

પાર્શ્વદર્શક

FEBRUARY 2002 Rs 35



Chief Justice of India
Sam Bharucha
Supreme Court Judge
Sam Variava



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Where movement is a science

Parsiana

February 2002
Volume 24 Number 7

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Parsiana is edited and published by Jehangir R. Patel for Parsiana Publications Pvt Ltd at 300 Perin Nariman Street, Bombay 400001 and printed by him at Kaiser-E-Hind Pvt Ltd, A-191, Road No 16A, MIDC, Wagle Industrial Estate, Thana (W), 400604. All rights reserved. Processing Comart Lithographers. Editorial enquiries: 2078183. Advertising: 2078104, 2072915. Subscription: 2665661, 2662709. General: 2078730, 2072624. Fax: 2074541, 2075572. Press: 5804162. E-mail: parvo@giabm01.vsnl.net.in parsiana@yahoo.com parsiana@vsnl.net For subscription enquiries and payments: C/o Kaiser-E-Hind Pvt Ltd, 300 Perin Nariman Street (Behind Reserve Bank of India), Bombay 400001. ISSN: 0971-3786.

Annual inland subscription for one year (12 issues) Rs 400; for two years (24 issues) Rs 750; for three years (36 issues) Rs 1,100. Foreign subscription rates: Seamount for one year Rs 675/ US \$ 15/UK £ 10/Euro 17; for two years Rs 1,250/US \$ 28/UK £ 19/Euro 32; for three years Rs 1,900/US \$ 41/UK £ 29/ Euro 48 (please allow six months or more for seamount delivery from the time of publication). Airmail for one year Rs 950/US \$ 21/ UK £ 14/ Euro 24; for two years Rs 1,800/US \$ 40/UK £ 27/Euro 45; for three years Rs 2,700/US \$ 60/ UK £ 40/Euro 68. For Indian upcountry cheques add Rs 20 for bank charges; for US cheques add \$ 5; for UK cheques add £ 3; for Euro cheques add Euro 5. Cheques and drafts are to be drawn in favor of Parsiana.



In 1978, with a view to boost the interest of non-Parsi spouses of Parsi members in the affairs and activities of the Anjuman, they were even enrolled as members of the Anjuman with all benefits of membership including voting rights, on the specific condition that such non-Parsi spouse members shall not be entitled to the use of the Anjuman's fire-temple, or to burial in the Anjuman's aramgah, or to be elected as a trustee of the Anjuman. The rules of the Anjuman were amended accordingly. Their children are entitled to the Anjuman's scholarships. Further the children of non-Parsi mothers and Parsi fathers were allowed to enter the Dar-e-Meher, provided that the navjotes of such children have been duly performed.

In the light of the above explanation, the answer to the question should have accommodated the navjote clause for accurate information and proper understanding of the readers.

ZALNOWSHERWANJI

Former vice president, Delhi Parsi Anjuman

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

"True or False?"

I wish to invite your attention to the first question appearing in "True or False?" (*Parsiana*, December 2001). This pertains to permitting the children of Parsi mothers married to non-Parsi fathers entry to the Kaikhushru Pallonji Katrak Dar-e-Meher in Delhi. Please note that the answer given to this question is not totally true. In fact, the Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) members have allowed admission to the children of Parsi mothers married to non-Parsi fathers only on the specific condition that the navjotes of such children have been duly performed. To make this issue clear, I may explain the related facts as follows:

Considering the growing trend of mixed marriages in the community all over the world and in order to keep the members of mixed marriages within the community fold, the DPA decided to allow them to participate in social and cultural functions of the Anjuman.

"The Nagpur incident"

Having read "The Nagpur incident," (*Parsiana*, November 2001) I'd like to add my voice from Toronto to the community's furore.

Ervad Marzban Hathiram's usage of the term "bastards" to describe the offspring of intercommunity marriages is inexcusable. Then again he makes a pathetic attempt to defend his position by offering a lamentable apology. To quote the scripture "that the greatest grief is caused to Ahura Mazda by the mingling of the seed of a Parsi Zoroastrian with that of a non-Parsi" sounds ridiculous and laughable. There are scores of far weightier, abhorrent issues vexing the world today which must cause the good Lord far more grief.

DINA AUSTIN

Ontario, Canada

I wish to take the liberty of replying to Ervad Marzban Hathiram's response in justifying the use of the word "bastard," for children born of intercommunity marriages ("The Nagpur incident," *Parsiana*, November 2001).

To begin with, it must be made clear that, whereas Zoroastrianism is a religion, the word Parsi refers to a sect of that religion living in India who have

since introduced a lot of Hindu customs in our Parsi traditions and ceremonies, but which have nothing to do with Zoroastrianism. There were no Parsis in Iran. It appears that Hathiram has mixed up the two terminologies. One can be a Zoroastrian without being a Parsi.

Hathiram states that the Zoroastrian religion does not recognize any marriage except those between descendants of Parsi Zoroastrians. In his defence he quotes the *Avesta*, *Vendidad* and Pahlavi texts. There is nothing in our true religious scriptures like the *Gathas*, as taught by Zoroaster, to this effect.

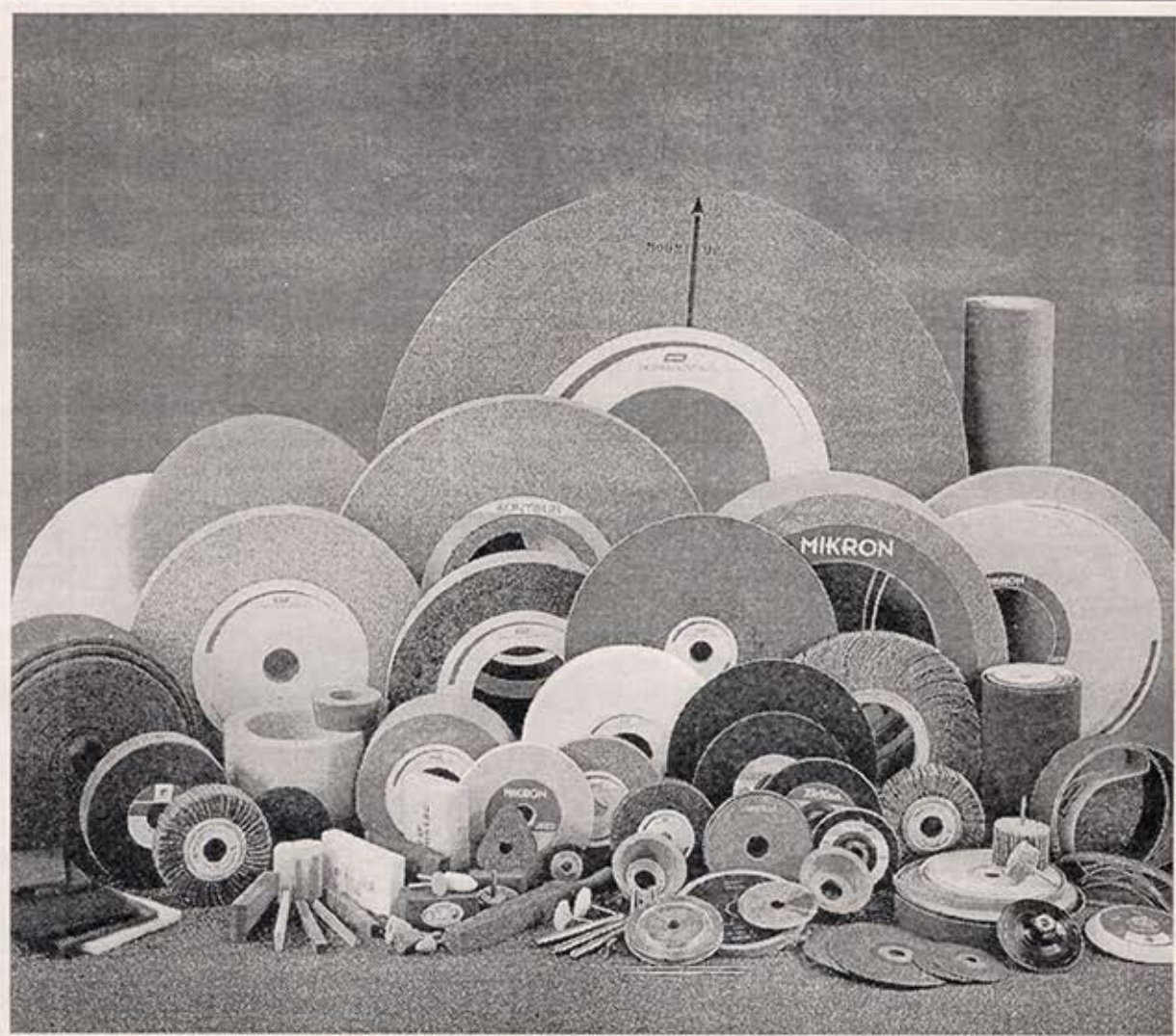
Hathiram then goes on to say that we are the descendants of the 2,000 Aryan men and women who left Iran to come to India to preserve our unique identity. Even by basic schoolboy arithmetic, one cannot visualize how we could have managed at one time to grow to a population of nearly two lakhs by procreation within our own fold only. More than 40 percent of our pure Aryan Parsi community has Hindu blood in it. Even with my fair skin I believe I have also some mixed blood in me, but am not ashamed of it.

Hathiram says that even amongst the Christians (only the Catholics) the Church does not recognize marriages outside its denomination. This may be true, but children of such marriages are not called "bastards" but are made Catholics, as they are all legitimate as per the civil law of the land, and enjoy all its privileges and freedom. We should also do the same, accept such children into the Zoroastrian fold if they wish to do so.

Hathiram forgets that in any country, the law of the land always supercedes the law of any religion, and that applies to marriages as well. In the past, Parsis have always been proud to be Indians first and then one of its various religious denominations, and let us stay that way.

It is bad enough that the dakhma issue has raised a lot of bigotry problems which has made us the laughing-stock of the world. However, this was contained within the Parsis and it didn't affect any other community. On the other hand, the bigoted statements made by Hathiram at Nagpur have a far-reaching ramification in that it will unnecessarily antagonize other communities against us. Such statements

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must be condemned by all as it goes against the basic concept of the state policy of secularism.

Brig NOSHIR B. GRANT
Poona

I was both amazed and appalled to read "The Nagpur incident" (*Parsiana*, November 2001). Notwithstanding all the literary and religious clarifications given by the learned man of God on the usage and derivation of the word "bastard," I feel that as a guest speaker at the Gymkhana function, he should have used his sagacity (a quality normally associated with priesthood!) before making such an outrageous announcement. I sometimes wonder if a similar outlandish remark would have ensued had a late dynamic prime minister of the country or a departed pioneer of civil aviation in India attended such a function! Would these 'greats' also have been peremptorily banished to the confines of illegitimacy being the offspring of intercommunity marriages? That would call for real guts and an absolute courage of conviction.

People of my generation constantly find fault with our youngsters in the community for using swearwords at the drop of a hat. Why not, when they have such role models to emulate? Such outbursts by members of the clergy reek of a form of Talibanization and do not augur well for the community.

SOLICANTEENWALA

I am neither a Zoroastrian scholar nor a dogmatic believer. To me good thought, good word and good deed are the tenets of our religion — simple and straight! Therefore, I am deeply shocked and repulsed at the usage of the word "bastard" by none other than a priest himself! Sad indeed is our plight if we have such a spokesman for the teachings of Lord Zarathushtra. A man who can't realize the derogatory meaning of a word used cannot be a *dharampita* (protector of the religion). Shame, is the word that comes to my mind. No amount of justification in the form of dictionary meaning, or disobeying the commandment of our religion, can ever allow anyone, and least of all a priest, to call anyone by that name!

The utterance of that single word has literally unlegitimized the whole *Parsi kom*. Every single Parsi family today has mixed marriages, and this has been going on since centuries. Does this mean

all of us are the recipients of that title? Unfortunately *Parsiana* had to give us this sordid episode of Nagpur, along with the awesome dedicated work of a Parsi doctor, Firuza Parikh who incidentally is married outside our pure community.

See the light, Parsis. Don't get bogged down by the darkness of bigoted minds.

RODA D. HAKIM
Baroda

"Disawalla's dismissal"

You have rightly given coverage in the November 2001 issue of *Parsiana* to the highhanded and disputable action by the Bangalore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman (BPZA) in expelling its senior member, Dr M. D. Disawalla from its membership just because he espoused the cause of electric cremation in the present context.

The main thrust of my argument is against this arrogant action of the BPZA.

The dakhmenashini system is now outdated and unworkable, yet its continuation has been propagated by false and unsubstantiated propaganda by the high priests and the religious fundamentalists with ulterior motives.

The rule 4.1 under which Disawalla has been expelled from the membership of BPZA is subservient to the fundamental right of freedom of expression under the Constitution of India.

Dr P. D. SUNAVALA

"In search of unity"

Your editorial in the November issue of *Parsiana* ("In search of unity") seems to confirm what our high priests and a large number of community members have feared for the last one year, namely that the dakhmenashini controversy was only a beginning aimed at triggering off a concentrated attack on the religion.

To depict religion as mere tradition and custom (as your editorial suggests) is by itself objectionable. If the line between what is Zoroastrian and un-Zoroastrian seems blurred today, it is only because it is deliberately sought to be made so by those who have personal agendas to promote. The tenets of the religion are unchanging and very clear to those who believe in and follow the religion as it was revealed.

Instead of wanting to emulate the practices of other religions, shouldn't one try to learn about, understand and follow one's own? Ignorance about our religion has already led us astray in so

many ways. If only the time and effort expended in fighting for rights to use community properties were used in gaining knowledge about our religion and understanding our prayers, then the religion would not be misunderstood the way it is today and none of the queries raised in your editorial would arise.

Those who do not accept the religion (rites and rituals included) are free to follow their own path. Please leave alone what is sacred to us.

TANNAZPARAKH

"If you opt for cremation"

I have read with interest the item "If you opt for cremation" (Events and Personalities, *Parsiana*, November 2001).

Some of us in Vashi are in our 80s and would be truly glad to have details of similar facilities which might exist in New Bombay towns like Vashi, Nerul, Belapur, etc. No mobed, let alone an agiary, is available and we would like to know the name and address of the nearest person who would be willing to pray in a private location for the few Zoroastrian families or individuals residing there. We come under a different police commissioner and a different corporation from those of Bombay and the hassles of bringing a dead body to Bombay (at a very wrong juncture) are considerable and we are left with no option but cremation in the nearest crematorium.

DHUN K. BANKER

Vashi

"BVS Millennial Shield"

I was delighted to read about my alma mater, the Bai Virbaiji Soparivala (BVS) Parsi High School in Karachi ("BVS Millennial Shield," Zoroastrians Abroad, *Parsiana*, November 2001) winning the Millennial Shield 2000 as the best private boys' school in Karachi. Being a Virbaijiite (class of '56) I was proud to read how well the School continues to excel in academics as well as in character building.

Behram Rustomji (popularly known as Behli Master) took over as the principal of this illustrious institution in 1946. Behli Master's acumen as an educator and administrator was soon put to test when within a year the nation of Pakistan came into existence, resulting in the influx of non-Parsi students eventually exceeding the Parsi student population. Behli Master stayed on his charted course and did not compromise the School's high academic standards

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or the Zarathushti values upon which it was founded. The result was that BVS quickly came to the Board of Education's attention as a school with exceptional discipline, high scholarship and rich curricular programs — a tradition that continues even today. During his 19-year tenure, Behli Master placed BVS on the world map as international dignitaries, academicians, entrepreneurs and ambassadors became frequent visitors to the School. The visitors were amazed to experience a private school in a third world country whose standards were comparable to any in the West.

My association with the current principal — the fourth generation of the founder's family — Deena M. Mistry (lovingly known in the Karachi community as Dinoo Aunty) began 52 years ago as a student taking tutorials. Dinoo Aunty with her devotion and perseverance over the last 29 years as principal has taken the School to higher excellence and many leading business executives and government officials are proud Virbaijiites. Both Behli Master and Dinoo Aunty are crown jewels of the Karachi Parsi community. Thousands of successful Virbaijiites in Hafta Keshwar Zamin are eternally indebted to both for their love of teaching, foresight, dedication and guidance "Towards That Best Light."

SHAHROKH MEHTA
Syracuse, New York

"Zoroastrianism enjoins..."

My congratulations on the bold step your magazine took to expose bigotry in our community ("Zoroastrianism enjoins conversion," *Parsiana*, October 2001). We need more people with a spine to stand up to the so-called learned Goliaths.

FARIDA BAMJI
Ottawa, Canada

AZA clarifications

The articles "The need to nurture" and "Dissent in Sydney," (Zoroastrians Abroad, *Parsiana*, September 2001) about the Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA) based in Sydney need some clarifications.

The first article reviews several issues about AZA, one of which was the Secret Women's Business (SWB) workshop held in Sydney to assess and review social and cultural needs of the community. The nine-page report contained a page of statistical analysis from

the responses obtained from the participants. Statistics reported in your article relating to the social issues faced by our community states, and I quote, "Though only 43 of the women who attended responded to the questionnaire... Alcoholism, drugs, physical abuse and homosexuality were faced by about 30 percent of the respondents."

There are two relevant issues involved — the sample size and what was the actual question asked. The sample size of only 43 (as mentioned in your article) out of an approximately 348 eligible adult women is not adequate considering the sensitive issues. But more important, much more important is the question asked. The actual question asked of the respondents in the SWB report was: "Do you believe that any of the following (social issues like alcoholism, drugs, divorce, etc) are of concern to AZA?" The response to this question elicited yes/no answers and 13 women (30 percent) said 'yes' for alcoholism, physical abuse and drugs, only nine women (21 percent) said 'yes' to homosexuality — not 30 percent as reported in *Parsiana*.

But what does all this mean? This response can be interpreted in a number of ways. Concern to AZA is a very general question and one's perception of a problem in the community therefore cannot be strictly equated (certainly not statistically) to "faced by" as is done in your article. There is a subtle difference and an important one. Interestingly for the other issues like intermarriage, divorce, unemployment, etc, you chose not to give any statistics, but an observation like "were seen to be the overriding problems," although intermarriage and divorce scored as high as 81 percent and 67 percent respectively, as concerns by the members!

The AZA through the SWB project has taken a very bold step to examine and identify social issues perhaps facing some in the community. The direction of this effort was only to identify the issues. Unfortunately the statistical part should not have been included in the report, especially due to the ambiguity of the question and the inadequate sample size.

Most of the social issues identified in the report are not unique to the AZA community but are worldwide phenomena facing society, irrespective of religious or ethnic backgrounds. Our effort should be to try and assist those people

who may require assistance and would welcome help, not to encroach on anybody's privacy.

The AZA is a dynamic, united (no factions or groups) Association actively pursuing to preserve our religion and culture. Sunday school for kids, adult discussion groups, Gujarati language classes (Persian language classes to recommence soon), jashans, ghambars, Parsi and Persian festival functions, sports, Parsi *nataks* (plays), etc are regular features. Members take passionate and active interest in issues which results in healthy and constructive discussions at annual general and other meetings. Of course different opinions are freely expressed by members as in a normal democratic society, before a final vote is taken (the word dissent used in your article was a bit harsh, I thought). Let me also assure your readers that the location of the AZA House does not impede participation by members, as reported in your article. In fact I am indeed intrigued by this statement, as the AZA House in the leafy suburb of Annangrove has stood on this site for almost 15 years. We fail to understand how the location is now posing a problem.

NOSHIR IRANI
President

Australian Zoroastrian Association, Sydney

Arnavaz Mama replies

Regarding the article "The need to nurture," the excerpted phrases raise questions which do not arise when the paragraph is read in its entirety, viz "Though only 43 of the women who attended responded to the questionnaire provided to them, the responses, as presented by Mistry in her report, are revealing. Intermarriage, the care of elderly parents, divorce, unemployment and child custody were seen to be the overriding problems, in the order listed. Alcoholism, drugs, physical abuse and homosexuality were faced by about 30 percent of the respondents. The women identified the need for doctors, social workers, counselors and lawyers, child support and AZA assistance." While we are happy to learn from you that there are 348 adult Zarathushti women in Sydney today, the article notes that 43 responses were received from the 70 women who attended the workshop. However, I stand corrected that nine women, not 13 (21 percent not 30 percent) said 'yes' to homosexuality.

