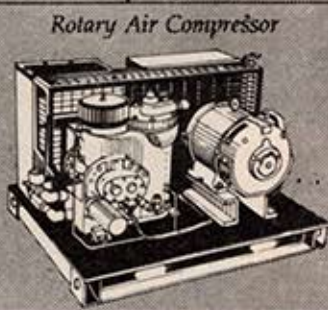
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experience repeated thrice over, a frown settles on Freney's face. When they start on their jive, Freney and Noshir can't seem to synchronize their pace. They immediately break off and start all over again. When they finally dance to their satisfaction they are so thrilled with themselves that they end their number with a spontaneous kiss.

Freney however, isn't satisfied with just one flawless practice. She wants to repeat the act but an exhausted Noshir opts out, saying: "I always get it right on the final day." This earns a prompt rebuttal from the wife who reminds him, "You can only get it right on the final day if you've got it right the day before... Besides, you are the one who wanted to dance all five numbers at a stretch tomorrow." Yes he did, confirms Noshir, not realizing that Bombay's winter can be enervating. Ultimately the audio cassette recorder appears to favor Noshir, for it refuses to rewind or fast forward!

A dance, to be visually appealing, requires the coordination of all body movements. "The foundation is your feet. The heel, the toe, the weight, the pressure, the alignment must show a perfect balance. That constitutes the technique. The dance comes as the icing on the cake," Freney sums up the criteria of a good performance.

This insistence on perfection inevitably creates tension and 'nerves' before any show — whether it is a world competition or a performance like the one they are preparing for in memory of Luciano D'Cunha who had trained countless individuals over the last several decades at the dance academy run by him and his wife Martha in Bombay. Freney and Noshir's participation in this event is their tribute to the man who 40 years ago "put us on the floor," guiding them through the pivots and twists of ballroom and Latin American dancing.

Freney (née Billimoria) and Noshir had met through the Youths' Own Union, remembers one of their friends. "But you can say that dancing brought us together," Freney observes. Soon after their marriage 35 years ago, the Umrigars settled in London. Much as they would have liked to pursue dancing then, they realized they couldn't afford it, and barely took a lesson once in six months. After the birth of their daughter Sharon, Freney stopped dancing for a while. Noshir continued, even appearing occasionally for medal tests. Then 15 years ago they decided to participate in the Seniors Amateur Latin Competition. The first time they appeared was in the

novice category (altogether there are four groups — novice, intermediate, prechamp and champ). Again, there are groupings age-wise — juveniles (under 11), juniors (under 16), youth (under 21), amateurs (under 35) and seniors (over 35). Enquire about their age and a diplomatic Freney responds, "Just say we are not amateurs."

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If you don't make it to the final round of six it is considered losing. "Every time you lose it makes you determined to do even better. Others get disheartened. But we enjoy a loser's breakfast the next morning and head home, the picnic over. Sometimes we just check the panel of judges (there are 11) and we know *aaje kai kari sakvana nathi* (we don't stand a chance)." Bias against the skin color plus several subjective factors influence decisions, a fact they have learnt to accept. Since it is a joint effort, do they feel frustrated if the other partner is not at his or her best? "Sure you do, but you keep it to yourself," admits Freney. "You either win or you lose — together."

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Not only do they have to spend £ 20-30 an hour for a dance lesson, they also need to pay £ 10 an hour for a practice session. They are very happy with the coaching they receive from their teachers Ms Lynn Harman and Ms Joan Knight. And even though one of their mentors is based in London and the other in Birmingham they don't mind commuting the five hour distance for a two hour lesson. They find that they are better off than other couples who, separated by distance, have perforce to travel hundreds of miles before the partners can get together.

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Their tight budget notwithstanding, they are always willing to consider appeals for financial help from the World Zoroastrian Organisation, and only recently, on the occasion of Sharon's wedding, they financed the cost of eight navjotes. They were one-time regulars at the Zoroastrian House in London but of late their attendance has fallen off. This is due to the orthodox stand adopted in the course of recent years by the office bearers of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, with which they are not in agreement. Freney chooses not to elaborate on the ideological differences between the reformists and conservatives in the UK, stating matter-of-factly, "We believe in the policy of live and let live."

Besides, with dance sapping all their time and energy, they genuinely find it difficult to socialize. For the present the Umrigars are content to make concerted attempts to improve their ranking in the strenuous Latin American dances — rumba, samba, cha-cha, jive, paso doble. "When we grow old we'll do ballroom," says Freney cheerfully (they were the all-India ballroom champions in 1957). Irrespective of form or style, lasting joy comes to the Umrigars from dance — "the thrill of two different persons trying to move as one."

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An urge to gather

The North American Zoroastrians prepare for the retirement of their founding fathers

Porus Cooper

We Zarhostis living in North America have been meeting in a congress every two years for nearly 20 years.

From the very beginning we have felt a common urge to gather. The urge has been irresistible even though, over the years, our disagreements have been many and sometimes loud. Through it all, we continue to need each other. If you count the growing number of other occasions that now brings us together — the youth congresses, the meetings of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America, the deliberations of the Mobed Council, and so on — it seems we just can't have enough of each other's company.

Nearly 500 of us met at the Sheraton-Valley Forge convention center, in the suburbs of Philadelphia, over July 1-4, 1994 for the Ninth North American Zoroastrian Congress. That's an impressive number considering that here, as elsewhere in the world, the Zarhosti community's numbers are small (even generous estimates don't exceed 10,000) and its members are far-flung.

And this kind of thing happens every two years. It's a remarkable feat, even more so, I can attest, because as a member of the host group, the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, I was privileged to have an inside view of how such an event is put together.

It takes months of labor and sacrifice on the part of dedicated volunteers to bring so ambitious an enterprise to life. There are endless meetings, countless telephone calls, reams of correspondence, numerous disappointments and several scares. Pet ideas are shot down and egos are bruised.

Mercifully, the worries and disappointments wash away at the sight of the hundreds of intent faces in the audience.

But it isn't only the hard work of the host groups that connects every congress to every other. Each appears to have become a living link like one year to another in our lives. By that analogy, the gathering in Valley Forge perhaps marked the North American Zarhosti com-

munity's passage from adolescence.

