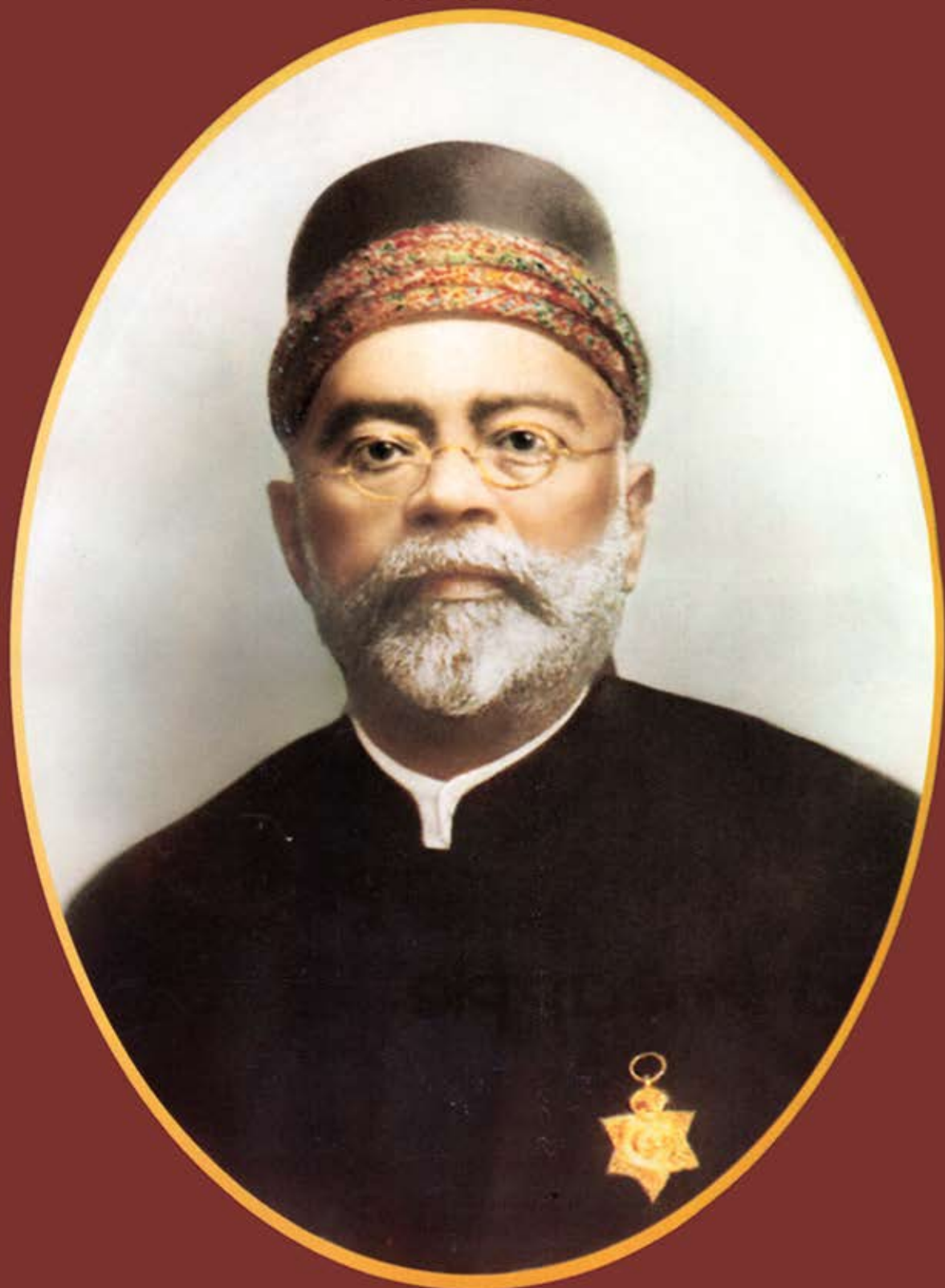


Parsiānā

JUNE 1998 Rs 27



Tehmuras Bajan

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Where movement is a science

Parsiana

June 1998
Volume 20 Number 10

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"Milestones"

I fully endorse the view expressed by Zenobia Sidhwa in her letter ("Milestones," *Parsiana*, December 1997). She is absolutely right when she mentions: "It's an indirect encouragement to the young generation (towards intercommunity marriages)." In my opinion, you are rendering a great disservice to the Mazdayasni Zoroastrian community by such an encouragement.

I appreciate your duty as an impartial editor to report the facts on intercommunity marriages to make everyone aware of the reality so that the community can come to terms with the issue and decide how to counter or accept the situation. All the same, don't you think that by openly publishing the names (whereby relations and friends can be identified) of all those Zoroastrians, who due to their mental immaturity and lack of appreciation of the true Zoroastrian spirit have gone astray to

marry outside the community, gives encouragement to similar young Zoroastrians?

I may quote from the very issue of your magazine: "We have lost the simple faith of our grandmothers; we don't really know where we stand or what we believe; and we helplessly watch our children drift into the powerful global seas of materialism sans spirit ('Spiritual storehouse,' Events and Personalities, *Parsiana*, December 1997)."

In answer to those who feel that there is nothing wrong in marrying outside the community, may I ask them a simple question? If they have a pedigree Dalmatian bitch as a pet, would they allow her to be mated by any other dog except a Dalmatian and sacrifice the pedigree of the pups? Pedigree (*buniaad*) is of prime importance in every life, be it that of humans, animals or even plants. Nature abhors incompatible soil which fact is well borne out by the following story:

In years gone by Parsi Zoroastrians had quite a population in Macau. There is a Parsi cemetery still in Macau, although it is lying unused for many many years after they left for Hong Kong and other places. Zoroastrians of those days in Hong Kong and Macau brought best quality mangoes from India and planted the seeds in the Macau cemetery's compound with a hope of seeing the trees grow and bear quality fruits. Of course, the trees grew but bore worthless fruits for some time and soon stopped bearing any. Why so? Because the seeds had an incompatible soil.

Justice Beaman gave the judgment (to which I do not agree) that if the seed is of a Parsi father, the offspring can be regarded as Parsis. But at best they can be called: *aradhians* — half Parsis! The soil (mother) has to be a Zoroastrian to bear a true Zoroastrian child. You can't expect a child born not of such a wedlock to be brought up in the right Zoroastrian culture inculcated with proper Zoroastrian religious philosophy, even if the marriage is contracted under the Special Marriage Act mentioned by you in reply to the letter. After all, the *jirum* (please refer to the writings of Ustad Saheb Behramsha Shroff) is not of a Zoroastrian. Hence the outlook of the child is bound to be different. Children of a Parsi woman married to a non-

Parsi have no locus standi as they are born from a non-Parsi seed (if you accept the abovesaid judgment)!

If the anjumans of Delhi and Jamshedpur have admitted such progeny to their fire-temples, suffice it to say that they have erred. Conscience, like a well-bred gentleman, would stop talking to those who wouldn't listen to it. So, less said in the matter, the better!

RUSTOM D. PATEL
Hong Kong

"The light is in the east"

Mr Farokh D. Deboo has made many predictions ("The light is in the east," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, December 1997).

However, he cannot claim any originality in predicting a third world war in this century, which was predicted centuries earlier by the French prophet Nostradamus (1503-1566). Nostradamus had predicted a devastating third world war beginning July 1999 and in view of the threat given by Russia to USA of a third world war in case Iraq is bombed, this event is most likely.

This great French prophet had also predicted the death of King Henry II of France in a friendly duel, the capture of Louis VI of France while trying to flee the country, the execution of King Charles I of England, the abdication of King Edward VIII of England, the rise and fall of Napoleon, the rise and fall of Hitler (Second World War), and the nuclear holocaust in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Many of Nostradamus' prophecies were made gazing at a crystal bowl of water, but some of his prophecies are attributed to flashes of intuition. However, to prevent being convicted of witchcraft and burnt at the stake by the Inquisition, he couched his prophecies in a bewildering mixture of old French, Latin and other languages.

Notwithstanding his other predictions, Mr Deboo's prediction that Parsis will be kicked out of India seems far-fetched. India is a multi-racial, multi-religious and a multi-linguistic country and such predictions should be considered as being in the realms of fantasy.

D P. D. SUNAVALA

"Promising politician"

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Russi Mody's election campaign ("Promising politician," Events and Personalities, *Parsiana*, December 1997). Jamshedpur is in Bihar and not West Bengal. The town is a parliamentary constituency by itself while the neighboring Singhbhum constituency, also in Bihar, is a reserved seat for a Scheduled Tribe candidate and Russi Mody could not possibly have contested from there. A BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) candidate won in Jamshedpur while Singhbhum went to a Congress nominee.

DARA KADVA

Editor/Publisher, *Parsidom*

Parsiana regrets the error — Editor

"Praise the Lord"

Devout Zoroastrians not having hitherto reacted to Mr Homi J. Kaikobad's outrage ("Praise the Lord," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, October 1997) over *Parsiana's* lack of respect towards our Zarathushtra, some belated stray thoughts will perhaps not come amiss.

We fully share Mr Kaikobad's sentiment that "our Prophet is second to none;" we would go further in affirming that he indeed still remains unique among founders of religions, and that

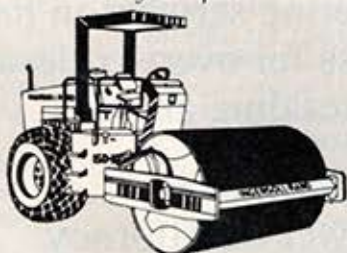
the label solely of "Prophet" does not at all do justice to his true stature. If by Prophet we mean "forth-teller" as contrasted with "fore-teller," then we do have a case for genuine expansion on his qualifications. In his *Gathas* — those marvelously inspiring productions! — we note his use of *fravakhshya*: proclaim, declare forth, even pronounce. It provides a clue to his calling as divinely-appointed messenger, *duta*, bearing the revelation.

Zarathushtra refers to himself as a *zaoter*, priestly invoker (though his are no empty effusions but deeply-felt invocations); *vidva*, an initiate, the knowing one; *ahum.bish*, world-healer, healer of existence; *manthran*, reciter/chanter of inspired utterances (not soothsayer, nor even spell-binder!), for which, as *ereshi*, an exact Gathic counterpart of the Vedic *rishi*, he was richly qualified to be. Zarathushtra boldly identified himself with the *drighu*, the underprivileged, those everywhere oppressed. He declares himself a true *dvaesha*, or enemy, to the lie, to the false gods and to their dupes, all of whom he outrightly rejected. Anghra Mainyu/Ahriman barely gets a mention, despite which impious preachers wilfully confer near-

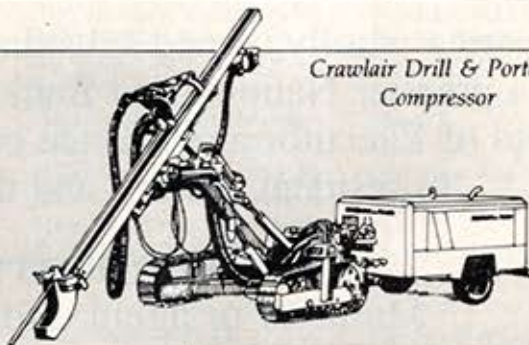
equal parity of the Evil One with Ahura Mazda Himself! Pious Parsis will always respectfully prefix Zarathushtra's name with *paigambar* — one who forthrightly taught us the magnificence, omnipotence and untarnished goodness of his sole deity Ahura Mazda whom we venerate.

What is also worrying is the recent tendency among some scholars and interpreters alike to dismiss him as philosopher ("mere (!) philosopher" springs to mind). That absurdly maligned word originally signified lover of wisdom, far removing it from kitchen-sink or bar-stool cant at one extreme and verbose sophistry at the other. Zarathushtra's compositions, apart from being skillfully wrought ("mere poetry!"), consistently display the workings of a most acute and highly original mind — one infused with Armaiti and Vohu Mana in quest of truth, Asha. If the appellation of philosopher were to be applied to anyone, then Zarathushtra is observably its most deserving candidate. It surely cannot have escaped the notice of his mindless detractors that it was his very aspect of profound thinker which held the philosophers of antiquity in awe of the great Iranian sage.

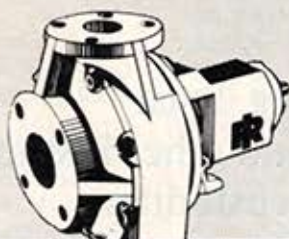
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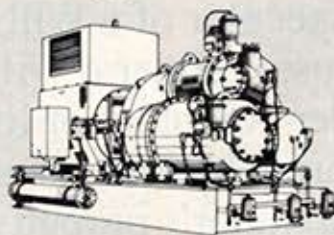
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Some early charlatans even endeavored to pass off their hocus-pocus under his name.

Zarathushtra recognized only Ahura Mazda, conveniently but inadequately translated as Lord Wisdom, and in *mazdaoscha ahuraongho* we see also Asha and Vohu Mana as lordly aspects of Mazda. He never refers to himself as *ahura*, Lord, nor claims divine status, save in as much as *ratu* or earthly spiritual guide — so why should we pointlessly strive to gild this especially beautiful lily? *Asho* is just fine, for who indeed could have better claim to be the best of *ashavan-s* — past, present and to be born?

"Lord" for us unfortunately has association with those gouty specimens in the Upper House here — blimps with bluster aplenty and a *kaasi-koosi* (labored) mode of speech. It would not be out of place to recall for your readers that the word "lord" has its origins in "keeper of the loaves." Surely we would not like to see our Zarathushtra referred to as *powwalla*, would we?

FARROKH VAJIFDAR
London, UK

Place for third child?

How many poor, aged and young couples are homeless because they have no place or house to stay in? I have repeatedly pointed this out to the Parsi Punchayet. Had I been trustee, I would have given top priority to this problem. When they had approached me to stand for trustee, I had told them this would be my top priority. I did not hear from them again.

How can the meager population of the Parsis grow if there is no economic accommodation for them? They cannot pay the fantastic prices the landlords demand for flats either on leave and

license basis, hire purchase or outright sale. The poor families just do not have that kind of money or funds.

Hapless families are driven from pillar to post, from sanatorium to sanatorium every few months. Or they stay in most congested conditions. It is truly pathetic. If they go to the Parsi Punchayet offices, they are made to wait forever without any result.

How can people reproduce under such conditions? How can the population of Parsis increase at this rate?

It is no use declaring that every third child will be paid for by the Punchayet. But where will that third child be accommodated when the couples concerned do not have room even for the two of them? Such conditions of living lead to constant quarrels within the family and break-up of homes. Besides, it is no use spending funds on supporting the third or fourth child of well-off families.

For the salvation of the community's future, we should concentrate on economic housing instead of building and selling expensive flats to the well-off at exorbitant prices. I have persistently reminded the trustees of the Parsi Punchayet to give their undivided attention to this most vital need of the community if it is expected that our Parsis should grow in number. Even without appreciable numbers though, we have made an outstanding contribution for the welfare and development of our great country.

HOMI J. H. TALEYARKHAN

Twilight zone

All of us wish ourselves a good life. We pray even more for a good death where the last years can be spent with dignity and self-respect. Sadly the last is a dream for many. Some are cast off by

their family when they have outlived their usefulness. Others, victims of cruel circumstances, face the prospect of old age on the streets with no roof over their heads.

One hundred and fifty years ago, a great visionary and humanist Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy visualized the plight of this helpless sector and established the J. J. home for the destitute aged.

Located in an unpretentious three-storied building on the junction of Nagpada, this institution accommodates 100 male and female residents who are selected without consideration of caste or creed, the basic qualification being that they are over 60 years and have no one to care for them. They must however be physically and mentally fit, and be able to look after themselves and manage simple chores such as cleaning their rooms and washing their clothes. Although founded by a Parsi philanthropist and although the facilities are available to Parsis, there are only two residents who are Parsis out of a total of almost 100. Once admitted, they are looked after till they are no more unless they choose to leave earlier. Food, shelter, clothes, toiletries, linen, everything is provided free of charge.

A visiting doctor checks them regularly for their physical complaints, and a psychiatrist helps them cope with the trauma of old age, abandonment and betrayal that has often been the reason for their entry in the home. There is a physiotherapy room with a physiotherapist attached to help them in their recovery after an illness or to prevent the onset of old age diseases like arthritis. A therapeutic center keeps them

J. J. Dharamshala (left) and residents celebrating a festival



occupied physically and mentally with mechanical jobs, besides helping them to restore their self-respect and dignity.

Amid the bickering and quarreling that is inevitable when living together, there is a strong camaraderie, and it is a heartwarming sight to see occupants of a room who have been quarreling with each other caring for the other person in times of illness.

Festivals are often celebrated with the residents putting up skits, themselves revealing the myriad talents that lie within. One of the residents insists on singing the same old popular film song on every occasion. There are sometimes jibes at the management for some perceived shortfalls or against a resident who may have marked personality characteristics. But all is accepted in good humor.

Now and then one of them passes into "the world beyond." The whole community grieves and attends the last rites as one family. A pall of gloom settles on the home for days before life picks up again and goes on.

The building is in urgent need of repairs and the cost of maintaining each resident goes up sharply every year. Fortunately the home has established itself as one worthy of support. Donations trickle in, often from unknown sources. One person has been sending a small donation for the last several years. It was only recently that he personally revealed the reason. An acquaintance of his suddenly abandoned by his family had found shelter here, years ago. He had decided at that time that he would help the institute to whatever extent he could. Many people pay for a good meal for the residents rather than spend that amount on religious ceremonies. These can however only touch the fringe of the problem and much larger sums are needed. The community at large owes it to itself to come forward and recognize this unique institution for its good work.

