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Parsiana

June 2002
Volume 24 Number 11

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Cover: Bejun Mehta in *Mitridate*

Photo: Ken Howard, courtesy The Santa Fe Opera

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

Annual inland subscription for one year (12 issues) Rs 400; for two years (24 issues) Rs 750; for three years (36 issues) Rs 1,100. Foreign subscription rates: 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.



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"Cama's convictions"

Born and brought up in the lap of luxury, Rusi Cama's heart always bled for the poor, the needy and disabled. He helped people readily and generously. One instance will bear it out.



Cama: ready and generous

Outside *The Bombay Samachar* building a young boy crippled by polio used to beg for money. Every morning around 11 a.m. when Cama got out of his car he would give something to the boy. One

day he approached the boy and told him sternly, "How long do you want to live on begging?" The boy pointed towards his legs. Cama immediately said, "That should not come in the way of your life. Think of something and see me after that." One afternoon a few days later the crippled boy climbed up the stairs on all

fours and entered Cama's cabin, stating, "Sir, if I have a weighing machine I can sit in a corner and people would come to have their weight checked." Cama immediately got him a weighing machine and forgot all about it.

Years later, as he parked his car at a street corner and got out, he saw a person in a wheelchair approaching him hurriedly. With profuse gratitude he thanked Cama and reminded him how he had changed his life. From the weighing machine the boy had got other ideas and opened a small shop.

A keen sportsman all his life, Cama believed in giving a sporting chance to anybody who was willing and in rendering help to those written off by society.

JEHAN DARUWALLA

"Beware of 'worshippers'"

Since the independence of the former USSR republics, persons of Zoroastrian ancestral stock are reviving their faith as too are persons of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Christians, Muslims, Buddhists living in these geographical areas. In the Krasnodar district of Russia, since 1998 a fire-temple has been built. In Uzbekistan, in Tashkent district there is a Zoroastrian school where 400 children aged 10-20 years are studying the *Avesta* and the Zoroastrian religious scriptures. As regards the Zoroastrians of Old Iran (some of the countries now renamed, republics of the former USSR), again both Dasturs (Drs) Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa and Firoze Kotwal have rushed into Press on mere hearsay. Who were the "two respected Zoroastrians from London" who did not find any Zoroastrian traces in their travels in Tajikistan? What places did they visit in Tajikistan? What was their correct report?

Since mobeds from India do not know Persian, the Iranian mobeds were invited to perform the navjotes of Tajik Zoroastrians in Dushanbe, the capital city. Would the Dasturs kindly educate the public as to why they consented to the navjote in India of an aged Christian gentleman born of a Christian father? On the basis of what authority have they done this deed? Why do they now perform a turnaround and complain if other mobeds follow their precedent? After all it is the mobeds who perform the navjotes, not we the orthodox behdin

community members. By such actions they are bringing the athornans into disrespect.

As regards Ardeshiri the matter is between him and the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman as to whether or not he is a Zoroastrian from Tehran, Iran.

So far as the Zoroastrian College is concerned, I as president and others connected with the one and only Zoroastrian College in the world will continue to do our best to spread the knowledge of the Zoroastrian religion to our fellow Zoroastrians worldwide, disregarding the deliberate and intentional defamation of the Zoroastrian College, which is a globally recognized seat of higher learning and research.

All the institutions named by the Dastur duo in USA, UK and Germany are governed by global education laws and European union laws. USA, UK and Germany and many other countries including India are signatories to the United Nations' conventions under which the one and only Zoroastrian College in the world is functioning; and the question does not arise of any of these institutions named by them not recognizing the Zoroastrian College and the degrees issued through it. In 2000 at the United Nations convened first Global Summit of Heads of Religion, as Zoroastrian College president I was the solitary representative of the Zoroastrian religion in the official delegation from India.

This pair of prelates have only themselves to thank for raising a controversy where none exists. It would have been wiser for them to have discussed with me, Ervad Yazdi Nadirsha Aibara, panthaky of Karani Agiary and the persons concerned from Iran and Tajikistan before rushing to Press.

Prof (Dr) MEHER MASTER-MOOS
President, Zoroastrian College

"Zoroastrianism enjoins..."

This has reference to Dara Aria's letter "Zoroastrianism enjoins..." (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, March 2002). Ervad Kavasji E. Kanga was a great scholar of repute and to wrongly deduce from his translation of the *Nirang* of *Sarosh Yasht Vadi* that conversion was permitted and enjoined even during the time of Prophet Zarathushtra is totally absurd, to say the least.



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In the dark days of fearful persecution following the Arab conquest, any person caught wearing the kusti (or known to either profess the Zoroastrian faith or even possess Zoroastrian literature) was subject to severe punishment. In fact, it is said that many Parsis were reduced to secretly tying a small piece of the kusti on their upper arms. Therefore, is it logically possible for the conquering Muslim zealots to ever consider donning the kusti, which, in fact, was the hated emblem of the conquered Parsis and their Zoroastrian religion; a symbol that was held in contempt by the conquerors? Is it not absurd to project the fanatical Arab Muslims as being agreeable to be converted into kusti-wearing Zoroastrians?

The interpretation as advocated by Kanga in his book *Khordeh Avesta* for the enigmatic phrase *taziane bastekushtian*, literally meaning Arab kusti-wearers was not wrong per se, and, at best, can be described as contextually inappropriate and therefore misleading. According to the explanation offered by the likes of the late Ervad (Prof) Rustom Dinshah Dastur Meherjirana and educationist Bejon Desai, the Pazand word

taziane means (in the figurative sense) the leader or the foremost person of a certain group of people. The term *bastekushtian* means the binders/tiers (wearers) of the kusti — the kusti being the sacred talismanic thread bestowed by Sarosh Yazad on Shah Jamshid some 11,000 years ago which, in fact, is regarded as being synonymous with the Aryan-Parsi race for whom it is mandatory to don the kusti (and sudreh) in their lifetime as well as in death.

Therefore the correct scholarly interpretation offered for the term *taziane bastekushtian* is: "the leaders of those who wear the kusti" and certainly not as misrepresented by Aria to suggest that conversion was permitted and enjoined even during the time of Prophet Zarathushtra.

ADIL J. GOVADIA
Bangalore

"Anomaly in name"

I very much agree with Soli Master's comments in "Anomaly in name," (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, March 2002) and have long objected to the widespread use of the term/description "Zoroastrian." Some readers might consider this to be a case of much ado about

nothing. However, the use of 'Zoroastrian' by our organizations, their leaders and our own scholars is so frequent that it has become the norm.

Our venerable Prophet's name was Zarathushtra. Is it too much to ask that we should use Zarathushti/Zarathushtrian as appropriate? It would seem that 'Zoroastrian' trips off Anglicized tongues more readily. Sadly, I believe it is also a reflection of a deeper malaise — insufficient knowledge and a lack of conviction. Furthermore, children who grow up habituated to hearing the word are unlikely in later life to use any other.

Finally, since we are all *Mazdayasno ahmi*, *Mazdayasno Zarathushtrish* our leaders might consider using *Mazdayasni/Mazdayasnian*! MAHIAR G. ARDESHIR

Pinner, UK

Spiritual foundation

The success and survival of our Zoroastrian community is directly linked to our religion and our mobeds.

It was recognized that looking to the present and future spiritual needs of the community, what was necessary was the development of an educated, intelligent, knowledgeable and articulate class

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of mobeds. It was very essential not only to encourage our young athornans to embrace mobedi as a full-time profession but also to make the profession economically viable. The WZO (World Zoroastrian Organisation) Trust Funds forged a working relationship with the Athornan Mandal to jointly address the issue. This project has been under way since the last four years and has been making satisfactory progress.

Enthused by our work, a well-known mobed residing in the USA recently urged us to establish through the WZO Trust Funds, a scheme towards reimbursing and/or subsidizing indigent athornan families who could not afford the expenses of initiating their progeny as navars or martabs. This concerned Zoroastrian has also made a commitment towards a modest contribution should WZO Trust Funds agree to undertake such a project.

The seeds for the "WZO Navar and Martab Fund" have been sown. For the future well-being of our community it is hoped that this acorn will eventually grow into an oak. Recognizing that quality is more important than quantity, preference/priority in this scheme will be always given to those candidates who

have studied *sampoorna* (complete) *Yasna* and *Visperad* texts.

Our young athornans will hopefully realize that our community stands solidly behind them, to encourage and support them in not only being initiated as *sampoorna* navars and martabs, but also to make mobedi a very viable profession.

The WZO vision is to make our community strong in all areas of human endeavor. Creating a strong spiritual foundation is certainly one of its prime concerns.

The WZO Trust Funds take this opportunity of expressing their gratitude to donors from all parts of the world who have always been generous in their support for all our projects. Donations for "WZO Navar and Martab Fund" are very welcome as it will enable us to launch this scheme on a firm footing.

Cheques/drafts made out in the name of "The WZO Trust Funds" may be forwarded to: The WZO Trust Funds, Shanti, 5th Floor, 6, Banaji Street, Fort, Bombay 400001. Donations to the WZO Trust Funds are exempt under section 80G(5) of the Income Tax Act 1961.

DINSHAW K. TAMBOLY
Chairman, WZO Trust Funds

Amicable matches

Once again the Ahmedabad Parsi Panchayat is organizing a matrimonial meet to encourage weddings among Zoroastrians and to thereby increase the strength of the Parsi community. Such efforts should be continuous in all cities to stop the serious problem of mixed marriages endangering the Parsi cultural heritage. Here is my poetic effort. Specially let young daughters come together in ethical contacts/with Zoroastrian youths, to make friends for further contracts./They will have guaranteed safe and sound future/and fulfill their duty to preserve the unique Parsi culture.

By wealth one can procure desired facilities,/but not happiness; inviting unexpected responsibilities./For a happy home and peaceful married life, love is important/as is dedication, understanding and sincerity constant.

'Raasi' and 'tapkaa' have a secondary stand and image;/more important is an amicable match in marriage./Courage and steadfast faith in Ahura is wanted./to jump in the arena of love, earlier undaunted.

Ahura Mazda blesses more the married
continued on page 49

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Events and Personalities

Udvada's cultural museum

Pilgrims to Udvada would be happy to learn that the Dastur Kayoji Mirza Museum of Udvada and Iranshah was inaugurated on April 28, 2002. Located on the first floor of the Dastur Kayoji Mirza Memorial Hall on the main road of the Udvada village, the cultural museum has become a reality thanks to the initiative of the Youth Wing of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) and the generosity of Dastur (Dr) Hormazdyar Mirza who has permitted his family premises to be used for this project, notes a write-up by Zelda Mistry.

The jashan was performed by Hormazdyar's son, Ervad (Dr) Peshotan Mirza together with Ervad Framroze Sidhva, the secretary of the Udvada Anjuman. The jashan elicited a grand turnout of priests and locals of Udvada, donors of the exhibits, WZO Youth Wing and parent body members, and pilgrims from Bombay and other parts of Gujarat. Many of the guests were put up at the comfortable Ervad Ratansha Katila resthouse, writes Mistry. Inaugurated in April 2001, the resthouse is yet another institution managed by the WZO Youth Wing as part of its "Project Udvada."

Expressing his gratitude to all who gave freely of their time, talent and efforts to help set up the Museum, Youth Wing president Sarosh Bana was particularly appreciative of Hormazdyar Mirza's dynamism and the wholehearted cooperation of the late Dastur Kaikobad Dastur. The largesse of Zal and Roshan Contractor as also Bachi and Dinshaw Tamboly who had gifted artefacts to the Museum was also commended. Dr Kalpana Desai, the experienced director of Bombay's Prince of Wales Museum (now rechristened Chhatrapati Shivaji Vastusangrahalaya) has evinced keen interest in developing the Udvada

Museum, mentioned Bana.

On behalf of the trustees of the Kayoji Mirza Hall, Peshotan Mirza congratulated Bana and his team and urged those present to pass on the Zoroastrian prin-



Bana with Peshotan Mirza at Udvada's new Museum

ciples, customs and traditions to the younger generation, reminding them of the tribulations faced by their ancestors to protect the sacred fire.

The Youth Wing has expended Rs 1.8 lakhs on this Museum project, according to Mistry's report, and would appreciate donations in cash and kind from the community. Among the treasures they are keen to acquire for the Museum are: an antique portrait of Zarathushtra, a chandelier or central lamp, an old clock in working condition, four display cases, and any records of Udvada, the Iranshah or the families living there. Contributions marked to "WZO (India) YouthWing" may be forwarded to Bana at 52, Bakhtawar (Main), 22, Narayan Dabholkar Road, Off Napean Sea Road, Bombay 400006, Tel: 3679717, 3616025, e-mail: sarosh_bana@hotmail.com

Among the exhibits on view at the Museum are religious implements used for liturgical ceremonies, an Iranian carpet, portraits depicting Parsi attire in bygone days and specially prepared panels depicting the history of Iranshah and Udvada. With admission to the Museum free to all, Parsis as also non-Parsis, Bana hoped that it would help to create an awareness of the grand heritage of Udvada. The Museum will be open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3-6 p.m. on all weekends, public holidays and the months of Adar and Ardibehesht.

In Bombay, the Youth Wing organized the third series of talks on health issues at the Banaji Atash Behram hall, according to a report forwarded by Mahatab Patel. Dr Aashish Contractor who heads the cardiac rehabilitation department at the Cumballa Hill Hospital and Heart Institute spoke on "Heart disease and its prevention," stressing on the importance of exercise and aspirin to circumvent cardiac failure whilst simultaneously monitoring blood pressure, cholesterol, smoking and diabetes. Dilnavaz Bana, a trained naturopath from Switzerland who works at the Lukas cancer research clinic in Arlesheim near Basle, referred to the need to activate one's inner doctor. Aspirations and expectations in life are good to a certain extent but not when they lead to tension and conflicts and consequent ailments, she pointed out.

'A prayer for peace'

Consecrated in 1855 when "many a Parsi family resided in Davier and the place throbbed with Zoroastrian rites and ceremonies," the Bai Navajbai Goiporia Agiary celebrated its 147th anniversary on April 20, 2002 in the presence of nearly 800 coreligionists, notes a press release.

The function began with a jashan performed by Ervad Aspiandiar Dada-

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Clockwise from top left: The Davier Agiary; Bapsy and Dali Wadia; a section of the audience and Marzban Wadia addressing the gathering



Below: Ozone ducts at Bombay's Anjuman dakhma



chanji and eight other mobeds. The gathering joined the president of the Davier Zarhosti Anjuman Fund Marzban Wadia in a humbandagi for the "prevalence of peace in the land of Gujarat which was recently evidencing unwarranted communal disharmony and natural calamities," states the write-up. Crediting the community's survival in India to the hospitality of this land Wadia asserted it was "our duty to hold a *shanti-prarthna* (prayer for peace)."

Dadachanji later explained the various kardas recited in the jashan ceremony while Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustee Rustom Tirandaz spoke of the *tokham kyani* (Iranian ancestry) of Zoroastrians. Hoshang Wania, president of the Nargol Anjuman, invited larger numbers to visit the agiary and Rohinton Davierwala, president of the Sanjan Anjuman, thanked the Wadia family for making the event a success. Wadia, in turn, referred to the efforts of Bapsy and Dali Wadia in maintaining the Agiary premises since 1995, and Pervez Mistry for his assistance in collecting funds (amounting to over Rs 15 lakh) for the upkeep of the fire-temple, and Zubin Batliwala for his help over the years.

With the migration of Zoroastrians from Davier to neighboring cities the Agiary fell into bad times when the paucity of funds and non availability of a full-time mobed reduced it to a *dadgah*.

When Marzban Wadia, his brother Pervez and Davierwala appealed for help, monetary and otherwise, several donations were received. Noted philanthropist NarYman Dubash was one of the main donors.

With sufficient funds in hand, the Anjuman hopes to start refurbishing the Agiary after the monsoons, reports Marzban Wadia. With the assistance of MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) Ramanlal Pathkar and the police, railway and electricity departments of the area the celebrations came to a successful end with a lunch organized by Kurush Dalal of KFD Caterers.

Simin J. Patel

Costly deaths

Would the Zoroastrian community in Bombay be fortified or mortified to learn that the annual deficit incurred by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) in maintaining the Doongerwadi property

is Rs 92 lakhs? While the recurring deficits would be in the region of Rs 25 lakhs, the capital expenditure incurred on installing the solar panels and ozone ducts added to the deficit, explains Dinshaw Tamboly, BPP trustee who oversees the Doongerwadi affairs.

To sustain the dakhmenashini tradition in the absence of vultures is proving frightfully expensive to the BPP. The Punchayet has installed four solar panels at the Sethna dakhma which are now operational after the initial hitch. Since the ozone ducts introduced at the Anjuman dakhma necessitate a monthly maintenance cost of Rs 60,000, the BPP is planning to dismantle the equipment and install three more solar panels after the monsoons, mentions Tamboly.

Although initially the BPP trustees had even indicated a willingness to bear the high cost of an experimental aviary project to breed vultures in captivity, an





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escalation in the figures quoted has forced the trustees to stipulate an upper limit which the Panchayet can afford.

Assuming that on an average there are 1,000 bodies consigned to Bombay's dakhmas in a year, a deficit of Rs 92 lakhs means that the Panchayet expended nearly Rs 10,000 on every dead body brought to the Doongerwadi last year, a cost not passed on to the bereaved family. The family of the deceased is expected to pay for the use of the bungli, the different services rendered by the Panchayet staff and the priests reciting the prayers.

The practice of soliciting donations at uthamna time earns the Panchayet around Rs 12,000 a month. The amount is low primarily because the four-day prayers of only one-third of those consigned at the dakhmas are said there. The majority opt to continue the prayers at their agiary after the geh sarna at Doongerwadi. Additionally, the administrative machinery too needs to be better geared to collect donations, acknowledges Tamboly.

Respected 'Shree'

"Ever since it became a registered body on November 13, 1953 and it came to be known as 'Shree Parsi Panchayat, Vadodara,' few in this city or for that matter in the country would know the reasons for the prefix 'Shree' being attached to a registered body like ours," writes editor Pesi Muncherji in the March 2002 issue of *Zend*, the quarterly newsletter of the Panchayat.

Quoting from Dastur Hormazdyar Mirza's explanation in *The History of Holy Fire Iranshah*, *Zend* conveys to the reader: "In Avesta literature, Daadar Ahura Mazda, Amesha Spentas and Yazatas are referred to as 'kharenau-ghat' (full of 'khorreh'), so also in the *Rig Veda*, Indra, Marut, Pushan and for the light of other daevas, the word 'Shree' is used. In *Avesta* the word 'khareno' is used for the light of Khorshed (sun), Mohor (moon), Tir (stars) and Adar (fire). Similarly in the *Rig Veda* the word 'Shree' is used for the light of the sun, moon, stars and fire since the time of the Aryan kings. Both have a royal touch about it. Besides this in Vedic literature the word 'Shree' is used with the name of any holy man or item." It also means luck, fortune and prosperity...The atash behram in Udvada is thus often referred to as Shree Iranshah, points out Muncherji.



Above: Palamkote and his crew; Right: Survivor Mehervanjee and the memorial at Princess Dock to honor those killed in the Bombay dock explosion



"The Avesta 'khareno' became 'khorreh' in Pahlavi. After coming to India the Pahlavi books were translated into Sanskrit and the Pahlavi word 'khorreh' has been translated as 'Shree,'" it is further elaborated.

"If one had to scrutinize the list of Parsi punchayets and anjumans of India, one will find that ours is the only Panchayat which holds this distinctive title with the prefix 'Shree,'" states *Zend*. When *Parsiana* had done a survey of the workings of different anjumans of India (see "The Crux of the Community," *Parsiana*, January 1993) we learnt that there are others like Sri Ajmer Parsi Jarthosti Anjuman, Shree Nagpur and Kamthi Parsi Zarthosti Anjuman, Shri Saronda Parsi Jarthosti Anjuman, Shri Surat Parsi Anjuman Panchayet and Shri Zai Bordi Parsi Jarthosti Anjuman Trust Fund in this league too.