Many of those who attended remarked on the generally businesslike atmosphere at the Ninth Congress, the emphasis on the practical. They noticed that while sparks flew, they were far fewer at Valley Forge than on some occasions before.

Typical was the sentiment at large during the workshop on promoting Zarhosti business: Let's stop talking about networking and just do it, many participants said. Kaemarz Dotivala, a leader of the community in Houston and one who has never been shy to speak his mind, offered a simple explanation for all this: The community has matured, he said.

The passage of years apparently has taken the edge off seemingly intractable problems of doctrine and dogma — off issues such as conversion and acceptance and dualism and calendars.

Oh we can't and won't let go of them, as the proceedings at Valley Forge showed. And perhaps we shouldn't. But these days more pressing issues seem to occupy our minds.

A good example of that was the youth workshop, where some of the featured speakers came prepared to field questions about conversion, and were astounded that virtually none of the youthful inquiries had to do with that issue.

"The youth were more keen on finding out about getting educated in (the basic tenets of) Zoroastrianism than dwelling on old controversies," said one participant afterwards.

There were other examples.

Out in the lobby during one tea and coffee break, a delegate from Chicago was heard discussing the prospects of building homes for the Zarhosti aged. And in the next two decades, quite a few of us will be aged and a potential burden to our children. Our children will be the first generation of Zarhostis native to North America. Their attitudes towards their retired parents are likely to be informed not by memories of cosy South Asian joint families but rather by the cold exigencies of their economic situation.

Are there ways — and means — to ensure a dignified fadeout for the founding generation in North America, or must we brace for a decline into desperation?

During another break, a delegate from Connecticut somberly discussed how he was laid off from his job but fortunately had found new employment. Other such examples abound within the community, and not all have been as fortunate as the delegate from Connecticut. A Pennsylvania engineer drives to a temporary job hundreds of miles away to another state, and returns on weekends. He cannot move his family there because his wife continues to hold a permanent job in their home town and they cannot afford for her to lose it. Yet others cannot find work in their chosen fields. We immigrants, so many of us who came here as students with nothing

Left to right (top) Desai, Choksy, Erach, Munshi and Dotivala, Deboo, Engineer, Shahriari and Khurody; (center) Bagli, Shahzadi, Mistree and audience including Pervin Mistry, Tahamtan Aresh and Silloo Kavarana; (bottom) Ichaporia and exhibits highlighting Zoroastrian achievers (Photos from Porus Cooper)



to lose and everything to gain, are being teased by fate as we cross middle age. Now we struggle along with everything to lose. Our master's and PhD degrees, the vessels that carried us to middle-class prosperity, are ancient and leaky now. For some of us they are barely adequate as life rafts.

The growing economic concerns of members of the community will have to be addressed, along with the spiritual and social concerns, if future congresses are to be meaningful.

If American Zarthostis become uncertain of their economic well-being, they can hardly be of assistance to their brethren in places like Surat and Kerman. If we struggle, what use can we be to priests back home whose plight was eloquently outlined by Cawas Desai, a founder of the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey? And how would we ever address the dire shortage of priests in the US and Canada?

The prosperity and happiness of the community here depend on putting our spiritual tenets to practical use, suggested Ms Dina McIntyre, a Pittsburgh lawyer who has edited a hugely popular 12-lesson introduction to the *Gathas*.

"Pick up some project of good work

each year," McIntyre said, urging her listeners to back up good thoughts and words with action.

And, she added, "don't limit yourself to projects that benefit only the Zoroastrian community."

The congress organizers made a special effort to involve a greater number of the youthful members of the community than before. After all, if old-age homes are ever built, the next generation may have to help pay for them. So on the stage were an array of new voices — Ms Shernaz Bamji, Ms Shahin Bekhradnia, Jamsheed Choksy, Farobag Cooper, Ms Shanaya Deboo, Jamshed Engineer, Ms Ferzin Jungalwalla, Ms Khursheed Khurody, Shervin Shahriari, Ratansha Vakil, Ms Natalie Vania, Ms Shehernaz Joshi Verahrami and several others.

Not surprisingly, they did not all march to the same drummer. Not surprisingly, they drew mixed reactions from the listeners. All in all, however, after hearing so much thoughtful commentary, it seems the future of the Zarthosti community in North America is in safe hands.

The new circumstances of a new continent inevitably will bring change. Zarthosti life in India and Pakistan, after all, is hardly a duplicate of Zarthosti life and mores in Iran, as Bekhradnia, who lives in England, pointed out in her remarks.

"Without really realizing how or why, we were aware that we had evolved very differently although apparently being told we had everything in common," she said of her discomfiture as a child of Iranian Zarthosti origin amid gatherings of Parsis in London. As she grew older and probed deeper, she said she realized to her surprise that the two groups diverged even in their practice of the faith.

She is not alone in recommending a return to the *Gathas*, "which impart our basic values," nor is she staking out an exclusively Iranian-Zarthosti position in doing so. The Iranian-Parsi divide, while persistent, is complex because it also coincides in many respects with the ideological fault line in the Zarthosti community at large and thus cuts across national origins. Many Parsis, at least in the West, are of like mind and willing, as Bekhradnia is, to scrutinize the centuries-old encrustations of tradition and ritual with some skepticism.

The debate was swiftly joined by Ms Pervin Mistry, a Canadian student of Ilme-Khshnoom, and others.

How this debate concludes, if it ever will, cannot be foretold. What can safely be predicted is this: No one can stop the passage of time on this continent from putting its own unique stamp on how the religion is practiced, as it did in India.

In this regard, a sobering reminder was forthcoming from Ervad Yezdi P. Antia, who at present heads the North American Mobed Council.

"In North America," he told the discussion on religious education, "contacts between many families are few and far between. Even in the same city, it is difficult to meet for educational and religious purposes due to the distances involved. The transmission of the religion and values is not automatic through the community as before. It is mainly done by special effort made in individual homes."