KHORSHEJ JAVERI

Molding minds

Mr Darasshah Edibam was an idealist. Particularly he was an admirer of Mahatma Gandhi. With his brilliant mind, he would have risen to the highest ranks of the ladder in government service, but he refused to serve a foreign government and chose to live out his life working in a small private school. Post-independence India brought disillusion-

ment. He saw with sadness and anger a wonderful country laid waste by the avariciousness of our politicians. A great educationist himself he saw, with regret, the wrong policies followed in this field by successive education ministries.

Mr E. Sauna, an old acquaintance from Panchgani wrote about Mr Edibam



Edibam: lasting impressions

in the *Maharashtra Herald* of July 13, 1997, "According to him, the need of the hour is not to churn out first class firsts from our schools, colleges and universities, but to have more simple men and women, good human beings and disciplined citizens of the world." Such was this great man who shunned publicity, yet left his mark on thousands of minds.

It was on a clear cool morning — the first of February 1919 — that Mr Edibam, a sprightly young man in his 20s walked into the portals of Parsi High School, Panchgani (now Billimoria High School) looking for a job as teacher. He was given the job, but being uncertain of his own plans and of the School's ideas, he refused to commit himself to a prolonged appointment, and agreed to work for one year.

However, fate had decreed otherwise, and long years of dedicated service followed. He grew to love the gentle and unspoiled beauty of the little hill station. Also he was fortunate to have the very congenial company of his colleagues. Special mention should be made of Mr Jehangir R. Dalal who had joined the School a few years before him, and in whom he found a friend for life. Others were Mr Mathew, Mr Parandekar, Mr Hydari and Mr Siganporia. Great teachers, all of them, completely absorbed in the lives of their

young charges, themselves content with their simple and frugal lives.

Likewise, Mr Edibam, young and enthusiastic, threw himself with zest into the activities of the boys, both inside the classroom and out of it. Not only did Mr Edibam see to their mental growth, but physically also, he looked after them in sickness and in health.

Fifty-three years later, when he left, he held thousands of students in the thrall of his ideas, ideals and principles. Today, after his demise at the blessed age of 103, he is remembered with feelings of love, respect and gratitude by those who studied under him. Though he taught all the subjects with equal efficiency, he is remembered more for the principles of life and living which he inculcated in the growing minds in his care. In later years, when asked the secret of the happy years at Panchgani, he would answer simply, "I loved my work."

Remarkable also, was the relationship he had with his employers. Staunch in his loyalty to them, faithfully serving them, there grew a strong bond between him and the Billimoria family. After the founder of the school, Mr Nowroji Billimoria passed away, his sons Mr Burjorji and Mr Rustomji took over. They revered him like a father; he loved them as his own sons.

He had his share of personal tragedy. His wife Mehra was stricken with the dread disease of cancer when she was not yet 50. His patient and courageous spirit saw him through her long and lingering illness. His work and his interest in the world around him, his devotion to his children and their love for him carried him through the long and lonely years as a widower.

It would be appropriate to end with a couple of verses from a poem dedicated to him by his dear friend, Mr J. R. Dalal:

Not much of worldly goods you
call your own,
Your wants are few, how very few
we know,
And yet you scatter gifts all unbeknown,
To your own self, and those who
profit so...
To mold the pliant mind of eager youth,
Fair learning's secrets to bare unto
his view,
Instil within his heart, the love of truth,
All this and more, is given but to few...

B. N. BILLIMORIA, R. N. BILLIMORIA,

K. T. SATARAWALLA

Father of Ladies' Club

My father-in-law, the late Mr Phiroze Darasha Mehta created a record being the president of The Ladies' Club for 19 solid years. His honesty and whole-hearted dedication for the betterment of the Club earned him name and fame amongst all the leading clubs of Pune.

When he took over as president of the Club, it had hardly any facilities to boast of. Today, with his painstaking efforts and time the Club has the most modern badminton court in Pune, spacious card rooms, billiard room, modern tennis courts, to name a few.

As president he never charged the Club a single pie as traveling expenses during all these years. He cared for the betterment and upbringing of the Club and lived and died for the Club. He refused to be admitted to the hospital for treatment of jaundice and overall weakness as the badminton court complex had to be completed before March 1998 and the Club required his services continuously. This neglect of his health cost him his life.

Excerpts from the letter of condolence sent by president Bomi Talavia on behalf of the committee members to my mother-in-law will prove my point: "We would like you to know that at the managing committee meeting of our Club, held on Tuesday, February 3, 1998, we passed a resolution to condole the sad and sudden demise of our beloved president, dear Phiroze Uncle. We also put on record our great appreciation for all the excellent work done by him for the Club. All of us paid glowing tributes to him for his 19 years of dedication to the development of the Club. He took a personal interest in every aspect and unstintingly spent his time, money and energy for the betterment of the Club.

"Phiroze Uncle will be remembered for his laudable services for the promotion of sports and for his encouragement to sports persons. It was during his long stint as president that the colorful shamiana was put up, the garden laid out and the roads asphalted and due to his relentless efforts the Club succeeded in building the most modern badminton court.

"Dear Phiroze Uncle will always be remembered for his integrity, honesty and dignity which left an indelible impression on all who were closely asso-

ciated with him.

"His passing away is going to leave a vacuum in all the spheres of life with which he was connected."

ROHINTON K. BUHARIWALLA
Pune

"The Top Ten"

For the current century I nominate Mr Ardeshtir Cowasjee, Pakistan's best-read columnist, for the field of journalism.

If ever a true Zarathushti has surfaced in our country in my lifetime who I regard as a "smiter of evil," it is Ardeshtir Cowasjee. He is known for his unequivocal stand on issues of national importance like servile-sycophancy, corporal-chicanery, lewd-land-grabbing and rife, rampant, rank coarse-corruption tilling the country's coffers to rock-bottom.

As mentioned in *The Friday Times*, Lahore, "The one and only Ardeshtir Cowasjee who uses a scalpel instead of a pen, strikes the fear of God in the hearts of admirals and generals, PMs and their spouses — in short all the corrupt in this Land of the Pure. To the Parsi goes our award for writing fearlessly to protect a society which has disowned the minorities. Also to Cowasjee goes our award for livening up PTV's turgid prose with such delightful insertions as *sala* and *charia*. Long may he rail against the looters of this land."

Dawn, April 17, 1998 carried a letter by Air Marshal Asghar Khan of Islamabad: "Ardeshtir Cowasjee's column (April 12) in which he has described his experience of March 22 and that of his 'General Staff Officer-1' a few days later, should be of concern to those who value one of the few voices of conscience in the present state of our chaotic society..."

"Whatever the truth about the motives behind the two incidents, Mian Nawaz Sharif would do well to see that no harm comes to Ardeshtir Cowasjee. In the lawless society in which we live, the Prime Minister would be well advised to ensure that Cowasjee is protected as well as he is himself. Should any harm come to Cowasjee, it could have serious consequences for the government and reduce its dwindling credibility further to a dangerously low level."

NOSHIR B. MANA
Karachi, Pakistan

Edited by Parinaz M. Gandhi

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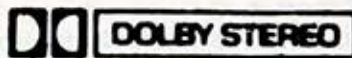
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Events and Personalities

Blood, sweat and toil

"Donate blood — it is meant for circulation," reminds a message on the inside back cover of the *Blood Donors' Directory 1998*. Compiled and published by Kersi Limathwalla, this *Directory* is a revised version of the earlier



Kersi and Zarin Limathwalla: "gift to the community"

two efforts initiated by the CER Youth Wing in the '80s. As Limathwalla explains in his preface, "The *Directory* published in 1988 was outdated as telephone numbers and addresses changed, and several donors registered in the old *Directory* could not donate on account of ailment or advancing age. This necessitated the need to update and publish a revised directory."

What complicated matters was "the false notions and lack of education about AIDS (which) made donors sceptical and the hitherto simple task of voluntary blood donation has become an ordeal," realized Limathwalla. Simultaneously, the demand for fresh blood is increasing due to "the development and advancement in medicine and science (which has) made rare and complicated surgeries a matter of everyday affair."

"In times of emergency,

accidents and during major surgery, it (is) extremely difficult to get the required quantity of blood from blood banks" and locating blood donors, pointed out noted physician Dr Farokh Udawadia in his foreword to the *Directory* appreciating that "the *Directory* consists of names of voluntary donors belonging to various blood groups, and also provides other information like the age, address and telephone numbers listed area-wise so as to facilitate easy reference and convenient access."

The donors are listed under different blood groups with the maximum number of pages, 51, being devoted to the entries under the O positive blood group, followed by 50 pages for the B positive group. The least number of entries — three pages — are found for AB negative; A negative has six pages earmarked for this blood group; O negative has marginally more entries, totalling eight pages. The contact numbers for blood banks, hospitals, eye banks, oxygen availability, AIDS detection centers, ambulance services, nurses bureaux and day-and-night chemists should also interest readers.

"A word of advice" from noted pathologist Dr P. K. Antia indicates when and when not to donate blood, reminding the readers that "Properly cross-matched blood is better than blood of your nearest kith or kin or of your coreligionist. There is always some risk involved for the recipient...and practically none at all for the donor. Blood transfusions have to be used to the minimum...and not merely as tonic."

Without the backing of any organization, the task of updating the *Directory* proved "monumental" for Li-

mathwalla. While he considers this effort his "gift to the community," as mentioned in a press release by Kersi Gazdar, he acknowledges the commitment from his wife Zarin, Khushcheher Mistry and Sudhir Gurav who were equally involved in the project.

Local Parsi organizations can apply for a free copy of the *Directory* by sending a simple request letter to Limathwalla, B-18 Aidun Building, 1st Dhobi Talao Lane, Bombay 400002. They would thereafter be required to make the *Directory* available to users in the area. Individuals who wish to avail of a free copy of the *Directory* have to forward 10 registration forms of prospective blood donors whose names do not feature in the *Directory*. This gesture would pave the way for a more comprehensive edition next time.

Inspired by Zarathushtra

Of Ahura Mazda, Thy Divine Fire,
Grown mighty through Asha, do we
earnestly desire!

Swiftest of the swift, supremely
powerful,
Giving clear help, at all times, to
the faithful.
But Thy fire shall see through and
annihilate,
With a turn of the hand, the evil
and their hate.

This rendition of Yasna 34.4 is part of Dr Jimmy Sidhva's versified edition of *The Gathas of Zarathushtra*. A limited edition of 1,000 not for sale copies were published by the author in 1998. He acknowledges that the "labor of love" had become an obsession by the time he completed it on the 100th anniversary of his mother's birth. The work has been dedicated to his parents, Goolbai and Dr Nadershaw Sidhva, the good-natured couple from whom Sidhva



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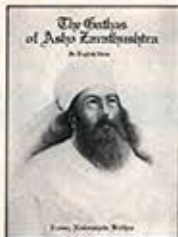
has inherited his infectious sense of humor and his histrionic flair, among other things.

"Zarathushtra himself wanted to instruct in poetry, not prose," says the noted radiologist reminding us that the *Gathas* are essentially songs. Unacquainted with Avestan, Sidhva says he turned to the translations and found most of them in prose. Himself undergoing a period of depression, Sidhva found an echo in Zarathushtra's own helplessness as he turns to Ahura Mazda for help against the *kavis* and *karpan*, false gods and their doctrines. "Every time you read them a veil lifts. Once I started, it became a craving," declares Sidhva who found the first *Gatha* "immensely pithy and profound."

As one who usually prays the *Gathas* on the Gatha days and goes to the agiary whenever he feels like it, Sidhva buckled down to study the translations by Kanga, Insler, Taraporewala, Sethna, Irani, Humbach and Chatterjea, often finding one translation conflicting with another. When he decided to put them together in rhyme, a mental block descended on him, he recalls. Having persevered, he found that "the stanzas flowed."

For nearly 18 months Sidhva says he struggled to put Zarathushtra's thoughts into contemporary English verse. He credits his wife Roshan with the maximum help during that extended phase. Also his radiologist son Ervad Sorab, (Jimmy is not a navar) who shouldered the routine work to give his father the requisite time.

Making "no claim to scholarship,"



Sidhva: voicing Zarathushtra's philosophy Photo: Arnavaz S. Mama

Sidhva refers to his production as "totally a lay Zoroastrian's book, meant for lay Zoroastrians." In his preface he notes, "This work is essentially a compilation of verses based on the verbatim...translations of the *Gathas* by Zarathushtrian and non-Zarathushtrian scholars... As each of the translations of these scholarly giants differs from the others, the present volume is a composite of them, and represents my own sincere interpretation of Zarathushtra's teachings."

In his prologue Sidhva attempts a background to the *Gathas*, the circumstances in which Zarathushtra describes himself and the revelation of Ahura Mazda that is the backbone of Zoroastrian philosophy, ethics and mode of life. As Sidhva writes, "Some of the most touching portions of the *Gathas* are the ones where Zarathushtra acknowledges his despair and frustration at not being able to spread Ahura Mazda's doctrine among the people around him. Engulfed by doubts, in all humility he prays like any other mortal to Ahura Mazda to give him the strength and show him the way to be a successful proclaimer of the sacred word..."



"The amazing fact that emerges is that his teachings are as valid and meaningful today as when they were first pronounced over 4,000 years ago. I am morally convinced that they will remain so for centuries to come till the purpose of Creation has been fulfilled."

The foreword, by senior counsel of the Supreme Court Khurshed Cooper, depicts Sidhva's "many-faceted personality" — a radiologist with diagnostic abilities; actor, director, author of Gujarati comedies "for which he composes the songs and purloins the music, in which he is not only the star of the show, but the show itself... The industry and the physical energy displayed in these productions have taken a toll of his health, but, to him, it was all done in a good cause, for the poor and the sick, for his community and for charity — which the Zoroastrian religion rates as the highest virtue..."

"This volume is not meant to comment on or analyze the sublime thoughts expressed in the psalms. The entire endeavor has been to give in verse, the benefit of the holy *Gathas* to others than the handful who can understand the Avestan language. The author has achieved this objective in language which is as elegant as it is reverent, in verse which captures the intellect and captivates the emotions... the labor of love of a man whom I consider to be the very quintessence of a true Zoroastrian."

Arnavaz S. Mama

The diamond march

The concert to celebrate 60 years of the Hohner Harmonica Club was a joyous occasion not only for its founder director Phiroze M. Damri, the contestants and participants who were to play under the baton of their 83-year-old instructor, but to three generations of ex-students who have learnt the fine art of harmonica playing from Damri.

This talented artist had first broadcast over the All India Radio (AIR) in June 1938, just six months after he had taken up the harmonica as a profession. Over the years he has given innumerable performances with his band in

Dinaz and Rohinton Chinoy (front seated) with the recipients of the various prizes awarded to sports personalities on the occasion of Union Press' 141st anniversary at Jeejeebhoy Dadabhoy Agiary compound on April 5, 1998



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Damri (right) receiving plaque from his oldest pupil Nahni Sukhadwala. The conductor in the midst of his all-ladies' orchestra



India and was invited to play in Russia, the US, Japan and the Caribbean. Among his most memorable performances was the invitation to play at the First World Harmonica Festival in 1953 in Duisberg, West Germany. Dressed in a Parsi dagli, he played an Indian tune, the music score for which was written by the late Cecil Mendonza, the then music director of AIR. "In appreciation of his efforts to popularize the harmonica in India, Matth Hohner (the renowned German harmonica manufacturer) presented him with a bronze medal, a piano accordion and a few harmonicas," noted a write-up in *Bombay First*, November 26, 1997.

Damri's ties with Hohner had begun in 1938 when he was appointed the official Indian representative of the company on a monthly salary of Rs 80, requiring him to teach pupils free of charge. The harmonica then was a new instrument for Damri who was proficient at the violin and the mandolin thanks to the tutelage he had received from Mehli Kasinath. (Along with jurist Nani Palkhivala he used to play in Kasinath's band, earning Rs 2 per evening plus the dinner.) By studying the book, *How to play the harmonica the easy way*, very soon Damri was able to master this instrument too. With the outbreak of World War II, his connections with Germany were severed and so was his salary. To support himself financially he started charging a nominal fee from his pupils and gradually

Dastur (left) Devi Prasad Verma, minister of communications, and President Narayanan at Indepex 97



gained popularity.

Among the institutions where he taught was his alma mater, St Xavier's High School, Queen Mary, Princess School, St Mary's, St Stanislaus and the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association). Keen to see more children learn the harmonica, especially since he considers this a fairly easy instrument, requiring minimal learning and practice, Damri conveyed his disappointment to *Bombay First*: "It's a pity that today's children have no time for hobbies, fun or games. Everything is studies and tuitions and exams."

In possession of a respectable collection of harmonicas and harmonica records, the smallest harmonica that Damri owns is reportedly just an inch and a half in size, called the Baby harmonica. The versatile artist is also able to tune or repair the instruments if the need arises.

Stamping success

Among the special stamps released at the Indepex 97 World Philatelic Exhibition by the President of India K. R. Narayanan was one on India's eminent



philatelist, the late Jal Cooper. The Rs 10 stamp shows a portrait of Cooper, the first Indian philatelist to be so honored, along with the early Indian cancellations and India Used Abroad postal markings which he made popular in India and abroad, notes a press release from Vispi Dastur, president of the Philatelic Congress of India.

