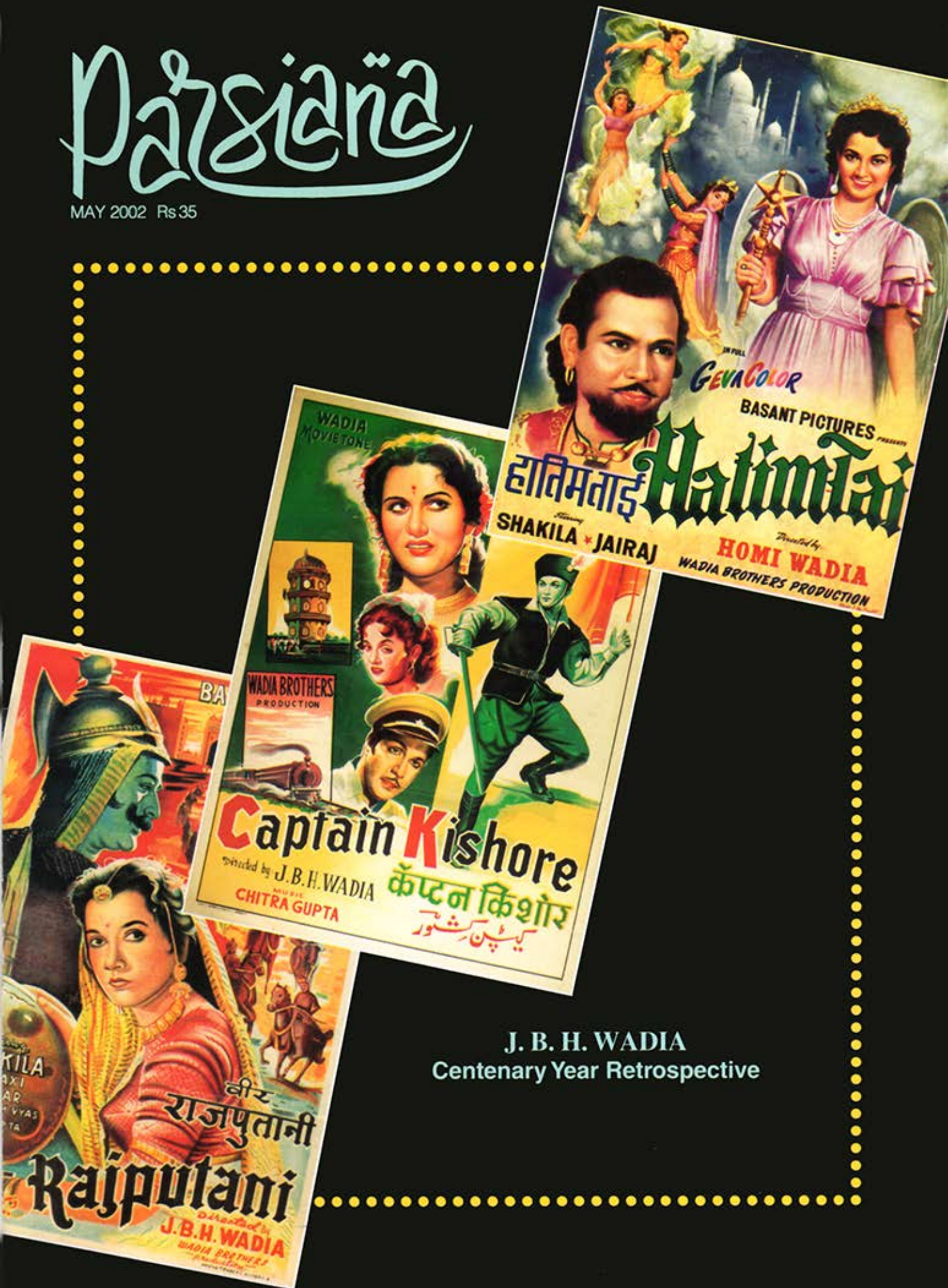
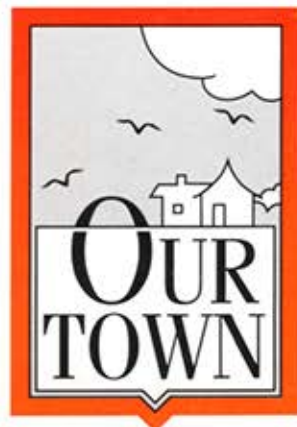


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# Parsiana

May 2002  
Volume 24 Number 10

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Cover: Posters of J. B. H. Wadia movies  
Courtesy: Wadia Movietone Archives

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@glasbm01.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: Seamail 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 seamail 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.



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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

### "Zoroastrianism enjoins..."

I am glad that several correspondents have expressed their views under "Zoroastrianism enjoins..." (Readers' Forum, Parsiana, March 2002). This issue of conversion needs to be sorted out, finally.

Pseudo-scholars and the dogmatic priests quote the scriptures when it is convenient, and set those aside, unceremoniously, when it suits them.

Several of our prayers have a direct, and not an oblique, reference to spreading our religion, far and wide: *Aiwis-ruthrem Gah, Haptan Yasht, Deen Yasht, Naamnê Khavar, Mahrespand Rozni Setayash*.

Are we, still, going to turn a blind eye towards the scriptures and focus on those only when it suits us?

It is high time that self-thinking Zoroastrians rejected these *thagara gurus* (false teachers) as advised in the *Gathas*.

B. T. DASTUR

### "An exciting escapade"

I read Dinshaw Naterwalla's story on China, "An exciting escapade" (*Parsiana*, March 2002) with mounting interest and amazement. It was also our family's experiences being described. We were all in it together!

My sister Suna Kanga and I were both born in Shameen, Canton, Suna in September 1938 and I in August 1941. We lived through the Japanese invasion, when our house was ransacked and looted. Our father, Jall Nanabhoy Patel, referred to in Naterwalla's article as "Father's best friend" happened to be the president of the Indian Association, and was taken prisoner of war in 1945 by the Japanese on unfounded suspicions of being a British spy, as mentioned in the article.

May I, however, set the record straight. He was not executed in prison by the Japanese, but was released in a few months, along with my uncle Byramji Tavadia, who lived in Hong Kong till he died at the age of 90 years, while my father suffered a massive heart attack and succumbed. Even though I was only three-and-a-half years old, I recall his death at home quite clearly. Incidentally, the Gulf of Tonkin is near Vietnam, not Penang, so Naterwalla was mistaken about that too.

My mother, Roshan, Suna and I returned to India as wartime refugees in a British ship, the *Glennear*, and lived with my grandparents in Nagpur till 1952, when my mother remarried and we shifted to Bombay.

I doubt if my father, Jall, was an "arrogant fellow" as so casually mentioned in the article. He was, in fact, by all accounts, most daring and courageous. He and many other Parsi families named in the article, like the Pavris, Masters, Tavadias, Shroffs, Dhabers and so on, consciously decided to stay on in the hope that the situation would improve and were lucky

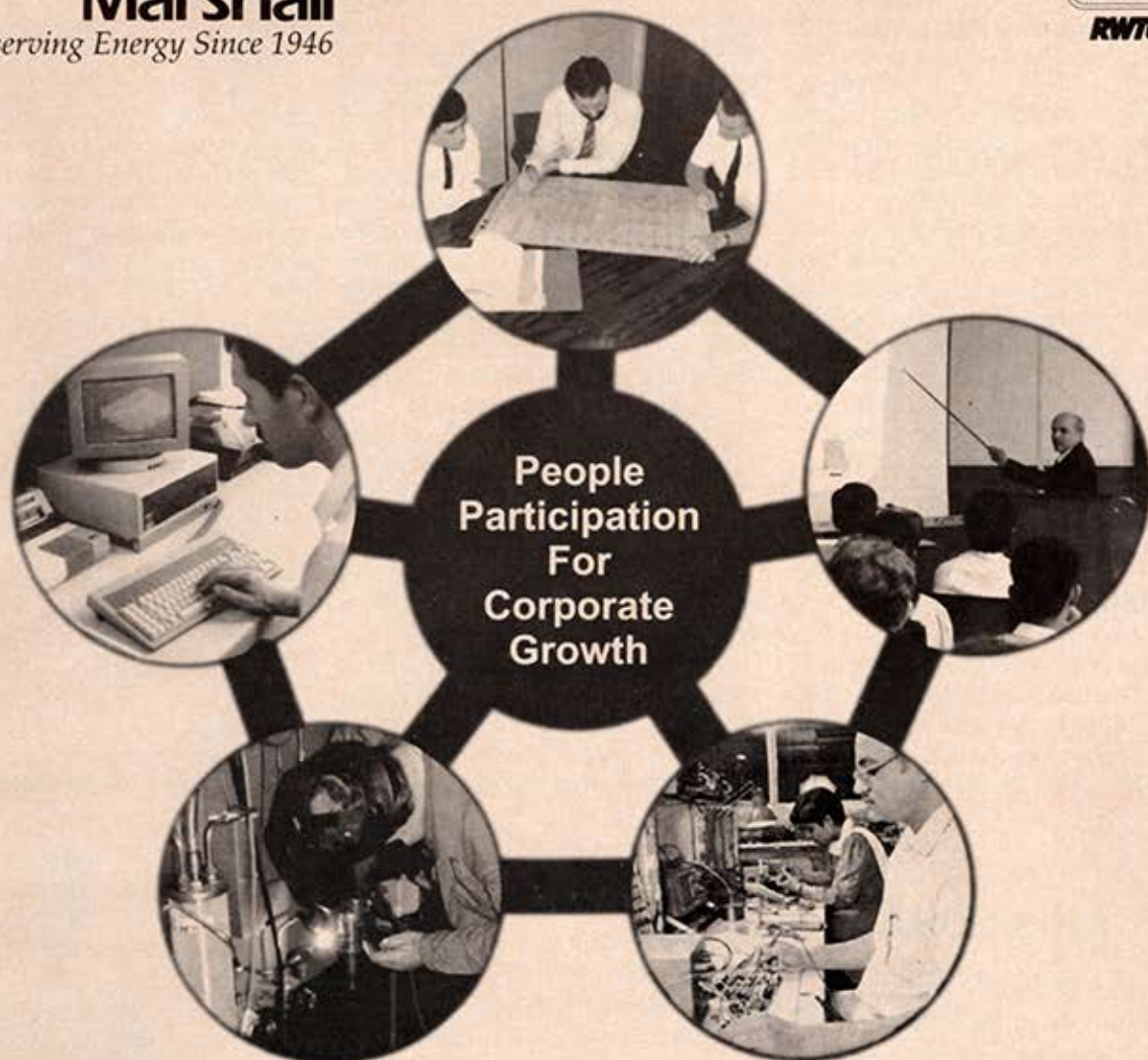
to have escaped to Hong Kong, where they still reside.

My mother, now 88 years old, suffered considerably through the war experience and has always been extremely reluctant to talk about the traumatic and tough times, when Parsis lived huddled together as one big family in air raid shelters without sufficient nutrition.

Suna, a travel writer living in Singapore for the last 28 years, has revisited Shameen on two occasions and found the area green and clean, quite spic and span. On her second visit she even mustered up the courage to visit the apartment we lived in and found that



Right: Shameen, Canton, in recent years with Suna Kanga at the entrance to her former home  
Left: Jall Patel



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there were four Chinese families living there now!

I have never been particularly keen to visit China, specially after reading of the harrowing experiences, brutality and cruelty imposed on the Chinese during Mao Tse Tung's reign, so vividly described in *Wild Swans* written by Jung Chang. We were fortunate to have returned to India and to be living in an environment of total freedom.

Of course, China has progressed enormously since then and is now the latest hot spot on the map of Indian and foreign tourists. So revisiting my birthplace is a future possibility.

As children we knew and visited Perinbanoo and Dossabhai Naterwalla a few times in their home in Bombay, when we enjoyed their hospitality and, I imagine, listened raptly to stories of days in another world, another lifetime.

DOLAT N. KOTWAL

### "Molding musicians"

This has reference to an article "Molding musicians" (Events and Personalities, *Parsiana*, January 2002). The Time and Talents Club has not been involved with Sangat since April 2001. The Time and Talents and the Mehli Mehta Music

Foundation are two separate entities.

DELARA R. JEJEEBHAY

President

Time and Talents Club

### "The Nagpur incident"

The utterance of Marzban Hathiram at the Gymkhana celebrations in Nagpur ("The Nagpur incident," *Parsiana*, November 2001) needs the condemnation of every single member of the Parsi community worldwide. No responsible adult in society, let alone a priest, has the right to use the word 'bastard' in public in any context. It is a sad commentary that there is no report of him being disciplined by the vada dastur of the panthak to which he belongs.

Who is he to pass judgment? Is he not aware of far more learned and senior dasturs who have acquiesced with or, if not agreed to, at least tolerated with compassion?

As per the statistics, albeit not 100 percent correct, researched by *Parsiana*, 28 percent of Zoroastrians in Bombay intermarried during 2000. No brief is being held whether it should or should not be so, or whether it is or is not a matter of concern. The fact is that it is happening. Perhaps 50 percent of off-

spring of such marriages even have their navjote performed. If such children grow up and marry a Parsi spouse, the third generation will be back as *shudh* (pure) Zarathushtris, and none the wiser among their contemporaries.

Each atash behram, agiary, dar-e-meher, dadgah is governed by the donor's trustees. They form the rules on who shall or shall not use the sacred temple. There is no central ex-communication authority, nor should there be one. Too many episodes in history, from the Inquisition to the Taliban, have surrendered unbridled power to the clergy, leading to religious extremism, and it has been brutally exploited.

RASHID MINOCHER

Bangalore

### Help the victims

As Gujarat has exploded in communal riots and consequent religious segregation, I try to understand what is happening in the state. It was Gujarat that allowed my forefathers to land on its shores at Sanjan. It was Gujarat that permitted my religion to survive for centuries. It is Gujarati that I and my parents spoke at home. My religion teaches me in my basic kusti prayer of

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*Jasame avanghe Mazda "mazdayasnim fraspayaokhedhram nidhasnaithishem khaetvadatham ashaonim"* translated "Mazda worship (which is) quarrel removing, weapon lowering, self dedicating and holy," so I must step forward with my Vohu Mano or good mind.

One can say that the Muslims and Hindus are fighting and that does not concern me. But it does. A young Parsi boy and his mother took refuge at councilor Jaffri's residence in the turmoil and the son Azhar Modi separated from his mother and has not been seen by his parents. The boy's first name Azhar was Muslim and his last name Modi was Hindu. But this did not save the young boy.

When Afghanistan was faced with Muslim refugees and human devastation Toxy Cowasjee, immediate past president of the Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal, mobilized local businesses and a slew of volunteers, raised eight lakh rupees, loaded three trucks and personally delivered the aid to a refugee camp in no man's land near Quetta. When the earthquake struck Gujarat, Parsis in USA responded with assistance.

We as a community, based on our religious teachings, need to respond. According to our forefathers we wanted

to mix like sugar in milk. We must help the victims of the recent communal riots in Gujarat, both Hindus and Muslims, by raising funds from both and distributing this ourselves. We must condemn the violence that has resulted in deaths and urge the lowering of weapons. We must step forward in Gujarat with a program that is self dedicating and holy. We must continue to be Zoroastrians not only in our places of worship but in our lifestyle.

PORUS N. DADABHOY  
Illinois, USA

## Who is a Zarathushti?

The question 'Who is a Zarathushti?' has been vexing the community for quite some time. The logical answer to this question is:

If a person believes in the principles enunciated by Zarathushtra and conducts his life according to them, then he must be a Zarathushti.

If a person has one or both Zarathushti parents, that will have helped him learn the principles and teachings of Zarathushtra at a young age and so get a good start on life. However there is no reason that one not so fortunate cannot educate himself by reading books and discussing with knowledgeable Zoro-

thushtis, to inform himself of what is needed to lead a Zarathushti life.

The sudreh and kusti are emblems of the religion. They are like a soldier's uniform which helps a soldier recognize whether another is a member of his own company or belongs to another unit. I cannot imagine that anyone would think that a soldier is not a soldier if he is out of uniform. A soldier is known by his readiness to fight for a cause he thinks worthwhile, such as the defense of his own country or to relieve the oppressed of another country, and to do so in a disciplined manner under the command of his superior officer. A Zarathushti is known by a similar readiness to fight for what he perceives (by his Vohu Mano) to be worthwhile, to fight against the propagation of lies and misinformation, and does so with respect for his guru (Zarathushtra). The sudreh/kusti help others recognize him as a Zarathushti, but the absence of these emblems cannot "unmake" a Zarathushti who is practicing *manashni, gavashni, kunashni*.

A true Zarathushti is known by his willingness to strive continuously towards spiritual, mental and physical purity and cleanliness. The navjote ceremony is merely an acknowledgement by society that the person undergoing

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the ceremony has undertaken to do such striving. If some members of society (be they priests or laymen) refuse to accept a person practising the Zarathushti philosophy, it will not change his nature or the fact that he/she is intrinsically a Zarathushti. A rose will be a rose and a lamb will be a lamb, even though some misguided people refuse to acknowledge the fact.

JAMSHED R. UDVADIA  
Lansing, USA

## Vulture venture

Every right thinking Zoroastrian would be in favor of the dakhmenashini system but due to the lack of vultures, the system operating today is imperfect and the trustees are considering the rearing of vultures at Doongerwadi.

We have been given to understand that the budget for 25 pairs of birds would be about rupees one crore 55 lakhs, recurring expenses for three years @ Rs 22 lakhs would be Rs 66 lakhs and the amount towards escalation would be about Rs 4.62 lakhs. Not counting the expenses for the netting which would enclose the dakhmas, the total works out to about rupees two crores 26 lakhs.

One feels that the total cost of rupees two crores 26 lakhs should be shared by the community and divided into three parts: one-third by the Punchayet, one-third by our NRI (non-resident Indian) friends from abroad and one-third by our local Zoroastrians who are so vocal about this scheme. Around Rs 75 lakhs each would be required from the above.

If it is possible, we can approach an insurance company to cover the risks of failure of this venture. HOMIF.DEVITRE

## Motivate success

The following proposals are submitted for your consideration to encourage marriage within our community:

- Permit one page of matrimonial advertisements at concessional rates
- Give examples of persons who have married outside and the difficulties experienced by them and their children.

Additionally, you can encourage young talented youth to give short articles on subjects of their choice. Print success stories of eminent persons to motivate others. MINOO BALSARA

## Lonely vigil

At the age of 70 when others call it a day, Mani Pestonji Asunderia is working hard to maintain the Zoroastrian

tradition at the desolated Tower of Silence on the outskirts of Deolali. Night and day she keeps a lonely vigil to maintain and keep the fire going at the dadgah which exists there.

Twenty-five years ago her husband who was working at the Deolali agiary expired. Today she is lonely yet keeping the fire going, and maintaining the place clean. She deserves recognition from the Zoroastrian community for the services rendered by her to uphold the traditions of the Zoroastrian religion. ZEND ZEND

## Alliance for childhood

Conventional education today has a tendency to smother pupils with mostly irrelevant information, stifling all creativity and leaving very little room for spontaneity and imagination. Many great educationists have voiced their concern about the one-sidedness of modern education, where the emphasis is solely on academics.

It was Dr Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) who recognized the need to educate children in a three-fold manner: through the head, the heart and the limbs. In Steiner or Waldorf Education, equal importance is given to academics, the arts and handicrafts. This ensures a balance in the forces of thinking, feeling and of will-activity in the growing child. At the same time, parents are encouraged to ensure that rhythms of sleeping and waking as well as meal-times are maintained. Late nights and irregularities in meals can be harmful for the child's health in the long run.

The need of the hour is to bring an awareness to parents and teachers of what helps or harms the development of the growing child. Indeed, the quality of childhood is the shared responsibility of all citizens in a democratic society. Children from poverty-stricken sections of society suffer from malnutrition, neglect, discrimination, sickness and illiteracy. The problems which the richer children face are different: malnutrition and sickness resulting from junkfood or overeating, excessive exposure to TV, computer and video games, manipulation of hard selling and advertising as well as pressure and tension in school. What is more, today's children, whether rich or poor, are allowed to watch films which are meant for adults, films with violence, sex and crime. It seems to be quite normal for a film's hero, the 'good guy,' to kill doz-

ens of 'baddies,' to take the law in his own hands in order to avenge a murdered family member or friend. Such films send out completely wrong signals to the impressionable young mind and we must not wonder when, during riots, the average man in the street resorts to looting and even killing innocent men, women and children.

