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JULY 21, 2006

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Parsiana

July 21, 2006
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The racial divide

Two incidents that came to light in the past month have once again focused on a crucial community issue: the status of interfaith married couples.

The first was the case of a Parsi lady married to a non-Parsi who was denied entry in the Sir J. J. Agiary in Poona. The concerned priest justified the action proclaiming he had the right to decide who could enter or not depending on whether he viewed their presence as a perceived threat to the "holy fire."

The second, which is featured in this issue, is the ban on a non-Parsi spouse from attending a gahambar in Secunderabad.

In the Poona case the priest was in violation of the laws of the land and the trustees of the Agiary were his accomplices. The aggrieved lady apparently does not want to pursue the case in the courts and thus an illegal practice may continue.

In the Secunderabad episode, the association hosting the gahambar may have been within their legal rights to deny entry to non-Parsis, but their action was divisive. The object of a gahambar is to bring the community together. But what constitutes the "community" is the question.

Are we to go on the basis of racial purity? Then any Parsi with a G6PD enzyme deficiency should be barred from all trusts, amenities, socials, etc meant for Parsi Zoroastrians. The gene causing the deficiency is not found among Zoroastrians in Iran but among the tribals in India. The inference is clear.

In Bombay almost one in three marriages is outside the faith. One in three Parsis are unmarried. So only one third is procreating "pure"

Parsis. Minus those with the G6PD deficiency enzyme and the figure may fall from one-third to one-tenth, if not less.

Outside of Bombay and certain towns in Gujarat, the interfaith marriage rate may be 50 percent or more. So fire temples and associations that opt for racial purity as the basis for admission may find their agiaries empty and gahambar tables lined with unoccupied chairs.

In Iran where Zoroastrianism was born and nurtured, no restrictions are placed on the presence of non-Parsis, either in the fire temple or at funerals or at community get-togethers. In Delhi, Jamshedpur and Madras, amongst other places in India, non-Parsi spouses are included in socio-religious events. The children of Parsi women married out of the community can enter the fire temple in Delhi and Jamshedpur.

In North America (NA) most Zoroastrian associations permit the non-Parsi spouse membership in the organization and participation in all events. Of course North America does not have any fire temples but even if it did, it is doubtful that the laws of the land would permit racial discrimination. Nor would the NA Zoroastrians wish to discriminate. After all they owe a debt of gratitude to their new homeland and its citizens.

The Parsis in India seem to be ambivalent towards their host country. Would Jai Rana or any other monarch or princeling, real or mythical, have permitted the Parsi boat people sanctuary if they were told the presence of Hindus would "pollute" or "weaken" the spiritual aspects of Zoroastrianism? Would the king have accorded

hospitality if he knew that Hindu men and women who married into this band of refugees would be treated as outcasts?

How many Zoroastrians have flourished in Iran in the last 100 years? Contrast that with the accomplishments of Parsis in India. From industry to military service, from politics to medicine, from law to social reform, Zoroastrians have been pioneers.

Why did this not happen in Iran? Why do we remain a discriminated minority in our country of origin while here we are permitted to excel? Because we live in a free country. Because the majority of Indians are broad-minded and tolerant. Because we have not been discriminated against.

Bombay has 50 fire temples. How many are there in Iran? The Indian constitution not only guarantees fundamental human rights for all citizens, it also accords minorities further rights and safeguards. And how do we repay these large-hearted people and country for giving us protection and freedom?

We had asked two high priests for their opinion on the gahambar ban, wondering if the grievance of a hurt spouse would move them to reconsider discriminatory practices. Unfortunately they have justified the exclusion. If priests and lay men think along these lines, the possibility of socioreligious change becomes remote. How then do we right the wrongs?

Islam faces the same dilemma. Clerics and fundamentalists justify terrorism in the name of religion. Similarly we justify discrimination on religious grounds. Yet neither Islam nor Zoroastrianism preached violence or discrimination as a way of life.

Where did we go wrong? How do we go back to the original teachings of the religion? The answer eludes us.

So they say

"There had never been a talk about Iranian religious minorities having to wear different color patches in order to be distinguished from Moslems."

Parviz Varjavand quoting Iranian MP Kourosh Niknam, *Hamazor*, Issue 2, 2006

"The Zarathushti cemeteries in Iran are open to the public and during the funeral as well as memorial services, friends and colleagues, regardless of their religion, attend."

Daryoush Jahanian, MD, founder and president of Fravahar Zoroastrian youth organization in Tehran, *FEZANA Journal*, Winter 2005

"He (Polly Umrigar) was one of the most disciplined cricketers. We were playing against Saurashtra (1961-62) in Jamnagar. It was a mat wicket, and the scores read 100 for 6. It was then that I along with Farokh Engineer stabilized the innings. I got out on the last ball

before lunch at 151. I came back expecting a pat on the back from (captain Umrigar). We won the match but he said, 'You played well but Ajit I wanted you to stay there and score 200.'"

Ajit Wadekar, cricketer, *Hindustan Times*, June 17, 2006

"Chances that Indians say that an inter-caste marriage is unacceptable: 74 in 100. Chances that Indians say that an interreligious marriage should be opposed: 56 in 100."

14 & 15 HT-CNN-IBN State of the Nation Survey, *Business India*, July 2, 2006

"I don't think that Parsis get offended when people refer to them as half mad, but they should be offended because they are more than half mad."

Boman Irani, actor, *The Times of India*, March 24, 2006

"It should be remembered that even large industries have crashed due to their non-compliance/negligence on the tax compliance front and it was aptly observed in *M'culloch v/s Maryland* (1890) that 'the power to tax involves the power to destroy.'"

R. Daruwala, *Philanthropy*, March-April 2006

"The Urban Land Ceiling Act over the years has frozen huge urban areas thereby reducing the supply of land for residential development; created a vast black market in real estate; inflated realty prices and aggravated housing shortages."

Hafeez Contractor, architect, *The Indian Express*, July 5, 2006

"Did you know that the springless lock patent was granted by King Edward VII to Godrej?"

Vrunda Pathare, archivist - Godrej Archives, *Change*, March-April, 2006

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[*Haptan Yasht (Large) - Khordeh Avesta*]

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"The specter of ..."

On reading your editorial "The specter of Doongerwadi" (*Parsiana*, June 7, 2006) I have two comments to make:

The ozone gas equipment, which is placed in the Anjuman dakhma, does not help in decomposing the body at all. Its function is to absorb the stench, purify the emission and release it in the atmosphere.

You also mention that "the drug diclofenac being banned by the Government of India on May 11, 2006... it will be a number of years before the vulture population grows." It is imperative to point out that according to a report in *The Times of India* dated May 23, 2006 this drug has been banned only for veterinary use. Hence, since the Parsi community and others will continue to use this drug, it will undoubtedly harm the vultures.

Dr HOMI DHALLA

"An unzoroastrian act"

This has reference to Berjis M. Desai's article titled, "An unzoroastrian act" (*Parsiana*, June 7, 2006). Desai's vitriolic attack on the elderly panthaky of Poona's Sir J. J. Agiary Ervad Eruchshaw B. Dastur is unwarranted and in absolutely poor taste. We fail to understand what has prompted Desai to rake up this unnecessary controversy? We also wonder why Desai, who is not only an eminent lawyer but also a journalist, did not bother to verify the truth and ascertain the facts with the panthaky or the behdins of Poona before rushing to the Press. Where is the 'fairness' and 'sense of justice' that columnists like Desai often preach to others but seldom practise?

As far as we know, neither the lady (Khushnum Chouhan) nor her family has complained to anyone. It therefore seems that this is all a planned and mischievous conspiracy to malign and tarnish the reputation of an elderly, dedicated and much respected priest and create with malefic intent, a rift between the panthaky and the trustees of the Agiary.

I have been a regular worshipper at the Sir J. J. Agiary for the past 70 years and I have personally known Dastur ever since he became the panthaky of this Agiary more than a quarter of a century ago. He is a very pious, humble and conscientious priest who takes his priestly duties very seriously. He has maintained the Agiary and its sanctity with selfless dedication and personal care. In my view the Sir J. J. Agiary is one of the cleanest and most popular agiaries in Poona and this is thanks largely to the efforts of Dastur who has not only been a good administrator but also a good fundraiser for the Agiary's maintenance and upkeep.

Desai has alleged that Khushnum Chouhan, a Parsi lady married to a non-Parsi was not permitted by Dastur to sit in the Agiary for her late mother's and her late aunt's prayers. This is a blatant lie. Khushnum had often been visiting the Agiary after her marriage and if one may add, without observing the 'tarikats' (spiritual observances) of the religion. Yet, Dastur, though hurt and disappointed would hold his peace to keep the dignity and decorum of the place of worship under his charge.

Chouhan's advocate seems to have

served a notice to Dastur stating to the effect that his client had never renounced Zoroastrianism. Desai has added that marriage under the Special Marriage Act does not amount to change of religion.

With great respect to these legal pundits I would like to pose a few counter questions and make a few observations of my own:

◦How can one claim that Chouhan has not renounced the Zoroastrian faith when in fact she has flouted one of the most important tenet and practice of the faith by marrying outside the fold?

◦If as alleged, she is a practising Zoroastrian, does she still wear the sudreh-kusti? Does she recite her Zoroastrian prayers? Does she perform the padyab-kusti before entering the Agiary?

◦There is no explicit provision in the Special Marriage Act, 1954, laying down that a woman marrying under the Act continues to enjoy the same religious rights and benefits after the marriage, or that she will be entitled to the use of the institutions of her religion in which she was born or which she professed immediately before her marriage.

◦The Special Marriage Act confers no special civil right to anyone in matters of religion. All the 51 sections and five schedules of the Act are silent on this subject.

◦Under the earlier Special Marriage Act, 1872, if a Parsi professing the Zoroastrian religion wished to marry under the Act, he or she had to make a declaration that he or she did not profess the Zoroastrian religion. In the present Act (i.e. the Special Marriage Act, 1954), there is no such provision for making such a declaration (i.e. renouncing one's religion). The absence of this provision is the only trump card relied upon by the champions of the alleged rights of Parsi women married to non-Parsis under the Special Marriage Act. The question is, can the mere absence of a provision confer a civil right?

◦India being a secular state, and having given constitutional rights of freedom of religion to individual citizens as also to religious denominations, no civil legislation can have such provisions as may disturb such religious freedom. Who can be a member of a particular religious denomination or who can have a right to insist on being a member thereof and

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being entitled to the use of its religious institutions is determined by the personal law of that denomination which, again, is based on the precepts, beliefs and tenets of the religion. Whether a person continues to be a Parsi, Hindu or Muslim and whether he/she is entitled to the use of the religious institutions are questions for the denomination to decide. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Special Marriage Act is deliberately silent on this question.

In view of the above, I am of the opinion that Dastur cannot be faulted if he chooses to stand firm on his religious beliefs and exercises his powers as a panthaky to deny admission to persons like Chouhan.

Desai who reportedly is himself an ordained priest has urged the trustees of the Sir J. J. Agiary to throw Dastur out of the Agiary. This impulsive and malicious hint is not only in poor taste but also absurd. The trustees of the Agiary may be the custodians of the funds and properties of the Agiary. However they neither have the right nor the competence to interfere in religious matters.

Dastur is a very senior and much respected priest who enjoys the full confidence and trust of the devout behdins of Poona. The attack against him is malafide, mischievous and calculated to cause him grievous hurt and harm. However, we would like to inform persons like Desai that the behdins of Poona who patronize the Agiary will rally round their beloved panthaky and stand solidly by his side no matter what the odds.