Regarding the accessibility of AZA

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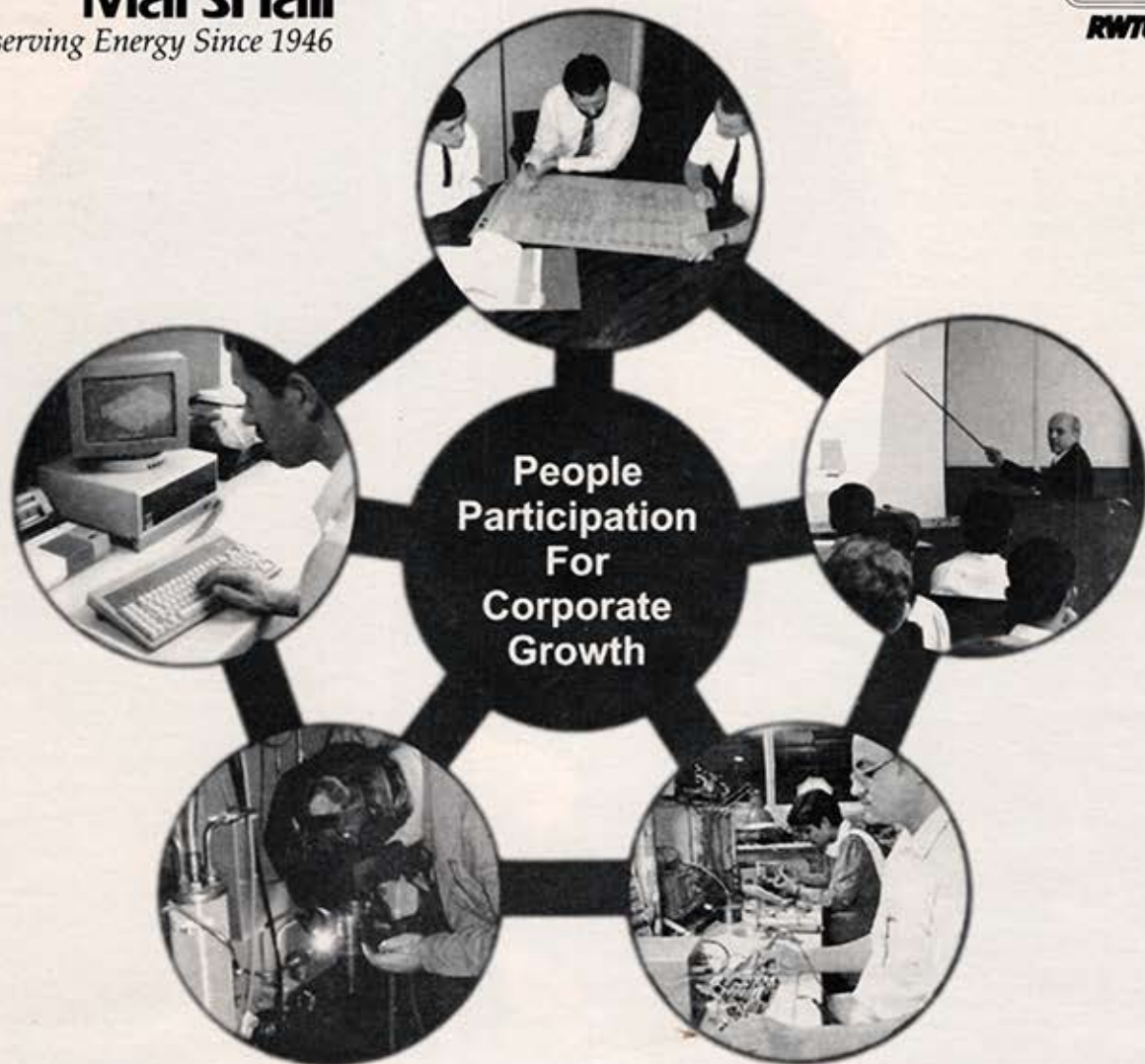
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House may we refer to the SWB report's identification of social, cultural and religious issues (page 4) where it is stated: "Geographical location of AZA and the subsequent travel restrictions imposed for many. No public transport. Isolation of members caused by the location of AZA House and the lack of transport."

Meditate, loving the vile

It is usually reasonably easy to love those who are possessed of attractive qualities. Zoroastrianism demands love of those who are vile. There was probably no time in Zoroastrian history when this was more difficult, since the moral culture of western societies today projects an optimistic view of human nature which is utterly unlike the way most people actually are. Yet the unfavorable contrast does not appear to upset the basic belief, now so widespread, that humanity is essentially good, and that individual men and women are so worthwhile that they deserve immortality. The last point is meant seriously. Zoroastrians have always followed the words of Zarathushtra himself in teaching that at the end of the world there is judgment, and that like the sheep and

the goats, the people of the world will be divided between the virtuous, or those aspiring with all their strengths to virtue, and the corrupt.

Today, however, there seems to be a strong tide flowing against discrimination of any kind — at least in the western world — when it comes to human worth; almost everyone who bothers to think about it, including probably a majority of believers in Zoroastrianism, suppose that everyone merits eternal life. A few rotten apples are left in the barrel: paedophiles and mass murderers — the demons singled out by the Press — racists and perhaps, drug dealers, have no place in the secular kingdom of the righteous. But in general western trained and western minded people are universalists, and the elevated estimate of human nature which now prevails will not allow for any statistically significant numbers to be destined for extinction.

When everyone is thought to be so lovely, how is it that real people, the people of everyday encounter, can be so awful? The contrast is left tantalizingly unrecognized. Zoroastrians, as a matter of religious belief, see humanity as deeply flawed: for them

love of the dreadful becomes a real discipline, a means of achieving growth in the moral attrition of familiar experience.

For the humanists, for whom men and women are doctrinally essentially good, the frequent confrontation with the plain evidence of the wrongness of their convictions appears undisturbing. So the awful characteristics of others become attributed to the chances of social conditioning. There also exists a large category of pathological moralists who are drawn either professionally

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Events and Personalities

Holiday restored

When the list of bank holidays for the year 2002 declared under the Negotiable Instruments Act did not include August 21, the Shahenshahi New Year commonly referred to as the Parsi New Year, many members of the community in India were upset. Not necessarily because they would be deprived of their traditional holiday festivities which usually start with a visit to the fire-temple in the morning, exchange of greetings and sweets during the day, a hearty repast in the afternoon followed by a visit to the movies or *natak* (play) in the evening and culminating with drinks and a dinner. They felt that the Parsis as a minority, despite their national contribution, were being overlooked by the government.

The general media carried letters expressing the wrath of some individuals. In one such letter in *The Indian Express*, Phiroze B. Javeri from Bombay wrote, "The contribution of Parsis in building our nation has not been sustained by sops offered by the government but by the goodness of our heart and a sense of duty toward the country we have made our home. The government will do as it pleases because the politicians who constitute it assume that the country belongs to them; Parsis believe that we belong to this country and we will continue to do what we should."

But the Maharashtra government did apparently accede to the "forceful plea" made to the chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh by Jamshed Guzder in his capacity as chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and president of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of India, according to a press release issued by the Punchayet. The holiday has been restored under a special notification issued by the General

Administration Department of the Government of Maharashtra, reports the Punchayet.

Conservation concerns

"Ninety-five percent of the trees planted worldwide die," said Martin Palmer, secretary-general, Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), an ecological movement set up under the patronage of Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, and the support of the World Wide Fund for Nature. Palmer was talking to core group members of ARC's Zoroastrian chapter, the Zoroastrian Alliance for Religion and Conservation (ZARC) at Godrej Bhavan in Bombay last December. ARC examines the synergy between the environment and religion and how each could assist the other. Palmer made this observation about the trees in response to the efforts made by the house of Godrej to distribute saplings to the public for planting.

Convener Pheroza Godrej observed that they had selectively distributed 64,000 saplings only to those people they

may not oversee their survival. Palmer lauded the efforts stating, "It's not about numbers, it's about survival."

Another participant in the meet, scholar-teacher Khojeste Mistree noted that 2,200 trees have been planted at Doongerwadi over a 16-month period, thanks to the efforts of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) and the house of Godrej. "The forest around the dakhmas is the best place we have anywhere in Bombay," said Mistree. He noted that certain species of ants and butterflies that had disappeared from the Western Ghats were found at Doongerwadi. In an effort to preserve water, drip irrigation was being introduced at Doongerwadi. He termed the greening of Doongerwadi "a success story so far." BPP trustee Silloo Kavarana mentioned the efforts of the Doongerwadi committee to beautify the grounds. Mistree and his wife Firoza spoke of efforts to plant bawal trees on community lands in Palghar, Talasari, Ahmedabad and Dahanu.

Phiroze Illava of Mhow spoke of work undertaken by the Lions Club and other organizations to conserve water and related some of the ancient customs of storing rain water in manmade storage tanks. At a personal level he noted that he had a bucket bath once every two days instead of a shower to conserve water.

While lauding his intentions Mistree pointed out that what Illava was doing was doctrinally wrong as a Zoroastrian is supposed to have a bath every day in order to cleanse himself. Illava said he would opt for the daily bath using a quarter bucket of water instead of half. He also noted that in his toilet flush tank he kept an upright empty bottle of beer and another smaller bottle so that when the flush was pulled, one



From left: Victoria Finlay, Palmer, Peer, Karanjia and Illava

believed would ensure the survival of the trees. Another 23,000 saplings have been kept in the Godrej nursery at Vikhroli rather than be distributed to people who

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less liter of water would be washed away, the water being conserved in the bottles. Illava also mentioned that he had heard of a village where, the water being scarce, people had baths on a three-tier level. The person at the top bathed with fresh water which then flowed down to the person at the second level and finally trickled down to the third person who was at the lowest level. Thus three people bathed with water meant for one person. The persons kept alternating their positions so every third day each person availed of a fresh water bath.

Palmer spoke about people's relationship with water, noting that scientists and technologists admitted that while they knew how to manage water they had lost the "relationship" with water, "its preciousness." In traditional societies people viewed water as more than just a commodity. "Old traditions for conserving water can be preserved," he said. Among Zoroastrians each fire-temple has a well/s whose water is used for ritual purposes. But as Ervad (Dr) Rooyintan Peer of the Dadyseth Agiary and Ervad (Dr) Ramiyar Karanjia, principal of the Dadar Athornan Boarding Madressa pointed out, some of the wells in the agiary precincts were polluted due to seepage. The gathering also noted that in order to raise revenue, agiaries had permitted contractors to pump water from the wells for sale. This was depleting the water table and by it the water supply and also affecting the sanctity of the premises.

Palmer described ARC as "a small group with big supporters." He noted that after governments and multinational corporations, religious organizations were the third largest fund owners in the world. Palmer suggested that just as Parsis observe the sanctity of the water on *Avan mah*, *Avan roz* so also the birthday of the trees, *Amardad mah*, *Amardad roz*, could be observed, and involvement of other faith groups in this celebration was also recommended.

Lawyer and community social worker Ketu Mehta noted that when efforts were first made to popularize the *Avan roz nu parav* (the day and month which are similarly named and coincide once a year) at a public function held at Bombay's Radio Club adjunct to the

sea, the response was poor but in due time the number of participants has increased to almost 2,000.

On the agenda for the same day were meetings by some ZARC members with representatives of the World Wide Fund for Nature, Bombay Natural History Society and Friends of the Trees, in order to involve such non-governmental organizations and create a network of conservation workers beyond the Zoroastrian community.

Stamp of solidarity

Holding a national philatelic exhibition is perhaps more demanding than having 10 weddings in the same family at the same time, commented Vispi Dastur, president of the Empire of India Philatelic Society (EIPS) and chairman of the Inpex-Empirepex 2001 National Philatelic Exhibition in his welcome address on December 22, 2001. The five-day exhibition in Nasik (known as "The city of stamps" where Indian stamps have been printed since 1926) was not only the first national philatelic exhibition ever held in a non-metropolitan city or a non-capital of a state but also the largest national philatelic exhibition held in a city, according to a report of the proceedings.

There were almost 950 frames in the exhibition with the exhibits in the invitee class including those from the National Postal Museum, Mumbai High Court, India Security Press and individual collections. There were 230 entries in various competitive classes with Dr Jamshed Madan winning a vermeil medal and the P. M. Medhora Memorial Award for his "Boxer Uprising Mail;" Cyrus Sidhwa winning a silver bronze medal for "First Day Covers of United States;" and Noshir Lam a certificate for his "Stamps Centenaries."

The Exhibition was organized "to celebrate the diamond jubilee of the EIPS; to expand and develop friendly relations and close cooperation among

Above Madan (left) receiving award from Dastur. Left: Special cover released at Inpex-Empirepex 2001

philatelists and philatelic societies in India and with the Department of Posts; to promote national integration and conditions of peace in the country."

Founded on December 18, 1941 at Bombay, Sir S. D. Saklatvala, Kt, had served as the EIPS's founder president and Jal Cooper as its founder secretary. The other Parsis on the first governing council included P. F. Laly, M. R. Billimoria and R. A. Dubash. Barring Dr M. U. Mascarenhas who was the mayor of Bombay, all the presidents of the Society to date have been Parsis: Minoo Polson, Medhora, D. R. Mistry, mentions the present president Dastur.

The special cover released on the second day of the Inpex-Empirepex 2001, referred to as EIPS Diamond Jubilee Day, shows the Cooper stamp released by the Department of Posts at Indepex 97 World Exhibition, portraits of Saklatvala, Medhora and D. N. Jatia, governing council member of the EIPS for more than 25 years, with a copy of *India's Stamp Journal* bearing the J. R. D. Tata stamp. The special cancellation is in the shape of a diamond to mark the diamond jubilee of the Society.

The other highlights of the Exhibition sponsored by Tata Iron and Steel Company Limited and the Tata Group of Companies were the Mahatma Gandhi Day, the Philatelic Congress of India Day and the Youth Day. Painting contests for different age groups and distribution of First Day Covers, folders and stamps to the children created an awareness among them. An estimated 80,000 persons including 30,000 children are believed to have visited the Exhibition. The Department of Posts, The Philatelic Congress of India, the philatelic societies, philatelists and dealers from all over the country had made possible this Exhibition, stated Dastur.





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The Committee of Honor included the mayor of Nasik Shobha Bachhav, secretary, department of posts, B. N. Som and former president of the Indian Merchants' Chamber Jamshed Guzder. A special Exhibition souvenir carries interesting articles including one from Dastur titled "Fascination of India Used Abroad in the Straits settlements."

Eclectic economist

When teaching economic theories and problems the late Prof Jamshed K. Mehta would introduce spiritual thoughts to exercise the mental faculties of his students whom he hoped to make into "intellectual *pehelwans* (strong men)," it was recalled at the birth centenary celebrations of this rare blend of spiritual economist on December 14, 2001. Mehta was one of the greatest products of the Allahabad University both as a student and professor of distinction, noted P. D. Tandon, former Uttar Pradesh minister of higher education and information, at the celebrations convened by the University and covered in the *Northern India Patrika*. Mehta had joined the economics department as an undergraduate in the 1920s and retired as its head in 1963.



J. K. Mehta:
"saintly scholar"

The focal thought of Mehta's theory was wantlessness where he would explain that "want not, and you are in equilibrium." The practical economist had foreseen the end of the Soviet Union on the premise that a system which ignores the critical role of incentives cannot grow, remarked Prof D. K. Srivastava of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi. In almost all aspects of a man's life and the universe Mehta saw rhythm, starting from the rhythm of breathing to booms and recessions in macroeconomics, added Srivastava.

In one of Mehta's books titled *Rhyme, Rhythm and Truth in Economics* he had observed that we have to crack the outer shell of the apparent reality to discover the real, ultimate reality. Presiding over the celebrations vice chancellor G. K. Mehta referred to J. K. Mehta's authorship of 22 books and hundreds of articles. Some of J. K. Mehta's other well-known works were *Studies in Advanced Economic Theory*, *Economic Problems of Modern India*, *Lectures on Modern Economic Theory* and *A Philo-*

sophical Interpretation of Economics which according to Prof G. L. S. Shackle "deserves to become a classic."

His erudition and academic brilliance were matched equally by his humanism and punctuality, it was reported by the Times News Network. His dislike of noise made him choose a room outside the University's main edifice. In a structure with a thatched roof, his place was exclusive and yet warm and cosy. "It would have been a great gesture on the part of the economics department if that room had been converted into a memorial for him," noted a tribute to him. The Academics section of the *Northern India Patrika* carried a special Mehta anniversary feature on December 14 wherein it was reported that once when a student requested him to postpone his MA thesis deadline as he was getting married, Mehta is said to have remarked, "This is fixed after great deliberations. No change can be made for an individual which may be unfair to the rest. You better postpone your marriage."

On another occasion a visiting dignitary called at Mehta's residence without seeking a prior appointment. When he reached his venue, hung on the verandah was a wooden placard reading: "Morning time is meant for research and study. If you happen to come in the morn-



From left: Goswami, Freya Javeri, Doshi, Ratty and Phiroze Javeri.
Inset: Invite to the inauguration

ing what should you do? Go back." Respecting his wishes the dignitary retraced his steps.

Besides economic theory and mathematical economics, religion and philosophy, J. K. Mehta's other interests were photography, cricket and homeopathy. Highly cosmopolitan in his views he had studied the scriptures of all religions. He was particularly impressed by the *Bhagwad Gita* and Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence. "His name evokes sweet and spiritual memo-

ries of a saintly scholar who was an angel for his students and a divine healer for his innumerable... patients," states the *Northern India Patrika*. Many of his colleagues in the department had once been his students and as had commented the late S. L. Parmar, "Whenever we are in his presence, we feel some superior being talking to us — not just a teacher or a professor but someone far, far above. He has a spiritual halo around him which makes him so saint-like."

Pet profession

"Total pet care in the comfort of a fully airconditioned clinic," announced the invite to the inauguration of Freya's Pet Centre on December 9, 2001. The modern veterinary clinic located in Bombay's Fort area will be headed by Dr Freya Phiroze Javeri. Besides offering the usual services like consultation, treatment, surgery and vaccination, the Centre inaugurated by senior animal practitioner Dr B. N. Doshi will "also tackle hereditary problems in animals like hip dysplasia in dogs by establishing a reliable data bank along the lines of similar registers maintained in other advanced countries," mentions a press release.



A graduate of the Bombay Veterinary College, Javeri had worked with Dr Rustom Bharucha and Wockhardt Limited before she proceeded to Melbourne, Australia to earn a master's degree, specializing in diagnostic imaging. A dog lover and a member of the American Dog Writers' Association, Javeri is a qualified Breeds

judge. Her parents Phiroze and Ratty are well known among dog lovers as the driving force behind the Indian National Kennel Club.

The 400 sq ft facility located on the ground floor of Mehta Building on Calicut Street accommodates a section offering the latest in balanced pet food and useful accessories like collars, leashes, dog chews, etc. Open from Mondays to Saturdays from 8.30 to 11.30 in the mornings and 4 to 7.30 in the evenings the veterinarians in attendance at the Centre will be Javeri and her colleague Dr Priti Goswami.

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi



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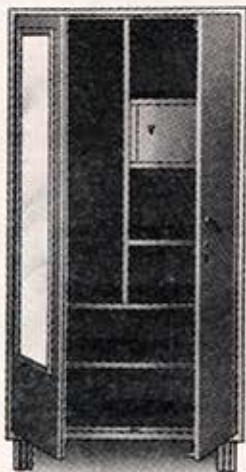
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As president of the International Association of Group Psychotherapy Dr Sabar Rustomjee oversees the apex body's therapeutic and organizational work

Parinaz M. Gandhi

"The meaning of life is quite important for me. At a personal level it means not leading an egocentric but a sociocentric life," says the Australia-based consultant psychiatrist Dr Sabar Rustomjee who aims to "work towards non-violence, to enhance family values and to help bring out the best in mankind."

As the first Asian president of the International Association of Group Psychotherapy (IAGP) for the term 2000-2003 she coordinates the working of 30 elected members on the board and oversees the functioning of 63 group psychotherapy organizations and 750 individual members affiliated to the apex body. When *Parsiana* met Rustomjee at Bombay's Taj President Hotel on December 20, 2001 she had come to the city to attend the Southeast Asia Regional Conference on Scientific and Applied Psychology. "I'm not a psychologist. I'm a psychiatrist (whilst both treat mental ailments, unlike a psychologist, a psychiatrist is qualified to administer drugs). "Being the head of IAGP I was invited to this meet to chair a session on 'Women's contribution to society and culture' and to conduct a pre-conference workshop on group psychotherapy," explains the unassuming, soft-spoken lady. Her new role requires her to make three overseas trips in a year: to an American city to attend a board of directors meeting, to a European or South American country, and to an Asian destination like Singapore, Japan or Bombay.

Any opportunity to visit Bombay where she has her roots is a welcome break from her regular duties in Melbourne where she is consultant psy-

chiatrist at The Monash Medical Center and the Maroondah Hospital, and also conducts her private practice. Americans dash to psychiatrists at the first opportunity; Indians try to keep their distance from psychiatrists; and Australians lie somewhere in between these two extremes, points out Rustomjee. In case of mental illness, a patient in Australia will first be taken to a general practitioner who will initially attempt to treat but if there is no progress, refer him/her to a psychiatrist.