It is the duty of the adult to protect children from all that is harmful to them and grant them a childhood that is rightfully theirs. The Alliance for Childhood is an international forum which works to improve children's lives. Most of the partners are parents and teachers who are active in the Waldorf movement. The UN Charter of the Rights of Children is the basis of all initiatives of the Alliance for Childhood. Here in India, which has the largest child population in the world, we would like to invite *Parsiana* readers to join us in the local chapter of the Alliance. You may write to: Aban Bana, 5, Proctor Road, Grant Road, Bombay 400007, or send an e-mail to: abanbana123@rediffmail.com for further information. ABAN BANA

Edited by Parinaz M. Gandhi



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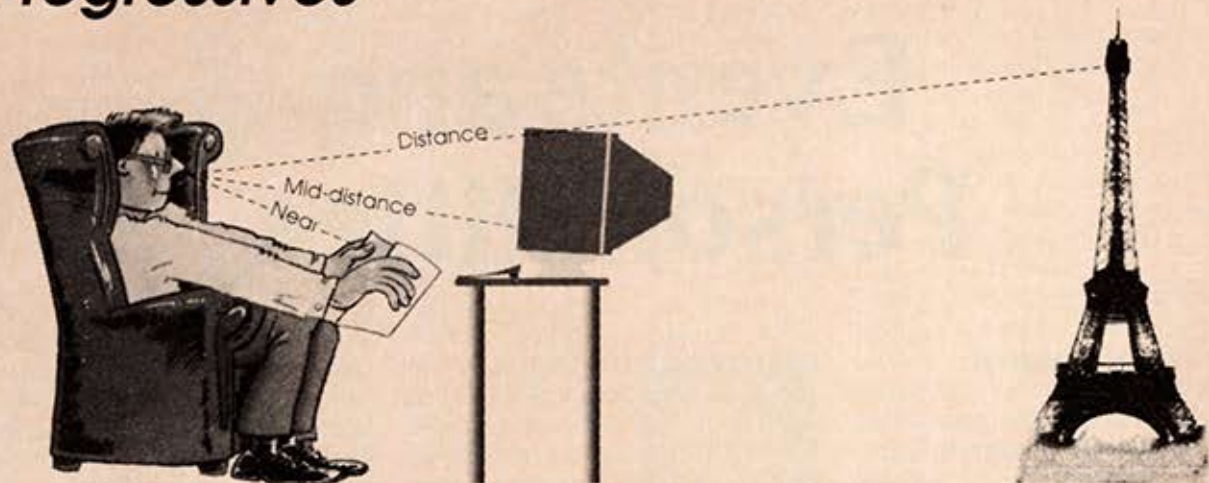
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and  
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# Events and Personalities

## Madressa's mission

"Legally our school is still called 'Athornan Boarding Madressa' where 38 Parsi (students) are currently studying the Zoroastrian religion. We have just added another dimension to our name by fixing this new board: 'Parsi Gurukul.'" Dr Ramiyar Karanjia, principal of the Madressa, was quoted in the



*Athornan Boarding Madressa:  
"another dimension"*

*Mid-Day* of April 9, 2002.

Stories in circulation that the 80-year-old Madressa at the Mancherji Joshi Colony at Dadar had been renamed gurukul lest the usage of the term 'madressa' invite trouble in today's communal scenario prompted Karanjia to clarify, "We are not scared of anybody or any organization; we just wanted to clear the confusion that this is not a Muslim madressa. That's why we have merely put an additional board at the entrance that states 'Parsi Gurukul.'"

The new board 'Parsi Gurukul' had apparently been affixed on the school building more than three months prior to the communal flare-up in Gujarat, it was stated in the *Mid-Day*. With the demand for priests continually on the rise the Athornan Madressa serves a useful role in equipping aspirants with a reasonable grasp of religious and secular knowledge.

*Mullan Dar-e-Meher in Nagpur*

## Conserving in Nagpur

The largest expenditure, Rs 1,81,653 incurred by the Shree Nagpur and Kamthi Parsi Zarhosti Anjuman for the year 2000-01 was on religious objects. Further Rs 67,663.35 was spent on medical objects, Rs 63,500 was disbursed as monthly aid to the needy members of the Anjuman and Rs 26,859.60 towards education, according to the annual report and audited accounts forwarded to *Parsiana*.

Anjuman funds are earmarked for individuals born of both Zoroastrian parents, according to their constitution. On September 29, 2000 a special general body was summoned to amend clause 1C of the constitution to give benefits of the funds to the children of Parsi fathers and non-Parsi mothers whose navjote had been performed. But by an overwhelming majority the proposal was rejected by the general body, mentions their report.

Their trust fund corpus which stood at Rs 6,085,193.92 in the year ending March 31, 2000 rose to Rs 6,432,379.92 in the next financial year. Of Rs 1,77,186 received as donations during the year, Rs 79,501 were towards the Kathi Fund, the largest donation of Rs 40,000 coming from Keki D. Shroff of Bombay.

The immovable property valued at Rs 4,612,116 in the Anjuman's possession includes the Dar-e-Meher Building with staff quarters, Kamdin Charity Chawl, Dharamshala, Anjuman Memo-

rial Blocks, A. H. Wadia Charity Building, Dr Dadi Balsara Apartments, M. M. Mulla Memorial Blocks, Parsi Anjuman Apartments, Dadi Terrace, Compound Wall and Cemetery Road. The Anjuman had to expend Rs 74,478.42 towards payment of rates and taxes, and Rs 34,888 on repairs and maintenance of buildings. Yet another major item of expenditure, Rs 1,07,975, was on salaries.

## Indore Dakhma cleansed

After more than 12 years the Nanabhai Masalawala Dakhma in Indore was cleaned in March 2002 thanks to the efforts of Cyrus Siganporia and his team of volunteers from Bombay, wrote Bomi Heerjee, president of the Indore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman.

"As in other places, there are problems here too due to absence of birds. Bodies are left at the mercy of the heat of the sun and other natural forces. Such dakhmas require periodic cleaning...To make matters worse, a tree was growing within and this was causing damage to the walls, platforms and possibly the foundation. The trustees of the Anjuman therefore decided that immediate cleaning was necessary," wrote Heerjee.

Following a rigorous religious schedule, even abstaining from water and liquids while at work, the volunteers wearing a smile on their face toiled for four days in the sweltering March heat to clean the dakhma, to cut the tree and

the roots where possible, to arrange the tiles and platforms, and resurface the shifting stones with plaster and cement. Resident priest Ervad Behramshah Kapadia used to visit the site twice a day to perform the nahn, etc, Heerjee provided the details.

The 105-year-old Dakhma is situated six miles from the city center on the Bombay-Agra Na-



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*Masalawala Dakhma in Indore with the band of volunteers from Bombay who cleaned it and Kapadia (standing at right)*



facilities for higher training at diploma and post diploma levels in high-tech areas like industrial electronics, computer science, information technology and concrete technology for which examinations are held by respective professional bod-

ies. The Yeshwantrao Chavan Open University deems Patuck as a technical center. Recognized by the Maharashtra state government and the National Council for Education Research and Training as a role model they have won several awards for excellence in value education, technical teacher training,

curriculum development and interaction with industry which has a symbiotic relationship with technical education, adds the release.

Their ongoing development program includes setting up a full-fledged senior college of applied science besides providing facilities for a degree course in commerce, management studies and e-education. From 71 aspirants, the Patuck Technical is among the 30 presently shortlisted by the University for pos-

sitional Highway. Originally it was secluded but with the spread of the city, tenements and slums started abutting the Dakhma boundary wall. Nevertheless, the Dakhma continued to be in use.

From Siganporia's band of 24 volunteers who have cleaned nine dakhmas so far, the six who had accompanied him to Indore included Jimmy D. Siganporia, Kersi R. Mistry, Sarosh H. Irani, Ardesheir B. Khushrowshahi, Jimmy M. Mistry and Sharukh D. Gowadia. In recognition of their selfless service which does not seek any remuneration, the Anjuman which had hosted them for the four days had a special dinner in their honor. Besides acknowledging their gratitude to the volunteers for "a remarkable job" the Indore trustees were also appreciative of the cooperation rendered by the Bombay Parsi Panchayet, particularly its chief executive officer Behram Dastur and senior executive Sheroo Master.

## Promising Polytechnic

Complimenting the Patuck Polytechnic for its contribution in promoting

vocational education, minister of state for home Kripashankar Singh lauded the service-oriented role of the Parsi community at the two-day function on January 5 and 6, 2002 that brought to a close the Patuck Polytechnic Trust's 70th year celebrations, mentions a press release. The Trust is a shining example of updating education whilst keeping pace with the changing need of the times, commented Ved Prakash Goyal, minister for shipping in his valedictory address. Emphasizing that the need of the hour is value-based education, he appreciated that the institute is being geared to impart high grade training in technological courses to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Senior trustee-director Prof R. K. Mody who presided over the inaugural session in the absence of chairman Dr R. B. M. Colah, referred to the pioneering role of founder principal Rustomba Patuck who established the then Model Industrial School in 1932 to train children from the underdeveloped sections of society. Today the multi-tier Patuck Technical located on Nehru Road, Santa Cruz (East) caters to a student complement of 2,200 undergoing training in a variety of vocations, trades and disciplines, mentioned Mody. By way of upward mobility the Institute provides



*Patuck Polytechnic: value-based education*

sible affiliation. They are now awaiting clearance from the education and finance departments of the Maharashtra state government. They were appealing to the government to grant them a plot of land in their neighborhood or a convenient area whereby they could expand their facilities. As stated principal *continued on page 46*

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## Atlantic Canada

In the Gulf of St Lawrence, on and off the Atlantic coast of Canada, lie the territories of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and the island of Newfoundland. A group of 40 Parsi Zarathushti families have made their home on this eastern seaboard and united to form the Zoroastrian Association of Atlantic Canada (ZAAC).

ZAAC was established in 1990, write its president Sarosh Rustom and secretary Shirin Jagosh in an article in *FEZANA Journal* (Spring 2002), the quarterly publication of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America. The Jagosh family (Adi and Jaloo Jagosh) were the first to arrive in Nova Scotia in 1963. Others followed in the late 1960s, early 1970s. Most of the settlers reside in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The group comprises engineers, health care, insurance and finance professionals, airline and transportation staff, teachers and government officers. Among them are 10 children, four youths and seven pensioners.

ZAAC's most popular function is the annual jashan, hosted by a family in their home, when 25 to 30 members of the community make it a point to attend. Since there is no mobed among the residents, voluntary mobeds from Canada and the United States, invited to perform the jashan, have shared their religious and spiritual knowledge with their hosts, provoking thought and constructive dialog, write Rustom and

*Nova Scotia Zoroastrians gathered at the Jagosh residence (below) and the new CZC board from left) Khatibi, Kasravi, Varjavand, Vafadari, Afshari, Mondegari and Anoshirivani*

Jagosh. Other events that band the community together are the Navroz and Pateti functions, picnics in summer, a thanksgiving gahambar and a bowling fundraiser.

Remaining au courant with the rest of the Zarathushti world through the *FEZANA Journal*, ZAAC invites Zarathushti tourists and students to make it a point to contact them when visiting the area.

Living in a region "blessed with friendly people, abundant natural beauty, universities and an emerging prosperity through a steadily broadening industrial and technological base," the ZAAC is mindful of its charity obligations. Their contributions reach the needy Zarathushtis of India on an annual basis through the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO), notes the article. A special donation via WZO was also made at the time of the Gujarat earthquake. Apart from these, they support the local food bank and other agencies that help the less fortunate in the area.

## Changing of the guard

The *FEZANA Journal* (Spring 2002) lists three new teams among its member associations.



*New ZAC president Lakdawala*

•The new board of directors at the California Zoroastrian Center (CZC) in the Los Angeles area is headed by Fereshteh Khatibi. Her team includes vice president Goshtasb Vafadari, secretary Gilda Kasravi, treasurer Shahryar Afshari and members at large Keikavous Varjavand, Mehrdad Mondegari and

Irindokht Anoshirivani.

•The Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC) has elected Khushroo Lakdawala president for the two-year term 2002-2004. Other office bearers at the ZAC include vice president Daraius Mistry, program chairperson Gulshan Kasnavia, youth coordinator Kashmira Variava, treasurer Diana Taraporewalla, secretary Keki Engineer and joint secretary Rhoda Lakdawala.

•The new board of directors at the Zoroastrian Association of Rocky Mountain (ZARM) in Denver, Colorado is now led by immigration lawyer Rumi Engineer. Vice president Nosh Tarachand, secretary Phiroza Shroff and Farida Contractor comprise the rest of the ZARM team.

The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) decided by a 78 percent majority at an extraordinary meeting on October 21, 2001 to demolish the present structure of the Mehraban Guiv Darbe Mehr and replace it with a larger and more functional structure, informs the *FEZANA Journal* quoting the ZSO newsletter. ZSO president Sam Vesuna is looking forward to the commitment of the community's brain, brawn and financial resources "to realize this dream."

## Cowasjee's noblesse oblige

While the world tut-tutted in sympathy with the miserable people of Afghanistan it saw fleetingly on its TV screen, one Zarathushti mounted a single-handed effort to provide them material comfort. Using her formidable organizational skills plus family and community resources, former Karachi Zarathushti Banu Mandal (KZBM) president and now editor of the World Zoroastrian





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The bespectacled Cawasjee (centre) with Afghan refugees and truck carrying the supplies



Organization (WZO) publication, *Ham-azor*, Toxy Cawasjee raised nearly eight lakhs of rupees to load three trucks with food and clothing and set out to personally deliver them to a refugee camp in no man's land between Quetta and the Afghan frontier, notes an article by *FEZANA Journal* editor-in-chief, Roshan Rivetna.

Making a firsthand acquaintance with the area on the advice of Roshan Bharucha, a minister with 11 portfolios in Baluchistan, Cawasjee was driven under police escort to Camp Rogani near Chaman, a three-hour ride from Quetta. "Virtually in the middle of the desert there were tents in neat lines with an odd makeshift toilet," Cawasjee described the bleak location.

Within 10 days of returning to Karachi Cawasjee had raised Rs 7.88 lakhs including £ 1,000 from WZO, London. Donations in kind included 1,000 cardboard cartons, 10,000 kg of flour, 2,000 kg of sugar, 800 kg of salt from B. D. Sethna, 1,050 Candyland Butterscotch packets, 15 dozen plastic balls, 50 footballs with air pumps, 150 new trousers and shorts courtesy Fran International and five dozen Vaseline bottles from Percy and Rashna Gazder. With the donated cash Cawasjee and her legion of volunteers purchased 2,000 pairs of footwear, several bales of sweaters, candies for children and foodstuff. Gathering at the Cawasjee container yard over a weekend, the KZBM band of volunteers packed the 1,000 cartons, each with 10 kg flour, five kg rice, two kg sugar, two kg vegetable oil, one kg dates, half kg tea, 800 g of salt and two

pairs of shoes.

These cartons, together with 11 bales of sweaters, three cartons of children's trousers, six bales of sweets, three bales of

plastic balls, a carton of 50 footballs and 35 boxes of medicines were loaded onto three trucks on December 4, 2001 and despatched for the two-day trip to Chaman.

When Cawasjee landed in Quetta two days later and met the District Coordinating Officer (DCO), she could feel the tension around her. She went with the three trucks between the borders where "there was no road, only sand," writes Rivetna.

As the DCO had organized the distribution, there were 618 persons lined up behind the barbed wire. Each had been given a signed slip of paper with a number. As they came to receive their carton their hand was stamped and their name struck off the list.

Trouble began after the allottees had received their packages and others saw the remaining cartons in the truck. Soon "there was a stampede, literally, and even though sticks and straps were used, nothing could stop them. The women were a nightmare, pushing in between and literally fighting with the men giving the parcels. I screamed to the truck men to shut their flap and drive away, otherwise we would have been trampled."

After a while they started distributing sweets to the children from another truck. "Once the word got around, if you can imagine locusts devouring plants, they were doing that to me," Cawasjee described the experience. She even sustained a "terrible thud" from the 'levies' who tried to control the mob. Cawasjee later laughed off the swipe she received: "I probably looked like a refugee too... the lenses of my glasses were full of dust and my navy anorak looked white." All the while two jets criss-crossed in the sky above and the Frontier Corps on horseback maintained a presence beside the trucks.

The remaining cartons were distributed by the DCO, the manager of the trucking company and Cawasjee on subsequent trips in January and Febru-

ary. Soon thereafter incendiary activity in Quetta resulted in a ban on foreign reporters leaving Quetta. "I am glad I got the job done in time," Cawasjee wrote to Rivetna.

## The Oprah endorsement

Though no stranger to literary fame, when TV talk-show hostess Oprah Winfrey's selected novelist Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* for her book club, she injected a popular appeal that the twice over finalist for the Booker Prize and the winner of the Los Angeles Times Book Prize in Fiction, the Giller Prize, the Commonwealth Writers Prize and The Royal Society of Literature's Winifred Holtby Award had not encountered before. Mistry's book jumped to major bestseller lists across the US and Canada after 700,000 US and an equal number of Canadian copies were reprinted with Oprah's logo — "ironically, many times more copies than there are Parsis, or even Zoroastrians, worldwide," observed Tamina Davar in the *FEZANA Journal*.

Winfrey's concern for social inequalities, and her interests in family and life situations may have prompted her to speak of *A Fine Balance* as "one of the most exquisite and moving books I've ever read... This (book) will do, in



Mistry (left) with Winfrey

some ways, what September 11 has done — take us out of our own little shell — expose us to a whole other world out there going on beyond our backyards."

Over the years Winfrey has "influenced millions to read literature and her selection — entailing special book store displays and discounts, free library and school copies and guided book club discussions worldwide — provides instant mass exposure," notes Davar.

Set in Bombay during India's 1975 state of Emergency, the book explores the lives of four impoverished strangers — a Parsi widow and her nephew and

*continued on page 56*

# Collegian camaraderie

For 50 years The Young Collegians' Zoroastrian Association has brought the youth of the community together

Hilla P. Guzder

Reliving their salad days and mingling with their mentors Prof Nadir Modi and Prof Khurshed Sheriar, the past and present members of The YCZA (Young Collegians' Zoroastrian Association) celebrated with zest and *en famille* the golden jubilee of their Association at the Allbless Baug on March 30, 2002.

"A jubilee is a time to jubilate, to exult. It is also a time to look back, and forward. With an average of 50 functions per year for 50 years, i.e. 2,500 functions, the YCZA has a batting average any association can be proud of," stated Modi, the chairman and co-founder (with Sheriar) of the YCZA, both of whom attended the function in crisp, white duglis and ervad headgear.

Noshirwan Modi and Dr Nozer Sheriar (Modi and Sheriar's sons, respectively) have recently been made YCZA trustees, announced master of ceremonies Zarine Commissariat, adding joyfully that it was through the YCZA that she and her chartered accountant husband Kersi had met, embarking on "the happiest 30 years of our life." For 50 years, we have tried to inculcate harmoniously and actively through the YCZA a spirit of *Parsipanu*, an appreciation of Zoroastrian culture and religion and many YCZAites have become bosom friends or life partners, stated Khurshed Sheriar.

On the anvil is an Alumni Association of the YCZA, where founder members will be required to make a one-time payment of Rs 500. Ex-members of the Association are today prosperous and well-established professionals — doctors, judges, senior defense officers, managing directors, etc in all parts of the world, noted Nadir Modi, adding

that they had received New Year greetings from the world's highest battlefield (Kargil), "from his (ex YCZAite) heart into our hearts."

Eulogizing Nadir Modi and the time, money and energy he has given to the YCZA, Zarine Commissariat informed the gathering that he had thrown open his bungalow at Udvada for outstation visits and 33 youngsters from Baroda recently spent three days there, with religious sessions being conducted for two-and-a-half days by Ervad (Dr) Ramiyar Karanjia. YCZA meetings are regularly held at his ground floor premises at Modi Lodge at Gamdevi and a part of the first floor has been given to the YCZA Book Fund to house their

vast collection of books on engineering, medicine, arts, science, commerce, etc donated by old students, with Ahmad Bharucha and a band of volunteers handling for three decades the herculean task of distributing the books to students.

With a Rs 50 lakh corpus, the YCZA Educational and Charitable Fund disburses up to four lakh rupees annually by way of scholarships, freeships, medical aid, sports scholarships, etc, with the trustees personally meeting each candidate to guide him/her and monitor progress, Khurshed Sheriar informed the gathering. Bakhtiar (Bucky) Bhesania, Kersi Commissariat, Nadir and Noshirwan Modi, Khurshed and Nozer Sheriar and D. E. Tata are the trustees of this Fund.

