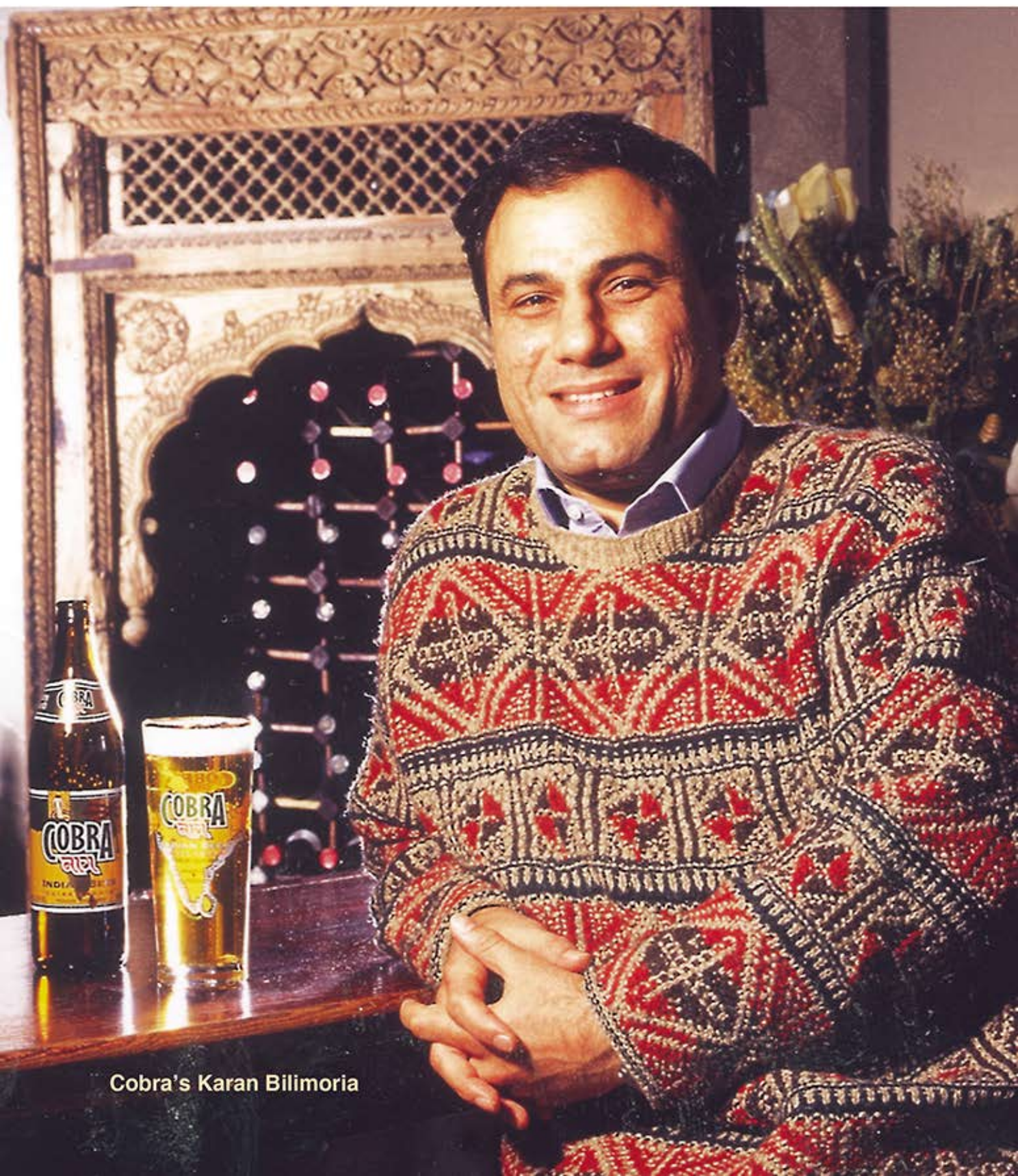


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Protection from Birth Onwards



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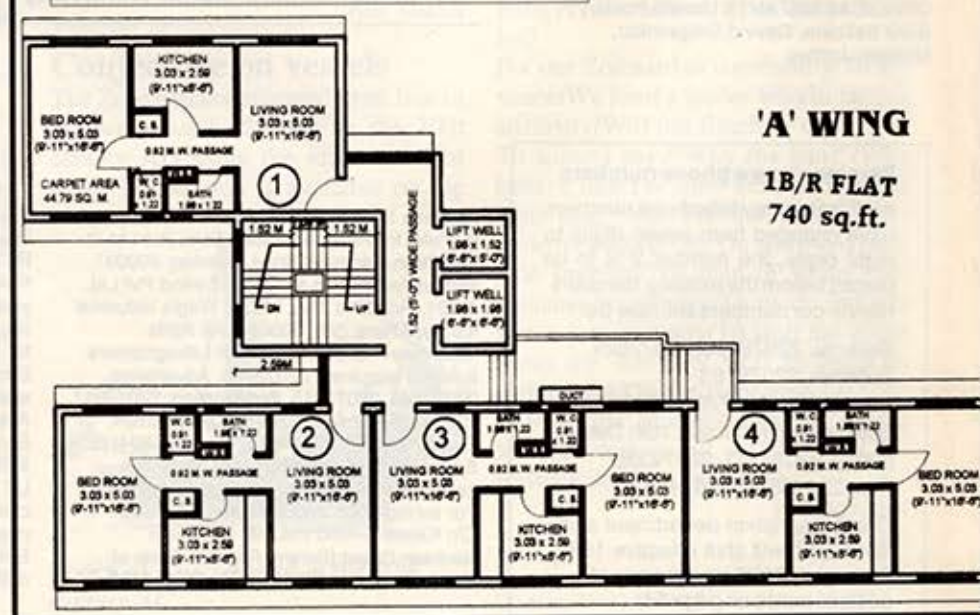
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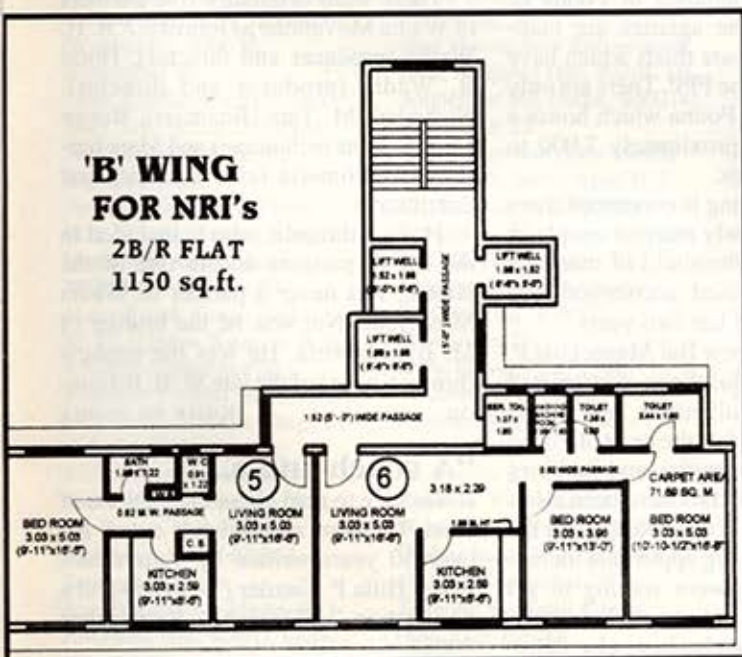
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'B' WING FLAT NOS.5 & 6



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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"The admirable aviator"

A memorable tribute has been paid to a remarkable personality — Air Marshal Aspy Merwan Engineer ("The admirable aviator," In Memoriam, *Parsiana*, September 2002).

We all know that the Tatas had started the civil aviation service in India. They once thought of constructing an aerodrome at Panchgani's tableland or plateau but had to abandon the proposal mainly because of the gravitational pull.

However Engineer, then hardly out of his teens, dared to fly all the way from Karachi to Ahmedabad to Bombay and then over the Western Ghats, with all their pre-monsoon air currents and thermals, to land his little biplane, a single engine Gipsy Moth, on the very same tableland (4,378 ft above



Engineer: dared to fly

sea level) with no navigational aids on the way and the "airfield" was Parsi High School's cricket-cum-hockey field.

It was said that the entire Parsi High School and the population of little Panchgani had turned out to welcome him. There was a hand-held movie camera to record the boy-pilot being garlanded.

The youth-pilot had won the Aga Khan prize of £ 500 beating competitors like J. R. D. Tata. It was stated that like a true sportsman, Tata helped that youth with a set of spare spark-plugs when their planes crossed at Alexandria.

I had joined this same Parsi High School (much later renamed Billimoria High School) Panchgani, as a boarder in 1935 when I was nine years old. I then came to know of the exploits of this Parsi boy who was once a boarder in the School, but very much senior to me.

He has made our community proud. Let us hope that the Government of India, in appreciation of his services will issue a commemorative postal stamp and his plane or a replica will find a prominent place in an aviation museum.

BHIKHAJI M. ADENWALLA

"Use space effectively"

In response to Capt (retd) J. P. Aga's letter "Use space effectively" (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, September 2002) I seek to clarify that the Poona Parsee Panchayat (PPP) does not own or manage any of the agiaries in Poona or elsewhere. All the agiaries are managed by their private trusts which have no concern with the PPP. There are only three adarians in Poona which house a population of approximately 7,000 to 8,000 Zoroastrians.

As far as housing is concerned there is not a single newly married couple or a couple on the threshold of marriage having been refused accommodation by the PPP in the last two years.

In fact in the new Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy Buildings constructed by the PPP at Lullanagar, one of the posh areas and within the heart of Poona city where all amenities and facilities are available, 114 flats have been allotted on leave and licence basis to all the needy and deserving applicants including couples who were waiting to get married or have got married recently. Some of these couples have also deliv-

ered children after they came to reside in our buildings.

This would not have been possible without the generous donations received from the trustees of the Bai Maneckbai P. B. Jeejeebhoy deed of settlement funds who have funded the entire project of four buildings comprising of 236 flats, each having an area of 720 sq ft built-up area with latest and modern amenities and for a meagre licence fee of Rs 500 per month. What more can the youth of our community or even any other members of our community ask for in these days. Moreover, the completion of the buildings, comprising of 236 flats took place in a span of three years, and without any hiccups or litigations.

It is a fact that the PPP owns and manages the two dakhmas in Poona. But it is wrong to state that only one dakhma is used since the other has no parking space for cars/scooters. There is abundant open lands surrounding both our dakhmas and no shortage of parking space. We alternately use one dakhma at a time since the other has to be closed for drying and cleaning.

DARAK IRANI
Trustee and vice chairman
Poona Parsee Panchayat

"Bonding with the..."

Let me take the liberty of pointing out some factual errors in the nostalgic article "Bonding with the brothers" (*Parsiana*, September 2002).

There were originally five partners of Wadia Movietone as follows: J. B. H. Wadia (producer and director), Homi B. Wadia (producer and director), Nadirshah M. Tata (financier), Burjor M. Tata (cine technician) and Mancher-shah B. Bilimoria (cine financier and distributor).

Homi Bilimoria, who is included in the list of partners and in one of the photos, was never a partner of Wadia Movietone. Nor was he the brother of M. B. Bilimoria. He was the nephew (brother's son) of the late M. B. Bilimoria.

HOMI P. BILIMORIA

"A coach and a..."

It was nice to read about the exploits of Keki Tarapore as a cricket coach for over 30 years written by your senior editor Hilla P. Guzder ("A coach and a gentleman," *Parsiana*, September 2002).



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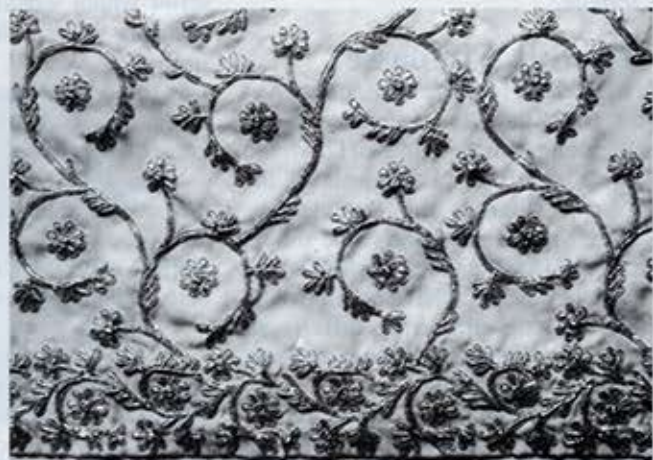
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Strangely, she makes no mention of the fact that K. K. Tarapore had also played for the Parsis in the Pentangulars in Bombay during the years 1940-1944. Tarapore was the stock left-arm spin bowler for the Parsis. He used to come on after the opening spell by Jehangir Khot and Rusi Mody.

The Parsis of the Pentangular years also had a good batting line-up consisting of Mody, Rusi Cooper, H. S. Colah and P. E. Palia of Hyderabad who was the captain.

K. R. Meherhomji had the reputation of hitting sixes, but when I had last seen him play at the Brabourne Stadium, as soon as he came to bat, Vijay Merchant, captain of the Hindus, moved all his fielders to the boundary, and Meherhomji in trying to live up to his reputation skied the sphere and was out caught first ball.

Dr P. D. SUNAVALA

Hilla Guzder replies

While Dr Sunavala mentions K. K. Tarapore, my article was on Keki Bezon Tarapore.

"The Surat impasse"

In "The Surat impasse" (*Parsiana*, August 2002) there is a reference to my name along with the names of Dr Minoo Parabia and Eruch Lakdawala of the Jarthosti Dharma and Samaj Seva Samiti, Surat. I guess the name should be Noshir Dordy and not Noshir Daboo.

Please note that I have nothing to do with the long simmering differences between the above Samiti and the Surat Parsi Panchayat (SPP).

Before 1984 I had served for 15 years the institutions under the SPP but I am presently a resident of Ahmedabad.

NOSHIR K. DABOO

Ahmedabad

Parinaz Gandhi replies

In the process of transcribing the names from Gujarati to English the error had first crept in our story "Landing in trouble" (*Parsiana*, August 2000) and has recurred here. *Parsiana* regrets the error.

"A royal visit"

It isn't often that the members of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) get to see the royal family ("A royal visit," *Parsiana*, August 2002). Being bereft of familiarity with protocol, confusion reigned at various points throughout the Earl and Countess of Wessex's visit to the new premises of

ZTFE, when the guests were variously referred to as "the Earl and Countess of Essex," "The Princes" and "Their Majesties." The event was "a great success" nonetheless. "Oh yes," reports a member of the Harrow Zoroastrian group, "the Duke and Countess of Sussex were here last Wednesday but I didn't go and see them." It is a pity the president of ZTFE and his team failed to ascertain the protocol pertaining to this occasion. Imagine any labelling of Zoroastrians, particularly in London, as a community of mediocrities!

FURHOK K. TANGREE

La Roche-sur-Foron

France

"The race to record"

After reading the very fine article "The race to record" (*Parsiana*, June 2002), I decided to visit the Parzor site and spent over half an hour responding to the questionnaire. To my disappointment — and dismay — at the end of the gruelling exercise, when I pressed 'submit,' I was informed that the form-mail script which would deliver my questionnaire to them did not allow access from their website. All they had to do was to add one line in the list of domains to allow input feeds from unescoparzor.com

Also, the layout leaves a lot to be desired and does no justice to the good content and the photos. I am sure UNESCO too would expect something better from the Parsi community.

HOMI J. ROGERS

Niloufer Shroff responds on behalf of PARZOR

We are extremely sorry that there was a technical snag which did not allow its submission. We have earlier received several on-line forms from India and abroad. The problem has been traced to a recent shift of the website to a new server and we have now rectified it.

In fact the website has been in the process of upgradation and you will be able to visit the newly designed website very shortly.

"The significant sudreh"

The evil influence of TV, cinema and Internet has brainwashed our youngsters. Recently I read in *Parsiana* ("The significant sudreh," Books, *Parsiana*, June 2002) that the Zoroastrian youth in America believe that wearing of sudreh-kusti is not essential, rather a matter of choice.

This proves our youngsters are igno-

rant, misinformed and lack an understanding of the principles of our divine religion. Wearing of sudreh protects us from *druj* (impurities and evil influence). Kusti prayers are a form of communicating with Ahura Mazda. It was reported in *Parsiana* ("Grace and graciousness," In Memoriam, *Parsiana*, September 2001) that Soonu Godrej and her husband Naoroji (of Godrej and Boyce) did not wear the sudreh-kusti regularly. Following the stabbing incident in 1979, the couple opted to wear those religious garments again.

What next should we expect from our youngsters? Not to wear a cap while visiting our holy places just because we are hotheaded?

FAROKH NAVAROJI DARUWALA

Wembley, UK

Options to dakhmenashini

During the past year or more, I have read of many half-hearted and misguided measures suggested, attempted and tried by various organizations or individuals to strengthen dakhmenashini. They include breeding vultures in captivity over existing dakhmas and harnessing solar energy by way of solar panels. Yet burial or cremation are considered forbidden. Breeding vultures is doomed to failure though healthy new species may survive or even thrive for a short period of five to 10 years.

This is due to a complex interplay of three factors: the habitat of birds, the birds themselves and the food for the birds.

When the dakhmas were built in Bombay, the area was a wilderness, the natural home of vultures who roamed (flew) freely in the wooded hills feeding upon their prey, augmented at times by fresh corpses left by charitable Zoroastrians. The subsequent urbanization altered the flight pattern of the birds and decreased their food, except for the corpses, often the putrefying culture of multiple microorganisms which these poor birds have to eat or starve. Thus suffered the well-being of the species, its immune system and breeding grounds. When death is imminent, birth takes a back seat or no seat at all. The premise of charity at death by presenting the unneeded corpse to the birds was a lofty idea which has backfired.

Solar energy concentration under the panels seems too erratic (when sun is not available, as in monsoon) and too weak for quick consumption of the corpse. This is more so in Bombay where the



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polluted atmosphere interferes with the penetration of sun's energy.

What do we do now? Maybe, we should go back in time and once again create a natural habitat for the vultures. A non inhabited island off the coast may be leased or purchased by the community and dedicated to remain so for posterity, assuring that the island will never be inhabited by humans. Allowing the vultures to thrive there and then building a dakhma would be the next step. The island may be accessed by ferry or a helicopter ride. Expensive? Yes of course, but the protectors of the faith will come up with the money! Another suggestion is to fast-forward in time and fund scientific programs to harness and concentrate laser energy in a large enough capsule to desiccate the corpse without burning or fire. Any takers? Parsi Zoroastrians at the moving edge of science and technology!

Dr MEHROO M. PATEL
Westchester, USA

I have been reading some of the arguments against dakhmenashini. Agreed, vultures play an important catalytic role. However, it is the sun which plays the primary role. This primary source of energy and purification, with the grace of Ahura Mazda, has not failed. How, then, can we say that our time-honored system of Khurshed Nagarishni has failed?

Dr Rodger Doran of the World Health Organization in Geneva refutes the commonly propagated myth that corpses are sources of disease. There has never been a disease outbreak attributed to non disposal of human bodies killed in a natural disaster. Since dead bodies are immobile, they cannot sustain an outbreak, no matter how many there are (*Asian Disaster News*, Vol. 6, No. 2, April-June 2000).

It is argued, fire is a great purifier and nothing ever can pollute fire. This is incorrect. Fire simply transforms pollutant matter from one state to another.

Have you ever wondered why Parsis use the fire of a burning corpse to consecrate an atash behram (the highest grade fire)? There are 16 fires used for consecrating an atash behram, including the fire of lightning (which may have struck a tree). But why use the fire of a burning corpse? Is it considered holy?

The answer is simple. The fire of a burning corpse is physically purified 91 times and the maximum number of ceremonies are performed over it, with a view to purify it and lift the dross with

which the fire of a burning corpse is doctrinally considered to be burdened with.

To claim that the electric crematorium is an efficient and hygienic alternative is a myth. It can neither be acceptable from a religious nor an environmental point of view. And, at this point, we are not even referring to the phenomenal cost of maintaining an electric crematorium.

According to *USA Today*, in 1998, a record 5,53,000 Americans were cremated. According to this American publication, nearly 25 percent of US deaths are followed by cremation; that number is expected to rise to 40 percent by 2010. This has caused considerable alarm at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

States another publication, *The Toronto Star* (June 4, 2000), with an air of sarcasm, that cremation, now the choice of some 53 percent of people in the Greater Toronto area is widely regarded as an eco-friendly gesture, notwithstanding smoggy evidence to the contrary. The green movement in Europe has shown increasing concern about cremation which it considers to be an unnecessary and wasteful contributor to greenhouse gases. Anyone with green pretensions should think twice about cremation: 4,37,000 wooden coffins are wastefully burned in the UK each year, polluting the atmosphere with dioxin, hydrochloric acid, hydrofluoric acid, sulphur dioxide and carbon dioxide.