The first Indian to write several internationally acclaimed handbooks on Indian philately, Cooper was the founder secretary of the Empire of India Philatelic Society (EIPS) and a member of the Government of India's Philatelic Advisory Committee. A Jal Cooper Award in the form of a four-and-a-half-foot sandalwood Krishna and 200 packets of stamps were distributed at the Exhibition by EIPS during this year of his 25th death anniversary, mentions the write-up.

Also produced for Indepex 97 was a special philatelic passport designed by Dastur and sponsored by the House of Godrej as part of their centenary celebrations. Besides giving details of the Exhibition and the Department of Posts, the passport carried information on different countries, specifying the capital city, currency, language, date of issue of first stamp, etc. Dastur had earlier



been appointed as the national commissioner for India for the Israel 98 World Stamp Exhibition at Tel Aviv

scheduled from May 13-21, 1998.

On April 18, 1998, Dastur was installed as community representative (president) of the Bombay center of The Experiment in International Living which is affiliated to the UNESCO

(United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), notes a communique from the organization.

The pilgrim painter

"His exhibitions every three or four years are like a royal event...Wine flows on opening evenings and dainty canapes..." recalled an article in *The Afternoon on Sunday*, March 29, 1998 referring to Jehangir Sabavala's paintings on periodic display. The latest collection of Sabavala's canvases were on view from March 26 to 31, 1998 at Bombay's Jehangir Art Gallery.

While Sabavala himself has been likened to a parfait knight with the features of a Parsi aristocrat and the manners of an English courtier, his paintings are reflective of a deep contemplation, characterized by subtle hues and inherently sublime. Commenting on the depth and unusual vision of Sabavala's present work, Dom Moraes wrote in *Sunday Mid-Day*, April 19, 1998, "I know that he works very hard, harder than most other painters of my acquaintance, that he is a very fine craftsman and a perfectionist...(who) has become an icon, an elder statesman of Indian art."

Also on sale at the exhibition presented by Eminence Designs and Apparao Galleries was *Pilgrim, Exile, Sorcerer: The Painterly Evolution of Jehangir Sabavala*, a critical biography by Ranjit Hoskote. "To understand Sabavala the man, it is

Sabavala with his painting, Pilgrimage II, 1996



A view of Taraporevala Aquarium on Marine Drive

necessary to accept that he is contradictory. The central contradiction is that he is a loner, though he relishes company. He is the poet of solitude and of seashore, estuary and mountain...The world is starving for lack of a certain kind of 'spiritual' nourishment, and this Sabavala's paintings provide..." writes Richard Lannoy in the preface to the book. Commenting on the book, Jerry Pinto states in *The Sunday Times of India*, March 29, 1998, "So we now see other Sabavalas, hitherto hidden behind the art that refuses to demand attention but rewards it; behind the image of the gentleman whose old-world charm and courtesy can restore your faith in civilization..."

Seventy-five-year-old Sabavala who is known to have spent the last 50 years of his life at the easel has held 28 one-man exhibitions in India and abroad and participated in over 100 national and international exhibitions following his training at the



Sir J. J. School of Art, Bombay, Heatherly School of Art, London, Academie Julien and Academie Andre Lhote, Paris, Academie de la Grande Chaumiere, Paris.

In the fourth publication on Sabavala, author Hoskote writes, "The identity of light as splendor with its intensity assuming a spiritual dimension was to become Sabavala's most enduring theme. By translating the

scarred, given terrain into a landscape suffused with the glow of the numinous, Sabavala has geared his art to an ascension from the material towards the ideal."

Underwater underway

The proposed demolition of the nearly 50-year-old Taraporevala Aquarium on Bombay's Marine Drive made front page news in *The Times of India* of March 28, 1998. The 4,394 sq m plot of land on prime property will be used to house thereon a "fifth generation Underwater World."

The fancy new Underwater World which is expected to come up by the year 2000 "will consist of an acrylic submerged walkthrough tunnel of 85 m having a viewing angle of between 270 and 360 degrees. A moving walkway to be installed at the base will allow for a gentle glide movement for visitors while some may from time to time step off the walkway to stop and view areas of specific interest. The tunnel will have a capacity of 300 visitors at a time," according to the news report which pegged the entry fee at Rs 140 per head. A multimedia presentation area, library, theater, laboratory and offices will find a place in the new seven-storeyed structure.

The finance for this joint venture by Alliance Technology and Development of Singapore, the State Industrial and Investment Corporation of Maharashtra and the Fisheries Development Corporation of the state government is expected to come from the Singapore firm. The Maharashtra government which owns the premises will reportedly lease the land to the developers.

Built from a donation of Rs 2,00,000

continued on page 24

Irani's Heritage

For London hotelier Bailey Irani, the welfare of the global Zoroastrian community has been of prime concern

Shernaaz Engineer

With so many modern preoccupations, religion is no longer at the center of most people's lives. But Bailey Irani, founding member and first president of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO), senior trustee of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, and London hotelier, has this tale to tell:

It was in January 1948 that he was coming to Bombay from Poona to set up his own business. With him was the machinery he needed to set up his own ice-making factory at Hill Road in Bandra. En route, both he and the truck carrying the machinery were stopped by a rioting mob.

"*Maar do, maar do,*" they were yelling, urging one another to attack the hapless young man. "At first I didn't know what the fuss was all about," Irani recalls, "but quickly I learnt that Mahatma Gandhi had been assassinated that day. The crowds were out to avenge his murder, and God knows who they thought I was! So I pulled up my shirt and showed them my *sudreh-kusti*. I told them I was a Parsi, and managed to escape. My *sudreh-kusti* really saved my life. I would probably have been lynched otherwise," he concludes ruefully.

Since that day, Irani has retained an unflinching faith in his religion; and the zeal to preserve and propagate it. In him coexist the twin attributes of sharp business acumen and deep religious fervor. Both are fundamental facets of his warm, vibrant personality.

As a businessman, he started the Heritage group of hotels four decades ago. Today, at 74, he is showing no signs of cutting back on a hectic work schedule that keeps him on his toes.

But it is not all work and no play. Irani is a keen traveler, and believes in living life to the full. He loves skiing

and won a bronze medal a few years ago. However, he didn't always acquit himself so honorably. He has had a series of mishaps while negotiating snow-clad slopes. "The first time I broke my wrist, followed by my left hand, two ribs, and as a grand finale I smashed my leg. At the age of 71 I had to give up skiing. My family threatened me that they would no longer look after my hotels as I sat bandaged in hospital," he grins.

Sweet are the uses of adversity. Since he could no longer ski, Irani had to find alternative ways of indulging his passion for the outdoors. So he took up mountain climbing. Last year, as part of a charity fund raising he climbed Ben Nevis, which at 4,408 feet is the highest peak in Britain. A certificate proudly displayed in his living room states that he was the oldest member of the team to successfully complete the feat.

"My family is happy," he explains, "because they think mountain climbing is safer than skiing. Little do they realize that it is very dangerous. When there is mist and rain up there, visibility is nil." It doesn't deter him. And he explains why. "When you are up in the mountains you feel very close to God. The prophets in the old days used to go up to the mountains to get messages from God. Every time I have been in the mountains, either in France, Switzerland, Austria, or even England, I have had a very spiritual feeling. All that white snow everywhere gives you a sense of complete purity. And the vastness terrifies you. You feel like a little speck. You are humbled, and you thank God for having looked after you."

Irani came to England for a holiday in 1951. He was so taken with the country that he was determined to come back the following year and settle down.



He did, bringing with him his wife Kitty and their four-year-old daughter Zerbano (now Gifford, well known author and political campaigner). It was in England that the Iranis' other three children were born: Genie, Rustom and Naswan, and all four were educated at some of the best schools and universities in the country.

Side by side with his flourishing professional career in hotels and finance, Irani took a keen interest in the affairs of the Zoroastrian community. At the first World Zoroastrian Congress held in Tehran in 1962, he proposed that a world body be formed for all Zoroastrians. "My idea was that we should not be wiped out as a race. The United Nations is concerned about survival of Equatorial Indians, but what about the Zoroastrians?" he asks.

It was this thought that led him to lobby for 18 long and hard years (during the course of which he met the Shah of Iran and Indira Gandhi), in order to set up the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) in 1980.

He was its founding member and president, but made a quiet exit when he realized that it was not turning out to be the sort of organization he had envisaged. "I was not interested in being part of a local 'tea and samosa' club," he explains.

What Irani had in mind when he set up the WZO was something quite different. He wanted a world body with representation at the United Nations and UNESCO (United Nations Educa-

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tional, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), in order to ensure that the Zoroastrians were never wiped out as a race. "Those days there was greater turmoil in the world," he says. "Idi Amin had just thrown all the Asians out of Uganda; and by getting representation at the UN, I wanted to make sure that the Zoroastrians would be safeguarded, not ethnically threatened or wiped out by a hostile regime in any part of the world."

Towards this end, Irani undertook several trips to the United Nations and UNESCO, bearing the cost in time and money to accomplish his goal. Unfortunately, he did not get much support from the Zoroastrian community around the world, and had to abandon his scheme despite his best efforts.

However, he was successful in seeing another of his initiatives through. When he was elected to the committee of the Parsee Association of Europe in 1961, he recommended that its name be changed from Parsee to Zoroastrian, in order to include the Iranians as well. Predictably, there was resistance. But Irani held his ground. "The Iranians were migrating to the West in the aftermath of the Shah's fall, and they felt very alienated because all the associa-



Irani (right) greeting the Shah of Iran. (Far left) The late Arbab Guiv

tions were called Parsi associations. I had to convince my colleagues that this was not in the community's best interest. At one of our meetings, we asked a young boy what his religion was. He said 'Parsi.' I told the others how we had written our Prophet's name out of the religion by calling ourselves Parsis instead of Zoroastrians. We changed the name to the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, and we started getting much money from Iranian Zoroastrian phi-

lanthropists since they now felt part of the group," he explains.

For over 35 years, Irani has worked with the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe in different capacities, first as committee member, later as president and, for the last six years, as senior trustee. He has helped steer the organization through some testing times when by his calm, reconciliatory ways, he minimized the confrontation and sadness that would otherwise have befallen its members.

With no taste for petty politicking, he is one of the Zoroastrian community's most temperate stalwarts in London, and his contribution has been lauded by several people. Modest and unassuming, he makes little of it by reciting from a poem he wrote some years ago: "If I carry the torch a little while/And pass it to others before I die/Then surely you can rest a while/That the faith and fire will never die."

Poetry is another passion that adds zest to his rich life. "You know, when I was a young man, I used to stroll down the Apollo Bunder in Bombay writing poetry," he smiles.

Clearly, Irani is a man for all seasons. And for the right reasons.

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Glitter on the green

Parsis thronged the Cusrow Baug lawn to cheer at the WZO and BPP felicitation of Nani Palkhivala and Dr Jamshed Irani

Arnavaz S. Mama

The community showered encomiums on two of its outstanding sons — jurist Nani Palkhivala and metallurgist Dr Jamshed Irani. Inundated under waves of roses, lilies, jasmine, and ceremonial shawls, Irani assured his well-wishers that not only he and his wife but his children and grandchildren (when they come) would bask in their warmth. Palkhivala's garlands livened the many doorways of his Bombay residence, we learnt. The vendors of flowers and shawls must have had their own reason to celebrate!

The euphoria had been triggered by national recognition of Palkhivala's lifetime achievements: the conferment of the Padma Vibhushan by the President of India and the prized degree of Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa) by the Bombay University chancellor and governor of Maharashtra. As for Irani, the honorary knighthood (KBE) bestowed on him by the British Queen made him the first Parsi to be so honored in independent India, as noted the evening's mistress of ceremonies Homai Modi.

The function on the Cusrow Baug lawn on March 17, 1998 had been jointly sponsored by the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) and the Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP) and while the scroll of honor was a common one, as was the silver salver, Dadi Engineer as WZO president and Jamshed Guzder as BPP chairman had their own remarks to make along with separate presentation of garlands and shawls. Joining them in felicitating the duo were 17 other organizations including the Panchayat and atash behrams of Surat, the Ahmedabad Parsi Panchayet and the Borivli and Madras Parsi Zarathushti associations.

The scroll of honor presented to Palkhivala spoke of his outstanding advocacy of human rights in cases which

have become a part of India's legal history, his authoritative commentary on the law of income tax in India, his annual analysis of the Union Budget within a day or two of its presentation,

bassador to the US and the honors he received there including the LLD degrees from the Universities of Princeton and Lawrence for his "unsurpassed" championship of fundamental rights and human freedom.

In his speech Engineer remarked on Palkhivala's "meteoric rise at the bar," called him "one of the greatest advocates this country has produced" and cited a postcard written by a peon of the Supreme Court lauding the jurist for exerting his "tremendous wisdom...to get justice for the common man."

Guzder reiterated Palkhivala's professional excellence in the legal field quoting Supreme Court

Justice H. C. Khanna: "If a court had to be made of the 10 topmost lawyers of the world, I have no doubt that Mr Palkhivala's name would be therein." He also underlined the man's human qualities, his modesty and humility. To which Ahmedabad's Kersey Shethna added Palkhivala's "ability to rejoice at the success of others."

It was Irani however who provided the personal touch in his tribute to his "esteemed senior colleague in the House of Tata — He was already a director when I joined the company," and referred to a time six or seven years ago when a legal bind at Tata Steel led him to gatecrash a Palkhivala dinner party.



Seated on the dais (from left) Dastur Firoze Kotwal, Minoo Shroff, Irani, Engineer, Guzder, Palkhivala and Dinshaw Tamboly

his involvement in the democratic experience as president of the Forum of Free Enterprise, chairman of the Leslie Sawhney Programme of Training for Democracy, the A. D. Shroff Memorial Trust and a host of other social and charitable organizations. The citation also referred to his term as Indian Am-

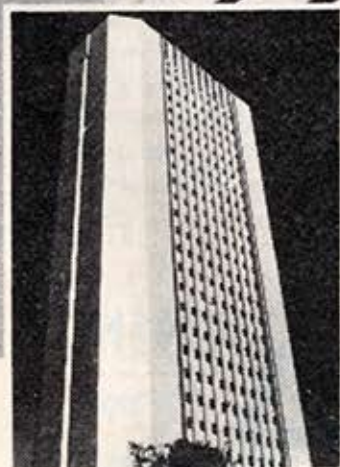


Above: Engineer (left) felicitating Palkhivala

Alongside: Irani (left) receiving silver salver from Guzder



Reaching for the Sky



Two landmarks in Bombay – the Commerce Centre of the World Trade Centre Complex and the new Reserve Bank Building.

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Palkhivala's wife Nergish "put in an extra chair." Immediately after dinner, after briefly chiding the industrialist ("you people don't know the first thing about law") Palkhivala "stayed up late into the night consulting books. By morning the problem was solved."

"Overwhelmed by the warmth and affection showered on me," Palkhivala said he had difficulty finding adequate words of thanks. "The government of India whom I had had the signal honor to criticize all these years thought fit to honor me! I hope it inspires young people with undying zeal in years to come." Describing a bar function in the UK to honor Lord Jowett, chief justice of England, Palkhivala recalled how Jowett's promise to make two speeches — the first short, the second long — had led to a pall of gloom over the gathering. He ended with Jowett's speeches. "First the short speech: 'I thank you.' And now the long speech: 'I thank you very much.'"

The scroll of honor presented to Irani recapped his early years as an outstanding student climaxed by a gold medal winning PhD thesis at Sheffield University which in 1996 bestowed its hon-

orary Doctor of Metallurgy degree on him.

Managing director of Tata Steel since 1992, Irani has been member and office holder of various professional bodies both Indian and international, has been

"I've always had the knack to be in the right place at the right time with the right people"

involved in working groups for iron and steel of the Planning Commission of India, been president of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and co-chairman of the Indo-British partnership. Engineer described Irani as "a technocrat of the highest order." Guzder saw him as a "likeable, gentle and humble person, always ready to help and guide people, (who had) endeared himself to tens of thousands of coworkers."

With gentle self-deprecation Irani attempted to neutralize the eulogies:

"I've always had the knack to be in the right place at the right time with the right people." Narrating how he became co-chair of the Indo-British partnership (which led to the knighthood) Irani recalled the 1993 visit of the then British Prime Minister John Major. "Major was a voluble and expansive speaker. (Indian prime minister) Narasimhan Rao's only contribution was in monosyllables and nodding of the head. (I was there in my) capacity as president of the CII. They asked me if I'd do the job. You can't say 'no' to two prime ministers! We (the co-chairmen) were the conductors. The orchestra consisted of thousands on both sides." Irani credited J. R. D. Tata with his success: "The House of Tata has put me here. (JRD) truly guided many lives and many destinies including mine. Through him my problems were solved..."

Irani had a word of advice for Parsi youths in Bombay: "Bombay Parsis don't look east. They look west and south to the UK, US and Australia. Parsi youths should look for opportunities. There are plenty in India. I went out for 10 years and came back, and have not regretted it at all."



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In her swift stride

A regular participant at inter-school, state and national athletic meets, Feroza Engineer was recently declared the junior national champion

Aspi P. Ustad

She stands tall facing the starter's gun. Others in her age-group look like the seven dwarfs. Big of frame and with well toned muscles, she is your best bet for the 2004 Olympics, if one is to go by the available statistics on this Girton High School student. Feroza Zal Engineer is barely 15 years old.