Outsiders like Desai may rake up a storm in the Press and get away with it. However, if push comes to shove, the behdins of Poona will not only defend their panthaky but ensure that those who threaten him will regret having ever picked up the gauntlet.

C. P. MEHTA
Poona

Berjis Desai replies

Even allowing for the fact that C. P. Mehta is an octogenarian, his letter bristles with illogical arguments. Mehta first states that "neither the lady nor her family has complained to anyone." He proceeds to then state that "Chouhan's advocate seems to have served a notice" to Dastur. The panthaky may indeed be performing his duties very well but that does not give him the right to deny entry to a Parsi Zoroastrian. Mehta denies that Dastur did not permit entry to the lady

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Events and Personalities

Bombay blasts

Cyrus Munshi who had come to Bombay from Madras died in the blasts on July 11, 2006 that killed over 200 people traveling on the city's train network. Zarin Mistry from Madras informed *Parsiana* of his sad demise: "We are all quite shattered... (he was) a very enthusiastic and cheerful young man." Munshi was in Madras with his wife Ferzin and small son, informs Mistry. He "was returning from his third day at a new job," she added.

The aftermath

The 10-day drama of allegations and counter allegations, of mass resignation of four trustees from the board of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP), and their subsequent return, has not added to their popularity. Anger and cynicism marked the community's reaction to the fracas as reflected in the columns of the *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly*, the "Parsi Tari Arsi (PTA)" section of *The Bombay Samachar* and the WAPIZ Page in the *Afternoon Despatch and Courier*.

Panning the joint statement signed by all the six trustees PTA columnist Berjis Desai noted on July 2, 2006, "They owe the community an explanation for all this soap opera they provided us... Do the quartet (chairman Minoo Shroff, and trustees Dinshaw Tamboly, Minoo Engineer and Burjor Antia) and Mehta have the right to level the most serious allegations against each other and then unconditionally withdraw them without offering any reasons for the same?"

The *Jamé* (July 9, 2006) was equally incredulous: "The joint statement wants the reader to believe that the continuing trustees, i.e. even Dinshaw Mehta, 'made an earnest request to the other trustees (i.e. including Dinshaw Tamboly and Maneck Engineer) to withdraw their resignations.' Possibly, even

if one were to wake up Dinshaw Mehta in the middle of the night, he would not make such a request. He would murmur in his sleep 'Good riddance to bad rubbish.'"

Writing in the WAPIZ Page of July 13, former BPP trustee and noted tax lawyer Homi Ranina termed the withdrawal of the four resignation, "contrary to the scheme of elections and without authority of law. The four erstwhile trustees cannot enter the BPP office as trustees."

According to public trusts expert Noshir Dadrawala, "The question arises, who or what gave Shroff the power or the authority to accept with such haste the resignation of his three colleagues, without putting the matter before his other two colleagues, the surviving trustees Dadi Engineer and Dinshaw Mehta? No resignation can be considered accepted unless decided by all the surviving trustees..."

A disillusioned Shroff told *Parsiana*, "There is no question of our sticking to the chair. The four of us wanted to go, to make way for new blood. Once the court decides we will know whether to go ahead with the new scheme of election or old. We came back to stabilize things. Let the community decide what they want, whom they want..."

Arnavaz Mama

Twin cities gahambar

For the first time in the 76-year-old history of the Zoroastrian Club a gahambar was hosted for the entire Parsi Zoroastrian community of the twin cities of Secunderabad and Hyderabad on June 4, 2006, according to a report of the function by president Ervad Kerfegar Antia.

The evening celebrations commenced with the Maidyarem gahambar jashan performed by the mobeds of all the three agiaries of the twin cities. After partak-

ing of the chasni, and the personal welcome from Lt Col Aspi Eduljee, the honorary secretary of the Club and other committee members, the congregation proceeded to the beautifully decorated and illuminated pandal for the ensuing program.

Antia briefed the gathering on the origin of the gahambars and later Ervad Mehernosh Bharucha, panthaky of the Bai M. N. Chenoy Agiary, Hyderabad gave a thought-provoking talk on "Proud to be a Zoroastrian." He referred to the difficulties

faced by our forefathers after the downfall of the Sasanian empire and how after considerable privations the minuscule community has prospered in India and given so much to the country in all fields. Goolbanoo Chenoy, president of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and Hyderabad, then presented a memento to Bharucha on behalf of the Club, adds the write-up.

The highlight of the evening was the delicious gahambar dinner, painstakingly prepared by Abad Wadia and his family. Non-Parsi spouses though were not allowed to join in the dinner which led to a protest from Padmini Patell (see "Perhaps a rethink," pg 16).



Bharucha: thought-provoking

Indo-Iranian initiative

"There is a lot of Indian investment in Iran," stated Minoo Shroff, president of the Indo-Iranian Friendship Society (IIFS) and chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) addressing a gathering of invitees and Iranian consular corps officials on June 27, 2006 at the Kilachand Conference Hall at the Indian Merchants' Chamber building. "Trade is ample" but industrial ties, joint venture projects "are not so many," he noted.



From left: Dotivala, Shokrani Shroff; Dastur (above) and Colah; in the foyer of Tehran's Bhikha Behram Agiary: Shroff, Dr Ardishir Khorshidi and Koorosh Niknam

Shroff was part of a 17-member delegation of Indian office bearers of the IIFS who visited Iran at the invitation of the Iranian government in May this year. Other invitees included BPP chief executive officer and vice president of IIFS Behram Dastur, Mehli Colah, chief financial officer of the BPP, and Havovi and Godrej Dotivala, the latter being the public relations officer of the BPP.

Shroff, who has visited Iran four times over the last 30 or so years described Tehran during the Pahlavi dynasty as "very glitzy," akin to "any mid sized

European city." At that time Iran produced around six million barrels of oil a day at eight US \$ a barrel.

Today Iran produces four million barrels, of which 2.8 is exported at US \$ 70 a barrel! They want to "conserve this valuable" irreplaceable resource, said Shroff explaining the reason for the cut-back in production. Saudi Arabia in contrast produces 10 million barrels of oil per day. Iran expects to earn \$ 380 billion in oil revenue in the next five years (caviar, carpets and nuts are the other major exports).

Petrol in Iran is priced at Rs 3.60 per litre as versus around Rs 50 in India.

Diesel is one rupee a litre in Iran. "Their per capita income is twice ours," said Shroff. Iran is half the size of India with a population of 70 million, he noted.

Describing Iran as "a confident nation on the move," Shroff opined people were "well groomed, disciplined and self-restrained... one hardly saw any policemen." The government wants to "open up" the economy. "They want to liberalize and downsize government... 65 percent of women go to university. They are educated out of choice." He described the women as "attractive and beautiful" and "not shy to talk with a stranger."

The bazaars had an oriental ambience and one had to bargain as in India,



Clockwise from left: Guzder, Minoo Shroff, Irani, Viraf Patel, Doodhwala, Tarapore, Turner, Mehta, dance sequence, pageant winners Palia, K. Billimoria, Kayani, Irani, V. Billimoria, Cooper and Guard Photos: Homz Prints



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noted Shroff. "The US dollar is the most preferred currency...air connectivity within the country is good." Referring to Iran's great cultural heritage Shroff said the Iranians took pride in maintaining their monuments.

A similar sentiment was expressed by Dastur who observed that unlike in India, the Iranians knew how to preserve their heritage. "The mosques are truly worth seeing... In India, the holier the place, the dirtier it is." Many Zoroastrian artifacts were on sale, he noted and many of the "buyers are Muslims."

Dastur bemoaned Iran's policy of not accepting credit or debit cards, thus throwing a dampener on tourism. He noted more English speaking guides were required and that the shopkeepers "hardly speak English." Encouraging Indians to visit Iran, the consul general Mohammed Shokrani noted that all the four seasons existed in Iran at the same time. Iran ranked seventh in UNESCO's list of countries that preserved their historic monuments, museums and fostered cultural activities.

Dotivala who compered the event and also presented an interesting slide show said that India was the motherland of Parsis and Iran, the fatherland.

May King after the Queen

The main purpose of the May Queen Ball is to bring the young boys and girls together during the summer vacation so that they can learn to sing, dance, make new friends and hopefully find future life partners, explained Dr Porus Turner, president of the Sir Ness Wadia Club. The second aim is to gather funds for the numerous community activities like the All Parsis Athletic Coaching Camp, The Body Beautiful and the weight lifting competition, cricket, football, badminton and other all Parsi tournaments, besides different events organized by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) on the Rustom Baug grounds. These activities are greatly encouraged by the N. N. Wadia and R. N. Wadia Trust headed by Nusli Wadia and assisted by Dhun Gagrati, notes a press release giving details of the 14th May Queen Ball held on April 30, 2006.

The May Queen 2006 crown was conferred on Hoorzan Irani with Vahbiz Billimoria being the first runner up and Kaizeen Kayani, the second runner-up. Kainaaz Billimoria won the Miss Vivacious title, Dilshad Palia, the Colgate Total Smile contest, Phiroza Cooper, the best hair and Shaheen Guard, Body

Beautiful. "It was a delight to see our young girls so confidently and with great poise walk the ramp displaying their beauty and elegance," states the release. The contestants were put through 10 days of rigorous yet fun-filled grooming under the efficient supervision of Hutoxi Doodhwala, supported by Mickey Mehta of 360° Gym Health Beyond Fitness. The grooming team included Yasmin Kadodwala, Farokh Chothia, Anaita Shroff Adajania, Sandip Soparrkar, Yazmeen Contractor, Perizad Kolah Marshal, Viraf Patel, Hufriya Bhiwandiwala, Shermeen Jal, Zenobia and Sharukh Davar. Next year they are planning a May King contest after grooming the boys.

The highlight of the evening was the entertainment program where Hormuzd Khambatta choreographed the dances and Natasha Bhamgara handled the costumes. The cheering and loud clapping and the repeated request for "encores" showed the crowd enjoyed the performances.

Commending the support of the BPP, particularly trustee Dinshaw Tamboly, the organizers also recognized that the pillars of the May Queen Ball are its sponsors. This year they had a record number of six sponsors: Jamshed Guzder, Colgate Palmolive, P. N. Writer and Company, Hilla Builders, the House of Tatas and Pepsi. As always the Ball was promoted by the Sir Ness Wadia Foundation and supported by the World Zoroastrian Organisation.

Among the others who deserve credit for the success of the program are Sarosh Daruwala of Mazda Audio Video Lab for the sound and music and many other courtesies, Bhola Sharma for the lights, Pavri and Company for the dance floor, Parvez Unwala and Pervin Mistry for the catering, Berges Tarapore for his compering and Rustom Jasoomoney, Adi Vazifdar, Rohinton Anklesaria and Ashdin Billimoria for their valuable inputs.

A'bad's unsung heroes

In appreciation of their "silent, dedicated and untiring social service to our *humdins* (community members) and mankind at large," a few Parsi unsung heroes of Ahmedabad were felicitated at a function commemorating the 10th death anniversary

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Shethna felicitating Dalal as RSMCT trustees look on

sary of Roda Savak Mohudawala on May 21, 2006. The trustees of the Roda Savak Mohudawala Charitable Trust (RSMCT) selected Naju Dalal, Zarin Cambatta, Minni Patel, Hutoxi Daruwala and Tehmas Commissariat as the "unsung heroes" each of whom was presented a memento, shawl and a bouquet of flowers by chief guest K. J. Shethna, senior advocate of the Gujarat High Court, notes a press release.

