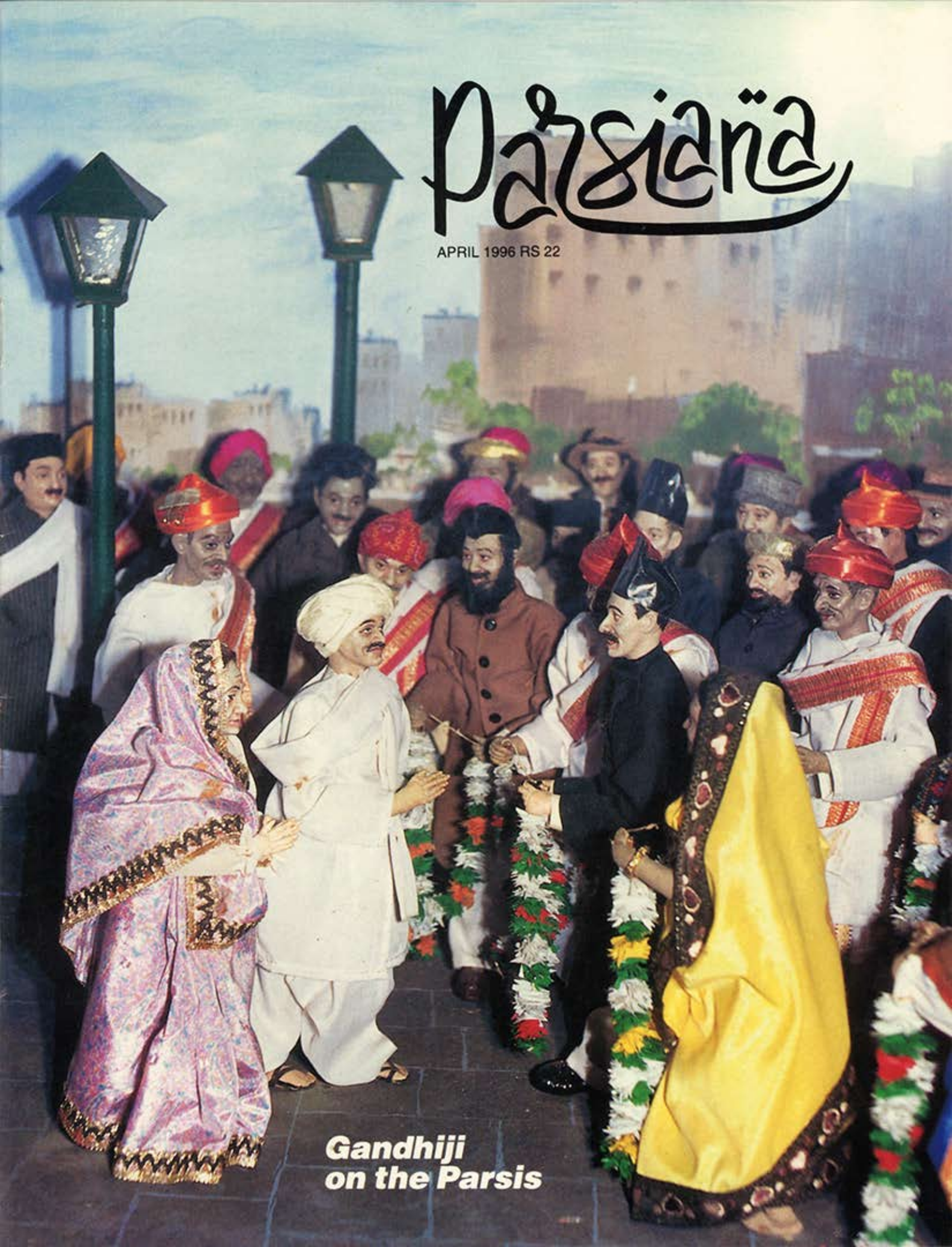


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on the Parsis**

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# Parsiana

April 1996  
Volume 18 Number 8

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## 2 Readers' Forum

---

## 10 Events and Personalities

---

## 17 "Surrounded by storytellers" by Parinaz Gandhi

---

## 18 "Each one of us is a perfect individual" by Arnavaz Mama

---

## 20 Zoroastrians Abroad

---

## 22 The Mahatma on the Parsis by Burjor Karanjia

---

## 26 Status of Women: sacred and secular - 5 by Dr Ketayun Gould

---

## 33 Burjor Mistry: For sound results

---

## 37 Books

---

## 41 Milestones

---

## 44 In Memoriam

---

**Cover: Tableau at Mani Bhavan depicting crowd receiving Gandhiji in Bombay upon his return from South Africa in 1915.**

Photograph: Varghese W. Fernandez

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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

## Zarthushti entrepreneurs

I am glad to read that the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), in its special supplement, has highlighted the strides made by the first generation of Zarthushtis in various businesses in North America.

I thank *Parsiana* for bringing to the notice of its readers and devoting its entire issue of January 1996, released very recently, to the achievements of these entrepreneurs.

When we were young, we often used to hear our elders state "*Apra bap dadao dario dohwta hatha* (Our forefathers sailed many an ocean)." Implicit was the fact that Zarthushtis stuck to honesty, integrity, charity and hard work, ingrained in them even as they traded in far-off lands. I am heartened to find the practice alive among North American Zarthushti entrepreneurs.

May these ladies and gentlemen flour-

ish and prosper. And may they never forget to come to the succor of the less fortunate and needy members of their community, wherever they may be.

BHIKHAJI M. ADENWALLA

## "Ubha' Parsi"

This is in connection with Bhikhaji M. Adenwalla's letter "Ubha' Parsi," Readers' Forum (*Parsiana*, November 1995). I don't know whose picture you have printed alongside. It certainly is, not of my great grandfather 'Ubha' or 'Khada Parsi!' What you have printed about Manockjee Cursetjee under the title 'The Editor replies' is correct; but Manockjee Cursetjee, was the son of 'Ubha' or 'Khada' Parsi — Seth Karsetji Manekji Shroff, born 1762, a sethia of the Parsi Punchayet, a contractor to the Government of Bombay who did a lot for his community.

So his son, Manockjee Cursetjee, and some other friends and admirers presented the bronze, imposing statue of Seth Karsetji Manekji Shroff to the then municipality to be installed at the junction of Bellasis, Ripon and Clare Roads (near Nagpada).

About Manockjee Cursetjee, you have omitted to mention that he was twice Sheriff of Bombay in 1856 and again in 1863. Maybe you were also unaware of the fact that Manockjee Cursetjee was not only the first Parsi, but the first Indian to become Chief Judge of the Small Causes Court at Bombay. It used to irk the then British advocates to plead their cases in front of him. But he was much respected: a just, upright, farseeing man of impeccable character and integrity.

As to the question of the protruding 'kathli,' sticking out of the back of his pugree, the explanation is as follows:

There was no kathli at the back of his pugree but there was a protruding spout. My grandfather Cursetjee Manockjee Cursetjee (generally known as CMC) had explained to me that as the statue was originally copied from a fountain of The Three Graces dancing on top of a tall column, the sculptor had provided a spout. But it would have looked pretty odd for water to gush out of the back of the venerable gentleman's pugree, and Manockjee had it blocked. It could not be removed, so there it stayed!

However, in the good old days, when water was plentiful and Bombay was indeed beautiful, water did gush from the large conch shells, held in the hands of the ornamental mermaids at the foot of the

statue, into a surrounding trough from which thirsty *Victoria-garee* (horse carriages) horses used to drink on a hot summer's day.

This statue was shifted from its original place where it had stood for 70 years, to its present, commanding site at the corner of Byculla Bridge (a stone's throw away from where his son Manockjee used to reside at Villa Byculla). It was kept in the municipal workshop at the corner of Foras Road for cleaning before it was reinstalled. I used to visit the place with my grandfather, CMC. It was rubbed over with oil and cleaned before it was reinstalled where it stands today, minus the water trough which would have occupied too much space at this busy junction. Anyway, there were fewer horse-drawn carriages and bullock carts by then.

Ms PERIN M. R. B. JEEJEBHOY

## Arnavaz Mama replies

*Parsiana* goofed! The photo published on page 4 (*Parsiana*, November 1995) is that of Manekjee Rustomjee (1815-1891), the first Indian sheriff of Calcutta.

## "The Priests' Rebuttal"

Must we continue to accept the disrespect shown to our priesthood? When was the last time any of us went up to our serving mobeds, dasturs or wada dasturji sahebs and said: Thank you?

"Thank you for not becoming a doctor or a banker and for dedicating your life to serving our community and Ahura Mazda!"

"For working long and tiresome hours for very little reward, and keeping our places of worship open and our sacred fires burning day and night."

"For performing our ceremonies — navjotes and jashans, weddings and funerals — and allowing us to witness and experience our customs and rituals."

"Thank you for keeping Zarathushtrianism alive!"

For those of you who have and continue to do so — I say no more! For those of you who don't... stop to think!

It is very easy for us to 'crucify' those who stand for something and have to make important decisions ("The Priests' Rebuttal," *Parsiana*, October, 1995). Time and time again, history shows that those who stand up to lead have to bear the burden of all the indignation people throw at them — never any reward. For the selfless and non-glory seeking leaders, this is unjust!

I personally wish to say that our wada

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dasturji sahebs, like the very few who do the true work for our community, are victims of a sad clan of 'stone-throwers' in our community. They are forced into very unfair corners to make decisions that most of us haven't even the capacity to comprehend — although I am sure many may think they do!

They are not corrupt officials amassing bundles of wealth by abusing the system; they are not unscrupulous officials scheming to close down our places of worship; they are not hungry for 'I did it' awards, for fickle praise and glory; they have not worked so hard and dedicated so much of their lives just to destroy all that they uphold!

They are our priests, with a very high caliber of religious and spiritual acumen and they are human beings too, in case anyone has forgotten!

So, isn't it time we did something a bit more constructive? Rather than sensationalizing abstract cases that, to my mind, will never shake the core ethos of our existence and our tradition, can we look to the things that matter: direct ourselves towards the issues that need to be addressed?

For example, our youth need education to appreciate our documented history and culture, they need to meet and form relationships, they need to be housed, they need help to start businesses and successful careers to prosper. They need to feel proud to be Zoroastrian, they need to feel they belong!

Members of other communities help each other and make sure their future is looked after. They are united in thought and united in faith. Their pride is their motivation!

We need to create the atmosphere for our young and old to know, love and understand the beauty of living a good Zarathushti life; to address the issues that matter.

By insulting our priesthood we are damaging our religion and damaging ourselves. We are not being threatened by persecution, dilution or extinction. Our ignorance and our neglect to do something good and creative for our community, especially our youth, are our real enemies.

FARHAD D. SETHNA  
Harrow, U.K.

## "Leap year day?"

Over the last five years, various parties including myself have expressed in your magazine the need and importance of changing over to the Fasli calendar (*Parsiana*, November 1991, February 1992,

June 1992, September 1992, January 1993, March 1993 and September 1995). Even two panels under topics III and VIII at the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress held in Bombay, January 3 to 7, 1990 had recommended the adoption of the Fasli calendar with Jamshedi Navroze on March 21 every year. But till date the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) have become paralyzed on this issue because the high priests of Bombay have not reconciled themselves to the change-over on some flimsy grounds of the difficulty of reciting the *mah* and the *roj* on the *varsi* (prayers on the first death anniversary) for a person who dies on a leap year day. The priests seem to forget that the heavens are not going to fall if the *varsi* is held a day later or earlier. The priests should also know that the Fasli calendar is working effectively in Iran and the neighboring Central Asian republics.

The years 1992 to 1995 were very propitious for the change-over to the Fasli calendar for during these four years, Hormuzd *roj* fell on March 21, for all the three calendars viz. Shehenshahi, Kadmi and Fasli but the golden opportunity was lost because of the apathy of the priests.

The present Shehenshahi and Kadmi calendars are basically faulty because they account for only 365 days in a year, whereas the true solar or tropical year (the period the planet Earth takes to make one complete revolution round the Sun) comprises of 365.2422454 days or 365 days, five hours, 48 minutes and 45.5 seconds. Thus the Shehenshahi and Kadmi calendars fall behind by 0.2422454 days every year. This mismatch is overcome in the Fasli calendar by adding one extra leap year day every four years, and ignoring the leap year additional day every 100 years, but adding again the extra leap year day every 400 years, ignoring a leap year every 4,000 years and again ignoring a leap year every 200,000 years as is done in the Gregorian calendar. The following mathematics explain how the matching is carried out:

$$0.2422454 \\ = (1/4 - 1/100 + 1/400 - 1/4000 - 1/200000) \\ = (0.2500000 - 0.0100000 + 0.0025000 - 0.0002500 - 0.0000050)$$

All the seasons of the year, viz. spring, summer, autumn, winter and monsoon as well as all biological rhythms or circadian clocks in nature follow the solar or tropical year whether the variations are diurnal (daily) or annual (yearly), whereas our existing Shehenshahi and Kadmi calendars have absolutely no relevance to the seasons.

It now appears to me that the final

decision to implement the Fasli calendar will be taken either at the Sixth World Zoroastrian Congress to be hosted by the Zarthoshtian Anjuman at Tehran, Iran from June 19 to 22, 1996 or at the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress to be hosted by the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) at Houston, USA while the BPP trustees will be left mute spectators to the event, victims to the whims and fancies of the priests.

Dr P. D. SUNAVALA

Allow me the privilege of your columns to respond to Hoshung S. Kotval's hand-wringing on leap-year day ("Leap year day?" Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, September 1995). But firstly, a firm rap on your editorial knuckles for letting slip for the past four years a sound opportunity for placing before your thinking readership the facts about and the desirability of adopting a Zoroastrian parallel to the Gregorian universal calendar. If this was denied all forward-looking Zoroastrians on the feeble ground of "controversiality," it must be straightaway pointed out that every issue confronting our communities world-wide has been hurriedly and irresponsibly shelved as controversial! No kudos, therefore, to a progressive journal of international outlook and renown.

Would publication of Mr Kotval's letter be *Parsiana's* way of signalling that the door is now being opened — though ever so slightly — for his "more rational and scientific reasoning?" If so, then for the benefit of genuinely interested readers we are in a position to offer some re-workings from earlier articles on the unified calendar which had appeared variously in *The Bombay Samachar*, *Hamazor* and the *FEZANA Journal*. Progressive and unificatory views there were counteracted by proponents of the no-action-no-change lobby whose long-term interest, as always, was to suppress verifiably accurate information based on both our prayers as well as religio-encyclopaedic texts. Refusal to put into action the very precepts of our emptily mouthed prayers has resulted in our rituals and commemorative prayers still being out of step with the seasons.

Both Shehenshahi and Kadmi calendars miss the necessary quadrennial intercalation to maintain them in synchrony with the seasons and the rest of the world. These so-called calendars drift back steadily; like rudderless ships they are unable to cope with currents, winds, tides and points of the compass! The analogy with a slow-running watch which can never

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tell the correct time may make our point clearer: one either gets it repaired or dispenses with it. In calendrical terms, one either intercalates it in accordance with the universally accepted Gregorian system, or one rejects it in favor of a religiously inculcated system, i.e. the so-called Fasli.

For those ritually inclined, it can only be fair to indicate that the *gah* Rapithwan has become so displaced that it is being largely observed when it should not, and vice versa! If, as they would have us believe, our prayers are so sacred that they can only be truly effective at the religiously appropriate periods, then the ritualists have a great deal of explaining to do to justify such untimely recitation.

The emotive issue of the *fravardegan* was cynically brought up, doubtless to promote the fears of the less educated against those favorite bugbears — the liberals, the reformers and similar disturbers of the traditional (time-honored, of course!) order. Little could they let on that their pious prayers were being offered up seven months after their true time of commemoration, but the lie had to persist.

Another ploy was to "expose" the fallacious Gregorian system by dint of falsification: those crafty westerners could, it

was whispered, suppress any number of days in their calendar at any time, just as they had 10 days in 1582! The fact is it was a one-off move made to prevent a huge drift in seasonal time-reckoning. For the rest of foreseeable human history it was to be regulated along very careful rules:

- Each year whose (full) number is divisible by four is a leap year and one day is to be added to the shortest month of February.

- The exception to the above is that the last year of each century (i.e. 2000, 2100, 2200...) becomes a leap year only if the century number (= 20, 21, 22...) is divisible by four.

- To account for the minutes' excesses (11 minutes 48 seconds per year, or one day in 128 years), the years 4000, 8000, 12000 and 16000 are to be common or non-leap years. The year 2000 will be leap.

To forestall Mr Kotval's protests at this seeming push-pull adjustment, may we point out that these rules allow for an error of one mere day in 3323 years. Having, however, indicated the sagacity of the Gregorian system solely with regard to its quadrennial intercalation, we are constrained to present its eccentricities which our Zoroastrian calendars do not share:

- the unevenness of the months,
- the quite meaningless beginning of its year on January 1 — speaking sun and season-wise (that date should be on its March 21, but foolhardy the one who would try to convince its ecclesiastical and secular authorities!),

- the caprice of its religious year with its fixed Christmas and a floating Easter and associated feasts!

- erroneous month names — September to December should refer to the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth months respectively, but these they plainly do not.

What might gladden Mr Kotval's heart is that our wise priesthood of yore had perfected a working time-reckoner at least 600 years before the westerners awoke to the imperfection of their annual observations and festivals; it may sadden him in advance were he to know that when their 10 days were suppressed, the ignorant masses rioted throughout, being given to believe by opportunists and bigots that their lives were being shortened by horrible reformists who, yes, existed even in the 16th century of our Common Era.

But let us not become unduly complacent — who among us can explain the six-day discrepancy in the 40-day reckoning

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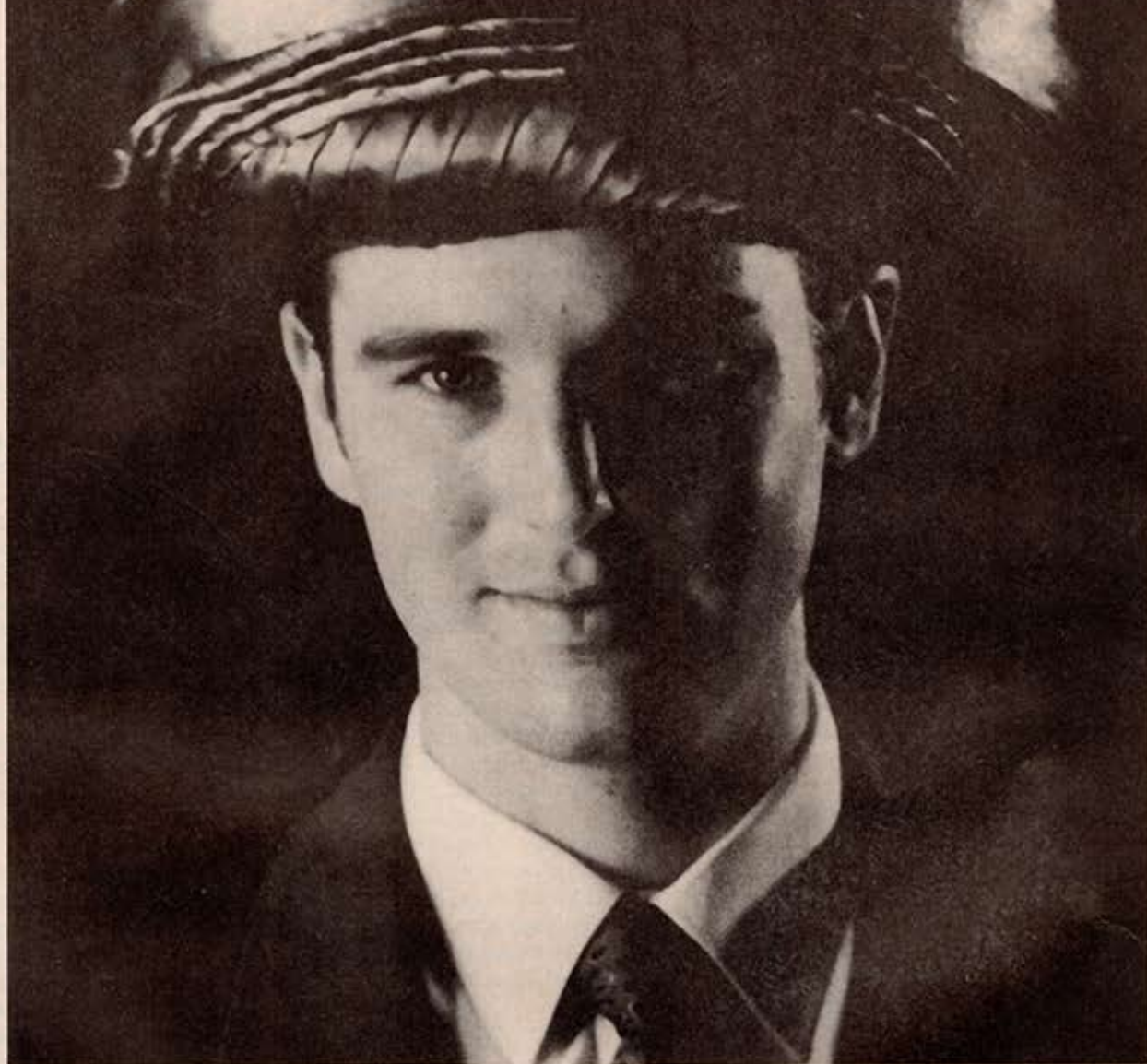
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of our Prophet's day of birth and his death [Our Zarathushtra was said to have lived for 77 years and 40 days. If his birth was, as agreed by tradition, on Hormazd *roj*, Fravardin *mah*, only then does the 40th day (his death) fall on Khwar *roj* of Ardi-behesht *mah*. If we observe his birth on Khordad Sal, i.e. on Khordad *roj* of Fravardin *mah*, then the 40 days do not add up]; also, who can satisfactorily explain the real significance of the order of our Zoroastrian months?

