

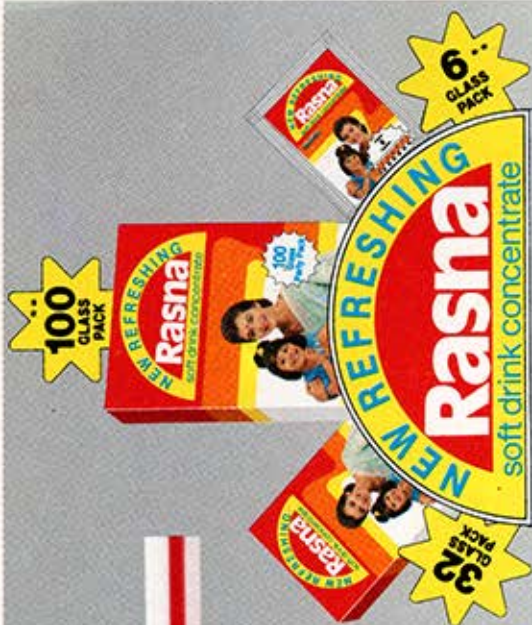
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June 1991
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Cover: A scene from *Percy*. Inset, Pervaz Merwanji and Ruby Patel

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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"In the matter of..."

By their resolution dated April 29, 1991 ("In the matter of the late Ms Roxan Darshan Shah..." *Parsiana*, March 1991) to assign a separate dokhma for Parsi women married outside the religion, the 'learned' trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet have done nothing more than put their official stamp of "Outcaste" on our women.

Sad indeed.

Ms RASHNA ZAIWALLA

"The correct position?"

This is further to the information provided by Dr H. E. Eduljee of Ootacamund on "The correct position?" (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, September 1990). My landlord Mr Mahmoud Rustom is a Syrian. He is a retired professor of chemistry at the University of Aleppo. When I asked him about his surname "Rustom," he could only say that it was of Persian origin. He had not heard of

Rustom Pahelvan nor his exploits! Similarly, the name Behram/Bahram is popular in parts of northern Syria and southern Turkey. The word "Bahram" in Turkish also means a feast/festival. The front desk receptionist of one of the hotels where we stayed last month while touring Turkey by car was named Niloufer! However, all these Bahrams, Rustoms, and Niloufers are pure Muslims.

Then there is the case of Zenobia, queen of Palmyra — a city-kingdom built on an oasis in the Syrian desert where caravans from India, Persia and even China stopped to refresh themselves on the way to Mediterranean trading posts and eventually to Rome. The Romans, having amassed enormous wealth due to their numerous conquests, paid for the Chinese silk, frankincense, Indian spices and perfumes and Persian rugs with gold coins.

Palmyra was besieged by Roman emperor Aurelian in 272 AD. Zenobia fought bravely and eventually retreated behind fortifications at Palmyra. Running out of food, she sent urgent word to Shapur of Persia for assistance. When Shapur did not reply she decided to go to Persia personally to plead for help, but was betrayed and captured while crossing the Euphrates river by Roman soldiers on faster horseback whereas Zenobia had chosen a camel for the long journey through the desert. Zenobia was taken to Rome and in 274 AD exhibited to Romans in a victory parade through the streets, bound in chains of solid gold. She is reputed to have ended her remaining life in the comfort of a villa at Tivoli in the hills some 50 kms from Rome.

Again, it is doubtful if Zenobia was a practicing Zoroastrian. The name may merely show a Persian descent and not the religion. Zenobia's portrait in battle gear is today printed on every Syrian 100 pound currency note, a rare tribute to pre-Islamic heroism.

The ruined city of Palmyra can still be seen but there is hardly any evidence there of the Zoroastrian religion. There are, however, several funerary towers into which bodies were entombed.

There are also many ruins from the glorious past when this area i.e. 150 km radius of the city of Aleppo formed part of the Persian empire, reputed to stretch from India to the Mediterranean sea in-

cluding modern Turkey. For example, there are the superbly preserved ruins of the beautiful city of Apamea (Apama), named after the Persian wife of one of Alexander the Great's generals, Seleucus Nicator. Apamea was a Zoroastrian lady who was captured by the Greeks in the final phases of Alexander's conquest of Persia (see *Zoroastrians*, Mary Boyce, pg 78). After the conquests, Alexander and many of his generals took Persian wives for political and other reasons.

About 70 kms to the east of Aleppo, lies the Plain of Issos where Alexander defeated Darius III in 331 BC despite the numerical superiority of the Persian army. Today modern motorways traverse these historic battlefields, occupants of vehicles scarcely realizing the importance of a crucial event that occurred there which was to ultimately lead to the destruction of Persepolis.

About 60 kms north of Apamea and an hour's drive from Aleppo, are the ruins of a town named Cirrus, or Cyrus. The ruins are well laid out and even boast of complicated drainage systems. There is also an amphitheater showing perhaps a later Roman occupation of the garrison town. Very few tourists travel to these ruins, their great and historic past witnessed only by serenely grazing sheep and the odd Bedouin shepherd with his dog.

While motoring through Cappadocia in Turkey we came across a replica of a Hittite tablet from the eighth century BC with distinct Persian markings of the asho farohar but without a head. The original tablet, we were told, is in the Ankara Museum.

A strange tale told to us by an old Kurdish gentleman is that, even today, there are some Kurds in the Caucasus mountains who worship fire! It was not clear, however, whether they are Zoroastrians or merely pray in front of a fire. It must be noted that there are many natural fires and steam eruptions due to volcanic activities in these mountains. In fact, some of the earliest fire-temples outside the Armenian city of Baku have fire at ground level which seems to be fed naturally by gas or oil from the earth's crust.

We also learnt another interesting story from an old Armenian doctor. He said that most of the Christian Armenians were previously Zoroastrians. After

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the Arab conquests they fled and converted to Christianity. There are some 70,000 Armenians in Aleppo today, most of them closely resemble Parsis in facial features! However, we are told that 10-15 years ago there were 1,50,000 Armenians in Aleppo, but since then many (most of them males) have migrated to Canada and USA for better prospects. Except for a few who return to search for an Armenian bride, these males have married abroad with the result that there are hundreds of unmarried, well-educated, highly eligible Armenian girls in Aleppo! They, without exception, prefer to wait or remain single than marry outside their community! In recent years some Armenian females have taken courage and migrated alone, leaving old parent/s behind. It must be recalled that many Armenians, mostly men, were massacred by the Turks in 1915. Due to the above two reasons there are several families comprising only of mother and unmarried daughter/s in Aleppo. It is a sad reality, not much different from that facing the Parsis of Bombay!

