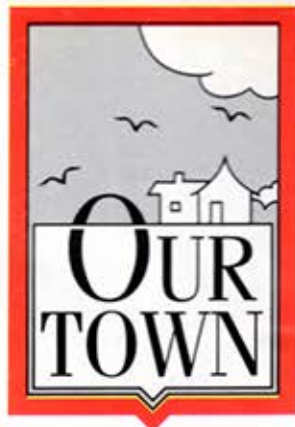


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# Parsiana

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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

### Recognizing excellence

The World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC), in its quest for promoting entrepreneurship among Zarathushtis, will annually recognize the following, from among nominations received worldwide:

- Outstanding Zarathushti entrepreneur of the year
- Outstanding Zarathushti professional of the year
- Outstanding young Zarathushti entrepreneur/professional of the year (35 and under)

Candidates must have achieved an outstanding standard in their field of business or profession. All nominations received will be presented to a distinguished panel of judges for their evaluation and ultimate selections.

Nominations must be sent along with all accompanying credentials and a detailed narrative explaining why the individual is nominated, what are his/her

achievements and eventual (professional) contribution to the world Zarathushti community.

The nomination package can be downloaded from the WZCC website (click on the update link at [www.wzcc.net](http://www.wzcc.net)) or may be obtained from Yasmin Pavri, Recognition Committee, World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce, 5400 Memorial Drive, #802, Houston, TX 77007, USA, tel: (713) 880-5727, e-mail: [yspavri@yahoo.com](mailto:yspavri@yahoo.com)

Nominations must be received by October 31, 2002. Please send nominations to the undersigned. YASMIN PAVRI  
Houston, USA

### Change of name

In the "Change of name" column in the *Mumbai Newslines* section of *The Indian Express*, August 28, 2002, Zubin Iftikhar Queresh has changed his name to Zubin Noshir Khambatta, vide Government of Maharashtra Gazette No. X-524.

All Zoroastrian individuals and institutions, particularly religious places of worship, charitable organizations, housing bodies and trust funds are earnestly requested to beware and notify all concerned.

GODREJ N. DOTIVALA

Public Relations Officer, Bombay Parsi Panchayat

### Use space effectively

We should build up public opinion to force our Poona Parsee Panchayat trustees to convert our agiaries, which are hardly used (like the third agiary in the heart of Poona city which is just too difficult to approach) into housing for younger, newly married couples. Only they can produce more children and boost our ever-falling numbers.

There are two dakhmas in Poona of which only one is in use because it has parking space for cars/scooters. The other dakhma nearer the Lulla Nagar colonies is always closed.

*Damanwala dispensary: in need of funds*

The real problem facing the Parsis is cheap rental housing. But in Bombay we see buildings like Spenta and another grand building in Khareghat Colony, flats in which only millionaire NRI Parsis in USA and UK can buy. The Petit multistoried apartments built on their valuable land will go to non-Parsis. Sad days ahead.

Capt J. P. AGA (Retd)

### Options at Doongerwadi

The solar concentrators at Doongerwadi are kept closed during the monsoon as they are not effective. Hence dead bodies remain there for months (in most unhygienic conditions). The smell emanating therefrom could endanger the health of people living in surrounding buildings. Religion has nothing to do with outdated customs. God never created religions and customs. D. R. ANTIA

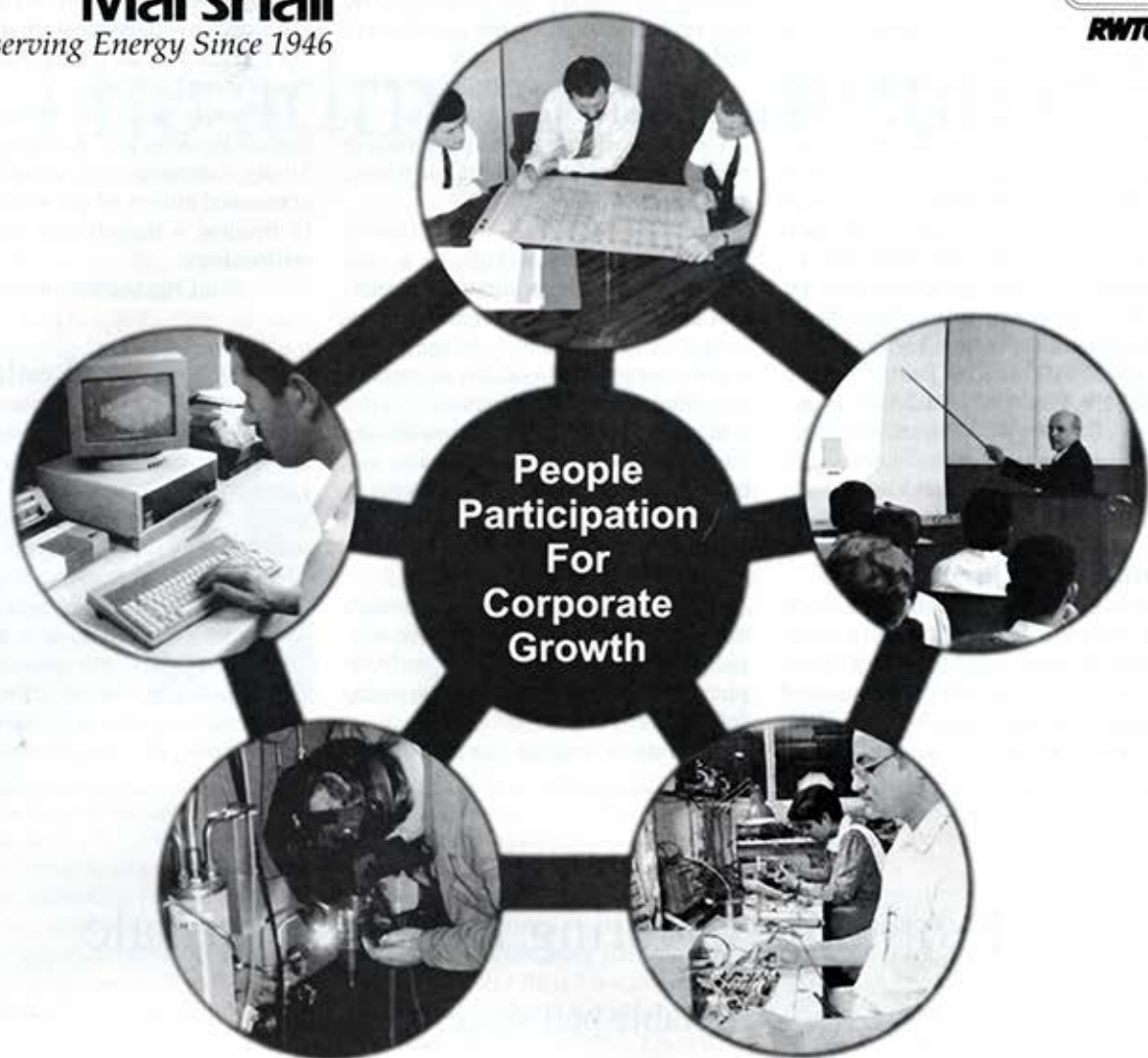
### Aid Damanwala...

The Seth M. C. Damanwala Charitable Dispensary founded by the Udvada Anjuman has completed 135 years. The Dispensary gives free service to all Parsi inhabitants including those living in surrounding villages, as also to all Parsis who come to Udvada to pay their respects to the Iranshah.

Members of sister communities are given medical aid too by charging them a negligible token fee, if they can afford it. Free treatment and medicines are provided to harijans and the poor in the village.

We earnestly appeal to the members of the community to consider the valuable services that are rendered by this Dispensary and to donate freely and generously. If the donation is Rs





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Our trust is recognized under section 80(G)(5) of the Income Tax Act vide certificate issued by the Commissioner of Income-Tax Surat and valid up to March 31, 2003. Donations may be sent by cash, A/c payee cheque or demand draft in the name of Seth M. C. Damanwala Charitable Dispensary to: Z. M. Dastoor, Hon Secretary, Damanwala Dispensary, Dr D. N. Rd, Udva 396180 or K. S. Dastur, Tardeo Chambers, Flat A-19, Kashinath Road, Tardeo, Bombay 400034, tel: 4940375.

K. S. DASTUR

President, Seth M. C. Damanwala Charitable Dispensary

### Jamshed, a jewel

August 1, 2002 marked the 50th death anniversary of Jamshed Nusserwanjee. Jamshed Nusserwanjee Rustomji Mehta was the real maker and the uncrowned king of Karachi. Regular, punctual, straightforward and honorable all

through his life, he dominated the public life of Karachi. The great and noble son of Hind sacrificed his vast business in serving the country and its people. He was respected both by the government and the people.

A gentle leader who believed in humility, Jamshed was a saint who was loved. Blessed with a silently attractive personality, he disliked pomp and power, and refused honors.

Jamshed was a true *jawahir* (jewel) — a scholar without fads — a sage without ostentation without affiliations and pretensions. Jamshed was a messenger of peace, mercy and unity. His work amongst the poor, the distressed, the afflicted and the harijans will ever be remembered. He was a healer without a parallel. And he died in harness — as a true servant of God and of humanity.

BEHRAM SOHRAB H. J. RUSTOMJI

### Silent sentinel

The late Behramshah D. Pithavala's unparalleled contribution to our religion deserves to be emulated, perfectly practiced and ably preached to our young fellow Zoroastrians.

This silent sentinel guarded fiercely

our rich Zoroastrian culture and religion, customs and traditions. His immortal works amongst others include his magnum opus *In Search of Divine Light* which gives one an endless pleasure and pride in our ageless Persian culture and civilization of over 7,000 years.

Pithavala was a true Freemason and radiant Rosicrucian. A caring, sharing, loving, compassionate, considerate and concerned citizen of the world, he rose to become a magnificent man of the millennium.

AADIL JEHangIRJI ARDESHIR PATEL  
Poona

### The tragic awakening

As I was dusting the furniture, on September 11, 2001, an unusually bright and a warm day here in Houston, I heard garbled words — "explosion" and "twin towers." I didn't bother looking at the television and I continued with my work. Then I heard "Pentagon," "Washington, DC," and "plane crashed into it." These words, then the sound of a boom, the sound of panic in the news reporter's voice made me look up at the screen. I just stood there seeing the images of the plane slicing the twin towers over and

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over again. I just couldn't hear the words, just the sound of terror and fear, bloody faces, crying faces, individuals fleeing. My dust cloth was clutched tightly in my hands, my body couldn't move from the spot. A phone call from my husband followed by one I made to my kids' school was reassuring. Yet my mind was still so numb, and slowly I started to see and hear what had really happened. Then out of nowhere anger was raging inside me, then sadness and then there were the tears — thinking of my kids, my husband, my family, the loneliness, the emptiness of ever losing them and the thought of any child caught in a situation like this. I felt frightened for my husband who had yet to catch a flight home, but we told ourselves to have faith in Ahura Mazda. Remember him and pray at times like these and all will be well. My husband did return home safely the next day. All I did from the time of this incident in the morning till the time I had to pick up my kids from school was curl up on the sofa hugging myself and praying. This was a span of three to four hours — of doing nothing but praying, and staring at the TV screen.

When it was time to pick up the kids, I was troubled with thoughts of how do

I explain where I am from, what if other parents ask me if I belong to the Islamic faith, what if they start disliking me, what if they start to hate my kids? A million more questions came to my mind. Our kids' school has 98 percent white children so I belonged to that two percent tiny minority. As I approached all the mothers who were waiting to pick up their children, I could hear the chatter of the unfortunate incident. I felt a bit uneasy at first, then joined in the conversation. For a while it was good to talk about the incident and express your opinion, and then came the question directed towards me, "Why do you think they (Muslims) do this sort of thing?" Just as the question came out of the blue, so did my answer, "I wouldn't know, I am a Zoroastrian." I remember saying a quick prayer and asking Ahura Mazda for help. A voice inside me said, "This is your opportunity to tell others all about your faith — do it!" A quick hug to my kids and they resumed their play with the others while I stood there in the warm sun for a good two hours doing nothing but satisfying curious minds. At the end of the day my family prayed to Ahura Mazda for all the souls lost in this cruel tragedy, and for the living to be safe, to

help those who are misguided, and to give us peace over hostility.

I took this dreadful tragedy and turned it to my advantage to educate my peers about who is a Zarathushti. This calamity also made me want to learn and understand more about my own faith so I could educate not only others, but my family and fellow Zoroastrians. I am just a mother who made her children's life a little simpler, and taught them to say the word Zoroastrian with confidence and dignity whilst proudly proclaiming to be a member of the oldest monotheistic religion in the world.

TENAZ SUNAVALA  
Texas, USA

### CORRECTION

Two of our readers, Behram T. Dastur and Dara A. Hakim have pointed out that in the article, "The regal ranks" (*Parsiana*, August 2002) in the box we have erroneously shown the rank of a Brigadier as equivalent to Commander in the Navy and Air Commander in the Air Force instead of Commodore and Air Commodore. The error is regretted.

Edited by Parinaz M. Gandhi

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# Events and Personalities

## Show of solidarity

"To reaffirm our faith and confidence in our Dasturji Nadirshah Unvalla and the trustees and to demonstrate our unqualified and total support to them in the service of our community," a special general meeting of the Bangalore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman (BPZA) was convened on July 14, 2002. An overwhelming majority (there were two abstentions) of the almost 80 members present passed a resolution forwarded to *Parsiana* to "condemn in the strongest possible manner the cowardly act of an unknown individual who has chosen to circulate an unsigned letter...containing malicious and totally unsubstantiated charges against our revered... Unvalla and our respected trustees and...to reflect the disgust and revulsion felt..."

Two senior members of the community, Nadir N. Billimoria and Sheryar D. Vakil who had reportedly taken the initiative to summon the meeting, voiced their views in favor of Unvalla and the trustees, mentions the press release. Billimoria referred to Unvalla's dedication for 60 years during which time he had assisted innumerable families who were in distress without any consideration. He further commented that a trustee's job is a thankless one, appreciating their concern, care and transparency. Since the anonymous letter writer had referred to personal misfortunes in the lives of Unvalla and certain trustees as retribution meted out by God, Vakil assumed the writer was "a sick man... devoid of any sense of decency."



Unvalla: community service

According to the letter replete with grammatical and spelling errors, "Cawasji, Nadirshah and Disawalla (Dr M. D. Disawalla's membership was terminated by the BPZA last year for not subscribing to the dakhmenashini tradition) all are equally responsible for all the shame brought to all the Parsis of Bangalore." Among the issues the letter writer was hoping to address were the problems of the present priest, Disawalla's problems, Unvalla's problems and making BPZA a reputable institution.

At the meeting Jimmy Panthaki reaffirmed Unvalla's individual acts of generosity and help to both Parsis and non-Parsis. Member Cawas Nazir also showed his disapproval of the letter writer. But when he criticized the trustees for disposing an old property (albeit with the sanction of the general body) he was not permitted to digress from the agenda on hand.

After the meeting, members, in their individual capacity, went up to Unvalla and the trustees to express their solidarity. "The Bangalore Parsis are a committed lot with the ability to arrive at their own conclusions on various issues (affecting) the community... In times of adversity or when there is a need to come together as one, whether to defend the faith or to help the Anjuman, you will never find them wanting," summed up Billimoria.

## Assets and values

"How do you qualify Indian citizenship? Are religious minorities not Indian citizens? Parsis came here in 600 AD. They were allowed to prosper, leave aside survive! Can you tell me that 'you have been in India only for 2,000 years so you do not have the right to be in this country?'" Jamsheed Kanga, advisor,

Forbes Gokak, was participating in the first ever meeting organized by the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF) under the auspices of the Hilla and Dosi C. Vakeel Endowment. The R. D. Birla Boardroom of the Indian Merchants' Chamber witnessed a lively discussion on June 29, 2002 when moderates, liberal men of letters, administrators, educationists, professionals, social activists and businessmen like Cyrus Guzder, chairman of AFL Limited denounced the communal violence witnessed in Gujarat. The proceedings convened by Arvind Deshpande (honorary secretary of the Leslie Sawhny Programme) highlighted that the media did not pay due attention to the calamity in Gujarat.

The remarkable Vakeel sisters were peace loving citizens who promoted values of communal harmony. An insight into their lives was provided by Bandra resident Kekoo Gandhi. While Hilla, the intellectual, was a journalist by profession, she assisted the elder sister Dosi who gave tuitions to earn a living. Although called the "gentle beauty" by the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Hilla fearlessly opposed the Emergency. Her book, *The Good Citizen*, was so well received for the type of moral direction it gave that the Bombay Civic Trust went for a reprint as they found its contents quite relevant in today's age.

On Thursday evenings their home on Turner Road saw friends and neighbors attend talks and poetry sessions conducted by Raja Rao, Prakash Tandon, Ashok Madgaokar, Mulkraj Anand, Ebrahim Alkazi under the auspices of Nalanda. There would be musical evenings too. The goodness of the sisters was experienced by many who valued their honorary services as an employment bureau.

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Following Hilla's untimely demise, Dosi continued with all the activities until she died in her nineties. Within a few years of Hilla's death, when their small one-storied bungalow where Dosi was a tenant was sold and she was offered an ownership flat in exchange, she suddenly became a woman of property worth several lakhs! After consulting friends she made a will gifting her flat to the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. She gave gifts worth Rs 2,000 to each of her friends and well-wishers. With over a lakh of rupees in her account she set up a trust where, on the advice of ICCF, the principal amount was deposited in a bank and the interest earned used to conduct yearly seminars. Thus came into being the Hilla and Dosi C. Vakeel Endowment.

As reinforced at the seminar, values like truth should be taught to children from their younger days and concepts like majority-minority should be totally abolished. Right-thinking people who come together on a common forum serve as role models and inspiration to others.

Rashna Ardesher

## Masonic mantle

"A very coveted and significant honor in the Masonic movement," was conferred on Dorab (Dolly) Cowasji Bajan, writes Phiroze Bhada of Bangalore referring to "the



Bajan: distinctive honor

crowning moment in (Bajan's) life as Mason with his appointment as district grand master of Bombay and Northern India by the Duke of Kent, the grand master of the United Grand

Lodge of England. Lodges in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh (MP), Chhatisgarh, Delhi, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh would lie within his jurisdiction.