Last but not one, who can convincingly explain why Mr Kotval's "well-educated, enlightened, rational and scientifically inclined" Parsis remain the most religiously backward of such communities, and why our self-elected "policemen" do nothing about it? Lastly, who will excommunicate our ever-ready excommunicators?

FARROKH VAJIFDAR  
London, U.K.

### "Late Dhunjisha Kalfati"

In *Parsiana* (Readers' Forum, September 1995) I find a letter written by Mr Bhikhaji M. Adenwalla soliciting details about the late Dhunjisha Kalfati.

I am surprised that the people of Bombay are so ignorant about their own great man whose real name was (Sir) Dhunjibhoy Bomanji — Kalfati (Kt), and not Dhunjisha; and I, sitting in Karachi, am supplying information as requested by the letter writer.

Sir Dhunjibhoy Bomanji was a *stevedore* — never a "Commissioner of Police" — and by sheer hard work he made a fortune. He moved about in a Rolls Royce, had a European chauffeur, and was very influential with the high officials of the British government, including those in the police department.

In 1921, the Prince of Wales — later to become the Duke of Windsor — was paying an official visit. To give him a rousing

welcome, the government had made elaborate arrangements, but Gandhiji and Mohammed Ali Jinnah of the Khilafat movement had joined hands and appealed to the people to boycott the reception and not go to the harbor to welcome him.

All Hindus and Muslims followed these commands. But the Parsi community refused to comply, and went to the docks to receive him. This was followed by a most serious riot between the combined Hindu-Muslim mob and our small community. Many Parsis and their homes, and perhaps our fire-temples, suffered from their attacks, and, thereafter, a huge mob passed through the narrow streets of the city and advanced towards Crawford Market where were located a number of shops of Parsi wine-merchants, and other Parsi properties. Had this situation been allowed to continue, hundreds of Parsi lives and homes would have been in danger.

At this point, Sir Dhunjibhoy, being quite influential in the police department, procured arms and ammunition for the Parsi shopkeepers who bravely faced the onslaught of the mob for over an hour, firing blindly.

Fortunately, the mob was carrying no arms, so the Parsis, though small in number, succeeded in stalling their advance till the arrival of the British troops dispersed the hostile crowd.

Sir Dhunjibhoy is remembered for this act of his, and the yearly jashan ceremony continues to be performed to this day.

An article on Eugene Sandow by J. R. B. Jeejeebhoy appearing in the golden jubilee souvenir of Stri Zarhosti Mandal notes, "It was at the special invitation of the late Sir Dhunjibhoy Bomanji, Kt. that Eugene Sandow (1867-1925), the Samson of the last generation, paid a visit to this land in 1904/1905. He received from his patron a large sum, the largest he had ever

obtained from any individual during his professional career, as fees for the physical treatment he gave to the Parsi magnate. It was therefore but natural that he had a soft corner for the Parsis, whom he called 'one of the most remarkable people I have come across in all my travels.'"

F. K. DADACHANJI  
Karachi

### Whither, *Parsiana*?

*Parsiana* arrives regularly and is read with much interest. The low level of subscribers noted in your subscription appeal is not necessarily due to dwindling numbers but to the apathy of community members.

NOSHIR N. DASTUR  
Bangalore

Much as I would like to renew my subscription to *Parsiana*, I have decided against it, the reason being that with maddening regularity the issues reach us three months too late!

The reading makes no sense when it is such old news. It is just looked through and goes straight into the raddi paper lot. This is the only magazine which gives news about Parsis, but when you read about things and happenings that took place months ago it doesn't stand to reason.

If issues within the city are not received on time, how can one even suggest gifting it to anyone else within the country let alone abroad? Would you please ensure that future issues are received by the readers during the current month and not three months later?

MS R. A. VAADOLIWALA

### The Editor replies

No one is more perturbed about *Parsiana's* publishing delays than the publication's proprietors and staff. Financial stringency adds to the constraints of a very small editorial team, leading to bottlenecks. Keeping our readers and subscribers in mind, we try to ensure that we include whatever is newsworthy at the time of going to press, irrespective of the issue's month-line viz the December '95 issue included coverage of the BPP press conference of February 12, 1996 on the prospective Iran Congress.

You may wonder why we do not employ more editorial staff. The reason is that our small specialized publication needs Parsis to understand the nuances of the community and the religion. Talented ones prefer mainstream journalism which offers wider avenues for career growth.

Edited by Arnavaz S. Mama



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# Events and Personalities

## Sanjan stambh's 75

For the 500-odd Zoroastrians assembled for the platinum jubilee celebrations of the Sanjan stambh (memorial column) on November 22, 1995, there was little to distinguish this Sanjan Day (traditionally celebrated on *roj Bahman, mah Tir*) from the last. Or the ones held earlier. A loosely strung cloth banner that announced the jubilee, in its own cynical way drove the point home further of a momentous occasion for celebration and consolidation being lost. If anything was achieved, it was the platform the occasion provided to launch newly elected Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustee Rustom Tirandaz to the community, and permit veteran serving trustee Jamshed Guzder to announce his willingness to stand for re-election in the forthcoming hustings. Guzder, as Sanjan Day Celebrations Committee president Rohintan Daviervalva reminded the gathering, has always graced the function "since '91, if in the country," and had made it to this year's celebration too "cancelling all his other appointments."

After the traditional jashan ceremony Dastur Kaikobad Firozi of Udvada gave a clarion call to the community to live peacefully in cohesion ("*samp vadhaare aave*"), discussing matters of conflict amicably and rising above in-fighting. Guzder in his address to the community informed that in response to his scheme of the BPP subsidizing the third child in a family (announced from this very platform two winters ago) "only 12 girls had come forward to claim the benefits." At this rate, reasoned Guzder, the community's population would decrease to just 22,000 in another 25 years time, "and we would no longer be called a community, but a tribe."

In response to queries raised, Guzder announced his intentions in his re-elected term to accept in the community children



Sanjan stambh: momentous occasion

born of Parsi mothers married to non-Zoroastrian fathers. Guzder's belief was that this debarment was not in our "*dharam*" (religion) but a result of the Daver-Beaman judgement of 1908. Guzder's pronouncements on adoption law, and promise to "change things there, but keeping in mind the orthodox view" had the gathering equally bewildered and a fair section smoldering too. Strongly chastizing the lady who raised these points with the BPP chairman, a member of the organizing committee thundered, "This is not the platform," and brought out the garlands hurriedly. It was only by negating the call for lunch that Daviervalva managed to speak his few words, or read out the messages received.

In his address to the gathering Tirandaz had called for a commitment to service. "If you cannot give money, give of yourself," he beseeched. "Provide at least an hour's

service every day for the community... We stayed in colonies, not just for marriage," said Tirandaz, raising a hearty laugh, "but to help one another." He suggested that colony residents who are now considerably well-off put aside some money for community welfare in fixed deposits, letting the weaker sections use at least the interest from it (while retaining the amount themselves) to further their means. "Nothing can be achieved without *saath* (togetherness) or *sahakar* (cooperation)," he reminded the gathering repeatedly, citing his own example of setting up an electroplating business with a small venture capital provided by friends and well-wishers.

Tirandaz further asked the community to participate in a computerized census initiated by him. "I'll bear the full cost of this community database," he announced, requesting assistance from people to gather data from their *mohallas* (areas) and villages, so as to arrive at an actual figure and break-up of the community's population. (Forms for the census as devised by Tirandaz may be obtained from him by writing to P.O. Box 5514, Dadar, Bombay 400014.)

The *amrit mahotsav* (platinum jubilee celebrations) may have lacked the glitz and glamor that was expected of it by some sections of the community. Former member of the Government of India's Minorities Commission Homi Taleyarkhan, retiring BPP chairman Eruch Desai, amongst others regretted they could not attend, despite promising to do so in communications released earlier by the Committee to the community. There was no entertainment, or even a sense of history breathed into the function. Yet, if even a part of Tirandaz's exhortations find fruit, the 75th commemoration day of the Sanjan stambh could signal a new coming in the community.

Homi J. Rogers

*Try it*



*The feel and  
fragrance of Satin*

## Boost for self-starters

Sixty-one more Zoroastrians seeking financial assistance to start their own enterprising ventures and thereby become self employed will receive Rs 1,11,35,000 through the offices of The WZO (World Zoroastrian Organisation) Trust Funds, informs a press release issued by chairman Dinshaw Tamboly. These funds have been made available to The WZO Trust Funds which screens the applications and forwards the requests to the donors — a Zoroastrian trust in the memory of Bai Maneckbai and Seth Pirojshaw Bomanjee Jeejeebhoy, acknowledges Tamboly.

Applicants from Aanand and Ahmedabad to Valsad and Vangaon, spread over 16 different urban, semi urban and rural areas of India will benefit through this project which extends interest-free loans. The maximum number of beneficiaries, 40, seek to establish themselves in transport related activities. Engineering workshops and computer centers are the other fields to be pursued by 10 applicants. Manufacturing and trading activities will see four new Zoroastrians on the scene. The other enterprising individuals want to introduce provision stores, cold storage facilities, cable TV network, watch repair establishment, pathology laboratory, export of handicrafts, improved farming inputs.

The 41 Zoroastrians helped last year "have not only been gainfully self employed, but have begun to make repayment as per schedules drawn up," notes the release. To accelerate their screening process, the WZO has requested prospective candidates to furnish details of their background, financial resources available, field of self-employment, funds required, realistic pay-back schedules and other relevant particulars. Individuals seeking to diversify their existing business or disinvest their own funds will not receive any priority, clarify the WZO officials.

## The forgotten songs

Last Pateti, the indefatigable Marzban J. Giara brought out yet another booklet in Gujarati. This time, an anthology of Zoroastrian devotional songs, *Jarthoshti Gayan Sangrah (Bhakti Geeto)*, most of which have long been forgotten. These used to be sung in Parsi homes in the good old days when the chief source of entertainment was the gramophone (or better still, the phonograph).

As Giara himself says in his introduction, in his childhood days, Parsi schools began their day, among other things, with *Roodi Savaar, Sad Hojo* and ended it with *Dafey, Dafey, Dafey*. Both these are incorporated in the booklet. But then those were the halcyon days when children, teenagers and even the elderly, sang with gusto, songs in honor of Ahura Mazda or those praising Lord Zarathushtra. There were the popular numbers too like *Jaya Jarthosht, Nabee-o-na Nabee Amar, Amari Deen Jarthoshti*, etc., many of which were composed by Parsi lyricists like Firoze R. Batliwalla and Jehangir Desai, and set to memorable tunes by Vistasp Bulsara, Kersy Mistry and others.

It is in this context that this anthology is to be particularly welcomed. Giara has indeed rendered a great service to the community in collecting and preserving for posterity these already-forgotten songs. He also rightly exhorts the major Parsi libraries, like the K. R. Cama and the J. N. Petit in Bombay and the Meherjirana in Navsari, to collect such songs so that they are not lost for good.

The book is divided into six sections, beginning with songs in honor of Ahura Mazda and ending with "Parsee Gayano."



Marshall: veteran takes aim

In between you have *monajats*, both Persian (including that indispensable one in honor of the Prophet of Prophets, *Nabee-é-bahaq morsele ba kitab...* by the late Mulla Firoz bin Kaus — strangely, only half of it has been published!) and Gujarati prayer songs, songs pertaining to Prophet Zarathushtra, etc.

There are only two drawbacks, which Giara possibly couldn't help: the book, being in Gujarati, is out of bounds for most of our youth; secondly, unless the book is accompanied by the relevant musical cas-

sette, it's a moot point how many will be able to sing these songs. They need to know what the various ragas mentioned under the songs are all about. This welcome effort is published by Giara, Dhunmai Building, 667, Lady Jehangir Road, Bombay 400014.

Adi Doctor

## Marshall's gold shot

At the 39th National Shooting Championship Competition, winning a gold in the veterans category was Darius Marshall of Calicut. He scored 80 percent in the .22, 50 meters free rifle prone position event, notes a press release.

This competition was hosted by the Coimbatore Rifle Club in the first week of September 1995. Marshall, who represented the Kerala state from the Calicut Rifle Club, informs that in his tally of medals this is the fourth gold apart from the two silver he has secured so far.

## Fascination for flowers

"Flowers have a special place in my heart... (reflecting) creation in its full splendor and glory," mentioned Ms Hutoxi H. Madon in a press release accompanying the invite to her exhibition of water colors and glow glass at the ANZ Grindlays Bank from

October 24 to November 4, 1995. Preferring to use flowers as the theme of her paintings, she adds, "It offers the greatest challenge of color besides being a feast to the eyes." Of the 40 odd paintings on display, 70 percent were sold, informs the artist.

Chinese landscapes and oriental flowers also captivate the 44-year-old artist who paints abstracts and landscapes too, stating, "There's never an end to how vivid one's imagination can run especially when it comes to planning the color schemes."

Before she became a full-time artist Madon had perforce to work for two decades as a stenographer with Bayer, devoting time to painting only in her free hours. The untimely demise of her father Jamshed K. Panthaki, when she was 18 years of age, shattered her dreams of joining an art college as she now had to assume the role of breadwinner for her family. Following her schooling at the J. B. Vachha High School for Parsi Girls in Dadar, she opted for a correspondence course in psychology to complete her graduation from the Bombay University. The self-taught artist who began with a Walter Foster Publication, *How to Draw and Paint*,



*Madon with her paintings*

has since acquired a personal library of books on painting that have helped to tutor her. Another gift that she treasured immensely and which boosted her enthusiasm for art were the Windsor and Neuter oil paints gifted by her father who used to do etching on glass as a hobby.

Before this exhibition Madon had displayed her works in some shops and boutiques that earned her the necessary confidence to display her works. For the future she plans to continue with her chosen themes believing painting helps man to discover himself "both personally and artistically and, in its highest form, (is) an expression of freedom and an enrichment of one's soul."

### 75 years and ever new

"We take pride in the fact that over a period of 75 years our group has participated in all the national and state jamborees," notes a write-up in the souvenir published on the platinum jubilee occasion of The 15th East Bombay Marzban Scout Group. To mark their anniversary year, the Group presented a play *Satam Atham* on December 30, 1995 when the chairman and managing director of REPL Engineering Ltd, Homi Patel, was the chief guest.

Guided by their motto "Ever new," the Group invariably participates in the various activities organized by the district association — inter-pack and inter-troop efficiency competitions, on-the-spot drawing competition for cubs and scouts, adventure awards, camporees, athletics, games, aquatic sports, elocution competitions and Ambulance Cup, mentions the article.

At international jamborees and rover

meets too have their Group members participated, as detailed in the historical account of their activities. A unique distinction accorded to the Group was in the year 1938 when the chief scout of the world, Lord Baden Powell visited India. The youngest cub of The 15th East Bombay Marzban Scout Group led the grand howl and garlanded the dignitary.

It was at the instance of Kaikobad Marzban, one of the founders and princi-

pals of the New High School, that The 15th Bombay Scout Troop was started in 1921 after he came in contact with B. T. Char, provincial commissioner, scouts, Mysore state. Among those involved in laying a firm foundation for the Group were A. B. Homavazir, Phiroze Lally, Rustom Talati and M. C. Mazmudar. On Marzban's demise in 1933 the Group was renamed the 15th Bombay Marzban Scout Group.

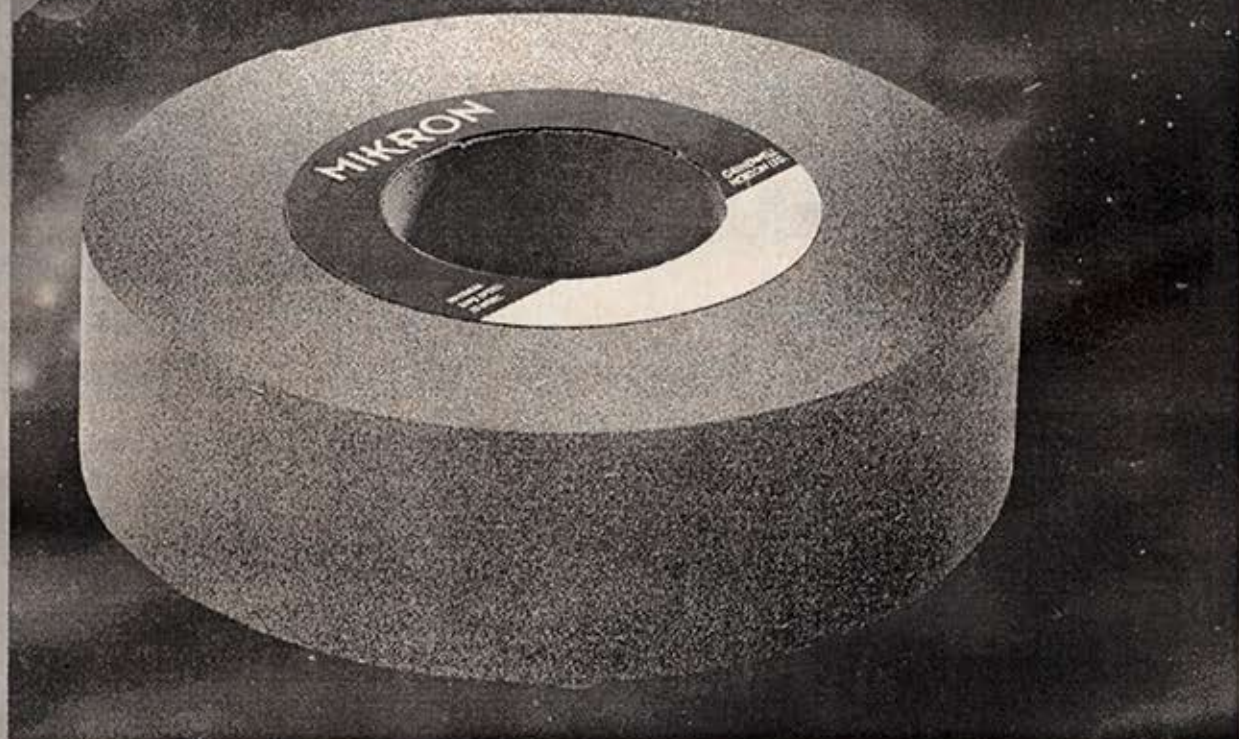
Among their scouters who went on to



*At the All Parsee Bonny Baby Contest organized by the Rustom Baug Association and sponsored by Wipro on March 17, 1996 are the winners (from left): Meherzad Dhunbhura who was conferred the rotating trophy and the first prize in the one to three years category, the most charming baby Anainah Patel, Arzan Balsara who stood first in the under six months age-group and Baktiyar Patel who won the first prize in the six to 12 months category. Seated in the front row are the judges (from left): Dr Sandeep Mehta, Dr Armaity Deboo and Dr Taher Kagalwala with the convenor Dr Mehercher Chaina*

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win acclaim for themselves were Dr Homiar Dastur who was appointed ophthalmic surgeon to the President of India, Yezdi Gandevia who became Commonwealth secretary, ministry of external affairs, Government of India, plastic surgeon Dr



**Bomi (left) and Hormuz Bhaka:**  
promoting Reza

Sam Mahalaxmivala, district commissioners (scouts) Minoo Damania and Pesu Damania... Presently the troop is led by group leader Behram Dalal with J. R. Mody serving as cub master.