In his welcome address trustee Porus Karanjawalla outlined the activities of RSMCT which included distribution of food grains to around 65 households in Ahmedabad, and notebooks to around 35 Parsi households at the start of the academic year. In addition they give loans for higher education as also for entrepreneurship and medical causes. Among the new facilities introduced by the Trust is the availability of a vehicle from Medora Travels at the Trust's expense for auspicious occasions or untoward happenings in the family. Upcoming and talented sportspersons from the community, preferably from Ahmedabad, will be given financial assistance for their training or for the purchase of superior quality equipment. Karanjawalla also mentioned that from the funds donated by the Mohudawala couple to the Ahmedabad Parsi Panchayat (APP) they were able to build the Mohudawala Mansion at Doongervadi, distribute food grains, give education aid and loans for cottage industries, as also host a community dinner every year.

The trustees of the Zoroastrian Hall were thanked for their cooperation and so also the youth who rendered help in the organization of the function and the nearly 550 community members who had gathered on the occasion for the felicitation and the dinner that followed.

Compiled by Parinaz M. Gandhi

Iranian angst

The stand-off between Iran and the United States is getting reflected in ways that spark concern for the Zoroastrian community heritage dating back thousands of years. The most prominent is the court battle being fought in the US whereby institutions and museums holding national Iranian artifacts on trust are being ordered to sell them so that the proceeds can be used to fund the victims of state terrorism attributed to the Iranian government.

"The University of Chicago's Oriental Institute is currently in possession of ancient Iranian artifacts including a collection of 2,500-year-old tablets, acquired on loan in 1937, which chronicle the daily workings of the Persian Empire. The University is being sued to turn over the artifacts as restitution to victims of a 1997 bombing in Israel. Representing five Americans injured in that attack, David J. Strachman successfully sued the Iranian government for 71.5 million dollars on the grounds that Iran is responsible as a state sponsor of terrorism. In order to recover this sum from a non-responsive Iranian government who has thus far declined to appear in the US courts or to acknowledge their judgments, Strachman has demanded that the University and several museums auction their collection of ancient artifacts and turn over the funds to him and his clients," writes Niki Akhavan in *Payvand Iran News* (July 5, 2006).

"A federal judge has rejected a key defense by the University of Chicago in a lawsuit over rights to ancient Persian artifacts, a decision bound to ripple through the American museum community," concurs Ron Grossman's report in *The Tribune* dated June 28, 2006. "The judge's decision comes as American museums are facing tough questions about how they acquired certain collections. The Metropolitan Museum of Art recently agreed to return invaluable antiquities that Italian authorities said had been looted from that country. The J. Paul Getty Museum is negotiating a similar claim with Italy.

"University of Chicago had argued that it needed to protect Iran's rights to the property, even though Iran declined to come to court. The University said the Iranians were gun-shy because of bad

experiences with the American legal system, a claim rejected by US district judge Blanche M. Manning in Chicago.

"In a published decision Manning ruled the University's 'brazen accusation that the courts of the United States are hostile to Iran and that, as a result, Iran should be excused from bothering to assert its rights, is wholly unsupported.'"

While Strachman, is ready to translate the judge's ruling into cash for his clients by asking for a judicial sale, the US Department of Justice is said to be reviewing the court's ruling.

"In several recent cases involving US citizens and foreign nations, the Department of Justice intervened and claimed the national interest is better served if such disputes are resolved through diplomatic negotiations rather than legal suit, an argument revived in the University of Chicago case," adds Grossman.

Further complicating the issue are fears of US military action in Iran, as reported in *The New Yorker* (July 1, 2006). The article by Seymour Hersh refers to the statement of the US Secretary of State presenting a prospect of the US joining Russia, China and Europe in direct talks with the Iranian government provided "the Iranian regime fully and verifiably suspends its uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities." Hersh notes, "Iran, which has insisted on its right to enrich uranium, was being asked to concede the main point of the negotiations before they started. The question was whether the administration expected the Iranians to agree, or was laying the diplomatic groundwork for future military action."

Noting that President Bush has talked about "freedom for the Iranian people," with the corollary that "Iran's leaders have a clear choice," Hersh adds, "There was an unspoken threat: the US Strategic Command, supported by the Air Force, has been drawing up plans, at the President's direction, for a major bombing campaign in Iran."

The article quotes Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to have said that Iran would make a formal counter-proposal by August 22nd, while Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme reli-

gious leader, has declared, on state radio, "Negotiation with the United States has no benefits for us."

While the US Navy and Army have registered their reservations against US military action in Iran and warned that an attack could lead to serious economic, political and military consequences for the United States, as notes Hersh, the Air Force is seen to be in favor of the idea of "carpet bombing" in lieu of precise details of where the Iranian nuclear facilities exist.

One of the problems exercising Zoroastrians regarding Iran is the report in the *New York Post* (May 20, 2006) by Amir Taheri that a new law "mandates the government to make sure that all Iranians wear 'standard Islamic garments' designed to remove ethnic and class distinctions reflected in clothing, and to eliminate 'the influence of the infidel' on the way Iranians, especially the young, dress." The *Post* article was brought to *Parsiana's* attention by *FEZANA Journal* editor-in-chief Dolly Dastoor.

Taheri further notes, "It also envisages separate dress codes for religious minorities, Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians, who will have to adopt distinct color schemes to make them identifiable in public. The new codes would enable Muslims to instantly recognize non-Muslims so that they can avoid shaking hands with them by mistake, and thus becoming *najis* (unclean)."

The law, drafted during the presidency of Muhammad Khatami in 2004, had been blocked within the Majlis. That blockage, however, has been removed under pressure from Khatami's successor, Ahmadinejad, adds Taheri.

"The new law imposes a total ban on wearing neckties and bow ties, which are regarded as 'symbols of the Cross.' Will Iranian Christians be allowed to wear them, nevertheless? No one knows," writes Taheri.

"Another aim of the new law is to abolish the chador, the overall piece of cloth that Iranian women have tucked themselves in for centuries. The reason is that the chador existed before the Khomeinist revolution and thus cannot be regarded as 'properly Islamic.' Women must wear clothes that would,



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in fact, transform them into advertising billboards for the regime's ideology."

Quoting Mostafa Pourhaddani, minister of Islamic orientation, the *Post* article notes, "By September, the Majlis is expected to approve an initial budget of \$ 800 million to help 'the poor and the needy' adopt the new uniforms. All public-sector workers, estimated to number 4.5 million, will be in uniform by 2009 at the latest."

Parviz Varjavand in an e-mail posting on the Zoroastrians@yahoo groups.com writes, "I have just called Kourosh Niknam, the Zoroastrian deputy in the Iranian Parliament and he confirmed that this news was not true. There had been a

talk in the parliament about designing a dress-code for all Iranians in order to distinguish Iranians from other nationalities and specially fixing a standard for how Iranian women should wear proper Islamic coverings, but the proposal was voted down and never came to pass. There had never been a talk about Iranian religious minorities having to wear different color patches in order to be distinguished from Moslems."

Varjavand's statement is corroborated by Dr Mahbannoo Tata, professor emeritus in the University of Kerman. In an e-mail to this reporter Tata notes, "This was reported a long time ago and promptly disclaimed by the government. You probably know that these days the manteaux worn by

young girls do everything except what they are meant to i.e. 'hide the curves!' So ever so often they threaten to have guidelines for what can be sold in stores."

New FEZANA team

Elections at the annual general meeting of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) has ushered in a brand new executive team. Headed by Dr Rustom Kevala, now a resident of Florida, the other members include vice president Bomi Patel of Northern California, treasurer Katayun Kapadia of ZAPANJ (Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey), secretary Rita Engineer also from Florida and assistant secretary Anahita Daryushnejad of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario.

Sumariwalla and the UN



The United Nations Association of the USA, Southern Oregon chapter, has elected Bombay born international lawyer and expert on philanthropic and nonprofit



Left: FEZANA team: Kapadia, Kevala, Engineer and Patel (Right) Sumariwalla: "Guarded optimism"



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dent of its new board of directors, notes a press release. He describes himself as a lifelong student of the United Nations. Currently serving on the board of directors of the United Way of Jackson County Sumariwalla is simultaneously founder-president of Global Philanthropy and Non-profits. A resident of Medford, Oregon, along with his wife Anita, the former president and chief executive officer of the United Way International, has traveled and lectured extensively in over 30 countries.

The local Oregon chapter had been largely dormant until Sumariwalla, 72, became its president, notes Paul Fattig writing in the *Mail Tribune* (December 28, 2005). Valuing the international scale of UN operations, especially its peacekeeping forces, Sumariwalla told Fattig, "As members of the UN Association we can approach our legislators and urge them to support the UN, not to cut dues, for example...I have guarded optimism (regarding the future of the UN). It is better to believe the glass is half-full rather than half-empty. And I think

the glass is more than half-full."

Toronto needs a professor

The University of Toronto is in search of a suitable candidate as assistant professor of Zoroastrian history at its Mississauga campus by September 1, 2006. The announcement, in the name of Prof Mohamad Tavakoli, chair of the Zoroastrian Search Committee in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* (July 9, 2006) notes that the candidate must be qualified — upto the doctoral level — to teach in all areas of Zoroastrianism and its possible impact on the development of Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam.

The tenure-stream assistant professor position would also entail the teaching and supervision of research on Zoroastrian diasporas. The applicant would need to be proficient in two or more of the pertinent source languages and would be expected to share the department's commitment to transdisciplinary historical enquiry. The selected candidate will be expected to contribute to a new undergraduate program in the history of religions at Mississauga and to the research-intensive doctoral

program in the graduate department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations at the St George Campus of the University of Toronto.

Applicants are urged to send a covering letter, a curriculum vitae, a sample of academic writing, a teaching portfolio and a short description of current research plans along with three references to the university on line at www.utm.utoronto.ca/3393.0.html. Enquiries may be addressed to m.tavakoli@utm.utoronto.ca

"The University of Toronto is strongly committed to diversity within its community and welcomes applications from visible minority group members, women, aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities, members of sexual minority groups and others who may contribute to the further diversification of ideas," states the letter.

A caveat notes that though all qualified candidates are encouraged to apply, Canadians and permanent residents will be given priority.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama



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"Perhaps a rethink"

By barring non-Parsi spouses from gahambars the community is hastening its disintegration, states an aggrieved wife

A gahambar in Secunderabad has sparked a controversy over the exclusion of non-Parsi Zoroastrian spouses from the event.

Parsiana carries letters from the aggrieved wife Padmini Bomi Patell, the president of the Zoroastrian Club, Secunderabad, Kerfegar Antia as well as opinions from Dastur (Dr) Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa, Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal, Sir Jivanji J. Modi (from his treatise *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*) and Prof Mary Boyce (from her work *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*). *Parsiana* had requested the two High Priests for their views.

"Callous manner"

I, Padmini B. Patell, a Hindu, am married for the last 15 years to a Zoroastrian. I would like to make the Zoroastrian community aware of the callous manner in which non-Zoroastrian ladies married to Zoroastrians are treated.

Earlier this month, a Maidyarem gahambar jashan was held at the Zoroastrian Club, Secunderabad. The circular for this particular jashan ends with the statement "this being a purely religious function entry is restricted to Parsi Zoroastrians only."

It is common knowledge that we are not permitted to attend the religious jashan ceremony. But what harm is there in allowing us to attend the gahambar which is anyway supposed to foster harmony? Anyway the food is cooked by non-Zoroastrian cooks unlike in the old days, I am informed, where only Zoroastrians cooked the gahambar food.