Here there are no Parsi colonies to foster community solidarity; there are no agiaries and atash behrams where to kindle religious fellowship; and once you get past that old mainstay, Zubin Mehta, there are no indigenous community heroes and role models — no Tatas, no Wadias, no Godrejs, no Dadabhai Naorojis, no Farrokh Engineers, no Homi Bhabhas, no Nani Palkhivalas and their Iranian counterparts — to aspire to emulate.

Some groups and some individuals have made Herculean efforts to foster substitute traditions. Periodic religious classes are organized for the children in many places.

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Where do we go from here?

The Ninth North American Zoroastrian Congress examines the issues that confront the preservation of Zoroastrian culture at the turn of a generation

Once the formalities of invocation, humbandagi and lighting the diva were completed, Jimmy Bharucha, president of the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey (ZAPANJ) welcomed the gathering to the Ninth North American Zoroastrian Congress and Ms Freney Ranji, Congress chairperson delivered the inaugural address.

The first of the four sessions dealt with the history and evolution of Zoroastrianism from ancient times to the Sassanian Empire and the period after migration from Iran. Speaking on doctrinal variations within Zoroastrianism in ancient and medieval Iran, Dr Jamsheed Choksy of Princeton, New Jersey, traced the development of dualistic ideas from the ethical concept of Zarathushtra to the "bifurcation of the world along dualistic lines" by medieval Zoroastrians who framed a whole litany of customs and rituals to guard against demonic pollution "from sex, childbirth and menstruation to eating, bathing and grooming."

"It is man who shapes his gods and his religion: he needs a spiritual milieu attuned to his times," noted Farrokh Vajifdar of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO), London, who chose the theme 'Zoroastrianism in exile: renaissance and approaching glory.' Recapitulating the social, economic and religious disturbances in fifth century Iran and the rigidities of the priestly and royal hierarchies that preceded the arrival of Islam, Vajifdar noted, "An invading Islam found the conquered land ripe for conversion to the new faith" and quoted Prof Ms Mary Boyce in substantiation: "By accepting Islam, a Zoroastrian freed himself at a stroke from the many rites and obligations which bound him to his own priests from cradle to grave."

Though "Zoroastrianism went into internal exile," Vajifdar notes that "Pahlavi literature continued to flourish for some four centuries after Yazdegard and it is from such writings that we can today glean information as to the position of the over-

thrown religion... (Though) exposed to the risk of perishing, Zoroastrianism did not disappear. Liberty of worship was not at first denied to the followers of the ancient faith... Even as late as the mid-ninth century — 200 years after Islam's incursion — Muslim priests and theologians were flogged because they had destroyed the Sughd fire temples. Mas'udi writes that fire altars were to be found in his day (ninth century) in Irak, Fars, Kerman, Seistan, Khorassan, Tabaristan, Azarbaijan, etc."

Providing "a youth perspective on our history," Ms Shahin Bekhradnia of Oxford's department of anthropology noted, "It is important for people and particularly children who either feel or are treated as being different in the environment where they are being brought up, to understand the source of their differences." Oral history has been particularly poignant in the Iranian Zoroastrian setting, noted Bekhradnia, referring to the collective memory of past persecutions. It was this racial memory that rang alarm bells when Islamic fundamentalism reechoed in the country on the downfall of the Shah, she added.

"Some anthropologists have argued that it is normal for the younger generation to reject and challenge the perspective of the preceding generation and their relationship with those wielding power... In fact, in the comfortable days of the Pahlavi regime, many young Zoroastrians in Iran had little interest in or knowledge of their backgrounds, because they were secure and took their security for granted (and even) began to challenge the older generations' high regard for... the Pahlavi regime... However, experience has changed all this (and) reawaked in Iranian Zoroastrians both at home and outside Iran, a real awareness that they are different... I believe that a process is underway of searching for information about the culture and the ideas that have led to such a determined and tenacious stand against Islam in the face of renewed persecution... We become curious about the ideas that have

inspired such loyalty."

The day's second session found four papers. Discussing aspects under the head 'Doctrines and rituals in Zoroastrianism' were Khojeste Mistree of Zoroastrian Studies, Bombay, Dr Jehan Bagli of Princeton, Bahram Shahzadi of California and Ratansha Vakil of New Jersey. Shahzadi noted how urbanization, with its concomitants of cosmopolitan communities and a busy city life with less time for functions and rituals, had led to changes in Iran. Long rituals are rarely performed; ceremonial articles are placed on a table and the mobeds as well as the laity sit on chairs instead of on the ground. Education has changed the perception of the religion with people becoming "introduced to the principles of the holy *Gathas*." It has also opened employment opportunities so that migration to Tehran and abroad has reduced the number of mobeds in Yazd and Kerman.

"An understanding of the rituals plays an important catalytic role in the comprehension of the prophetic message," said Bagli, who chose their significance as his theme.

In the *Gathas* the prophet pleads with Ahura Mazda to reveal to him and his followers the path to ideal existence, a strength of character so that humanity can think, speak and act in consonance with Ahura Mazda's attributes. Coming to the younger *Avesta*, Bagli said that in the first karda of the *Hom Yasht* we read the demand for a "long list of blessings from the divinity, sharply contrasting with the gathic mantras." With the younger *Avesta* emerges various groups of prayers such as prayers for confession, devotion, benediction, proscription and exorcism with accompanying rituals, said Bagli. "Concomitant with this development there grew an acute need for the performers of these rituals which led to an elaborate hierarchy of priesthood."

Bagli proceeded to trace this development until the time "the purity rules became a dominating force in (themselves)

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experience repeated thrice over, a frown settles on Freny's face. When they start on their jive, Freny and Noshir can't seem to synchronize their pace. They immediately break off and start all over again. When they finally dance to their satisfaction they are so thrilled with themselves that they end their number with a spontaneous kiss.

Freny however, isn't satisfied with just one flawless practice. She wants to repeat the act but an exhausted Noshir opts out, saying: "I always get it right on the final day." This earns a prompt rebuttal from the wife who reminds him, "You can only get it right on the final day if you've got it right the day before... Besides, you are the one who wanted to dance all five numbers at a stretch tomorrow." Yes he did, confirms Noshir, not realizing that Bombay's winter can be enervating. Ultimately the audio cassette recorder appears to favor Noshir, for it refuses to rewind or fast forward!