"Only mad people do psychiatry," Rustomjee recalls her spontaneous response when she had been approached by the superintendent of the hospital in Mooroonpa in Australia to put her medical training to good use, candidly confesses the doctor who had studied at Bombay's J. B. Petit High School for Girls, Elphinstone College and Grant Medical College before marriage to Pirosha Rustomjee (coincidentally, her maiden name also was Rustomjee), a surgeon, took her to Ceylon and thence to Australia. She had initially planned on pursuing pediatrics but since there were no vacancies in this department, Dr Tom Mu, the psychiatrist in charge at the Shepparton twin complex in Mooroonpa convinced her to specialize in psychiatry.

Presently a full clinical member of the American Group Psychotherapy Association, the Group Analytic Society, London and the Victorian Association of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapists, Rustomjee has worked extensively in the field of group psychotherapy for end stage renal failure, patients with metastatic breast cancer and with parents, families and children at the Royal

Children's Hospital in Melbourne, mentions her bio data. Knowing that death is round the corner "we try to improve their quality of life. Within this homogenous group they find support and peer acceptance and are willing to discuss intimate and personal subjects which they may not want to do with even their family. They discuss highly emotion-laden issues; morbid issues like life and death. 'Will my husband remarry after my death?' 'Will the money I saved over the years be spent on the new woman?' are some of the questions that plague them," she explains. Not only the patients, even the highly qualified nurses who have to deal with these patients year after year "need support to remain professional." If they become friends with the patient they tend to lose their cool and show anger or impatience, it has been observed.

In collaboration with the Maroondah Hospital she will now be initiating research on first episode psychosis (when the first breakdown occurs between the ages of 16 and 25). As early intervention is known to have helped such patients, group therapy sessions will be conducted for patients and their families. An in-depth follow-up program is meant to reduce the recurrence of psychotic behavior.

In fact group analysis, psychodrama, family therapy, organizational and transcultural work constitute the core areas of IAGP's activities. Their publication forum is planning on starting a newsletter and the public visibility committee keeps the member associations posted of each other's progress. Sometimes Rustomjee is required to answer 30-40 e-mails a day from the members. "With each one of them being a high-up in their respective organization, to integrate all of them is a challenge" for her. Every year the elected board members spend a fortnight together when they are able to bridge cultural differences, assess ongoing programs and initiate new ones. Her prior experience as treasurer of IAGP plus chairmanship of one of its sections prepared her for her presidential role for a three-year term. "After which you've got to give others a chance. And anyway by then you've got enough grey hair," smiles Rustomjee.



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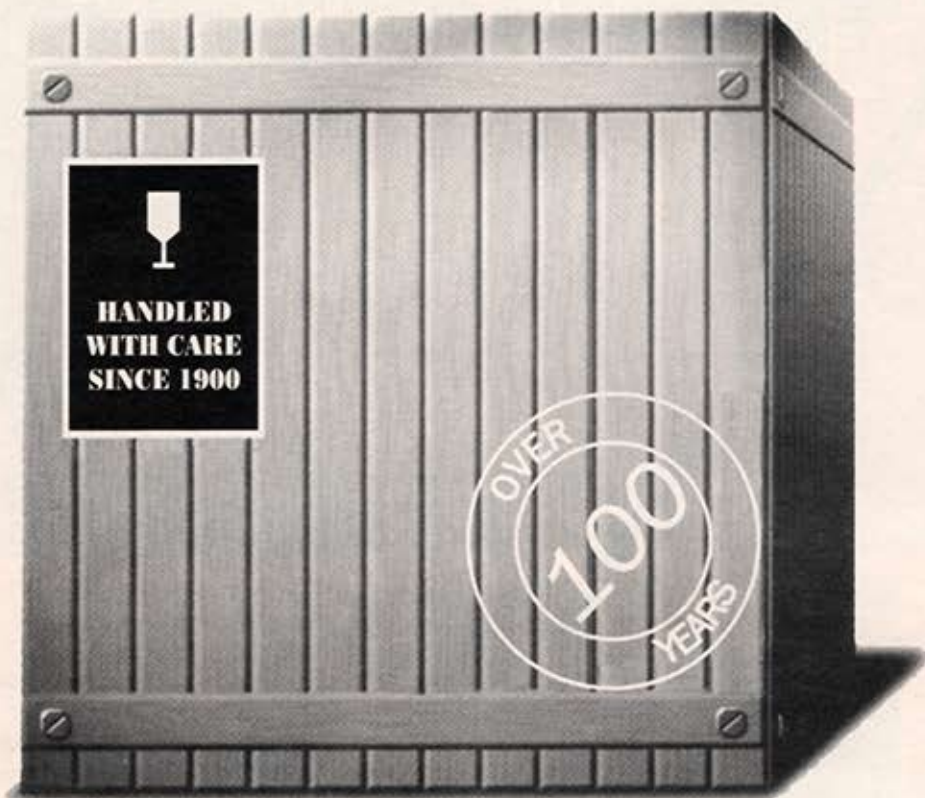
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As course coordinator of the Master of Group Analytic Studies and senior lecturer of Monash University, Melbourne, Rustomjee announces the University's distance training program leading to a graduate diploma (and subsequently a master's) course in group psychotherapy and/or student or full membership of the IAGP (those interested can contact her at 44 Cummins Road, East Brighton, Victoria 3187, Australia; e-mail: sabar@iprimus.com.au).

Happy that her family migrated to Australia, Rustomjee observes, "Australians recognize an individual's worth." Former president of the Australian Association of Group Psychotherapy Rustomjee says, "I practice in an area where there are no Zoroastrians but live in an area where there are. My preference is not to treat people I know so that I can be objective." As a community she observes that Zoroastrians in Australia "are less prone to mental illnesses," qualifying further that it is "the healthier ones who have migrated. Zoroastrians have adjusted better than other races, by and large."

When asked to compare the Zoroastrians in Colombo with those in

Melbourne, Rustomjee states that with "their culture of being totally involved with other Zoroastrians, in Colombo if one child in a family has a cough, half the community will enquire about his progress." Colombo however is a small city as compared to Melbourne where it is not possible to keep a track of all developments, she adds. Her leisure time in Melbourne is spent not necessarily with other Zoroastrians although her family migrated in 1969. Of her three married children who all live in Melbourne, son Hormaz is pursuing a career in computers, daughter Niloufer has taken to psychology and the youngest Firoza is a general practitioner.

Husband Pirosha was the first president of the Zoroastrian Association of Victoria. While the elder two children have Zoroastrian spouses, the youngest is married out of the community. Religious by nature Rustomjee, who always travels with her *Khordeh Avesta* and likes to regularly visit the Iranshah at Udvada, does not see intercommunity marriages as a major issue although in Melbourne there are some in favor and some against accepting children of intercommunity marriages. "I'm a very accepting person. I can't think of not

accepting any human being. Those who are very keen should be given an opportunity (to enter the religious fold). The quality of commitment should be considered. After all, Zoroastrians were converted from another faith. It would be a pity if the race dies out. I would hate to see the day when this happens," she declares.

"Family life is important to me. It's wonderful to be a grandparent," says the psychiatrist who takes pride in her four grandchildren's accomplishments. Charter president of the Lioness Club in Camberwell, Rustomjee's other interests include embroidering tapestries, dress-making for children, travelling, skiing.

Her attachment to the community has been growing since her student days in Bombay. As her father Maneksha Rustomjee died when she was but five years old, it was her mother Mehra who had to bring up the children. The N. M. Wadia Trust financed the cost of all the textbooks for her medical studies, she gratefully acknowledges: "It was such a bonus that I'd really like to thank them and in return do something for my community. Once my presidency is over I wouldn't mind spending my life towards educating the Parsis."

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The new Bombay Parsi Punchayet polyclinic at Gamadia Colony provides premises to 18 young doctors



The face of the polyclinic and Mehta who enabled it to materialize (Photos: Arnavaz Mama). Below (from left): Engineer, Dastur, Guzder, Silloo Kavarana, Tirandaz and Fali Poncha — crediting the achievers



The opening of the Rustomji N. Gamadia Polyclinic of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) marks the advent of a new phase in the Punchayet activities. While the provision of medical facilities and help for medical education have been part of its long-standing activities, facilities where young medicos can practice their dearly acquired skills have been elusive in space-starved Bombay. An array of medical specialties — gynecology, homeopathy, dentistry, dermatology, radiology, ENT, pathology, psychology and veterinary surgery — are now available at a single venue in Bombay's centrally located Tardeo area within the Gamadia Colony.

After a traditional thanksgiving jashan performed by panthaky Parvez Madon and priests of the S. F. Jokhi Agiary, BPP chairman Jamshed Guzder cut the ceremonial ribbon on October 25, 2001. The low slung structure which once functioned as the Industrial Center and Godrej Press has been revamped



by architect Sam Rao and civil contractor Cyrus Unwala into 18 consulting rooms of unequal size to meet the space and finance specifications of the doctors with a large waiting room in common. The two veterinarians have been provided with external entrances for

their four-footed patients. Punchayet Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Behram Dastur mentioned to *Parsiana* that the refurbishing cost the BPP approximately Rs 75 lakhs. Involved with the governmental/municipal aspects of the project was BPP trustee Dinshaw Mehta.

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Guzder cutting the ceremonial ribbon aided by Dastur. Below: administrator Mullan



While Guzder thanked Ahura Mazda that the project had "come to fruition," BPP trustee Dadi Engineer noted that it had taken a number of years to take final shape and indicated that the trustees were also thinking in terms of providing such occupational facilities to other budding professionals like accountants, architects and lawyers.

The opening of the polyclinic and the establishment of the Venture Capital Fund under BPP aegis demarcates the current social service trends which are veering away from the giving of doles to

the provision of facilities for self-employment, remarked BPP trustee Rustom Tirandaz. He also noted that the BPP had taken charge of the Bhabha Sanatorium at Bandra on the urging of its family trustee Khurshedji Bhabha.

Though Behram Gamadia, scion of the family that has endowed the Gamadia Colony, was present on the occasion, he disavowed any family contribution to the Polyclinic beyond a "no objection" certification from his father Rustom to former BPP chairman Dr Aspi Golwalla.

The BPP has appointed Homi Mullan as the Polyclinic's administrator. An independent energy and environmental consultant with awareness of biomedical management and consultancy, thanks to a long innings with J. N. Marshall and Company at its many locations, Mullan had also garnered managerial experience at Raychem and Xicon.

About 38 finalists were screened by the BPP's trustees and CEO before allocating the 18 cubicles. Younger and more need-based applicants generally scored over established names and those who already had their own clinics, noted Dastur in a chat with *Parsiana*. He also informed us that maintenance costs of a capital and administrative nature would be borne by the BPP from the service charges levied on the incumbents while other costs like personal telephones, etc would accrue to the individuals concerned.

Unable to absorb the large recurring losses of the Industrial Institute and Godrej Press, the Punchayet had reluctantly closed the establishment with effect from January 1, 1987. The moribund property was left on the back burner for nearly eight years until the new think-



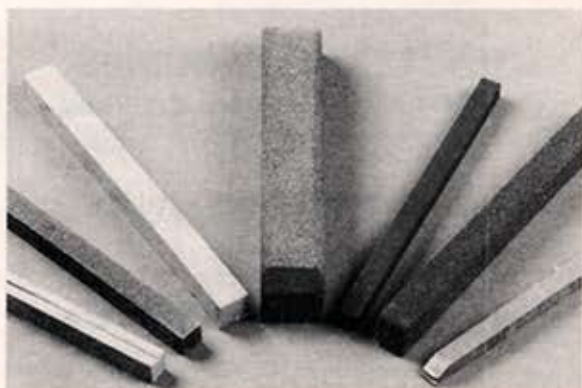
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ing crystallized in favor of setting up a polyclinic in 1995, by which time Mehta was a part of the BPP board. He said he was assigned the arduous task of getting the requisite municipal and governmental permissions for the change of user from a printing press to a polyclinic.

The task was compounded by the

The center consists
of 18 consulting
rooms with a large
waiting room in
common

fact that the original factory permit was nowhere to be found. Mehta explained that the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) factory inspector needs to authorize a closure licence which requires a no objection certificate and cancellation of the original permit issued by the BMC's factory department. It was only at the end of 1999/early 2000 that this was acquired thanks to Dinshaw Mehta and his brother, corporator Noshir Mehta's concerted efforts. Thereafter they had to pursue permissions for change of user through the government's urban land ceiling and area planning departments.

Once the official paperwork was satisfactorily completed, the physical rehabilitation of the property was taken in hand — the end of a project for Mehta, the fulfilling of a dream for young medical professionals on the threshold of their careers.

The Practitioners

The medicos practising at the Polyclinic are: general practitioner Syrus Irani; homeopaths Viraf Kapadia and Kainaz Saklatwala; dentists Ferzin Turner, Ashdin Turner, Ooshin Shroff, Nariman Kavina and Arnavaz Havewala; dermatologists Fara Vandrewala and Hoshang Sanjana; physiotherapist Paurooshasp Pardiwala; occupational therapist Hutokshi Bana; pathologist Khurshid Merchant; gynecologist Dinoo Dalal; psychiatrist Pervin Dadachanji; neurologist Fali Poncha; and veterinarians Percis Ghiara, Nazneen Antia and Tina Rustomjee. The BPP's vocational guidance bureau has also been shifted to these premises. Those wishing to fix appointments with any of the doctors may call the clinic on 4924068.

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Conveniently located, the reconstructed Pudumjee Parsi Dharamshala provides Zoroastrian travelers comfortable, affordable accommodation and food

Hilla P. Guzder

The three-storied structure is conveniently situated at the fringe of the Poona Camp (cantonment) area. The rebuilt Pudumjee Parsi Dharamshala at Bhawani Peth provides Zoroastrian travelers unostentatious yet comfortable accommodation with food, in rooms with attached bath and toilet. "Besides visitors to Poona, people on their way to Belgaum or Bangalore stop by; race goers come during the racing season, wedding or navjote parties seek accommodation here," explains Col Soli K. Pudumjee who is a trustee of the Dharamshala along with his brother Nusly Pudumjee.

The 15 rooms provide a range of double, triple or quadruple occupancy. Neatly furnished with drapes, dressing table, wardrobe and beds, the Dharamshala charges, in what is essentially a big city, a reasonable Rs 250 per head per day, inclusive of breakfast, non-veg-

etarian lunch and dinner and tea twice a day. These are the rates as of January 2002, elaborates manager Neville Vajifdar who has been looking after the Dharamshala for over 20 years. "If passengers do not wish to have a meal, charges are reduced to that extent." While the holiday season and work compulsions do bring in passengers, Vajifdar says that in the last 10 years there has been a surge in Parsis buying their own apartments, with the resultant drop in occupancy at the Dharamshala! If the economic status of the Parsis has improved and they have their own places to live in, it is a sign of progress, philosophizes Soli.

Speaking to *Parsiana* in his spacious, well-appointed bungalow at Kalyaninagar, walls studded with pictures of handsome horses and other memorabilia, a green carpet of turf and

A passage to Poona



garden laid out in front, the trustee says he sees no hassles in running the Dharamshala "barring the fact that you can't keep everybody happy!" The only member of the Pudumjee family to have joined the army, Soli retired prematurely in 1969 as colonel in the Armored Corps, after a two-decade stint in the service. Nusly's long association with the Poona Turf Club spanned four decades, retiring as the Club's secretary in the 1980s. Noting that he does not involve himself much in the running of the Dharamshala, Nusly says, "Soli is really the one who is managing it."

The present structure reflects the changing face of Poona. The demol

The Dharamshala building, a bedroom and dining hall (Photos: Hilla Guzder) and trustees Soli (top) and Nusly Pudumjee

ished dharamshala was over a century old — a sprawling retreat with big partitioned rooms, nestling within a restful compound. The present one stands within the complex of the cooperative housing society known as Pudumjee Paradise, but is a distinct entity from it. "When we developed the property, the builder constructed the new dharamshala as part of the arrangement," notes Soli, adding that for an interim period there was no dharamshala as the charity commissioner's approval



Manager
Neville Vajifdar

and other bureaucratic procedures took quite a while. In deference to 21st century compulsions, an elevator has been installed, a solar heating system provides adequate hot water for bath, etc, car parking space is available, protecting passengers' cars from the perils of kerbside parking on what is a fairly busy road.

It was the present trustees' great great grandfather Khan Bahadur Pestonji Sorabji, originally from Adajan in

Gujarat, who moved to Poona and ran a horse mail service from there to Nasik, Ahmednagar, Aurangabad, etc. Soli paints a profile of his ancestor. Since he owned land in the Camp area, Pestonji toyed with the idea of building an agiary, but finally approached Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, first baronet, to build the fire-temple and offered to run it. Pestonji's son, Pudumjee Pestonji had varied business interests and the entire, extended

Pudumjee family (which eventually adopted this surname) lived in houses around the main bungalow, eating meals in the common dining room. This joint family system existed up to grandfather Byramjee's time, but subsequent generations spread their wings, going their separate ways. Father Kaikhushru looked after the Dharamshala and Ervad Khurshedji Vajifdar, Neville's father, was the manager even at that time. "I have grown up here," reminisces

Neville. "It was like a *gam* (village) during my childhood." The old well on the site still exists, he narrates. Khurshedji who was also the panthaky of the

Komra ni agiary expired in 1997, while his wife Meherbai died in 1979. Neville resides in the Dharamshala with wife Kashmira and daughters Zenia (13) and Rukhsheen (10) who study in St Anne's School.

Happy to work for the Pudumjees ("a noble family"), Neville characterizes his

An elevator has been installed, a solar heating system provides adequate hot water for bathing and parking space is available

as a "24-hour job," requiring his presence on the premises. But when the Dharamshala is empty, it can get quite lonesome, he rues, wishing his coreligionists would make more use of the facilities community institutions offer.

Neville Vajifdar can be contacted at Pudumjee Parsi Dharamshala, Pudumjee Paradise Building D, 383 Bhawani Peth, Next to Ajmera Society, Poona 411042. Tel: 6359483/6347908.

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The night of the judges

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet in conjunction with the World Zoroastrian Organisation felicitated Chief Justice of India Sam Bharucha and Justice Sam Variava of the Supreme Court of India on their high appointments

Arnavaz S. Mama

Parsis in and around Bombay converged in strength on the central lawn of Cusrow Baug on December 15, 2001. The appointment of the first Parsi Chief Justice of India (CJI) on November 1, 2001 was a legitimate cause for euphoria. That the government and collegium of senior judges had earlier nominated a second Parsi to the Supreme Court (SC) bench heightened the feel-good factor — this hadn't happened before. At last there was something to celebrate instead of the long, bewildering, depressing debates about Doongerwadi! The only flaw in that cup of cheer was CJI Sam Bharucha's short tenure of six months. He will retire on May 6, 2001 on reaching the age of 65.

The combined felicitation of the two jurists had been announced by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) and the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) over a month in advance. As linchpin of the combined hosts BPP trustee and WZO India president solicitor Dadi Engineer and his team shouldered the protocol requirements of the celebration. Although the Cusrow Baug lawn has been the site of glittering World Zoroastrian Congress inaugurals in the past, there were probably more lawyers and judges assembled there that night than ever before, including members of the Bombay High Court's Goa, Nagpur and Aurangabad benches and two former Chief Justices of India, Justice Yeshwant Chandrachud and Justice Madhukant Kania.

"Sam" was the most toasted name that evening. The archetypal Sam was the grandfather of the Pishdadian hero Kersasp celebrated in the *Shah Namah*. Sharing in the glory with CJI Sam Bharucha ("big Sam") and Justice Sam Variava ("little Sam") that evening was the original Sam whose name became a

household word in India three decades ago — India's first Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw ("aapro Sam"). And for a few brief minutes they were joined on stage by the Surti Sam, Surat Parsi Panchayat (SPP) president Dr Sam Bhacca who felicitated the scions of neighboring Bharuch and Variav on behalf of Surat, the "ancient hub of the Parsis."

Perhaps a little bewildered by the euphoric community but graciously accepting the well-meant congratulations was Justice B. P. Singh who was invited to the stage by the organizers. The well-loved former Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court had just the prior day been administered the oath of office as judge of the Supreme Court. While Ashima Singh was not present on the occasion, Perin Bharucha and Dilnavaz Variava shared in their husbands' felicitations.