Full of zest and energy, she changed three chairs during the hour long interview, darted from room to room, paced the floor. "You can't keep her in one place for more than 10 minutes," her mother Farida tells us. It's not surprising that she leaves the rest of the competitors way behind on the track.

Feroza started athletics at six, when she was in kindergarten. "It was a 50 m run," she recalls her first school sports, "and I stood first in that race." Her smile broadens as she relives that proud moment.

Who got her started in athletics? Looking at her mother she exclaims, "My mom, of course," then continues in one breath, "she placed me under the watchful eyes of Mr Adille J. Sumariwalla (10 times the national sprint champion)." The very first day she was thrilled when "Adille sir asked me to warm-up with the (then) national sprint champion Zenia Ayrton." She praises her coach. "I have benefited by his experience. But of late Mr Homiyar Mistry (the unsung hero of athletics) takes our workouts" when Sumariwalla is absent.

When pressed hard, she admits that her mom and uncle encouraged her in sports. "Dad is always concentrating on my academic career, but, of course, he supports me in athletics, financially." Her mother takes her daily to the Priyadarshini Park for training, since the University Stadium does not allow practice on their grounds. She works out during the off season at the Priyadarshini Gym, and visits Dr Anant

Joshi in case of medical problems.

Referring to the role of family, she says, "What are we on our own? Nothing. Whatever I have achieved today is because of the encouragement I got from my parents, specially my mother Farida, who was a good thrower, a good jumper and a 100 m dash champion. My *mama* (maternal uncle) Cyrus Irani represented Bombay in swimming, he was a good breast stroke swimmer. My late grandfather Jehangirji Engineer used to play in triangular and pentangular cricket matches in his day."

Feroza spoke of the encouragement she gets from her school principal, Ms Navaz Sanjana. "She gives me time to practice. If I'm out participating in meets, and there are exams during that period, I'm allowed to appear (for my papers) on my return."

On being asked about her ambition in life, Feroza says, "Firstly it was my mother's ambition that I win a gold medal in a national event. I fulfilled that by getting a gold in the 100 m run for girls under 16 at the just concluded junior nationals held in Ernakulam, Cochin. I clocked 12.7 seconds." She goes on to tell us that this year too her best time has been 12.7 seconds, which she clocked at the University Stadium during the inter-school meet held in December 1997. About her own ambition in life she says, "I want to wear the colors of India. To represent India is my dream. India does not have too many good athletes, so I will work hard to get a medal for my country."

The path to success is not always easy; Feroza has experienced some painful moments in sports. In December 1995 she was selected to represent Maharashtra at the junior nationals' girls under 14 group in the pentathlon event. On reaching the venue in Julundhar, she discovered that there was no such event, nor did there exist

any category for girls under 14. She did not let this get her down, and later went on to attend seven state level meets and two nationals.

In inter-school athletics she has stood first in the 100 m right from 1989 to date. In 1996 a back injury made her drop the sprint event, but she went on to create a new meet record in the shot put and discus throw.

When asked if she has any idols she looks up to, her reply is remarkably mature: "Why should one keep an idol? If you have (only) one person" to idolize, you may probably "stick to the ideas of that single person. With so much information available, like books, videos, etc you can gain knowledge from many people and mobilize (your own resources)."

Her views on religion sounded straight from the heart. "I am proud to be a Zoroastrian. Our religion is deep as an ocean. One's urge to know more and more about it can never end. I always tell my Zoroastrian friends to wear the *sudreh* and *kusti*. (Without them) they have no right to call themselves Zoroastrians. I'm grateful to my granny Gool and my late grandpa Jehangirji who taught me the basic tenets of our religion. Being in a Parsi school is an advantage. My teacher Feroza Punthakey-Mistree teaches us all we ought to know about the Zoroastrian religion." She adds, "I visit the fire-temple whenever I find time from my busy schedule, but I make it a point to visit it every Sunday. I also pray twice a day." Looking back Feroza feels that her success is the result of her deep faith and lots of hard work.

Two years back she had wanted to take up tennis, but could not balance the two disciplines. She thanks the day she decided to drop tennis in favor of athletics since now she is the new junior national champion. She also



plays throwball and basketball in school.

What she does besides athletics came to us as a surprise. She has passed the 8th Grade with distinction from the Trinity College in London. She is coached by Noshirwan and Meher Jehangir in elocution and dramatics. No wonder she felt so confident during the interview!

She is not only a sports enthusiast and a book worm, she loves music and her favorites are Back Street Boys and Boyzone. Her favorite movie star is Akshay Kumar.

We wind up the interview by wishing Feroza a great future in sports. The world is at her feet.



Clockwise from top: Engineer in action; on the victory stand; receiving the Best Sportsman of the Year trophy from Bachi Tamboly (as Aspi Ustad looks on) at the 18th All Parsis Athletic Meet — 1998; with her trophies and medals and with parents Farida and Zal

EVENTS AND PERSONALITIES

continued from page 13

by D. B. Taraporevala in 1951, the existing aquarium housed 18 tanks containing marine forms and nine tanks containing freshwater life, mentions the article regretting that no longer will the masses be able to gain an entry into the hitherto affordable "source of education and fun." With tickets priced at four rupees for adults and two rupees for children, the aquarium had attracted 11 lakh visitors in 1996-97 and made a profit of eight lakh rupees, states *The Times* article.

Environmental activist Shyam Chai-nani told *The Times* that if the authorities wanted a glamorous aquarium they should have it elsewhere instead of depriving the people of the existing one with its low rates of entry. He also asserted that the new project should not be implemented without clearance from the heritage point of view.

At the executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India on June 13 and 14, 1998 in Bombay, Homi Taleyarkhan, former member of the Minorities Commission, maintained that he had re-

ceived an assurance from the state government that the present aquarium would not be demolished.

Journey into celluloid

"I am doing the film because the book reaffirms my belief that each of us is on a similar journey. The quest to be a moral person..." declared Canadian Swede director Sturla Gunnarsson who has taken upon himself the gargantuan task of filming fellow-Canadian Rohinton Mistry's novel *Such A Long Journey*, heading for a September 1998 release.

Portraying the tribulations of a Bombay-based middle-class Parsi family residing in Gilder Lane, the other on-site locales included in the film are Navjivan Society, Crawford Market, Chor Bazar...The central role of Gustad Noble is played by Roshan Seth with Soni Razdan enacting Noble's wife Dilnavaz. The other stars of the film are Om Puri, Sam Dastoor, Pearl Padamsee, Dinyar Contractor, Shazneen Damania, Persis Khambatta...

Mistry's novel was almost like a *Bible* to the director who mentioned in an interview with *Outlook*, February 16, 1998, "The issues central to it like fam-

ily, friendships, loyalty, humor even in tragedy, betrayals, disillusionment and the humanity arising above social chaos are so universal. We decided to focus on two relationships, Gustad's with son Sohrab (played by Vrajesh Hirjee) and with friend Jimmy Billimoria (played by veteran thespian Naseeruddin Shah)." The plot that forms the spine of the book is the financial scandal surrounding Billimoria, quite akin to the real-life episode of the 1970s when a Parsi accountant of the State Bank of India fraudulently withdrew moneys invoking the name of the Prime Minister.

But scriptwriter Sooni Taraporevala is convinced, "Mistry has only fictionalized events, exploiting his liberty as an author," adding, "Unlike other scriptwriters who retain the spiritual essence of a novel, I retain the literal. Its humor too adapts excellently to the cinematic medium."

The funding for the film was made possible by Canada's Telefilm and CBC, India's UTV and Britain's British Screen and BSKyB, according to the *Outlook* article.

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi

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Mines and the man

The grand old man of Katni, Tehmuras Bajan minted a fortune and shared it with the underprivileged

Dilnavaz E. Bhagwagar

The city of Katni, in the Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh, boasts of two things — money and minerals. The money comes from the mining, processing and transportation of limestone, dolomite, bauxite and other minerals. But these very mining operations leave the area raped and ravaged; the lime kilns or *chuna bhattis* that are everywhere, belch white smoke and the thousands of trucks that transport these minerals to industry all over the country, add their share of dust and exhaust fumes. The combined result of this is to place Katni among the dirtiest, dustiest, most polluted and unaesthetic of cities.

In stark contrast to the city is Bostan, the recently built home of Aban and Beji Bajan and Beji's mother, Goolbai. Bostan is a Persian word that translates to garden of paradise and their lovely home, set on a sprawling acre of land, surrounded by water on three sides, is just that.

But the story of Bostan doesn't begin with the present generation of Bajans. It goes back 122 years to 1876, when Tehmuras Cawasji Bajan, a young mobed from Navsari, with the fire of adventure coursing through his veins, decided to explore the country on the wheels of the Great Indian Peninsular Railway. With a trunk of Chinese silks to pay his way and with the unbounded enthusiasm of a 25-year-old, Tehmuras, after visiting many cities, alighted in the small town of Katni. What was meant to be a short stay, developed into a lifelong affair.

With a hundred silver *sikkas* (coins) that he had brought with him in a *langri* (flat bottomed vessel), the enterprising young mobed started a *mahua* (country liquor) business. In due course, his business prospered, he invested in land and made friends among the gentry.

Recounting the story of their entry into limestone mining, his great-grandson Beji says, "Tehmuras invited some

friends for a picnic in his fruit orchard. They made a fire to sit around or maybe to roast a leg of venison. On seeing the burnt stone, at the spot where the fire was made, turn white on being calcined into lime, Mr Forrester, a British geolo-



T. Bajan: fire of adventure

gist who was part of the picnic group, exclaimed, 'You are sitting on a limestone mine. You must immediately apply to the government for a mining lease!'

Quick to see an opportunity, Tehmuras did just that. Starting with a mining lease on seven acres, he eventually became the owner of half the town of Katni. With great business acumen and foresight he prospered and became a wealthy, well-known man. He contributed generously to local charities. During the Great Famine of 1907, he fed 200 hungry people every day, for six months. He built schools and hospitals and donated to every deserving cause. He became president of the Katni Municipality and was actively involved in local governance.

"Affectionately known as the Grand

Old Man of Katni, the Government honored him with the title of Khan Bahadur in 1915," recalls Goolbai Cawasji Bajan. "He also had the honor of being invited to the Delhi Durbar, where King George V presented him with a sword," continued Goolbai with pride. "Wanting to be recognized as a Parsi of priestly lineage, Tehmuras Bajan wore his jama and pichori for the grand Durbar and cut a fine figure in them," she added.

In the year 1920, Tehmuras' grandson Cawasji joined the family business after having completed his education in Pune. Cawasji was the only son of Tehmuras' daughter Jerbai who had married her cousin Bejanji Bajan. After his grandfather's death, he took on the title of Khan Sahib and became the managing director of T. C. Bajan and Company. Cawasji followed in his illustrious grandfather's footsteps. He shouldered the responsibilities of an expanding and prosperous limestone mining business. In addition he was a *malguzar*, an honorary magistrate of the Katni court, president of the Murwara Municipal Committee, a high ranking Freemason and a charter member of the Rotary Club of Jabalpur.

Khan Sahib Cawasji Bejanji Bajan died in Katni in 1950, at the relatively young age of 51. His wife Goolbai, a very interesting and well preserved 80 plus, continues to live in Katni with her son Beji and his wife Aban at Bostan, the Garden of Paradise.

The beauty of Bostan lies mainly in its unusual location. As one turns off the main street, choked with wheezing, rattling trucks, into a narrow lane with the inevitable *chuna bhattis* and piles of *chachri* (the rock covering the mineral seams), one is startled by the impressive wrought iron gates and the deep blue lake embracing Bostan.

The lake is a 200 ft deep abandoned limestone quarry — part of the



Aban and Beji Bajan (top row) and the environs of their home in Katni; (second row) Cowasji Bajan; (last row, from left) Jerbai Bajan; Cowasji with wife Goolbai and children Beji, Dinoo and Dolly; Beji Bajan as a child

original seven acres bought by Khan Bahadur Tehmuras Bajan. The site was being mined till 1962 but after reaching a depth of 200 ft it became uneconomical to mine it further, so it was abandoned.

Till very recently, the Bajans lived in an old comfortable family home in the congested heart of the city. Beji's brother and sister Dolly and Dinoo, and his half siblings Tehmul and Dhun (born

of Cowasji's first wife) had in course of time taken their share of the inheritance and moved out of Katni to establish their families and fortunes elsewhere. Beji, his wife Aban and daughters Jeroo, Feroza and Navaz continued to live in Katni. Beji looks after the ancestral family property and business. He is now the sole owner of T. C. Bajan and Company. "A quirk of fate made us leave our ancestral home and build

Bostan," said Aban who teaches school, keeps a beautiful home, is known by everyone in Katni and who in turn is a repository of news and views about Katni. "In 1991 our pet abso, Riddles, died. Having no place to bury our dog around our town house, we took the body to be buried near the lake, at the site of the old mine. In that half hour of tranquil melancholy spent at the water's edge, it occurred to our daughter Feroza that it might be nice to build a weekend retreat on this idyllic spot."

Incredible but true, they had no architect, no structural engineer, no landscapist, no professional help. Feroza herself designed, supervised and executed the building of Bostan over a period of three years. What started out as a Sunday-getaway, ended up as their permanent home. "Sometime during its construction, we just fell in love with the idea of living here and added two more rooms to the original plan," laughed Aban.

By the time Feroza's dream house was completed in 1994, her dream man, Zarir Dalal, came along and she got married and moved to Bombay. Her twin sister Navaz is married to Yazdi Daruwalla of Bombay while elder sister

Jeroo is settled in London with husband Kersi Mody. So, the parents and grandmother moved into Bostan and they love it. "We never realized the extent of the dust and noise pollution we had been subjected to all our lives, till we moved away from it." A naturally warm and hospitable couple, the Bajans have even more friends dropping in now, all wanting to get away from the madding crowd and into the tranquil beauty of this garden of paradise.

The other long-time residents of Katni are the wealthy and well-known Dubash family. They are the descendants of Nusserwanji and Tehmina Dubash. Story has it that Nusserwanji's father Maneckji left his prosperous, ancestral family business of shipbuilding because being fervently religious, he considered it sinful to urinate and defecate in water, revered as Avan Yazad. So he left shipbuilding and came to Katni in the beginning of the 19th century, to deal in forest products. He worked for the Tata mines at Bistra at Rs 20 per month. He soon acquired limestone mines and extensive property in Katni and Jabalpur. Nusserwanji, in time, bought over the Bistra mines. The Dubashes also own three cinema theaters in Katni. Of the many children and grandchildren of Nusserwanji and Tehmina, eight Dubashes continue to live in Katni.

The latest and youngest Parsi additions to the Katni community are Naushad and Tauby Bhagwagar and their sons, Cherag and Arman. Though they have their own home and mining business in Katni, they are migratory birds, moving between Nagpur and Katni.

Ten years ago, when Naushad Bhagwagar went to Katni for the first time, in an M. P. (Madhya Pradesh) State Transport bus amid a press of beedi smoking villagers, he did not know limestone from lodestone. Today, he travels between Katni and Nagpur in his chauffeur driven Cielo and can talk limestone seams and depths and purity, like one born to it.

If you are willing to take opportunity by the horns, to drive over miles of unpaved roads into the innards of the mines, to be covered with sweat and grit, to tackle truck drivers, to grapple with labor, to load rakes at railway sidings, regardless of cold winter nights or scorching summer afternoons — then Katni will allow you a foothold and in

time, even take you to its heart.

Tehmuras Bajan did it in his time. Maneckji Dubash did it in his. These were pioneering men. More important, they were men who dared. They cycled for miles to the mines. For days on end, they worked and slept at the mining sites with the sky as their roof.

Today the Dubashes and Bajans are among the wealthiest families of all Katni. The Parsis of Katni are reportedly 16 strong. Jabalpur, 91 km from Katni has a few more Parsis, most of them in their sunset years.

"Being athornan, we are staunch believers in our religion and adhere to most of the community's traditions and practises," says Aban. They are glad that all three daughters have married within the community. They felt particularly cut off from the mainstream of Parsis when it was time to look for a suitable match for Feroza.

About the future, Aban and Beji are clear about one thing. They would never dream of shifting out of Katni and their beautiful home, Bostan.

Another amazing thing about Bostan is the health and size of its plants. Looks like it has something to do with the limestone in the soil. There is a profusion of flowering shrubs, trees and creepers that make a burst of color against the blue sky and white walls of the house. The garden is landscaped around natural rocks, buttresses and 100-year-old palm trees.

In the back garden, the Bajans grow vegetables and a dozen varieties of fruit trees — banana, papaya, mango, guava, mulberry, sweet lime and more. As if all this is not enough, fishermen in old truck tyres cruise the lake and cast their net. Aban need only call out to them, if she wants a fresh *maral* for lunch.

The sights and sounds at Bostan, the play of light and shade and the reflections in the water, make for a changing kaleidoscope through the day. Winter mornings see a veil of mist over the lake which is dispersed with the sudden burst of sunrise. Myriad land and water birds twitter to life. The evening sees lengthening shadows and the western sky turns a painter's palette of copper and crimson and then dusky pink and grey, before night finally descends with a symphony of croaking frogs and nesting birds.

And so, another day is over in the story of Bostan. A story that began 122 long years ago.

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The business of beauty

From selling juke boxes to manning bars, Jimmy Ardesher's forte has been setting up a chain of beauty saloons in Calcutta and Madras

A. Patel

Times have changed for 76-year-old Jimmy Shapur Ardesher; and so have the chimes. What started as a clock manufacturing and distribution business way back in 1871 has led the way to a string of beauty parlors both in Calcutta and Chennai.