A written request to the president of the Zoroastrian Club, Secunderabad for an explanation has received no response in two weeks. *Parsiana* (June 7, 2006) carried an article "An unzoroastrian act" wherein Ervad Eruchsha B. Dastur of Poona is quoted: "When a Zoroastrian lady has married a non-Zoroastrian, she has embraced the faith of her husband,

and to that degree ceases to be a Zoroastrian." Would the corollary to his statement then read "When a non-Zoroastrian lady marries a Zoroastrian, she embraces the faith of her husband, and to that degree becomes a Zoroastrian?"

If his was truly an "unzoroastrian act" this one should be termed a downright "inhuman act" where instead of promoting integration and harmony through events such as the gahambar, the focus is on disintegration, thanks to certain members of the committee who choose to keep the blinkers on!

With the number of interfaith marriages on the rise, perhaps a rethink on permitting non-Zoroastrian spouses to attend non-religious functions will not be out of line. Not to mention that simple gestures of inclusion that really do not threaten anyone's faith, being a huge advantage to any fast dwindling community!

PADMINI B. PATELL

Hyderabad

"No right to interfere"

At the outset I (Kerfegar Antia) would like to state that just by virtue of being married to a Zoroastrian, Padmini Patell has no right to interfere nor advise us regarding the tenets of our religion. This was precisely why we did not deem it fit to reply to her letter.

Another point to note is that Bomi Patell, husband of Padmini Patell, is the vice president of our Club and was very much a party to the unanimous decision taken by the managing committee on April 12, 2006 to restrict entry to Parsi Zoroastrians only, for the gahambar. The same was duly minuted and the minutes were confirmed on May 9, 2006. Both the meetings were very much attended by Bomi Patell who never recorded any dissent on the issue.

Thereafter, Bomi Patell requested the undersigned to invite non-Parsi spouses at least for the dinner. In response to his request I and the panthaky of our

Hyderabad Agiary, Ervad Mehernosh Bharucha, who also happens to be a member of the managing committee of our Club, briefed Bomi Patell to his satisfaction, about the sanctity of a gahambar and the reasons for restricting entry to Parsi Zoroastrians only. I was therefore surprised to learn that Bomi Patell's wife who is a non-Zoroastrian has now objected to the Club restricting entry to Parsi Zoroastrians only for the gahambar.

Gahambars are essentially community get-togethers followed by a community dinner, the idea being to bring Zoroastrians from all walks of society on one platform. Our Parsi children nowadays are more in the company of non-Parsi friends and hence the need to bring them closer to their Zoroastrian brethren. If one occasion is restricted to meeting and knowing their own co-religionists, can the intentions be regarded as malafide? Some people are very particular about family get-togethers on certain days because they realize the importance of family ties. In the same way, community get-togethers are done with the sole purpose of bonding the community.

Recently, gahambars were held at Poona, Bombay and some other places wherein also entry was restricted to "Parsi Irani" and "for all Zoroastrians" only, as published in their newspaper invites. Besides, our Zoroastrian Club holds programs and dinners often, entry to which is open to non-Parsi guests as well (Padmini Patell hardly attends them). Hence the committee felt the need to specify about the restricted entry for Parsi Zoroastrians for the gahambar dinner. If the entry to one program is restricted out of 10 programs in a year, it should not be a matter for creating such a ruckus. Padmini Patell appears to be the only one making such a hue and cry, which she did even in the past when entry to gahambars was restricted to Parsi Zoroastrians only. If one cannot view things in the proper perspective,

one can turn an ordinary situation into a problematic one. If one has a tendency to find fault in every word and trouble in every nook, life becomes miserable for them and for the world.

With our response as aforesaid, we are treating this issue as closed from our end.

Dastur JamaspAsa

He is perfectly justified. We agree with the views of the president of the Club. We cannot meddle...



Dastur Kotwal

According to tradition, Prophet Zarathushtra himself founded the celebratory seasonal feasts of obligation which later came to be known as gahambars. Each of the six festivals are linked to the six creations of Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom. The creations are the sky, water, earth, plants, animals and man. All six gahambars are dedicated to Ahura Mazda.

For celebrating the gahambar, the soul of a Zoroastrian receives merit in the spiritual world. Besides seasonal gahambars there are also endowed gahambars which a pious Parsi Zoroastrian may initiate in memory of a dear one.

The word gahambar has a variety of meanings which include "to assemble with one another in a work of merit," "a time for storing good deeds," "the period for receiving merit," or "to assemble at one place at one time." During this time it is obligatory for the Mazda worshipping Zoroastrians to pray and show gratitude to Ahura Mazda for His bounties. Hence a gahambar is always celebrated with a jashan followed by a community lunch or dinner partaken by Parsi Zoroastrians with due care and in a state of ritual purity. Furthermore, it is also seen to be an act of merit to have a stum ritual performed in memory of the righteous farohars before eating the specially prepared food during the gahambar celebration. Additionally it is believed that the partaking of food serves to strengthen the feelings of fellowship within the community as gahambars are seen to be solemnly observed communal feast days.

In fact, the prayer (Afrinagan) for the gahambar jashan enjoins Mazdayasnis

to make an offering of a fat sheep, some alcoholic liquor and some dry logs of wood (kathi) during the gahambar festival. In this Afrinagan prayer the term Mazdayasni is used seven times and the Mazda worshippers are warned of the punishment which would be meted out to them for the non-performance of this feast of obligation.

Thus, in a gahambar, the jashan and the partaking of the celebratory meal are inextricably linked to the religious life of a Mazdayasni. Therefore, participating in the feast of obligation (gahambar) is restricted to the Parsi Zoroastrian community, exclusively, as the theology of the gahambar cannot be transposed onto a non-Zoroastrian paradigm.

In my view, it is unbecoming of a non-Zoroastrian to encroach upon the spiritual rights and religious traditions of the Parsi community which continues to uphold its rich and time tested beliefs and practices within the religious mosaic of India.

The religious sentiments of the Parsi Zoroastrian community must be respected by non-Zoroastrians at all times in a live and let live manner, as the Parsi Zoroastrians have always done in India, for over a thousand years.

May wiser counsel prevail in order not to make an issue of a non-issue.

Prof Mary Boyce

In the latter half of the (19th) century, after the reformists had started girls' schools, women gradually began to take



part also in the public life of the community, and to attend what had previously been wholly male functions, such as the gahambar feasts. By then, however, these feasts, which for so many centuries had been a means of bringing rich and poor together, were no longer, in Bombay, an occasion for all Parsis of one locality to forgather. Their houses there were too scattered, and the rich had adopted foreign ways, and were no longer ready to sit at one cloth with the poor. So the ancient custom, though still observed, had degenerated there more or less into club or social dinners, though still with a religious element.

Sir Jivanji J. Modi

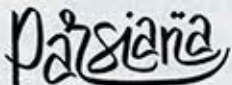
The gahambars are generally accompanied with solemn feasts, wherein members of the family, or residents of a street,

or a town participate... There may be public gahambars, celebrated by the members of a family or by the inhabitants of a particular street in a town or by those of a particular village or town. All may participate in these public gahambars. If one can afford, he may pay his mite, in money or in kind... Universal brotherhood, which we often hear spoken of, was one of the principal objects aimed at in the public gahambars. The rich and the poor — rich and poor not only in wealth but in intellectual knowledge — of the town were expected to meet together and to learn from each other's company what was best in it.



The editors reply

Though Modi talks of the gahambar being a family affair, Parsi women were not permitted to attend till the mid-19th century. We are now in the 21st century. In Bombay one out of three Parsis marries outside his or her faith. Elsewhere the number of interfaith marriages is much higher. If customs changed in the past, why can they not be adapted to present realities?



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The Holiday Programme for Youth marks its 20th anniversary with the composition of The HPY Song, a special souvenir and function at the Colaba Agiary

Hilla P. Guzder

'Striving for excellence' is the Programme's motto. "We are fully aware that we have to continue to maintain standards in an organization that is big on standing and repute," stated Diana Marfatia, chief coordinator of the Holiday Programme for Youth (HPY) in her welcome address at the inauguration of HPY's 20th successive summer program on May 1, 2006. "This year we have taken the responsibility to incorporate new things — focusing on dying Zoroastrian arts and customs such as kusti weaving, toran making and the teaching of Gujarati. A new dimension has been added with our fitness hour every morning."

"Like good wine, HPY has matured and got better and better," declared Priya Bhujwala-Aga, herself an HPYite and longtime organizing committee (OC) member who was master of ceremonies at the inauguration. Crisp, self-assured and radiantly pregnant, Bhujwala-Aga said that the multi-dimensional program has given back immense returns in the form of accomplishments and joy and "has been our wonderful home for 20 years."

HPY marked its 20th anniversary with the release of a special souvenir, the composition of *The HPY Song* and a valedictory function on a grander scale at the Jeejeebhoy Dadabhoy Agiary at Colaba.

This year's enrolment saw a preponderance of boys (120) to girls (86), with 146 from Bombay and 59 from places in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa, as well as Gurgaon (near Delhi), Jamshedpur, Ooty and one student from Dubai as well. Of the 80 different schools from which the children came, 36 were from outside Bombay. "We were bombarded with requests for accommodation and somehow managed to provide for 24 participants, in contrast to around half

that number who ask for lodging every year," Marfatia said. With the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) sponsoring the program, participants pay but a token



Releasing the souvenir (from left) Dinshaw Tamboly (seated), Rustom Jeejeebhoy, Soli Dastur, Dadi Engineer and Eruch Desai

registration fee for the lunches, teas, visits, prizes, etc for which costs are incurred.

Senior BPP trustee and solicitor Dadi Engineer chaired the inaugural function at the heritage hall of the 115-year-old Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsee Charitable Institution (BJPCI). Distinguished advocate of the Supreme Court of India and tax expert Soli Dastur was the chief guest, solicitor Eruch Desai and BJPCI trustee Rustom N. B. Jeejeebhoy were guests of honor. At the valedictory function on May 28, 2006 BPP chairman Minoo Shroff presided, with Dr Katy Dinshaw, director, Tata Memorial Centre as chief guest and popular film and theater personality Perizaad Zorabian as guest of honor.