## The crush concern

The best form of publicity is a satisfied and happy customer and they have no dearth of them... The best test of any product is its ability to withstand competition from cheap and mass produced substitutes and Reza fruit crushes have stood the test of time for many decades, maintains Hormuz Bhaka, the third generation entrepreneur referring to the family business started by his grandparents Shavak and Mehroo Bhaka in 1945. Over the last 50 years it has been run under different names: In Shavak's time the company was Victory Fruit Products and the products marketed under the brand name Venus. When his widow Mehroo and son Bomi ran the business the company name was S. D. Fruit Products and the brand name Reza. Since Hormuz's inclusion in the business, the manufacturing and marketing activities have been compartmentalized with the incorporation of another company S. D. Marketing Services where Hormuz and his mother Kety are partners.

The marketing company deals directly with the customers obtaining useful feedback about existing and future trends and consumption patterns. It also gives a clue to varying consumer tastes by feeling the pulse of the market and is expected to serve as an outlet for future diversification into other products in the retail food business. This will help the parent company in offering what the consumer demands.

Their marketing is mainly concentrated on bulk supply. Grade I restaurants and deluxe hotels are their major clients, with Indian Hotels Company Limited (Taj Group) being one of their most reputed customers, they inform. However, they sell through retail outlets too and welcome direct customer contact, their motto being "Customer is king." Among individual customers there are loyal ones like one Parsi lady who gets a couple of jars of fruit crush delivered every week since years now, and people coming from as far as Gorai and Vasai just to pick up a can of fruit crush for their homes and parties. Also, many going to Goa, take a can of crush for their parents and relatives only to return with a can full of fenny or wine!

Reza fruit crushes are basically fresh fruit extracts without the use of any synthetic elements. Their product range consists of fruit crushes (orange, pineapple, mango and lime), synthetic syrups (raspberry and rose) and fruit sauce. The products are competitively priced compared to other brands in the market and have a standing of their own.

Hormuz, a computer buff, avers that strict quality control standards are maintained with every thing under their personal supervision. "Nothing happens without our knowledge," he says. Purchasing is done personally by them from a network of regular suppliers with whom they share an excellent personal rapport.

Although essentially a family business, initially Shavak and Mehroo were joined in the business by their Parsi neighbor's wife who offered to be a sleeping partner. However, Shavak's demise on June 30, 1960, led to the other partner not wishing to continue in the business with his widow and the matter went into litigation for four years until arbitration resulted in a verdict in Mehroo's favor, we are informed.

In the meanwhile, on October 1, 1960, Mehroo had started business afresh. Equipped with all the knowhow but no premises, she started operations at a friend's bungalow at Shivaji Park. At that crucial juncture, she was supported financially and in every other way by her brothers and friends. After receiving their share of the dissolution from the other partner, the Bhakas — mother Mehroo and son Bomi (who had joined her by then) — purchased their present premises at Wadala.

Bomi recalls how his wife Kety got involved in the business. Soon after the demise of his mother in 1988, Bomi met with an accident. As soon as he gained consciousness after an operation, he called

Kety to his bedside with a paper and pencil. He proceeded to dictate all the aspects of running the business from manufacturing to marketing, and Kety creditably ran the business single-handedly for four months.

After weathering many a storm their business has grown from strength to strength and Reza fruit crushes have become a name to reckon with.

Villie Daruvala

Compiled by Parinaz Gandhi

## MATRIMONIAL

A 35-year-old Parsi physician from a good family, well settled in USA, seeks matrimonial correspondence from well-disposed Parsi lady professionals (25 to 35 years). Please send bio data with photograph (returnable) to:

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# "Surrounded by storytellers"

*The struggle to retain her minority identity has considerably influenced the works of Dr Roshni Rustomji-Kerns*

Parinaz Gandhi



soning her literary work. She has also penned a series of "Parsi stories," set against a make-believe town called Devinagar. They are a recollection of her

"I think I recognize the voice and the vision... The way women look at the world... Their language reverberates." Dr (Ms) Roshni Rustomji-Kerns explains her affinity for writings authored by members of her own sex. "To hear what women say and how they say it; how they use the English language," is particularly fascinating for Rustomji-Kerns, a penperson herself, who took time off from her teaching and writing schedule to co-edit *Blood into Ink*, a book wherein "South Asian and Middle Eastern women write war." The pathetic price that females have to pay for the bloody battles waged by males is portrayed through the fiction and poetry presented in this work.

Since Rustomji-Kerns herself would not write such stories, she was even more captivated. And as the co-editors mention in the book, "The hope behind our anthology is that by transfiguring blood into ink and death into discourse, we may survive beyond war into peace." What would Rustomji-Kerns like to present to her readers? "My writing crosses continents, (featuring) places, houses, people. They are stories heard from my parents, grandparents, friends. I have always been surrounded by storytellers. These stories indicate how people relate or don't relate to one another. Some parts are imagined or come in dreams," reveals the author who in the past has seen her short stories published in journals and anthologies in the USA and Canada, and is currently finalizing her novel *The Braided Tongue* which she hopes will be published soon.

"I wish I had started writing earlier," admits 57-year-old Rustomji-Kerns, presently professor emerita, Hutchins School of Liberal Studies at Sonoma State Univer-

sity, California. "Being a teacher and writer takes the same creative energy," she maintains. When she was full-time into teaching, she served as coordinator of the India Studies Program from the BA course, and had for a while coordinated women's studies too.

Following *Blood into Ink*, Rustomji-Kerns edited another anthology *Living in America: Fiction and Poetry by South Asian American Writers*, brought out in 1995 by Westview (See "Sheltering against the hurt" on page 38). For the last few months though, she has only been focussing on her own writing. As contributor to a historical account of Asian Americans, she will be focussing on those settled in central and south America, giving a first person account of why they migrated, what their journey was, their encounters with the dominant community. "Now all my writing is done on the computer," she acknowledges the support received from her husband Charles who in her words is a "big computerwalla" and helped her make the transition to the computer even though she did not know typing. It was also Charles, head librarian of Multi Media Library at Stanford University, who has been constantly reminding her to concentrate on her own writing.

*The Braided Tongue* will be her first novel to be published. But this is not Rustomji-Kern's first attempt at writing a novel. She had in the past written two novels but can't seem to trace that particular notebook. "I don't like to keep things," she explains how her unwillingness to hoard articles could have led to her jetti-

young days spent partly in Bombay and subsequently in Karachi, of her holidays with the family. "Remember, I was very thoroughly colonized," she states. "How do you fight back against colonization? How do you retain your identity and yet be true to yourself? I was very against changing names from Jamshed to Jimmy..."

To explore how thought processes work differently, what can be construed and interpreted at different times, she worked for a while at a Sleep-Dream Laboratory. That periods of sleep or quietude can last for 24 hours was a revelation to Rustomji-Kerns who finds stimulation in adventure and new experiences.

The love for books, music and travel, the respect for people of all denominations, the enjoyment of being with people — all these pleasures she imbibed from her close family. Her parents, Behram and Gool Rustomji, well-known in the community, were respected figures in scholastic circles for Behram was the principal of the Bai Virbaiji Soparivala Parsi High School in Karachi and the late Gool was a Montessori directress of different schools. Among their commendable efforts was the English translation of Dastur M. N. Dhalla's autobiography which has been serialized in *Parsiana*.

"Ours was a very simple household full of books and music. To this day I get

*continued on page 40*

# "Each one of us is a PERFECT INDIVIDUAL"



*You must know the constituents of your body before you can treat it, says ayurvedic practitioner Mehlli Bhagalia*

Amavaz S. Mama

"A rose does not want to be a daffodil, but we want to be different from what we are," says Mehlli Bhagalia. The co-founder and co-director of the Ayurveda Institute of Upstate New York (with his wife Perin) shakes his head ruefully as he reflects on stout people wanting to be slim, or short people wanting to be tall, on men who want to be like Robert Redford, or women who seek to resemble some famous actress. "Each one of us is a perfect individual, an original masterpiece at the time of conception when the blueprint is established," he states on the authority of Chanaka, the ayurvedic sage of ancient India.

"Chanaka tells us how one can have a happy, healthy baby," Bhagalia told hostess Theresa Cosco on the TV show *Insight* (Bhagalia had provided *Parsiana* with a video cassette of the interview), adding that classes at his Ayurveda Institute teach American couples the route to harmony before they conceive as also the post-conceptual care of the expectant mother — family happiness would depend on the well-being of the infant in and out of the womb, he comments. The dominant element in the dominant parent would dominate the child physically and emotionally, he adds.

Dominant element? Quoting the ancient shastras, Bhagalia says each human being is a compound of *vata* (air); *peeta*

(fire), *kafa* (water and earth). Each one is gifted with his/her own *prakruti* (variously interpreted as balance, harmony, nature, because everything in nature is in balance). "Without all three elements we couldn't survive," he says, neither in our bodies nor in our mental state. "They form the connecting link between the body and the emotions," he explains, because "thought produces the molecule which translates into emotion." Every human being is dominated by a combination of two of the elements, known as the dominant and the secondary element.

"Ayurveda is the science (or book) of life... It teaches us to read the book of life — our own book. If one only reads this one book, it would enable us to have a happy, contented life," Bhagalia told Cosco. And that is what his Institute is all about. "I try to make them (student-patients) find out for themselves as to who they are" and what they should do for themselves (US law prevents Bhagalia from prescribing, anyway) in an intensive 10-hour program of four equal sessions. He says he seeks to empower them by teaching them to look at themselves in the mirror, "know what's wrong with you, look at your tongue... Everything below the waist is taboo in Western society," he notes, but advises observation of the eliminatory functions which are a good barometer of the state of one's health.

During a brief interview with *Parsiana* on December 29, 1995 Bhagalia had explained how lifestyle and food habits work for health or its detriment. His thesis emphasizes harmony with nature, the seasons, the time of day. "Like attracts like," he says, comparing the body to a driveway where no seeds could take root unless there were cracks. Bhagalia theorized that disease could never strike where mind and body were in harmony with nature and challenges anyone to give him a cold. "I'll sit in a room full of people with colds and coughs. I'll sit and read until the cows come home," he promised Cosco.

Cold fluids in the cool hours of morning or night increase the build-up of mucus in the body. To keep colds, coughs, flu in check, we must control the water element in the system, especially during the cooler hours of the diurnal cycle, he amplifies. "There are two types of asthma — dry and wet," he told Cosco. "In the first case you balance with water; in the second you remove the excess fluid." If there is too much heat in the system, skin, blood and eye disorders would result; excess air can lead to joint and bone disorders like arthritis, he told us. The correct dietary principle involves an evaluation of which is one's dominant element. Bhagalia identifies "alienation from nature" as the primary cause of trouble.

Bhagalia distinguishes the ayurvedic

philosophy of health from the allopathic concern to "isolate germs, conquer disease." The latter is doomed to failure, he says "because we can't conquer the environment." Ayurveda, on the other hand, seeks not to cure a disease but to remove it. "Medicine is something that removes the disorder and removes itself, leaving only good health. Allopathy leaves the original poison and the medicine" in the system. In contrast Bhagalia says that ayurvedic medicine "tonifies, metabolizes and removes." A basic resource in the deshi arsenal is *trifala* or three fruits: *amalaki* (a tonic), *bibitaki* (an eliminatory agent) and *haritaki* (a metabolizer). But each plant/stem/bark has an affinity to certain areas of the

body, he adds. Anabolic metabolism, he reminds us, is the normal rebuilding state of the body; catabolic metabolism implies an excess of adrenalin (the fight or flight syndrome) produced by stress that leads to premature aging because it robs the body of the chance to rebuild.

It is difficult to accept that Bhagalia started professional life as a banker. An economics graduate from Bombay's St Xavier's College whom the Bank of India sent on assignment to Ahmedabad, Bhagalia got talking with a yogi fellow traveller in a bus. Having grown up in Jogeshwari with an academic interest in his uncle Palonji Bhagalia's ayurvedic practice, Bhagalia readily accepted the yogi's invitation to the Sabarmati Ashram where, he says, people come from distances to learn what physician Chanaka and surgeon Sushruta had taught millennia ago.

Pursuing it as a hobby outside of working hours, Bhagalia learnt yoga — *pranayam* or the science of breath. "Everything in our Indian sciences is to be done, not read," he avers, explaining that when you breathe through the right nostril you are inhaling the male, or sun, energy; through the left, the moon, or female, energy; and laughs at our dearly held belief that the nose functions as a single entity! "Change the chemistry in the body by changing the nostril through which you are breathing," he advises.

The Bhagalias had no intention to migrate but a visit to the US in 1978 changed their perceptions. Mehli continued there as a bank executive, practising ayurvedic

education in his leisure hours. Since retirement he has been teaching the ayurvedic path to good health, yoga and meditation techniques. ("Meditation is not something you can 'do'; you fall into the state of meditation by using certain techniques. Concentration is not meditation; but it could

be used as a technique beyond which you might fall into meditation.") He also provides massage therapy to four or five persons a day as he says he is proficient in oriental, ayurvedic, Japanese and Chinese systems of massage.

Perin, who had been executive secretary to the managing director/chairman of Brady/Glaxo in Bombay, continues as an administrative assistant in General Electric's research and development (R&D) center (one of the largest R&D centers in the world, according to Bhagalia) and teaches a gentle form of yoga for older people. Of their three children, the eldest Nilufer (also called Shraddha because she trusts in the Divine) is married to an Englishman in New Mexico, speaks Japanese and has been a teacher in Alaska and England. The Bhagalias' son Zarosh is in electronics sales in Syracuse and Zexes is a third year computer science student at the State University of New York.

The Bhagalias are the only Zoroastrian family in the three city ambit of New York state capital Albany, Schenectady and Troy though there are four to five intermarried Zoroastrians in the area. At Syracuse there are about 10 Zoroastrian families, he informs. Though the entire area lies within the purview of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY), it is only a rare function at New York's La Rochelle *darbe mehr* that the Bhagalias say they are able to attend.

With his penchant for awareness — "knowing your surroundings" — Bhagalia has also imbibed the Tibetan Chinese science and art of Feng Shui which aims at promoting harmony between the home/business and the natural environment. No Oriental businessman, large or small, ever starts a business or building construction without consulting a Feng Shui practitioner, he informs. "I do (these things) on a very small scale... It makes me feel good because I'm teaching, (doing) something worthwhile..."

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## In and around Manchester

Some of their functions are attended by almost 90 percent of the members. At other times barely 40 percent are present. In addition to the five or six functions annually organized by the North West Zoroastrian Community (NWZC), the nearly 80 strong Zoroastrians of Manchester, Blackburn, Bradford and Birmingham, located within a radius of 30 miles, get to meet on other occasions too. At anniversaries and social functions of importance invariably all the Zoroastrian contacts are invited, including those settled in Newcastle and Leeds, informs Ms Annu Khambatta who served on the first committee of NWZC. The members of the nine-year-old association also keep in touch through their three-page newsletter brought out every month.

Despite all their attempts at community interaction they find that four or five individuals opt to stay away from the community. What is of far more concern to the NWZC is to "try and keep the youth within the flock," points out Khambatta who has two children in the marriageable age-group. They organize debates for their young, encourage them to attend seminars in London but find that though there is camaraderie among them it is difficult to match-make as these youths, who constitute nearly one-fourth of the NWZC population, are not in the appropriate age/sex bracket. "There should be more communication between London (at a distance of 100 miles from Manchester) and our group," observes Khambatta.

Members of their community try to adopt a neutral stand on community controversies, Khambatta gives the details, with many of them enrolling as members of both the World Zoroastrian Organisation and the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe. To express their solidarity and support towards setting up a new community center in London their members purchase raffle tickets and participate in their dinner-dance. But the NWZC constituents are essentially liberal in outlook. As per their constitution, non-Zoroastrian spouses, as also children of intercommunity marriages, are enrolled but without voting rights. They are happy that there is no Parsi-Irani divide as a cause for possible conflict.

In fact the first president of their association was Taraneh Zomorodiy (daughter of Shahrokh Shahrokh) who to this day arranges for the publication of their newsletter from

her printing press. The present chairman is Cyrus Jokhi. Their committee of three executive members and four members-at-large, one of whom is a youth officer, is rotated every three years as per their constitution. The NWZC came into being in 1987 under the leadership of Prof John Hinnells. Among those who worked very hard to bring about this association is Burjor Avari, mentions Khambatta.

Barring two or three life members — one of whom is erstwhile international cricketer Farrokh Engineer — who have contributed £ 75 as their dues to the association, the rest of them pay £ 5 as their annual membership fee. When they organize functions, the catering for the meals is done by the members themselves to minimize costs. Yet the hiring of the hall plus overhead charges necessitate collection of £ 6 or more from each person to cover expenses. Currently they are seeking registration with the government and hope that some finance will be forthcoming from that end.

Among their regular functions is a jashan organized at least once a year. On such occasions they have to rely on the services of Ervad Behram Udvadewalla who is invited from Wolverhampton or Ervad Jal Karkaria, from London. Just as the priests help out on auspicious occasions, in the event of a death too are their services summoned. While some NWZC members opt for burial, the rest choose to be cremated. In case of burial, the body is interred at London's Brookwood Cemetery. Irrespective of the cause of death, a body is invariably taken to the mortuary from where it is released after three or four days. Often by the time the *geh sarna* is done, the *chahrum* prayers in Bombay or Karachi, depending on the country of one's origin, would have been completed by the family members who have stayed on in the subcontinent. A custom the Zoroastrian migrants have adopted from their new environment is the 'wake.' Following a burial or cremation, friends and relatives go to the house of the deceased to pay a condolence visit when they are treated to a simple meal of *dar-chaval*. "Everything is very solemn, very dignified," impresses Khambatta. Just as the turnout is good for celebrations, similarly, "when someone dies, the whole community is there and all help out."

Almost all the residents in their area are first generation migrants, believes Khambatta. Khambatta's family has been residing in Manchester since 1986 when her

husband Shahariar's employers, Ingersoll-Rand International, posted him there. Referring to the community settled in the area, Khambatta states, "We are a very unassuming, simple, friendly lot." Whether it be the management of their small circulating library or providing transport for functions, those with facilities invariably help out. They dream of having their own community center but unfortunately the large majority being salaried people, "*koi khas paisawalu nathi ké motu* donation *aapé* (no one is so wealthy that the association would benefit from large donations)."

Sustaining the NWZC for the present is their membership subscriptions and their fund bottle brought out each time a function is held. One member may contribute £ 10, another a penny. This is their way of expressing their solidarity for a community cause.

Parinaz Gandhi

## CIMNA's Gatha cassette

The Council of Iranian Mobeds of North America (CIMNA) has been actively pursuing the task of educating the Zoroastrian community in its scriptures and history. Its regular camps for children have been popular locally for a number of years. But their felicitous prayer recitation on tape benefit Zoroastrians all over the world.

The three-cassette compendium of *Khordeh-Avesta* prayers initially launched in 1991 had been well received. The same team of mobeds — Mehraban Firouzgary of the melodious voice, Firouz Azargoshasb who provides the translations in English and Farsi and Fariborz Shahzadi, the compiler-editor — have now produced the *Ahuna-vaiti Gatha* on tape. Unlike the *Khordeh Avesta* venture, the English and Farsi translations are not spoken but separately published in an accompanying volume.