Ardesher was thrust into business at a very early age even before he could complete his schooling. "I was put in charge of the Temple Bar that the family owned," recalls Ardesher. "It was a rough place, frequented mostly by sailors who wanted to have a good time. There were frequent scraps and fisticuffs and that was where I had my training," he adds.

The clock manufacturing business gave Ardesher the idea of selling juke boxes in the country. "At the time," says Ardesher, "no one knew what these coin operated musical instruments were. I was the only one in the country who used to get them down from Copenhagen and supply to hotels and restaurants. These were very popular in the late '60s," recalls Ardesher. "Slowly with time their popularity waned but the instruments still remain, adding a touch of class to the modern decor in hotels and bars," he notes. Next, it was time for video games and Ardesher still owns one video game parlor in Calcutta, his hometown.

The popularity of his Bar gave Ardesher the incentive to expand. He went to America in search of ideas and it was there that he decided to set up a beauty parlor in Calcutta.

In 1970, the Ennis beauty parlor was

established in Calcutta by his wife Ratti, daughters Zarine, Roshan and son Farok. "This beauty parlor is open to both men and women," explains Jimmy. "My wife learnt the foreign techniques of hairstyling and incorporated it in our saloon," he says.



After that, he set up two more saloons, Nu Ennis and August Moon in Calcutta. He expanded his business to Chennai and has a chain of eight beauty saloons there. "I learnt from my experience that children need to be pampered when they come with their parents for a haircut, so I started giving them free gifts," relates Ardesher. "A balloon, a whistle or sweets ensured that the same customer came again and again and things have come to pass in such a manner that children want to come to my shop every week and not wait for the customary monthly haircut," he adds proudly.

"I have learnt that to keep my customers happy one has to keep giving them some incentive or the other," says Ardesher, adding, "And I have done so

by giving the regulars calendars, diaries, greeting cards and trinkets...

"When beauty parlors were meant only for women, we were the pioneers to start beauty parlors for men. People are now very conscious of their looks and good grooming is very important," mentions Ardesher.

It is not only the beauty parlors that have made Ardesher a name in Calcutta. He has been a master of ceremonies in every restaurant in the city worth its salt. In the late '70s and early '80s no function at the Oberoi Grand was ever complete without Ardesher presiding over it. "I have compered for functions patronized by chief ministers and governors besides balls for the Navy, Red Cross and the Lions Club. It is a hobby that gives me immense satisfaction. It was I who gave the Sami Sisters namely Usha, Indira and Uma their first break, thanks to which Usha Uthup is a big name today," he adds proudly.

Ardesher has also been a billiards champion and a goalkeeper for the Parsi football team in his youth. Helping the needy and organizing charity drives is another hidden trait of this businessman. One such show that he organized for the Calcutta Parsis nearly 40 years ago was able to net over a lakh of rupees for the hall they were proposing to build



Ardesher with wife Ratti (above)
The emphasis on good grooming at
one of his beauty parlors

for the community, relates Ardesher.

"I respect all religions and feel the Lord above has been kind to me in more ways than one," says Ardesher who is happy that both he and his son are navars. Photographs and religious pictures of nearly all faiths hang around his spacious office and he proudly says, "I have visited many holy shrines abroad as well as in the country. 'Whenever there is any trouble or obstacle I light a diva. This gives me a feeling of satisfaction that help will come from some hidden source,'" mentions Ardesher who believes in wearing the sudreh-kusti and reciting "some of our prayers with solemn devotion."

Traveling is another love that Ardesher has always fostered. "I have visited the United States around 50 times and have gone to Lourdes and have traveled right across Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia. I have just returned from Prague," he says.

His association with Mother Teresa was also legendary. "I had known Mother for a very long time and she used to always address me as 'Jimmy.' I used to do all her odd jobs," he recollects, "from repairing her pump and tape recorder to selling her chocolates. Whenever we used to meet, which was

at least twice a week, we used to talk for hours," he reminisces.

But, coming back to business, he feels there has been a transformation. As far as his Temple and Saqi bars, both in the same premises, are concerned he feels business has gone down. "The sailors who used to frequent these joints with their hostesses are gone. The government has too many dry days in a year and most of all, floor shows have been stopped." Ardesher says that in days gone by, cabaret shows were held in most restaurants in Calcutta and they added to the attraction of the hotels. "These cabarets were not vulgar," says Ardesher, "but simply exciting. Now, with new government policies and various other acts, floor shows have been banned. This way, our customers have also dwindled."

But it's not the same for his beauty business. Unlike his bars, the beauty saloons have picked up. "People have become more figure conscious than in days of yore and both men and women want to outbid the other in looking attractive... A beautiful face sure brightens up the day, and that is what we do at beauty parlors," claims Ardesher. "My beauticians are well trained in the use of

modern cosmetics and we are doing well. There is of course the stray strike now and then, but the unions have meliowed and things are moving on," he notes.

Despite the fact that his enterprises are doing well, Ardesher is looking for a buyer. "My son, a chartered accountant, has settled down in America and opened up a beauty saloon there for children called Dots and Dashes. He also has a store adjacent to the saloon that sells beauty products. Both these outlets are doing very well and he is not interested (in returning). My daughters too are well settled in the States and are not keen on taking over my business. So unless my heirs take it up, which I want them to, I will be forced to sell my outlets," says Ardesher sadly.

But, unlike his children, Ardesher is not willing to move. "I have lived my life in Calcutta and now I cannot uproot myself. This city has made me what I am today. I cannot just chuck up and leave," he says. Despite the fact that he is keen to sell his lucrative businesses, 'young Jimmy' has no plans to retire. "Even if I sell, I will keep doing something," says Jimmy. "I am not one who can retire and sit back."



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Gujarat Parsis: Near and yet apart – 2

A royal reception

To the Moghul court the Parsis went, to seek redress or earn laurels

That the howl of a dog at night is believed to foretell a death or other evil in his master's family; that the persistent cawing of a crow is supposed to be the harbinger of bad news are some of the superstitions frequently repeated among Zoroastrians. What may not be as well known is the notion that the spasm of breath in sneezing or in yawning is the work of an evil spirit which should be countered with the words "Broken be ahri-man." And that a drawn tooth or cut nails are to be buried four inches below the ground whilst reciting the sacred texts.

Insights into the life-style, value systems, code of conduct, performance of elaborate ceremonies among the Parsis of Gujarat in the latter part of the 19th century can be had from perusing the *Bombay Gazetteer*. The relevant chapters of the journal which had been sent to us by the noted Bombay dentist Dr Dinshaw F. Boga are being edited and carried over six instalments of *Parsiana*.

In the first instalment we learnt how the Parsis landed on the shores of India, how circumstances led to subsequent migrations and an increase in their numbers. Though known to be kind and considerate, even at that time dissensions were known to exist among different factions.

Being shrewd traders and businessmen they were seen flourishing along the Malabar coast, recalls this second instalment. Not only were they known to own the most beautiful villas and gardens in Surat, but they were also reputed for not having a single beggar amongst them.

The dress and ornaments worn by the priests and laity, the nature of their dwellings, their life-style and preoccupations find a mention in the third instalment. With Parsis, eating and drinking are religious duties which help to drive away the evil spirit, it is stated herein.

Their religious beliefs, their mode

of celebrating auspicious occasions and feasts are referred to in the fourth episode. In the midst of this rejoicing they were also enjoined to observe a code of behavior that prescribed wearing of sudreh-kusti and covering the head and feet at all times, thanking God before every meal and keeping silence whilst eating!

The customs accompanying first pregnancies, births, navjotes and marriages are detailed in the fifth instalment. When a much awaited male child was born, instead of the child, some cowdung was shown to the mother, supposedly in the best interests of the mother and the child. Elaborate were the marriage rituals too and as noted therein, the poorest Parsi could hardly marry his son for less than Rs 400 or his daughter for less than Rs 250.

Most of the practices accompanying death rites seem to be preserved to this day as is indicated in the last instalment. There were some noticeably different customs too: for three days after a death no food was cooked in the house of mourning, except for dogs. To save the soul of a Parsi man who died without a male issue, it was mandatory to announce an adoption on the uthamna day. Often too were donations to charitable causes made on this day.

...

The Parsis had begun to settle in Bombay under the Portuguese (1530-1666 AD). One of them, Dorabji Nanabhai, the founder of the Patel family, held a high place in the island before its transfer to the British in 1666, and before the close of the 17th century several more families, of whom the Modis, Pandes, Banajis, Dadiseths and Vadias were among the earliest settled in the island. In the 18th century the movement greatly increased. To the Gujarat Parsis, more than to any class of native traders, was due the development of the trade of Bombay, especially of its great trade

connection with China. Early in the 18th century Gujarat Parsis were also spread along the Malabar coast for purposes of trade. In Madras in 1780 Parsis were influential merchants and in 1790 built a Tower of Silence which owing to some ill omen has never been brought into use. Though many Parsis came to Bombay, almost all continued to consider Surat or Navsari their home and during the second half of the 18th century, after its transfer to the British in 1759, the Surat Parsis rose greatly in wealth and position. In 1764 Niebuhr found them a gentle, quiet and industrious race, beloved by the Hindus, multiplying greatly, and engaged in all trades and callings.

They were skilful merchants, hard-working craftsmen and good servants. They made common contributions for the aid of their poor, and suffered none of their number to ask alms from people of a different religion. In 1774, according to the Dutch traveller Stavorinus, there were about 1,00,000 Parsis in and round Surat. There were no beggars among them, and they much surpassed all the other people in industry. Many were servants to Europeans. They increased in number from day to day and inhabited many entire wards. [Several of the wards or *puris* in Surat are named after Parsis; Rustampura is named after Rustam Manek, a leading broker (for the Portuguese and the English) about 1660; Nanpura is named after Nanabhai Narsangji Patel, a wealthy landlord; and Mancherpura is named after Mancherji Kharsedji Seth, a well-known broker (for the Dutch) and merchant between 1740 and 1784.] Some leaving their wives behind them went to Cochin but they were despised.

Several were rich and might be counted among the chief merchants of Surat. Their leading men were the English, Portuguese and Dutch brokers. The Musalman governor of Surat feared

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The Parsis at Surat and Bombay not only grew rich, but knew how to enjoy the comforts and luxuries which money can bring

their superior courage and let them live in their part of the city very much as they liked. Several Parsis enjoyed honor and influence at the court of Delhi and some of them received grants of land and other marks of distinction.

[Of the Parsis who visited the Moghul courts the names of eight remain. The first was Meherji Rana who invested Akbar with the sacred shirt and girdle in 1580 and in reward became high priest of Navsari. The second was Meherji's son Kekobad who about 1594-95 went to Delhi to seek redress as the Nawab of Surat had tried to take away the emperor's grant of 200 acres. Kekobad was successful and in a paper dated the 10th of Aspandad in the 40th year of Akbar's reign he received an additional grant of a hundred acres. The third was Mulla Jamasp, a priest of Navsari who about 1619 in return for a present of jasmine oil was given a piece of land named Ratnagiri near Navsari by the emperor Jahangir. The fourth was Rustam Manek who went with the head of the Surat factory to Delhi in 1660. The fifth was Sorabji Kavasji who was of great service to the English in 1760 when they obtained command of the Surat castle and the post of Moghul Admiral. He returned to Surat bringing dresses of honor and a horse to the heads of the English Company at Surat (Despatch from the Surat Chief in Council to the Bombay President and Council May 3, 1760 in Briggs' *Cities of Gujarastra*). It is said that Sorabji Kavasji, who had been taught watchmaking by a European, first went to Delhi in 1744 to mend a favorite clock of the emperor. The emperor, probably Muhammad Shah (1719-1748), was so pleased with Sorabji's skill that he honored him with the title of Nek Satkhan, that is Lord of the Lucky Hour, gave him a lien on the customs revenue in Surat and the rank of a chief of 500 horse and 300 foot. Nek Satkhan was an ancestor of the well-known Ardeshir Bahadur Kotval of Surat. The sixth was Kavasji Rustamji, third son of the high priest of Udvada, who is said to have gone to Delhi as Nek Satkhan's assistant. He was given the title of Mirzan Khosru Beg and land near Surat which his family, now known as the Mirzan family,

enjoyed for several years. Mirzan Khosru Beg's skill as a watchmaker descended to his son Kaioji who was watch-repairer to Bajirav Peshwa. After Bajirav's fall in 1818 Kaioji went to Bhavnagar with a clock of Bajirav's which the Bhavnagar chief had bought.



Modi: rose to great influence

Photo: Parsi Lustre on Indian Soil

In Bhavnagar he made entirely from local materials a large clock for which a tower was built and which is still (in 1898) in order. Kaioji's descendants have a high name in Bhavnagar and in Kathiawar generally for their skill as watchmakers and mechanics. The seventh was Kalabhai Sorabji, the son-in-law of Nek Satkhan. He is said to have gone to Delhi to meet his father-in-law and received an estate in Rander in Surat. The eighth was Mancherji Kharshedji Seth, a wealthy merchant and well-known broker for the Dutch who some time before 1784 visited Delhi, it was said at the emperor's request, who had heard of the liberality for which he was famous.]

Shortly after this, owing to the great development of the opium and cotton trade with China, the Parsis rose greatly in wealth both at Surat and Bombay. In 1783 Forbes noticed that in Surat of late years the most beautiful villas and gardens, at least those in the best order, no longer belonged to Moghuls or Hindus but to Parsis. They were active, robust,

prudent and persevering, and formed a very valuable part of the Company's subjects on the western shores of Hindustan where they were highly esteemed and encouraged. They never interfered with the government or police but gradually and silently made money. They not only grew rich, but knew how to enjoy the comforts and luxuries which money can bring. In their domestic economy and still more in their entertainments to their English friends in Bombay and Surat, Asiatic splendor was agreeably blended with European taste and comfort. They were subject to little priestly influence and liable to few restrictions in food, fasting, purifications and religious mortifications. They knew how to appreciate and enjoy the blessings by which they were surrounded.

Early in the 18th century a Broach Parsi named Kamaji Homaji, a weaver, was convicted of having called a Musalman a kafir or infidel. Ahmad Beg, the Nawab of Broach, gave Kamaji the choice of embracing Islam or being slain by the sword. Kamaji refused to change his faith and was killed. The Broach Parsis still recite his name with other notables in all public religious ceremonies. In 1857 there was a riot between the Parsis and Musalmans of Broach. (On May 15, 1857 Broach became the scene of a serious riot between the Muslims and Parsis. The Mohammedans of Broach, whose numbers were largely increased by the Bohras of surrounding villages, were excited by the report which two Parsis, Jivraj Peshwaji Kamalkhan and Kerbad Kavasji Popti, enemies of Bezonji Sheriarji known generally as Bezon Ganda or The Mad, had spread that Bezonji had defiled the mosques of the Mohammedans. Dastur Ardeshir Hormasji Kamdin, a 90-year-old priest who was in charge of one of the fire-temples, was killed. Several other Parsis were wounded and much property destroyed. Bezon Ganda also was killed with cruelty. The military had to be called to suppress the riot. Between the following August and November the rioters were tried, two were hanged for the murder of Dastur Ardeshir and Bezon Ganda, 11, among whom were the two Parsi instigators,

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As *kotval* of Surat, Ardeshir freed the city from robbers and pirates, and people slept with open doors

were condemned to transportation for life, one to penal servitude for 10 years, and 25 others to smaller terms of imprisonment.)

During the early part of the 19th century the Parsis continued to prosper. In the general depression of 1825 in Surat the Parsis alone were well-to-do without a beggar among them, thriving where even a Bohra could glean only a scanty maintenance. Besides as wealthy merchants Parsis rose to high posts under the East India Company and in the native states. The 18th and the early years of the 19th century were the times of the greatest prosperity of Gujarat especially of Surat Parsis. [In the beginning of the 19th century Kharsedji Jamshedji Modi, a Parsi of Cambay, rose to great influence in the Peshwa's court at Poona. In the British service he rose to the post of native agent to Colonel Close, the Resident at Poona in 1809. In 1810 Bajirav Peshwa appointed him Sur Subhedar of the Karnatak. He was allowed to hold both appointments till 1813 when he gave up the Peshwa's service. In 1814 Mr Elphinstone, the British Resident, suspecting him of advising the Peshwa against the British, rewarded him for his past services but required him to retire to Gujarat. As he was about to leave Poona he died of poison whether taken by himself or given by the Peshwa is unknown. Modi's descendants enjoy land in Ralej in Cambay which was given to him by the Peshwa and confirmed to his descendants by the British.]

Dhanjisha, son of Barjorji Behere-mankhan and grandson of Nek Satkhan, early in the 19th century held the post of native agent under the East India Company for the states of Sachin, Bansda, Mandvi and Dharampor. In 1840 when a Mohammedan fanatic calling himself Abdul Rehman raised a revolt in Mandvi, Dhanjisha went with the force that was sent to suppress the outbreak. He was among the first to cross the river, and endeavored to prevail on the fakir to surrender himself, but along with the Raja's agent and some others he was killed in the attempt. In recognition of Dhanjisha's services his widow was given a yearly pension of Rs 3,000.