It appears disposal of the dead is not just a community problem for Parsis but a global problem as well. People in the western world began to opt for cremation because burial locks up useful land and burial plots are frightfully expensive. It now turns out that cremation harms the atmosphere and contributes to greenhouse gases. And, remember, these are countries that use state-of-the-art crematoriums with sophisticated scrubbers and high chimneys.

All said and done, dakhmenashini is still the best, for now and forever!

NOSHIR H. DADRAWALA

Amesha Spentas' accord

In organized fora and on the cocktail-circuit, one refrain stands out — that of an unacceptable degree of discord in our microscopic community. Any community which has no dissenting voice is a community heading for extinction.

I do not equate discord with dissent. A healthy exchange of ideas makes a community or a company vibrant. What

we suffer from is not dissent but wanton discord.

Our scriptures give us a holy and classical example of the seven Amesha Spentas (Ahura Mazda being the first amongst them) working in total unison, for the well-being of the universe and that of all Zoroastrians. I quote only two small extracts which reflect the essence of this letter.

"vise vo Amesha Spenta staota zaota zbata yashta framareta aibijareta. Pairi ve Amesha Spenta hukhshtira hudhaonghho dadhami tanavaschit khakhyao ushtanem pairi vispao kujitayo. (For the prosperity of the good ones, for the love of the children, for righteousness, for victory, for peace of mind, (we promise) to worship you, Amesha Spentas, to sing your praises, to satisfy you and to command you)" — Visperad 5.1.2

"Fera ve rahi Amesha Spenta yasnemcha vahmemcha fera manangha fera vachangha fera hyaothna fera anghaoya fera tanvaschit khakhyao ushtanem. [Here do I offer unto you, O Bountiful Immortals, worship and homage with thoughts, words and deeds and my entire being; (I offer) the life of my own body]" — Yasna 11.18

It appears that we have lost the message of our scriptures and gone centripetally and not centrifugally. A recent and disturbing trend has been that we fall back on our scriptures, by convenience. That is another malady from which we have started suffering in the last 10 years.

As a community, we need to repair the damage to our fabric by our divisive tendency. We do not cooperate with ourselves to the extent we should. There is a lot of bad blood within the community. I am told that we suffer from this malaise even overseas, though to a lesser extent than here.

We have to learn two great lessons from the Jews (with whom we have been wrongly compared by contemporary, western historians): their sense of closeness across national and continental barriers and their devout faith in the *Old Testament*.

Consciously we have to stand united if we have to continue to survive in a global population of 6.2 billion, growing at an average of 2.5 percent per annum!

How do we do it? How have the Jews done it? Place the community above self. Emulate the example of the Amesha Spentas who are all of one thought and one word and one deed.



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The more we follow our scriptures scrupulously and without any fanaticism, the more secure we will be. The dilution of our faith was seen by Dr Dadabhai Naoroji, much before he died when he started the movement "Back to the Gathas," and adopted by Lokmanya Tilak for his movement "Back to the Vedas." Either unite and survive, or war and perish.

BEHRAM T. DASTUR

Help Vesu agiary

The Bai Pirojbai Manekji Adarian Saheb situated at Vesu village, about six km from Surat, requires urgent repairs to the agiary building and the adjoining residence of the panthaky.

Pirojbai, in memory of her husband Manekji Ruttonji Patel, had the present Adarian Saheb building constructed in 1889 for the convenience of the Parsi families residing at Vesu. Due to heavy seasonal rains the said buildings have suffered considerable wear and tear over a period of time. The buildings which could not be maintained for want of funds now require immediate repairs.

This appeal is therefore made to all Zoroastrians to contribute generously towards the cost of repairs so as to keep our Adarian fire burning.

Cheques in the name of Bai Pirojbai Manekji Patel Adarian Saheb Trust should be sent to Minoo Patel, managing trustee, Hormuz Bldg, 4th fl, Sleater Rd, Bombay 400007, or to Roshanbanu Mehta, 2/B, Sonavala Bldg, 3rd fl, Tardeo Rd, Bombay 400034.

MINOO PATEL, ROSHANBANU MEHTA,

SHERNAAZ S. MEHTA, SAM MEHTA

Trustees

Bai Pirojbai Manekji Patel Adarian Saheb Trust

Value water

Some time ago, I had an opportunity to

meet a couple of trustees of some fire-temple in Bombay who were rather concerned about the future of the water supply from agiary wells considering that tanker loads of water were being daily supplied to high-rise buildings and other places.

On visiting some of the agiaries I was surprised to find that in one well, water was being drawn out through a six-inch delivery pipe for supply to water tankers from morning to night. Even for agricultural purposes, at the most, three-inch pipes are used.

As a concerned individual who, in his capacity as chairman, water conservation, Lions Club of Mhow in Madhya Pradesh, has gained some knowledge and experience I would like to make the following observations:

The main source of piped water supply for a mega city like Bombay are the huge monsoon lakes situated on the mainland which are fed with rainwater. In the old days, before piped water from these lakes was available, the population of Bombay derived its water from the numerous wells dotted all over the place. While some wells still supply water many of the others are now in disuse, having been filled up.

The main source of water that fed these wells were the underground aquifers that were recharged annually by the seepage of rain water from the surface during the monsoon months. With the copious rain that Bombay was blessed with, these underground aquifers, over the years, became vast reservoirs of enormous quantities of water, and we can safely assume, that it is these massive reservoirs of underground water which are charging the wells even today, enabling us to draw out enormous quantities of water.

the monsoon months and recharging the underground aquifers.

God forbid, but only one failed monsoon will leave the monsoon lakes high and dry in Bombay. We would then have to resort to the only other alternative source, viz the wells, only to find that they have already been pumped dry. The underground reservoirs of water built up over the past many years, when there were plenty of open spaces around and Bombay had not yet become a concrete jungle, would have finally thrown their hands up at man's thoughtless profligacy.

Our small community has ever been in the forefront of the development of this magnificent city, and it is time for us to again take the lead, and prevent it from slipping into anarchy. This year we have had only 55 inches of rain against the average of 85 to 90 inches. Water riots have already taken place in certain parts of our country. It is said that future wars will take place over water.

The Bombay Municipal Corporation has finally woken up and decided that all new buildings over 1,000 sq m i.e. about 10,000 sq ft area will require to have water harvesting arrangements which is a viable alternative.

Underground aquifers can be recharged by simple methods such as terrace/roof water harvesting: This involves the diversion of all the rainwater from terraces and roofs of large buildings such as hospitals, schools, colleges, residences, bays, offices and commercial buildings and industries into nearby wells and/or percolation pits. Even old disused wells can very well serve the purpose. These wells can be cleaned and reactivated.

A moderate one-time expenditure will ensure the channeling of enormous quantities of rainwater into wells for years to come, as long as the infrastructure (such as pipes, etc) last.

However certain precautions should be taken to prevent the well water from being polluted: do not store any polluting material such as chemicals, cement and corroding articles on the terrace; clean the terrace/roof before each monsoon; ensure that the first two showers do not enter the recharging system; do not allow pets on the roof during the monsoon; provide mechanical filters to filter out any matter like leaves, etc.

A mere 1,000 sq ft of terrace/roof area is capable of harvesting 80,000 litres of rainwater per year, which trans-

Since the last 30 to 40 years, Greater Bombay, covering an area of about 125 sq km has been converted into a concrete jungle. This prevents the rainwater from seeping into the soil during

Adarian in Vesu





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lates into 400 barrels/drums of 200 litres each. Similarly, one acre of open land can recharge about 18 lakh litres of rainwater per year.

Hence, the trustees, administrators and owners of large building complexes



An agiary well serving as a reservoir of underground water

should take steps in this matter on a priority basis. Additionally, individuals can save water by the simple expedient of using water by mug and bucket instead of directly from the tap for daily activities such as brushing of teeth, washing the face and hands, toiletry, washing of clothes and utensils, etc. It just requires a change in attitude and mindset.

Further, simple methods such as prevailing upon children not to throw away the water remaining in their bottles at the end of the school day, or reducing the capacity of one's flushing cistern by putting in any solid thing such as glass bottles, bricks or stones, etc can result in saving enormous quantities of water daily.

In the small cantonment town of Mhow in Madhya Pradesh where I come from, the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman has successfully installed terrace/roof water harvesting systems in its agiary and common hall complex, as also several residential buildings, connecting them to four open wells. At the Tower of Silence, one open well and two tube wells are being charged by rain water from about eight acres of hilly slopes by way of several trenches, percolation pits and soak pits.

Several schools and private individuals have adopted the terrace/roof water harvesting to charge wells and bore wells.

A lake has been constructed on military land with the help of the Infantry School, Mhow, the Lions Club and cooperation from the public.

Any queries or clarifications may

please be addressed to the author at the following address: Phiroze B. Illava, 143, Simrole Road, Mhow (MP) 453441, Tel: 07324-73336. PHIROZE B. ILLAVA

Mhow

Saved by the fire

Just the night before he read the appeal from Shiavax Nargolwala, the then president of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman, our 74-year-old father Hormusji Jamshedji Mistry had announced his intention of doing charity in the name of our elder sister Khorshed and brother Phiroz who both expired in 1941 at the age of 22 and 16 respectively within a short span of eight months. He wanted to donate the same amount he had spent on the wedding of my brother Tehmuras and myself. We learnt that the most important things needed for the newly constructed Kaikhushru Pallonji Katrak Dar-e-Meher in Delhi were the afargani and other alat in the kebala room.

We placed an order for making a German silver afargani and a thick silver toran for the kebala door with Ratonji Jhangir and Sons at Parsi Bazargate Street, Fort, Bombay. For the bell, which is to be made from seven different metals, we placed an order with Jayant Metal Work at Elphinstone Bridge, Parel.

My father was from the village Suwali in Surat district and had a sawmill business. But he knew everything about metal works so every few days we would go and supervise the craftsmen. The marble stand was ordered from a company in Jaipur.

We also arranged for one large size photo frame of Zarathushtra which is still there in the Dar-e-Meher along with a large electric clock. The implements like *chipya* and *chamach*, *khumcha* and *anni* needed in the kebala room were sent to Delhi by Frontier Mail as passenger baggage.

Our whole family was invited by the Delhi Anjuman to join the opening of the Dar-e-Meher.

My parents, Hormusji and Meherbai and my brother along with his wife and four children reached Delhi one week prior to myself and my wife Roshan. Ervad Darius Bagli who had come to receive us, narrated how Delhi was having a very cold spell with the bureau recording the lowest temperatures in the preceding 25 years. Every room in the Dharamshala was provided with a

fire of gas coke kept in the fireplace. Even then, the room was very cool so my brother shifted the fire to the center of the room. Since the coke gas could not find an outlet through the chimney, the carbon monoxide remained in the room causing breathlessness and suffocation to all the members of my family. My father opened the window and started shouting for help. His entreaties were heard by the priests readying the fire for installation at the new Dar-e-Meher. They all came running to the Dharamshala.

Immediately some oxygen cylinders were summoned and everybody was okay after some hours. "I had come here to do something for the atash padshah. How could God do any harm to me or my family?" my father shrugged nonchalantly but I could see he was shaken up.

Every time I read the words written on the marble plaque in the Dar-e-Meher "In loving memory of dear daughter Khorshed and son Phiroze," I



From left: Roshan, Meherbai and Hormusji Mistry

am reminded of this blessing of the atash padshah which has been the biggest miracle of my life. JIMMY MISTRY

Haven in Calcutta

To me, the Calcutta Dharamshala offers the luxury and simplicity of living in a true Parsi tradition. I have stayed at the Dharamshala on three occasions in the last 15 years and I can personally vouch for the excellent service and the cleanliness of the place. My last travel to Calcutta was in March 2002 after I had successfully completed the Everest Base Camp trek in Nepal. I needed a well-deserved rest!

The Maneckji Rustomji Dharamshala, strictly for Zoroastrian travelers, was said to be built in 1908 and the current new building was later added on in 1936. The Dharamshala offers tem-

porary resting place for travelers from all over India, and also from Nepal and Bhutan, and occasionally for overseas travelers like myself. The 13 rooms are spread on two floors. Rooms are large and furnished in typical Parsi style complete with two wooden beds, a steel cupboard for locking your valuables, an easy chair, a dresser, and a solid vintage timber table and chairs. This was reminiscent of my old house in Dadar, Bombay wherein the furniture provided some great hiding places! Rooms have an attached western-style toilet.

What makes such an institution run so efficiently is the men and women behind it. The Dharamshala is run by the trustees of the Calcutta Zoroastrian Community's Religious and Charity Fund (CZCRCF). The day-to-day management of the Dharamshala is handled by Dolly Lavji Katrak, a staunch and determined lady of 76 years. Her cordiality, hospitality and sincerity are some of the virtues that travelers admire. One feels so much at home and comfortable during the stay. Born in Bijapur near Sholapur, she shifted to Dhaka where her husband Lavji Katrak was running a Daak Bungalow. Many travelers including American and British troops

passed through their Daak Bungalow during the Second World War. During the partition in 1947, they were forced to shift to Calcutta as Dhaka fell under East Pakistan. For the next 20 years they supplied Parsi meals from Vacha Mohallah in Dharamtalla Street. In 1968 Dolly and Lavji were entrusted with the running of the Dharamshala. Her dedication towards work and the upkeep of the Dharamshala has been unwavering these last 34 odd years. With the passing away of her late husband in 1996, she has since been assisted with book-

keeping by Adel Sutaria. Dolly also commands a team of housekeepers and cooks, some of whom have been with her for the last 15 to 20 years.

Drinking sips of tea (a pot of tea costs only six rupees or in Australian currency 15 cents) on the easy chair and reading *The Statesman* truly lets you relax and enjoy the start of the day in the true fashion of a Parsi. The room charge is Rs 25 per day and lunch or dinner costs Rs 50. Food is divine and very hygienic. It would take a lot of persua-

continued on page 56

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Events and Personalities

New chairman emeritus

For the first time in the history of the almost 330-year-old Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) a new post of chairman emeritus has been created. "Taking into consideration the long and meritorious services rendered to the community" by Jamshed Guzder, the present BPP chairman, it was unanimously resolved by the board of trustees at their meeting on November 7, 2002, that Guzder be designated as chairman emeritus from January 29, 2003, his last day in office, notes a press release issued by the Punchayet.



Guzder: meritorious services

As chairman emeritus Guzder will be expected to grace certain social occasions and lend his expertise and profundity of knowledge when sought by the board, clarified BPP chief executive Behram Dastur. He will not though form a part of the quorum nor participate in the decisions taken by the board, noted Dastur. Papers will not generally be sent to him unless he specifically asks for them. He will officiate "more as a figurehead; a sensible, balanced figurehead," noted Dastur.

Guzder was first elected as trustee of the BPP in early 1975. Barring a 10-month absence when he had not sought reelection against Naoroji Godrej in 1985 but came in unopposed when Jal Vimaladasi resigned from the Punchayet in 1986, Guzder has enjoyed a long innings with the Punchayet as also many other community institutions.

When he joined the BPP board he was a leading industrialist, having considerable experience with N. S. Guzder and Company. He had started the first

Air Cargo Agency in India, the precursor to the present AFL Limited. Besides being managing director of National Peroxide, among the reputed companies where he has been director are Bombay Dyeing and Manufacturing Company Limited, Herdillia Chemicals and Josts Engineering Company Limited.

Surat snippets

Dr Sam Bhacca submitted his resignation as president of the Surat Parsi Panchayat (SPP) as did his co-trustee Noshir Dabhoiwala, and in their stead have been appointed Yazdi Karanjia and Eruchshaw Lakdawala, announced Burjor Antia of the Bombay based Parsee Surat Charity Fund (PSCF).

Members of the opposition had for many years been pressurizing Bhacca to step down as SPP president (see "The Surat impasse," *Parsiiana*, August 2002). His detractors tried coercion, intimidation, insults and allegations, but to no avail. The SPP trustees who are appointed by the PSCF remain in power so long as they enjoy the confidence of the Bombay based committee. As per their deed of settlement, the PSCF has the right "to nominate and appoint...to remove...and to revoke such appointment and to reappoint...Parsi merchants or householders resident at Surat or Bombay of substance, character and respectability..."

In mid October came the news that Rustam Khusrokhani, Burjor Vakeel and Firoze Vakil have resigned from the seven-member PSCF and the vacated seats have been filled in by Dr Keki Turel, Sam Kalagopi, Homiar Vakil and Khurshed Gandhi. "The three trustees who resigned and their ancestors have given yeoman services to the Surat local Parsi community. (They) have always protected the donor's wishes, properties and funds of

the Zoroastrians," noted an e-mail from community activist Mehernosh Fitter, claiming that the trustees had resigned for "reasons not known." Old age and a non willingness to take a firm stand on issues vexing the committee would be the main reasons for their resignations, explained Antia.

Another e-mail from the Save Doongerwadi Action Committee (SDAC) announced that at the PSCF meeting on October 23, 2002 Dr Daraius Modi's resignation from the PSCF was accepted. Thus only three of the original seven members continue to serve on the PSCF. They are: Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Antia and Dosan Limboowalla.

The same meeting of October 23 accepted the resignations from Bhacca and Dabhoiwala. But according to the e-mail, their resignations were reportedly "taken by force and not willingly." Neither were they given an opportunity to answer the queries put before the trustees, alleges the SDAC e-mail.

The trustees in Surat — Dr Dhanjishaw Dumasia, Jamshed Dotiwala, Hormazad Patel, Dr Homi Dudhwala, Dr Minoo Parabha, Homai Shethna and Darius Master — will decide who they want as the new SPP president, conveys Antia. The PSCF had instructed Bhacca to hand over charge to the seniormost trustee Dumasia in the presence of all the other trustees by November 15, 2002.

"Amidst the little chaos and confusion in our Surat Parsi community we tried to bring in togetherness and fun," noted Maharukh Chichgar, trustee of the Zoroastrian Women's Assembly of Surat (ZWAS), reporting on the Gatha Festival organized by them in August 2002 to bring in "a little peace and enjoyment in



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our community."

On the first Gatha was held a prayer competition. The speakers that evening were Dara Behramkamdin and Rohin Karanjia who expressed their views on spirituality and Zoroastrianism. The third Gatha was celebrated with music and colors when there were competitions for chalk and rangoli, sagan-ni-ses decoration and a musical muquabala. On August 23 was a pageant for the best wedding and navjote attire. The festival concluded with an evening of games on August 24, conducted by Anahita Mistry, Benaifer Engineer, Arnawaz Dungore and Pearl Daboo, and a contributory dinner. "What bigger and better work for the community can be done than bringing all on one platform and enjoying together—putting aside differences and joining hands with each other. That is our idea of Gatha celebrations every year," notes the press release.

The ZWAS which completed 10 years in November 2002 is "a dream and a plan of a few (which) has today become an inspiration and a steady platform for many enterprising women." Starting with the compilation of a directory of Surat Parsis and working with "dedication, team work, creativity and charity towards the community" during the 10 years of its existence, ZWAS has given educational and medical aid to the needy and sought to create self employment for poor Parsis. Presently the ZWAS is led by president Dilnaz Kharadi with Kainaz Kapadia as secretary and Piloo Bhathena as treasurer.

While the ZWAS is an independent body, there are 11 community institutions/trusts which are in the control of the Surat Parsi Panchayat Fund and Properties. The SPP showed a corpus of Rs 82,859,136.16 as of March 31, 2002 as against Rs

76,451,989.44 in the preceding year. From a copy of the audited statement of accounts for the year ended March 31, 2002, we learn that donations from individuals increased from Rs 226,359 in 2001 to Rs 249,543 in 2002 but donations from public trusts reduced from Rs 128,974.75 to Rs 41,755.25.

This year too the largest sum was expended on education, Rs 12,333,096.74 (as against Rs 11,534,023.10 last year), followed by Rs 1,180,312.50 on medical relief (Rs 990,858.50 last year) and Rs 748,445 on relief of poverty (compared to Rs 848,470.50 last year).

Among the educational institutions incurring expenses on educational objects, the maximum sum of Rs 1,545,036.69 was by the Bai P. M. Patel Siganporewala Girls School, followed by Rs 1,421,254.79 by the Surat Parsi Orphanage and Properties, Rs 1,405,993.21 by the Nariman Parsi Zoroastrian Girls Orphanage, Rs 34,815 by the Seth K. H. Alpawala Industrial Institute for Parsi Zoroastrian Women and Girls and Rs 27,785 by the Seth Sorabji Nausarwanji Parukh Polytechnic Institute. Among the other bodies incurring expenses on educational objects are The First Dastur Meherji Rana Trust Fund, Rs 79,361 and the Sorabji Burjorji Dastur Darab Pahalana Trust, Rs 72,080.

Incurring expenses primarily for medical objects are the Seth R. D. Tarachand Parsi General Hospital, Rs 1,619,096.08; Bai G. N. Mehta Maternity Hospital, Rs 309,452.31 and the Nariman Home and Infirmary, Rs 940,299.70. At the Nariman Home an equally large sum of Rs 921,334.69 was shown as diet expense with the next highest expenditure of Rs 280,468 incurred on electricity. The Dastur Darab Pahalana Trust Fund also expended Rs 72,041 on medical objects.