A fourth generation Mason, 67-year-old Bajan was initiated in the Alexandra Lodge in Jabalpur when he was 23 and has over the years with his "commitment and hard work" risen to occupy different posts in the Masonic hierarchy. "The Masonic movement in the country was given its impetus in the earlier years by the British, the Anglo Indian community and the Parsis. Despite its working being shrouded in mystery the movement per se encompasses

many noble virtues clearly reflecting its primary objective of building core character in its members and concern for the welfare of our brothers and sisters, more particularly those who face hardship or are in distress," explains Bhada.

President of the Jabalpur Parsi Anjuman, Bajan has been active in community life. Former chairman of the standing committee of the Katni (MP) Municipal Corporation, he was also president of the Rotary Club of Katni.

## Select secretaries

At the Eighth DHL-NIPS (National Institute of Professional Secretaries) All India Secretary of the Year Contest on July 27, 2002, Yasmin Bhadha became the first Parsi from Bombay (and the second Bombayite) to be declared the second runner-up at the all-India level and the first runner-up at the Bombay region level. The winner and first runner-up of each of the seven NIPS chapters participate at the all-India level. The national winner then competes in a similar contest at the Asian level.

Another Zoroastrian to win acclaim at the Bombay regional level was Pervin Shaw who was declared the second runner-up. Shaw has been a secretary with Novartis Enterprises for the last 29 years, mentions *The Indian Express* of August 8, 2002.

Executive secretary to the managing director of Heinz India Private Limited, Bhadha was among the 25-30 contestants shortlisted for the written test from all those who had sent in their bio data as per the format specified by NIPS. Based on their written performance where general knowledge, understanding of their corporate profile and English skills are put to test, the choice was narrowed down to 18 who were selected for the group discussion and personal interview round. Six finalists are then chosen for each of the seven chapters — the winner, first runner-up, second runner-up and three others.

What was it that clicked in Bhadha's case? Facing an audience comprising participants, secretaries, bosses, spouses, special guests and family members at the Crystal Room of Taj Mahal Hotel Bhadha was expressing her views in the extempore round on the topic given to her: "Do single women make better secretaries than married women?" To convey her feelings on the subject, Bhadha stated, "Do we ever ask the question whether single men make better manag-



Bhadha winning acclaim from NIPS founder Homai Mehta

ers than married men? If not, why single out secretaries?" At this point the audience gave her an impromptu applause, giving her the necessary boost. Her point was well taken not just by the audience but even by the panel of judges comprising Prem J. Kamath, head — management resources India, Hindustan Lever Limited, Kiran Nanda, chief economist — Gujarat Ambuja Cement Limited and Sonu Kripalani, general manager — sales (western India) of Jet Airways.

Amongst the audience were her father Minoo Khambatta, husband Khushroo and mother-in-law Dolly cheering and supporting the relaxed and confident Yasmin. "It was a very interesting and enriching experience. Being the second runner-up at the all-India level is an achievement I certainly am proud of," notes Bhadha to whom a secretary's "job is like any other. The difference is that as secretary one manages not only one's own work but also the boss' work." As a winner she took home cash prizes plus kitchen accessories, clocks, dinner coupons, assorted hampers...

R. A.

## Student custodians

The thunderous applause had a hint of self-congratulation. And why not? For the audience comprised largely of the parents of 98 Zoroastrian students who were being felicitated by FOZAWAC (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations for Welfare and Culture) for scoring 80 percent and above at the 2002 board examinations of SSC (Secondary School Certificate), ICSE (Indian Certificate of

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Top row (from left): Wadia, Adi Mehta, Silloo Engineer, Jiwanji Jamadar, Dadi Engineer, Dastoor, Marfatia, Vispi Dastur, Bhungara and Dastoor  
Second row (from left): A section of the audience, Jamadar with D. Engineer, Marfatia with A. Mehta



Alongside: Committee members of FOZAWAC and WZO (India) along with the guests of honor and top scorers at the 2002 board exams

Secondary Education) and in the science stream of HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate), 75 percent and over in HSC (commerce) and 70 percent and above in HSC (arts).

Of the 98 students, 62 were girls and 36 were boys. The higher number of female performers has been the trend for the last three years, it was reported at the function on August 4, 2002 sponsored by the World Zoroastrian Organisation (India) when its India president Dadi Engineer was the chief guest. Diana Marfatia, principal of The Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsee Charitable (BJPC) Institution which got the special appreciation award and Veera Dastoor who represented the J. B. Petit High School for Girls which got the Best School Award were the guests of honor.

Amongst the Parsi run institutions, five students from J. B. Petit, four from Avabai Petit, three students each from J. B. Vachha, Activity and Maneckji Cooper, and two students from BJPC were the top scorers this year at the school leaving examination. Two students from BJPC in HSC (commerce) and one in HSC (science) also shone out. At the SSC examination the top three scorers were Simin Patell (90.33 percent, from Secunderabad), Zenobia Dotivala (90 percent, from J. B. Vachha) and Zervin



Baam (89.73 percent, from St Joseph). Topping the ICSE list were Zenobia Chinoy (95 percent, from J. B. Petit), Peshotan Kapadia (94.17 percent, from St Mary's) and Mayav Movdawalla (93.5 percent, from Maneckji Cooper). Heading the HSC science stream were Fehrard Patel (95 percent, from Ruia), Percy Dadabhoy (93.33 percent, from Jai Hind) and Nadirsh Patel (90.33 percent, from Jai Hind). Topping the HSC commerce faculty were Farzana Wadia (89.83 percent, from Podar), Sharon Coorlawalla (86.33, from H. R. College) and Karishma Irani (84.83 percent, from Don Bosco). The HSC arts achievers were Parinaaz Bhomisa (76.67 percent, from Poona's Wadia College), Zarine Colah (76 percent, from St Xavier's) and Shiraz Patel (75.83 percent, from Jai Hind). The first three in each category were given a cash gift of Rs 1,000, 700 and Rs 500 respectively along with a plaque. All the 98 students were given

certificates and a box of chocolates at the awards ceremony conducted by FOZAWAC general secretary Rusi Bhungara.

These students are the future custodians of the Parsi community, impressed Jiwanji Jamadar, president of FOZAWAC in his welcome address. As Engineer noted in a speech replete with references to H. G. Wells, Michelangelo and Sir Donald Bradman, and their single-minded pursuit of excellence, "Youth should be well spent and combine both work and play." Quoting Henry Ford he added, "The most successful people are those who have one goal."

Jeroo G. Irani

## Key conscious

After impressing audiences in Bangalore with their mastery of the piano keys, 10-year-old Neville Bharucha and his seven-year-old sister Navaz have

*continued on page 38*

## North American Awards

Seven outstanding Zarathushtis were inducted into the Hall of Fame by their Zoroastrian compatriots at the 12th North American Zoroastrian Congress hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC), July 4-7, 2002. The North American Zarathushti Community Awards have been an intrinsic feature of each biennial congress since 1988.

Heading the distinguished group, professor emeritus of Boston University Dr Farhang Mehr became the third North American Zoroastrian to win the Lifetime Achievement Award since the awards were instituted in 1988. The award is presented to a highly respected North American Zarathushti whose personal achievements have been a source of recognition to the Zarathushti community worldwide. The former deputy prime minister of Iran and chancellor of the Pahlavi University at Shiraz, Mehr had broken the glass barrier that prevented non-Muslims from attaining positions of power and authority in Iran. "His preeminence enabled him to imprint reforms of lasting impact on Iran's economic, education, financial, insurance and oil sectors... As his career progressed, his personal example and efforts persuaded Islamic officials to open doors of high public offices closed for centuries to other Zarathushtis, and initiate religious equality and social acceptance of Zarathushtis," notes the press release forwarded by FEZANA (Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America) awards committee chair Dinshaw Joshi. Though Mehr and his family had to flee Iran after the Islamic Revolution, "his wisdom, leadership and service... has contributed immensely to raise public recognition of the Zarathushti community in North America... His scholarly advice, urging rationality, prudence and moderation on contemporary religious and community issues, is heeded equally by adult and young Zarathushtis around the world. His dedicated community leadership has enabled Zarathushtis in Iran to face their future

with greater confidence, encouraged Zarathushti youth to be active in shaping the community's destiny and for Tehran's Mobed Kankash to modernize its outlook on religious and community matters. Further, through his leadership, world Zarathushti congresses have be-



Winners all (L to R):  
1st row: Mehr,  
Siddhwa and K.  
Mehta (2nd row):  
Tata, Bhathena and  
Dubash (Alongside):  
S. Mehta

come a norm and countless Iranian Zarathushti families have found safe asylum in western countries," notes the citation read by Joshi before the award was presented by outgoing FEZANA president Framroze Patel.

Kayomars Mehta's "significant contributions in leadership, religious education and social and cultural aspects of the Zarathushti community both in Chicago and around the world," won him the Rohinton Rivetna Outstanding Zarathushti Award - the seventh individual to do so (The Outstanding Zoroastrian Award was renamed the Rohinton Rivetna Outstanding Zarathushti Award in 1990). The award recognizes a Zarathushti who has made outstanding and well-recognized contributions to further the cause of Zarathushtis in North America and internationally through leadership and service, notes the press release. A former president of ZAC, Mehta has been the chairperson of its Religious Education Committee for over

30 years, notes the citation crediting him with the development, leadership and management of "a very active and informative program of religious education for the local Zarathushti community... He initiated and successfully formulated a Universal Zarathushti Religion Curriculum to serve as a guide for standardizing religious education among Zarathushtis in North America. This curriculum was printed and issued by FEZANA and distributed to FEZANA member associations in North America as well as to other Zarathushti organizations throughout the world. (Mehta) has initiated also an elaborate program for advancing the religious education of mobeds in North America," notes the citation. Mehta is said to be on the lookout for philanthropists to finance a Zarathushti Learning Center in North America on the lines of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute in Bombay.

A Zarathushti entrepreneur with four high tech start-ups to his name in less than 10 years, Firdaus Bhathena, president and CEO of Relicore, became the eighth Zarathushti to receive the Excellence in Business or Profession Award.

Bombay-born Bhathena joined the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) after securing an all-India first at the ICSE examination. There he won the Henry Ford II scholarship for "exceptional potential for leadership in engineering," notes the citation. After a couple of stints as director of engineering and developing educational software, Bhathena won MIT's Entrepreneurship Competition and with the prize money of \$ 50,000 founded WebLine Communications which became a leader in customer interaction software with 150 employees and 100 large customers in three years' time. In 1999 Cisco Systems acquired WebLine for \$ 325 million and a year later Bhathena left it to found Relicore which "raised \$ 11 million in its first round of venture capital funding, and has over 40 employees working on distributed application management solutions. Firdaus also advises a number of early stage companies and is a charter member of several software and entrepreneurial organizations," notes the write-up.

The Jamshed Pavri Humanitarian Service Award went to Vancouver's Bella Tata — the eighth person to be so

honored in North America. The award has been so named for the "immeasurable services" provided by the late Jamshed and Roda Pavri to the Zoroastrian community as well as to the Canadian host community, notes the write-up. A former president of the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (1998-2000) Tata had served as the chair of FEZANA's congress committee for four years. A professional secretary and manager, and a descendant of the formidable Keikhosrow Shahrokh who had become the first Zoroastrian representative in the Iranian majlis (parliament), Bombay-born Tata is currently executive assistance officer, Pacific region, of Industry Canada — an economic appointment of the Canadian federal government which she has served since 1983, notes the write-up. "For her extensive and notable contribution to the department, its clients and community work," Tata was awarded the Canada 125 Commemorative Medal, notes the citation emphasizing "her efforts to bring the fruits of education and the message of equality, compassion, harmony and unity to all segments of the society in Vancouver."

Well-known novelist Bapsi Sidhwa was the first recipient of the Excellence in Performing Arts, Painting or Literature Award. Author of *An American Brat*, *Cracking India* (aka *The Icecandy Man*, was filmed as *Earth*), *The Bride and The Crow Eaters*, Sidhwa has taught at Columbia, Houston and Brandeis Universities. In 1994 she was presented the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Writer's Award. The Lahore-born writer was nationally acknowledged by the award of Sitara-I-Imtiaz, Pakistan's highest national honor in the liberal arts, and the LiBeraturepreis in Germany. She has also been awarded the Bunting Fellowship at Radcliffe, Harvard, notes the citation.

Current president of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater Boston Area (ZAGBA) Sherazade Mehta was the sixth recipient of the Outstanding Young Zarathushti Award, meant for achievers under 30. A full-time Montessori teacher in Boston, Mehta's entrepreneurial skills were evident when she started making jewelry and began reaching a wider audience by launching her own website <www.Sherazarts.com>. Mehta's jewelry and website were featured in the *Boston Globe* and in a news segment of the New England Cable news television network highlighting local entrepre-

neurs, mentions the citation.

The Ontario-born daughter of Rashna and FEZANA president Firdosh Mehta earned her BA in history from the University of British Columbia and her Bachelor of Elementary Education degree from the University of Alberta, acquiring her Montessori Diploma in Washington DC. Her training as a professional teacher has enabled her to initiate and teach children's religious classes at ZAGBA. As one of the three co-chairs of ZYNA (Zoroastrian Youth of North America), a sub-committee of FEZANA which aims to help Zarathushti youth come together in educational, cultural and social areas, Mehta's aim has been "to ensure that Zarathushti youth have a representative voice in all areas affecting their future," states the citation.

Tenaz Dubash was the first recipient of the Paradise Award which aims to recognize an individual or group who has contributed to spreading the message of Zarathushtra through the composition of an artistic and educational play, poetry or song capable of being transcribed on film, video and/or DVD for dissemination among the Zarathushti and other communities in North America and worldwide, states the press release. India-born Dubash, with a master's degree in television/radio and film from Syracuse University and over eight years of TV production experience, traveled to Iran with 34 fellow Zarathushtis and produced her first documentary on Zoroastrianism, *In the Footsteps of Our Forefathers*. Acclaimed nationally and internationally, the New York based Dubash's production received positive press coverage in *The Indian Express*, *India Today* and *Rediff.com*. "A seven-minute segment of the documentary was featured on CNN's 'Inside Asia,'" records the citation, adding that the film has been screened at Boston and Berkeley Universities and at MIT.

Twenty-four nominations for the six awards were received by the extended date of February 15, 2002, a "disappointing" response according to Joshi. The committee selected 36 Zarathushti men and women to serve as judges. They were divided into six equal panels, each including a youth member. The awards committee did not divulge the names of the judges even to other judges on the same panel. Instead each judge received copies of the nominations which he/she was enjoined to evaluate strictly on the criteria specified. Thereafter the

awards committee collated the total scores of each nominee, Joshi described the meticulous process of evaluation. When the committee discovered that some of their selected judges had been nominated for awards by the community, it ensured that no nominee served on the judges' panel for the award for which he/she had been nominated. In the event four of the awardees had also been judges, notes Joshi.

There was no call for nominations for the Lifetime Achievement Award. Mehr was selected by the awards committee in consultation with FEZANA executives and a few prominent North Americans, writes Joshi.

The awards committee which comprised Joshi, Yasmin Pavri of Houston, Trity Pourbahrami of Vancouver, Framroze Patel and Hosi Mehta, president of ZAC, noted its appreciation of philanthropist Mehraban Zartoshty's donation of \$2,500 in continuation of the Zartoshty family's continued support for the biennial awards; Montreal businessman Ness Lakdawala who had provided the plaques presented to the awardees; and Feroza Fitch of Maryland for the design of the brochures. Master of ceremonies Laila Contractor ensured the smooth flow of events till Pavri's vote of thanks brought the awards ceremony to an end.

## Mody and the HK Varsity

The Incorporated Trustees of the Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hongkong Canton and Macao (ZCF) celebrated the 90th anniversary of the founding of Hong Kong University by installing a new bronze bust of Sir Hormusjee Nowrojee Mody, the university's principal donor. The joint unveiling by ZCF president Jal Shroff and vice chancellor of the University, Prof Ian Davis on June 17, 2002 was attended by distinguished members of Hong Kong academia and members of the community, informs a missive from the ZCF. The bust replaces an earlier one which for some reason had been removed and misplaced.

"The University had decorated the entire staircase with lights and set up enlarged photos of Sir Hormusjee taken at the original foundation stone laying ceremony in 1910," notes the write-up by Yazdi Parekh. Refreshments and champagne organized by the University followed the ceremony which took place a few steps up from the front entrance of the main building, he notes.



*Clockwise from top left: ZCF trustees and their spouses stand around the bust of Mody; the new bust installed at the University; Shroff (left) and Davis at the unveiling ceremony; benefactor Mody*

The 60 cm high bust cast in bronze is set on a polished wooden plinth with a base of solid black stone. The plaque on the plinth — which states, "Sir Hormusjee N. Mody (1838-1911), major donor towards the founding of the University of Hong Kong, a distinguished Parsi businessman, renowned philanthropist and benefactor of Hong Kong for over fifty years. This bust is presented to the University of Hong Kong on 17th June, 2002 by the Incorporated Trustees of the Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton, and Macao to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the University of Hong Kong" — will ensure that generations of students, professors and visitors will be aware of Mody's contribution to the institution.

When the ZCF trustees found that the original statue was missing and sought to replace it, they realized that a long and complex liaison with the University was required. It was former president Noshir Pavri MBE, JP who undertook and completed the task. Together with his son Kawas, now a ZCF trustee, Pavri worked with a master sculptor to design and construct Mody's likeness, even supervising the placing and lighting of the bust for optimum effect. "Thanks to the hard work of the Pavris, the trustees prevailed and donated a stunning new bust of Sir Hor-



musjee to the University," notes Parekh. Shroff concluded his opening speech honoring Mody and describing the time-consuming process that ended so happily, recalling Mody's words: "providing for others what I myself was denied."