"It was in 1952 that my friend Nadir and I were young teachers at Jai Hind College," narrated Khurshed Sheriar. While the College at that time had many linguistic groups — Gujarati, Marathi, Sindhi, Punjabi, Kannada — which provided entertainment for the students, Parsi boys and girls were seemingly left out. Principal Advani "loved the Parsis" and willingly gave permission for a Zoroastrian association, even making the College auditorium available for its activities. Elected representatives called trustees worked collectively to organize musical evenings, picnics, debates, etc and within two years YCZA went inter-collegiate with Parsi students from other colleges clamoring to join!

"Fifty years of continuous association with the YCZA and I've been given five minutes to recount (my experiences)!" quipped Bhesania who is a senior partner in the solicitors' firm of Mulla and Mulla and Craigie Blunt and



Clockwise from top left: Khurshed Sheriar, Nadir Modi, invitees with Zarine (far right) and Kersi Commissariat



Caroe. Among the first batch of YCZA members, Bhesania recalled that the fee at that time was one rupee fifty paise per year (the annual fee today being Rs 15)! Bhesania narrated the fun and frolic of trips to Agra, Ajanta-Ellora, etc, the sharing of belongings and hardships, the tragedy of finding that someone had lost his wallet at the station at the very start of an excursion, the first mixed group trip to Matheran where the boys and girls were more interested in each other than in the scenic beauty! Another of YCZA's earliest members, well-known orthodontist Dr Keki Mistry, narrated the comic and the profound, while solicitor Gool Kotwal (then Damania) recalled the pleasures of living in the open (and the pain of being attacked by red ants!) and cooking a meal over firewood fetched by the boys.

Chartered accountant Jimmy Khan remembered the talent parades and fancy dress, the classical music appreciation evenings where even non-members could join at a 50 paise fee! "If my knees are not knocking today as I address you, it is because of the umpteen opportunities provided by the YCZA," he stated, in keeping with its motto

"YCZA must lead and not follow."

Sharing his erudition in a straightforward, thought provoking address, Nadir Modi touched upon the ground realities of being a member of the Parsi community today. While there has been a qualitative and quantitative decline, he noted, it is necessary to roll back that decline. Every major business and industrial group faces and solves its problems, and it's as simple as that for our community too. "It is no vain boast that we have in the past exerted an influence on society beyond our numbers, and our community has produced a field marshal, admirals, air marshals, top industrialists, doctors, scientists, etc," he asserted. Ours has often been an ungrateful community (*khaasraa no haar apéché*), at other times apathetic or uninterested. To some youth, the community is even distasteful, he noted.

Like the melting polar ice caps which float as icebergs in solitary splendor, among Parsis too individuals are doing well, but the community is dissolving. "It is late, but there is still time to put out the lifeboats and row to safety. We need to commune, to think, speak and act together," he said. The proliferation of

youth organizations like the HPY [Holiday Programme for Youth and the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) Youth Club], the YCZA, the Young Rathestars, etc need to band together, with older organizations like the BPP providing central support, he advised. We have to pick up the challenge at the macro level and think out solutions at the organizational level.

"We ain't what we ought to be, we ain't what we wanna be, we ain't what we gonna be, but thank God we ain't what we was," he said, quoting Martin Luther King's famous words and proffering the advice, in Theodore Roosevelt's words, that you have to start where you are, with what you have. "Let us look upon the community as an extended family, if we don't look after it, who will?" he queried.

While the community spirit was fostered by a jashan and the rendering of monajats by a few girls of the Avabai Petit School's Zoroastrian choir led by their superintendent and ex-YCZAite Yasmin Charna, the golden jubilee function ended on a note of merriment with skits, music and dancing and a Tanaz Godiwalla repast.

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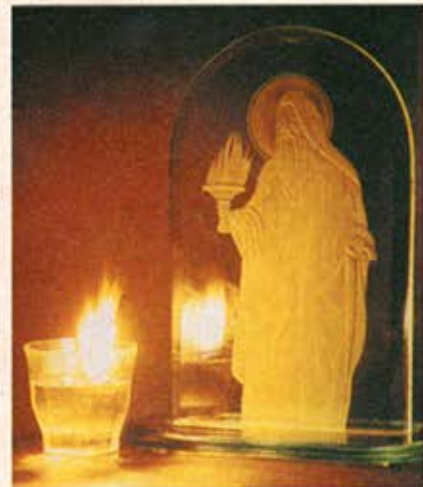
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# Art on glass

It is the calmness of the composition that comes across first. The *German Zarathushtra* in etched curved glass stands serene, 10 inches tall, six inches

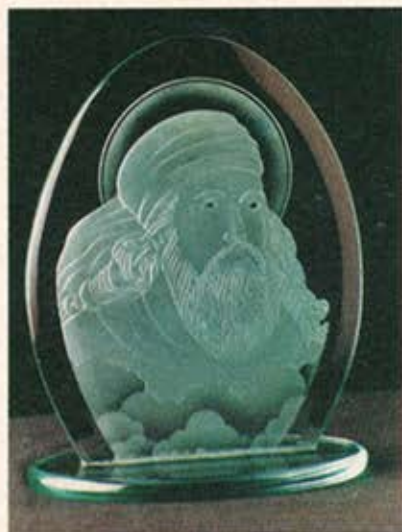


wide, in majestic flowing robes, flaming torch in hand, on a glass base. "The figure has to be highlighted with a light green or yellowish bulb or spotlight from above or behind, or a divo in front," explains Zubin Wadia who manufactures and markets glass figures of Zarathushtra as well as glass etchings of the Asho Farohar. Taking pride in his artistic creations, Wadia says: "The features are always very clear — the eyes, the nose, the streaks of beard. Zarathushtra looks like Zarathushtra Saheb, not like a Chinese monk."

With no formal art training, Wadia has a team of four artisans who create the figures under his watchful eye. "I would like to try my hand now at a glass etching of an afarganyu and fire," he reflects aloud. From the initial sketches to the scanning and computerized configurations, to the subsequent stages of glass cutting, sandblasting, shading and depth (which gives the embossed ef-



Wadia: for the love of art and religion



fect), to the beveling and the final sticking of the figure on its glass base, Wadia ensures that the piece is flawless. Attaching the figure on to the stand is very important, he explains. There should be no bubble, else the piece might separate from the stand. Earlier the figures used to be placed on a wooden base, but a glass base enhances beauty, he believes.

Using a friend's workshop in Powai, Wadia says it takes about two months to make 100 pieces of the same design. About 25 pieces may go waste, as the smallest scratch means they have to be



Davar: entertainment packages for young and old

discarded. Appreciating the community's response to his work, Wadia says Zoroastrians living abroad buy the pieces not just for their own homes but as gifts for friends or relatives as well. "There is a good demand from places like Poona too," he notes. Bombay customers' have the benefit of free home delivery. "We have to do a good amount of legwork," he says, with nephews Meherzad and Farahmarz Wankadia (sister's sons) assisting with the marketing. With brother Darius, Zubin also runs a small chemical business under the name Mazda Waterproofing, making adhesives for the leather industry.

Parsis should get into business, asserts Zubin. Embarking on his venture in '97, Zubin discontinued for a while, resuming in the year 2000. "It is mainly religious figures which interest me," he avers, having tried his hand at making Ganpatis in glass as well as Jesus which was made at a friend's request. His web page <http://communities.msn.com/zarathushtraGlass> provides a preview of his work. Prices range from Rs 2,000-Rs 3,200 and sizes can be made to order. "I like to do things for religion. I believe one has to be staunch to one's community," he opines. As someone who "hates to sit idle," Zubin puts in a personal contribution by volunteering his services with other young men for cleaning of agiaries, particularly the Patel Agiary at Andheri.

A resident of the Salsette Parsi Colony at Andheri (East), this is his first experience of residing in a community environment and "I'm very happy about it." An ex-student of St Joseph's School at Juhu where he used to reside earlier in a cosmopolitan building, Zubin believes it is beneficial for his one-and-a-





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half-year-old son Shayan to be brought up in a Parsi atmosphere. Wife Persis is a teacher at Andheri's Vassanji Academy. Zubin can be contacted on his mobile 98204 21796 or by e-mail: zubin1971@hotmail.com

### Entertaining with Davar

"Centerstage Entertainment will organize everything for you — from invitations, floral decoration, catering, music, photography, car hire, permits... down to every meticulous detail," says Aban Davar of her event management company which plans and executes corporate parties and picnics, product launches, children's theme parties, navjotes, weddings, boat parties, office and outdoor catering, etc.

"We have over 40 themes inhouse," she elaborates, which can transport a client into a fruit, flower, sun and sand Caribbean or Hawaiian setting, or take them on a walk on the wild side in a tribal/jungle environment, or to the dice and dollars of Las Vegas, the mystique of veiled belles and belly dancers of Arabian nights, or the lamps, sigdis and earthy aromas of a roadside Indian dhaba. Accessories and cuisine match the setting, with an inhouse catering unit ladling out the fire and ice to suit different palates — choice cocktails and tequila, to sorpotels, vindaloos, barbeques...

"Depending on the clients' needs we suggest a suitable venue — it could be a club, a home, garden, the racecourse, etc. Be it 30 people, or 300 or more, we offer a choice of decor, with lights, a live band, disc jockey if required, hangabouts (costume characters who mingle with the guests), dancers, jugglers, magicians... whatever the client desires," she explains. Centerstage Entertainment had executed the week long 21st anniversary celebrations of *Mid-day* in June 2000, Azeem Khan's spring/summer collection fashion show, parties and events for the National Geographic Channel, Thomas Cook, Reuters, Banque National de Paris, Cancer Patients' Aid Association, a seven-city launch for the Tata Sumo, etc, states the company profile. "Yes, I take up assignments out of Bombay as well," Davar says. Centerstage Entertainment was set up three years ago with two partners who have since moved out.

In today's corporate world, work pressures and punishing schedules often deprive the executive or the administrator of the opportunity to really let his hair

down and enjoy, Davar believes. Interpersonal relationships revolve around the mobile or e-mail messages, conversation is all too often just work-related. "Motivation and esprit de corps among the ranks often flags by virtue of being just a name or a designation in a large organization or group," she notes. Fun-filled get-togethers can rekindle the sense of belonging and improve motivation. Theme merchandizing like jackets, badges, caps, blazers, T-shirts, etc serve to promote the customer's products and image as well, she asserts.

Different packages for children's parties accommodate varying budgets. For the young ones, Davar has themes ranging from the stone age to the space age, cartoon characters like Winnie the Pooh, Lion King, Jungle Book, pirates and cowboys, with prizes, puppet



shows, mimicry, electronic games, or water sports, trekking, etc.

Centerstage Entertainment also organizes and delivers gift hampers for Divali/New Year, etc, ranging from Swarovski Crystal to traditional mithai or fine chocolates to suit the budget, notes Davar.

The Bombay-born, Cuffe Parade resident enjoys being part of the theater scene as well. Last year she was among the cast of *Vengeance on the Menu*, one of the three short plays called *Trio* written and directed by Bejoy Nambiar of the Theatre Club of Bangalore and will soon act in *Closer* by Prakash Belawadi. Davar commends her parents Sohrab (a chartered accountant who was a senior partner in P. C. Hansotia and Company) and Parveen ("the best housewife you can have") for being progressive and supportive, and for giving her and her brother Dorab (a chartered accountant working with C. C. Choksi and Company) the freedom to chart their own course. Aban can be contacted on her mobile 98200 22357.

Compiled by Hilla P. Guzder



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# Nagpur's niche

A five-minute drive from the Nagpur railway station, the recently refurbished Billimoria Brothers Dharamshala offers comfortable and clean accommodation

Dilnavaz E. Bhagwagar

Facing the picturesque Gandhi Sagar Lake and flanked on one side by the majestic Bai Hirabai Noshirwanji Mancherji Mullan Dar-e-Meher stands the Billimoria Brothers Parsi Dharamshala of Nagpur.

Offering comfortable and clean accommodation in congenial surroundings, the Dharamshala has seven three-bedded rooms with attached bathrooms. Twenty-one guests can be housed with ease. When visiting Parsi cricket teams or marriage parties come, the Dharamshala expands to fit the requirements!

The original Dharamshala was built through the munificence of the Billimoria family, as far back as 1907. It stood on a hillock along with the old agiary. In the 1940s, the land was leveled to build a new agiary but no effort was made to rebuild the Dharamshala. In the early '50s, when D. P. R. Cassad was at the helm of affairs of the Nagpur Anjuman, he initiated a move to build a new dharamshala for the many Parsi itinerants, mainly salesmen, medical representatives and auditors who frequented Nagpur in the course of their work and needed a clean, comfortable and affordable place to stay. Interestingly, descendants of the same Billimoria family were persuaded by Cassad to come forward once again to donate the (then) princely sum of Rs 90,000 to build the present Dharamshala which was opened to the Parsi community on March 21, 1956.

Last year, the enthusiastic, newly elected managing committee of the Shree Nagpur and Kamthi Parsi Zarthosti Anjuman decided to give the Billimoria Brothers Dharamshala a much needed face-lift. The electric wiring was changed and the building given a fresh coat of paint, inside and outside. All the toilets were upgraded with a

European seat, flush and hot water geyser. The geysers were donated by a large-hearted Parsi gentleman from Poona, Rustam Ginwalla, who often stays in the Dharamshala. A water cooler was installed and the Dharamshala generally spruced up to attract more passengers.

For the past 24 years the Dharamshala has been ably managed by Nargis Karbhari, assisted by her husband Feroze. "We have our duties well defined," says the smiling Nargis. "The kitchen and cleanliness are my department. Feroze looks after the administrative and outside work." On any given morning, the bustling, brown-eyed Nargis can be seen supervising the servants in their chores or presiding over the kitchen from which emanate the most delicious aromas. Fond of good food herself, she believes in giving the same to her passengers.

Breakfast, consisting of two eggs, chappati and tea, costs Rs 35. Lunch and dinner with a serving of mutton, chicken or fish, rice in the afternoons and a side dish and chappatis, cost Rs 45 per meal. Unbelievable in this day and age but true! The tariff for lodging is pegged at Rs 40 for a bed which invariably translates to Rs 40 per room because bookings are not heavy and one usually gets a room to oneself.

"The low occupancy rate is our main problem," laments Nargis. "It would be more enjoyable and more cost-effective if we had more people coming and staying here." When asked the reason for the sparse occupancy, Nargis said, "These days visiting auditors and executives get much bigger allowances. Also, there seems to be some sort of unspoken stigma attached to the word 'dharamshala.' Many visitors will stay in a hotel but come to the Dharamshala for their dinner."

However, there are Parsis who deem

it a privilege to stay next to the holy fire and be able to pay a visit to the agiary every day. There are those who like the close, community feeling even though they are in a strange city. Shanoor Irani, deputy general manager, co-ordination with Automotive Manufacturers has been coming to Nagpur for over a year in connection with work. She used to stay at the Tuli International or Royal Palace Hotel till she came to know of the Parsi Dharamshala. "Since my first stay at the Dharamshala, I have always come back here," says the young lady executive from Bombay. "It gives me a feeling of home away from home. Nargis is more a friend than the manager of the Dharamshala," smiles Irani. "She will sit and chat with me over the dinner she serves. Work demanded that I be away from Bombay even on Jamshedi Navroz. Had I stayed in a hotel, however luxurious, I'd have spent the evening alone. Because I was at the Dharamshala, I could visit the serene agiary and spend the evening among the warm camaraderie of fellow Zoroastrians at a community dinner."

Irani had one suggestion to make which the Nagpur Anjuman trustees should give a serious thought to. "At least one of the seven rooms at the Dharamshala should be upgraded to a deluxe room at enhanced rates, providing amenities like air conditioning and a TV in the room," she opines. "By paying Rs 40 a day, I am only saving my company a lot of money."

The Dharamshala also has a big recreation hall where Zoroastrian youth gather in the evenings for badminton, table tennis, carom and other games. The well-kept green lawn at the back, with a permanent stage, is where most weddings, navjotes and other community functions are held. Anyone staying



*Clockwise from top: the Dharamshala facade; Gandhi Sagar Lake across the road; Mullan Dar-e-Meher adjacent to the Dharamshala and one of the rooms*

at the Dharamshala is welcome as a guest at these functions.

The Dharamshala could not be more conveniently located. It is a five-minute drive from the Nagpur railway station and the wholesale orange market in a town that is famous for its oranges. The Raman Science Centre and the Empress

Mills, Jamshedji Tata's very first industrial venture (now taken over by the government) are a stone's throw away. And if your idea of an evening's entertainment is not necessarily sitting and talking with Zarathushtis living around the agiary complex, you can go walking or boating on the placid Gandhi Sagar

Lake, just across the road.

While there is a good chance that a room will be available, it is better to give prior intimation of your arrival by phoning 0712-728361 or writing to the Manager, Billimoria Brothers Parsi Dharamshala, Sir Bejanji Mehta Road, opposite Gandhi Sagar, Nagpur 440018.

# Honor — and humor — at Rustom Baug

The community honors Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, attorney general of India Soli Sorabjee and former solicitor general of India Tehmtan Andhyarujina

Arnavaz S. Mama

*Honor and shame from no condition rise,  
Act well your part and there the honor lies.*

These words of classical English poet Alexander Pope were enlisted to underscore the intrepid achievements of three Zoroastrians on the Indian national stage — one protecting the physical frontiers of India, two striving to preserve the moral imperatives of the rule of law.

The trio — Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, India's attorney general Soli Sorabjee and India's former solicitor general Tehmtan Andhyarujina — were jointly felicitated by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP), the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) and the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI) on the central lawns of Rustom Baug on April 20, 2002. Nearly 30 other anjumans, punchayets and associations across the country joined the happy conspiracy to drown them in garlands, shawls and mementoes leading Sorabjee to quip, "There can be no recession in the flower industry." Sorabjee's expressed preference for chocolates led the Rustom Baug Association to conjure up a boxful for each of the three dignitaries ere the ceremony concluded.

Seizing upon the Republic Day 2002 conferment of the Padma Vibhushan on Sorabjee, the BPP trustees used the occasion to also honor ("aapro Sam") Manekshaw nearly 30 years after he became India's first Field Marshal. Sorabjee's earlier appointment as India's first Zoroastrian solicitor general in 1979 and attorney general in 1989 and Andhyarujina's appointment as the first Zoroastrian advocate general of Maharashtra in 1993 and later as solicitor general of India in 1996 had similarly been victims of a "communication gap" (perhaps the absent-mindedness of an aging community).

Introducing these "eminent sons of

the soil" to an appreciative audience, BPP chairman Jamshed Guzder described Manekshaw as "a master of man management and a superb delegator. He trusts his men and knows whom to trust." When 93,000 Pakistani soldiers surrendered to India in 1971 — "a record in the history of modern warfare" — Manekshaw ensured that they "were treated with dignity," noted Guzder.

Describing Sorabjee as an example of one born with "a silver spoon in the mouth (who) with industry and acuity turned into gold," Guzder remarked on Sorabjee's "extraordinary memory," and recounted his art of advocacy, "gently needling the opposite side into becoming aggressive." A jovial man with a marvelous sense of humor, junior lawyers could speak with confidence in Sorabjee's presence, said Guzder. One who had represented India at the International Court of Justice at The Hague, Sorabjee was adept at issues with "political undertones and ticklish overtones," noted Guzder and wanted to "convey our wish and desire" that Sorabjee be considered worthy of appointment as the first "Parsi President of India."

Andhyarujina, currently a senior counsel practising in the Supreme Court, had been Maharashtra's advocate general (1993-95) and retired after a two-year term as India's solicitor general in 1998, recounted Guzder noting that he had argued in several landmark cases involving constitutional matters.

BPP trustee and WZO (India) president Dadi Engineer narrated an incident in Burma in 1942, when World War II was at its height. A company of the Indian Army was engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the invading Japanese. The young Indian officer, urging his troops forward, sustained six machine gun shots in his stomach. Afraid to leave his company leaderless, he continued to fight till he collapsed. His

company won the day. The general commanding the Indian forces arrived to congratulate the soldiers and immediately awarded the Military Cross — Britain's highest honor for bravery under fire, never awarded posthumously — to the fatally wounded commander. Sam Manekshaw was not expected to recover. He did. "His fearless independence, his grasp of a military situation and his great acumen for military planning drew the attention of his superiors. Manekshaw's rise in the army was spectacular, but not without controversy," said Engineer.