Winners of the best wedding and navjote attire (left) and the prayer competition held in Surat

Frivolous petition

This is not a bonafide petition but an attempt to settle some personal score with those in power at the Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP), held the division bench of Justice V. C. Daga and Justice J. P. Devdhar of the Bombay High Court. They dismissed the "frivolous" petition filed by Syrus Merchant, a tenant of Cusrow Baug, alleging substantial income-tax evasion by the BPP.

According to Merchant, the BPP was accepting donations for transferring tenancy but not paying income-tax thereon. The corpus of the trust had increased from Rs 11 lakh to Rs 15 crore by avoiding tax, he maintained. Contending that if the Income-tax department properly investigates the matter it will be able to recover crores of rupees, Merchant was claiming that as an informant he was entitled to a 10 percent reward.

Viewing the petition as a harassment to the trust, the judges requested Merchant to withdraw his application but his counsel Jayesh Bhat refused and insisted on continuing with the suit. Finally instead of earning a reward Merchant was ordered to pay Rs 10,000 to the defendants as compensatory costs.

On behalf of the BPP trustees counsel R. A. Dada pointed out that since Merchant had already filed a complaint against the trustees before the charity commissioner there is an alternate remedy available for him, negating the need for this petition. He further asserted that there is no violation by trustees under the provisions of the Income-tax Act and that the accounts of the trust are audited periodically and assessed by the Income-tax department. Appearing for the trustees were Dada and Burjor Antia

with P. J. Pardiwala and Homiar N. Vakil instructed by M/s Mulla and Mulla and Craigie Blunt and Caroe.

This is not a case where the assessee has concealed his income and/or not disclosed a particular income entitling the informer to claim reward, declared the judges who viewed Merchant's action as abusing the process of law. They further noted that all citizens are entitled to do their tax planning. Tax evasion is a crime but not tax planning.

WZCF's root concerns

Whilst spearheading the conservation work on the Bahrot caves and the excavation of the mound in Sanjan in his capacity as founder of the World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation (WZCF), Dr Homi Dhalla has been strengthening his ties with the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF), the 102-year-old body which has 90 member groups in 25 countries. In early August he was in Budapest, Hungary to attend their 31st World Congress on "Religious freedom: Europe's story for today's world." Besides giving an introductory talk on Zoroastrianism and leading certain group discussions Dhalla was made a member of the international council of the IARF in recognition of his contribution to the interfaith movement, mentions a press release.

In early September Dhalla was in Palermo, Italy to attend an international conference on "Faiths and cultures within conflict and dialog." As the Zoroastrian delegate Dhalla spoke on the "Zoroastrian view of harmony" in the seminar on "Eastern religions and their commitment to peace." On the final day he gave a discourse on Zoroastrianism and recited Avestan passages, along with their translation, on the subject of peace.

Religious representatives then walked through the main streets of Palermo in a peace march and the meet concluded with the delegates lighting the lamp of peace, reported Dhalla.

The initiative shown by the WZCF and the grants received from the Archaeological Survey of India and the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi has helped in the preparatory work to preserve Bahrot caves and to establish Sanjan's significance. The reports submitted by four professional teams to Dhalla and Dr Mani Kamerkar of the WZCF and Dr S. P. Gupta, chairman of the Indian Archaeological Society (IAS), stress on the urgency of conserving the Bahrot site.

As conveyed conservation architect Pankaj Joshi, architectural and photographic documentation for historical, architectural and archeological interpretation should be undertaken. His team of six persons visited the site comprising of seven caves on three occasions, clearing the debris to facilitate photo documentation, land and contour survey. Between the fortification and the cave complex they noticed plinths suggesting the existence of settlements around the cave site. Plinths in bastion/watchtower like formations were also observed at some locations on the hilltop. Ramesh Nagvekar and his four assistants made a thorough two-dimensional contour survey of the hill comprising of 50 acres along with the adjoining access path and outer fortification using electromagnetic distance measurement technology. They recorded two sets of fortifications. Porus Master and Associates have recommended a two-meter wide all weather stone pathway, about six kilometers long, connecting Aswali village to the hilltop, embracing three hills and rising to a

height of 1,700 ft. Senior conservationist Devendra Sood urged that percolation of water into the caves be stopped, small outgrowths be cleared, cracks be sealed, walls of the caves be cleaned, fallen debris be cleared. He pointed out that a huge rock between the second and third cave which seems detached should be bolted and strengthened. The third cave being the largest, where the Iran-shah was probably housed, he felt the need to reinforce the pillars which are damaged there. To implement all these recommendations, clearance was awaited from the Maharashtra Government Forest Department.

When excavating the mound near the bunder in Sanjan the potteries and glassware unearthed indicated they were very familiar to the Sasanian wares coming from Iran and Iraq. Archeologists Kurush Dalal, field director, his wife, Rhea Mitra, Roxanne Nanji and Abhijit Dandekar are making a detailed study of all the artefacts under the guidance of Gupta and Prof V. N. Misra at the IAS. Sanjan seems to have been a very flourishing urban center trading with the Persian Gulf region and the Zoroastrians who settled along the Gujarat coast were probably traders from Iran familiar with the local populace.

Solar concentrators, the brainchild of Dhalla, are fast gaining acceptance in different regions of India after their successful installation at Bombay's Doongerwadi. Anjumans in Poona, Navsari, Bulsar and Baroda too are adopting this mode of disposing the dead. This breakthrough is making news in the international media as evinced in the *Time* magazine, July 30, 2001 and the interview with Dhalla over the BBC radio service. A film on the ecological and environmental effectiveness of solarpan-



*Dhalla (right) as the Zoroastrian delegate lighting the lamp of peace at Palermo, Italy
Left: Main cave at Bahrot where damaged pillars need to be reinforced*

els was screened on the National Geographic Channel in their program "Hot Science" where Ronnie Sabawalla of Baroda who implemented this idea explains the scientific basis of the device that helps in disposing corpses effectively.

French recognition

The decision of the French Government to bestow the Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite (Knight of the National



Godrej receiving award from Montferrand as wife Rati looks on

Order of Merit) on Nadir Godrej, managing director of Godrej Industries and president of the Alliance Française de Bombay "is a tribute to his remarkable professional career and to his respected personality...it is also because of his personal contribution to the long-standing Indo-French relationship," commented Bernard de Montferrand, Ambassador of France in India at the award presentation in Bombay on October 17, 2002.

As recipient of one of the two most prestigious civilian awards conferred by France, Godrej conveyed his gratitude in verse for the distinction conferred on him... "I thought to myself, what a chance/To strengthen ties with my dear France./Though others may deserve this more./France is a land that I adore./I'm not the first to set eyes on France/And fall in love, right at first glance./Where on the planet could you see/A city that vies with Paris?/The culture, art and bonhomie./The cheese, the wine, gastronomy./The lovely language, spoken and written./All could explain why I'm so smitten..."

Referring to Godrej's commitment to the French language and the French culture as "a tradition in the Godrej family," Montferrand continued, "Your uncle Sohrab from whom you carried forward the torch was president of the Alliance Française de Bombay. You are currently

(its) president...and representative of the Alliances Françaises of Asia on the board of directors of the Alliance Française of Paris. You are also president of the Indo-French Technical Association. Your commitment to the Alliance Française network has for Indo-French relations and for the future of our societies a very special meaning."

By offering courses in French and organizing other activities, the Alliances Françaises serve to establish a dialog between many different cultures, commented Montferrand, adding, "What is remarkable is that more than 100 years after its creation the network of Alliances Françaises around the world is still very lively and vibrant...The growing interest in the French language and culture in a country like India...is possible only through the commitment and dynamism of (its) leaders...Political relations between India and France are today of great quality...It is very important that our two countries who have a great consciousness of their responsibilities and a capacity to take their own decisions come close together and voice their positions. In the economic field our relations have a new dynamism but could do even better. In this perspective what you are doing in the cultural field will have long lasting effects..."

Godrej's studies in the United States, at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford and Harvard, reflect on Godrej's "determination, the broadness of (his) interests and (his) great intellectual qualities," noted Montferrand. As director of Godrej Soaps since 1977 he had been active in developing the animal feed, ag-

First day covers and stamps recognizing Zoroastrianism released by Singapore (above) and Sri Lanka (below)

ricultural inputs and chemical business. Research and development too has been his focus. The Ambassador referred to the Godrej family's industrial tradition where "the common good has always been a major preoccupation," balancing human, capital and natural resources.

Philatelic homage

A set of commemorative postage stamps was issued by the Singapore Government in 1999 in honor of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO), Singapore, writes Jamshed Fozdar of that city, forwarding to *Parsiana* the stamps and first day cover bearing the date January 15, 1999. Chairman of the Commemorative Postage Stamp Committee of the IRO, Fozdar notes that these were the first religious postage stamps issued by the Singapore Government. Three million of these stamps were printed by Singapore Post.

Fozdar was also instrumental in the issuance of the "World Religion Day" postage stamp by the Government of Sri Lanka in 1985 which depicts a Zoroastrian fire altar alongside the symbols of other religions of the world, notes the write-up.

The Singapore stamps portray the "unity in diversity" of the tiny city-state, listing the membership in historical chronological order of the main religions practiced in Singapore — "Hindu,



Jewish, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Taoist, Christian, Muslim, Sikh and Bahai." Unwatermarked and in three different denominations, the stamp for local addressees (no-value indicator, valued at the prevailing postage up to the basic weight step for local mail) is in light yellow with the IRO logo and motto in the center and a slim blue band on the right indicating the country of origin. A 60 cent stamp in muted shades and a one dollar blue stamp complete the trinity.

According to Singapore's *Dharma World* (May/June '99), the stamps are unique because they list nine religions whereas similar stamps issued earlier in other countries have included at most only four or five religions.

Singapore's IRO is one of the world's oldest inter-faith organizations, states the pamphlet issued by Singapore Post. Strengthening community bonding with talks, seminars, in-house bulletins and publication of books, IRO representatives are also invited to appear before the select committees of Parliament when issues of morality or spirituality are under consideration. IRO also encourages its constituent religions to participate in organ donation campaigns and offers its services in rehabilitation programs for drug addicts. *Dharma World* notes that IRO Singapore has individual members

from all religious groups. Churches or religious bodies are not accepted for membership because the IRO does not promote any specific religious teaching.

The Sri Lanka stamp, multicolored on a white background, is in a denomination of Rs 4.60. It commemorates the Government of Sri Lanka's declaration of the third Sunday in January as World Religion Day. The first day cover bears the postmark 1985.01.20. The accompanying leaflet issued by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications notes that World Religion Day, inaugurated 40 years prior to 1985 by the World Centre of the Bahai faith, was being regularly observed in nearly 70 countries on the third Sunday in January. The motif for the commemorative stamp shows sacred symbols blended together and is representative of the Bahai faith's principle of the oneness of religion. "Human unity and true equality depend not on past origins but on future goals," the pamphlet states. World Religion Day observances aim to encourage leaders and followers of every religion to acknowledge the similarities in each of the sacred faiths — to see the whole earth as a single country and all humanity its citizenry.

Hilla P. Guzder

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi



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"My mother's grand-father, Dinshaw Dadabhoy Italia, had started a *desi* (country) liquor brewery in Varangal. He had enamel and porcelain factories, cinemas... and was a member of the Rajya Sabha. Nobody had a word to say against him. Though now hardly anything is left of the business, his motto — 'To aspire and achieve' — fell into place as my vision at Cranfield (University's Business Growth Programme) when I added 'To aspire and achieve against all odds.'"

In Cobra Beer's sparse conference room at London's Fulham, its founder and chief executive Karan Bilimoria recounted to *Parsiana* the steps leading to Cobra winning the gold medal for each of the two years (2001 and 2002) that it entered the contest at the Brussels based Le Monde Selection for Quality. Tailored by master brewer Dr Cariapa of the Bangalore based Pals Beer to suit Bilimoria's precise taste, Cobra was designed to add to the gastronomic delights of "curry" — the holdall term for Indian food that has conquered the British palate.

Growing up in army cantonments as the son of officer Faridoon Bilimoria (who retired with the rank of lieutenant general commander-in-chief of India's Central Army) Bilimoria savored his fondness for beer since "the young man" was first allowed to drink. But Bilimoria, who says, "I love Indian food, eat it at least twice a week," found the standard European lagers with their gassiness "bloating me up, ruining my eating experience." A friend introduced him to ale "which has lots of variety and is non-gassy. But ale and Indian food don't go together!"

Since the British market at the time was divided down the middle between

lager and ale, Bilimoria set out to produce a drink that had "all the refreshing qualities of ale but was not gassy and not so bitter as ale" which would appeal to both segments in combination with Indian food.

Pals Beer had been supplied to the Indian Army for years. Bilimoria described the firm as the largest independent, family-owned brewery in India. Its brew master Cariapa, who had spent six years in Prague, home of Pilsner Beer, "had the technical expertise. I knew in my mind what taste I wanted. (Pals' owner) K. P. Balasubramaniam trusted me, had faith in me. I was clear about my mission — to evolve the finest Indian beer and make it world known," says Bilimoria.

Like stereotypical Parsi parents the senior Bilimorias were not enthused. "They told me, I had all the odds stacked against me. In England anyone can start supplying beer. It's a highly competitive field. Most well-known beer brands are several hundred years old and are well entrenched. (Even the Indian) Kingfisher had an eight-year headstart." But their chartered accountant son, who had a masters degree in law from Cambridge and had captained its polo team, was not daunted. "I knew I could produce this product that was better and from day one I priced Cobra higher than any imported Indian beer and one of the most expensive beers as such — slightly more expensive than Carlsberg or other premium beers!"

Bilimoria, who had sharpened his sales technique in door-to-door campaigning to become vice president of the students' union at Cambridge, had to think of ways to repay scholarship loans totalling £

20,000 by the time he left the University and came to India in 1988 to play a polo match. Indian polo stick manufacturers suggested he sell their product in England. Writes David Summer Smith in the 'Enterprise network' feature of *The Sunday Times*, London (October 29, 2000), "Bilimoria began to buy polo sticks in India for £2 apiece, having discovered he could sell them for £15 to retailers such as Harrods and Lillywhites where they would retail at £30... (He) sold £50,000 of polo sticks in nine months to repay his debts..."

A year later Bilimoria was sales and marketing director for the *European Accounting Focus* magazine — a stint he describes as "incredibly successful."

Four generations of family friendship led to an equal business partnership with Arjun Reddy. As "an Indian educated in England, at home in England and India," the primary question in Bilimoria's mind was, "Where can I add value?" Sensing that the Indian economy was getting ready "to open up and liberalize," the boys initially wanted to be a bridge between the two countries, importing high fashion garments, leather and silk goods, hitting some business deadends in the process. When Cobra, brewed to their specification in Bangalore, was launched in 1989, "the boys (Bilimoria was then 27) used to go from restaurant to restaurant in their old Citroen car, selling beer to Bangladeshi proprietors," recalls a senior Zoroastrian in London.

One example of Bilimoria's ability to "turn threats and objections into opportunities" was Cobra's Indian packaging in large

Cobra's cheer

Karan Bilimoria's Cobra beer is among Britains fastest growing 100 companies

Arnavaz S. Mama





Left: Heather and Karan with Zara, Kai and Josh
Above: Lt Gen F. N. Bilimoria & wife Yasmin

Everybody eats Indian food, regardless of the level of affluence. Children are now being brought up on curry," Cobra is available at all supermarket chains, starting with Harrods, says Bilimoria.

When Reddy left the business to go to the US for personal reasons in 1995 Bilimoria sold a part of the 97 percent of the company that he owned to raise money. When Pals sold out to South African brewers Cobra commenced production under licence with Charles Wells, a 125-year-old family run brewery in Bedford, UK, in 1997.

With the increasing popularity of wines in the UK, Bilimoria's research revealed that more than 50 percent of wine consumed is house wine. He defines house wine as "good value wine at the lowest price," as against table wines which, he says, are "among the lowest quality wines."

Deciding to produce premium house wine, "we sourced the world," zoning in on five varieties of red and white wine from France and in November 1999 Bilimoria saluted his father with the launch of General

Dynshaw Italia, Cobra's finance director

Bilimoria Wine. The "phenomenal success" of the two initial products — a Merlot and Terret-Sauvignon — led Bilimoria to expand the portfolio with three more wines from the same region and at the time of the interview was in the process of adding three more from South Africa. Like

Cobra Beer, General Bilimoria Wine is sold by most Indian restaurants including the two Michelin Star winners Zaika and Tamarind.

Though currently less than five percent of Cobra Beer goes into export Bilimoria has an eye on India (he expects to start brewing here in two years' time) and the US. Cobra is already on the list of 100 fastest growing companies in Britain and is one of the fastest growing beer brands in the country, he notes, adding, "We never tell restaurants they can only sell Cobra. We know and have confidence that we can do better." He is unstinting in getting the best advertising agencies and the best financial advisers, and basks in the international atmosphere of his establishment with co-workers from South Africa, India, Pakistan and England. "We have a very relaxed atmosphere with very few rules, so long as people don't drink during working hours. We have no dress code except for important meetings," says Bilimoria.

He considers himself fortunate to have a clutch of dependable managers on his team including relatives. His marketing and finance director is first cousin Dynshaw Italia, an ex KPMG man currently working on the modalities of floating Cobra on the stock market; market manager Hoshang Chenoy got his masters degree in marketing from Leeds University after his first spell with Cobra; Zubin Bhedwar came

600 ml bottles in a market that has traditionally used small bottles or draught. "But big bottles mean sharing, twice the amount sold... The original objection became an advantage," he notes. He also found that there was no publication catering to the Indian food industry. So he started (and remains the publishing director of) *Tandoori*, a quarterly magazine (and the www.tandoorimagazine.com website) providing information for and communication between the Indian restaurateurs and the ancillaries who service them. It remains "the most respected publication on Indian food and drink in the UK," he claims. His bio data also lists him as founder of curryzone.com and founder and chairman of Cobrabyte Technologies.

Cobra's higher alcohol content (five percent as compared to Carlsberg's 3.8 percent) and hence higher tax and higher price led to the development of Swift, a lighter bodied lager to compete with Carlsberg, notes Smith. Both Cobra and Swift are available in draught. Cobra Beer also joined the ranks of the smaller 330 ml bottles.

With a Gallup survey establishing that "we are a nation of curryholics..."



in as an intern and proved to be "so good, we asked him to stay on" as an executive in the marketing department; cousin Perses Bilimoria looks after Cobra interests in Bombay.

Bilimoria is among those advising the British government on ways to get unemployed people back into the workforce. The letters DL after his name signify that he is one of London's 50 deputy lieutenants — the youngest and the only Indian among them. Every county has a Lord Lieutenant who represents the Queen, gives awards on her behalf, accompanies the royal family on business visits. "It is a lifetime appointment and a great honor, though it will be some time before I'm asked to fulfil any duties. Somebody has to nominate you and feel you can fulfil the duties," he explains.

Bilimoria supports charities and charity events with donation of Cobra and wines almost on a daily basis "to put back into the wider community as well as your own." A couple of years ago he had cochaired the committee for restoration of St Ethalberga's Church in the City of London with Bishop of London Rev Richard Chartres. They had succeeded in raising about £ 3 million to repair the edifice damaged in IRA bombing in 1992/93, Ervad Rusi Bhedwar of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) had informed *Parsiana*. Bilimoria had also appeared on the well-known BBC program *Question Time* with David Dimbleby, leading to conjectures in the local Zoroastrian community about Bilimoria's political ambitions.

Born in Hyderabad, schooled in Ooty, Bilimoria initially graduated from Osmania University's commerce stream before proceeding with his British education. Married to Heather (née Walker), a South African of Scottish descent who teaches Latin, they have two sons Kai (5) and Josh (1) and a daughter Zara (3). Bilimoria is proud of his Parsi heritage, particularly the community's "reputation for being honest, decent, straightforward and fair minded — so many values we take for granted as youngsters and appreciate as we grow older."

He would however, prefer to be able to pray not by rote but with understanding and appreciates Piloo Nanavutty's presentation of the *Gathas*. Marvelling how 3,000-year-old wisdom can continue to be so relevant, Bilimoria considers it illogical to link it to one race of

people. He also questions the ban on non-Parsis entering fire-temples. "The Indian Army realized Indian secularism at its best. Every community's functions were celebrated. I've been brought up to worship God anywhere... A fire-temple is a holy place. It should be open to anyone," says Bilimoria, adding, "We need to progress for the good of the community. As individual or company, community or religion, we need to reach out, look outward, not inward."