Incidentally, all different offshoots of the Christian faith with their individual churches are represented in Aleppo: Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Syrian Christian, Coptic, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Armenian Catholic and Armenian Orthodox. All of them live in peace and harmony among themselves, but rarely mix socially with the Muslims who are in the majority here. Interreligious marriages are unheard of, the rare exceptions being male students returning with their European (German, French or Italian) wives. Some European male professionals working in Syria have married local Christian girls with blessings from the parents, but when they marry Muslim girls they have had to convert themselves formally to Islam first!

Regarding the Roxan Shah case, it seems to us from afar that our tiny community likes to wallow in litigation and controversy when our very survival is at stake! Our feeling is that every Parsi (girl or boy) who marries outside the community must be notified in writing at the time of marriage that he/she will not be permitted the use of the community's facilities such as dokhmas, housing colonies, etc. It is too late to construct new fire-temples for practicing Zoroastrians who are married to non-Parsis. Instead leave the decision to permit entrance to a fire-temple or atash bahram to the individual panthaky or chief priest of the respective places of Zoroastrian worship.

(It will be very difficult to detect breaches, as one Parsi lady boasted of having entered the Iranshah at Udwarda and the Wadiji Atash Bahram unhindered with her *mangalsutra* on.) In time, liberal priests may permit such Parsis (those married to non-Parsis) to enter places of worship which will then automatically become known as the 'liberal fire-temples.' Those very 'orthodox' amongst us could choose to avoid visiting the 'liberal fire-temples.' But for heaven's sake let us stop this madness of filing law suits in courts whenever there is a disagreement of views!

Not long ago a modest and hardworking Sindhi friend remarked to me as a matter of astonishment and sadness, that even in their large and equally prosperous community there were not so many court cases and litigations as in the minuscule Parsi community! Most cases, when necessary, were decided by a Sindhi Panchayet whose decisions, I was told, were fair and final.

ARDESHIR B. DAMANIA
Aleppo, Syria

A 'death wish'

About a year ago a distinguished physician, and very dear friend who deals with the terminally ill made an observation that this community of ours was suffering from a "death wish."

Having lived out of the main stream of the community for many years one is able to look at things dispassionately and one has come to the conclusion that this acute observer of men and matters was perfectly right in making what I then thought was a sweeping statement.

Ever since, this conversation has haunted me, as it would any one who has always had strong ethnic ties. I have therefore come to the conviction that if this ancient community of ours intends to perish by slow degrees, so be it, but I do not think that we have any right to take our religion with us into the limbo of history.

Every thinking Parsi does understand that in being a Parsi he belongs to an ethnic group. If he turns to Christianity or Hinduism to satisfy his spiritual needs, he does not cease to be a Parsi. He ceases to be a Zoroastrian.

Similarly if any Englishman or German is convinced of the divinity of Zarathushtra and wants to embrace Zoroastrianism he does not become a Parsi but remains an Englishman or a German. He only ceases to be a Christian by faith and turns into a Zoroastrian.

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This is a logical and undeniable statement that none can refute.

I therefore see no reason why any individual cannot be accepted into this ancient faith of ours which was never meant to be an exclusive religion for the few. As Tagore says, "Zarathushtra was the first Prophet who emancipated religion from the exclusive narrowness of a tribal god or a local elemental god of nature. He was the first to teach that God was to be won by all, by righteousness and love and not by sacrificial ceremonies." How can God ever be the private preserve of a few? He has to be universal and he has to be all pervading.

It is an absurd contradiction of history to say that our ancients did not proselytize. No less an authority than Prof Max Muller says that if the battle of Marathon and Salamis had been won and the Greeks had succumbed to the might of Persia, the state religion of the entire civilized world would have been the religion of Zarathushtra; that the Achaemenians, despite their excellent record of tolerance, betrayed the original religious instinct of proselytizing as did Darius with the Elamites, Xerxes with the Greeks and the other Achaemenian mon-

archs with their non-Zoroastrian Iranian subjects. The Sassanian kings however were not so tolerant, for they openly persecuted and converted the Jews and the Christians to Zoroastrianism and Firdausi in his *Shah Namah* says that the devout Khosrow converted the Turks and King Behram converted his Indian bride to Zoroastrianism.

History has been written and read and oft repeated, but the lessons of the past and the crying need of the present is completely disregarded by our so-called learned priests and pundits. By this sanctimonious and bigoted attitude and treatment of our young who have married outside the community, we are driving our children and our grandchildren away from our fold. This, over the years, has been a self-destructive process and, if continued, will help neither the community nor the religion to survive.

Dr H. S. ADENWALLA

Trichur

Whither Parsiana?

Though your magazine is of immense interest, I do not believe that your readership has dwindled because of our community getting smaller.

It is only because of your failing to identify the correct readership, because even today the majority of the Parsi community is orthodox and middle-class. Whilst you are touching on issues concerning only the affluent and richer class who certainly will not mind shelling out Rs 80 or so to see their fading images being published, you have totally failed to cover the majority of the community.

It is a professional obligation to follow the code of conduct by not giving partisan views. Your one such article was "Injustice at Doongerwadi."

By allowing such articles to be printed, you give allergy to the majority of your readers (to be frank all readers are not subscribers) so anybody having a free read will also be deterred from subscribing to such a magazine.

My only advice is to be absolutely impartial. Do not touch any controversial issue. Give only the events, news and religious topics in simple terms and do not try to glorify the affluent only and *Parsiana's* readership should increase.

YEZDI P.F. PANTHAKI

In *Parsiana* all articles are heartbreaking: all about quarrels within community and

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anjumans and punchayets; no lead or guidance from Asho Zarhosht, the *Gathas*, the *Avesta*, etc. or direction on the problems of the day. ROSTAM ROSTAMI

Ohio, USA

Parsee General Hospital

It is quite understandable for Ms Yasmin Tavaría to file a suit against the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital for alleged negligence leading to a fatal result during a blood transfusion.