The producers' objective — to make the work of Zarathushtra accessible to his disciples in an easy-to-understand form — has led them to break down each verse into syllables which even the beginner can recite correctly. A pronunciation guide in English accompanies the cassette.

In his preface Shahzadi has acknowledged the help of the published translations of the *Gathas* by Dr Iraj Taraporewala and Dr T. R. Sethna in providing the background and explanation to each verse. Moreover he has tried to capture the essence of each verse in its title. While the Gathic content is intact, Shahzadi notes, "It is possible

that the interpretations in this version may vary from other ones. This is because the *Gathas* are poetry (hence) the interpretation differs with each audience."

The *Ahunavaiti Gatha* book has been financed by the family of Meherbanoo (Zartoshty) Soroushian and Mehrborzin Soroushian. Expenses for the *Ahunavaiti Gatha* tape were borne by Mitra and Dr Rostom Kavosh. The package has been distributed free of charge "because the words of our Prophet should be available to all Zarthoshtis regardless of their financial situation," as notes Shahzadi.

More Zoroastrian textbooks and a correspondence course on the religion are on the anvil and financial support is welcome. Requests/donations may be mailed to The Council of Iranian Mobeds, P.O. Box 22911, San Diego, CA 92192, USA.

## Serving the Youth Court

Jimmy Doctor was sworn in as a member of the Youth Court of New Rochelle by Mayor Tim Itoni and presented with official credentials at a special ceremony in the city's Court House on February 5, 1996. Following the appointment ceremony Doctor was administered the oath of confidentiality by Judge DeLuca in the presence of commissioners of the Youth Bureau, members of the legal profession, police detectives, prominent citizens and dignitaries, notes a press release.

The Youth Court of New Rochelle is an official court under the United Court System in the State of New York where first-time juvenile criminal offenders between the ages of eight and 17 are tried. This "justice of the youth, for the youth by the youth" has proved to be very time efficient and decreases the load on the Family Court in the County of Westchester, informs the write-up.

The executive board of the Youth Court

adopts a highly selective process to pick suitable incumbents from among students living in New Rochelle. They are then trained by the District Attorney's office, a defence lawyer, a judge and the City Marshall. Upon successful completion of the training they are appointed to serve the Youth Court, taking turns to act as judges, prosecutors and defence attorneys. Punishment for the guilty is meted out in terms of community service and sentences can range up to 50 hours, notes the write-up. The Youth Court is said to have led to a very significant reduction in juvenile crime in New Rochelle.

Z. M. Zend, who forwarded the news item to *Parsiana*, notes, "Jimmy is the second Parsi Zoroastrian appointed to this position, the first being his sister Kervin." They are the children of Ervad Shapur Doctor of New Rochelle.

## Grassroots involvement

Lion Eric Daruwalla of Hounslow was privileged to take part in the 50th anniversary VE and VJ (the victory of the Allies in Europe and Japan respectively, which ended World War II) day parades in London last year, notes the Lions Club of Hounslow's newsletter of March 1996. A long serving member of the London Underground — he is station supervisor at the Finchley Central Station — Daruwalla has been a regular part of the annual Remembrance Day parades at the Cenotaph, informs the newsletter.

London Transport (of which the London Underground is an integral part) is said to be the only civilian organization permitted to march with the armed forces on Remembrance Day — a right conferred by the royal command of King George V in recognition of the dedicated busmen who drove their buses to the front line in France during World War I.

Daruwalla has also earned praise and thanks for his involvement with The Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal — a mode of fund collection for Britain's war veterans — from G. W. C. Peacock, chairman of the Wood Green Branch of The Royal British Legion, the chairman of London Transport and ex prime minister Ms Margaret Thatcher. The Legion itself had conferred upon him a special award in 1991 — a certificate of appreciation — for 21 years of involvement in the Legion's work, as notes the press release. The Appeal provides for the rehabilitation, training, employment and welfare services for ex-servicemen, their widows and families. "This is a very worthwhile cause and I should like to join the Legion in thanking you for all your work," MP John Marshall had noted in a personal letter to Daruwalla whose other social service activities include scouting.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama

## THE PARSIANA BOOK OF IRANIAN NAMES

The Iranian names of boys and girls along with their meanings which originally appeared in *Parsiana* have now been reprinted in an attractive 24-page booklet. The book, which is priced at Rs 25, is available on sale at:

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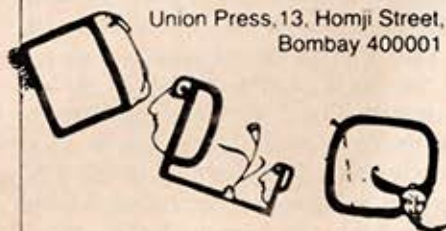
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# The Mahatma on the Parsis

*For a miniscule community, the Parsi contribution to the freedom struggle was remarkable, believed Mahatma Gandhi*

Burjor K. Karanjia

Few people may be aware that while many in the Parsi community were sharply critical of Mahatma Gandhi's imposition of prohibition, particularly because it deprived a large section of the community of their income, Gandhi himself was appreciative of the suffering imposed on the Parsis and willing to discuss the issue with leaders of the community. This apart, Gandhi was full of praise for the community -- for its philanthropy as well as for its contribution to various spheres of national life.

Researching recently on material for the Godrej Story, our attention was drawn by the eminent Gandhian, Ms Usha Mehta, to what the Mahatma had to say about the community in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Vol. 20). In the extract below the Mahatma refers specifically to the donation of three lakh rupees by the pioneer founder of the Godrej enterprise, Ardeshir Burjorji Godrej, to the Tilak Swaraj Fund: "Mr Godrej of safe fame has eclipsed all donations to the Tilak Swaraj Fund with his announcement of three lakhs of rupees. His donations to public purposes have been hitherto quite unknown. But he was induced to appreciate the necessity this time of a public announcement. I tender my congratulations to Mr Godrej and the whole Parsi community. I wish also to testify that, during the collection week in Bombay, not a day has passed without Parsi donations. Parsi ladies and gentlemen are also making door-to-door collections. Parsis are also working as pickets. Among the newspapers, too, not all the Parsi papers are hostile to the movement. But Mr Godrej's generosity puts the Parsis easily first in all India. Parsi Rustomji's Rs 52,000 would in any case have put the Parsis in a respectable position. Mr Godrej has secured the first place."

The Mahatma goes on to call for an understanding of the community's attitude

to prohibition, which he considered a very necessary reform: "The liquor shop picketing has an intimate relation to Parsis. We will have to exercise great forbearance towards our Parsi countrymen. While we cannot stop picketing altogether, we must meet the liquor dealers in conference, understand their difficulties and explain our own. Mr Godrej has earmarked his donation for liquor prohibition and the uplift of the suppressed classes."

Recalling his experience in South Africa when some whites had besieged his house and threatened to kill him and how Parsi Rustomji had come to his rescue risking his own life in the process, Gandhi writes: "When in South Africa the whites had besieged (my) house in the dead of night and wanted to kill (me), it was Parsi Rustomji who had protected (me) at the risk of his life and that of his people and stood by (me)." As long as Gandhi lived he could never forget what Mr Rustomji had done for him. The Parsis were full of virtue, truth and honesty, and he was proud of them as a race. Even if the Parsis had not collected Rs 30,000 and had only given him Rs 5 he would still have been satisfied with them. Mr Godrej had already handed him a sum of Rs 3,00,000 and he had shown to the whole of India what the Parsis were capable of doing, further notes the publication.

While deploring that Parsis as a rule sought government employment, he recommended the example set by some great Parsis: "The Parsi community had given liberally in many ways and it was not a fact that by coming to India they had not done any service to this country. Naturally they were a commercial people, and it was a pity that they had taken up government appointments lately. It was a loss to the whole of India and not to the Parsi community alone. But the education which they

had got had made them seek Government employment, and it was a great pity. Commerce had taught them to be honest and collect money and do good to other communities in this country." Gandhi asked the Parsis to take stock of the present conditions and their future, and noted, "They had fully paid their debts to the country by producing such great men as Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta and Jamshedji Tata."

He appealed to the Parsis to take part in the swaraj movement which was now going on in full swing: "The Parsis were able to compete with other communities in every department of life. If they had done so much in this country in the past, why were they keeping themselves aloof from the movement now? They were a rich community, possessing crores of rupees, and why had not they given any more money to the Fund? Dadabhai had served India by leading the life of a political recluse for the purpose of making India free, not for Parsis alone, but for all communities and races." Gandhi promised to speak to the Parsis "as their friend because he was a great admirer of theirs and was very intimate with them for a long time."

Continuing, the Mahatma said, "If the Parsis wished it, they could easily accomplish anything, because they were a small, compact community of 80,000, but that was not so with the Hindus and Muslims." If they could remain independent even before the English came, he did not know why they could not be so when they got swaraj. "It was the first duty of Hindus and Muslims to protect the smaller communities in this land. If the Hindus and Muslims were true to themselves, they would see that not a Parsi was starving before they took any morsel of food. If Hindus or Muslims wished to do anything else, then they were not working for a dharma rajya."



*In the struggle against oppression: (From left) Pandit Malviya, Kaikobad Cowasjee Dinshaw (Adenwalla), Gandhiji and Sarojini Naidu. Picture taken at Ballard Pier prior to Gandhiji's departure*



*for the Round Table talks; and Parsi Rustomji (inset and second from right, below) "the Grand Old Passive Resister" of South Africa. To his right are Gokhale and Gandhi*

He wanted "to make the Parsis fearless and drive away their doubts" and he wanted them "to devote their energies for the welfare of this country. If they could do so, they could get swaraj this year, and they could also right the Khilafat wrong."

In passing, the Mahatma criticizes those who inveigh against the non-cooperation movement launched by him. He quotes the example of Ardeshir Godrej against whom the British rulers passed a secret circular not to purchase any Godrej products, for his temerity in donating three lakh rupees to an anti-British cause. Gandhi writes: "A close friend points out that those who inveigh against non-cooperation seem to forget that all these years the Government has non-cooperated with our culture, our language and our race. We would be the biggest fools if we do not resort to non-cooperation against this system. A fresh example of the Government's non-cooperation even at the present day, and an example which reveals its meanness, is seen in its dealings with Mr Godrej. This large-hearted gentleman has donated money to the Tilak Swaraj Fund earmarking the contribution for the uplift of the untouchables and for propaganda against drink. This (has) provoked a secret circular from the Government to the effect that no Godrej safe should be ordered for any of its departments, which used to go in for numbers of them in the past. Because Mr Godrej (has) contributed to the Tilak Swaraj Fund, the 'just' Government has boycotted his safes. How should the people deal with such a malicious and vindictive Government, if not by resorting to non-cooperation with it?"

Reverting again to Parsis and their connection with the freedom struggle, Gandhi refers to the many contributions made by Parsis: "Whenever I hear people say that the Parsis had not joined the movement, I

have merely smiled. The Parsi population in the country totals one lakh. On the basis only of numbers, their contribution would be full if they gave Rs 4,120, provided the same number of members and accounted for 824 spinning-wheels. As a matter of fact, Rs 4,120 have come from them just by way of petty contributions. The sums which Parsi friends sent anonymously must have come to this total. I also include in this Fund Parsi Rustomji's contribution of Rs 52,000. The Parsis must have, I believe, provided 4,120 members too. Some Parsi volunteers have been enrolling members of the Congress and doing excellent work in Bombay. There has been a Parsi lawyer, too, who gave up practice. One gentleman has resolved to utilize his scientific knowledge for the service of the people. It is true that the number of spinning-wheels among them is small, but even so Parsi women, and some men too, have taken up the work. Some Parsis also go out to picket liquor-booths.

"How can one say, in the face of this, that they have in any way done less than others? Not all papers run by them are opposed to the movement. The services of Sanj Vartman are known to all. Who has not heard of Shri Bharucha's hard work? As for the work being done by some Parsi ladies, I shall give my experiences some other time, but there is one name I must mention. The granddaughter of India's 'Grand Old Man' has been working tirelessly. She has, actually, adopted a completely khadi dress. Even if the Parsi community had done no more than what they have, we would have reason to be grateful



to them, would have no reason for pointing a finger at them.

"But the fact is that Shri Godrej has done something which far exceeds any other performances. He has contributed three lakhs. No other single individual has given so much. True, the entire amount is not available in cash today, but it is as secure as if offered in gold. He has earmarked the sum for two of the purest items in our program, banishing liquor and Antyaj uplift. Money was earmarked for the latter cause on his insistence. For myself, I would have preferred to employ only Hindus' money for this work. It is for them to carry out this particular reform. But how could I stand in the way of this friend who offered what he did in utter sincerity of heart? With the receipt of this amount, I believe the total contribution by Parsis, so far as my information goes, will easily come to not less than four lakhs, leaving out the value of the gifts promised by some of them. We cannot thank Shri Godrej and the Parsi community sufficiently."

Finally, to manage the funds collected for the freedom struggle in a business-like and becoming manner, Gandhi quotes a resolution passed by the Bombay Provin-

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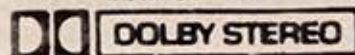
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cial Congress Committee appointing a sub-committee to manage the funds, on which the only Parsi member was Ardeshir Burjorji Godrej.

"The Bombay Provincial Congress Committee has come to a decision on the question of the management of the big collection made by it in a most business-like and becoming manner. I quote from memory the effective part of its resolution:

"Whereas the All-India Tilak Memorial Fund collections made during the month of June were made not to meet provincial needs merely but in order to fulfil the obligation incurred at Bezpada and in order to meet the requirements of provinces in need of help, in the opinion of the



*Mani Bhavan at Gamdevi, Bombay,  
houses the memorabilia of the Gandhi era*

Committee it is desirable to entrust a special committee with the control and management of the collections. Messrs Raghavji Purushottam, Velji Lakhamsi Napu, Revashankar Jagjivan Jhaveri, Umar Sobani, Jamnalal Bajaj, Ardeshir Burjorji Godrej, Shankarlal Banker and Lakshmidas Tairsi be appointed a committee to control and manage the said funds, subject to the following conditions:

"\*The non-cooperation expenses of the Provincial Congress Committee to be a first charge on the funds.

"\*The other provinces to be helped on the advice of the All-India Congress Committee in respect of the spread of the charkha and khadi, elevation of suppressed classes, national schools, famine relief and prohibition of liquor."

"It is an act of self-denial, for which the Bombay Committee deserves the warm congratulations of the country. The one intention running through the resolution is to put the administration of the large funds beyond suspicion and on a sound footing."

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*Status of Women: sacred and secular - 5***Educated, not emancipated**

Dr Ketayun H. Gould

Higher education for their women  
could threaten the domestic peace,  
feared the Zoroastrian men

*The image of a liberated Zoroastrian female on par with the male is only an illusion, an ideal that has yet to be realized. There is no denying that in certain spheres she has been granted equal opportunities but she has had to suffer discrimination too. This article which will run into six instalments analyzes the relevant texts and traditions to study the status of women in the ancient, medieval and modern periods.*

*As it originally appears in Religion and Women (a publication of the State University of New York Press, 1994) the paper entitled "Outside the discipline, inside the experience: women in Zoroastrianism" is a researched, academic presentation. Since Parsiana will be carrying an abridged version of the text to make it simpler for the lay reader, we will not be detailing the sources that the author painstakingly cites at each instance.*

*In the first four instalments we learnt that certain divinities perceived as female entities were venerated, that the soul of a dead man was said to be met by a female figure on its upward journey. Yet within the stronghold of the aristocracy and priesthood in the pre-Zoroastrian era, paradise was denied to women. With the advent of Zarathushtra, both men and women were*

*deemed allies of Ahura Mazda to fight the evil forces. The domestic routine though was considered to be of prime concern to the female in the ancient period. While marriage and the begetting of children is advocated in Zoroastrianism, the prevalent belief was that menstruation causes a woman to lose her ritual purity and spread impurity if she comes in contact with others. Even though religious equality was denied to females in ancient times, within the confines of a patriarchal society women were ceded certain economic and legal rights. Women had to bear considerable hardships and suffering in the medieval period when Zoroastrianism was relegated to the status of a minority religion. Also noticeable were the double standards that condoned remarriage and adultery among men but censured females who dared to take the same liberties.*

*With the introduction of formal education for girls in modern times they were able to assert their socioeconomic independence. However within the religious sphere they continued to be discriminated against, as this fifth instalment indicates, and the privileges enjoyed by men who had married out of the community were denied to their female counterparts.*

The socioeconomic independence of women has often been pointed out as an outstanding characteristic of the Parsi Zoroastrian community (Eckehard Kulke, Leela Visaria, Malini Karkal). However, the checkered history of this phenomenon has usually been glossed over in an effort to glorify the past. The move to India led

to the adoption of certain Hindu customs like infant marriages that did not show a decline until the last part of the 19th century (Gooloo H. Sahiar). Polygyny also prevailed during this period, with the Parsi Panchayet (a quasi-judicial-cum-social body) forbidding bigamy, but dispensing permission to remarry if the first wife was

unable to bear children. At the same time, however, the patriarchal structure of society was gradually being eroded by the fact that by the middle of the 17th century the Parsis had made the transition from villages to towns, and had branched out from agriculture to become artisans, merchants, traders and bankers. By the end of the 18th century, there was an exodus from the hinterlands to the port of Bombay, where the Parsis assumed the mercantile role, which became a source of their wealth and power. They established a mutually beneficial relationship with the British as "mediators and pace-setters of social change" (Kulke) — a role that would expose them to what must have seemed like a very liberal Western system of sex-role relations. Gradually, the Parsis abandoned the system of purdah, and the female members of the families of prominent reformers and some sethias (business magnates) mixed socially with outsiders at private and public functions. By 1884 this "innovation" had grown into a popular custom among the Parsis (Sahiar).

The changeover though was not as smooth as Kulke maintains — that Parsi reformers interested in "purifying the religion" were successful in eliminating such customs as infant marriages, polygyny, or the prohibition of widow remarriages, since these practices were only assimilated superficially from the Indian environment. In fact, the tenacity with which these customs hung on for a few generations attests to the fact that the priests, who were the spokespersons of the community during the early years of the Parsi settlement in India, gave it their tacit stamp of approval. However, when Bombay became the new stronghold of Parsi immigrants, it was evident that the strength of the clergy in the new city was weak. The Bombay Panchayet, which sought to carry on the leadership function of the community, became an organ for hereditary membership for leading merchant families.

This change from priest to laity in leadership positions was a mixed blessing for rulings affecting the status of women. For example, the Panchayet passed regulations against bigamy, but tolerated it among its own members. It tried to control the free movement of females by interjecting an interesting religious twist in one of its ordinances. In 1819 the Panchayet ruled that no woman could stir out of the house before sunrise and after sunset, and no woman could visit Hindu temples or Muslim tombs or perform any related ceremo-

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The accompanying charge that "superstition and pernicious practices had taken root among Parsi women (Jehangir R. P. Mody)" turned out to be a very clever ploy on the part of Punchayet leaders, because it ended up appealing to both the orthodox and reformist wings of the community. The conservatives were looking for an acceptable way to turn the tide of alien influences, which they blamed for ruining the traditional sex-role structure of the community. They were afraid that the newfound freedom of Parsi women would lead to "numerous cases of divorce and domestic trouble reported in England which were attributed to mutual intercourse between the sexes (M. M. Murzban)." The reformists worried about how the community would "abjure priestcraft... organize a new national church founded on simple tradition of good thought, good word, good deed... weed scriptures of its verbiage (Behramji M. Malabari)."

The turmoil over the religious/ethnic community identity was also fanned by the introduction of Christian mission school education that the Parsi middle-class recognized as an avenue of upward mobility, but also feared for its ability to convey

Christian teachings. The 1839 conversion of two Parsi boys in Rev John Wilson's school stirred up the community to a state of frenzy, especially since Wilson attacked the validity of Zoroastrian teachings. The community realized that the double-edged effect of education, both in helping the community and undermining the religion, could only be dealt with if the Parsis themselves became knowledgeable about their own religious traditions (John R. Hinnells).