Recalling his early years the strapping, sociable entrepreneur noted in an interview with Richard Johnson published in *The Sunday Times* magazine (June 2, 2002), "We experienced everything with the Gurkhas:" the first shelling on a firing range, the goat sacrifice in front of the whole battalion at Dusslera, a public boxing match at the age of eight... Life with father also included swimming in the pool with Rajiv and Sanjay Gandhi at the Raj Bhavan when Faridoon Bilimoria was aide-de-camp to President Dr Rajendra Prasad. "Part of me still wishes that I had joined the army. But I was always going to be following in my father's footsteps," he notes, shying away from the inevitable comparison, though he is nostalgic of the Bilimorias' long lineage in the services. His great-grandfather had been in the police; his grandfather had been a colonel at the time of Partition. He may be the odd one out if Kai pursues his childhood dream of wanting to be a Field Marshal.

In Zartoshty's memory

A new religion education scholarship fund has been established in memory of the late philanthropist Mobed Faridoon Zartoshty under the aegis of the



Reticent philanthropist Faridoon Zartoshty

Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA). An e-mail from its president Firdosh Mehta thanks Zartoshty's daughters Pari, Homayoun, Iran and Farangis, for their generous donation to FEZANA that has enabled the institution of the Mobed Faridoon Zartoshty Scholarship/s to enable Zarathushti individuals to pursue higher studies and research on the

Zarathushti religion at any recognized center of higher learning anywhere in the world.

The eligibility criteria and selection of awardee/s for the scholarship/s rests with FEZANA's Religion Education Committee, notes the missive. It is understood that the awardee/s will be expected to share the tangible benefits of their study/research with FEZANA and/or the Zarathushti community.

According to current thinking these annual scholarships will cover a study period of five years, starting 2003. The budget for each annual academic year may be used to field one or more students, writes Mehta.

Interested individuals may apply for the scholarship with their postal address, e-mail and telephone number to Kayomars Mehta, chair of FEZANA Religion Education Committee at 8122 Circle Drive, Palos Hills, IL 60465, USA (Tel: 708-974-1238) or e-mail him at kayomehta@aol.com

The deadline for receiving completed applications with all attachments is January 31, 2003.

FEZANA youths at the UN

"Rebuilding societies emerging from conflict: a shared responsibility," was the theme of this year's conference between the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI) and non-governmental organizations (NGO). An annual event between the UNDP and NGOs, the three-day meet September 9 to 11, 2002 saw FEZANA's UN team consisting of Tenaz Dubash, Homi Gandhi, Mitra Mehr, Jehan Panthaki, Behram Pastakia, Mehr Pastakia and Susan Karani making several contacts at the UN's New York headquarters, notes Karani in an e-mail to *Parsiana*. Other Zoroastrians they encountered there were Rozy Rustomji and Jim Rustomji of the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Noshir Nalavala of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Learning more about what Zoroastrians and FEZANA can do in terms of humanitarian work and UN sponsored projects, the FEZANA-UN team members were enthusiastic about "a youth summer program (which) allows high school and college/university level students to travel abroad to do humanitarian type work with the help of a grant,"

continued on page 30

Engineering a victory

Doongerwadi, the Press and the community's perceptions of the candidates dominated this election

Arnavaz S. Mama

Rustom Tirandaz termed it "a landslide victory for (Maneck) Engineer. Today he has conquered me..."

Substantially before the counting of the votes had ended (442 vs 330) the trounced trustee had got up from his chair to shake hands with the triumphant challenger. Tirandaz's sportsmanly acceptance of defeat is one of his endearing qualities, as had been evident even in 1995 when he initially lost the trustee seat vacated by former civil servant Jamsheed Kanga to solicitor Dadi Engineer.

In contrast to the three elections in 1995 marked by gentlemanly restraint, the current election had been presaged by mounting acrimony. The charges, accentuated by the *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly's* no holds barred criticism of Tirandaz, were abetted by the campaign of the Alert Zoroastrians Association (AZA) against the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP)'s policies and actions. The AZA was itself born of the perceived injustice and lack of fair play when Maneck Engineer had challenged sitting trustee Dinshaw Mehta in 2001 and lost by a margin of 120 votes.

Week after week the *Jamé* had strafed at Tirandaz (and through him at BPP trustee Mehta), refusing to publish his version or, as claimed by his supporters, letters in his favor until well-known social worker Mithoo Jesia noted in her letter to the publication (Oct 6, 2002), "What is, indeed, happening to our community? Why is it that every election brings out the worst in us Parsis? We think of ourselves as an intelligent, elite community. Yet we spare neither words nor efforts to tear to shreds the reputation or character of a candidate."

Her letter, received earlier, had on the editor's admission, nudged the *Weekly* into publishing Tirandaz's ar-

ticle "Looking back — looking ahead" in its issue of September 29, 2002. An article co-signed by the management and editor of *Jam-e-Jamshed* titled "Tirandaz or Engineer? The time for reckoning is at hand," in the issue dated October 20, 2002 had noted, "Engineer has enough experience in construction activities to be a good check and balance and if necessary an able foil to those who try to push through their own convoluted agenda that take the poor of the community for a ride all the time." The front page editorial of the same issue titled "Did two

eminent trustees walk out of BPP?" noted, "We are very surprised to be informed that Dinshaw Mehta has announced at Shapur Baug on October 18, 2002 that (trustees) Minoo Shroff and Dinshaw Tamboly will walk out if fresh blood is not introduced in the BPP."

"Knowing Mehta well, we will not be surprised if this is his way of not only getting Tirandaz re-elected, but also of creating a wave of discomfort for Shroff and Tamboly with the intention of driving them out."

Though he was the unwitting beneficiary from the *Jam-e-Jamshed* campaign, an embarrassed Engineer, in a full page advertisement that appeared in the same issue, noted, "I wish to strongly and publicly clarify that I have no connection with the various issues raised against Rustom by *Jamé*." Further excitement had been generated when Tirandaz's three supporting trustees on the BPP board (Silloo Kavarana, Engineer and Mehta), in a panegyric dated October 18, 2002 sent to all Anjuman Committee (AC) members, referred to their man as a "galvanizing force in the BPP" and ascribed several BPP decisions/actions/achievements to him. The fat was in the fire when the other three trustees — Jamsheed

Guzder, Shroff and Tamboly — issued a letter of their own stating, "We are of the firm belief that as sitting trustees of BPP we should not involve ourselves in the process of campaigning for any candidate during an election. We have therefore not involved ourselves in any manner in the election campaign of any of the candidates..."

"By way of abundant caution, we wish to reiterate through this communication that should any letter be released in support of any candidate by any of our colleague trustees, it should not be construed to have emanated from the full board of trustees."

Election day (Saturday, October 26) arrived and with it the *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly* datelined Sunday, October 27 claiming, "Owing to technical reasons we have been compelled to print our issue dated 27/10/2002, today." It published the above mentioned letter and noted in its front page editorial, "This will also amply prove that the fight is not between *Jamé* and Tirandaz, as has been made out by Tirandaz's supporters, but that Tirandaz himself has been the cause of the great divide in the BPP boardroom."

Hence it was not surprising that in the first three hours of the election 537 votes had been cast. Thereafter the tempo slackened with only 239 more ballots in the box to total 776 (of the total AC strength of approximately 1,390) at the end of the day. Of these 272 were donor votes and 504 from the elected members indicating that Engineer's low profile had appealed even to the elected members of the AC who were popularly considered to be Tirandaz's supporters.

A civil engineer and architect, Engineer is currently vice president in charge of construction and property management at Godrej and Boyce whose candidature for trusteeship was proposed by the company's managing director Jamsheed Godrej and seconded by radiolo-



Maneck Engineer's moment of triumph



Alongside: Toasts, flowers and cheers for M. Engineer (left) garlanded by Ratu Dastoor and (right) Tirandaz (ext left) having a final say.
Below: Polling booths and box with scrutineer Homai Modi (center) and Minoo Crawford providing duplicate certificates



Clockwise from right: Hormuzdiar, Behram Dastur and Kavarana; Arnavaz Mistry and Mehta; Sheroo Master, Rusi Bhungara, Engineer, Tamboly, Shroff and Guzder



gist and community thespian Dr Jimmy Sidhwa. Rooting for their man were Godrej chairman Adi Godrej and social activist Pheroza Godrej, professionals, industrialists and businessmen like Khushrooh Byramjee, K. N. Suntook, Vice Admiral R. K. S. Ghandhi and a host of doctors including his fellow managing committee members at the

Parsi Lying-in Hospital. Engineer, a trustee of the Batliwalla and Mewawalla agiaries not only enjoyed the support of the DDD-AG (Disposal of the Dead with Dignity Action Group), but interestingly, that of Iranshah high priest Dastur Khurshed Dastoor.

Arraigned against him were orthodox stalwarts of the Save Doongerwadi

Action Committee and a long list of high priests and mobeds (with the exception of the mobeds serving the two Dadar agiaries as pointed out by Jame) led by Dasturs Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa and Hormazdyar Mirza who supported Tirandaz in recognition of his high profile role in "saving" Doongerwadi and dakhmenashini from the DDD-AG

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who wished to use the bunglis for the funerary rites of those opting for other forms of disposal of the body like cremation or burial. Also rooting for Tirandaz were the Borivli and Suburban Zoroastrian Association and the Panthaki Baug Welfare Centre.

The orthodox/progressive stand-off was hardly reflected in the issues raised by the contenders. Engineer's manifesto, which began with the words "I have a dream," referred to the usual Zoroastrian themes of preserving the cultural heritage, forging unity in the community, improving the condition of the priests, encouraging entrepreneurship and early marriages, increasing the housing stock and preserving the old buildings by proper maintenance and repair, caring for the aged, infirm and poor. "In the current highly competitive corporate scenario, our youth sorely needs that edge to go the extra mile. Focused educational counseling and assistance to hone intellectual skills at premier institutions of higher learning could do wonders. We need to reinvent ourselves and breathe life into our educational and vocational aid programs. With astronomical real estate prices in (Bombay) we need to accept that our youngsters need affordable, quality housing. As a professional associated with the real estate and construction business I have the confidence to suggest that this is an achievable objective," notes Engineer's manifesto.

Tirandaz's "refurbished and revised program for the community" included the total demographic study of the Zoroastrian community as a precursor for a referendum followed by universal adult franchise, "the setting up of a modern human resource development institute for management, marketing, finance, electronics, computer programming, production engineering et al" which he sees as a "world class minority institute with 50 percent seats reserved for Parsis," community medical insurance, the transfer of an agiary to Borivli, the setting up of another vernacular/English newspaper and other ideas unsupported by any road-map to reach the vaguely ambitious goals.

With his penchant for public speaking Tirandaz addressed voters at the hustings and itched for a debate with his opponent while the retiring Engineer preferred to meet voters individually or in small groups. Frankly admitting to inferiority in debating skills, Engineer

avoided a combined setting except for a meet at the Dadar Athornan Madressa organized by the Young Rathestars on October 13, 2002 with noted insurance executive Maneck Dastur as moderator. Initiating the proceedings Dastur decreed 15 minutes speaking time for each candidate followed by 30 minutes of questions from the floor. Engineer read

"What is, indeed, happening to our community? Why is it that every election brings out the worst in us Parsis?"

a prepared speech (ending "on time, in time," in Dastur's words) without making any significant addition to his manifesto statements.

Tirandaz began by asking for 15 minutes more (a request which Dastur turned down) and reverted to his pet themes of *tokham kyani*, the Parsi-Irani ethos ("That ethos I've been elected to safeguard") and universal adult franchise ("The matter is in the High Court. The day it is heard every single person will have the right to vote"). He remonstrated against the *Jamé*'s tirade against the BPP stating he had "never called *Jamé* a rag or toilet paper, but today I would not call *Jamé* a newspaper," and registered his hope that some other Zoroastrian will come forward to establish a counter publication because "it is the right of the community to hear the other side." On the issue of medical insurance for the community Tirandaz noted, "I'm a dreamer. I set into motion ideas..."

The sounding of the bell denoted Tirandaz's time was up but he asked for a few minutes' grace because he wanted "to publicly acknowledge (that) my wife and kids sacrificed life, property, reputation so that I can serve the community." He spoke of "the suffering they went through (due to) unearned allegations," and concluded, "Hope the better man loses."

The lackluster question time was further marred by power failure. Nonetheless it was significant that when Tirandaz was questioned about the modalities of the community medical insurance scheme that he advocates, he passed the question over to Dastur! When Engineer was asked about the source of

funds for the increased housing activity he proposed, he answered that the money could be raised from other trusts or cross financing by way of ownership flats (which the BPP has been doing anyway). In answer to a query Engineer stated that he would not have agreed to the DDD-AG's request for the use of the Doongerwadi bunglis, but refused to opine on the BPP's acquisition of the Nirlon property as he hadn't studied the case. Engineer, who was the supervising architect for much of Godrej Baug, was asked why he had constructed "cubicles" there. According to the Urban Land Ceiling Act (under which the property had been acquired and then released by the government) only flats of 40, 60, or 80 sq meters are permitted, he answered.

Engineer's reasonable composure and low key responses contrasted sharply with Tirandaz's hyperbole. As solicitor journalist Berjis Desai, son of the late Minoo Desai, former editor of *The Bombay Samachar*, aptly summed up in his trenchant analysis of the election ("A first class comedy" in *The Bombay Samachar*'s 'Parsi Tari Arsi,' November 3, 2002), "Tirandaz was perceived by many as not preserving the decorum of the institution. Perhaps, his style, honed by BMC theatrics, did not go down well. May be, a good man has been felled for the wrong reasons. This was not so much Engineer's victory but Tirandaz's defeat."

Even before the president of the election Rustom Hormuzdiar could announce the final tally, Engineer's supporters had started cheering "Maneck Engineer zindabad (long live Maneck Engineer)." A portrait of Zarathushtra had been kept aloft over his head all the time, perhaps to signify that the victory was thanks to his blessings, perhaps to emphasize Engineer's own religious orthodoxy.

Ere the traditional three cheers for Engineer and his key workers — Kersi Randeria and Yezdi Bhumagara — were sounded and the champagne flowed, Tirandaz had his say: "It was an acrimonious election but all that is over. I hope (that) hatred will be a thing of the past. I am down, but not for long. I will return." The next election is due on December 14, 2002 and noted solicitor Burjor Antia has already tossed his hat into the ring.

(With inputs from Parinaz M. Gandhi)
Engineer being out of station *Parsiana*'s interview with him will be featured in January 2003.

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A gallant loser

A seasoned politician, Rustom Tirandaz sees an electoral defeat as part of the game

Arnavaz S. Mama

"That I'm going to stand again I've announced on the day of the results. A lot depends on the configuration... I don't want to run away from a hit campaign against me for (what) reason I'm not able to comprehend," defeated trustee Rustom Tirandaz told *Parsiana* on November 7, 2002.

It was a subdued and quieter individual than his public persona who responded to *Parsiana*'s request for an interview — and a disillusioned one. "In retrospect I'm learning to play my cards close to my chest. I had felt I should be open with fellow Zoroastrians but it's been misconstrued," he noted.

He believes he scored a first on three major counts during his seven-year trusteeship of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP). He says he was the first Irani Zoroastrian ever to be inducted on that hallowed board, that he was the first to have taken a proper perspective of the trustee's role, as not just a manager of the Punchayet's funds and properties but as the community's leader: "I came with an agenda for the community." The third count, he said, is his penchant "to call a spade a shovel." (Tirandaz's propensity to do so has been amply documented in these pages over the past seven years).

Noting that he had tried to "improve on what (he) saw at the Punchayet," Tirandaz admits, "(It is) true, I was aggressive at times but only when the poor and needy were sought to be steam-rollered under rules, regulations and precedents. I was forceful in (expressing) my point of view but not in one instance was anything done by majority (vote)... I never imposed my views," he claims, noting that all seven trustees



Tirandaz:
"aggressive at times"

had accepted his view that Parsis should be allowed to encash their tenancy goodwill by sharing 40 percent of the sale price of the flat with the BPP, as is permitted by the state government, the housing board and the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC).

Referring to the blinkered attitudes of the community, Tirandaz says he was the first BPP trustee to identify with and to participate in the activities of suburban Zoroastrians like the Borivli and Suburban Zoroastrian Association. There he says he met Boman Irani of Keystone Realtors — "the Shapoorji Pallonji of the western suburbs," — a man in his early 30s who has established a "world class school." He also regularly visits the doughty Iranis of Palgar. "We don't realize the potential of the community. We are the controllers of (its) ethos, in which direction it would go."

As for the community's "cocooned" youth, he says that it was only over the past three years or so that at his instance participants in the long-running and popular Holiday Programme for Youth have been taken to the Bombay docks to see firsthand the size and scale of modern industrialized life. Similarly he had organized a public speaking course for Gamadia Colony hostelites.

When *Parsiana* had interviewed him in February 1996, a couple of months after he assumed the responsibilities of office, Tirandaz had regretted that the community had not availed of the contribution of outstanding Parsis like the late Rohinton Aga and Russi Mody. He had noted then that "The community's affairs have become self-perpetuating since persons in power remain in power till they die or fade away. Therefore the community is not able to get the best people during their prime (see "I'm a man in a hurry," *Parsiana*, February-March 1996)." In this context he now stated that he had nudged his fellow trustees to set up a building committee

of outstanding builders to help direct the Punchayet's construction program. To the doongerwadi committee which used to meet once or twice a month he introduced redoubtable social worker Mithoo Jesia which prompted others to add Noshir Dadrawala and Khojeste Mistree leading to energy and verve in the maintenance of the estate. He added that the Doongerwadi Awareness Day he had organized on March 3, 1996 (see "Awareness at Doongerwadi," *Parsiana*, February-March 1996), when the community was taken by trustees Silloo Kavarana, Dadi Engineer, Dinshaw Mehta and himself through the grounds and made aware of several encroachments, had eventually led to all five encroaching *kharwas* being removed through a combination of legal action, physical presence, political influence and public relations including payment of a few lakhs each to enable them to find shelter elsewhere.

In line with his earlier agenda to help Parsis find their own accommodation without being at the Punchayet's mercy he says he has been negotiating with the HDFC and ICICI Banks to enable couples earning decent salaries to acquire the 60-65 ownership flats constructed at Panthaky Baug with bank loans. His concept is that a 20-lakh rupee flat can be acquired by a salaried couple having only five lakhs for initial payment by getting a loan from these banks. To persuade the banks to provide the loans on reduced interest rates Tirandaz would have the Punchayet deposit the loaned amount with the originating bank. "I do the spade work," he says, adding, "It's very difficult for me to bring things to fruition."

Irrespective of whether he is in or out of the Punchayet, Tirandaz is keen to promote a group medical insurance scheme for the community on the lines of those being offered to the employees of large companies and their families

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by the new insurance companies that have entered India. He says, "I would like to see the geriatric ward of the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital, the J. J. Hospital's Parsi Ward, the Parukh Dhamshalla and others being supported by such a scheme."

As for the Parsi Lying-in Hospital, he says he would like to enlarge the scope of this venerable institution with a cy-prés petition to enable the establishment of "a world-class institution of advanced learning giving postgraduate diplomas in various faculties of human endeavor under the auspices of the BPP." The 50 percent reservation under the Indian government's reservation policy for minority run educational institutions would enable young Parsis to see "the fulfillment of their dreams."

The donors of the mini-morgue at Doongerwadi had initially approached Tirandaz with their offer, he noted. Though he claimed to be "supremely indifferent whether I get credit or not," the *BPP Review* had credited him with the development that enables the community to maintain the body in optimum condition if and when required to do so. It is unlikely that Tirandaz could have anticipated the strafing the concept re-

ceived from his erstwhile champions, the high priests, on this count in their letter, published in *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly* (November 10, 2002). Quoting chapter and verse from the *Vendidad*, Dasturs Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa, Hormazdyar Mirza, Firoze Kotwal and Peshotan Mirza note, "We wish to make it abundantly clear that such a cold storage for two dead bodies, is totally against the cardinal tenets, doctrines and practices of the Zoroastrian religion."

Through it all Tirandaz's wife Armaity, a qualified physiotherapist with "a strong commitment to life," in her husband's words, has stood by him. "I'm lucky to be married to her; I don't deserve her at all," he notes with genuine emotion. Of their two sons, the elder Faredoon looks after Armaity's travel agency business while Darayus is a software consultant. Their eldest son Behram succumbed to rabies nine years ago.

"Today there is a conflict in the community on everything... we are not being proactive... twice (co-trustees) Minoo Shroff and Dinshaw Tamboly had (opted to) resign," he says. Asked for details Tirandaz counters, "I like to forget unsavory things."

ZOROASTRIANS ABROAD

continued from page 22

writes Karani. Certain foundations are willing to provide such grants for a joint project with the UN, she adds. The FEZANA team is aiming to focus on India, "a safe place for youth to get involved," which moreover would fall within the UNICEF mandate.

FEZANA, led by Dr Roda Patel, has already teamed up with the Children's Program at the Gram Seva Trust Hospital in Gujarat. Patel may induct a couple of Zoroastrian youth interns for the summer of 2003, as per Karani's report.