Pherozsha, Dhanjisha's eldest son,

became Principal Sadar Amin in 1825 and native judge of the Surat court in 1832 and was appointed the governor's native agent in Dharampor, Bansda and



A. *Kotval*: model policeman

Photo: Parsi Lustre on Indian Soil

Mandvi. In 1822 the government granted Pherozsha the six villages of Umber, Velarva, Bhanodra, Gez, Khurvel and Rajvada yielding Rs 12,000 a year. Pherozsha also received the village of Vandervala worth Rs 6,000 a year from the Bansda chief and a village named Kamlapur from the Mandvi chief. Pherozsha's heirs up till recently enjoyed these villages. He died in 1843 and was honored by one of the largest funerals ever seen in Surat (*Parsi Prakash*, I.417).

Ardeshir, Dhanjisha's second son, rose to be the most prominent man in Surat. As *kotval* or head of the police he freed the city from robbers and pirates, remodelled the police, and according to the common saying enabled the people to sleep with open doors. In 1829, in

reward for his services, Sir John Malcolm, then governor of Bombay (1827-1830), presented him with a gold medal, dresses of honor and four villages worth about Rs 3,000 a year. Ardeshir died in 1856.]

After the great fire of Surat in 1837 Bombay became the headquarters of the Parsis and since then has had as permanent settlers the largest and richest section of the community. In Bombay the Parsis have showed themselves the most enterprising and successful merchants. The bulk of the native foreign trade was in their hands and the very great liberality of some of the leading Parsis made their name honorable. Between 1857 and 1863 they secured a large share of the wealth that was poured into western India by the American war and by the making of railways. In 1864 and 1865 many lately-made fortunes were lost and some old families were ruined. But most were able to keep a competence and some remain among the richest families in Bombay island.

Since 1865 the Parsis have played a leading part in starting and developing the great factory industry that has sprung up since 1854. Many of the largest and best managed mills belong to Parsis, and besides as owners and shareholders large numbers find highly paid employment as mechanical engineers and weaving, carding and spinning masters. Broach ranks next to Bombay in the prosperity of its Parsis. The Parsis of Broach, Anklesvar and other towns in the Broach district are wealthier than the bulk of other natives of the place. There is hardly a Parsi family that does not own a merchant, a trader, or a contractor.

In all Gujarat the Parsis of Broach are remarkable for their enterprise and perseverance as merchants. They deal largely in cotton, timber, fuel, and in the flower of the *mowra*, *Bassia latifolia*, and own several cotton gins. They are also to be found in Bhavnagar as prosperous cotton merchants. A wealthy Parsi merchant of Broach has obtained, under the usual terms, a large extent of wasteland in the Panch Mahals and established on it a large and thriving settlement of laborers under the supervision and control of a number of Parsis



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whom he has encouraged to take part in the operation. The settlement after the name of its founder's grandfather is called Rustampura. Much wasteland has been turned into a fertile tract yielding cotton, wheat and other crops. The Parsis of Gandevi, Bilimora and Balsar rank next as merchants. They carry on a large trade in dried fish, castor oil, timber, fuel, grain, *mowra* flowers, and molasses. Bilimora Parsis enjoy a good reputation as carpenters. Balsar Parsis were farmers of villages in the neighboring states of Dharampor and Bansda and also held liquor farms and shops. In Ahmedabad and Cambay, Parsi families are very few and unimportant. In Surat and Navsari, Parsis figure as rich landlords, though after the crash that followed the share mania of 1864-65 many of the best and richest holdings in Surat passed from their hands.

In Navsari the Desai family represents the largest Parsi landlords. [The office of *desai* of Navsari has been held by Parsis since 1419 when Changa A'sa who brought the Sanjan fire to Navsari was appointed *desai*. The office remained in Changa A'sa's family till about 1595, when Dastur Kekobad, the son of Dastur Meherji Rana, was made

desai. His family did not hold the office long. A few years later a mobed named Behram Faredun secured the office as representative of Changa A'sa's family of whom no male heirs were left. The *desaiship* remained in Behram Faredun's family till about 1714 when a large share of the emolument was sold to a wealthy mobed Temulji Rustamji Sirvai since called Desai. In 1720 Temulji was discerning enough to see that the Gaikwar's power would dominate in Gujarat. He accordingly waited on Pilajirav Gaikwar at Songad and induced him to establish posts in the Surat Athavisi and to give him the management of the revenue affairs of the newly acquired lands. Keen rivalry continued between the descendants of Behram Faredun and the representatives of Temulji and the office of *desai* was held sometimes by the one family, sometimes by the other. Temulji Rustamji's family was the more successful. They are now (in 1898) known as the chief *desais* to distinguish them from Behram Faredun's family who are called Poria *desais*. In 1800 and 1802 Mancherji Kharsedji, the grandson of Temulji Rustamji, was of so much value to the British in their dealings with the

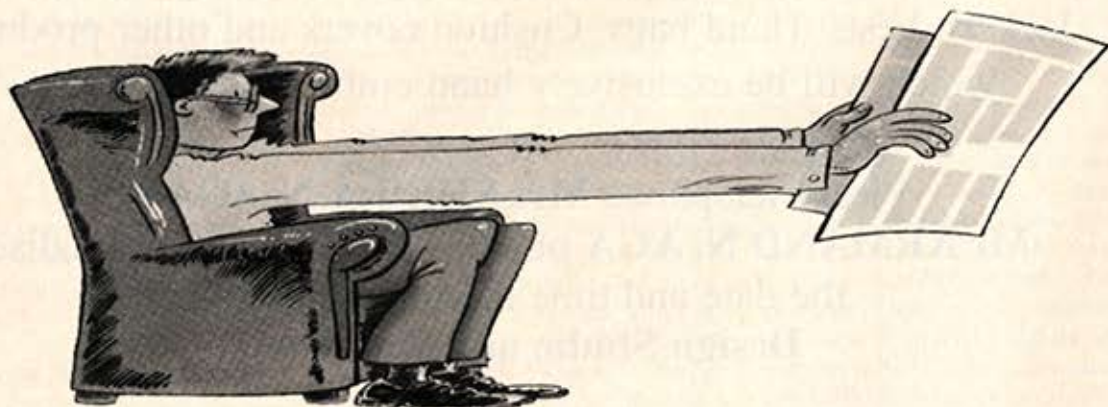
Gaikwar that in 1817 the Court of Directors granted him a monthly pension of Rs 200 for three generations. They also gave a guarantee or *bahe dhari* that his family estate should be unmolested. The Gaikwars continued to dispute the permanency of this guarantee, but in 1856, the Government of India decided the point in the Desai's favor.]

Many poor Parsi families in Surat still (in 1898) support themselves by the old craft of weaving silk cloth, while those in the villages around Surat and in Navsari are chiefly occupied as cultivators of small farms and as drawers and sellers of palm-juice.

On the whole in Gujarat as landlords, merchants, petty traders and government and railway contractors, Parsis hold a respectable and prosperous position. Parsis enjoy almost a monopoly of liquor farms and liquor shops. They fill prominent posts in cotton and ginning factories. In the service of government and of native states as well as in railway and municipal service they are gaining an increasing share of well-paid and honorable posts. As lawyers, engineers and physicians Parsis hold their own with any other natives of India.

To be continued.

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Godrej: changing perceptions

Rusi J. Daruwala

The Builder Also Grows - Godrej A Hundred Years 1897-1997 Volume II by B. K. Karanjia. Published in 1997 by Viking, Penguin Books, (P) Ltd, 210 Chiranjiv Tower, 43 Nehru Place, New Delhi 110019. Pp: 374. Price: Rs 395.

Godrej is a family business with a difference. Its all-round professional approach and emphasis on total quality management makes it stand apart from the numberless family-based concerns in India.

The saga of Godrej began in the last century with Ardeshir Godrej starting at the grass roots level with the manufacture of locks in a small shed at Lalbaug. He went on to make security equipment (safes) of a high quality and successfully began the manufacture of toilet soaps from vegetable oils. His was a simple lifestyle and on his death he bequeathed almost all he had to the Parsi Punchayet.

In this second volume journalist/biographer/novelist, B. K. Karanjia explores the social and environmental commitments made by the Godrej clan to India. Whether it was a school for workers' children or setting up the India unit of

the World Wide Fund for Nature and the National Conservation Centre, the Godrejs have always led from the front and set up solid self-reliant institutions without fuss or fanfare.

Naval Godrej's untimely death in 1990 placed the responsibility of running the flagship company, Godrej and Boyce on his only son Jamshyd. Jamshyd imbibed from his father the latter's flair for all things mechanical and a deep insight into men's natures: Jamshyd has a fine sensitive touch when dealing with people whether they be humble or high and mighty.

Karanjia gives a moving example of Jamshyd's thoughtfulness. P. D. Lam, senior executive with the company, had an attack of polio at the age of three and lost the use of his right arm. He makes do with his left arm and does it wonderfully well. When serving himself at the buffet table, for instance, he puts his plate down, serves himself with his left hand, then moves forward, again puts the plate down, serves himself, and so on down the line. But there was an incident at a lunch at the Sea Rock Hotel following an official function

which Jamshyd and Lam attended.

At the buffet lunch the dishes were put so near the table's edge, there wasn't any place for Lam to put down his plate and serve himself. He stood puzzled, plate in hand, wondering whether he should forego lunch, when out of the corner of his eye, he saw a figure rapidly approaching. Before Lam realized what was happening, Jamshyd took the plate from him, piled it with food,

The Godrej family at the jashan ceremony which inaugurated the centenary year on January 1, 1997 at the Lalbaug factory. Seated (left to right): Kaizeen Mody, Armaity Austin, Pheroza, Jaiben, Sohrab, Hormuzd, Rati, Soonuben, Burjis, Smita Crishna and Nadir Godrej. Standing (left to right): Rashna Dastur, Boman Mody, Jamshyd, Raika, Navroze, Sohrab, Adi, Pirojsha, Nisaba, Freyan, Nyrika and Vijay Crishna. Not in the photograph: Parmeshwar and Tanya Godrej, Kaikhushru, Dosa and Rishad Naoroji who could not be present on the occasion





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MAZDA

handed it over and went back to his place without a word. Lam can't forget this gesture.

Jamshyd's wife Pheroza recalls an event that gave her a new insight into his character. They had been looking forward to attending the premiere in Bombay of Attenborough's film, *Gandhi*, initiated by Sohrab Godrej as the sheriff of Bombay. At the same time, two close relatives from Geneva had just landed in Bombay. They too wanted very much to see *Gandhi*. Jamshyd was confident that extra tickets could be obtained. Only at the last minute with Pheroza all dressed up for the occasion, he confided to her that as extra tickets couldn't be obtained, they would let their guests use their tickets and the two of them would have a nice quiet dinner instead.

Pheroza was distraught and gave expression to her disappointment in no uncertain terms. Here she was all dressed up and looking forward to a memorable experience, and he was talking of taking her to dinner as if that would ever make up for what they'd be missing.

Jamshyd remained silent as she grumbled. Then, gently, he admonished her: "Look at you. Gandhi gave up so much in life, and you are making such a fuss just because you are giving up a couple of tickets!"

"It was a lesson I'll never forget," Pheroza says. "It made me realize how petty I was."

Interestingly, the first cover story on Godrej that *Business India* magazine carried in their July 6-19, 1971 issue, was entitled, "Godrej, the Untold Story." The cover portrayed a box file entitled 'Godrej - Private and Confidential,' padlocked with a Naval lock.

The letter from the publisher, Ashok Advani complained that *Business India* was "handicapped by a lack of comments and information from the Godrej board. *Business India* decided to independently analyze the operations of the group, especially Godrej and Boyce." The Godrej management's argument was that Godrej was a private company and thus did not need to answer any questions. But the group relies on public funds as indicated by the debt equity ratios of the companies. What Karanjia fails to mention is the amazement of Godrej executives at the accuracy of the 'guesstimates' made by the *Business India* editorial team of the company's financial workings, which were not pub-

lic knowledge.

There is in the book a detailed discussion of Jamshyd's approach to divisionalization. Divisionalization involves recognizing each unit and process in an industrial enterprise as equal to the others in equal measure, entrusting it with the related responsibility and, finally, providing it with commensurate power. It was prompted by the realization that Godrej, for all their past success, fell short of being a world class organization.

"World class organizations give a competitive definition of quality to include also cost, delivery and flexibility, always exceeding the expectations of customers. These organizations have a network which integrates customers, suppliers and all internal users to a well-structured on-line database. 'The emphasis is not on transaction processing but on information handling.' In world class organizations customers are almost invariably partners in progress. These organizations rely on just one or two suppliers for even the most critical components and sign contracts for extended periods, with trust binding them together.

"Relying on their employees to achieve results, world class organizations educate and train them, offer them fair terms of contract and freedom to satisfy their internal and external customers — in other words, they empower them. They create a congenial environment, managing the culture rather than the men. 'Today the above points may sound Utopian and dream-like. Some may feel it is an assured recipe for bankruptcy and chaos in the organization. But, they are becoming real and will soon become a necessity. That in my opinion is the only way out,' Jamshyd maintains."

As the first step A. F. Ferguson and Company was appointed to undertake a comprehensive review of several human resources development and organizational issues. This was followed by Jamshyd officially announcing to all employees the company's re-organization through divisionalization. Divisionalization was introduced in a phased manner beginning with electronic business equipment, then appliances to be followed by other product groups — process equipment, office equipment, manual typewriters, locks and latches,

machine tools and forklift trucks. The divisions, further, would include the function of manufacturing, sales, distribution and service. Other functions like accountancy, purchase and personnel would also be included, but again in a phased manner.

Godrej Soaps on the other hand set out on a policy of diversification. Godrej Soaps has invested heavily in Godrej Agrovet, a fully-owned subsidiary and the largest marketer of animal feeds, plant growth promoters and urea coat-

ing agents in India. Godrej Plant Biotech concentrates on the export of ornamentals. This market being very unreliable, the new plant is to concentrate on the Indian market and to introduce sophisticated tissue culture techniques in the country. The main products will be potato microtubers and banana plants. The company also produces foliage, flowering, fruit, medicinal and oil-bearing plants for export.

Adi Godrej is today the silent but pervasive force in the organization. The situation in Godrej Soaps when Adi took over as managing director was different from that in Godrej and Boyce. Adi, an engineer and management graduate from MIT took over the company's reins in 1963-64 and "brought about a watershed in its history." The turnover which had been Rs 2.43 crores in 1963 shot up to Rs 7.99 crores in 1967 and went on rising till it reached Rs 586.90 crores in 1995.

The phenomenal growth in turnover, explains Karanjia, was a reflection of the new marketing skills and strategies which were adopted. "Adi's forte lay in exploiting to the fullest the achievements that were already there, largely an outcome of his father Burjor's genius in research." Godrej Soaps had scored firsts in epoch-making areas of product and process development. They were: the development by Ardesir of a toilet soap out of vegetable oils, a scientific discovery of the first order; the launch in 1952 of the flagship product Cinthol with the world-famous proven deodorant G-11; the development of a combination soap, Crowning Glory, based on alpha olefin sulphate (AOS) technology (which is more eco-friendly), a quick lathering, hard-wearing soap even in hard-water areas; the



Karanjia: gives a moving account

manufacture of all varieties of soap from fatty acids and, as a corollary, the recovery of glycerin, a valuable and versatile chemical; fatty acids of 99 percent purity; and a neem-based non-toxic US-patented pesticide "Achook."

Sales and profit showed considerable growth. The sales growth graph rose impressively except for a decline in 1979 when the government suddenly discontinued private imports of edible oils. Profitability, measured as profit after tax as a percentage of sales, however, fluctuated considerably.

Godrej Soaps in the late 80s started feeling the pressure of continuing as a private family owned company. Financial institutions did not come forward readily to lend. Corporate taxes were very high. Debt was getting to be expensive as compared to equity and, most importantly, their competitor, Hindustan Lever, backed by the might of its parent Unilever, was infiltrating every area of the consumer products business. Godrej's mainstay has been the traditional urban premium segment of the market. But it had not thus far achieved the same kind of penetration in the fast growing rural markets. Its interest costs were heavy. As a private

limited company, it could not resort to cheap expansion.

In 1991 Godrej Soaps put up a Rs 41 crore soap and detergent plant in Malanpur in Madhya Pradesh funded largely through debt. Between March 1990 and March 1992 while sales jumped up 42 percent, interest rose by more than 300 per cent to Rs 30 crore. But capacities were not fully utilized, not only at Malanpur but also at Vikhroli.

Changes were needed in the company — drastic changes. Where other company leaders would have changed their managerial strategies, Adi went one better — he set about changing himself. He had to learn how to shift from boss-subordinate relationship to team relationship, from manager to strategist. While the group transformed itself from a controlled corporation to a decentralized enterprise, he himself took an operational backseat, focusing his involvement on strategic management, human resources, training, selection and total quality management.

Indeed, writes Karanjia, Adi is a high priest of time management. Time for him is the most precious resource of all. Time management begins with managing ourselves — Adi uses time as a precious tool

to carve out maximum value from each passing day, each fleeting hour. So that through all the strains and stresses of running a Rs 600 crore company he remains cool, unruffled. His is not a race against time. He races with it, so that he has enough and to spare.

Adi's younger brother Nadir is the managing director of Godrej Soaps whose hobby is writing poetry or as he calls it, "versifying." He has already published *Life and Other Poems* in 1992. His wife Rati, a qualified doctor, admires Nadir's intellect as also his empathy and consideration for others, his humanity and wonderful temperament. "He stays calm even in the most stressful of times. He is an extremely fair-minded individual who always sees problems and issues from all angles and perspectives."

In the chapter 'Corporate Heartbeats' Karanjia gives cameo portraits of some senior executives (non-family) of the Godrej group.