Equally gutsy against political power Manekshaw refused to accept defence minister V. K. Krishna Menon's assessment of India's security position and was sidelined until the Chinese invasion humiliated India in NEFA (North East Frontier Agency). Disillusioned Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru ("*Hindi-Chini bhai bhai*" — the Indians and Chinese are brothers — had been the mantra thereto) rushed Manekshaw to command the retreating Indian forces. "In no time, Manekshaw convinced the troops that the Chinese soldier was not '10 feet tall.' His first order of the day was: 'There will be no withdrawal without written orders and these orders shall never be issued.' The soldiers showed faith in their commander and successfully checked the further advance of the Chinese army," Engineer recalled the prevailing scenario.

An outstanding commander through each of the three Indo-Pakistan wars, Manekshaw's finest hour was the defeat of Pakistan in 1971 and the establishment of an independent Bangladesh. "As army chief he planned the operation meticulously, refusing to be pressurized by politicians or bureaucrats," commented Engineer and when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi asked him to accept the surrender of the Pakistani forces in Dhaka, he magnanimously

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declined the honor in favor of his commander in the east.

Engineer emphasized Manekshaw's sturdy independence of political pressure, buttressed by his competence, professional standing and public stature. His personal charm, chivalry and graciousness, his fondness for feminine company at parties were enumerated. An egalitarian at heart Manekshaw was noticed one night happily playing cards with street urchins after a dinner with noted jurist Nani Palkhivala and other bigwigs and, said Engineer, he will invariably stop to chat and shake hands with the ex-servicemen who function as doormen of the Taj and Oberoi Hotels.

"Sandwiched" between Sorabjee who was about three years his senior and Andhyarujina who was a couple of years his junior at the St Xavier's and Government Law Colleges, Engineer referred to both as his contemporaries.

Emphasizing Sorabjee's signal achievement — he is the only Indian to

have been appointed attorney general twice — Engineer noted that Sorabjee's advocacy reflected his mastery of courtcraft. In 1967 he had persuaded the Supreme Court to uphold his view that the right to travel abroad and hence the right to obtain a passport were implied in the Constitution's guarantee of personal liberty. Known for his dedication to human rights, personal liberty, freedom of expression and freedom of the Press, Sorabjee had appeared for various newspapers and periodicals which were victims of censorship during the Emergency, totally free of charge, personally absorbing the cost of airfare and stay in Delhi.

In his book *My Presidential Years* former President of India R. Venkataraman had described Sorabjee as "one of the most reasonable men I have come across," noted Engineer. He also referred to Justice Claire L'Heureux Dube of the Supreme Court of Canada who in the context of a certain human rights

situation had quoted a statement by Sorabjee, describing him as "a great friend and an inspiration to me... and jurist par excellence."

In his article in *The Hindu* former supreme court judge V. R. Krishna Iyer had enumerated what it takes to be a worthy lawyer — a knowledge of history, science, philosophy, the arts and business, apart from law, a large understanding, integrity and sense of honor. All these qualities Iyer had found present in Sorabjee.

Literature, especially poetry, and music, particularly jazz, have been Sorabjee's abiding joys. According to Engineer, Sorabjee had a choice between law and music in his college years and was glad he opted for law. (Engineer did not particularly fancy Sorabjee's clarinet renditions though Sorabjee begged to differ.)

Andhyarujina had been selected for the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), standing third in the all-India contest, but



*L to R (1st row): Manekshaw, Sorabjee and Andhyarujina receiving their respective mementoes from Guzder and Engineer and later acknowledging the tributes paid to them (2nd row): Silloo Mahava presenting flowers to Zena Sorabjee; Sunnu Andhyarujina to Silloo Andhyarujina; the distinguished trio and their hosts on the podium with Engineer at the mike; Dorab Mistry; Modi (3rd row): Shroff; Silloo Kavarana; Dadi Mistry from Delhi and Dinshaw Mehta; Tamboly; Tirandaz, Sheroo Master, Gandhi and Mehli Colah*

Photos: Mazda Audio and Video Labs



opted to join the chamber of Hormasji Seervai, the constitutional authority who was then advocate general of Bombay (which combined the states of Gujarat and Maharashtra). Fundamental rights, parliamentary privileges, the sexual harassment of women, the MPs' (Members of Parliament) immunity case were some of India's legal highwater marks with which he had been involved, said Engineer. Chairman of the committee on banking laws, Andhyarujina is studious by nature, functioning also as part-time professor of constitutional law in Bombay University, as honorary professor at Bangalore's National Law School and visiting lecturer at Queen's University, Belfast. "When one briefs him, one is confident he will have read his brief carefully and be thoroughly prepared," vouched solicitor Engineer of the senior counsel.

"They have done the country proud. To say more is to gild the lily," noted BPP senior trustee Minoo Shroff commenting on their "great rectitude and personal probity... character which inspires confidence." He recalled that Jagjivan Ram, who was India's defence minister at the time of the Bangladesh war, concocted the title of Bharat Marshal for Manekshaw. The more perceptive Indira Gandhi sensed the revulsion to the term and "stuck to the title of Field Marshal despite the colonial

shadow... Even today India's defence forces have not seen as colorful a personality as Manekshaw."

Shroff referred to Sorabjee's versatility, specifically his column in *The Sunday Times*, the brief comments highlighting the finer nuances of the countries he visits, and the "self-effacing" Andhyarujina's 20 years of community activity as a member of the CER (Committee for Electoral Rights subsequently renamed Committee for Economic Revival).

"Being born of Parsi parents they had no choice but to excel... their *tokham kyani* (pure Zoroastrian genes) made them what they are," BPP trustee Rustom Tirandaz flogged his hobbyhorse on the virtues of inbreeding. "It is the exceptional human being in Manekshaw that leads him to play with street children, (to) Soli Sorabjee's greater than normal share of a large bleeding heart, (to) Andhyarujina arguing for the underprivileged even when he was advocate general of Maharashtra." Tirandaz was at pains to make younger Zoroastrians realize that the days of Pochkhanawala, Tata, Bhabha et al who helped build India, were not over. "My descendents will be felicitating others who will be the *crème de la crème*."

Delighted and honored "to represent the oldest Zoroastrian anjuman abroad

to join in these felicitations," was Dorab Mistry, president of the London-based Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe. "We have produced our share of very distinguished Zoroastrians. The first three colored Members of the British Parliament were all Zoroastrians," he reminded the gathering. He recalled Manekshaw's stint with the Royal Scots regiment while he served with the British Army. Sorabjee's enduring interest in human rights was acknowledged by noted columnist Bernard Levin in his own comments on human rights, noted Mistry, adding that Sorabjee and Andhyarujina were both visiting professors at Queen's College.

FPZAI honorary secretary Keki Gandhi congratulated the trio and joined Guzder and Engineer in presenting the mementoes, garlands and shawls on behalf of the Federation.

Acknowledging the adulation, Manekshaw regaled the audience with humorous anecdotes from his personal and professional career, not all of them printable. "Now you know how old I am and how uneducated I am!" he began with a straight face. The son of a doctor who was expected to become a doctor, Manekshaw grew up surrounded by medical literature. His brothers had been sent to the UK to study engineering and Sam's father had promised to send him

*continued on page 42*

# The classic completeness

The content should determine the usage of color, believes artist Jehangir Sabavala

Meher Marfatia

It proved a fortuitous coincidence. Veteran painter Jehangir Sabavala's latest exhibition, *Occasions Of Light*, opened in January at Bombay's famed Jehangir Art Gallery as his 51st year show. It coincided well with the golden jubilee celebrations of the prestigious institution, a prized family legacy established by his uncle Sir Cowasji Jehangir.

Reappearing with 24 masterful oil studies in this exhibition after a hiatus of four years (although 10 of his other works sold at group shows across the world during this period), the painter confesses to emerging from self-imposed exile only towards and during a display of his work. "Art must have something poignant to say," he stresses, jabbing the air with elegant fingers to explain why he faces the public and critics when he does. His works taking months to complete, not mere days, Sabavala has always been more of a deeply contemplative and controlled artist — "very conscious, meticulously planned" — rather than a spontaneous one. "I retreat in a private, isolated, hardworking world which I enjoy till I am ready... otherwise I may as well be an actor!"

Yet, interestingly, such reticence has hardly resulted in reclusion, for this is one artist who does not believe in remaining inaccessible to the lay viewer. For long enjoying the reputation of being one of the foremost painters in India, he acknowledges the common man's reaction: "Yes, I'd like to think that art is communication, not intimidation. At some point, as an artist you simply have to reveal a part of yourself and lay it open. There is no hiding behind technique. Just as a good writer exposes himself through his books, so too does a painter become vulnerable. And every person who comes to see my work brings to it his own unique interpretation." In fact, as far as solo displays are concerned, he chooses only

the Jehangir because he finds this downtown venue the real way to reach out to art lovers at large. "You need to engage an entire city, not just its elite. All those nice private galleries get exclusive clientele to buy or other painters to visit out of interest in the showing artist's work. But where is the public?"

A commendable stand, given the charmed life he has had the privilege of leading thanks to an aristocratic lineage and long periods of residence in Paris and London, collectively responsible for molding much of his artistic influences. Born to the illustrious Cowasji Jehangir Readymoney family, his father Ardeshir was mayor of Bombay while mother Bapsy was a keen patron of art and theater, a patriot and social worker. Taken at 10 to live in Switzerland, Jehangir and his brother Sharokh were educated by tutors and governesses even as their mother allowed them "absolute freedom" to roam the gloriously picturesque countryside surrounding the little village called Les Avants just above Montreux. Back home in Bombay he studied at the J. J. School before going on to the Heatherley School of Art in London. While his wife Shirin, then at the London School of Economics, returned to India, Jehangir went on to the Academie Julian and the Academie Andre Lhote in Paris and later the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere.

If those initial years were steeped in critically evaluated impressionist studies, tutelage under the last of the great cubist painters Andre Lhote was an intellectually stimulating experience. Explaining the amalgam of personalized cubism with his own version of impressionism, when faced with one of his later paintings Sabavala remarked that the colors were used in the manner of an impressionist and yet the backbone of the work was cubist.

Fifty years after displaying paint-

ings on hessian mounts stretched across wooden frames (as the management could not allow nails driven into the walls of the Taj Mahal Hotel room he hired for his first one-man show), Sabavala has created the fine *Occasions Of Light*. Presented by Sakshi, the country's largest multi-location gallery, this exhibition just traveled from the Jehangir in Bombay to New Delhi's Shridharani Art Gallery at Triveni Kala Sangam and New York's Gallery Arts India on Fifth Avenue. It opened at all three places to the rave reviews and accolades that have over years become customary for a Sabavala event. As always, his deft strokes not stopping at lyrically breathing life into empty canvases but imbuing them with an intense analytical consciousness, the present collection is devoted to the artist's ideal of the beautiful.

Dwelling on the artist's passion, poet and critic Ranjit Hoskote who has authored *Pilgrim, Exile, Sorcerer: The Painterly Evolution of Jehangir Sabavala*, comments in the catalog to this exhibition which he also curated: "Sabavala's recent paintings are occasions of light, picked out and marked against the pervasive darkness of our times, visions of redemption set against a backdrop of bombs exploding in subways and streets, kamikaze jets crashing through high towers... terrified villagers fleeing towards shifting borders... Sabavala journeys through the ruins of human enterprise, looking again for the lost places and lost times that have long fascinated him, summoning them forth in paintings whose lyrical felicity of handling accentuates their tone of elegiac prayer."

The artist himself points to a difference here between the subdued palette of his earlier work and the comparative brightness of a higher tone dramatically adopted in *Occasions*. Though stepping up the color code in such frames as

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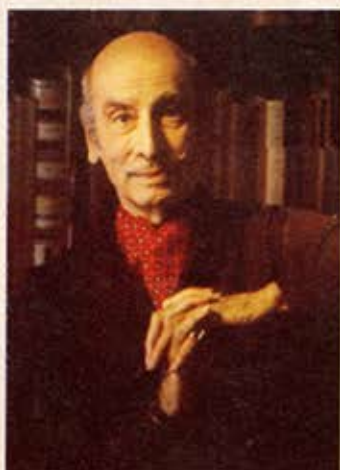
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The artist (below) and his works (clockwise from top): *Vespers II*, *The Friendly Shepherds*, *Stag Antlered Trees II* and *The Star that Beckons III* (Photo of Sabavala: Rafeeq Ellias. Photos of paintings: Prakash Rao)



*Smouldering Sunset*, *Lunar Magic*, *Pilgrimage III*, *Stag-antlered Trees III*, *Sunburst* and *The Star that Beckons III* from subtle grey and blue hues to more radiant red and orange shades, he appears to have given each piece of his current oeuvre the singular treatment of classic completeness that is the very hallmark of any Sabavala. As he points out, the gamut of colors used here range from the soft and simple to multi-toned effects which he likens to the half tones of a Hindustani raga. Convinced it is the content that should determine color and even using as many as about 30 tones in some drawings, this is one painter who stays clear of sacrificing art for effect. Never given to indulging in technical pyrotechnics, he observes, "You must marry the palette to the subject."

The selection of subject in turn, Sabavala reveals, may be triggered by different things as a response in the mind's eye. It could range from a reaction to an extract from a book, a piece of music, an evocative landscape, snatches of conversation, or a particular kind of person. Whatever the driving force behind the aesthetic understanding, it is uniquely rendered in a style described variously as "cool classicism that can both attract and distance the viewer" and "a revisitation of the classical quality of impressionist realistic works," with his figures "mysterious and compelling in their crystalline geometry." *Occasions* also marks a departure from natural elements like "sand, sea, dune and mist," where for the first time an urban landscape has found its way into the painter's

*continued on page 47*

# The right to reside

When housing colonies built for Zoroastrians have non-Parsi spouses residing therein, it may defeat the original intention of the settler, opines the author

Eruch B. Desai

Our illustrious ancestors, out of foresight, dedication and zeal to serve the community, went to great lengths to leave behind vast lands and housing structures for their exclusive benefit. So have the philanthropic ancestors of the other communities in the country. Will their dream to provide such housing for the exclusive use of a community remain true? Perhaps not, if a recent judgment of the Bombay High Court is to be the trendsetter.

The concept of cooperative housing on ownership basis entered the portals of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) quite some time before I became a trustee. Even then, several difficulties were faced in the formation of the housing society, and incidental thereto, formulating the bylaws thereof, the main bone of contention being the price at which the allottee of the flat would be entitled to sell the flat if he were to go in for another ownership flat outside the colony. Naturally, the BPP, with the objective of providing housing at a cheaper rate for those of the community not very comfortably placed, would not want the allottee to make a handsome profit. At the same time, the allottee would try his/her best to get as much benefit as is possible to meet the cost of the more expensive flat. Years would roll by, but there would be no sight of the society.

I recall a day in my office when the court's bailiff with a policeman came to serve on me, in the presence of clients, a summons from the court in respect of a proceeding initiated by one of the allottees against the trustees in not forming the society within the stipulated period as required by law. The non-Parsi client wondered as to what I was up to. When they knew what went wrong, they expressed anguish that members of an educated and cultured community such as ours can resort to

such a stratagem to coerce the trustees to agree to their terms. Those were the days when these problems and hurdles were dime a dozen. The recent judgment of the Bombay High Court (BHC) has compounded the problems further.

Housing on ownership basis could never have been within the contemplation of the settlers of the trust properties. This concept developed in India after 1947 when the country gained Independence. With the mounting cost of construction and the coffers of the BPP drying out as a result of inflation, and less and less of the community donating funds for charity due to strict tax laws, the BPP felt the pinch and had to resort to alternative avenues to raise funds to provide housing. One way to achieve this was to develop the concept of housing on ownership basis with a fervent hope and expectation that the members of the community would not dig their own graves and take any step which may prove a hindrance or obstruction to the idea of a housing colony for the exclusive use of the Parsis. But that was not to be. With inter-communal marriages on the rise, alien spouses could be seen in the premises, and with the judgment in the case of *Petit vs. Jeejeebhoy* that only children of a Parsi father could be accepted as members of the community, the problem compounded if the husband were to be a non-Parsi. It has now reached its zenith with the aforesaid BHC judgment at an interim stage in the case of the Zoroastrian Radih Society. It indeed has far-reaching consequences for various communities in the city and in particular for the Zoroastrian community which has a number of such colonies.

Before proceeding to deal with this judgment, I may draw attention to the observations of the Supreme Court in the case of *Damyanti vs. Union of India* reported in AIR (*All India Reporter*)

1971 Supreme Court 966 to the effect that the right to form an association necessarily implies that the persons forming the association have also the right to continue to be associated with only those whom they voluntarily admit in the association, and any law by which members are introduced in the voluntary association without any option being given to the members to keep them out, or any law which takes away the membership of those who have voluntarily joined it, will be a law violating the right to form an association. A law which seeks to compel those who formed the society to act in the association with other members who have been imposed as members by the law and in whose admission to membership the original members had no say, would violate the right of the original members of the society to form an association guaranteed under Article 19(1)(c) of the Constitution. There are several other judgments on this issue supporting this view which would enable a society to frame the bylaws in such a way to ensure the concept of an exclusive Zoroastrian society.

The Maharashtra Cooperative Housing Society Act, 1960 governs the administration and affairs of housing societies. Under Section 22(1)(a) thereof, every individual who is competent to contract under the Indian Contract Act is entitled to become a member. Under Section 23, a society cannot refuse admission to membership to any person duly qualified, except with sufficient reason. The Act has also prescribed a model agreement to be entered into with the society.

The Zoroastrian Radih Society was registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, with the main object of providing housing for the benefit of Parsi Zoroastrians. It developed a residential colony meant only for Parsi

Zoroastrians and the residents occupying flats in the colony had to sign a declaration to that effect. One Nariman Jogina sought a flat in the colony. He gave the required declaration and the Society agreed to allot a flat to him. Subsequently, an agreement for sale of the flat was executed in his favor. Soon thereafter, Nariman bid farewell to this world leaving behind his wife and son. Before being put in possession, the wife and son also gave the declaration that they would not allow any non-Zoroastrian to use the flat. After they occupied the flat, the son married a non-Parsi. When the Society came to know that the son was about to get married, a suit was filed to hand over the possession of the flat. A notice of motion was taken out praying that the wife and the son be restrained from inducing or allowing residence of a non-Zoroastrian in the flat. In spite of counsel Edul Bharucha contending that the restriction in the bylaws of the society whereby the benefits of housing would be available to a particular community are protected by Articles 25, 26 and 29 of the Constitution and in spite of citing several judgments in support, the Court has held that any restriction which is contrary to the provisions of the statute cannot be defended. It particularly observed that where any such agreement is contrary to a statutory provision, it is the statutory provision which will prevail. The matter has gone in appeal and the appellate court's judgment is awaited.

Again, in the case of Talmakiwadi Cooperative Housing Society Limited reported in 1999 (1) Bom CR 393, the relevant bylaws provided that all the members of the Society have to be of the Kanara Saraswat community. The registrar directed the Society to amend the bylaws to bring them in consonance with the model bylaws. The matter went to the Bombay High Court. The learned judge relying upon the provisions of Sections 22 and 23 of the Maharashtra Cooperative Societies Act held that the said bylaw was liable to be struck down as ultra vires the above referred provisions of the statute. Whilst deciding, the Court relied upon the judgment of the learned single judge of the Gujarat High Court in the case of the Zoroastrian Housing Cooperative Society Limited reported in AIR 1997, Gujarat, page 136, in which it has been held that the bylaw of the Society allowing only Parsi Zoroastrians as members of the

Cooperative Society is violative of Sections 23 and 24 of the Maharashtra Cooperative Societies Act, 1960, and such a bylaw is liable to be struck down as ultra vires the above referred provisions of the statute. This matter has also gone in appeal to the Supreme Court and is pending.

Considering the above, it is now for the BPP to have a second look at housing through ownership societies. It was introduced way back in the '60s when funds were scarce and legal problems plenty. With the latest amendment to the Bombay Rent Act resulting in giving a nod to the pagri system, the task to build houses is smoother than what it was before. With the community spirit of self-sacrifice showing a decline, the concept of housing on ownership basis should be the last resort.

The above then is a fundamental issue which agitates the minds of many in the community when individual interest gains precedence over community interest. Further, should a secular state set at naught the original intention of the settlers who would have liked their bounties to be used exclusively by the community, the affectionate smile of our ancestors may have frozen into a deep frown. The dreams that they had dreamt for the benefit of the community seem to be shattered by the strokes of pen running through these judgments and the misdeeds of their successors.