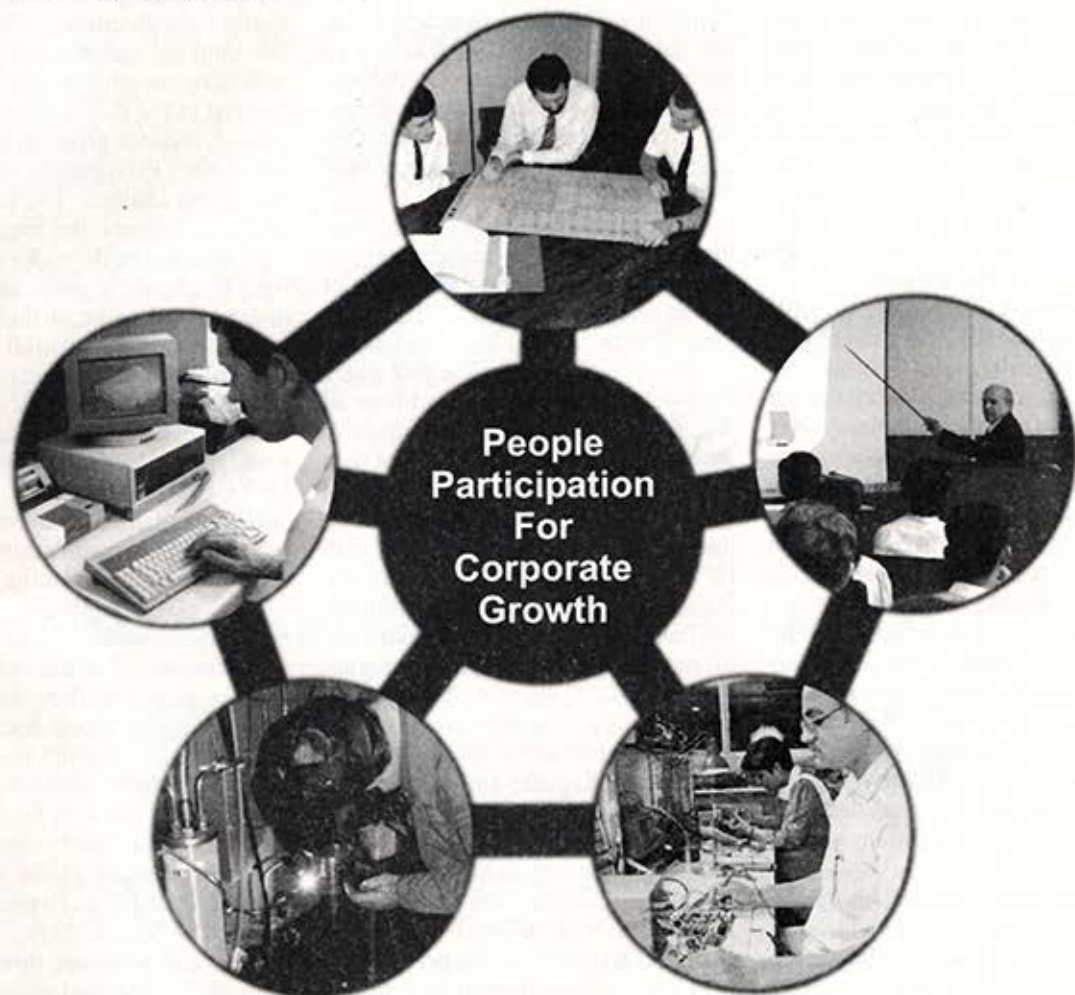
In his address, Engineer stated that HPY deserved "the biggest bouquet anyone could give." Engineer expressed special gratitude to a long list of people associated with the Programme over the years — Dr Mehroo Bengalee, ex BPP trustee whose brainchild HPY was, ex-

BPP chief executive, the late Rustom Anklesaria, recently retired senior executive Sheroo Master, present chief executive Behram Dastur, senior executive Cawas Panthaki, office assistants Bakhtavar Dastur and Persi Mistry, Marfatia and her young team of Bhujwala-Aga, Shirzad Khory, Pearl Mistry, Hoshang Gotla, Raika Gazder, Khurshid Mistry, Peshotan Kapadia, Azmin Mistry, Delaviz Gazder, Diana Bhathena, Rayomand Mistry and Delzin Tantra. "Organizing HPY is a

backbreaking, challenging experience. It is one of the most popular welfare activities of the BPP," notes Master, herself involved for almost two decades with the Programme.

Engineer introduced Soli Dastur as "perhaps the best tax brain in the whole of India," a man extremely humble, modest and self effacing who also has a very fine sense of humor. Soli Dastur's address to the students reflected the integrity he is known for: "Today you see things which were unheard of, undreamt of when we were your age. We went through an economy of shortages (in the pre-liberalization era). If you wanted a car, it had to be an Ambassador or you had to wait 20 years to book a Fiat. There was a ceiling of Rs 5,000 on salaries, anything more than that was disallowed for tax purposes. We lived in a misguided, socialist state." Today, one can earn five or even Rs 10 lakhs a month and there is nothing wrong with that, he added, provided you pay your taxes properly and do your civic duty. Freedom is to be admired, but handled with care as unrestricted freedom can lead to chaos.

Voicing his views forthrightly on community matters, Soli Dastur stated: "The community is dwindling. People say there is a dearth of accommodation.



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In a way perhaps that is correct. But is it so very impossible for a wife to stay with her husband's family, as a joint family? Accept this mode of life. But young couples insist: 'No, no, we must stay separately.' What is so special about us, Dastur asked, seeking a change of attitude. "Let us not always talk of the great Parsis of the past. We have to pull up our socks. I strongly urge you to start something independently where you are the boss." Dastur asked the youth to differentiate between custom and religion. "Religion is enduring, custom can change," he noted. "If I don't say what I feel, I am not true to myself. I cannot look at myself in the mirror."

Expressing his happiness at HPY being held at the BJPCI for the 11th year running, Jeejeebhoy said: "We are very proud to have you here. You are the salt of the country and the community. It is up to you now how and where to take this country. We wish you all the very best for your youthful future."

Touching on the efficacy of prayers Desai, senior partner of Mulla and Mulla and Craigie, Blunt and Caroe who is a former BPP trustee, pointed out that while Zoroastrians complained that our prayers are in a language we don't understand, the same was true of other religions as well. "The *Gita* is in Sanskrit, the *Quran* in Arabic, the *Torah* in Hebrew. What's wrong with that? It's the sound, the vibration which makes impressions on the mind," he declared.

The valedictory function was held in the open air on a midsummer night for the first time, thanks to the good offices of the Jeejeebhoy Dadabhoy Agiary trustees who gave the large and luxurious premises free of charge. "This is the first time in my 19 years (at HPY) that I've seen two ladies (Dinshaw and Zorabian) adorn the stage (as chief guest and guest of honor) and lend such color and charm. It makes me feel young again!" smiled Shroff. "The HPY cause is fantastic," enthused Zorabian. Vivacious as always and speaking from the heart, Zorabian shared with the students the three mantras of her own life — live well and do what makes you happy (by way of career); love well (parents, siblings, spouse) as love completes you; give back to society. "Be nice to your driver, serve in small ways. Life is rough, but don't lose focus. If you mess up the next five years, it will be very difficult to get back. Education is your strongest base. Build a network, stand by each other. Do well and rock the world!"

An eminent oncologist who has been awarded a Padma Shri by the Government of India, Dinshaw has been director at the Tata Memorial Centre in Bombay, one of India's leading cancer centers, for 11 years. "Our peril lies in our small numbers," she asserted. "We live in a fast changing world, mean and competitive. The old orthodoxy is going to kill us. To survive we have to be better than the best. I urge you all — please dare to dream. Persevere, the last strike often makes the difference. But don't sacrifice your honesty, integrity, values."

With great emotion, Marfatia commended her team of organizers who, she said, so often backbench their studies or jobs to give their all to HPY. "For years, Priya (Bhujwala-Aga) has been holding my hand (at HPY). She's a few weeks from delivery, but has been with us all day, every day. If I make an impulsive decision, she holds me back. Come with the infant next year, but Priya, we want you back." Receiving special mention this year were Khory (who has been with HPY for 11 years), the three Mistry siblings (Pearl, Azmin and Rayomand), sisters Raika and Delaviz Gazder, Khursheed Mistry, Kapadia, Hormuz Ragina, Bhathena and Gotla who, though still a student, was a competent and confident master of ceremonies at the closing function. It was Kapadia and Ragina who composed the music for *The HPY Song*, with lyrics by Raika Gazder.

Wearing the sash as Mr HPY and Ms HPY were Danesh Irani and Freyaan Anklesaria, with Maneck Kutar and Kaizeen Daruwalla the respective runners up. Hoozan Bastani and Rohan Sanjana were the best female and male models. Kaizad Aibara picked up the trophy for best sportsperson. With ex-HPYites putting on their dancing shoes to join the festivities at the Colaba Agiary, Marfatia, popularly known as Dee/Lady Dee received as always the loudest rounds of applause.

"It's been 13 years since I walked up HPY's steps, wearing bellbottoms and walking the ramp," Urvakshi Mehta had said at the inauguration. "HPY has given me the widest and most treasured circle of friends. It has given me opportunities to speak at the World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston. I met my husband Burzin at HPY. I am looking forward to 14 years hence when I will be one of the parents when our son Jamshed, just one year old now, will join HPY to spread his wings and fly."

A score at HPY

This year the Holiday Programme for Youth (HPY) turned 20. Conducted every month of May, HPY takes a motley crowd of Zoroastrian 15-year-olds fresh out from school from all parts of India — small town guys and girls to sophisticates from the cities — through activities ranging from the academic to the artistic to the athletic. And the rites of passage at the four-week-long, power-packed, summer program sponsored by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) have seen many changes. The tentative teen in flared trousers and baggy shirt has been replaced by the cocky youngster of the 21st century in jeans, skimpy skirts and spaghetti straps, on the infotech fast track in a shrinking world!

The landmarks are several. As per Programme sources, HPY alumni now number over 3,500, 19 couples have found their suitable boy/girl from within HPY, two couples from successive, youthful organizing committees (OC) have a child each, with a third mum-and-dad-to-be eagerly awaiting D-day! Between 1993-2006, the Programme has had navjotes performed for 22 children from less well off stratas and cleaned 25 agiaries as part of their social service. Their energetic blood donation drives over the past 12 years have collected over 1,200 bottles of blood for different blood banks. "HPY is the longest and most successful non-commercial youth summer program in the world," announces their 20th anniversary souvenir released on May 1, 2006.

The one common thread running through 20 years and weaving the collective tapestry together has been the strong presence of chief coordinator Diana Marfatia. For the first two years ('87-'88) Marfatia was the facilitator when Dr Ketayun Madon was HPY's first coordinator. At that time it was a two-week program with an enrolment of around 60, conducted in the small, Khareghat Colony hall on Hughes Road. Handed the mantle of chief coordinator in 1989, Marfatia has captained HPY courageously, intuitively and imaginatively. It is at her house that the OC (consisting of ex-HPY-ites) meets once or twice a week for eight months prior to May each year, chalking out the nitty-gritties of the workshops/competitions/visits/lists of speakers, etc that keep such a large number of noisy, restless teenagers interested, occupied and entertained for four weeks, with ne'er a



1. Khushnaz Daruwalla with Katy Dinshaw
2. Kaizad Marolia with Perizaad Zorabian
3. Varzan Patel, Kaizeen Kolah, Kaizeen Daruwalla, Freyaan Anklesaria
4. Diana Marfatia (fourth from left, center row) and young organizers



5. Spenta Havewalla, 6. Maneck Kutar, 7. Danesh Irani; 8. Singing The HPY Song with Peshotan Kapadia at the guitar; 9. Judges Hoorzan Irani and Scherezade Shroff; 10. Stepping out in style; 11. Soli Dastur; 12. Sheroo Master; 13. Minoo Shroff (at mike) and dignitaries at the valedictory function Photos: C. C. Gandevia



rest even on a Sunday!

The platter this year consisted of, as in earlier years, aptitude testing, career counseling, talks by eminent professionals in old and new age careers, personality development, parent-child relationships, environment and health awareness...

Hobby afternoons were enlivened with dance and rhythm, fashion, textile and jewellery designing, speech and drama. Visits included the Shantivan Park (the nature and herb garden outside Godrej Baug on Napean Sea Road), the naval establishment *INS Angre*, the Braille Press, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the J. J. Hospital Parsi Ward, etc. The extravagance of youthful energy is channelized each year into swimming competitions, cricket, football, volleyball and basketball matches with attendant cheer leaders, high fives, smiles and sighs! The BJPCI turns into adventure arena when the children are taught to cope with emergency situations like escape from a burning building, how to execute a fireman's lift or give first aid. While speech time does occasionally turn snooze time, it's a time to disco during the hugely popular fashion show, when dozens of ex-HPYites suddenly decide to visit the school as they were just passing by!