A major artery in the heart of the bustling Tsim Sha Tsui district is named Mody Road after the man who activated the Hong Kong Gold Bullion market (today Asia's largest) and the Hong Kong Stock Exchange (Asia's second largest), founded the Kowloon Cricket Club and owned a famous horse-racing stable, notes Parekh. The 20-year-

old youth who had arrived in Hong Kong in 1858 was responsible for reclaiming and developing much of urban Kowloon and Hong Kong and became the president of the ZCF in the 1890s. "He made a considerable fortune from his business but returned much of it to the area and the people that made him



*Zoroastrian Building in Hong Kong: the old (left) and the new*



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successful," writes Parekh.

What was particularly gratifying to Shroff and the community was that the next day the Chinese language Press featured substantial reports and pictures of the event which "served to educate the local population on the vast contributions made to Hong Kong by past generations of Parsis and to raise the profile of the current Parsi community and Zoroastrianism in general," states Parekh. He further notes that the *Sun Daily* devoted a full page to Parsis and Zoroastrianism tracing the community's history from Zarathushtra to the modern 23-storey Zoroastrian Building in Hong Kong.

"The newspaper even had a small article on the ancient Zoroastrians who had come to China over a thousand years ago and helped the Chinese develop a better style of Kung Fu. The local Chinese population was extremely surprised to find out how much Parsis had contributed to the development of Hong Kong and the betterment of their way of life. Most were completely unaware of the existence of Parsis and Zoroastrianism at all. Truly, these were special days of recognition, not only for the Parsis of Hong Kong, but for Parsis around the world," Parekh concluded his report.

## Hong Kong Zoroastrians

A xerox copy of "A Historical Outline of our Trust, its Activities of its People," forwarded to *Parsiana* by Perviez Aggarwal, managing director of the DBS Group of Companies, states:

"The beginnings of the present day trust started quite humbly in the year 1822, when a piece of land was purchased on the slopes of Guia Hill in Macao (which until 1844 was administered from Goa) for the establishment of a Parsi cemetery there. The cemetery became operational in 1829. Canton (Guangzhou), however was the hub of China trade in those days with firms such as that of Cowasjee Pallanjee and Company establishing 'factories' which were warehouses, residences of 'factors' or agents there as far back as 1794. The first Parsi association formed in this area was in Canton in 1834, and was known as the 'China Canton Anjuman.' Parsis had begun to settle in Macao in the 1820s and started

to settle in Hong Kong in the 1840s after the establishment of the British administration and in Shanghai in the 1850s after it was opened up to foreigners. On September 19, 1845 the Zoroastrian community living in this area met in Canton and created a wider anjuman body, covering Hong Kong, Canton,



Cemetery at Shanghai

and Macao for the purpose of establishing and maintaining burial grounds, having places of association and rendering financial assistance to the needy. Zoroastrian cemeteries were established in Hong Kong in 1845, in Whampoa (near Guangzhou) in 1847 and in Shanghai in 1854. A bungalow was built in Whampoa in 1860 and a house purchased in Macao in 1874. The house in Macao was sold in 1939.

"As the resident Parsi community in Hong Kong increased and prospered, the first premises for use of the Zoroastrian community here was rented in 1857, and the first house purchased at 49 Elgin Street in 1861. This house was later sold and a plot was bought at 101 Leighton Road, on which was completed on July 19, 1934, a two-storey building named the 'Zoroastrian Building' at a cost of HK \$ 48,000 including land. In 1970, a third storey was added to it. This building was demolished in April of 1991 for redevelopment and the anjuman was located temporarily (for two years) at a rented premises at B-6, 17th floor, Fontana Gardens, on Causeway Hill. The new 'Zoroastrian Building' a 23 storey centrally air-conditioned concrete and glass commercial tower, was officially inaugurated on Jamshedi Navroz day, March 21, 1993 a day that would be etched in gold in the history of our Trust (see "An affirmation of faith," *Parsiana*, August 1993). A time capsule was placed underneath the ground floor lobby's cen-

ter marble tiles, and a limited edition of specially crafted sterling silver souvenir medals, with a portrait of Zarathushtra on one side and an etching of the new Zoroastrian Building on the other, were minted and distributed to the members and other VIPs to commemorate the inauguration. Four floors of this building are currently being used by the community, whilst the rest of the floors are rented out as shops and offices. Most of the redevelopment cost of HK \$ 33 million was financed by taking out a loan mortgaging the land. The loan was fully paid back in November 1996 and the building now belongs completely to the Trust.

"Parsis have always been noted for their charity and the first remittances of money by our Trust to India started as far back as 1848. Charities for the relief of local destitute Chinese first began in 1854. Substantial donations are now made annually to individuals and institutions in India and Hong Kong. A large number of educational subsidies are also granted to students every year...

"Though the number of Parsis in Hong Kong has rarely exceeded 200 at any time, the contributions of the Parsis to the development of Hong Kong has been considerable. Early 19th century 'taipans' such as Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, the first Indian Knight Bachelor and Baronet, and Pestonjee Cowasjee Sethna, founder of Cowasjee Pallanjee and Co were often known as the princes (among) eastern merchants. Pestonjee Cowasjee, Rustomjee Dhunjishaw and Framjee Talati were present when the British landed in Hong Kong on January 26, 1841. Pestonjee Cowasjee, Dhunjibhoy Bisney (our Trust's first president), Framjee Jamsetjee and Dadabhoy Rustomjee also made substantial purchases at the first land auction in Hong Kong held in June of that year. In the first 25 years of Hong Kong's history as many as a quarter of all foreign firms in Hong Kong belonged to Parsis. The latter day Parsis too have not only made tremendous contributions to the growth of Hong Kong's trade and commerce, but have also helped in the formation and development of financial, educational, medical, social and sports organizations here.

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president of our Trust in the 1890's was one of the principal founders of the Hong Kong University and the Kowloon Cricket Club. He helped reclaim Central praya, activate the Hong Kong share and bullion markets and owned and developed large parcels of land in Kowloon. Mody Road is named after the outstanding philanthropist and a true Hong Konger. Bisney Road and Kotewall Road are also named after Parsis. In Macao, our cemetery is located on 'Estrada Dos Parses' or 'Parsi Road' and in Whampoa too, the hill on which our cemetery stood is still known to locals as 'Parsi Hill.'

"Dorabjee Naorojee Mithaiwala accelerated Sir Hormusjee Mody's development of Kowloon by starting in 1888 the first regularly scheduled cross-harbor ferry service known as the "Star Ferry." Both owned famous racing stables as well whilst Dorabjee also owned most of Hong Kong's top luxury hotels of the time. Jehangir Ruttonjee built and donated the Ruttonjee Sanatorium (now Hospital) and founded Hong Kong's first brewery, later sold to San Miguel. His son, Dhun Ruttonjee, another Trust past president, was a legislative councillor in the 1960s — one of only two ethnic Indians to have ever become a member. Cowasjee Pallanjee and Company helped start and were the star players on the yarn market in the late 1800s. They, together with the Banaji brothers Framji and Rustomjee, owned and plied scores of ships. Their clippers included some of the fastest and best known of their time. Hormusjee Rustomjee started the ball rolling to build a seamen's hospital which opened in 1843. Still other Parsis brought banking and insurance from India to Hong Kong and were founding committee members of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank in 1865, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce in 1861, and the Indian Chamber of Commerce Hong Kong in 1952. Many of them were also directors of what are now blue-chip companies on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

"The Parsis have continuously shown confidence in Hong Kong throughout its history, starting from the first land auction in 1844 right through to the currently redeveloped HK \$200 million Zoroastrian Building. As our current Trust president Jal Shroff has said,

'We've been in Hong Kong a long time. We'll be around for a lot longer yet.'"

### Fee's preservation project

At the 2002 Historic Preservation Conference sponsored by the Historic South Dakota Foundation, Fee (Feruzeh) and Jerry Jacobsen were honored with the Award for Excellence in Historic Rehabilitation. The Jacobsens' award win-



*Jerry and Feruzeh with sons Eric and Zak*

ning work was the restoration of the Central Block building in downtown Pierre, the state capital, as notes an article by Mary Gales Askren in *Capital Journal* of May 10, 2002.

In the early 1880s a group of investors constructed several wooden frame structures in the upcoming town. Outstanding among them was a commercial building of St Louis pressed brick and Kansas stone trimmings with Italianate features, described as "the handsomest building in town," according to records maintained by the South Dakota Historical Society.

The 1884 Republican territorial convention was held in the new structure to celebrate the grand opening while businesses vied for office premises, indicates Askren.

By the mid 1990s when Jacobsen bought the building "downtown was pretty sad," she told Askren. The upper storey of the Central Block, which had once held the offices of prominent professionals, had been boarded up; the lower level had been renovated so often that "only the pressed

tin ceiling remained and that was covered by a suspended ceiling," notes Askren.

Jacobsen bought the building thinking "it would be kind of fun to... restore it." Her goal was to restore the exterior and convert the former office space into apartments, notes the article. Her view was endorsed by historic preservation coordinator Steve Rogers. "Restoration is rehabilitation. It's not just a matter of preserving the buildings the way they were originally. It's rehabilitating them," Askren quotes Rogers. In the process of her task Jacobsen encountered "expensive challenges like preserving the windows and some surprising finds, like skylights in all of the offices," writes Askren.

Like a deft facilitator Jacobsen created a team of professionals to aid her — banker Bill Fischer providing financial support; local contractors like Jim Leidholt being "sensitive to the special demands of historic restoration;" Stokes Masonry who met the exterior requirements by slicing bricks in half to give the wall a uniform appearance; Mary Gates of the state historical society who guided her to avail of grants and tax incentives; friend and former colleague Sarah Ackerman who, in Jacobsen's words, "was part of the whole project all along." However Rogers maintained, "If (Jacobsen) hadn't had the vision, it wouldn't have been done."

Daughter of the late Keki Erani, founder of Steelage, and his wife Nerges, Fee now has beautifully crafted items for sale in her Pierre Street Emporium. Together with her husband, who works for the Federal government, she has run other businesses. A former secretary of the South Dakota legislature, Fee's social commitments have included work at the local hospice and with cancer patients. Mother of two and grandmother of four, Fee is an active member of the town's museum committee and heritage center, informs her mother. A prize winning gardener, she helps maintain gardens in various parts of the city and is enthusiastic in imparting the love and lore of gardening to children.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama

# Hallowed be thy name

Through Court intervention the office bearers of the Nagpur Anjuman have stalled the recent move by the Nagpur University to rename the Jamsetjee Nusserwanjee Tata Convocation Hall and Building

Dilnavaz E. Bhagwagar

With their fast and firm response, the members of the managing committee of the Shree Nagpur and Kamthi Parsi Zarthosti Anjuman (SNKPZA) have foiled an attempt by the Nagpur University to change the name of the Jamsetjee Nusserwanjee Tata Convocation Hall and Building to Dadasaheb Kalmegh Hall.

On the night of Friday, July 26, the president of the SNKPZA Edul Bhagwagar came to know that the Nagpur University authorities, headed by its vice chancellor Dr Arun Satputaley had decided on the proposed move. W. M. alias Dadasaheb Kalmegh was an ex-vice chancellor of the University. Invitations for the renaming function to be held on July 29 had already been issued.

Acting swiftly, the Anjuman president and his colleagues on the managing committee, Navroze Daver (vice president), Shiraz Doongaji (honorary treasurer) and Yezdi Bhagwagar (honorary secretary), sent letters of protest to the chancellor, vice chancellor and pro vice chancellor of the University. They also questioned the University's legal and moral right to change the name. They pointed out that though the Parsis were a minority community, their contribution to the cultural, educational, industrial and political fabric of the country was significant

and this proposed move had deeply hurt the sentiments of the minority community.

Telegrams were sent to the chairman of the National Minorities Commission, to its Zoroastrian representative Lt Gen (retd) Adi Sethna, Soli Sorabjee, attorney general of India, Themuras Doongaji, managing director Tata Services and Jamshed Guzder, chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet. Ex-Nagpurians Dr Jamshed Irani, Jamsheed Kanga and Ava Khullar were appraised of the move and everyone's help sought in thwarting the same.

Edul Bhagwagar, Daver and Shiraz Doongaji went to the Press who were supportive of their stand. The next day's newspapers — English, Hindi and Marathi — strongly decried the renaming of the University Convocation Hall.

On the morning of Sunday, July 28, the Nagpur Anjuman represented by its lawyer Arun Chaudhari approached the Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court for a stay order on the proposed move of the Nagpur University to change

the name.

The division bench consisting of Justices J. N. Patel and R. S. Mohite granted the stay and directed the Nagpur University to refrain from changing the name of its Convocation Hall.

Edul Bhagwagar told the judges that they had nothing against the late Kalmegh. Their only contention was that the name of a person of the stature of Jamsetji Tata should not be removed. "Jamsetji Tata was not just a Parsi," said Bhagwagar, "he was an Indian first. His vision and largesse were never restricted to one community. His contribution to the country and most of all to the city of Nagpur was monumental."

Tata's very first industrial venture, the Empress Mills, was located in Nagpur. The Empress Mills gave direct employment to over 7,000 people for 125 years. It was the largest single employer in Nagpur, in its time. Seven thousand bread earners meant that at least 25,000 people depended on Tata's mills. The J. N. Tata Parsi Girls High School, Nagpur, was the first school for girls in this region and continues to be one of the foremost girls' schools even today.

The respect and reverence the name of Jamsetji Tata evokes even today, among a cross section of people, is evident. Cutting across lines of community and class, ex employees of the Mills, academicians, captains of industry and commerce and many concerned people have supported the Nagpur Anjuman in its bid to halt the change of name. Eighty-eight-year-old Keki Mehta, onetime accountant in the Empress Mills sent a handwritten



*The Jamsetjee Nusserwanjee Tata Convocation Hall and Building (alongside) and the visionary (above)*



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account from the pages of his diary of the donation made by the Tatas to the University in 1924. Everyone is together in the fight to uphold the honorable name of Jamsetji Tata.

The judges came down heavily on the Nagpur University officials, telling them to concentrate their energies on improving the academic standards of the University. The decision to rename the Convocation Hall is an insult to one of the greatest visionaries of modern India and a philanthropist of the highest order, the Bench observed during the course of the hearing.

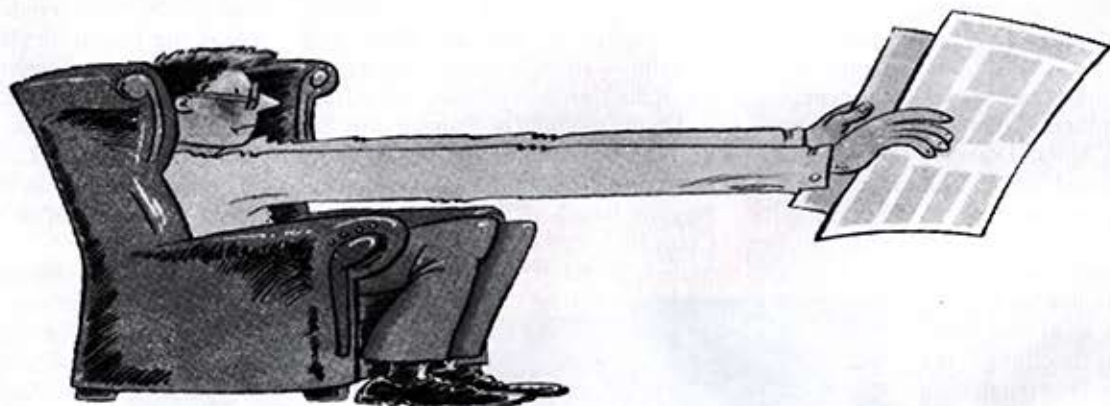
This stately edifice to higher education in the region was made possible by the (then) princely donation of one lakh rupees given by the Tatas in 1924 in response to an appeal from the first vice chancellor of the Nagpur University, Sir Bippin Chandra Bose. The governor of C. P. and Berar, Sir Butler, inaugurated the illustrious J. N. Tata Convocation Hall and Building in 1927. Until 1949 all convocations of Nagpur University took place in this hall. When numbers became too large the convocations were held on the grounds of the same building.

"We have succeeded in getting a four-week stay," said Daver. "It is

now up to the chairman and directors at Bombay House to impress upon people in government to prevail upon the vice chancellor to drop the move. We are also confident that men of education and integrity like the chancellor and vice chancellor of Nagpur University will see how right and fitting it is to continue with the name 'J. N. Tata Convocation Hall and Building,' for this temple honoring academic achievement."

At the end of the four-week stay, the University contested the court order. They said they have not violated any commitment. Their contention is that they had agreed to name the building as the Jamsetji Tata Building and that will continue. They are only naming the main hall as the Dadasaheb Kalmegh Convocation Hall and there is no reason legal or otherwise why they cannot. The Bombay Bench of the Nagpur High Court, in a judgment delivered on September 13, 2002 has however continued its interim stay on the Nagpur University, restraining it from renaming the Convocation Hall after W. M. Kalmegh. The case is now in court and will probably take years to come to a conclusion.

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# The lethal cargo

An overload of ammunition and combustible articles aboard *Fort Stikene* in 1944 led to an unprecedented explosion in the Bombay docks

Ardeshir B. Damania

Friday April 14, 1944 was a very hot day in Bombay. The ship *Fort Stikene* (7,420 tons) had arrived on April 12 and was moored at Victoria Dock undergoing unloading like several other ships next to her. At the time of the explosion, the ship was carrying a lethal combination of cargo of dried fish, cotton bales (loaded from Karachi), timber, 1,400 tons of ammunition including gunpowder and gold bars (loaded from Berkinhead, England). The gold was to stabilize the rupee which was sagging due to World War II and fear of invasion from Japan and would allow the government to print more currency notes for paying salaries and other war expenses. The gold bullion was valued at approximately two million pounds sterling at that time.

Nobody is certain as to how the fire started but the two explosions which followed one after another were so loud that windows rattled and/or shattered as far away as Dadar, a distance of eight miles. The destruction in the docks and surrounding area was immense and several hundred lives of dock workers and firemen were lost in an instance. After the first explosion went off, the Bombay Fire Brigade led by chief fire officer Rustom Palamkote answered the call to duty within minutes. Palamkote himself courageously entered the hold of the burning ship to inspect the cause of the explosion when there was a second, more devastating blast. All of the 66 brave fire fighters, including Palamkote, lost their lives (a monument has been erected in the Victoria Dock in their

honor). Some of the ships that were docked alongside the *Fort Stikene* were blown right out of the water and lay along the dock on their sides!