The time at KZBM

"In the good old days the Parsis of Karachi celebrated Navroz evening at the Clifton beach. People traveled there by horse-carriages, camel carts, in buses and a few by cars. At the time, there was a rickety long plank-wire-and-rope pier, which took people to the sand dunes where a band played or a soldier or two dressed up as clown/s tried to entertain the crowd."

Octogenarian activist Behram Rustomji's recollections in the chapter on "Navroze Traditions" hint at the

flavor of Sunnu Golwalla's history on the Karachi Zarhosti Banu Mandal (KZBM) which celebrates its 90th anniversary this month. Currently KZBM's vice president, Golwalla's book, titled *Sands of Time*, traces the KZBM's raison d'être of *Seva anay sakhavat* (service and charity) from its inception in 1912 up to 2000. Its role in the two World Wars and national calamities, felicitous occasions when Rabindranath Tagore, Eleanor Roosevelt and prominent Zarathushtis were honored make for stirring memories.

KZBM has its own website and book society and often conducts workshops in the care of the elderly, special education, medical problems and income generation schemes. It interacts with other Zarathushti associations in Karachi and their brief sketches are woven into the story of the Mandal.

But the history goes back to the arrival of the Parsis in Sind and how they settled there in the early 1800s, forming various associations to meet their needs. Considering how the small community has fanned out, it is likely that a reader in New York, New Zealand

Zarhostipanu, as he defines it is "not just prayers, but also that, not just dakhmenashini, but also that (plus a long list which this reporter was unable to note)... Zarhostipanu is the sum total of every aspect of our being. You can't isolate even one part of it and expect to survive into the next millennium. I'm the first trustee to proclaim against intercaste marriage (the late Jal Vimalalal, the late Maneck Hodiwalla, former chairman Eruch Desai and others would question that), the first to proclaim not to modernize to the extent of ending Zoroastrianism... The community needs leaders who can give direction fearless of consequences..."

"Everything I did was exclusively for the community. I was not preparing myself for a popularity contest. I didn't know this hate campaign was going on against me," he notes, brooding over *Jame's* prolonged hostility.

Trying to rationalize the kaleidoscope of hope, support, censure, setback that has dogged him, the former BMC councilor and university boxer says, "My failing is that I've been very predictable. I don't want to be predictable any more."

or New Delhi may encounter a forefather in the narrative.

The jacket design by Tannaz Minwalla and 200 photographs and illustrations make for a pictorial journey through time. Priced at US \$ 15 (or £ 10 sterling) plus shipping charges, the book may be ordered from Golwalla (sunnu@cyber.net.pk) or Aban Rustomji (aban@coatingengineers.com).

The neighbor's protest

Ten days after Toronto based author Rohinton Mistry cancelled the second half of his US tour to protest against the "unbearable" humiliation meted out to him and his wife at US airports, the US has reportedly promised that no Canadian citizen or passport holder, irrespective of his/her racial origin, will be subjected to such treatment. "As far as Canada is concerned, they (the US) will make changes (in their policy of dealing with tourists and travelers). But we have to monitor it closely," Canada's India-born minister for natural resources Herb Dhaliwal was quoted in *The Times of India* (November 14, 2002).

Mistry, who has won a string of awards including the Commonwealth

Writers Prize, the Giller Prize and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, was recently awarded the seventh annual Kiriyaama Prize for his latest book, *Family Matters*. The award is given for books that promote greater understanding of and among the nations of the Pacific and South Asian subcontinent, notes the announcement in *The Indian Express* (October 10, 2002). Each of Mistry's three novels — *Such A Long Journey*, *A Fine Balance* and *Family Matters* — was shortlisted for Britain's prestigious Booker Prize, but the award has eluded him, as noted *Mid Day* (October 23, 2002).

The Mistrys' US tour had been undertaken to promote *Family Matters*. Explaining the aborted tour, Canada's *Globe and Mail* (*G & M*) quoted a representative of Mistry's US publisher Alfred A. Knopf as saying, "As a person of color he was stopped repeatedly and rudely at each airport along the way — to the point where the humiliation for both he and his wife has become unbearable." Mistry's complaint underscored "a cross-border rift over racial profiling which began after the US started to fingerprint, photograph and register Canadian citizens originally from certain Muslim countries," notes *The Indian Express* (November 4, 2002).

Mistry's original response to *G & M*'s query whether the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks has complicated his travels, had been low-key: "I did feel for the first few weeks... that a brown skin and a beard were not a felicitous combination. I could feel the looks from the security personnel. That is okay, it is a part of their job."

When the author's opinion changed, leading to cancellation of appearance in Chicago, San Francisco, Boston, Salt Lake City and Utah, US booksellers were upset. "It makes me feel ashamed of my country," Betsy Burton of The Kings English bookstore in Salt Lake City was quoted as saying.

The *Express* notes that the Canadian Foreign Affairs Ministry had issued a travel advisory in September warning that Canadians born in Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan or Syria could be subjected to increased attention from US authorities. Later, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen were added to the list. The advisory was stated to have annoyed the US administration as such an advisory is "generally issued for states which are unstable or have terrorist links," noted the *Express*.

"Mistry is not from a country originally targeted by the US, nor is he a Muslim. And yet he and his wife would appear to have suffered some serious scrutiny while travelling on the first leg of his US tour at the end of September," the *Express* has quoted the *G & M* report.

According to *The Times*, Dhaliwal said he issued "strong statements condemning the selective screening of anybody from West Asia or with West Asian looks. His government too had lodged a strong protest after Mistry, the celebrated writer touring the US to promote his latest novel *Family Matters*, cut short his stay after he found the racial profiling 'humiliating.'"

"Going that extra mile"

About 200 men and women from all over the US participated in one of the country's most challenging ultramarathons — the grueling Vermont 100 — on July 20, 2002. Among them was Firdaus Dotiwala who was the 87th to finish the 100-mile run which began at 4 a.m. on Saturday morning and saw participants trickling past the finish line by late Sunday morning, informs Theodore Orsher in his pre and post event reports in *The Riverdale Press* (July 4 and August 1, 2002).

Dotiwala achieved his stated goal of completing the 100-mile loop in 24 hours with 42 minutes to spare. The winner clocked 14 hours and 12 minutes but "not everyone who started the hilly course, finished," observed Orsher. Monitored by support teams, the runners are weighed at two checkpoints along the route to ensure that they do not lose more than seven percent of their weight at the start of the race. A higher weight loss disqualifies the participant, informs the article.

It is said to be especially important to rehydrate and eat something during the middle sections of these rigorous ultra races. Dotiwala eats a small peanut butter and jelly sandwich and other carbohydrates for energy while still running and keeps a couple of bottles of water around his waist.

The son of Zareena and late Feroze Dotiwala was born in Nimach in India's Madhya Pradesh. He lost his father in a motorbike accident when he was three years old. The staunch self-discipline that has enabled him to achieve this remarkable running feat within three years of starting the sport was



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inculcated by his mother, a major in the National Cadet Corps (NCC) at a time when there were very few women in India's armed forces. A product of Panchgani's Billimoria High School and Bombay's Podar College where he graduated in the commerce stream, Dotiwala was an average student who enjoyed outdoor sports, the favorite being football (soccer), notes Zareena who was subsequently married to Shapur Cyrus. She now works as superintendent of Bombay's Masina Hospital.



Dotiwala: "an aggressive approach to everything"

Always keen to live abroad, Dotiwala got the opportunity for a nine-month stint in New York on a project from his company in Bombay. A year later he was back there on his own steam. He joined a soccer team and started running to improve his fitness and health. Watching the New York City Marathon (NYCM) on TV that year, he decided he "wanted to be a part of it." So he ran 12 miles on his first day of training!

An interview article "A moment with Firdaus" by Earline Smith in the *Van Cortlandt Track Club (VCTC) magazine* (November-December 2001) notes that Dotiwala ran the November 2000 NYCM (a 26 mile event) for his first race ever. In the "Midpack wrap-up" in the *NY Runner Road Club magazine* of January-February 2001, Joy Newton had noted, "All he wanted was to finish and experience the glory that is the NYCM. And oh! Did he ever."

In a report he submitted to the *FEZANA Journal* (Spring 2001) he noted, "When I finally saw the finish line and crossed it, there was not so much of excitement, but a feeling of containment and relief that ultimately it was over. The legs would not stay still... For it did not matter who won or who lost the race because each and every one won in one way or another."

In his article, "The Marathon - Sweat, Pain and Glory," in the *VCTC magazine* of September/October 2001 Dotiwala had observed, "Of course all the years of playing soccer and having done karate for five years has helped me tremendously in terms of patience and that invisible force that keeps you going that extra mile even though you just want to sit down and give it up."

Dotiwala described his pre NYCM 2000 training to Smith, "I just ran all the time. My excessive running, in addition to playing soccer resulted in a knee injury and a stress factor to my right leg. I didn't run for three months after my visit to the doctor. I learned that I had run the marathon with a stress factor." Assessing his own weaknesses, Dotiwala told Smith, "I am not patient with myself. My running philosophy is that I must feel pain. If there is no pain, then I won't gain anything. I know that my philosophy is not necessarily true all the time. Nevertheless, it's very difficult for me to control myself. I have an aggressive approach to everything that I do."

With more professional training at the VCTC Dotiwala has participated in various other events including ultra-marathons (with 30, 50 or 100 mile courses) and half-marathons. While holding on to a job in Giselle Clothing, an Indian firm trading in readymade garments, Dotiwala also finds time to talk and play with children. Football is a favorite spectator sport; collecting rare coins a hobby; long walks, movies and reading a source of enjoyment.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama

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From pole to podium

Rayomand Banajee's successes in karting and national formula championships fuel aspirations for international car racing

Rashna Ardesher

Keeping his cool on the race track, 22-year-old Rayomand Banajee won both the 10-lap and 15-lap races in the second round of the National Formula Racing Championship in Madras in October 2002. In pole position (first in qualifying), Banajee drove the fastest lap in each of the two races as well, notes an e-mail from the over six-foot-tall Poona lad.

"I was always attracted to fast cars. After I started watching Formula 1 in 1993-94 on television, I felt that what the racers were doing was literally superhuman! I'm confident of beating anybody. I know what my capabilities are as also my opponents'. It's not merely speed that makes a good racing driver. What is needed is also a high level of commitment, concentration and fitness, the will to win, to go up to 300 km per hour and be perfect to the inch!" Banajee explains.

Banajee started with kart racing in the year 1999. Untrained and 19 years old then, he was one of the first drivers to enter this new sport in the country conducted by First Track Go-karting at Poona. "I wasn't very serious at that time. I was recovering from a scooter

accident in which I had broken my right hand fingers. I was pretty happy when I stood second." He kept in touch with different circuit owners who'd inform him about the races. Banajee trained with the Gaekwad Racing Team at karting tracks in Bombay in September 2000: "The selection was done after I broke the track record at the Hakone Go-karting circuit at Hiranandani Gardens, Powai. The rigorous physical training and daily go-karting practice with a team of five drivers helped improve my kart racing skills."

He qualified for the JK Tyre National Karting Championship held in New Delhi in 2000. In 2001 no qualifying round was held in Poona, so Banajee qualified from the Bangalore region and became the Bangalore Champion for 2001-2002. His several podium finishes (first, second or third position) through the course of two national championships and the others he has raced in has led him to hold the maximum number of podium finishes in karting championships in the country — about 25 kart racing trophies and 88.8 percent po-

dium finishes in his racing career so far, he reports.

During December 2001 and January 2002, the KNK Championships (Indian car manufacturer, Karts and Karting) were held. Explains Banajee: "It was about drivers going to different centers to compete. Whoever had the most points after four cities bagged the championship. I entered the championship and won by a huge margin. In the process I won a kart, which is built specifically for racing and can't be used on a daily basis."

In August 2001 he was selected for a five-day intensive course on race driving by Akbar Ebrahim, the great Indian racer who has raced abroad and holds a Formula 1 superlicence. Ebrahim trained Banajee at his new Circuit Racing School at the Sriperumbudur Racing Track near Madras. Asserts Banajee: "I started by learning on the Esteem, followed by a two-seater Formula car and, finally, the Formula India. This training was necessary since I wanted to take part in the



Banajee (center, holding trophy) at the JK Tyre National Karting Championship and (left) enjoying the thrill of racing

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National Formula Racing Championship."

A month later, ADCA (Advanced Driving and Corporate Academy founded by Ebrahim and Indian racing champion Karun Chandhok), held a scholarship test for all their drivers, akin to qualifiers. Thrilled by his performance during the tests, Ebrahim ensured that Banajee drove the full Formula India season. What Banajee won was exactly what he was looking for — a one-year full sponsorship for Formula India.

Ready to take part in Formula India in the single seater Maruti engine category of the MMSC (Madras Motor Sports Club) Cup Championship, Banajee drove for Team ADCA. According to the *Pune Times* of August 23, 2002: "In the first race, Rayomand qualified third overall on a grid of 18 cars. In the 10-lap race, Rayo maintained his third position at the start. However a lap later, due to lack of engine power, he was overtaken. Rayo fought back within a lap, finishing second. In the longer 12-lap race, Rayo made a good start and coming out of the last corner pressurized polesitter Naveen Kumar and the two dived all the way to the finish. Rayo won the battle and after that, it was easy going for Rayo. Maintaining the lead, Rayo won his first Formula India race in a time of 15:12.903." Till date, Banajee's fastest time in the Formula India races on a 2.1 km track has been 1:13.1 seconds, that's an average speed of 106 km per hour.

Although the winning streak continues sponsors are hard to get. Each and every pie he wins goes back into the next race. Eventually, he lands up spending at least Rs 40,000 for every event. The practice itself costs about Rs 100 for four minutes. Additionally he spends on entry fees, traveling, accommodation, gear, racing suit, car maintenance, tune-up and accident insurance. "Last year I was lucky to have Jotun Paints as my sponsor for the National Formula Racing Championship. The two federations that organize car races, MAI (Motor-sports Association of India) and FMSCI (Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India), can achieve much more if they pool their resources and work together...

I'm fond of other adventure sports such as windsurfing, paragliding, etc. But since all that I earn goes into car racing, I don't waste money on anything else!" he declares.

Though Banajee's dream is to take part in Formula 1 (a level no Indian has yet reached), his next step is to qualify for Formula Asia, Formula 3-A, Formula Nippon and, finally, Formula 1. The two

**"I know what my
capabilities are as
also my opponents'.
It's not merely
speed that makes a
good racing driver"**

main factors that differentiate these races are advancement in technology (by light years) and increase in racing time. Whereas a Formula 1 race lasts for almost two hours, Formula India lasts for barely 15 minutes.

Having had three to four car crashes in his racing career thus far and luckily escaping injury, Banajee quips: "If you're aiming to reach a certain level, do you expect to get there without a couple of bad moments? However, to set the record straight, car racing has become extremely safe over the years with several technological advances."

Banajee believes in God and the power of Zoroastrian prayers. He always prays three *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*s and one *Ashem Vohu* before and after each race. He is concerned about the dakhmenashini controversy dogging the Parsi community: "I prefer to follow the tradition although I'm not opposed to new things. It's not that birds are wiped off from the face of the earth. It's possible, that can be rectified." Banajee believes that Parsis should marry within the community "so that our dwindling community prospers."

With parents Armaity, a general physician, and Dadabhoy, a printer of identity cards, shifting from Dubai to Poona when Rayomand was three, Banajee's base is Bombay where he takes part in most of the karting races and stays with his maternal grandparents. His younger sister, Huzannah, plans to take up equestrian studies. Like Banajee, there are quite a few young Parsis into the sport for whom he has a message: "Don't get affected by everybody's opinions. If you want to do something, go out and do it. But when you do it don't leave it half way; give it all you have. And, believe in yourself." That's exactly what has made Banajee an achiever.

A force to reckon with

His commendable feats of strength have earned Edul Palamkote a mention in the *Limca Book of World Records*

Rashna Ardesher

When a student in Standard IV at Bombay's Sir J. J. School, Edul Palamkote was slapped by a senior boy who thought the junior had hurled a stone at him. Palamkote went home with a red mark on his cheek and showed it to his father Pirojshaw who gave him another slap for taking a beating from another boy. Today, an 84-year-old great-grandfather, Palamkote still remembers the first lesson that made him toughen up. Practising freehand exercises and yoga from the age of nine he grew to be "One of the Strongest Boys of Bombay" with a strong, lean and symmetrical physique. For three years consecutively from 1938 to 1940 he won the "Mr Bombay" title.

As time passed, Palamkote became stronger. He relates how he could lift with his teeth a weight of 200 lbs, break thick buffalo chains, cut a thick iron bar into two on his chest while lying on a bed of nails, tear a big copper plate apart, tear apart two telephone directories... He could even pull a heavy fire engine (with full crew) over a distance of 100 yards by his teeth when he was only 18. The latter record is still unbroken as per the *Limca Book of World Records* first edition in 1990.

Prof Tehmurasp Sarkari, the Father of Physical Culture in India, once introduced Palamkote to two well-known *pahelvans* (strong men), Gamma and Himambux. Edul played handgrip with both. When he was testing his strength against Gamma's neither of them could outdo the other, making Gamma compliment the young Palamkote, who was barely 20 at the time, for his strength and give him the titles "Fauladi Purush" and "Man with the Iron Grip." He offered Palamkote a fistful

of almonds and pistachios which was politely refused: "Instead of almonds I eat grams, and peanuts are pistachios for me." Palamkote's name was splashed all over the papers. Making headlines is in his genes.



27-year-old Palamkote's Pose of Challenge during the Mr Bombay competition

Palamkote has a very illustrious family background. From the carefully preserved news clippings we learn that his father, Lt Pirojshaw Dinsha Palamkote was a member of the Poona and Bombay Volunteers Rifles, Auxiliary Force (India), Indian Defence Force and Indian Territorial Force. He served in World War I and was Prisoner of War in Turkey for three years. His mother, Cooverbai, was a distinguished swimmer and cyclist. His brother Rustom was with the Bombay Fire Brigade and died in the line of duty during the 1944 Bombay Dock explosion. He had two other brothers: Burjor was in the Royal Indian Airforce and served in World War II; and Homi was in the Arsenal as Edul's assistant in the Bombay Fire Brigade before he joined Tata Hydro in charge of automobile workshops. Edul's *fui* (paternal aunt) Bhikaiji was a life academic member of the Trinity

College of Music, London. Another *fui* Bai was a Parsi lady journalist running a Hindi graphic paper. His uncle Sorab Limjibhoy Palamkote was a poet and journalist.

In the throes of World War II, an announcement was made that volunteers were needed in the Auxiliary Fire Service. Palamkote joined immediately. Part of his training he attributes to his elder brother, Rustom. In 1941 Tatas took over the Service. Explains Palamkote: "Tatas wanted to depute an officer who knew ARP (Air Raid Precaution), fire-fighting and could train their staff. They had approached Norman Coombs, the then fire chief, who recommended my name." Palamkote reported to the directors of Tata Industries.

In 1942 Coombs appointed Palamkote as the first Indian section leader, says the veteran. He had to train new recruits in discipline, fire-fighting and drilling. But life was not a bed of roses. Palamkote went through rough times, he narrates: "Once there was a big fire in the Fort area. Rustom and I entered one of the rooms to fight the fire. We suddenly got locked from outside. We tried hard to push open the door, but couldn't. My brother broke open the window and leaped outside to catch hold of the open window of the opposite building. I followed him. Later, we got to know that someone from within the Fire Brigade had locked us from outside. Today, I'm surprised how we managed to save ourselves." Duty was for 24 hours. In Palamkote's words: "It was like *niché dukaan*, *ooper makaan* (shop below, residence above). We could not even have a proper bath lest the bell ring,



Top (L to R): Palamkote, Bhabha, Prince Philip, Dr Homi Sethna and Queen Elizabeth at the Atomic Energy plant Center: A young Palamkote receiving a cup from Bombay Governor Lord Brabourne. Alongside: Palamkote (seated center) as fire chief of armed forces and (far right) with wife Sheroo



calling us on duty!"

Major Snalling, the fire chief of the armed forces in Khadki, Poona, came for a visit to the Auxiliary Fire Service. Amongst the 250 officers he selected Palamkote to work as fire chief, in charge of arsenal and explosive factories. Palamkote became the first and the youngest Indian to be appointed as fire chief of the armed forces (army, navy and air force) in March 1943 at the age of 24, he happily reports. Palamkote recalls an incident vividly: "One day, two European sergeants were walking towards me. They noticed me and, instead of saluting me, started tying their shoelaces. The commanding officer, a Britisher, watched that from a distance. He told me: 'Son, did you notice anything? The two sergeants didn't salute you!' Both were called in to salute me and were warned against any future misbehavior. The commanding officer continued: 'They don't salute you. They salute the King and the Queen. Next time if anybody breaks the discipline, please tell me immediately.' Sadly, today things are exactly the opposite."

When India gained Independence, Edul was proud that now he would fight for his motherland. But, to his dismay, most of the allowances and perquisites he enjoyed were discontinued by the



Indian government. Also, injustices started prevailing ["*maama, maasi nu raaj* (favoritism and nepotism superseded merit)"].