There were, however, other changes that were taking place in the educational arena in the mid-19th century where the outcry was no less bitter. The first schools for female education were being established, originally by missionaries, and later by organizations like the Students' Literary and Scientific Society. At first, the schools provided education in the vernacular language (Gujarati), although education in English was provided by Parsi schools after 1860. Of course, the females could have attended the girls' schools established by missionaries between 1824 and 1830. But the Parsis, like other respectable families, were opposed to breaking purdah and sending girls out of the homes to acquire English schooling

that might lead women "to make slaves of their husbands (R. P. Masani)."

The first Indian girl who was sent to such a missionary school through the efforts of a very unusual, strong mother happened to be a Parsi Zoroastrian. She has written a feminist document that presents what it was like in 1842 to encounter the ire of the community in acquiring English education. Dosebai Cowasjee Jessawalla's autobiography (1911) is the only piece of literature that drives home the point that although the male Parsi reformers, who are lauded for their pioneering efforts on behalf of female education deserve all the credit, the girls themselves — the real heroines — are a forgotten page in history.

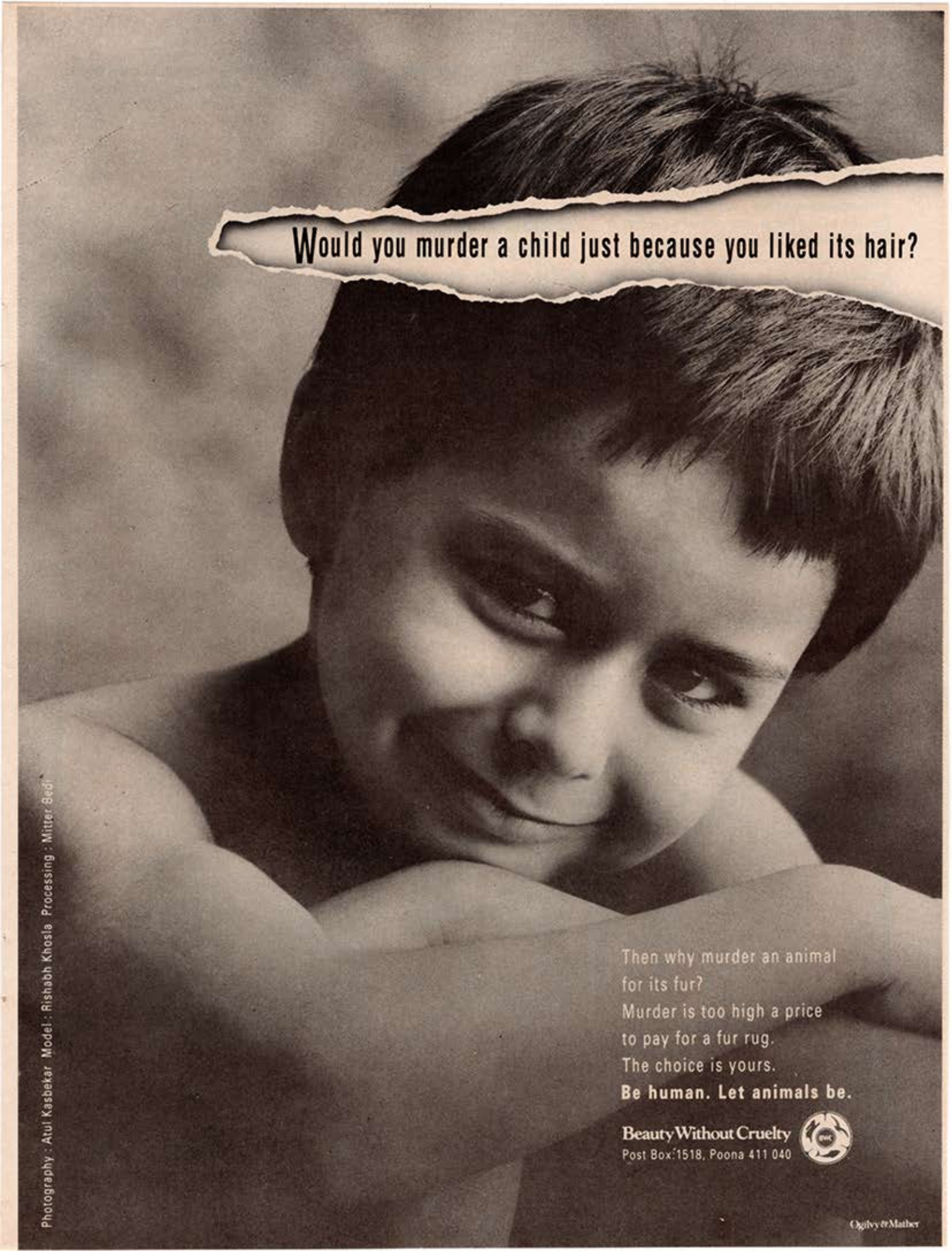
Ultimately, the sethias themselves, and then the government, decided that the idea of female education had gained enough public support to risk their participation in establishing such schools. By 1881 the census recorded that "over 15 years of age, the smallest proportion of illiterate, either male or female, is found in the Parsi population" (Census of India 1883). This fact did not exactly overjoy the majority of the community. Newspaper articles expounded the theory that "education would spoil the



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health and delicate bodies of the females. They need education in English, but they need sufficient education, nothing beyond that (*Kaiser-E-Hind* 1902)."

The 1880s saw the beginning of yet another radical trend that was not so obvious in terms of its consequences for the future of the community. Visaria has demonstrated that as early as 1881 the marital fertility of the Parsis was only 46 percent of the maximum potential. Obviously, this finding indicates that even before the introduction of modern contraception, resort was sought to some form of control of fertility within marriage. The continuing demographic decline of the Parsi community during the 20th century with its pattern of late marriage, nonmarriage, and low fertility has led to a few studies to understand and possibly deal with this critical phenomenon (Visaria, Ketayun H. Gould, Karkal). The 1981 census reveals that the Parsi population of India was 71,630, with 62,478 or 87.2 percent of them living in greater Bombay (Census of India 1981, Karkal). The 21.5 percent decline in population in the 1971-1981 decade (some of it due to emigration) is disastrous for the survival of an endogamous ethnic minority community that sees itself facing extinc-

tion if these trends continue unabated (Gould).

This topic itself has great significance for understanding the bitter religious controversy regarding conversion and inter-

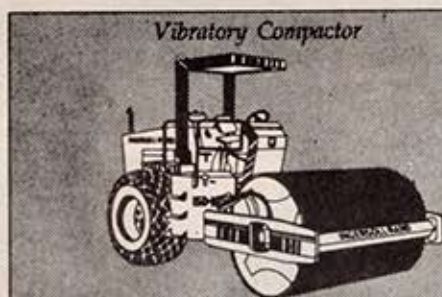
## Newspaper articles expounded the theory that education would spoil the health and delicate bodies of the females

marriage, and the ambivalent attitude toward the status of women in Zoroastrianism. Among the Parsis, a marriage is recognized as a "Parsi marriage" when both parties are Parsi Zoroastrians, and the priest consecrates the marriage by the ashirvad (blessings) in the presence of two Parsi witnesses. Despite this regulation, it has been shown that many Parsi men took non-Parsi wives, especially during the early

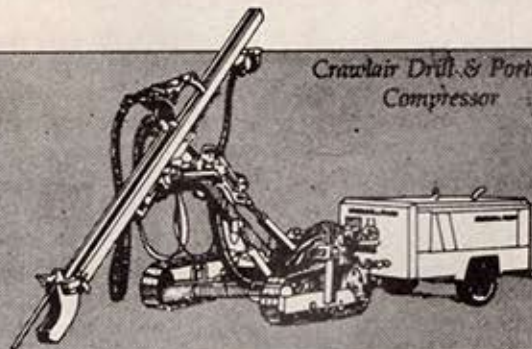
years of their settlement in India (Sahiar). It is also evident that these non-Parsi wives, as well as some other adults like personal servants, were initiated into the Zoroastrian religion (Sahiar). The children of these intermarriages between Parsi men and non-Parsi women, as well as the illegitimate children of Parsi men had also been accepted into the religion by having an initiation ceremony that is reserved for children of both Parsi Zoroastrian parents.

The occurrence of these phenomena are attested to by the fact that from time to time there were public outcries about admitting such persons to the fire-temples, and consigning their bodies to the towers of silence. In fact, in 1770, this matter was referred for clarification to the Zoroastrian authorities in Iran who saw nothing objectionable in admitting converts. In 1818 the Panchayet decreed that the initiation ceremonies of children of Parsi fathers and "alien" mothers could not be performed without its sanction. Notice that in the patriarchal religion there is no record of Parsi women marrying non-Parsi men, and the consideration that children of such unions can be initiated into the religion.

In 1903 a member of a prominent industrialist family in Bombay married a French



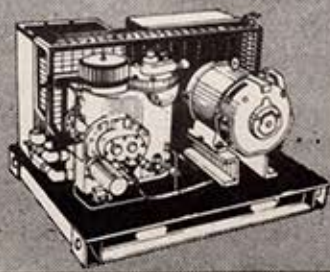
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woman while he was abroad. When he returned to India, he had her converted to Zoroastrianism and married her in a Zoroastrian ceremony. An anjuman (community) meeting passed a resolution that she could not enter a fire-temple, use Parsi trust funds, or have her remains consigned to the towers of silence. The resulting court case, popularly known as "the Parsi Punchayet case of 1908," set the standard on conversion that has not been challenged to this day. The Bombay High Court ruled that even if a non-Parsi is duly admitted into the Zoroastrian religion, such an individual is not entitled to the uses and benefits of the funds and institutions that are under the Punchayet's control, since these privileges are traditionally reserved for only those individuals who are Parsi Zoroastrians (a caste). Thus, the ruling spelled out that a Zoroastrian could not be automatically considered a Parsi. The judgment upheld the customary definition of the Parsi community as follows: Parsis who are descended from the original Persian emigrants, and who are born of both Zoroastrian parents, and who profess the Zoroastrian religion, the Iranis from Persia professing the Zoroastrian religion, who come to India, either temporarily or permanently, and the children of Parsi fathers

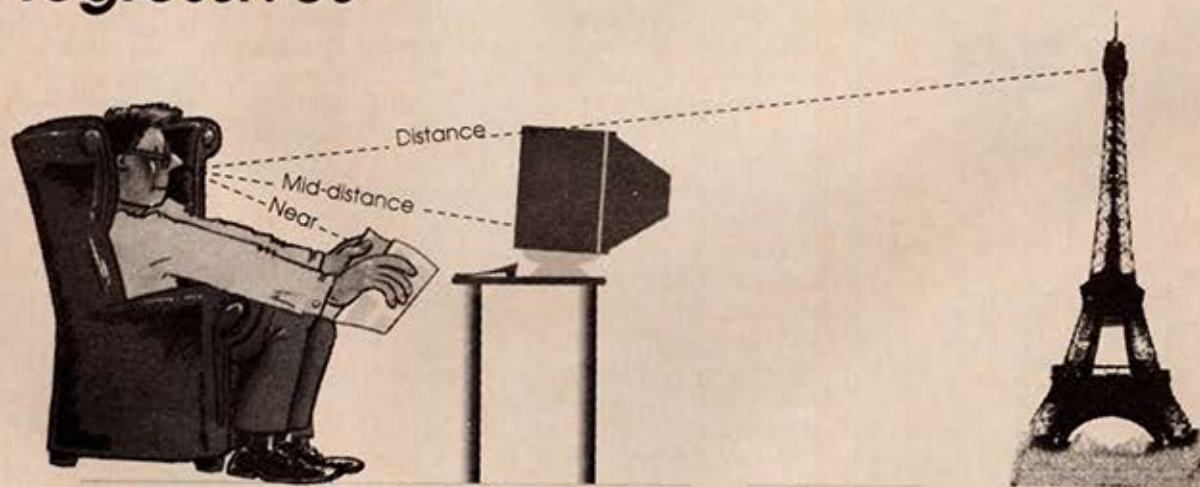
by alien mothers, who have been duly and properly admitted into the religion (Sapur Faredun Desai).

A related case, Saklat vs Bella 1925, did involve a child of a Parsi mother and a non-Parsi father. This child (a girl) was the "orphan" daughter of a Goanese Christian father and a Parsi mother who was brought up in a Zoroastrian household of Rangoon from early infancy. After her initiation ceremony was performed, Bella was taken by her adoptive father (a Parsi) to the Rangoon fire-temple on March 21, 1915. Ten days later, three members of the Parsi community of Rangoon filed a suit against Bella and the adoptive father, claiming that they had "not only wounded the religious feelings entertained by religiously inclined Parsis, but also caused the desecration of the said sacred temple (Privy Council Judgement)." The case was thrown out in the preliminary judgement, and the chief court of lower Burma agreed with the initial judgement. But on appeal to the Privy Council, they ruled that Bella was "not entitled as of right to use the temple, or to attend or to participate in any of the religious ceremonies performed therein (Privy Council Judgement)." But the judges also noted that while the trustees "can treat her as a trespasser...it does not follow that

they are bound so to treat her (Privy Council Judgement)." Thus, the right of admission to converts could be decided by the trustees of the fire-temple. This particular point in the ruling, however, is only a salve at this point, since nearly all the community trusts governing fire-temples and towers of silence require the beneficiaries to be both Parsis and Zoroastrians (Feroza Paymaster and Jeroo Gorimar, *Parsiana*).

The succeeding years saw the conflict over these religious/societal issues translate itself into questions regarding the literal meaning of Zoroastrian scriptures, tenets, doctrines and tradition. The orthodox and reformist camps battled it out at several Zoroastrian conferences, with some elite reformists, trained at Western universities, pushing for a more rational, less ritualistic view of the religious tradition. The early 1940s saw at least two major events that shook the orthodox foundation of the community: the mass initiation ceremonies of children of Parsi men and non-Parsi women in the village of Vandsa, and the "wrongful" consecration of the Fasli fire-temple in Bombay (Adi F. Doctor, *Parsiana*). The furor resulted in the reformist group suggesting a round table conference to settle various religious issues, but the orthodox wing refused on the

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# Farah & Tanya

grounds that further discussions would snuff out "whatever faith that Zoroastrians had in their scriptures (Doctor)." The attacks and counterattacks between the two camps were played out in the Parsi newspapers over the next decades, with clear lines being drawn at times between those who supported the reformist and those who supported the orthodox cause, and a turn-around in editorial support at other times that infuriated supporters. Doctor mourns the effect of all these factors on community identity today, since he views with alarm the fact that "fissiparous tendencies and internecine squabbles and wrangles have done far more damage to the orthodox cause than the attacks of all the heterodox thinkers put together."

An examination of some other laws might provide further proof of the ambivalent attitudes toward women in Zoroastrianism. In 1868 the Legislative Council, Calcutta, had introduced a bill to legalize marriages between members of communities who were not Christians. The Parsis, afraid of the implications of such a bill for interreligious marriages, prevailed on the government to pass the Special Marriage Act, commonly known as the Civil Marriage Act of 1872, making the contracting parties renounce their Zoroastrian religion. However, in 1918 a Parsi woman married a Christian not under this act, but under the Indian Christian Marriage Act of 1872. She continued to practice her religion, and on her death, her relatives wanted her body consigned to the towers of silence. After consultation, her body was consigned to the chotra where "doubtful" bodies are assigned. The decision was still based on the belief (supported by the advocate general) that even if she remained a Zoroastrian she went out of the community by having married a non-Parsi.

During the intervening years, the question again surfaced in 1948 when the trustees of the Punchayet were concerned about the "large number" of Parsis marrying outside the community (Desai). The trustees drew up a case for opinion, and they were advised that if the woman continued to be a Zoroastrian, the only way they could deprive a Parsi woman marrying a non-Parsi from enjoying the benefits of Parsi institutions was to prove one thing: that there was a prevalent custom that such a marriage meant that she left the community automatically. However, the opinion stated that legally, it was not possible to prove such a custom. As a result of this opinion, the Bombay Prevention of Excommunication Act, 1949, was passed.

The issue of how the Parsi community should respond to inter-marriages of Parsi females was complicated further by the passage of the Special Marriage Act of 1954, which nullified the necessity of renouncing one's faith in the case of a civil marriage (required by the Civil Marriage Act of 1872). The 1954 law strengthened the argument that a Parsi woman does not leave the community automatically when she marries a non-Parsi, as long as she continues to profess the Zoroastrian religion. Again, the trustees asked for legal advice, and were told that the Bombay Prevention of Excommunication Act, 1949, had already established the rights of Parsi women who married non-Parsis but continued to practice the Zoroastrian faith.

The roadblocks, however, to establishing and maintaining the religious rights of these Parsi women are numerous. The main problem are some orthodox high priests who exert their authority in their own "territories" (Parinaz Toddywalla, *Parsiana*), and influence their anjumans to support their decisions to prevent such women from entering fire-temples, attending religious ceremonies, and having their remains disposed of in the customary Zoroastrian traditions of the community. In fact, they also refuse to accept the 1908 Parsi Punchayet case decision by not performing the initiation ceremonies of children of any mixed marriages, or offering the sacred elements that are required at such ceremonies so that other nonlocal priests could perform the navjote (Toddywalla). Thus, there is a checkered pattern of compliance with the Special Marriage Act of 1954, with different anjumans/punchayets following their own individually defined rules or practices.

*To be concluded.*



Dr. Ketayun H. Gould is professor emerita in the School of Social Work, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the United States. She is a partner, along with her husband, in Independent Scholars Associated in Stafford, Virginia. She opted for early retirement to pursue her research and scholarship. Her writings have dealt with two main areas: feminist theory, models and practice frameworks in the area of women and ethnic minority concerns, and historical and demographic studies of the Parsi Zoroastrian community in India. Currently she is authoring a book on the historical and demographic decline of the Parsi Zoroastrian community in the rural and urban areas of Gujarat.

# FOR SOUND RESULTS

First there was sea. After that came the land. Next followed the erections and with that the sound effects. This is not a new theory of creation but a measure of time to indicate Burjorji Mistry's association with the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) in Bombay and the different auditoria constructed on its premises at Nariman Point. Mistry remembers the function when Sir Homi Mody had thanked the then chief minister of Maharashtra for gifting 10 acres of the sea at a nominal rent of about two rupees a year for perpetuity. Subsequently the land was reclaimed by the NCPA to house thereon the Experimental Theatre and the Little Theatre, the Tata Theatre and the upcoming Drama Opera Arts complex.

In all these ventures the man entrusted with helping in the designing and/or execution of acoustics was Mistry who along with the architects, Patel, Batliwalla, Manohar and Associates, has worked as a team on different landmarks. "Everyone talks of acoustic treatment which presumes that the patient is sick. It should be acoustic design," clarifies Mistry, a physicist by training. "A theater is built inside-out," he adds, "after determining the parameters and needs of the performing and viewing space." At the auditorium under construction, the interiors will be designed such that half the floor space will be reserved for the stage, the seating capacity being restricted to 1,300. "This project will be one of its kind in India and will enable foreign dance troupes or orchestras to come in full strength to perform in India. Until now they did not have such performing space," says Mistry, seated on his couch at the NCPA Guest House where he has presently taken up temporary residence to be able to monitor from close range the progress of the building. This living arrangement saves the energies of the 77-year-old sound and theater specialist who would otherwise have needed to commute regularly from his residence at Marine Lines, to the office of the architects at Napean Sea Road, to the NCPA complex at Nariman Point.

Within this complex has also arisen a high-rise residential building which the



**Burjorji Mistry's  
acoustic expertise  
is sought in the  
construction  
of landmark  
auditoria in India**

Parinaz Gandhi

critics have dubbed a "monstrosity," but according to Mistry it was the revenue raised from the sale of these flats that helped finance the new auditorium estimated to cost between 20-30 crore rupees. The Tata group of companies are the other major financiers along with other business groups and individuals. In response to those who may well ask, 'Does India need such a thing? Why not use that money to feed the poor?' Mistry has an answer: "For the sake of art every country needs such a thing." Work on this auditorium commenced four to five years ago and should be ready for use by December 1996, hopes Mistry. "India is a strange place," reports Mistry. "On one side the government helps and on the other side functions so bureaucratically, asking irrelevant questions (tantamounting to) 'Why is your nose crooked?' That's taken up considerable time."