The Parsee General Hospital, with its band of dedicated doctors, is a boon and a haven to poor and middle-class Parsis. There is many a person, in Government and out, who would like to see it made cosmopolitan. And this can well be made to happen, under the guise of "improvements" in public interest, in the not too distant future, if we do not watch out!

R. H. KOOKA

A children's *Shah Namah*

Childhood is the time when a child is most receptive to outside influences. These impressions, retained as vivid memories, persist through life. They motivate and propel him to achieve the objectives of his inspiration.

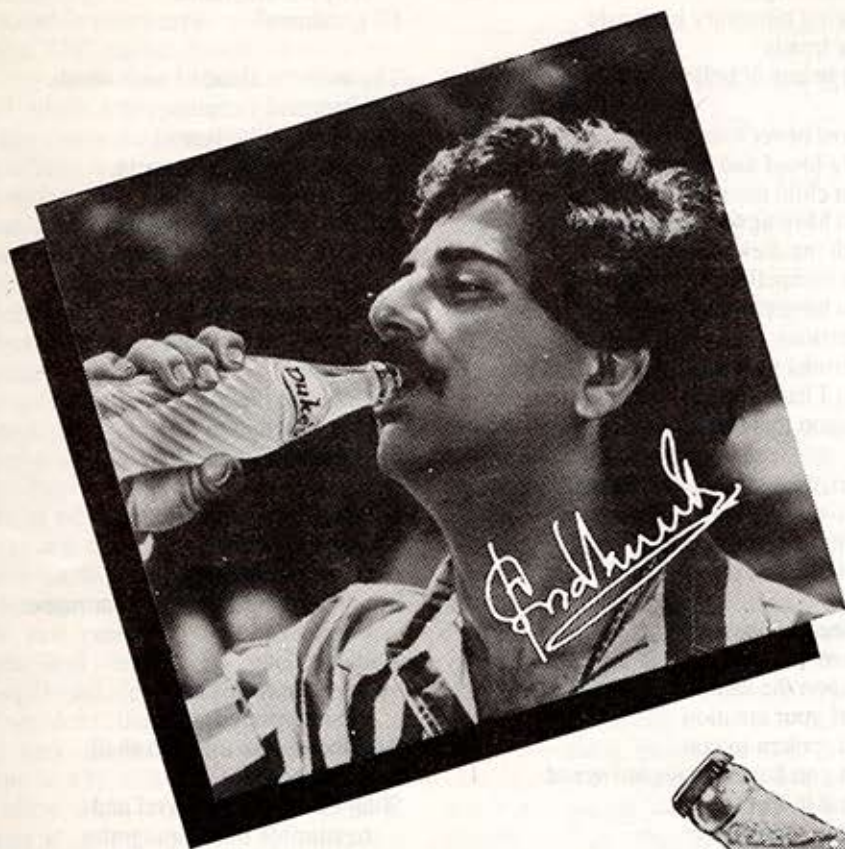
When I was a child, my friends and I used to crawl up on to the high bed and implore my old granduncle to tell us stories of achievements of our elders, like Pherozechah Mehta and Dadabhoy Naoroji, who were his contemporaries. My granduncle had the habit of using snuff and by the end of the story time, we would all be covered with the snuff, and sneezing to high heavens. Still, the happy memories persist.

In case of my friend, who is now heading a Zoroastrian revival in North America, what inspires him are the stories he remembers his father telling him about the sufferings the Zoroastrians had to undergo under the Moslem yoke in Iran. He remembers how he and his brothers used to crawl up on the high bed (note the persistence of a high bed in a Parsi life 50 years ago), and then onto the high stomach of his sleeping father and plead with him for stories. His father who had suffered first-hand would tell them the stories and then he would break down and cry under the emotional stress. These are the impressions which are inspiring him to do such a formidable job.

The Jews in our own lifetime worked, suffered, fought and died to build a new Israel. What inspired them were the stories of achievements, real or imaginary, of their ancestors as glorified in the *Old*

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Testament. Similarly, I think, some rich foundation should come forward and publish a beautifully illustrated book for children, telling stories from the *Shah Namah*. These books should inspire children and make them feel proud of their Zoroastrian heritage and impel them to hold onto Zoroastrian culture and values.

Z. M. ZEND

In the name of our Lord

I have been reading in *Parsiana* about the various controversies facing the community today. A controversy does not really worry me, because controversies are bound to occur where thinking people exist. What upsets me is a total refusal of either side to try to see the other side's point of view. On going through these various issues, a poem has come to my mind:

Dear God, on high
What is my religion?
An ignorant human below,
I must know —
What to follow.

In your name, do you know
What horrors flow?
What hatred fills
The hearts of men?

The earth weeps in solitude
Friendless and dying
A sickly wind sighing
Gently drying
The red blood
on her head
As man 'pon man
Lies dying — or dead
All in your name
Oh, what a shame!

There was a time
when I thought
I was religious
But seeing now what
religion has done to them
I have severed myself of it.

For these men have become
Gods unto themselves:
Arrogant and self-appointed
They pass judgment on others
In your name

In the name of religion
They forgive not —
nor forget
Tearing humanity to shreds.
Fear treads
The hearts of believers.

I have never feared you
Only loved and respected you
As a child does her father:
You have never threatened me
With the darkness of hell;
Nor compelled me to believe.
You have enriched me with
visions
Of truths so beautiful
That I have found my heaven
upon this earth.

Who, then, are these faithfuls?
Who put the fear of damnation
into my timid heart,
If I do not as they decree?

In need of answers
I have often sat myself
upon the sands
of your creation
And spoken to you.
And you have always answered
me in truth:
And in that answer
What enormous trust
you have put upon me

Along the Path of Asha
I have walked
My eyes fixed 'pon your face.
And caring not, if I
stumbled or was hurt —
Have crossed to safety.

And yet, around me they float

In doubt of you.
Why do they not speak to you
As I do
And get their answers?
What treasures do they wish
to gather by the setting sun
When all shall remain to waste
And we shall carry with us
only the fragrance
Of goodness?