The population of the city was panic stricken as wild rumors spread rapidly that the explosions signaled the com-



Above: A view of the harbor after the first explosion and the ill-fated *Fort Stikene* (alongside)



mencement of hostilities by the Japanese on the same style as the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian islands in December 1941. Totally unfounded tales from Surat, where the Tapti river meets the sea, had mentioned several sightings of periscopes of supposedly Japanese submarines! As it turned out, the Japanese were nowhere near Bombay since they were engaged in fighting a losing battle with the British army in Burma at that time. Nevertheless, the Bombay Central (BB&CI) railway terminus was packed to capacity with terrorized citizens fleeing the city in whichever train they could board with all belongings they could possibly carry. It was impossible to get any train from

the Victoria Terminus as both the harbor and main lines of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway were also affected by the blast and were unoperational due to the large amount of debris fallen on them.

At the time of the explosion, one of the red-hot gold bars crashed through the roof of the third floor apartment of a Parsi gentleman named Burjorji Motiwala, more than a mile from the docks as he sat in his *lehenga* (pyjama) and sudreh reading a newspaper! He promptly and honestly returned the gold bar to the authorities for which he was commended. A substantial number of gold bars were subsequently recovered from different parts of the city; the last ones to be found were hauled up from the bottom of the sea in the docks. During

normal dredging operations, carried out periodically by the Bombay Port Trust to maintain the depth of the docking bays, gold bars were found intact sporadically as late as the 1970s and returned by the port authorities to the British government. But a considerable number of bars still remain missing.

My father, Behramji M. Damania, was in his office at the Tata Power Company's receiving station at Dharavi when the first explosion occurred. He went outside to see a plume of dark smoke rising that he cleverly deduced came from the dock area. Since he owned a spices and herbs grinding mill (*chakki*) at Chinch Bunder very close to the docks, he immediately got into his car and drove towards the area at top speed. As he neared the J. J. Hospital he saw crowds running away from the area with their most precious belongings on their heads and/or in their hands. He worriedly made his way towards the mill to find my cousin Rusi Medhora, who used to manage the day-to-day operations of the mill, standing at the corner on the Dana Bunder bridge in a complete daze. Rusi was very glad to see my father and they both cautiously went towards the mill on foot.

The wooden doors of the mill, about a quarter of a mile from the docks, had been blown off their hinges and all the workers had fled for their lives, leaving all the machines still running! Together he and Rusi shut the machines one by one and managed to put the doors back



Workers fleeing the scene after the second explosion

#### Genesis of the fire

As per maritime rules, any ship carrying gunpowder and ammunition has to fly a certain type of flag signifying the explosive nature of its cargo when it enters the docks. The captain of the *Fort Stikene* never flew this flag and so nobody except the

crew knew of the danger that the lethal cargo posed. Why the flag was not flown can be anybody's guess. Possibly, the British feared that there were plenty of spies in the dock area who would report the arrival of the ship with the ammunition (and also the gold) and hence decided to keep it a secret and the captain may have had specific orders not to fly the danger flag that day.

Perhaps, the captain made another fatal error. Due to the heat, the smell from the dry fish loaded from Karachi may have been so overpowering to the captain and his crew that they decided to unload the fish first instead of the dangerous cargo of ammunition and gunpowder!

The first sign of fire was reportedly noticed by a sailor of another ship close by who saw the white smoke and sounded the alarm. As *Fort Stikene* was not flying the flag signifying the explosive nature of its cargo, the fire's danger to the ship and the city was grossly underestimated and a small fire tender with about half a dozen men was sent out.

Had the nature of the cargo been made known at the outset and a much larger force been called, perhaps under Palamkote, the fire could have been put out in time (before it got to the gunpowder) and the explosion avoided altogether. But as it happened, the same sailor who had first reported seeing smoke, was horrified to see the smoke change color from white to greenish-brown! From his training he at once knew the significance of this color change. It meant gunpowder was on fire! He shouted a warning and at the same time dove into the water! Minutes later the first explosion was witnessed. That is when Palamkote and his men came on the scene of utter chaos. As per official records, 1,376 lives were lost. The real number could be much more. The cause of the start of the fire was never determined. It could have been a lighted cigarette carelessly discarded into the hold where the cargo of cotton bales was kept, or it could have been a case of sabotage! Those who may have known the answers were never heard of again. April 14, 1944 will always be remembered as the day when the horrors of war came to Bombay.

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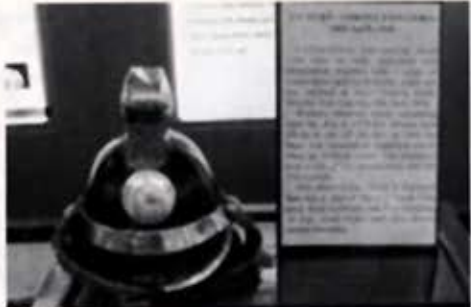
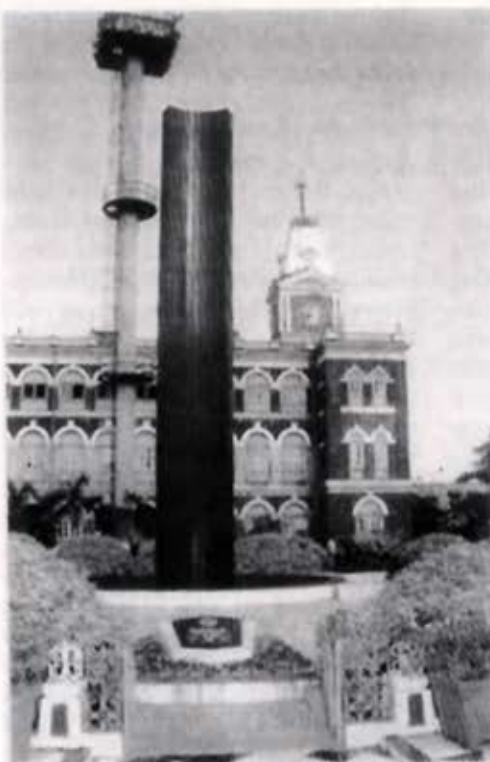
For the information of our readers and on the suggestion of the author *Parsiana* accessed the website <http://www.merchantnavyofficers.com/bomEx.html> to gather more information on the catastrophe.

Deep in the holds were 1,395 tons of explosives including shells, torpedoes, mine signal rockets, magnesium flares and incendiary bombs, and these were for discharge at Bombay. Above these lay 12 crated Spitfires and more explosives for discharge at Karachi and finally gliders were stacked on the upper decks. More specifically in the tween decks of Number Two hold 238 tons of highly sensitive Category A explosives had been stacked on three sides, on the fourth side a steel container measured 5'x4'x4' had been lashed. Within the container were 31 wooden crates, each crate contained four gold ingots measuring 15"x3"x1.5", each bar weighed two stone and was a part instalment to a bank in Bombay which was to be used to cancel out

at the entrances as best as they could. People were fleeing everywhere. Some of the residential buildings were on fire. My father saw one old man on the second floor balcony refusing to come down from his burning building! His relatives and friends were pleading with him to abandon his home and flee. From his perch the old man shouted, "*Pun aanoo shu karoo* (but what shall I do with this)?" He was holding a sack full of currency notes! Later my daddy and Rusi drove home through the throngs of crowds heading towards the Bombay Central railway terminus. The British administration at the time of the explosion, under the governorship of John Colville, took full responsibility for the disaster and adequate monetary compensation was promptly paid out to citizens who made a verifiable claim for loss or damage to property. The damage to the mill too was in time set right, but my father always talked about that fateful "*dhadako* (explosion)" day "when Bombay blew up" with great enthusiasm. Rusi on the other hand, who had been close to the explosion and must have been very badly shaken, rarely talked about it. A curved piece of solid steel from one of the several ships that were destroyed that day lay where it fell for several decades alongside the railway tracks just before the down platform of the Sandhurst Road (upper level) station. When I looked for it the last time I was there it had disappeared.

Palamkote and his fire fighters





*Memorials to honor those killed in the explosions: At Princess Dock (left) and a fireman's helmet and plaque recording in brief the events of April 14 at Victoria Dock (above)*

the adverse effect that the British War economy was having on the exchange rates in India. The estimated value of the gold varied from a low of £ 1,000,000 to a high of £ 2,000,000.

The vacant space created by the discharged crated gliders and Spitfires was filled with 8,700 bales of raw cotton, drums of lube oil, timber, scrap iron, sulphur, fish manure, rice and resin. (The ship's officers) were more than a little alarmed at what they were expected to carry... So much so that when Captain Naismith complained to the shippers, their response was in effect, 'Didn't he know that there was a War on?' The last straw was on April 7 when 750 drums of turpentine turned up with the shippers proposing that the highly inflammable concoctions be placed on top of the ship's coal bunkers, Naismith turned them down flat. All the deck officers voiced their concerns over the stowage of cotton with lube oil in the same hold as explosives but couldn't find any reference books on the ship or ashore and so it was with a great deal of misgivings that the cargo was loaded.

"Prior to sailing the chief officer Harris gathered his deck crew together and tested all the ship's fire fighting equipment and Naismith declared he was to hold an extra fire drill once the ship had left Karachi. With five civilian watchmen, a crew member on the gangway

and two Doms Gunners patrolling the deck, an officer on watch and two Pakistani policemen on or near the ship it's fair to say that sabotage was not a factor in events which were to follow. The cotton was stowed in the lower hold, wood and then scrap iron were placed on top and then the lower hatch covers were put into place. Before the lube oil could be stowed it was discovered that one of the drums was definitely leaking with others suspect, so Harris laid tarpaulin and nailed it down himself over the lower hold covers. The American regulations stipulated that no more than 250 barrels of oil should be carried in the same hold as raw cotton and then separated by the length of the hold. *Fort Stikene* loaded 1,000 barrels and it was stacked immediately above the cotton. Naismith declared, "We are carrying just about everything that will either burn or blow up... The least we can do is to have extra fire drills."

"The ship then made her way towards Bombay's Victoria Dock... No-one within the dock area was aware of her dangerous cargo because the flying of the 'Red Flag' had been discontinued for the duration as the ships flying the flag were quite well aware of being 'The Target Ship' in the event of an air raid. Under normal conditions ships carrying explosives were not allowed alongside and were discharged into lighters. Because of the war this prohibition had been lifted. Explosions fall into three categories, A, B and C, the least dangerous 'C' could be loaded into warehouses and await transport, 'B' had to be loaded into waiting wagons for immediate carriage and the highly sensitive 'A' could only be off-loaded into lighters moored

alongside the ship and never on the quay. *Fort Stikene* was immediately granted 'A' certificate of grave urgency by Major R. C. R. Hawkes on behalf of the Embarkation Commandant and work commenced a short while later when all five hold hatches covers were lifted. No lighters arrived to unload the category 'A' explosives until the following afternoon despite the grave urgency certificate issued by Hawkes.

"Work commenced however on discharging other cargo including the drummed lube oil onto the jetty. The foreman stevedore Shapoorjee Desai noticed that after discharging the drums from both Number One and Two holds quite a few of the drums were leaking and that the tarpaulins nailed down by Harris has a slick of oil covering them. It was at this juncture that an extra gang was employed to work on the Number One hold to facilitate the rapid discharge of the fish manure which by now was causing distress to all onboard. The gang worked all night and it was this action which created much discussion at the later commission of enquiry. Could for instance one of the labor force have climbed the ladder out of Number One hold into the forward mast house, gone through the bulkhead door should it have been unlocked and descended into Number Two hold for a cigarette unseen?

"Alerted that something was terribly wrong by the stampede to get off *Stikene* the section leader gave the order to get onboard with their hoses and remembering that the ship contained explosives ordered his sub leader to contact the Fire Brigade control room and give them a 'Number Two' message.

"Unfortunately the sub leader, unable to get through to the control room on the telephone, broke the glass on the fire alarm out of sheer desperation. All this effectively did was to alert the Fire Brigade to the existence of a fire, not that it involved explosives! Consequently only two engines were dispatched.

"Onboard the ship were three conflicting points of view as to how best to cope with the problem and who, if any, had the authority to make a decision. Naismith wanted to save his ship, the dock's general manager Colonel J. R. Sadler his docks and Bombay

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Fire Brigade chief Norman Coombs wanted *Stikene* to stay where she was so his crew could concentrate on extinguishing the fire. Captain Brinley Thomas Oberst, a British Army officer attached to the Indian Army Ordinance Corps, however doubted that any of the men could comprehend what was about to happen when *Stikene* blew up as she was sure to do in his opinion.

"The clock in the Dock Yard Tower had stopped at 1606 hrs when the first explosion occurred and remained so for many months. Oberst was flung up in the air by the blast and landed on a pile of dunnage. As he surveyed the scene around him in the gloom he observed bodies lying all around, most with their skin burnt off. Of the firemen in the immediate vicinity 40 were killed outright. *Fort Stikene* was blown in two and her boiler, still intact was found a half mile away from Number One berth. A huge tidal wave swept across the dock and ripped ships from their moorings. One ship finished astride a warehouse and *Jalapadma* finished up alongside what was left of *Stikene*. At 1633 hrs as Coombs stared across the dock surveying the scene of destruction the second explosion occurred throwing debris 2,000 ft into the air. *Jalapadma's* poop deck along with her 12 pounder gun was blown clear over the warehouse to land some 200 yards distant. British India's *Baroda* which had been set on fire by the first explosion when parts of Number Four shed fell onboard was blown across the end of the adjacent berth when the second explosion occurred."

The effect of the devastation was conveyed in an account, written in 1969, by Derek P. Ings who had joined H. M. T. Chantilly as assistant purser

Entrance to the Swadeshi Grain Crushing Mill owned by Behramji Damania

in October 1943.

"An hour after the first explosion all the shops, stalls and eating places had closed. Many of the windows of offices and shops had been blown out and glass and roof tiles were strewn everywhere. There were some people in the streets, mostly office or shop workers, but there was no sign of the sweeper class.

"I reached the (St George's) Hospital at about 5.30 p.m.; passing a dead gharry horse lying at the entrance. My friend had been put out of his bed to make room

for the injured that were arriving by ambulance in very dirty and bedraggled condition. Mattresses were (laid) all over the ground floor to treat the casualties...

"There were now 30 burning dhows in the stream and, as they sank, their cargoes of cotton still smoldered on the

surface... Next morning... I walked towards the scene of the explosion and, whilst still in Alexandra Dock, saw several large steel plates, all twisted and torn, too heavy for one person to lift...

The fire continued to burn for all of that day and for the following night; by this time dead bodies were to be seen floating in the water off the ship. In all 27 ships were destroyed in the Victoria and Princess Docks. Many people were killed outside the dock area by falling shrapnel and shells which exploded on impact, many buildings collapsed and others were set on fire.

Amongst the debris falling from the sky were the 28 lb ingots of gold. One of the first to be found was picked up by

Burjorji Motiwala, a retired Parsi civil engineer. The ingot had crashed through the building's corrugated roof, penetrated the floor of the balcony above and come to rest on his balcony in the corner. The bar was stamped Z13256 and was worth Rs 90,000. Motiwala received a reward of Rs 999 which he donated to the relief fund...

The area of fire extended out from the epicentre by approximately 900 yards and included all of Victoria and Princess Docks, the godown estate to the west, the Burmah Oil installation to the north and the rice market to the south. On the western side it had gone beyond the godowns and had set fire to many of the dwellings of the poorer natives who lived on the fringes of the city proper. It took four more days to extinguish the main fire and for a further two weeks smaller fires continued to smolder in the ruins.

Two hundred and thirty-one people, attached to the various services which included the fire brigade and dock employees, were killed, another 476 were injured. Outside the docks over 500 civilians were killed and a further 2,408 were injured... In all some 50,000 tons of shipping was destroyed with a further 50,000 tons severely damaged. Of the *Stikene's* officers and crew, Naismith, chief officer Henderson and Alexander Jopp, the second cook lost their lives, the remainder miraculously survived.

Within seven months the docks in Bombay were back in operation and it was estimated that up to 8,000 men had been involved in the clean up project including troops from Britain, West Africa and India itself.

On October 28, 1944 the authorities began to flood the basin at a rate of three feet for each tide, this allowed the salvageable ships to re-float at a gradual rate and also allowed the repair crew to repair leaks as and when they were located. It took 48 hours to complete the operation and four days later the docks were back in normal use. Three hundred acres around the docks had been cleared using bulldozers, grabs, cranes and bare hands. Three hundred and fifty lorries a day made four round trips to Sewree carrying 3,500 tons of debris, the total amount transported exceeded 800,000 tons...



# Of trusts and taxes

The income-tax benefits available to charitable and religious trusts and institutions should be availed of by the community

Rustom S. Gae

At the commencement of the 21st century we have Zoroastrians who have given crores of rupees as charity for deserving causes. The late Shapoorji Jokhi and his philanthropic brother Keki of Hongkong have during recent years donated an amount of over Rs 17 crore in India in support of diverse causes relating to our small community, including the establishment of Avan Baug in Navsari and a state of the art wing (the modern nursing home) of the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital in Bombay.

Establishment and maintenance of agiaries (including dar-e-mehers) are acts of charity highly favored by Parsis in India. The inauguration of the Shapoorji Jokhi Agiary in Godrej Baug in Bombay on December 21, 1999 made possible by a munificent donation from the Jokhi family of Hongkong bears eloquent testimony to the charity of our microscopic but philanthropic community. However, the maintenance of some of the economically weak agiaries has become really difficult due to the acute shortage of qualified priests (mobeds or dasturs) to keep the fire burning besides the ever increasing cost of sandalwood, kathi, oil, etc. The fire of such agiaries should be merged with the fire of other economically viable agiaries.

Many Parsis make donations to atash behrams and agiaries in the hope of getting tax benefit under the Income-tax Act, 1961. However in several cases they get disappointed when it subsequently transpires that no such benefit is available to them in respect of communal trusts. In view thereof this brief article highlights some income-tax benefits available in respect of donations to charitable trusts and institutions in general and trusts relating to atash behrams, agiaries and the Doongerwadi complex in Bombay in particular.