Memorial duty

April 14 each year is observed as Fire Service Day in India when 2,023 fire stations across the country pay tribute to their fellow firemen who died in action, mentions *Fire Safety Chronicle* (FSC) in its issue of January-March 2002. The significance of April 14 is known to Lovejoy Secil Dadee Mehervanjee who, according to the FSC, is perhaps the only surviving fire officer who physically participated in fire fighting operations in the infamous Bombay dock explosion of 1944. Each year he is among the fire officers who dutifully attend the memorial service held annually to commemorate the gal-



lant efforts of the 66 firemen, including the first Parsi station officer Rustom Palamkote, who lost their lives.

"It is a day I cannot forget. The fire, the flames and the loss of lives and property," recalls Mehervanjee who had joined the War time Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) as sub leader just two years earlier. The ship *Fort Stikene*, laden with lethal ammunition caught fire and within a few hours slipped onto its side and exploded. Mehervanjee reported, "I was by my trailer pump near the ship organizing further strategy when the ground rumbled... Then at 4.05 p.m. the ship exploded (and) the searing heat and vicious flames leapt high into the air..." After 31 minutes there was a second explosion, causing further devastation but by then 19-year-old Mehervanjee along with other injured firemen had been rushed to hospital for medical treatment.

Mehervanjee quotes Lt Edward F. Oliver of the U.S. Coast Guard who wrote: "Few have ever heard of the greatest dynamite gunpowder explosion of World War II — a blow to the allied war machine beyond the wildest dreams of a potential saboteur. The explosion nearly wiped out the Gateway of India and destroyed or damaged nearly 1,00,000 tons of allied shipping. The cost of the disaster has been put at more than a billion dollars. In terms of human lives, the figure is more difficult to arrive at."

The *Stikene* laden with RAF planes and general stores, explosives and ammunition left Birkenhead (UK) on February 24 and reached Karachi on March 30 where a part of the cargo was offloaded and substituted with cotton,

timber, lubricating oil, resin, sulphur and other combustibles, reports Mehervanjee. Sailing from Karachi on April 9, she reached Bombay's Victoria Dock on April 12, 1944. "Outwardly there was little to distinguish the 7,000 ton merchant ship from the other freighters discharging cargoes of allied war supplies. The only unusual thing about the ship being... a little known item, a cargo of gold ingots worth millions," writes Mehervanjee in FSC.

When the War was over and the AFS disbanded, Mehervanjee and some "of the luckiest persons" were absorbed in the regular Fire Brigade of Bombay. Originally a good robust physique and completion of matriculation were sufficient qualifications for recruitment while presently one must be a science graduate and additionally have technical experience, points out Mehervanjee who retired in 1983 as chief fire officer.

There have never been many Parsis in employment in the fire brigade, points out Mehervanjee. Following the demise of Palamkote who was station officer at Motor Pump 13, the British rulers chose another Parsi, Shiavak Pavri, to succeed him, mentions Mehervanjee. Impressing upon the community "the need to be enthusiastic," he would like to see Parsis join the Fire Brigade.

Mehervanjee states his mother, who was pregnant when proceeding to China by the ship *Secil*, was keen to name her baby Lovji but his father Dadee wanted to name the boy after the ship. They reached a compromise and gave the baby, born in China, a double-barrel name Lovji Secil. Unfamiliar with Parsi names, his British employers transformed Lovji into Lovejoy which has stuck since then, reveals Mehervanjee. And since Love-joy translated into Hindi means *Prem-anand*, his Maharashtrian friends now tease him saying he could consider a name adaptation yet again!

Ultimately an usher

His life revolves around movies. An usher in movie theaters, Soli Aspi Wadia is enjoying his job at the age of 53. He started as an usher at the Apsara theater when the popular film *Sangam* was being screened. After a couple of years he joined the Roopam theater which was showing *Anita*. When there was an opening at Sterling theater in 1969 which was then

screening *Doctor Dolittle* he joined them on a starting salary of Rs 240 per month. After 33 years he now draws Rs 3,000 per month, mentions Wadia.

Although he had dreamt of joining the Navy, on completing his schooling from Bombay's Sir J. J. School Wadia felt obligated to support his mother who had been widowed when he was only one year old. The first job offered to him was at Cadbury but following the ban on cocoa import he had to switch vocations and opted to become an usher. Despite his long working hours from 12.30 in the afternoon to 11.30 at night and commuting back and forth



Wadia: passion for movies

from Thana, a content Wadia maintains, "You have to be happy."

"His passion for movies is as strong as ever and although he does prefer the old school of actors like Clint Eastwood, Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra he never misses any of the latest blockbusters screened at the theater," noted a write-up in *The Times of India* of April 12, 2002.

Viewing Sterling as his "second home" he takes pride in reporting that it was the first theater to introduce Dolby sound in Bombay and also the first to introduce fresh popcorn in theaters! In the course of his duty as usher at both the stalls and the balcony Wadia has had to help out kids who seemed to have lost their way as also to discipline unruly teenagers. "Parents don't mind sending their daughters here because we have always maintained a good crowd and reputation," maintains Wadia. He recalls the time when the Sunday evening show would be referred to as the "Parsi show," because of the large Parsi presence in the theater.

Over the years he has worked in almost all the departments at Sterling and has strong loyalties to his Tata employers. A veteran of English movies screened at Sterling, his favorites include *Two for the Road* and *Herbie*. He enjoys Hindi films too and thespians Dilip Kumar and Dev Anand are the heroes he fancies.

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi



With
best wishes
from

**Farah
&
Tanya**

Hamazor's new look

The first issue of the new *Hamazor*, the publication of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO), printed by the Regal Press Canada Limited in Ontario, and funded by its proprietor Marzi Byramjee, reached *Parsiana* in early April. Taking on the job of editor, WZO committee member and former Karachi Zarthosti Banu Mandal president Toxy Cowasjee writes, "My aspirations are to make the *Hamazor* a medium for all Zarathushtris to share their thoughts in, whether tradi-



ditionalists, mainstream or progressive as we are fortunate in the teachings of Zarathushtra, who tells us to use our minds." Though the printing will be done in Toronto, the editorial and layout work will proceed in Karachi. This issue features an Afghan girl on the cover which has been designed by Tanaz Minwalla. Hitherto *Hamazor* had been produced by the Union Press in Bombay and Cowasjee as editor expresses the WZO committee's thanks "for producing our magazine for so many years."

The 52-page art paper production includes a variety of articles including WZO chairman Rumi Sethna's address at the annual general meeting of the WZO on September 23, 2001. Sethna notes that discussions on the WZO's constitutional changes (to meet the requirements of a world body) are proceeding with each region at a time because discussing these "constitutional changes with several regions at one time would not achieve the result that we all are seeking."

Other information on the WZO are reports by Dinshaw Tamboly, chairman of the WZO Trust, India on the Sanjan Sanatorium and the genesis of its annual ghambar financed from the interest on a seven lakh rupee donation by the late Muljibhai Narsi in memory of his Parsi friend and benefactor Edal Kharas. The WZO's role in protecting international Zarathushtris who fall foul of the local administration has also been examined in the context of the assassination of the Tajik Zarathushtri leader Rudaki Samadi.

"A sky full of stars" by Pennsylvania

attorney Dina McIntyre provides an inspired response to the question, "Why do I like the *Gathas*?" McIntyre's four-page essay encapsulates Gathic philosophy in everyday terms to which the youthful reader too can relate.

Another outstanding general article pertains to the discovery of the 1.25 mile long canal dug through the peninsula in Northern Greece by Phoenician engineers at the bidding of King Xerxes in 480 BC. The findings by scientists from Britain and Greece confirm the de-

scription of the engineering feat provided by Greek historian Herodotus which had hitherto been regarded with scholarly skepticism, writes Yudhijit Bhattacharjee. The article had initially appeared in *The New York Times* of November 13, 2001.

Expressing his pain at the dilemma faced by Zoroastrians in Iran Dr Farhang Mehr, professor emeritus of international relations at Boston University, examines the Islamic laws, reinstituted about 10 years ago and currently in operation there, which use devious financial pressure to undermine the community's numbers. According to these laws any convert to Islam becomes the sole inheritor of the family fortune to the detriment of other siblings and/or direct heirs. Also, the Iranian criminal code entails the payment of blood money to the Islamic victim of violence/accident or his/her heirs by the perpetrator of the crime. No such allowance is available to the victims of other communities.

A chronological history of Afghanistan and a recount by Sunnu Golwalla of the Karachi citizens' humanitarian aid to the Afghan refugees orchestrated by Cowasjee, make interesting reading.

While Homi Davier documents the establishment of the World Zarathushtri Chamber of Commerce, a 14-page section, "Global gupsup" incorporates news of Zarathushtri activities from Australia, Belarus, Canada, Dubai, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore, UK, USA and Uzbekistan. Readers are requested to communicate local news, with photographs to

Cowasjee <toxy@cyber.net.pk>.

The next issue is slated to carry readers' letters and a short story by outstanding Zoroastrian novelist Bapsi Sidhwa. Cowasjee notes, "hopefully each issue will feature one Zarathushtri author."

Sri Lanka's TT veteran

The team of veteran table tennis players from Sri Lanka, scheduled to tour Germany for a fortnight in April and May and play 10 matches against leading German clubs, had Pesi Pestonjee, former president of the Board of Control for Table Tennis in Sri Lanka, as its chef-de-mission, reported the *Daily News* of Sri Lanka (April 19, 2002) on its sports page. The clipping was sent to *Parsiana* by Colombo's Sohrab Panthaky.

Pestonjee's brief, according to the report, was to get the German clubs to reciprocate the tour by visiting Vanni and northern Sri Lanka to popularize the game and assist schools to obtain the necessary equipment. He was to play competitive table tennis after 35 years, notes the *Daily News*.



Pestonjee: competitive table tennis after 35 years

A top ranking player throughout his career, Pestonjee was the first man to represent Sri Lanka in the World Table Tennis Championships. As president of the Board he took the Sri Lanka team to China and Japan and was instrumental in obtaining all the equipment necessary for staging the SAF (South Asian Federation) games in Colombo with the help of his friend and twice world champion Ichiro Ogimura. The 10 San-Ea tables then acquired are still used for all the major championships in Sri Lanka, notes the article. The newspaper adds that Pestonjee had officiated at the World Championships in New Delhi and was an observer at the Olympic Games in Sydney.

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ministrators," columnist Suman Guha Mozumder quotes New York Governor George Pataki in the cover story in *India in New York* (March 1, 2002).

Senior vice president at the state owned Empire State Development Corporation, Neville Bugwadia has been in



Bugwadia: making the world love New York

charge of the "I love New York" campaign which highlights tourism and business opportunities in the State of New York. Mozumder says Bugwadia's task is "to make the world fall in love with New York," and has a \$40 million fund for this year alone to make it happen.

Spending a substantial part of that budget on TV and print advertising Bugwadia's brief is to reverse the drop in tourism and business since September 11, 2001. "Travel and tourism, in particular are not just the state's second largest industry — they are the premier industry in New York City as well," says Bugwadia.

The "I love New York" campaign is 25 years old and was once described by *The Financial Times*, London, as one of the top 50 brands world wide, writes Mozumder. But to keep the brand fresh, there is need to reinvent the brand, reinvest it with new meaning and make it more relevant to changing consumer behavior, Bugwadia told Mozumder. "One of the ways we did this was by focusing on the attributes and spelling out the attraction and opportunities that people did not previously identify with New York," Bugwadia noted. These he said, included the Niagara Falls and the magnificent landscapes of Western New York apart from the city's skyline, its fine dining and theaters on Broadway.

The son of Phiroj whose family had fled Rangoon, and Khorshed, Bugwadia grew up in Bombay, an alumnus of Campion School and Sydenham College. Though the parents hoped he'd become a chartered accountant, Neville's focus on history, politics and current affairs made him opt for a master's in international affairs from Columbia University financed by the R. D. Sethna Trust and the J. N. Tata Foundation. After his master's he worked for a year at *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) regularly contributing to its editorial page, as notes Priya Ganapati in a side piece based on interviews with

the family.

Following the WSJ stint Bugwadia worked for a few years with an Indian software company, eventually quitting to join a New York based think tank, the Manhattan Institute, where he met and married Cynthia who is currently director of development for the NGO, Sanctuary for Families.

Bugwadia credits his early years in Bombay as "the best education for somebody who would work in New York... It is very similar to New York. There is the same... richness and diversity in both places... Most of my American friends from small towns in the US found it hard to adjust to the pace of life in New York. But I did not have that problem."

When Pataki picked a senior scholar at the Institute to run with him, Bugwadia "saw an opportunity to jump into politics and public life" and joined Pataki's campaign. "To me politics has always been a very honorable profession. Public life, too, has its own appeal," says Bugwadia, bemoaning the fact that the Indian American community has shown little interest in politics. As an instance of the relevance of government to people's lives he notes that Pataki set up a business assistance center within 48 hours of the September 11 attack on New York.

Will Bugwadia take up politics as a full-time profession in future? "I have not quite thought about that as yet," he replied.

Avesta Computing

With a head office at the World Trade Center and branches in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, California and Poona (India), Avesta Computer Services Ltd was ranked 97 on *Inc 500's* 500 fastest growing private companies, writes Roshan Rivetna in *FEZANA Journal* (Winter 2001). Then, on September 11, 2001 founder president and CEO Cyrus Davierwalla and vice president Rushad Cassad saw their office crumble and fall — Davierwalla on a TV screen in Poona; Cassad from their New Jersey office across the Hudson River. Both of them agreed, "It could have been worse; fortunately we did not lose any of our (115) employees to this tragedy."

Relocating some of their employees in New Jersey while some worked from home, "they reconfigured computer, telephone, e-mail and networking systems, restored data from backups kept in the Jersey office and started rebuild-

ing," writes Rivetna.

Financial controller Dadi Sethna, manager resources Farrokh Tuner, senior marketing executive Eric Gagrati, and software engineers Navrooz Irani, Nekzad Shroff and Vispi Patel all work with Avesta. Cyrus Nallaseth handled their immigration and legal work and Rustom Irani and Homsy Patel of RBI Trading helped the young firm stand on its feet — "a great example of Zarathushti businesses helping each other," notes Rivetna.

With its large pool of qualified technical personnel working full-time, Avesta has been able to provide computer consulting services across the US. Its specialized technology and functions have been made available to large corporations for time frames ranging from a couple of weeks to a year, states Rivetna. Availing of Avesta's services



Cassad and Davierwalla: "breathe the effort"

are Cisco, Bank of New York, Apple, JP Morgan Chase, Merrill Lynch, Intel, IBM and AT & T amid a client list of large banks, telecommunications, insurance, pharmaceutical and information technology companies.

With sales booming from \$592,000 in 1995 to over \$13 million in 1999 (which placed them on the *Inc 500* list) by 2000 their revenue figure had stood at \$16 million.

Davierwalla arrived in the US in 1991 for a masters in computer science. Wanting to do something on his own, he gave up the family hotels (Il Palazzo) in Panchgani, Surat and elsewhere, developed contacts in the computer field and started his business in 1994 from his sister's home with a loan from her to buy his first computer. Grateful to his family for helping him out when his bank balance had dwindled to \$80, Davierwalla advises the nascent entrepreneur to "grasp the moment, breathe 'the effort,' cherish your associations and embrace the outcome. (Also) make sure you have enough capital."

continued on page 18

Giving back

Despite bureaucratic hurdles, expatriate Dr Phiroze Hansotia is determined to establish the Nagpur Medical Alumni Association for his alma mater

Dilnavaz E. Bhagwagar

The story of Phil Hansotia could be the story of any one of the hundreds of young, intelligent Parsi boys who go to the USA every year for higher studies.

They usually excel in academics, adapt easily to an American life-style, meet and marry an American girl and make a success of life over there, with occasional bouts of nostalgia for Dadar Parsi Colony, dhansak and dar ni pori.

His story has many parallels to this, but Hansotia wants to

give back to the college, the community and the country of his origin, a measure of what he took out of it in terms of values, education and expertise.

A Bombay boy, Phiroze Hansotia completed his early education from St Mary's High School and later St Xavier's College. Opting for medicine like most brilliant students do, he got admission in the Nagpur Government Medical College. "I have always thanked my stars that I got admission in Nagpur," said the now handsomely graying and bearded Hansotia. "Growing up in a Parsi colony in Bombay was a very insular experience. I was never exposed to the real India of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. My six years at the medical school in Nagpur added a whole new dimension to my understanding and appreciation of our multicultural country."

Hansotia came to Nagpur in 1956 as a freshman and left in 1962 with an MBBS degree in hand and a stetho-

scope around his neck. "The Medical College was young and vibrant, the faculty was excellent," said Hansotia, reminiscing. "Some of the best names

and brains in medicine, like Drs Berry, Dubey, Shridevi, Nargis Dalal were our teachers. Whatever I might have achieved today in the field of neurology, the foundation for it was laid in Nagpur."

Hansotia, MD, FAA, FAEFGS (now retired), is a neurologist of

international fame, with many professional papers and presentations to his credit.

Forty years after having left Nagpur Medical College (he has been back in between), Hansotia returned to Nagpur in January 2002, this time with a fervent desire backed by the ability to give back something to his alma mater. "Experience, equipment, money, it can all be harnessed and ploughed back to the institution for helping today's students," says Hansotia with visible enthusiasm. "Networking" is his mantra and "ploughing back" his mission. "Most of my batch mates are highly successful doctors scattered across USA, Europe and India. I have been able to establish a network to contact and motivate many of them."

Hansotia's biggest hurdle, believe it or not, is not in getting the money but in giving it to government run institutions like the Government Medical College

in Nagpur. There is so much red tape and bureaucracy involved that a less motivated person would have thrown his hands up in despair. "Money or equipment cannot be given to the Medical College of your choice," he was told by officialdom. "It must be given to the State Government, which will decide where it is needed." Meetings with the dean or concerned ministry were delayed or cancelled arbitrarily when he or one of his colleagues had made a special effort to be present for them. After battling with bureaucracy for years, Hansotia has finally on this trip to India been able to lay down the framework for setting up a Nagpur Medical Alumni Association, with the authority to give money, equipment, books and the sharing of experience and expertise with his alma mater.

Hansotia has now retired from active hospital work. Recalling his rise up the medical ladder, he says it was very hard work but it was a labor of love. After his MBBS, he went to Wisconsin, USA to study general internal medicine and neuropathology. He did more than complete his residency at the University of Wisconsin. He met and married Marilyn, an American fellow student. The distinguished doctor actually blushed in describing how he met Marilyn! "A friend and I went on a double date, which is a common thing to do. I found Marilyn more interesting and enjoyable than my own date. Then on, things took their own natural course!"

From USA the young couple moved to London. As registrar of the National Hospital at Queens Square, one of the most prestigious teaching hospitals for neurology, Hansotia immersed himself in some hard and satisfying work. He participated in many training programs for Commonwealth students.

During this time the Indian High Commission in London approached Hansotia to come to India and conduct similar programs. In spite of having an American wife and a four-month-old son, Hansotia was fired with enthusiasm to return to his roots: "I saw myself as a bridge, transferring technology and know-how to young, enquiring minds."

With the assurance of a position at the department of neurology at Grant Medical College, the Hansotia family came to Bombay, the doctor brimming



(L to R): Dr Hema Mankeshwar, previous dean of the Medical College, Hansotia, current dean Ram Ayachid and Hansotia's classmate Dr Mukta Kherdekar



The Hansotia family: Phil and Marilyn (standing) with Eric, daughter-in-law Karrie (center) and Shirene

over with ideals, the wife mildly apprehensive of a new country, culture and baby to cope with. Hansotia worked at a manic pace — four days at Grant Medical College, two days at Bombay Hospital and weekends at Ruby Hall, Poona. "To present a young Indian medical student the opportunity to grow was a challenge to me as a teacher."

At the end of a year however, Hansotia was a disillusioned man. Because of the red tape and obstacles at every step, his interest and desire to work in India, took a sad hammering. Hansotia accepted a position at Marshfield Clinic, Wisconsin and returned to the USA to resume a career in teaching, research and hospital work.