The world is flooded with words
bitter and vicious,
And hearts with hatred.
Did you not give us hearts
So we could love
— You, and all you created —
And words — so we could convey
your wisdom to the world?
And a mind, to decide
For ourselves the path
To follow?
For you are the Lord of Wisdom
And your creation cannot be
mindless.

Send us no more prophets
No more messiahs
No more messengers
For many have come in your name
but not of you
And cons later,
your messages are
misinterpreted
And those, like us, who shall
come hence
Shall continue to quarrel and
to stumble in the quagmire
of ignorance.

Instead, my Lord,
Reveal to each of us
in our hearts
The mysteries of your
creation.
Help these poor faithfuls,
Who, afflicted of themselves,
Unable to contain their greed
Preach wrong in your name
Giving it the vestige
of religion.

M^{rs} THIRTY E. BHARUCHA

Play center for children

The Parsi community is grateful to the good people who established residential quarters for the community — The Wadias and Mr Godrej.

But as both parents have now to go to earn money to meet the rising costs there is no one left at home to look after the children. So pre-primary schools are being established where children of two-and-a-half years are sent to be looked af-

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ter. These institutions are situated at some distance from the homes of the children, charge heavy fees and fail to give the all-round development that children receive at home.

There was some talk of having a fire-temple built at Godrej Baug. It will be a great boon to the community if instead a play hall is built where all the children between the ages of two-and-a-half and six years may be taken care of by some person trained for the purpose and having a natural love for children. Can the community not produce some Zoroastrian sisters of mercy who can do this service? The parents will be quite willing and happy to support the running of such establishments.

D. R. EDIBAM

Violation of divine laws

Suicide is murder of self — a living being, and mercy-killing (meaning intentionally putting an end to someone's life by means of poison, drugs, injections and the like) is murder of other living beings. Though in both these cases the intention is to give relief to the tortured living beings, yet mere good intentions are not enough to absolve oneself from the repercussions of wrong deeds committed in ignorance of divine laws.

continued on page 44

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Events and Personalities

Firdauz' fatal fall

"My son was a brave person who did not fear nature," said Ms Thrity Homi Taleyarkhan in an interview with *Mid-Day* of June 3, 1991 about her son Firdauz. "He was so much in love with the mountains that they finally claimed him."

The 41-year-old advocate lost his life after he fell into an L-shaped, two-foot wide and 60-feet deep crevasse on May 24 while trekking in the Garhwal range of the Himalayas. Taleyarkhan is believed to have shouted for help but his companions were unable to assist him and a few hours later he reportedly died as the snow piled up in the crevasse.

A talented lawyer, Firdauz had appeared for a number of cases before the Bombay High Court and the Supreme Court, the latest one being to challenge the development control rules for Greater Bombay. Secretary of the Bombay Bar Association for three years, Taleyarkhan was offered the judgeship of the High Court at the age of 39, but declined the

offer, noted senior counsel Tehmtan R. Andhyarujina.

"In a profession which has debased itself, and has, by and large, converted itself into an unsavory business, Firdauz stood out as a lawyer of the highest integrity — to the court, to his clients and to his opponents at the bar," wrote noted lawyer Navroze H. Seervai in a letter to the *Indian Express* of May 30.

Praising Taleyarkhan's legal acumen, lawyer Berjis M. Desai noted in *The Bombay Samachar* dated June 2, "At the

Indian Government when mountaineering expeditions from abroad visited India. As liaison officer, he had participated in a rescue mission that saved the lives of two members of an Austrian Himalayan expedition, reads the *Samachar*. He had also served as the liaison officer to the Wolfgang Stafan's Austrian Expedition to Dunagiri (23,184 feet) in the Outer Nanda Devi Sanctuary in May 1980. He himself climbed over 19,500 feet in a support role in this unsuccessful expedition. According to the *Samachar*, Firdauz not only

participated in mountaineering and rock climbing courses, but in May 1978, had climbed the unnamed peak 6181 (20,382 feet) near the Khalindini Pass.

His father Homi Taleyarkhan, former governor of Sikkim and former member of the Minorities Commission, recalled in the *Mid-Day* interview: "At the very time the accident (took) place, I was in

Delhi attending the funeral of Rajiv Gandhi. Little did I know that on my return I would have to face another shock."

On the crest of a wave

"It is unimaginable how many factors can go in your favor when they have to. This is my first world title, but I wouldn't regard it as my best performance." Farokh Tarapore who, along with his crew Kelly Rao, won the International Enterprise Championships '91, was quoted in the *Mid-Day* of March 18, 1991.

With this victory the Tarapore-Rao duo reportedly become the first Asians and, after 1973, the first non-Englishmen to win the Enterprise title which had



Above: World Enterprise champions Tarapore (left) and Rao

Photo: Michael Rodrigues/*The Times of India*
(Left) Taleyarkhan: "in love with the mountains" Photo: Jam-e-Jamshed

young age of 40, he had attained heights in his legal career. He had an extensive practise in customs and central excise cases including recent cases on the important principle of unjust enrichment in central excise matters." Desai recalled that, "Firdauz often mentioned to his friends that if he ever happened to die in the mountains, he should be left there."

He was a member of several expeditions and acted as liaison officer for the



hitherto been the exclusive prerogative of British yachtsmen. Neither Tarapore nor Rao are Enterprise class sailors. Thirty-year-old Tarapore sails in the 470 class whereas 28-year-old Rao's domain is the Laser category.

The start was reportedly not very smooth for the winners who, in fact, had to struggle to improve their performance



before they could maintain an edge over their competitors in the six-race world event in March '91 sponsored by Modi Xerox.

Veteran winners

"The honor of running a lap with the torch and lighting the flame at the inaugural ceremony" of the 13th National Veterans' Athletic Championships was shared by 86-year-old Jehanbax Kapadia and Ms Grace Chiramal. About 800 sportspersons aged 35 and above from 12 states in India participated in this meet at Calcutta's Salt Lake City Stadium in February '91, notes a report in the *Calcutta Gavashni*, February-March 1991.

Winning a gold in the 100 and 200 m flat races in the 85 plus age-group, Kapadia retained his 1989 world meet timings in both the events.

Setting a new meet record in the three km walkathon was Ms Lily Khan who also won a gold in the five km walkathon in the 45 plus category.