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HEROES FAMED FOR ZEROS

Homi Rogers

Out for a Duck by Kersi Meher-Homji. Published in 1994 by Kangaroo Press Pty Ltd, 3 Whitehall Road, Kenthurst NSW 2156 Australia. Pp: 112. Price: Not mentioned.

An apocryphal story we narrated as school-boys reflected our unconcealed angst at the fortunes of the Nawab of Pataudi, Jr, who had 'hooked' our heartthrob Ms Sharmila Tagore. In the tale actress Tagore phones the stadium, asks for Pataudi, and is told that the Nawab had just gone in to bat. "No problem, I'll hold on," coos back the actress.

But despite Pataudi's penchant, as we liked to believe, for quickly getting back to the pavilion, Kersi Meher-Homji tells us in his new book *Out for a Duck* that the Nawab did not feature in the consistently-out-for-a-duck list. For that matter, where Pataudi's name does occur in the book (as the helpful and well-compiled index informs us), it is for making a prophetic statement to a 'duck-on-debut' player, G. R. Vishwanath. "You'll hit a ton in the second innings," Pataudi is reported to have said. Vishwanath did, scoring 137, and earns inclusion in the work under review for being a batsman on those not so rare occasions (34 such, as per the count here) when a player scored a zero and a century in the same test. (The inverse pattern of a century in the first innings and a zero in the next, too, has been documented, and stands at the figure of 45.)

Out for a Duck is a compilation of oddities 'revolving' around the bugbear of cricketers: the ugly duck(ling). Within the book's 112 fact-filled pages, you find an entire range of quirks and tidbits of information on, for example, the batsman who has registered the most zeroes, to the bowler who has dismissed the maximum number of players for this score. In short, the book — a veritable sixer from Bombay-born Meher-Homji — chronicles the lives and times of cricketers who, at some time

or the other, have faced the ignominy of a 'duck,' a word that Meher-Homji informs us originated in the 1860s because the figure '0' resembles a 'duck's egg.'

Meher-Homji draws upon the statistics of 1,260 tests played up to June 1994 in which, we are told, 4,592 ducks have been recorded, with quite a few zero-heros hailing from India. B. S. Chandra-shekhar, our spin sultan, holds several test records as a batsman: 23 ducks, four pairs (zero runs in both innings of a test) including a king pair (out first ball in both innings); and during the '77-'78 tour to Australia, "scores resembling a pearl necklace:" 0.0; 0*, 0*; 0.0. (*indicates not out).

Mohinder Amarnath, who in the first six months of '82-'83 plundered 1,182 runs from Pakistan and the West Indies, scored just one run in the three-test series against the Windies later that year, bagging five ducks, including two pairs. And India's bespectacled opener, Pankaj Roy had failed to score four times in a row against England in 1952. On the positive side is Kapil Dev's record of 68 dismissals for zero: the highest for any bowler in test cricket.

If all this gives an impression that *Out for a Duck* is a Wisden-like compilation of zero scorers, perish the thought! For Meher-Homji, who acclaims his own felicity at 'making ducks' (his most memorable one being in the 1968 Kanga League match at Bombay against the Wadekar-Gavaskar-Vengsarkar combine) is equally, if not



more, felicitous with his pen in recreating the events behind the ducks. The book includes all the drama, the trauma, the pathos and the philosophy of the zero, presenting many interesting, little-known and bizarre snippets on ducks made at test, first-class and minor match levels.

Sample the pun Meher-Homji indulges in when recording the rare case of a batsman,

Percy Fender, who "hit a six and a duck off the same ball." The feat was accomplished, as "his huge six...landed in a fowlyard and killed a duck." There's more pun-fun when Meher-Homji records a Gwydir G. Duck being bowled by T. Gander; or a John Duck and son Stephen bowling to Colin Swan and brother Ken.

Meher-Homji has stumped with facts all those who love their cricket for its wicked wicket ways... or has he bowled them over? He informs us how at a match in Sydney in 1974, five wickets fell to a ball in a rare cumulation of events: a batsman did not turn up because he took a bus to Kennington instead of Kensington; another was run out on a no-ball; two were declared out as the ball struck the batting partner on his head cracking his skull, then rebounded to be caught by a fielder, thus leaving the last man in with no partner to run with.

Yet another outlandish tale is of opener Ivan Hutchings who carried his bat through a complete innings. His score: zero. His other partners made the team's score of 26 runs. That is surely one record *apro* Zubin

Bharucha, who only recently became the first Bombay player to carry his bat through an Irani trophy innings, would not like to emulate!

While such details about minor matches give the book a frothy (though not zero-value) buoyancy, it is not without moments of pulsating drama that would thrill a true-blue cricket aficionado. Sir Donald



Bradman's last appearance where he was dismissed for a duck is dramatically recorded. (Does anyone remember the bowler, Eric Hollies, who in so doing denied Don a three-figure batting average?) Greg Chappell's 1981-82 'duck fever' is retold with chilling facts and figures. And Arthur Moore's first duck, after a century of innings played without the zilch, seems to hold a moral for the young cricketers of today, as it did for Pataudi: "Stay away from beautiful women before a test match."

Yet for all its 'duck-u-menting' facts, *Out for a Duck* does not poke fun at ducksters. Nor does it glorify their (non-) achievements. Written in a racy, witty style, the book only sets out to prove that ducks are a part of the game. Like measles or acne, cricketers have to go through them.

"There has not been one test match in which all 40 wickets fell with no ducks recorded." So, as Meher-Homji sees it, "There is life after ducks." Does this mean that after such an unusual compilation, there will be an equally entertaining and thought-provoking sequel? May we suggest, as part of our resurfacing adolescent ardor, an almanac in the same vein on 'bowling maiden overs'? After all, it's the bowler who is responsible for the duck.