Why frown at these judgments when our own lot are the perpetrators of the crime? When they come to occupy the flats, they well know that only Zoroastrians can occupy the same. The noble deeds of our ancestors should not be met with ingratitude. Although love may know no barriers, the community's interest cannot be frittered away. It is in the same vein that I have taken the stand as I did on the dakhmenashini issue. Those who do not desire to abide by the rules on the basis of which they entered the community and Parsi society and gained considerably, should not shatter the trust and confidence reposed in them, nor create problems for the community. Let community interest and solidarity have preference over personal interest. Preference for the love of the community as against the love for an individual would result in greater good for the greater number, for whose benefit our ancestors strived to ensure that the community may survive.



Former president of Bombay Parsi Panchayet and a senior partner of Mulla and Mulla and Craigie Blunt and Caroe, Desai is a director of around 15 companies and a trustee of the General Electoral Trust formed by the House of Birlas and some other trusts. He has also made representations before the authorities for the amendments to the Bombay Rent Act.

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# Poster perfect



The Vintage Bollywood Poster Art exhibition showcased the evolution of filmmaker J. B. H. Wadia on the occasion of his birth centenary

Parinaz M. Gandhi

Looking at the posters of popular movies like *Hunterwali*, *Mela*, *Madhosh*, *Hatim Tai* some of the senior citizens who had come with their children or grandchildren were deeply moved. It brought back memories of the film, seen in which theater, in whose company... "The mint quality of these posters was a source of amazement to the lay public as also the art collectors and critics," mentioned Riyad Vinci Wadia who had curated the exhibition on Vintage Bollywood Poster Art to showcase the evolution of Indian cinema.

Visitors of all age-groups and different denominations at Bombay's Hermitage Art Gallery from January 31 to February 9, 2002 had an occasion to study 45 exhibits — including posters, lobby cards, publicity booklet covers and other memorabilia — selected from the Wadia Movietone Archives (WMA). Meant to reflect the evolution of Indian cinema



over four decades from 1933-1976, they encapsulated the contribution of pioneering filmmaker Jamshed B. H. (JBH) Wadia, Riyad's grandfather, on the occasion of his birth centenary. With recorded music from the same era permeating the hall, viewers were better able to relate to the visuals before them.

The increasing patronage and appreciation of vintage poster art is related to the satellite television boom and the easier access to the old movie titles. While most collectors are tempted by their nostalgia for a favorite star or

movie title, of late the realization that posters are an art form has also found many buyers. Last year at a Christie auction for the Gujarat Earthquake Relief held in New York, a poster of *Madhosh* (1951/WMA) went under the hammer for \$ 850, mentions a handout.

During the days of the exhibition, sixth and seventh standard students from select south Bombay schools were specially invited to workshops to "get them to have respect for posters as an art of communication; to show them that behind every poster there is an artistic mind at work," explains Riyad. It was impressed upon them that "posters lying around the house should be treated with more care and respect," he adds. "Even if three or four of them become collectors/preservers it may be interesting," believes Riyad, himself a poster collec-

tor since the 1980s. Having picked up Hollywood posters of 1920s-40s in the course of his international travel he says he recognized the inherent value of his grandfather's collection. "Not necessarily monetary value but information value," he clarifies, "apart from nostalgia and access to one's own family history."

Film posters are essentially printed for one-time use and are produced in bulk quantities. Most studios and film companies destroyed or sold as *raddi* (waste) unused posters after a few years as it took up valuable space or attracted rats and termites, mentions a write-up detailing the history of poster art. The large size of the posters and the porous quality of the paper which makes it susceptible to damage in humid conditions necessitate special preservative precautions. "You must never laminate a poster nor introduce any acidity or feticol," reiterates Riyad. In fact, de-acidifying the paper and reinforcing the poster is money worth spent as it extends the poster's life for another 100 years, he recommends. "The best way of preservation is not to touch it at all," observes Riyad who found many of his grandfather's posters stacked one on top of another in their three-fold format.

Although Indian distributors and exhibitors tried to follow the prevailing norms and formats standardized by Hollywood in regard to poster size and display, they had to devise their own appealing layouts for the lithographic printing processes. A unique feature of the Bollywood posters was the mix of two or three languages—English, Urdu, Hindustani. Additionally the poster design had to entice a large illiterate population so film stars were given pride of place, and text and credits often ignored, states the handout.

Following JBH's demise in 1986 when efforts were being made to straighten out his estate, Riyad remembers the piles of material at the Wadia Movietone office at Lower Parel. When he was initially asked "soo karvaanu (what is to be done)?" Riyad was at a loss for an answer. He was sure that he didn't want "a single scrap to be thrown unless its value was assessed...I had no idea of the scope of the materials and the efforts involved."

On his return from the film school in Australia Riyad spent one and a half years to study the material, all lying uncataloged. "There was a lot in very precarious condition" requiring his active involvement. In 1990 he set up the

WMA to shelter the 7,000-10,000 stills, lobby cards, song and publicity booklets, posters, fan magazines, books and other film memorabilia of the '30s through the '70s. Around 200 films must have been made under the banner of Wadia Brothers Productions (founded in 1926) and Wadia Movietone (founded



J. B. H. Wadia (left) and Riyad Wadia

as a company in 1933). These films, notes on the movies, reams of articles, correspondence and accounts files are all preserved which Riyad feels would be a "rich source of material for a researcher in film history."

"The ambition of WMA is to make available this large archive for academics, film students and interested public, both in India and internationally. The JBH Wadia Centenary Year Retrospective is a project being undertaken towards this aim," according to a summary of WMA's major activities in the last decade. Riyad's hour-long documentary, *Fearless — The Hunterwali Story* on the life and films of Fearless Nadia, produced under the aegis of WMA, received the Government of India's best documentary award for 1993. Their plans for 2002 include taking the Vintage Bollywood Poster Art exhibition internationally to Europe, USA, Japan and Australia. Creative support for this exhibition was received from Divya Thakur of Design Temple, Fred Poonawala of Comart Lithographers and Ishwar and Bhavna Thadhani of Hermitage Art Gallery, it was acknowledged.

In a career spanning 50 years JBH wrote over 200 screenplays, produced over 180 features (directing some 30 of them) and produced over 200 documentaries, shorts and serials, notes an introduction to the celebrated filmmaker, crediting him with many distinctions. Born into a reputed family of master shipbuilders to the East India Company and the Bombay Royal Naval Dockyards, JBH opted to make a career in cinema, initially writing scenarios and producing silent films and in 1933 progressing to a full-fledged produc-

tion unit, Wadia Movietone in partnership with younger brother Homi Wadia and the noted distributor M. B. Billimoria. His first all-talking film *Lal-E-Yaman/The Prince of Yemen* is today the oldest surviving Indian talkie. Within a couple of years the studio became a household word when it released *Hunterwali/Lady Wilds* the Whip debuting the blue-eyed blonde Nadia who later wed Homi. The first Indian film to be simultaneously produced in three languages (English, Hindi and Bengali) was *The Court Dancer*. With the imposition of raw stock quotas during World War II when it was no longer tenable to produce 10 to 12 films a year, the original Wadia Movietone partnership split. The brothers though never stopped working together and their partnership (The Wadia Brothers) spanning 1928-81 was referred to in the trade circle as "Ram-Laxman ki jodi."

Steeped as he was in India's freedom struggle, as co-founder of the Radical Democratic Party he used the film medium to propagate his views on social issues like women's emancipation, Hindu-Muslim unity, dignity of labor. *Ankh-ki-Sharam*, *Krishna Bhakta Bodana* and *Vishwas* were some of his classics during this period. Following the War he produced classics like *Mela/The Fairground of Life* starring thespians like Nargis and Dilip Kumar, accompanied by the music of Naushad; *Madhosh/The Intoxicated* starring Meena Kumari with the music of Madan Mohan; and the box office hit *Hatim Tai/The Seven Riddles of Hatim*. Among the brothers' mythological melodramas were *Sampoorna Ramayana/The Complete Ramayana*, then the longest Indian film; *Veer Rajputani/The Brave Rajput Princess*; and *Duniya Jhukti Hai/The Earth Trembles Before Heaven Above*. They were also the pioneers of using the scenic landscapes of Kashmir and the Himalayas and the exotic locales of Goa for their productions like *Tasveer/The Portrait* and *Saaz Aur Sanam/The Dancer from the Dance*. Glimpses of many of these movies could be had at the Vintage Bollywood Poster Art Exhibition in Bombay.

In the mid-1970s JBH, the political activist, fought for democratic rights when the Emergency was declared and devoted his time to encouraging a slew of young filmmakers to create an alternate style of Indian cinema, away from the Bollywood formula. His home was the nucleus of political debate, cinematic

*continued on page 44*

## The bodies built

"We wanted to create an awareness amongst the Parsi youth to take greater interest in their health and bodies," stated Dr Porus Turner, president of the Sir Ness Wadia Club (SNWC) while explaining the rationale behind holding the first All India Zoroastrian Body Building Championship. Organized by the Club and supported by the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO), the Championship was held at the SNWC lawns of Rustom Baug, on March 9, 2002. Eleven contestants from Bombay, Ahmedabad, Surat and Poona participated in the event.

The judges, which included president Madhav Poojari and general secretary Sudesh Kadam of the Indian Body Building Federation (IBBF) declared 22-year-old commerce student Kaivan Panthaki (of the Zoroastrian Club, Surat), Neville Bodhanwalla (of Malcolm Baug, Bombay) and Aresh Meher Shahi (of Bal Vyayam Mandir, Bombay) the first, second and third winners of the 'Overall Category.' Panthaki received Rs 10,000 for securing the 'Mr Zoroastrian 2002' title, Rs 1,000 as the 'Class winner' and Rs 2,000 and a trophy donated by Viraf Chiniwala in memory of the late Prof Tehmuras Sarkari. Bodhanwalla was awarded Rs 5,000 and Meher Shahi Rs 3,000. Chiniwala also awarded 57-year-old Jimmy Muglai Rs 1,000 for being the oldest participant. Aresh Toddywala, Muglai, Rustom Patel, Meher Shahi and Panthaki contested in the 'Below 65 kg' category; Yazad Davar, Bodhanwalla, Freddy Muglai, Adi Engineer, Ardeshr Khushrushahi and Shahrugh Sholapurwalla in the 'Above 65 kg' group.

Jamshed Guzder, chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP), Dinshaw Tamboly of WZO/BPP and philanthropist NarYman Dubash presided over the function. Recently a patron of The Family and Medical Aid Trust, Dubash who is a licensed gun technician was felicitated by the International Gojukai Karate Do with the highest honor given to a civilian karate expert, states a promotional write-up in the *Mid-day* of April 21, 2002. Guiding

the organizers every step of the way was Viraf Panthaki, veteran weight lifter and Chhatrapati Shivaji Award winner (in 1979) who is also a coach of the Indian team for power lifting and an international referee for body building and power lifting. He is currently helping to set up a ladies gym and upgrade the men's gym at Rustom Baug. The cost for the renovations and new equip-



(L to R) Clockwise from top: Dinshaw Tamboly, Sholapurwalla, Bachi Tamboly, Bodhanwalla, Turner and Engineer; Jesia; Malcolm Kasad; Adi Irani being felicitated by Dubash

ment have also been borne by Dubash.

The Championship also marked the floodlighting of the entire playground, courtesy the WZO, fulfilling a long felt dream of the residents and in particular sports lovers of the Baug. The entire light project was effectively handled by Viraf Sahier, an electrical engineer of Godrej and Boyce, states the release.

The Championship served as a "unique occasion to remember and invite the veteran body builders who had brought fame and honor for the community at state, national and international levels," mentions the press release.

Dubash's generous donations enabled 12 veteran body builders including Viraf Panthaki to be felicitated with a plaque and Rs 20,000 each: Bomansha Bulsara who participated in the first Asian Games in 1951 and won first, second and third place in the Mr India, (Class Two) contest for several years, Jimmy Muglai, winner of the Mr Gujarat contest for several years consecutively,

Malcolm Kasad who won the Junior Mr Bombay competition in 1957-58 and thereafter the Mr Bombay in 1961, Homi Jesia who was the All India Weightlifting and Body building Champion in 1959, Kersi Kasad who won the Best Body Built and Mr Apollo titles in 1962, Noshir Shroff, winner of the Mr Bombay title in 1945-46, Adi Irani who secured the Mr Budding Bombay (1969) and Maharashtra Shree (Tall Man) in 1975, Jehangir Patva, winner of the Mr India (Tall Man) title in 1973, Bomi Irani, winner of the Mr Maharashtra and Mr Greater Bombay titles in 1963-64, Manek Deboo who secured the Mr Gujarat and Mr Bharat Kumar titles, and Tehemton Gowadia who obtained the Sree Mysore Best Physique, and thereafter the Mr Bombay, Bharat Shree, Mr Maharashtra and the

Chhatrapati Shivaji Award for excellence in Best Physique in 1974.

In a chat with *Parsiana*, Gowadia acknowledged the inspiration from his father Kekobad and support from his brother Rohinton which enabled him to pursue body building despite facing several difficulties when he shifted from Belgaum to Bombay in 1971. Residing at the Banaji Agiary his daily routine for the next four years comprised praying and then going to work in the morning and spending his evenings at the gym. His only regret, expresses Gowadia, was that even though he was recognised at national and international levels the recognition from the community was very poor. "This function which was very well organized and professional... was almost the first time we were given some importance," stressed Gowadia.

Serving as an object lesson for the budding youth of the community were the five special invitees (national champions who had participated in several world body building contests) who were invited on stage to demonstrate "their awesome power and control with a series of poses," notes the release. Anthony Dias at his "dazzling best" compered the show. Sarosh Daruwalla was responsible for the stage lights, sound and music.

The event was followed by dinner organized by Tanaz Godiwalla.

Committee members Rustom Jasoomoney, Nozer Tantra, Hutoxi Dudhwalla, Homiyar Shroff, Ashdin Billimoria and Godfrid Patel took approximately one-and-a-half months to organize the Championship. "As the first step the Club got affiliated with the IBBF, which means that the contest is conducted, judged and officially put

on record by the IBBF officials," explained Jasoomoney. The success of the event has convinced the SNWC to hold the championship as an annual feature, the second one probably on January 26, 2003. He hopes there will be more participants from across the country contesting next year. The unstable situation in Gujarat prevented some of the applicants from taking part this year.

Simin J. Patel



(L to R) Top row: Kaivan Panthaki; Engineer; Sholapurwalla (above); Freddy Muglai (below) and Khushrushahi. Alongside: Toddywala; Patel and Davar



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too if he did well at Senior Cambridge. So Manekshaw said he passed the exam with distinction in all the eight papers. "My father hugged me and said, 'You're only 15. When you are 18 I'll send you.' I didn't talk to my father for two years." When the Army advertised 150 officer vacancies Manekshaw applied among 1,500 others and was the sixth to be selected. "Every officer had to do one year with a British regiment," in his case the Royal Scots. Thereafter he was transferred to the Frontier Force regiment (now part of the Pakistan army) and spent seven years on the Indian frontier fighting the Pakhtoons.

One of his earliest commanding officers (CO) was "the nastiest man God ever produced." He had noted in Manekshaw's confidential report, "This man may some day become an officer." The CO who had retired as a colonel and was among those invited to meet Field Marshal Manekshaw who was the Queen's guest in London, asked his erstwhile junior, "Can I call you Sam?" Manekshaw said he reminded him, "You called me bloody fool before!" "It didn't do you any harm," pat came the response.

"When I was evacuated from Burma because of my injuries, my father wrote to me, 'If you smoke, you'll be a dead man. If you drink you'll be a dead man.' I listened to my father and nearly died!" deadpanned Manekshaw.

As a lieutenant colonel he was earning Rs 1,500 and acquired a motorcycle which cost more than his salary. His junior officer was Major Yahya Khan earning Rs 800. "Two days before Partition Yahya said, 'Sell me your motorcycle.' He took it for Rs 1,000 but he didn't have the money. Eventually Yahya became President (of Pakistan) and I became Field Marshal (of India). He made up for it. He gave me the whole of East Pakistan!"

Claiming to be "overwhelmed" by the tributes, Sorabjee added modestly "the audience is intelligent enough to know better." Manekshaw's speech reminded him of his own "*dhakharas* (illusions)" of leading military campaigns. After seeing the movie *Patton* seven times Sorabjee remembered strutting around in a uniform, binoculars on his chest, till someone remarked, "*Soli chakkar lagé chj* (Soli seems demented)."

Though his father doted on him and his maternal grandfather Ardeshtir Dubash was very prosperous, "the ways of business and commerce I always detested; service was out of the question. It was the most terrible thing to be in government service. Law seemed viable!" Hanging out at the St Xavier's quadrangle and the canteen through the six years of college, the only lectures Sorabjee said he "wouldn't miss at any cost," were those of Nani Palkhivala, and Y. V. Chandrachud who later became chief justice of India. He started a jazz quartet while at Law College and claimed, "I was not a bad clarinet player. Dadi's knowledge of jazz is very poor."

Fortunate to be admitted to Kanga's chambers which produced a slew of great advocates, Sorabjee recalled the towering personality, devastating courtcraft and the childlike simplicity of Kanga, noting, "If the Government of India had had any sense, Jamshedji Kanga would have been awarded the Bharat Ratna!" On Sorabjee's list of Zoroastrian contributors to jurisprudence were Fram Balsara, Rustam Gagrati ("one of the finest solicitors I ever met"), Rustem Colah, Cooverji Bhabha and Behram Pesikaka who, Sorabjee said, contributed significantly to the jurisprudence of the Supreme Court in relation to the "prohibition" laws which curtailed the sale of alcohol in the country.

"I look upon the award of the Padma Vibhushan (also awarded to Palkhivala and Seervai) as a recognition of lawyers' contribution to society." He decried "the phenomenal fees which makes access to justice very difficult" and noted that in some of the most important cases in the Supreme Court senior and junior lawyers had appeared for days together without charging fees. In this context he named Seervai who "didn't even claim out-of-pocket expenses," Palkhivala and noted counsel Khatu Cooper. Recalling the days of the Emergency, Sorabjee reminisced how Seervai and he had fought "many forensic battles without charging fees," how counsel Bomi Zaiwala had cheerfully shared his hotel room and acknowledged the support of Sorabjee's junior Avinash Rana. "We used the legal machinery to the extent we could against the authoritative (administration)."

Examining the "down side" of the Padma Vibhushan award, Sorabjee said "he felt old and ancient. Would I be able

to play practical jokes with the aid of Dadi? Eat biryani with my fingers? What about my mimicry sessions, the inexhaustible supply of naughty limericks with Khatu Cooper?"

"I assure you, Padma Vibhushan has not changed my basic construct. (I am still) *aapro* Soli with all my eccentricities. We shouldn't be shy of the achievements of our community. Our achievements are solely on merit and we will continue to (achieve)."

Denoting the community's sense of humor as the late Adi Marzban's legacy, Sorabjee recalled the terrible clamor in Parliament because Manekshaw said that if he had led Pakistan, India would have lost! He was wont to equate humor with the Parsi Gujarati tongue which has created such choice expressions as the Parsi peg (equivalent to a double peg of liquor), *éni wicket pari gai, é tau* was not *thai gayo* (two facetious references to death). "Despite gloomy prognoses, our community will flourish, grow, prosper and leave indelible Zoroastrian footprints on the sands of time."

Andhyarujina noted his "great satisfaction that my community which has nurtured me, fostered me, said such kind words about me." Unlike his fellow achievers who had grown up in comparative affluence, Andhyarujina grew up in a Parsi colony in Mahim, and witnessed the ceaseless striving of his father, a mobed from Udvada, who not only became a lawyer but ensured that all his five children were fully educated. Of Andhyarujina's four sisters, two are lawyers, two are doctors. Andhyarujina said he declined the IFS because he felt that in the long run he would not be able to make enough to support his family: "I might have retired as ambassador to Outer Mongolia!"

Andhyarujina remains grateful to the Punchayet for the "solid virtues of life in a Parsi colony with its sense of cohesion and solidarity." He recalled his father's unflinching honesty amid great adversity and his advice: "There are many intelligent and clever persons. You may never be their equal, but if you put in twice the effort, you will succeed." A friend of Seervai since their school days at the Bharda, Rustom Andhyarujina placed his son in Seervai's chamber.

Seervai, "one of the most formidable lawyers this country has seen," knew literature and poetry by heart and had a philosophical bent of mind. Seervai's



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moral courage and commitment to whatever he did reminded Andhyarujina of the motto of Sir Walter Scott: "Without courage there can be no truth and without truth there can be no virtue." The former solicitor general noted humbly, "If I am anything today, it is because of what Seervai taught me."