Recalling all of this, Hansotia said, "I have been totally happy in my 30 years at Marshfield and have no regrets." Elaborating upon the success of his present visit, he said, "I am delighted that on this trip to Nagpur, my colleagues and I got some great ideas and good support from the dean's office. I am optimistic that by year end, we will have the Nagpur Medical Alumni Association turn from a long-held dream to reality." When this happens, it will open up endless possibilities for an exchange of ideas, an enrich-

ing of minds and a ploughing back of money, books and equipment to the Nagpur Medical College.

Even a half hour meeting with Hansotia leaves one impressed with the wide and varied range of his interests. "Our family is very tuned to the outdoors. Hiking, biking, camping and horse riding are favorite pastimes." He is absorbed in literature and poetry and collects folktales from around the world. The birds and the bees, the shrubs and the trees are all studied by Hansotia, not as an academic pursuit but to make them more interesting and enjoyable. "Travelling with like minded friends is another thing we enjoy and can do more of, now that I have retired." This October, they are going to Iran.

When asked if being a Parsi meant something special to him or if community and religion were of scant importance, Hansotia asserted, "I am very proud to be a Zoroastrian. My pride stems from our traditions of honesty, generosity and pursuit of excellence. I honor the essential creed of good thoughts, good words and good deeds. I admire the leadership qualities our community has shown in industry, the professions and in social life." On the negative side, he said, "We as a community do have difficulty in accepting others into our fold, our religion. I am not sure I like that. I would hope that our young are focused on values rather than ritual and have a generous, inclusive view of life."

Marilyn and Phil have a married son

Eric, who is the director of the forestry division of the John Deere Corporation and a daughter Shirene who is a policy analyst for the US State Department and an officer at the American Embassy in Ethiopia. Talking of how they brought up the children in an interfaith alliance, Hansotia said, "Both Marilyn and I are very moderate in our views on religion. Our emphasis has always been on human goodness. The children were taught the essentials of both Zoroastrianism and Christianity. They were also exposed to other faiths and taught to respect people's right to choose their own creed."

Hansotia's own early life was greatly influenced by his maternal grandmother Shireen, from whom he imbibed the bedrock values of life. His uncle, Adi Bhathena, with a passion for excellence and a lively interest in everything, also impressed his formative years. In Hansotia's professional career, his role model was a senior doctor he interned with in Iran. "He is dead now but he was the most compassionate and giving person I have known. It pleased him to give his juniors every opportunity to learn and to excel. His encouragement would even extend to paying for students to present a professional paper."

With so many positive influences it is no wonder that Hansotia comes across as a person with a generosity of spirit and a gentleness of being. His world view is summed up thus: "Having gone to a Jesuit school and college in Bombay, then to the Medical College in Nagpur where I learned to appreciate the beauty and depth of both Hindu and Muslim philosophy and then having worked in different continents, I've seen human beings of every stripe. What comes through is, one likes and admires people for what they are as individuals and not for the community or religion they belong to."

ZOROASTRIANS ABROAD

continued from page 16

Hartmarx CEO Patel

Hartmarx Corporation, the Chicago based apparel maker, acquired a Zarathushti chief executive officer in April 2002 when Homi Patel succeeded Elbert O. Hand. Patel who had joined Hartmarx in 1979 as vice president and general manager of the career apparel focused Fashionaire Division of Hart Schaffner and Marx, became Hartmarx president in 1992 and its chief operat-

ing officer in 1993. He was elected to the company's board of directors the following year.



Patel: marketing menswear

Austin Reed of Regent Street and M.

Patel followed his BSc in statistics from the University of Bombay with an MBA from Columbia University. Prior to joining Hartmarx where he led several operating units like

Wile and Company becoming the head of the Men's Apparel Group in 1990, Patel had been marketing director for Corbin Limited in New York.

Married to Anne, the Patels have two sons — Cyrus working for Price Waterhouse in Washington DC and Neville doing his MBA at Wharton — and a daughter Natasha in school, notes the *FEZANA Journal*.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Manna



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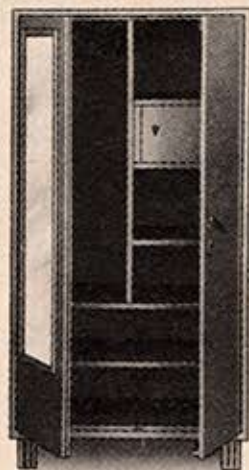
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The *Spark* reignites

Concerted efforts by the city's art lovers resulted in the late sculptor Pilloo Pochkhanawala's creation *Spark* once again gracing Bombay's landscape

Simin J. Patel

"Restraint and release is the life force of all art. *Spark*, which appears spontaneous to you, is ironically the one that has been planned to a very high degree because the material had very little possibility of a dialog." Noted sculptress Pilloo Pochkhanawala had made this revelation during her lifetime, much before her 30-foot high metal sculpture *Spark* disappeared from the city streets in 1992 and reappeared in its new avatar 10 years later.

Originally commissioned for the BEST (Bombay Electric Supply and Transport) Undertaking in 1970, *Spark* graced the traffic island at Haji Ali for over 20 years. As reported in the *Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of February 16, 2002, "She conceived this majestic symbol to typify a 'spark' of electricity. Pochkhanawala spent many hours perched on a ladder at the site welding the steel sculpture together. And thus *Spark* was created — symbolizing a confrontation of manmade metal forged into a symbol of energy with nature and open space." With the removal of the traffic island in 1992 the sculpture was probably sold as scrap or crumbled since it had already rusted in the saline sea breeze. This was probably Bombay's largest and first modern street sculpture, observes Pochkhanawala's nephew Dr Behman Davar. With the efforts of Pochkhanawala's family, the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (HSBC) and some of Bombay's art lovers, a scaled-down replica of *Spark*, four feet wide and 12 feet high, was created.

Saryu Doshi, director of the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) explained that they initially thought of placing the sculpture inside the NGMA, but since the "high railing would not give the sculpture the prominence it deserves," it was placed in the traffic island opposite the NGMA. On February 16, 2002, at a function held at the David Sassoon Li-

brary Garden, Doshi and HSBC chief executive officer Zarir Cama unveiled the sculpture. With the Kala Ghoda Festival and the Picasso exhibition simultaneously running in the vicinity, it was considered perfect timing.

"Though all the traces of the original sculpture were lost, Pochkhanawala's family were in possession of *Spark*'s maquette (a preliminary model in wax or clay), mentions Davar. Using the maquette as a paradigm and under the guidance of Pheroza Godrej of Cymroza Art Gallery, Babulal and Rasik Panchal welded the new sculpture together at their workshop at Ghatkopar. Godrej mentions that it was a "real pleasure" working on the project especially since it was Pochkhanawala's work they were recreating. Pochkhanawala's valuable suggestions had helped her when the Gallery was in its nascent stages, she acknowledges. "Art work should never reach the stage when it needs to be restored," says Godrej, adding "unfortunately there aren't many sculpture restorers in the city." Some of Pochkhanawala's aluminium and stone works are displayed at the Godrej Bhavan, she says.

HSBC was "happy to participate in this project since environment and education are the two principal areas the bank supports," conveyed Malini Thadani, manager, public affairs at HSBC. She mentioned that HSBC maintains almost all the traffic islands around the Regal cinema including the one in which *Spark* stands. "It seemed like a splendid gift to give back to Bombay," declared Cama mentioning that aside from *Spark* the other projects HSBC was sponsoring included the sprucing up of the David Sassoon Library and the Elphinstone College in Bombay, both in the historic Kala Ghoda precinct. A copy of the original maquette, gifted to the bank by Pochkhanawala's family, is on display at their office at Flora Fountain.

Art critic Nikky Ty-Tomkins Seth described *Spark* as "a dynamic explosion of steel rods which radiate outwards and upwards...a shower of electrical impulses made visible by the artist. It is in *Spark* that Pochkhanawala's increasing concern with the interplay of form and space within a preset environment becomes evident. Originally conceived for the Haji Ali Circle at a time when trees and open space still held sway over the area *Spark* forced a startling visual confrontation."

Creating a sculpture in blocks never appealed to Pochkhanawala. "I always follow the feel of the rhythm...a certain rhythm that gathers a cyclic energy is my way of expression," she had explained. In an interview with *Bombay* magazine in 1986 (the year in which she died), she noted, "All my sculptures have met with a bad fate — the one at Haji Ali (*Spark*) has clothes drying on it, while my sculpture at Doordarshan and CEAT too (both presently standing at Worli) have not been maintained properly."

Born in 1923 in Bombay, the self-taught sculptor had spent her early childhood in Zanzibar. In 1951 she went to Europe on a commercial assignment. Then in the advertising field, she had no thought of becoming a sculptor. But while visiting the museums in Europe she was left "mortified by the sculptures" and was "seized by the fear of the challenge of tackling something so difficult." Inspired by the work of leading sculptor Henry Moore, Pochkhanawala was guided in her first explorations by senior sculptor Pansare who let her experiment with whatever material caught her fancy, states S. V. Vasudev in an introduction to a book titled *Pilloo Pochkhanawala*, published by the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.

Tracing the stages of development in Pochkhanawala's artistic career, the period 1958-64 was marked by sculp-

Below: Pochkhanawala;
Bottom (from left) Davar,
Godrej and Cama with
Spark maquette.
Alongside: Spark replica on
traffic island between the
National Gallery of Modern
Art and the Prince of Wales
Museum

Photo: Varghese Fernandez



tures like *Erosion* and *Time Destroys*, reflective of the trying situations she faced in her own life. The depression gave way to hope, confidence and courage — *Spark* and *Ascent* were works of this period. Sculptures like *Embryo* and *Unfolding*, as the titles suggest, “seek the final adoration of art in an attitude of prayer and penance,” writes Vasudev. In the '80s sculpting to her was an act of

meditation since between the idea and the realization there is always a gap which the artist has to keep on filling. With 10 solo exhibitions to her credit, until 1982 her works had been displayed at 19 other exhibitions in India and abroad.

Over a span of 32 years, Pochkhanawala's sculptures embraced a wide range of techniques and material — wood and

stone, cement and steel, dripped lead and terracota, aluminium alloy and bronze, copper and ceramic.

“I think of people not as the masses and the elite, but as those who are responsive or unresponsive to art,” noted Pochkhanawala. “Their social, educational or financial background is of little consequence and has no bearing on their understanding of aesthetics.”

The race to record

Research into the history and culture of Parsis in India could snowball, given the funds

Arnavaz S. Mama

Convinced of the national importance of the material found in the Meherjirana Library (MRL) at Navsari, the National Archives of India and the Gujarat State Archives have recommended a maximum grant of two lakh rupees per annum for three consecutive years to the Parzor (Parsi-Zoroastrian) project which aims to preserve the cultural heritage of Parsi Zarathushtis with UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) support. The amount covers only a part of the resources required to preserve the material at the Library and to put the manuscripts on a digital format for worldwide access, notes the report of Parzor director Dr Shernaz Cama.

"The MRL is not a Parsi Zoroastrian Library alone. (Its documents form) a part of the history of India from very ancient times to the Moghul days," emphasizes Lt Gen (retd) Adi Sethna, Delhi Parsi Anjuman president and Zoroastrian member of the National Minorities Commission, who is a core committee member of the Parzor project. Outstanding original documents of interest to the community that are housed in the MRL include the *sanad* from Moghul Emperor Akbar to the first Dastur Meherjirana granting him lands, letters from Akbar's erudite Prime Minister Abul Fazal and the song, *Mahiyat Khayal*. Composed by the immortal bard Tansen the song celebrates Meherjirana's victory in Akbar's court when the Dastur, after three days of meditation, recited the *Vanant Yasht* and demolished the "second sun" floated in the sky by a dread magician, Sethna told *Parsiana*.

The former military strategist noted that Akbar first came across Parsis during his campaign to conquer Gujarat. Planning to attack Surat from the south, the Emperor had camped in Navsari and was fascinated by Meherjirana. The Persian, Arabic and old Gujarati manuscripts which include the Persian

Rivayats, monajats, medical recipes, books on divination and ancient fairy tales, need restoration after years of neglect and careful preservation in future, notes Cama's report.

With the cooperation of the MRL trustees including Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal and Dastur Meherji Meherjirana, the two advisors on the MRL



(L to R) President K. R. Narayanan, Jungalwalla (partly hidden), Dr Kapila Vatsyayan, Cama and Sethna

project, 90,000 pages of manuscript have been microfilmed on site with the help of two Parsis from Microdata India — Cyrus Patel of Bombay and Viraf Sutaria of Delhi. The duo transported their office staff and equipment to Navsari for the project and are yet to be fully paid for their services, notes Sethna. Honoring the stipulation of the MRL trustees that the material be not commercially exploited, Parzor has nonetheless brought it to the attention of scholars and archivists in India and abroad and Cambridge scholar Aptin Khabagi accessed the MRL microfilms for his research on "Non-Muslims in Medieval Iran: the Cultural and Commercial Activities of Zoroastrians during the Safavid period (1501-1722)."

The six lakh rupee donation from *Gatha* scholar Piloo Jungalwalla of Delhi had enabled Parzor to start work on the monumental MRL collection and to provide a microfilm reader and a photocopying machine at the Library.

The manuscripts, some of them on

birch bark, some with Persian calligraphy lined in gold, deal substantially with the Zoroastrian religion but also include the history of the Moghuls in western India. They need to be deacidified for better preservation and a chamber has to be created for them. Parzor is on the lookout for a person who could be trained for the job by experts at the National Archives.

Few Zoroastrians are aware of the craft and significance of the *sudreh* and *kusti*, symbols of the faith often taken for granted. The intricate, ancient technique of weaving the *kusti* on both, the old and the new looms, has been documented under the joint aegis of Parzor and Ahmedabad's National Institute of Design (NID). Ashdeen Lilaowala of NID worked with weavers to understand the craft and documented their social, cultural, religious and ritual role in a monograph titled *Threads of Continuity*. With over 175 color illustrations and 15 line drawings the monograph has been exhibited at Ahmedabad, Baroda and Delhi, attracting the attention of international textile experts, according to the Parzor report. To publish it as an international quality edition of 1,000 to 1,500 copies Parzor is seeking to raise six lakh rupees to cover the cost.

An even wider research and documentary project on Parsi textiles and embroidery is under way with NID's Priya Mani working under the direction of Viloo Mirza, director of the NIFT (National Institute of Fashion Technology), Gujarat. The accent is on the Parsi adaptation of Indian costumes, including the sari, with borders and embroidery incorporating Chinese and European stitches and motifs.

The three Jokhi brothers (*tan-Choi*) learnt silk-weaving techniques in China before setting up their looms in their native Surat to evolve a fabric — *tanchoi* — which continues to dazzle the fashion world. According to Cama, the

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L to R (1st row): Monaz Variava creating a bead toran; embroidered portrait of Jerbanoo Kanga (courtesy Ava Khullar); two-year-old Tushna Baria modelling a zardozi topi; (2nd row) Meherjirana with his family tree; Farida Jambusarwala at her tanka in Bharuch; mobed Vimadlal pointing to wood carvings in his Bharuch home; (3rd row) Soona Mirza displaying her mother's paan-daan; 100-year-old carved sandalwood casket made by Pesi Pettigara displayed by Naozar Chinoy in Secunderabadi court attire; Sarosh and Piloo Ginwala playing the pedal harmonium in Bharuch

Parzor team was able to locate the original sample pieces of tanchoi with the seal of the family woven into them. On the urging of Mahatma Gandhi and social worker Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay the art had been taught to the weavers of Benares. An illustrated book on Parsi textiles and embroidery is on the Parzor agenda, funds permitting.

Another tangible Parsi heritage is the old *tanka* system of water harvesting whereby rain water was led off the roof through a series of strainers to collect in a clean underground tank. This system was most prevalent in the old houses of Bharuch. The Parzor write-up notes that at its request Rohinton Jambusarwala, an expert in the methodology, shared his knowledge with the NGO Development Alternatives. The latter reported after tests that the water in the *tankas* of Bharuch Parsis met the World Health Organization's standards of purity.

It is, however, the intangible aspects of Parsi heritage which is receiving immediate Parzor attention. Resource people, both priests and laity, are of advanced age and the race to record the knowledge and experience of musicians, artists, medical practitioners and others is a race against time. Manuscripts, paintings, photographs, textiles, jewelry, furniture and artifacts in their possession all have a tale to tell which needs to be recorded. Beginning with the old settlements of Bharuch, Navsari, Surat, Bardoli, Adajan, Bhatha, Suwali, Hajira, Ahmedabad, Baroda, Dahod in Gujarat, and the Hyderabad-Secunderabad region of the Deccan, Parzor's digital archives have lodged 35 hours of Beta-Cam recording and thousands of photographs. For example, the Parsis of Gulbarga, Jalna, Berar and other places of the Deccan established cotton ginning and processing factories, creating vast fortunes and enjoying prominent positions in the local administration and were closely associated with the Nizam's court in Hyderabad. The Parsi women's cars were curtained; they wore zardozi embroidery and Hyderabad jewelry. Their languages were Persian, Urdu and Telegu as well as Gujarati and they enjoyed and patronized the qawali and mujra with the same gusto as the Parsis of Gujarat danced the garba. The greetings "*Khudayaad*" and "*Khudaniya baan*" continue in use in the households there, notes the report.

In Surat, on the festival of Bhai Beej, members of different communities pay

tribute to a pheta taken through the streets in procession. The relic belonged to Sahjanand Maharaj, the first leader of the Swaminarayan sect but is in the possession of the Kotwal family whose brave ancestor, Ardeshir Dhanjisha Bahadur, a Kotwal (equivalent to a police commissioner) of Surat, had rid



Dara Chenai, aged three, offering 'nazar' to the Nizam in 1904

Photo courtesy Soona Mirza

the city of the menace of rural dacoits. Ardeshir earned encomiums from the people and a medal from the British rulers in 1830. The Maharaj, however, showed his appreciation of Ardeshir's courage by taking off his headgear and placing it at the Kotwal's feet. The Swami's homage was cherished by Ardeshir and his family and a regular *aarti* is performed before the sacred relic to this day.

The collected material, documenting diverse community lifestyles and history, is available to scholars and researchers at the Parzor archives in Delhi. Parzor also answers questions on the community to people around the world. Provided free of cost for academic purposes, Parzor maintains its copyright on the photographs and archival material supplied on request. The Parzor website www.unescoparzor.com is constantly upgraded, as per the report.

Each field trip however costs three to four lakh rupees, says Sethna, adding that a field trip to Bombay in October '02 is currently under planning. They

expect to interview a number of people based on their response to the original questionnaire floated by Parzor in 1999 (see "Documenting a lifestyle," *Parsi-ana*, October 1999.) These trips have also revealed the diversity of interests shared by the community. In Baroda, Dara Hakim shared the written account of his father's bicycle journey around the world — a story of escapades and adventures, meetings with kings and presidents with a foreword by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. In Baroda too the Parzor team met the octogenarian Homai Vyarawalla, India's first woman photojournalist and organized an exhibition of her historic photos recapturing the Independence era at New Delhi to coincide with the 40th anniversary celebrations of the Katrak Dar-e-Meher.

Prof Mahesh Champaklal of the Maharaja Sayajirao (MS) University at Baroda and Dr Gopal Shastri have agreed to share their expertise with the Parzor sub-module on Parsi theater coordinated by core committee member Dadi Pudumjee while the MS University's Faculty of Performing Arts and the Yazdi Karanjia troupe will assist in the collection of sets and props. Dr Bharati Modi of MS University, an abridged version of whose doctorate thesis on Parsi Gujarati literature had been published by *Parsi-ana* ("Thus spake Parsis," January 1992), Dr Ratan Marshall, the noted litterateur of Surat and criminal lawyer Kersi Shethna of Ahmedabad are participating in the module on Parsi Gujarati literature coordinated by Dr Mani Kamerkar, vice president of the Asiatic Society of Bombay.

The Parzor study on traditional Zoroastrian medicine led Prof Lokesh Chandra of the International Academy of Indian Culture to explain how Tibetan medicine, especially pulse determination, was influenced by Sasanian Iran. Parsi vads, hakims and hadvads had once been leaders of a profession that is now dying out so Parzor has interviewed and recorded the techniques of the very few who still remain in the field.

