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OCTOBER 1996 Rs 22



*Sir Pherozeshah Mehta's  
150th birth anniversary*



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# Parsiana

October 1996  
Volume 19 Number 3

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## 2 Readers' Forum

---

## 6 Events and Personalities

---

## 16 Zoroastrians Abroad

---

## 20 Sir Pherozeshah Mehta: When the lion roared by Arnavaz Mama

---

## 34 The gift of compassion by Hilla Guzder

---

## 38 A difference of approach by Khushro Rustamji

---

## 40 "Beeseeching the Lady" by Dr Borzoo Nadjmi

---

## 42 The Parsi Punchayet Case -- 4

---

## 48 Vistasp Balsara: Melody Maker by A. Patel

---

## 50 Books

---

## 53 Milestones

---

## 56 In Memoriam

---

**Cover: Portrait of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta by N. Writer, circa 1908, courtesy Elphinstone College Photograph: Varghese Fernandez**

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**The role K. R. Cama played**  
1923 saw the publication of the book *Kharshedji Rustamji Cama, 1831-1909 — A Memoir* written by Mr S. M. Edwardes. The former Indian Civil Service officer dedicated it "to His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, who during the period of his stay in India was acquainted with Mr K. R. Cama and realized the value of his services to that country and to the cause of Freemasonry." The following extracts are interesting:

"In 1903 he played a prominent part in a controversy which centred round the fundamental question whether the religion of Zarathushtra permits the conversion to Zoroastrianism of persons born in, and belonging to, other faiths. The matter, which arose through the conversion of a Christian lady on the occasion of her marriage according to Zoroastrian rites to a Parsi merchant of position and influence,

*Cama: uplifting co-religionists*

to whom she had already been married under French law, was hotly debated by the Parsi community, the conservative and orthodox members of which stoutly opposed the admissibility of such conversions to their faith. Cama entered the lists, regardless of praise or blame, and pinned his faith to the Avesta, of which he was admittedly the ablest lay exponent. Relying on the teaching of the ancient scriptures, he boldly proclaimed that if any person from a sincere conviction of the truth of the Zoroastrian religion desired to be converted to that faith, there was no good ground for refusing to admit such a one, whether man or woman, to the fold. In delivering this message from the Parsi sacred lore, Cama was actually doing violence to his own personal views; for in his opinion it was far better for a man to cling to the religion in which he was born and imbibe its highest teaching, than to enrol himself, perhaps for material or worldly reasons, under the banner of another faith.

"Moreover he was opposed on general grounds to marriages between Zarathoshtis and those of another creed, believing that such marriages are productive of religious and social incompatibilities, and might, if widely practised, exercise a detrimental effect upon the matrimonial prospects of Parsi girls. Despite these views, however, K. R. Cama took his stand upon the Avesta; and when in due course a sub-committee, appointed to investigate the question, pro-



posed to put almost insuperable restrictions upon conversion, he wrote a separate minute to the effect that when the sacred and ancient lore permits of receiving aliens into the Zoroastrian fold, it is a sin to place unnecessary obstacles in their way, and that so far from making the conditions of conversion restrictive, they should on the contrary be made as little onerous as possible."

In the chapter on Iranian Research And Parsi Reform, Mr Edwardes states:

"Valuable as was the part which Kharshedji Rustamji Cama played in the general educational advancement of Western India and in the sphere of Freemasonry, these activities were subordinate to the one overmastering purpose of his life, namely, the reform of the Zoroastrian religion and the religious education of the Parsis. It was the successful prosecution of this great object which gained for Cama the unique position which he held in his own community during the later years of his life; it was his passionate endeavour to uplift his co-religionists to a higher religious and social plane which earned him the unquestioning veneration of the multitude."

I would strongly advocate the reading of this excellent — detached — *Memoir*.

Capt HORMAZDIAR J. M. DESAI

It Hon Sec, The K. R. Cama Oriental Institute

### "I'm a man in a hurry"

While agreeing with Mr Jehangir R. Bisney ("I'm a man in a hurry," *Readers' Forum*, *Parsiana*, June 1996) that we have lost some of our spirit of enterprise, and have sat back, resting on our laurels, for too long, I fail to understand how giving homes to those in need can be anything but beneficial. Would Mr Bisney like to see young couples starting life under a plastic sheet on the pavements, adding to the city's confusion and squalor?

He says that money is spent only on housing, and all "other important priorities" are ignored. What are these priorities? Would Mr Bisney like to enumerate them? "A co-ordinated master-plan" is very vague.

Constructive criticism can be useful, but purely destructive criticism has never done anyone any good.

Ms KHORSHED R. K. S. GHANDHI

### Queuing before the *kebla*

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Queuing to enter Aslaji Agiary, Bombay  
Photo: Homyar Mistry, Homz Prints

went. We witnessed fairly large congregations on these two days at different atash behrams and agiaries. Whilst this is heartening, how one wishes that half these numbers would visit these holy places every day. The next such large thronging of devotees would be seen at the *salgreh* (anniversary) of an atash behram or agiary.

The only thing lacking at these large gatherings is self-discipline. One sees devotees pushing and jostling to reach the *kebla* (sanctum sanctorum). If devotees were to cultivate the habit of forming orderly queues every one of them would be able to bow and pay homage peacefully either for two or three minutes or for five to seven minutes each according to his/her conscience.

There was a case of an agiary situated at central Mumbai where on its *salgreh*, it used to employ Parsi schoolboys to maintain orderly queues to enable devotees to go to the *kebla* and bow without hustle and bustle. Alas, for the last two years the management of the agiary has discontinued engaging the services of the schoolboys, with the result that pushing and shoving has restarted.

The trustees of all atash behrams and agiaries should put up suitable notices on festive occasions when they expect large congregations of devotees, requesting the formation of orderly queues, so that the present *khotto dhasharow* (melee) could be avoided and everybody would be able to pay homage quietly and peacefully.

Who will take the lead?

BIKHAIJI M. ADENWALLA

## RBI's Tarapore retires

When Mr Savak Sohrab Tarapore relinquished office as deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on September



30, 1996 after a service of 35 years in the central bank, he had several accomplishments as a monetary expert to his credit: the liberalization of the money markets, the move from direct instruments of monetary control to indirect instruments and control of inflation.

Together with RBI governor Dr C. Rangarajan, Mr Tarapore can be called an architect of the modern monetary system in India. The two handled the balance of payments crisis during 1990-91 and the turbulence in the foreign exchange market during October 1995-February 1996 with great finesse.

Conscious that inflation hits the poorest the hardest, Mr Tarapore strongly argued that the Reserve Bank need not be an apologist for being zealous about inflation control. He had advocated that the central bank be given a mandate on an inflation target which, however, must emerge from a national consensus.

Born in 1936 in Hyderabad, Mr Tarapore acquired a BA (Hons) degree from Sheffield University, and an MSc in economics from London. In recognition of his work over the years, he was conferred an honorary Doctor of Laws by Sheffield University.

On returning to India, Mr Tarapore had joined the RBI as research officer in 1961, became executive director in 1988 and deputy governor in 1992.

Working late into the night almost every day, he was a source of inspiration to all those who worked with him. Not egoistic or conscious about his position in the Bank, he was a guide, philosopher and friend to his colleagues. He could devote himself wholeheartedly to work because of the able support from his family. At the same time, he knew his responsibilities to his family members.

Mr Tarapore's landmark contribution to the formulation and conduct of monetary policy will be remembered for a long time to come.

NIRANJANA M. SHAH

RBI

## Long and silent suffering

When Roshan Dara Bharucha expired in Nagpur it was the death of a very brave

woman. A woman who fought against galloping osteo-arthritis for 36 long years.

Way back in March 1959, while Roshan was holidaying at a hill station near Bombay, she was struck by this damaging disease. From then on it was a series of operations and hospitalization, but to no avail. Even a five months' stay in Australia for treatment under a leading orthopedist did not help. The disease had a firm grip on Roshan. As one joint after another got immobile, Roshan resigned herself to a life in bed, with only one and a half hours to sit up in a chair.

Having a very active mind and a good memory, she was able to live as normal a life as her illness permitted. She thought of different ways to keep herself mentally occupied. One of her hobbies was composing poems on various friends and family members who had departed from this abode. To give her some mobility, her bed was put on castors, as well as her bath and TV chairs.

In later years all meals were taken lying prone in bed, the plate being propped on her stomach and a spoon held between her first two fingers. There were many spills as the food made its way from plate to mouth, but Roshan was always careful that she was cleaned up properly after each meal.

A daily hot bath was the best time of the day for Roshan and good therapy for her stiff joints. She was meticulous about being properly dried and well powdered after the bath by her attending maidservant. Hence in all those years she never had a single bedsore. Maintaining a strict routine throughout the day enabled her to carry on for 36 long suffering years. Maidservants would come and go but her faithful nephew Adil and sister-in-law Perin were always there to take over in the maid's absence.

Being good at elocution and drama in her schooldays enabled her to coach not only her nephews and nieces but also the neighbors' children who would come to her to polish up their performance.

After dinner was "story time." From grandfather to the littlest grandchildren, they would gather around her and listen in rapt attention as she related the latest episode of the story she was currently reading. She would render the dialogues as if the characters themselves were speaking. Soon her reading stopped as her eyesight was failing.

The last 15 years were the most difficult as Roshan was living without both hip-joints. The hip replacements done in Aus-

continued on page 39

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**"Goodness, I left the tap on!"**



*The next time  
you're careless,  
remember over 250 million Indians don't have  
access to drinking water.*

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# Events and Personalities

## Metal merits

"For long service dedicated to the pursuit of academic matters," Dr Dara P. Antia was presented a scroll of honor by the West Bengal Academy of Science and Technology in July last, mentions the *Fed Newsletter* of August 1996.

Presently serving as management consultant to various engineering, metallurgical and mineral industries, Antia was formerly director of metals with the Government of India, responsible for the conversion of metal industries from war use to a peacetime economy. He has also been instrumental in founding and giving direction to the Indian Institute of Metals, internationally renowned as a professional and research body, notes the *Fed Newsletter*, giving the highlights of the 82-year-old metallurgist's career. Antia has also been credited with coordinating and monitoring highly technical Indian and international research programs.

Several are the distinctions that have been conferred on Antia, prominent among which are: the Howe medal by the American Society for Metals which later conferred on him its fellowship too, the first Syed Hussain Zaheer Medal by the Indian National Science Academy, the Tata gold medal, doctorate of science (honoris causa) by the Banaras Hindu University whence he graduated in metallurgical engineering. For his postgraduate studies he had proceeded to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to obtain a doctorate of sci-

ence in physical metallurgy and mineral economics, and to the Harvard Business School for a degree in advanced business management.

## Turel beats tumor

"I did miss a few beats. There are always those moments during surgery," admitted neurosurgeon Dr Keki Turel who recently removed a 550 gm tumor from the brain of a 15-year-old boy. Head of Bombay Hospital's department of neurosurgery, Turel spent 10 hours on this operation, according to an article in *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of August 12, 1996.

The distinction of removing the world's largest tumor in 1982 reportedly stands in the name of Turel who is also known to have performed certain surgeries lasting 22 hours, states *The Afternoon* report. "Microsurgery is very advanced," remarked Turel, adding that with God's help "we are able to overcome the unthinkable, the unapproachable."

In the case of the brain tumor that he extracted from young S. Sunil of Hyderabad, Turel had to excise the cancerous growth piecemeal although some huge blobs were also removed. Lodged within the brain, the surgeon had to dislodge it from the surrounding blood vessels without causing any impairment to the functioning of this vital organ. Suffering from frequent convulsions, S. Sunil had earlier had his tumor operated upon in Madras. When the symptoms recurred, the adolescent was taken for another check-up when the parents were informed that the tumor

had grown again. They therefore decided to consult Turel who after a series of tests decided to perform the surgery. To the relief of the doctors, following the second operation, "young Sunil woke up well and conscious and is on his way to complete recovery."

## Iranian MP Larijani

"We wanted to create a new civil social order. What kind of society (should we have)?" Dr Mohammad Jawad Ardeshtir Larijani, a member of the Islamic Republic of Iran's (IRI) Parliament and head of its Centre for the Parliament's Researches, on a day's visit to Bombay, recounted the intellectual and political preoccupations of his country following the Islamic revolution in 1978.

Was the idea of representation of the people compatible with the concept of legitimacy as conceived in the Islamic order? It was "a big debate," Larijani told the small group of academics and reporters gathered to hear him at Bombay University's Management Council Hall on November 29, 1996. He credited the late



Metallurgist Antia



Turel: "overcoming the unthinkable"



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Ayatollah Khomeini and the Shiite scholars with the innovation that "convinced the rest that it is."

Putting together the experiences of other peoples of the world, they designed a structure similar to the US model, but incorporating other European ideas also, noted the former deputy foreign minister. "For us, power has remained in the institution of leadership," said Larijani. A 65-member council of clerics elects the Leader — currently Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. The President, on the other hand is elected by the people's representatives, the present incumbent being Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

Members of Parliament cannot be older than 70 years, "cannot hold any other job, not even that of a minister," informed Larijani. The priorities are well demarcated: the social structure precedes the economic; there is a systematic way of analyzing political issues. Despite that, "the biggest challenge is to put these ideas into work (but) even if we commit mistakes, it's our own mistakes," said Larijani.

The Centre for the Parliament's Researches comprises 200 experts who assess bills introduced in Parliament, prepare innovations, provide background and maintain a data bank to help the deputies with their decision making. "It's the biggest national network... It can access a lot of information by pushing a few buttons," noted the bearded legislator proudly. "We try to be objective as far as possible. More than 76 bills failed because of (the Centre's) negative assessment," he added.

Queried about the IRI's foreign policy in the Caucasus and in Central Asia Larijani, who is head of the foreign policy committee of the Supreme Council of National Security and vice president of the Foreign Affairs Commission (he was founder and erstwhile head of the department of political and international studies of the foreign ministry), remarked that after the fall of Soviet Russia, the area is "a game field. The country that can play hard ball has (the best) chance of success... In Central Asia everything is in Persian... In these areas there are no real nation states. They do not have the infrastructure of states. (They are) basically provinces."

According to Larijani, whose doctorate in mathematics was acquired at the University of Berkeley in California, US policy

in these areas is dictated by the American desire to keep these areas out of the Russian belt of security on the one hand and their paranoia about Islam on the other: "Oh boy, the Fundamentalists are coming!" laughed Larijani. According to him, the ground reality is different: most of the people of the erstwhile USSR "don't know how to pray: they can smell culture, but are not really aware. Our policy is to act



Taleyrakhan, Larijani, Dr Nawaz Mody, Homai Modi and Silloo Kavarana at Bombay University

rationally and naturally — we can't go further than their capability ... There is no banking or regulation but trade is possible, for example, with Azerbaijan."

Former ambassador to Italy and Libya Homi Taleyrakhan introduced and welcomed the Iranian legislator whose bio data credits him with more than 500 articles in mathematics, philosophy and politics and who describes himself as "a scientist seduced to politics."

Arnavaz S. Manna

## Mody's hold on gold

Heading the Indian chapter of the World Gold Council is Ms Khursheeda Mody who perceives the role of this organization as "agents for change." Not only do they look after the interests of the trader but also the consumer. The global body has, over the years, sought to develop an in-depth understanding of the market, according to a report in *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of April 11, 1996. "With the appointment of a woman as its head, it aims to further sharpen its understanding of the end users — the women of India," states *The Afternoon*.

Prior to this appointment, Mody was working for Saatchi and Saatchi (Thailand) as client service director. From consumer products which she has marketed for nearly 23 years, Mody will now apply herself to promoting the sale of the yellow material in India which is reportedly the world's largest consumer of gold (477

tonnes in 1995-96), as mentioned in *Mid-Day*, December 2, 1996.

"End-user communication has a role, one to be handled with great discretion and caution," Mody told *Business India* (May 20-June 2, 1996). The challenges before the World Gold Council are manifold: it has to function in an environment where gold is now readily available; where casting technology has created a mass branded,

low karat fashion jewellery market; and where traditional goldsmiths have to compete with new entrepreneurs.

## Noble music

They have their roots in India. They draw their inspiration from India. They have fans in India. They are Cyrus and Shirin Valentine, the lead cast of the band

Noble Savages, who came visiting India in September-October 1996 to perform their popular number — *I am an Indian, Digging in the nose...* Their appearance on Channel V was a familiar sight; their promos for the Sahara Cup cricket match on Star Sports was a regular feature. The unexpected for many was their performing before the same audience as pop star Michael Jackson when he stormed Bombay with his presence on November 1, 1996.

Born in Bombay to a Parsi mother and Christian father, the duo are now based in Germany but have strong affiliations to their motherland. "We are fully westernized, but in our hearts we are Indian," said Cyrus in an interview with *The Bombay Times* of September 11. "I wouldn't want our songs to make our audiences go around saying 'India is the best,' but it's important that Indians know themselves, their rich culture and respect themselves... If your self esteem is high, only then can you love others," he added. "If you don't have an identity, it is like *na ghar ka na ghat ka* (neither here nor there)," Shirin expressed her sentiments in an interview with the *Express Newslite* of September 24.

They call themselves Noble Savages, a term used by Jean Jacques Rousseau to describe the Red Indians whom he viewed as "noble in their thoughts, but savage in their behavior." To counter this racist statement the duo adopted the Noble Savages label with which they convey the message that Indians too can shoot videos of international standard, and to change the negative image of India as a third-world country. Adopting the Om sign as the group's

*Try it*



*The feel and  
fragrance of Satin*

identity, Noble Savages give an Indian touch to their videos by interspersing their music with tabla and sitar renditions, and wearing Indian outfits, it was reported in the *Express*.

Cyrus who has studied musicology at the German University has his own studio where they produce music for their own group as also other artistes. Shirin veejays Germany's popular music channel VIVA Wecker, mentions the *Express Newline*. *If I would be a star* is the next album they are working on, reveals a spokesperson from BMG Crescendo, the music company that has been marketing the Valentines' music.

## Godrej Baug gives news

"Parsis are very insular in their thinking. Very few come forward with suggestions and offers to help," states Ms Navaz Master, secretary of the Godrej Baug Residents' Association, who attempts to keep the residents of the Baug informed of developments and programs by bringing out a newsletter. About three or four newsletters are brought out in a year at varying time intervals, depending on the news and announcements that need to be publicized, she informs.

Within two or three pages the residents are kept apprised of the progress on different fronts, be it security or water problems, or dissatisfaction with the cable operator, and intimated of new projects like prayer classes for children, religious discussions for youth, Christmas and New Year's eve parties, and the constitution of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet's (BPP) vigilance committee to prevent encroachment on community property.