READERS' FORUM

continued from page 10

Balaporia (January '94) and Adille Sumariwalla (June '87). We have tried to interview Mickey Mehta who has, on two occasions, been unable to meet our reporter despite previous appointments. Ms Meher Gandevia of Chocophile features in our December '94 issue with other Zoroastrian ladies who have proved their mettle in this competitive trade.

Of late I find the reading is rather dull and stereotyped. The policy of your magazine should be impartial although at times you can give your magazine's views i.e. the Editor's. It does not matter what the Editor's views are provided the reader forms his own conclusions.

Yes, there are legal implications. Your magazine may be exposed to prosecution, but if the Editor has guts he can overcome the legal aspect of it. Every newspaper and magazine has its own policy in judging controversial subjects. I can quote the *Indian Express* for it has faced many prosecutions but in the end it has succeeded.

Your get-up of the magazine is good and I find of late the number of advertisers has increased. Yes, the magazine pays only on the number of advertisements and not subscribers i.e. circulation. I may be wrong. So the salesmen who are in charge of securing advertisements ought to be very efficient and if your circulation is high there is every possibility of securing more advertisers. So much so that even on TV we find advertisements for magazines. However since *Parsiana* caters only to Zoroastrians, the readership may not be that high. If some of the articles are of current news then there is every chance that any layman can go for it.

F. K. TARAPORE
Madras

Edited by Arnavaz S. Mama



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rather than the doctrinal principles they symbolized... The notion that the laity can gain spiritual advantage through the prayers of the priest rather than understanding the principles for themselves, became pervasive among the community... With the passage of time, the lofty concept of Asha was overshadowed by the... performance of the ritual for its own sake. The bareshnum was administered to priests and laity alike to confer ritualistic purity. It was deemed important for the yaodathregars who administered this ritual to undergo the same as a means of revival of their ritualistic purity. As pointed out by Prof Boyce and Sir Jivanji Modi, the ritual was administered to an individual in proxy by a priest undergoing the ritual, for the person to attain religio-ritual purity." Bagli quoted Boyce on the prevailing beliefs of the time: "If a man has not been thus purified during his lifetime, the divine beings cannot bring themselves to approach his departed spirit and he must wait to go to the judgement seat until his son or heir undergoes the cleansing for him or pays a priest to do so."

The session on effective religious education had Ms Villy Gandhi, Ms Dina McIntyre, Ms Natalie Vania, Cawas Desai and Ms Khursheed Khurody. "An emphasis on content alone, without creative application, provides academic learning in

isolation of relevance or practical context... Children learn by what they live... If we can learn anything from what ails public education today, it is the all-important lesson that children of parents who remain inactive in their education relegate their children to outer influences and a lifetime of disenchantment and unfulfilled aspirations," declared Gandhi whose involvement with the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York as educator and former president is well known. Putting issues into perspective and urging parental involvement Gandhi noted, "The question (for the community) is not of survival alone as much as it is of qualitative endurance. Birthright does not create credible ownership; the practice of a religion and a way of life that it creates, based on learned knowledge and inherent ethical and philosophical understanding, does."

According to McIntyre "If a religious experience fills our needs, people will come for it no matter how far away they live, or how busy they are." Noting that "our religion has become something of a spectator sport," McIntyre advocated the analysis of real contemporary problems within the framework of the teachings of Zarathushtra.

Taking the cue from McIntyre, Khurody discussed the relevance of the *Gathas* in today's world. "When the world looked

toward smaller cars for convenience in cities and efficient fuel consumption, General Motors failed to address the problem and to confront the truth. Similarly IBM went through years of corporate blindness which caused them not to see the revolution taking place in mini and personal computers which were becoming as powerful as IBM's mainframes... It is tempting to explain these crises purely in economic terms; however, I submit that the problem does not lie with the system but with the souls and individual moralities of the leaders and followers that make up the system... Do we really need to pay thousands of dollars to institutions such as the Harvard Business School, to take courses in business ethics, only to learn about truth and righteousness, basic human decency, honesty and integrity — perhaps the most fundamental of Gathic principles?" asked Khurody. Quoting from an article by Dame Mary Warnock, Khurody added, "The question for educationists is not how to teach people the difference (between) right and wrong, but how to engage their feelings and make them love the one and hate the other, which is a far more difficult thing to do."

Desai, a past president of ZAPANJ, discussed the future of the priesthood in North America (NA) against the backdrop of the community's depletion and the im-



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 November 30

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Maneck Eruch Daruwalla (22),
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 Chawl, Vithalwadi, Dist Thane,
 421300; November 1
Meherbai Framroz Doctor (97),
 Maskati Corner, 37 Altamont
 Rd, 400026; November 1
Naval Dhunjishah Hansotia
 (70), 9 Hill View-1, Hill Rd,
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Jeroo Adi Sanjana (59),
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 Rd, 400039; November 1
Khorshed Kershasp Dubash
 (80), Minocher Block, Mehla
 Patel Agiary Lane, Grant Rd,
 400007; November 2
Burjor Hormusji Goiporia (67),
 Piroja Mans, Opp Grant Rd Stn,
 400007; November 2
Pirozshah Dhenji Mistry (94),
 B, Old Adenwalla Bldg, Tulsi
 Pipe Rd, Mahim, 400016;
 November 2
Meherbai Byramji Umrigar
 (98), Patel Bldg, 782, M. Joshi
 Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
 November 2
Jerbanoo Khurshed Cursetji
 (88), Wadia Bldg, Princess St,
 400002; November 3
Banoobai Darabsha Patel (83),
 Lentin Bldg, 12/14, Gamadia