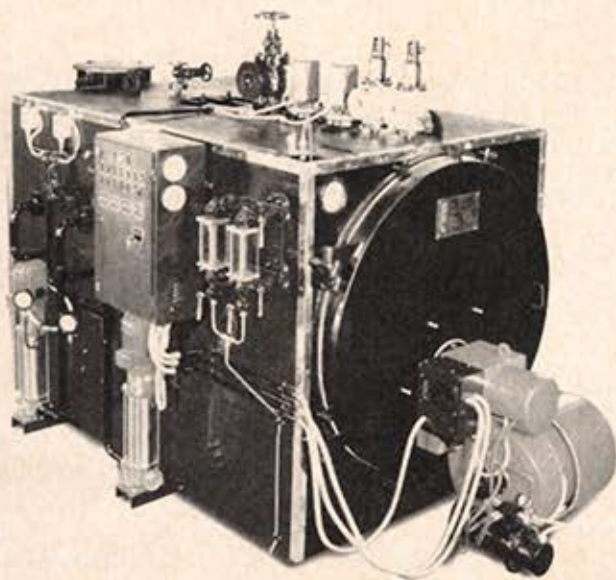
Despite the enormous industrial activity in the Hajira belt of Gujarat, the empty Parsi vads and vadis amid the massive industrial estates of Essar, Kribhco and Reliance testify to the diminution of the community. Why did the villagers leave? Did they just die



out? These questions prompted Parzor to institute a demographic medical module headed by former University Grants Commission chairperson Dr Armaity Desai. The cooperation of the medical fraternity and the Census of India has led to an awareness of the medical problems peculiar to Parsis.

L to R (1st row) Katy Patel weaving a kusti in Navsari; Dr Jarsis Bonesetter, a trained allopath, works with his father as a hadvaid in Baroda (2nd row) Vyarawalla and Contractor of Dahod (3rd row) Jal Khambata of Wadia Theatricals enacting Hamlet (courtesy Shirin Vakili); Hoshang Kotval at a tea ceremony in Japan in 1905 (courtesy Avi Sabavala); (seated on floor) Dr D. N. Wadia, father of Indian geology and Dr Sorabji Shroff, founder of the first charity eye hospital in North India (courtesy Mehru Shroff)

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Using modern genetic methods researchers at the Bombay Hospital, South Gujarat University and the Cancer Research Institute will review each topic in light of the data generated by our small community, the results to be fed into a medical demographic data center. The "predicaments of progress" and their impact on the youth and the aged are being coordinated by TISS (Tata Institute of Social Sciences) in Bombay and Ava Khullar in Delhi. These sociomedical problems of a progressive community — late marriages, infertility, high rates of cancer and neurological illness — will be examined to benefit Parsis as well as to aid other communities in the rapidly changing social structure of India.

The project has spawned a variety of benefits. Apart from the exhibitions at Delhi, Ahmedabad and Baroda, Parzor's "Pictures with a Purpose" was exhibited by UNESCO, New Delhi at its Paris headquarters in 2001 during the UNESCO general council meeting, notes the report. The Government of India is also said to have selected the Parzor project as its candidature file for the international UNESCO award, "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity."

A happy side effect of the project has been the increasing involvement of youth in Ahmedabad, Baroda, Delhi, Dahanu, Bombay and Secunderabad. Offers of help have even come in from young community members in UK and the US. If the initial funds are forthcoming for the printing of books, CDs, etc, revenue in the form of their sale price would enhance the resources available for further research. Cama's urgent appeal for donations to the project may be answered by cheques/drafts made to "UNESCO, New Delhi (Parzor Project)" and despatched to UNESCO House, B5/29, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi 110029 with the envelope superscribed "Attn: Dr Shernaz Cama." The money is audited and allotted by UNESCO as per the requirements of each phase and module, notes Cama's report.

On the Parzor agenda is research into military legends starting with Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw. Sabeena Gadhiok of Jamia Millia University is working on a book on Homai Vyarawalla and her historic pictures.

The Zoroastrians of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are urging UNESCO to term the year 2003 as the 3,000th year of

Zoroastrian culture and are seeking Parzor's support. "There is a tremendous amount of interest in Zoroastrianism all over the world," says Sethna.

Though sensitive to the "penalties of progress" including small families, disease, allergies, infertility and foetal loss, high divorce rates and the problems of

aging ("26 percent of Parsis in India are over the age of 60. Compare that to 12 percent of the general population in the UK and 13 percent in Canada and Europe"), Sethna obviously believes, like Shakespeare, that "There's a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune..."

Why are our numbers declining?

The Parzor module on demography and health is an effort to seek the causal factors behind the community's declining numbers. Coordinated by Dr Armaity Desai, former director of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and former chairperson of the University Grants Commission, it envisages a study of the socioeconomic and attitudinal factors impacting the community as well as clinical research to understand how and to what extent genetic factors are responsible for the hypertension, cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis, sterility and foetal loss, etc that cloud the Parsi healthcare.

The socioeconomic and attitudinal study has been roughly compartmentalized into family, youth and aging, the first two to be undertaken by two researchers at TISS. It is meant to provide an in depth indication as to how the community perceives problems of the family, of children, of old age, of delays in marriage. The study will be both qualitative and quantitative, says Desai, the former with discursive interviews, the latter with a questionnaire followed by very structured interviews. For example, youths and young adults will be asked a range of questions regarding education, employment, marriage, etc.

The census commissioner of the Government of India has undertaken to organize the study on aging, using the census data from all over India. This will probably be in the latter half of the decade when the census office normally undertakes small studies, says Desai.

The medical component will examine issues relating to the molecular, cellular and genetic composition of the community. Desai hopes that these studies including blood, tissue samples, etc could be housed in a central data bank, accessible to scientists — both Parsi and non-Parsi, from India and abroad. The clinical as well as the social data could prove useful to other communities that face similar problems. A better

understanding of the diseases borne by the community could lead to a more healthy aging process, to action programs for target groups and to the provision of requisite services, she adds.

With the limited sponsorship available so far, efforts are underway. But research is a costly process and Desai hopes that individuals and trusts will come forward to sponsor these programs. If funding for a central facility is available full-time staff could generate analyses and spread the available information by publishing small pamphlets, she notes.

Having studied the immuno-genetic aspects of breast cancer in Indian women for four to five years, Dr Narendra Joshi seeks to confirm his data by studying a "genetically distinct and homogenous community," the Parsis. Though the incidence of breast cancer in Parsi women is relatively higher, "it is not an alarming situation," he says. He notes that he chose to work with Parsis because they are "easy to identify and being more progressive are that much more cooperative."

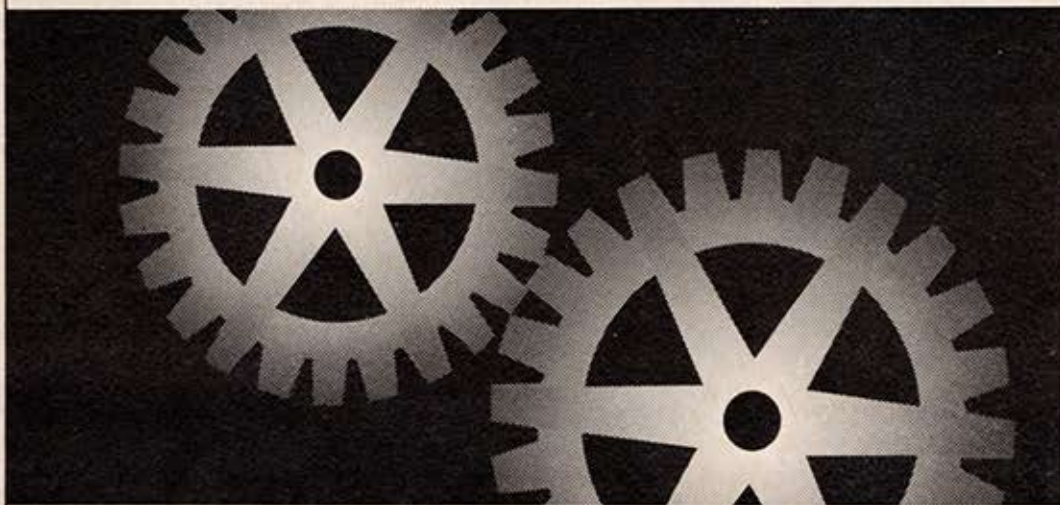
Joshi's three year project, funded by the Lady Tata Memorial Trust and supported by Parzor, targets a comparative study of 50 patients aged 65 or less who have been diagnosed after June 2000 against a control group of 200 healthy women (30-65 years).

There is a "suggestive possibility that breast cancer patients could have a genetic make up that contributes to a reduction in their immunity to cancer," says Joshi. The project involves the study of white blood cells vis-à-vis related genes. For this Joshi needs about 20 cc of venous blood.

Those willing to volunteer for a project that could generate a permanent data base for the community may contact Joshi at his office at the Tata Memorial Centre (4123803 ext 208) or at home (5400398) or email him at narennjoshi@yahoo.com. Joshi assures confidentiality to the participants.

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

- Booker T. Washington



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The tenor of Bejun

His perfect pitch, versatility and dramatic presence have rapidly made countertenor Bejun Mehta an international star

Hilla P. Guzder

As a boy soprano, his dulcet voice had set audience spirits soaring. At age 14, for his first solo compact disc (CD) *Bejun* on the Delos label Bejun Mehta won approbation and applause, including the coveted "Debut Recording Artist of the Year" from *Stereo Review*.

When his voice broke a year later, triumph gave way to tribulation. For a while, his life centered around the cello. He graduated from Yale University magna cum laude in 1990 with distinction in Germanic languages and literature. He conducted, he won a Grammy in 1998 as a producer in the recording studio for his production of cellist János Starker's recording of Bach's *Six Suites*. After a seven-year interval he took to singing once again, in what he himself termed a "pleasant" baritone voice. But the inner restlessness persisted till one day in November 1997 he chanced to read an article on the well-known countertenor David Daniels. Struck by the similarity to his own life, Mehta decided he had nothing to lose by trying to sing countertenor — and finally found his voice!

The countertenor, first popularized by Handel and other baroque composers, sings in a high range, equivalent to that of a female alto, using a highly developed falsetto. (It's a contemporary version of the castrato voice, which is to say it's natural, no surgery required.) "It's a freaky thing — certain people can

do it, certain people can't," Mehta stated on the program "The Countertenor," 60 Minutes II aired in January 2002 on CBS television. "I don't sing like a woman. My voice comes out like a woman, in that range."

Currently one of the most bankable voices in the business, Mehta's operatic assignments over the past four years have seen him perform on stage in all parts of the USA, in London, Vienna, Paris, Frankfurt, Brussels, Venice, Sydney... Writing from New York in *Opera News* (May/June '99) critic Matthew Gurewitsch stated: "His registers are seamless, from the bell-like top... down to low notes that are rich and sensuous. Equally remarkable are his sheer power and his expressive freedom... Among the remarkable crop of new countertenors, Mehta takes his place in the very front ranks."

"Mehta cultivates his chest voice and gets astonishing results. The voice never sounds forced, but big, round and

full — like crescendo up the scale, right up to the top — like a diva. His strength lies in the lyrical and dramatic, as the young singer proved with his rendition..." notes a translation of a review in German, forwarded by ICM Artists Ltd of New York, of Mehta's European debut, where he sang in Vienna and Frankfurt as a last minute replacement for the indisposed star Daniels. "At first disapproving noises could be heard from the audience... but the discontent was quickly dispelled."

During the 2000-2001 season, Mehta made yet more prestigious debuts. States the *New York Times Magazine* of March 4, 2001: "The Los Angeles Opera is currently putting on a much-awaited production of Handel's *Giulio Cesare* (Julius Caesar) that features possibly the three best countertenors in the world: Daniels, David Walker and Mehta. Mehta... is the youngest (in his early 30s) and the least experienced of the three, but his sound may be the most beautiful and dramatic. His story is one you could write an opera about." That concert season also saw Mehta play the part of Ottone in the Netherlands Opera's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and Farnace in The Santa Fe Opera's production of *Mitridate*.

The following season Mehta returned to the Théâtre du Châtelet as Masha in *Three Sisters* and as the Voice of Apollo in *Death in Venice* at the Teatro Comunale di Firenze in Italy. This year Mehta makes his Metropolitan Opera debut in New York as Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and at the San Francisco Opera as Tolomeo in *Giulio Cesare*.

His datebook is full and includes debuts at the Edinburgh Festival, the Paris Opera, etc. His piercing blue eyes, "close-shaved



Mehta (above and seated alongside) with soprano Lisa Saffer in Handel's *Ariodante*. Photo: Carol Rosegg, courtesy New York City Opera

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"COMPANIONS IN CONNECTIVITY..."

head and Parsi ancestry (give) him the look of a Himalayan ascetic," comments *Town and Country* in its profile on Mehta. Notes *Financial Times* (December 18-19, 1999): "He demurs from talking about God-given gifts," though he believes that every time someone sings beautifully "it's a miracle."

When younger, Mehta was greatly interested in visiting India, the land of his forefathers, "but my father (Dady) discouraged me, he himself having few fond memories of his home country. Now it's a matter of scheduling — it's almost impossible to find a suitable length of time for such a journey," writes Mehta in his e-mail response to *Parsiana's* queries. Believing Zoroastrianism to be "a tolerant faith," Mehta notes: "I believe there must be some spiritual center to life... In principle there are good aspects to many organized religions but in practice it seems most of them break down in some way, many horribly... too much of the evil in the world has been committed in its name."

Strongly moved even as a child by the Muse within him (the inner world of his musical sensibilities), Mehta recounts in the chapter "A Process of Prodigy" the traumas and triumphs of growing up as a prodigy. The chapter forms the epilogue of Claude Kenneson's book *Musical Prodigies: Perilous Journeys, Remarkable Lives* first published in 1998 by Amadeus Press. (The book was first brought to *Parsiana's* attention by Bombay solicitor Keki Mehta of Payne and Company. *Parsiana* also acknowledges the lead provided by Rusi Kapadia of Poona who put us in touch with ICM Artists.)

(Above) Mehta and Saffer Photo: Carol Rosegg, courtesy New York City Opera and with Celena Shafer in Mozart's *Mitridate*. Photo: Ken Howard, courtesy The Santa Fe Opera

Born on June 29, 1968 in the little North Carolina town of Laurinburg, Mehta moved as a small boy with his family to Ann Arbor, Michigan. His Bombay-born father Dady (who is Zubin Mehta's cousin, Dady's father Nariman and Zubin's father Mehli being brothers) lived in India before he left the country to study the piano in Paris and Vienna. Dady later played and taught in North Carolina and at the Eastern Michigan University, having concertized and taught in Europe as well. Bejun's mother Martha was born in Pennsylvania and was his first voice teacher. Martha received her vocal training in Vienna with the celebrated Elisabeth Rado. Bejun's

older brother Nuvi (Navroj) is an accomplished violinist and conductor who studied with Joseph Gingold at Indiana University, with violin virtuoso Nathan Milstein and at the Juillard School. 'Regulars' on the concert stage, harmony and counterpoint, melody and polyphony are at the core of Mehta family life.

Bejun's first musical memories, as he narrates them in his autobiographical sketch, are from the time he crawled around under his dad's piano, gazing in amazement at the struts and sounding board while his father practised. Later, it was on the piano stool, on his father's lap with Dady slowly striking the keys, that Bejun imbibed the beginnings of voice leading, counterpoint, and a good deal of music theory. "While my father showed me very specific things about the piece at hand, he also showed me how much he loved music, and by sharing these things, how much he loved me... I also realized that a truly wonderful thing about having grown up in our family, given my particular gifts, was that there was an atmosphere in which you knew that artistic things were noble."

As a baby, Bejun was ironically non-

verbal, till a fall from his high chair and the resulting smack on the head on the kitchen table seemed to loosen the floodgates of speech! Words soon gave way to song: "Nuvi, who is five years older, recalls many an afternoon trying to do his homework while I was embarked upon what he has since affectionately named 'Opera for One.'" Singing was spontaneous for Bejun — he would sing every part from an opera recording, circling the kitchen table ("our home had a big resonant



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kitchen") for hours on end, till he was hoarse! He sang in the car; tunes bubbled in his throat even during independent work time in school, prompting his teacher to ask his parents to "talk to him about this." His parents, of course, did not talk to him about it at all!

"When it became apparent that school presented me little challenge...

my parents were quite free about letting me find my own way to do things that did engage me. My mother, particularly, was just as happy to have me at home with a serious book in hand, or Beethoven on the turntable, than in school every single day." This freedom also marked Martha's early stewardship of his voice — a "gentling" of him along his own path. "I also sensed that somehow I was substantially different from everybody else, and that made me quite lonely at times."

At five, his first stage experience was as a little Siamese child in a local high school production of *The King and I*. At six, he was singled out for a small part in the University of Michigan's production of Puccini's *La Bohème* — singing solo all of seven notes! "Between the ages of five and 10, my singing was very free and easy. I never really thought or worried about anything" — till one day a woman in the audience came backstage in tears, crying because she couldn't get over the beauty of his voice! "It was the first time I realized that what I was doing onstage could have a serious effect on people." It increased his joy, yet heightened his isolation.

At 12, Bejun was reengaged as a soloist for a series of Handel's *Messiah* concerts, having sung the same series the year before, with a 200-strong choir, orchestra, in front of a 5,000-strong audience! In 1983, the recording of *Bejun* preserved for posterity his vocal tapestry in songs by Schubert, Brahms, Britten, Handel...

At 15, he faced what was for a boy soprano the peril of puberty — he could no longer sing like a little angel. At nine, at his parents' suggestion, he had begun casting about for an instrument to play. "After a brief contretemps (struggle) with the French horn, a battle I quite lost, ... (I

settled on the cello." He left home at 16, to study the cello in New Haven with Aldo Parisot. As a member of the Yale Cellos, in 1986 in the University's Sprague Hall 35 cellists, all students of Parisot, recorded a new CD for Delos that included Bejun's arrangement for solo cello and ensemble of Sergei Rachmaninov's *Vocalise, Opus 34, No 14*. In 1990 he

graduated from Yale. By then, his musical life in New Haven had carried him to the conductor's podium, coaching for a while with legendary conductor Leonard Bernstein.

At the recording studio, his production of cellist János Starker's *A Tribute to David Popper* was nominated for a Grammy Award in '89, and in 1998 he won a Grammy for Starker's recording of Bach's *Six Suites*. Bejun's CD reissue productions for Sony Classical numbered several hundred; he won acclaim for his work on the "Masterworks Heritage" and "Essential Classics" series. Bejun Mehta Productions Inc, his own classical audio production company, linked him to many outstanding classical artists.

In 1991, he began singing again as a baritone, performing as soloist and recitalist. But it was "decidedly average," Bejun told his CBS interviewer. "I had never been average, it was not (a) great (feeling)." In 1997, admitting defeat, he stopped singing for six months, sitting lonely and despondent in front of the telly, soap opera filling the empty space in his life. "I was broke, depressed and going nowhere," he said, till the article on Daniels and his own assessment of his countertenor singing spurred him to contact his friend and mentor — Metropolitan mezzo Marilyn Horne who presented him in concert under the auspices of the Marilyn Horne Foundation. "He sang this extraordinary, really fast coloratura (with ornamental trills and runs) aria... It was like a star had arrived," the prima donna told CBS.

Finding the present success and popularity of countertenor singing "incredibly exciting" and predicting countertenors to be the superstars of the future Bejun stated: "Ten years from now you wouldn't be doing this story because there would be no story!"

"I realized that
a wonderful thing
about our family was
that there was an
atmosphere in which
artistic things
were noble"

Transporting a business

Treading a solo road on her father Jal's demise in 1996, Yasmin Mistry has chosen to put into high gear Mistry Transport Service, a trucking enterprise founded by her paternal grandfather Minocher more than half a century ago. "My father was only 53 years old when he died. He had not been keeping well and so had considerably reduced the level of our business," Yasmin states.