## Eligibility for tax deduction

Donations to an institution or fund are

entitled to a deduction equivalent to 50 percent of the amount donated if it is established in India for a charitable purpose and fulfils the conditions specified in sub-section (5) of section 80-G. "Charitable purpose" as defined by section 2 (15) is wide enough to include religious purpose too. However, in section 80-G "charitable purpose" does not include any purpose, the whole or substantially the whole of which is of a religious nature (Explanation 3 to section 80-G). Hence to claim the benefit of the section each and every object of the trust must be charitable in nature. If any of its objects is of a religious nature the benefit of the section would not be available. Donors making donations to such a trust would not be entitled to claim deduction under the said section.

Trusts or institutions doing charitable work are often inspired by the tenets of the religion. In view thereof it is provided that if a trust or institution established for a charitable purpose incurs expenditure of a religious nature for an amount not exceeding five percent of its total income during the previous year, the benefit of the section will not be denied to it. This is by way of an exception to the rule that the trust must be purely of a charitable nature.

Further no relief can be claimed under the section unless the donation is "of a sum of money" (e.g. cash, cheque, draft, etc) and not in kind. The donation of a fixed deposit receipt would qualify for deduction under the section since it represents a sum of money though it is not cash.

To claim the benefit of section 80-G one of the important conditions is that the institution or fund is not established for the benefit of any particular religious community or caste. Benefit of the section is thus allowed in respect of donations to a non-communal charitable trust or institution fulfilling specified conditions. Most of the charitable trusts cre-

ated by Parsis are communal in nature, generally for the benefit of Parsi Zoroastrians, and are not therefore entitled to the benefit of the section. Exceptions to this rule are referred to hereafter.

Another important condition is that the institution or fund must be approved by the commissioner in accordance with the rules made in this behalf. An application for the purpose must be made in Form No. 10-G prescribed under rule 11 AA of the Income-tax Rules, 1962. Such approval shall have effect for such number of assessment years (not exceeding five) as may be specified in the approval.

Other conditions are that any income derived by the institution or fund must be exempt from tax. Further it must be constituted as a public charitable trust and must maintain regular accounts of its receipts and expenditure.

On the grant of commissioner's approval potential donors may be motivated to make handsome donations to the trust and thereby its funds could be well augmented and used for the benefit of the trust. Receipts for the donations issued by the trust must bear the number and date of the certificate of approval granted by the commissioner and the period for which such certificate is valid. No revenue stamp need be affixed on receipts for the donation issued by the trust.

## Permissible exceptions

An exception to the rule that a charitable trust must be non-communal is contained in explanation 1 to section 80-G. It provides that an institution or fund established for the benefit inter alia of women and children is not deemed to be an institution or fund expressed for the benefit of a religious community or caste. "Women and children" form a well defined separate class of the public, recognized as such by the Constitution of India. An institution or fund established

for the benefit of women and children would clearly be one for "the advancement of an object of general public utility" and would constitute "charitable purpose" as defined by section 2(15). Donations to such an institution or fund would qualify for deduction of income under section 80-G, if it fulfils specified conditions, notwithstanding that the particular institution or fund is expressed to be for the benefit of only Parsi women and children. The WZO Trust for Women and Children is one of such trusts approved by the commissioner under section 80-G(5)(vi) of the Act.

Another exception to the above rule is contained in section 80-G(2)(b). Under this section deduction is available in respect of donations made by an assessee for the renovation or repair of any place notified by the central government in the official gazette to be a place of public worship of renown throughout any state or states. "Public worship" connotes worship by the public or a section of the public and not by a group of private individuals. Worship in an atash behram or an agiary by members of the Parsi community is "public worship" as contemplated by the said section, though members of other communities are not allowed entry in these places. Further the place must be a reputed or well-known place of renown throughout any state or states and must be notified by the central government for the purpose. Donations received by the trust must be utilized exclusively for the renovation or repair of the place of public worship of renown and for no other purpose.

To claim the benefit of Section 80-G(2)(b) an application must be made to the commissioner in Form No. 10-G referred to above. The government considers the objects of the trust or institution relating to the place of worship, its importance in the state or states and compliance by it with the conditions contained in the section. While notifying the place of worship under the said section, the government imposes the conditions that the trust shall obtain every year a certificate from a chartered accountant that the donations received by it are utilized exclusively for the renovation or repair of the place and that separate accounts will be maintained in respect of donations received and their disbursements. The notification issued under the section is of a permanent nature. Once the place is so notified donations for the renovation or repair of

such place would be eligible to deduction, even if it is for the benefit of a particular religious community or caste, e.g. the Parsi community. Conditions contained in section 80-G(5) regarding donations to charitable trusts in general (e.g. commissioner's approval) are not applicable to a case falling under section 80-G(2)(b) of the Act.

The Kaikhushru Pallonji Katrak Dar-

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### **Worship in an atash behram or an agiary by members of the Parsi community is "public worship" though members of other communities are not allowed entry**

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e-Meher in New Delhi has been accordingly notified by the central government on November 28, 1975. Donations to the trust of the Dar-e-Meher are entitled to deduction of 50 percent of the sum donated to its renovation or repair.

**Donations to Doongerwadi complex**  
Prayers are offered in the bunglis and sagdis in the Doongerwadi complex by qualified ordained priests for the soul of the deceased Parsi Zoroastrians. Prayers for the first four days after death form an essential part of the Zoroastrian religion and are aimed at facilitating the transference of the soul of the deceased across the "Chinvat Pul" (the bridge of judgment) into the heaven of eternal repose. The words "public worship" as contemplated in section 80-G(2)(b) would include worship by a section of the public. Parsi Zoroastrians clearly qualify as a well-known section of the public. The entire complex is thus a "place of public worship." It is well-known that the Doongerwadi complex (generally known as Towers of Silence) is the main place for the disposal of deceased Parsi Zoroastrians in Bombay. It is therefore a place "of renown." Thus the entire Doongerwadi complex (including the bunglis and sagdis therein) qualifies as "a place of public worship of renown" in the state of Maharashtra as contemplated by section 80-G(2)(b). Notifications issued by the central government under the said section support the view that all places where prayers are offered by a particular community or by followers of a particu-

lar religion according to the tenets of that community or religion must be regarded under the said section as places of public worship of renown in the concerned state. This is therefore eminently a fit and proper case to move the central government under the said section to notify the entire Doongerwadi complex as a place of public worship of renown throughout the state of Maharashtra. This view has been now confirmed by eminent jurist Fali Nariman whose opinion was obtained by the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet last year. It is gathered that the matter is under consideration of the trustees.

### **Corpus and revenue donations**

Donations are of two kinds, corpus donations and revenue donations. Corpus donations are donations made by a donor to the trust with a specific direction that they shall form part of the corpus of the trust. Being capital receipts in the hands of the trust, they are not considered as income of the trust and should not be used for advancing charitable objects of the trust. Trustees of a trust have no power to treat any donation as corpus donation at their will. Directions for the purpose can only be given by the donors to the trust. It is advisable to obtain such directions in writing. Trustees should utilize only the income from such donations (and not the corpus itself) for charitable purposes of the trust by keeping the corpus intact to be used for capital expenses and such other expenses relating to the trust.

On the other hand revenue donations are received by the trust without any such direction as aforesaid. They are deemed to be the income of the trust and must be utilized for charitable purposes in order to claim exemption from income-tax. They are deemed to be income derived from property held under trust and hence the conditions and restrictions imposed by sections 11 and 13 must be fulfilled to claim exemption from tax. Donations received in charity boxes or collection boxes and anonymous donations received by the trust are revenue donations and are treated as income of the trust.

It is thus clear that revenue donations are deemed to be the income of the recipient trust, whereas corpus donations are not such income.

### **Foreign donations**

Charitable or religious trusts and in-

*continued on page 34*

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# Headstart for Engineer

In his maiden film *everybody says I'm fine* Rehaan Engineer impresses audiences with his portrayal of an uncanny hairdresser

Parinaz M. Gandhi



"I think I am reasonable although others may remark that I'm insanely bent on getting everything perfect. Within the given circumstances you have to do the best. If you are not going to bother to do it perfectly, why do it at all?" Rehaan Engineer explains his rationale for ensuring that he gets every frame correctly, whether he is in front of the camera or behind it. Playing the lead role of Xen, the owner of a beauty salon, in the English feature film *everybody says I'm fine*, Engineer's portrayal has been acclaimed by audiences and critics.

For this 26-year-old graduate from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, shooting for his maiden film, the experience was "a steep learning curve," acknowledges Engineer. "The scale, the complexity was an eye-opener. I had no idea how much coordination and planning is required." The indefinite wait between shots was what he found particularly trying. "There we were, waiting for maybe two hours while the next scene was being readied, and the shoot would have lasted for barely 30 seconds," reports Engineer, his expressive

face and eyes, the pierced eyebrow notwithstanding, conveying much of the impatience he had experienced. The waits though did give the cast an opportunity to interact with each other.

There were an unprecedented number of Parsis, "almost like a Parsi mafia," as observed Engineer, cast in the film directed by Rahul Bose. In addition to Engineer there was Boman Irani playing the role of the industrialist Mr Mittal who had messed up his daughter's life; Anahita Uberoi who was cast as the bitchy socialite Misha Patel; Sharokh Bharucha who plays the role of the infatuated Bobby; and Delna Patel who acts as the well endowed receptionist Monica. Behind the screens there was choreography by Shiamak Datar and costume design by Anaita Shroff.

Engineer and Bose have known each other since their college days at St Xavier's and that is probably why Bose thought of casting Engineer, the star undermines his importance. "I was not excited by the script he sent me," admits Engineer but "Rahul's enthusiasm is infectious. His love for the project was quite convincing." Since Bose did not even have funds

at that time Engineer was not sure when "it would take off but within six months everything moved so fast."

Although not planned as a high budget movie with most of the scenes restricted to the confines within and outside the salon, the cost of the film ultimately worked out to Rs 3.5 crores, 15 percent over budget, mentions Bose. Launched under the banner of Insight Productions on July 26, 2002, the film produced by Viveck Vaswani had "notched an impressive 72 percent collection in Bombay, Delhi and Poona with Rs 50 lakh in the first week," according to a report in *The Economic Times* of August 8. "In Delhi's PVR Saket and PVR Naraina where the English movie ran alongside the extravaganza *Devdas* in the third week, *everybody says* recorded 89 percent and 76 percent respectively, better than *Devdas*," added *The Economic Times*. Bombay's Sterling Theatre reportedly preferred *everybody* to *Men In Black II* and *Minority Report* for the late night show. "These figures show that the English movies made on contemporary Indian story lines cannot be dismissed and have a large appreciative audience. Of course, provided they are well made!" commented *The Economic Times* referring to patronage for the film from well known danseuse Malika Sarabhai who was raising funds for the Gujarat riot victims and activist Maneka Gandhi who was seeking support for animal rights.

The skin-deep beauty of the affluent customers stands exposed at the beauty parlor for the owner Xen (who had been christened Sikander, which translated into English became Alexander, and further abbreviated became Xen) is "a hairdresser who examines your head on the outside and in the inside." As he stands behind each client snipping hair he is able to hear their innermost thoughts. Ever since he was trapped as a child in a room in a freak fire which engulfed his parents, he had vowed to himself that he would never wait to be verbally told anything by anybody. Niki, the heroine of the movie played by Koel Purie, is the only person whose thoughts are not laid bare. And as we learn the reason for this silence in the second half of the movie, we also realize why it was given an 'Adult' rating.

"A film about...trust and tender-

ness...damage and salvation... bravo," commented columnist Shobhaa

De. "One of the best films

you have seen in recent times,"

stated *Asian Age* while

Canada's *Vancouver Westender* declared that it re-

flected "the future of India and Indian cinema." The film "belongs

to Engineer and Purie...perfect chemistry," declared *Mid-Day*.

"Extremely impressed" with Engineer's acting as Xen, in a telephonic

interview Bose commented how the star "brings to the role a certain ease," effectively

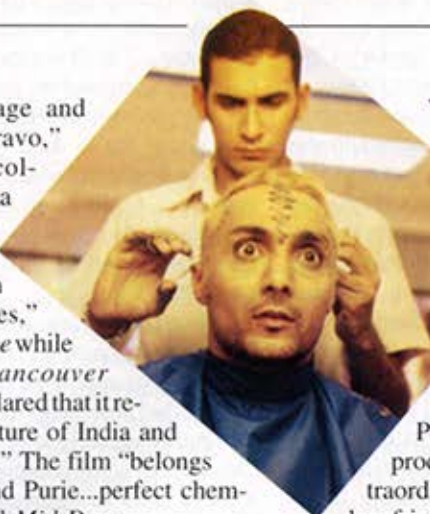
able to portray "both compassion and turmoil...I think he is most talented.

An absolute delight to cast." On the sets Bose also got to see Engineer as a

"lovely, gracious person, tolerant, patient, never complained, never fussed."

Bose had good things to say about his other Parsi caste too. Irani "is clearly

one of the finest actors in the world.



Working with him was a privilege." Remarking

on Uberoi's "grace and talent," Bose

perceived her as "beautifully cultured

and versatile." Bharucha "is a natu-

ral; full of beans with a great sense of humor."

Patel who was the executive producer of his plays is "extra-

ordinary in the film. A very dear friend she has been most help-

ful." Although presently he is concentrating on his acting assignments for

three forthcoming film releases, following the success of his maiden directorial

venture, Bose hopes to direct another film by the end of next year. "I would

not hesitate to cast them again," he declares.

Never mind Bose's willingness. For Engineer, the single experience of acting

in a film has been sufficient, he says. The reviews he gets are of no conse-

quence to him. He learnt that when star-

ring in a production in his third year at drama school. Two of his voice teachers

who were in attendance at the same show on the same day came backstage to

give him two diametrically opposite views. This taught him a lesson for life:

the impact an actor has on the audience "is so subjective that it does not matter.

I have to be happy with my performance and my director has to be happy."

Being behind the camera is more fulfilling for Engineer than facing it.

When *Parsiana* met him in end August he was enthusiastic about producing his

45-minute short film which he had scripted himself. What is the subject of

his film? "About mourning and dreams and philosophy. I'm sorry it sounds so

pretentious." Since avenues for screening such films would be limited he would

have to be content with participating in film festivals, he realizes undeterred.

*Top: Engineer with Bose*

*Center row (from left) Engineer,*

*Purie, Patel, Uberoi and Bharucha*

*Bottom row (from left): Irani, Dodo Bhujwala and Purie*



Under the banner of the Industrial Theatre Company which Engineer co-founded with radio jockey Nadir Khan, cameraman Pushan Kripalani and third year BA student Karan Makhija they have worked on some path-breaking productions in the last two years. *Agamemnon*, a Greek tragedy, was staged one weekend at the Sakshi Art Gallery (due to limited funding they could only afford to have select shows). While the actors were performing, live footage was being projected on the walls behind. Their production of Girinsh Karnad's play *Hayavadana* at Bombay's Horniman Circle was also well received by the "niche audience." For the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) they did a radio play *A suitable boy* directed by John Dryden. "There is so little happening in the Bombay theater. Just an endless line of silly comedies. The corporate world doesn't participate in the cultural life of the city," notes Engineer. But his prospects here are better than the unchallenging roles that would have come his way had he stayed on in England. Due to the work permit regulations, Asians have been reduced to playing stereotype roles matching their physiological features, he states.

Born in Bombay to Jernaz and Khushroo, Rehaan had studied at a boarding

school in Nainital and later at the Mayo School in Ajmer. After graduating in literature from Bombay's St Xavier's College, for a while he served as a Fellow of the English department, taking creative writing lessons. He then applied to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in UK where after auditioning he was among the 32 (of the nearly 3,000 applicants) fortunate to be admitted. On his return he chose to settle in Bombay, residing with his paternal grandmother Ruty Engineer and aunt Katie. His parents have made Nainital their home looking after his maternal grandfather's oil business. Every year he spends nearly one and a half months in Nainital which he finds "blissful and wonderful (needing) to recover from Bombay."

He may not speak Gujarati but his paternal grandmother keeps him informed of community developments every week as she reads the *Jamé* and regrets the bigotry increasing in the community. Though he can't seem to feel passionately on issues like dakhmenashini and inter-community marriages vexing the community, he believes that "more the freedom and less the restrictive practices, greater will be the sum of human happiness." His sister Sanaya Raj Singh is

settled in Bangalore. "I think plurality and variety make for a richer source of cultural fabric." With numbers dwindling in the community and the pressures on identity preservation increasing, he realizes that some Parsis become more rigid. Delhi's liberal approach he finds "quite cavalier" while Bombay's is "quite trenchant...The stronger the barriers become, the more difficult it is to understand each other," he adds.

About 10 years after his navjote, Engineer stopped wearing the sudreh-kusti. "I'm not a practising Parsi," states the star who is interested in comparative religions. He finds that "Vedic and Upanishadic Hinduism has a more mature approach to integrating the physical and spiritual aspects of one's life." What he enjoys observing though are the "Parsi eccentricities and characters." It is also difficult to overlook the community's "strong cultural presence," he adds.

Ever the thespian, the varying lifestyles fascinate Engineer. Studying them facilitates his projection of the different moods and nuances as required of a given role. For, as reinforced to Engineer at the drama school, "It takes 20 years to train an actor. This is just the beginning."

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## OF TRUSTS AND TAXES

*continued from page 30*

stitutions established in India at times receive contributions or donations from foreign sources. Such donations are governed by the provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 1976. As regards donations so received the trust or institution must in the first instance be registered with the central government before accepting foreign donations. Where regis-

## Donations must be utilized exclusively for the renovation or repair of the place of public worship

tration is refused or the trust or institution is not registered it will have to obtain prior permission of the central government for accepting foreign donations [Section 6 (1) and (1A) of the Act of 1976]. The ministry of home affairs, Government of India, deals with cases falling under the said Act.