Palamkote resigned as fire chief of the armed forces and joined corporate bodies, he says. In 1950 he started with Tata Sons as fire and security in-charge of the Tata concerns. In 1953-54 he became fire chief and advisor to Stanvok. From 1956-58 he was with Atul Attic and Ladderlee as fire and security chief.

In 1958 it was an honor for Palamkote

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when Dr Homi Bhabha offered him service at the Atomic Energy as fire and security officer. He was given the responsibility of organizing their fire brigade. He came across several dignitaries such as Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Queen Elizabeth, Prince Philip... In 1960 he was appointed Scout and Guide examiner by the State Government. He retired in 1977 from the Atomic Energy as Central Government gazetted officer.

The good-looking Palamkote had unknowingly pulled the heartstrings of many a girl during his younger days. He received several offers for marriage, for dates at hotels and cinema halls. But the good boy "would show all the letters to my mother and she would warn me, 'Muvaa maari naakhas; ai lafraa maa padto naa (I'll kill you if you have clandestine affairs).'" But soon he fell in love with a reserved, sober and active Sheroo Behramsha Khargamwalla, whose family in Bulsar was known as the Jagirdars. The two met in

a Parsi Youths Rally and later took part in several charity physical/cultural shows together, showing feats of strength. Edul and Sheroo got married in 1950.

For the last several years Palamkote has been preoccupied with doing social work for the Parsi community. While

his eldest daughter Roshni Cyrus Palamkote is in Bombay, the other two children are abroad. Son Behram, a master chef with Lufthansa, is in Germany and daughter Hutoxi Minoo Driver is in the UK. A de-

**He could even pull
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vout Zoroastrian, he believes in the dakhmenashini tradition and is against inter-caste marriages: "If you cannot be faithful to your own religion, how will you be faithful to your spouse's religion?" He is particularly unhappy with the Parsi youth: "All they want is a cushy job in a bank. They don't want to work hard as we did." He would like to share the secret of his good health: "Keep well, live well, be hygienic."

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Monies for muktad

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Homiar Nariman Vakil

It is unfortunate that day by day Parsis are losing faith in muktad ceremonies, either because of the increasing costs of the ceremonies or because the laity are not satisfied with the services given by the priests. Many people prefer to do charity in the name of the deceased, instead of performing muktad ceremonies year after year.

The term muktad (derived from *muktatma* to denote the passage of the soul from purgatory into paradise) is used to designate the last 10 days of the Zoroastrian year, starting from *roz Ashtad*, the 26th day of the last month Spandarmad up to the day of the *Vahishtoist Gatha*. The object of these Fravardigan days is to remember and honor the farohars or the spirits of the dear departed ones. From passages of the *Fravardin Yasht* (Yasht XIII 40-50) we learn that the fravashis of the dead expect their name to be invoked in some of the liturgical ceremonies, especially the *afrikan* ceremony where the names of the deceased members of a family are recited from a list called *namagrahan*. According to a passage in the *Fravardin Yasht*, the farohars of faithful Zoroastrians visit the homes of their survivors during these 10 days and nights when the priests offer prayers in memory of the dead. Hence in villages in ancient times, the muktad ceremonies were performed in the house of the deceased. With the passage of time and shortage of priests, the muktad ceremonies came to be performed in *agiaris* and *atash behrams*. In some cases the muktad ceremonies of a deceased person are performed at more than one place.

Muktad ceremonies or at all events the essential part of such ceremonies can only be performed by priests. The

money paid to the priests for the performance of the muktad ceremonies forms a good portion of their ordinary income. The priests make a higher income during the Fravardigan days than they do during any other period of the year, and the muktad ceremonies form a sort of endowment which goes a long way to



Priests performing muktad ceremonies

maintain the priestly classes whose existence is necessary to the community of Zoroastrians. According to the belief prevailing amongst the faithful followers of Zoroaster, the performance of muktad ceremonies confers public benefits on the Zoroastrian community, on the people amongst whom they live, and upon the country which they have chosen as their home. The fundamental principle underlying this belief is faith in the efficacy of prayers addressed to the Great Creator.

When Parsis prepare a will, they direct their executors to spend a certain sum for muktad and obsequial ceremonies. The performance of muktad and obsequial ceremonies is a religious duty imposed upon Zoroastrians.

The first case regarding muktad ceremonies and religious trusts came up before Justice Jardine of the Bombay High Court in *Limboowala's* case where

the judge declared trusts for *baj rojgar* and muktad ceremonies to be invalid. The learned judge held that the rule of law forbidding perpetuity applies to muktad trusts. As explained in section 114 of the Indian Succession Act, "No bequest is valid whereby the vesting of the thing bequeathed may be delayed beyond the lifetime of one or more persons living at the testator's death and the minority of some person who shall be in existence at the expiration of that period, to whom, if he attains full age, the thing bequeathed is to belong."

Thereafter another case came up before the Bombay High Court in *Suit No. 267 of 1890, Dinbai vs Hormusji Dinsha Hodiwalla*, where Justice Farran gave no judgment but merely recorded a decree declaring that the bequest under the will was void.

In *Limji vs Bapuji* (1887) I.L.R. II Bom 441, it was held that a trust for the performance of muktad and *baj rojgar* ceremonies comes within the category of trusts for the advancement of religion and not as valid charitable trusts.

Various judgements were overruled in the judgement delivered by Justice Davar in 1907, Volume X, *The Bombay Law Reporter*, page 417 in the case of *Jamshed K. Tarachand vs Soonabai*. Davar held that:

"Trusts and bequests of lands or money for the purpose of devoting the incomes thereof in perpetuity for the performance of muktad, *baj*, *ijeshne* and other like ceremonies, are valid 'charitable' bequests, and as such exempt from the application of the rule of law forbidding perpetuities.

"The performance of the muktad ceremonies is a religious duty imposed upon the Zoroastrians by the proved tenets of the religion they profess. The ceremonies themselves are acts of religious worship. They include worship, praise and adoration of the supreme deity, and a thanksgiving for all his mercies. They contain petitions for benefits both temporal and spiritual for all Zoroastrians — for all holy and virtuous men of all other communities — and

continued on page 56

Dialog against discrimination

Zoroastrian problems need to be aired in Iran's national parliament and other legal fora for the benefit of the minorities, opines the author

Farhang Mehr

In January 2002, Mohamad Reza Aref, the first Vice President to President Hojatollah Khatami, issued a circular to all ministries, government organizations and institutions, the Islamic foundations, and governor-generals' offices in the provinces throughout the country to apply their utmost care and supervision to ensure the rights of religious minorities (Zarathushtis, Christians and Jews) in all areas including employment and engagement in various professions (quoting from Persian newspapers).

In February 2002 the judicial authorities drafted an amendment to article 30 of the Islamic Criminal Code, thereby extending the blood money (*dieh*), payable to the Muslim victims of homicide, manslaughter and other bodily harm, to the victims of the same crimes if they be members of the recognized religious minorities. This of course requires ratification from the religious leader of the country (quoting from Persian newspapers).

In November 2001 during President Khatami's visit to the US, to address the United Nations (UN) assembly on cultural dialog, a small number of Iranian immigrants were again invited to meet with him. My wife and I, this time also another Zarathushti Allahyar Dabestani, were among them. That occasion gave me a third opportunity to raise the issue of discriminatory treatment of the religious minorities in Iran with the President.

As in previous meetings, I was overwhelmed by the President's humility, humane behavior towards all invitees, sincerity and frankness in his words and magnanimity towards me.

The time allocated to each speaker was limited yet he gave me as much of his time as I needed. I reminded him of the two questions I had raised in our first two meetings in 1998 (recorded in *Humata*, Winter 1998-99) and in 2000. I mentioned that according to his recom-

mendation the two issues were subsequently raised by two successive Zarathushti representatives in the Majlis (Parliament) — Parviz Ravani and Dr Khosrow Dabestani.

However, no attention was paid to those complaints. While that was by itself regrettable, a most serious incident occurred recently. A Zarathushti man embraced Islam and after his parents' demise, tried to deprive his siblings from inheriting their share of their deceased parents' assets. His siblings took the matter to court. The converted person sought the view of the religious leader of Iran who edicted that 'with a Muslim heir, *kafer*s (infidels) do not inherit.' Thus, not only have our complaints not been heeded, but to add insult to injury we are now degraded to the rank of *kafer* (recorded in *Humata*, Fall 2001).

I drew the President's attention to the fact that religious minorities suffer discrimination in the job market in securing government jobs. This complaint was voiced by the Christian representative in the Majlis a few months earlier. I recapitulated that 51 years ago, in 1952, the Police Academy had excluded non-Muslims. The Tehran Zoroastrian Anjuman wrote a letter to Ayatollah Kashani who in turn wrote a letter to the President of the Academy admonishing him for including a reference to religion in the application forms. Ayatollah Kashani also emphasized that Zarathushtis are the natives of Iran; they are patriotic and honest — and there was no justification for excluding them from the police force. The Academy removed that condition from the eligibility requirements. After 30 years, in the Islamic Republic of Iran Zarathushtis and other religious minorities are regretfully being banned from entering the military and police academies as well as the civil service in many ministries. This is a backward and suppressive move.

President Khatami regretted that the request by Zarathushti representatives in the Majlis has remained unheeded. He asserted that there is no reason for any discrimination against Zarathushtis. He philosophically added: "By calling you *kafer*, you will not become *kafer*!" We know that in Iran many great philosophers and scholars like Avicenna, Hallaj and others had been called *kafer*. Avicenna, in reply to all such accusations composed a poem, the purport of which was that with his righteousness and observance of Islamic rules, accusation of infidelity is hard to stick; that if in those circumstances he be a *kafer* there would be no Muslim in the world! Then addressing me (by which I am sure he meant all Zarathushtis) Khatami said Zarathushtis should not take such insulting statements to heart.

I felt that this time Khatami himself was certain to take action to redress the situation. The two pieces of news mentioned at the top of this article, I am certain have been issued under his direction after the November 2001 meeting.

For a minuscule religious community like the Zarathushti community in Iran the most effective policy for removal of discrimination and inequality is 'constructive engagement.' This was the policy adopted by Maneckji Limji Hataria when the Zarathushti community in Iran was being suppressed in all avenues of life. That policy was followed by our late leaders Arbab Jamshid, Arbab Keikhosrow and Ardeshtirji in a less oppressive era that followed. Similarly it was pursued by successive community leaders during the more religiously tolerant years. Indeed the same should now be our policy under the theocratic Islamic government.

Fear to voice grievances simply perpetuates discrimination while reacting emotionally endangers the community's survival. Those who avoid 'constructive engagement' lack experience. As

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Zarathushtis, we have a duty to our community and a responsibility for the preservation of our religion and culture. We must be active and exercise our discretion wisely. I am proud that the community in Iran has reached the necessary awareness and maturity to act accordingly.

Let me end this article by another promising piece of news which demonstrates that the right action at the right time yields results. I trust such actions will continue through appropriate constitutional avenues.

On January 7, 2002 Khosrow Dabestani thanked the president of the judiciary for having placed the question of *dieh* of religious minorities on the agenda. He also expressed hope that a certain number of slots in the hiring of teachers by the ministry of education will be allocated to Zarathushti applicants. This is a good start.

Dr Dabestani should pursue the matter and extend it to employment in general, including the ministries, the public sector and all government agencies and request the revision of Article 810 of the civil code concerning inheritance. I was glad that in his speech Dabestani men-

tioned Cyrus the Great of Iran, the author of human rights, and also referred to the UN Charter of Human Rights of December 1948 as well as to the principles 13, 14 and 19 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. All our demands should be based on the domestic law and the international conventions and practices of civilized nations. As Khatami says, the minorities must voice their grievances through legal channels and the government has a duty to investigate and change the laws to achieve justice in compliance with international practices for all Iranian nationals, irrespective of the religion they choose to espouse.

This article has been reprinted from Humata, Spring and Summer 2002.

Scholar, author and activist Farhang Mehr was Iran's former deputy prime minister who left the country during the Islamic revolution. A professor emeritus of Boston University, Mehr is presently editor of *Humata*, the journal of the Center for Ancient Iranian Studies.



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The good, the bad and the not-so-beautiful

Dr Ketayun H. Gould

Evil, Good and Gender: Facets of the Feminine in Zoroastrian Religious History by Jamsheed K. Choksy. Published in 2002 by Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., Acquisitions Department, P. O. Box 1246 Bel Air, Maryland 21014-1246, USA. Pp: 166. Price: Not mentioned.

This monograph published by the Toronto Studies in Religion, Vol 28 presents a difficult task of evaluation to a reviewer who is equally interested in the field of Zoroastrian studies and gender studies since the book is uneven in the depth and level of attention it devotes to some of the major topics that are of concern to this volume.

According to the author Jamsheed Choksy, the "book examines doctrinal, theological, ritual and socioreligious developments over time in the relationship between evil, good and gender — within a context of malevolence and benevolence attributed to the feminine, the masculine, the female and the male by Zoroastrians." In the three realms — doctrinal, theological and ritual — in the Zoroastrian tradition as it examines facets of the feminine, the book succeeds marvelously in guiding the reader to specific primary sources, especially those that are grounded in the religio-historiographical system. Choksy displays a remarkable grasp of his material, focusing for the most part on texts, artworks, coins and other items that explore the implications of the religion's attitudes towards gender-related issues. In fact, the book is so rich in thick descriptions in these areas, that an explanatory paragraph at the end of each chapter might have helped in analyzing the implications of the numerous examples that are presented to illustrate a particular line of thinking. In this regard, a more gen-



Choksy: discoursing on gender-related issues

eral point can also be made at this juncture that as a contribution to the scholarly and academic understanding of religion, the book is a tour de force in what the Series calls "surface" and "depth" description. Where it falls short, at times, is in achieving the second task: "the search for explanation and the development of theory to account for religion and for particular historical traditions." Perhaps this problem could have been avoided by relying more heavily than the author prefers on theoretical paradigms drawn from other disciplines to analyze the source materials that Zoroastrianism provides, and to augment the work of scholars who are so intimately involved in Zoroastrian studies that they often tend to provide a benign explanation for some of the religion's questionable beliefs and traditions that affect women.

However, it is in the realm of socio-religious development during modern times that the problems with the book are most evident and where it fails to meet the high standard of scholarship that it achieves in the other three areas. This is particularly disappointing in view of the fact that the introduction promises an exploration of the premise that "images of the female and male in *theology* (italics mine) were fundamental in defining both women's and men's cultural roles and statuses." Instead, the discussion on socioreligious transformation of Zoroastrian women's lives during modern times concentrates more on putting a positive spin on "changing contexts" — communal responses to general, western-style social and educational influences, while curiously omitting the mention of some systemic

problems in religious thinking and practices that have discriminated consistently against Zoroastrian women. Even in this context, Choksy seems more at ease in discoursing on gender-related issues when he returns to the old, familiar territory of describing the decline of diabolism, and less in control of his material when he strays into the world of cultural roles and statuses.

Specifically, the monograph contains five chapters and a brief introduction. The introduction provides a review of the main thesis of the volume. Basically, Choksy lays out the opposition between evil and good as "interlinked religious concepts," with its origins attributed to a "non-human spiritual being, with ancillary spirits and mortals acting as evil's agents — all in opposition to a spiritual entity who supposedly represents order and good." In many societies, gender, along with aspects of sin, sex and impurity came to be associated with evil, and Choksy draws on this connection to demonstrate how the notion of the feminine, which was believed to be more evil and distinct from the order of goodness and good, became a perspective of the Zoroastrian religion. Generations of clerics (all male) transformed this concept into yielding demonic female spirits. Placing the blame on the feminine made it easy to depict them as the agents of disorder, and provided a means of externalizing the chaotic evil within humans in female demons. At the same time, Zoroastrian beliefs did not exclude the feminine from goodness. Mazdean rites included several female spiritual beings who played important roles in expelling evil and serving as the role models for mortal women.

In elaborating the above theme, the author introduces many other topics that are dealt with in later chapters. These include doctrinal notions from the Old Avestan, the impact of dualism, gender-related consequences of the concepts of sexuality, avidity, imperfection and death, and the effects

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EVIL, GOOD, AND GENDER

Facets of the Feminine in Zoroastrian Religious History



Jamsheed K. Choksy

LANG

of belief and practice on the lives of women in past and present Zoroastrian communities. At the outset, Choksy acknowledges that this study places a heavy reliance on the source materials that Zoroastrianism provides. He also recognizes that these source materials reflect male discourses — a particularly troubling bias when the topic of interest is the image of the feminine, but no female input is available. In view of these facts, it is unfortunate that in backing away from viewing “gender-related issues of the past as misogynist,” the author does not differentiate between a misogynist and a broader, feminist perspective. Without such a framework, Choksy often leaves the reader with meeting only one of his goals in dealing with differential aspects of gender: describing “what seems to have taken place,” leaving the question of explaining “why it took place” (italics mine) at a more generalized and less nuanced level.

Chapter 2 provides a straightforward discussion of the rise of Zoroastrianism, including details about the Prophet's life, the Zoroastrian scripture, dualism, spiritual entities, the sectarian sacred history, Zoroastrian beliefs regarding death and its aftermath, the belief about the saviors, initiation, worship and death rituals and the emigration of Zoroastrians to India. The author then goes on to discuss the international dispersion of the community during the last few decades. Choksy ends the chapter with a short but interesting discussion of dualism and the feminine, pointing out how a male dominated society ensured that in Zoroastrianism, the origins of good and evil were both attributed to male entities. Needless to say, the dynamics of power prevented the female from being named the “top dog,” although it can be easily understood why a societal fear of the feminine mystique would lead to the female being blamed for furthering the cause of evil. Of course, this interpretation also succeeded in taking away the blame from men, and helped support the thesis that the “demonic feminine was more powerful than the divine feminine.”

Chapter 3 takes us into the domain of female demons and beneficent female spiritual beings, elucidating the gender-specific linkages of notions like deceit, discord, sexuality and avidity that are embedded in the faith's symbolism of the demonic female entities, while the

female divinities are depicted as working to ensure that cosmic order is upheld. Moreover, male dominance over the female in preserving the socioreligious order is demonstrated by the might of the male spiritual beings who are responsible for casting aside the ill effects of female demons on indi-

A male dominated society ensured that in Zoroastrianism, the origins of good and evil were both attributed to male entities

viduals and the power that they exercise over female spirits who help them to fulfil their tasks. Choksy presents a long list of female demons to demonstrate the association of gender and evil, particularly the specific manifestation of the disorder that is tied to a certain entity. He uses myths from the *Bundahishn* to elaborate his points. He again ends the chapter by submitting how the contrasting notions of order and disorder and the connection between evil and the feminine found an easy answer in the faith's dualistic system which insisted on the maintenance of cosmic order through appropriate actions.

Chapter 4 carries us more specifically into the male dominated religious and societal world-views that linked feminine as a gender to being weak willed and easily led astray by the devil's menagerie. In fact, women were not considered evil by nature but were thought to be misguided by evil beings into performing sinful actions. This Mazdean belief is illustrated by the myth in the *Bundahishn* regarding the act of the first woman, Masyana. The image of the primeval woman thus created was projected upon women, and used to reinforce the belief that women, acting independently, will always end up creating the conditions that produce evil. Choksy elaborates this theme further in his discussion of sayings, literature, witches and demonesses and tales of the afterlife. The main emphasis in this section is the tie between pollution and evil, and its association with death and the feminine. The threats posed by menstruation and childbirth (some of the

sources of pollution) to the cosmic order and purification rites related to neutralizing its effects all speak to the power of the connection between evil and gender in the Mazdean theology. Interestingly, the feminine connection between evil and good is continued in the afterlife in the depiction of attractive and unattractive Daenas who meet the souls of men. Even in death, however, females seem to be second class citizens since the gender and attractiveness of Daenas is considered to be an important issue, but the souls of women are not considered worthy of being addressed in the theological literature.

Chapter 5 is a historical excursion into antiquity and the middle ages for a search of available records that might divulge the socioreligious aspects of Zoroastrian women's lives. The author covers Iran under the Achaemenian dynasty, the Parthian regime, the Sasanian dynasty, the Arab conquest and the subsequent Islamization. As expected, the early periods reveal a paucity of data, with much of the meagre information focusing narrowly on the lives of female members of noble birth. There is much more available data starting with the Sasanian dynasty, although even here the focus is on the lives of elite women. Generally, the records present a mixed picture with women being able to engage in some gender appropriate work, enjoying certain legal rights, but on the whole, having their public life curtailed and mediated by their relationship with adult men. In the religious domain, purity and pollution codes continue to restrict women's functions in the spiritual life of the community. The most interesting section of this chapter, however, is the discussion of Zoroastrian women's lives after the Arab conquest, particularly the complex reasons and circumstances that led Mazdean women to cross religious boundaries and seek entry into the Muslim community. In doing so, these women helped temper Muslim positions with earlier Zoroastrian beliefs, creating a multicultural system that must have felt familiar to them in terms of its tone and context. As for Mazdean women's lives, the pre-modern period saw very little significant change in the male dominated secular order that continued to be sanctified by the masculine religious te-



With
best wishes
from

**Farah
&
Tanya**

nets. Consequently, the old dichotomy between evil, good and gender as embodied in the divine and demonic spirits still functioned to restrict the socio-religious aspects of Zoroastrian women's lives.