His early death threw his family — consisting of wife Arnavaz, noted social worker, and young daughters Yasmin and Mehroo — into a dilemma. Should the business be shut down or should the family try to make a go of it? "Managing a transport company is a trying task even for a man," asserts Arnavaz. Yasmin was only 22 at that time, but "with her grit, undaunting spirit and astute judgment," she self-started the business, even bringing back many old clients, commends the mother. "We had absolutely no knowledge of the business as Dad would not let us come anywhere near, believing that it was not a job for ladies," remarks Mehroo (now Turel). "It was my personal decision," adds Yasmin. "I decided to give it a shot. If I were successful, well and good, if not I would have taken it in my stride."

Within three years, she had set up two business operation units with a working force of 20 office employees and 100 on her fleet payroll, elucidates Arnavaz. Running a company with around 50 trucks (including trailers) and tankers which convey a variety of freight from the docks to different destinations in Bombay, Yasmin is reportedly the only Parsi lady sole proprietor of a trucking business. Transportation to upcountry destinations is under consideration as a future possibility, specifies Yasmin.

Igniting the positive spark, Yasmin dismisses the difficulties associated with the running of the enterprise. Yes, of course there are day-to-day problems, she says. "The business environment we are in is somewhat different. Drivers/cleaners are not educated people, so one has to be realistic and practical." Being a woman employer does not make a substantial difference, she believes. "I do supervise personally, but I delegate as well. Ours is a combined effort. I

would say I've been lucky. If the people around you are nice, things fall into place. At the end of the day there is no difficulty that cannot be surmounted. It has to be smooth sailing," she declares.

An ex-student of J. B. Vachha High School at Dadar, Yasmin did her BCom from Sydenham College and her MCom from Bombay University. Her range of interests included being captain of the Dadar Parsi Colony volleyball team, playing badminton and other indoor games. Starting off by taking part in intercollegiate beauty contests, Yasmin took to ramp modelling and her career gathered momentum when she was selected for prestigious advertising campaigns for Godrej's Fresca soap, Hindustan Lever's Sunsilk, Raymond, etc. She was on the verge of signing up for two movies when her father's demise decelerated all these activities. "My father always wanted me to be an IAS (Indian Administrative Service) officer. I wanted to be a lawyer!" laughs the lady who says she loves to read astrology and believes in the stars, and who likes making good friends. "Yasmin made a lot of personal sacrifices, giving up modelling and spending a lot of time understanding the business," remarks Mehroo, a Tata Administrative Service officer, now with Tata Interactive Systems.

"I have absolutely no regrets," Yasmin maintains. "If you sit down with regrets, you'll never move forward. I live with the present." Challenges mold people into becoming stronger, she avers, citing the example of her mother who chooses to go out of her way to perform magnanimous ministrations when there is no compelling reason for her to do so. "It is very easy to sign a donation cheque. It is very difficult to execute the charity and to do the kind of work she voluntarily does at the Parsee Ward at the J. J. Hospital, the Ackworth Leprosy Home, the Don Bosco Shelter for street children, the Kamala Mehta blind school, the Jai Vakeel School for children in need of special care, the Young Rathestars where she is currently president, etc. I am really proud of her," states Yasmin.

Yasmin can be contacted at Mistry Transport Service, tel: 4139206 at Dadar.

Enchanted by embroidery

As a mother of two children aged four

and one, she joined Sophia's B. K. Somani Polytechnic in 1997 for a three-year full-time diploma course in Dress Designing and Garment Manufacturing. Adjudged the best seamstress for each of the three years, Zenobia Davar stood first at the final year technical board exam in the year 2000.

"On the basis of my work, Bridal Asia selected me to participate in their annual exhibition in Delhi," states Davar, fashion designer and consultant who specializes in fashion wear and embroidery under the label ZS. "I was given one of the largest stalls and 30 of my Indo-Western trousseau and wedding outfits were displayed — saris, kurta with pant, long skirt with zardosi blouse, and so on with matching shoes, purses and other accessories," she narrates.

Taking orders for the embroidering of wedding and other saris, Davar explains that it takes two-four weeks for her *karigars* (artisans) to complete a bridal sari. "I make my own designs and have many embroidered samples ready — we work on lace, or georgette or whatever the customer desires." Costs depend upon the embellishments on the sari with pure silver/zari work enhancing price and allure. "We repair and restore old korts too," she states.

Running her business from her home in Parel behind Haffkine Institute, Davar is appreciative of the support and guidance given by husband Shahrookh, an interior decorator who operates under the name Zenrookh (a combination of both their names, she elucidates) Constructions, dealing also in the restoration of old buildings. "It was my mother-in-law Khorshed who, seeing my love for designing and embroidery, suggested I do a professional course, despite the fact that son Shahzen (now nine) and daughter Zenrookh (now six) were already born," Zenobia commends her husband's mother. Baby girl Zeshah arrived last year. Zenobia also tailors children's garments, cholis, etc, emphasizing that she does all the cutting herself to ensure a good fit.

Savoring the creative and eager to learn, as a Camlin Club member Zenobia joins Camlin's courses whenever they launch a new product — be it fabric painting, sculpturing (making a figure with m-seal and painting it), stained



Mistry Transport Service (far left) and proprietor Yasmin Mistry; Zenobia Davar (below, inset) and models displaying her creations

School, Zenobia did her BCom from Lala Lajpatrai College, and a secretarial course at Davar's College, working with an advertising agency for three years before marriage and motherhood beckoned. "I sat and embroidered my own wedding sari," she smiles. With a house, three children and a business to manage, Zenobia has her task cut out but "I'm very happy with what I have." Zenobia can be contacted on tel nos 4125073, 4139107, 4106568. E-mail: bdavar@vsnl.com

Compiled by Hilla P. Guzder

glass painting, etc.

It was Zenobia's artistic expressions at the Tvashtar 2000 fashion show (where commercial and avant-garde bridal outfits designed, embroidered and stitched by the final year students themselves are showcased by professional models) that captured the limelight. Choosing the theme "Vivacious Venus," for the commercial garment section Zenobia created a two-piece bridal outfit in silver lame and silver net, the front yoke studded with swarovski crystals giving a gradation effect, the back richly embroidered like a bouquet of flowers, incorporating silk skeins, rainbow cord,

chenille (soft tufted silk or cotton cord), transparent glass beads, pearls and swarovski crystals. Since avant-garde designing entails the use of materials like plastic, metal, etc for impractical garments (not for daily use), Zenobia derived her inspiration from a plastic tablecloth with a lacy look, on a shiny base. The skirt's hooped, billowy effect was achieved with galvanized and plastic stiff wire and plastic sleeve, the ethereal aura of Venus being created by the use of colored LED (light emitting diode) bulbs under the skirt, as well as on the veil.

After her schooling at Dadar's J. B. Vachha High



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"A willingness to learn"

Solicitor Dadi Engineer pursues his BPP involvement into his second term on the board of trustees

Arnavaz S. Mama

"If the members of our community make a firm resolve to try and appreciate the other person's point of view and make a determined effort to resolve controversies as quickly as possible, I think the community will make considerable progress in the years to come," says Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustee Dadi Engineer on the eve of his second term on the board beginning July 11, 2002.

Announcing his intention to stand for reelection months ahead of the nomination deadline of April 10, the astute lawyer has walked back unopposed onto the BPP board for a second seven-year term. A senior partner in the law firm Crawford Bayley and Company, the witty Engineer is an acknowledged expert in the field of excise and customs over his 45-year forensic career and is chairman/director of several public and private limited companies. Like other solicitors on the BPP board before him, filtering the Punchayet's problems and decisions through his legal acumen has been Engineer's most potent contribution to its affairs.

Ready to take the "same balanced, practical and result oriented approach" in his second term, Engineer has been emboldened to seek more active involvement in housing as a recently inducted member of the Punchayet's housing committee.

The Punchayet's housing policy has been the perennial eye of the storm; only the players and venue have changed. Through the 1970s and 1980s the late advocate Ardeshir Katrak and solicitor Rustam Gagrati had hauled the BPP board over the coals with their letters to *The Bombay Samachar*. It is now the turn of the Alert Zoroastrians Association and the *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly* to do so. With 1,600 on the waiting list, the point at issue is the current policy of providing community housing on a leave and license basis

against refundable interest free security deposits. This has been criticized as a slant in favor of the affluent and that this is being done without the permission of the charity commissioner.

"The position is that a lease of premises exceeding a certain period requires the sanction of the charity commissioner. This is not so in the case of a leave and license agreement," Engineer demolishes the second point of criticism.



Engineer: "balanced, practical approach"

As for the first, Engineer states that it is the average middle class — dispersed all over Bombay in large flats — who take advantage of this policy to sell their cosmopolitan housing at a premium, reinvesting a part of the proceedings in a refundable deposit with the BPP. Such families enjoy the dual advantage of raising their children in a Parsi ethos as well as saving a few lakh rupees.

Reviewing the genesis of the policy Engineer explains that a refundable deposit is sought mainly in the case of transfer of tenancy of tenanted and occupied flats. This precludes the "lengthy and expensive litigation" when BPP tenants wrongly induct a third party into the flat. "Vacant flats in the BPP's possession are, by and large, given to merit rating applicants without any deposit (except for large and valuable flats)," he maintains.

Moreover, the MHADA (Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority) Act, currently being contested by landlords in the Supreme Court, would entitle tenant occupants to take over their accommodation in charity buildings for paltry sums. Hence, "leave and license arrangements have

to be resorted to in order to safeguard invaluable trust property," notes Engineer. It is easier and more expeditious for the BPP to terminate a license when a licensee defaults, he adds. The deposits also contribute to the liquidity of the BPP when the prevailing low interest rates have curtailed the trust's income even as growing inflation and cost factors have increased the financial burden of its many social activities. "The current deficit in respect of the Doongerwadi property alone is to the tune of approximately Rs 90 lakhs," he cites as an example.

With the exception of Rs 25,000 donations sought for the Jokhi Agiary at Godrej Bungalows in some cases, "over 600 allottees on our waiting list (have been accommodated) without any transfer fees, donation or deposit on the basis of merit rating or donors' recommendations... Only about 60 flats have been allotted or transferred on the basis of a refundable security deposit and most of them have been flats once occupied by legal tenants who may have expired with sundry successors claiming the flat or who may have inducted an occupant illegally," says Engineer, claiming a 10:1 ratio in favor of "the needy and the deserving."

Engineer, who along with his colleagues Minoo Shroff, Silloo Kavarana and Dinshaw Mehta hails from the CER (originally the Committee for Electoral Rights, rechristened the Committee for Economic Revival), explained the CER concept of the "Robin Hood approach" on housing. The idea is to accumulate funds by providing housing to the affluent and the middle class which can be used to provide accommodation to the genuinely poor. "Due to the recent availability of funds... we have purchased the Nirlon property at Goregaon (E) for Rs 6.5 crores where we ultimately intend to house about 150 to 200 poor and needy Parsi families without any de-

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HISTORIC BOOK RELEASE FUNCTION – KHORDEH AVESTA IN TAJIK-RUSSIAN CYRILLIC SCRIPT – 26TH MAY 2002.

For several thousands of years, the books of Avesta containing the sacred wisdom and knowledge about the Mazdayasnie Zarathushtrian Daena, were being laboriously copied generation after generation, in different scripts. After Parsis came from Iran to India, over a thousand years ago, they started using the script in common use on the West Coast of India – Gujrati. Over time period of centuries even the Parsi priests and mostly all the Behdins were accustomed to reading Avesta Prayers in Gujrati script. During the 20th Century, Parsi Community became more familiar with the use of English Script and Avestan Prayer books were published in both Gujrati and English/Roman Script, and these are in common use at present.

Since the independence of the Republics of the former USSR about 10 years ago, which for thousands of years formed part of Aryana Vaeja and Olde Iran Empires, there is a revival and upsurge for Avesta Prayers to be taught to the people. The need is being felt in these countries to have the Khordeh Avesta book and other Avestan Texts, easily available to the people, to enable them to pray easily from books in their own familiar languages.

Prof. **RUSTOM K FUZAYLOV**, a Zoroastrian from Tajikistan, Head of English & Foreign Languages Dept. of Technological University of Tajikistan, Khujand was willing to come to India to the Zoroastrian College for the purpose of writing the **FIRST EVER KHORDEH AVESTA IN TAJIK RUSSIAN CYRILLIC SCRIPT**.

Zoroastrian College **THANKS ALL THE KIND PERSONS** who have given donations to both **MAZDAYASNIE MONASTERIE AND SHAH BEHRAM BAUG SOCIETY**, to enable Prof. Rustom Fuzaylov to come to India for this great work, and for enabling the book to be completed in record time and released on 26th May morning at the Russian Cultural Centre. Special thanks

to all the good persons in U.S.A. & Canada, who contributed financial support for this project; and especially in India Mr. Nar y man Dubash, Mr. Jamshed Guzder, The Sir Ratan Tata Trust, and many kind persons including Dr. Faram and Mrs. Gulistan Irani, Mr. Soli Morris, and others, Zoroastrian College Faculty Members especially Prof. Sam Doctor, Mr. Rustom Chothia, Dr. Homi Press, and other persons including Mrs. Homai Billimoria, Mrs. Dinoo Cooper, Mrs. Shirin Faramarzi, Mr. and Mrs. Jal and Roda Sarkari, Mr. Rohinton Billimoria, Dr. Dara Rupa and especially the Zoroastrian College Staff and helpers including Mr. Siddharth Desai, Mr. Dara Meherji, Ms. Khurshid Cooper, Mrs. Felicia Fernandes, Mr. Babu and Mr. Navin, Ervad Yazdi Karanja, amongst many others.

THE BOOK RELEASE FUNCTION was held at the Russian Cultural Centre, Mumbai on 26th May 2002. **CONSUL MAREK A. MORON**, the Consul for Poland, released the book as Chief Guest. Speeches were made by the co-editors – Prof. **RUSTOM K. FUZAYLOV** & Dame Dr. Prof. **MEHER MASTER-MOOS**, and by Guests of Honour, Mr. **DADIENGINEER**, Mr. **SOLI MORIS**, Mrs. **SHIRIN FARAMARZI**, and by **ZOROASTRIAN COLLEGE** Faculty Members, Prof. **SAM DOCTOR**, Prof. **MEHER PAVRI** & Mr. **RUSTOM CHOTHIA**, Mr. **ESPHANDIYAR ARYA MEHR** of Tajikistan and Ms. **KHURSHID COOPER**.

The book is available in printed format and CD/Floppy for computers from Mazdayasnie Monasterie office. **ENGLISH EDITION OF THE BOOK IS TO BE RELEASED DURING JUNE – JULY 2002.** The book of **YASHTS**, in two volumes is under preparation.



Consul for Poland, Mr. **MAREK A. MORON**, releasing the 'KHORDEH AVESTA' BOOK with Zoroastrian College President, Dr. **MEHER MASTER-MOOS**, & Prof. **RUSTOM FUZAYLOV**.



Release of the CDs and Floppy edition of the **KHORDEH AVESTA** in Tajik Russian Cyrillic Script with illustrations.



Mr. Dadi Engineer, WZO representative in India and Bombay Parsi Punchayat Trustee at the Book Release Function, with Consul Marek Moron, Dr. Meher Master-Moos, Prof. Rustom Fuzaylov, Esphandiyar Arya Mehr, Mr. Soli Morris with Mrs Shirin Faramarzi being garlanded by Mr Siddharth Desai with Mr Jal Sarkari looking on.

posit or donation," affirms Engineer. The BPP has also negotiated the purchase of a plot in Panthaki Baug for three crore rupees, he adds.

The BPP's strident critics have spurred it to establish a Housing Advisory Committee

(HAC) comprising well-known community members to advise and guide the trustees in cases where allotment of flats are to be made against interest free security deposits. After the HAC's first meeting it has been decided that particulars of flats offered by occu-

pants for transfer would be published in the Parsi Press without mentioning the occupant's name or flat number. Notices regarding the same would also be put up in the baugs and colonies. "This would ensure that the best possible price, in keeping with market trends," would be available to the transferor though factors such as need and circumstances would also get due consideration. The role of the HAC however is a recommendatory one, the final decision resting with the BPP trustees.

The BPP's other current bugbear has been Doongerwadi. The gloom and controversy generated by the vanishing vultures has been much lifted by the success of the solar panels. While the ozone plant to eliminate the odor of decay and the sprinkling of chemicals to aid disintegration of the bodies have had limited effect, the concentration of the sun's rays through concave reflectors has reduced the period of drying up a body to skeleton to about three and a half days in dry weather and about 10 or more during the monsoon, informs Engineer. Hence the four solar concentrators in operation on the Sethna dakhma are scheduled to be augmented with others over the Anjuman dakhma after the monsoon. The third phase would include the Bisni dakhma. "Once 12 or 13 solar concentrators are fully functional, we feel that the problem will be resolved to a considerable extent," says Engineer.

The Banaji dakhma has been tentatively identified as the site for the proposed vulture aviary and after consultation with naturalist Rishad Naoroji of

Godrej, Maneck Engineer (also of Godrej) is working on a cost analysis and blueprint for the project which is the brain child of Zoroastrian Studies founder Khojeste Mistree. Mistree and ornithologist Jemima Parry-Jones of UK

are the other experts the BPP consults. Each aviary is expected to cost over one crore rupees, says Engineer. The running cost of the project is estimated at Rs 25 lakhs each year. Nonetheless, Engineer considers it "a step in the right direction in as much as it would be con-

ducive to the disposal of the dead by the time-honored and conventional system of disposal which is enjoined by our religion."

Despite four CER trustees now on the board, the question of electoral rights seems to have been relegated to the back burner. Two BPP trustees — Rustom Tirandaz and Mehta — have been proponents of universal adult franchise. Engineer, who says he has "always been in favor of the concept," would not however sidestep the rights of donors.

Accordingly, an interim measure has been filed since 2000 for approval with the Bombay High Court, replacing the 1:1 ratio of elected to donor members by a ratio of 2:1. Engineer, who is the architect of this revision, states that the scheme is sub judice. In the meantime the present Anjuman Committee (AC) has outlived its seven-year term. The current AC, which was elected in December 1992, will be deciding four more trusteeship elections in the months ahead.

Administrative procedures on election day had generated much heat and unhappiness during the last election. Parsiana's query and request for a level playing field between a sitting trustee seeking reelection and his challenger, evoked the response, "Speaking for my-

self, we will try to even further streamline the election day procedures so that the scope for controversy is minimized."

Though Engineer feels the need to support community entrepreneurs and is a member of the venture capital committee, there has been no substantial progress on that front with its fund restricted to the 20 lakh rupee contribution from the BPP. Speaking of other community bodies with which he has been associated Engineer, who has been the president of WZO (India) from its inception, says, "We are not interested in any religious or other controversies. All we are seeking to achieve is the socioeconomic uplift of the Zoroastrian community... I see no conflict whatsoever between my duties as a BPP trustee and my association with the WZO." He further notes, "On the aspect of the formation of a world body, I believe the matter has progressed considerably and a possible solution may not be far."

As for the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India whose executive committee meets twice a year, Engineer feels that a streamlined procedure with adequate time allotted to focused discussion on important issues facing the community would make the body more effective.

President of the All India Bank Depositors' Association and vice president of the Forum of Free Enterprise,



With wife Silloo on their anniversary

Engineer is an authoritative commentator on the annual union government budget from the viewpoint of indirect taxation. High flying rotarian and freemason, past president of the Bombay Gymkhana and the Bombay Incorporated Law Society, Engineer has had

little time to pursue sketching and cartooning which he enjoys — perhaps as much as public speaking. He and his supportive wife Silloo (née Secretary) recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary.

Approaching his duties as trustee with "humility and a willingness to learn," Engineer says, "I have an open mind on all subjects including housing and I would always welcome a fair exchange of views with all members of the community."

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Tips for trusts

The principles of managing a trust and a corporate enterprise are not dissimilar

Behram T. Dastur

In the hope that Parsi managed trusts will become professional, asset-minded, cost conscious, better organized and vibrant, to face the 21st century successfully, I am summarizing the contents of an important talk given by Minoo R. Shroff, a senior trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP), as part of a two-day seminar organized by Sampradaan — Indian Centre for Philanthropy.

Many principles of good governance run across not only different institutions but across continents and different political ideologies. Principles of good governance can be common to tightly controlled economies (as of China and erstwhile USSR) and to the fountainheads of free enterprise [the US, Britain (for many years now), Germany, Singapore and Hong Kong].