Clny, Tardeo, 400007;
 November 3
Goolbanoo (Dolly) Pirojsha
Pavri (93), Shiv Shanti Bhuvan,
 M. Karve Rd, 400020;
 November 3
Daddy Shiavax Vatcha (76),
 M/54, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd,
 400039; November 3
Goverbai Khushrao Irani (78),
 3, Niamat Manzil, N. P. St,
 Grant Rd, 400007; November 4
Phiroze Dadabhoy Madon (74),
 2, Ganga Vihar, TPS-III, 20th
 Rd, Bandra (W), 400050;
 November 4
Minoo Shavakshaw Mehta (78),
 Old Khan Bldg, 275/F,
 Zoroastrian Clny, Grant Rd,
 400007; November 4
Hilla Shahpur Ratnagar (48),
 P. O. 3668, Abu Dhabi, UAE;
 November 4
Dhun Framroze Dordi (72),
 H/26, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd,
 400039; November 5
Mamai Dorabji Cooper (82),
 34, Piroja Mans, Sir Ratan
 Tata Rd, Tardeo, 400034;
 November 7
Homai Hoshang Mistry (80),
 2/1, Versova View, Sadguru
 Ngr, Four Bglws, Andheri (W),
 400058; November 7
Najoo Framroze Nazir (85),
 170/D, Amtobai Blocks,
 S. V. Rd, Bandra, 400050;
 November 7
Naval Framji Davar (77), The
 View, Hornby Vellard, Worli,
 400018; November 8
Pesi Ratanshaw Nakra (72),
 394, Mancharam Bldg, Grant
 Rd, 400007; November 8
Soli Edulji Pavwala (72), I-D/2,
 Blue Arch Coop Hsg Soc, Four
 Bglws, Andheri (W), 400058;
 November 8
Allamai Rustomji Turner (91),
 5/15, Tata Clny, Sir Ratan
 Tata Rd, Tardeo, 400034;
 November 8
Homi Kharsetji Guard (97), 16,
 Sethna Bldg, 216, Princess St,
 400002; November 11
Meheran Rustomji Mistry (80),
 Tardeo Chmbs, Kashinath St,
 Tardeo, 400034; November 11
Jamshedji Hormusji Bilimoria
 (82), C/o Curush F. Bilimoria,
 22, Essup Bldg, Mehla Patel
 Agiary Lane, Grant Rd, 400007;
 November 12
Shirinbai Ardeshir Davierwalla
 (90), 5/6, Ratan Tata Clny,
 Tardeo Rd, 400034;
 November 12
Baby of Nifofer Jamasp Irani

(1 day), 7, Gamadia Clny,
 Tardeo, 400007; November 12
Kaikhushru Jamshedji Kharas
 (92), B/3, Gowalia Tank Bldg,
 A. K. Marg, 400036;
 November 13
Rodabe Rutton Mithaiwala (86),
 672, Rd no 14, Parsi Clny,
 Dadar, 400014; November 14
Hoshi (Hoshang) Lovji Sethna
 (53), Pardiwala Bldg, 168,
 Bora Bazar, Fort, 400001;
 November 14
Tehmina Kaikhoshroo Bhesania
 (86), F/6, Mody Bldg, Captain
 Clny, Haji Ali, Tardeo Rd,
 400034; November 15
Najamai Dossabhai Gandhi
 (91), 671, Boyce Bldg, Rd no
 13, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
 November 15
Pirojshaw Jehangirji Baria
 (89), Seeta Mhl, B. P. Rd,
 400036; November 16
Ratti Palonji Kapadia (79), 6,
 Marine Mans, Byramji Jijibhoy
 Rd, Bandra (W), 400050;
 November 16
Roshan Rustomji Bagwadia
 (86), Mistry Bldg, Balaram
 St, Grant Rd, 400007;
 November 17
Adi Jehangirji Jehangir (64),
 29/D, Venus Apts, 45,
 Worli Seaface, 400018;
 November 17
Jer Nadirshaw Daji (88), 15,
 Heera Meher, Wodehouse Rd,
 Colaba, 400005; November 18
Khorshed Hosang Desai (64),
 C/o H. B. Desai, Jyoti Mhl,
 13, Sleater Rd, 400007;
 November 18
Goolchar Rustom Irani (60), 82,
 Acharaya Hse, 1st Marine St,
 400002; November 18
Firoze Jehangir Mistry (49),
 11-2/B, Sonawalla Bldg,
 Tardeo, 400007; November 18
Jemi Kaikhushroo Bhomisha
 (76), Roda Bldg, South Frere
 Bridge, Grant Rd, 400007;
 November 19
Fareedon Jamshed Irani (88),
 Mistry Bldg, 10, Padamji
 Rd, Pavwalla St, 400004;
 November 19
Perin Noshirwan Jamsetjee
 (67), Marine Mans, 1st Marine
 St, 400002; November 19
Sharukh Homi Korkhao (41),
 Percy Manor, 791, Jame
 Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar,
 400014; November 19
Adi Bhikaji Patel (79), 12/E,
 Harbour Heights, B/1, N. A.
 Sawant Marg, Colaba, 400005;
 November 19

Shavaksha Sorabji Amaria (90),
 8-7/C, Sir Ratan Tata Clny,
 Tardeo, 400034; November 20
Hilla Rusi Divecha (78), 2394,
 Sholapur Rd, Poona, 411001;
 November 20
Dina Piloo Kaka (54),
 Gadiwalla Hse, Gilder Lane,
 Off Lamington Rd, 400008;
 November 20
Adi Khurshed Meherhomji (56),
 Lily Court, Opp Ritz Hotel,
 Churchgate Recl, 400020;
 November 20
Sehra Savak Pardiwalla (90),
 281, Sidhwa Bldg, Princess St,
 400002; November 20
Perin Jal Vajifdar (77), 12,
 Lentin Bldg, Gamadia Clny,
 Tardeo, 400007; November 20
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 (99), 759, Gulab-Simmo Vihar,
 Rd no 7, Parsi Clny, Dadar,
 400014; November 21
Banoo Framroze Lord (62),
 M-14, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd,
 400039; November 21
Jerbanoo Dossabhooy
Sachinwalla (91), 32, Station
 Ter, Sleater Rd, 400007;
 November 21
Banoo Manekji Bhathena (48),
 654, Firdoshi Rd, Parsi Clny,
 Dadar, 400014; November 22
Phiroze Pestonji Deboo (63),
 13/12, Lentin Bldg, Gamadia
 Clny, Tardeo, 400007;
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Roshan Abadan Irani (58), C,
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 400004; November 23
Porus Dali Ustad (16), 10,
 Agiary Chawl, 273, Dr S. S.
 Rao Rd, Lalbaug, 400012;
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Homai Ratanshaw Menty (78),
 16, Agiary Bldg No 2, Lalbaug,
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Erach Jamshedji Mirza (74),
 13, Sant Savta Cross Rd No 3,
 Byculla, 400027; November 24
Dolly Noshir Shroff (67), 13,
 Ahura Apts, Gunpowder Rd,
 Mazgaon, 400010;
 November 24
Aloo Minoo Bharucha (75), C,
 Gowalia Tank Bldg, August
 Kranti Marg, 400036;
 November 26
Minoo Hormusji Billimoria
 (80), Aziz Bldg, Tardeo Rd,
 400034; November 25
Aloo Minocher Kavarana (88),
 Pallonji Mans, 43, Cuffe
 Parade, 400005; November 26
Fali Dhunjishah Khambatta
 (59), C/o G. B. Irani, 59/C,
 Bazar Rd, Bandra, 400050;