Taking Mahatma Gandhi's famous description of Parsis ("In numbers beneath contempt, in achievement beyond compare") Andhyarujina noted that at an estimated 65,000 in India the community accounted for less than 0.06 percent of the Indian population and likened its survival to a man falling 40 floors from the 100th floor of a building, consoling himself that he still had 60 floors to go! "Live for the present, for the future. Our controversies must stop. It's no use talking about our great achievements in the past. Today we require men of vision and character to guide the community." He was however optimistic that the Parsi traits of total honesty, sincerity of purpose, industry and hard work coupled with their sense of humor will ensure that "we will never lose our identity, our sense of destiny."

Saluting "Sam bahadur" as "the senior-most Field Marshal in the world today and a figure of adoration for all democratic armies," Sorabjee as "ardent champion of human rights" and wishing Andhyarujina "many more laurels and years in the administration of justice," social worker and trustee-secretary of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute Homai Modi unleashed the pent-up queue of representatives of other anjumans and associations waiting to felicitate the trio.

In his vote of thanks BPP trustee and WZO Trust Funds chairman Dinshaw Tamboly ascribed the nitty-gritty of organizing the glittering function with the plethora of community institutions, the fulsome attendance of bench and bar to "Dadi's labor of love." Congratulating Engineer on his unopposed reelection as BPP trustee earlier in the month, Tamboly jestingly urged him to be ready "to receive the few bouquets and many brickbats that is the lot of all Punchayet trustees!"

Despite the heat of the halogen lamps raising the temperature of the breathlessly sultry evening, the long program ended felicitously with a normal wedding feast prepared by caterer Tehemtian Dumasia.

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## POSTER PERFECT

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discourse, poetry readings, classical music soirees. In 1981 after a protracted legal battle with the Datta Samant led union, the Wadia Brothers sold their Basant Studios in Chembur which had been built in 1946. From 1933 to 1946 the Wadia Movietone Studios were located on leased premises at Lowji Castle, the ancestral home in Parel of the master shipbuilder family of which JBH was the 15th scion. When the trust, unknown to JBH, sold the property to V. Shantaram in 1946, rebuilt on the site of the palatial castle was a post-modern structure called Rajkamal Kala Mandir, Riyad gives the details. At the time of his death JBH was collaborating with scriptwriter K. A. Abbas on bringing to the screen *He Who Rides A Tiger*, a tragic story on the great famine of Bengal.

Riyad guesstimates that 65 percent of the Studio in the 1930s and 1940s consisted of Parsis. "Why is that period referred to as 'Bawaji ka bioscope?' Because Parsis were here (involved in the silver screen) when it was taboo by the Hindu culture," reasons Riyad. Besides the partners there were other popular figures like thespians Jal Khambatta, Manchi Thoothi, Boman Shroff, John

Cawas, sound recordist Minoo Tampal, cameramen like Rustom Masters, Fali and Jal Mistry, and Dali Daruwalla. 'Minoo the mystic' was a pioneering actor and stage magician, and classical singer Firoze Dastur, presently a leading exponent of the Kirana *gharana*, was the highest paid child star of the 1930s, states Riyad. After Independence, Hindus and Muslims outnumbered the Zoroastrians in the film industry.

Having been very close to his grandfather Riyad knows that JBH joined the film industry against his family's wishes. Armed with an MA in English, as also a law degree JBH tried to make a career in banking and law. In his mid-20s though he decided to pursue his passion with films and was almost in penury, trying to survive on a small stipend until his hard work and persistence paid dividends. Referring to his grandfather's dedication and commitment Riyad mentions that until the age of 83 when he was hit by a car and sustained a hip fracture, he would often walk home from his office at Parel to his residence at Worli.

"Being an extremely principled man, although he was extremely proud to be a Zoroastrian and believed in the philosophy of this religion" he could not subscribe to its dogmas or tradition.

Having studied the religion himself, being a gold medalist in Avesta Pahlavi from St Xavier's College, he had "come to the conclusion that more than half of the interpretations were fallacious or misguided," states Riyad. When the managing trusteeship of the family owned H. B. Wadia Atas Bahram fell on him, considering himself an atheist, he relegated it to his younger brother Homi. Long discussions with Dastur Khurshed Dabu, then the High Priest of the Wadia Atas Bahram, he found very scintillating. He had also expressed his wish to be cremated because he felt that the dakhmenashini tradition, although scientific, was outdated in an urban environment, mentions Riyad.

A prolific writer on cinema (over 2,000 articles), a published poet (in English and Gujarati), when JBH died at the age of 85 he left behind two volumes of unpublished personal memoirs titled "Those were the days" which Riyad hopes to bring out believing "it is very interesting and vital to tell this story. In addition to this romanticized telling of his personal life there is a lot more information which can be gleaned from others of his vintage that conveys a far more complex story."

*Tanaz R. Godiwalla*

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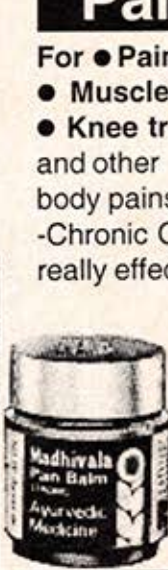
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K. G. K. Kurup, such a degree college would fulfil a longstanding demand in the suburbs of Kuria and Santa Cruz which do not have a University recognized college conferring graduation degrees.

## Neurocon 2001

Nearly 1,800 persons attended the Neurocon 2001 conference at the Marriott Renaissance Mumbai Hotel and Convention Centre at Powai Lake, December 15-18, 2001. The 1,100 neuroscientists, 125 neuro nurses together with accompanying members, exhibitors and medical students converged in the verdant surroundings to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Neurological Society of India (NSI). Those attending included 22 past presidents and all past secretaries of the NSI and all but one past editors of the NSI's journal *Neurology India*, notes the press release issued by Prof Dr Keki Turel, chairman of the organizing committee. The event was marked by the presentation of 330 papers and 90 posters. Held conjointly was the 22nd annual conference of the Society of Indian Neuro Nurses (SINN).

The convention began with day-long concurrent sessions of continuing medical education (CME) on neurosurgery and neurology covering such topics as tumor markers, neurosciences research, neurosurgery in the 21st century, surgery of Parkinson's Disease, cerebral malaria, rabies, leprosy, epidemiology, neurotuberculosis, etc.

That evening witnessed the celebration of NSI's golden jubilee with Dr R. Chidambaram, principal scientific advisor to the Government of India and Homi Bhabha professor at the Department of Atomic Energy as chief guest and Maharashtra's deputy chief minister Chhaganrao Bhujbal as guest of honor. Maharashtra health minister Dr D. Khanvilkar released the specially created souvenir and the 400-page book containing abstracts of papers presented at the congress.

"As doctors and scientists we need to lead the country from the front to help overcome disease and poverty and in-

still health and education amongst the masses," Turel urged his fraternity in his welcome address. Added Prof K. Ganapathy, honorary secretary of the NSI, "Resources to technology may be limited but not resources to creativity and intelligence. To project where we need to go we must first of all look at where we are and also the road we originally traveled to get there... The ability to accept one's mistakes is what sets apart the men from the boys. We should never forget that excellence is a moving target and perseverance can make miracles happen."



Turel (right) with Bachchan

In the souvenir Dr B. Ramamurthi, founder secretary of the NSI, recalled the genesis of neurology in India with neurosurgeons S. T. Narasimhan and Jacob

Chandy, both educated abroad, respectively setting up a private neurosurgical clinic in Madras in 1948 and a neurosurgery department in Vellore in 1949. Joining them were neurologists Dr Baldev Singh and Ramamurthi himself. "Thus there were four men at that time keenly interested in developing only neurosciences. With great foresight Chandy suggested, 'Why not form a society for neurology in India?' At that time such an idea seemed fantastic and ridiculous and in spite of my being the youngest, I expressed my doubts. Chandy brushed them aside and we formed the NSI... Chandy was chosen president, Narasimhan the treasurer, Singh the member and I was made the honorary secretary... Chandy made us agree to the condition that unless a doctor practices full-time neurosciences he cannot be a full member. This added to my problems as the secretary. All the physicians were up in arms against this upstart society... To ward off their animosity, I proposed an associate membership and was able to recruit about 80 people," noted Ramamurthi.

Prof Mathew J. Chandy addressed the Powai gathering as the NSI's president elect 50 years after his pioneer father.

A cultural program and a ghazal night with Jatin Lalit where the chief guest was screen thespian Amitabh Bachchan and the guests included stage

and screen personalities, fireworks, cocktails and gala dinners provided the recreation material for the long days of coping with neurological diseases that began with breakfast sessions at 7.15 each morning, as per the press release.

Arnavaz S. Mama

## Physician's fiftieth

"It is not usual for any medical practitioner to continually serve just one hospital for over 50 years," wrote Capt H. J. M. Desai referring to Dr Behram Minocher Meher Homji's long innings with Bombay's Breach Candy Hospital as family physician since its inception.



Meher Homji:  
humane doctor

Having completed 50 years of service on April 1, 2002 he will now be associated with the Hospital as a consultant.

Meher Homji is known to have been on the panel of doctors approved by the White House during President Bill Clinton's visit to Bombay (see "President's praise," Events and Personalities, *Parsiana*, August 2000). He also enjoys the distinction of serving the family and staff members of several consulates in Bombay, notes the write-up from Desai. But the humanitarian doctor is especially respected for treating the large menial staff of the Hospital and their family members free of cost.

Several members of the Meher Homji family have been medical practitioners beginning with Behram's grandfather who had a practice in Bulsar, states the write-up. His father Minocher served the Udvada populace for over 25 years while his uncle Sohrab ran the maternity nursing home at Tardeo, once popular among the Parsis. His cousin Dadi was the well-known oncologist at the Tata Memorial Hospital. Behram's daughter Zarine is a dentist and son Jimmy a psychiatrist in New Zealand. Granddaughter Diana is a doctor too, planning to pursue higher medical studies abroad.

Behram's brother Kersi, residing in Sydney, has authored several popular books on cricket, a game enjoyed by both the siblings.

## Record column

Yet another Parsi to feature in the *Limca Book of Records* in its latest

2002 edition is Dorab Mehta whose column Jamas-ni-Jiloo has been appearing in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* for over 50 years. Author of more than 2,600 Jamas-ni-Jiloo columns, Mehta is well-known in the community for the hilarious plays and skits he has written.



Mehta: column commended

According to the entry in the *Limca Book of Records* which was reprinted in *Jam-e-Jamshed*, a (Bombay) based Parsi-oriented newspaper established in 1832 carries a column Jamas-ni-Jiloo by Dorab Mehta under his byline Jamas since February 1951."

## Reams from Ragoonwalla

"I would watch the movies again and again since the rates were not high and they made good viewing," reminisces film historian and critic Firoze Ragoonwalla of his first stints with the world of films. On March 14, 2002 Ragoonwalla was honored with the All India Filmgoers

Association's Lifetime Achievement Award for his work in film history and journalism for over 30 years, mentions a press release. The Award was presented to Ragoonwalla by the veteran Hindi film actor Prem Chopra at the St. Andrews Auditorium, Bombay. Several other awards were given to individuals who had contributed significantly to the Hindi film industry.

"The actors' performances never interested me; it was the fascination for the medium, the moving images and sound" that encouraged Ragoonwalla to join the Wadia Brothers where he was involved with direction and script editing. His 10-year experience there gave him an insight into the film industry after which he joined *Screen*, writing extensively on Indian and world cinema and on other mass media like television, states the release. His articles, some of which have been translated into eight Indian languages, have ap-



Ragoonwalla: film historian

peared in publications like *Sunday Express Magazine*, *The Illustrated Weekly*, *Filmfare*, etc.

He has also written several books like *Indian Film Index*, *Satyajit Ray's Art*, *The Cinema Mystique*, *Indian Filmography*, etc.

Describing his experience as a film critic as "slightly disillusioning," Ragoonwalla explains that since there exists a general atmosphere of fear one cannot write freely.

Ragoonwalla's hobbies include collecting rare ancillary material of silent and talkie films like stills, posters, booklets, etc. Exhibited in 13 Indian cities his collection is open to students/academics seeking relevant information, he says.

He has been a member of the Indian Censor Board, Film Advisory Board and a panelist for the *Limca Book of Records*, mentions his bio data. Aside from lecturing on film appreciation and the influence of media, Ragoonwalla has co-directed radio and television programs like *75 Years of Indian Cinema*.

Simin J. Patel

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi

## THE CLASSIC COMPLETENESS

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work, in *The City I* and *The City II*.

Looking back over half a century of the artist's work it is Hoskote again who asserts, "Sabavala's journey has been a thoughtful and disciplined one, a passage navigated according to a definite pattern of choices. Principal among these is his insistence on a classical attitude towards experience, embracing the values of order, lucidity and serenity, a predilection that he expresses through his exploration and eventual transcendence of the formal genres of academic painting. The still life, the human figure and the landscape have been the modes of discovery by which Sabavala has approached the external world of sensations; undergoing mutation, these have served as the idioms of construction through which he has developed an inner universe, where he invokes flowers that blaze like suns; visionary landscapes in which the domain of time yields before that of eternity; prophetic figures that seem to be visitants from other worlds; and massed groups of figures, their passage resonant with echoes of a lost Arcadian past."

The artist's personality epitomizes

the image of the dapper old-world Parsi gentleman. At a sprightly 79 his zest for the best things of life stays undiminished. Good books and music are considered invaluable companions to

"Instead of... equating Parsis with all things western, I'd prefer stating I'm international in my outlook, that I embrace universality"

enjoy, time is set aside for moderate socializing and regular appearances at celebrated art soirees. "There need be no docketing me as Parsi. Yes, of course, I am ever so proud to belong to our community but I've always basically had pride in my Indian nationality. Remember, the Zoroastrians are one of India's most cosmopolitan people. Instead of going with the usual formula equating Parsis with all things western, I'd prefer stating I'm international in my outlook, that I em-

brace universality."

Wielding no more than the classic tools of his trade — paint, brush, palette, knife and regular canvas — Sabavala is open to following such modern trends as installation art, cyber art and performance art, but is disappointed when there is blind appreciation of new forms. The purist in him does find it "ridiculous" to accept every example of these "unless it is excellent in itself." His advice to up-and-coming painters? Work hard, train individual perception, develop a growing critical faculty, aim for a steady graph — not the erratic careers many young people tend to have — and beware of the easy hype of today.

Two years ago the World Wide Fund for Nature published their first contemporary art calendar with 12 of Sabavala's landscapes, while more recently a Marathi educational institution approached him with a request to use his work in textbooks. As for future exhibitions? "I now seek to go further inwards. Every show should be a renewal. Any artist's greatest dread is finding his work beginning to plateau... When I next paint it would only be to say what I've never said before."

# A portrait of Palkhivala

Ruby Lilaowala

*The Legend of Nani Palkhivala* by M. R. Pai. Published in 2002 by Popular Prakashan Private Limited, 35-C, Pt Madan Mohan Malaviya Marg, Popular Press Building, Tardeo, Bombay 400034. Pp: 142. Price: Rs 250.

Today's author has to be careful with his style, genre and language to compete with an audience used to surfing and switching from one web link to the next.

In *The Legend of Nani Palkhivala*, M. R. Pai gives an impressively rendered and remarkably coherent portrait of Nani Palkhivala, truly a legend in his lifetime. Well-known consumer activist, author and advisor to several top companies on time management Pai has been associated with Palkhivala for over 40 years. In fact, when the Forum of Free Enterprise (FFE) was set up in 1956, it was Pai who approached Palkhivala, then only 37 years old, to give a lecture from the Forum platform. The date was December 2, 1957 and the subject "Recent changes in the tax structure." It was the beginning of Palkhivala's public life and he has never looked back since.

As years rolled by, Pai became more and more involved in all of Palkhivala's public activities, from making arrangements for his budget speeches to traveling with him all over India on lecture tours. Pai became privy to several momentous issues in Palkhivala's public life which he shares with us in his book. However Pai has been careful enough to say that the book is not Palkhivala's biography since his early years, family life, boardroom battles and friends have not been mentioned at all. Also as Pai says, Palkhivala as a rule did not speak about his own self and certainly never about his achievements.

Palkhivala completed his MA in

English in 1943 and would have opted for the Indian Civil Service but his father insisted that he should also study law. In 1946, Palkhivala passed the advocates exam (original side), standing first in every paper. He was attached to the chambers of Sir Jamshedji Kanga and specialized in taxation. He wrote a

book, *The Law and Practice of Income Tax* in 1950 which became a standard reference work for income tax practitioners as well as the authorities. Many editions were subsequently published. With his quick grasp of complicated problems and his phenomenal memory, Palkhivala rose to become the country's top tax expert and constitutional lawyer apart from being a director and chairman of

several Tata Group companies.

In 1973 Palkhivala fought the historic Kesavanand Bharati v/s the State of Kerala case in the Supreme Court where he won his point that Parliament could amend the Constitution but had no right to alter its basic structure.

Pai also dwells on two other episodes in Palkhivala's life. He explains at some length why Palkhivala accepted Indira Gandhi's brief in her battle in the Supreme Court against the Allahabad High Court judgment. The High Court had ruled that for the misdeeds of any functionary down the line and beyond the control of the decision-makers, the person at the top was re-

sponsible. He felt this view, if uncontested, would make the functioning of Indian democracy impossible. Later though he had the courage to return Gandhi's brief when she declared Emergency in the land. Another milestone in his life was his decision to accept the ambassadorship to the United States after considerable deliberation. Then Prime Minister Morarji Desai and foreign minister Atal Behari Vajpayee apparently convinced him that the ongoing nuclear treaty discussions between India and USA required his legal expertise. Also Pai tries to give his own reasons why Palkhivala never stood for elections to the Lok Sabha.

By the early 1950s Pandit Nehru and the Congress party had openly come out in favor of socialism. The second five-year plan, inspired by Soviet centralized planning, called for diversion of most of the available resources for investment in the public sector. Also taxation was used as a tool to reduce gross inequalities in society. So when the FFE was set up there was fear in the minds of industrialists of offending the government which was riding high on the socialism wave.

It was men like A. D. Shroff, Minoo Masani and above all Palkhivala who had the guts to stand up and speak in favor of free enterprise. History proved them right. In 1991, i.e. 40 years later,



From left: M. C. Chagla, Palkhivala and Pai

the Congress party, the very party that had espoused socialism, reversed its stand and gradually started liberalizing the economy under its finance minister Dr Manmohan Singh.

Pai describes Palkhivala's qualities of the head and heart. Utterly loyal to his friends, Palkhivala went all the way to London to discuss the line of treatment and care for his friend S. Ramakrishnan, the director general of Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan who had undergone a major operation.

Palkhivala has repeatedly rejected requests from his friends to write an autobiography. His views are that it would reveal many things about several persons on the Bench, Bar and the Government and he has no desire to hurt anyone. Pai maintains that someday a detailed biography needs to be written about this great man. The only authentic record of his life appears as a brief profile in the book *Nani Palkhivala — Selected writings* co-authored by L. M. Singhvi, Ramakrishnan and Pai.

Among the books penned by Palkhivala, his *Our Constitution Defaced and Defiled* in 1974 shook the establishment. It was followed by *We, the People* in 1984 and *We, the Nation — The Lost Decades* in 1994.

Palkhivala earned huge amounts from his flourishing legal practice but he was equally generous in giving it away to worthy causes. He donated two crore rupees to the Sri Sankara Nethralaya in Madras. Also since 1994, he has regularly donated 10 percent of his annual income to the Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan. A deeply religious man, Palkhivala finds similarity between Zoroastrianism and Hinduism, claiming that "Hinduism is as great as Zoroastrianism." This makes it possible for him to quote the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* along with Arnold Toynbee on the oneness of man.

Though the author tends to repeat certain matters, this is altogether an absorbing book.

## A valued package

"It has been the endeavor of the board of trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) not only to keep our traditions alive but to disseminate the ideas, concepts, precepts and practices enshrined in our holy scriptures and the commentaries on those scriptures by the most erudite scholars, Parsis and non-Parsis alike," states chairman Jamshed Guzder

in his common foreword to the five booklets reprinted by the Punchayet in 2001. On the advice of Dastur (Dr) Kaikhushroo JamaspAsa and Dr Homi



Masani: outstanding work

Dhalla the five titles selected "for the benefit of the Zoroastrian readers in India and abroad" are: *The Religion of the Good Life — Zoroastrianism* by Rustom P. Masani, *A Brief Sketch of the Zoroastrian Religion and Customs* by Ervad Shierarji Dadabhai Bharucha, *The Religious System of the Parsis* by Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, *Zarathushtra and His Teachings* and *Handbook of Information on Zoroastrianism*, both by Dastur Khurshed S. Dabu.