There is a misconception amongst many charitable trusts (not only the Parsi trusts) that there has to be a great divergence between charitable trusts and business operations. The R. C. Church in the USA is one of the best organized charities and run very professionally.

At the outset non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should allow for philanthropy plus 10 percent profit. If the profits are not generated, on an enduring basis, the NGOs would come to grief, and would have to go hat in hand, ever so often. Enlightened self-interest and enduring solvency are the corner stones of a good NGO which enable it to work for any good cause or a set of good causes. The Harvard University (whose first corpus was created by a British donor) is an excellently organized, forward looking and very solvent NGO.

For any NGO/institution, its character and credentials are reflected in the composition of its board. Character and reputation are not identical. One may have a reputation, for enormous energy, to do something but may not have

the character (the moral fiber) to project oneself. The board must be composed, essentially, on grounds of merit, i.e. 'meritocracy' should be the cardinal principle behind its composition. Compatibility at board level is vital and the board needs more doers than talkers. There is an old management adage which says "talkers get paid more than the doers." Though true it may be in many cases, it doesn't augur well for any institution.

"If gold rusted, what can iron do?" When that happens, not only does the image suffer but the entire value system suffers. We have seen how insider trading, manipulation and concealment of financial data have ruined gigantic undertakings, both in India and abroad (Unit Trust of India and Enron being recent examples).

Like with any office, every employee is not a star performer and so also at the board level, one third or half of the board is effective and, over a period of time, it carries some 'pedestrians.'

As a natural corollary to that phenomenon, some conflict of interest arises and it has to be resolved in the interest of the institution (whether a charity or a business). An absence of conflict need not demand an absence of a healthy abrasion of ideas. Dissent stimulates thinking and logic, and demands a second look at many proposals and propositions. Conflict weakens an organization. Constructive dissent is mostly healthy.

Old institutions have a tendency to develop dead wood. It applies to trusts, family run businesses and other institutions. So what is the remedy against developing slumber and dead wood? A periodic renewal and churning of the board. Those who have been long on it can make room for younger, and deserving blood. Employment and human resource development managers welcome retirements and resignations as necessary to inject 'hormones' in any

organization.

The chairman of any organization is (supposed to be) the pivot and wears the personality of the organization on his right sleeve. The chairman must lay down the mission statement, whether it be for an NGO or for a commercial organization. He must set up a road map of service and welfare. More importantly, he must develop a delivery system whereby their plans, objects and the main mission get translated into action and do not remain, only on paper, as noble intentions. The chairman should help formulate a sound plan for funding and a conscionable profit on an ongoing basis so that when a need arises they are ready with the funds at their command. An organized charity, or a business organization, has an orderly plan for the generation and distribution of funds.

Credibility is a crucial ingredient in fund-raising. Funds flow in when a charity or a business perform well and there is no skepticism about it. For a successful NGO/business, detailed delegation is very necessary — a compulsion. Without it, the operating style would be cramped and suffocating. There is a distinction between delegation and abdication. A detailed delegation does not imply a well laid down plan for abdication. The responsibility for results (or the absence of them) always rests with the delegator. He has a moral, functional and legal responsibility towards what he/she delegates.

The reporting relationships should disable the delegator from pleading ignorance of what happened after the delegation. The chairman in particular and the board, in general, should ensure precautionary compliance of all rules. A sound selection is central to the functioning of a CEO (chief executive officer).

Many above average qualities are expected from a CEO and these should not only be latent in him but properly visible to those who deal with him. Some of these are integrity, maturity and competence. Only with the passage of time may these attributes be demonstrated, but in order to ensure that the potential CEO has an intrinsic worth, his selectors have to check on his antecedents thoroughly — more so about his service orientation.

The CEO should have good human

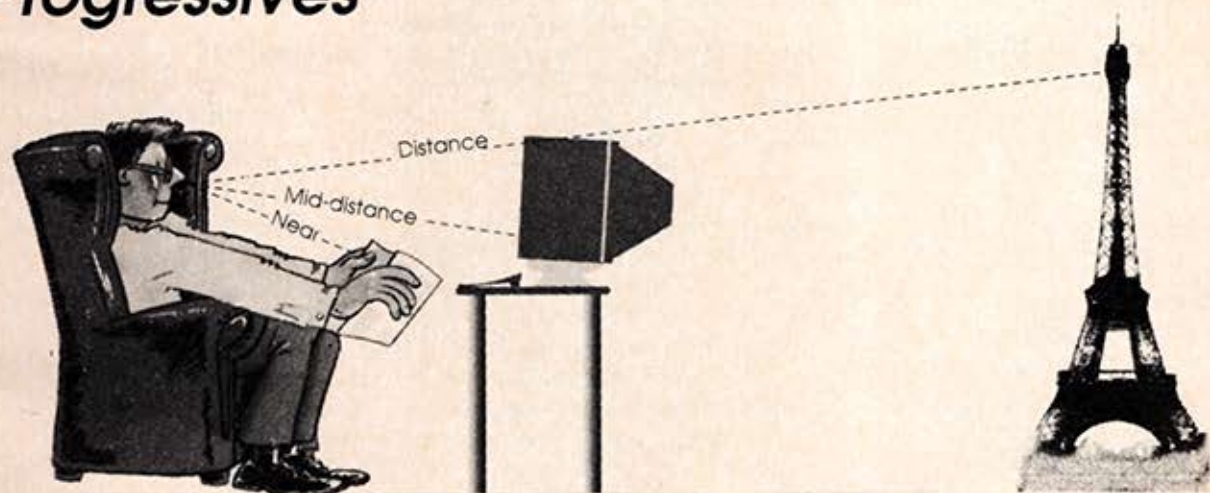
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relations, be approachable/amiable and develop good networking facilities. He should have a smile. Just as he has to be guided by the board, he should also guide the board and help it formulate the basic policies and strategies.

The CEO has to create the right image and perception not only about himself but also about the organization he serves. He must enjoy the trust of the board, and should be bold enough "to wake up a sleepy board."

For him to be a good networker, and to get the best out of his juniors, he will have to select his junior staff with as much care and precaution as his board selected him. He should foresee and meet the demands of the day, and plan for the imponderables. Merit should be his motto. He should not be swayed only by the old school tie, but demonstrate that he is a believer in and supporter of merit.

A CEO should plan for a successor, after periodic ratings of potential juniors. The CEO should have a five-year rolling budget and his project planning must be tight so that there are minimal deviations. Some deviations will be inevitable but those should be explain-

able. The CEO must develop the ability to smell 'rats,' at once. Like a good scout, he should always be prepared for unforeseen contingencies and anticipate shortfalls in collections. He must

The CEO has to create the right image and perception not only about himself but also about the organization he serves

complement this anticipation with a plan to meet such shortfalls. The CEO should be a very good practitioner of time management and should have innovative ideas for funding.

At a very recent seminar which was organized at the launch of "Smart Manager," a pointed question was asked whether Indian CEOs were dynamos or dinosaurs? The collective consensus of corporate chief honchos, and a business think tank, was that they were 'dino-

saurs!' One very pertinent comment which was made by S. Ramadorai, chairman of Tata Consultancy Services, was: "Competition should drive innovation. And companies, therefore, have to look beyond their noses and bodies to propel themselves into dynamic heights." The buzz word today is competition. Only that enables an NGO or a business entity to hone its skills sufficiently and substantially.

There is a lot to learn for a Parsi trust from the above observations. Some of our trusts are moribund in character and one way they can pull up their socks is to implement, in toto, Shroff's simple but practicable suggestions.

Chief Executive Officer of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet, Dastur had 31 years' experience



with multinationals in materials, systems and corporate development. His last position was as a senior general manager (materials) with Burroughs Wellcome (India) Limited. He represented the chemicals and drug industries before the finance and commerce ministries on tariff issues.

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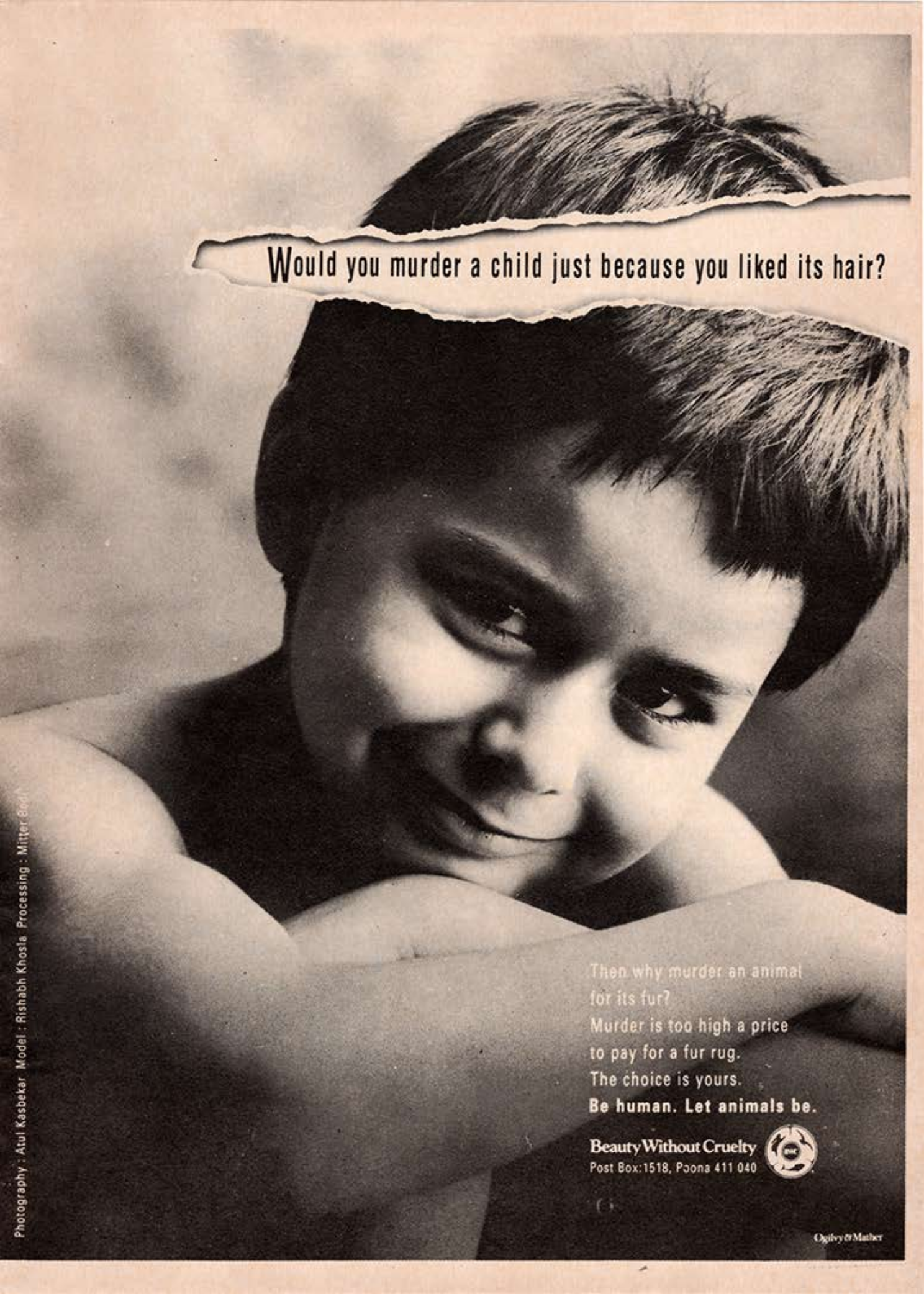
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The romance of rice

Arnavaz S. Mama

"Nowhere in the world is rice so treasured and valued as in India... But the way in which the Moghul rulers in India developed its cooking and presentation was an art form," writes Katy Dalal in her latest contribution to gastronomic literature, *A Tribute to Indian Cuisine: Pulaos and Biryanis*. The 180-page edition published by Vakils, Feffer and Simons Limited (Hague Building, 9 Sprott Road, Ballard Estate, Bombay 400001) packs 126 ways of dressing the staple fare for special occasions.

Mutton or mince, chicken, fish, shrimp, eggs or vegetables, there is something here for diverse tastes and requirements as Dalal has woven in the Indian cuisine of Lucknow and Hyderabad, Bengal, Karnataka and Kerala.

Even more valuable than the recipes are the little bits of advice in the introduction, priceless advice from her grandmother when Dalal herself was an eight-year-old novice but which is invaluable for all time to come: Foods cooked on a slow heat are tastier and the meats more succulent. Also, a covered vessel with water on the lid enables the food to cook faster, without burning.

She discusses the virtues of deep frying and shallow frying and the "dum" method where the vessel is sealed with a layer of fresh dough between the container and its cover to prevent the steam from escaping. Dalal also advocates that the vessel containing the concoction of rice and meat or fish, etc be placed not directly on the stove but over an iron *tava* (griddle) which sits on the stove.

To the harried working housewife Dalal advocates the virtues of the electric rice cooker. "You need not be threatened by having to face your husband's

friends for a meal or be frightened when you have unexpected guests. Armed with your rice and pressure cookers you will be able to conquer mountains. All your culinary worries will vanish and

you will be able to bring joy to your family with this plethora of fabulous dishes, which once upon a time would have taken half a day to prepare."

There is a list of major ingredients required for pulaos and biryanis which Dalal advises the would-be chef to maintain in the larder, including a variety of spices, nuts and dried fruits.

And for the best results from the saffron — one of the most expensive ingredients which can sometimes prove disappointing in color and flavor — Dalal shows the way: heat it lightly, all over for about three minutes, then crumble it into half a cup of hot milk or water.

Dalal's *Pulaos and Biryanis* was launched by social worker Homai Modi at the jam-packed Convocation Hall in the University of Bombay's Fort campus on March 16, 2002. The book, priced at Rs 245 was offered for the special price of Rs 200 that day, a queue of eager cooks snapping it up.

Sharing the podium with Dalal and Modi were Bimal Mehta, the executive director of Vakil and Sons and director of Vakils, Feffer and Simons; columnist Mumtaz Currim whom Dr Nawaz Mody, head of Bombay University's department of civics and politics and the emcee on the

occasion, introduced as a renowned scholar in Islamic studies; Nilanjana Roy, author of *Creative Cuisine of Bengal* and producer of *Behind Closed Doors*, a film on battered women; Bombay Parsi Punchayet chairman Jamshed Guzder; award winning chef Nozer Iranpur and Jerry Kumana who according to Mody has a "unique talent for locating, restoring and making available old Chinese borders and garas."

It was an appropriate setting to recall the historical implication of the Parsis' love of food: "More than 1,300 years ago when Parsis landed, their way of conveying that they would assimilate in India's cultural framework (was to add) sugar to a bowl of milk. (It was meant to convey) that the community will assimilate into the mainstream population, adding sweetness, richness, enlightenment," said Mody, introducing Homai Modi, "(whose) record of activities is in accord with this promise." Modi is the trustee-secretary of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute (KRCOI) who, as Mody said, has metamorphosed that dormant institution into a vibrant one. Modi is also joint honorary secretary of the Maharashtra State Branch and the Bombay City Branch of the Red Cross and is a member of the University Senate as a nominee of the Governor of Maharashtra.

The first two copies of the book, fondly dedicated to the late Shirin Guzder, were presented to her husband Jamshed and their daughter Stetira Wadia.

Modi recalled her original surprise and that of the academia of Bombay when Dr Katy Dalal, an archaeologist by training and a lecturer in ancient history at Bombay's St Xavier's College, initially took up catering on a large scale. Her first book *Jamva Chaloji* sold out in eight or nine months. The title

reminded Modi of her early years when invitees at a wedding or navjote awaited the call "*Jamva chaloji*" before proceeding to the dining tables. Now the scramble begins before the wedding ceremony is over!



Katy and Feroze Dalal at the launch of the book by Homai Modi (below)
Bottom: Mody (left) and Guzder

Photos: Arish Patel



Appreciating the courtesy, graciousness and generosity of the Dalal family including Katy's husband Feroze, daughter Freny and sons Kurush (also an archeologist like his mother) and Daraiyus, Modi recalled their readiness to serve at community events or at the KRCCI's seminars and congresses at cost, oftentimes themselves hosting a ceremonial dinner.

As Mody said, "All of us are products of history and memories; (past examples) do much for us even if we all cannot emulate them."

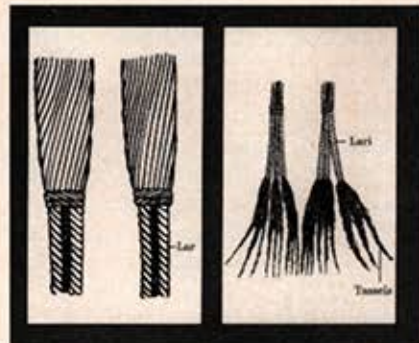
The significant sudreh

Distraught that at a youth congress in North America the sudreh and kusti were referred to as 'outer symbols' (wearing them being regarded a matter of choice), Pervin Mistry decided to write a booklet that would "instill faith and dedication in the tenets of our religion." *Sudreh-Kusti* is "for the unbelievers" who do not consider wearing the sacred shirt and girdle a "mandatory *alat* in order to progress on the path of *Asha*," notes Mistry.

Having been brought up in a traditional family, where religious tenets were inculcated since early childhood, the author felt the need to emphasize that religious freedom did not extend to breaking "the spiritual link that binds Ahura Mazda and his creation into a stupendous whole." "The author has been successful in...exploring the deeper meanings and significance of the navjote ritual as well as sudreh-kusti by richly drawing from scriptures and teachings from *Ilm-e-Khshnoom*," mentions Ervad (Dr) Ramiyar Karanjia, principal of Dadar's Athornan Boarding Madressa, in the foreword.

Mistry divides her 32-page booklet into three parts — "Navjote," "Sudreh" and "Kusti." In the first part she explains why the navjote is usually performed when a child is seven years old. Since every individual is under the dominion of the Moon (Avesta: *Dae*) for the first seven years of his life and the Moon has occult connections to the 'mind' these years are mostly associated with the development of mental faculties, she illuminates.

The sudreh, acting as a spiritual guide to the right path, was first worn by King Jamshed, heeding a direct command of Ahura Mazda through Sarosh Yazad, states Mistry. But when Jamshed succumbed to the demon of disobedience



The ends of a kusti as depicted on the back cover of the book

and discarded the sudreh-kusti, royal glory departed from him and he became defenceless against physical and moral decay. Mistry explains the importance of the sudreh being made of white cotton cloth only. White cotton works significantly to keep the effects of *druj* in check by eliminating perspiration from the skin and by refracting some of the harmful rays of the sunlight.

Another requirement is that the sudreh must be made from one strip of cloth which "reminds the wearer that everything that exists is interdependent and is created by Him," comments Mistry. A sudreh is stitched such that it has nine seams. If torn and patched or stitched the additional seams would "hinder the occult property of nine from performing its beneficial work of spiritually progressing the soul," according to the author. She mentions that one of the nine seams, the *girdeau*, positioned at the nape of the neck, is close to the center of spiritual energy located in the throat and acts as a reminder to speak kind words and the truth. The soul on the fourth day (*chahrum*) is judged by the weight of the *gereban*, the tiny bag-like receptacle over the chest meant to store good deeds, she adds.

The kusti woven of 144 threads is never made from any thread except white wool. This wool is taken from a lamb "to remind us to be as gentle and self-sacrificing." Mistry clarifies that lamb's wool is not "hair" which, once detached from the body, is considered *naso* (defiled matter). She explains the importance of the kusti being wound around the waist — "the navel is referred to as the equator, or the median in man, which divides and protects spiritual inspiration from lesser instincts."

If we were to wear our sudreh-kusti to suit fashion or convenience, a Zarathushti's identity and link with

Ahura Mazda would be lost, emphasizes Mistry.

The booklet, published in March 2002, is meant to help the community to "honor and safeguard our spiritual inheritance."