Where donations received by a trust

or institution are rare or very few, it may directly apply to the central government for prior permission under section 6(1A). While giving permission the government usually imposes a condition that the trust or institution shall intimate to the government as to the amount of the foreign donation received by it, the source from which and the manner in which such donation was utilized. A certificate from the chartered accountant in the prescribed form must be annexed.

Charitable or religious trusts and institutions must comply with the provisions of the Act of 1976 before accepting any foreign contributions or donations. They may thereafter claim deduction under section 80-G of the Income-tax Act, 1961 on fulfilling the conditions contained therein.

Rustom S. Gae, a former law secretary to the



Government of India, is presently a senior advocate practising in the Supreme Court of India. He is known for his expertise on subjects relating to fiscal laws, company law and constitutional law. He writes frequently on legal issues pertaining to the community.

# A coach and a gentleman

For over 30 years, the late Keki Tarapore molded the careers of many of India's leading cricketers

Hilla P. Guzder

The spectacular success of his protégé — Rahul Dravid, "Mr Dependable" — in the recently concluded India-England cricket Test series in England would have warmed the cockles of coach Keki Tarapore's heart, had he been alive. With a career best double century (217) in the fourth Test, hard on the heels of a century each in the earlier two, India's Man-of-the-Series Dravid, "the one-drop (number three batsman) from Karnataka became the fulcrum of the side, in fact its lifeline," wrote Ayaz Memon in *The Times of India* of September 10, 2002. India's vice captain as well, Dravid aggregated 602 runs from six innings!

Building his batting career brick by brick and sometimes referred to as "The Wall," Dravid's reaction on missing his first Test century at Lord's in the 1996 series was: "It hurts, but it's no good thinking about it." "Something had to be done. So he consulted his coach, the late Tarapore, to iron out the defects in his technique. It was not so much his game but his temperament that seemed to be at fault," observes veteran sportswriter K. N. Prabhu in "Placid Rock," in *Outlook* magazine, September 16, 2002.

"I first met Tarapore as a 12-year-old boy when I attended the summer coaching camp at the KSCA (Karnataka State Cricket Association)... Tarapore always ran the nets very efficiently and watched over them with hawk eyes... Personally, he knew my game well and was always ready with a quiet word if he noticed anything wrong... He believed in my ability long before I did and was always pushing me to maximize my potential," Dravid related his views to G. Krishnan, published as a press tribute shortly after Tarapore's death in Bangalore on July 12 last year at the age of 78.

Many a famous face was seen paying their last respects — ace spin bowler Anil Kumble, speedsters Javagal Srinath and Venkatesh Prasad, veteran wicket-keeper Syed Kirmani and scores of oth-

ers whose careers he helped to shape. Over a coaching career spanning more than 30 years, some of India's most successful players — E. A. S. Prasanna, B. S. Chandrashekar, G. R. Vishwanath, Brijesh Patel, Roger Binny, etc — had the benefit of Tarapore's guidance from their school and college days, as did scores of Ranji Trophy players. A life profile of Tarapore was forwarded to *Parsiiana* on his first death anniversary by his son Shahvir, himself a one-day international (ODI) umpire on the umpires panel of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

From 1975-91, Tarapore was involved in the conduct of the BCCI's annual national summer camps held in Bangalore and Bombay, when Hemu Adhikari was the national coach. The parade of cricketing talent at these camps included Kapil Dev, *Wisden's* "Indian cricketer of the century," Mohammed Azharuddin, Ravi Shastri, Navjot Sidhu, Shivlal Yadav and many others.

"He (Tarapore) helped me in the early '90s when I could not get my outswing going," asserted Srinath at the time of Tarapore's death. "He sorted out that problem. Later, he used to call me regularly and give me advice before each series... 'Sri, watch out for overstepping. There is nothing more unpardonable than dismissing a batsman and then being called for no-ball.'"

"(Tarapore) was the one who asked me to take up wicketkeeping in my school days. He encouraged me and backed me every single time," opined Kirmani. Stated Binny: "I used to play a whole lot of other games, but Tarapore believed that I should concentrate on cricket. He did not just let that go. He would call up regularly and enquire why I missed practice... and ensure that I did not miss a single match."

"If you come to play cricket, look like a cricketer," Tarapore advised his young wards, setting the lead by being

in white himself, with neatly polished white shoes even at practice. "It was a common sight to see him perched on his scooter with his dark glasses and leather gloves on, following inter-school, inter-club, junior and senior cricket. He moved from ground to ground, religiously watching... The following day he would recall in detail (without resorting to notes) the errors made by the cricketer. In the 10 years I trained under him, I cannot ever recall his having raised his voice," stated well-known sports writer Vedam Jaishankar in a lengthy tribute entitled "Coach par excellence" published in *The Indian Express* of July 15, 2001. On days when practice was not possible due to wet conditions, Tarapore would devote the time to the rules, traditions and the spirit behind what is known as the 'gentleman's game.'

Ailing for the last few months before his death, Tarapore's left toe and later the leg itself had to be amputated. "Tarapore was really a tough man and the courage and strength he showed during the death of his younger son Kaizad (a promising cricketer who died of hepatitis at the age of 26) and the way he handled the tragedy was unbelievable," recalled Dravid in his tribute.

Born in Indore on October 11, 1922, Tarapore's early years were spent in Lahore in pre-Partition India where his father Bezon worked for the Singer company. The family later moved to Bangalore where Tarapore's brother Dinyar played as a left arm spinner in Mysore junior cricket, while sister Jer was a Mysore state table tennis champion in the '50s, states Shahvir. Keki's own cricketing debut in 1945 in the Ranji Trophy for Mysore turned out to be an unfortunate start and he was allotted the role of drinks (twelfth) man for five long years! Opting for a career in coaching, the Mysore State Cricket Association (later the KSCA) sent him along with a few other Mysore players for a three-



*Tarapore (far left) receiving the Rajyotsava Award from the then Karnataka chief minister Bangarappa and (above) with David (left)*

week coaching stint at Bombay's Brabourne Stadium under the legendary Prince Duleepsinhji. "What I learnt in those three weeks I don't think I've ever picked up in the whole of my life," recalled Tarapore later.

In 1960, Tarapore was appointed official cricket coach under the Rajkumari Sports Coaching Scheme [which later evolved as a National Institute of Sports (NIS) scheme] and was posted at Jaipur. A transfer back to the Garden City (Bangalore) followed, first through the NIS and then through the BCCI. During 1970-71, Tarapore was the chief coach in cricket at the NIS headquarters in Patiala, states Shahvir. The "well-known and much loved" cricket teacher was in charge of the Karnataka Ranji Trophy state team nets for almost 30 years, during which time Karnataka won the national championship three times — in 1974, 1976 and 1983.

"His (Tarapore's) decision to make cricket coaching his profession must have come as a surprise even to his close associates in those days," stated one of India's most successful bowlers Chandrashekar in an emotional recollection published in *The Sunday Express*

of July 22, 2001. Karnataka cricket teams are known for their discipline, wrote Chandrashekar adding that Tarapore's contribution here "has to be written in letters of gold. Yet another remarkable thing was his focus on fielding... He would not let you go till you took a catch in a particular style and in a particular position. And you just could not escape him if you had the misfortune to make an erratic 'pick up and throw,'" penned Chandrashekar, adding that Tarapore's "wonderful pep talks" benefitted him at various stages of his career. David's evolution as a seasoned



*Above (from left) Rayumand, Abad, Nauzer, Farhad, Freddy and Zyros. (Along-side) Former Indian captain, veteran Test cricketer and administrator Polly Umrigar (left) receiving the Castrol Lifetime Achievement Award from Jiten Goswami, then director of sales and marketing at the West End Hotel, Bangalore on December 17, 2001.*

slip and close-in catcher is a vindication of Tarapore's continued efforts to drill into his students the basics of cricket.

Tarapore's life partner Nargis has also devoted a lifetime to children, being a teacher of Hindi at the Sophia High School in Bangalore for 35 years, states their daughter Kashmira Bose, proudly pointing out that a Parsi teaching Hindi for so many decades and that too in south India is no mean feat! "Our father has been the inspiration behind our family," states Shahvir who has so far officiated as umpire (on field) in three ODIs, India versus New Zealand at Hyderabad in 1999, India versus Australia at Visakhapatnam in 2001 and India against Zimbabwe at Mohali in March 2002. Shahvir has also been a TV and reserve umpire. Having played for Karnataka as a leg spinner in the Ranji Trophy between 1980-86, Shahvir now plays for Syndicate Bank where he is employed. Being on the all India umpires panel, Shahvir keenly looks forward to the time he can officiate in Test matches as well.

President of Bangalore's United Cricket Club till a few months before his death, the Karnataka Government honored Tarapore with its Rajyotsava Award in 1991 for his dedicated services to the cause of cricket. In February 2001, a benefit match raised Rs 10 lakhs for the ailing coach, with David and Brijesh Patel (now chairman of the BCCI selection committee) being the main driving forces behind it. "I cannot think of a more deserving person for the Dronacharya award (for coaches) than him," David stated. "He commanded respect and didn't demand it... I think getting coached by Tarapore at such an early age was one of the luckiest things that happened to me."

## On a new high

Volleying their way to victory in a cliffhanger final at the Open Maharashtra Volleyball Tournament, the All-Parsees team recorded a landmark by being the first team of all Zoroastrian players to win an open, state-level volleyball tournament.

Strapping six-footers all, captain Farhad Irani and players Zyros Zend, Freddy Nariman, Nauzer Dubash, Abad



Irani (the tallest at almost 6 ft 5 in) and Rayumand Irani were among the 16 teams who participated in the day-long tournament held at the railway grounds at Dhaund, an hour away from Poona in January this year. With three players (Zend, Nariman and Dubash) being Bombay denizens, they set out for Poona by car at dawn to join their Poona teammates, playing and winning three games to reach the finals, lifting the trophy and returning to Bombay exhausted but triumphant at two o'clock next morning!

"Since half of us are from Poona and half from Bombay, we get virtually zero practice together as a team," Zend told *Parsiana*. But with each player being very fit and in constant practice by playing for his college, his baug or his company, the team gels together at short notice. "We play a totally different game," explains Zend. "We attack from the outer side of the poles while other teams play more center. The opposition was extremely tough. We were down by four points in the last game. But summoning all our resources we won three points in a row and moved on to victory." The tournament fielded some strong teams from the army, Poona's renowned Deccan Gymkhana, etc and though the All-Parsees had reached the semi finals before, they had never savored victory at the state level, elaborates Zend.

The All-Parsees Club was founded 10 years ago and Farhad and Zarir Shroff have been the pillars of the Club, Zend narrates, adding laughingly that the minimum qualification to get into the volleyball team is that one should be over six feet tall! "We are very particular about the 'all-Parsi' angle," he says. "We want to encourage more youngsters to play. We want to prove that we have something in us."

With Poona's Steelman Engineers being the sponsors of the team for this tournament, the All-Parsees are looking forward to involving more Parsi businesses in Poona in the sport as sponsors. "There is no dearth of supporters in Bombay," he adds, with Peekay Wines, Union Press, the World Zoroastrian Organisation, Leopold Cafe, etc being among the sponsors of tournaments. Besides volleyball, the annual throwball, football and tug-of-war tournament conducted by the All-Parsees is a looked-forward-to event, attracting Parsi players from all over Bombay and as far as Thana, says Zend.

With the volleyball team ranging in

age from below 20 to over 40, Rayumand and Abad are students of Wadia College in Poona, with Rayumand also a part of the Maharashtra junior team for the nationals in basketball. While 23-year-old Abad has just completed his MCom, 18-year-old Rayumand is studying in First Year BCom. Rayumand is among the 20 or so youngsters shortlisted from all over India to attend a training camp in basketball at Ludhiana in Punjab in September, preparatory to selection of the Indian team for the Asian basketball championship in China this year. "I enjoy playing both volleyball and basketball," he asserts. "In basketball you have to be more athletic as one has to run about quite a lot. In volleyball one needs to jump higher to spike the ball and to be more alert." In 2000, Rayumand was in the under-16 Maharashtra team for the 17th Youth Nationals in basketball at Vashi in New Bombay where the team managed to reach the quarters. In 2001, he was in the Maharashtra under-19 basketball team for the junior nationals at Bhilai where the team once again moved up to the quarterfinal stage. At Goa in the 2002 nationals, they lost at the league stage, he narrates.

While Farhad is a real estate consultant, Dubash is a research scientist in a pharmaceutical company and Nariman a software consultant. Besides being at his father's Yazdani Bakery at 5 a.m. every morning, Zend's enterprising spirit has seen him launch Zyraa's Fortune Cookie, scouting around initially in China and the US to procure the machine to make the cookies. Supplying most of the 5-star hotels and Chinese restaurants in Bombay their requirements of fortune cookies, Zend has expanded his customer base to Bangalore, Calcutta, Madras, Poona and Goa.

## SPOTLIGHT

Representing Kerala, veteran marksman **Darius Marshall** of Calicut struck gold at the 12th All India Mavalankar championship held at Coimbatore from August 24-September 1, 2002. Participating in the veterans .22, 50 meters free rifle prone position, Marshall added to his tally of medals which now stands at six golds and four silvers at the nationals, according to information forwarded by the sharpshooter who is also the vice president of the Calicut District Rifle Association.

Compiled by Hilla P. Guzder



With  
best wishes  
from

**Farah  
&  
Tanya**

## EVENTS AND PERSONALITIES

*continued from page 13*

also won acclaim from visiting musicians. Recently, they played for a delegation from the Royal School of Music, Stockholm, when their director Anders Oman described Neville as "exceptionally gifted." Swiss pianist Christina Zulauf also commended his playing, notes a press release.

Having won several prizes for outstanding musicianship, in 2002 Neville was conferred the Peter Coelho Memorial Award. In December 2001, Navaz won the first prize at the St Marks Cathedral Music competition in Bangalore. That same month the siblings gave a pianoforte recital, *Miniature Masterpieces*. While Neville's favorites are the works of Mozart and Chopin, Navaz loves Bach. Neville also possesses the rare gift of spontaneously improvising and has composed many pieces like *Spring Song*, a simple light piece of one-minute duration, *Song without words*, a slow paced melodious composition, *Rock n' Roll 7*, a fast paced composition and *Gallop 7*, a peppy marching tune. "When I sit down at the piano, the notes just fall in together," Neville was quoted in *The Times of India* of February 27,



*Budding pianists Navaz and Neville Bharucha*

2002. The duo recently featured on the Star TV network's Star News channel as also on ETV.

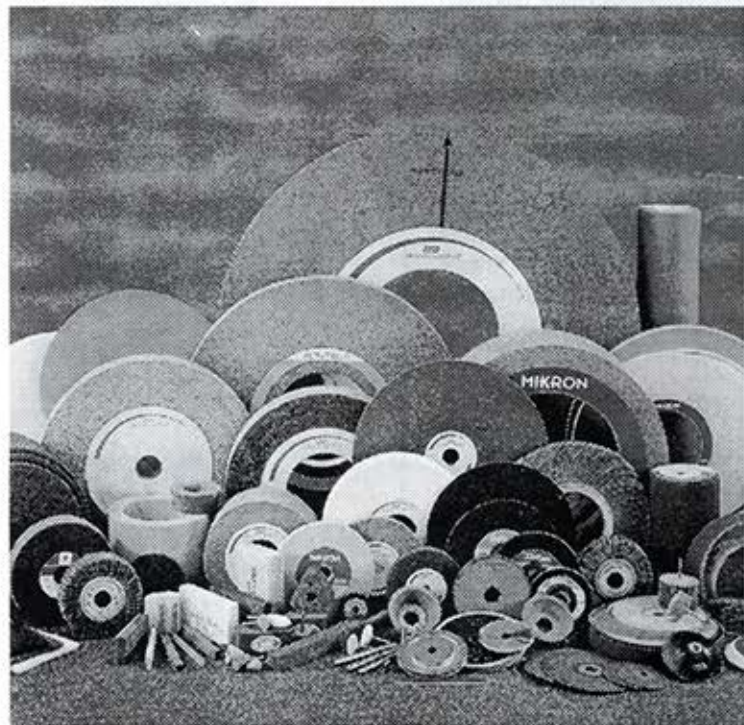
Neville is currently being tutored by Neecia Majolly in Bangalore after receiving his initial training from his fa-

ther Zarir when he was only five years old. Navaz received her first lessons from her father when she was four and a half years old. Despite the regular school work and the hours of practice required on the keyboard Neville finds time to enjoy his other interests which include astronomy and swimming. The young duo "spend many hours listening to the great masters and imbibing the feel of fine music," reports *The Times* referring to their disdain of boy bands as being "too noisy and nothing compared to a Beethoven where the notes are so tune-ful and with so many musical movements."

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi

## ADDENDUM

In the article "From fiction to football" on Novy Kapadia (August 2002), the photo credit had inadvertently been omitted. The photos were shot by Mohammed Shafiq.



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# Bonding with the brothers

Having worked as Wadia Movietone's accountant for 32 years, Dossabhai Naterwalla had close interaction with the famous brothers

Dinshaw D. Naterwalla

In 1942 my father Dossabhai Naterwalla came across an advertisement in a newspaper that the reputed film company Wadia Movietone required an efficient and experienced accountant. He was in dire need of a good job, being forced to flee China in the throes of World War II a year earlier. My father was initially apprehensive since he had just one certificate in accountancy from the London Chamber of Commerce. After a year at St Xavier's College he had joined the Bank of India and was later with M/s Vasania and Company in Shameen (China) for seven years.

When my father went to the Wadia Movietone office at the palatial Lowji Castle at Lower Parel he approached Jamshed B. H. (JBH) Wadia who directed him to Burjorji Tata, a strict administrator and technician at that time. The partners at Wadia Movietone then were Jamshed Wadia, his brother Homi, Tata, Manchershaw Billimoria and his brother Homi. My father so impressed Tata that he was asked to join the next day, much to the consternation of our family who was not keen that he join a film company.