November 26
Nargesh Dossabhai Patel (83),
 Jehangir Mans No 3, Next to
 Metro Cinema, 400020;
 November 26
Behramji Dinshawji Thanawala
 (73), A, Bhiwandiwalla Ter,
 618, Dhobitalao, 400002;
 November 26
Rustom Hormasji Variava (61),
 14/G, S. B. Bharucha Baug,
 Andheri (W), 400058;
 November 26
Aloo Homi Contractor (74),
 738, Dr Ghanti Rd, Parsi Clny,
 Dadar, 400014; November 27
Noshir Rustomji Shroff (48),
 M1/41, Cama Park, Cama Rd,
 400058; November 27
Nergish Phirozshaw Talati (89),
 10, Albless Bldg, Thakurdwar,
 400002; November 27
Najabai Fardunji Talavia (79),
 B/10, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar
 Rd, Byculia, 400027;
 November 27
Tehmi Nadirshaw Colabewalla
 (68), Nargis Villa, Malcolm
 Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102;
 November 28
Jamshed Nusserwanji Engineer
 (71), 9/10, Bldg no 1,
 Dhunbaiwadi, Dadabhai Rd,
 Vile Parle (W), 400056;

November 28
Vicaji Sorabji Mewawala (86),
 Society Bldg, 729, J. Vimadala
 Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
 November 28

Dhun Boman Billimoria (74),
 Soida Hse, Malcolm Baug,
 Jogeshwari, 400102;
 November 30
Homi Phirozshaw Dubash (76),

6/8, Old Khareghat Clny,
 Hughes Rd, 400007;
 November 30

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

TOTALS FOR 1994						
	Bombay		India		World	
	A	B	A	B	A	B
BORN						
Boys	11	114	—	6	—	23
Girls	13	96	—	5	—	21
MARRIED						
Parsi	54	248	—	9	—	9
Intercommunal	—	52 [^]	—	3	—	4
DIED						
CONSIGNED						
Males	36	453	—	56	—	34*
Females	43	454	—	78	—	29*
CREMATED						
Males	—	11	—	—	—	—
Females	—	7	—	—	—	—
A: Total numbers in this issue						
B: Running totals for 1994 (February-March 1994-January 1995 issues)						
[^] Males married out -- 28						
Females married out -- 24						
* Overseas deaths are listed in the consigned column as <i>Parsiana</i> does not have a breakup of those cremated.						
These figures pertain to information provided to or collected by <i>Parsiana</i> . They do not represent the total number of births, marriages and deaths in the Zoroastrian community in India and abroad.						

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MICKEY'S mastery of the line

Parinaz Gandhi

"I hate seeing my work in front of me. Makes me static. I'd prefer to forget, prefer to go on." So Mickey Patel, 53-year-old painter, illustrator, cartoonist and, to the fore, a dedicated and unpretentious artist, had written to *Parsiana* four months before a massive heart attack claimed his life on August 17, 1994.

Progressively his art had evolved and his versatility gained fame. Yet Mickey himself preferred to sum up the character of his works simply as "Dots, spots, dashes, ... lines, smudges, smears, stains; groping, searching, floundering to arrive at some form of truth or the other... Attempting to utter a statement: sometimes not. And the utterance could stretch to a cry, a wail, a moan." Thus Ms Ajanta Sen Poovaiah recalls his words in her write-up in *Debonair* September 1994.

Last October, the Vadehra Art Gallery in New Delhi had scheduled an exhibition of his paintings which Mickey was looking forward to. Following his sudden demise, however, and as a mark of tribute, the organizers decided to prenone the show to September when 17 of his most recent drawings were also on view, his wife Sunila informs us. Mickey was best acclaimed for being a "master of the line" in the words of cartoonist Mario Miranda. Corroborated filmmaker Saeed Mirza in *The Sunday Times of India* of August 28, 1994 which carried tributes from Mickey's peers: "I don't think there was anybody in India who could hold a line as confidently as he could. Yet he never got the recognition he deserved."

According to filmmaker Shyam Benegal, "The trouble was that Mickey was so original." Miranda remembers pointing out to Mickey that his pocket cartoons "were too

high-brow and cerebral for the average reader, but he never did agree with me."

"He did what he wanted to do in his own way," stated Alyque Padamsee, president of AP Associates. "I warned Mickey not to leave Lintas and seek his fortune in Delhi but he had a marvellous stubbornness which I admired," Padamsee added. "He joined the agency with no formal training," noted Gerson Da Cunha, "and was soon a much sought after illustrator and art director. He left because he felt—who knows, with justice—that



his skills and spirit were being unduly cabined."

After working with Lintas for some

years in Bombay, Mickey returned to Delhi and soon became art director of the ad agency, Advertising and Sales Promotion. For a while he worked with F. D. Stewart's ad agency in Madras, mentions an article in *The Sunday Times*. Mickey had served as creative consultant to various advertising agencies as also to UNICEF and the World Bank. Other overseas organizations with which Mickey was associated are UNESCO (Tokyo and Kuala Lumpur), BBC (London) and the Government of Bhutan's Department of Education. Publications and periodicals that have featured Mickey's works include the *The Indian Post*, the *Patriot*, *India Today*, *The Statesman*, *Business Standard*, *The Times of India*, *Debonair* and *Reader's Digest*.