Residents are regularly invited to enrol

as members of the Association. Even though the annual dues are only Rs 60 per annum per member, Master finds that many have not become members of the Association which was formed in December 1994. The membership fees help defray the costs of the newsletter, 400 copies of which are circulated to the residents and the seven BPP trustees, and subsidize the other activities undertaken, states the secretary.

Positive response to the newsletter has been scant: many a times members say that they had no time to read the newsletter and only consigned it to the waste paper bas-

*Tata scholars: (top) Shroff, Poncha, Acharia, (below) Irani, Cooper and Panthaki*

ket! Nevertheless Master, who recalls how *Deepanjali* (the newsletter of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman) used to keep the community in Delhi abreast of happenings, feels the need to communicate regularly and is determined to continue with her efforts.

## Six scholars

Four of the six Parsi students chosen as J. N. Tata Scholars for the year 1996-97 are females, in pursuit of higher qualifications in fields as diverse as fine art photography, international relations, education and music with economics. The two males will be pursuing courses in metallurgy and international affairs, according to a press release from the J. N. Tata Endowment for the Higher Education of Indians, giving a brief profile on each of the six students.

After a year's work experience in the USA, Zubin Jamshed Irani will be joining the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, for a master's degree in metallurgy. Irani completed his BTech in materials science from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, securing the first rank in the department, and making one of his professors opine that he "is the most outstanding student the department has

*A section of Godrej Baug*





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At the fifth anniversary function of the Parvez Katrak Foundation when five social workers from the community were felicitated and a dinner treat organized for the students of the Dadar Athornan Madressa: (from left) Ms Mithoo Jesia, Jal Amaria, Ervad Rustom Panthaky, chief guest Rustom Tirandaz, Parvez Katrak, Firoze Sholapurwala and Ms Sheroo Bilimoria

had in the past several years." His extracurricular activities include trekking, gliding, horse riding, swimming, dramatics, cricket, and tennis, the game where he captained his college team when in his final year of studies.

Jamshed Mehli Poncha has proceeded to the Columbia University for a master's degree in international affairs. After his graduation in chemistry from the Bombay University, Poncha completed his master of management studies from Podar College, securing the first rank and "The Best Student Award." On completion of his studies Poncha will resume his work at Tata Sons Limited where he was employed as manager-planning development (international).

The London School of Economics had admitted Ms Meherangiz Acharia who wished to do her BSc in international relations. However, inability to raise adequate funds has compelled Acharia to postpone her plans by a year. She is a graduate in political science from St Xavier's College, Bombay.

For her master's in education, Ms Navaz Cooper has gone to the Boston University. She will be specializing in policy, planning and administration. After her double graduation in arts and education from the Bombay University, Cooper had been working as a secondary school teacher and plans to return to India to continue with her teaching career.

Music and economics are the subjects Ms Scherezade K. Panthaki will be specializing in when studying for her BA degree at the West Virginia Wesleyan College. She was among the youngest in India to have completed the LTCL performer's diploma (voice) and grade eight (piano) course when yet a teenager. She has won awards in national piano contests and given performances as a soprano soloist.

To gain further training in fine art photography for which she has a "natural talent," Ms Tushna Shroff has secured admission at the Rochester Institute of Technology. A commerce graduate from the Bombay University, Shroff later joined the Sophia Polytechnic for a diploma in commercial art since she evinced keen interest in photography, typography, graphics and calligraphy. She will now qualify for a bachelor's degree in fine arts.

### Story telling techniques

It was in September 1996 that director Alyque Padamsee presented three short stories from Dina Mehta's latest book, *Miss Menon Did Not Believe in Magic* (Rupa 1994), as a unique theater event at The Little Theatre at the NCPA complex in Bombay. It was the first time that an attempt was made to maintain the integrity of the short story as an art form, and instead of turning the tales into little stage plays complete with dialogues and action to be

performed by a cast of actors, only one voice told one story — aided and abetted by technical devices thought up by Padamsee to enhance the telling.

What happens when a story is read out to you? Do you miss your intimacy with the printed word, or does the tale grow taller in the telling? Does the raconteur (it could be grandma or the village *sutradhar*) illumine for you the author's domain, or does she/he impose her/his own compulsions or arbitrary conceits on the story, and thus on the captive child or audience?

These are some of the questions that intrigued Padamsee in this experiment with narrative techniques. Working closely with Mehta, he allowed the protagonist's voice (in each story) to dictate his style of presentation. The voice in *Absolution* is that of a participant; in *Eyewitness*, that of an observer-participant; in *The Other Woman* it's that of a commentator who views with a sardonic eye the marital traumas (in a witty reversal of roles) of an exemplary husband.

The raconteurs on stage were Ms Sabira Merchant, Gerson da Cunha and Aadya Bedi. After the performance the audience was invited to participate in a discussion with the director, author and actors, on what had been shown. Were the innovative technological devices employed by Padamsee to highlight the tales necessary? Did they work, or did they merely clutter up Mehta's elegantly crafted tales? What were the actors' problems? Was the author satisfied with the end results?

The second performance in Bombay was held at the Max Mueller Bhavan's Stuttgart Hall. It was an interesting evening

*Mehta: author vs raconteur*



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and both sides of the coin were reflected in the discussion that followed. The seasoned voices certainly heightened the drama of the tales; but Mehta's often felicitous turns of phrase had to be compressed into the time frame of a single 'reading.' For the literary-minded, *Ms Menon...* deserves the attention of the eye!

So enthusiastic however has been the audience response to this unique theater workshop that Padamsee is thinking of taking the 'show' to Goa, Pune and Calcutta this year.

### Death with dignity

"To die with dignity is to waltz off the stage without pain, without humiliating sores, without being drenched in smelly secretions, without clutching to a labored breath..." writes Dr Nagraj Huilgol, editor of the newsletter brought out by the Society for the Right to Die with Dignity. "At the very end of a life which in substantial part may have been spent in seeking the greatest possible degree of dignity for oneself, one slides paradoxically into the indignity of despair, the clutching after straws," remarks Rohit Manchanda in the same April issue of the newsletter.

"We have to differentiate between existence and living. When an individual is no longer able to contribute to his own physical, intellectual and spiritual well-being, sustaining such a state is a perversion of the concept of respect for life," argues Society chairman Dr B. N. Colabawalla. It is this "deep respect" for life and death that has drawn over 300 members to the Society which in its nearly 15 years of existence has sought to justify voluntary euthanasia. Care has been taken to clarify that adults of sound mind, who after careful consideration and without undue coercion are convinced that the illness is irreversible and all medical treatment futile, should be permitted to give directives to terminate their life.

To this effect the Society is in the process of drafting a bill to legalize the "living will" or "advance health directive," mentions Colabawalla. In his outline of the draft, Colabawalla enunciates the role and responsibilities of the individual and the attending physician so that the document is not abused by vested interests. In his article Colabawalla shares the findings of a sample survey of 200 doctors carried out by the Society in Bombay. Seventy-four percent of the medicos believed that artificial life sup-

ports should not be extended when death is imminent but only 65 percent were willing to withdraw life supports. Further, 41 percent were in favor of honoring the living will while 31 percent had reservations. "We have to keep on trying," notes Colabawalla who realizes that for the bill to become an act is a "long process."

To spread the message of the Society the chairman invited active participation from members by goading them to put forth the objectives of the Society to outsiders, contributing items to the newsletter, offering comments on the functioning of the Society and obtaining donations whereby the Society may expand its activities. The Society's new address is Sassoon Building, 1st floor, 143 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Fort, Bombay 400023. New members too were invited, their life membership fee being Rs 500 and their regular membership fee Rs 60 for three years, both of which were likely to be revised.

### Doctor done to death

Seventy-four-year-old city gynecologist Dr (Ms) Hilla Banaji was found murdered in her flat in Bombay's Altamont Road area on August 2, 1996, according to a report in *The Times of India* the following day. She was strangled to death with a gas cylinder pipe by her former domestic employee Sunil Bitt who confessed to having committed the crime.

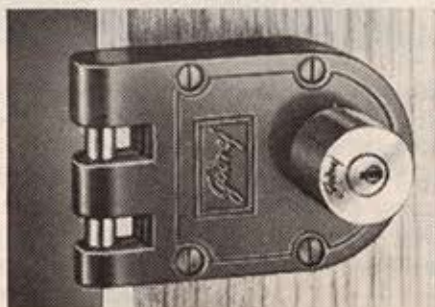
The crime and the criminal were detected almost immediately thanks to the efforts of Banaji's current domestic help, Mahesh Valmiki. When he reported for work at Banaji's Cama Terrace residence at 7.30 in the morning he found the doorbell unanswered. While waiting outside he was informed by Bitt's accomplice that Banaji was out of town on vacation so he need not report to work for the next few days. Valmiki's suspicions aroused, he bolted the door from outside and alerted the watchmen downstairs who saw Bitt slithering down the drain pipes, trying to escape.

As soon as Bitt reached the ground floor, he was nabbed and handed over to the police who recovered Rs 7,000 from his person, mentions *The Times*. The three security guards who caught Bitt were reportedly presented cash awards of Rs 1,000 each by the police while Bitt was arrested on charges of murder and robbery.

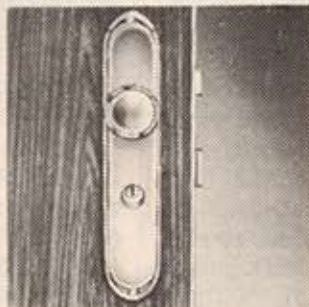
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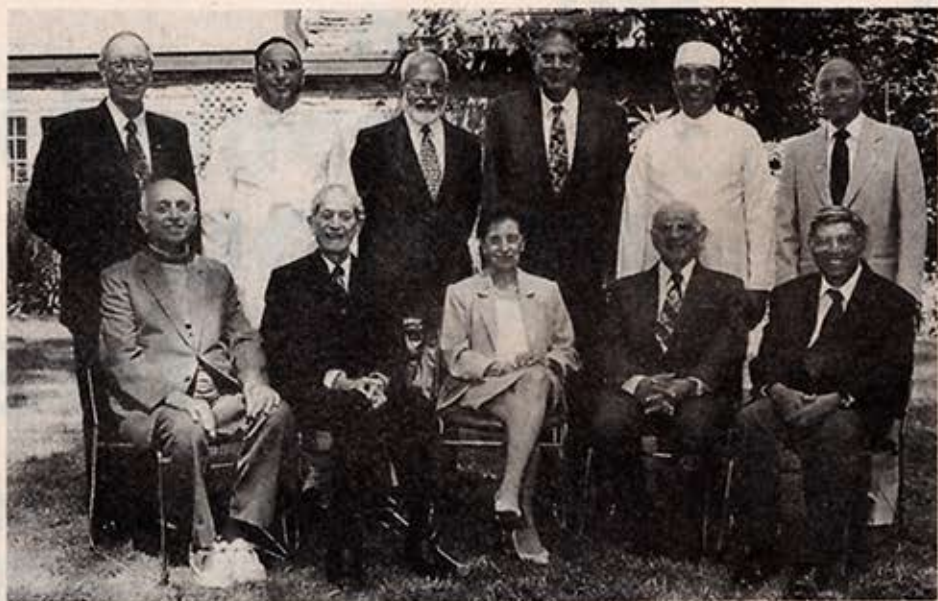
## Celebrating ZSO's silver

The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) kicked off its silver jubilee celebrations with a gala banquet at the Thornhill Community Center on September 20, 1996, reports the *FEZANA Journal* (Winter 1996). Garas and gowns, tuxedos and evening suits were the order of the day as ZSO president Ms Moti Balsara welcomed the gathering and announced a year-long program "designed to inform ourselves, our friends and neighbors of our glorious and ancient faith, our heritage and our culture." An exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum, scholarly lectures and other enlightening events are on the cards.

Mingling with the dignitaries who included government members and representatives of Queen Elizabeth II, the consul generals of India and Pakistan, an official from the Iranian embassy, were internationally acclaimed Zoroastrian novelist Rohinton Mistry and nuclear wizard Adi Dastoor (both specifically honored that day), *FEZANA* president Ms Dolly Dastoor, representatives of various North American Zoroastrian associations and several past presidents of the ZSO, informs the write-up by *FEZANA Journal* publisher Ms Roshan Rivetna and Dr (Ms) Dhun Noria, chairperson of the ZSO banquet committee.

The evening began with the playing of the Canadian national anthem followed by the recitation of four verses from the *Gathas*. The Iranian Zoroastrian Choir, under the baton of Edward Hovsepian chanted four songs for the assembled guests. Hovsepian, the founder-conductor of the 120-voice choir of the Armenian community in Ontario had earlier been the concert master of the Symphony Orchestra of Tehran. The *tar*, a string instrument and the *tombak*, a type of drum, revived the "Sounds Ancient Iran" while a professional sound and slide show titled "Journey of the Sacred Fire" highlighted the role of Zoroastrianism in world history, replete with little known facts and achievements.

The entertainment was interspersed with the reading of messages and greetings, a sumptuous dinner and a raffle draw (five dollar tickets had Toronto Zoroastrians vying for a Pontiac Sunfire Sedan, a 32" TV and a Rotary Watch) as per the exquisite art paper brochure distributed on the occasion. Apart from the program and dinner menu, the 20-page publication contains messages from the Lt Governor, the



All the ZSO presidents: (standing) Russi Balsara, Jamshed Mistry, Jamshed Mavalwala, Sam Vesuna, Kobad Zarolia, Dhun Bhaya, (seated) Minoo Treasurywala, Jehangir Karanjia, Moti Balsara, Homi Homji, Yezdi Antia (missing: Bomy Boyce and Minoo Khoorshed)

premier and the mayor of Ontario, the mayor of North York and D. Dastoor. In her welcoming letter Balsara writes, "This is a celebration of who, what and where we are today, thanks to the opportunity provided to us by this wonderful country of Canada."

Short, skilfully phrased articles on Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrian achievements interspersed with quotes from the *Gathas* and the Old Testament provide a quick background to the uninitiated. Colorful reproductions of Achaemenian and Sasanian bas reliefs, a view of Persepolis and vintage coins from the Achaemenian, Parthian and Sasanian empires add to the aesthetic publication.

The germ of the ZSO was laid in 1965 by Jehangir Paymaster (Medora — recently in the news with his Zoroastrian flag) when he induced Canadian immigration authorities to send a representative to Bombay to interview prospective immigrants and several Parsis received their immigration visas, notes an article on the ZSO by Kawas Nanavutty in the *FEZANA Journal* (Summer 1996). A year later 16 individuals started a service group called the Zoroastrian Fraternity to assist new arrivals to settle into the Canadian lifestyle. They

provided non-financial help with procuring employment, accommodation, etc.

When the ZSO was registered in 1971 its three priorities were to obtain government recognition of marriages performed by the mobeds (acquired a year later), organize religious classes and perform jashans/ghambers and other religious ceremonies. Various halls in churches and at the University of Toronto were rented for such ceremonies. By 1977 a structured curriculum had been developed and car pools organized to ferry children to religious classes in rented premises. Their success led to the detailed syllabus of the Religion in Life Emblem for Boy Scouts and Girl Guides of Canada, reportedly one of ZSO's success stories.

By 1975 the Ontario community was actively pursuing the goal of a community center. A ZSO newsletter of 1977 reporting on the effort chanced to be read by Iranian philanthropist Arbab Rustom Guiv who offered \$ 500,000 for land and a structure to be named after his late nephew Mehraban Guiv. In 1978 a suitable property was located and Guiv signed the purchase agreement but the community was upset that the deal had been struck without its knowledge and consent and that the property would be owned in trust by the Rustom Guiv Foundation though operated by the ZSO. The dissension was bridged by an agreement that leased the property to ZSO for 999 years at an annual rent of one cent, documents Nanavutty. The project ran into further litigation with the local authorities but a landmark judgement in

Organized by the personnel and cultural department of the UNO on request, the food, specially prepared for the occasion, was spiced with ingredients from Lyon and much appreciated by people from Sarajevo and Latvia.



Tangree at the UN

A short talk on Zoroastrianism delivered by a professor from the University of Geneva's department of international religions, was equally well received, writes Tangree. The audience included the British consul general and his wife who, having been posted in Tehran earlier, were delighted to partake of the celebrations. Another welcome presence was that of Dr Heinrich Wanser whose wife is a practising Zoroastrian, writes Tangree.

Though there are a few Zoroastrians in Zurich, the two to three hour travel time deterred the invitees from making the trip, notes the write-up.

## Life in East Africa

Nearly a 100 years ago the Adenwalla family established an agiary in Zanzibar in memory of a deceased daughter. The fire is now dead, the priests' quarters dilapidated and only two Zoroastrians remain in Zanzibar today of the original 800 plus settlement, informs Zanzibar-born Meher Framroze who now lives in Mombasa. "We are afraid that all the remaining vessels may be stolen (from the defunct agiary)," Framroze and his wife Dinoo mentioned to *Parsiana* in the course of a visit to Bombay in November '96. Framroze says he met Cowasjee Dinshaw, who now heads the Adenwalla family, but Dinshaw was unable to provide Framroze with the requisite authority. "On whose authority can we move them?" puzzles Framroze.

A retired electrical contractor, Meher and his twin brother Farrokh (who is commercial manager with East African Cables in Nairobi) have continued their lives in East Africa. Their younger brother Tehmtan went to the UK to study and remained there, entering local politics, being appointed Mayor of Brighton in 1994 (see "Finger on the pulse of the city," *Parsiana*, February-March 1996).

There is a prayer hall and aramgah but no agiary in Mombasa where about 50 Zoroastrians continue to reside. In Nairobi, which also has an aramgah, reside about 60

more, estimates Framroze. Most are over 50 years of age, many are over 60. Political uncertainty made most Zoroastrians send their children to the UK or US to study and they have made new lives in those countries, they say. The few younger members of the community now in Nairobi or Mombasa are 10-15 Indian expatriate professionals or business employees — including a qualified banker, actuary and food technologist — and their families. Among them is Aspi Gowadia, a resident engineer with Spirax Sarkeo, who is also a qualified mobed and helps when he can, informs Framroze.

After 30 years of one-party rule the inception of a multi-party political system has created some friction but the economy has gained, says Framroze, referring to the conditions of life in Kenya. The increased trade has led to an appreciation in the value of the Asian community there, he adds.

Their father, Framroze Ardeshir Patel, had come to Africa from Igatpuri in 1926



The Kenya connection: Meher and Dinoo Framroze

as a steno-clerk of the Legislative Council of Zanzibar, relates Framroze. Their mother's family had arrived on the Sultan's ships earlier. Her father, Shapurji Dhunjishaw Elavia, had been overseer in the government's public works department. He had helped construct the tarmac roads of Zanzibar and had been awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his services to the country, narrates Framroze. It was due to him that many Parsis migrated to Zanzibar and thence to other parts of East Africa like Kenya and Dar es Salaam, he notes. Framroze himself moved out of Zanzibar when he was about 20 years old, but he remembers navjotes and *lagans* (weddings) being celebrated with pomp, religious classes being conducted, an agiary maintenance fund and a mobed provident fund being in existence.