In the 40 plus age-group Ms Zarin Rustomji won two silver medals in the 100 and 200 m flat races.

Bagging four golds in the 35 plus age-group was Ms Prochy Mehta who won the 100, 200 and 400 m flat races and also ran for the team which won the 4x100 m relay, *Gavashni* informs.

Another veteran athlete Ms Mani Nanji who represented India at the 6th Asian Veteran Athletic Championships in Kuala Lumpur in November last won one gold and two silver medals at that meet. She

stood first in the discus throw and second in the shot put and javelin throw events, according to the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of January 13, 1991.

Sporting youngsters

Making new meet records and winning different events at the 98th Annual Bombay Schools Athletic Meet in January '91



(Above, from left) Veteran sportspersons: Nanji, Kapadia and Mehta
(Below) Interschool champs: Printer (left) and Engineer

was eight-year-old Ms Feroza Engineer who was declared the girls under-nine individual midget champion, notes the *Jam-e-Jamshed* dated February 3, 1991. In the two sprint events where she stood first, Engineer from Girton High School clocked 15.8 seconds in the 100 m and 34.3 seconds in the 200 m.

In the 200 m run for midgets Ms Sanoobar Garda of Udayachal School clocking 34.9 seconds also bettered the earlier meet record of 35 seconds. Girton High School's Ms Delna Bhungara came third in high jump in the midgets group, the *Jamé* reads.

In the intermediate girls section Ms Perinaz Printer of St Agnes High School stood first in the javelin throw, second in the 100 m hurdles and third in shot put and discus throw events. At the Maharashtra State Open Athletic Championships last year, Printer had stood second

in the 100 m hurdles for girls under 15.

Other Zoroastrians to feature in the J. K. Foundation-sponsored meet at the Brabourne Stadium in January last were Ms Delna Avari of Convent of Jesus and Mary, Fort who stood second in the 400 m run for girls under 15 and Ms Anahita Balsara of Bai Avabai Petit High School who stood third in the long jump in the same age-group, the paper further informs.

In the inters group 1,000 m cycling mass start for girls, Ms Pearl Irani of J. B. Vachha High School finished first while in the boys inters 3,000 m lap cycle race Kaizad Mistry from St Xavier's High School stood second.

XI All Parsis sports

Girls were to the fore rewriting records at the XI All Parsis Annual Athletic Meet, notes a press release sent by organizer Aspi Ustad. Altogether 15 new meet records were set and two equalled.

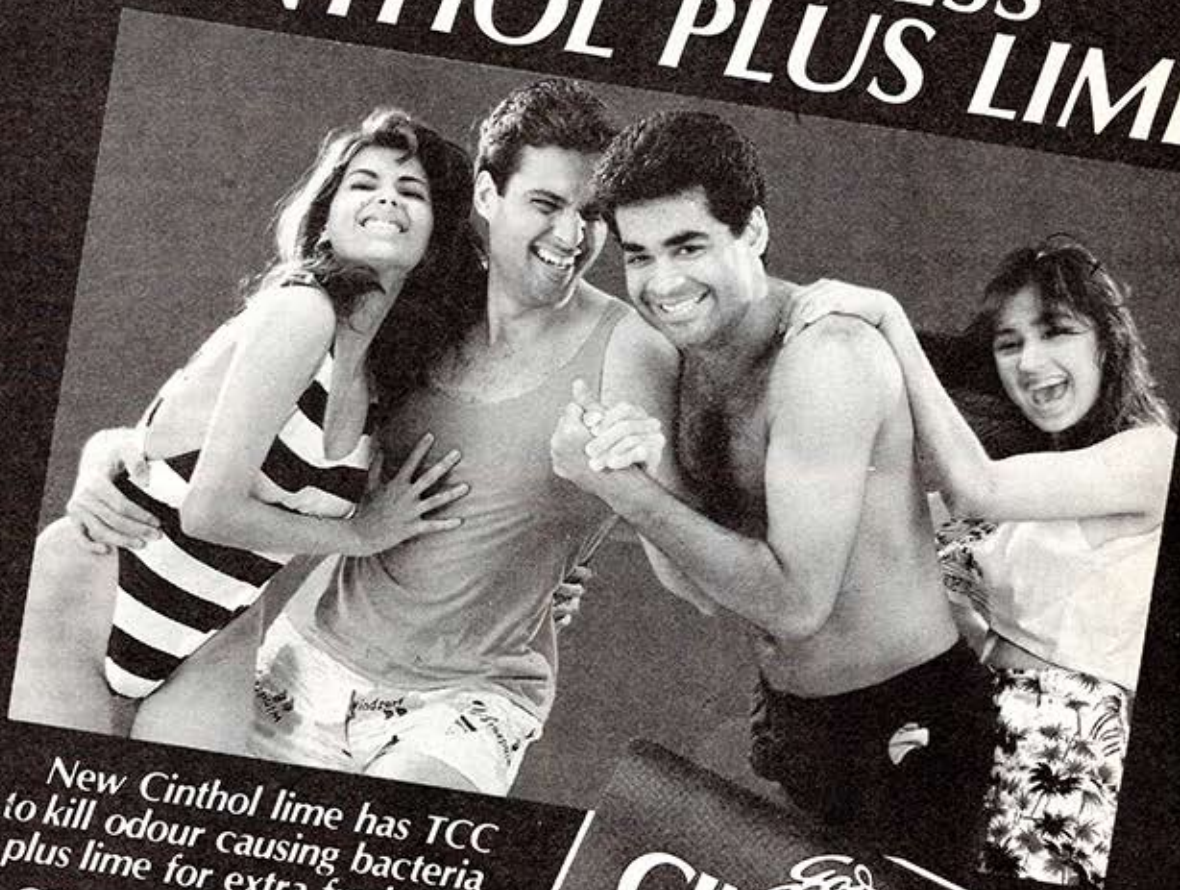
The youngest participant of the meet, three-year-old Ms Jenifer Mehernosh Chhor was the spectators' favorite participating in the under seven age-group and running the race "till the last, getting a loud applause from the audience," according to a family source.