Sudreh-Kusti priced at Rs 20 can be purchased from Marzban Giara, Dhunmai Building, 667, Lady Jehangir Road, Dadar, Bombay 400014, tel: 4166204, e-mail: giara@vsnl.com and at Parsiana at Kaiser-E-Hind Pvt Ltd, 300 Perin Nariman Street, (Behind Reserve Bank of India), Bombay 400001, tel: 2665661, 2662709, e-mail: parsiana@vsnl.net

SIMIN J. PATEL

Prayerful prescriptions

"Here in this small book I have made a humble attempt to show how, when, where and for what purpose our *manthra* (Avesta: *manthra*) should be recited...It is explained how certain *Yasht*, *Nyaish*, *Nirang*, etc should be chanted to remove certain mental as well as physical ills and thereby live a blissful life. These *Avesta kalam*s or *manthras* are like *jadibuttis* (elixir or panacea to live a true Zoroastrian life. Which remedy (prayer) should be used by us depends on our own discretion and judgment," writes the author Rusi F. Besania in *Zoroastrian Manthra Elixir To Lead a True Zoroastrian Life* which was released at Cusrow Baug's Karani Agiary on Dastur Kookadaru's 171st birth anniversary on April 15, 2002. Besania's Gujarati book *Jarthosti Jindagi Jivani Jadibuttio* (see "Prayerful prescriptions," Books, *Parsiana*, March 2002) which was first released in September 2001 has now been translated into English by Prof Firoze Mistry, a highly qualified educationist in Gujarat.

Manthra, explains the author, is a combination of a few specific words to bring about certain scientific effects. As the medicine prescribed by a doctor enables us to do away with our diseases, the definite *manthra* helps us remove our difficulties and ailments. Only with the help of *mithra* — a meditated strong thought — can a *manthra* be successful, the author clarifies.

"All these prayers and facts given in the following chapters are found scattered in our different Zoroastrian scriptures. I have made an attempt to give them here in a nutshell," writes Besania. The 183-page book, covering 51 topics,

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contains a list of the different prayers that can eradicate problems, physical, emotional or mental, whether at home, in the office or in the outer world. Specific prayers to be recited on different days of the year are listed for those interested. The scientific basis of the Zoroastrian religion is reiterated with Besania pointing out that even though many believe Galileo was the first to



observe that the earth revolves around the sun, in the *Gathas* it had already been described as a moving planet (*geush ajiyao*).

Yatha Ahu Vairyo, Ashem Vohu and Yengehe Hatam are the three

talismans of the Zoroastrian religion, notes the author. "The holy vibrations of all these three sacred mantras build a protective shield...before which even Satan becomes helpless...These three mantras can be chanted any time, any where...They are free mantras." The number of *Yathas* and *Ashems* to be prayed at the beginning or on completion of different acts or when unable to recite the recommended *Nyaish/Yasht* are all listed here. The evolved saints who worshipped the different yazatas are also introduced.

This religious compendium published by the WZO (World Zoroastrian Organisation) Trust bears testimony to the fact that the WZO has been wrongly labelled as reformist and unorthodox, commented WZO India president Dadi Engineer at the book launch. "As long as we keep the faith, we shall be assured of continued ascent," noted Dinshaw Tamboly who released the book. Thanks to the WZO support, 1,500 copies of the book were available for free distribution, according to a press release issued by Godrej Dotivala, public relations officer of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet. "It remains the fond hope of WZO that this book will play a positive and vibrant role in shaping the thought process of all those who read it," adds the write-up. For enqui-



Besania:
faith in prayers

ries regarding the book, write to the author at 2, Sava Sadi Sadan, Bhavanagari Street, Vanki Bardi, Surat 395003, tel: 7410651. S. J. P.

Light lessons

Prerna Prakash — Inspiration and Light by Noshir Daboo. Published in 2001 in Gujarati by Bazme Jashene Ruhe Behram, Naorji Hall, Shahibaug, Ahmedabad 380004. Pp: x + 98. Price: Rs 20.

This is the second anthology of Parsi religious topics to have come my way within a short time. The first one by Rusi Besania of Surat has by now a translation in English.

Noshir Daboo is popular with the Parsi readers of *Jam-e-Jamshed*. He has written several books in Gujarati, some of them reviewed by this reviewer. *Prerna Prakash* I believe is the latest, a collection of 15 topics related to the Zarathushti religion.

As mentioned by the author himself, he has exploited different literary forms — the short story, essay, poems, etc for expressing his views. As for instance "Dadar-ni-Dyanat". (To begin with, 'dyanat' is not a very happy choice of word to be applied to Dadar Ahura Mazda, used as it is here to relate the unimaginable creation of the Creator of this world.) Or take some of the others: "Humn Tamne Puchhun", "Chalo Patta Ramie", "Mari Prarthnani Pothi", "Khuda Ahinj Ché", "Panjana Parakram" etc. Each one is a religious topic articulated in a different literary form.

The question to consider therefore is, has such an exercise by the writer proved successful in throwing light on the subject at hand? Has he lucidly conveyed his views to his readers? This reviewer feels that though Daboo has made an attempt to express himself on religious topics through poems and stories, he is better as an essayist. In my opinion, the dream sequence, "Arda-farvash Sathe Interview," is the best.

Prerna Prakash could have given more inspiration and light. The topics selected by the author are interesting and readable, but he needs to be more practised in the art forms he adopts. There are not many good poems in Gujarati literature on religious themes but those which are good are first rate as they have been written by poets like Narshing Rao Donelist and Kavi Khabardar. HORMAZDYARS DALAL

READERS' FORUM

continued from page 6

couple/and further more, those who have progeny ample/than those who do not think of marriage at all/and turn deaf ears to the community's call.

Beware children of crossing limits with alien/to avoid perplexing unethical emotional union./Parents should not encourage unions with outsiders/to avoid insults to their community and moral orders!

NOSHIR DABOO

Ahmedabad

Role models

At the function to felicitate Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, Soli Sorabjee and Tehmtan Andhyarujina on April 20, I was particularly impressed by Andhyarujina's speech — not because it was witty, but because of the inspiring message it carried for the youth of our community. That his father, to whom he acknowledged his success could become a leading lawyer, although the son of a priest in Udvada, by dint of his burning ambition and hard work, is something that should inspire our youth.

Tehmtan and his siblings who have all distinguished themselves in their own fields, have proved what one can do if provided the right role model. As a Tata employee, I have heard the story of one of them — Khorshed Javeri — who was the first lady to be selected for the Tata Administrative Service (TAS). The selection committee had decided to reject her because of her sex but were ashamed to do so when confronted with her brilliant academic record. Thus started the trend of ladies in TAS.

Our community cannot fail to make its mark as long as we have families like these.

N. D. GUZDER

Conflict resolution

As a Parsi, interested in the current problems of the community and wishing to see a revival, it strikes me that decline and conflict have fuelled each other. Having given thought to issues, it occurs to me that the root cause of the community's problems, both decline and conflict, is our relative neglect of the *Gathas*.

Whilst our prayers are in a dead language and science has rendered some of our rituals outdated, the teachings of

Zoroaster — both philosophy and values as set out in the *Gathas* — are timeless. Whereas our kusti prayers are a form of communication with God, the *Gathas* offer Zoroastrians guidance and wisdom on leading a healthy and constructive life. We need to remember that Zoroaster was a philosopher as well as a religious prophet. His teachings go well beyond good thoughts, good words, good deeds and offer guidance on the way ahead. In contrast, our rituals and practices are a historical legacy, evolved by followers of Zoroastrianism.

Unfortunately, over the years, the focus on religious education in the community has been mainly on kusti prayers and on religious rituals/practices, rather than on the philosophy and moral values of Zoroastrianism as set out in the *Gathas*. Whereas rituals and practices provide Parsis reason to come together for a couple of hours, before going their separate ways, subscription to and adoption of the teachings of Zoroaster provide permanent bonding between fellow Parsis. One reason for the decline of the community is a reduction in bonding (spiritual/moral/philosophical) between Parsis. This to some extent explains an increase in inter-community marriages.

There is an irrational, but understandable fear, amongst orthodox Parsis that to let go of and compromise rituals is to forsake the religion. Not so, if we subscribe to the thinking, philosophy and values of our Prophet. The *Gathas* are as important an aspect of Zoroastrianism, if not more important than our religious rituals and practices.

The above is relevant to the dispute concerning the disposal of expired Parsis. Using common sense, is Ahura Mazda going to judge Parsis by the way they have lived life or by the way their bodies were disposed of? With regard to developments concerning Doongerwadi, it was suggested by orthodox Parsis that 'pragmatism is not an issue.' As a matter of fact pragmatism underpinned the conventional method of burial. In the days of Zoroaster, and for some considerable time thereafter, the world was predominantly agricultural — the Tower of Silence was conceived as a solution to the problem of preventing agricultural land being polluted by dead bodies. The world today, especially Bombay, is almost predominantly commercial or industrial.

We cannot move forward if we blindly cling to the past. In one of the *Gathas*, Zoroaster calls for innovation

and progress. We need to apply this to rituals and practices that have been rendered outdated by developments over the centuries. This said, not all rituals and practices need to be revised. Life enhancing rituals/practices such as the navjote and wedding ceremonies and the custom of sev or ravo, on auspicious occasions, should be maintained.

It is worth making the following point on conflicts — 'A storm in a tea cup should so be contained and not blown up into a hurricane or a tornado.' We need to maintain perspective and subordinate differences to commonalities — a rich heritage and an ancestry to be proud of, a legacy to value, common beliefs and values, similar tastes and personal qualities. Constructively motivated dissension is worthwhile and purposeful, disagreement for the sake of argument per se, causes discord and seldom achieves anything.

Finally, if Parsis lend support to and heed those who call for unity, such as Armin Wandrewala who wrote an excellent article ("An avoidable divide," *Parsiana*, January 2002), as well as those who work for the good of the community, there is hope for us.

FURROKH PANTHAKI

London, UK

What is Dinkard?

Parsiana had devoted its entire July 2001 issue to reprinting Rustam Paymaster's translation of *Qissa-I-Sanjan*.

We often hear about *Dinkard*. What is *Dinkard*? Is it a separate scriptural text by itself? BHIKHAI M. ADENWALLA

The Editor replies

As mentioned in *Zoroastrians — Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* by Mary Boyce, the *Dinkard* or 'Acts of the Religion' is the longest extant Pahlavi work: "This great compilation was begun by the first known Hudinan peshobay, Adurfarnbag Farrokhzadan, and was re-edited and enlarged by his descendant Adurbad Emedan, who probably held the same office at the end of the ninth century. It contains a great variety of matter, and includes at the end a summary of the contents of 19 books of the Great *Avesta*, and a detailed analysis of three of them."

Seeing ourselves clearly

This is an age described by the sovereignty of humanity; it is human values that preoccupy the moral landscape, and our angle of vision is dictated by consid-



Andhyarujina:
family bonds

erations which, however altruistic in relation to others, direct our own beliefs about our personal entitlements to achieve ascendancy. Actually, of course, we think too much and too highly of ourselves. Anything which appears to interfere with the happiness and serenity that we posit as our birthright is not only automatically regretted but also made the occasion of blame — of others, whose selfish interests may have blocked our path, or of Ahura Mazda, for having contrived a universe in which living creatures experience pain. Ahura Mazda, in fact, is an early candidate for relegation: how we ask, can He exist if men and women are given to suffering and sorrow?

Humanity is simply not worth the estimate we place upon ourselves. Our only dignity and significance derives from Ahura Mazda — that he endowed us with reason, and therefore with the capacity to discover the nature of moral and physical laws. As candidates for immortality, however, humans remain creatures of the earth, capable of salvation but actually enveloped in the wickedness which is inseparable from our status as created beings. Everything that elevates hu-

man life derives from Him, and we forget it at great cost to our sense of proportion. For men and women enlarge their demands for entitlements at will. Theirs is a calculation which escalates with dialectical velocity. With each material improvement which they contrive in the circumstance of life they expect an accompanying increase in their sense of self-significance; with every generation of change there comes an anticipation of further emancipation from suffering. In the past people tended to accept imperfection and set their entitlements upon a humbler scale. Now our modern lives are filled with demands for improvements.

In each individual life, however, there is the same timeless experience of the permanent fact of human sin and its baneful consequences. We choose, often, not to identify it as such, and to allocate blame, instead, to external causes. Our suffering, therefore, is largely self-induced, and its origin lies in false priorities, such as the pursuit of happiness rather than the fulfilment of duties, and in wrong estimates of our entitlements. What fools we are to have allowed our-

selves to become the victims of our own desires on such a scale.

FURHOK K. TANGREE

La Roche-sur-Foron
France

Lessons for ladies

Your readers may be interested in a five-week "Special Ladies Course" which we have scheduled for July. The intention is to make women aware of their own affairs and not be totally dependent on the advice of others e.g. I have a friend who has suddenly become a widow. Close as they were, her husband had not given her any idea about their assets and now she is totally confused.

It is for women such as these as well as for those who are, or aspire to be, on committees or start their own little business that we are conducting this certificate course which covers understanding of Income Tax returns, investments, planning a will, conduct of meetings, etc. Classes will be held for an hour-and-a-half, three times a week.

Dr KHORSHED D. P. MADON

Principal, Davar's College of Commerce
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MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 23 and 42 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 28 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 28 and 56 years, averaging at 33 years.

There were seven babies born in April this year versus 67 deaths. Heart disease felled 21 Zoroastrians of whom 12 were in the 80+ age category. The other killers were pneumonia and lung disease (nine), cancer (seven), old age/general debility and brain disease (five each) and diabetes (four). Three patients each succumbed to septicemia and kidney failure whereas two were victims of

liver disease. The eight isolated cases registered were intestinal obstruction, accident, lower cranial nerve palsy, osteoporosis, hypertension, haemorrhage and shock, fever and anemia. The youngest and oldest to die were both females at 41 and 96 years respectively. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth for April, 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 consistent: we are unable to carry data from areas where the anjuman do not furnish the particulars; the birth figures for Bom-

bay are supplied by two hospitals — births in suburban hospitals and private nursing homes are not included unless individuals send us information together with a copy of the birth certificate. There may be an inadvertent repetition of names in the marriage list when a civil marriage precedes a religious ceremony. In the breakup of deaths according to illnesses, especially of the elderly, death is often due to a combination of several diseases.

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

BOMBAY

BORN

A boy to *Kashmira* and *Urmez Mugaseth* on April 13, 2002
A boy, *Hirjee*, to *Freny* and *Adi Jehangir*, April 14
A boy to *Shekoofa* and *Cyrus Aryana*, April 15
A boy to *Firozi* and *Kersi Bhikhaji*, April 16
A girl, *Delreen*, to *Khurshed* and *Khurshed Baldawala*, April 20
A boy to *Firoza* and *Rohinton Dadyburjor*, April 20
A boy, *Yahaan*, to *Meherangiz* and *Adil Billimoria*, April 29

MARRIED

Pinky Farrokh Ginwalla of *Bharuch* and *Xerxes Rusi Mistry*, April 2, 2002
Natasha Keki Wadia and *Armayesh Sam Buhariwala*, April 7
Roxann Behli Sepoy and *Peterasp Fredoon Dholoo*, April 7
Jennifer Homi Mahuvawala of *Thana* and *Maneckshaw Samy Siganporia*, April 15
Shernaz Phiroze Gagrati and *Kayroze Sammy Chichgar*, April 20
Nulufer Minocher Siganporia of *Surat* and *Firdaus Adi Bhola* of *Thana*, April 21

Farzandi Sorab Bhesania and *Neville Soli Daruwalla* of *Poona*, April 27
Viloo Rustomjee Jeejeebhoy and *Sheamak Dara Acidwalla*, April 29

DIED

Freny Adi Damania (61), residing at 7/B, Navjivan Soc, Lamington Rd, 400008; April 1
Noshir Motabhai Davar (64), C-10/4, Pirojshanagar, Vikhroli (W), 400079; April 1
Homai Boman Bozorgi (76), 189/30, Hirabai Petit Bldg, 400007; April 2
Hormusji Jivanji Lakadia (82), Wadia Bldg, Marzban Clny, Lamington Rd, 400011; April 2
Jehangir Rustomji Balsara (79), Readymoney Bldg, 781, M. Joshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 3
Gool Rusi Daruwalla (72), D/67/1310, Azad Ngr II, Panchsheel Co-op Hsg Soc, Andheri (W), 400053; April 3
Pervez Ruttonshaw Meherji (68), 56, Botawalla Bldg, Bomanji Master Rd, 400002; April 3
Noshir Dhanjibhoy Medhora (73), A/39, Jer Baug, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Byculla, 400027; April 5

Homai Mehli Umrigar (73), A/14, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; April 5
Amy Sorabji Darukhanawalla (76), Guzder Mans, Princess St, 400002; April 7
Perin Ratansha Unwalla (63), 220, The Reward, Tardeo Rd, 400007; April 8
Hosi Kaikhasroo Khajotia (68), B/13, Modi Bldg, Parel Tank Rd, Parel, 400012; April 9
Roshan Homi Cooper (71), 14/A, Tardeo Chmbs, Kashinath Rd, Tardeo, 400034; April 10
Cavas Munchersha Damania (85), Manibai Bhavan, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; April 10
Piroja Homi Kotwal (86), Moonlight, M. Karve Rd, 400020; April 10
Nergish Darasha Bharucha (75), 275, Princess Bldg, Princess St, 400002; April 11
Homai Jehangir Irani (80), 8/63, G. I. C. Qrts, M. H. B. Clny, Bandra Reel, Bandra (W), 400050; April 11
Nargish Tehmurasp Jangbarwala (66), 507/1-B, Salsette Parsi Clny, Pump Hse, Andheri (E), 400093; April 11
Ardesher Khodadad Bastani (95), 13/7, Umrigar Bldg, Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; April 12

Gool Kaikhasroo Bugle (69), M/1-3, Merwanjee Cama Park, Cama Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; April 12
Hilla Loveji Contractor (78), 17, Heera-Meher, Wodehouse Rd, 400005; April 13
Freny Framroze Ghadially (86), 347-A/13, United Chmbs, Grant Rd, 400007; April 13
Banubai Savakshaw Kolah (75), 1-7/C, Sir Ratan Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; April 13
Minoo Noshir Panthaki (81), G/3, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; April 13
Nariman Sam Irani (49), 61/B, New Mistry Bldg, Balamram St, Grant Rd, 400007; April 14
Jamshedji Naoroji Khadiwala (82), 281, Sidhwa Bldg, Princess St, 400002; April 14
Piloo Parvez Siganporia (80), Gul Mans, Balamram St, 400007; April 14
Rustomji Jamshedji Daruwalla (86), A/2, Satyabhama Niwas, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; April 15
Freny Sorab Mistry (84), M-3/12, Merwanjee Cama Park, Cama Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; April 15
Noshir (Aderji) Pirojshah Shroff (86), Jawalkar Mans, 280/A, Sopari Baug Rd, Parel, 400012; April 15
Russi Hormajsha Wadia (92), 396/3, Parwati Bldg, North Avenue, Santacruz (W), 400054; April 15
Nergish Faramroze Gazi (67), Central Bldg no 3, Next to Kalbadevi PO, Bomanji Master Rd, 400002; April 17
Phiroze Khurshedji Jeejeebhoy (75), 1, Suman Apts, Sleater Rd, 400007; April 17
Behramsha Cooverji Khumbatta (92), Gangadevi Bhavan, Uranwala St, Grant Rd, 400007; April 17
Khorshed Jehangir Poncha (82), 10, Dr K. N. Marg, New Gamdevi, 400007; April 18
Gool Dara Todiwalla (84), Coover Villa, 801, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 18
Noshir Jalejar Gazdar (66), 9, Gool Dhun Abad, Opp

Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; April 20
Rusee Eruchshaw Sukhia (77), K-3/42, Merwanjee Cama Park, Cama Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; April 20
Mani Jehangirji Jilla (86), 11, Gohil Hse, Khetwadi 9th Lane, 400004; April 22
Pesi Meherwanji Nowroji (85), 15, Windsor Hse, M. Karve Rd, 400020; April 22
Gool Jamshed Patuck (86), D/4, Eden Hall, Dr Annie Besant Rd, Worli, 400018; April 22
Dhan Cawasji Kasad (89), 3, Gulnar, 12, Hill Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; April 23
Piroja Ardeshir Mistry (87), 15/A, Mistry Widows' Chawl, Jame Jamshed Rd, Dadar, 400014; April 23
Dhun Kaikhusroo Billimoria (90), Belmont, Napean Sea Rd, 400036; April 24
Shavak Tehmuras Patel (82), Shroff Mans, N. Petit St, Grant Rd, 400007; April 24
Tehmina Kavashaw Tolat (93), 303, Bai Ratanbai Tata Bldg, 38th Rd, TPS III, Bandra (W), 400050; April 24
Navaz Kali Chothia (41), R/6, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; April 25
Banoo Darabsha Daruwalla (82), Meherbai Wadia Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; April 25
Mani Darabshaw Irani (73), Sethna Bldg, Princess St, 400002; April 25
Homai Nadirshah Maudawala (72), Mahim Mans, Mori Rd, Mahim, 400016; April 25
Perin Tehmuras Mehta (78), 784/B, Readymoney Bldg, M. Joshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; April 25
Savakshaw Ardeshir Sethna (91), H-4/14, Godrej Hillside Clny, Vikhroli, 400083; April 25
Nergish Noshir Bhada (58), 4/189, Hirabai Petit Bldg, Opp Grant Rd Rly Stn (E), 400007; April 26
Chadan Marazban Daruwalla (85), 10/B-1, Malegamwala Bldg, M. M. C. Rd, Mahim, 400016; April 26
Homi Kekobad Lala (78),

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*						
	Bombay		India		World	
	This issue	2002*	This issue	2002*	This issue	2002*
BIRTHS						
Boys	6	20	—	1	3	6
Girls	1	29	—	1	2	6
MARRIAGES						
Parsi	8	102	1	5	—	2
INTERCOMMUNAL						
Males married out	—	—	—	—	—	—
Females married out	—	—	—	—	—	—
DEATHS						
CONSIGNED						
Males	29	132	2	16	—	6
Females	38	162	4	21	—	4
CREMATED						
Males	—	—	—	—	—	—
Females	—	—	—	—	—	—

*Running totals for 2002 (January 2002-June 2002 issues)

Overseas deaths are listed in the consigned column as *Parsiana* does not have a breakup of those cremated.