Godrej are now building the necessary strategies to meet the challenges of sustainable development in three key areas — pollution prevention, products stewardship and the development of a clean technology.

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On the run

Dina Mehta

Of No Fixed Address by Kaizad Gustad. Published in 1998 by Harper Collins Publishers India Private Limited, 7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110002. Pp: 242. Price: Rs 195.

I review books with care. That is, I usually proceed with caution, with solicitude, with painstaking application. This book I thought I should review without care. Not carelessly, but perhaps skimmingly — like I'm bouncing on water, skidding on ice, slowing down only for that something that catches my eye (like the sentence: "Eyes clenched together like knuckles, tight-fisted, avoiding contact and look.")

Why this radical change in my modus operandi? Because Bombay-born Kaizad Gustad is an impecunious writer on the run, a "full-time bum and part-time writer" he calls himself (he's written screen plays and short stories and was writer/director of the feature film, *Bombay Boys*), and surely the best way to enjoy a bum's effusions is to sample them on the run?

Like the lilies of the field invoked by Christ, Gustad does not toil (not at the craft of writing) — though he does spin yarn after yarn around the cities he visits. (His wanderlust is as red as the Rioja he guzzles in a Madrid bar, he assures us.) One story per city is what we get. The result is 13 tales, 13 panels hinged to one another in a kind of vastly extended triptych, linking the migratory artist to 13 cities. And in each tale he sets out to capture the particular space, the ambience, the scenes and obsessions that are Bombay, London, Toronto, Goa, Sydney, Amsterdam, Bali, Paris, Hong Kong, Madrid, Los Angeles, Tahiti and New York. All his canvases, nevertheless, are self-referential. He presents a one-man show. In fictional terms, each story is in a sense a monologue: the narrator drowns all other voices. He is the star, centerstage, the others merely prompters.

In the first story 'Meena,' the cityscape of Bombay leaps into life: Kamathipura, the notorious street of cages with its throbbing crowds and pressing flesh, the sands of Chowpatty,

Marine Drive on the rim of the Arabian Sea, monkey-tricks outside the Taj Hotel... all are fluent and vivid and touristic. But the soul of Bombay is not ignited, its climate of liberalism (despite the Shiv Sena phenomenon) that attracts writers, artists, entrepreneurs to this vital and progressive metropolis... there is not a hint of that.

Co-starring with the boy-narrator is the silent Meena, a prostitute with whom he enjoys an improbable touch-me-not relationship. She is the excuse for us to go traipsing all over the city but despite the packaged tour (or perhaps because of it) the story does not deliver. Meena does not matter to us. What does matter are the lines that stop us in our fast lanes. Like the one that describes Meena's *choli* as a "bright red blouse stuffed with enough ambience to serve as fish and tackle for unwitting men." We wonder: does he really scribble furiously, this speeding scribe?

In 'The Marriage of Rita Marelo' there can be no doubt that he is strapped for time. He jumps like a flea from Varca to Anjuna Beach to Varca to Brixton (yes, way away from Goa) to Calangute to Vagatore to Anjuna etc... by using the simple device of asterisks at the end of each scene (a stratagem he employs in story after story). Not for Gustad the careful forging of connecting links, the boredom of working on seamless transitions. Such heroic labor is not for a tramp. He'd much rather dash off a film script.

Certainly, his work has the visuals and liquidity of cinematics. Exterior shots and interior shots are composed frame by frame. He is a cineaste. This is how he describes his encounter with four unfriendly immigration officers in Hong Kong: "It was almost surreal, what with the hot arc lights, the green amber walls, the stark minimalism of the room, and the three thin guys and the one fat one all pointing fingers. We are in a B-grade Italian neo-realist movie from the 50s — the kind that has subtitles spelled all wrong." His exterior shots are of beaches and streets — he has a Dickensian affair with streets. His interior shots are of slammers, stamp-

sized cubicles in brothels, sleazy bars, claustrophobic hospital rooms. His close-ups are of bath tubs, makeshift beds... and their denizens.

Talking of beds, we could say that Gustad's oeuvre — like that of the manic film director in 'A Woman on the Verge' — is women. Let's see: there's Meena who works the cages in Kamathipura and Angel whose ambition is to fly the world "on someone else's money" and Louisa who is "too perfect to love" and the legendary superstar Her who had "more lovers than an insomniac has sheep" and there is Bernadette and Camilla and the fat aunts... He loves them and leaves them. Because no one city can contain this questing, conquering brave...

Didn't Shaw say that a libertine was one who had a plurality of addresses? And what of one with no fixed address? Certainly the temptation to call him *aapro* Gustad must be resisted. For though he does once hint at his affiliation by referring to his mother's "immortalized recipe for *dhansakh* on Sunday afternoons," he quite vociferously repeats that he belongs nowhere. We have to respect that.

Just as we respect his concern for the poor and the disinherited. He rubs shoulders with them, he makes them visible. More. In his bum avatar he shares their vicissitudes. He has the human touch. What, for him, makes Paris Paris? "It is infected with humanity. A large, overabundant humanity that accepts even if it never understands. An invigorating, phantasmagoric humanity hanging across every clothesline, dancing over every rooftop, making love on every park bench and pew." (Yes, pews as in churches.)

This is how he writes of an Australian aboriginal town, "... a blunt mile long, frayed at the edges. Tin shacks with moth-eaten blankets for doors. A 1957 Holden pick-up with no license plates. Rusted through and through... White shirts hang with the dread of time and oppression, stained permanently by both. Heads are held low, eyes averted. Groups coalesce in corners. Little girls with ponytails. Young men clutching half-empty bottles, caressing, the touch like that of a lover, living between fortnightly dole checks, meted out with substantial guilt and rote, by governments in Canberra."

Perceptive, unsentimental, brash or even cynical his voice can be, yet he chooses to sing of the dirt and the dust

and the scum of the earth -- the panhandlers, the junkies, the homeless, the disfigured, the wannabes.

And what does Gustad want to be? A writer. Maybe like his guru Henry Miller. A good one. Then what seems a little odd about these stories is that while he tosses them off on the run, he finds time enough to brood on the figure he cuts as a writer. He dotes credulously on his own persona of the vagabond scribe. The danger here is that concern to remain centerstage can become more important than commitment to excellence.

His bounce and brio and audacity are very attractive. But with so much aplomb perhaps what he needs is a little private honesty which leaves him dissatisfied with trying to get away with mere bravado -- which he can, because of his ease with language.

But the attitudes he strikes also have something to do with exploring the ambiguities of a multiple identity: the tools he uses to pry himself open. Gustad does not own a single identity of birth, country, community. And with a growing awareness of cultures and sensibilities across the world, he must continue his posturing till he discovers who he really is.

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MILESTONES

This issue of *Parsiana* includes intercommunity marriages registered both at the Old Customs House and at the MHADA office in Bandra (East) for the four-month period of January to April 1998, in addition to the regular data that we collect from the Bombay High Court every month. However, names that could not be confirmed as Zoroastrian have been omitted from the list.

There were 17 intercommunity marriages plus two civil marriages between Zoroastrians registered at the Old Customs House, and 14 and one respectively, at the MHADA office.

The Chandanwadi crematorium registered 11 names of Zoroastrians between January and May 1998.

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as recorded at the Bombay High Court and listed in this issue) ranged between 21 and 33 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 26 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 23 and 34 years, averaging at 29 years.

As compared to 16 births, there were 96 Zoroastrians who were consigned to the Bombay

Towers of Silence in May. Thirty-six Zoroastrians fell prey to heart disease of whom 15 were above the age of 80. Pneumonia and lung disease took a toll of 10 lives and old age and general debility of seven. Brain disease and hypertension claimed five victims each, whereas cancer claimed four. The other killers were bronchitis and septicemia (three each) and cellulitis (an inflammation of connective tissue), diabetes, liver disease and malaria (two each). There were 17 isolated cases registered in May. They were: anemia, AIDS, asthma, anorexia (loss of appetite for food), 'acute myeloblastic crisis,' dementia, malnutrition, Parkinson's disease, filariasis (infestation with *Filaria*, a parasitic, thread-like worm), Alzheimer's disease, gastroenteritis, kidney failure, encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), pyrexia (elevation of the body temperature above normal), hemiplegia (paralysis of one side of the body), malarial fever and urinary tract infection. The youngest to breathe his last was a 15-year-old boy as compared to the oldest — a 98-year-old lady. A 36-year-old youth was also lost to the community. The

Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth, in Bombay in May, was 78 years.

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

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

February 23
Shamin Zazer Mugal and Dara Naval Patel; March 6
Shernaz Elavia and Kayomarz Palkhiwalla; March 20
Swati Moreswar Chavan and Porus Dinshaw Asha; March 23
Jini Shroff and Patrick Nick Heller; March 29
Mehr Homi Jesia and Arjun Amarjeet Rampal; April 2
Shireen Dara Karanjavala and Luigi Bisol; April 3
Anita B. Chatterjee and Firdaus Nariman Postwala; April 3
Farida B. Dubash and Vishal Y. Singh; April 5
Rupali Arte and Kaizzad Capadia; April 6
Anahita Jamshed Sunavala and Firoz Dinshaw Patel; April 12
Meher Burjor Medhora and Satyen Jitendra Dasondi; April 18
Mehnaz Kathawala and Shyam Jasani; April 20
Abha Virendra Sinha and Shahrugh Naval Patel; April 21
Kermeen Rusi Divecha and Parag Deepak Mehta; April 23
Manisha Govind Alshi and Burzin Dara Dadimaster; April 29
Khurshid Bozergchami and Tushar L. Mohit; April 30
Zenobia Nariman Khambatta and Khushru Noshir Avari; May 1
Pashmina Jehan Contractor and Mahyar Dadi Contractor; May 4
Farida Phiroze Khambata and Kobad Nariman Gheewala; May 4
Perviz Yezdi Batliwala and Carl Bomi Avari; May 8
Khushnam Shapurji Sidhwa and Delzad Bomi Mistry; May 10
Vahbeez Sam Calagopi and Soli Homi Karanjia; May 11
Cyrene Jamshed Bilimoria of Ooty and Farhad Sohrab Shahparast; May 11
Farida Hosi Kotwal and Neville Hosi Mehta; May 30
Farah Yazdi Bhesania and Zubin Rusi Fitter; May 31
Arnavaz Framroze Patel and Farhad Nariman Madon; May 31

BOMBAY

BORN

A boy to Armin and Rohinton Fatakia on April 25, 1998
A girl to Shirley and Rashid Kanga; May 1
A boy to Veera and Aspi Patel; May 5
A girl, Tanya, to Farida and Neville Patrawala; May 5
A boy to Pouruchisty and Adil Gazdar; May 10
A boy, Rohan, to Delna and Jamshed Mistry; May 11
A boy to Sharu and Malcolm Anjirbaug; May 12
A girl to Anahita and Bhagat Shivdasani; May 15
A boy to Parizad and Mehernosh Writer; May 18
A girl, Sharmin, to Zenobia and Kersi Engineer, sister to Jehan; May 20
A girl to Dilnaz and Kersi Machhi; May 21
A boy to Amy and Zarir Darbari; May 23

A girl, Azbana, to Zenobia and Neville Velati; May 23
A boy to Kernaaz and Adi Shroff; May 24
A girl to Jasmine and Neville Gandhi; May 27
A boy to Tehnaz and Karl Dhamodiwala; May 28

MARRIED

Parvatiben N. Kartharia and Aspi D. Mehta; January 8
Ghaver Jehangir Master and Xerxes Homi Buhariwala; January 9
Anuradha Chawdhary and Farhad Sorabjee; January 13
Sherry Rusi Dadimaster and Sylvester Chiang; January 15
Hneeta H. Behl and Afroz Jamshed Daruwalla; January 19
Shiraz Dhan Gheewala and Mehul Dinesh Shah; January 23
Gitika Bansal and Dennis Rustum Taraporewala;

January 25
Kabira Nisar Merchant and Percy P. Bhatporia; January 27
Gita Niranjana Patel and Kerman Kaikhushroo Mistry; January 28
Oona Soli Dhabhar and Abid Amirali Lalljee; January 30
Natasha Naasha Dastur and Parag Rameshchandra Goradia; February 1
Navaz Keki Pastakia and K. S. Shyamsunder; February 6
Rowhani D'Jena and Bakhtiar Sumavala; February 9
Etelvina Dias and Yezdi Doctor; February 12
Rukshana H. Bamboat and Bryan D'mello; February 13
Pervaz Mody and Ireland Spencer; February 13
Danish Karaka and Rohan Jathanna; February 16
Kashmira Sam Karkaria and Shriram Venkatraman;

DIED

Dolly Jal Irani (79), residing at Yusuf Chmbs, Opp Gloria Church, Byculla, 400027; March 26 (cremated)
Phiroze Ardeshir Baria (91), 2/18, Shanti Niketan, 11, Padamji Rd, 400004; March 31 (cremated)
Tehmina Homi Bharucha (85), C. C. I., Dinsha Wacha Rd, Churchgate, 400020; April 5 (cremated)
Khurshed Hormusji Vazir (50), 1/2, Zaoba Wadi, Thakurdwar, 400002; April 7 (cremated)
Burjor Behramji Dubash (72), Bueno Vista, Windy Hall Lane, Colaba, 400005; April 9 (cremated)
Betty I. Bhabha (83), Bhabha Hse, 12, Little Gibbs Rd, Malabar Hill, 400006; April 10 (cremated)
Rucy D. Collie (78), Puran Nivas, Arthur Bunder Rd, Colaba, 400005; April 15 (cremated)
Perin Minoo Gilder (90), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; April 30
Aloo Nariman Patel (74), 2/1, Parsi Agiary, 102, Dadyseth

Agiary Lane, 400002; April 30
Mancherji Shapurji Mehta (93), 3/6, Khan Est, M. M. C. Rd, Mahim, 400016; May 2
Soli Pirojshaw Doctor (70), 8/B, Patel Bldg, Marzban Clny, Gilder Lane, Lamington Rd, 400008; May 3
Goolbai Meherwan Irani (88), Sir J. J. Dharamshala, J. Behram Boman Rd, Nagpada, 400008; May 3
Piroja Jamshedji Maney (98), 1, Mehta Bldg, Khan Est, M. M. C. Rd, Mahim, 400016; May 3
Hormez Pesi Patel (36), 4-B/17, Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; May 3
Jehangirji Rustomji Bagwalla (97), 676, Fareedon Ter, Katrak Rd, Wadala, 400031; May 4
Katayoon Homi Hormuzdi (57), 34/A, Elco Arcade, 46, Hill Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; May 4
Khorshed Hoshang Billimoria (66), 7/C, Old Wadia Bldg, Chandanwadi, 400002; May 5
Freny Daraius Desai (84), A/3, Banoo Mans, Cumballa Hill, 400036; May 5

Sabar Behram Dharwar (68), 25/2, Malegamwalla Bldg, M. M. C. Rd, Mahim, 400016; May 5
Bucha Phiroz Dubash (97), 1, Ark Royal, 50, Peddar Rd, 400026; May 5
Murazban Jamshed Irani (75), D. Dinbai Petit Bldg, Balaram St, 400007; May 5
Tehmina Pestonji Wadia (89), 5/1, Malegamwalla Bldg, M. M. C. Rd, Mahim, 400016; May 5
Soli Pherozeshah Daruwalla (80), Waghela Cooper Bldg, Khetwadi 12th Lane, 400004; May 6
Rhoda Adal Parakh (75), Ben Nevis, B. Desai Rd, 400036; May 6 (cremated)
Shirin Ardeshir Vakil (97), Windmere, Cuffe Parade, Colaba, 400005; May 6
Cyrus Rohinton Daboo (15), Dr Engineer Bldg, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; May 7
Cawas Dhunjishah Mistry (69), 29, Jame Jamshed Bldg, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 7
Tehmina Rustomji Mistry (87), 4/G, S. B. Bharucha Bldg, Andheri (W), 400058; May 7

Silloo Darabsha Dubash (74), 2/3, Lady Dorab Tata Bldg, Tata Blocks, S. V. Rd, Bandra, 400050; May 8
Polly Dinshawji Surti (69), B. Reward, Tardeo Rd, 400007; May 8
Dhun Faredun Umrigar (84), 785/C, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 8
Nargesh Faramroze Bharucha (75), A-2/22, New Khareghat Clny, Babulnath Rd, 400007; May 9
Rani Edulji Colabawalla (87), 786, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 9
Rustom Kaikhusroo Irani (80), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; May 9
Dolly Eruch Mohta (66), 3, Baria Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; May 9
Nergesh Burjorji Chhapger (74), Zoroastrian Bldg, Khan Block, Golanji Hill Tank Rd, Parel, 400012; May 10
Godrej Pirojsha Wadia (48), Old Wadia Chawl, Dhobitalao, Chandanwadi, Princess St, 400002; May 10
Pervez Rustom Alpaiwalla (66), 8/55, Shyam Nivas, B. Desai Rd, 400026; May 11

With Best Wishes From

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

and

Mrs Purviz R. Shroff

Noshir Rustomji Patel (67),
32/A, Nowroz Baug, Dr S. S.
Rao Rd, Lalbaug, 400012;
May 11

Daisy Meherji Arsiwalla (83),
B, Botawalla Bldg, Raghavji
Rd, Gwalia Tank, 400036;
May 12

Bahadur Jehangir Balsara
(62), 63/D, Station Ter,
Sleater Rd, 400007; May 12
Jer Minoo Billimoria (77),
804/C, Ratty Lodge, Dr
Ambedkar Rd, Parsi Clny,
Dadar, 400014; May 12

Jaloo Munchershaw Damania
(70), Manibai Bhavan,
Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004;
May 13

Ruby Keki Rana (62), 2/175,
Vivekanand Hsg Soc,
Saraswat Clny, Guru Mandir
Rd, Dombivali (E), 421203;
May 13

Soli Pirojshah Bacha (71),
D-1/8, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd,
400004; May 14

Piroja Jehangir Irani (83),
Homai-Abad, 240, Linking
Rd, Bandra (W), 400050;
May 14

Khorshed Jal Jussawalla (84),
R/13, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd,
400039; May 14

Noshir Rustomji Titina (69),
6/3-A, Ashoka Apts, Arthur
Bunder Rd, 400005; May 14
Shera Faredoon Khambatta
(84), Jehangir Mans, 73/3,
Hughes Rd, 400007; May 15
Nargesh Firoze Nanavati (92),
Banoo Manor, Dadysheh 2nd
Cross Lane, Babulnath,
400007; May 15

Jer Ratanshaw Panthaki (73),
654, Society Bldg, Firdausi
Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar,
400014; May 15

Jehangir P. Patel (93),
Goolestan, Cuffe Parade,
Colaba, 400005; May 15
(cremated)

Nasarwanji Pestonji Patel
(83), 3, Rustom Baug,
Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027;
May 15

Mehroo Framji Sidhwa (83),
Regal Theatre Flat, Apollo
Pier Rd, 400039; May 15
Framroze Cursetji Broacha
(97), 2/E, Wassiamull Bldg,
Charni Rd Junction, 400007;
May 16

Russi Savaksha Cooper (83),
36/B, Sarita Apts, B. J. Rd,
Bandra, 400050; May 16
Ami Behramshah Damri (92)
3, Sea Breeze Annexe, 50,

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*						
	Bombay		India		World	
	This issue	1998*	This issue	1998*	This issue	1998*
BIRTHS						
Boys	9	39	—	—	6	21
Girls	7	33	—	4	1	8
MARRIAGES						
Parsi	13	124	—	3	1	4
INTERCOMMUNAL						
Males married out	14	14	—	1	—	—
Females married out	17	17	1	1	—	—
DEATHS						
CONSIGNED						
Males	44	201	18	54	1	15
Females	54	222	15	42	2	17
CREMATED						
Males	7	7	—	—	—	—
Females	4	4	—	—	—	—

*Running totals for 1998 (January-June issues)

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.