Now the Zanzibarians in the UK celebrate an annual get-together at Silloo and Kersi Jussavala's place in Wimbledon, informs Framroze. At Mombasa, "Ms Khoshed Patel used to organize get-togethers.

Now Phiroze Naoroji, a leading lawyer at the High Court of Kenya in Nairobi, takes keen interest," visiting Mombasa, Zanzibar and other places, says Framroze.

Until his demise in 1981 "Ervad Sorab Rabadi gave excellent service for years in Nairobi. After his death his behdin friend Minoo Byramji took over. He gave, and continues to give, service to the community," appreciated Framroze.

Dinoo [née Jokhi — the late Shapurji Jokhi of Hong Kong was her *kaka* (father's brother)] hails from Bhusaval in central India. She and Meher had met through an advertisement, they recall. Farrokh's wife Sheroo is also a Parsi. Tehmtan however is married to an Englishwoman, Marian.

Tehmtan had spoken about Marian to his father and the latter had stated that he would prefer a Zoroastrian girl which had resulted in Tehmtan stalling his marriage. Finally, the old man despatched Meher and Dinoo to the UK to see Tehmtan's girlfriend. "We found Marian so good, we arranged for the engagement. Father sent a list of prayers for the wedding and the marriage was arranged according to Parsi *rivaj* (customs)," Meher and Dinoo reconstruct the sequence of events, concluding happily, "see how he's come up in life!"

Not so happy was their experience in Bombay in 1984 as they recounted it. Their father had been hospitalized at the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital for 84 days because his right leg was amputated. Thereafter he made better recovery at the Rehabilitation Centre at Worli. When it was all over, he was keen to donate one lakh rupees to be capitalized and its proceeds distributed annually to the poor mobeds of Udwada. However, neither the Bombay Parsi Punchayet nor any other agency was willing to accept the donation on his terms until someone arranged a meeting with Paurushasp Magol of Karachi who willingly accepted it in furtherance of his Fund for Udwada Mobeds.

Some Parsi traditions from India can put the community in an awkward spot, says Framroze, referring to the usual custom of not allowing non-Parsis to view the dead after *sachkar*. "Why can't other friends pay respect to the dead?" he asks, citing two cases in Mombasa not long ago when embarrassed community members had to seek the help of non-Zoroastrians to help lift the bodies, there being no Parsi youths available. "Modification *thavunj joiyé* (should happen), rationalism *avvunj joiyé* (should come)," says Framroze. Their father had shown the way.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama

# When the lion roared...

Bombay University explores Sir Pherozeshah Mehta's many contributions to national life

Arnavaz S. Mama

"I cannot get members appointed to the corporation by Government; I cannot get members elected to the Bench of Justices; I cannot get persons returned to the Standing Committee; I cannot get members elected presidents of this corporation; I can only indulge in — if I may be allowed to be a bit poetic — the feast of reason and the flow of soul... At one time in my younger days people used to play with my name and call me 'ferocious Mehta,' but advanced in years and with my apostolic old age the ferocious character has fallen from me and I can frighten no one and cannot get votes from any other source but 'reason, justice and right.'"

Sir Pherozeshah Merwanjee Mehta, a mature 70 by then, repudiated the appendages to his name (the Lion of Bombay, the Kingmaker, etc) which a lifetime of relentless advocacy of all that he considered right, proper and necessary for the governance of the Indian people and his beloved city had earned him.

"Whoever talks or writes about Sir Pherozeshah Mehta's contribution, refers to his greatness. I feel 'great' is not an adequate word. (His was a) colossal, magnificent, gigantic contribution. He is a colossus striding across a page of our history. The stamp of his personality is on everything he touched. Gandhiji referred to him as the 'Himalayan mountain' when he met him on returning from South Africa. It is an honor for me, as Chancellor of this

(Bombay) University, to pay tribute to one who had adorned the office of vice chancellor. In that short span, he laid the foundations of greatness to which this

university rose in subsequent years...

"I consider Sir Pherozeshah Mehta as one who started the concept of national political leadership. Before him (there were) leaders in various places and movements, but it was only from him that the concept of national political leadership emerged," noted Governor of Maharashtra, Dr P. C. Alexander, addressing the audience that packed the University Convocation Hall on February 24, 1996 in continuing celebration of Mehta's 150th birth anniversary with a two-day national seminar on "The contribution of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta towards nation building and his relevance to our times." The seminar was a part of the year-long commemoration planned by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta 150th Birth Anniversary Celebrations Committee chaired by University vice chancellor Dr (Ms) Snehalata Deshmukh and organized by the committee secretary Dr (Ms) Nawaz Mody who is Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Professor of Civics and Politics at Bombay University.

"It is a mistake to judge the development of an individual by the standards of the current period," Alexander continued, describing the conditions of the late 19th century. Noting that the liberal ideals of John Stuart Mill, which influenced the Gladstone government so deeply in their policies at home, never percolated into their colonial administration, Alexander referred to the "demoralization in the upper classes and sense of fear in the lower classes... the sense of un-



*Sir Pherozeshah as he stands at Bori Bunder* Photo courtesy Godrej Dhotwala

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Garlanding Mehta's portrait overlooking the University's main stairway: University registrar Dr Jairam Chavan, pro vice chancellor A. P. Pradhan, Dr S. A. Kale, Deshmukh and Mody (top left).

At the foot of Mehta's statue outside the municipal headquarters: Homai Modi, Kale, Mody, Burjor Antia, Jamshed Guzder, Bahadur Mody, Deshmukh, Taleyarkhan and Chavan (top right). After lighting the lamp: the Governor and Ms Alexander, Taleyarkhan and Mody (right).



certainly that prevailed after the uprising of 1857 was defeated and suppressed so totally. When the whole country was enveloped in thick clouds of fear — fear of British law, fear of the lowest levels of British government — where was the question of freedom of expression? The concept of national freedom was unthinkable then. The so-called princely states of India were cesspools of tyranny and exploitation and few even dreamt of self-government." The Indian National Congress in its resolutions of 1885-86-87, with Sir Pherozeshah Mehta as one of its leading lights, sought greater representation in the governing councils, in local self-governments, simultaneous examinations for the Indian civil service (ICS) in India and England, and aimed at restoring the dignity of the colonial people. Alexander quoted an editorial in *The Times of India* of 1886 which noted in response to these resolutions, "It was by force that India was conquered and it is by force that India must be governed. If we (British) were to withdraw, it would be in favor of the strongest arm and the sharpest sword — not of fluency or facility of tongue."

Tracing the changing face of leadership from Mehta to Gandhi to Nehru, to our own times when our leaders have "lost credibility as human beings," Alexander concluded, "How can we expect them to be different from what we are?...As doctors, as academicians, giving distinctions, passing students who don't deserve it? Once we find self-justification at our level, we'll carry it higher. The professionals as a group have to turn the searchlight inwards... Pherozeshah Mehta was described as a dictator by many, (he was called) the uncrowned king of Bombay, but no one — no enemy — has accused him of lack of integrity. Let examples like his continue to guide us."

It was during Mehta's term as vice chancellor that the foundation stone of the Convocation Hall, one of Bombay's beautiful heritage structures, was laid, informed Deshmukh. "He was an ardent defender of the freedom of the University, vehemently resisting Government attempts to systematize this institution, opposing Government interference," calling for reforms, espousing his philosophy of higher education as a means for the upliftment of the country, noted Deshmukh and urged the audience to help "make education more meaningful for life in the 21st century."



A new Sir Pherozeshah Mehta Bhavan is being designed by architect I. M. Kadri. To be set on 1.9 acres of land on the Bombay University's Kalina campus, the Bhavan is expected to house the civics and political science department which was established by an endowment fifty years ago as part of Mehta's centenary celebrations. Its new home will provide it with its own library, research facilities and lecture rooms, informs N. Mody. With Rs 95 lakhs (of the estimated cost of Rs 1.5 crores as per *The Times of India* of February 2, '96) in the kitty, the University is hoping to lay the foundation stone of the envisaged structure on March 1, 1997, adds N. Mody. The date would be particularly appropriate as Mehta had been appointed vice-chancellor of the University on March 1, 1915.

The celebrations had begun on August 4, 1995 being Mehta's 150th birthday when the late Karl Khandalawala, outstanding criminal counsel and long-time chairman of the Prince of Wales Museum, presented to the assembled gathering at the Convocation Hall a cameo of "Piroji mama and Aimai mami," his mother's maternal uncle and aunt. Though still a child when Mehta died, Khandalawala remembered the "imposing personality, always excellently dressed." A particular occasion he recalled in vivid detail was when he had accompanied his mother on a visit to the Mehtas. His mother had said, "I always ask for God's blessing that my son grow up like Piroji mama," and Aimai had replied, "Té tau kem bané? Loko kahej ké evo manus tau saw varas ma ekuj thai (That's hardly likely! After all, people say that a man like Pherozeshah is born but once in a hundred years)!"

Homi Taleyarkhan, former member of the Minorities Commission, referred to Mehta's immense admiration for Dadabhai Naoroji. "An anchor of moderation, impelled by duty, characterized by discretion, Mehta held every high position" in Bombay except that of Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustee, noted Taleyarkhan, describing the BPP's loss as "perversity of chance." Municipal councillor and BPP trustee Rustom Tirandaz was more forthright: "The Parsis rejected him because of his secularism."

The February seminar had been divided

*A new stamp to mark Mehta's 150th*  
*From top: Khandalawala, Sawant and*  
*Chaulet*



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into four working sessions to analyze Mehta's contribution to Indian nationalism, higher education, the Municipal Corporation and "selected themes" which included his involvement with the Central Bank of India, the legal profession and the Press. Each paper presented the life-work of an individual — amazingly, the same individual: Mehta was a latter-day Leonardo da Vinci who sculpted society, architected its institutions and engineered educational and legal details!

A second generation alumnus of Elphinstone College, (Dadabhai Naoroji belonged to its first generation) the first Parsi barrister's "good abilities, industry, good sense, modesty, excellent moral character, remarkably gentlemanly and pleasing manners on the cricket field as well as the lecture room... his manliness and courage" were attested to by no less a personage than Sir Alexander Grant, then principal of Elphinstone College. Grant was the man who formed the traditions and decided the bent of the College, informed Ms Nergish Charna, professor of political science at Elphinstone College. One of the essays written by Mehta so impressed Grant that it was preserved in the archives of the College which then functioned from Tankar Villa near Gowalia Tank, noted Charna.

Of medium height and broad shoulders, his strong, handsome features and brilliant conversation were said to have drawn a large circle of friends. Notable among them were Justices K. T. Telang and Badruddin Tayebji who, with Mehta, comprised "The Triumvirate" representing three major communities, fighting for "social equality, the rule of law, rectitude and dignity in public life," recognizing the "plurality of our society and the strength it drew from that plurality," as noted Yasmin Rukmani, Tayebji's granddaughter and head of Bombay University's department of English, and Narain V. Khote, Telang's great grandson. "Whatever we have of cosmopolitanism is due to Sir Pherozechah

Mehta... He made a sea change in our society. Sir Pherozechah Mehta is part of our life, culture and heritage," Maharashtra's advocate-general C. J. Sawant paid tribute.

When Mehta began his legal practice "the bar was dominated by Europeans," informed Sawant. The step-motherly treat-

right as he conceived it," admitted his longest-running foe, Lord Curzon. The Vernacular Press Act of 1878 — a bill introduced in the morning and passed in the evening — was dubbed "the Black Act" because it instituted vigorous censorship and penalties. The reactionary measure was justified, as necessary in a state of

emergency, by Lord Lytton. Mehta did not deny the existence of recriminations, pomposity and petulance among the articles in the vernacular Press but argued that "of real disaffection or disloyalty there is absolutely nothing," believing that "the mischief lay in distorted translations," noted Patel. The Act was eventually repealed by Lord Ripon. Similarly, when the Indian Evidence Act was revised, some reactionary provisions based on strictures against Indian lawyers were introduced.

Mehta's strongly worded representation earned him a rebuke, but the galling provisions were withdrawn, added Patel.

"It was Sir Pherozechah who taught the Indian people not to accept injustice and to raise the voice of dissent at appropriate places," said Patel. He criticized the East India Bill of 1870 for threatening "to sow fruitful seeds of discord between races;" the Police Bill as "a vicious principle in legislation to give indefinite and drastic powers to the executive without the legislature having a say in the matter;" the Arms Act which prevented every Indian from bearing or possessing arms: "...if they followed a farsighted policy, they would realize from the lessons of history that it would never be wise to emasculate a nation;" the Ilbert Bill which, for the first time, gave Indian magistrates and judges the right to try an accused European, but upon the pressure of the European and Anglo-Indian lobby was amended to give the accused the right to decide whether he would prefer to be tried by a jury of his own countrymen, the judge being bound by the jury's verdict. "It was no use purchasing equality of right at such a cost," observed Mehta as he dropped the case.

Many of Mehta's legal battles were



*Pherozechah at his table*

Photo courtesy Rajan Jayakar

ment Indian barristers received was ventilated by Mehta in a series of newspaper articles which "focussed on the manner in which appointments were made to certain offices in the High Court," narrated Dr (Ms) Thrity Patel, head of the post graduate teaching department of law at Nagpur University. Mehta's conduct was questioned by the Bar Association. He responded by giving comparative tables citing names, offices and salaries drawn. In a strong letter he told the Association, "I am a public man and not only a barrister. As a public man I am bound to ventilate the grievances of the Indian community. As I had done this as a newspaper correspondent and not as a member of the Indian Bar, you are not entitled to examine my conduct." "The Bar was unable to do anything in that matter," noted Patel. "He could have been the richest man in Bombay Presidency if he had continued in practice; (instead) he left us the legacy that despite his rich practice, he gave it up and devoted himself to civic life," said Sawant.

Mehta made public interest litigation his domain and "fearlessly fought for the

fought not in the courts but in the viceregal and governor's councils of which he was a distinguished member, on the floor of the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) where, according to his biographer Sir Homi Mody, "If Pherozeshah failed to be convinced about any question, the probability was that the Corporation would fail to be convinced as well," and in the Press.

The Corporation was Mehta's baby. He nurtured it for 43 years, ever since he was first appointed as a Justice of Peace shortly after his return from Britain with his legal credentials in place. As noted Tirandaz, "The Bombay Municipal Corporation Act is the Bible for all local self-governments in the land and also in... the new countries of Africa... 150 years is a long time: people are forgotten. (But) in local self-government Pherozeshah Mehta did all that was to be done. There's nothing to revise."

Dr (Ms) Usha Thakkar, head of SNDT University's department of politics, has quoted Mehta's words: "I value my work for the Bombay Corporation more than anything else in my life. Our Corporation sits every Thursday and I accept no engagement however remunerative on Thursday and the judges of the High Court know my ways and would not take up any case on Thursday."

Originally the government-appointed Justices of Peace administered the city and their duties included the maintenance of clean and safe streets in good repair. They had police duties, could punish those who obstructed traffic or encroached, and were authorized to levy taxes on shops, stalls, music, horse carriages and the like, Dr M. D. David, former professor and head of Bombay University's history department, traced the antecedents of the BMC. In 1858 an executive body of three executive commissioners was constituted under the control of the Justices. Problems of water supply, sanitation and health proliferated. By 1864 cholera was claiming 4,580 victims annually. This led to the appointment of a single municipal commissioner, Sir Arthur Crawford, ICS who, in two years, reduced the mortality rate per thousand from 36 to 19, instituted drainage and road repair, initiated the control of venereal disease and banished the slaughter house to Bandra.

The cotton boom of 1861-65 had led to Bombay's increasing prosperity and expansion. With the end of the American Civil War in 1865 the boom had busted and by 1867 Crawford's zeal presented the city fathers with a deficit of Rs 37.71 lakhs and landed him in the center of a storm. The

24-year-old Pherozeshah who had been made a Justice of Peace in 1869 defended Crawford as Bombay's "savior and benefactor." Not minimizing Crawford's arrogance, he challenged, "Are we to forget, in our day of safety and prosperity, that he has in so short a time driven disease and death from our doors where they were such constant visitors before? Are we to forget that if he has touched our pockets too closely, he has put us in a position to enjoy in comfort and safety the remainder a thousand times more?"



*London-based son Kaikhushroo Mehta presided over the Parsee Association of Europe* Photo courtesy Rajan Jayakar

There was so much opposition to Mehta's view that his speech was expunged from the record of the proceedings of the East India Association where it had been made.

Mehta advocated the introduction of a municipal government based on elected representatives of ratepayers with a single executive officer responsible to them. "This forthright and clear demand for self-government by Mehta in 1871 was to be the nursery of the demand for self-governing institutions in India that became the bedrock of India's freedom struggle," noted David, adding, "The basic outlines of municipal administration he advocated in 1871 have remained the basis of the municipal government in Bombay even now." Though some aspects of Mehta's principles were incorporated in the Municipal Act of 1872 (with the commissioner being appointed by the Government) it was only by the Act of 1888 that his vision was fully embodied in a legal framework.

Elected President of the Corporation

(equivalent to the current mayor) four times — in 1884, 1885, 1905 and 1911 — it was during his presidentship that the liberal, rational Lord Ripon laid the cornerstone of the imposing Municipal Building in 1884. Significantly, it was Ripon who passed the Act of 1888.

By 1905 Mehta was contending with a totally different type of individual as Lord Curzon replaced Ripon as viceroy. The Prince and Princess of Wales were visiting India and were to be received in Bombay. The Municipal secretary wrote to the Bombay government at Mehta's bidding, referring to a precedent where the chairman of the Corporation, the municipal commissioner and the sheriff had a prominent place on the reception committee. Yet, when the list of persons to receive the royal guests was announced four days before D-day, there was no mention of any of the three abovenamed personages. "The members of the Corporation felt slighted. It was conveyed to the government that the royal guests would pass through a city of 'solemn silence,'" narrated Thakkar. Realizing the gravity of the situation, the government's chief secretary was sent to Pherozeshah to convey that the arrangements were to be altered. "Pherozeshah expressed the need to consult the Corporation. The officer asked (to be sent) the message: either yes or no. An informal meeting of the Corporation was called the day before the arrival of the royal guests. The Corporation decided 'yes' — a cryptic message that saved embarrassment for the Government," related Thakkar.

On July 1, 1905 Lord Curzon introduced Standard Time. Thereto each presidency had its own local time. When asked its opinion the BMC, with Mehta as president, which constrained him from arguing against the motion, passed a resolution to adopt Standard Time for municipal purposes. But it galled him that "the population of the city should be driven like a flock of dumb cattle," that the measure had been adopted by Government "without consulting the feelings and sentiments of the people, and without giving them an opportunity of expressing their opinions," even though "it is a matter of mere sentiment and prejudice."