This package of "invaluable religious lore," conveys to the reader how the Zoroastrian philosophy and terminology is interpreted by different scholars. So while the concept of creation and the contribution of Prophet Zarathushtra is referred to in each of the five books the interpretations offered may vary from scholar to scholar. The explanation and significance of the Zoroastrian rituals and ceremonies, when pieced together from the five texts cited, give the reader a comprehensive understanding of their spiritual function to perpetuate the faith and religiosity among devotees.

Intended primarily as a handbook for non-Zoroastrians Masani states that the first part of his 189-page book, *The Religion of the Good Life — Zoroastrianism*, first published in 1938 elucidates the fundamental doctrines of the great religion, laying special emphasis on its ethical aspect. The second part, elaborating on Zoroastrian rites and rituals is sourced primarily from Modi's thesis, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*.

"It seems to me to stand out among all works that have been written about the Parsis and Zoroastrianism in this respect, that it tells the ordinary student in clear and simple form the things which he wishes to know," writes Rev (Dr) John McKenzie in his foreword to Masani's book. The first Indian to be appointed municipal commissioner of Bombay in 1922, Masani was one of the

founders of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute (KRCOI) and was the editor of the English columns of the *Kaiser-I-Hind* periodical.

"Some of the sterling qualities of the Parsi community which strike the other communities most are its vitality which has enabled it to withstand the vicissitudes of centuries, its adaptability to changing circumstances; its loyalty to the Crown; its industry and spirit of citizenship; and above all its philanthropy," points out Masani in his preface. He further adds, "To what extent these qualities are induced or stimulated by the religion which the community professes is a question frequently asked... If conscience enjoins strict adherence to the principles and precepts embodied in one's prayers, if one lives or even strives earnestly to live up to those principles, one's conduct must necessarily be on a high level. The Parsis are a devotional people. Prayer forms the daily routine of their lives..."

When applying the ash of the sacred fire to his forehead a devotee is supposed to remind himself to emulate the fire which spreads the fragrance and beneficence and the light of righteousness and knowledge.

In his introductory chapter the author explains that the idea of a good life



Bharucha: sound reference

was first developed in the Aryan world by the Iranian prophet who cheered his disciples with his message of hope, which later found expression in many a creed. Zoroaster's message of hope can perhaps be most clearly found in

the principles of resurrection and renovation.

Commenting on Zoroastrian eschatology Masani states, "Man is his own savior. He has the making of his own heaven or his own hell... As man must work out his salvation himself, the Omniscient Lord, who plans what is best, has allowed him freedom to act."

Bharucha too refers to the element of destiny and fate in one's life explaining in *A Brief Sketch of the Zoroastrian Religion and Customs* published in 1893, "Wife, children, property, and authority (we get) through fate, everything

else through industry; that good which is not destined for a man will never reach him, that which is destined will reach him, but only through his industry." He relied on the *Vendidad* to support his stand.

"Sheriarji has...produced a work which the Sabha's committee feels confident will be of permanent use not only to strangers to the religion but to the Zoroastrians themselves," wrote K. R. Cama, president of the Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha, in the preface to the first edition. Having learnt Avesta, Pahlavi, Persian and Sanskrit at the Sir J. J. Madressa, Bharucha later taught the *Avesta* at the Madressa. He was a professor of Sanskrit at Poona's Deccan College.

Tracing the history of the Zoroastrians in Iran the author narrates that the Zoroastrians migrated to India to escape persecution and maintain the purity of their religion and religious code. In India though they succumbed to many of the notions, customs and superstitions of their neighbors, the Hindus, Muslims and others, which the Sabha was hoping to rectify, writes Bharucha. This assembly headed by Navroji Furdoonji and Dadabhai Naoroji brought about many important religious reforms among the Parsis.

Briefly summarizing parts of the *Avesta*, Bharucha cites *Gatha Vohukshathra* which states that Zoroaster's enemies, the *karapans* and those who do not appease the unhappy cow (symbolizing the living world) by word or deeds will inevitably go to hell.

Bharucha's 210-page book makes interesting reading. However a student would prefer to use this as a reference book rather than one that would convey the essence of our religion.

Of the five books, *The Religious System of the Parsis* by Modi is the most easy to grasp as the entire 31-page pamphlet can be read easily at one sitting. A lecture he had delivered at the Town Hall, Bombay on January 12, 1885 which was presided over by Sir James Fergusson, then governor of Bombay, was published in the form of a pamphlet on the suggestion of some of Modi's friends. President and secretary of the KRCOI at different times, Modi had also served as secretary of the BPP. Having been knighted in 1930, among the different titles conferred on the scholar were Shams-ul-Ulama and



Modi: sterling scholar

Modi states that the religious system of Zoroaster is monotheistic and not polytheistic in nature. Evidence of this fact lay in Zoroaster's writings where he rejected the word '*daeva*,' an ancient Aryan word for God.

In the second part the author explains the two primeval principles that make up the divine being. Those things that conduce to the greatest good of the greatest number of mankind fall under the category of the creations of the good principle, and those that lead to the contrary result, under that of the creations of the evil principle, states Modi.

The triad of good thought, word and deed form the groundwork upon which the entire edifice of Zoroastrian morality rests, mentions the author in the third part. The interrogation in the Pahlavi *Pandnameh* quoted by Modi summarizes the principle: "Who is the most fortunate man in the world? He who is the most innocent. Who is the most innocent man in the world? He who walks in the path of God and shuns that of the devil..."

Modi mentions that the three cardinal virtues of honesty, charity and truthfulness are enjoined in many parts of the *Zend Avesta* and later Pahlavi books. Regarding the virtue of truthfulness, Modi says that the ancient Persians were taught first to be a good rider, a good archer and to speak the truth.

Two of the five books authored by Dabu serve as primers for those seeking basic information on the Zoroastrian religion. A lecturer cum educationist, he had completed his training in Avesta Pahlavi from the Sir J. J. Madressa. He had headed the Surat Parsi Orphanage, was assistant professor of English at the Fergusson College and was even a University examiner.

Of the two books, the 71-page (plus 12 pages of visuals) *Zarathushtra and His Teachings* published first in 1966,

Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire.

Modi categorized the subject matter of his lecture under three heads — the theology of the Zoroastrian religion, its speculative philosophy and its moral philosophy.

In the first part

is the English version of a collection of weekly articles written by Dabu for the *Jam-e-Jamshed* in Gujarati. His 80-page *Handbook of Information on Zoroastrianism* was first published in 1969.

While both the books explain the basic concepts and symbolism that distinguish the religion, the first book dwells on the milieu in which Zarathushtra was born and the mythological stories associated with his saintly life. The second book refers to those disciples who had led saintly lives and the archangels who assist one's progress.

In *Zarathushtra and His Teachings* the author explains that since Pars (a prosperous province in Iran from which the word Parsi has been derived) had not come into prominence when Zoroaster preached his message, Zoroaster accordingly cannot be called a Parsi.

Referring to our permanent eternal abode, Dabu compares life on earth to a brief visit to a hotel from which we have to invariably return home to render our account to the Auditor-General in heaven. "Blessed are those who have no regrets for lost opportunities to do good here," he states.

Dabu asks us to learn the art of living from ants and bees. While explaining



Dabu: handy information

the doctrine of self sacrifice (*Khaetwadath*) the author mentions that "All merits are supposed to be deposited with God's bank (*Ganj-e-Dadar*) and without such deposits we have no right to pray for

personal comforts. Learning, art, prestige and skill should be considered as wealth and should be shared equitably amongst all who need the same." The *Ahuna Vairya*, an ancient text, emphasizes that the reward for the real servants of God is not earthly pomp, but the gift of Bahman (loving wisdom). Dabu mentions that even the rewards of health, wealth and intelligence are transient. It is only the happiness of the soul that lasts beyond bodily death.

In the second book which touches upon many of the controversial subjects Dabu shows his belief in karma and reincarnation. He reasons, it is

*continued on page 56*

## MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 21 and 40 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 27 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 23 and 44 years, averaging at 30 years.

The Bombay Towers of Silence interred the bodies of 65 Zoroastrians in March this year. On the other hand only nine babies were born at the two hospitals where *Parsiana* gets its birth data from. Twenty-nine Zoroastrians (15 above the 80-year-old mark) were victims of heart disease, nine succumbed to cancer, five to septicemia and four fell prey to pneumonia and lung related diseases. Old age/general debility and diabetes took a toll of three lives each whereas two each died due to kidney failure and hemiplegia (paralysis of one side of the

body). Osteomyelitis (inflammation commencing in the marrow of bones), haemorrhage, osteomyelofibrosis, malnutrition, asthma, thrombo-embolic (a clot moving to another part of the body in the blood stream to block a blood vessel) stroke and gastritis (inflammation of the stomach, especially the mucous membrane lining) were the isolated cases registered. In the case of one death the viscera was pending for chemical analysis. The eldest to breathe his last was a 95-year-old male as versus the youngest: a 58-year-old. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth for March, in Bombay, was 79 years.

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled from information supplied by various newsletters and anjuman in India and abroad, courts and hospitals. This information is not always complete or con-

sistent: 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 co-operate with us.

*Sharmine Rohinton Chavda* of Poona and *Yezdi Bahadur Pithawalla*; March 22  
*Farzana Adi Gandhi* and *Neville Sam Nakra*; March 23  
*Meher Vispi Engineer* and *Percy Rohinton Tarapore*; March 24  
*Yasmin Rusi Daruwalla* and *Paterasp Gev Palsetia* of Dahanu; March 25  
*Khurshid Shyavax Sidhva* and *Adil Jimmy Vazifdar*; March 29

### DIED

*Phiroze Bomanshaw Cooper* (83), residing at 1-7/1-8, Spenta, B. G. Kher Marg, 400006; March 1  
*Firoze Hormusji Daruwalla* (58), Jalbhoy Seth Bldg, 279, Tardeo, 400007; March 1  
*Khorshed Minoo Billimoria* (64), Sea Land, 41, Cuffe Parade, 400005; March 2  
*Gool Sohrab Modi* (70), O/8, Dalal Est, Bombay Central, 400008; March 2  
*Sheru Barzo Taraporewala* (76), 2/14, India Hse, A. K. Marg, 400036; March 2  
*Kety Jamshed Irani* (75), Irani Dharamshalla, 26, Pandita Ramabai Marg, Gamdevi, 400007; March 3  
*Mehroo Pesi Elavia* (63), Rati Manzil, 639, M. Joshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 3  
*Neriosang Syavak Khandhadia* (78), Sanjana Bldg, Opp Bhatia Hosp, Tardeo, 400007; March 4  
*Cooverji Fardunji Driver* (83), Vania Pada, Village Borigoan, Taluka Talaori, Dist Thana, 400601; March 5  
*Shirin Nowrojee Naggad* (84), Dhun Villa, 615, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 5  
*Sheroo Faramji Bhada* (76), Randha Silvasa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, 396230; March 6  
*Dorabji (Dali) Dhunjisha Bilimoria* (79), Prabhu Bldg, Dockyard Rd, 400010; March 6  
*Nargesh Khurshedji Khodaiji* (86), B/1-3, Tata Hsg Centre, Lallubhai Park Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; March 6  
*Dhunmai Darabshah Mistry* (80), V/11-102, Shiv Vallabh

### BOMBAY

#### BORN

A boy to *Mahtab* and *Homiyaar Sukheswalla* on February 27, 2002  
A boy to *Mitha* and *Mahyar Engineer*; March 5  
A girl to *Dinaz* and *Hezeer Kavaran*; March 7  
A girl to *Monaz* and *Nozer Mehenty*; March 13  
A girl to *Ghaver* and *Xerxes Buhariwala*; March 17  
A girl to *Anaheeta* and *Priyavrat Goenka*; March 19  
A boy to *Sherazade* and *Keki Patel*; March 19  
A girl to *Roshan* and *Arun Rane*; March 19  
A girl to *Kainaaz* and *Kaizad Mistry*; March 24  
A girl to *Monaz* and *Burjiz Irani*; March 29

#### MARRIED

*Manaz Fali Shroff* and *Freddy Kaikobad Dastur*; January 26  
*Mahatab Homi Patel* and *Viraf Dhanjishaw Siganporia*; February 7  
*Raazbeen Noshir Gandhi* and *Zubin Mehernosh Vaid*; February 18  
*Hufresh Jimmy Bulsara* and *Rayomand Minoo Adajania*; February 21  
*Arnav Savak Adajania* of Surat and *Jamshed Viraf*

*Billimoria* of Dahanu Rd; February 22  
*Meena Ardeshtir Bakhtiary* and *Nevill Marzban Fanibanda* of Leicester, UK; February 22  
*Delna Mohtoo Rustomji* and *Adil Aspi Maloo*; February 23  
*Roshni Firoze Mhow* of Vasai and *Mehernosh Kersi Chhapgar*; February 24  
*Binaifer Fali Gandhi* and *Farhad Khurshed Wadia*; February 26  
*Navaz Sheriyar Foujdar* and *Kali Maneckshaw Chothia*; February 28  
*Persis Rohinton Bhesania* and *Zubin Sam Cooper*; February 28  
*Havovi Sam Kerawala* and *Daravus Parvez Bajan*; March 1  
*Sharmin Rusi Bhesania* and *Farokh Jal Patel*; March 1  
*Navaz Kersi Tata* and *Kayomarz Dara Colabawalla*; March 2  
*Hinata Shapur Jambuserwala* and *Jehangir Petras Mehta*; March 2  
*Rukshana Murzban Siganporia* and *Fredy Hormeze Dadinath*; March 3  
*Rashna Ratan Surveyor* and *Adil Hirjee Rustomjee*; March 3  
*Jasmine Rohinton Irani* and *Firdaus Dinyar Bilimoria*;

March 4  
*Bakhtawar Rohinton Master* and *Rayomand Dhunjishaw Jeejeebhoy*; March 7  
*Benifer Rusty Treasuryvala* and *Pervez Nariman Workingboxwala*; March 8  
*Kamal Minoo Wadia* and *Danesh Neville Mistry*; March 9  
*Pervin Dadi Printer* and *Homi Kersi Bodhanwala*; March 10  
*Khushnam Kayoji Mirza* and *Rayomand Rohinton Sheriffabadi (Irani)*; March 11  
*Shirley Munchi Khajotia* and *Rushad Rustom Batiwala*; March 12  
*Roshni Pervez Daver* and *Homiyaar Noshir Choksi*; March 15  
*Zubina Ardeshtir Limki* and *Kayzad Bejan Dariashaw*; March 16  
*Binaifer Rostam Shahlori* and *Meherdad Minocher Kermani*; March 16  
*Pearl Fali Anklesaria* and *Behram Pheroze Jamaspi*; March 17  
*Binaifer Behram Deboo* and *Behzad Soli Kekobad*; March 18  
*Farida Fali Kapadia* of Thana and *Viraf Ady Karanjia*; March 19  
*Gulshan Maneck Dubash* and *Zubin Sheri Zack*; March 21

Rd, Ashokvan II, Borivli (E), 400066; March 6

*Perin Nusserwanji Panthaky* (69), 695, Dinshaw Master Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 6

*Dadiba Pestonji Master* (74), 233, Bazar Gate St, Fort, 400001; March 7

*Banoo Edulji Pavri* (85), 6, Jehangir Mans, Next to Metro Cinema, 400020; March 7

*Tehmul Ardeshir Randeria* (78), P. A. Hormarji Bldg, 726, M. Joshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 7

*Hirabai Bomansha Daruwalla* (86), A/1-403, Salsette Parsi Clny, Andheri (E), 400093; March 8

*Homi Burjorji Postwala* (95), E/15, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; March 9

*Cawas Pirojsha Gotlaseth* (89), 9, Kasremohammad Bldg, Khetwadi 14th Lane, 400004; March 10

*Ratansha Manchersh* *Karkaria* (72), G/16, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; March 10

*Freny Behram Damri* (93), Mithoo Villa, 749, Rd no 6, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 12

*Manekbai Ardeshir Katrak* (94), Jehangir Mans, Hughes Rd, 400007; March 12

*Dhunjai Behramji Patel* (91), A/25, Godrej Baug, Napean Sea Rd, 400036; March 12

*Jer Mancherji Shroff* (83), E, Cozi Home, Pali Hill, Bandra, 400050; March 12

*Shirin Jehangir Vesuna* (79), M/28, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; March 12

*Sam Behram Aga* (87), Banoo Mans, Kemps Corner, 400036; March 14

*Piuli Hormusji Mistry* (73), A/10, Ness Baug, Nana Chowk, 400007; March 14

*Mitha Dinshaw Petit* (90), Ram Mans, Napean Sea Rd, 400036; March 14

*Amy Nariman Dadrewala* (77), 12/10, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; March 15

*Ardeshir Rustomji Patel* (94), 347/A-19, United Chmbs, Grant Rd, 400007; March 15

*Cooverbai Munchershaw Pithawalla* (90), 5, Petit Block, Balaram St, 400007; March 15

*Eady Jamasji Eduljee* (84), 106, Shiv Ashish, S. V. Rd,

| FIGURES AT A GLANCE* |            |       |       |            |       |       |            |       |
|----------------------|------------|-------|-------|------------|-------|-------|------------|-------|
|                      | Bombay     |       |       | India      |       |       | World      |       |
|                      | This issue | 2001* | 2002○ | This issue | 2001* | 2002○ | This issue | 2001* |
| <b>BIRTHS</b>        |            |       |       |            |       |       |            |       |
| Boys                 | 3          | 97    | 14    | 1          | 10    | 1     | 1          | 36    |
| Girls                | 7          | 98    | 28    | 1          | 7     | 1     | —          | 34    |
| <b>MARRIAGES</b>     |            |       |       |            |       |       |            |       |
| Parsi                | 37         | 252   | 94    | 5          | 18    | 4     | —          | 11    |
| <b>INTERCOMMUNAL</b> |            |       |       |            |       |       |            |       |
| Males married out    | —          | 18    | —     | —          | 1     | —     | —          | 6     |
| Females married out  | —          | 14    | —     | —          | 1     | —     | —          | 5     |
| <b>DEATHS</b>        |            |       |       |            |       |       |            |       |
| <b>CONSIGNED</b>     |            |       |       |            |       |       |            |       |
| Males                | 28         | 432   | 103   | 2          | 66    | 14    | 1          | 48    |
| Females              | 37         | 454   | 124   | 7          | 39    | 17    | 1          | 34    |
| <b>CREMATED</b>      |            |       |       |            |       |       |            |       |
| Males                | —          | 8     | —     | —          | —     | —     | —          | —     |
| Females              | —          | 9     | —     | —          | —     | —     | —          | —     |

\*Running totals for 2001 (January 2001-May 2002 issues)

○Running totals for 2002 (January 2002-May 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.