Choksy's concluding chapter on socioreligious development during modern times should have developed his vision of how the "images of the female and male in theology were fundamental in defining both women's and men's cultural roles and statuses." Unfortunately, the emphasis on theology is often lost in the amount of coverage that he devotes to statistics on the effects of western-style societal influences that might have been responsible in bringing about some secular changes, such as a more egalitarian pattern of sex-role development. More important, he fails to make the point strongly enough that a relatively egalitarian ideal that might govern societal sex-role behavior might not provide a bulwark against continuing negative

A societal fear of the feminine mystique would lead to the female being blamed for furthering the cause of evil

images of women in the religious texts and tradition. As a result, the chapter paints a much more benign picture of "social and religious liberalization" without any mention whatsoever of some very acrimonious issues

that have discriminated consistently against Zoroastrian women. For example, the status of Parsi women married to non-Parsis, the status of their children, their legal status as Zoroastrians, etc are all subjects of vital concern that deserve particular coverage here since quoting chapter and verse from various scriptures seems to be the commonly accepted way of justifying the legitimacy of these gender-related religious laws. These problems could have been addressed very easily in the section where the author talks about the "increase in the frequency of marriage across confessional communities." Instead, he leaves the discussion by backing away from tackling the problem when he makes a very general, non-

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threatening comment that this trend has succeeded in "bringing new issues and concepts into familial settings." A newcomer to the field could read this statement and have no inkling whatsoever about how these socioreligious developments have affected the lives of Zoroastrian women in vital ways.

A further problem with this chapter might be the fact that certain generalizations are not modified as much as they should be in order to present a more accurate and balanced picture of the level of liberalization. For example, Choksy's assertion that "only extremely orthodox women will separate themselves from others during menses or after childbirth" is an underestimation of the strength and numbers of orthodox Parsis, based perhaps on a non probability sample study. My demographic study of 551 Parsi households does not support this claim, although the data included both urban and rural households. A different example of an overstatement, which might be a reflection of a commonly repeated assertion is the author's reference to the following belief: recently, women's expectations of marriage have "begun to exceed the reality represented by potential male partners within the community." Furthermore, turning this belief into a significant factor in terms of its effects on "declining marital and reproductive rates" is a non-data based generalization that might easily take on the aura of blaming women for the community's woes. Interestingly, contrary to even my stereotypes, my demographic study of never-married females revealed that it was an utterly traditional resource like household income which turned out to be the most significant factor in determining the prospects for marriage.

In other parts of the chapter, when the author is discussing some familiar issues, he seems to be more in charge of his material. This is true when he is dealing with the effects of the decline of diabolism, giving examples from the texts of various evil spirits whose power is depicted as having diminished in value. His discourse on the use of religion as a means of legitimizing the notions of evil, good and gender, as well as the examination of texts to determine whether negative perceptions of the feminine were attempts by the Mazdean hierarchy to deal with the increasing status of women are equally illuminating. In general, Choksy seems more at ease

in dealing with material from the past, and in drawing out the religious and social functions of these ideas which might be used to perpetuate or modify traditional beliefs. This is not surprising since by discipline and training, he is a historian of religion whose interest lies in furthering discussion of "continuity and change in the history of religions." Choksy has approached the writing of this monograph with an impressive array of scholarly credentials. These attributes have enabled him to produce a highly detailed and authoritative work that should be on the shelf of any scholar who is interested in Zoroastrian studies.

Fair fare

Ticket to Minto: Stories of India and America by Sohrab Homi Fracis. Published in 2002 by Indialog Publications Private Limited, 0-22, Lajpat Nagar II, New Delhi 110024. Pp: 214. Price: Rs 250.

It is a commonplace practice among Parsis to lament their dwindling numbers. However, the community can now boast of one more star in the literary firmament of Parsi fiction. Into this arena dominated by expatriate writers like Rohinton Mistry, Bapsi Sidhwa and Boman Desai enters Sohrab Homi Fracis with his collection of short stories *Ticket to Minto*. Fracis, originally from Bombay, now teaches literature at the University of North Florida and has been awarded the 1999-2000 Florida Individual Artist Fellowship in Literature/Fiction and the 2001 Iowa Short Fiction Award.

The title of this collection has been expanded to *Stories of India and America*, and Fracis alternates between the two countries skillfully using characters like Pesi Screwvala, Veer Paintal and Zubin Commissariat who appear in stories set in both countries. The common themes and motifs which he employs create interesting parallels and resonances between the two cultures.



Fracis: creating parallels between two cultures



Most of the stories have a poignant and sympathetic tone; however, underlying this is a

strange and uncanny streak of violence as the protagonists try to come to terms with themselves. Most of them fail to pull themselves out of the morass into which they have fallen. They seem to be caught in a vise-like grip of inactivity. Noshir is one such character in "Flora Fountain." Fat, wheezing and prematurely old, he waits endlessly at Flora Fountain for the woman in a slate grey Fiat to reappear. He has caught a glimpse of her just once and has allowed her to speed away. His resourceful father, on the other hand, saw a pretty girl shopping, followed her home, obtained information about her by bribing the liftman and immediately got the family to make an alliance which resulted in his eventually marrying the girl. Noshir mistakenly believes Flora is the Goddess of Plenty only to realize at the end of the story that she is the goddess of Spring and once the fleeting moment of life has passed, opportunity seldom comes again.

In "Keeping Time," the protagonist is an aging and penniless Parsi spinster, Ms Davar, who is an unsuccessful music teacher. She is another of Fracis' characters who is caught in a time warp. She regrets the departure of the British and is unable to come to terms with the cruel present where she is addressed as Bawaji. In her prime she had suitors who have married and moved on. She has one solitary pupil whom she strictly instructs to keep time to a metronome and who decides to discontinue the music lesson by the end of the story.

However, some characters do manage to extricate themselves from the

impasse in which they find themselves. In "Fire," Pesi Screwvala, a timid boy recovering from typhoid, is constantly tortured by two of his classmates, one of whom even pierces his skin with a compass point drawing blood. Fracis uses the motif of fire very adroitly in this story. Apart from the religious significance of fire, it is also seen as a symbol of regeneration and renewal: the farmers of Khandala burn the under bush leaving a fertile ash in its place. Pesi uses fire to subdue the boys who are bullying him and symbolically renews himself with courage and fortitude.

The strange streak of violence which emerges in "Fire" once again makes a reappearance in "Ticket to Minto." Fracis presents the students of Minto College as polite and extremely polished in their use of language and full of courtesy to the visiting team of badminton players. There are subtle indications though that this is merely the external facade. There is an underlying coarseness which Fracis presents in the lewd remarks the students of Minto College make when the visitors bathe in a semi-open space reserved for washing clothes. The entire process of Maal Darshan when they watch college girls on the way to their hostel and indulge in obscene comments and crude sexual innuendos is a further example. However, the visitors are totally unprepared for the violence which is planned when a student of Minto College is asked to pay 15 paise for a bus ticket which shows a totally different facet of the students as they plan a demonstration the next day and burn buses as a mark of protest.

A similar deadlock between action and inaction and between peace and violence is reflected in the colliding worlds of the immigrant and the manner in which he seems to constantly live in limbo between two worlds. In "Rabbit's Foot" through the skilful use of flashbacks, Fracis describes the transformation of Veer Paintal, a strict vegetarian Brahmin who comes to the USA where he not only eats rabbit but also cruelly hunts them himself with his air pistol.

One of the most powerful and compelling stories in the collection is "Stray" in which Fracis poignantly captures the plight of the immigrant in an objective yet compassionate manner. The very first sentence of the story is an indication of the author's concerns: "Hullo! And where do you belong?" This is addressed to a cat which waylays Pesi

one evening in Harrison, USA. The cat stays comfortably in Pesi's home throughout the winter but when summer arrives and Pesi tries to get him indoors, he scratches and bites him, and scampers into the open countryside. This episode is repeated and the cat, stray though it may be, manages to strike a balance between the warmth of Pesi's home and the necessity to find its freedom and independence. Pesi on the other hand seems to be in a limbo. He does not seem to have many friends in USA yet he does not want to return to India after his studies. He faces a similar impasse even in his relationship with his girlfriend Shenaaz who wants to return to India after her studies. At the end of the story, Pesi seems undecided about his future. He is unwilling to make a commitment to Shenaaz; yet he is unable to make a clear break.

There is a certain unevenness in some of the stories and the writing does not always seem to flow easily. However, one must admit that Fracis seems to be at great ease with the form of the short story and his characters are etched with a piercing insight as well as a warm and compassionate understanding of human nature. This is an admirable first attempt and one waits for his next work with eagerness and curiosity.

FIRDAUS GANDAVIA

Cricket's dawns and dusks

Dramatic Debuts and Swan Songs by Kersi Meher-Homji. Published in 2001 by ABC Books for Australian Broadcasting Corporation, GPO Box 9994, Sydney NSW 2001. Pp: 160. Price: Not mentioned.

Kersi Meher-Homji's pen is prolific. This is his 10th book on his favorite subject — cricket. Fascinated by the mathematics and memorabilia of the gentleman's game, Meher-Homji's latest offering *Dramatic Debuts and Swan Songs* records the thrilling moments of dashing debutants and the dismay of cricketers who have flickered and faded.

Meher-Homji "does his homework brilliantly, but I doubt he has ever gone further into his locker to hunt down information in researching all the

Meher-Homji (left) with classy batsman Gundappa Vishwanath



Dramatic Debuts and Swan Songs



Kersi Meher-Homji

Foreword by Doug Walters

marvellous details in this book," writes noted Australian cricketer Doug Walters in his Foreword. One of only 67 cricketers who have scored a debut Test century and one of less than a handful who have scored centuries in their first two Tests, Walters congratulates Meher-Homji on his "half century" of watching Test cricket since 1951 and reporting on most of the Test matches he has watched!

"Cricket bristles with sensational to emotional debuts and swan songs — with more human angle stories than a Mills and Boon novel," writes Meher-Homji. So we read about a heart-wrenching Test debut by Australia's Dr Roy Park — a much loved and admired doctor who was selected to represent Australia in 1921 on his home ground Melbourne after a series of successes in Sheffield Shield matches. He played the first ball and deflected it on to his stumps! He walked back to the pavilion accompanied by "deafening silence" from the crowd and was never selected again! His wife missed his entire Test batting career as she had nervously dropped her knitting ball and stooped to pick it up as he faced the first delivery!

We read of Englishman Graham Gooch's "pair to riches." Starting off with a "Daddles Duck" in his first two Test innings, Gooch retired 118 Tests later after making nearly 9,000 runs! "No swan song is so much a part of cricketing folklore as Bradman's final Test,"



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notes Meher-Homji. "Lightly Fades The Don" describes the legendary Don Bradman's final Test. Coming in to bat with a career average of 101.39 and needing only four runs to finish with a Test average of 100, the cricketing colossus walked out to bat at The Oval in 1948 to a tremendous crowd ovation. The opposing Englishmen gathered around and gave him three cheers and wished him good luck for his retirement. "That reception had stirred my emotions very deeply and made me anxious — a dangerous state of mind for any batsman to be in," Meher-Homji quotes Bradman. One ball later came a perfect length googly — and Bradman was bowled! The master batsman thus ended his career at a phenomenal average of 99.94. And this from a batsman who was dropped from the team after playing his first Test!

Meher-Homji's book chronicles the "Hundred and Out" syndrome (batsmen axed after a century on debut!), the conflicts and controversies. Lanky lad Mohammad Azharuddin made centuries in each of his first three Tests and created many a varied record. Yet he found his career at an abrupt end 17 years, 99 Tests and 334 Limited-Overs Internationals later, amidst a cloudburst of match fixing allegations. Innumerable snippets tell us that only seven players have so far made their Test debut at less than 17 years of age, of which six are Pakistanis and one Indian — Sachin Tendulkar who debuted aged 16 years 205 days in 1989-1990. R. J. D. Jamshedji has the distinction of being mentioned in the list of oldest players on debut, having played his first Test at the ripe old age of 41 years, 27 days. He was but a spring chicken compared to C. J. Vels of South Africa who made his entry into first class cricket at 60 years, 270 days!

Among the plethora of facts and figures that dot this book, besides Jamshedji just two other Parsis find a brief mention — Nari Contractor who is among the batsmen who scored a century in each innings in their first class debut and the author's wicketkeeper kinsman Kharshed Meher-Homji who took one catch and scored zero not out in his only Test innings against England in 1936, which led him to boast tongue-in-cheek that no bowler had ever got him out!

Meher-Homji chronicles the high drama and trauma of bowlers like India's

Narendra Hirwani who wrote his name in the record books by capturing 16 scalps in his maiden Test, yet could not sustain his bowling performances. Australia's Damien Fleming achieved the rare feat of a hat trick in his first Test — one of only three bowlers to achieve this distinction in 124 years of Test cricket!

Sustaining reader interest with tittle, tattle and behind-the-scenes trivia, we are told the "Me and Dad" story (Javed Miandad telling the Australians how to pronounce his name!) or about a rookie on his way to the venue stranded in the midst of the countryside beside an old silver Vauxhall Victor which refused to move!

With his previous books having exhaustively covered batsmen in their nervous nineties, the six hitters, the 'duck' hunters and hat trick takers, the Waugh twins and the cricketing clans, Meher-Homji must surely be scouring cricketing archives for a suitable subject for his next book! In the meantime, *Dramatic Debuts and Swan Songs* is the kind of comfortable companion you might like to take with you to while away the monotonous minutes of a long train journey!

A virologist by profession and cricket writer by choice, Meher-Homji can be contacted on e-mail: kmeher@arcbs.redcross.org.au

HILLA P. GUZDER

Fundamentals of the faith

An Overview of Zarathushtrianism by Adil F. Rangoonwalla. Published in 2002 by the author, M/4, Dalal Estate, Lamington Road, Bombay 400008. Pp: 101. Price: Rs 160.

Adil Rangoonwalla in his book *An Overview of Zarathushtrianism* takes us on a religious journey, giving us an insight into some of the concepts and fundamentals of the faith.

He starts by describing Prophet Zarathushtra as the most righteous, brilliant and victorious among all human beings — one with the divine glory passed on to him by Ahura Mazda.

Rangoonwalla next discusses the realm of Ahura Mazda — the Supreme

Creator, who is the genesis of all creation. The paradox of His being present in each and every element of nature, yet Himself being invisible, the concept of Amesha Spentas (Ameshaspands or the holy immortals), the Yazatas (the Adorable Ones), the virtues they symbolize and their role as caretakers of God's creations is then recounted.

To counter Ahriman (the evil spirit) is recommended the protective gear in the form of sudreh and kusti. Among the Spenta Manthra or benificent prayers he lists *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*, *Ashem Vohu* and *Yenghe Hatam*. The *Airyama Ishyo* prayer is referred to as the best, strongest, victorious, most supreme and the most efficacious among all prayers according to the *Ardibehesht Yasht*.

From there, we move on to understand more about the importance of atash (holy fire). It is through atash (Ahura

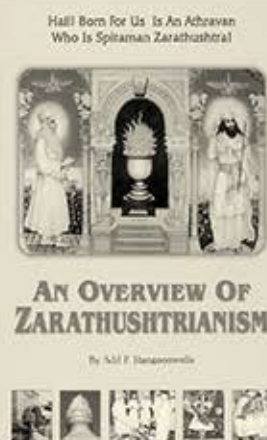
Mazda's representative or son in the corporeal world) that our prayers reach Ahura Mazda in the spiritual world and His blessings are delivered to us.

The importance of Zarathushtrian ceremonies like jashan, navjote and lagan and the opportune time to perform them are then discussed.

When it is time for a man to say farewell to this corporeal world the Zarathushtrian way of disposing the dead (by dakhmeh-nashini and Khurshed Nigerrashni) is deemed the most environment friendly. On the fourth day after death the tribunal of Meher Yazad, Sarosh Yazad and Rashne Yazad take stock of an individual's doings in the corporeal world and assign him a place in heaven, hell or purgatory, until it is time for renovation, states the author.

Well-written and logically structured, *An Overview of Zarathushtrianism* lives up to its title, providing the reader with valuable insight into the concepts and ceremonies pertaining to one of the most profound and oldest surviving religions of the world.

DARAYUS BAJAN



Rangoonwalla: valuable insights



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MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 24 and 30 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 27 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 30 and 35 years, averaging at 32 years.

Eighty-one Zoroastrians were consigned to the Bombay Towers of Silence in the month of September as versus eight babies born. Twelve in the 80 and above age group plus 15 others made up the count for deaths related to the heart. Twelve victims fell prey to general debility/old age, nine to cancer and seven to pneumonia and lung related diseases. Brain disease took a toll of four lives whereas three deaths each were attributed to diabetes, bronchitis and septicemia. Two patients each succumbed to kidney failure and anemia. Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, asthma, burns, multi organ failure, hypothyroidism (a group of symptoms caused by the deficiency of thyroid secretion), uremia, haematoma (a swelling filled with blood), hypertension and anaplastic astrocytoma were the nine isolated cases registered in September. Two youths, both males, aged 16 and 21 respectively, were also lost to the community. The eldest to breath his last was a man one short of his century. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth for September, in Bombay, was 76 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 in-

advertent repetition of names in the marriage list when a civil marriage precedes a religious ceremony. In the breakup of deaths according to illnesses, especially of the elderly, death is often due to a combination of several diseases.

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

BOMBAY

BORN

A girl to *Veera and Cusrow Sadri*; September 3
A boy to *Huffrish and Burgese Parekh*; September 14
A girl to *Khorshed and Hoshi Kanga*; September 15
A girl to *Delzin and Hanoz Patel*; September 16
A boy, *Farhad*, to *Khurshed and Jamshed Sethna*, brother to *Kaiyomurz*; September 16
A girl to *Meher and Firdosh Katgara*; September 26
A boy to *Helena and Reyaz Mama*; September 27
A girl to *Zenobia and Adi Patel*; September 27

MARRIED

Parisa Iraj Faroodi and Shahroukh Shahbehram Demeri; September 7
Havoovi Sorab Mistry and Peshotan Jimmy Chowna; September 10
Farzeen Sohrab Madon and Percy Hoshang Elavia; September 22

DIED

Sorab Jamshedji Bhungara (69), residing at 53, Jamsaji Apts, 32, Sleater Rd, 400007; September 1
Shirin Nariman Dinshaw (91), 3/4, A. H. Wadia Bldg, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; September 1
Sapal Manekji Italia (78), 13, Sidhwa Bldg, Balaram St, 400007; September 1
Zenobia Kavasha Rustomjee (75), 70/1, Phirojsha Bldg, A. K. Marg, 400036; September 1
Armaty Baji Avari (67), C-28, Gilder Bldg, J. B. Ngr, Andheri (E), 400059;

September 2
Jini Faredun Madan (72), Clover Bldg, Sleater Rd, 400007; September 2
Dorabji Cawasji Daruwalla (78), Dhunmai Bldg, 667/A, Lady Jehangir Rd, Parsi Clny, 400014; September 3
Bahadur Manekji Gai (85), 24, Deep Bella, Mount Mary Rd, Bandra, 400050; September 5
Tehmina Pestonji Bhandari (87), 11/A-2, New Khareghat Clny, Babulnath Rd, 400007; September 6
Navzor Jamshed Mohta (21), 4/17, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; September 6
Behram Jalejar Umrigar (63), M-24, Godrej Bldg, Napean Sea Rd, 400036; September 6
Najoo Kaikhushroo Amrolia (85), 37, Surat Bahar, N. A. Sawant Marg, Colaba, 400005; September 7
Dadabhai Hormasji Dumasia (85), Aruna Niwas, Sleater Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; September 7
Perin Phiroze Vakil (76), 2/227, Madhuban Co-op Hsg Soc Ltd, Sector-4, RDP-8, Charkop, Kandivali (W), 400067; September 7
Rustom Nusservanji Daruvala (79), 701, Belscot Bldg, Lokhandwala Complex, Link Rd, Andheri, 400053; September 8
Shapur Aspiandiar Irani (68), M-42, Cusrow Bldg, S. B. Rd, 400039; September 8
Noshir Boman Irani (Kayani) (65), Irani Rd, Dahanu Rd, Dist Thane, 401602; September 8
Daulat Fali Khambatta (87), 162, Mistry Bldg, 10th Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; September 9
Khorshed Eruch Sahiar (83), 2/D-2, Blue Arch Co-op Hsg Soc, Convent Avenue, 4 Bglws, Andheri (W), 400053; September 9
Minoo Hormazji Boyce (78), 38, Patanwala Mhl, 39, Ranibaug, Byculla, 400027; September 10
Ratan Jehangir Meherhomji (70), 19/1-B, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; September 10

Perin Kersasp Punegar (79), Apurva, 662, Sorab Palamkote Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 10
Jeani Burjor Bharucha (69), 77, Rajat Apts, Mount Pleasant Rd, 400006; September 11
Rusi Jehangirji Dolasha (65), 83-D/1, S. B. Bharucha Bldg, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; September 11
Freny Kavashaw Jhabvala (75), Khurshed Hse, 604-D, Lady Jehangir Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 11
Curset Manekshaw Patel (65), 54, Gautam Niwas, 7 Bglws, Versova, 400053; September 11
Savak Bomansha Kapadia (92), 11, Pushpa Milan, Sophia College Rd, 400026; September 12
Manijeh Hormazdyar Mirza (86), 4, Babulnath Rd, 400007; September 12
Navroji Cawasji Patel (Poonjiajee) (77), Fortune, 568, Lady Jehangir Rd, Matunga, 400019; September 12
Naju Palonji Antia (85), Dhana Patel Bldg, 232, Tardeo Rd, 400007; September 13
Adi Phirozshaw Bana (76), Pateti Blocks, 609, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 13
Framroze Dhunjishaw Dhanidaduna (78), 8/19, B. S. Panthaki Bldg, Andheri (E), 400069; September 13
Homi Dadabhai Katrak (87), B/64, Bina Apts, Sir M. V. Rd, Andheri (E), 400069; September 13
Porus Vicaji Taraporvala (83), K-3, Palm Springs, Cuffe Parade, 400005; September 13
Merwan Rustomji Hakim (85), A. Mistry Bldg, Parel, 400012; September 14
Gool Maneck Lawyer (64), Wadia Bldg, Princess St, 400002; September 14
Coomi Jal Shroff (90), 72-B, Cozy Bldg, A. K. Marg, 400036; September 14
Shirin Barjor Vajifdar (83), F. S. Parukh Dharamshala, Hughes Rd, 400007; September 14
Faridoon Rustomji Aibara (69), B-3, Anand Mhl, M. G.