Mickey shared his talent and experience with others by conducting an illustration workshop for the National Book Trust; and by serving on the panel of NCERT and UNICEF, the ministry of information and broadcasting, the department of environment, the department of culture and the Trade Fair Authority of India. A popular lecturer and examiner at the Jamia Millia Islamia and the Delhi College of Art, several of Mickey's students had come to pay their last respects at the Parsi cemetery in Delhi where Mickey was interred.

"Talking about his 'success' as an artist, I must mention that he had 11 prize winning international ex-



hibitions (1975-1987), 15 solo and national exhibitions (1960-87), and he won 10 national and international awards," writes Santo Datta in *The Hindu* of September 16, '94. Individuals and organizations in different corners of the world value Mickey's work in their collections. His works also find a place at the Buckminster Fuller Associate, New York/Tokyo; The Yomivri Shimbun, Tokyo; the Grand Museum for Cartoons, San Antonio De Los Banos, Havana...

Karachi born Mickey is said to have published his first cartoon when he was just 14 and preparing to support himself through college. (He graduated in economics from St Stephen's College, Delhi.) His work was then substantially influenced by the British magazine, *Punch*. A mentor who molded him considerably was Shankar Pillai of *Shankar's Weekly* fame. Encouraging him to transgress all norms was Khushro Rustomji of the Indian Police Service who was then the president of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman. Khushwant Singh is also credited with giving him encouragement and support while he was still a fledgling artist. The contribution of these three remarkable men Mickey had acknowledged in an interview with *Parsiana*, March 1989, when he wryly observed, "There is nothing like a polite drawing."

The style that Mickey developed was distinctly his own, enabling even a lay person to identify his work in a group show. "Mickey's was the truly creative talent," commented Da Cunha, "the ability to associate with purpose previously unrelated elements, the insight, the sense for essence, and all of it in exceptional measure." Marvels Kersy Katrak, executive creative director of Lintas India, referring to Mickey's touch, "The pen and ink strokes became scalpels that incised and curretted the social vanities and political shams of the period." Katrak further recalls, "We spoke a common language: He knew Hemingway and Joyce and Keats whom I loved and I was familiar with the gods in his first pantheon: Picasso, Braque, Lautrec..."

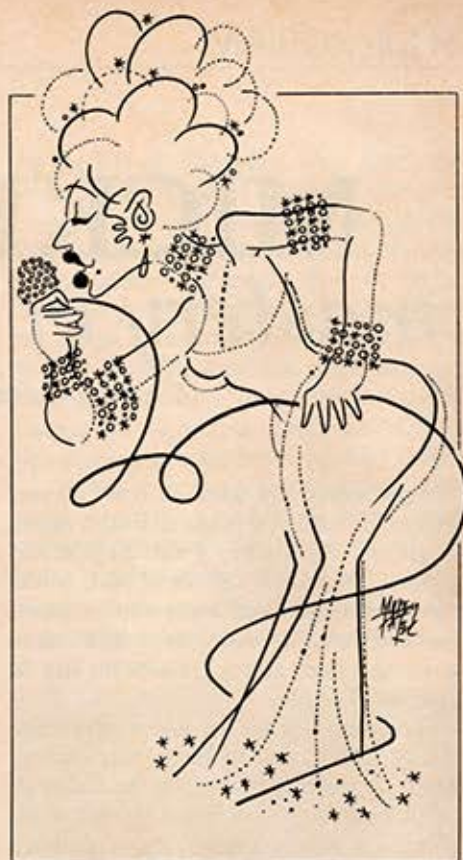
"Mickey stood unshakeably for certain causes," remarked Mirza. "He was a great friend of the African National Congress much before they came to power." In the mid-'80s he had exhibited a series of serigraphs on Nelson Mandela. In the previous decade, one of his exhibitions had Mahatma Gandhi for its theme. Remembers senior artist Jehangir Sabavala, "I knew

him as a shy, introverted and sensitive man who felt deeply about his country's troubled political and artistic future.

"Mickey was a man of few words but one who, once engaged on a one-to-one basis, was an able conversationalist. Barbed and humorous though they often were, his comments were always generous" continued Sabavala. "Ambition and politicking played no part in his scheme of things." He added lamenting, "India has lost a cartoonist of quality who combined the electric crackle of a trenchant pen with the underflow of a fine artist." "The unfailing summertime for his friends," is how Datta chose to describe Mickey. "I never heard him speaking ill of anyone either in anger or with envy."

An obituary by artist Ms Arpana Caur in the *First City* (September 1994) reads, "For him work meant exclusion of all petty thoughts. This led him to an utter simplicity of living, an unusual honesty and absence of any self importance. No other artist would have...not known how to price his drawings... He loved to draw and drew very fast... It seemed as if forms — whether human, animal or object — sat on his fingertips, forever ready to explode on paper. Behind his quickness and ease were years of discipline."

That he could be depended on to adhere to his deadlines, *Parsiana* can vouch for. Even though we were not able to afford the payment rates he deserved, he would always accede to our request for an assignment and accommodate us in his busy



schedule. Observes Sunila, "He used to enjoy working for your magazine a great deal." And it seems that in their new home which they had moved into barely 17 days prior to his death, the first mail they received was a cheque from *Parsiana* — a source of immense pleasure, Mickey had written to us in his last letter. In fact, that was the first time he had ever referred to his ill health and heavy medication. It was from Sunila we later learnt that Mickey was suffering from cardiac problems since 1981 and that since 1990 his heart was functioning at barely 20 percent of its capacity, making him susceptible to infection.

All the while that his laboring heart was sapping him of his energy, he continued to show his large-heartedness. Among the last letters we received from him was a suggestion to *Parsiana* to hold a show of those of his drawings and photographs that had featured in the magazine. "If any of my work is sold, the money goes to your office," he had offered. And believing that *Parsiana* "has a wider potential market outside the community," he was invariably gifting subscriptions to non-Parsis and urging us to change our marketing approach.

The noble and magnanimous artist is survived by his wife Sunila, son Rishad and daughter Ria.

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