When Mehta, reelected BMC president in 1911, received George and Mary again, now as King and Queen of England, Emperor and Empress of India, he told them, "We rejoice to think that, since your visit, a steady advance has been made in the realization of high civic ideals... that Bombay is broadbased upon the firmest of

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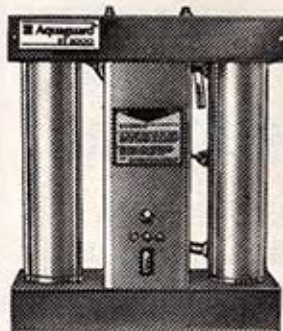
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foundations in being united within itself and that the diverse races and classes, whom we represent, are actuated by a strong sense of common citizenship." And George V replied, "Your eloquent address has recalled to me that Bombay was once the dowry of a British Queen. As such Humphrey Cook took it over 250 years ago, a mere fishing village. You gentlemen, and your forerunners, have made it a jewel of the British Crown... but above all, I recognize with pride your efforts to heighten what must always be the supreme lustre of a jewel such as this — the peace, happiness and prosperity of all classes of its citizens."

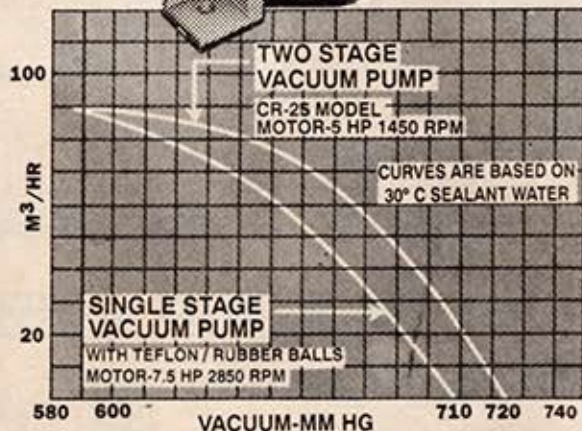
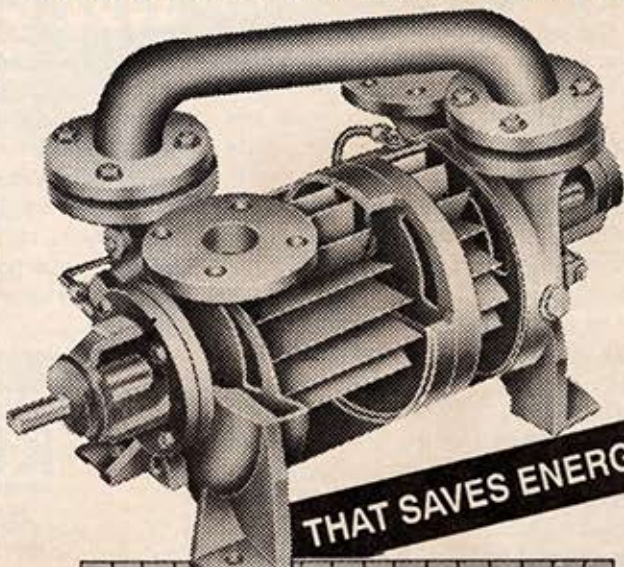
Steeped in the liberal ideas of Jean Jacques Rousseau, Charles Louis Montesquieu and Francois Marie Voltaire, Mehta became interested in the French language and its literature which led him to introduce French into the Bombay University curriculum, noted Marc Beraud Chaulat, French consul general in Bombay. The other dominating influence on Mehta's thought was that of Yohan Wolfgang von Goethe whose concept of nationhood shaped European political history in the 18th and 19th centuries. The principle of citizens' rights and their equality motivated the French Revolution and eventually led to the emancipation of colonized nations, he added.

Mehta's long involvement with the University began with his appointment as a Fellow in 1867 and culminated with the vice chancellorship in 1915. A member of its Senate, its Syndicate and dean of the arts faculty, Mehta was above all the protector of its freedom of thought and action and strenuously resisted the slightest government encroachment especially when he suspected that the aim was "to restrict the spread of higher education for political reasons," noted Prof (Dr) Gulistan Kerawalla, head of the University's department of education.

Even in his time, an ongoing debate centered on whether scarce resources should be expended on primary or higher education so as to accelerate national development, informed Kerawalla. A strong believer in the downward percolation of education, Mehta opined, "An elementary knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic, however widely diffused, would no more be able to break and loosen the hard ground of traditional prejudice than children's hatchets of paper, however numerous would suffice to clear a jungle." Admitting that higher education would be received by the relatively few, he believed it is "these few men who do the work of the renovation of the masses." Successive reductions in the government's grants to the University were termed "an act of untimely and impolitic parsimony." He traced the shortcomings of the University ("the fatal flaw... that teaching continued to be subservient to examination" as Kerawalla phrased it) to the government's default in strengthening teaching in high schools and colleges. He pressed for adequate accommodation for the rapidly increasing number of students appearing for the matriculation examination, that the exam be held twice a year, appointing additional examiners and paying them more so that they "do their work conscientiously and not in a perfunctory and mechanical manner."

In protecting University autonomy Mehta was locked in combat with Curzon who nonetheless hammered home the Indian Universities Bill vesting the government with absolute power over them, their every exercise and function subject to government approval. Mehta urged the Fellows of the Senate to "resist (the Bill) to the best of their power, little as that may be," recorded Kerawalla quoting biographer Mody's observation that Mehta's "great debating powers, resourcefulness and dialectical skill were rarely displayed to better advantage than when he was fighting a battle which he knew was lost." One of Mehta's ablest opponents, Lovat Fraser, testified to his mettle: "The hostility with which Lord Curzon's schemes of

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educational reform were met was to a great extent the work of one remarkable man... and the man who really stimulated and kept alive the fight against University reform is worth a little attention for he played a great part in Indian political life during Lord Curzon's viceroyalty, and his influence was not less potent because it was often unseen. Sir Pheroza Shah was at that time unquestionably the strongest and ablest politician in India... The University lay near his heart." However, in his zeal to preserve University autonomy, Mehta opposed all reform measures emanating from government — good as well as bad, noted Kerawalla.

Even at that time Mehta opposed the system of reexamining a candidate for all subjects when he had failed in only one, as wasteful. While he believed that Sanskrit study should be promoted, he was hesitant about the ability of vernacular languages to cope with burgeoning Western ideas. Nonetheless he cautioned that "the rejection of the vernaculars and the employment of English would eliminate the only means of communicating to the masses of the people the 'superior knowledge' acquired in English colleges," noted Kerawalla adding, "The issue of medium of instruction has dogged Indian higher education ever since."

And he opposed the introduction of domestic science in the school final examination because "It was not possible for the University to test (the young ladies') knowledge of the quality of fish or meat or examine them in cleanliness and general arrangements!" Also, when it was decided to raise the standard of examination for those entering medical college, he preferred to exempt young ladies from it. He was not sure their intellect would bear the strain!

Rajendra Vora of Poona University's department of politics referred to Mehta's "tremendous skill for organization and management of politics," emphasizing that the man was an orator, not an ideologue or

political thinker who used two main fora to ventilate his political views. He began as joint secretary of the Bombay Branch of the London based East India Association. Later, as one of the Triumvirate he proceeded to form the Bombay Presidency Association (BPA) to provide adequate public expression to the citizens of Bombay, informed N. Mody. This organization in turn led to the foundation of the Congress in 1885 where "he attacked attempts to isolate the Parsis from the political movement," said Vora. Throughout his public career Mehta resisted attempts at communal divisions, irrespective of the source of the idea as for example when proportional



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representation was suggested for the ICS. Merit alone should be the criterion for selection, declared Mehta as N. Mody noted in her paper. All he wanted was equal association of Europeans and Indians in the civil service.

The other fora were the governmental bodies from the municipal to the Imperial Council. Mehta was the first non-official member to be elected to the Bombay Provincial Council (BPC) where he represented the BMC. Thence he became the BPC representative on the Imperial Council.

Providing a detailed history of the BPA, N. Mody referred to the letters its secretary Dinshaw Wacha wrote to Dadabhai Naoroji in England bemoaning the state of its finances and complaining that Pherozeshah had "one serious defect — he will never move his little finger to collect funds."

"The politics of petitions, prayers and protests" marked the Congress' first 20 years when Mehta was its "manager and controller," noted renowned research scholar Y. D. Phadke. Through the percolation effect of education, however, newer and more militant leaders were emerging who criticized and refuted Mehta's policies which were becoming out of tune with the changing world, noted Vora and N. Mody. The Congress became a battleground with the new party of extremists who supported Lokamanya Tilak, eventually leading to the split of 1907 at Surat when Tilak and his followers left the party and could return only after the death of Mehta in 1915. The difference between their styles of functioning was aptly described by Phadke: "Gokhale and Pherozeshah were always willing to cooperate with the government whenever it was possible and obstruct the government whenever it was necessary. Tilak and the extremists were in favor of obstructing the government whenever it was possible and cooperating with the government whenever it became necessary to do so."

Pherozeshah's autocratic style came in for its severest criticism in the Congress. "I cannot see why some people should make an attempt to keep the strings of the Congress so tight in their own hands," grumbled Tilak. Gandhiji wryly commented on the Calcutta session of 1901 in his autobiography: "No one had troubled to understand the resolution, everyone was in a hurry to go, and because Gokhale had seen the resolution, it was not thought necessary for the rest to see it or understand it."



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Eventually, the voice of Tilak was reflected in the *Kesari* and of Pherozeshah Mehta in *The Bombay Chronicle* which he founded in 1913 with B. G. Horniman as its editor. Significantly it was M. A. Jinnah who took over as chairman of *The Chronicle* after Mehta's demise, to carry on the fight against corrupt officers, to ensure the rule of law.

As founding chairman of the Central Bank of India (CBI) Mehta's presence not only helped the launching of the bank — his presence a measure of extreme reassurance to hordes of depositors — but at a critical juncture, was crucial to its survival, depicted B. Venkatesh Kumar, a scholar in Bombay University's department of economics and politics. Within two years of its launching the financial scenario in the country was dominated by bank crashes. The CBI was only able to withstand a similar fate when Mehta offered the title deeds of his personal properties to help the Bank raise additional funds to ward off its depositors clamoring to get their money out. "This unusual example of bravery, confidence and self sacrifice spurred the other directors on to action and they too shared their willingness to come forward with their private resources and help the Bank. These gestures were enough to put an end to the nervousness of the depositors," noted Kumar. A marble bust of its benefactor, commissioned from the subscriptions of its shareholders, was unveiled in the Bank's foyer three years after Mehta's passing in 1915, informed Kumar.

Mehta's myriad public personas tend to eclipse his personal life. The scant documentation of his family tells its own tale amid the elaborate chronicles of his public work. Groping for details of Pherozeshah the patriarch, we learn that his marriage to Dinbai Marzban (whom he renamed Pirojbai) led to the birth of five sons and one daughter of whom Jehangir and Ardeshir were solicitor and barrister respectively, Sorab was a doctor and Savak an architect with Aga & Co, informed his granddaughter, the late Ms Roshan Bhedwar. *Parsiiana* salutes the lady whom we interviewed at the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital but a few days prior to her demise. Kaikhushroo headed Tata Sons in England. Though all the sons were sent to England for their education, Kaikhushroo was the only one to make his life there. Mehta's only daughter Jer had married a son of K. R. Cama. She was disinherited by her father when she dared to criticize the knight (Mehta was made Knight Commander of the Indian Empire in 1904) for remarrying when his first wife died. A

similar fate befell Bhedwar's father Ardeshir, a deputy sheriff of Bombay, when he married his maternal uncle's daughter. The uncle in question was believed to have earned Mehta's displeasure by disapproving of his brother-in-law's many lady-friends during Dinbai's lifetime. Prof Sheriyar Ookerji acknowledged that Mehta's second wife was Aimai Shroff, his grandmother's sister. The marriage, however, produced a rift as the family disapproved of the marriage and the original amity between the Mehtas and the Shroffs came to an end. Ookerji recalled his mother describing the great Pherozeshah as superstitious and fearful of attending funerals.

Rusi Modi, Mehta's grandnephew, said his mother recalled the fiery Mehta as a meticulous dresser, even during his last illness. Well-known dentist Dr Fali Mehta reminisced how his grandmother "Dhunbai and Pherozeshah were very close. All his (Mehta's) political parties were held at our house," even though Dhunbai did not concur with her mercurial friend's political views. Dr Mehta spoke of Pherozeshah's second wife, Aimai, who survived her husband by many years. They had had no children but Aimai had a white pomeranian whose birthday she was wont to celebrate. Memories of her liveried chauffeur remain with the dentist who used to visit the lady's Omer Park residence as a child.

The truest encomiums to Mehta came from his adversaries. Phadke translated

Tilak's tribute from the *Kesari*: "Pherozeshah's courage and love of independence, his determination, and his willingness to fight for the legitimate rights of citizens evoked a sense of awe and admiration."

"There have been frequent occasions when we have found ourselves in antagonism to Mr Mehta upon controversial questions. But we have never failed to recognize that he is unquestionably the ablest representative of the non-official native community now in public life in India," noted Curzon, continuing, "Time has mellowed and chastened the perhaps unrestrained ardor of Mr Mehta's earlier years, but one honorable characteristic has been exemplified throughout his whole career. He has never stooped to palter with his own convictions in order to earn official approval, but has fearlessly fought for the right as he conceived it. An alert and strenuous antagonist, he has never forgotten that need of courtesy to opponents which is one of the finest traits of English public life."

An apocryphal assessment of his own life's work and worth were quoted by Thakkar. There was a proposal in the BMC to erect a statue of George V. "Pherozeshah thundered — 'What business has he to be placed outside the Corporation building? He has done nothing for the city.' Someone taunted, 'Do you want your own statue erected there?' 'Why not?' said Pherozeshah, 'It may happen. I have served the city for 30 years!'"

### What Pherozeshah thought and said...

\*"There is always a substratum of public spirit latent in every individual, and a statesman could not be more usefully employed than in trying to set that public spirit in the direction of local administration."

\*"We cannot arrive at the truth of a thing without much discussing it — might be with some confusion of thought or language. It is impossible to arrive at the right conclusion in matters of the greatest importance until we have a certain amount of talk over them — even irrelevant or confused."

\*"Habits of self-government cannot be acquired or usefully exercised without freedom of action and it is the experience born of groping through darkness and error, and not compulsory correction, that teaches and enlightens."

\*"Men and women possess great talents to suit their different environments. Women have to do their work in their homes and

men, to a great extent, outside their homes... it is not possible for them to take part in civic affairs. The rough and tumble sort of way which men follow does not sit well upon the gentler sex."

\*"If I have spoken and acted in my public life so as to be regarded as a Babu in Bengal, as a Sikh in the Punjab, as a Madras in Madras, and as a Mohamedan among Mohamedans everywhere; then I am sure I have not gone far wrong, but have, on the contrary, proved myself what we should all strive to be — a true and faithful son of the country, a true and faithful Indian."

\*"There ought to be, a certain amount of pressure on the minds of the students. It braced the mind just as much as physical exercise braced the muscles."

\*"Mahomedan and Hindu members in our Legislature may be regarded not as representatives of their respective communities but of the electorate as a whole."

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# The gift of compassion

A six acre donation of land in Bombay by Godrej houses the Red Cross' Disaster Relief Centre

Hilla P. Guzder

The black patch he usually wore on his sleeve to show distress over various issues troubling the country was missing. Sorabji Pirojsha Godrej, chairman of the 100-year-old Godrej group of companies, looked a happy man as he watched Maharashtra governor Dr P. C. Alexander light the lamp to inaugurate The Indian Red Cross Pirojsha Godrej Disaster Relief Centre at Vikhroli in Bombay on December 5, 1996. For Godrej, the opening of the Centre was a 20 year dream turned into reality.

Way back in 1975, according to a press release, the Indian Red Cross had approached him for the donation of six acres of land at Vikhroli (currently valued at Rs 30 crores) for the setting up of a zonal depot or disaster relief operational headquarters at Bombay, which would be one of the four envisaged at Calcutta, Delhi, Bombay and Madras. The Godrej family responded to the appeal and approached the Maharashtra government for permission to donate the land to the Red Cross. Due to bureaucratic delays, the Maharashtra Red Cross could take possession of the land only in November 1979 and the Centre was opened in 1996 — 21 years after the idea was mooted! Bemoaned Godrej, "How much harm is done through

procrastination... how much more we can do if delays can be avoided."

In his welcome address, Dr B. K. Goyal, chairman of the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations Committee of the Indian Red Cross Society, appreciated the generous contribution of six acres of land by Godrej in a metropolis where people are fighting for every square foot. He described Godrej as a "fellow

Sheriff, a man of simple habits ... a dedicated man without airs ... interested in many activities of public life ... Protection of the environment, preservation of wildlife, afforestation are causes dear to his heart." Goyal stated that the estimated cost of the depot was Rs 1.5 crores and that it would stock emergency supplies of food,



Left: Modi, Dr Manoj Mathur, Godrej, Alexander, Goyal: inaugurating the depot (seen below)

Right: Delapraz (speaking) Gherda, Goyal, Alexander, Godrej and Mathur

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medicines, clothes and blankets, so essential in a country that suffers chronically from floods, cyclones, droughts and epidemics (AIDS, according to him, is also a 'disaster'). Tents, collapsible boats and ambulances would be provided at a later stage. The Maharashtra State Red Cross would train field-level relief workers from Maharashtra and other states.

Godrej touched upon three projects envisaged by his brother Naoroji before his death — the setting up of a permanent Exhibition Complex at Pirojshanagar (their sprawling, industrial garden township at Vikhroli) on the high standards of those at Frankfurt and Cologne, low cost housing to be named after their mother "whom he hardly knew" and the setting up of an archive and international management institute. Lamenting that India's "great mistake" was in not controlling its population, Godrej cited the example of a small country like Korea which had surged ahead because it had controlled its population whereas in India, even in a place like Borivli National Park, you find humans living cheek by jowl with animals.

In the course of his inaugural address, Alexander remarked that just prior to the inauguration, he had visited the Godrej school 'Udayachal' and was greatly impressed by this "innovative project," where the worker's child and the manager's child attend the same school, wear the same uniform and eat the same food. He lauded the Godrej commitment to quality and after-sales service, confessing that as a private citizen he was an avowed Godrej user "from locks, almirahs and refrigerator to soaps." He observed that quality had always been the stamp of Godrej products, "at a time when quality was not even known for consumer goods" and that the Godrej emphasis on quality had served to "educate the Indian consumer" in his present preference for price combined with quality.