The man who has been credited with designing over 500 auditoria and cinema houses all over the world has slowed down his pace of work, preferring not to accept any outside project on the rationale, "I've become aged, insecure in mind and body," he says with a straight face. Mistry has benefitted from varied work exposure. His pre-war and war years with the Royal Air Force were rewarding. But when he opted to work in India, he was disappointed. For a while he worked with a group of people involved in the production and distribution of films, and ownership and building of cinemas. He then branched out on his own.

His first cinema, in Nairobi, built in 1949 for an international operator is still functional. But ask him which is his best work, and prompt comes the response: "The next one. People forget that you never stop learning." He then recalls the words of Einstein who when asked by an upstart journalist how much he had learnt in the course of his long hours of work had replied, "How little I know." Mistry too has adopted the same maxim and believes, "People should learn from their mistakes instead of trying to cover them up. We should constantly analyze and find out

*"People believe that if you study more science, you become godless. But it's exactly the opposite"*

what we could have done, what we missed out on, what we did wrong... There are only two people who never make mistakes — a bloody fool and God."

A good theater, maintains Mistry, is one where the audience can see and hear in a comfortable and pleasant environment... where they don't have to keep shifting in their seats... after the show is over they don't feel the need to say a word about the auditorium." He talks at length about the creation and functioning of the Tata Theatre that has a seating capacity of almost 1,100. On this assignment the world's leading architect Philip Johnson and physicist/acoustician Dr Cyril Harris chose to work as a team for the first time. To resemble the intimacy and rapport shared between the artistes and the audience in the traditional Indian 'baithak' setting it was decided that the Tata Theatre would have no proscenium, no barrier, no curtains to differentiate between the performers and the viewers. It was also expected that no electronics will be in use at the Tata Theatre for the simple reason that there is no sound system which will not color the sound that it reproduces. Further, while in the west musicians are trained to become sound operators, such facilities do not exist in India with the result that "the attendant who finds it difficult to catch the whispered endearment 'meri pyari (my dear)' will unknowingly increase the volume and when a man's shouts are supposed to be disturbing to the ear, the attendant will tone it down," points out Mistry.

Any talk of a multipurpose hall is anathema to Mistry who explains that a cinema is meant to reproduce what is recorded in the film while for an orchestra, an auditorium is also part of the orchestra; another instrument without which the music would be lifeless. An auditorium where you mix the two mediums is like a "woman in a man's body — a horror," was Mistry's invariable lesson to his students at the Film Institute and the Drama Institute. Since most auditoria in India are not able to do justice to visiting orchestras, for best effects, Mistry has often been called upon to create an acoustic shell such that the sound does not get dissipated on the stage. Last

year, when Zubin Mehta had toured India with the Israel Philharmonic, Mistry, as before, had designed that shell.

When it comes to a cinema, Mistry takes maximum pride in the Satyam Sundaram Sachinam complex (a multiplex unit of three auditoria) that he designed at Worli where for the first time he pioneered a technology whereby the screen would have no black border which he perceived was a "constraint and narrowing of the visual field... It's like watching a *madari* (roadside artiste) perform from the second floor." From their seats the viewers should feel that they are a part of the movie scene, he insists.

The constant urge to innovate, to explore new avenues, Mistry says he imbibed from Father Rephal who taught him maths and physics when he was an undergraduate student at St Xavier's College. The analytical and rational thinking that Rephal inspired among his students may have had no bearing on the University curriculum and any student indicating that he was interested in a degree was requested not to attend his classes. Mistry graduated with a first class first and thence proceeded to the Indian Institute of Science at Bangalore to do his PhD. But midway through the course Mistry's services were requisitioned by the Government of India defence wing and then passed on to the Royal Air Force (RAF) and he was deputed to their research wing in England just before and during World War II.

While abroad he availed of the opportunity to do his BSc in structural engineering and MSc in telecommunications from the University of London. "War does some good things and some terribly cruel and horrible things," in Mistry's opinion. "When it's a choice of man or materials, the correct decision is 'lose man.' Man is human fodder while the sinews of war are materials. The objective of bombing is more to maim than to kill; the reason being if you kill one Johnny, a few will cry but if you maim one person you take away the energies of others in caring for him, thereby diverting useful manpower," he elaborates. Mistry should know for when he was deputed by the RAF to oversee the winding



PHOTO: MANOJ K. JAIN

up of the Air Raid Precaution wing in India, he happened to be on the same ship that exploded in the Bombay harbor, wounding him substantially. In the process his colon was destroyed and to this day he cannot eat any foods that leave a residue.

The positive side of combat are the new techniques developed to train man. Aptitude testing, the theory of management, faster methods of reading and assimilation... are the outcome of war. Men were taught reading skills such that 400 pages of technical matter could be covered in one hour. And since the English language was found to contain 50 percent of superfluous words, it became easy for the reader to scan the written words. In the process of perfecting this skill he admits, "I have awful spellings but I don't care to correct them. Where are the rules and regulations?" he adds defiantly.

When aptitude testing was developed during the war, subjects were required to answer stupid questions without any forethinking. Questions were in the nature of "How long is a piece of string?" "How far can you go into the woods?" There could be several correct responses to the first one: The distance from one end to the other; or twice the distance from one end to its mid point; or... For the second query the right response would be: When you are halfway through it. After that you are getting out of it.

The purpose of education, according to Mistry, is to "apply it truthfully and (purposefully) for result-oriented action." He gleefully cites the case of a Parsi who ran a workshop at Tardeo insisting on adding the suffix CIE to his name. When the British administration chose to question him diplomatically, his unabashed response was, "I am a Cast Iron Engineer."

"Many people have degrees but no application," observes Mistry who worked as an examiner for the Bombay University. He is disturbed by the prevalent attitude of judging a person's prowess by his bio data

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and refuses on principle, to supply it to anyone who wants to engage his services on the merit of academic qualifications. "I am prepared to be evaluated and cross-examined but I say no to a bio data... When you go to a doctor or a lawyer do you ask for his marksheet first?"

Mistry's foundation in education was laid at the Master Tutorial High School. Staying in Andheri he would commute daily to the Nana Chowk area where his school was located. If

he got a chance, he would surreptitiously cycle his way back and forth without his father's knowledge, remembers Mistry. His father Ardesir Jivanji Mistry was an engineer-architect who ran his own organization. "He had a very funny attitude to life," acknowledges Mistry. If people would go to him with complaints about his son he would tell them, "I have fulfilled my obligation in educating him."

The nature of their complaints? The usual — roams around, does not put on proper clothes... The latter is now constantly expressed by his wife, laughs the bald-headed physicist with a take-me-or-leave-me countenance, attired in a shirt that he seemed to have outgrown but with a pocket accommodating his constant stationery companions including a six-inch ruler. Mistry's wife Pola (née Sabavala) whom he fondly addresses as Popo or Popee much to her chagrin was an announcer with the All India Radio "reputed to have one of the finest broadcasting voices in English" because of which she is still invited there even though she has retired. Their son Kaivan does lighting for plays and exhibitions.

"According to my wife, I am not married to her because (contrary to the prevailing Parsi custom that is supposed to have originated with our oath to King Jadav Rana) I insisted on getting married before sunset," discloses Mistry, firmly of the view that under the Zoroastrian religion darkness is not good and besides it is not healthy scientifically. Parsis of the grand old days had two marriages, he enlightens us. One was the aara-antar adopted from the Hindu rites following which the couple waited in the baug for the early rays of the sun to receive the *Bamdaad na ashirwad*. With the passage of time the two ceremonies came to be performed together and later the second was discarded.

In the course of his study of comparative religions Mistry has realized that every religion is divided into the modality of rituals and the spiritual aspect. The first reflects the environment "and cannot be duplicately applied to a changed environment," he points out. Our attire is now based on the Hindu dress. Even the style of the *topi* — the headgear — has changed, no longer covering the ears as it used to formerly, he informs. Mistry who has

studied Avesta-Pahlavi up to the MA level reminds us that Pahlavi is a dead language and Avesta is cent percent parallel to Sanskrit. He relates the incident of simulated research conducted by the officers of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in their

personal capacity wherein Zoroastrian and Hindu priests were made to recite Avestan and Sanskrit prayers backstage before a mixed audience who did not know either of these languages. Due to the phonetic integration, more than 50 percent mistook the prayers as that of their own faith. "I am opposed to making translations of our prayers available to lay people because verbal translations give stupid and funny results. Without the philosophical background the mind gets biased," opines Mistry who describes himself as "a stupidly religious man."

"People believe that if you study more science, you become godless. But it's exactly the opposite," claims Mistry. "If you genuinely study, you come to an end and you can't go any further. As an escape mechanism scientists take the help of a 'constant,' a 'factor x' or even an 'unknown factor.' This is an answer to God's work, by use of mathematical equations and thus God may be a phenomenal index used to explain unaccountable and unexplainable presumptions. Eventually you are forced to acknowledge something which you cannot perceive. Without that your progress stops."

To cite an instance of the inexplicable ways of God, Mistry narrates his personal experience. From his childhood he suffered from the lazy eye syndrome whereby he never used his right eye despite his stint with the airforce when binocular vision was important. When this eye developed a cataract it was operated upon but made little difference to Mistry as he did not use it. Subsequently his left eye had to be

operated for a triple operation which was a failure. Three months before he lost the vision of his left eye, his right eye started functioning. "I keep asking myself 'why?'" says Mistry.

Does he wear the sudreh-kusti? Yes, says Mistry to the sudreh because he considers it a very hygienic underwear. Again we probe about the kusti. The answer to that is yes too "because I know the purpose of the prayers said. Ninety percent tie it as a piece of rope. The mind can hear unspoken thoughts. It is now proved that the brain and mind are not the same. The mind is the functionary of the brain which interprets logic. The brain is like the computer and yet all computers are brainless," maintains Mistry.

The scientist may have great faith in the religion but he is not as sanguine about the community's future days ahead. "The future of the community is as stupid as that of the country in general. We have everything in the world but we have no sincerity to apply it for community use," he laments. "If we could pool our assets we could be called one of the richest in the world, physically and mentally. But we don't..."

## MATRIMONIAL

Parents of an attractive, fair, 24-year-old, post graduate daughter, 5'6", invite correspondence from qualified, well-placed, tall, Zoroastrian boys. Girl is creative minded and domestically trained. She desires a modern and straight-forward life partner. Apply with recent photograph (returnable) to:

The Advertiser  
Parsiana, Matrimonial (Apr/10-96)\*  
GPO Box 892, Bombay 400001

\*Please make sure the reply envelope bears the reference number cited here.

## MATRIMONIAL

Parents of a fair, attractive daughter, 25 years, studying for her doctorate in USA, desire matrimonial correspondence from suitable, young Parsi boys, 25-32 years old, well-qualified and settled in business or profession in USA. Write in confidence with photograph (returnable) to:

The Advertiser  
Parsiana, Matrimonial (Apr/12-96)\*  
GPO Box 892, Bombay 400001

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# The Goodness of the Gathas

Burjor K. Karanjia

*Understanding The Gathas, The Hymns of Zarathushtra*. Introductory Lectures on Gathic Themes by Dinshaw J. Irani. Edited with an Introduction by Kaikhosrov D. Irani. Published in 1994 by Ahura Publishers, Inc. Reprinted in 1995 by K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, 136, Bombay Samachar Marg, Bombay 400023. Pp: 87. Price: Rs 50 (for India and Pakistan only).

Can one presume to review *The Hymns of Zarathushtra* any more than one can review, say, the Bible? One can only bow in homage to the great truths enshrined in the noble hymns and be grateful for the scholarship and dedication of Dinshaw J. Irani, Kaikhosrov D. Irani and the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, who have combined to introduce, interpret and reprint this great little volume, *Understanding The Gathas*.

One finds portraits of Zarathushtra in fire-temples and prayer books, and in the homes of rich and poor. This is the rather unfortunate fate to which all great prophets are subject, with the exception of the Islamic Prophet Mohammed. The portraits of the Iranian prophet are so unlike each other that one puzzles how they could possibly bear any likeness to Zarathushtra. One has to turn to these hymns to discover Zarathushtra as he really was, with his doubts and tribulations, his adoration of Ahura Mazda and fortitude in His service, his humility in contrast to his exalted spirituality, the earliest and perhaps the greatest of prophets, a born leader of men.

Ancient Iran around 1300 BCE was in the thrall of *kavis* and *karpans*, tribal chiefs and priests, who had imposed a religion of fear upon the people with meaningless rituals and cruel sacrifices. To confront them and expose their hypocrisy, Lord Ahura Mazda, as a discerning judge, chose young Zarathushtra: "As there is not a righteous, spiritual Lord, or secular chief/ So have I, indeed, as the Creator, made thee, Zarathushtra, the leader/For the welfare of the world and its diligent people."

The Iranians initially felt let down by this appointment. They had expected, according to the beliefs then prevailing, that a mighty and powerful warlord would be appointed to fight these destructive forces. Instead, here was a weak man with no armor except "the charm of speech." But Zarathushtra is not deterred and asks for the gift of righteousness in action, and for the wisdom of the Good Mind. He knew that the gift of revelation was not for the chosen one alone, but that it was his duty to spread the message throughout the world. He asks for help that would allow King Vishtaspa, perhaps his earliest disciple, to propagate the new faith among his subjects. He asks for enlightenment to enable people to decide between *Spenta Mainyu*, the spirit of goodness and *Angre Mainyu*, the forces of evil. He who chooses rightly and lives according to *Asha*, the ideal form of existence as envisioned by Ahura Mazda, is assured of a place in a heaven called the House of Songs.

Zarathushtra was no ascetic, preaching withdrawal from the world and its pleasures. He wanted his followers to lead a productive life, full of joy, and bring joy to others. He was the first Prophet to emphasize freedom of choice: "Let each choose his creed." He wanted people not to accept what they were told, but to think for themselves, "for a thinking man is where wisdom is at home." A pioneering religious moralist, he made the good life lived according to good thoughts, words and deeds, a religious act, the finest form of worship. He anticipated thinkers like the Buddha and Gandhi in his belief that social stress and political violence are to be corrected not by force, but by moral regeneration.

The verse below could apply to our age of all-pervasive corruption:

"Unto Thee, O Lord, the Soul of Creation cried:

'For whom didst Thou create me, and who so fashioned me?

Feuds and fury, violence and the insolence of might have oppressed me,

None have I to protect me save Thee, Command for me, then, blessing of a settled, peaceful life."

In the early stages of his divine mission, according to *The Gathas*, Zarathushtra was troubled by questions for which he had no answers but which he dared to put to Ahura Mazda. He calls upon Ahura to reveal to him who balanced the earth and heavens to keep them apart, who created the waters and the plants, who yoked swiftness to the winds and motion to the clouds? What great artificer created light and darkness and produced the phenomenon of sleep and waking? Who made the dawn, noon and night, that remind man of his duty?

In gradual stages Zarathushtra came to a full realization of God, but continued to be troubled whether his followers would achieve the same realization. He wanted them to appreciate that Ahura Mazda is not remote from their lives, that indeed He is their brother and father. The choice was always theirs: by following His teachings to achieve the Abode of Songs; if not, be relegated to the foul darkness of the House of the Lie.

Towards the end of his mission, in the evening of his life, Zarathushtra did acquire a sense of fulfilment. He realized that Ahura Mazda's believers and followers would ultimately be vindicated in times of social uncertainty: "Then, at the time of salvation, there shall be full adoration of thy glory."

The most haunting and delightful of the *Gathas* relate to the wedding of the Prophet's daughter Pouruchista to Jamaspa, a minister in King Vishtaspa's court and a devout follower of the new faith. In fact, as Dinshaw J. Irani so aptly puts it: "These thoughts are timeless in their application, noble in their sentiment, worthy of being incorporated in the marriage service: 'These words do I address to you, maidens marrying, These counsels do I give you bridegrooms,

**One has to  
turn to these  
hymns to  
discover  
Zarathushtra  
as he really  
was**

Heed them in your mind and lay them to  
heart  
Learn from the righteous the precepts of  
the Good Religion;  
Let both then strive to lead the Life of the  
Good Mind;  
With upright hearts let each cherish the  
other;  
Then surely a happy life shall be yours."

Immortality, as surmised from these  
*Gathas*, is of two kinds: After death we live  
in the recollection of all those who were  
near and dear to us. But the good we do and  
the transformation we are able to achieve,  
is a more lasting testament to our immor-  
tality. Death comes to all, but the degree to  
which we reach the spiritual state in after-  
life depends on the extent of our realization  
in consciousness of Truth and the Good  
Mind in the House of Ahura Mazda. So we  
leave Zarathushtra standing, at last, at the  
Gate of the Abode of Songs with this  
prayer on his lips:

"With Truth moving my heart,  
With Best Thought inspiring my mind,  
With all the might of spiritual force  
within me,  
I venerate Thee, O Mazda, with songs  
of Thy praise!  
And at the last when I shall stand at Thy  
gate  
I shall hear the echo of my prayers from  
Thy Abode of Songs."

## SHELTERING against the hurt

Dina Mehta

*Living in America* Poetry and Fiction by South Asian American Writers edited by Roshni Rustomji-Kerns. Published in 1995 by Westview Press, 5500 Central Avenue, Boulder, Colorado 80301-2877, USA. Also Westview Press, 12 Hild's Copse Road, Cumnor Hill, Oxford OX2 9JJ, UK. Pp: xiv + 277. Price: \$ 17.95.

In geopolitical terms, South Asia is a vast region of mixed ethnic affiliations. A South Asian can be a native of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan or Sri Lanka. And the South Asian experience of America [Canada and the United States for the purpose of this anthology edited by Dr (Ms) Roshni Rustomji-Kerns (see interview on page 17)] usually begins with an encounter with the immigration official at the airport.

That such encounters — the starting point of the quest for a place in the sun in the country of one's adoption — can be disconcerting if not traumatic, is vividly illustrated in *Living in America*, a compilation of poems and fiction by South Asian American writers. The voices here are of exiles who straddle at least two distinct cultures and are struggling with questions of assimilation and identity. What they are doing is participating in the on-going process of shaping 20th century American literature — even if the rich complexity they bring to traditional literary norms has yet to be fully acknowledged.

One of the excerpts included here is from Ms Bapsi Sidhwa's novel, *An American Brat*. It describes the ways in which Ms Feroza Ginwalla, on a visit to her uncle Manek, a student at the MIT, is intimidated by two "demon persecutors" at the Kennedy Airport. With their false allegations they confuse Feroza into unwittingly incriminating her uncle with her naive answers. Manek manages to sort things out for them, but not before Feroza has been reduced to tears and is ready to catch the next flight back to Pakistan. *Aapri* Bapsi writes a bouncy prose, but the humor of this piece does not disguise the vulnerability of people who enter the brave new world.

Ved Mehta also entered the United States on a visitor's visa, though what he required was a student visa for studying at the Arkansas School for the Blind — which was not on the list of approved schools for foreign students, which was why he had not applied for a student visa in the first place. All rather complicated. How he untangles all this in his joust with his immigration officer is told here in an excerpt from Mehta's autobiography, *Sound-Shadows of the New World*. The disgruntled official becomes helpful towards the end of the interview — impressed, no doubt, by the sheer guts of the blind boy!

A truly harrowing experience of an expatriate's first day on the land "famous for the Statue of Liberty" is related with wry humor by Moazzam Sheikh in his short story *Kissing the Holy Land*. (Could it be that humor builds a shelter against the hurt, the frustration, the culture shock suffered by immigrants?) Sheikh, who had always admired American presidents, has his wallet stolen at the airport by one of the "President-looking men" — a relative of the late Lincoln? Of Kennedy? Nixon? Totally unnerved by his loss, Sheikh weeps with his head on the carpet. "He is kissing the holy land," says a voice above him. "Welcome to America."

Sheikh's story also sketches in the difference in attitudes of successive generations of an immigrant family towards the host country. His father before him, for instance, was appalled when a white bell-boy at New York's Hotel Ambassador took charge of his suitcases. He simply was not ready to let a white man carry his luggage and it was some time before he realized that the hotel employee "was not directly related to the Queen of England."