Has HPY raised the bar, seen changing patterns in the last decade? we query. Marfatia provides the perspective: "Today's parents believe they are their children's very, very good friends, that there should be no distance between them. This 'best friend' equation often makes them give in more than they should. Parents have become extremely liberal — allowing late nights, sleepovers, any kind of dress... And the kids have so much money to spend! Barista, KFC, Noodle Bar, you name it, they've been there. Perhaps if the parents inculcated a little more discipline, we wouldn't have to do so. It is not only I who feels so, my young organizers think so too, but then they come from very, very balanced homes." Respect for authority (read parents and teachers) is getting diluted, she adds, "but we see to it that HPY rules are followed. We are not dictating. Kids don't like to be



told what to do. We have to subtly inculcate values/discipline."

"The kids clearly understand that the objective is not only fun. They have to focus on a career, on building morale and confidence. This is not just all about winning. Everybody takes part in everything and puts in effort," Marfatia told us. "Earlier we used to notice that the sense of achievement in the girls was more aggressive, but the boys have taken a spurt in the last three-four years. We haven't had to take much of the 'hey, c'mon guys, what are you doing, the girls are doing so well' approach!"



All Parsi rock band SCAR, midsummer evening at the Colaba Agiary, Nazneen Italia



HPY is a good leveler too, chuckles the lady who as principal of BJPCI has her finger on the pulse of one's wonder years. "Some of them do come with a bit of an attitude, but by the end of the month they realize that others who they thought were less than themselves have done far better and that it is neither money nor the tag of an elitist school, but talent and ability that counts."



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"They know how to survive"

Student documentary maker Kaevan Umrigar's film on economically disadvantaged Parsis reflects their forlorn existence

"They were sad to know there are more people like them," said neophyte filmmaker Kaevan Umrigar. This was the reaction of the economically disadvantaged elderly Parsis after they viewed his 23-minute student project documentary titled *Invisible Parsis* in which they featured.



Umrigar: "An eye opener"

They "identified" with the other Parsis portrayed in the film stating "*Ai tau maari story chë* (this is my story)," said the 33-year-old Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) graduate.

"People went out of their way (to help me). They let me shoot in their houses at great inconvenience to them. While researching the story they took time out to talk to me," recalls Umrigar who as part of his course, shot the documentary in Poona where the Institute is located.

The film focused on the subsistence-level existence of elderly Parsis assisted by the

Poona Parsi Panchayat, other trusts, individuals and family members. Their stark homes are devoid of any frills or luxuries and their clothes well worn with age (see Umrigar's account, "Poor Parsis do exist"). "With little money they manage," notes Umrigar. "Their lives have always been like this. They know how to survive."

His documentary was screened at the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities and Tata Institute of Social Services (TISS) workshop on Parsis held at TISS on January 10, this year.

"What you saw was the aging process – the loneliness, the isolation from

the community and hardship of life. We started (the seminar) with the film to sensitize the audience," stated Dr Armaity Desai, a former director of TISS and one of the conveners of the seminar (see "Propping up the community," *Parsiana*, March 21, 2006).

Umrigar is keen that as many Parsis as possible view his documentary as well as four other shorts films on the community produced to fulfill his academic requirements.

He is willing to send out DVDs containing the films to Zoroastrian associations in India and abroad. Commercial merchandising of the film is not possible without the consent of the FTII. Three of the remaining four films, *Dadar Ormaj*, *maney jaldi bolaavo*, *Bedpan*, *Non-Parsi* are interesting but of uneven quality while *Parsi Wade*, *Tarapore* — *Present Day*, is academic and may not hold lay viewers' interest. All the actors performed gratis.

Dadar Ormaj maney jaldi bolaavo (Dear God, call me soon) depicts a lonely old Parsi man (Bomi Dotivala) who finds he has nothing at all to live for and decides he wants to die



Above: Scene from *Non-Parsi*; Right: *Banoo Thanawala*; Above right: *Beruj Irani*



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*** Where Growth Is A Way Of Life ***

and decides he wants to die waiting forlornly for a telephone call from his son/daughter who are settled abroad. Disillusioned at their callousness he contemplates suicide but finds himself unable to take the fatal steps.

Bedpan, a three minute vignette of a bedridden ailing father (Rattan Pavri) and his working daughter (Mahabano Mody-Kotwal), depicts the strain in their relationship on account of his physical disabilities.

Non-Parsi is about a Parsi daughter who weds a non-Parsi and the family's initial resentment to the liaison. *Parsi Wada Tarapore — Present Day* is a documentary on the decay in villages/towns

where Parsis once resided and how this decline mirrors the community's status today. There is no commentary or background music to the film; only the sounds emanating from the surroundings.

The experiences were an "eye opener" for the film-maker. "I'm interested in documentary making but it's not a very paying career in India... funding is a problem," he notes.

The son of Dinyar, a retired accountant and the late Freny, Umrigar intends to work with the advertising agency of the Aban Pestonjee group of Sri Lanka. An electrical engineering graduate from Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute, Umrigar worked as creative group head of

Everest Integrated Communications in Bombay and as a creative supervisor in Contract Advertising prior to joining the Film Institute. His sister Kazveen is a wild-life veterinarian in Morocco.

Umrigar has no plans for filmmaking at the present but may opt for teaching film or advertising at a later stage. He appreciated the photography in the movie *Being Cyrus* directed by Homi Adajania and liked the irrelevance of Kaizad Gustad's *Bombay Boys*.

If Umrigar does decide to make a movie on the Parsis he won't "ask the community for funds — I would raise money independently" so as not to compromise the content of the film.

"Poor Parsis do exist"

Kaevan Umrigar

One myth about the Parsis is that no one is poor. That each one is well-educated, well-fed and well-looked after. Reality though is slightly different. Poor Parsis do exist. Though they are better off than most poor, survival for them too is an everyday struggle. Dependent on charity for food, shelter and clothing, they live on the margins of Parsi society...

I have seen them while growing up in Bombay. I have seen them in their shabby houses and their shabby dresses, hiding away shamefully, as if aware that they are the community's dirty laundry, not meant for public washing.

I have seen them lining up for aid. In hundreds... They lived in subsidized housing. Parsi charities doled out old clothes and food-grain allowances. They lacked neither food, clothing nor shelter. And yet they were poor.

I have even seen them beg. But only from Parsis. They would stand outside the agiaris, especially on Navroz day, their hands outstretched but not a word from their lips. Standing there pitifully, helplessly.

My attitude towards them would be like most middle-class Parsis. I would turn away, shun them, ignore them. They weren't the Parsis I was used to. Their children didn't go to convent schools like we did, but to Parsi schools where they got free schooling, free uniforms and free lunches. They didn't go to see English films or listen to English songs. And when they married non-Parsis, they didn't marry white-skinned foreigners but lower-class Hindus and Christians.

Among the first people I meet is Dinu Choga. She is in her seventies, ridden with arthritis. She is lying down on the bed and is incapable of getting up herself. A servant has to help her up. Her fingers have all curled up and become completely useless. Her husband Noshir is well into his seventies too and again, not keeping well. The couple have no children. Their savings, nothing much to speak of anyway, have dwindled after retirement. Through charity, they manage to raise Rs 2,500 each month, 1,500 of which goes to the servant without whom they are helpless. The house is big, but bare for the most part, with a color TV standing incongruously in one corner. It is probably a gift from a concerned relative so that the home-bound couple can have something to do, but the servant's family watch it more than they do.

Banoo Thanawala is 86 and lives alone, her husband died five years ago. He used to be a store-salesman. He was only making Rs 200 a month when she married him in 1967. They had no children and she is dependent on nephews and other charities. Though arthritic she manages to do all the housework herself. Her house used to be part of a bakery once. Soot covers the peeling walls, and the roof leaks. Her home is cluttered with belongings, but it is mostly old stuff that once used to belong to her mother-in-law. There is no TV, no fridge, and she cooks on a kerosene stove.

Meheroo Karkaria (resides at) Talookdar Building... built at the turn of the last century to house needy Parsis. Today the building is in need itself.

Most of the tenants have been shifted to a newly constructed complex at Lullanagar. Meheroo is 56, but looks 10 years older. A hernia operation keeps her restricted to the house. She has no income and is dependent on charity. Her husband is dead and so is her daughter. Her son stays elsewhere and works as a TV mechanic.

Mani Mistry is the only person who breaks down while telling me her tale. Hers is a riches-to-rags story. From a comfortable life, she has been reduced to a hand-to-mouth existence. In her sixties and plagued by health problems, she makes do by making things at home and selling them door-to-door. Her husband has been reduced to a shadow of his former self after a paralytic stroke. A subsidized new flat in the Parsi housing complex at Lullanagar, a fridge, a phone, a geyser gifted by relatives. But a closer examination reveals badly-torn mattresses, old furniture and clothes stored in bags and suitcases.

I make my way to Juna Bazaar, Khadki, a regular urban shanty-town. Tiny brick tenements with asbestos or tin roofing. Hardly the place I expected a Parsi to live. But walking down its narrow winding alleys I reached Nazareth Chawl, once a hospital and dispensary and now home to Beruj Irani, 77. He moves around on a walker, and is cared for by his Maharashtrian working-class neighbors. His house is big but mostly bare. His children are away, but a TV and fridge stand in for them. Beruj whiles away time playing solitaire. He was born in Nazareth Chawl and will probably die here too.

READERS' FORUM

continued from page 6

and dubs it a "blatant lie," when the Ervad has himself admitted in writing to Chouhan's advocate that he has indeed denied entry to her! Mehta contends that by reason of her interfaith marriage, "she has flouted one of the most important tenet and practice (sic) of the faith." This contention is too nonsensical to be controverted. Mehta would like to know whether she still wears the sudreh-kusti, recites prayers and performs 'padyab' before entering the Agiary. Mehta should stand outside the Agiary and ask these questions to each Parsi lady, intermarried or not, entering the Agiary.

It would be a waste of newsprint to engage in a debate with Mehta over his fanciful attempts to interpret the law (including the repealed 1872 Act). Suffice it to state that not even the most diehard orthodox lawyer will disagree with the proposition that marriage under the Special Marriage Act 1954 does not amount to renouncing one's faith.

Mehta should realize that alas his favorite panthaky does not have "powers to deny admission" to any intermarried Parsi. However, the trustees of the Agiary do have the power to throw out a panthaky who admittedly violates the civil rights of the beneficiaries.

"Baria's battle"

Some questions for Dhun Baria and those who want to change Zoroastrianism to be in tune with time.

Will Baria ask maestro Zubin Mehta to now dissociate himself from the Philharmonic Orchestra and bend towards Spice Girls to keep up with the music of the times? In fact would she herself change her bias from qawwali towards rap music to change with time?

Would she support a change in the

"Would she herself change her bias from qawwali towards rap music to change with time?"

RUSTOM JAMASJI

system of housing today?

We fled Iran and our predecessors built agiaries and dakhmas and even residential properties so that the likes of me and Baria can get near free housing. Now staying in charitable properties we fight the charity givers' aims!

Zoroastrians donated land so that Zoroastrianism could prosper through Zoroastrians maintaining their customs. Will all those Zoroastrians who demand change add to the coffers left by our forefathers in terms of monies or by building other charitable blocks or make for themselves a crematorium or aramgah or whatever they prefer, forming a cult after their own name as they deem themselves modern and knowledgeable about Zarathushtra's teaching? Maybe Baria wouldn't want to change trust deeds and laws that govern Parsi housing policies but has no qualms in changing ancient Zoroastrian laws!