Sharing the industrialist's concern about delays in bureaucracy and the "insensi-

tivity of people who take decisions," Alexander worried over how it would affect India's future. Stating that the disaster relief project would succeed only if backed by "compassion on the part of the people and voluntary giving of time and money," he strongly urged that the center be managed not by well-intentioned volunteers but by professional managers or else the "disaster relief center will become a disaster. Once established, many good things end in failure."

David Delapraz, the regional delegate of the Comité International Genève (Inter-

the driving force of the movement worldwide. Delapraz gave the International Committee's assurance of help to "translate the spirit of the center into action."

The Centre is named after Sorabji's father Pirojsha Godrej who nurtured the family concern begun by his innovative brother Ardeshir. Fired by the spirit of Swadeshi, Ardeshir gave up law and turned to making locks and soaps. Godrej today is a vibrant enterprise that manufactures a range of products from locks, typewriters, steel furniture, refrigerators, soaps, toiletries and food stuffs to laser printers,

electronic alarm systems and sophisticated software and is also into telecommunications, tooling services, space programs, medical diagnostics and real estate development.

In his vote of thanks, Kersi Gherda, chairman of the Maharashtra State Red Cross, thanked the house of Godrej for its "outstanding donation" and prayed that the family be rewarded by prosperity in business as the Godrej group prepares to celebrate its centenary year in 1997 and enter into the second century of its illustrious existence.

At a press conference held at Godrej Bhavan on November 30, 1996, Ms Homai Modi, honorary co-ordinator of the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations Committee of the Indian Red Cross, stated that raising funds for all their projects was a major problem and that "with so many NGO's (non-governmental organizations) sprouting, it was difficult to jostle for funds" among the public. She also informed Parsiana that,

recognizing the need to provide safe blood for transfusion, the Red Cross' old blood bank near the Town Hall in Bombay has been renovated, state-of-the-art equipment procured and collaborative technical know-how arrangements finalized with Baxter and Melbourne Red Cross, Australia. She said that meeting the heavy operational costs of Rs 30 lakhs per year was the main constraint and that commitment from the public was essential if the Red Cross is to succeed in its goals.



Top: Soonoo Godrej, Smita Crishna and Pheroza Godrej flanking Pirojsha's portrait Photo: Hilla Guzder

Bottom: Alexander unveiling the plaque as Goyal, Modi (partially hidden), Godrej and Mathur look on

national Committee of the Red Cross) stressed that, in keeping with the vision of Jean-Henri Dunant (the founder of the Red Cross movement), the two principles of humanity and voluntary service are still

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## REPORT OF THE AVES TA CONFERENCE HELD IN TAJIKISTAN, DUSHANBE & 5TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF THE REPUBLIC, & 675TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF KAMAL E KHUJANDI, THE TAJIK IRANIAN POET



Dr Meher Master-Moos, Z.C. President, and Mr. Firoz Andhyaruna with Madame Maisara Kolonova President, Tajik Friendship Society and friends.

Historically, Tajikistan and other present Republics of the Ex-USSR including the geographical area of parts of Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kirghizia, Turkmenia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Caspian Sea, Black Sea, Pamirs and other mountain ranges, formed part of the great Iranian Empire in the times of Darius the Great, about 2000-3000 years ago. As recently as the end of the 19th Century, these all formed part of Iran. The people, especially the Tajiks, were Persian speaking and preserving the Ancient Persian Culture and Zoroastrian Religion. At about the end of the last Century, the then Shah of Iran was afraid that the British Govt. would support the attempt of the Army General, Reza Shah Pahlavi against the legitimate claim of his son to be the next Shah. He sought the help of the Tzar of Russia to support the claim of his son. The Tzar agreed to give the help in exchange for a substantial area of land of Iran being handed over to the Russian Tzar. And that is how this large area of land came under the suzerainty of Russia. The rule of the Tzar did not last much longer. In 1917 the Communist Revolution overthrew the Tzar, and all these present Republics came under Communist domination for the past 75 years. This resulted in the suppression of the rich Iranian language, culture and religion which was the historical heritage of the different peoples living in these areas. All religions were suppressed. In the area of Tajikistan/Uzbekistan, there were many Zoroastrians, and they are still practising the Zoroastrian way of life in remote mountain villages as indicated in the Vendidad. Tajiks had produced rich literature. Tajik Persian poets such as Firdausi, Rudaki, Kamal e Khujandi, Omar Khayyam, and scientists such as Avicenna, had settled in other cities of Iran during the course of their lives; but originally they were of the Tajik stock.

The tragedy of the Communist take over was to crush the Persian language and culture of the people in addition to the religions. Tajiks were forced to write Persian in Roman and later Cyrillic script. Tajik children living in Uzbekistan were compelled to attend Uzbeki language schools. To some extent the Communist regime benefited the Tajiks of Zoroastrian ancestral stock

who had suffered during the regime of the Muslim Emir of Bukhara for about 400 years.

In September 1991 the Republics created as artificial administrative units during the Communist regime gained independence. It was my good Destiny, thanks to Russian Consul Zagrebely in Bombay to be invited as a guest of the Govt. Tajik Friendship Society by its President, Madame Maisara Kolonova to visit Tajikistan in September 1991, and I first set foot on the soil of Tajikistan on the very day it received its independence. I was the first guest of the new Govt. and they were very happy to have a Zoroastrian for the occasion. The ties of friendship forged then, led to a GOOD WILL DELEGATION of Tajik Scholars, Historians and Doctors visiting India as the guests of the Zoroastrian College and various Anjumans. They were most impressed by the warmth of hospitality accorded to them by Lt. Gen. Adi Sethna/Delhi Pasi Anjuman; Mr. Savak Patel/Baroda Parsi Anjuman; Mr. Dara Deboo/Navsari Parsis; Mr. Cyrus Poonawalla/Poona Parsis, Mrs. Mani Irani/Dahnu Parsis and Mr. Yazdan Bonshai/Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman of Bombay, and all the members of the Tajik-Indo Zoroastrian Friendship Association throughout India, during Navroze 1992.

### DUSHANBE, OCTOBER 1992 FIRST WORLD AVES TA CONFERENCE

The Navroze Good Will Delegation visit in March 1992 resulted in the Tajik Friendship Society and Reudaki Society inviting the Zoroastrian College to bring a Delegation to Tajikistan to attend the First World Avesta Conference in October 1992. This was a historic occasion as such a Conference was being held after 1000 years in Tajikistan the original homeland of the Zoroastrian religion. Madame Maisara Kolonova, President of the Tajikistan Friendship Society, Madam Golrokhshor, a Poetess, head of the Avesta and Ancient Tajik Cultural Association and connected to Reudaki Society and Dr. Pulat Pulatov, Vice Chancellor of the Tajikistan Technological University were the main organisers. They were keen that Avesta language should be taught to the

School/College students to bring about revival of the original Zoroastrian Culture and way of life.

The major development which occurred as a result of 6 persons Delegation from Zoroastrian College attending the First World Avesta Conference in Dushanbe was the signing of a Protocol to establish a collaboration between the Zoroastrian College and Tajik Technological University to enable the Avesta Dept. to be opened at the University. This enabled Tajik students to study Zoroastrian religion at home.

The persons comprising the 1992 Delegation were Dr. Meher Master-Moos, Mrs. Shirin Faramarzi, Mrs. Homai Billimoria, Mrs. Jerry Kumana, Mr. Homi Sethna of Bombay, Mr. Rustom Degamwalla of Karachi, Mr. Shahrokh Shahrokh, Mr. Jal Amroli of England, from Zoroastrian College.

### THE BORDER - WAR 1992-1996

At that time in 1992 the border and civil war with Afghanistan was just beginning. Many Tajiks were dying. The youth, young soldiers were being killed. In four years, between October 1992 and September 1996, in a population of about 5½ million persons, over 60,000 young Tajik men lost their lives. It was only now that the truth about the tragedy of the war in this mountain region of Central Asia came to light. The Pamirs and other mountain ranges of this region are rich in radio active minerals in the soil. U.S.A. Govt. and the CIA have the policy to dominate the energy resources of the world. In order to control the price of a barrel of oil, the Shah of Iran was liquidated; Saddam Hussain was installed in Iraq; and Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran; and war was kept going between the two countries so that the youth were killed, the economy shattered and the oil wells kept burning. Finding that the oil reserves of the earth were being rapidly exhausted, they looked around for alternative sources of energy for the 21st century. Finding the Central Asiatic mountains rich in radio active minerals, War was fomented in Afghanistan, the buffer barrier strip 40 kms. wide created as a country by the British to separate the lands of the Tzar of Russia from the North West Frontier Provinces of British India; and the border war was spread into Tajikistan. The youth of both countries were slaughtered as cannon fodder for the arms and ammunition manufactured in the U.S.A. and sold/dumped in this region; to weaken the next generation; and pave the way for an economic take over by the U.S.A. so that the energy resources of the radio active minerals in the mountains soil would come under the control of the U.S.A. in the 21st century. The tragedy of this war was highlighted during the Republic 5th Anniversary celebrations Parade in Dushanbe during the September 1996 celebrations.

### 1992-1995 GOOD WILL DELEGATIONS VISITS

During this period through the Zoroastrian College, Friendship and Goodwill visits were organised for Delegations from Tajikistan to visit India.

In August 1993, a Delegation of 4 ladies came to attend the International Inter Faith Peace Conference in Kanyakumari organised by the W.F.I.R.C. and Z.C. Govt. of India Tourism and Railways Dept. thanks to Padma Shri Homi J. H. Taleyarkhan provided free rail travel throughout India from Delhi to the Tajik Guests. Speeches given by distinguished ladies, amongst whom was the Dy. Mayoress of Penjikat highlighted the Zoroastrian Ancestral way of life of the Tajiks.

Before that in January 1993 the first elected Prime Minister of Tajikistan brought a plane load of Tajik Members of Parliament Ministers and Bankers to India, the first country with which the newly elected Govt. sought to create economic ties to trade, this directly arose out of the two Goodwill visits of Delegation exchanges sponsored by the Zoroastrian College during 1992. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao opened a Rs. 5 million credit line for Indian business men to trade with Tajikistan. Several leading Indian Companies including Tatas, Godrej Companies, Hindustan Lever, and others explored the possibilities, but only the Ajanta Pharmaceutical Company plucked up the courage to open a factory to manufacture medicine in Dushanbe. The Tajik P. M. stated at the meeting held at the Indian Merchants Chambers Bombay that he could have taken his team to E.E.C. countries or the U.S.A. but he preferred to come to India as the "Brothers and Sisters of the Tajiks are in India." He was referring to the Parsi Zoroastrians of India and the Goodwill generated by the visits sponsored by the Zoroastrian College during 1992.

"To be continued. For information about Tajikistan please contact Zoroastrian College Office."

# A difference of approach

*North American leadership has learnt to galvanize the grass-roots community*

Khusro F. Rustamji

Watching some of the functions of the Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrians in Toronto, I began to wonder whether there was more cohesion, unity and drive in their activities than in the Zoroastrians of any city in India. That view was not only confirmed, but I began to see that the leadership of the community is passing to North America when I went to a banquet of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO). It was a glittering function organized to mark the 25th anniversary of the ZSO (1971-1996). There were about 500 Toronto Zoroastrians, many from India and Pakistan, some from England and Africa, and a sizeable number from Iran, and all cooperated to make the function memorable under the leadership of Dr (Ms) Dhun Noria. The diplomatic representatives of Canada, India, Pakistan and Iran and their wives added grace to the function.

The Parsi community of Bombay was never properly organized in the past. It depended on the goodwill and harmonizing skill of a few philanthropic leaders who never felt the need to broadbase the establishment to enable all to have a voice in its affairs, although the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) at that time was able to look after the indigent in the community far better than we do today. The elitist system established by those great leaders had made only a small group eligible for the vote. It is a system out of tune with democratic times. Although the BPP has tried to look after the interest of all Parsis, it has never given a say to all members of the community in the management of its affairs, and in consequence faith and reliance in this body has always wavered.

What started as a feudal set-up has remained so for more than 300 years, and attempts to change it have not been well received by those in authority. On the other hand the Toronto organization, like others in North America, was started fully on democratic lines and has taken the support and assistance of a large number of



people, young and old, to build it up.

It was in 1954 that the first group of Zoroastrians, fresh from college, were accepted in Canada. They were Adi Dastur, Keki Bharucha and Dara Dastur. All of them rose to eminence in their spheres. Adi Dastur in particular is recognized as an international authority on the safety of nuclear reactors.

Keki Bharucha headed a large research group on food technology, and Dara Dastur rose to hold a big post in the engineering field.

It was about this time that a small group called the Zoroastrian Fraternity met to provide information to intending immigrants, to receive them at the airports, and find accommodation and employment for them. By the '50s and '60s the influx of immigrants from all over pointed to the need for a well-organized method of helping them. (It may be of interest to intending immigrants that a group is shortly coming to India to advise on immigration.)

Out of this rose the ZSO which was registered in 1971 under the presidentship of Minoo Treasurywala. Minoo helped a large number on arrival in Canada, in recognition of which he was awarded FEZANA's (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) Jamshed Pavri Humanitarian Award in 1994. Minoo, the

citation says, "molded (the ZSO) in its formative years to help it blossom into one of the strongest community organizations in North America... His devotion to humanity spans far beyond his work for the community. His services to the chronically ill... and to misguided youth was recognized by a medal award from the Canadian Government."

I was struck by the prominent part that women play in organizing and directing the affairs of the community in Toronto. The president for the present term is Ms Moti Bulsara, a petite dynamo of spirit and authority, and she is so clear-headed that I wondered why we in India have not yet comprehended that in today's world the community has to adapt, accept, even compromise in the interest of maintaining harmony, and helping each other in joy and in sorrow. There were many mixed marriages, all accepted as precious units of the community, not excluded from everything as in many cities of India. Two task forces were organized to study the assimilation of mixed marriages. In fact some of the progeny of these marriages looked so handsome and beautiful that I felt a new breed of Zoroastrians was emerging.

Years ago, a newsletter of the ZSO describing the activities of the organization so impressed the late philanthropist Arbab Rustam Guiv that he donated \$ 6,00,000 to provide a center for the community in the shape of a large house in a superb wooded area. That is now the hub of activities.

The banquet was a part of year-long celebrations which included tai chi, lectures, jashans with chasni, study groups on Zoroastrian religion and culture, cooking classes, prayers, Iranian cultural activities, gourmet food fair, youth camps, Indian musical evenings, scouting (they have sent a message up in a space craft).

An Iranian choir under the leadership of Edward Hovsepian gave a delightful recital of Iranian music at the ZSO function beginning with a poem from the famous Iranian poet Saadi which ended with the words, "You who are not saddened by the troubles of others cannot claim to be human." This was followed by the *Invocation to Dawn*:

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tional religion and continues this way to this day.

The purpose of prayer is to guide and inspire the devotee. For one who has absolute faith, it is immaterial whether the prayer is understood or not. However, for the eager person who wishes to understand the meaning of what he prays, the *Gathas* have been translated by at least 42 individuals into Persian, English, Gujarati, etc. The moral and ethical character of Prophet Zarathushtra's teachings have been seriously neglected in recent, misplaced, manipulations of ritual. What must be understood is that the focus and emphatic insistence of the Prophet's hymns are directed towards a purpose and unity of thought which oppose the empty, mechanical methods of ritual.

In the *Gathas*, the Prophet says that every man and woman is an individual in his/her own right and that life's eternal and infallible lesson is that one's progress depends entirely upon the action of each individual. One man's good deeds cannot be loaned to another, and no man's burden of sin can be lightened by another. Confession and prayer cannot change either of these truths.

The wise lord hears prayers even in the form of thought in any language and any place. The truth and foundation of Zarathushtra's religion is found only in the *Gathas*. Ritual is not religion, but it is a powerful aid to religious life. Righteous thinking is prayer and that elevates man to Ahura Mazda. The Prophet himself wishes to win Ahura Mazda's love (*Gatha* 44-17), yearns to reach him (*Gatha* 50-8), approaches him with songs of praise and invocation (*Gatha* 34-2), asks for long life (*Gatha* 43-13) so that he may perform good deeds through righteousness (*Gatha* 28-1).

Dr Borzoo J. Nadjmi is a medical practitioner in Lincoln, Rhode Island, USA, deeply interested in Zoroastrianism.

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## The Parsi Punchayet Case — 4

# Whence came the authority?

Neither the officiating trustees nor their predecessors in office were validly appointed, ruled the judges in 1908

Should the entire community have a say in the election of trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet? There is a constant fear that by disregarding the present scheme for election of trustees, a time-honored institution may be abused and power may vest in the wrong hands.

Many community members may not be aware that originally the Punchayet whose selection was ratified by the entire anjuman and in whose hands the affairs of the community were entrusted, were invariably accountable to the anjuman or the community at large. Though the Punchayet members could suggest new names on its body as replacements or additions, it was only after the anjuman sanction was obtained that the changes were recognized as official.

These facts come across clearly in *The Parsi Punchayet Case* (Suit No 689 of 1906) when in the historic plaint filed by Sir Dinsha Manockji Petit, II Bart, and others against Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy, IV Bart, and others, Justices Dinshaw Dhanjibhoy Daver and Frank C. O. Beaman ruled on two issues in 1908: whether the Punchayet trustees were validly appointed and entitled to fill up vacancies in their ranks; whether the funds and properties in the custody of the trustees were intended for all Zoroastrians (including converts) or only the born Zoroastrians. The six others who joined Petit as petitioners were Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Rustomji Behramji Jijibhoy, Ratanji J. Tata, Bapuji Sorabji Patel, Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata and Nanabhoy Naoroji Katrak. Arraigned as the defendants were Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, IV Bart, Hormusjee Edaljee Albless, Cursetjee Jamsetjee, Merwanji Muncherji

Cama and Bomanji Dinshaw Petit.

The verdict on the latter issue had been serialized over 16 issues of *Parsiana* from October 1981 to March 1983. In four episodes, ending this issue, we carry-



Daver and Beaman: in agreement

ied at length Justice Daver's opinion (fully supported by Justice Beaman) reflecting the careful scrutiny he made of varied documents. In his words, "The members of the Punchayet were the appointees of the community... They had themselves no legal right to appoint trustees of property that belonged to the community, and they had certainly no right whatever to confer on others the power which they themselves never had."

The court however noted that the defendants were of impeccable integrity and honor "and their management of properties devoted to charity have been so fair and faultless that not a complaint has been heard against them." The judges observed that they were forced to remove the trustees from office on technical defects. Thus while ordering a scheme of elections to be framed, Daver authorized the surviving trustees to once again take charge of the

Bombay Punchayet funds and properties.