*These figures pertain to information provided to or collected by *Parsiana*. They do not represent the total number of births, marriages and deaths in the Zoroastrian community in India and abroad.

*Running totals for 2002 (January 2002-June 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.

South Lands, Opp Colaba PO, 400005; April 26
Homi Jamshedji Bamjee (84), P/2, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; April 27
Khorshed Phiroze Karai (84), 22, Sangita, Arthur Bunder Rd, Colaba, 400005; April 27
Burjorjee Pirojshaw Master (82), Afternoon Hse, 6, Nanbhoy Lane, Flora Fountain, 400001; April 27
Bijou Dadabhoy Nadirshaw (91), Wimbridge Hse, 20/D, Sleater Rd, 400007; April 27
Faramroz Nusserwanji Patel (82), 893/25, Subhash Ngr, Chembur, 400071; April 27
Ardeshir Furdoonji Billimoria (83), 5, Jehangir Mans, Dhobitalao, 400020; April 28
Jerbano Framroze Cooper (96), Cooper Bldg, 229, Princess St, 400002; April 28
Dinamai Rustomji Siganporia (94), 4, Dinshaw Bldg, Parsi Clny, Dadabhai Rd, Vile Parle (W), 400056; April 29
Rustomji Cawasji Wankadia (92), 4, Caesar Villa, Veera Desai Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; April 29
Noshir Pestonji Engineer (86), Aziz Bldg, Tardeo Rd,

400034; April 30
Gool Jehangirji Jilla (88), Alves Soc, 60, Hill Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; April 30
Lily Minoo Mistry (73), 24, Police Court Lane, Fort, 400001; April 30

CALCUTTA

DIED

Dolly Pestonji Majoo; March 3

NAVSARI

MARRIED

Arnavaz Fanibanda and *Viraf Langrana*; March 3

SECUNDERABAD

DIED

Perin Dadi Viccajee (87), mother of Minoo, Farrokh, Heera and Bano; April 20

SURAT

DIED

Dhanmai Nariman Tamboli (Mistry) (73), 401, Park Avenue, Dehla St, Rustom-pura, 395003; April 3
Minocheer Dosabhai Sarkari (91), 1/1232, Maneckji Doctor St, Timaliyawad, 395001; April 18
Minochehar Behramji Ilavia (94), Raj Pipla, Village

Kumas, Dist Bharuch, 393145; April 23
Homai Ratanshah Bhavnagari (78), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; April 30

CANADA

British Columbia

BORN

A boy, *Zal*, to *Kaynaaz* and *Neville Dholoo* in Richmond; April 11

Ontario

BORN

A boy, *Darius*, to *Persis* and *Cyrus Banker*, brother to *Alisha* in Mississauga; April 1
A girl, *Sanaea*, to *Armene* and *Kaiwan Suntok*, sister to *Ava* in Toronto; April 21
A girl, *Yasna*, to *Arnavaz* and *Jamshed Dhabhar*, sister to *Humin* and *Sanaya* in Mississauga; April 30

USA

Ohio

BORN

A boy, *Anosh*, to *Gulnar* and *Shahrukh Irani* in Columbus; April 25

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

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The Gagrart era

Arnavaz S. Mama

"Old soldiers never die; they just fade away..." A Zoroastrian *hamkar*, companion in arms, who used his resources of compassion, legal acumen and common sense to fight the wrongs he perceived — though with his earthy sense of humor he would have laughed the idea out of court — solicitor Rustam Gagrart, founder of Gagrart and Company and the father figure of public interest litigation (PIL) in India, soldiered to the end. Gagrart's peaceful demise at the age of 102, the end of a long life, well lived, found counsels and judges reviewing with moist eyes the passing of an era.

"God offers every man a choice between truth and repose. Take which you will, you cannot have both... Truth is uncomfortable, repose is based on security... Ordinary men oscillate. Rustamji never oscillated. He stood for values like courage, dedication," noted Justice Sarosh Kapadia of the Bombay High Court at the public condolence meeting convened by Kiran Shantaram, sheriff of Bombay, at the Indian Merchants' Chamber on June 6, 2002.

Remarking that "Rustamji was first and foremost a gentleman," former Chief Justice of India Yeshwant Chandrachud commented on Gagrart's appreciation of friendship, of merit, of good work, his knowledge of the law ("there was hardly any point worth knowing that Rustamji didn't know"), his complete lack of bitterness despite the professional hurdles of his early years, his warmth and generosity. Stating that he was the first lawyer from the appellate side of the Bombay High Court to be engaged by a solicitor, Chandrachud recalled how Gagrart had approached him, saying he had heard him arguing for three hours and wanted to

engage him. "He gave a fillip to my career." The professional acquaintance grew into three generations of family friendship.



Gagrart: confidence, courage, dedication

Justice Shiavax Vazifdar of the Bombay High Court said he had "missed the privilege to work with Gagrart" but spoke of how Gagrart gave free legal advice and assistance to various organizations including the Women Graduates Union and to its members... Neither his stature nor his success clouded this side of his nature."

Paying "a personal tribute to a remarkable man

whom it has been my privilege to know at close quarters," at the meet as well as in *The Asian Age*, Maharashtra advocate general Goolam Vahanvati commented on "the fact that (Gagrart) never lost the sharpness of his mind and that his memory never failed him." As a result he "could bear testimony" to many of the great events of the past century. "Rustamji had the good fortune to have personally briefed almost all the major stalwarts of the Bombay Bar. The Setalvads, Sir Chimanlal and Motilal, M. A. Jinnah and Jamshedji Kanga and a host of other legendary counsels. To us they are hallowed names. Rustamji had a personal equation with each of them."

Vahanvati testified to Rustamji's amazing "ability to recognize talent and promote outstanding lawyers when they were relatively unknown," and ascribed the success of Gagrart and Company to its values and traditions handed down through generations. "In my early days at the Bar I used to be briefed by managing clerks who had been trained by Rustamji. These were incredible legal executives. Better than full-fledged lawyers. Meticulous and thorough. Each

brief came with instructions and observations. The papers were thoroughly organized. Rustamji would not have tolerated it any other way... Today (counsels) would be lucky if they get instructions and a docket!"

When India became a republic in 1950, "Rustamji and his firm were in the forefront of constitutional and administrative law... The firm took on the government during the Emergency. When the executive tried to prevent the holding of a public meeting, Gagrart and Company instructed Nani Palkhivala, Ram Jethmalani and over 150 other advocates who appeared before the division bench of the Bombay High Court and got the preventive order of the police commissioner struck down. In the early 1980s Gagrart and Company led the fight on behalf of the Bombay Bar Association in the famous Judges' Case where several vital issues pertaining to the independence of the judiciary were at stake. Months of effort. All pro bono (free of charge)," attested Vahanvati.

Former solicitor general of India Tehmtan Andhyarujina, who had started his professional career with Gagrart on the same day as Supreme Court senior counsel Ashok Desai, recalled that his father Rustom and Rustamji had studied together at the Bharda New High School. The friendship is now into its fourth generation, he noted with pride. Recalling Gagrart's "twinkling eyes and smiling face," Andhyarujina described the eminent solicitor as a man with "no airs, no pomposity... a man you could not help liking."

Referring to the "great days of constitutional litigation," Andhyarujina remembered how a Parsi named Pesikaka was arrested for violating the Prohibition laws. "He was found drunk but he said he had not taken prohibited liquor, he'd taken B. G. Phos (a therapeutic restorative popular at the time)!" Gagrart and Company took up his case and Pesikaka was eventually acquitted. This case also raised the question of the classification of Halls Wine, another popular appetite restorer much prescribed in those years. The famed constitutional expert Hormusjee Seervai

was a supporter of Prohibition and Andhyarujina recalled an overnight trip to Delhi on the Frontier Mail he had made as a junior, in the company of Seervai and Gagrut, the latter pulling out a bottle of whisky and offering it, mischief writ large on his face. "I have never seen a solicitor so meticulous, so methodical. Every attendance (of the counsel) would be recorded. He wrote in a scribble which no one could understand except his personal assistant Anandlal Buch," said Andhyarujina.

"An average solicitor leaves his memory behind only in his dusty files. Rustam Gagrut has left behind a rich heritage. Three generations as partners in a professional firm is a record," noted solicitor and Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustee Dadi Engineer who had organized the sheriff's meet on behalf of the Punchayet. "The forebear of the public interest litigation in India" had spurred the professional careers of Palkhivala, India's attorney general Soli Sorabjee, Andhyarujina, judges Ramakant Bhatt and Kapadia, said Engineer.

Engineer also referred to Gagrut's service on the board of the Zoroastrian Co-operative Bank, 13 years as chairman, on the board of the *Jam-e-Jamshed* and the governing body of the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital and saluted him as a "zealous guardian of the interests of advocates and solicitors."

"His relationship with my father (Mohammedali Chagla, the first Indian Chief Justice of Bombay and later ambassador and union minister) was very special. Both were born in 1900," said noted counsel Iqbal Chagla. "He briefed my father as junior to Mohammed Ali Jinnah (the founder of Pakistan) and continued to brief him independently." Recalling, "birthdays and anniversaries at Gagrut's where we were required to be present," Chagla had observed how friends and admirers continued to increase until there was barely room to sit on the balcony of the house. Over a long weekend in Goa after a successful litigation on behalf of the Taj Group of Hotels, young Chagla had observed the patriarch Gagrut in the role of loving husband, father and grandfather, indulging and encouraging children in their pranks, giving free rein to his own sense of mischief and impishness. On a copyright case before the tribunal in Calcutta, Gagrut's sense of dedication,

industry, attention to detail surfaced during working hours. His "love, concern and affection for (his wife) Mani aunty" ensured that there was enough time to "sit, talk and joke together in the evenings."

Though BPP chairman Jamshed

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Guzder's "association with Rustamji was not so great," he remembered the latter's advice to stand firm as a trustee and his readiness to help and guide.

"To have lived for 100 years with grit, integrity and repute is what men dream of but seldom achieve," noted Anand Bhatt, president of the Bombay Incorporated Law Society, an office Rustamji had adorned with distinction (1943-48) when the Bombay High Court celebrated its centenary. Coincidentally, Rustamji's son Jangoo Gagrut was president of the Society (1990-94) when the Society celebrated its centenary.

Speaking on behalf of Gagrut and Company, ("colleagues, peons and staff because he was loved by all,") long standing partner Anant Jani referred to the legal doyen as "a name to be reckoned with in social reform... my senior partner, my legal guru (who) taught me how to apply law to the facts of the case." With "a heart softer than a rose petal" Jani noted that Gagrut had taken care of his cosmopolitan staff members without discrimination long before labor laws came on the statute book. Noting that three generations of Gagruts and two generations each of the Agarwals, the Mehtas and the Janis were partners of the firm, Jani said, "A family feeling has kept us together. When he walked to his office everyone got up as a measure of respect, spontaneously, even the clients."

"Rustamji was responsible for the conception and formation of the Association of Inter-Married Zoroastrians (AIMZ)" in 1991, noted AIMZ presi-

dent Meher Amersey. Inter-marriage per se "was not his focus. The moral imperative, to uphold the true precepts of the religion and the justice of equal rights for men and women were his paramount concern," she added.

Describing Gagrut as an "irreplaceable citizen (who) fought hard and tenaciously for a good cause," Adi Mulla, ex-principal and director of Bharda New High School said the doughty solicitor would reduce his fees or not charge at all when the litigant deserved the service but had no means to pay. BPP trustee Rustom Tirandaz who was billed to speak that evening but was delayed, later told *Parsiana* that if you asked the common man for the name of a suitable lawyer, his response would generally be "Gagrut."

"Much touched by his gesture," a misty-eyed Jangoo Gagrut expressed his gratitude to the sheriff and the BPP for having convened this meeting. BPP public relations officer Godrej Dotivala read highlights of the resolution passed on the occasion which says: "Rustam Gagrut was actively involved in developing Labour Law practice for the firm. Initially he took up cases representing the employers against the workmen. But in the course of his work there developed mutual regard and respect between R. A. Gagrut and R. J. Mehta, the prominent trade unionist, with the result that Mehta entrusted cases on behalf of the union to Gagrut and the firm was perhaps the first law firm of solicitors to attend labor work on behalf of trade unions. Later his brother M. A. Gagrut assisted him in these matters."

The Zoroastrian Co-operative Bank placed on record Gagrut's 25-year contribution to its board and the Supreme Court Bar Association recorded its grief at Gagrut's passing as did The Bar Association of India and the Society of Indian Law Firms.

In his tribute in the *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly* (June 9, 2002) former editor of *The Bombay Samachar* Jehan Daruwalla documents Gagrut's community involvement. "He maintained that our religion not only teaches but exhorts us to move with the times," notes Daruwalla recalling Gagrut's dismay when Chief Justice Chagla closed his court work early to attend Rustamji's father's funeral. The tradition at Doongerwadi, which Gagrut considered outdated, forbids sezdoy by

non-Parsis and, along with the late Dastur Framroze Bode, Gagrati openly advocated and supported the cause for an aramgah. Though Bombay did not budge, Rustamji fought and won the case in 1948 for the continued use of the aramgah in Bangalore which the traditionalists had tried to shut down when a dakhma was built there.

His crusade against the BPP was two-pronged. For years its accounts lay in arrears — a sad contrast to the annually published accounts of the Surat Parsi Panchayat. His second point of attack was the BPP's housing policy which remains a stormy issue to this day.

On the issue of the voting right of out-married Parsi women which the BPP had refused to concede, Gagrati went to the Bombay High Court which endorsed and confirmed the right.

As Kapadia had pointedly observed at the condolence meeting and in his tribute in the *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly*, "Rustamji had Parsi sethias as his clients but Rustamji did not agree with certain creeds and dogmas and had the courage to express his view that (they) were irrelevant today. (There are) today people who are afraid to express their views if they stand to lose their clients or their positions."

The eldest among the 11 children of Porbunder-based Ardeshir and Piroja Gagrati, Rustam learnt to work and to share early in life becoming a guide and mentor to his siblings as his youngest brother Maneck, himself an expert on labor law, had acknowledged on an earlier, happier occasion. Living in Bombay with his uncles to pursue his studies, Gagrati had to borrow the Rs 5,000 demanded by the law firm Crawford Bayley and Company to allow him to apprentice as a solicitor's articled clerk. Passing his solicitor's exam at a single shot at the end of the two-year apprenticeship, he was enrolled by the firm as a solicitor assistant but denied a separate cabin unlike his British colleagues, first on grounds of shortage of space and a couple of years later, when cabins were erected for two English solicitor assistants, as an open discrimination against the natives. Gagrati, highly nationalistic since his undergraduate years at the Wilson College, tendered his resignation and walked out. As Vahanvati noted, "It took a lot of guts to walk out of Crawford

Bayley because I'm sure Crawford Bayley did not give a refund!"

On borrowed funds Gagrati went into partnership with a Parsi solicitor, Ratansh Chubb, and Chubb and Gagrati was born. It later amalgamated

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with E. B. Ghaswalla and company as Chubb, Gagrati and Ghaswalla. But within a few years Chubb and Ghaswalla went their way and on April 1, 1934 Gagrati and Company was born.

It was an uphill task, sustained by all of Rustamji's devotion. He had to freelance as a journalist, teach mercantile law at Davar's College and correct LLB examination papers for Bombay University to make up the income slack. But by 1942 he had inducted his first articled clerk, Mehra Shroff and his first partner, the late Chandrakant Mehta in 1942. It is a matter of record that none of his partners ever left him. The families grew together.

There were other fledglings in the Gagrati nest who grew to be senior advocates, counsel, et al. The condolence messages are revealing. "Way back in 1962 when I was a junior I addressed him as 'Mr Gagrati' and he retorted by saying that, as a counsel, I must call him 'Rustam,'" writes senior counsel S. Venkateswaran. Commenting on Rustamji's transparency, nationalism, self discipline and firmness while shunning publicity, former law secretary to the Government of India Padmanabh Gokhale wrote, "He was in the true sense qualified for 'Bharat Ratna.'" Senior advocate A. N. Haksar called him "a pillar of propriety in the profession and almost an institution in himself." "It was a privilege to know him... with a person like Rustamji there is always the linger-

ing memory of all his kind deeds," notes senior advocate Ashok Desai. Senior advocate S. Ganesh remembered "his painstaking and meticulous instructions and also his lavish praise for work well done." "It was an honor to know him at close quarters. I gained valuable experience and knowledge from his guidance," notes Justice C. K. Mahajan of the Delhi High Court. Commenting on Gagrati's dedication, learning and rectitude, G. H. Guttal, former judge of the Bombay High Court added, "He carried all these qualities with unmatched modesty."

Writing to Jangoo Gagrati from London industrialist Srichand Hinduja notes, "The relationship between the Hinduja Group and Gagrati and Company has gone well beyond being one of client-advisor to a close familial one... You both always had the best interest of our family at heart."

The staff from Gagrati and Gardi, as the Dubai branch is known, noted, "Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some people leave their footprints on our hearts. And we are never, ever the same."

Centenarians tend to be forgotten by their faster-paced successors. Not Rustamji. The sentiments are repeated in a seemingly endless spate.

If Gagrati reached great heights by dint of courage, conviction and hard work, life did not spare its slings and arrows. His wife Mani and daughters Bachoo Dubash and Najoo Bulsara had predeceased him. His solace lay in the lifelong devotion of Jangoo as his partner and as his only son and that of his daughter-in-law Maneck. In his latter years Gagrati, who as Andhyarujina said, loved the color red (his cars were red, his pyjamas were red, his vest was red) was tended day and night and as his cortege was carried out to the electric crematorium, thronging with his admirers at Chandanwadi, after the paidust at their Worli home, nurses and servants bid a silent adieu, their feelings reflected in their faces.

"We should not be mourning the passing of Rustam Gagrati. (Let it be an) occasion to applaud a man who has lived life to the full, achieved greatly but also suffered inordinately and bore his losses bravely," Chagla had encapsulated the prevailing sentiment.

Gagrati is survived by his son Jangoo.

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