Voicing the community's "pride and joy," BPP chairman Jamshed Guzder described Bharucha as one of the SC's "youngest judges ever." The "no-nonsense" judge was never unkind or unjust, was known for his tongue-in-cheek humor and respected for his "total honesty in supreme measure... His judgments as judge of the Bombay High Court had seldom been overruled (on appeal)," noted Guzder, hoping "like fellow Zoroastrians, that you will get a new governmental position equal to your august status."

Remarking on Variava's "burning desire to do justice as he saw it," Guzder praised the "fair and just solution" he had evolved in the Harshad Mehta scam case and commented on the sense of discipline and work ethic he had instilled as Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court prior to his promotion to the SC.

Welcoming the judges on stage and

in the audience, Engineer provided a historical backdrop to the legal profession in Bombay, particularly the Parsi notables who had ruled the roost. Noting that the minuscule community currently had two representatives among the 26 stalwarts of the SC, Engineer described them as the late Murzban Mistree's "devils" (as junior lawyers are known in the lingo of counsels). Mistree himself had grown to full stature as senior counsel in the chambers of the legendary Sir Jamshedji Kanga. Kanga, whom Engineer described as over 6'2" tall always wore a black coat and white pugree in court because he was an athornan, though in his chambers he would be clad in a lounge suit. "He insisted on the world knowing that he was a Parsi," noted Engineer.

Kanga's chambers spawned a wealth of legal heavyweights including Hormusji Seervai, Rustom Kolah, Kharshedji Bhabha and Nani Palkhivala. Tracing the legal lineage further, Engineer noted that Kharshedji's juniors included India's two-term attorney general Soli Sorabjee and preeminent counsel Fali Nariman who has been nominated to the Rajya Sabha. Seervai's juniors included senior counsel Atul Setalvad and former solicitor general of India Tehmtan Andhyarujina; counsel Bomi Zaiwala and Justice Rohinton Vachha of the City Civil Court were Nariman's juniors. Several Parsis had been Supreme Court judges, "but" declared Engineer, "no Zoroastrian in the history of the community had risen to be Chief Justice of India."

Quoting a supreme court lawyer who had described Bharucha as being "as upright as his posture... genuinely believes in the rule of law and is least bothered about political equations in the country," Engineer added that Bharu-



L to R (clockwise from left) Standing for the national anthem: Mehta, D. Variava, Manekshaw, Guzder, Bharucha, Engineer, Variava, Singh, P. Bharucha, Silloo Kavarana and Tirandaz; Manekshaw and Modi; Y. V. and Ms Chandrachud, B. Hansotia and Variava; Tamboly; senior counsel Rafiq Dada whose opinion was sought by the BPP regarding Doongerwadi; P. Engineer with Pansy Mehta; D. Variava with Armaity Tirandaz; silver salver



cha's "outstanding quality was his unimpeachable integrity. (He is) never swayed by public opinion or extra legal considerations."

Remarking on Bharucha's penchant for brevity, both oral and written, Engineer commented on the judge's "short and terse orders," adding that with his sense of dignity and decorum Bharucha was cast in the mold of Lord Denning, the celebrated British judge, "whose judgments were known for their brevity and clarity." Referring to the firm and forthright manner in which Bharucha presides over his court, the irrepressible Engineer added, "Every time I was in his court in Bombay or in Delhi, I was reminded of a little story about an En-

glish magistrate at the Old Bailey. The accused in the dock looked up to heaven and said: 'As God is my judge, I am not guilty.' The magistrate looked sharply at the accused and said: 'God is not your judge; I am. You are guilty. Six months' rigorous imprisonment.' I would not be surprised if Justice Bharucha passed such a brief sentence if he was trying a criminal matter."

Sharing with Bharucha "many of his fine qualities as a judge," Variava was hand-picked to try the breathtakingly complicated business scam perpetrated by broker Harshad Mehta (since deceased) because "it was necessary to appoint a man of high integrity and

scrupulously clean reputation," noted Engineer. So involved was Variava on this case from June 1992 onward, toiling to unravel its many facets, making "bold and courageous pronouncements (which) earned him the respect of the bar and the public at large," that the legal denizens of the Bombay High Court dubbed him Justice Scam Variava with roguish good humor, recalled Engineer. Commenting on Variava's love of the outdoors including rock climbing, Engineer added with a straight face

"I'm also an expert at rock climbing, along with my BPP fellow trustees, because of the number of rocks and boulders thrown at us!"

Engineer quoted the Greek philosopher Socrates according to whom "Four things belong to a judge: to hear courteously, to answer wisely, to consider soberly and to decide impartially," adding, "Our two distinguished judges have all these qualities." But there can be no greater compliment paid to a judge at the end of his career than for the public and his peers to say of him, "He was a just judge," noted Engineer, declaring "We have (here) two just judges."

Looking forward to the day when Parliament consults the SC so that the laws and ordinances it promulgates pass the scrutiny of the courts, BPP trustee Rustom Tirandaz opined that Bharucha's qualities of head and heart could lead to such a happy fusion. "As member of the largest Parsi-Irani conglomerate i.e. the Parsis of Bombay," Tirandaz prayed to God "to give (the two judges) strength against all odds at all times."

Starting with garlands, shawls and silver salvers from the BPP and the WZO, the two legal eagles were deluged with enough flowers, shawls and mementoes from 39 all-India Zoroastrian anjumans and institutions [briskly moving under the direction of KRCOI (K. R. Cama Oriental Institute) trustee-secretary and social worker Homai Modi], to set up a retail outlet! Among those who greeted the judges were the Agra Parsi Anjuman; Ahmedabad Parsi Punchayet; Allahabad Parsee Zoroastrian Anjuman; Bardoli Zarhoshti Anjuman; Borivli and Suburban Zoroastrian Association; Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman; Jamshedpur Parsi Association; Jhansi Parsi Anjuman; Lonavla-Khandala Parsi Zarhosty Anjuman; Lucknow Parsi Anjuman; Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Mhow; Shree Nagpur and Kamthi Parsi Zarhosti Anjuman; Poona Parsee Panchayat; Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and Hyderabad; SPP; Shri Udawa Nine Families Athornan Mandal; Vesu Zoroastrian Parsi Anjuman; Shree Parsi Punchayet Vadodara; B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital (PGH); Sir Cowasji Jehangir Navsari Zarhosti Madressa; P. K. Patel College of Commerce, Navsari; S. B. Garda College of Arts, Navsari; B. P. Baria Science Institute, Navsari; Dinshaw Daboo Law College, Navsari; D. K. Tata High School Trust, Navsari; *Jam-e-Jamshed*; KRCOI;

Cusrow Baug United Sports and Welfare League; Seth Nusserwanji Hirji Karani Agiary; Rustom Baug Association and Sir Ness Wadia Club; Zoroastrian College; Salsette Parsi Colony, Andheri; Young Ratheshstars; Farohar Films; Navroz Baug Play Centre; Godrej Baug Residents' Association; Parsi Chief Matrimonial Court and Muncherji Edulji Joshi Memorial Trust, Dadar.

The response of the judges marked the high point of the event (and an object lesson in how youngsters without connections can make it to the top). Never expecting "all these associations to join in with the BPP and the WZO," an "overwhelmed" Bharucha said he was "immensely grateful for the tribute paid to both of us." Bharucha noted how, as an only child, he was expected to follow in his father's footsteps and become a doctor. "I was not terribly keen but I didn't put up any resistance." However when he failed to secure the requisite marks at the interscience exam, Bharucha declared he would go into law. Wondering how he would access the profession without a "godfather" Bharucha nonetheless "was extremely keen to join Sir Jamshedji's chamber because I had heard of all the stars it had produced."

Availing of a slight acquaintance with Kharshedji Bhabha, the hopeful Bharucha asked to join but was told by Bhabha that he had no place. On returning from a lukewarm response in another chamber, he bumped into Bhabha again. When the latter learnt from Bharucha what he had done, "I heard from Kharshedji in very explicit language what a fool I was!" recalled Bharucha. He was told to go to the chambers and meet Murzban Mistree on August 8, 1960 at 11 a.m. He found "Murzban, a very senior counsel, very imposing" and was terrified. He had gone wearing a tie and jacket and "Murzban said, 'Why are you not wearing bands?'" When Bharucha demurred, saying he did not know if he would be accepted, Murzban voiced the words that must have been music to Bharucha's ears: "Of course you are accepted!"

Bharucha recalled that he was asked to work on an opinion for the PGH and be ready for a conference within a day or two. He went to the library, researched, "wrote out the opinion and gave it to Murzban to check. On the day of the conference (Murzban) gave that handwritten opinion to the solicitor saying 'It's been drafted by my junior. I

have read it. It's absolutely correct.' That sort of thing happened again and again. I asked him how I can ever repay what you have done. He said, 'Treat your juniors in the same way!' Fortunately or unfortunately, I was appointed to the High Court far too young in 1977 to acquire many juniors."

When Bharucha was the senior-most judge of the SC he had expected that Variava, then chief justice of the Delhi High Court, would succeed him onto the SC bench. "I had never thought that the Indian community would contemplate that there should be at one and the same time two Parsi judges of the Supreme Court. Therefore his name was not proposed by me. It was proposed by one of my colleagues and it went through without a hitch. It went through the court without a hitch. It went through the Government without a hitch. It is an indication of the very great respect that the Parsi community enjoys in this country. Friday before last I was at a semi-official dinner, we both were, and people kept asking how is it that a community as minuscule as this can produce so many people who have rendered such service to the country and the two names repeatedly mentioned that evening were J. R. D. Tata and Sam Manekshaw.

"I will end by saying that we belong to a great community. We should be proud of it. We should maintain the respect which the country gives us and we should build on it."

Having grown up in the vicinity, with Cusrow Baug as his "regular haunt," the evening made Variava nostalgic. He too came from a family of doctors, the first to go into the legal profession. Though "disappointed when he learnt that I wanted to become a lawyer," Dr Variava took his son to Murzban Mistree to ask, "Will you take my son?" Variava recalled his mortification when his father added, "'I've told him all lawyers are liars, but he still wants to join!'"... Being accepted in that chamber was the most fortunate thing that happened to me, except meeting my wife," added Variava gallantly.

Recalling Sir Jamshedji, then over 80 years old, "a giant in the profession, yet humble and simple," Variava noted, "You could talk to him about anything and everything. If he saw you he would call and ask if you were busy! His memory even at that age was phenomenal. He could tell you not only the book but the page number and very

often the line where one would find what one needed." Variava recalled that Bhicku Gandevia and Sam Bharucha were Murzban's other juniors and that's where their "big Sam" and "little Sam" titles originated. "Our legal colleagues still refer to us that way!" laughed Variava, adding, "When I joined, Sam Bharucha was a counsel and much in demand."

Variava said he soon realized that his degree had not equipped him to argue in court. He regularly attended trials and conferences with Murzban, watched him build up the plaintiff's evidence and the finesse with which he cross-examined the defendant's witnesses in the defamation case filed by Thackersey against *Blitz*. Even though the compilation was bulky and there were a lot of documents, Murzban had all the facts at his fingertips. He knew exactly what was stated in which document and where to find that document, remembered Variava. Despite being so busy "he was an understanding and concerned senior. He suggested I work with Sam and I started tagging along with him. It must have been a nuisance to have a fresher asking silly questions

and making a hash of drafting work," smiled Variava, adding sadly that he had learnt that lawyers in Delhi avoided taking juniors nowadays and when they did, spent little time in training them. "I was very lucky. Both Murzban and Sam were very patient and never hesitated in providing their valuable time on training a raw junior and converting him into a successful lawyer."

Contrary to his father's perception, Variava said he learnt that "this was not a profession of liars and swindlers but a very noble profession. They taught me that the duty of a lawyer was to represent his client to the best of his ability and that it was not part of a lawyer's duty to make up or put forth a false representation... My seniors ingrained in me the fact that there is no substitute for honesty and fair play."

Variava ended advising the community's youth to pursue business or the professions instead of plumping for the security of service. "The Parsi community made its name and has come to be respected because its members chose to do business or take up a profession" and urged more and more young people to do likewise.

"The community has had the opportunity to honor two Zoroastrian Indians who have reached the pinnacle of their chosen careers," noted BPP trustee Dinshaw Tamboly who is also chairman of WZO Trust Funds, India. His vote of thanks encompassed the many dignitaries present as well as the plethora of community individuals and institutions represented that day in the well-orchestrated felicitation. Their participation "affirmed the solidarity that exists within the community. Long may it remain so," he noted fervently.

The VVIPs were expected for cocktails at the well-appointed residence of Dr Mehroo and Dara Hansotia and Gool and Bomi Hansotia. But for quite some time there was no sign of the judges either on the main lawn, the Hansotia home or the pavilion where the first dinner sitting was in progress. And then they emerged from behind the Agiary, strolling casually in the balmy night, having put the length of Cusrow Baug between themselves and their security staff! After the banquet, where caterer Tanaz Godiwalla had outdone herself, the official cars swiftly whisked their precious passengers away.

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Guardian of the Law

Chief Justice of India Sam Bharucha brooks no impingement on the independence of the judiciary

Arnavaz S. Mama

"I have done nothing extraordinary. I have only abided by the oath which I took to do justice without fear or favor, affection or ill will." Even as the Chief Justice of India, the honorable Justice Sam Bharucha filed a disclaimer to the many compliments paid to his legal astuteness and constitutional grasp of the law, his words underscored his fierce independence and total dedication to the propriety of office which have distinguished his career.



Senior advocate Tehmtan Andhyarujina, former solicitor general of India, had described Bharucha's style of functioning at the felicitation organized by the Delhi Parsi Anjuman on November 10, 2001. Recalling the tribute paid by the famous Greek historian Herodotus to the Achaemenian Persians of Darius' court, as excelling in archery, horsemanship and in keeping promises, Andhyarujina noted of Bharucha, "Like a good rider he is quick in the disposal of cases; he speaks straight from the shoulder in his court, sparing no one, big or small; and he is true to his oath of deciding cases without fear or favor, affection or ill will." Andhyarujina then went on to add, "He is a bit impatient at times in court... but today if there is one quality which marks him out as a judge, it is the confidence of the public in his court. You may be the cleverest and

most learned judge but if the public (has) no confidence in you, it is of no use. Justice Bharucha instills a confidence in the court from lawyers and laymen, the government as well as his colleagues in the judiciary."

Four of Bharucha's landmark judgments were referred to by his contemporary lawyers. Solicitor Dadi Engineer mentioned that Bharucha's "passion for the letter of the law and clean public life was very much in evidence" when he ordered the removal of popular Tamil Nadu chief minister Jayalalitha from office noting that the people's mandate could not override the constitution of the country.

Senior Supreme Court advocate Anil Divan explained the Veerappan Case to *Parsiana*. After kidnapping the well known movie star Rajkumar, bandit Veerappan sought a package of concession from the chief ministers of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, including the release of certain jailed criminals, in exchange for the life of the hostage. When the two state governments wanted to

yield to Veerappan's terms, the father of a police officer who had died in the process of capturing these brigands petitioned the court. When it reached the Supreme Court, Bharucha, heading a three judge bench, pronounced the unanimous decision that no compromise with lawless elements could be accepted. When the governments spoke of riots and blood baths, he told them it was a law and order problem which it was the government's duty to handle. Bharucha's stern stand "paid off: nothing happened, and the kidnapped man was released," noted Divan.

Andhyarujina referred to Bharucha's tough stand on the Ayodhya case. Bharucha had declined to answer the President of India's reference to the Supreme Court on the constitutionality of the Ayodhya Acquisition Act as it offended the principles of secularism. Andhyarujina said that Bharucha had argued that the Indian state has no religion and is bound to honor and to hold the scales even between all religions. According to Andhyarujina, Bharucha had stated, "The Act and the reference favors one religious community and disfavors another. The purpose of the reference is therefore opposed to secularism and is unconstitutional."

In his profile on the Chief Justice of India titled "Guardian of the Letter" in *Outlook* (November 12, 2001) Bhavdeep Kang had quoted Bharucha's dissenting judgement in the Narmada Bachao Andolan case of 1999 when writer Arundhati Roy and others were pulled up by the Supreme Court for their statements against its judgement on the contentious dam. "While I record my disapproval of the statements... I am not

inclined to take action in contempt against Medha Patkar, Shripad Dharamadhikari and Arundhati Roy because the Court's shoulders are broad enough to shrug off their comments and because the focus should not shift from the resettlement and rehabilitation of the oustees," he observed.

Enrolling as an advocate of the Bombay



President of India K. R. Narayanan (ext left) administering the oath of office to Bharucha

High Court in 1960, Bharucha practiced mainly on the original side of the Bombay High Court and also represented his clients at the Supreme Court, his speciality being tax law. According to Andhyarujina, Bharucha's name was first suggested for judgeship in 1975 "but then those were the days of the Emergency and the powers that ruled did not want judges who would turn out to be too independent for their liking. It was on September 19, 1977 after the Emergency was lifted that he was appointed a judge of the Bombay High Court." Transferred to the Karnataka High Court as Chief Justice on November 1, 1991, Bharucha was elevated to the Supreme Court on July 1, 1992, becoming Chief Justice of India on November 1, 2001. Bharucha is married to Perin (née Kharas), author of a book on the community titled *The Fireworshippers*.

Supreme Court judge Sam Variava had noted in the course of his response to the felicitations in Bombay, "By the time Sam became a judge I was already established as a lawyer. I had the privilege of appearing in his court on a number of occasions. Even though we were from the same chamber and I had been working under him, there was no favoritism. I won or lost a case on its merits. Before Justice Bharucha it made no difference who appeared. Watching him on the bench made one proud to have been his junior."

Divan saw Bharucha's short term as the main stumbling block to his ability to translate his ideas into action. "If the Supreme Court has to go forward with long range issues, two or three successors have to band together to work out the direction in which they want to take the Court," he noted.

Referring to Bharucha's fearlessness and the consequently high respect in which he was held even by his brethren on the bench, another Supreme Court lawyer spoke to *Parsiana* of the nine-judge bench constituted to decide whether the appointment and transfer of judges rested with the Chief Justice alone or be the decision of the collegium. "There was only one judgment (favoring the collegium concept)," he noted. "It is an achievement to carry your colleagues with you."

Bharucha is perceived as a lawgiver in the traditional mold: very correct, quick in perception and disposal. Not only is the oral judgment quickly deliv-

ered, even "the written judgment would be delivered faster than others who keep it back for six to nine months," noted a lawyer who declined to be identified.

Supreme Court advocate Lalit Bhasin told *Parsiana* that he had appeared fre-



Perin and Sam Bharucha: walking the corridors of power

quently before Bharucha in Bombay. "So far as the standard of the judiciary and the legal profession is concerned, Bombay is a role model," said Bhasin, noting that "Justice Bharucha fits in with the reputation that the Bombay judiciary has got. He is in the same mold as the first Chief Justice of Bombay M. C. Chagla. I have always found him to be a correct judge, i.e. his mind is open, not made up until he has heard every aspect of the case." Commenting on Bharucha's emphasis on court etiquette Bhasin says that this judge "won't tolerate irresponsible conduct on the part of anyone, regardless of the status or stature of the counsel appearing before him... I have found him a man of profound legal knowledge and of a fair application of common sense which is so vital for those who administer justice."

"He was like this in Bombay and when he came to the Supreme Court, he continued to flourish with these attributes. But sometimes people think he's got a touch of aristocracy or sahib (British) mentality. I find such comments wholly misplaced," noted Bhasin, describing Bharucha and his wife Perin as sociable, hospitable people. (Ignorant of judicial propriety that shuns personal publicity, this reporter had hoped to interview Bharucha while in Delhi in

1994. Gaining an appointment through a mutual friend, the Bharuchas welcomed us to a high tea and showed us around their home, introduced us to their dog, but, said the judge, "No interview!")

Reverting to Bharucha's legal accomplishments, Bhasin said, "He is one person who encourages junior members of the profession to argue before him without inhibitions, has a deep feeling for the underprivileged and comes down very heavily against any violation of human rights."

Commending Bharucha's effective spread of the legal network throughout the country as chairman of the National Legal Services, Bhasin noted, "It speaks volumes for his care and concern for underprivileged people." In one of his first addresses as Chief Justice of India Bharucha expressed his assent toward the setting up of a National Judicial Commission to look into the appointment of judges and for taking action whenever there is judicial misconduct, Bhasin told *Parsiana*, amplifying that "the legal profession has taken it up as an issue though the judiciary is by and large opposing it." The power of appointment now vests with the judiciary. Bharucha, as head of the bench had opined that the collegium of three judges should be extended to five.

Though Bharucha's short tenure may prevent him from seeing his agenda through, Bhasin saluted the judge for upholding the "larger perspective of litigation," and hoped that his successor may be able to carry it forward.