The judgment on this topic is being carried almost in its entirety barring those references which are technical, or of common knowledge to the community, or repetitions of statements made earlier. Minimal editing and stylistic corrections have been undertaken to facilitate smooth reading.

The first instalment gave an account of the origin and necessity of establishing the Punchayet as a governing body to regulate the internal affairs of the community. The nature and constitution of the earlier Punchayets was analyzed in the second instalment such that it establishes "beyond all doubt that the right of electing members of the Punchayet always was in the general body of the Parsi community of Bombay." In the third instalment we learnt how exigencies of administration necessitated the appointment of the first four trustees who assigned to themselves the power to nominate successor trustees, an authority later codified by the deed of 1851. However, as per the court ruling, "nothing that is subsequently done can validate an act which in its inception was invalid and unauthorized."

The original intention of the donors of immovable properties, analyzed in depth by Justice Daver, has been summarized in this fourth instalment by *Parsiana* and carried in parenthesis for reasons of brevity. *Parsiana* has also abridged the last part of the judgement that refers to the status of the defendants. The developments in the Punchayet after the judgement, presented in the article, have been taken from Sapur Desai's *History of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet: 1860-1960*.

**I**t seems that between 1851 and 1871, 23 other funds came into existence. On September 16, 1871, another trust deed was executed. One of the funds mentioned in the third schedule of this trust deed is the fund for carrying dead bodies of all Zoroastrians to the Towers, in which fund, the plaintiffs contend, all converts to Zoroastrianism are entitled to participate. Between 1871 and the present time, two hundred and odd more funds have come into existence... The amount to the credit of all the charitable and religious funds of the Parsi community at present exceeds 53 lakhs of rupees. Mr Strangman argues that it is a matter of no consequence whether the trustees were validly appointed or not in 1851. Since 1851, they have exercised the rights of appointment conferred by the deed of 1851. The public, he says, must have known this because till 1846 the trustees published the accounts of their management in a newspaper — *The Bombay Samachar* — and since then up to the present time in separate books. These accounts were published under the names of different trustees, which from time to time showed that the trustees were not the same. It was, he says, also known to the community, because at times there were articles in Gujarati newspapers which showed that the surviving trustees were filling up vacancies. On these materials, it is argued that the Court must hold that every single member of the community who has given donations to the various charities established for the benefit of the community or given funds to inaugurate new benefactions must have been fully cognisant that the trustees for the time being to whom these moneys were entrusted had a right to appoint or were appointing successors and filling up vacancies. On the assumption that each one of the donors knew this, the court is asked to hold that when the donors gave their moneys to the trustees for the time being, each one of them by implication conferred on the trustees the power to nominate the successors of those of them who died or retired. At all events the court must — Mr Strangman urged — hold that these donors of all funds that came into existence after 1851 intended to confer on the trustees the power of appointment for which he was making this vigorous fight.

This line of argument did not impress either my learned brother Beaman or myself in the least, and we noticed that Mr Strangman seemed surprised that we should be so little impressed with what appeared to him and to his learned colleagues such

sound reasoning. Now, in the first place, the assumption the court was asked to make seemed to me to be entirely unwarranted by the facts proved before us. I do not, in the first instance, think that one in a 1,000 Parsis ever cared to read the voluminous accounts published by the trustees. The trustees have always been men of the highest integrity and social position. They have been always men who commanded the respect and confidence of the community. They have all through administered the charitable funds with such efficiency that there never was at any time any complaint against their management. They were always good men and absolutely trustworthy. Members of the community may have noticed — probably they did

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## **Surely these doubts may be thrown to start a useless discussion to fill up their columns**

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know — that they filled up vacancies amongst themselves, but who ever cared to enquire whether they had the right to do so or not? I venture to think not one Parsi in 10,000. On the happening of an auspicious or inauspicious event in his family, when a member of the community felt inclined to contribute funds to existing charities or to establish a new charity or to found a separate benefaction, he found that there was a body of good and honest men who were already in possession of the funds of the community. They were possessed of an establishment and an organization for giving effect to all charitable donations, and had hitherto administered the charities of the community to the community's entire satisfaction. What more did he want? Send the moneys to them and express to them the object of his benefaction and the way in which the funds were to be used, and he was quite content to leave the rest to them. Of the hundreds and hundreds of donors of sums, large or small, not one, I venture to think, when making his donation, ever thought of the trustees' powers of appointment. They assumed that what they had been hitherto doing in the past they had legal right and power to do; and when

entrusting their moneys to existing trustees, they could not have had the remotest notion of conferring on them any powers in addition to those that they may have had.

These funds have grown to their present proportions by innumerable donations, small and large. I doubt if there is any single family of Parsis in Bombay who has not at one time or another contributed sums of money — maybe large, maybe small — to some one or more of these funds. These donations are mostly made in memory of the dead and are generally announced at the third day ceremony. It seems to me preposterous to conceive that when a Parsi contributed Rs 5 or Rs 5,000 to some Parsi charity and sent the moneys with a covering letter to people who he had no reason whatsoever to believe were not validly appointed trustees of the Panchayet funds, that at that moment he sat down and solemnly said to himself, "I am entrusting my moneys to people who are trustees of Panchayet funds. I know the survivors of them are appointing successors to their dead colleagues. I constitute them trustees of my money, and I intend that so far as my contribution is concerned they should have the same powers they have hitherto exercised, no matter whether they legally had or have the powers or not."

In the first place, there is no warrant for any such assumption of intention on the part of the donors as Mr Strangman asked us to make; and, secondly, supposing there was such an intention, what does it matter as long as the donors did not carry out those intentions and actually confer those powers?

Mr Strangman next relies on the fact that the appointments of new trustees were, in his own words, "frequently notified in the Press." Assuming that they were, does it follow that all or any of the donors necessarily read them; and assuming that every member of the Parsi community read these notices, how was he to know that the appointment by the trustees was an exercise of a right or power which they *never had*? The very natural presumption every reader would make — and every Parsi for a long time in all probability did make — was that the trustees in some way had legal authority to do what they were doing. It is only the very close investigation of many ancient documents that discloses the fact that no such powers as the trustees claimed were ever validly or legally conferred upon them.

Then again, the learned counsel said newspapers had commented on the appointments made by the trustees, and in

support of this statement he has put in half a dozen extracts from articles published in Gujarati newspapers... These are from publications between 1859 and 1901. Half a dozen articles in the course of 42 years do not err on the side of excessive publication and do not prove any very active discussion; but again, assuming that every Parsi read those articles, what does it prove? Supposing a Parsi read a newspaper article adversely commenting on an appointment made by the trustees and stating that they had no power to make any such appointment, what would an ordinary prudent Parsi say to himself? He would say, "These newspapers throw doubt on the trustees' authority to appoint a new trustee, but surely these doubts must be thrown merely to start a useless discussion to fill up their columns, or these articles are inspired by someone who bears ill-will to the trustees. They are men of the highest respectability — they occupy very high positions in life — they command the respect and confidence of the community, surely it is not possible to conceive that such men would do what would be very wrong if the newspaper comments are correct. They would be the last persons to deprive the community of its right to appoint trustees

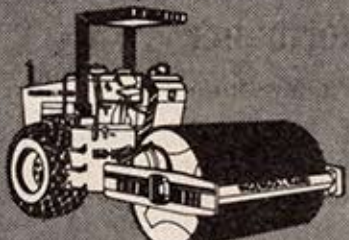
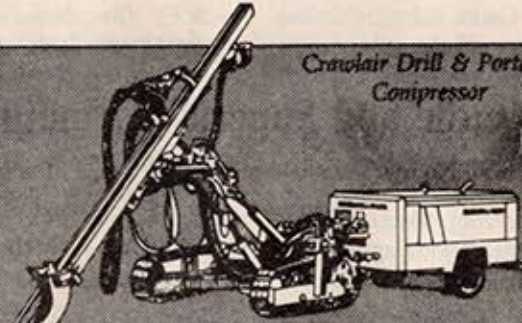
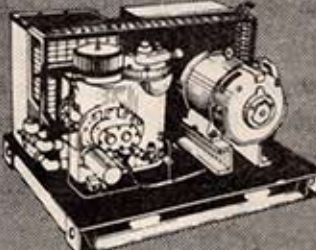
and arrogate to themselves the right which they have not got..."

The deed of 1851 was there. That deed contained the power of appointment. The obvious inference to them would be that the then members of the Punchayet would not have got the power inserted in the deed, and that the then trustees would not have accepted the trusts with those powers unless there was good ground and legal authority for doing so.

The whole fabric of this portion of the defendants' case is based on the deed of 1851. That deed affords no foundation whatever for the fabric, and, like all structures based on no foundation or a foundation that at best is not substantial, it must crumble. The powers sought to be conferred by the six members of the Punchayet on five of themselves were powers that they had no right to confer, and nothing that is subsequently done can validate an act which in its inception was invalid and unauthorized.

The right to appoint members of the Punchayet according to ancient usage has been satisfactorily proved to have been in the Parsi community. The community never expressly delegated to the Punchayet the power to appoint trustees. The members of

the Punchayet were mere delegates of the community, and if they exercised any powers they must be taken to have derived those powers from those who appointed them their delegates. The defendants' counsel, however, argues the trustees have exercised those powers of filling up vacancies rightly or wrongly for nearly 60 years. Why deprive them of this power now? The answer is to be found in the case of the Attorney-General vs. Dalton reported in *13 Beavan*, page 141. The facts of that case are, in many respects, very similar. If anything, the facts in this case are clearer against the defendants and less lost in obscurity than in the English case. In the course of his judgment, Lord Langdale, the Master of the Rolls, says: "The principal question litigated was by whom new trustees to be added to the rector and church wardens ought (when required) to be appointed, it being contended on behalf of the informant (the Attorney-General) that the new trustees should be nominated by the rate-payers of the parish: while the defendants now claiming to be trustees contend that the right of nominating new trustees (when required) belongs to the surviving trustees without the intervention of the parishioners at large."

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As in this case, the surviving trustees in that case had been for some years nominating new trustees; but it was contended that that was contrary to the original usage. The Master of the Rolls in his judgment gave effect to the fact that the estate was purchased from funds belonging to the parish, and was managed, although not regularly, by the parish at vestry meetings; that there was distinct evidence of new trustees being appointed, at all events, at one vestry meeting; and that several deeds contained recitals that the new trustees were appointed by the parishioners and inhabitants of the parish in vestry assembled. The court finally held that "a mode of nomination contrary to former usage...but acted upon only at a subsequent period cannot affect the right of the parishioners, if the nomination was with them;" and that, in such circumstances, the court "ought to be guided by the earliest evidence of usage, and rather presume that what was then done, and so long afterwards continued to be done was rightly done." It was held in that case on circumstances — not so strong or clear as in this case — that the defendant trustees had not been duly appointed...

I will now consider the defendants' position with regard to the immoveable properties of which they claim to be the trustees. To this part of the case somewhat

## There should be some responsible electorate for the appointment of new trustees

different considerations apply. It is necessary to consider, in the first place, how each one of these properties was acquired by or for the Parsi community. As shown before, the only immoveable properties that belonged to the Parsi Punchayet previous to 1823 were a large piece of land at Malabar Hill, with three Towers of Silence, a Sagdi, and a Sagdiwala's house standing thereon and the Fort Nasakhana. Between 1823 and 1884, the Parsi Punchayet acquired other properties. Some were given as gifts to the Punchayet for the benefit of the community and some were purchased by them from the General Charitable Funds and another fund known as the "Fund for expenses in connection with the Towers of Silence." The properties

that were acquired by purchase were pieces of land adjoining the land on which the Towers stood. It appears that the Punchayet was desirous of extending the compound of the Towers, thus ensuring greater seclusion for the Towers and avoiding as far as possible the chance of people of other religions — commonly spoken of as durwands — from settling on adjoining lands or building houses in the vicinity of the Towers. As opportunities offered, they acquired pieces of land contiguous to the land on which the Towers stood and added the same in the original compound. All these pieces of land now form one large piece of ground and there is nothing at present to show separately the different small pieces of land added from time to time — except the various documents evidencing the acquisition of these pieces of land. Since 1823, two other Towers and two other Sagdis have been built on the original land. Previous to 1884, there was no general deed covering all these properties in the possession of the trustees — I use the word trustees for convenience, meaning thereby the people who from time to time claimed to be trustees and were in possession and management of the Punchayet properties. I will continue to use the word in that sense. There were, prior to 1884, a great many deeds and



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conveyances relating to the various properties in their possession, and whenever new trustees had to be appointed there was considerable trouble and expense. Long previous to 1884, it was felt that a General Trust Deed, covering all the properties in the hands of the trustees, would be very desirable; and after considerable delay, on September 25, 1884, the then trustees executed a comprehensive trust deed...

The question for consideration now is, are the defendants properly and validly appointed trustees of all or any of these properties?

(Of the 26 properties of which the defendants claimed to be trustees, the court held their appointment valid for only two properties where the deed of gift specifically conferred on them the power of appointing successors and filling up vacancies in their ranks.)

In all other cases the Judges ruled that trusteeship of the properties had been assumed in the absence of any valid authority conferred on them. Often with the death of the original donor or trustees who did not exercise their power of appointing successors, certain others took over the mantle. Lack of documentary evidence was the reason for other properties to be entrusted to select individuals. When the appointment of trustees of funds was deemed invalid, it followed that in the case of all properties purchased from such funds, the trustees' authority was nullified.)

It seems to me that, in the case of large charities, it would be the duty of the court to see that there should be some responsible electorate for the appointment of new trustees, and the court will not approve of any hole and corner arrangement for such appointments. It seems to me that, in all cases where the donors of charitable bequests or gifts have not provided for the appointment of new trustees, those vitally interested in the charities and its due and effective administration should have some voice in deciding to whom the administration of such charities should be entrusted...

It is a source of very great satisfaction to me to find that in the conclusions I have arrived at on this portion of the case, my learned brother Beaman entirely concurs.

We hold that the defendants are not validly appointed trustees of any of the funds... We also find that they are not validly appointed trustees of any of the properties comprised in the General Trust Deed of 1884, except two properties...

Further noted the judgement, "We feel it our duty here to record that we have been drawn to these conclusions with much

regret and great reluctance; and in holding that the defendants are not validly appointed trustees of the Punchayet funds and properties, we should not be taken to cast the smallest reflection on their integrity or honor... Our declaration — that the defendants are not validly appointed trustees — means their removal from office, but this is only due to technical defects in the appointment of themselves and their predecessors before them. Their administration of large charitable funds and their management of properties devoted to charity have been so fair and faultless that not a complaint has been heard against them..." Daver then proceeded to show how great in status the defendants were and from what families they descended.

"These are the persons whom we are constrained to remove from office," added Daver, "but, in order to show our appreciation of them and their work... we appoint the surviving defendants trustees (for life)" in exercise of the powers conferred on the court under the Indian Trustee Act.

Their reappointment was deemed necessary in view of the fact that the framing and sanctioning of a scheme for appointment of new trustees, as directed by the court, was expected to take considerable time. The responsibility of framing a scheme was to be delegated to a commissioner or a legal panel of Parsis mutually agreed upon by both the parties.

Finally, it was left to the court to appoint Limji Naoroji Banaji, a barrister-at-law, as special commissioner to frame a scheme. Thus came into being the election scheme that allowed for an Anjuman Committee with its different categories of A, B, C, D, E and F Registers that participated in the first elections in 1911. It was only by an amendment of 1935 that the tenure of a trustee was limited to 10 years while granting him/her the privilege to stand for reelection at the end of that term.

Reiterates Justice Beaman: "On the first part of the case, I am in complete agreement with my learned colleague. We had thoroughly discussed it, laid down the main lines of our reasoning upon every material point, and settled our conclusions before we separated in April. All that then remained to be done was to embody the results of these discussions in a Judgement upon that branch of the case. I have only now to gratefully acknowledge the masterly manner in which my brother Daver has given methodized and exhaustive expression to our joint conclusions."

*Concluded.*

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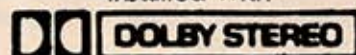
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# Melody maker

Vistasp Balsara of Calcutta  
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A. Patel

They say genius is eccentric. A Parsi genius, they say, has to be crazy. But then Vistasp Ardeshir Balsara, a Parsi and a genius, is neither eccentric nor has he lost his mental faculties. A soft-spoken and revered musician, he has carved for himself a niche among the stalwarts of Indian and Western music in the country by compositions and renditions that are inspiring.

Balsara, now 75, has been associated with music from the age of six. His father used to run the Balsara Training School in Bombay where subjects as diverse as shorthand, Latin and music were taught. "My mother Najamai," says Balsara, "used to conduct music classes there, and it was from her that I learnt the harmonium."

He joined the Bombay film industry as a musician in 1938 and played in Bollywood till he came to Calcutta in '54. From '56 onwards he has been music director of a number of films. "In 1956," reminisces Balsara, "Asha Bhonsle and Hemant Kumar sang my songs for the Bengali film, *Rater Andhokare*."

Music is his passion and Balsara particularly fancies certain instruments. "The piano and harmonium are my favorites, on which I play a lot of Western classical music," he admits. He loves to experiment. His obsession with the idea of presenting Indian classical music on a Western instrument, the piano, has given the Indian ragas a new dimension. "Western musical instruments and Western music have always fascinated me," says Balsara. "So much so that I regularly broadcasted a Western musical program from the All India Radio, Calcutta, from 1956 to 1979. Incidentally, this program was not devoted to classical music as such, but to popular pop music," he adds.

Noted for his patronage of amateur musicians, during his early Bombay years,

Balsara formed the YOU Music Circle, which organized seminars and debates by well-known personalities, besides evenings that were devoted exclusively to amateur artistes. His Saaz-O-Awaaz group of amateurs in Calcutta was responsible for the translation of Rabindranath Tagore's songs into 16 Indian and eight foreign languages. This group also performed the national anthems of most countries in their original languages. "I have also presented the Indian Symphony Orchestra with 80 musicians projecting the different moods in Tagore's *Debatar Grash*," says Balsara proudly.

Not only has he written the lyrics for a number of Hindi songs, but Balsara has contributed to the Bengali and Gujarati languages as well. "Talat Mahmood has sung many of my songs in Hindi, like *Mera Pyar Mujhe Lautao*," says Balsara. "Besides Hindi songs, Mukesh has also sung two of my Gujarati songs and *Dilkash Deedar Taro* sung by him is still very popular in Gujarat. As far as Bengali songs are concerned, I am still writing and playing them," adds Balsara.

Balsara is also fond of reading. "Not heavy reading matter, but I like books that are light and subjects that are down-to-earth," says the septuagenarian who had studied at Bharda New High School and St Xavier's College, Bombay. Mentions Balsara, "Instead of passing out, I failed out in the second year of the Arts stream which I was pursuing. And that was the end of my education."

His research into music has led him to write *A Book On Orchestra*, comprising a series of 304 scales in chronological order.