That perspectives change and the initial awe with which the exile regarded his hosts gives way to criticism, frustration, alienation and (after much conflict and agonizing) to a synthesis of cultures and the fashioning of a new literary mythology, is illustrated again and again by the poems and stories in this volume. Sometimes the agonizing itself is the poem — as for example Saleem Peeradina's *Reflections on the Other* which is hewn out of a "double consciousness." In Ms Qiron Adhikary's *Nosey Nakshitka's Adventures in America* the conflict is more down-to-earth: she is overwhelmed by the vast, complex systems of the country and critical of the "many-colored people these systems oppressed." Ms Meena Alexander in the selection from *Fault Lines* included here, talks of the nurturing of children who have inherited multiple cultures. Her daughter puts it in a nutshell: "You are brown mama, papa is blond papa, Adam is brown Adam, and I am peach Svati." Such acceptance, suggests the author, is like creating music out of discord.

Sometimes the synthesis of cultures indeed makes music as in Darius Cooper's *I Have Been Offered My Country's Begging Bowl Again* in which echoes of Buddhism are skillfully woven with the Adam and Eve story as the poet keeps vigil over his sleeping wife and son. The humble begging bowl strikes a note of compassion, which binds together all of humanity *Aapro* Darius is a Bombay boy who went to California to pursue a doctorate in literature and film. He has presented papers on Indian cinema at various conferences abroad and we look forward to his essays on the late Satyajit Ray in a forthcoming anthology to be published in India.

Another writer who welds what is Indian with what is American with a degree of objectivity and common sense, is *aapro* Boman Desai. In *This Thicket*, an excerpt from his forthcoming novel, *Asylum USA*, Desai takes us from one technique of storytelling to another, from straightforward narration to philosophical discourses — a technique used brilliantly in the

*Mahabharata* and other classical Indian literary works. Desai's novel is structured as if it were a drive in a car, and the 'thickets' are the perplexities the driver ploughs into. Here is one particular 'thicket':

The driver of the car is married to an American in order to get his green card, and is awaiting his divorce. But in the meanwhile his parents have sent him their blessings and gifts — and they want wedding pictures. What is he to tell them? That he is married to a gay and lives with her and her girlfriend?

From this situation we are led to the protagonist's encounters with racism within his family (his father thinks he won't send the pics because he's married to a black woman), and within the different cultures he has lived in. We are then drawn into his struggle to find a solution to end racism — "skin cancer" — within all races and hierarchies.

A triad of Parsi writers in an anthology breaking new ground is exciting news! But wait. The distinguished editor, *aapri* Roshni brings the tally to four. She has not only given us a taste of new writing, but provided two introductions (one authored by herself, the other by Ms Rashmi Sharma)

exploring the concept of this collection. And she has contributed copious headnotes to place each poem and story in context, and discussed their literary nuances.

The writers are in very good hands. One can only wish that Roshni will one day compile a volume by Parsi writers in diaspora. Help them emerge into light from every corner of the globe!

## Admonition and advice

Hormazdyar S. Dalal

*Phool Chhab* — *Guru Prasad*, Part II by Noshir Dabu. Published in 1995 by Mehr-e-Band-e-Khuda, Secunderabad (author's address: Gandhi Block, Parsi Sanatorium, Ashram Road, Ahmedabad 380009). Price: Rs 25.

*Phool Chhab* means a tray full of flowers. The wicker tray, shallow and circular in shape, artistically woven, is commonly used by female flower vendors.

The title of Noshir Dabu's book reminds this reviewer of a popular paper of

the same name brought out by a fiery publisher, the late Amrutlal Sheth, in pre-Independence days from Ranpur, Saurashtra. Like a sentinel it sought to guard the rights of the subjects of the former native states. Sheth was also a bitter critic of the British rule. Once India became free, Sheth shifted to Bombay and established an evening paper in Gujarati. *Janmabhoomi* was a very popular and well-edited paper. Today *Janmabhoomi*, *Pravasi* and *Phool-Chhab* are published under the aegis of the People's Trust, Saurashtra.

Dabu's *Phool Chhab*, a collection of 27 articles in Gujarati, has been divided into four broad sections: '*Dini Prakash*' throws a searchlight on some religious problems concerning the Parsi community; '*Komni Karvat*' deals with vexing community questions; '*Kavya Kalrav*' is reflection in free verse on assorted topics; and '*Chintan ni Chingari*' offers sparkling thoughts on subjects like mixed marriages, etc.

The collection is, on the whole, feeble except for the first section of 10 articles, which discusses questions of death, nirang, satan, *khoreh* or aura, *patet* or seeking the Almighty's forgiveness for one's sins, etc. In these articles the author, well-known to Parsi readers as a columnist of *Jam-e-*

***With Best Wishes  
from***

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

**and**

**Mrs Purviz R. Shroff**

*Jamshed*, provides some direction to the present generation of the community which has lost its moorings. To a large extent it has drifted away from the basic principles of the ancient faith.

The next section deals with the desecration of the holy navjote ceremony; cultural links between Iran and India; Irani names selected for newborn children in Zoroastrian families; and the knotty problem of non-Parsi husbands selected by Parsi girls. The open letter, *Parkomi Jamai*, is particularly addressed by the author to Parsi girls who so freely walk out of the community fold. But Dabu also wishes it to be taken note of by Parsi boys. The letter is rather long, running into six printed pages (69 to 74) and serves a heavy dose of advice.

Section three consisting of five topics in versified form, is weak and trite. The first topic, '*Pasti*' deals with the human weakness of preserving unwanted, useless things in life. But at the same time it is suggested that human beings carelessly allow their minds and souls to be cluttered with evil thoughts and sinful actions. The simile is far-fetched. Other topics in the section are: 'Who am I?', 'Fountain of Knowledge,' '*Eitun to Karjo Nabi*' — a prayer to the Creator for the dear departed souls. '*Prani Pukar*' is about the agony of hunted birds. '*Antar-ni-Aag*' tells of the soulful repentance of a Parsi girl who married outside the community; and '*Sodagar*' deals with Satan's call to human beings to follow him in life by rejecting the path of truthfulness and purity.

The fourth and the last section begins again with an open letter to young Parsi boys and girls. "*Yuvan tun kon Chhè?*" is a fervent plea to the youth to sincerely follow the ways of Ahura Mazda. '*Dukhi Thavaun Chhè to Bhalé*' is the topic of the 24th article: it advises the reader to live without too much grumbling against adverse circumstances. Accept life as it is — with its clouds and sunshine.

The last three articles have nothing much to say. They are insipid, written with a too obvious desire to counsel readers. They employ wornout images, they lack artistic skill.

*Phool Chhab* sadly suffers from a paucity of thoughts, too generous slices of advice and incorrect usage of words. For example, '*Keri Rasne Poolini Mehfil Jame*' on page 3, and '*Jeevanthi Parvadi Hath Masalta Raheshe*' on page 101. The correct Gujarati words are '*Keri Rasne Poori*' and '*Jeevan thi Parvari*.' The book is also burdened with a sprinkling of wrong spellings (*jodni*) all over the 101 pages.

## "SURROUNDED BY STORYTELLERS" *continued from page 17*

uncomfortable in a luxurious household. We weren't brought up in an orthodox household and yet you woke up every morning to the fragrance of grandma doing the *loban*. It purifies you, it makes you ready for the day," believes Rustomji-Kerns who now continues with this ritual in her own home. "It is surprising how powerful a hold some of these rituals have," she points out. "To this day I lose my temper if the house is dark when I step in. Chuk (her petname for her husband) knows that he has to keep one light on." The values of *manashni*, *gavashni*, *kunashni* (good thoughts, words and deeds), ingrained in her as a child, abide with her but she regrets missing out on navjotes and "the overwhelming sense of a jashan" after residing in America for almost 30 years.

It was the pursuit of higher education that took Roshni to the States. Her schooling was at Bombay's J. B. Vachha High School for Parsi Girls and Karachi's Mama Parsi Girls High School. After two years of study at the College of Home Economics in Karachi she opted to go to Lebanon where she graduated from the American University in Beirut. She spent six years in Lebanon and thence proceeded to the Duke University in North Carolina to do her masters. For her PhD she went to Berkeley, her field of study being comparative literature, Sanskrit and Greek.

Spanish is another language Rustomji-Kerns is conversant with. In fact bits of Spanish are woven into her novel. "There is a lot of me, lot of my friends in this novel," she declares. Being a frequent visitor to Mexico and always being interested in Hispanic culture, Rustomji-Kerns found the need to learn Spanish. "The texture of life in Mexico," she says, "reminds me of my childhood." Since her first visit to the city (Mexico is the world's largest city, she informs us) 22 years ago when lack of hotel accommodation had led her to the house of Signora Glafira Cruz Porras with whom she had boarded for a while, accepting her offer of bed and breakfast, Rustomji-Kerns must have returned to that city umpteen times. Now she is almost a part of their family and in fact they would not consider holding a social function of importance in her absence, smiles Rustomji-Kerns.

Removed from their close families, "a lot of us immigrants make families," she notes. "Not just for social outings *pun dukh-sukh ma oobha thai téva* (those who can be counted upon in times of happiness

and distress). Their family stories become my family stories and vice versa." Her immediate family though includes Charles and Brian, Charles' son by his first marriage. The "khichri" that she speaks at home has rubbed off on her husband too with the result that his vocabulary includes words like '*ekdam* (absolutely)' and '*phataphat* (quickly).' When in Bombay she indulges in the care and concern of family members like for instance her paternal aunt who insists that Roshni have a companion and not commute by taxi on her own in this city!

Her sojourns, most of them solo, have taken Rustomji-Kerns to different parts of America, Europe, South East Asia and the Middle East. Among the places that she would like to visit are China and Peru. What she misses of Bombay and Karachi is the landscape — "the texture of the earth, the sounds, the smells. I think it is the same for a lot of us expatriates. The birds — the crows, sparrows, parrots — the bougainvillae," she cites in particular. Though she may not be able to recollect all the people from her past, their voices have left a firm imprint.

She also carries with her childhood memories of the Indian struggle for freedom; of Pakistan's partition from India: "I was barely 10. It took me years to realize the impact I had. Overnight, old friends disappeared and new ones came. We never understood why. One day we were speaking Marathi. The next day we had to learn Urdu. Karachi was a small quiet town and one fine day we found it jammed with people..."

Indian music and dance have always captivated her, acknowledges Rustomji-Kerns, particularly Bharat Natyam dancing. Given a chance of another life she would love to learn this art, confesses the enthusiast who had trained in modern dance in America for several years until a back problem compelled her to discontinue. After learning the piano at length, she regrets that she did not pursue it and is now totally out of touch with the keyboard.

Just as she misses the landscape, she also misses company, Rustomji-Kerns has realized. "A model of someone older." Someone like her father. Observing him grow old with grace she feels "it's like a gift. No complaints; no envy of youth and on the contrary immense joy to be with the youth." Contemplating at length on the choice of an appropriate model to pattern oneself on she finds that now "I have become a model for the younger people. It's a scary thing..."

# MILESTONES

This issue of *Parsiana* presents data for the months of March and April 1996. As the marriage register was not currently available at the Bombay High Court, the data on marriages for these two months will be published in the May '96 issue of *Parsiana*.

There were 147 Zoroastrians consigned to the Towers of Silence while 33 babies were born during these two months. The major killer, heart disease, claimed 53 lives of whom 22 were 80 years and above. Twenty-five deaths were attributed to respiratory diseases and 12 to cancer. General debility and old age took a toll of 10 lives, whereas eight patients succumbed to brain disease. Kidney failure and diabetes claimed four victims each and head injuries, three. Septicemia, circulatory disease, gastro-enteritis, gastro-intestinal bleeding, liver disease, bronchitis and Parkinson's disease were responsible for two deaths each. There were 14 isolated cases registered for the two month period. They were: hepatitis, malaria, tuberculosis, uremia, thrombocytopenia (a reduction in the number of platelets in the blood), neuro-muscular dystrophy, intestinal obstruction, nervous disorder, hernia, asthma, miscarriage, accident and peritonitis (inflammation of the delicate serous membrane which lines the abdominal and pelvic cavi-

ties). Two girls, aged 11 and 19, a 40-day-old baby boy and a premature female child were lost to the community. The oldest to die was a 101-year-old lady. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth in Bombay, was 75 years for the two month period.

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled from information supplied by various newsletters and anjumans in India and abroad, courts and hospitals. This information is not always complete or consistent: we are unable to carry data from areas where the anjumans do not furnish the particulars; the birth figures for Bombay are supplied by four hospitals — births in suburban hospitals and private nursing homes are not included unless individuals send us information together with a copy of the birth certificate. There may be an inadvertent repetition of names in the marriage list when a civil marriage precedes a religious ceremony. In the breakup of deaths according to illnesses, especially of the elderly, death is often due to a combination of several diseases.

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

## AHMEDABAD

### DIED

*Freny Marshall*, wife of Ratan and mother of Rustom on March 23, 1996

## BOMBAY

### BORN

A boy to *Meherangir* and *Jamshed Rangoonwala*; March 5  
A girl to *Shernaz* and *Homiyar Bhuangar*; March 8  
A boy to *Navaz* and *Darayus Marolia*; March 9  
A boy to *Farida* and *Adil Sahukar*; March 9  
A boy to *Firangiz* and *Eric Sethna*; March 9  
A girl, *Ayesha*, to *Tanaz* and *Mark Selwyn*; March 11  
A girl to *Farida* and *Vizak Ankleshwaria*; March 12

A boy, *Firdous*, to *Bakhtawar* and *Percis Satha*; March 13  
A boy, *Farzan*, to *Phiroza* and *Mehernosh Surti*; March 13  
A boy to *Rashna* and *Rayomand Choksi*; March 16  
A girl to *Jesita* and *Rajiv Mehra*; March 18  
A boy to *Pervin* and *Percy Wadia*; March 22  
A girl to *Pervin* and *Darayush Contractor*; March 25  
A girl to *Gulshan* and *Mhernoo Bhesania*; March 27  
A boy to *Shehnaz* and *Kaizad Dumasia*; March 31  
A boy, *Meheryar*, to *Gulshan* and *Rohinton Kasad*; April 1  
A boy to *Ketayun* and *Kurosh Fallahzadeh*; April 8  
A boy to *Renu* and *Rointan Katrak*; April 9  
Twins (boys) to *Delna* and

*Tarvinder Singh*; April 9  
A boy to *Khushman* and *Khushroo Cooper*; April 10  
A girl to *Tanaz* and *Firoz Batliwalla*; April 13  
A girl to *Shernaz* and *Yazdi Barooliwalla*; April 16  
A girl to *Roshan* and *Neville Deboo*; April 18  
A boy to *Yasmin* and *Nariman Khan*; April 18  
A boy to *Rukshana* and *Hirji Choksy*; April 19  
A girl to *Firozi* and *Adarbad Motafram*; April 22  
A girl to *Mahtab* and *Burzin Daruwalla*; April 24  
A boy to *Avan* and *Fredy Bam*; April 25  
A boy to *Aban* and *Kiran Deohans*; April 25  
A boy to *Phiroza* and *Yezdi Patel*; April 25  
A boy to *Gitanjali* and *Bahadur Dastoor*; April 27  
A girl to *Zarine* and *Dinsha Singpoorwala*; April 27  
A boy to *Anahita* and *Kersasp Mistry*; April 30

### DIED

*Aspandiyar Khodadad Irani* (65), residing at Sukh Shanti Clny, Chal D/4/6, Tisgaon, Kalyan (E), 421301; March 2  
*Dinamai Edulji Engineer* (92), E/2, Bhiwandiwalla Ter, Dhoitalao, 400002; March 3  
*Khodi Behram Irani* (73), G/14, Godrej Bldg, Nepean Sea Road, 400036; March 3  
*Khorshed Jamshed Petigara* (74), Jaiphal Ter, 31, Forjett St, 400036; March 3  
*Coomi Pestonji Sethna* (80), Panthaki Hse, 19, Turner Rd, Bandra 400050; March 3  
*Ratanbai Minocher Mirzan* (82), 704, Brighton Tower, Lokhandwalla Complex, Andheri (W), 400053; March 4  
*Freny Maneckshaw Mistry* (84), D/2, Jer Bldg, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculla, 400027; March 4  
*Sohrab Navalshaw Patwa* (74), 4/4, E. M. Est, 291, S. V. Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; March 4  
*Maneckshaw Darabshaw Anklesaria* (87), 3/B, High Peak Apts, S. V. Rd, Bandra, 400050; March 5  
*Soli Ardeshir Palkhiwalla* (77), Naoroji Hse, Naigaum Cross Rd, Dadar, 400014; March 5  
*Jer Minoo Wadia* (76), 619,

Banoo Mans, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 5  
*Sheroo Savak Gamat* (79), 16, Shiv Sagar, Worli Hill Rd, 400018; March 7  
*Nerisa Bobby Khambatta* (11), 7/18, Blossom Hsg Soc, Maroshi Rd, Marol, Andheri (E), 400059; March 7  
*Purviz Burjor Vakharia* (68), Seervai Bldg A, 20/G, Sleater Rd, 400007; March 7  
*Rusi Kaikashroo Bhagwagar* (75), 247, Veera Hse, Dr Cawasji Hormusji St, Dhoitalao, 400002; March 8  
*Freni Homi Mistry* (67), 275/L, Old Master Bldg, Chikalwadi, Tardeo Rd, 400007; March 8  
*Kolan Darabsha Hataria* (74), 5, Petit Block, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; March 9  
*Kety Kaikashroo Daruwalla* (82), Shirinbai Dinshaw Mody Hostel, 83-A, Annie Besant Rd, Worli Naka, 400018; March 10  
*Vicaji Maneckji Engineer* (97), 599, Sharma Nivas, Jame Jamshed Rd, Matunga, 400019; March 10  
*Tehmurasp Dinshawji Pavri* (79), D/16, Godrej Bldg, Nepean Sea Road, 400036; March 10  
*Khorshed Russi Boyce* (64), C/610, Usha Ngr, Khandelwal Marg, Bhandup, 400078; March 11  
*Manijeh Jamshedji Doriawala* (93), Rusi Mehta Bldg, Dinbai Petit St, Grant Rd, 400007; March 11  
*Bapsy Kersi Edibam* (65), R/17, Shapurji Bhaurucha Bldg, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; March 11  
*Khorshed Minoo Chinoy* (78), 327, Bhesania Bldg, S.B.S. Rd, Fort, 400001; March 12  
*Jer Soli Cooper* (64), 648, Kaka Bldg, Firdoshi Rd, Dadar, 400014; March 12  
*Gustadji Pestonji Dehnugara* (80), 65, Firoz Villa, Malcolm Bldg, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; March 12  
*Shahrukh Nariman Kapadia* (49), 10, Cama Bldg, Marzban Clny, Gilder Lane, 400008; March 12  
*Savaksha Munchersha Shahuna* (82), 1/25, A. H. Wadia Bldg, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; March 12