Of the 570 competitors, 59 had come from Dahanu, Surat, Pune, Balsar, Ahmednagar, Vadodra, Nagpur and Nasik. The 10-strong team from Calcutta could not make it to the event. Another disappointment was the absence of 20 sportsmen from Navsari who did not come as Navsari's prominent sports instructor, organizer, social worker and member of the Gujarat State Sports Council, Phiroze Jokhi, 32, was brutally murdered just a day before the start of the two-day meet on February 16 and 17, 1991. The gathering observed a minute's silence to condole his death.

As in the past, one event in each age-group was kept open for participation from non-Parsis. The intention of the organizers — The Nowroze Baug Play Centre, Zoroastrian Physical Culture and Health League, Cusrow Baug United Sports and Welfare League and Mancherji Edalji Joshi Memorial Trust — was to enable "our children... to see the best of Bombay athletes run before their own eyes."

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Ms Zenia Aryton set four new meet records in the 100 m run, 200 m sprint, 100 m hurdles and long jump, and equalled her high jump record. She won the individual championship in the women's category and was also declared the best athlete of the year.

Among the men, Porus Guzder winning five gold, three silver and two

The Ustad brothers, Homi, Hoshang and Aspi and veteran Jal Pardivala were the key persons credited for managing the two-day show. The encouragement from the owners of Wibbs bread who distributed free bread and buns to all the participants was specially acknowledged.

Rashid Kersi Mirza holding a junior black belt in karate and reportedly rank-

the *Mid-Day* dated January 10, 1991. The newspaper's statement of apology had meanwhile insinuated that the story of Ajitabh, brother of cinestar Amitabh Bachchan, holding the infamous sixth account in the Bofors case had been planted by government sources.

This arbitrary decision by the non-Congress Government meant a loss of 15 to 20 million dollars in foreign exchange, according to the *Mid-Day* report. And the losses would have mounted even further had not Zaiwalla and Company, even after the termination notice, assisted the government in the Indian Oil case by helping it save seven million dollars after the arbitration stage where it was allegedly "complicated" by the new legal team. Zaiwalla's help was also sought to challenge another arbitration award worth 10 million dollars.

The reason purportedly offered by the Indian High Commission in UK for the discontinuation of the solicitor firm's services is the demand for higher rates and the refusal to work on panel rates, the

paper reads. It is claimed however that the new legal firm engaged is being paid far more than what Zaiwalla and Company were given.

Rated among the top 10 percent of law firms in London, Zaiwalla and Company is the first solicitor's firm to ever merit a visit from the Lord Chancellor (Britain's premier legal authority) and operates from Chancery Lane, London's most prestigious legal address, according to a write-up in *Society* of April 1991 where Zaiwalla has been interviewed.

Zaiwalla and Company reportedly concentrate on three areas: marine and admiralty; representing overseas governments; and representing companies who choose London as their international base or as a forum of jurisdiction for their international contracts.

"Most lawyers apply law. I like to change it. Laws must evolve and progress," notes the low profile solicitor who has been practising in London for the last 14 years.

Indo-Soviet bonds
In the rapidly changing context of global politics, the developmental and security needs of India and USSR acquire great importance, according to Dr Aspy Phi-



(Above): Youngest participant Chhor and the organizers of the All Parsis Annual Athletic and Cycling Meet

(Below, from left): best athlete Guzder, all-rounder Mistry and karateka Mirza

bronze was declared the best athlete of the meet. Rayomand Elavia and Homiyar Mistry were rated the best all-rounders among men, the release notes. The other individual champions were: Kazveen Peddar (girls under seven), Feroza Engineer (girls under nine), Zenia Daruwalla (girls under 11), Kamal Wadia (girls under 13), Anahita Balsara (girls under 15), Mahir Mubarak (boys under six), Raumin Deralaz (boys under eight), Karl Irani (boys under 10), Aresh Wadia (boys under 12) and Yohaan Wadia (boys under 14). Both the men's and women's team championships were won by the Mancherji Edalji Joshi Memorial teams.

ing 66th in the world in this martial art was also felicitated at this meet.

At the All-Parsis Annual Cycling Meet on March 17 at the Valabhbhai Patel Stadium, Neville Pithawalla emerged as the fastest man on wheels. In the women's section it was Ms Jasmine Arethna who was the unrivalled winner. "There were no casualties, nor any accidents," triumphantly claimed the organizers of the meet.

Libel suit costs dear

When solicitor Sarosh Zaiwalla successfully fought a libel suit against a Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* on behalf of his client Ajitabh Bachchan, he was widely acclaimed by the public. But one of his clients, the Government of India, reacted by terminating the services of his London-based firm of solicitors, M/s Zaiwalla and Company, reads a report in

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roze Rana, director of the international relations program at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda.

He was deputed to Moscow in October last year to attend the meeting of the joint Indo-Soviet research committee. There, he was to present the leading framework paper for the Indian delegation, according to the Ahmedabad edition of *The Times of India* of September 25, 1990.

The Indian and Soviet scholars on the high level research committee constituted by the Indo-Soviet joint commission will work out trends and project future possibilities for collaboration between these countries, the paper mentions.



Rana (left): international ties and Vazifdar: forte is company law. (Below) Inmates of the Choksi Rural Girls Home and Dangor: surrounded by art

President of secretaries

His election as president of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India makes Nowroze Jamshed Vazifdar the second Parsi to be elected to this post, reports the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of February 10, 1991. In the past he had served in various capacities on this national Institute.

Other bodies of significance with which Vazifdar is connected are the Company Law Committee of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the core working group that made recommendations to the government on matters relating to the Companies Act, the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, etc, reads his curriculum vitae. Additionally he has served on committees dealing with law, company affairs, banking and finance.

He is vice president (finance) and secretary of Mahindra UGINE Steel Company where his work involves supervision of finance, accounts, banking, taxation, costing and secretarial and legal functions of the company.

The company secretary has authored various articles on company law, corporate taxation, cost audit and manpower planning and has also contributed to professional development programs and conferences in India and abroad. In '78 he

was awarded the President's gold medal for standing first on an all-India level at the Institute of Company Secretaries of India's final examination and was awarded a silver medal for the best performance in company law, mentions his bio data.

Dangor's one man show

"There is always something new, something unexpected..." in the creations of artist Bomi Dangor who held his first one-man show of drawings, paintings and sculptures in Surat from February 21 to 25 this year, informs Dr Ratan Marshall, former chief executive of the

Surat Parsi Punchayet.