Another of his books, *Western Chords In Indian Ragas*, explains the possibility of using chords without disturbing a raga. His traditional *bhajans* on the chronologically arranged 32 ragas, sung by Ms Dhannawaz Indorewalla (his disciple for 32 years till her sudden death) were well appreciated.

Balsara has also brought out a cassette on Parsi Zoroastrian prayers translated into Gujarati and English which, he claims, "helps to explain the deeper meaning of our prayers through song for a better appreciation of our religion."

Balsara feels that interest in music among the Parsis is not surprising. "Our community has always had an ear for music and we have produced musicians in their own right. In fact, the doyen of classical music, Pandit Bhat-

khande used to have mostly Parsis for his patrons. And these patrons actually formed a Gayan Uttajat Mandli (an organization to inspire songs and music), where Pandit Bhatkhande held classes exclusively for Parsis," says Balsara.

"During my 42 years in Calcutta, I have played many times for different Parsi organizations. Last year in 1995, I played for the Parsee Stree Mandal at their request," he recalls.

"Indian classical music in the country," he adds, "is going through a transition phase at the moment. The standards in



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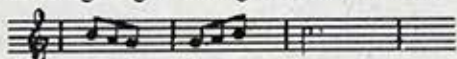
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music that I have heard are not there any more. This is because during our days, life was very easy. Nowadays, the artiste has to struggle for his existence. There was not so much of competition then, as there is now." But then, he is quick to point out, one has to accept the fact of change.

Balsara has also had the opportunity to travel abroad and perform before renowned musicians. He has been on concert tours to England, Holland, Surinam, Guyana, West Indies, the USA and Japan, where his presentations of "Indian Ragas on Piano" were well received. His visit to Iraq, Iran and Egypt in 1940 as a member of the team sent to entertain Indian troops, gave him first-hand experience of the loneliness that soldiers fighting on foreign soil have to face.



Balsara has also brought out a cassette on Parsi Zoroastrian prayers translated into Gujarati and English



Besides winning acclaim from a number of musicians, Balsara has also won a number of awards at the state as well as national levels. Noteworthy among them are The All India Critics Association Award which he won in 1978, The Shiromani Award in 1993 and, more recently, The Sangeet Natak Academy Award in 1995.

Balsara and his wife Alloo, "a quiet housewife," live alone in Calcutta. "We had two sons. Our elder son Hormuzdiar died in Calcutta in 1958, at the age of 14. Sarosh, the younger of the two was working as an electronics engineer in Germany and he suddenly passed away in November 1995 at the young age of 48," he says with his face drawn. "His wife Khursheed and 16-year-old daughter Nisha are carrying on life in Germany."

At the moment Balsara is busy doing what he likes best, composing and performing. "I am keeping myself busy with Rabindra Sangeet programs and Bengali aadhunik songs. I am also working on something that is a mix of Bengali, Hindi and Western. In between all this, I have to find the time for my recordings on All India Radio and on television," he admits happily. But then, time is something that Vistasp Balsara has always got ahead of.

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# The joy of good living

Shirin K. Bharucha

*Parsi Food and Customs* by Bhicoo J. Manekshaw. Published in 1996 by Penguin Books India (P) Ltd, 210 Chiranjiv Tower, 43 Nehru Place, New Delhi 110019. Pp: 430. Price: Rs 200.

My dear Bhicoo, What a marvellously happy book you have written! Filled as it is with the joys of good eating at a time when nasties like low fat diets and cholesterol were blissfully unknown.

There are recipe books and recipe books — mouth-wateringly illustrated — but few which have silken strands of memories woven into them. Memories of a spacious, gracious time when the leisure to enjoy such things was not a luxury, but an essential part of one's life. None of the spartan, eating-to-live business was known to us Parsis! We were, and still are, a people who can sit down to a feast, and cheerfully discuss more good food through the meal. Perhaps one such recipe book that can compare with yours is *Memories of Food at Gypsy House* by Felicity and Roald Dahl, which recalls the parties and occasions around which a memorable meal was made, or of the idiosyncracies of the person who created the recipes. You must read this book, if you haven't already.

What especially pleased me about your book is how customs and celebratory — and not so celebratory — occasions from birth to death are explained and embellished by a few apt sketches. What people do, are required to do, what they eat, and how they dress on those occasions are as much a part of the minutiae of living as any. Much of this has been lost to our small but unique community in the rush and bustle of life today in which we tend to (of necessity sometimes) take short cuts. But, more importantly, these customs and usages have been lost in the blending of us-

into India — symbolized by the sugar that not only sweetened the brimful cup of milk that the ruler of Sanjan sent back to the first

tanced by time and space from their community of origin.

The recipes you have described are mercifully, for an amateur cook like me, not too complicated — so I can attempt a few. They go back to our roots, to those very special flavors and tastes which are difficult to replicate now that genetically engineered, monster-sized perfect foods, hybrid seeds and pesticides have taken over. Or is it that we are just older, our palates a bit jaded and there is no sauce like the hunger of youth? I refuse to believe that.

You have described the dishes — dhansak, akuri, rava being some of them — by which our cuisine is well-known. (I loved the quaint reproductions of the pronunciation of some of them — *custar biscot!* — is that really so?) There is a host of other dishes in your repertoire which would grace any table. But, really, are you serious about *bhujelo sas* and *sukha boomla pur eeda*? In all my years of good eating (and happily there have been many) I've never heard of them — much less tasted them, especially the

latter rather curious, esoteric creation, which defies even my vivid imagination.

Bhicoo, according to me, the best way to test, as it were, a recipe book is to try out one familiar dish and one new one to see how they taste — authentic and tasty, or strange but nevertheless acceptable. So I tried out the unusual recipe of Maja Daruwala's prawn patia with tomato sauce (Grandma would think that sacrilegious). It was so good! And an added bonus was the uncomplicated short method of making it, especially when I have to fit it in between my work schedule and my social schedule — both hectic — I can tell you. For the new recipe I tried *vengna ni buri-*



*Manekshaw: a taste for the meals and conventions of times past*

Photo: Varghese Fernandez

settlers here, but by the sugar that blended with the milk.

The illustrations are so important, as a *ses* (silver tray) or a *paro* (cone shaped silver container) or a *chalk* (daily renewed floor designs with white powdered lime) would have no meaning for the uninitiated. They must also be of great help to those Parsis who have made their homes abroad and a new generation has grown up around them, many of whom in the company of their foreign peer groups are dis-

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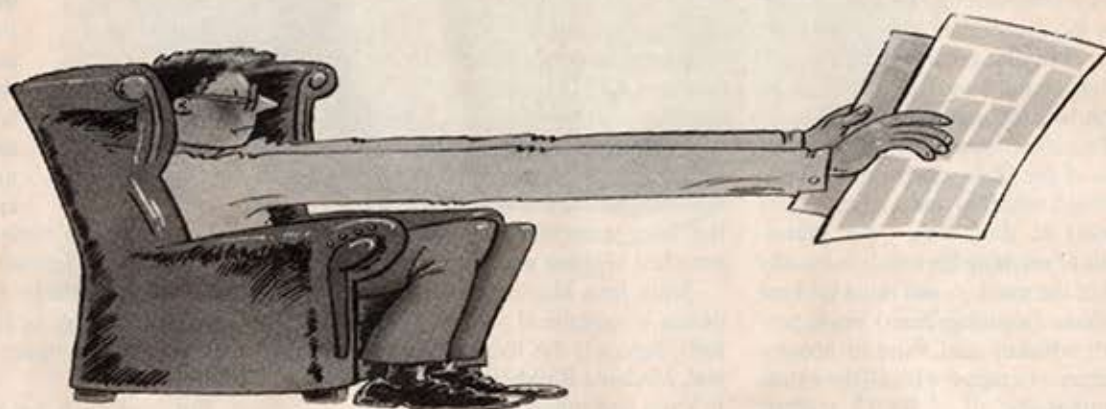
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ani, which is something I disliked as a schoolgirl as it looked like dhansak and tricked you into tasting some other not so nice thing. The dish transported me back to days long forgotten and, with an adult's acquired tastes, I wondered why I had so disliked it.

I thought I would muster up the temerity to try a variation on your rava recipe to transform it into a heavenly dessert: Soak plenty of dried fruit for garnish — raisins galore, slivers of orange peel, cherries and walnuts in a generous measure of dark rum for a day. Add all the rum to the rava, and then some, till it takes on the color of a pink dawn — and sit back and accept the praise from your guests! Do people still make and eat exotica like *popatji*? I think even our stronghold of Parsi cuisine, the RTI, has discontinued this.

You are what you consume, said the French gourmet Brillat-Savarin. So what does that make us? Gourmets? Gourmands? Or, having seen how people can eat at a wedding, a mix of the two? More the gourmet I think, with our enthusiastic love of life and its goodies. Our love of good food spills over into our love of literature, music and the arts. Someone once said that the best way to get the better of temptation is just to yield to it — and sometimes I think we follow that advice, foodwise, to the letter. Nevertheless, have you noticed, Bhicoo, that our community is, despite our indulgences, long-lived? Is that not quite contrary to all modern thinking on dietary rules? Are the doctors out there listening?

I agree with you, ours is a happy religion — one of the tenets of which is an admonition to keep one's mind and body healthy. This is reflected in our unreserved enjoyment of the fruits of the good earth. Our renowned wedding and navjote feasts bear witness to this. Yes, your grandmother tells of washing her hands in brandy at the end of the meal — and mine told me of a full *bhonu* (wedding feast) being provided with whiskey and wine to accompany a gargantuan repast with all the extras and trimmings for all of Rs 15 a plate. Unbelievable? Those were the days!

So, I am leafing through your book with much joy — not knowing what gastronomic delight awaits me at the turn of a page. You can be sure, I will be carrying a copy of it to my sister in New York — for her and her children. To explain to them in an uncomplicated manner our fascinating customs — some still followed and some fallen by the way. And to give them in the hurried present a taste of the meals and conventions of a leisurely past.

# Parsi Gujarati: the end of an idiom

Hormazdyar S. Dalal

*Gujarati Sahitya Kshetre Parsionun Pradan* by Dr Ratan Rustomji Marshall. Published in 1995 by Gurjar Granth Ratna Karyalaya, Gandhi Road, Ahmedabad 380001. Pp: 262. Price: 130.

There are not more than six Parsi writers with us writing in *shudh* (correct) Gujarati today. Dr Ratan Marshall is, by any standard, in the front rank among them. He has by now a dozen first-rate books to his credit, including the present one under review which has appeared in Gujarati as well as in an English account of Parsi contribution to Gujarati literature. Four more publications by Marshall are in the pipeline.

Marshall initially made his mark by writing a very well-researched work, *The History of Gujarati Journalism*, nearly four decades ago. He received a PhD for it from the University of Bombay. It was a labor of love, to which he had devoted the best years of his youth. The work enriched Gujarat and Gujarati literature.

Since then Marshall has written half-a-dozen biographical works. He has skillfully depicted the lives of Ardeskar Kotwal, Madame Bhikhaji Cama, Nusservanji Vakil and others.

In his life of Kotwal, Marshall has not only traced the contribution of this illustrious figure to the history of Surat, but has also lent color to the past culture of one of the prominent cities of Gujarat. It is, in fact, an exciting tale of the very cordial relationship between two ancient cultures: of the Hindus and Iranian Zoroastrians.

His two other works on the lives of Cama and Vakil have brought his subjects to life. If Cama was a freedom fighter and

a patriot to the last moments of her life, Vakil was the embodiment of the noblest values and virtues of humanity.

Marshall's account of Parsi contribution to Gujarati literature is a valuable addition to the history of Gujarati literature in general. It is, in a sense, the result of the author's golden years. If Marshall

spent his youth writing the *History of Gujarati Journalism*, he has devoted the latter part of his life in giving us this informative work.

Parsis are, in fact, pioneers in almost all spheres of life. If they were first in the field of Gujarati journalism, medicine, engineering, etc., they were also the first to launch the theater movement in India. And they did not lag behind in cultivating all the salient art forms of literature: the essay, the novel, poetry and criticism. During the

last century or so, their literary work grew in volume and formed a distinctive section, which came to be known as Parsi Gujarati literature as Parsi writers left on their creations a stamp of their individual idiom.

But, sadly, in no way could this be considered a happy result. Because they did not pay enough attention to creating original works, or to developing their knowledge of the language. This, and other weaknesses of Parsi authors are the burden of Marshall's present work.

The majority of Parsi novels are translations of popular fiction writers of the past century, mostly British. Originality, therefore, is conspicuously absent in Parsi works though a few of the novels have

*continued on page 56*



Marshall: a passion for Gujarati

## MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 23 and 41 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 28 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 26 and 44 years, averaging at 32 years.

As compared to 78 Zoroastrians who were consigned to the Towers of Silence there were 22 babies born in Bombay in September as per the data supplied to us from four hospitals. Heart disease claimed 25 patients of whom 12 were 80 years and above. The other killers were pneumonia and lung disease (11), septicemia and kidney failure (six each) and old age and general debility and hypertension (five each). Brain disease took a toll of four lives whereas three victims fell prey to cancer. Two deaths each were attributed to uremia and diabetes. Gastro-intestinal haemorrhage, Hepatitis B, lupus pericarditis, head injury, hypertensive thalamic bleed, motor neuron disease, haemorrhage, hypoproteinemia (deficient protein in the blood plasma from dietary deficiency or excessive excretion) and atherosclerosis (deposition of fatty substances in the arteries) were the isolated cases

registered last month. The age range fluctuated between 48 and 102 years. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth, in Bombay in September, was 78 years.

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled from information supplied by various newsletters and anjuman in India and abroad, courts and hospitals. This information is not always complete or consistent: we are unable to carry data from areas where the anjuman 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.

### BOMBAY

#### BORN

A girl, *Mehrmaaz*, to *Pinaze* and *Daravus Bharucha* on August 16, 1996  
A girl, *Benafsha*, to *Monaz* and *Porus Soonawalla*; October 2  
A girl, *Benafsha*, to *Rashna* and *Zubin Wadiwalla*; October 2  
A girl to *Dilshad* and *Cyrus Unwalla*; October 4  
A girl to *Anna* and *Neville Choksi*; October 5  
A boy to *Shermaz* and *Viraf Dhalla*; October 6  
A girl to *Jennifer* and *Rustom Thanawala*; October 8  
A girl to *Jennifer* and *Maneck Mistry*; October 10  
A girl to *Perlena* and *Rustom Irani*; October 12  
A girl to *Hufriez* and *Pharoah Basta*; October 13  
A girl to *Niloofer* and *Cusrow*

*Cooper*; October 13  
A boy to *Parvin* and *Aspy Buhariwalla*; October 14  
A girl to *Maneck* and *Manoj Bhatia*; October 16  
A boy to *Dinaz* and *Kersi Irani*; October 20  
A girl to *Niloufer* and *Rumy Dukandar*; October 23  
A girl to *Ava* and *Neville Poonawalla*; October 23  
A girl to *Zarin* and *Farrokh Bharucha*; October 24  
A boy to *Shehnaz* and *Zubin Bilimoria*; October 24  
A girl to *Monaz* and *Zubin Dalal*; October 26  
A girl to *Taruna* and *Heckter Engineer*; October 26  
A boy to *Dinaz* and *Sorab Engineer*; October 26  
A boy to *Jennifer* and *Jimmy Dadrewalla*; October 28  
A girl to *Meher* and *Phiroz Dubash*; October 29

#### MARRIED

*Zarin Aspi Jijina* and *Ruzbeh Jehangir Afkham*; October 2  
*Jennifer Loveji Contractor* and *Jamshed Eruch Dinshaw*; October 6  
*Kainaz Minoo Bhagat* and *Hoshang Firoze Deboo*; October 17  
*Benaifer Rusi Mirzan* and *Dinyar Behramgor Dastoor* of Ahmedabad; October 24  
*Bakhtawar Eruch Vaghchhipawala* and *Yezdi Homi Sagar*; October 25  
*Mahzarin Pervez Driver* and *Rohinton Cawas Wadia*; October 25  
*Khushnum Rusi Fraser* and *Porus Kersi Rabadi*; October 28  
*Mehnaz Rusi Anklesaria* and *Zubin Sikander Maloo*; October 29

#### DIED

*Dolat Darashaw Kapadia* (91), residing at 15/3, Wadia Block, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; October 1  
*Daisy Darabshaw Patel* (48), Umrigar Bldg, Chikalwadi, 400007; October 1  
*Roda Behram Vachha* (75), Cama Bldg no 3, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; October 1  
*Rusi Jehangir Driver* (77), Petit Sanatorium, Cumballa Hill, 400026; October 2  
*Khodabux Khodaram Khosravi* (66), 5, Qureshi Mhl, M. M. Chotani Rd, Mahim, 400016; October 2  
*Hormuzdiar Dinshaw Choksi* (78), 2, Marine Chmbs, New Marine Lines, 400020; October 3  
*Homai Faredoon Kutar* (80), R/8, Dalal Est, Bhadkamkar Marg, Near Bombay Central, 400008; October 3  
*Darabshaw Cooverji Amroliwalla* (88), 15, Doctor Bldg, Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; October 4  
*Minocheher Meherji Antia* (85), G/5, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; October 5  
*Jamshed Hormusji Katrak* (83), C/o A. M. Katrak, Jahangir Mans, Hughes Rd, 400007; October 5  
*Aloo Navroji Billimoria* (80), J. Petit Block no 1, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; October 6

*Dara Jalejar Driver* (57), F/20, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; October 6  
*Khorshed Nariman Khatao* (78), Gowalia Tank Bldg, August Kranti Marg, 400007; October 7  
*Soonoo Adi Motivala* (80), 8, Lady Ratan Tata Bldg no 3, Turner Rd, Bandra, 400050; October 7  
*Gool Savak Unvala* (86), 785, Readymoney Bldg, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; October 7  
*Ratanshaw Cooverji Bhathena* (87), C/68, Bhiwandiwalla Ter, Dhobitalao, 400002; October 8  
*Ardeshtir Cursetji Lentin* (76), Roda Bldg, South Frere Bridge, Grant Rd, 400007; October 8  
*Naja Cawasji Sidhwa* (94), 9, Soona Mhl, 143, Marine Drive, 400020; October 8  
*Mino Noshirwan Pestonji* (84), G/1, Mahavir Complex, Navghar, Vasai, 401201; October 9  
*Jer Jal Daruwalla* (59), 2/35, Piroja Mans, Sir Ratan Tata Rd, Tardeo, 400034; October 10  
*Aloo Jamshed Khambatta* (82), 1/A, Lady Dorab Tata Bldg no 1, S. V. Rd, Bandra, 400050; October 10  
*Jal Jivanji Vakil* (78), 224, Gustad Mans, Tardeo Rd, 400007; October 10  
*Roshan Soli Madon* (66), 6/27, Old Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; October 11  
*Bahadur Rustamji Mewawala* (72), 1/A, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; October 11  
*Rustomji Jeejeebhoy Billimoria* (91), 751, Rustom Villa, Dr Ghanti Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; October 12  
*Dina Keiki Jarda* (85), G, Bhiwandiwalla Ter, Dhobitalao, 400002; October 12  
*Dhanmai Behramji Patel* (79), 7/101, Rajendra Ngr, Dattapada Rd, Borivli (E), 400066; October 12  
*Morvarid (Homayoon) Khodayar Attai* (85), Irani Bldg, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Dadar (E), 400014; October 14  
*Nusserwanji Nanabhoy Bharucha* (80), C/o M. N. Bharucha, 7, Bharucha Bldg, Gilder Lane, Lamington Rd, 400008; October 14  
*Nerges Rustam Irani* (72), 25, Anand Niwas, A Rd,