- Alloo Sorabji Bharucha* (75), 5, Dina Bldg, Shrikant Palekar Marg, Chirabazar, 400002; March 13
- Homi Kawas Bharucha* (60), 604/D, Lady Jehangir Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 13
- Khorshed Cawasji Fitter* (72), 18/6, Mahalaxmiwalla Bldg, Sleater Rd, 400007; March 13
- Nerges Nusserwanji Talaty* (85), M/32, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; March 13
- Pulian Rustomji Adajania* (87), 5, Turner Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; March 14
- Mehramai Phirozshah Bilimoria* (97), 4, Quest-End, Cuffe Parade, 400005; March 14
- Sorabji Cawasji Elavia* (76), R/20, S. B. Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; March 14
- Dhun Pherozshaw Shroff* (87), K/13, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; March 15
- Tehmina Jalejar Batki* (77), C/8, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculia, 400027; March 16
- Goolstan Cawasji Engineer* (80), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; March 16
- Perin Jamshed Amroliwala* (86), 5/BC, High Peak Apts, 20/A, S. V. Rd, Bandra, 400050; March 17
- Mani Manekshaw Bhadha* (80), Burjor Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; March 17
- Farrokh Munchershaw Bhesania* (75), 8, Asha Mhl, N. Gamadia Rd, 400026; March 17
- Khorshed Burjorji Billimoria* (89), A/28, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; March 17
- Kersy Darab Kutar* (84), Nanabhai Chmbs, Rustom Sidhwa Marg, Fort, 400001; March 17
- Goolbai Gustad Irani* (80), 25, Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; March 17
- Minoo Ardeshir Katrak* (89), 72/B, August Kranti Marg, 400036; March 18
- Mahiar Maneksha Dastur* (75), B/2, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculia, 400027; March 19
- Minoo Dossahoy Engineer* (86), N/8, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculia, 400027; March 19
- Ketie Behramji Katrak* (80), Central Studio Bldg, Tardeo Rd, 400034; March 19
- Amy Burjor Mehta* (68), Dalamal Apts, 15, Cuffe Parade, 400005; March 19
- Amy Sorab Pavri* (92), 7, Swastik Court, 132, M. Karve Rd, 400020; March 20
- Banoobai Fakirsha Anklesaria* (83), C/3, Parijat, Patel Est, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; March 21
- Tehmina Ardeshir Desai* (91), Union Bldg, 54, Sleater Rd, 400007; March 21
- Cavas Sorabji Mehta* (65), 5/4, Petit Block, M. P. Agiary Lane, Balaram St, 400007; March 21
- Darabsha Kawasji Patel* (92), Darab Manor, Opp Rly Stn, Gholvad, 401702; March 22
- Dinshaw Dorabji Patel* (75), 347/A, United Chmbs, Next to Shalimar Talkies, Grant Rd, 400007; March 22
- Bomanshaw Nadirshaw Akolawala* (86), 14/1, Dhunbaiwadi, Dadabhai Rd, Vile Parle (W), 400056; March 24
- Goolbai Framroze Elavia* (86), G-2/11, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; March 24
- Tehmina Kaikhushru Mistry* (90), E/21, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; March 24
- Banoobai Camaji Bharucha* (81), Vatcha Gandhi Fire-temple Comp, Hughes Rd, 400007; March 25
- Jehangir Maneksha Katrak* (73), C. D. Sethna Bldg, Golanji Hill, Parel Village, 400012; March 25
- Pesi Jamshedji Motiwala* (54), 8/B, Mota Mans, Tardeo Rd, 400007; March 25
- Bachabai Jehangir Batliboi* (93), Terrace Cama, Altamont Rd, 400026; March 27
- Homi Rustomji Siganporia* (73), C/o Eddie Bhot, 1103, Dun Apt, Tardeo Rd, 400007; March 27
- Nergish Pestonji Captain* (70), Nawab Manzil, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; March 28
- Najamai Ruttonshaw Nariman* (78), R/32, S. B. Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; March 29
- Burjor Jehangir Davar* (78), 5/B, Heera-Villa, Pali Rd, 400050; March 30
- Roshan Jal Khambata* (65), 32/33, Bhavashwar Niketan, August Kranti Marg, 400036; March 30
- Meru Tehemurasp Havewalla* (57), C/o Sheru, 5, Yogita Bldg, Daulat Ngr, Dahisar (E), 400068; March 31
- Jamshed Dorabji Homji* (76), Batliwalla Bldg, Zoroastrian Clny, Tardeo, 400034; March 31
- Dhun Faramroze Panthaki* (77), Beach View, 93, Bhulabhai Desai Rd, 400026; March 31
- Rustom Behram Kermanian* (75), 64/9/B, Wadia Bldg, Cawasji Patel St, Fort, 400001; April 1
- Perrin Marazban Mehta* (78), 5, Sayaji Bldg, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; April 1
- Ratan Bhikhaji Patel* (64), M/26, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; April 2
- Ardeshir Khurshedji Wadia* (88), 61, Las Palmas, 20, Little Gibbs Rd, 400006; April 2
- Adi Savaksha Engineer* (87), Indian Surveyor Hse, Above Kerala Hotel, 315, S. B. Singh Rd, Fort Market, Fort, 400001; April 3
- Minoo Kaikhushru Mistry* (75), 52/A, Sea Pearl, 7 Bglws, Versova, 400061; April 3
- Framroze Rustomji Titina* (72), Dr Dadina Bldg, Jehangir Daji St, Sleater Rd, 400007; April 3
- Ketty Kaikhushroo Surty* (77), 40, Powwalla Bldg, Raja Ram Mohan Roy Rd, Grant Rd, 400004; April 4
- Rati Nariman Kapadia* (74), 6/4, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; April 5
- Meherbai Barjorji Lal* (99), 17, Sheri Hse, Cawasji Patel St, Fort, 400001; April 6
- Mani Erachshaw Khambatta* (69), Motiwala Bldg, Proctor Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; April 7
- Dhun Jal Shroff* (66), 41, Aderbad, Hughes Rd, 400007; April 7
- Homi Framroze Chothia* (68), 194, Talati Bldg, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; April 8
- Behram Rustomji Mistry* (52), 36/A, Engineers Bglw, Sunmill Rd, Lower Parel, 400013; April 8
- Gool Marzban Master* (88), Hill View, 25, N. S. Patkar Marg, 400007; April 9
- Rodabe Rustum Vankadia* (60), 35, Vidya Vihar Clny, Chakan Rd, (Dist) Pune, 411001; April 9
- Dinshaw Behramji Chinoy* (74), 11/2, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculia, 400027; April 10
- Mani Savak Choksey* (85), Divine Grace, 114, Turner Rd, Bandra, 400050; April 10
- Dhunmai (Dhun) Eruchsha Dotivala* (83), 4/6, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculia, 400027; April 10
- Dolly Minoo Driver* (55), F/20, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; April 10
- Soli Dinshawji Siganporia* (78), Q/1, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; April 10
- Rohinton Ardeshir Tatary* (46), 12/3, Baria Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400036; April 10
- Dinoo Fram Dhondy* (66), Kumar Villa, 1st Pasta Lane, Colaba, 400005; April 11
- Gool Faredoon Nusserwanji* (63), 22, Usha Kiran, Bank of India Bldg, Opp Lalubhai Park, Andheri (W), 400058; April 11
- Banoobai Phirojsha Katrak* (92), Vimla Sadan, 8, Navroji Vakil St, 400007; April 12
- Bejanjee Bomanshaw Surtee* (84), 51, Hill Rd, Bandra, 400050; April 12
- Meharwan Naswarnji Taraporewalla* (80), Post Barda, Via Vangoan, Dist Thane, 400601, April 12
- Sharukh Jehangir Nanji* (45), Om Yogeshwar, Kanderpada, Dahisar (W), 400068; April 13
- Shavak Sorabji Tata* (90), 29, Jaiphal Ter, Forjett St, 400036; April 13
- Bhickoo Bejoh Chinoy* (84), G/38, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; April 14
- Rustamji Faramji Karanjia* (83), Yusuf Bldg, Mehella Patel Agiary Lane, Balaram St, 400007; April 14
- Minoo Kaikobad Tarapore* (75), 794/C, Family Hse, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 14
- Dolly Jahanbux Bhathena* (69), 5, Karani Widow Chwl, Gilder Lane, Tardeo, 400007; April 15
- Burjor Nusserwanji Dantra* (72), 13, Shri Vallabh Co-op Hsg Soc Ltd, Murbad Rd, Kalyan, 421301; April 15
- Ketty Phiroaz (Parushesep) Daruwalla* (75), Railway Clny, Taloja, 410208; April 15
- Fram Sorabji Merchant* (81), 602, Shiv Shakti, Caesar Rd, Amboli, Andheri (W), 400058; April 15
- Ardeshir Cawasji Todywala* (85), E/44, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculia, 400027; April 15
- Khorshed Godrej Unwalla* (82), 609, Mercury Apts, 4th Cross Rd, Lokhandwala Complex, Andheri (W), 400058; April 15
- Goolbai Meherji Bharucha* (82), Chhatrawala Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; April 16
- Mani Kaikhushroo Chinoy* (86), 751, Rustom Villa, Dr Ghanti

Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 16  
*Dhunmai Jehangirji Vajifdar* (101), 91, Cuffe-Castle, Cuffe Parade, 400005; April 17  
*Ratanshah Manekji Bhura* (79), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; April 18  
*Villie Kersi Chavda* (19), C/o Noshir D. Chavda, A/201, Bafna Apts, Mugal Lane, Matunga (W), 400019; April 18  
*Rusi Maneckshaw Daruwalla* (78), 319, Samudra Mhl, Dr Annie Besant Rd, 400018; April 18  
*Jamshed Rustum Ahrestani* (84), 18, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; April 19  
*Baby girl of Jasmine Hormaz Daruwalla* (miscarriage), C/20, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; April 19  
*Najamai Ratansha Katrak* (95), Gamadia Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; April 19  
*Nariman Ardeshir Palkhiwala* (66), 785/A, M. Joshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 19  
*Bhikan Shapurji Govadia* (92), 600, Bachan Manor, Jame Jamshed Rd, Matunga, 400019; April 20  
*Edujee Jamshedji Nilgiriwala* (80), E/22, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculla, 400027; April 20  
*Goolbai Erachshaw Taraporewalla* (87), E/10, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculla, 400027; April 20  
*Gool Framroz Mirza* (74), A/6, Tardeo Chmbs, Cassinath Rd, Tardeo, 400034; April 21  
*Jeroo Rusi Patel* (65), Lam Bldg, Delisle Rd, Lower Parel, 400013; April 21  
*Jal Minocher Pavri* (65), 650, Karani Charity Bldg, Firdoshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 21  
*Homi Jehangir Presswalla* (86), Presswalla Bldg, 190, Lamington Rd, 400007; April 21  
*Rusi Pirojsha Sidhwa* (67), 4, Sheetal, Chirabazar, 400002; April 21  
*Ramyar Darabshaw Sukheswalla* (76), 788, Avabai Mans, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 21  
*Banoo Eruchshaw Gandhi* (78), 3/8, Panthaky Raug, Sanatorium Rd, Hargovindas Marg, Andheri (E), 400069; April 23  
*Dhunbai Manchershah Tata* (85), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; April 23

| TOTALS FOR 1996  |        |                 |       |    |       |     |
|------------------|--------|-----------------|-------|----|-------|-----|
|                  | Bombay |                 | India |    | World |     |
|                  | A      | B               | A     | B  | A     | B   |
| <b>BORN</b>      |        |                 |       |    |       |     |
| Boys             | 21     | 34              | —     | 3  | —     | 1   |
| Girls            | 12     | 26              | —     | 1  | —     | 3   |
| <b>MARRIED</b>   |        |                 |       |    |       |     |
| Parsi            | —      | 64              | —     | 2  | —     | —   |
| Intercommunal    | —      | 17 <sup>^</sup> | 1     | 3  | —     | —   |
| <b>DIED</b>      |        |                 |       |    |       |     |
| <b>CONSIGNED</b> |        |                 |       |    |       |     |
| Male             | 63     | 142             | 6     | 26 | —     | 13* |
| Female           | 84     | 167             | 7     | 19 | —     | 6*  |
| <b>CREMATED</b>  |        |                 |       |    |       |     |
| Male             | —      | —               | —     | —  | —     | —   |
| Female           | —      | —               | —     | —  | —     | —   |

A: Total numbers in this issue  
 B: Running totals for 1996 (February-March 1996-April 1996 issues)  
<sup>^</sup> Males married out -- 9  
 Females married out -- 8  
 \* Overseas deaths are listed in the consigned column as *Parsiana* does not have a breakup of those cremated.  
 These figures pertain to information provided to or collected by *Parsiana*. They do not represent the total number of births, marriages and deaths in the Zoroastrian community in India and abroad.

*Mani Jamasp Tata* (80), Husanali Bldg, 5, Jijibhai Dadabhai Lane, Fort, 400001; April 23  
*Mani Sorabji Wachagandhi* (93), 6, Nadirsha Dinshaw Bldg, 2, Babulnath Rd, 400007; April 24  
*Keki Rustom Avari* (81), Shroff Mans, N. Petit St, Grant Rd, 400007; April 26  
*Sarosh Jamshed Irani* (39), 6, Engineer Hse, Dhobitalao, 400002; April 26  
*Mani Kaikhusroo Khambatta* (83), New Khan Bldg, Chikalwadi, Tardeo, 400007; April 26  
*Nusserwan Dhunjisha Mistry* (74), 4, Mody Trust Bldg, Parel Tank Rd, 400012; April 26  
*Dina Maneckji Mody* (80), Navaz Mans, 25, S. B. Rd, 400039; April 26  
*Gool Jal Adaggra* (87), 11, Vikas, 31, Peddar Rd, 400026; April 27  
*Eruch Jehangirji Billimoria* (75), Kashinath Bldg, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; April 27  
*Jehangir Fardoonji Dhalla* (76), Sorab Manor, Henry Rd, Colaba, 400005; April 27  
*Aloo Eruch Engineer* (75), 594, Wadia Bldg, J. S. S. Rd, 400002; April 27  
*Kety Cooverji Mistry* (45), Khalakdina Ter, Gowalia Tank, 400036; April 27

*Perin Sorabji Colabawalla* (86), 38, Dubash Bldg, Walchand Hirachand Marg, Fort, 400001; April 28  
*Mani Jal Laskari* (86), 5, Jamshedji Tata Bldg, S. V. Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; April 28  
*Khorshed Dali Mistry* (67), Mistry Hse, 49, 3rd Marine St, Dhobitalao, 400002; April 28  
*Bahadur Byramji Udwadia* (74), Kavarana Bldg, Dadar Cross Rd, 400014; April 29  
*Aris Zarir Patel* (40 days), R/7, Godrej Baug, Off Nepean Sea Rd, 400036; April 30  
*Rati Ardeshir Petigara* (79), Hornby View, Rustom Sidhwa Marg, Fort, 400001; April 30  
**CALCUTTA**  
**MARRIED**  
*Shehnaz Dalal and Sudeep Roy*; April 19  
**DIED**  
*Najoo Kapadia*, wife of Homi and mother of Aspi and Jeroo Firdose Vandrevalla; March 14  
*Jamshed Kotwal*, son of Soona and Ardeshir and brother of Piloo Gan; April 30  
**POONA**  
**DIED**  
*Gool Rustom Sethna* (102), Bund Garden Rd, 411001; March 11  
*Gulbai Kekashru Writer* (92),

20/3, Mody Clny, Camp, 411001; March 15  
*Nanabhai Jejeebhoy* (87), Viloo Villa, Church Rd, 411001; March 19  
*Ardaiviraf Noshervan Irani* (63), A/3, Hermes Tower, 618, Sachapur St, 411001; March 19  
**SURAT**  
**DIED**  
*Hormasji Fakirji Variava* (92), Vegalpur, Parsiwad, Broach, 392001; March 1  
*Homai Jalejer Bhagat* (86), Umra Jakat Naka; March 10  
*Dinamai Ardeshir Tavadia* (82), Diwanjiwadi, Rustompura, 395002; March 12  
*Rustamji Dosabhai Patel* (Bhesania) (65), Divali Baug, Athwa Lines, 395001; March 16  
*Bepsi Manchershah Katpitia* (80), 11/2429, Muglisara, 395003; March 27  
*Eruchshaw Ardeshir Billimoria* (80), Near Nagarelas' Wadi, Shahpore, 395003; April 3

#### CORRECTION

A boy, *Zal*, was born to *Farinaz* and *Marzin Shroff*. The mother's name was mistakenly printed as *Parizad* in *Parsiana*, February-March 1996. The error is regretted.

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

# Jungalwalla: indoctrinating health

Parinaz Gandhi

Died: Dr Nowshir Kaikobad Jungalwalla, 82, founder director of the Government of India's National Institute of Health Education and former director of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Health Unit, on May 8, 1995 following Alzheimer's disease at London's Ealing Hospital.

Referring to Jungalwalla as "one of his country's most distinguished medical scientists" Morocco-based Dr K. W. C. Sinclair-Loutit who had in the 1950s worked with Jungalwalla at the newly started South East Asia regional office of the World Health Organization in Delhi, acknowledged in his condolence letter, "I did indeed appreciate his professional leadership and even more his human qualities of kindness and of humor."

Jungalwalla had then been appointed consultant, venereal diseases, by the WHO. Thereafter he served a three-year term as WHO's first representative to Indonesia. A certificate of appreciation from the Indonesian health ministry as also two large wooden panels carved by Balinese artists was that country's way of showing their gratitude. Two decades later he was appointed the WHO representative to India.

The story of how Jungalwalla had earned his Order of the British Empire (among the last Indians to be conferred that distinction) as a doctor in charge of a military hospital during World War II, is interestingly narrated by Sinclair-Loutit. Able to satisfy almost all the whims and fetish of the general relating to cleanliness and neatness, Jungalwalla so impressed his inspector that he was even invited to dine at the divisional headquarters — a rare privilege!

When the doctor was called up for war service, he was posted somewhere in a desert in Egypt, notes his bio data. He was given the charge of the venereal diseases section of a 1,000-bedded hospital. As remarked Col K. N. Khosla commander of the hospital, "If Nowshirbhai says '*koshish karunga* (I will try),' then take it from me that the work is done."

A firm believer in the efficacy of prayers, he had related to his wife Piloo, reputed for her discourses and books on the Zoroastrian religion, the incident when he was on duty with an ambulance brigade engaged in mine sweeping and the explosion of a mine hit two men — killing one and injuring another. Carrying the dead man in his arms while giving cover to the other with his body until they reached the first aid post, he fervently prayed the *Yatha*. Another occasion when Jungalwalla had to fall back on the *Yatha* was when an orderly, a young Pathan lad dedicated to the doctor, insisted on serving him during the Delhi riots of 1946.



Once when Jungalwalla was driving to a hospital in old Delhi, he was held up by a gang of armed hooligans who insisted on inspecting his car. They saw an old, torn, army blanket lying crumpled near the back-seat of the car, never suspecting that the Pathan lad lay trembling beneath it. They waved the car on, the doctor reciting the *Yatha* in thanksgiving.

In 1946 Jungalwalla had reverted to civilian life, working for a while as deputy public health commissioner, ministry of education, Government of India. In the interim period between his WHO appointments the doctor was building up health institutes in India. As acknowledged Dr P. K. Khosla, secretary of the National Academy of Medical Sciences (India), Jungalwalla "evinced keen interest in the promotion of medical sciences." His demise was a national loss "particularly (for) the medical profession and different organizations including ours," he added.

He served as director of the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Calcutta, reportedly the only institute of its kind in South East Asia. Identifying remote villages in need of fresh water and sanitation was part of his job. On one such trip he was approached by a poor woman who was willing to part with her worldly wealth of two rupees to reinforce her request that

a latrine be built near her hut also. Refusing the payment, Jungalwalla assured her that a latrine would be built for her too. When the sanitary engineer objected saying it was outside the purview of the Institute, the doctor answered that the payment would be borne by him personally, the incident was reported in *The National Medical Journal of India* (November-December 1995). On another occasion an old peasant who wanted to show his appreciation to the doctor, came to him at the Institute with his life's savings, all in small coins, totalling several thousand rupees. With the donor's consent it was decided to use the money to help treat tuberculosis.

"Nowshir himself felt that his greatest achievement was the founding of the National Institute of Health Education," Government of India, later renamed the National Institute of Health and Family Planning, states his wife. Among Jungalwalla's other appointments with the Government of India were as additional director general, health, and as convenor and honorary treasurer, National Board of Examinations affiliated to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, mentions his bio data.

Jungalwalla, whose roots were in Burma, had earned his MBBS degree from the Rangoon University winning a gold medal for standing first class first. After his MD he proceeded to London where he was conferred the Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians. It was a decade later that he was awarded a fellowship to do his masters in public health from the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA.

The expertise that he had gained over the years was put to use by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), the Union Public Services Commission as also the Royal College of Physicians which appointed him consultant. The last named organization appointed him their first representative in India. To Jungalwalla goes the distinction of being listed in the Indian *Who's Who*, as also the British, American and Canadian *Who's Who*. Despite his failing health and the onset of Alzheimer's disease in 1993, the American Biographical Institute nominated him Man of the Year in 1992 and 1994 and conferred on him an honorary professorship in 1993.

Jungalwalla is survived by his wife Piloo, and son Hoshang who is a consultant psychiatrist in geriatrics affiliated to the National Health Service, UK.

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