An architect by profession, Dangor has explored different mediums and is largely a self-taught artist who believes that art is "as much concerned with the way people feel about things as it is with the way things really are," notes a brochure released at the time of his exhibition.

He is a graduate in architecture from Baroda's Maharaja Sayajirao University, while his wife Rukhasana has done her bachelors in fine arts from the same University.

Surat needs an art gallery, stated Dangor at the press conference before the exhibition and declared that if land was made available to him, he would take care of the other requirements. After his successful show in Surat, the artist has intentions of exhibiting his works in Bombay, informs Marshall.

Choksi Home's 25

Donations totalling Rs 4,25,000 from charitable trusts and philanthropic Zoroastrians from India and abroad helped strengthen the assets of the Seth Nanabhoy B. Choksi Home for Rural Zoroastrian Girls in Navsari on the occasion of its silver jubilee.

According to trustee Hormuzdiar D. Choksi, the largest donation of one lakh rupees came from Canada's Zartoshty brothers. The gift was made specifically in memory of the late Maneckji Limji Hataria "who sacrificed his life to save his co-religionists in Iran" from the tyranny of the Muslim rulers, as acknowledged Mehraban Zartoshty.

The Choksi Girls Home, where reside about 35 poor Zoroastrian girls from the rural areas of Gujarat, looks after the educational and religious requirements and meets the medical and nutritional needs of the children, noted an associate of the institution.

On the occasion of their silver jubilee an entertainment program was organized by the Home's superintendent Ms Gool Nimuchwalla under whose direction the girls performed a short skit — *Doodh ma sarak*, sang special compositions and did a lively *garba* dance, further notes Choksi.



Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

Spreading the Good Word

Arnavaz S. Mama

The California-based Zarathushtrian Assembly aims to spread the message of Zarathushtra worldwide

"During the last few centuries, the acceptance of persons desiring to choose the religion has declined to the point where it has become more or less a hereditary and closed religion. (Thus) there has arisen a fresh desire to rekindle the propagating light and accept into the faith those who desire to embrace it."

With that preamble to its constitution, The Zarathushtrian Assembly (ZA) intends to "proclaim the message of Zarathushtra to a world in need of its enlightening wisdom." Membership to the newly formed association based in California is open to anyone who considers him/herself Zoroastrian by birth or choice and has "knowledgeably performed his or her initiation (navjote/sad-reh-pooshi)."

Acknowledging Zoroastrianism as a "universal religion with a powerful message for the progressive betterment and happiness of the living world," the organization harkens to the religion's "active propagating movement for 2,300 years from the days of its founder to the fall of the Sassanian empire in 630 AD." The existence of "persons who wish to acquire knowledge of the Good Religion and exercise their free will to choose it as their way of life," has led to the creation of this new organization where such individuals may peacefully foregather (see box).

The inaugural function held on March 22, 1991 at the Ramada Inn at Beverly Hills in California began with bilingual

prayers and talks (in English and Persian) followed by Zarathushtrian songs, dinner, Iranian music and dance. Two hundred and seventy persons attended the meeting according to a letter from its chief organizer Dr Ali Jafarey to *Parsiana*. The Assembly is beginning with training classes for teachers and navjote candidates. Talks, fireside meetings, publications and celebration of religious festivals are on the cards. Chapters in other cities of North America, in London and Paris are also being planned, writes Jafarey.

The ZA communication organ is *Spenta*, a small, 24-page bulletin presently to be published on a bi-monthly basis. The ZA logo is based on the 2,500-year-old Achaemenian fire altar, depicting a blazing fire on a three ridged vase which symbolizes the message of Zarathushtra, explains *Spenta*: Its six flames "represent the six principles of life — good mind (*Vohu Manah*), best righteousness (*Asha Vahishta*), chosen dominion (*Khshathra Vairyta*), progressive serenity (*Spenta Aramaiti*), wholeness (*Haurvatat*) and immortality (*Ameretat*) — arising out of the divine inspiration (*Seraosha*) and radiating light, warmth and energy (*Atar*) from a triple base of good thoughts (*Humata*), good words (*Hukhta*) and good deeds (*Hvashsta*). The circle round the altar, penetrated by the converging flames, depicts the good earthly life soaring high to a blissful state beyond."

A non-political, non-profit religious organization, the ZA has been accorded a tax free status but is yet to acquire a place for use as its headquarters. The organizers are said to be busy writing and compiling a number of books in English and Persian to meet the demand for Zarathushtra's true teachings.

According to a letter by William Brawner, a member of the Assembly's Council of Elders, published in *The Bombay Samachar* of April 28, 1991, a large number of people have shown an interest in joining the Assembly, half of them being 'born Zoroastrians.'

Orthodox displeasure has, so far, been reflected in the letters of Ervad Jal Birdy, member of the Traditional Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Anjuman (TMZA) — a breakaway organization with approximately 150 individuals as members according to its president Tahamton Aresh — and vice president of the North American Mobed Council. Birdy says he is writing on behalf of 300 Zoroastrian families.

In his letters of November 11, 1990 addressed to the community at large, and of February 2, 1991 addressed to Rohinton Rivetna, president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), Birdy has charged the umbrella body with assisting "in propagating a destructive conversion policy."

"We learned that there are full-time salaried individuals, supported by well-

to-do, influential but misguided Zoroastrians, who have been devoting all their time and energy propagating conversion, mixed-marriages and discrediting our time-honored beliefs and traditions openly. One such individual, Ali A. Jafarey — a Moslem who has published his own interpretations of the *Gathas* and now considers himself a Zoroastrian, has started an organization called The Zarathushtrian Assembly which is actively engaged in the process of converting anyone into our faith. Its aim is to enroll some 20,000 converts of all races within the next five to 10 years in this country alone.

"Accepting 20,000 converts of different faiths and backgrounds into our tiny North American community of about 10,000 is not going to boost our supposedly declining numbers as some of us mistakenly think. It will destroy our identity and completely transform our religion as well within a couple of generations. It is like suggesting decapitation as a good remedy for a headache.