While Bharucha has not been involved with community issues as such, his keynote address to the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India at Jamshedpur in December 2000 bore the same ring of fearless outspokenness as he urged the "trustee sahebs" to respond positively to the needs of the community in terms of education, the acceptance of the offspring of Parsi women married to men of other communities and a rational adjustment to the ailing system of dakhnenashini (see "Thus spake Bharucha," *Parsiana*, January 2001).

From the cut of the jaw to the crease of his trousers, Bharucha today is a maturer version of the young man with dark-rimmed glasses who presided with a combination of wit, sang froid, outspokenness and courtesy over the mock

continued on page 56

"Nothing but the truth"

The biggest scam in the country enhanced the scrupulously clean image of Justice Sam Variava

Arnavaz S. Mama

Describing his induction into the legal profession in the chambers of Sir Jamshedji Kanga to those who had felicitated him at Cusrow Baug, Supreme Court judge Sam Variava had stated, "I learnt that the lawyer is part of the system where the aim is to arrive at the truth and nothing but the truth."



How well he had internalized this lesson was on view to the country when Variava was appointed to get to the bottom of the enormous financial scam perpetrated by the late Harshad Mehta that smeared the reputation of several financiers and financial institutions in 1992 and sent the stock market into a spin.

Presiding over the "scam court" gave him all-India exposure but his demeanor as a judge remained "fair, courteous and above all, patient," noted solicitor Dadi Engineer.

"He always believed in carrying his own weight," said Supreme Court advocate Lalit Bhasin who remembers Variava as a competent counsel, walking from the Bombay High Court to the chambers, his files tucked under his arm. "He brought a lot of discipline into the Delhi High Court where he took over as Chief Justice, tried to tighten up the loose ends so far as the administrative side of the High Court was concerned," noted Bhasin, adding, "(It) required firm and decisive action and (Variava) did not hesitate. The Delhi High Court went

into major surgery during his tenure as Chief Justice and emerged as a vibrant High Court, as it should be."

Referring to both Sam Bharucha and Variava, senior Supreme Court lawyer Anil Divan said, "It has been proved that if you select young people at the right age, it makes an enormous difference." At one time the general decision was not to offer judgeship to lawyers under 45 years of age, he noted. Yet Bharucha at 40 and Variava at 46 went on to render an excellent account of themselves as judges, he added.

Bhasin expects that the relatively youthful Variava "will be a major contributory to the development of law and the judicial system in the country. He belongs to the class of the younger generation of judges, brings with him a freshness of approach along with the wisdom of his seniors of Bombay." Like Justice Sabharwal from Delhi and Justice B. P. Singh from Bombay, Variava "combines legal expertise with modern technological advances," adds Bhasin.

During his years as an advocate at Bombay's City Civil Court and the original side of the Bombay High Court Variava had been a part-time professor of law at the Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics. After about

11 years on the bench of the Bombay High Court, Variava was transferred to Delhi as Chief Justice of the High Court and thence promoted in 2000 to the Supreme Court. Described by Engineer as "extremely genuine, warm and friendly," Variava is said to be a lover of the outdoors, a good tennis player, a car rallyist and a rock climber. Married to Dilnavaz (née Sidhwa), vice president of the Bombay Natural History Society, the Variavas have a son, Firdaus, and a daughter, Naira.

Bhasin says, "I don't view (Bharucha and Variava) as Parsis. Not also Soli (Sorabjee) or Fali (Nariman) or Nani (Palkhivala). I don't like to call them Parsis because they are all part of the mainstream, not part of any minority group. They are committed to the rule of law in this country. No one can say there's any deficiency in their approach. They are more committed to the welfare of the country than most of us are. There is one trait in Parsis generally: they are so committed to whatever is good and noble in life that they lose their cool and their equilibrium when they see anyone doing something unjust or unfair... When the lawyers were beaten up in Agra, Fali was so upset,

he told the lawyers 'Bring your case to me, I'll fight for you.' Bharucha is visibly agitated when some case comes to him where it is manifest that grave injustice has been done. You can see it in his face. Justice Variava's recent judgments on employment laws show his concern for the labor class. (They) get choked with emotion which is visible to everyone. Their work is within the four corners of the constitution!"



The Variavas — Sam, Dilnavaz, Firdaus and Naira

Pragmatism is unacceptable

The high priests and the orthodox groups castigate the BPP decision to provide a plot on Ambawadi as prayer hall for the souls of the buried and the cremated

Arnavaz S. Mama

We are "facing a battle between David and Goliath, a battle between the rich and powerful and the dispossessed (of the community), between friends and lovers of the Zoroastrian religion and those out to break them," noted Dastur (Dr) Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa, High Priest of Bombay's Anjuman Atash Behram, in the course of his presidential address at the public meeting summoned by the Save Doongerwadi Action Committee (SDAC) at Patkar Hall on December 28, 2001.

The meeting was called to protest the majority (6:1) decision of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustees on November 6, 2001 to permit the Disposal of the Dead with Dignity — Action Group (DDD-AG) to build a prayer hall on 3,000 sq feet of Ambawadi grounds adjoining Doongerwadi for the post funeral prayers of those who opt for cremation or burial instead of dakhmenashini. The BPP resolution had given the SDAC a month's time to contest the decision with the appropriate authorities.

The SDAC resolution, carried at the meet without dissent, seeks to prohibit present and future BPP trustees from "providing any facility whatsoever for any purpose/s which is/are antithetical to or against the tenets, practices and customs of the Zoroastrian religion, anywhere on the Doongerwadi complex and/or on any other property or premises under their control."

The evening's moderator Noshir Dadrawala refreshed the memory of the audience in the 750-seater Patkar Hall (where people were standing in the aisles) on the dakhmenashini issue which began with all seven trustees swearing an affidavit in its support in July 2000; the Samast Anjuman meet called by the BPP in December 2000 to acquaint the community with problems they faced at Doongerwadi viz slow decomposition

of bodies due to a dearth of vultures and the consequent foul odor and the measures being taken to contain them including the use of ozone pumps to refresh the environment, the spraying of chemicals to aid quick disintegration of the bodies, the experiments with solar reflectors (since then, successfully implemented in two dakhmas) and a scheme to breed vultures in captivity.

However, in mid-February 2001 the BPP trustees announced their acquiescence to the DDD to use the existing bunglis for the funerary requirements of those who chose to by-pass the dakhmas. The DDD's two other demands — that the BPP arrange for priests to perform the ceremonies and that the Punchayet organize a crematorium on the Doongerwadi grounds — were shot down by the trustees. Nonetheless the orthodox community was stridently critical of the BPP stand at a meet on February 23 also at Patkar Hall after which the hastily formed SDAC succeeded in browbeating the BPP to put its February decision "on hold." A subsequent meet on April 21, 2001 at the Cowasji Framji Hall, attended and addressed by the high priests, had demanded that the BPP hold a samast anjuman meeting before reaching a conclusive decision on the issue. This "democratic solution," as described by Dadrawala, was bypassed by the BPP even though "at election times the trustees had said they would abide by the advice of the high priests," he observed. Noting that the November 6 decision was intimated to the SDAC on November 23 with the rider that the Committee had a mere month's time to get an order from the court to hold in abeyance a decision on the 300-year-old institution of Doongerwadi, Dadrawala exclaimed "Is that fair?" The audience responded with cries of "shame!"

Describing the lawyers, doctors and

surgeons comprising the DDD as "leading lights (who had)... held the BPP trustees at gunpoint (the DDD had threatened to move the court in pursuit of their own right as beneficiaries of the Doongerwadi property)," Dadrawala noted that had he been a trustee he'd have told them to "go now, do your worst." The villainous DDD was reinterpreted to stand for "Disposal of the Dead with *Dadagiri* (bullying)."

Dadrawala, as did the speakers after him, underlined the flaw in the DDD concept of seeking a facility in the periphery of the dakhmas for their funerary requirements while arguing that dakhmenashini is a health hazard. Moreover, the orthodox view looks beyond the present to future fears. "We feel this is the first nail in the coffin (of dakhmenashini)," noted Dadrawala.

Thanking the DDD for uniting the various orthodox groups, he enunciated their action plan: The SDAC has been formed into a trust so that it can fight as an institution. Funds for a legal campaign were being sought in collection boxes and a donor preferring anonymity had already provided seed money, according to Dadrawala. Efforts were also underway to form a council of high priests, he noted.

"Truth is not negotiable. If we have to fight, we will. We are conscious, aware that they have the best doctors and solicitors on their side. But we have truth on our side, the high priests on our side and you on our side," concluded Dadrawala. Rhetoric was the order of the day.

"Standing before you once again on an issue that has plagued our community for sometime now," JamaspAsa reiterated his earlier plea for a samast anjuman meet (which only the BPP trustees are entitled to call) as "it would help them know what the community believes, not fall to pressure groups.



L to R (top): JamaspAsa and the audience affirming the resolution; (center) Kotwal, Unwala, Dadrawala, Mistree and Wania; (bottom) Doctor, Karanjia, Engineer and Bengalee (Photos: Adi Suder)

The DDD is wanting change without considering its impact on the living or the soul of the dead. Fire is sacred. It is the son of Ahura Mazda, a yazata to which we offer kathi, sweet-smelling sukhad and frankincense. How can fire be given a dead body which is *naso* (decomposing matter)? It is antithetical to the Zoroastrian faith where a dakhma exists... The majority of the community continue to use our age-old system of disposal. Cremation is only favored by the ignorant but influential classes."

Exempting "the lady," (Silloo Kavarana) the Dastur lashed out at the "five BPP trustees" (Jamshed Guzder, Minoo Shroff, Dadi Engineer, Dinshaw Mehta and Dinshaw Tamboly) for having "sought to ignore learning and scholarship," and referred to "derogatory statements" made at trustee meetings. "(It is) shocking that theirs' is a mindset that seeks to break rather than strengthen our ancestors' practices." He compared them unfavorably with "BPP trustees in the past, men of substance (who) upheld traditions and practices of the faith (and)

did not kowtow to the Tatas and Petits." He spelt out his ire at the DDD as having "made no attempt to meet with or learn from the high priests." Lambasting the DDD's "pragmatism" JamaspAsa noted, "religion is sacred. It can't change to suit some people. Among the DDD supporters are women who have married out of the community. Ten years ago they fought for the right to dakhmenashini. Today they are against dakhmenashini."

Congratulating and thanking BPP dissenting trustee Rustom Tirandaz "for having defended orthodoxy against the trustees and the unjust demands of the DDD," JamaspAsa emphasized that "cremation is wrong. ...The ceremonies are confusing for the soul. We must look at it holistically. The BPP trustees are answerable to the community. (We) know that it's only a matter of time before other irreligious demands will lead to further demands under the guise of pragmatism."

The high priest lashed out against "the black sheep in our *athornan tola* (priestly fraternity) who for the sake of

money will sell their souls. They are unfit to be practising priests and to wear the *saféd* (white) pugree." Describing the prayers of the priests who hold the contrary view as "not efficacious, meaningless," JamaspAsa noted, "Therefore we have debarred them from practising and put up notices to debar them. Their actions merit total contempt; they will be ostracized from our midst." JamaspAsa's warring words brought the audience to its feet in a standing ovation at the end of his speech.

Castigating influential Parsis who had sown the seeds of discord, Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal recalled how the sethias of yore had bought over lands surrounding Doongerwadi and bequeathed them to the community which should be used according to the deeds of trust. Comparing the Doongerwadi property to that of Muslim religious trusts known as waqfs, Kotwal noted in Gujarati that even in Iran where the law of succession is skewed in favor of the family member who has converted to Islam to the detriment of other Zoroastrian sib-

lings, property willed to the waqf of the religious community is respected. "Our trustees whom we have elected to preserve this waqf property, they are the ones desecrating it," he said.

Referring to the advent of the bunglis at Doongerwadi in the 20th century when ritual purity could not be maintained while transporting the body to Doongerwadi after the sachkar and geh sarna at home, Kotwal maintained that the bunglis were irretrievably wed to the dakhmas. He mockingly suggested that if the DDD has the money, it could build the intended bungli at Ambawadi and leave it for the use of those who opt for dakhmenashini.

Jestingly interpreting DDD to mean "Die and Destroy Doongerwadi," Khshnoomist scholar Adi Doctor referred to the 500-year-old *Rivayat* of Cama Vohra to the effect that ceremonies performed for those who were cremated or buried have no religious sanctity or merit and do not reach the soul of the dead.

Like Shakespeare's Mark Antony castigating the killers of Julius Caesar, Doctor referred to the BPP trustees as "honorable men." To emphasize the sarcasm he then went on to narrate how past BPP trustees had helped the Deolali anjuman scotch the British government's attempt to acquire part of the Deolali dakhma land in 1930 and again in 1937 had supported the Poona Parsee Panchayat in preventing the establishment of a Parsi cemetery sought by two influential Parsis there when the dakhmas were already in existence. "Where towers are not permitted, Parsis are buried. But from compulsion, not free will. Today's trustees are singing a different tune... There is some nexus between the DDD and some BPP trustees — perhaps only one!... The AIMZ (Association of Inter-married Zoroastrians) is another nexus... The property belongs to the community. The trustees are misusing their authority." From the revved up audience came shouts of "Ask them to resign," "Throw them out."

Doctor's jibes did not stop with the trustees: "Behind the BPP drapes is the CEO (chief executive officer). He has not read three-fourths of a book but says he has done research." Describing him as a "mischievous person," Doctor referred to Behram Dastur's 11-point memo presented to the executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India in Mhow on November 19 and 20, 1999. Among

much else, Dastur had recommended that the children of Parsi women should be allowed in the Panchayat's Godavra Agiary in Bombay. Dastur's concern for the community's future needs had also prompted him to warn the BPP trustees in a memo about the dwindling number of nassessalors and the need to establish a corps of volunteers for the task in the years ahead. Doctor faulted Dastur for his projection of zero nassessalors by

The majority of the community continue to use our age-old system of disposal. Cremation is only favored by the ignorant but influential classes

2010 as the end result of a deliberate policy of not encouraging the children of nassessalors to remain in the profession. As the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) is educating them, they will not be available for such work, concluded Doctor. At the end of his remarks Doctor read out the resolution which was passed without dissent though *Parsiana* noticed a few people here and there who did not have their hands up.

"We must strive to act and not just talk," urged former BPP trustee and former vice chancellor of Bombay University Dr Mehroo Bengalee. "How can just six trustees, of whom not one is a religious scholar, at the behest of so called reformists, create such a turmoil and emotional agony in the entire Zoroastrian community?" asked the ailing Bengalee. "Can we not, as an intelligent community understand the ulterior motive of the evil-eyed group to somehow... usurp the property... the most precious possession of the community?" Though unable to stand, Bengalee noted firmly, "Act we must and immediately," suggesting a program to pressurize the trustees to stick to the beaten path. "Awake Zoroastrians and put pressure on the trustees to fulfill their promise or else show your wrath and give them no peace at all. Let them know, we have reached the threshold of tolerance... Revolt we must and we will!" The audience approved Bengalee's words with a

standing ovation.

BPP trustee and its spokesman on the Doongerwadi issue, solicitor Dadi Engineer was a singularly embattled man that evening. Though fellow trustees Rustom Tirandaz and Dinshaw Mehta were present, an ideological gap separated the trio. Mehta, who had originally voted with the majority, changed sides after the meet as per his letter published in *Jam-e-Jamshed* (January 6, 2002). (According to the grapevine Kavarana has done likewise, but Kavarana told *Parsiana* she would abide by her decision as trustee, though personally she would opt for dakhmenashini.) Dadrawala, driving home the unpopularity of the BPP decision after each speech, may have added to Engineer's discomfort. Nonetheless he strode on stage to a chorus of boos to explain the thinking behind the BPP decision. Declaring himself "born and bred in sheer orthodoxy," he asked, "Do you think all BPP trustees are reformists?" He referred to the genesis of the present impasse in the complaints from Spenta residents on the smells emanating from the dakhmas, the differences of opinion among scholars and priests regarding the various schemes, especially the stand-off between the aviarist lobby and the solar panelists. He referred to the Rs 1,000 per month stipend paid by the WZO to the nassessalors and related that when the WZO-UK amended its articles to ensure equal rights to non-Zoroastrian spouses, he had declared he would resign as president of WZO-India if the policy was applied here.

Engineer bravely defended the decision to seek counsel Rafiq Dada's opinion as the opinions of the DDD and counsel Bomi Zaiwalla were in conflict. "Unfortunately, (Dada's) opinion can be interpreted both ways," he admitted. Describing himself as a solicitor for 45 years who had seen courts functioning at every level, Engineer voiced the trustees' fear "if the matter goes to court before a non-Parsi judge." Envisaging a scenario where photographs of the dakhmas' innards would be produced, Engineer winced with embarrassed apprehension of the legal fraternity saying, "This enlightened community is doing this!" He asked the audience, "Do you sincerely think we want to be *soori ni vachhé sopari* (caught in a pincer)?" He promised to fight against a crematorium at Doongerwadi even if he was not a trustee.

But the restive audience, far from commiserating with Engineer's dilemma, interrupted with boos and cat-calls and had to be reminded several times by Dadrawala to remain quiet.

Dadrawala gave an instant rejoinder to Engineer's plea of stench. "Stench exists (at the electric crematorium) at Chandanwadi also," he remarked adding that along with the smell there was soot, pollution and environmental hazards there. As for photographs, the usual orthodox line was heard: "What do you expect to see inside a dakhma? A rose garden?" Dadrawala further noted, "If pictures of an exhumed body are produced with thousands of maggots, one may also have to demand for closure of Christian and Muslim cemeteries." He urged Engineer to look beyond his seven years of trusteeship: "Where do you draw the line? The compromises you make today will lead to other compromises," he noted, visualizing the DDD-AIMZ members as future BPP trustees. "If you clip their wings today, you will prevent this," he advised. "(But) you would much prefer that we go to court than they go," Dadrawala opined.

Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia, principal of the Dadar Athornan Madressa, was the only person that evening to describe the day of acrimony as "a day of sorrow." According to Karanjia "one of the biggest lies is that dakhmenashini is a custom that can change." He declared it to be "as important to us as atash behrams and agiaries, sudreh-kusti, the *Gathas* and *Vendidad*." He too referred to the DDD's agenda as a "conspiracy," and looked for an "ulterior motive." According to Karanjia, "The present trustees have blocked the front-door entry to a crematorium (at Doongerwadi) but they have not prevented its back-door entry."

Zoroastrian Studies (ZS) founder Khojeste Mistree who is in the vanguard of the aviary project recounted how he had "begged the trustees to seek the opinion of the high priests" but was instead taken to Dada's office where he presented the senior counsel with material to show that burial and cremation were anti-Zoroastrian practices. "Whether the faceless majority do not want change and the big shots want change, we have to go according to what is right in the religion," declared Mistree.

Complaining that he gets no "proper media coverage on the aviary issue," Mistree took the opportunity to share his insight with the audience: "What's

the point of the Punchayet saying that they have allowed one crore (for the aviary project) when I've told them that the cost is double?" Mistree said that he required support from the BPP but the trustees (Tirandaz and Mehta excepted) and the CEO are against the aviary. "The aviary project (needs to be) professionally managed. There can be no fifth columnists... whatever the cost, the Punchayet is well-off. (There is) no shortage of funds."

Though there are 12,000 vultures in Rajasthan according to Mistree and

"Our trustees whom we have elected to preserve this waqf property, they are the ones desecrating it"

hence obtaining a hundred for Doongerwadi would not be difficult, Mistree expressed his dismay at the circular from Behram Dastur regarding the need for volunteer nassessalors in 10 years' time. "Lay people going into the dakhmas would be horrified... If there are no nassessalors, there will be no aviary and no dakhma system." Referring to the ZS involvement with religious education at five Parsi schools, Mistree admitted that a number of students there are children of nassessalors, thereby endorsing Dastur's basic observation that the children of the nassessalors are now being educated.

Though the high priests from Surat and Poona, Dasturs Noshirwan Dastoor and Dastur Hormuzdiar Dastoor, were also present, Bangalore's Nadirshah Unwala was the only one to speak. "Dharam paisa thi véchaich (religion is being sold)," he averred, adding that the ancestors of the DDD members must

have done a lot of *bundagi* (prayers) for their families to achieve positions of such influence and affluence. He noted that a non-Parsi former solicitor general of India has offered his services to fight the SDAC case at a concessional charge!

Currently riding the crest of orthodox popularity, Tirandaz greeted the "*kom naa rakhevaalo ané kom naa wafaadaro*" (the community's protectors and warriors)" with some homespun philosophy, history and religion: "Lies have speed, truth has endurance. In the BPP senility is conquered by public relations (which is) a catastrophe for Parsi Zoroastrians. (Ours is) crystallized DNA, the product of the first civilizing force in mankind 5,000 years ago. At a time when men were eating men, Zarathushtra took his band and taught them to live among themselves... Not to escape but to carry forward the religion led our ancestors to come to India. They didn't come to make money or careers but because they wanted to save future generations of Dinshaw Mehtas, Rustom Tirandazs, Jamshed Guzders, Dinshaw Tambolys..."