Andheri, 400058; March 16

*Minoo Kaikhushru Fanibanda* (67), 4, Windsor Chmbs, Cawasji Patel St, Fort, 400001; March 16

*Mani Hoshang Katrak* (66), 45-A, Silver Oaks Est, B. Desai Rd, 400036; March 16

*Parvej Barjorjee Shingapurwala* (58), 7, Todiwalla Bldg, Sunmill Rd, Lower Parel, 400013; March 16

*Dinshaw Sorabji Talati* (80), Talati Ter, Seven Bglws, Versova, 400061; March 17

*Meherbai Gustadji Udwadia* (82), 14, Godrej Bldg, Contractor Baug, Mori Rd, Mahim, 400016; March 17

*Hormasji Cawasji Degamwala* (83), J/11, S. Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; March 19

*Tehmasp Framroze Raimalwani* (Panthaky) (73), 8/7, Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; March 19

*Perin Kaikhushroo Suntoke* (76), G-1, Shapoor Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; March 19

*Roda Dosabhai Wadia* (85), 102, Coronation Mans, Dadasaheb Phalke Rd, Dadar, 400014; March 19

*Shapurji Kekobad Fataki* (72), J/2-9, Kalpita Enclave, Sahar Rd, Andheri (E), 400069; March 20

*Dolly Dinshaw Golla* (90), 7, Cooper Bldg, Marzban Clny, Dr A. Nair Rd, 400011; March 20

*Homi Ferdoonji Madon* (78), D-6/250, Sagar Co-op Hsg Soc, Gorai Part II, Gorai, 400092; March 21

*Aloo Fali Poonjiaji* (83), Albless Bldg, Thakurdwar, 400002; March 21

*Manek Kaikhushroo Daruwalla* (79), 8/1, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari, 400102; March 22

*Khorshed Rustomjee* (67), 22, Dev Chhaya, Tardeo Rd, 400034; March 22

*Banoobai Bomansha Gadiwala* (89), Cama Bldg, Kashinath Rd, Tardeo, 400034; March 23

*Rustom Jehangir Sethna* (65), E-20, Shapoor Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; March 23

*Noshir Framroze Colabavalla* (76), Empire Mhl, Khodadad Circle, Dadar T. T., 400014; March 24

*Goola Jehangir Kavarana* (94), Pallonji Mans, Cuffe Parade, 400005; March 25

*Roda Darab Siganporia* (80), 10, Mistry Bldg, 17, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; March 25

*Soli Rustomji Daruwala* (87), Sherevar Bldg, 672, Parsi

Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 26

*Shapoor Ardeshir Irani* (81), 4, Elysium Mans, Walton Rd, Colaba, 400039; March 26

*Jaloo Pesi Madon* (65), 17/8, Rustomji Bldg, Sleater Rd, 400007; March 26

*Noshir Jehangir Shroff* (82), 7, Mohmadbhai Mans, 7, Hughes Rd, 400036; March 26

*Beji Jamshedji Vachha* (76), 4/C, Banoo Mans, Cumballa Hill, 400036; March 26

*Perin Dadiba Mukadam* (80), 1/7, Malegaonwala Bldg, Station Rd, Mahim, 400016; March 27

*Phiroza Jamshed Contractor* (90), 11/4, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; March 29

*Minocher Murazban Reporter* (82), N/17, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; March 30

*Homai Framroze Bhathena* (78), Lam Bldg, Delisle Rd, Lower Parel, 400013; March 31

*Dina Nariman Ragina* (95), 693, Dinshaw Master Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 31

*Aloo Bomi Vasaigara* (82), 4, Rutton Manor, 39, Garden Rd, 400039;

March 31

#### CALCUTTA

DIED

*Dolly Pestonji Majoo*, sister of Sukla, Perin and Homi;

March 4

*Tehmi Balsara*, wife of Keki and mother of Jeroo;

March 20

#### CHANDIGARH

BORN

A boy, *Rohan*, to *Havovi* and *Rohit Joshi*, brother to *Rhea*;

February 7

#### NAGPUR

DIED

*Gool Rustomji Patel* (76), mother of *Percy* and *Dilshad Doongaji*; March 17

#### SECUNDERABAD

BORN

A girl, *Anahita*, to *Sanobar* and *Zahl Tantra*; March 11

MARRIED

*Anahita Govdia*, daughter of *Ruby* and *Khurshed*, and *Berjor Balsara*, son of

*Alu* and *Maneck*;

December 21, 2001

*Zinia Behram Patell* and *Beraaz Bommy Italia*;

December 25

*Sanobar Bhagat*, daughter of *Dolly* and late *Jal*, and *Sharookh Mehta*, son of

*Banoo* and *Naval*;

January 5, 2002

*Rashna Elavia*, daughter of *Kety* and *Syrus*, and *Daraesh Mistry*, son of *Kety* and *Parvez*; February 3

*Shehnaz Munshi*, daughter of *Gool* and late *Nariman*, and *Aspi Signaporia*, son of *Dhanmai* and *Merwanji*; February 17

DIED

*Bilkiz Mehta* (77), sister of *Dolly*, *Furrokh* and *Farrokh Patell*; December 12, 2001

*Gool Gev Tata* (81), sister of *Dhanmai*, *Dinamai*, *Manibai*, *Rati*, *Armin*, late *Jamshed Italia* and late *Narges Sorabji*

*Nakra*; February 3, 2002

*Jerbanoo Darabna* (75), wife of *Maneckshaw* and mother of *Jahangir*;

March 20

#### SURAT

DIED

*Behramsha Nusserwanji Kharas* (78), *Choki St*, *Nanpura*, 395001; March 10

*Nergis Nariman Mehanti* (60), *Sarkari Mohallo*, *Adajan*;

March 14

*Rusi Darabshaw Mistry* (65),

*Dastoor Hse*, *Sodager Wad*,

*Machhlipith*, 395003;

March 23

...

#### UK

##### Cambridgeshire

DIED

*Pesi S. Driver* (75), 11, *Myrtle Avenue*, *Peterborough PE1*

4LS; March 4

*Mani Shapurji Sepai* (64), 3,

*Chaple Way*, *Waterbeach*;

March 8

#### USA

##### Ohio

BORN

A boy, *Rohan*, to *Pouroochisti* and *Shahzad Dorabshaw*, brother to *Daryus* in

*Columbus*; March 2

Compiled by *Roxana A. Driver*

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# The spirited sheriff

Parinaz M. Gandhi

Died: Jehangir Kaikushroo Nicholson, 86, former sheriff of Bombay and an avid art collector, on October 31, 2001 in Mauritius following a brief illness.

"He was a small man with a big heart," commented ex sheriff F. T. Khorakiwalla, referring to Nicholson's short stature and generous disposition. "He had great concern for the common man, was outspoken and never afraid to let people know what his thoughts were," added Khorakiwalla. The present sheriff Ashok Mehta appreciated that Nicholson "took pictures of me and my wife at the swearing-in ceremony and later gave them to me when he visited my office."

An avid photographer who enjoyed using his camera at formal and informal functions, many are the sheriffs who treasure photographs voluntarily shot by Nicholson when they assumed office as sheriff.

"He brought a great deal of sparkle and wit to the post of sheriff," remarked Cyrus Guzder, chairman and managing director of AFL Limited. "Being the sheriff gives me a lot of elbow room to do the things I want to — move people to contribute funds, involve them in some causes. I am a Boy Scout at heart," Nicholson had told *The Indian Post* of June 5, 1988. He further observed, "Everything here in India is drowned in this mire of poverty and vastness (the solution lying in) the creation of a social conscience, not socialism." His year as sheriff was guided by the seven axioms in his life which start with the letter 'c' — courage, confidence, communication, cooperation, coordination, consideration and care — he had conveyed to *Mid-day*, February 22, 1988.

Although Nicholson was introduced to art through his late wife Dina, a painter, following her demise in 1968, he found solace in this new interest. As reports *The Indian Post*, "With an artist couple, Sunita and Laxman Shreshtha, in whom Nicholson was to find the

children he never had, he frequented art galleries, met artists and collectors." His personal collection, built over the years, featured works of S. H. Raza, V. S. Gaitonde, Ramkumar, Akbar Padamsee, Tyeb Mehta, J. Swaminathan, Gieve Patel, F. N. Souza, M. F. Husain, Anjolie Ela Menon, Nalini Malini, Jehangir Sabavala, Uday Raj Gadnis, Anju Dodiya, Jamini Roy and of course his personal favorite Shreshtha. Since no comprehensive documentation was known to exist of his collection, art connoisseurs guesstimated that his total collection could be between 400 and 1,000.

As Guzder, one of the executors of Nicholson's will told *Society*, January 2002, "Documenting it fully will be one of the primary concerns of the custodians."

For some collectors, investment in art could be an outlet for unaccounted black money. But to Nicholson, an important consideration was to ensure that the paintings he bought were "worthy of entering the portals of a museum so that other people can see and appreciate." Any painting priced over Rs 1,000, he insisted on paying by cheque. "We forget that he was also a highly capable chartered accountant... In later years he was very provocative and outspoken in his criticism of the red tape and paralysis of the bureaucracy; and the colossal waste of energy caused to the world of commerce and industry from the tangled web of income tax, excise, sales tax and customs duty — the only things in life he truly hated," mentions Guzder.

Intent on expanding the visibility of his private collection, over two decades ago he had donated 58 of his priceless treasures to the National Centre for the Performing Arts to create there the Jehangir Nicholson Museum of Modern Art. Disappointed that his paintings had not been "given more space, prestige and a better visibility for public interface," as stated art documenter

Neville Tuli, he was keen to build a museum in south Bombay as his gift to the city if the government would oblige him with a plot of land. "Apart from making bequests to his many friends and relatives, Jehangir has willed the creation of a trust to oversee the sale of his non-painting assets for building a museum to preserve his paintings for posterity," confirmed Guzder.

Four years ago the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) in Bombay and in New Delhi organized an exhibition titled *A Collector's Eye* that showcased more than 100 works from his collection. "Curating the collection was a fascinating experience for it revealed the whims and idiosyncrasies that guided his choice of works," wrote Saryu Doshi, director of the NGMA, in her tribute to Nicholson in *Mid-day*, November 2, 2001.

"I buy art because it does something for my soul, not because it appreciates in value," the one-time sheriff had been quoted in *The Times of India* of November 2. His rounds of the city's galleries never ceased. Recalling their first meeting, Sangita Kathiawad narrated to *Society*, "My first memory of him is that of a little man staring at a Laxman Shreshtha painting hung on the ceiling of my shop Melange for full 20 minutes. Thinking that his neck might hurt, I suggested him to lie down and watch to which he said, 'Only if you lie down with me.' That's how he was, always flirting and full of ready wit. I used to call him 'naughty Nicholson.'" Shreshtha too recalled Nicholson's mischievous ways at one of their earlier meetings. Stating that he stayed as a paying guest in a flat at Worli, Nicholson invited Shreshtha over for drinks. "He drove us down and we went up to the first floor. He opened one of the rooms and then said, 'Oh, we've come to the wrong place!' Then he took us to the second floor and said the same thing. It was only much later that we got to know that the entire mansion belonged to him!"

"I would like a man's true worth to be measured by the wealth and strength of his mind and not his pocket," Nicholson had told the *Sunday Daily*



Nicholson: "brought sparkle and wit"

when he took over as sheriff in 1988. Circumstances had compelled Nicholson to devote his earlier years to the family's cotton business Breuland Company. Respected in the industry, he had served as director of the East India Cotton Association, as president of the Bombay Cotton Merchants and Mukadums Association for over 26 consecutive years, and as member of the government of India's Textile Commissioner's Cotton Certification Committee.

One of five siblings, initially a tutor coached the children at their residence. Subsequently at different times Nicholson was sent to the St Xavier's School and the Bharda New High School. He graduated in English from St Xavier's College and later qualified as a chartered accountant and became a partner of S. B. Billimoria and Company.

Besides photography his other hobbies were music, having learnt the violin, and motor racing and rallying, winning awards and prizes at national car meets even in his 70s! "He seemed to be a permanently youthful person. Even into his 80s he displayed more energy than a person half his age... With an immensely busy social calendar he always enjoyed driving himself at high speed..." noted Guzder "Passion, energy, commitment, knowledge and grace," characterized the man, wrote Anupa Mehta in *The Times of India* of November 8, adding, "these were the mainstays that kept Nicholson afloat at a time when values are not quite a selling point."

## Cama's convictions

Died: Rustom Muncherji Cama, 79, chairman of *The Bombay Samachar* and past president of the All India Federation of Master Printers, the Indian Newspaper Society (INS) and the Press Trust of India (PTI) on December 15, 2001 in Bombay following cardiac arrest.

As president of the INS in 1986-87 Cama provided "dedicated and able leadership to the Society," noted the condolence resolution passed by the Society at its executive committee meeting on December 28, 2001. "The INS has lost a friend, philosopher and guide. The Society owes its eminence to a great extent to him," added the resolution referring to his active association with the Society's executive committee in different capacities.

When he stepped down as chairman

of the INS advertising committee in 1991, Rajiv Agarwal of Nexus Advertising Private Limited wrote: "Here was a man who was at times stubborn and obdurate, often demanding, but never unreasonable nor unfair... Our entire industry's... association with (him) over the years has been one we have all cherished." These sentiments were shared by Roda Mehta of Ogilvy and Mather Advertising who considered him "a wonderful and impartial representative of the INS and I know of many agencies who have valued (his) guidance over the years..."

When Cama had taken over as chairman of the PTI in 1987, *Blitz* (August 1, 1987) had commented, "At a time when the PTI is poised for a giant leap that places it decisively ahead of all other developing national news agencies, what it requires is a leadership that is at once experienced and capable of guiding without being intrusive... The gentle, professional... Cama has considerable skill and experience in guiding a media organization; he is known for allowing professionals under his command operational freedom."

"He was cast in a large mold — in body, mind and heart," remembers Jehan Daruwalla, erstwhile editor of *The Bombay Samachar*. Although "amicable and congenial, if excited he would blow up like a volcano and yet within minutes he could be cool and collected." A friendly boss to all his subordinates the annual staff dinner hosted by the Camas was a popular event within the organization, recalls Daruwalla.

His role as past president and long standing governing council member of the All India Federation of Master Printers has been acknowledged in the monthly *Print and Paper* (May-June 1989): "He was very particular to attend all governing council meetings, wherever they may be held and with his timely wit and unfailing sense of humor in expression endeared himself to his colleagues in a manner that saved many a tense situation." Active in the Bombay Master Printers Association too, in his dual role as newspaperman and a job



Cama: considerable skill and experience

printer the "shrewd businessman... had championed the cause of the printing industry with special emphasis on gaining recognition for it from the government." He is also credited for being the first chairman of the development panel for the printing industry which was announced by the ministry of industries and civil supplies in 1976.

In the days of the Emergency, "Ours was the only paper in the country which did not need to have a censors' cell," Cama's son Mehli was quoted in the bi-monthly *India Digest* (No 26-27) in 1991. "For the government knew that we would stay absolutely neutral," added Mehli. "We in *Bombay Samachar* don't know investigative journalism and the headlines in our paper never carry a question mark," the senior Cama attributed the paper's credibility to its scrupulous adherence to publishing only fully authenticated news. "Any newspaper can get circulation with a clever strategy and a bit of luck. But it is far more important to gain credibility which is our biggest asset," Rustom Cama was quoted in *India Digest*.

"Almost everything about *Bombay Samachar* is conservative — its get-up, its contents and the massive interior of its premises... No other major newspaper in India can perhaps match its old-world charm. And yet (the 180-year-old newspaper, the fourth oldest surviving newspaper in the world) forms the compulsive reading habit of the country's financially most dynamic... community — the Gujaratis," states *India Digest*.

The conservative bastion nevertheless espoused the liberal cause on issues dividing the Bohra community. "The Bohras in general and the reformist Bohras in particular have lost a great well-wisher," noted a report in *The Bohra Chronicle* of January 2002 referring to *The Bombay Samachar*'s "healthy tradition of educating public opinion and thereby bringing about social and religious reforms. Its news and the articles are aimed at bringing the society out of the mire of old superstition and prejudice and making it enlightened and liberal... For Dawoodi Bohras too it has provided a platform in the form of a regular column 'Vohra Vartaman.' In spite of all violent opposition from the Bohra religious establishment this column is continuing till today."

Even though he wanted his mortal remains to be consigned at Bombay's Doongerwadi, several decades ago the

gutsy Cama had dared to see the insides of a dakhma to verify for himself the condition of the corpses. As per the family upbringing, he observed the Kadmi calendar and prayers and even though he was confined to bed for several months prior to his demise due to throat cancer coupled with a disorder in the leg, he would try to sit up to tie his kusti himself. Visiting a fire-temple in Bombay was not a regular feature for Cama although weekends spent in Khandala invariably involved a trip to the Agiary in Lonavla on a Sunday morning, mentions his wife Mehroo.

A sports enthusiast since his early days at the Bharda High School and the Sydenham College whence he graduated, Cama was junior heavy weight boxing champion of the then Bombay Presidency in 1936. An avid swimmer too despite his heavy build, for years his mornings would start with a swim in the sea before reporting to work. Only after he had grasped the rudiments of the printing press and had been exposed to the working of the different departments was he made director of the family owned *Bombay Samachar*. A senior Rotarian and past commodore of the Royal Bombay Yacht Club, Cama en-

joyed sailing too as also gardening. "Reading is no longer a hobby, but a compulsion," Cama had admitted in an interview with *Parsiiana* (see "Cama's commitments," December 1986).

More than the Bombay dailies, several newspapers in Gujarat carried obituary write-ups following his demise. Cama's death has created a void in the sphere of Gujarati journalism, Gujarat's chief minister Narendra Modi was quoted in the Ahmedabad edition of *The Indian Express* as also several Gujarati periodicals.

His physical demeanor matched by his mental temperament persuaded many in the family and the media to view him as a 'Rock of Gibraltar.' His consolation and courage would convince them that they could surmount their difficulties. His open-door policy made him approachable to his colleagues and staff. Some he would help with their medical difficulties, referring them to good doctors and bearing the cost of their treatment, others with educational help for their children.

He was trustee of the Petit Charities, Sett Charities, The Bai Maneckbai Jeejeebhay Trust and a number of Cama family trusts. Dispensing trust monies

is easy, it is private philanthropy that counts, Cama used to impress upon his family. His advice to his children, quoting John D. Rockefeller was: "Give a little, spend a little, save a little." As Behram Contractor, the late editor of the *Afternoon Despatch and Courier* had stated in one of his articles on the media, "The Camas are perhaps the last of the breed of gentleman publishers remaining in the newspaper industry."

The respected Cama is survived by his wife Mehroo, son Mehli and daughter Avi Dastoor.

## ZOROASTRIANS ABROAD

*continued from page 16*

two harijan tailors fleeing caste violence in their village — forced by circumstances to share a cramped apartment. In the process they develop family ties that supersede religious and social barriers, "learning the fine balance between hope, despair and survival," writes Davar.

A special Winfrey show on January 24 had featured a discussion with Mistry and four readers inspired by the book but the community at large was disappointed at the lack of mention of either the "Parsi" community or "Zoroastrian" religion. Mistry, a reticent, soft-spoken man, described his book as "a look at history... from the point of view of the dispossessed" and hoped that its readers see "the human need for family" beyond the bonds of blood relationships.

The second of late COVP (Council of Vigilant Parsis) spokesman B. K. Mistry's four children, Rohinton was born in Bombay, graduating in maths and economics from Bombay University. "His youthful pursuits on the guitar and folk singing also earned him the billing as 'the Bob Dylan of Bombay,'" according to Davar. Migrating to Canada where he worked in a Toronto bank for 10 years, Mistry attended classes in English and philosophy at the University of Toronto. He continues to live on the outskirts of Toronto with his wife Freny, a high school English teacher. Mistry's books of short stories includes *Swimming Lessons* and *Tales from Firozsha Baug* followed by the novel *Such a Long Journey*. The latter was made into a movie scripted by Sooni Taraporevala.

Mistry's latest novel, *Family Matters*, was scheduled for release in April 2002.

## BOOKS

*continued from page 50*

not possible to "become sinless and perfectly wise during our short life granted here to us on earth." But the comfort in knowing that we are reincarnated gives us more opportunities to learn.

Among the other queries answered by the book are: What is the benefit of obsequies after one's demise? What if a Parsi does not put on a sudreh-kusti? Why do the Parsis not admit aliens to their fold? etc. While explaining why smoking is not tolerated by orthodox Parsis, Dabu stresses that the term 'orthodox' implies "one holding correct opinion... Any thought, word or deed that tends to destroy one's physical or mental health would be held as a sin." Therefore smoking in any form is not favored.

As to why Parsis are adverse to intercommunal marriage, Dabu's theory pertains to genetics and engenic. He explains that "breeding is concerned with transmission of certain characteristics (not only physical features, but temperamental and moral qualities) to the progeny." He however advises all Parsi girls mar-

rying outside their ancestral fold to take a "total plunge" and adopt their husband's religion otherwise "the situation is like riding two horses simultaneously heading for a fall."

"These books have been reprinted because it is necessary to beam the message (of our Prophet) time and again," stresses Behram Dastur, chief executive officer of the BPP. About 1,000 copies of each book have been printed, some of which have been donated by the BPP to Zoroastrian punchayets and anjumans in India and Zoroastrian associations, museums and schools across the world. The set of five sold for Rs 175 can be purchased from the Punchayet office at 209, Dr Dadabhai Naoroji Road, Fort, Bombay 400001. This project was possible thanks to the cooperation of the BPP staff, in particular, Sheroo D. Master, Mehli P. Colah, Benaifer S. Master and the printers Nikhil Enterprises, acknowledged Dastur.

While this effort was financed completely by the BPP, in the coming months they plan to publish a series of books on Parsi pioneers for which they hope to be co-funded.

Simin J. Patel

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama

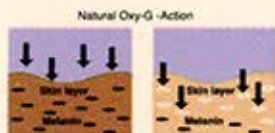
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