Why be adamant in changing our system? Why claim to be Zoroastrians when you detest its principles or prefer principles of other faiths?

Will Baria who is trying so hard for an aramgah get a flat from the Muslims or Catholic society, especially when she tries to change Islamic or Catholic customs?

Would she advise change for crematoriums if one photographed a body

nearly sitting up and bursting in flames when cremated? Would she change the burial system if one photographed the remains of a body lying in the soil for a long time? After all land shortage for burial is a very important issue facing Muslims, Christians and Jews in Bombay!

She asks how many times have graves been dug up and photographed? And how many have photographed a body twisting and the skull exploding when cremated? Not many are sick to do it. In 5,000 years of dakhmenashini, how many times and how many Zoroastrians were sick enough to photograph the dakhmas?

Zoroastrianism treats a dead body as an empty shell and its rituals are in relation to the happiness of one's soul, not the empty shell. We see a dead body as evil at its pristine; yet if one wants to put joss sticks around it and build a monument, the person has the freedom of choice, but not the choice to disband what he/she feels is unfit. On what grounds fight dakhmenashini? Why not fight the negligence towards it? Seeing the photographs, I acknowledge that something should be done on a war footing to preserve our custom. The dakhmenashini system has been allowed to drop to a drastic situation, maybe on purpose or negligence.

Modern man preserves the pyramids, the mummies, the Tasmanian tiger, extinct species of wildlife, fauna and flora and technology enables us to treat a person when a doctor may be a thousand miles away. That's technology! Why not use it? Modern man is using it to preserve, only the naive give it up in the name of changing with the times.

RUSTOM JAMASJI

Kudos to this strong little woman Dhun

MEHERZAD TRAVELS

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The Advertiser
Parsiana, Wanted Rooms (July 21, 2006)*
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*Please make sure the reply envelope bears the reference number cited here.

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Baria who has literally single-handedly brought out the obsolete use of the dakhmas. I remember seeing the nightmarish pictures way back in the '70s, of highly decomposed bodies, the loud whispers about stench, and viewing from balconies of multistoried buildings around the Doongervadi. But that was then and the matter like all sensitive issues was pushed to the back burner. But this is now. We are in the next century, and Bombay is virtually breaking at its seams, and to compound that

there are no scavenger birds around the dakhmas. It's only a matter of time before the prized land will come in the eye of the land-sharks. And then what? Probably it will be "Save Doongervadi," like "Save Udvada?" All it needs is a public interest litigation case to be fought in the court. If this happens (the idea itself is so frightening), it will open up a Pandora's box which will not be easy to handle!

Coming to the little woman Baria, what pray is she seeking? She is rightfully asking for an aramgah on the Doongervadi land for those who wish to be buried, and to perform the four-day prayers at the Doongervadi premises for any one who opts for an alternative method of disposal — could be burial or cremation. This little gesture would give satisfaction to the bereaved families who need not then worry about where to find the priest and to perform the prayers. Let prayers not be for sale, but for the soul! Let every Parsi have a say, have a choice, to adopt his/her own way to cross the "Chinwadpool."

By denying prayers to those who do not consign the bodies to the dakhma is totally wrong. As I once again ask, would my grandparents who are buried in Hubli and Nagpur be living in limbo? The argument that where there is a dakhma there can't be an aramgah is absolutely irrational. Let some strong steps be taken. Let those who wish to still use the dakhma use them, but let the others too not be deprived of prayers for their beloved departed especially when it is partially allowed and sanctified and coexists since time immemorial! These are the problems that need to be dealt with urgently. One cannot make everyone happy but in the long run people will realize that old methods need drastic changes.

RODA D. HAKIM
Baroda

"Let prayers not be for sale, but for the soul!"

RODA D. HAKIM

I have read "Baria's battle" (*Parsiiana*, June 7, 2006). I sympathize with Baria's cause and I am heartened that her crusade is creating a stir. The dakhma system of disposal of the dead worked well in the past when there were no high-rise buildings close by and the vultures were in sufficient numbers to reduce a corpse to bare white bones in a matter of 30-40 minutes.

Alas, this is not the case, as we read reports that come in from time to time. Even a staunch believer like me in the religion of Zarathushtra and its principal teachings of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, has to question the practicality of continuing to follow a system that does not function anymore like it should.

We, Parsis, have always been admired by other communities, ever since we came to Hindustan, for our honesty and cleanliness. Everyone admires our tree-lined, clean Parsi colonies and baugs. Then why should our dakhmas smell and the bodies of our dear departed lie in various stages of putrefaction? I have to ask myself, would those in Persia who originally gave us the dakhmenashini system approve of what we are doing at Doongervadi with solar reflectors (sic) and ozone gas?

I can understand that there are some priests who wish to uphold the tenets of our religion and will not budge. That is alright; they have to live with their conscience. But are the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustees also so rigid as to not take into account the feelings of a growing number of people like Baria who desire funeral prayers at Doongervadi but would like the body to be cremated? Given the current conditions at Doongervadi, as described in *Parsiiana*, I would not want that my body be consigned to the Towers of Silence.

I therefore appeal to the trustees of the BPP to look earnestly at the proposal of first constructing a special bungli for the prayers of those who wish to be cremated. And later, to construct an electric crematorium at Doongervadi itself. Why should Parsis have to use the facilities at Chandanwadi? Let us use the land that we have before we lose it. Change with the times, or time will change you. If the stench of rotting flesh continues or becomes worse, the government will acquire the prime property with one

Appeal for donations MANCHERJI JOSHI MEMORIAL EDUCATION FUND

C/o Mrs Zareen Jimmy Engineer
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Kindly draw your cheques in favor of **Mancherji Joshi Memorial Education Fund** and forward them to the above address.

All donations will be promptly acknowledged.

Mrs Zareen J. Engineer

Grand daughter of the Late Mancherji Joshi, Founder of Parsi Colony, Dadar
Ms Katy R. Bharucha, Barrister-at-Law,
Trustees and Jt. Hon. Secretaries

stroke of the pen in "public interest" because then it will become a hygiene/health issue. The dakhmenashini system was put in place during another era and another place. Today it is totally out of step within the confines of a modern and congested city like Bombay and a progressive and educated community like the Parsis should respond to change and go with the flow.

Dr ARDESHIR B. DAMANIA
Davis, California

"His soul goes..."

Dastur (Dr) M. N. Dhalla's complete autobiography is available on the website <http://www.avesta.org/dhalla/saga.htm>
JAMSHEED KANGA

"How trust-worthy?"

In the editors' reply to a letter ("How trust-worthy?" Readers' Forum, *Parsi-ana*, April 7, 2006), you state that "A Parsi couple cannot be legally wed by a Parsi priest in North America."

In the province of Quebec, Canada, under the auspices of The Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, since March 15, 1996, a few ordained Parsi priests including myself, do have dispensation to perform marriages which are recognized by the government of Quebec and the government of Canada. We have performed several marriages which have been recognized and certified legal.

Ervad JAL MINOCHER PANTHAKI
Montreal, Canada

While reading "How trust-worthy?" it occurred to me that although many states do not recognize our priests and, as such, require couples to undergo a civil marriage, we in Ontario, Canada are very fortunate. Our priests have been licensed to perform marriages and sign the marriage certificate thereby making it unnecessary to have a civil ceremony. As for the nirang, our priests have brought it from India and the nahan is performed before both the wedding and the navjote ceremonies.

To negate the marriages of couples marrying outside of India or Pakistan is foolish and to further say that their offspring "...not be considered Parsi Zoroastrians" is fuelling the decline of our noble religion. When our children read such drivel is it any wonder they choose to go out and marry people of other faiths? Parsis were always respected and known to value a good education but if

"Why don't we introduce other scavenging creatures at Doongerwadi, like crocodiles, hyenas, mongoose?"

PHIROZE B. JAVERI

we let fanatics and dogmatists cut off our future generations then no wonder we are a dying breed.

ROSHAN BYRAMJEE
Oakville, Ontario

The editors reply
We stand corrected.

Disposal at Doongerwadi

Our dakhmas are intended to facilitate returning a dead body to the same elements of nature from which the person – when alive – drew sustenance. This is in keeping with our inherent respect for nature.

The function of vultures in this process is incidental, and not central. In ancient Iran, the dead bodies were left atop an isolated hill, where many scavenging creatures other than vultures also helped consume them. There is nothing intrinsically pious about being consumed exclusively by vultures.

In the absence of vultures now, and the resultant problem of human bodies being left to rot, why don't we introduce other scavenging creatures at Doongerwadi, like crocodiles, hyenas, mongoose and so on? Or even piranha fish, if we can adapt to the thought of submerging the dead underwater in a dakhma converted into a water-tank? The lush environment is suitable for adapting to such a solution, and with minor modifications, the animals can be securely kept on the far side of a safety barrier. The benefits of this will be:

- Adherence to our principle of returning our dead body to nature;
- Not generating any controversy about burning the dead body or desecrating fire;
- No pollution, nuisance or creating unhygienic condition;
- Quick and efficient disposal;
- Encouraging wildlife;
- Justifying the use of the vast lands we

have at Doongerwadi.

PHIROZE B. JAVERI

WAPIZ editorial armor

For a "world" body not exactly renowned for its temperance, perhaps one of the more prudent accomplishments of the modestly named World Alliance of Parsi Irani Zarthoshtis (WAPIZ) is concealing the identity of its so-called editorial team.

These worthy individuals have an editing style uniquely their own. To say that it is colorful would be an understatement. The main weapons in their armory appear to be red ink, capital letters, bold typeface and an extravagant use of exclamation marks – not to mention driving home their point with a sledgehammer. I do not wish to volunteer an opinion on the contents of the article "Kappawalla agiary land grab, (WAPIZ Page, *Afternoon Despatch and Courier*, June 22, 2006)" except to comment that it comprises six paragraphs (bulleted, if you please) each and every one of which ends with the exhortation "So, Mr Nicholson, stop fooling the community!!!" Apparently, subtlety and moderation are alien concepts to these "editors." Perhaps they are inspired by their chairman who, in the same WAPIZ paid advertisement, has issued a statutory warning (in Gujarati) which loosely translates as "WAPIZ will not leave those who leave the religion." Stirring words indeed, almost Wagnerian in their lyricism.

At least one cannot accuse the editor of *Afternoon* of being imprudent or rash. The bottom of each WAPIZ page carries the disclaimer: "The contents of these pages do not represent the views of this newspaper."

FIROZE HIRJIKA

ERRATUM

The readout attributed to Mehli Bhagalia in the Readers' Forum column (*Parsi-ana*, June 21, 2006) reads: "The nahan purificatory ceremony with nirang (which is not possible outside India or Pakistan) negate any marriage ceremony of Parsi Zoroastrians in foreign lands." It should actually read: "The absence of the nahan purificatory ceremony with nirang (which is not possible outside India and Pakistan) negate any marriage ceremony of Parsi Zoroastrians in foreign lands."

Parsi-ana regrets the oversight.

Edited by Parinaz M. Gandhi

MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 21 and 49 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 30 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 24 and 43 years, averaging at 32 years.

Of the 42 Zoroastrians who breathed their last, 17 succumbed to heart disease (nine being over 80 years). Cancer claimed six lives. Five patients each died due to pneumonia/lung disease and septicemia and two to diabetes. Kidney failure, brain disease, paralysis, asthma, old age/general debility and Parkinson's disease were the isolated cases registered. One cause of death was kept pending. The age range fluctuated between 52 and 93 years. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth for June 1-15, 2006, in Bombay, was 79 years.