Bullock Rd, Bandra (W),
400050; May 16
Mehra Faredoon Mehta (89),
Windsor Villa, 1, Westfield
Est, B. Desai Rd, 400026;
May 16

Feroze Dinshaw Doctor (72),
Jer Villa, 314, Linking Rd,
Khar, 400052; May 17
Merwan Jehangir Irani (50),
Meher Mans, Jamshedji Petit
St, Balaram St, 400007;
May 17

Jalu Boman Bamboat (89),
Ravindra Mans, Dinshaw
Vatcha Rd, Churchgate,
400020; May 19
Shera Fakirji Bhansali (87),
3/4, Panthaki Baug, Andheri
(E), 400069; May 19

Bahadur Hormusji Palsetia
(84), 2nd Victoria Cross Rd,
P. O. Victoria Gardens,
Byculla, 400027; May 19
Hormazdiar Khodadad Sabza
(79), Zainabadi Baug, Anand
Rd, Deolali Camp, Deolali,
422401; May 19

Rustom Adeshir Bharucha
(74), Jame Jamshed Bldg,
Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
May 20

Minoo Shavaksha Daver (77),
Appa Baug Est, 41, M. Karve
Rd, 400002; May 20
Eruchshaw Hormasji Divecha

(94), 22, Contractor Bldg,
Sussex Rd, Byculla, 400027;
May 20
Aspi Kaikhushru Master (59),
307/C-2, Hari Om Apts, S. V.
Rd, Borivli (W), 400092;
May 20

Dhunnai Bahdurji Udwadia
(84), 1, Avabai Petit St,
Balaram St, 400007; May 20
Aloo Shapoorji Desai (85), 8,
Meherbai Wadia Bldg, Wadia
St, Tardeo, 400034; May 21
Kunzy Phiroze Murzban (69),
22, Colaba Chmbs, Colaba
Rd, 400005; May 21

Bomi Cavasji Pardiwala (49),
7, Hirabai Petit Bldg, Opp
Grant Rd Stn, 400007; May 21
Framrose Nasserwanji

Sachinwala (92), 16,
Vibhavan, 4 Bglws, Andheri
(W), 400058; May 21
Dina Rustomji Dadina (87),
Petit Widows' Chawl, Modi
St, 400001; May 22

Goola Kaikhushroo Tata (94),
A/10, Mehta Bldg, Captain
Clny, Tardeo, 400034; May 22
Ratan Ardesir Bacha (81),
Eddie Hse, Peddar Rd,
400026; May 23 (cremated)
Najamai Framroze Bativala
(82), 16/3, Mamoon Manzil,
Balaram St, Grant Rd,
400007; May 23

Pesi Rustomji Bhajiwalla (53),
1/D, Ambawadi, Mathar
Pakhadi Cross Lane,
Mazgaon, 400010; May 23
Sheroo Pestonji Bilimoria
(75), A/213, Yusuf Mans, 204,
Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004;
May 23

Viller Nadirshah Billimoria
(76), New Khan Bldg,
Chikalwadi, Tardeo, 400007;
May 23

Mehru Hoshang Golvala (80),
779, Daruvala Hse, M. Joshi
Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar,
400014; May 23

Perin Minoo Sopariwalla
(72), O/10, S. Bharucha Baug,
S. V. Rd, Andheri (W),
400058; May 23

Jer Burjor Gai (74), 14,
Varsha Sangam, Chakala Rd,
Andheri (E), 400099; May 24
Soli Mancherna Karanjia (72),
Namdar Hse, Opp Bandra
Police Stn, Bandra, 400050;
May 24

Minoo Sorabji Daruwalla (80),
275/C, Chothia Bldg,
Chikalwadi, 400007; May 25
Minoo Kolabhai Medhora
(78), A/3, Shapur Baug, V. P.
Rd, 400004; May 25
Firoze Dara Vakil (78), At &
PO Dahanu, Dist Thane,
401601; May 25

Shera Minoo Bhamgara (72), Bhiwandiwalla Ter, Dhobitalao, 400002; May 26
Gini Naserwanji Engineer (83), 614, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 26
Jehangir Behramji Irani (75), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; May 26
Parviz Homi Kapadia (81), 161, Silver Arch, 66, Nepean Sea Rd, 400006; May 26
Homi Sorabji Masani (63), 19, Malagaonwalla Bldg, Old Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; May 26
Jal Ardeshir Kapadia (83), Dadachanji Bldg, Marazban Clny, Opp Nair Hosp, 400008; May 27
Minoocher Rustom Masani (92), Breach Candy Apts, Bhulabhai Desai Rd, 400026; May 27 (cremated)
Jal Shapurji Nargolwalla (65), 42/18, Manish Kaveri, Andheri, 400058; May 27
Daisy Jal Pardiwalla (76), 111-B, Diamond Court, 14, Nepean Sea Rd, 400036; May 27
Khorshed Godrej Dastoor (77), E-12/4, Godrej Hill Qtrs, Vikhroli, 400079; May 28
Khorshed Bomanji Khambatta (76), G-1/3, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; May 28
Darabshaw Munchershaw Aspar (65), 1/1, Parsi Anjuman Bldg, Parsi St, Kalyan, 421301; May 29
Boman Ardeshar Avasia (75), Marine Mans, 400002; May 29
Hilla Pirojshaw Bulsara (89), Kohiyar Bldg, Dhuswadi, Dhobitalao, 400002; May 29
Pesi Dhunjishaw Colabawala (68), K/24, 4th St, Fort, 400001; May 29
Feeroz Dhunjishaw Haradhwala (78), B/4, Kerawalla Bldg, Tata Blocks, S. V. Rd, Bandra, 400050; May 29
Erach Rustom Irani (74), Rustom Court, Worli, 400025; May 29
Tehmi Homi Mistry (82), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; May 29
Tehmina Maneckji Behramkamdin (80), C/o Gool H. Behramkamdin, 674, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 30

Daulat Tehmuras Sanjana (65), 62, Tardeo Court, 251, Tardeo Rd, 400007; May 30
Vera Noshir Daver (94), 759, Gulab-Simon Vihar, Rd 7, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 31
Soona Kaikhushroo Mistry (67), F/16, Contractor Baug, Mori Rd, Mahim, 400016; May 31

CALCUTTA

MARRIED

Roxshana Sarosh Bahadurji and Arijit Mukherji; April 12

DIED

Rustom Hormusji Tangri; May 24
Sorab Jehangir Tata, brother of Pillan Elavia, Mani Khambatta, Dolly Katrak, Homai Munshi and Russi; May 30
Jimmy Sorabji Italia, brother of Kaikobad; May 31

JHANSI

DIED

Framroz K. Bhagat, 142, Chaman Ganj, Sipri Bazar, 284001; May 25

POONA

DIED

Jer Rustomji Pochara (83), 696, Taboot St, 411001; April 1
Khurshed Burjorji Mama (84), 3, Winchester Hse, 55-6/1, Salisbury Park, 411037; April 4
Homi Munchersha Satha (79), B-601/I, Thakkar Apts, 411001; April 7
Sarah Dara Mugaseth (94), 1, Parvati Villa Cottage, 411040; April 20
Khodadad Rustom Irani (72), 5, Sir Maneckji Mehta Rd, 411001; April 24
Freny Vistas Patel (44), 5/10, Konark Ngr I, Nagar Rd; May 1
Perin Sarosh Aghazadeh (92), E-7, Konark Puram, 411040; May 9
Homayun Kaikhushroo Irani (87), 1340, Rajaram Bldg, Shivaji Ngr, 411040; May 9
Gool Homi Charna (80), 102, Bhatnagar Homes, Opp Konark Puram, 411048; May 10
Perin Noshir Dorabjee (72), 13/8/6, Kubera Park, 411040; May 20
Hilla Hormusji Master

(88), 4, Ardeshir Baug, Irani Rd, 411002; May 26
Tehmasp Rustom Sanjana (63), Opp Varqua School, Penta Compd, Ahmednagar, 414001; May 30

SECUNDERABAD

DIED

Sohrabji Bomanji Mehta (84); May 2
Avabai Behramji Chenoy (89), mother of Roshan Patel, Firoze and Jehangir; May 6

SURAT

DIED

Dolatbanu Eruchshaw Lakadawala (71), Alhaibaug, Rustompura, 395002; May 2
Ardeshir Palanji Mandviwala (82), Parsivad, Village Amroli; May 4
Framroze Piroshaw Postwala (71), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; May 4
Ratan Pirojshaw Elavia (53), Machlipith, 395003; May 7
Homai Meharwanji Bharucha (86), Machlipith, 395003; May 9
Dali Nariman Petigara (64), Shahpore, 395003; May 9
Tehmina Nadirsha Surati (79), Palia St, Nanpura, 395001; May 12
Dinsaji Savaksha Pajniwara (74), Unwala Bldg, Nanpura, 395001; May 13
Dinsaji Mancharsha Dalal (90), Adagra St, Nanpura, 395001; May 14
Naja Rattanshaw Vakil (Koyaji) (84), Adagra St, Nanpura, 395001; May 15
Cooverbai Barjorji Engineer (94), Nagina St, Rander, 395005; May 16
Motamai Noshirvan Variava (92), Joshi Block, Shahpore, 395003; May 17

Manacksha Eruchsha Bangali (64), Alhaibaug, Rustompura, 395002; May 18
Khushroo Pirojsha Elavia (56), Vankibordi, 395003; May 20
Koomi Barjorji Hosotia (76), Telephone Ngr, Jalgaon, 425001; May 22
Sam Jahagirji Kapadia (63), Athvalines, 395001; May 22

CANADA Ontario

BORN

A boy, Sinclair Pheroze John,

to **Kimberley and Pheroze Jeejeebhoy**, brother to Zenobia; April 14
A boy, Riaan, to Binaifer and Rustom Mirza; April 28

Toronto

DIED

Hira Keki Contractor, mother of Perin Khushroo Katrak and Dinoo Benjamin Taylor-Baptiste; April 21
Sabar Erach Patel, mother of Saker Anklesaria and Poras; April 22

UK

Surrey

DIED

Khushru Dosabhoy Vesuna (82), Purley View Nursing Home, Brighton Rd, Purley; March 10

USA

Atlanta

MARRIED

Parisa Khoshravi, daughter of Parvin and Ardeshir, and **Goodarz Bozorgechami**; April 11

Maryland

BORN

A girl, Jessica, to Benaifer and John Devine, sister to Sarah; April 2

Washington

BORN

A boy, Alexander, to Kashmiri and Farhad Bharucha; January 13
A boy, Zain, to Cathy and Cyrus Banji, brother to Jahan; January 16
A boy, Rushad, to Pervin and Yezdi Antia, brother to Avan; February 26
A boy, Aurash, to Mina and Sohrab Aidun; March 26

Compiled by Roxana A.Driver

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The queen of caterers

Parinaz M. Gandhi

Died: Freny Rohinton Godiwalla, 57, reputed Parsi caterer, on February 25, 1998 in Bombay following cardiac arrest.

When conductor Zubin Mehta wanted his orchestra to enjoy the taste of traditional Parsi fare last year, it was the Godiwallas who were entrusted with the menu. When the cream of society was invited to a sit-down dinner as part of the Godrej centenary celebrations, it was once again the Godiwallas who catered to the international palate. These are but two of the major assignments undertaken by the Godiwallas recently, credit for which is due to Freny Godiwalla who, despite being confined to a wheelchair, was able to satisfy varied needs.

In fact, even on the day of her funeral, the family ensured that the function for which they had accepted the catering contract was made memorable for the hosts. "The show must go on," she had impressed upon her family time and again, recalls the younger daughter Tanaz. "She'd place a client next to God," in the view of her son Neville, recollecting how she had once enjoined him to shoulder a catering responsibility when he was in hospital, telling him that he could always return to the hospital bed once the job was accomplished. The dedication that she had towards her work, she expected from her children too.

Always wearing a smile on her round face as she enquired into the personal preferences of the guests, her public relations were perfect, acknowledged various sources. She "must have been a great source of inspiration as she was so creative and devoted to her work and family," noted the condolence letter by Perveez Aggarwal, joint managing director of DBS Corporate Services.

Vice Admiral Rusi Ghandhi described her as "a great person with a large heart and devoted to our Parsi community," expecting her demise to be a loss not only to the family but "to all Parsis who knew her."



Godiwalla: "the show must go on"

Known to be pro-Parsi, she was a conservative at heart who felt obliged to observe the community customs and rituals, mentions her son. For herself, she had stipulated that all prayers should be stopped a year following her demise. Just as she had taken care to specify that she would like lovely but few flowers at her uthamna alternating with 33 divas, she had instructed that lots

of biscuits be fed to the dogs at Doongerwadi. She was known to have been attached to her pet pomeranian.

Although she had undergone a bypass surgery 10 years ago and her leg had to be amputated one and a half years ago due to high diabetes, Godiwalla's death came as a surprise. She was on the job the preceding night with no complaints barring fatigue on the morning of February 25.

Regular supervision and customer satisfaction were uppermost to Freny and husband Rohinton who had to put in a lot of hard work to gain recognition as caterers. As related by Neville, his late father worked in the docks as a foreman earning a salary of Rs 150 when he married 19-year-old Freny (daughter of Alamai and Erachshaw Bhathena). They fell in love when Rohinton was tutoring her in mathematics during her last year of school at Bombay's Gloria Convent. Freny went to St Xavier's College but did not complete her graduation as son Neville was born the year following their marriage.

To supplement his meagre salary, Rohinton started catering, being first associated with the Renown Bakery at

Fort. Later he ran canteens for the Grindlays Bank, the Parsi Gymkhana, Cusrow Baug. The turning point for them was the outdoor catering jobs that they accepted. Due to their full-time commitment and involvement, "there were times when the children never saw their parents for 25 to 30 days. They would leave house early in the morning when the children were yet asleep and come home at night, well past bedtime," mentions a family source.

Advising the children to use their well-earned wealth wisely, Freny had stated, "You (may) not imagine how many storms we have faced; how many heartburns, unhappiness and disappointments in order to amass this wealth."

There had been occasions for rejoicing too when they became celebrated caterers once Chandan Patel reposed in them the confidence to handle the Parsi fare at a celebration which was to be graced by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her immediate family.

Neither Rohinton nor Freny had been professionally trained at a catering institute. "To serve *saas ni machhi* and *pulao dal*, you don't need professional training," Neville is convinced, giving credit to his mother, sister Tanaz and himself for constantly experimenting with various ingredients which enables them to introduce new dishes.

Besides catering to the upmarket clients Freny was also concerned about the welfare of the less fortunate and for years she used to send food at concessional cost to the School for Children in Need of Special Care at Sewri run by Jai Vakil. More than institutional support, she believed in personal charity, extending help to innumerable families in distress, states Neville.

With her zest for life, Freny enjoyed visiting interesting sites in the course of her travels around the world, and more importantly, serving and eating good food.

The gourmet is survived by her son Neville, and daughters Roxanne, who is a financial consultant in Paris, and Tanaz.

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