During his first year my father was able to win over the confidence of JBH and Tata. He was given a room next to JBH on the first floor of Lowji Castle

with an intercom system, a novelty in those days, permitting them easy access. Soon he learnt how to prepare artists' contracts, film distributors' agreements, costing of raw stock of films... Words like dubbing, matching, sound positive and sound negative became meaningful. He got to meet Madhuri and Meena Kumari who were then child artistes and would often climb onto my father's table

to the Wadia Movietone office I remember seeing a dance shoot of *Sharbati Ankhein* with dance master P. D. Kothare showing some new steps to the dancers.

The partners then separated and set up their own companies. Manchershaw Billimoria set up M. B. Billimoria and Sons as a film distributor; Burjorji Tata and Son were into repairing cine movie cameras, H. B. Wadia under the Basant

Pictures banner started producing mythological movies; and JBH, continuing with Wadia Movietone, focussed on social themes. Both the brothers' pictures did good business all over India and overseas because they had a close network of distributors with two distributing offices of their own in Bombay and in Delhi.

Before I joined Wadia Movietone in 1960 Lowji Castle had already gone into the hands of legendary filmmaker V. Shantaram at a throwaway price.

to scribble on a piece of paper.

Over the years my father would invariably bring home amazing and funny stories from the studio. On my first visit

I harbored dreams of becoming a director and storywriter in the future and of joining the Film Institute in Poona with the help of JBH who was a lecturer there. My father was keen that I graduate but when he realized that I could not achieve what I wanted to do, he encouraged me to assist him at his office, doing filing work, writing out cheques, slip books and running small errands. One day I started writing a few entries and soon I was able to write the whole cash book with ease, work on journals and ledgers independently, ready trial balances.

Working in the small one-room Wadia Movietone office at Chamarbaug Road where there was just space for three tables — for JBH, my father and an assistant from Chembur Studio, I had the privilege of sharing the table with JBH who rarely came to



Top: At the *muhurat* of *Sharbati Ankhein* with Lowji Castle in the background; Center: JBH Wadia with Haidee and Hillamai; Below (from left) Roy and H. B. Wadia, Perinbanoo Naterwalla and M. Wadia



Above left:  
On the  
occasion of  
Vinci  
Wadia's  
(sitting,  
third from  
left) gra-

duation; to his left are  
Hillamai, Haidee, JBH and  
H. B. Wadia and Dossabhai  
Naterwalla; Above right:  
Dinshaw Naterwalla;  
Below (from left): Tata, JBH  
Wadia, M. Billimoria,  
M. Wadia, H. B. Wadia and  
H. Billimoria



that office. Within six years I was able to write the account books of Wadia Films Private Limited, would attend to income tax matters, and was offered a half day's job at the Basant Film Distributors' office at Naaz Cinema building to learn film distribution and exhibition work.

One day I chanced to see the famous Sohrab Modi (fondly called 'the roaring lion of Minerva Movietone' because of his resonant voice) who came barging in to meet the Wadia brothers to remind them of their promise to purchase his two movie cameras. Facing a financial crisis Modi was desperate to raise money and the brothers agreed to pay him.

JBH's wife Hillamai was a gem of a person, soft-spoken, always elegantly dressed in a sari. She was once made production manager of a movie. The brothers had an elder brother and two sisters Gaimai and Soonamai. Their mother Dhunmai was an orthodox person who had been widowed at a young age. Although initially she was not happy with her sons on their joining the films, subsequently, even as an invalid she would arrive at the studio in a wheel-

chair to watch the shooting. JBH and Hillamai had a son Vinci and daughter Haidee. Vinci and his wife Nergish have two sons Roy and Riyad.

A shrewd businessman, Homi Wadia recognized my father's potential as an administrator and started giving him more responsibilities. It was through his persistent efforts that the Basant Cine Labs got started. When the Basant Theatre was built my father played a very important role in its initial stages. Ten years back, after working with Wadia Movietone for 32 years, my father died. I worked with them for 13 years until I joined Mulla and Mulla as an accounts officer. In the two-volume memoirs of JBH that the family is considering publishing, I hope the doyen has referred to my father's contribution!

It would have been only fitting if the British government had shown an interest in saving the majestic Lowji Castle from demolition when Wadia Movietone was facing financial difficulties. On the occasion of JBH's centenary year, if any institution or individual can help restore his association with the erstwhile premises, it would be a fitting tribute to his memory.

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The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 22 and 40 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 29 and 41 years, averaging at 33 years.

There were 12 births recorded at the two hospitals in the month of July 2002 as versus 79 deaths at Doongerwadi. Seventeen of the 32 patients who succumbed to heart diseases were in the above 80 age bracket. Pneumonia/lung disease and cancer (11 patients each), old age/general debility (seven), diabetes and kidney failure (four each) and septicemia (three) were the other killers. Hyperglycaemia (excessive sugar in the blood), jaundice, brain disease, gastro-intestinal haemorrhage, liver disease, asthma, tuberculosis, cholecystitis (inflammation of the gall-bladder) and anemia were the nine isolated cases registered in July. Thirty-four years and 104 were the lowest and highest ages at death. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth for July, in

Bombay, was 78 years.

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled from information supplied by various newsletters and anjuman in India and abroad, courts and hospitals. This information is not always complete or consistent: we are unable to carry data from areas where the anjuman do not furnish the particulars; the birth figures for Bombay are supplied by 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 breakdown 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, *Darius*, to *Binaifar* and *Cyrus Modi* on June 28, 2002  
A boy to *Archana* and *Sarosh Dabhoiwala*; July 3  
A boy to *Kashmira* and *Vispi Vesuna*; July 5  
A girl to *Jernaz* and *Rustam Patel*; July 12  
A boy to *Candy* and *Homi Captain*; July 15  
A boy, *Rehan*, to *Daisy* and *Phiroze Navdar*, brother to *Rudabeh* and *Avan*; July 18  
A boy to *Yashnaaz* and *Jimmy Vesuna*; July 20  
A boy to *Jenifer* and *Kershasp Carnac*; July 21  
A boy to *Roxanne* and *Mehemosh Ichhaporia*; July 22  
A girl to *Zenobia* and *Porus Kapadia*; July 27  
A boy to *Farzana* and *Porus Jussawalla*; July 29  
A boy to *Zena* and *Maneck Mavji*; July 30  
A girl to *Jahan* and *Mehrab*

*Nargolwala*; July 30

### MARRIED

*Yasmin Homi Gai* and *Marzban Jal Driver*; July 3  
*Kainaz Vistasp Sachinwalla* and *Barzeen Rohinton Forbes*; July 19  
*Delnaz Jehanbux Mundagar* and *Meherzad Bomi Deolaliwala* of *Deolali*; July 26

### DIED

*Ratan Rustomji Bhagat* (75), residing at 3, Andheri Kiron Co-op Hsg Soc, Caesar Rd, Amboli, Andheri (W), 400058; June 30  
*Amy Minocher Dadachanji* (86), 6, Albless Bldg, 266, B. Jaykar Marg, 400002; June 30  
*Roshni Minoo Engineer* (72), Choksi Bldg, 721/A, Rd No 4, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 1  
*Gool Minoo Katpitia* (75), B/4, West View, S. V. Rd, Santacruz (W), 400054; July 1  
*Naval Dossabhoj Peston-jamasp* (74), Mcher Villa, Malcolm Baug, S. V. Rd.

*Jogeshwari* (W), 400102; July 1  
*Phiroze Jehangir Unwalla* (90), P/23, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; July 2  
*Shavak Pestonji Tarachand* (77), 2, Samyakul Co-op Hsg Soc, Sector 1, Kopar Khairne, New Bombay; July 3  
*Jamshed Hosanghi Dastoor* (83), 11, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; July 4  
*Coomi Phiroze Gandhi* (80), 503, Varun Apts, Dr Ambedkar Rd, 400012; July 4  
*Sam Minocher Patel* (63), Dhanbad Bldg, Sleater Rd, 400007; July 4  
*Dhun Ratanshaw Carnac* (80), 733, Katpitia Bldg, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 5  
*Bomi Burjorji Contractor* (78), 194, Talaty Bldg, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; July 5  
*Soli Faramroj Mehta* (77), New Khan Bldg, Chikalwadi, Tardeo Rd, 400007; July 5  
*Ramyar Hormusji Powvalla* (67), Fakhri Manzil, Bhaji Gali, 12, Shankerseth Rd, 400007; July 6  
*Nariman Aspandiar Irani* (57), Rustom Manzil, S. B. Rd, 400039; July 7  
*Polad Rustom Irani* (48), Zarine Villa, Patel Pada, Dahanu Rd, Dist Thane, 401602; July 7  
*Shavaksha Rustomji Pagdiwalla* (88), New Petit Hse, Sleater Rd, 400007; July 7  
*Jamshed Pirojsha Barsiwala* (89), Zaver Banoo Ter, 670, Rd No 13, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 8  
*Phiroze Rustomji Jokhi* (86), Guzder Mans, Princess St, 400002; July 8  
*Nargish Maneckshaw Kapadia* (88), Ebrahim Mans, Jamshedji Petit St, 400007; July 9  
*Meher Jehangir Lali* (88), Jer Mans, August Kranti Marg, 400036; July 9  
*Bomi Fakirji Master* (75), 3, Readymoney Bldg, Sir Ratan Tata Rd, Tardeo, 400034; July 9  
*Rustom Meherwanji Bharucha* (89), Gandhi Mans, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; July 10  
*Sheriar Boman Irani* (84), 402, Krishna, Bhardawadi, Off S. V. Rd, Andheri (W),

400058; July 10  
*Gool Hiraji Medhora* (80), Sethna Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; July 11  
*Katy Sorabji Patel* (85), 7, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; July 11  
*Dinar Dara Doctor* (90), Patel Bldg, N. M. Joshi Marg, Lower Parel, 400013; July 12  
*Homai Keki Engineer* (81), Kerawalla Bldg, 789, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 12  
*Mehroo Faramji Wadewala* (69), 17/4, Panthaky Baug, Andheri (E), 400069; July 12  
*Pesi Jamshedji Antia* (73), 8, Jubilee Court, 269/B, Linking Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; July 13  
*Kaikobad Edulji Ghasvala* (81), 61/A, Sarnath, Sophia College Lane, 400026; July 13  
*Homiyaar Nowroji Jijina* (52), 3, Cooper Bldg, 9th Lane, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; July 13  
*Minoo Kaikhshroo Bharucha* (83), C/o Samir Eknath Shidhankar, Anand Niwas, Diva Stn, Thane, 400601; July 14  
*Nergish Jamshed Elavia* (77), 54, Gopal Mans, Turner Rd, Bandra, 400050; July 14  
*Khorshed Ardeshtir Irani* (73), Ibrahim Mans, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; July 14  
*Banoobai Fareedoon Nooreyzedin* (88), Kala Niketan, 95, M. Karve Marg, 400020; July 14  
*Burjorchmeher Dhunjisha Wadia* (73), 3, Sea King, 24, Thomas Cross Lane, Colaba, 400005; July 14  
*Ernavaz Burjor Keeka* (82), Readymoney Bldg, 786, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 15  
*Gulshan Hoshang Chapkhana-wala* (72), Chapkhanawala Hse, Dhondy Rd, Deolali, Dist Nasik, 422401; July 16  
*Hirji Bap Vachha* (75), 16/B, Hampton Court, Colaba, 400005; July 16  
*Parvez Kavasji Besania* (59), 15, Contractor Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; July 17  
*Adeshir Kekhushru Vakil* (81), C/4, Ness Baug, Nana Chowk, 400007; July 17  
*Mehroo Dali Wadia* (75), 5/12, Panthaky Baug, Andheri (E), 400069; July 17

Amy Jimmy Banker (66), 4/C, Kulsum Ter, 7, Walton Rd, Colaba, 400039; July 18  
 Coomi Burjor Engineer (85), 13, Old Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; July 18  
 Pilloo Framroz Antia (81), West Hill, 27, Napean Sea Rd, 400026; July 19  
 Perin Bamansha Bhesania (72), 688, Dinshaw Master Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 19  
 Naja Savak Daruwalla (93), 20, Pavri Hse, Rustom Sidhwa Marg, Fort, 400001; July 19  
 Roda Darabsha Sukheswala (86), Avabai Mans, 788, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 19  
 Maharokh Rohinton Cursetji (49), Nyoma, 13, North South Rd, JVPD Scheme, 400056; July 20

Banoo Rashid Irani (78), Bana Bldg, 11th Lane, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; July 20  
 Jal Sorabshah Manekshaw (82), Avan Abad, Walton Rd, Colaba, 400005; July 20  
 Dina Phirozshah Daruwalla (78), 801, Cumballa Crest, 42, Peddar Rd, 400026; July 21  
 Sorab Nadirshaw Dubash (73), Cooper Bldg, 617, Girgaum Rd, 400002; July 21  
 Rusi Jeejeebhoy Khumbatta (88), Ness Baug Annexe 2, Nana Chowk, 400007; July 21  
 Khorshed Nusservanji Amaria (90), 5/11, Jijibhoy Dadabhoy Lane, Fort, 400001; July 22  
 Hormajsha Bomanji Gandevia (85), B/31, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; July 22  
 Jal Ardeshtir Kerawala (83), 517, Shreeji Krupa, H. R. Mahajani Marg, Matunga, 400019; July 22  
 Kaikhushru Bejonji Madon (81), 102/103, Kuber Apts, New Clny, Nagpur, 440001; July 22  
 Meher Zarir Mistry (52), 31, Mistry Park, B. Desai Rd, 400036; July 22  
 Rati Nusservanji Nazir (85), U/1-3, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; July 22  
 Kerman Pesi Patel (34), 4/17, Sir Ratan Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; July 22  
 Nariman Darabsha Colsavala (89), 2, Readymoney Bldg, Sir Ratan Tata Rd, Tardeo, 400034; July 23  
 Ratansha Merwanji Guard (79), 101, Patel Apts, Tembi Naka, Agiary Lane, Thane,

| FIGURES AT A GLANCE* |            |       |            |       |            |       |
|----------------------|------------|-------|------------|-------|------------|-------|
|                      | Bombay     |       | India      |       | World      |       |
|                      | This issue | 2002* | This issue | 2002* | This issue | 2002* |
| <b>BIRTHS</b>        |            |       |            |       |            |       |
| Boys                 | 10         | 39    | 1          | 3     | 4          | 14    |
| Girls                | 3          | 49    | —          | 2     | 1          | 8     |
| <b>MARRIAGES</b>     |            |       |            |       |            |       |
| Parsi                | 3          | 126   | —          | 10    | 5          | 8     |
| <b>INTERCOMMUNAL</b> |            |       |            |       |            |       |
| Males married out    | —          | —     | —          | —     | —          | 1     |
| Females married out  | —          | —     | —          | —     | 1          | 4     |
| <b>DEATHS</b>        |            |       |            |       |            |       |
| <b>CONSIGNED</b>     |            |       |            |       |            |       |
| Males                | 46         | 259   | 7          | 39    | 1          | 15    |
| Females              | 35         | 267   | 5          | 35    | 2          | 10    |
| <b>CREMATED</b>      |            |       |            |       |            |       |
| Males                | —          | —     | —          | —     | —          | —     |
| Females              | —          | —     | —          | —     | —          | —     |

\*Running totals for 2002 (January 2002-September 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.

400601; July 24  
 Hiraji Ardeshtir Karbhari (69), 8/11, Tata Block, C. J. Clny, Sir Ratan Tata Rd, Tardeo, 400034; July 24  
 Dinyar Shapur Irani (82), 3, Happy Home, Forjett Cross Lane, 400036; July 25  
 Adi Phirozshah Pavri (93), 5/2, Jijibhai Bldg, Khan Est, Mahim, 400016; July 25  
 Adi Bomanji Ranikhetwala (89), 21, Sangrilla, Opp Colaba P. O., 400005; July 25  
 Koomi Maneck Desai (87), 9, Shiv Sadan, C Rd, 131, Marine Drive, 400020; July 26  
 Behram Dossabhai Karki (72), C/o Dumlawalla, 5/A, Horizon, Pali Hill, Bandra, 400050; July 26  
 Noshir Hormasji Master (79), Pateti Blocks, 611, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 26  
 Bhikhu Aspi Golwala (81), Empress Court, 142, Maharshi Karve Rd, 400020; July 27  
 Sheroo Ardeshtir Soordas (85), 204-B, Surya Apt, 53, B. Desai Road, 400026; July 28  
 Jer Dinshaw Irani (77), 52/C, Chotani Bldg, Proctor Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; July 29  
 Shavakshaw (Shavak) Hormusji Shroff (83), Marine Chmbs, Sir Vithaldas Thackersey Marg, 400020; July 29

Shehroo Ratan Udwadia (78), Narang Mans, 34th Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; July 29  
 Noshir Darabsha Billimoria (80), 662, Sohrab Palamkote Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; July 30  
 Dhunjishaw Ardeshtir Patel (88), Empire Mhl, 806, D/32, Khodadad Circle, Dadar, 400014; July 30  
 Hormasji Jehangirji Vakeel (77), 9, J. Mehta Rd, Malabar Hill, 400006; July 30  
 Shernavaz Manchershaw Mistry (104), Maneck Abad, 26/F, Napean Sea Rd, 400036; July 31  
 Rustomji Framji Tata (91), B/103, Swagat II, Dhuri Complex, Om Nagar, Vasai (W), 401202; July 31

#### CALCUTTA

DIED  
 Nilufer Godia, daughter of Nergis and Behram Jila; July 11  
 Rati Mehta, wife of Jal; July 18  
 Adi Bapuji Rabadi, husband of Bapsy and father of Sharmeen and Kaizad; July 24

#### DELHI

BORN  
 A boy, Bahram, to Tooshna and Homi Gandhi, brother to Kainaaz; July 7

#### POONA

DIED  
 Sohrab (Soli) M. Nicholson (91); July 12

#### SECUNDERABAD

DIED  
 Schramai Erachsha Patell (91), mother of Daran, Sonu, Roshan, Hoshi, Khorshed and Arnavaz; July 3  
 Rustom Jehangirji Vesuna (67), brother of Naoshir and Jaloo; July 3  
 Ratansha Dinshaw Jilla (78), father of Kersi, Bijoo and Silloo; July 12  
 Roda Jalnawala (70), wife of Sohrab and mother of Beroze Patel, Khushnam Mehta, Ruxana Morawala and Darius; July 19

#### SURAT

DIED  
 Eduljee Nusservanji Dumasia (76), Bazar Rd, P. O. Madhi, Tal Bardoli, Dist Surat, 394601; July 2  
 Dolat Hiraji Variava (65), Bibiniwadi, Opp Shahenshahi Atas Behram, Sayedpura, 395003; July 3  
 Kaikhushroo Kharsedji Variava (65), Village Laveth, Tal Mangrol, Dist Surat; July 9  
 Cyrus Jemy Munshi (25), Parsiwad, Village Nandpor,

*Tanaz R. Godiwalla*

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Tal Mandvi, Dist Surat,  
394160; July 25

...