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled from information supplied by various newsletters and anjuman in India and abroad, courts and hospitals. This information is not always complete or consistent: we are unable to carry data from areas where the anjuman do not furnish the particulars; the birth figures for Bombay are supplied by two hospitals — births in suburban hospitals and private nursing homes are not included unless individuals send us information together with a copy of the birth certificate. There may be an inadvertent repetition of names in the marriage list when a civil marriage precedes a religious ceremony. In the breakup of deaths according to illnesses, especially of the elderly, death is often due to a combination of several diseases.

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

BOMBAY

BORN

Twins (girl and boy) to *Preeti and Nozer Tarapore* on June 9, 2006

A girl, *Iyanah*, to *Renata and Darius Desai*; June 10

MARRIED

Imrose Kaiyomarz Medhora of Nagpur and *Meherdad Manchi Bomanbehram*; June 1
Roshan Rustom Irani of Poona and *Cyrus Homi Mistry*; June 1
Jennifer Nari Bharucha and *Adil Jehangir Bajirao*; June 3
Zinobia Dasu Taraporwala of Akola and *Aspi Dinshaw Mavalwala* of Poona; June 3
Lyla Homi Patel and *Jamsheed Rustom Mehta*; June 5
Soonu Minoo Readymony and *Mehermoz Jalbhai Asdin* of USA; June 11

DIED

Rattan P. Dessai (92), residing at Sunnoo Lodge, Tilak Bridge, Dadar, 400014; January 11 (cremated)
Roshan Fali Desai (93), 4/E, Karai Est, Tardeo, 400007; May 31
Jimmy Soli Khambatta (52), 7/18, Blossom Clny, Marol Maroshi Rd, Andheri (E), 400059; May 31
Jerroo Dinshaw Mistry (61), K/3/503, Happy Home Complex, Mira Rd (E), 401104; May 31
Homai Minoo Kias (89), Room no 7, 347/C, United Chmbs, M. S. A. Rd, 400007; June 1
Cali Phirozshaw Toddywalla (83), 286/A, Sopari Baug Rd, Parel, 400012; June 1
Ratanasha Rustomji Motafram (77), M. F. Cama Athorman Institute, Andheri (W), 400058; June 3
Rustom Dinshawji Umrigar (86), 193/4, Dial Mhl, Dalamal Park, Cuffe Parade, 400005; June 3
Gool Jal Porbunderwala (78), Mistry Hse, 5, Dominic Rd, Bandra, 400050; June 4
Adi Pestonji Desai (82), 2/8, Lady Dorab Tata Bldg, Bandra (W), 400050; June 5
Homai Kaikhushroo Gorimar (90), K/4, Palm Spring, Cuffe Parade, 400005; June 5
Rustom Jal Kerawalla (77), C/6, Gurukrupa Ter Co-op Hsg Soc, Near Basant Park, Chembur, 400088; June 5
Daisy Noshir Mobed (65), 3,

Hirabai Petit Bldg, Opp Grant Rd Stn, 400007; June 5

Dosa Hoshang Sarkari (80), Burjor Behram Bldg, 800, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; June 5
Mani Minoo Ghadiali (72), 3, Baria Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; June 6
Nina Tehmurasp Karkaria (75), M-2/13, Cama Park, Cama Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; June 6
Shirin Salamat Irani (86), Jer Mans, August Kranti Marg, 400036; June 7
Sohrab Khurshedji Munshi (87), B/1, Fariyas, 143, A. K. Marg, 400036; June 7
Mucca Dhunjishaw Shroff (84), G/6, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; June 7
Noshir Dinshawji Gotla (81), A/7, Tardeo Chmbs, Avabai Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; June 8
Rustom Phiroze Kanga (89), 8, Pitha St, Off P. M. Rd, Fort, 400001; June 10
Villie Manekshaw Karanjia (70), Meher Behram Bldg, 7th lane, Khetwadi, 400004; June 10
Bachoo Minoo Mistry (57), 8B/11, Old Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; June 10
Piroja Kaikhushroo Patrawala (85), 758, Dilkush, Rd no 7, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; June 10
Hoshang Darab Pavri (60), F/10, Venus Apts, Worli Sea Face, 400018; June 10
Maneck Faramroj Pir (76), 13/A-1, Godrej Tower, Pirojsha Ngr, Vikhroli (E), 400083; June 10
Katie Dali Darwalla (81), 739, Cama Bldg, Rd no 5, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; June 11
Dara Rustom Davar (80), 21/3, Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; June 11
Jinnie Rustomji Bhamgara (73), A/2, Petit Block, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; June 12
Noshir Sorabji Haradhvala (81), 8/B, Garden View, Opp Almeda Park, Bandra (W), 400050; June 12
Meherbanoo Meherban Jehani (85), 422/A, Dubash Bldg,

Near Novelty Cinema Lane, Grant Rd, 400007; June 12
Darius Bejon Bhappu (86), 12, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; June 13
Dinyar Dosabhai Billimoria (80), 194, Talati Bldg, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; June 13
Najoo Adi Captain (87), Kashinath Bldg, 17, A. K. Marg, Fort, 400001; June 13
Rustom Darabshaw Dordi (68), U-5/1, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; June 13
Jaloo Hormusji Marker (92), B/16, Satya Bhama Nivas, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; June 13
Jamshed Framroze Motafram (87), Windsor Chmbs, Cowasji Patel St, Fort, 400001; June 13
Adi Dinshawji Davar (63), 4/1, Baria Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; June 14
Keki Burjorji Bharucha (70), 301, Mohammadi Minar, 14th lane, Khetwadi, 400004; June 15
Shera Bejonji Chandabhoy (92), A, Aidun Bldg, Dhobitalao, 400002; June 15
Adi Pallonji Ghadiali (85), 5/36, A. H. Wadia Baug, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; June 15
Putla Bapoo Maloo (76), 2, Vatcha Gandhi Bldg, Banaji Atash Behram Compd, Charni Rd, 400002; June 15
Dolly Rustomji Pardiwala (76), Sea Glimpse, B. J. Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; June 15

CALCUTTA

MARRIED

Megha Vora and *Nadir Rohinton Babycon*; January 17
Evelynn Chilon Palza and *Karl Adil Ghyara*; January 18
Debasree Saha and *Polard Cawas Nazir*; January 19
Behnaz Beji Bulsara and *Vijay Dugar*; January 22

DIED

Hirjoo R. Bhesania; January 15
Rohinton Pestonji Ghiara; March 12
Russi Dhunjishaw Anklesaria; March 17
Godrej Dick; March 21

POONA

BORN

A girl, *Friyana*, to *Freny* and *Navroze Printer*, June 4

SECUNDERABAD

DIED

Khursheed E. Taraporewala (92), June 2 (cremated)
Shapoor Wadia (41), son of *Shirin* and *Gustadji*, husband of *Farida* and father of *Jimmy*, June 8

SURAT

DIED

Perin Kersasp Nadirsha (77), Mota Mohalla, near Anjuman Baug, Rustumpura, 395002; June 1
Khurshed Dosabhai Bhesania (76), 9, Savasadi Sadan, Bhavnagri Sheri, Wanki Bordi, Sayedpura, 395003; June 12

...

CANADA

Ontario

BORN

A girl, *Zia*, to *Shiromi* and *Adil Bulsara* in Toronto; February 5

A girl, *Zoish*, to *Dilshad* and *Behram Byramji*, sister to *Xenia*, in Mississauga; May 2
A boy, *Darien*, to *Zavera* and *Farshad Appoo* in Toronto; June 8

MARRIED

Pearl Panthaky, daughter of *Meher* and *Jal*, and *Kerman Merwan*, son of *Khorshed* and *Kersas* in Mississauga; May 6

DIED

Khorshed Kaiku Wadia, mother of *Nani*, *Sarosh* and *Sam* in Toronto; May 25

Quebec

BORN

A boy, *Rushad*, to *Zareen* and *Pheroze Austin* in Montreal; December 29, 2005
A girl, *Helena*, to *Meher* and *Mehermash Iranpur*, sister to *Jehan* in Montreal; January 14, 2006

IRAN

DIED

Farhangiz Ostovari (Kiani)

(78), mother of *Behrooz*, *Homa Fariborz Gohari*, *Mahin Goshtasb Kiamanesh* and *Khodadad* in Tehran; December 10, 2005
Kambiz Abadian (75), husband of *Banoo* and father of *Kouroush* in Tehran; December 26

PAKISTAN

Karachi

DIED

Jehanbux Burjor Bharucha; May 26, 2006
Nariman Rustom Khursigara, husband of *Hutoxi* and brother of *Mani Pajnigara*, *Homai Minwalla* and *Khorshed Divecha*; May 28
Frenie Eruch Mehta; June 14

USA

BORN

A girl, *Asha Ilaria*, to *Dilnawaz* and *Nenshad Bardoliwalla*; December 8, 2005
A girl, *Daria Pareez*, to *Roxanne* and *Dan Shepelavy*; December 12

A boy, *Armand*, to *Shanaz* and *Jamshed Patel*, brother to *Zoey*; December 26

California

BORN

A girl, *Chista*, to *Arianne* and *Raymond Irani*, sister to *Anushé* in Palo Alto; December 6

MARRIED

Shireen Commissariat, daughter of *Aban* and *Pervez*, and *Sarosh Motivala*, son of *Roshan* and late *Jijoo* in Los Angeles; December 18

DIED

Homi Unwala (92), father of *Khorshed Rashmi Mehta*, *Homai Alex McPherson*, *Erna Rohinton Fatakia* and *Adi* in Riverside; February 20, 2006

Florida

DIED

Silloo D. Khory (90), mother of *Adil* and *Roshni Hebert* in Largo; December 12, 2005

New York

BORN

A boy, *Zall*, to *Arya* and *Snejana Arvandi* in New York; January 5, 2006

North Carolina

BORN

A girl, *Sabrina*, to *Shanaz* and *Alexander Hazel*, sister to *Natasha* in Davis; January 18

Pennsylvania

BORN

A girl, *Ava Caroline*, to *Shermaaz* and *Patrick DiGiacomo*, sister to *Jacqueline* in Franklin Park; January 9

Virginia

DIED

Shahbahram Rashid Aidun, husband of *Kharman* and father of *Katayoun Zare-Parsi*, *Rashid*, *Mehrdad* and *Sohrab* in Reshton; December 8, 2005

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

FIGURES AT A GLANCE*

	Bombay			India			World		
	This issue	2005♦	2006○	This issue	2005♦	2006○	This issue	2005♦	2006○
BIRTHS									
Boys	1	65	29	—	9	2	4	30	8
Girls	2	53	37	1	11	3	8	40	11
MARRIAGES									
Parsi	6	224	94	—	20	6	2	21	4
INTERCOMMUNAL									
Males married out	—	65	13	3	1	3	—	7	—
Females married out	—	39	16	1	3	1	—	13	2
DEATHS									
CONSIGNED									
Males	20	387	181	6	72	23	—	—	—
Females	22	398	179	1	53	21	—	—	—
CREMATED									
Males	1	7	4	—	1	—	—	—	—
Females	—	9	4	1	—	1	—	—	—
CREMATED/BURIED									
Males	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	54	17
Females	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	43	20

*Running totals for 2005

○Running totals for 2006

Overseas deaths are listed in the cremated/buried column.

*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.



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