Most of the speakers at the three-and-a-half-hour talkathon had done their homework. The SDAC organizers had spared no pains: from the provision of bus service from and to the baugs; to a handy form for fellow travelers to declare whether they would provide financial, secretarial or administrative help, volunteer service or whatever; to the arrangement for audio/video recording of the evening's events; to a note of thanks from the SDAC to its supporters in the *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly* (January 6, 2002) regretting the lack of seating space. The SDAC convener Hoshang Wania, who proposed the vote of thanks at the end of the meet, and his team had organized the event with remarkable precision.

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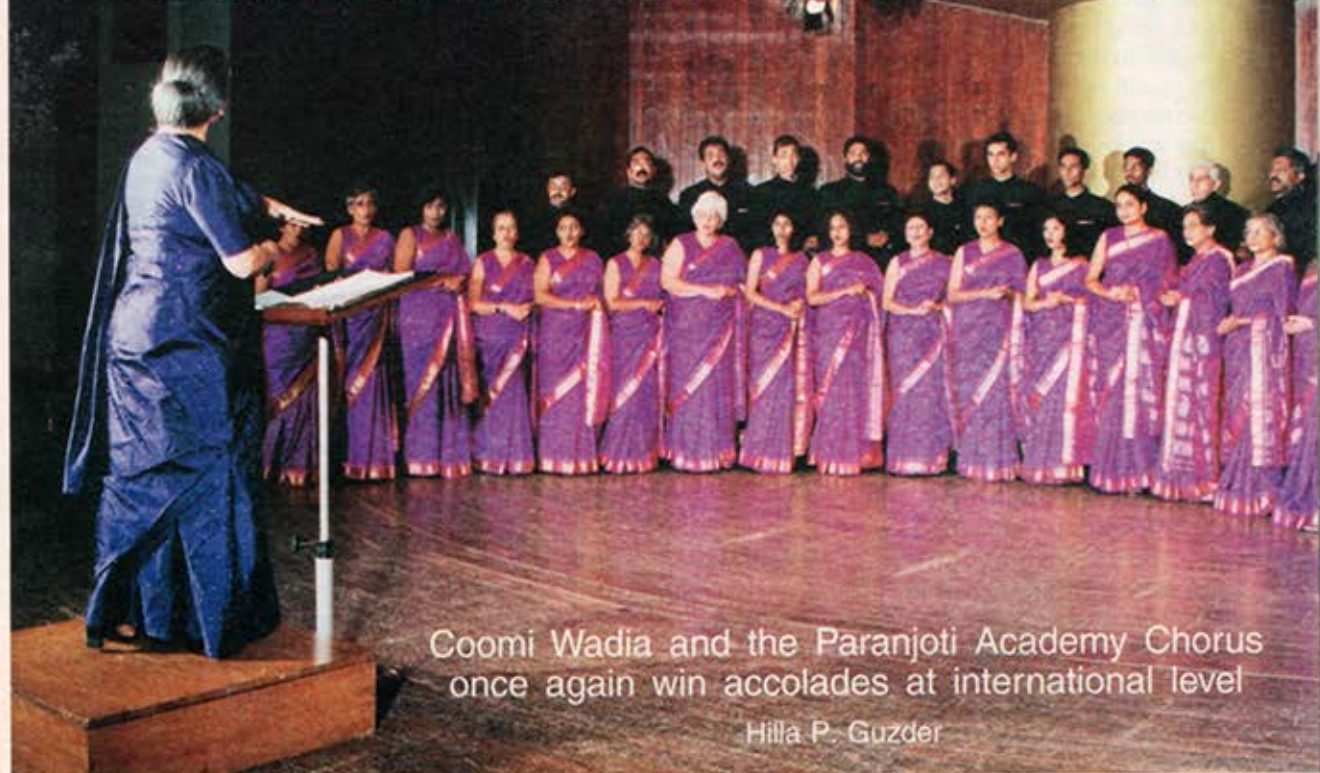
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The world in their voice



Coomi Wadia and the Paranjoti Academy Chorus once again win accolades at international level

Hilla P. Guzder

Their repertoire covers an expressive and expansive scale — from the majestic music of Bach, Beethoven or Handel, to the soul and syncopation of the Negro spiritual, the rhythms of the Indian raag and taal, chansons from around the world in changing tone and tempi. In keeping with their motto “International harmony through international music,” the Paranjoti Academy Chorus sings in 22 languages — from Latin, German or Polish to Filipino, Konkani or Sanskrit.

On the podium stands Coomi Wadia — the conductor and driving force behind the Chorus for the past 34 years. Short of stature, sari elegantly pleated, a string of pearls adorning her neck, Wadia weaves together the subtleties of sound with softly choreographed movements of her hands, eyes and composed body language. Elaborating on the joys of music-making, Wadia says she finds the Chorus’ foreign tours, be it for competitions or choir festivals, immensely satisfying. “My ability as a musician and the Paranjoti Academy Chorus’ ability to work hard is put to the test. There are no



aunties, uncles and friends of the singers in the audience there. Nor do foreign audiences make any allowance for the fact that your choir is from India or any other distant land, singing music that is essentially western. They take you on a par. If you’re good, they applaud spontaneously. If not, they slash you!” The



Conductor and choir on stage at the Tata Theatre (top); outside an ancient cathedral in Europe; (far left); Wadia with the Torre Vieja competition’s third prize

ultimate high note for both conductor and singers is of course a standing ovation. Winning the third prize from among 21 finalists from Ireland, Russia, Argentina, Poland, etc at the XLVII International Competition of Polyphony and Habaneras in Torre Vieja on the Spanish Riviera in August last year, Wadia states that the choir received standing ovations in every concert and at the end of each encore as well. “The reception to every kind of music we sing is tremendous,” she says.

Invited to participate in the XVIII



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Choral Festival at Segorbe in an ancient Gothic cathedral in Spain, the Chorus then moved on to Valencia and to France where they engaged in concerts and workshops with over 3,500 participants at the XVII International Choral Festival 'Choralies' in Lyon, in the ancient Roman ruins of Vaison la Romaine. Scheduled to give three concerts in three days the public demand was so great that an additional performance was squeezed in to accommodate those who clamored to hear the group from India. "I have known conductors who say they will not give more than one concert in three days. We gave two concerts in one day, and the second concert did not suffer," smiles Wadia.

Quickly adjusting to the acoustics of cavernous concert halls, the high rafters of magnificent cathedrals, small church cupolas or 'dead' auditoriums where the sound does not gel, Wadia explains that the singers need to hear each other to maintain the delicate equilibrium between the sopranos and altos, tenors and basses, to take entries in polyphony (music with two or more independent melodic parts sounded together), to adjust dynamic, tonal levels. "Otherwise we feel we are singing in a vacuum," she elaborates. "Coomi may exhort us to sing more legato (smoothly), or more staccato (crisp), as required," explains Chorus member Perin Jesia who first joined the ensemble way back in 1958, when Wadia herself was a soprano in the choir originally founded by conductor/composer Dr Victor Paranjoti who was for several years the deputy director-general of All India Radio and the principal music critic for *The Times of India*. "Even at the international level, our standard is as good as the next choir, often much higher!" says Jesia. Opines Cynthia Thyle who has been with the Chorus, albeit with breaks, since 1969: "Our strengths are Coomi's inputs and our response to her. Musically, she is so talented, sensitive to the nuances of the composition. If we are showing signs of nerves, she calms us down. You just have to follow her every step of the way."

Bonding together as an

The winning choir

ensemble are the young and the not-so-young, not products of conservatoires, not professional musicians but a motley group of accountants, architects, web designers, housewives and even a trainee pilot, many of whom cannot even read a note of music! "All I ask for from my singers is a good ear and a willingness to work. There are people with good voices and people with average voices and they form a good choir. I do not require a trained voice. Singers have come to me raw and have become leaders in their line," Wadia points out. Of course, there are some who join drawn only by the magnet of foreign tours. "I don't see their faces after that!" she laughs. Longtimers with the Chorus, with breaks for marriage, the arrival of babies, work commitments, etc, are Jesia, Thyle, Freney Peddar, Homai Dandiwalla, Donald Michael, Mario Derek Lobo, Mehroo Kotval, Rusy Shroff and many others. "The Paranjoti Chorus is so hugely important in my life that I travel from my office at Goregaon to the J. B. Petit High School for Girls at Fort where practices are held two evenings a week. Just before a tour rehearsals may go on for the entire day. But I love it. My closest friends are in the choir and I really do not see myself singing with any other chorus," asserts businesswoman Serena Jacob.

The choir's several tours have seen it perform in Europe, USA, Egypt, Lebanon, Japan and the Philippines, as well

as in major Indian cities. At the IX International Choral Song Festival in Poland in 1974, they secured the first prize for overall musical excellence; in 1977 they won silver medals in the categories of polyphony/classical as well as folk songs at Tolosa in Spain.

With Bombay having a 'sister city' status with Yokohama and Stuttgart, the German festival in 1981 was made even more memorable by the fact that Wadia was selected, from among 13

German and international conductors, to conduct the grand finale, with over 700 singers and instrumentalists. The "Voices for Hospices," (Bombay, 1977) an international event when the *Messiah* by Handel was sung on the same day all over the world by over 200 choirs; the World Festival of Sacred Music in 2000 in Bangalore; an entire program of Bach in Bombay with guest artistes Dilshad Billimoria (Posnock) (flute), Farhad Billimoria (violin), Zarin Ghadialy-Hodiwalla (contralto) and other soloists; recording for radio and television stations in India and abroad — conductor and choir take it all in their stride.

But amidst the fortissimos (crescendos) and the diminuendos (decrecendos) come the quavering realities of raising funds for shows and tours. "We had just started our quest for advertisers and sponsors for our tour last year when the Gujarat earthquake struck on January 26. But God is great. He always helps us," believes Wadia who begins her day with prayer and meditation, even before her morning cuppa. She graciously acknowledges the "tremendous family support, without which I wouldn't have gone beyond my first year as a conductor." Husband Nariman sang for long years with the Paranjoti Chorus till his bypass surgery in 1997. "Nariman is a very fine critic of my work," she declares. His choral composition *Jalakamaladala* is dedicated to his wife and nar-



A young Coomi with Paranjoti



Reaching for the Sky



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rates in Gujarati an incident from the life of Lord Krishna as a child. Nariman was with the family firm, K. Wadia Jewellers, till he branched out in 1989 to become a consultant for jewelry techniques, including the setting up of factories for the jewelry export trade.

Their 32-year-old son Sorab cut his musical teeth with the Chorus, singing with them from when he was a school-boy in Bombay. Honing his artistic accomplishments at the Peabody School of Music in Baltimore, Sorab did his masters in piano and voice in the USA and now seeks to make his mark abroad as a tenor in opera, auditioning for roles and traveling where opportunity beckons. Sustaining the family bond, Sorab joined the Paranjoti Chorus in Austria last year, fine-tuning the singers individually and collectively with vocal exercises, breathing techniques, etc. "Sorab is the type of person who inspires and challenges you. It is wonderful to see him at this (international) level," comments Peddar. With music score availability restricted to a couple of shops in Bombay, "Sorab selects music suitable for the choir and sends it to me from abroad," says his mother. Sorab performed the first movement of Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No. 2* with the World Zoroastrian Orchestra at the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston in December 2000.

Coomi's path to the podium began fortuitously enough when a piano was gifted to her family by a friend who intended to purchase a grand piano for his own daughter. "I was around nine at the time, studying in J. B. Petit School. I owe a lot to pianist and piano teacher Khorshed Screwvala who gave me piano lessons free for years as my mother Aloo could not afford the fees," recalls Coomi. Father Rustom Umrigar had passed away and the early years were tough. She soon became an accomplished pianist, obtaining both the Associate (ATCL) and the Licentiate (LTCL) from the Trinity College of Music, London.

In 1950 at age 16 she joined Paranjoti's choir, first known as BALOS (Bombay Amateur Light Opera Sabha), then as the Paranjoti Chorus from 1960 onwards. The following year saw the choir's first concert tour of Europe, independent of the Bombay Madrigal Singers' Organisation, under whose auspices it had originally been founded. "Paranjoti was a great conductor. Though I was a singer with the choir, I

would prepare other singers for their part, take rehearsals when he could not, etc, but he never actually taught me conducting," notes Coomi who is a graduate in graphic art from the Sir J. J. School of Art.

Paranjoti died at the age of 61 of a sudden heart attack in 1967, throwing the Chorus into turmoil, with more than one aspirant to the podium. The majority elected Coomi as the conductor, some walked out; but a brief four months later



With Sorab (left) and Nariman in New Orleans

the choir gave a public performance under Coomi's baton. "We had to quickly tell the public that the choir hadn't collapsed!" With no formal training in conducting, it was literally a case of sink or soar, she smiles. It was two foreign tours and almost 12 years later that she took a 15-day summer course in conducting abroad. "Unnecessary acrobatics, shaking the head and body are not required. They detract from the music. I use small gestures, which have been highly appreciated, as we sing a *capella* (without accompaniment). While conducting an orchestra stronger gestures may be required as the musicians are concentrating on the notes in front of them," she elucidates.

Coomi has studied and worked under well-known conductor, Helmuth Rilling and the last tour saw contemporary composers, Lithuanian Vytautas Miskinis and Argentinian Nestor Zadoff, present her with some of their choral compositions/arrangements in appreciation of the choir's excellent rendition. Modern music, sometimes atonal, is very interesting but difficult to interpret, she remarks. Well-known Indian composer Vanraj Bhatia, also hard to perform, has written three works especially for the Chorus. "At least one-third of the pro-

gram on every concert tour consists of works by Indian composers — Victor Paranjoti, Vanraj Bhatia, Nariman Wadia, Abel D'Cruz..." states their souvenir. Pandit Ravi Shankar has also invited the choir to perform his compositions. "Our performance in 1980 at the Homi Bhabha Auditorium of Bach's *Mass in B Minor* with some very talented (western) instrumentalists from Poona's Rajneesh Ashram playing in the orchestra obtained rave reviews," reports Jesia.

Invited to international symposia and workshops, Coomi has also officiated as a judge at singing competitions and festivals in Brazil, Poland and Ceylon. "Your inner self evolves with music. I feel I have matured as a person. My singers have found a great change in me," asserts the conductress who does yoga, and terms herself a religious person. "I love going to Udvada. Being in the Iranshah alone at night, amidst the glow of the fire and the divas, is an uplifting experience." Unnecessary rituals do not find favor, nor does the pushing and jostling in crowded agiaries and atash behrams on Pateti or Navroz! A staunch believer in the sudreh-kusti, Coomi remarks she had read about a high voltage crematorium in Germany which instantly reduces a dead body to ash. "Why cannot we bring such a crematorium to Bombay," she queries, perturbed by the present controversies in the community. "If the solar concentrators fitted on the dakhmas work, that's fine," she adds.

With her musical odyssey spanning five decades, Coomi aims "to keep making music at the highest level possible. At the end of a concert I feel, not drained, but elated." At the Chorus' invitation or through its efforts choirs not only from sister cities Yokohama and Stuttgart but from Aachen (Germany), Poland and Spain have performed all over India. On concert tours abroad, east-west chords are harmonized not just through the colorful saris, Nehru jackets, folded hands (namastes) and Indian melodic motifs but through living with local hosts in their homes, imbibing the cadence of competing choirs... Says Shroff, "Coomi is very particular about detail — correct multi-lingual pronunciation, tone and timbre. Her level of excellence in music is hard to find in Bombay. Though we are not professional singers, she makes us feel like a professional choir," cleansing from the soul the dust of everyday life.



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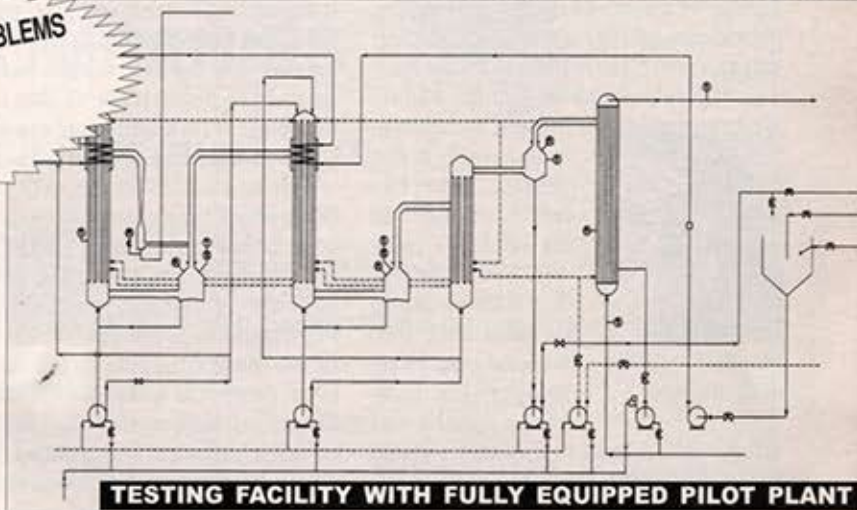
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"India has to learn"

"Once you young people are provided with discipline and encouragement, the sky is the limit. Do not wait for your parents or teachers to take the lead. The poor dears are too old and set in their ways and may find it difficult to change," was the late freedom fighter Minoo



Masani: "we have to be trained"

Masani's message to the youth in the chapter "The Future Is Yours" in his book *We Indians*. Since the Indian Liberal Group is keen that this book be read by as many young Indians as possible, an

effort was made to reprint this volume first published in 1989, mentions S. V. Raju in his preface to the second edition. Barring certain statistical data which has been updated in the footnotes, the text remains the same in the two editions. "We commend this book to today's youth, the citizens of tomorrow," states Raju, a long-time colleague of Masani and editor of *Freedom First*.

Masani, according to the book, "was happiest when surrounded by young people." He joined the freedom struggle shortly after completing his education in England and was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. Referring to their mutual respect for punctuality, Masani relates how once when he was having a discussion with Gandhi at his ashram at Wardha, the Mahatma interrupted him mid-sentence to remind him that his time was over. Unhappy that he had to join the bottom of the queue once again to complete the point he was making, Masani noted that when his turn came several hours later, Gandhi reminded him where he had trailed off and asked him to continue. "That was wonderful consolation for the interruption," acknowledged Masani. At another place in the book he recalled Gandhi's advice, "India has to learn to say 'no.'"

A member of the Lok Sabha and India's Ambassa-

dor to Brazil, Masani viewed India as "our own melting pot." Among the questions which the book addresses are: "What is the balance sheet of our post-Independence achievements and failures, and what does being a good Indian mean?" The book is replete with anecdotes from his own life as also those of his peers. With appropriate illustrations by R. K. Laxman, this 106-page book which is a sequel to his *Our India* (a book about the dreams and aspirations of a nation in bondage) makes enjoyable reading, reminding the reader of both his cultural and spiritual heritage. For Masani who died in 1998 at the age of 92, the golden rule in life was: "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you."

After retiring from politics Masani edited the journal *Freedom First*. He



also founded the Leslie Sawhny Programme For Training in Democracy and the Society for the Right to Die with Dignity. Stressing on honesty, discipline, commitment, hard work, cleanliness, etc Masani points out that "an average Indian government employee works only 186 days out of 365 days in a year... Work does not come naturally to most people. We have to be trained and motivated to work."

Published by Raju for the Indian Liberal Group, Sassoon Building, 143, M. G. Road, Bombay 400001, Tel: 2674453, *We Indians* is priced at

Rs 50. Raju is appreciative of the financial support of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and the Oxford University Press for permitting them to reprint the book.

Simin J. Patel



Blessings at Banaji

"This booklet has been prepared with the idea that more and more Zarathostis would be inspired to visit our sacred atash behrams regularly to pray and to receive divine inspiration to lead happy, purposeful lives. Thereby the objectives with which these sacred places of worship were established by our noble, devout ancestors would be fulfilled," delineates the inside front cover of *A brief history of Banaji Atash Behram* (1845-2001).

"This Banaji Atash Behram like all places of worship has its own old world charm and aura... Devotees have experienced the peace and calm and had their good wishes fulfilled by its blessings," writes author Marzban J. Giara in his preface to the 48-page booklet published in November 2001.