**AUSTRALIA**  
**New South Wales**

DIED

*Mahabanu (Mae) Philp*, wife  
of Jim and mother of Farokh,  
Gilan and Farahmarz; July 6

**CANADA**  
**British Columbia**

MARRIED

*Shahnaz Jangi and Viraf*  
*Zack* of San Francisco,  
in Vancouver; July 5  
*Behnaz Yazdani and*  
*Jahangir Kamdar* in  
Vancouver; July 19

**Ontario**

BORN

Triplets (two boys and a girl),  
*Arya, Tina and Kourosh*, to  
*Sima and Manochehr Jam*;  
July 22

MARRIED

*Kashmira Sepoy and Firdosh*  
*Laheer*, son of Goolcher and  
Parvez, in Mississauga; June 7  
*Tanaz Wadia*, daughter of  
Yasmin and Maneck, and  
*Mohammad Hajiani*, son of

Mariam and Madatali in  
Scarborough; June 22  
*Anahita Bozorgi*, daughter of  
Dilnavaz and Rustom, and  
*Cyrus Khory*, son of Pervin  
and Fredoon, in Vaughan;  
July 13  
*Tanya Hansotia*, daughter of  
Mehra and Zubin, and *Nadir*  
*Irani*, son of late Yasmin and  
Meherwan in Mississauga;  
July 26

DIED

*Julie Vakil*, mother of Betty  
Daruvala and sister of Aimee  
Karanjia in Toronto; July 22

**USA**  
**California**

BORN

A boy, *Karl*, to *Urvashi and*  
*Rohinton Sidhwa* in Los  
Angeles; March 3  
A boy, *Darius*, to *Rachael and*  
*Phiroze Parakh* in San Jose;  
July 21

DIED

*Ardeshtir Edalat* (45),  
husband of Fariba and father  
of Bahram in Berkeley; July 7

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

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and

**Mrs Purviz R. Shroff**

# The admirable aviator

Parinaz M. Gandhi

"Old soldiers never die, but must just fade away," Air Marshal Aspy Merwan Engineer, former chief of the air staff, Indian Air Force (IAF), had specified in his will. Respecting his wishes that there should be no fly pass or gun salute at his funeral, the family bade him their final farewell on May 1, 2002 at Bombay's Doongerwadi. Even the air force was informed a few days after his demise.

"It is indeed an irreparable loss...for the Indian Air Force as a whole," wrote the present chief of the air staff, Air Chief Marshal S. Krishnaswamy. On Jamsheedi Navroz, March 21, 2002, 89-year-old Engineer had specially penned a message for the Indian Air Force: "You shall not rest/You shall not pause/You shall not relent/You shall pursue mercilessly/You shall never waver/You shall not spare yourself/You will achieve your goal/Then without pause — you shall/ Set out again to pursue the next/You shall never falter/You shall never fear/We will prevail!" Describing this message as "very, very profound and pithy," Krishnaswamy added, "I, on my part, plan to ensure that it finds its way to and touches the heart and mind of each IAF air warrior today and tomorrow! It will serve them well both in peace and in war."

When Engineer took over command of the IAF in 1960 shortly before his 48th birthday his address to his comrades was reported

*Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw (left) and Engineer (center) at the world's highest air field, Leh*



Engineer:  
"never fear"

in *The Hindustan Times* of December 2, 1960, "The task of building up the IAF to its full stature is yet to be completed and a period of consolidation lies ahead of us. I take this opportunity to call upon all ranks to carry on with the same zeal and devotion to duty. As a united force, we must march ahead without ever faltering and with the fullest confidence in our destiny. I know I can fully rely upon each and everyone of you to do this." Within the four years he spent as chief he reorganized the national air defence system, the command structure of the IAF and tactical air centers, and organized the induction of air-to-air and ground-to-air missiles into the air force. For a year he had also been appointed chairman of the chiefs of staff committee until he retired in 1964.

Prior to this prestigious appointment he was managing director of Hindustan Aircraft Limited (HAL) at Bangalore. Having transformed it into a purposeful organization and being the seniormost air force officer then, he was chosen to succeed Air Marshal Subroto Mukerjee who had died in harness. During his years at HAL, Engineer had initiated several new aircraft manufacturing programs for a supersonic fighter bomber, Vampires and Gnats, Pushpak and Krishak aircrafts, as mentioned in his

biographical sketch.

Since his commissioning in the IAF in 1933 Engineer had served different stations, had occasion to lead several goodwill and aircraft purchasing missions, and had represented the IAF on the air force partition committee, the armed forces reorganization committee, and the original committee set up for the establishment of the National Cadet Corps in India. He has been given credit for initiating the training of air force pilots and mechanics of countries like Indonesia, Egypt, Afghanistan and Iraq. During World War II, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) in 1942 for gallantry and leadership. Since his brothers Minoo and Rointon had also been conferred the DFC during World War II it was considered a rare accomplishment for the family.

"Dad was married to his Indian Air Force... The family came second," recalls son Cyrus clarifying, "This does not mean he didn't care for his family. Whenever any of us were sick, he was the first to be there and always took charge of operations. As soon as things were in control, he was off to his air force...He would be away at work from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. His habits were frugal... up at 5.30 a.m. every morning all his life. He would gulp down two boiled eggs with toast and rush to office by 7 a.m. in his 1947 Mercury car, which he always drove to office himself, refusing to use his staff car although he was entitled to it. He held on to his Mercury car till 1980..."

By 1950 the family had relocated to 6, King George's Avenue, Delhi. At 4, King George's Avenue was their legendary neighbor General Cariappa whose son Nanda and Cyrus be-





Far left: Queen Elizabeth shaking hands with Engineer as Rajendra Prasad and the other Service chiefs look on. Alongside: Engineer accompanying President Nasser in 1960

came close friends. One day when invited to a party at Nanda's house at age 14, Cyrus came back at 2 a.m. and found "Dad waiting for me with a lecture and reprimand. A young man had to have rules," he remembers being told.

The practice of rising before dawn has remained with Cyrus too who acknowledges the strength derived from starting the day early. Above all, "he taught me 'never to fear,'" adds Cyrus. The reticent man of few words had once told his son, "I never had any fear of dying but at the same time I was never foolhardy and planned everything I did. If there were any risks or a gamble was taken, it was only after fully understanding the consequences and planning for it."

"Dad could face the bullets flying around him in Waziristan, and later on in the 'War on Kashmir' or meet the fierce warriors of the Nawab of Ippi in the Northwest Frontier province with a smile and get his way with them. Men of honor recognize each other. But in 'court craft' he was sadly lacking," observed Cyrus. "His survival was simply due to his great honesty, sincerity and the fact that all things had to be done in the right way and that there were no shortcuts... Simple in his thinking... Dad was always 'a man of his word.' Once he gave it, no arguments could ever sway him. His word was final and had to be honored... His only failure therefore was the implicit trust he held in all human beings."

The eldest of the Engineer



brothers, the skies beckoned to Aspy since his school days at Panchgani. When he was barely 17 he became the first Indian to fly solo from London to India in his Gipsy Moth (bought by his father Merwan) within 17 days winning the Aga Khan Prize of £500 in 1930. Earlier he had flown with Ram Nath Chawla from Karachi in the Gipsy Moth, landing at Croydon, UK, 17 days later. Competing with the likes of Manmohan Singh and J. R. D. Tata, the young lad put his training to good use to emerge as the winner over a route where few airfields and practically no communications existed. Cruising at an air speed of 80 mph in his Moth aircraft which has a limited range of 550 miles under no wind condition Engineer told *The Sind Observer* of May 12, "I flew as circumstances permitted, sometimes six hours at a stretch in a day and sometimes four hours... My longest flight was from Rome to Catania which lasted for about seven to eight hours without refuelling the machine..." As commented *The Sind Observer* when Engineer landed in Karachi, "To fly over three continents exposed to the inclemencies and treacheries of the weather, to cross mountain, sea and desert, plain and prairie with no more than a chart to guide him required physical and spiritual qualities of which heroes are made... We congratulate his par-

ents especially for encouraging him, even at the risk of their dear son's life, to dare and to achieve." As a tribute to his accomplishment, there stands at the Croydon Museum a statue of Engineer at the Lifetimes Gallery which was inaugurated in 1995.

"An Indian has been chosen as the best all-round pilot and awarded a special prize at the Royal Air Force (RAF) College at Cranwell. He is Flight Cadet A. M. Engineer," reported a 1933 news item from London. "It has been decided that he has shown the greatest flying ability among the cadets of the senior term and he, therefore, receives the R. M. Groves Memorial Prize, the coveted distinction of all cadet officers in the RAF," added the news item. After passing the 16th Army Co-operation Course at Old Sarum, Engineer joined the Royal Indian Air Force. After more than a decade he returned to the UK to graduate from the RAF Staff College, Bracknell in 1946 and the Imperial Defence College, London in 1951. The next year he was made deputy chief of air staff, India, mentions his curriculum vitae.

"In the latter years of his life his concern for his immediate family far outweighed all the neglect of the air force years. In 1966 when I desperately needed funds for my fledgling business,

Dad, without a thought, advanced me half the proceeds from his Provident Fund when he could ill afford to. In his will he had written, 'I leave all my wealth and assets to my son Cyrus...if he can find any.' There were none because whatever little he had, he had given away to us, his family, over the years," observed Cyrus. The premature death of his son Kersi in 1981, had left him heart broken. His wife Ruby had predeceased him



Right: Engineer with his Gipsy Moth in 1930

Above: as chief of air staff

by three years.

"Dad was a clairvoyant like his mother (Maneck) and his premonitions were uncanny," states Cyrus. "He predicted that the Shah would fall almost two and a half years before the Shah of Iran abdicated." He had many occasions to interact with the Shah during his ambassadorship to Iran from 1965-67. In fact, Engineer had conveyed to Jawaharlal Nehru that he had a vision of bringing Iran and India closer with a view to do good for Zoroastrians in India and Iran. A religious minded and staunch Zoroastrian, Engineer had studied ancient history and visited Persepolis many times. After completing his tenure as Ambassador, Engineer served as head, organization affairs of Iranian Marine International Oil Company in Tehran till end 1969 and he was concurrently resident representative of Hydrocarbons India Private Limited in Tehran. After he left Iran, Engineer spent equal time in Bombay and abroad. "Whenever pos-



*Aspy and Ruby Engineer with grandchildren Tayunaz Merchant, Rohanish Engineer and the pups*

sible he visited our fire-temples and met prominent Zoroastrians and gave talks not as an intellectual but as one who had a passionate love for his religion. He had an open mind and his sole fear was that one day the Parsis would become an extinct race," conveys Cyrus.

Although he had expressed his preference for cremation, the ever thoughtful Engineer had specified that ultimately his son could choose the more convenient mode of disposal. Cyrus opted to consign his father at Doongerwadi "be-

cause I sincerely believe that the peace and tranquility and the power of our prayers at Doongerwadi far outweigh all other considerations."

Until the end he sustained his interest in cricket and national events. Although once an active shikari, he gave up hunting and opted to pursue fishing in later life, teaching his family much about the splendors of nature and wilderness. Attempts to chronicle his life remained unsuccessful. In the last month when he realized that his physical health was failing and his legs could not support him he almost "masterminded his demise" announcing to his family, "Now my time to go has come and I'm a burden." He was very close to his brother Homi in Canada, who was a year younger to him. "He phoned him and prepared him and then after calling for his great-grandchildren and meeting them, he left us," notes Cyrus.

"I have no hesitation to say that I have inherited an air force which can be considered professional by any standards. The credit for this essentially lies with you," one of his successors had addressed Engineer stating, "I have just assumed command of the air force and could not think of anything better than

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to seek your guidance and blessings."

The air marshal is survived by his son Cyrus and brother Homi.

## The dedicated Dastoor

Died: Dastur Kaikobad Phirozeji Dastoor, 75, High Priest of the Iranshah Atash Behram and president of the Udvada Athornan Anjuman and Bombay's Athornan Mandal on January 25, 2002 at his residence in Udvada following prolonged illness.

In appreciation of Dastoor's "selfless and devoted services to the priestly class and young athornanzadas of the Madressa in particular and the community in general" the Athornan Mandal's board of trustees and managing committee recorded his "sincere, keen and deep interest in the affairs of the Mandal... The upliftment and progress of young athornans was uppermost in his heart and mind," added the resolution.

In addition to resolutions passed in Gujarati by the anjumans in Udvada, representatives of different anjumans referred to Dastoor's dedication during the 31 years he served as high priest. "He presided over our holy Iranshah with dignity and conducted its functioning with a strong sense of dedication and pride," wrote Phiroze Bharda, honorary secretary of The Bangalore Parsee Zoroastrian Anjuman, regretting that "the community has lost a great leader and an established authority on the Zoroastrian scriptures." "Our community has lost a beacon," noted F. H. Davar and Ervad N. B. Kanga, joint honorary secretaries of the Ahmedabad Parsi Panchayat, referring to Dastoor as "an illustrious, unassuming personality whose smiling face was a symbol of all that was good." On religious issues confronting the Dahanu Road Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman Fund Dastoor's guidance had been sought on many occasions, recalled its president Zarhost Mubarakai. Helpfulness and generosity, not only to members of one's own community but to sister communities too, were Dastoor's hallmark, acknowledged the trustees of the Bulsar Parsi Anjuman Trust Funds.

The years he spent in Udvada, serving the Iranshah and the Sanjana tola of priests, only posterity will value, declared Prof Khurshed Sheriar. Whenever he was invited to a function in Bombay, he ensured that he returned to Udvada the very next day, confirmed

his son Khurshed who succeeds him as Dastur. As per the practice prevailing among the Shri Udwada Nav Kutumbi (Nine Families) Athornan Anjuman, there are two high priests affiliated to the Iranshah. Kaikobad was the 19th descendant from his family to take on his father's mantle in 1971, functioning in conjunction with Dastur (Dr) Hormazdyar Mirza. Every alternate year Dastoor and Mirza took turns to preside over the meetings of the Anjuman. More often, it was the resident high priest who would take charge of local affairs. "Despite being very orthodox, he was practical," Khurshed commended his father's flexibility when situations so demanded, instead of insisting on rigid adherence to dogmatic practices.

Dastoor was "a *rathashtar* (soldier) who faithfully stood by the principles of our *deen* (religion)," appreciated his orthodox colleague Roni Khan who passed away within seven months of sending the condolence letter. "Who can forget the superb 'mini-letter' that he wrote opposing the conversion and juddin navjote of a certain rich and powerful (Christian born of a Parsi father)?" In 1994 when the octogenarian industrialist Neville Wadia had sought the high priests' consent to his navjote, Dastoor along with Navsari's Dastur Meherji Meherjirana were the two High Priests who dissented whilst the five other High Priests consented to the navjote. Dastoor had then written to Wadia in his letter dated August 9, 1994, "I cannot agree to your request to convert you in the Zoroastrian religion as the same is not permitted in our religion. With regards and blessings of Iranshah (see 'A Zoroastrian again,' *Parsiana*, October 1994)." Khan added, "I am at least glad that (Dastoor) received the full exposure to and admiration of the public at the historic vada dasturjis' public meeting that we held on April 21, 2001 at (Bombay)." The High Priests then had unanimously spoken in favor of continuing with the dakhmenashini tradition even in the absence of cultures.

There were other community and charitable organizations too which he had aided during his tenure as High Priest. Trustee of the N. M. Wadia Charities, Sam Joshi referred to Dastoor's helping hand "at the time of the centenary of the Atash Behram in installing

the bust of Bai Motlibai Wadia on the verandah of the Atash Behram against strong opposition from some members of the Anjuman." President of The Bombay Parsee Association Vispi Dastur commented on the High Priest's "knowledge...courtesy, dignity and willingness to guide and help all those who came to him."

With his cheerful and loving disposition he had endeared himself to all during his 12 years as trustee and vice president of the Shree Udvada Vibhag Sarvajani Kelavni Mandal, as noted its president, giving him credit for suggesting schemes with foresight and in the interest of sound education.

Valsad born Dastoor's own education was at Dadar's Athornan Boarding Madressa before he did his navamaratab. From 1941-43 the young initiate performed pav-mahal ceremonies as also boi prayers at the Iranshah in Udvada. Thereafter he completed his SSC from the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute receiving training from priests like Dastur Khurshed Dabu. He then proceeded to St Xavier's College for his BA degree. Before he took over as High Priest, he was for some years a teacher at Nasik's Boys' Town Public School and had thereafter worked in Bombay.

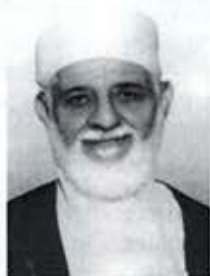
Interested in sports he represented St Xavier's at inter-collegiate cricket tournaments, according to his curriculum vitae. His passion for cricket abided with him till the end and he enjoyed watching every game of cricket on television, mentions Khurshed, adding, being of service to the people was his other interest.

As commented one of his schoolmates Burjor Antia, partner of Mulla and Mulla and Craigie Blunt and Caroe, "He sincerely guided our community in the religious field for several decades."

The High Priest is survived by his son Dastur Khurshed and daughter Zenobia Peshotan Sidhwa, sister Banoo Dastoor and brothers Eruch and Khurshedji.

### Far Eastern cuisine

Due to exigencies of space the second instalment of "Far Eastern cuisine" will be carried in the next Navroz (March 2003) issue of *Parsiana* and not in the September issue as mentioned earlier. We regret the inconvenience.



Dastoor: piety and devotion



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