Rd, Bandra (W), 400050;
September 15
Baman Hormusji Billimoria
(74), 43/D-2, S. B. Bharucha
Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W),
400058; September 15
Homai Khurshedji Kapadia
(85), 45, Khodadad Circle,
Dadar TT, 400014;
September 15
Phiroz Sorabji Mehta (87),
A/12, Mehta Bldg, Captain
Clny, Tardeo, 400034;
September 15
Eduji Dosabhai Bilimoria
(86), A/304, Accord, Andheri
(E), 400093; September 16
Tehmina Burjorji Mehta (88),
Cooper Bldg, 12th Cross
Lane, Khetwadi, 400004;
September 16
Dinaz Maneckshaw
Rustomkhan (75),
Readymoney Bldg, 784, M.
Joshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar,
400014; September 16
Bapaimai Darabshaw Dordi
(89), G-39, Cusrow Baug, S.
B. Rd, 400039; September 17
Nargis Kaikhoshroo Eranee
(91), Ram Mans, 4, Napean
Sea Rd, 400006; September 17
Homi Maneckshaw Jokhi (77),
Avan, 660, Sorab Palamkote
Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
September 17
Coomi Hormusji Katrak (75),
5/15, Aziz Bldg, Tardeo,
400034; September 19
Minoo Ruttonsha Kavarana
(82), 128, Heena Madhu Park
Soc, Rd no 1, Khar (W),
400052; September 19
Framroze (Freddy) Cowasji
Sethna (99), 22/A, Bellevue,
Warden Rd, 400036;
September 19
Dina Kaikhushru Ashavaid
(82), 315, Indian Surveyor
Hse, S. B. Rd, 400039;
September 20
Jamshed Darashaw Desai
(83), Scholar School Bldg, 13,
Henry Rd, Apollo Recl,
400039; September 20
Homi Eruch Kanga (56),
M-27, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd,
400039; September 20
Rohinton Dadiba Daruwalla
(42), A-23, Nowroz Baug, Dr
S. S. Rao Rd, Lalbaug,
400012; September 21
Fali Pallonji Dumasia (65),
43, Badani Hse, Jijibhoy
Dadabhoy Lane, 400001;
September 21
Sam Darabshaw Mistry (81),
Khurshed Hse, 604/D, Lady

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*

	Bombay		India		World	
	This issue	2002*	This issue	2002*	This issue	2002*
BIRTHS						
Boys	3	50	—	3	1	19
Girls	5	63	—	2	2	14
MARRIAGES						
Parsi	3	129	—	10	—	10
INTERCOMMUNAL						
Males married out	—	—	—	—	—	1
Females married out	—	—	—	—	—	4
DEATHS						
CONSIGNED						
Males	45	348	2	49	2	20
Females	36	338	9	54	1	14
CREMATED						
Males	—	—	—	—	—	—
Females	—	—	—	—	—	—

*Running totals for 2002 (January 2002-November 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.

Jehangir Rd, Parsi Clny,
Dadar, 400014; September 21
Kaizad Navroz Panthaky (16),
Beach View, 93, B. Desai Rd,
400036; September 21
Roshan Homi Noble (82),
35, Pallonji Hse, Raja Ram
Mohan Roy Rd, 400004;
September 21
Homi Meherji Gai (68), 9/14,
Ashish Bldg, M. I. G. Clny,
Kurla (W), 400070;
September 22
Rati Maneckshaw Kalyaniwala
(68), Adajania Hse, 803/B, Dr
Ambedkar Rd, Dadar, 400014;
September 22
Guloo Nariman Satarawalla
(85), 36/B, Sarita Apts, B. J.
Rd, Bandra (W), 400050;
September 23
Keki Homi Ghandhi (78),
Merwan Bldg, Uranwalla
St, Grant Rd, 400007;
September 25
Hilla Pervaz Patel (56),
Widows' Chwl, Jame
Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny,
Dadar, 400014;
September 25
Bahadur Kaikhushroo
Darukhanawala (76), B-5,
Godrej Baug, Napean Sea Rd,
400026; September 26
Tehmina Rustomji Karani
(84), F. S. Parukh

Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd,
400007; September 26
Hoshang Hormasji Khan (80),
34, Sunil Shopping Centre, J.
P. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058;
September 26
Noshir Tehmuras Mistry (59),
27, Malegaumwalla Bldg, M.
M. C. Cross Lane, Mahim,
400016; September 26
Ardeshir Hormasji Bharucha
(75), 1, Nagin Mhl, 82, Veer
Nariman Rd, Churchgate,
400020; September 27
Khorshed Maneckshaw
Contractor (77), 3/7, Malcolm
Baug, Jogeshwari (W),
400102; September 27
Homai Farokh Anklesaria
(78), Rekha Sadan, 747,
Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;
September 28
Silla Bejon Birdy (87), 3,
Chaman Chmbs, 400020;
September 28
Freny Jahangir Irani (80),
Petit Widows' Chwl,
Mody St, Fort, 400001;
September 28
Jivanji Maneckji Jamadar
(81), 8/9, Rustom Baug,
Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027;
September 28
Freny Firoze Master (84),
3/B, Saker Apts,
Pochkhanawalla Rd, Worli,

400025; September 28
Rustom Dinshaw Mistry
(90), Hornby View,
Gunbow St, Fort, 400001;
September 28
Dinshaw Jamshedji Mistry
(86), Avasia Hse, 8,
Darabsha Lane, Napean
Sea Rd, 400026;
September 28
Cawasji Gustadji Engineer
(87), C/13, Vatcha Bldg,
Captain Clny, Tardeo,
400034; September 29
Fali Rustomji Unwalla (86),
Sea View St, Opp J. J.
Dharamshalla, Udvada,
396180; September 29
Dosan Hormasji Mistry (93),
24, Tara Manzil, 1st
Dhobitalao Lane, 400002;
September 30
Gool Jehangir Siganporia
(81), 201/7, Shah Behram
Bldg, Zoroastrian Radik Soc,
Jogeshwari (W), 400102;
September 30

POONA

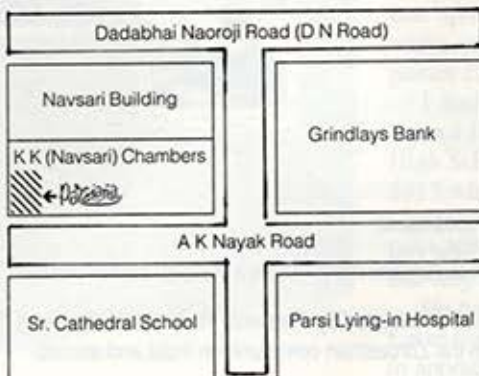
DIED
Sheroo R. Irani (80);
September 1
Tehmina P. Desai (95);
September 6
Sheriyar B. Irani (55);
September 6

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

As the building housing our present premises at 300 Perin Nariman Street is to undergo repairs, our subscription and Book Club office/showroom will shift to the following address effective 16th December 2002.

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E-mail: parsiana@vsnl.net



Nergish E. Cooper (80);
September 8
Mani A. Nania (78);
September 14
Katy M. Vakharia (68);
September 14
Meheroo S. Mistry (75);
September 17
Jimmy N. Engineer (44);
September 25

SURAT

DIED
Perinbanoo Jehangirji Bhesania (81); Vakil St, Aganowad, 395003;
September 14
Putlami Tehmuras Daruwala (79), WZO Nursing Home, Navsari, 396445;
September 23
Nergish Faredoon Dastoor (83), 11/2486, Wadia St, Machhlipith, 395003;
September 27

CANADA

Ontario

BORN
A girl, **Kashmira**, to **Riah** and **Shahroukh Sidhwa**, sister to **Jahan** in Oakville;
September 10

PAKISTAN

Karachi

DIED

Katy Patel, wife of **Aspi** and mother of **Viraf** and **Noshir**;
September 22

USA

Texas

BORN

A girl, **Natalya**, to **Natasha** and **Naushad Mehta** in Houston;
September 1

DIED

Bahram Ardeshtir Radpour, brother of **Houmayoon Vafadari** and uncle of **Dariouh** in Houston;
September 16
Faridon Namdarian, husband of **Zarin** and father of **Ardeshtir** and **Susan** in Houston;
September 29

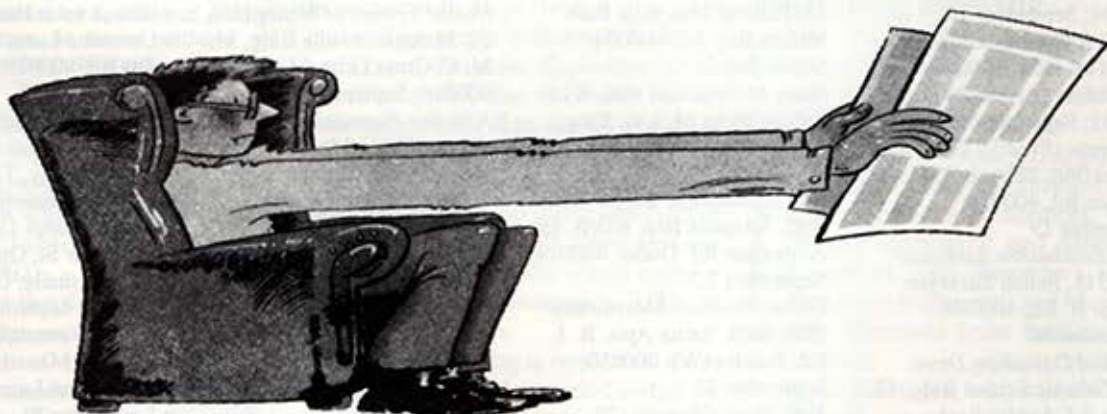
Virginia

BORN

A boy, **Zane**, to **Jasmine** and **Zubin Dastoor**, brother to **Jehan** of Ontario, Canada;
September 7

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

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Welfare visionary

Parinaz M. Gandhi

Died: Meher C. Nanavatty, 85, former advisor, social welfare to the Government of India (GOI) and the United Nations (UN) on August 12, 2002 at the M. P. Heart Centre, New Delhi following pulmonary complications.

"Over the years I came to value his insight and experience very much, and his resulting mature, realistic judgment on social welfare policy and practice as well as social work education. His affability and sense of humor also contributed to his being an effective colleague," noted a condolence letter from Herman Stein, dean emeritus of the Columbia University, USA, who had known Nanavatty for five decades.

Yet another long-standing colleague Prof V. Gopalan, erstwhile joint director of the GOI Planning Commission conveyed, "He had impressed me as a disciplined, devoted, dedicated and empathetic social worker. He was a source of inspiration to many of us." For two terms Nanavatty had served as president of the Indian Association of Trained Social Workers and was vice president (Asian region) of the International Federation of Social Workers.

For 14 years, from 1958 to 1972, Nanavatty worked as an employee of the GOI, first as director, social education, and later as advisor, social welfare in the then ministry of social welfare, now known as the ministry of social justice and empowerment, mentions his curriculum vitae. He was then deputed by the GOI as regional advisor, social welfare and family planning at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific. Functioning from Bangkok, Thailand he was involved in providing technical assistance to 15 developing countries in the region, coordinating social development activities with those of family planning and population. His next appointment was as social welfare expert at the United Nations' Social Wel-

fare and Development Centre for Asia and the Pacific, based in Manila, Philippines from where he retired in 1980. On his return to India he worked as consultant with the National Institute of Child Development and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees at Geneva, preparing guidelines for services to special groups like children, women and the aged, notes his life profile.

"Till the last days he remained committed to his profession. He inspired and prodded us all along. His concern for the profession and affection for colleagues had drawn some of us close to him. I will continue to cherish his memory," acknowledged Prof R. R. Singh, director of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), referring to Nanavatty as "a distinguished alumnus of TISS."

Bombay born Nanavatty had schooled in Surat after which he returned to Bombay to graduate in science from St Xavier's College. After obtaining his diploma in social science administration from TISS, he started his career as the first secretary of the Liaison Committee for Charity Organisations (functioning under the aegis of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet), coordinating 18 Parsi charity trusts and providing community based services to members of the families receiving charity assistance in Bombay, states his wife Dolat.

At the age of 31 he joined the Case Western Reserve University, School of Applied Social Sciences at Cleveland, Ohio, USA for a postgraduate degree in social science administration. As noted the dean of the University Dr Grover C. Gilmore in his condolence letter, "We had the pleasure of meeting Nanavatty when he visited Cleveland last summer. He was most interested in meeting with our faculty and with the staff of the Federation for Community Planning where he was placed as a student in 1949-50. All these people were fasci-

nated to... learn about his career since he left Cleveland. He was truly a remarkable person."

Armed with a postgraduate degree Nanavatty returned to India to join the Baroda School of Social Work as a reader in community organization. Thereafter he joined the Delhi Municipality as advisor, social education. Adult education with civic responsibilities was his main thrust. Subsequently as chief education officer he organized and supervised the primary education in Delhi city. His love for teaching made him join the Delhi University's Delhi School of Social Work as director, field work and reader, community organization. Later he was made a member of the managing committee of the Inter-University Consortium for International Social Development. Ever keen to share his knowledge, he wrote innumerable articles in professional magazines and journals and authored two publications jointly with Prof P. D. Kulkarni: *Social Issues in Development* and *NGOs in the changing scenarios*.

His outstanding leadership in promoting the United Way movement in India had won him an award. Along with Girdhar Vaswani, executive director of the Baroda Citizens' Council he was actively involved in setting up United Way of Baroda, a fund raising agency which met the financial needs of nearly 35 to 40 non-governmental organizations of Gujarat. "A fatherly figure, friend and mentor," noted Vaswani of Nanavatty, "I shall always remember his smile, bright eyes and an alert mind." Their dream of expanding United Way Baroda to United Way Gujarat had remained unfulfilled as Vaswani migrated to USA and macular degeneration of the eyes restricted Nanavatty's activities in the last few years. He benefited though from student readers who spent time with him and from news and intellectual programs aired on television.

Known to take "keen interest in community matters and civic issues," the Senior Citizens' Forum recalled how he had made voluntary contributions to good causes like the maintenance of a rock garden and to Sadhana Trust. Yet



Nanavatty: expertise valued

another developmental effort, Prayatn, where he had served as trustee and chairperson of the program advisory committee, gave him credit for being "a visionary and a guiding force."

Referring to Nanavatty as "a thorough gentleman, indeed a rare commodity these days," World Bank consultant Dinshaw Joshi of Washington noted that he was "a highly respected intellectual and a great Zarathushti who did honor to his community." Actively interested in the activities of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA), until the end he remained a keen supporter and a critic at its annual general meetings, mentions Dolat. Despite being an ardent admirer of the late Shiavax Nargolwala, the far-sighted DPA president who had held the post for nearly 26 years, Nanavatty firmly believed that there should be a change in office bearers after two terms. Transparency, accountability and participation of the members should be the keystone of any successful anjuman, believed Nanavatty who preferred to step down after serving one term on the DPA board of management. Although he was not a very ritualistic Zoroastrian and opted for cremation, he practised the basic tenets of the religion in his life, notes his wife.

"To me, he was like a father, an uncle and a friend all rolled into one," acknowledged Zenobia Panthaky, a budget analyst with the World Bank at Washington, adding, "He lived life to the full and was a caring and intuitive person. He meant so much to so many and he touched many lives..."

The social welfare expert is survived by his wife Dolat and daughter Meherangez.

MONIES FOR MUKTAD

continued from page 39

they comprise prayers for the well-being and long reign of the sovereign, for good government by him, and for victory to him over all his enemies. The muktad ceremonies tend most unmistakably towards the advancement of the religion promulgated by the Persian Prophet Zoroaster, and the performance of these ceremonies is an act of divine worship in its highest and truest sense."



The author is a solicitor practising in the Bombay High Court.

READERS' FORUM

continued from page 13

sion for a person like me to be dragged away from such good and tasty Parsi food in lieu of five star tandoori or an Italian lasagna or a French cuisine.

The Dharamshala has also played host to Parsi cricket teams from Surat, Hyderabad, Jamshedpur and Nagpur during the play off in Calcutta as guests of the CZCRFC. The Dharamshala is packed during the lagan and navjote season. The proximity of the Dharamshala to the Dhunjibhoy Byramjee Mehta's Atash Adaran gave me an opportunity to visit the agiary every single day, something we miss so dearly in Australia.

The Dharamshala is located on Bow Street, Bow Bazaar which was once the central hub of Calcutta where Zoroastrians, Anglo-Indians, Muslims, Jews and Bengalis all lived in harmony. The old buildings built by Parsis around this central area are now under heritage listing (over 100 years old). Madon Street boasts of many buildings of great architectural and aesthetic value. There is even a toddy shop in the adjacent street owned by a rich Parsi family.

China town and the famous Kamling restaurant used to be a few minutes' walk from the Dharamshala. However today, all the restaurants have disappeared due to burgeoning slums on those same streets. While Somerset Maugham may have liked to stay in the famous Raffles in Singapore or The Orient in Bangkok and Hongkong, give me the Calcutta Dharamshala and all its trimmings.

JEHANGIR MEHTA

Perth, Australia

Conjecture on vessels

The Zoroastrians migrated from Iran to the west coast of India in the 10th century AD using the sea route. Not much information is available on the



Sketch of a vessel used in the 10th century AC

type of boat used by our ancestors.

Dr Jean Deloche, a well-known Indologist and author of the book *Boats in Ancient India* writes that the type of boat called "dungiyah" used in early 19th century in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea was probably a replica of the ancient vessels in the area.

Deloche also cites Admiral Paris, an authority on the vessels in use outside Europe: These vessels, probably the oldest in the Indian seas go back to the time of Alexander's expedition, their features suggest that they have since then practically remained unchanged and surprisingly still continue to be in use.

Dr V. M. MEHER-HOMJI

Silent stalwart

The city of Bombay lost another religious stalwart Curset M. Patel on September 11, 2002.

He used to publish a religious magazine on behalf of the Dini Avaz committee. I was first introduced to this great religious writer as "Khatli" at a family get-together some years back. A sober, handsome man with a smart French beard I knew that he was working in a bank as an officer but I was not aware that his real name was Curset Patel and he was the same unassuming person who used to write beautiful religious articles. He was indeed a very dedicated person doing his duty silently for his religion.

DINSHAW D. NATERWALLA

A religion lost?

Racism, discrimination, bigotry/Babas, gurus, and Virgin Mary/Sai Baba, Meher Baba et al/Aren't we a sad and pathetic lot?

For our Zoroastrian community/To advance/We need a leader who/In face of adversity/Will not flinch or cower.

To some I say:"Why the ban?"/Why behave like/The Shiv Sena or/The Klu Klux Klan?/May I remind you/That we ourselves/Are living/On borrowed land. I do implore/"Ye men of white/Your valuable knowledge/To us do impart:/Leave it to the laity/To shift the grain/From the shaft./As well as lead/Our community/On the right path."

May the guiding light of Ahura Mazda/Lead us all on the path of/Humata, hukhta, huhrashta.

FARIDA BAMJI

Ottawa, Canada

Edited by Parinaz M. Gandhi

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