The history of the Banaji family, the Banaji Adarian at Calcutta which was founded in 1839, the Banaji Atash Behram at Charni Road in Bombay where the adarian was first consecrated on September 17, 1844 and the atash behram on December 13, 1845 is related here. Giara has reproduced a notice published in the *Bombay Courier* of Friday, December 5, 1845 which reads, "Saturday the 13th instant being the day appointed for the consecration of the new church erected by them, M/s Faramji, Cursetji and Rustomji Cawasjee and Dadabhai Rustomji would respectfully solicit the favor of the European and native gentlemen granting leave to their Parsi clerks and servants on that day in order to permit of their attendance at the ceremony."

This third atash behram in Bombay was constructed after the inception of the Dadysett and the H. B. Wadia Atas Bahram. The booklet explains how the Banaji family, originally Shahenshahis (from the first wave of Zoroastrian migrants to India who, as per their ancient practice, intercalated an extra month of 30 days at the end of 120 years to synchronize with the solar calendar),





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opted to become Kadmis (the group who had stayed back in Iran did not allow for this extra month and hence fell back by 30 days in their calendar): Faramji Cawasjee Banaji was sent to China as an agent of Dadi Noshirwanji



Gira: faithfully recording

Dadiseth. After finishing his work he left for India but reportedly lost contact with his family who used to make anxious enquiries with Dadiseth. On one such day when father Cawasjee came to enquire about Faramji's whereabouts, Dadiseth is said to have asked, "What would you do if your son Faramji returns safely? Would you and your son become Kadmis?" Cawasjee is believed to have responded in the affirmative following which Faramji returned safely within eight days. Cawasjee, after whom the Atash Behram is named, along with his seven children became Kadmis, reports Gira.

The eight center pages carry color photographs of the eminent members of the Banaji family, the precincts of the fire-temple including the sacred wells and the varasyo who is given pride of place, and the framed Persian carpet which adorns the front entrance of the Atash Behram. According to Gira, "the sixth border of the carpet portrays along with some Persian shahs, reigning before and during the period of making this carpet, many well-known ancient Zoroastrian monarchs, members of royal families and nobility, chiefs and courtiers, heroes and heroines with their names in the seventh border deliberately set and indicated not in accordance with the reign and rank on account of the powerful hatred and discrimination prevailing at that time against the Zoroastrians."

The latter half of the book dwells on the layout of the Atash Behram, the dasturs who have served this house of worship, and the remembrance of Jalbawa on Monday evenings when many members of the community throng this fire-temple in time for the maachi offered in the Aiwisruthrem *gah*. Gira reasons: "If a righteous man such as Jalbawa publicly or secretly minimizes the hardships of the faithfuls and helps in their good wishes being fulfilled which gives him a place in their hearts

and they remember him, what objection could anyone have?"

Dastur Minocherji JamaspAsa's description in Persian verse of this imposing Atash Behram has been translated thus: "That place is not merely a monument but a place where God's mercy descends, as also the farohar and ameshaspands, where the splendid fire of the truthful, good religion is enthroned. This place of worship of God refreshes the body and gives joy. This royal palace having sea breeze is so constructed that by seeing it, one would forget a garden..."

Priced at Rs 60, this booklet is dedicated to Phiroze Navroji Patel whose two sons Hanoz and Zubin of Din Publications and Powerpusher Financial Services Private Limited requested Gira to work on this project. Copies of this booklet are available with Gira, Dhunmai Building, 667, Lady Jehangir Road, Dadar, Bombay 400014, Tel: 4166204 or Din Publications, 306, MB House, 3rd floor, 79, Janmabhoomi Marg, Fort, Bombay 400001, Tel: 2846521/22.

S. J. P.

Lest we err

"While none of us may be able to observe all the tarikats all the time, yet it is a good idea to put them on record so that it can help anyone, maybe even in the future," writes author Adil F. Rangoonwalla in *Zoroastrian Etiquette* which is the second revised edition of his earlier *Agyari Etiquette* (published in 1997). "The Parsi community, the smallest minority in the world today, cannot afford to move away from traditional Zoroastrianism and it is in our best interest to imbibe the good values of our religion," conveys Dastur (Dr) Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa in the book. He is happy therefore that the book provides "good and useful information so that we do not do something, even unknowingly, that violates the decorum of our holy institutions."



Viewing religious tarikats "as a bridge between the religion and ourselves," the 34-page book of 18 chapters is "written with the sincerest desire that all of us uphold some rules our religion has laid down for us," states the author. While most of the subject matter in the first half of the book has already been covered in the first edition (see "Religious etiquette," Events and

Personalities, *Parsiana*, April 1998), the latter half includes new chapters like "The Boi Ceremony," where Rangoonwalla explains that "people have their own notions of what to do when the bell is being rung." He advises continuing with one's prayers, whether sitting or standing, as "due to the ringing of the bell evil is shaken up and is in a state of flux and can afflict you." In yet another new chapter "Monopoly Over The Lord?" he refers to the "over-faithfuls (who) stand at the door of the kebla or its adjoining windows for hours together." After reciting the *Atash Nyaish* make way for others, he counsels. "The Funeral Ceremony" explains the futility of crying at a funeral and how "according to the *Sad Dar*, a Pahlavi text, every tear becomes one drop of a river before the Chinavad bridge and it is difficult for the soul to make its passage."

In a chapter entitled "Electronic Media," Rangoonwalla highlights the need to switch off mobile phones and pagers while visiting a place of worship: "We do not like to be disturbed even when we are watching our favorite TV show. Then why should we keep ourselves open to possible interruptions when we are trying to have a communion with God?" he questions.

"With this book I finish one decade of writing religious books," notes the author thanking the trustees of the Shapurji Burjorji Bharucha Trust and Viraf Hansotia of Online Systems for their help in promoting and formulating this 2001 publication. Priced at Rs 15, *Zoroastrian Etiquette* is available at Union Press, 13, Homji Street, Fort, Bombay 400001.

S. J. P.



Rangoonwalla: upholding religious laws

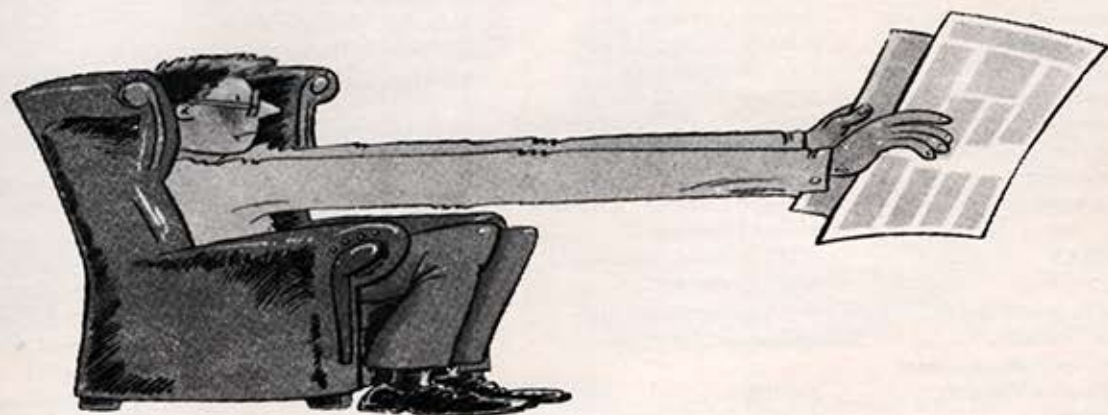
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MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 21 and 41 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 24 and 55 years, averaging at 29 years.

There were 15 births registered at the two hospitals in the last month of 2001. Fifteen of the 30 patients who succumbed to heart disease were in the 80+ age bracket. Pneumonia/lung disease felled nine Zoroastrians whereas five fell prey to cancer and three each to diseases of the brain, old age/general debility and septicemia. Uremia, diabetes, liver disease and Parkinson's disease took a toll of two lives each. Paraplegia, respiratory tract infection, haemorrhage and shock due to multiple injuries and hypertension were the four isolated cases registered. The age range fluctuated between 46 and 99 years. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth for December 2001, in Bombay, was 77 years.

BARODA

MARRIED

Zenobia Aspi Vajifdar and Cyrus Jamshed Dotivala on December 2, 2001
Urvakshi Farokh Katpitia and Kaizad Dinyar Engineer; December 8
Urvaz Pervaz Kapadia and Zubin Dinyar Engineer; December 9

BOMBAY

BORN

A girl to Behroz and Rustom Mulla; December 7
A boy, Malcolm, to Kamal and Khushru Vakharia; December 7
A girl to Armin and Fareedon Irani; December 8
A boy to Tannaaz and Rayomand Karkaria; December 10
A girl to Mahkharshid and Hushang Mazdayasna; December 15
A girl to Dinaz and Kayomars Kapadia; December 16
A boy, Farhad, to Dilshad and Viraf Bhadha; December 17
A girl, Khusnaz, to Aban and

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

Yezdi Chinoy; December 18
A boy, Jejan, to Meher and Farokh Cooper, brother to Sanaya; December 18
A boy to Jasmin and Adil Dalal; December 18
A girl to Ava and Kersasp Bhor; December 21
A boy to Khushnam and Delzad Mistry; December 24
A boy to Mehernaz and Zubin Malao; December 27
A girl to Ayesha and Neville Mody; December 27
A boy to Ferzin and Aspi Erane; December 30

MARRIED

Anahita Jal Pithawalla and Adil Tehmul Mistry; November 25
Jennifer Homiyar Jilla of Essex, UK and Riyaz Medioma Bhada; November 27
Anahita Viraph Daruwala and Adil Hormuzd Baria; November 30
Benifer Darayus Mowdawala and Cyrus Edul Bharucha; November 30
Anaita Sarosh Shroff and Homi Aspi Adajania; December 1

Delaram Manoochehr Jamsbnejad and Arman Jehangir Irani; December 1
Delnaz Porus Rana and Adil Farokh Khodaiji; December 1
Kashmira Behram Contractor and Behzad Farokh Kolah; December 1
Rashna Sapal Pastakia and Rayomand Hoshang Ambapardiwalla; December 2
Monaz Sam Songhadwala and Keki Khushru Shroff; December 3
Navaz Dinyar Marfatia and Rayomand Behram Contractor; December 4
Keshmira Tehmulrus Mistry and Neville Phiroze Dordi; December 6
Faranaaz Dadi Pithawalla and Firdos Firoz Kavina of Ahmedabad; December 6
Dinafrid Dinyar Mehta and Cyrus Rohinton Umrigar; December 6
Dinaz Dhun Mistry and Vispi Dinshaw Avari; December 7
Arnavaz Adi Mody and Zubin Rustom Irani; December 7
Delna Minoo Jijina and Farokh Behram Surti; December 7
Khushnuma Dinyar Mehta and Farhad Rohinton Umrigar; December 8
Armin Adi Billimoria and Kurush Dady Daruwala; December 9
Mahfrin Maneck Engineer and Khushru Kekobad Elavia; December 9
Farzana Soli Sakka and Darayas Minoo Gocal of Jamshedpur; December 9
Delzin Farokh Irani and Hanoz Pervaz Patel; December 9
Nilufer Noshir Dungor of Poona and Darius Ratan Surveyor of Texas, USA; December 9
Aban Pervaz Bavaadam and Tehemton Jehangir Bhagwagar of Lynchburg, Virginia, USA; December 10
Pearl Dara Godiwala and Mehernosh Navroze Khambata; December 10
Tushna Darius Irani and Darius Khushroo Patel; December 10
Dilnaz Hoshang Balsara and Kaikhushroo Zarir Adajania; December 11

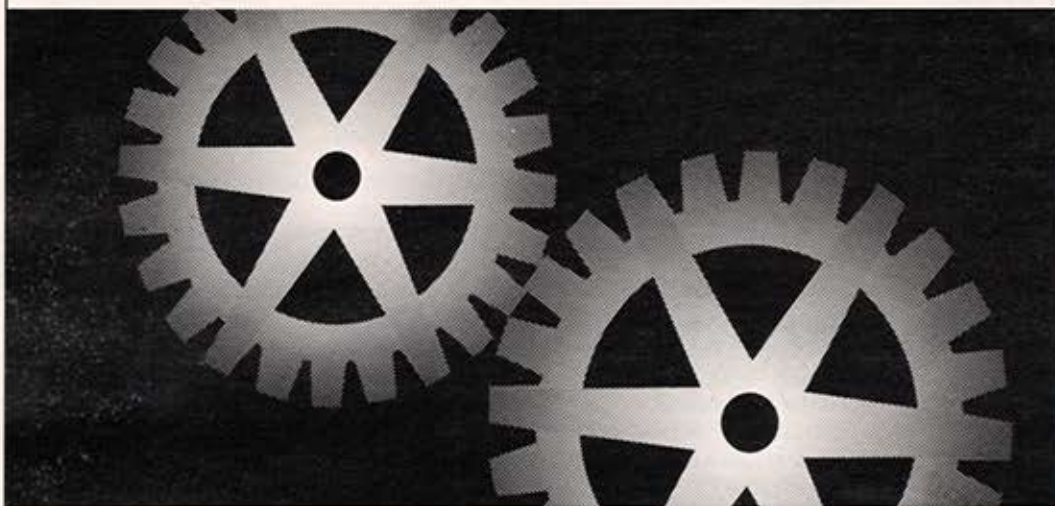
Zarin Bomi Khambatta and Kayomars Rusi Kapadia; December 11
Roshni Rustomji Karkaria and Rayomand Dinyar Marfatia; December 11
Mehroo Jal Mistry and Kaiwan Aspi Turel; December 11
Maheringiz Rumi Hansotia and Cyrus Noshir Khodaiji; December 15
Dilshad Jimmy Colabawalla and Behram Firoze Kotwal; December 15
Kashmira Jamshed Dukandar and Yezdi Kersi Khodaiji; December 16
Dilshad Nozer Kapadia and Marzban Godrej Patel; December 18
Beroze Kavas Umrigar of Hyderabad and Neville Phiroze Amaria; December 20
Aban Noshir Lam and Farhad Firoze Elavia; December 20
Roxanne Nosh Vadoli and Zubin Dinshaw Mistry; December 20
Daneesh Zarir Adajania and Rustom Jamshed Appoo; December 21
Chermeen Ardeshtir Elavia of California, USA and Yazdi Viraf Parekh of Hong Kong; December 21
Tinaz Kaiky Karkaria and Burzin Sam Toddywalla; December 21
Dilshad Cyrus Zack and Kaizad Keki Irani; December 22
Binaifer Dinshaw Desai and Mahiyar Keki Khambatta; December 23
Firoza Jal Doctor and Rohinton Kaikhushroo Patel; December 24
Dilshad Marzban Morena and Farhad Jal Bagli; December 25
Mahafrene Feroze Ganjia and Kerfegar Dinshaw Eduljee; December 27
Jasmin Fali Pardiwalla and Khushroo Homi Udwadia; December 27
Pearl Cyrus Balsara and Jamshid Hoshang Tantra; December 29
Nilufer Dinshaw Tampal and Viraf Dara Fauzdar; December 31

DIED

Piloo Khurshed Darukhana-

*“In all things that are purely social
we can be as separate as the fingers,
yet one as the hand
in all things essential to mutual progress”*

- Booker T. Washington



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walla (70), residing at 502/B, Ahura Apts, Divecha Complex, Edalji Rd, Charai, Thana (W), 400601; December 1

Khorshed Shapurji Sabawalla (70), Mody Bldg, Marzban Clny, Gilder Lane, 400008; December 1

Dina Sam Maravala (83), 1/14, Pushpa Vihar, Opp Colaba P. O., 400005; December 3

Murzbani Phiroze Narsang (46), 1/9, A. H. Wadia Bldg, Parel Tank Rd, 400012; December 3

Perin Cawas Marolia (76), 275, M. Damania Bldg, Chikalwadi, Tardeo Rd, 400007; December 4

Homai Jehangirji Rumwala (87), Dhan Bldg, Sant Gadge Maharaj Lane, Dadar (E), 400014; December 4

Nergish Jamshed Sarkari (61), Rusi Mehta Bldg, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; December 4

Homi Fakirji Bhagat (72), 14/10, Panthaki Bldg, S. V. Rd, Andheri (E), 400069; December 5

Fali Jamshed Modhawalla (65), 3, Drinal Apts, Hathi Mohalla, Vasai (W), Dist Thana, 401201; December 5

Boman Merwanji Antia (74), 4/10, Panthaki Bldg, S. V. Rd, Andheri (E), 400069; December 6

Shirin Sohrab Avari (82), B. Bhiwandiwala Ter, Dhobitalao, 400002; December 7

Jerroo Keki Dick (70), N/13, S. B. Bharucha Bldg, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; December 7

Ardeshir Kaikhushrou Patel (75), 8/A, C. M. Banaji Bldg, Forjett St Cross Lane, Gowalia Tank, 400036; December 7

Homi Kaikhushroo Aga (86), 347/C, United Chmbs, Grant Rd, 400007; December 8

Zal Minocher Contractor (96), 1-A/25, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; December 8

Rohinton Ratansha Elavia (61), 16/1, Petit Sanatorium, Kemp's Corner, 400036; December 8

Darab Bomanji Ghadiali (78), 7/7, Rustom Bldg, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; December 8

Jal Dinshaw Karkaria (71), Polson Bldg, 731, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; December 8

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*						
	Bombay		India		World	
	This issue	2001†	This issue	2001†	This issue	2001†
BIRTHS						
Boys	8	96	—	6	6	32
Girls	7	98	—	7	12	29
MARRIAGES						
Parsi	48	251	3	15	1	11
INTERCOMMUNAL						
Males married out	—	18	—	—	—	1
Females married out	—	14	—	1	2	3
DEATHS						
CONSIGNED						
Males	40	432	2	64	5	43
Females	25	454	2	39	8	30
CREMATED						
Males	—	8	—	—	—	—
Females	—	9	—	—	—	—

†Running totals for 2002 (January 2001-February 2002 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.

*Running totals for 2002 (January 2001-February 2002 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.