Churchgate, 400020;  
October 14  
*Rustom Jamshed Irani (Palang)*  
(73), Rustom Manzil,  
Khadeshwari Mandir Marg,  
Bandra (W), 400050;  
October 14  
*Jehangir Jamshedji Muccadam*  
(86), E/15, Rustom Baug,  
Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027;  
October 14  
*Rati Pirojsha Palkhiwala* (82),  
A, Aradhana, 6/D, Ambedkar  
Marg, 400012; October 14  
*Tehmina Behram Patel* (102),  
Chateau Windsor, 86, Veer  
Nariman Rd, Churchgate,  
400020; October 14  
*Banoobai Sohrabji Shroff* (94),  
Patel Wadia Bldg, Wadia St,  
Tardeo, 400034; October 14  
*Nergish Ratansha Bulsara* (66),  
618/A, Bhiwandiwalla Ter,  
Girgaum Rd, 400002;  
October 15  
*Piroja Darabshah Laher* (82),  
M. B. House, Janmabhoomi  
Marg, Fort, 400001; October 15  
*Banoobai Noshirwan Mody*  
(83), 286, Sitaram Sadan,  
Princess St, 400002; October 15  
*Gool Adi Hakim* (67), New  
Khan Bldg, Chikalwadi, Tardeo  
Rd, 400007; October 16

*Bhikhoo Kekhushroo Khodaiji*  
(73), Motibai Bhuvan, Proctor  
St, Grant Rd, 400007;  
October 16  
*Bejan Jehanbax Lakdawala*  
(Bharuchwalla) (88), C/o N. J.  
Bharucha, 8, Rustom Baug,  
Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027;  
October 16  
*Jal Eruchshaw Khambatta* (85),  
Lady Dorab Tata Bldg no 7,  
Tata Blocks, S. V. Rd, Bandra,  
400050; October 17  
*Noshir Framji Motafram* (86),  
R/270, Olive Lodge,  
Chowdhary Marg, Juhu,  
400049; October 17  
*Gool Barjor Gai* (75), 101,  
Hormuzd Apts, Cumballa Hill,  
400026; October 18  
*Firoze Kaikhushroo Engineer*  
(72), Rusi Mehta Bldg, Dinbai  
Petit Lane, Balaram St, Grant  
Rd, 400007; October 19  
*Parvez Pirojsha Jesia* (62),  
Room no 8, Contractor Chwl,  
Dadji Konde Rd, Byculla,  
400027; October 19  
*Alamai Eruchsha Colah* (71),  
H/8, Tarachand Bldg, Captain  
Clny, Tardeo, 400034;  
October 20  
*Keki Dinshaw Dumasia* (72),  
Sethna Bldg, 27, Station Rd,

Mahim (W), 400016;  
October 20  
*Ketayun Gustad Khambatta*  
(75), E/16, Nowroz Baug,  
Lalbaug, 400012; October 20  
*Soley Rustomji Panthakey* (72),  
3/25, A. H. Wadia Baug, G. D.  
Ambedkar Marg, Parel, 400033;  
October 20  
*Jaloo Rustomji Daruwalla* (80),  
E/28, Jer Baug, Ambedkar Rd,  
Byculla, 400027; October 21  
*Boman Dinshawji Mistry* (72),  
Petit Block no 1, Jamshedji  
Petit St, Balaram St, Grant Rd,  
400007; October 21  
*Nerges Burjor Pardiwalla* (74),  
Minoo Lodge, 139, Tardeo Rd,  
400034; October 21  
*Keshwar Bahram Felfeli* (80),  
Fairy Manor, 13, Gunbow St,  
Fort, 400001; October 22  
*Peshotan Kayoji Mirza* (89),  
A/704, Accord Co-op Hsg Ltd,  
Lokhandwala Complex, 2nd  
Cross Lane, Andheri (W),  
400058; October 22  
*Rusi Jalejar Motashapur* (82),  
5, Auburn Hse, 38, Forjett St,  
400036; October 22  
*Noshir Jehangir Olia* (84),  
125/A, Bhargarwadi, Lonavla,  
410401; October 22  
*Rumi Ruttonsha Bhavnagri* (86),

E/6, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd,  
Byculla, 400027; October 23  
*Phiroze Jehangir Daver* (70),  
Hira Cottage, Raja Ram Mohan  
Roy Rd, 400004; October 24  
*Hormazd Jamshed Dadachanji*  
(66), India Hse no 1, Kemp's  
Corner, 400036; October 25  
*Dinshaw Jehangir Mehta* (85),  
5, Master Bldg, Bai Navajbai  
Contractor Baug, Mori Rd,  
Mahim, 400016; October 25  
*Coomi Minocher Wellington*  
(93), 201, Roberts Ark,  
Chinchpokli Rd, Bandra,  
400050; October 25  
*Homai Eruchshaw Dukandar*  
(87), C/o A/22, Jer Baug,  
Ambedkar Rd, Byculla, 400027;  
October 26  
*Khorshed Rustomji Elavia* (72),  
Mithaiwalla Mans, 12th  
Khetwadi Lane, Grant Rd,  
400004; October 26  
*Behram Khurshedji Kapadia*  
(82), Navyug Chmbs, 165, Dr  
D. Bhadkamkar Marg, 400007;  
October 27  
*Mithamai (Mithibai) Ardeshir*  
*Katpitia* (87), Keshav Bhavan,  
7th Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004;  
October 27  
*Zini Keki Patel* (69), Hormuz  
Bldg, Dadajee Konde Marg,

*With compliments from*

**B. B. GARDA & SONS**

10 B. J. Road  
Poona 411001

Byculla, 400027; October 27  
*Shirin Nariman Aloona* (82),  
 Khairapada, P.O. Boisar, Tal  
 Palghar, Dist Thane, 401501;  
 October 28  
*Jal Hormusjee Khajotia* (69),  
 T/3, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd,  
 400039; October 28  
*Pesi Ardeshir Khodaiji* (85),  
 3/11, B. S. Panthaky Baug,  
 S. V. Rd, Andheri, 400069;  
 October 28  
*Roshan Rustom Bhomisha* (67),  
 Dhunbad, Sleater Rd, 400007;  
 October 29  
*Mehra Kaikhushroo Kanga*  
 (89), 681/B, Firdoshi Rd,  
 Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;  
 October 29  
*Dhunjishaw Edulji Medhora*  
 (84), Sethna Bldg, Wadia St,  
 Tardeo, 400034; October 29  
*Sheroo Ardeshir Tata* (77), 2/A,  
 Karai Est, 248, Javji Dadaji  
 Marg, 400007; October 29  
*Roda Jehangir Treasuryvala*  
 (76), Dina Villa, 23, Pali Rd,  
 Bandra, 400050; October 29  
*Mary Cursetjee Jamshedjee*  
 (90), 10/B, Darbhanga Mans,  
 12, Carmichael Rd, 400026;  
 October 30  
*Feroze Dara Mirza* (88),  
 Jaiphal Ter, 31, Forjett St,  
 400036; October 30  
*Jal Rustomji Khory* (77), E. M.  
 Estate Bldg no 4, Near Bandra  
 Talkies, S. V. Rd, Bandra,  
 400050; October 31

#### JABALPUR

DIED  
*Jerbai Dinshawji Mistry* (86),  
 Jehangirabad, Marhatal,  
 482001; October 18

#### NAVSARI

DIED  
*Aderbad Dastur Meherjirana;*  
 September 14

#### POONA

DIED  
*Tehmina Nadirshah Khambatta*  
 (88), A-7/403, Neelkanth Ngr,  
 Bhavani Peth, 411042;  
 September 5  
*Alice Hormagi Bhiwandiwalla*  
 (89), 6, Sahani Sujan Park,  
 Kondwa Rd, 411040;  
 September 10  
*Dara Rashid Khambatta* (65),  
 4, Bund Garden Rd, 411001;  
 September 16  
*Noshir Dinshaw Karani* (86),  
 Karani Bhavan, Narangi Bhaug  
 Rd, 411001; September 18  
*Sheroo Sheriyaar Fatakiya* (82),  
 Jamasp Bldg, Ma-Parvizi Rd,

| TOTALS FOR 1996  |        |                 |       |    |       |                 |
|------------------|--------|-----------------|-------|----|-------|-----------------|
|                  | Bombay |                 | India |    | World |                 |
|                  | A      | B               | A     | B  | A     | B               |
| <b>BORN</b>      |        |                 |       |    |       |                 |
| Boys             | 6      | 80              | —     | 6  | 3     | 21              |
| Girls            | 16     | 85              | —     | 3  | 5     | 26              |
| <b>MARRIED</b>   |        |                 |       |    |       |                 |
| Parsi            | 8      | 138             | —     | 4  | —     | 10              |
| Intercommunal    | —      | 17 <sup>^</sup> | —     | 4* | 2     | 4*              |
| <b>DIED</b>      |        |                 |       |    |       |                 |
| <b>CONSIGNED</b> |        |                 |       |    |       |                 |
| Males            | 37     | 388             | 11    | 84 | 5     | 49 <sup>o</sup> |
| Females          | 41     | 419             | 11    | 72 | 4     | 36              |
| <b>CREMATED</b>  |        |                 |       |    |       |                 |
| Males            | —      | —               | —     | —  | —     | —               |
| Females          | —      | —               | —     | —  | —     | —               |

A: Total numbers in this issue

B: Running totals for 1996 (February-March 1996-October 1996 issues)

<sup>^</sup> Males married out — 9  
 Females married out — 8

\* Males — 2  
 Females — 2

\* Males — 1  
 Females — 3

<sup>o</sup> 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.

411002; October 4  
*Jeerubanu Erachshah Engineer*  
 (73), 208, Mahatma Gandhi Rd,  
 411001; October 5  
*Dara Shapoorji Sadri* (91),  
 C/4, Pancharatna Bldg,  
 Bhairobanalla; October 7  
*Aloo Sorab Majoo* (72), E/10,  
 Hermes Hse, 1989, Convent St,  
 411001; October 8  
*Sam Rustom Irani* (80), Sukh  
 Sagar Apts, 7, Connaught Rd,  
 Opp GPO, 411001; October 13

#### SURAT

DIED  
*Firoz Dhanjisha Crawford* (88),  
 Nariman Home and Infirmary,  
 Shahpore, 395003; October 2  
*Pirozsha Aredeshir Postwala*  
 (52), Jakat Naka, Palanpur,  
 395001; October 2  
*Piroza Adi Contractor* (79),  
 Nariman Home and Infirmary,  
 Shahpore, 395003; October 5  
*Darabshaw Faramji Suwaliwala*  
 (85), Kuka Chawl, Shahpore,  
 395003; October 12  
*Kolamai Dadabhai Ghadiyali*  
 (97), Joshi Block, Vakil St,  
 395003; October 16  
*Dorabsha Kharshadji Choksi*  
 (81), Nanpura, 395001;  
 October 24  
*Allamai Darabshaw Mistry*  
 (86), Paia St, Nanpura, 395001;  
 October 25  
*Dolly Fali Sachinwala* (66),

Alahi Baug, Rustompura,  
 395002; October 25  
*Makkamai Pirojsha Lalsodagar*  
 (75), Bibini wadi, 395003;  
 October 27  
*Kawasji Piroshsha Daruvala*  
 (74), Abikanikatm, 395003;  
 October 28  
*Keki Hosang Patel* (69),  
 Nanpura, 395001; October 28  
 \*\*\*

#### CANADA Vancouver

DIED  
*Mehraban Rostam Farhangi*  
 (81), husband of Goli and  
 father of Nilgun and Padra;  
 October 26

#### PAKISTAN Karachi

BORN  
 A girl, *Charmaine*, to Vini and  
*Farhad Irani*; April 23  
 A girl, *Khursheed*, to Jasmine  
 and Sarosh Gamwalla; May 8  
 A boy, *Sheriar*, to Anahita and  
*Danesh Khambatta*; June 17  
 A boy, *Nadir*, to Mehenaz and  
*Khurshid Bharucha*; July 18  
 A girl, *Danielle*, to Jessica and  
*Jamshed Dubash*; August 13  
 A girl, *Farezea*, to Katy and  
*Jamshed Patel*; August 20  
 A girl, *Sarah*, to Shermin and  
*Jal Kaikobad*; August 23  
 A boy, *Rony*, to Jassica and  
*Khurshed Karanjia*; August 27

DIED  
*Maneck Minocher Mehta* (83);  
 August 7  
*Goola Jal Billia* (89); August 9  
*Minoo D. Gamwalla* (64);  
 August 16  
*Nadir Nawroji Sethna* (89);  
 August 17  
*Bahdur Jehangir* (67);  
 September 1  
*Dolly Hommie Bharucha* (61);  
 October 11

#### USA Chicago

MARRIED  
*Benifer Khambatta*, daughter  
 of Farida and Sarosh and Bruce  
*Bedford*; August 29  
*Tammi Davis* of Indiana,  
 daughter of Peggy Akin  
 and Ray and *Jamshed Rivetna*,  
 son of Roshan and Rohinton;  
 August 31

#### Houston

DIED  
*Kawasjee Desai*, husband of  
 Perin and father of Rohinton;  
 September 9

#### Los Angeles

DIED  
*Mahrukh Sorab Charna* (43);  
 May 25

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

# Blessed with the bat

Parinaz Gandhi

Died: Rusi Sheriar Modi, 71, former Indian test cricketer, on May 17, 1996 following cardiac arrest that led to his fatal fall from the third floor balcony of the Cricket Club of India (CCI).

"Modi personified the best in cricket. He was a gentleman to the core." This tribute for Modi came from Lala Amarnath, considered the grand old man of Indian cricket, who remembered their days at the crease and especially the duo's 411-run partnership in less than a day for a Combined XI against Rest of India at Calcutta in 1946.

"Modi was a cricketer straight from the coaching manuals," mentioned his noted peer Polly Umrigar. "He was an artiste of the highest order," added Umrigar who related how Modi could play on the front or back foot as the situation warranted. When speaking to the United News of India, former Indian skipper Nari Contractor referred to Modi's style and grace, being blessed with a tremendous capacity to score and place the ball at will.

His total of 736 runs in the 10 test matches where he represented India was an indicator that "while Vijay Merchant was the most successful batsman in the party, Modi, if not as prolific...could be depended upon," commented Rajan Bala in *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of May 18, 1996. With Vijay Merchant, Modi holds the distinction of sharing a Ranji trophy record for their 371-run partnership for the sixth wicket, as reported in the *Indian Express* of May 18. His record of scoring seven centuries in seven Ranji matches is a feat that has yet to be surpassed, while his other record of aggregating 1,008 runs in seven innings was beaten after 44 years in 1988. Tall and

lean, Modi, who has been commended for deft use of his wrists and almost flawless technique, was known to be physically imposing and "some of his feats are still

talked about despite the passage of time," states the *Express*.

His contemporary at Associated Cement Companies (ACC), Madhav Mantri, referred to Modi as an "all-time great," and recalled Modi's reluctance for net practice on the rationale that practice pitches might not be good and adversely affect his confidence.

Bombay born Modi spent his school days in Surat and derived

his inspiration for cricket from his father, informs Keki Dudhwala in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of June 9, 1996. His higher education was at Bombay's St Xavier's College. During his association with ACC, which spanned several years, he rose to be senior manager, purchase. One of his associates, Bhagwan Thadani, remembered him as being "gentle, kind-hearted and soft-spoken. He was easily approachable and always used to guide and help out in work. As a column writer in various newspapers, Modi offered many tips..."

Known to be jovial in his younger days, in later life the cricketer became a "bit of a recluse and (was) seen to move around the CCI all by himself. He had difficulty recognizing people," wrote Bala. Irrespective of whether he could identify others, Modi had built up an identity as "one of the finest batsmen the country produced in the forties," in the words of Contractor who added, "Comparing him with batsmen of following generations would be a futile exercise."

Modi is survived by his wife Rutty, and daughter Gyesha Adi Madan.



Modi: "a gentleman to the core"

Courtesy: *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier*

## BOOKS

continued from page 52

been garbed in the Parsi way of life or the culture or history of days gone by. Kaikhushru Ardeshir Fitter was one such writer, who wrote good novels based on socio-historical problems. Nevertheless, every Parsi today is rightly proud of two Parsi poets — Behramji Malbari and Ardeshir Framji Khabardar. There were other lesser lights too, like Jehangir Manekji Desai and the late Minoo Desai, both of Navsari. As the editor of *The Bombay Samachar*, Minoo also carved his name as a capable journalist.

Another outstanding name associated with Gujarati literature is that of Rustomji Ranina, who was the first to compile an English-Gujarati Dictionary in 1857. Similarly, Fardunji Marzban and Kaikhushru Naoroji Kabraji were outstanding Gujarati journalists whose pioneering work will long be remembered.

There were scores of other writers, men and women who enriched Parsi Gujarati literature. But all that is in the past. Today, sadly, we do not have even half-a-dozen reputed Parsi writers of chaste Gujarati. The present generation of Parsis has un-

If Marshall spent his youth writing the *History of Gujarati Journalism*, he has devoted the latter part of his life in giving us this informative work

fortunately lost touch with its mother tongue. The majority of our boys and girls, and their elders too, do not even know the Gujarati alphabet.

In her voluminous work, *History of Parsi Literature*, Pitan Makati first dealt with this subject nearly 50 years ago. But how many of us know of it? Marshall has humbly acknowledged his debt to it as it was his principal reference work while writing the book, along with other works on the subject.

Marshall's work is scholarly, and an eye-opener for the Parsis of today. Also, it will surely prove very useful to all other readers and writers of Gujarati literature.

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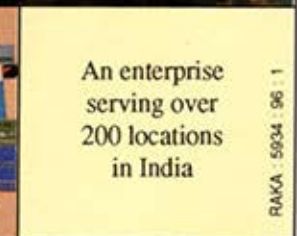
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