Naval Rustom Khambatta (71), Dastur Bglw, Dastoorwadi, Naigaum Cross Rd, Dadar, 400014; December 8

Freny Ardeshir Bastani (84), 13/7, Umrigar Bldg, Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; December 9

Cawas Ardeshir Bilimoria (78), 26, Sagar Darshan, B. Desai Rd, 400036; December 9

Nariman Sorabji Nariman (81), 1/10, Lam Bldg, J. I. P. Store Lane, Delisle Rd, Lower Parel, 400013; December 9

Banoo Manek Mullan (83), Engineer Bldg, 259, Princess St, 400002; December 12

Coomi Naoroji Karkhanawala (80), 113/3, Bora Bazar St, Fort, 400001; December 13

Naju Behram Mistry (88), Amit Apts, Veronica Rd, Bandra, 400050; December 14

Gool Naval Patch (82), Advile, 34, Ridge Rd, Malabar Hill, 400006; December 14

Rustom Muncherji Cama (79), Cosy Corner, Doongersay Rd, Malabar Hill, 400006; December 15

Shirin Jamshed Irani (63), 784/B, Mancherji Joshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; December 15

Feroze Ratanshaw Surti (64), 11, Engineer Bldg, Sleater Rd, 400007; December 15

Jehangir Hormusji Jamooji (83), 201, Kedarnath, Hari Market, 3rd Rd, Khar (W), 400052; December 16

Mithoo Keki Vicajee (87), C/o Dr S. B. Master, 12, Rustom Bldg, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; December 16

Ardaviraj Sorabji Kerawalla (72), D/2, Dinbai Nusserwanji Petit Bldg, Dinbai Petit St, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; December 17

Jal Dinshaw Siganporia (87), 5/11, Khan Est, Station Rd, Mahim, 400016; December 17

Sorab Dadabhai Sookhadwala (84), E/9, Shapoorji Broacha Bldg, V. P. Rd, 400004; December 18

Dinshaw Darabshaw Bharucha (90), 4, Vatcha Gandhi Bldg, Banaji Fire-temple Compd, Thakurdwar, 400002; December 19

Najoo Petrus Daruwalla (66), Minoo Mans, 799, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; December 19

Rashid Khodad Irani (65), 2117, Chawl no 191, Camp no 2, Pratiksha Ngr, Sion, Koliwada, Sion, 400022; December 19

December 19

Behram Jamshed Tarapore (91), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; December 20

Najamai Homi Patel (89), C/11, Shapoorji Broacha Bldg, V. P. Rd, 400004; December 21

Ratan Jehangir Rutnagar (76), 70/B, Jer Mans, A. K. Marg, Gowalia Tank, 400036; December 21

Rustom Darab Sethna (84), 63/A, Meher Apts, Anstey Rd, Off Altamount Rd, 400026; December 21

Dadi Hormasji Bharucha (78), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; December 22

Rusi Jamshedji Daruwalla (71), Rustomji Bldg, 17, Sleater Rd, 400007; December 22

Kola Rustom Dastoor (99), Minoo Lodge, 139, Tardeo Rd, 400034; December 22

Minoo Burjurji Mehta (78), Sherbanoo, 111, M. Karve Marg, 400002; December 22

Aspi Homi Irani (58), Sea View Bldg, Kelvskar Rd (North), Shivaji Park, 400016; December 23

Hoshangshaw Maneckshaw



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Master (90), 1/A/6, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; December 24
Jahabux Dadabhai Bhesania (81), 55, Tata Ngr, Sion Chunabhaty, 400022; December 25
Gool Burjor Elavia (81), P/16, S. B. Bharucha Bdg, S. V. Rd, Andheri, 400058; December 25
Rustam Nussarwanji Hathiram (76), H/1/14, Salunke Vihar, Kondwa Rd, Poona, 411022; December 25
Dara Fardunji Panthaky (76), 8, Batliwalla Bldg, Khan Est, Mahim, 400016; December 25
Coomi Jehangir Jamooji (81), 201, Kedarnath Bldg, Khar (W), 400052; December 26
Shera Rustomji Pagdiwalla (92), C/o M. D. Surti, Glamourglen, 100, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; December 26
Jamshed Phirozsha Toddywalla (81), Toddywalla Hse, 286/A, Sopari Bdg Rd, Parel, 400012; December 26
Dolly Maneck Fitter (74), 694, Dr Dinshaw Master Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; December 27
Roshan Pesi Mistry (74), 20, Old Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; December 27
Parveen Adi Mody (60), B/111, Darya Mhl, Napean Sea Rd, 400006; December 27
Jimmy Ratansha Karanjia (87), G/9, Shapoorji Broacha Bdg, V. P. Rd, 400004; December 28
Gustad Rustomji Patel (73), 5/3, Khan Est, M. M. C. Rd, Mahim, 400016; December 28
Shavak Mancherji Udwardia (98), Ali Manzil, N. Petit St, Grant Rd, 400007; December 28
Cawasji Bomanshaw Bottlewalla (75), Alpawalla Bldg, Chhotani Rd, Mahim, 400016; December 29
Bapsi Keki Mandriwalla (84), 13, Jamasp Tata Block, Off Turner Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; December 29
Darabshah Palanji Pavri (90), F/10, Venus Apts, Worli Sea Face, 400018;

December 29
Dinshaw Maneckji Jokhey (92), 8, Sadhana, N. Gamadia Rd, 400026; December 31
Nadar Nerioshang Panthaki (70), Dadyseth Atash Behram, Fanaswadi, 400002; December 31

CALCUTTA

DIED
Jehanbax Aderji Kapadia, husband of late Homai and father of Yasmin, Lily, Daisy, Zarin, Kamal and late Mehernosh; November 27
Behram Sorabji Batliwala, husband of late Nergis; November 28

POONA

DIED
Shirin Dinshaw Doctor, August 9

SURAT

DIED
Dhun Bomi Patel (70), Savasadi Sadan, Bhavnagri St, 395003; December 14

CANADA

British Columbia

DIED
Nargez Amar Singh Tikari (86), mother of Julie Bates and Ghalib in Vancouver; July 11

Ontario

BORN
A girl, **Kassundra**, to **Vicky** and **Kaezad Divecha** in Toronto; August 22
A girl, **Kavita**, to **Geeta** and **Adil Balsara**, sister to **Sunita** and **Phiroze** in Mississauga; August 30
A girl, **Vahishta**, to **Lily** and **Kaiomarz Suntok** in Toronto; November 3
A girl, **Kyra**, to **Armin** and **Zubin Daroona** in Toronto; December 3
A boy, **Nathan**, to **Anaita** and **Flavian Paris**, brother to **Zara**, in Mississauga; December 12

GERMANY

DIED
Tabaneh Behrooz, sister of **Parviz**; September 23

IRAN

BORN
A boy, **Kiarash**, to **Mahsa** and **Ali Makki** in Tehran;

October 6

PAKISTAN

Karachi

DIED
Cowsee M. Colabewalla (75), brother of **Perween Homi Cooper**; March 28
Roda Irani (73), wife of **Sohrab** and mother of **Diniyar**, **Farida Khambatta** and **Cyrus**; May 26
Jolly Dadi Bharucha, sister of **Pesi** and **Villy Engineer**; November 6

UK

London

BORN
A girl, **Renee**, to **Sharon** and **Rumi Talati**, sister to **Rhea**; November 6

USA

California

BORN
A boy, **Cyrus**, to **Bakhtavar** and **Rustom Vachha**, brother to **Sarosh** in Fremont; March 22

Florida

DIED
Kerfegar Mehta, son of **Katy** and **Noshir** and brother of **Persi** of **Bombay**, in **Miami**; August 23
Adil Tamboli (23), son of **Bina** and **Cawas** of **New Delhi**; December 7

Georgia

DIED
Nargesh Mistree, mother of **Farokh** and **Khojeste** in **Atlanta**; October 21

Illinois

MARRIED
Zenobia Rivetna, daughter of **Roshan** and **Rohinton**, and **Darius Damania** of **Bombay**, son of **Minoo** and late **Viloo** in **Hinsdale**; July 21
Gita Farhadieh, daughter of **Mahnaz** and **Bahram** of **Libertyville**, and **Monte Goss**, son of **Carol** and **Richard** in **Rosemont**; August 25

DIED

Thrity Naval Dordi (82), mother of **Zarin Minoo Press** and **Yezdi** in **Schaumburg**; July 30

Massachusetts

BORN
A boy, **Kian**, to **Jila** and

Ramesh Izedian in **Boston**; July 25

New York

BORN
A girl, **Maya Freny**, to **Oufree** and **Peter Argenta**; May 25
MARRIED
Zahra Sethna, daughter of **Mahrugh** and **Rohinton**, and **Stephen Mostad**; September 15
DIED
Jamshed Colah, husband of **Perin** and father of **Jessy**, **Eric**, **Aspi** and **Percy** in **Baldwin**; October 11

North Carolina

DIED
Nozar B. Satarawala (79), husband of **Parvin** and father of **Soonu**, **Pearl**, **Zarin** and **Zerxis**; August 1

Texas

BORN
A girl, **Simone**, to **Shenaz** and **Amol Sabnis**, sister to **Adit**; April 27
A boy, **Cyrus**, to **Keshvar** and **Kali Buhariwalla** in **Dallas**; May 10
Twins (girl and boy), **Harshika** and **Hritshik**, to **Navaz** and **Prakash Jha**; June 24
A girl, **Hope**, to **Leslie** and **Pheroze Tamboli** in **Houston**; July 23
A girl, **Arshia**, to **Shahla** and **Afshin Dehgan** in **Dallas**; August 10
A girl, **Roxanne Hope**, to **Natasha** and **Adel Irani** in **Houston**; October 2

DIED

Roshan Rustomji, mother of **Kaizad**, **Rukshandeh**, **Dhalla** and **Mahnaz** in **Arlington**; June 8
Khorshed Sorabji, mother of **Nilufar Kasnavia** in **Houston**; November 8

Wisconsin

BORN
A girl, **Jasmine**, to **Jinobya** and **Kaizad Machhi**, sister to **Rushad** and **Rehan** in **Germantown**; January 25

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

An engaging educator

Parinaz M. Gandhi

Died: Jal Pheroze Gimi, 87, former vice chancellor of the Nagpur University and erstwhile president and secretary of the Nagpur and Kamphthi Parsi Zarthosti Anjuman, on September 15, 2001 at his residence in Nagpur following a brief illness.

Gimi inspired several new members of various university bodies, guiding them to work for the welfare of the students and the Nagpur University, commented the present vice chancellor Dr Arun Satputaley when presiding over the condolence meeting convened by the University in honor of the man who on two brief occasions had officiated as vice chancellor. For 35 years he had served on the executive council of the Nagpur University and to him too goes the credit of establishing its postgraduate department of business management where he was appointed honorary director. The meeting hall of the University has been named after Gimi and this same hall where important decisions are taken by various University committees will bear a portrait of Gimi, reported *The Hitavada* of September 21, 2001. The Jal P. Gimi Memorial Lecture series in memory of the flamboyant orator has been instituted by the department of business management.

Among the three former vice chancellors present at the condolence meet M. M. Lanjewar recalled that Gimi was a man of principles. He served the University for almost 35 years but never accepted any remuneration for it. In fact, he even refused to use the University car and opted instead to move around



Gimi: celebrity with humility

on his bicycle. As commented Shernavaz Buhariwala, head of a department at the Nagpur University, in *The Hitavada* of September 17, "A celebrity on a bicycle is not a picture of austerity but one of curiosity. And he loved its attendant publicity...What in a lesser person would be gimmickry, made here an arresting personality, and his crusade colorful and charismatic. And charisma he certainly had. It flowed from precept and practice. To the first, histrionics contributed. To the second converged qualities forged in the furnace of the human heart...What made (him) remarkable was the conviction that propelled it and the tenacity that sustained it. For how else could we evaluate a service that sought favor for neither friend nor family, that scoffed at money and preserved a lifestyle of dignity which never gained or waned?"

During the 42 years he had served as honorary lecturer in the Nagpur University's department of law Gimi had impressed many students including Dr P. L. Bhandarkar who later became the vice chancellor of the University. Referring to Gimi as "a personification of humility," Bhandarkar remarked that "he never hurt people even while pointing out mistakes or wrongdoings." Although a strict disciplinarian he remained approachable to his students who valued his wit and advice.

Among the other academic institutions he was associated with were the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan where he was an executive committee member and the J. N. Tata Parsi Girls' High School of which he was a trustee. The Chief Justice of India had appointed him chairman of a committee for admissions to BEd colleges under Nagpur University, notes his curriculum vitae.

"It is the responsibility of every citizen to see that the city is clean," his student Pankaj Maniktala recalled Gimi's words in *The Hitavada* of Sep-

tember 16. Gimi who had been the vice president (now known as deputy mayor) of the Nagpur Municipality and subsequently a member of the Nagpur Improvement Trust Tribunal regretted that "nobody is looking after the man on the street. Even employees of the Municipal Corporation do not do what they are paid to do." The first president of the Jan Sangh's Central Provinces chapter, working closely with S. P. Mukherjee, Gimi was reportedly a good friend of Atal Behari Vajpayee, Lal Krishna Advani and Justice M. Hidayatullah. At a condolence meeting convened by the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), the organization paid tribute to his stewardship as the first president of the BMS outfit, Sarva Panth Samadar.

Having unsuccessfully contested one of the Lok Sabha elections, Gimi had remarked, "Had I succeeded my main pressure of working would have been to give an honest government and an honest administration. Nobody now cares about integrity." As a socially conscious activist he led one of the first batches of satyagrahis seeking Goa's liberation, had courted arrest in Pakistan occupied Kutch, and had undertaken a long journey by bus when he was 77 to verify for himself the genesis of the Mandir-Masjid controversy at Ayodhya.

Viewing him as a "prominent figure in the Parsi community," senior Congress leader and former member of Parliament Gev Avari recalled the occasion of his father Manchershaw's demise in 1974 when the non-Parsi crowd in the area insisted on taking out his procession for the last rites, contrary to the Zoroastrian practice. Gimi who was then the president of the Nagpur and Kamphthi Parsi Zarthosti Anjuman arrived at a timely solution to avoid a crisis. He urged the non-Parsis to have their procession with the chanting of inter-faith prayers after which the body

was handed over to the community for Zoroastrian rites and prayers.

"Until well into his 70s Gimi was among the best dressed men in Nagpur, impeccable, very proper yet pleasantly spontaneous, so much so that he would shock other proper persons with his easygoing lighthearted approach to life," acknowledged his associate Vijay Phanshikar. And although he was comfortable on a bicycle he enjoyed sitting at the wheel of his imported car and was regarded as one of Nagpur's finest drivers. The Surat born, Nagpur educated Gimi was one of the respected handwriting and fingerprint experts in the country, according to his bio data. Trained at New Scotland Yard, London, he lent his expertise to the customs and central excise departments with whom he was working in sensational cases involving gold smuggling and forged documents. A director of the Nagpur Electric Light and Power Company Limited, Gimi was a charter member of the Rotary Club of Nagpur.

"His endearing speciality however was that he never fussed about his countless achievements, his widespread contacts, his social commitments and his die-hard faith in ethical life," noted Phanshikar adding, "He found in his life that potion that has kept humanity humane all these ages: unshakable faith that goodness prevails in the end and an unfaltering yet silent doggedness in persisting with that faith through life's thick and thin."

The academician is survived by his wife Jeroo and sons Shiraz, Farhad and Feroze.

GUARDIAN OF THE LAW

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trial of the late Rev Edward D'Cruz, then the formidable vice principal of St Xavier's College. For two or three consecutive years in the late 1950s the St Xavier's quadrangle echoed with delighted laughter during the fun-filled mock trials of the Jesuit fathers who were the College's executive authorities on the festive annual College Union Day. The occasions this reporter recalls saw BSc student Bharucha on the bench, a peculiar precursor of his later judicial stand-offs with the nation's executive wing. The judge had noted at the Cusrow Baug felicitations on December 15, 2001, "I am where I am as a result of chance occurrences or perhaps predestination."

READERS' FORUM

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or privately to interfering in the lives of others. Love thy neighbor, a popular concept in a secular sense, can be interpreted within a culture of welfare entitlements and other provisions of the state which do not require personal involvement. Zoroastrianism is about the love for a neighbor. And love hurts, it involves real sacrifice, it goes against the grain of our nature in all but the most favored circumstances. It exists indiscriminately in relation to the good and the bad, and it makes us like Zoroaster. The intrinsic pessimism about human nature in the Zoroastrian view of things is more than compensated by a supreme optimism about the great love of Ahura Mazda. The sign of its presence is when people love one another, not because they are nice but because they share the universality of sin.

FURHOK K. TANGREE

La Roche-sur-Foron

France

Useful books

The Parsee Vegetarian and Temperance Society has reprinted a set of three prayer books written and translated by Ervad Phiroze S. Masani, MA, LLB. They are:

- *14 Pazend Afrins or Benediction* — Prayers and 101 names

- *Pazend Setayeshes* — invocations of praise and thanksgiving to the hierarchy of archangels and angels besides the Creator Ahura Mazda, nuptial benedictions (with Sanskrit ashirwad). Ashirwad or nuptial blessing is also translated into English

- *Pazend Nirangs* or powerful formulas

All three books in Gujarati come with correct pronunciation, Gujarati translation and studied notes. They are available from The Parsee Vegetarian and Temperance Society, Vatsa House, 4th floor, Janmabhoomi Marg, Fort, Bombay (Tel: 2870795). A set of three hardcover books is priced at Rs 200.

Another very useful book is *Dharmik Jindagi Gujarvata Jarthosti Kaydao* (Zoroastrian Life Procedure Code) by Bamanji Burjorji Rivetna, priced at Rs 50. It explains in simple language how a Parsi Zarathushti should lead his life with daily discipline to develop spiritual powers. The Parsee Vegetarian and Temperance Society deserves to be congratulated for reprinting and making available such useful books for the

benefit of our community at an affordable price.

MARZBAN GIARA

Sacred silence

First it was the turn of the pagers, now the use of mobile/cell phones is increasing day by day. Wherever you go and whatever be the time, you will observe people talking with cell phones glued to their ears.

The trustees of various atash behrams/agiaries have displayed notices requesting devotees to keep these instruments completely shut off on sacred precincts.

The writer had to request two to three brethren not to misuse cell phones whilst on holy premises. One of them openly replied, standing before a kebala, that he wanted to talk for only two minutes. I told him why talk for only two minutes, he can talk continuously for two hours or even for two days, no one would object, but such talk over cell phones should certainly not be before a kebala or where religious rituals are being performed.

Cannot these people switch off their cell phones during their visits to holy places? Is it proper to make calls or receive messages during such time?

Our learned scholars should make members of our community aware by writing in the Parsi papers why pagers/mobiles should not be used in our holy places and how their blatant use would affect the manthran prayers being recited in these places.

BHIKHAJI M. ADENWALLA

'Dogged relief' addendum

With a view to providing a good home to stray unwanted dogs versus pedigree animals,

Phiroze H. Irani of Dahanu who owned five canines requested his nephew Farzan B. Mazda to obtain a stray puppy for him (see "Dogged relief," Readers' Forum, *Parsi-ana*, November

2001). The nephew obtained a pup (subsequently christened Tom) through the good office of Daisy Sidhva working for The Welfare of Stray Dogs, Bombay. *Parsi-ana* carries a photo of the proud owner and his new pet.

Edited by Parinaz M. Gandhi



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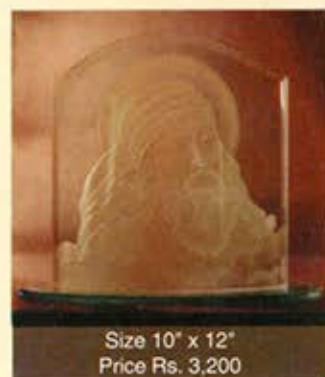
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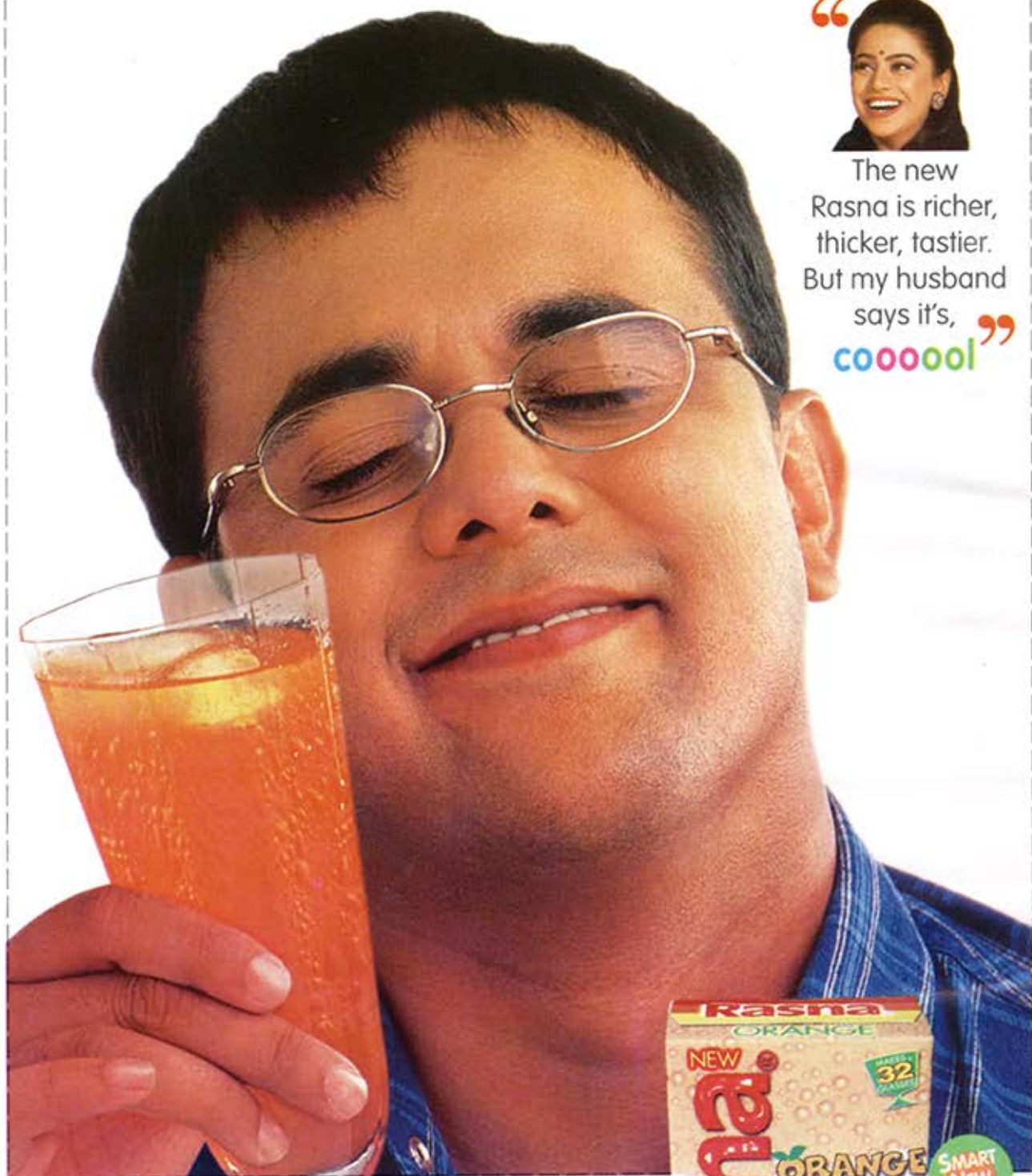
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