"Some gullible Zoroastrians seem to be falling for Jafarey's preaching — hook, line and sinker. A few Parsis are even spending their retirement years convincing our community that accepting converts is a good policy for us. Most disturbing of all is the fact that such Parsis hold prominent positions in FEZANA. They are influencing FEZANA to actively support and encourage Jafarey and others like him to travel to Zoroastrian associations around the country and spread their damaging message...

"While we cannot stop others from following Zarathushtra's teachings... It is outrageous, and also saddening, to see some of our own people advocating policies which will send us down the road to self-destruction..."

Urging FEZANA to include a definition of the term 'Zoroastrian' — as those born of both Zoroastrian parents and who have undergone the navjote ceremony — in its constitution, Birdy further states that the organization should serve only such Zoroastrians and should not accept anyone who did not meet this definition on any of its committees or panels.

Notes Birdy, "When we supported the formation of FEZANA we were hoping to create a central organization which would facilitate communication between community members who are flung far and wide on this continent; one that would keep us together as a community through these formative years. We were

not looking for an organization which would embark upon schemes which go against the sentiments of a large section of the community." (The TMZA has applied for, but is not a member of FEZANA yet.)

A third viewpoint is provided by Meher Amalsad, chairperson of FEZANA's Helping Hands committee which is its youth based, social service arm. Offering what he terms as a "different and unique concept of conversion," Amalsad writes, "Instead of wasting our resources and energies worrying about

"Outside conversion diverts our attention from the strengthening of family ties..."

converting other people into the Zoroastrian faith, namely 'outside conversion,' we would be in great shape if we focussed our attention and time towards converting ourselves into better Zoroastrians, namely 'self conversion'...

"If we closely study the message of Zarathushtra, it is crystal clear that he has strongly urged us to first focus our attention on the family. After we have established strong ties within our families, then we should worry about diverting our attention to our neighborhoods, our cities, our countries and eventually this world. Self conversion follows the message of Zarathushtra whereas outside conversion gives us an opportunity to follow Zarathushtra's message in the reverse direction. It inclines us to worry about how to recruit people from other faiths..."

Aresh, another Jafarey critic, told *Parsiana* in the course of an interview on March 5, 1991, "Ali Jafarey is a Moslem. Do you know what his PhD is in? It's in chemistry... He has sworn to bring in 20 to 30 thousand converts... We are a minority in the world, but now we will be a minority in our own community... Why do you think a Moslem wants to become a Zoroastrian? It's because a Zoroastrian is respected. We are respected today in Iran."

The running feud between Jafarey and Aresh in California precedes the forming of the TMZA. Ms Roshan Motivala, then president of the Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC), in an open letter to ZAC members on April 9, 1988 had criti-

cized TMZA founder, Aresh: "The forming of the Traditional Mazdayasni Zarathoshti Anjuman on the assumptions that other organizations failed 'to deliver the goods' in relation to rites and traditions, is to bypass the true essence of the Zarathoshti faith, and that is the pursuit of 'Vohu Mano' and the 'Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni' way of life."

Counters Jafarey: "None of the persons working with and for the Assembly are salaried. All of them help and work on voluntary and honorary basis.

"No 'well-to-do, influential but misguided' Zoroastrian has financially helped The Zarathushtrian Assembly. So far, it is the founders and their families who are supporting it with whatever finances they can afford. The Assembly will eventually become self-supporting.

"None of the Assembly members are devoting 'their time and energy propagating conversion, mixed-marriages, and discrediting time-honored beliefs and traditions openly.' That is a mischief-monger's job. All they are doing is learning, practicing, and teaching the true doctrine of the *Gathas* because they firmly believe that the Good Religion is a timeless, universal religion meant for the entire humanity.

"The Assembly does not convert anyone but only 'accepts' as members those adults only who, after due study and discernment, choose the Good Religion by their (own) free will, perform their navjote, profess themselves as Zarathushtrians, and apply for membership. This is more than what the Councils of Iranian Mobeds in North America and Iran require (of) one to become a Zaratoshti..."

"No plan has so far been made to win a specific number of people into The Assembly. The more, the better. The Assembly is not a missionary organization established on the pattern of other missionary religions which push, persuade, promise, seduce, allure, warn, and go to other great lengths to convert people. The Assembly only introduces Asho Zarathushtra's divine doctrine to those desirous of listening to it, and then leaves it to them to take the next step.

"None of The Assembly members intends or will intend to call him or herself a 'Parsi' or 'Irani' in order to become a member of the ethnic religious order called Zoroastrianism or enter their closed religious centers. The ethnic Parsi and Irani groups can relax with what they possess in beliefs and funds, and maintain

continued on page 26

The lonesome twosome

Parinaz Gandhi

The film *Percy* brings home some truths about human relations and the community for those who are willing to listen

We are nearly about to shut the door on the salesman standing outside with our usual curt reply... when we are reminded of that scene in the film *Percy* where the middle-aged Banubai goes from door to door trying to vend *bhakras* and other Parsi delicacies, encountering rejection, dejection in her efforts to eke out an honest living. We see a young couple speed off on a motorbike... and we can't help contrasting their companionship to the isolation experienced by Percy, the hero of the movie, who yearns to enjoy life, to delight in music, to express his feelings to the girl he likes...

Many such commonplace encounters in real life assume a new significance, demand a fresh approach after a viewing of *Percy*. Images from the movie remain with you long after the film was telecast on the national television network, long after you give up hope of a repeat telecast since the first viewing was marred due to technical interruptions at the Doordarshan end, long after the film was declared the best feature film in Gujarati



Left: Deboo in the title role of *Percy* with Patel playing Banubai



at the national film awards presentation in 1990.

The Parsi milieu in the 128-minute film effectively accentuates the theme: a mother's stifling love and concern for her 28-year-old son, and the obedient son's difficulty in breaking free of his mother's shackles. The widowed mother's insistence on waiting for Percy to join her for dinner on a rare occasion when he gets delayed returning home after an evening

of music, or her refusal to accept that he can stitch on his own pant buttons are some of the artifices deployed to govern her son. And Percy, who always respectfully addressed his mother as "mamma," would never dare to defy her overtly even though he'd wait anxiously for the evenings when she would go to the fire-temple so that he could take out his father's old gramophone and learn to dance, book in hand, to the accompaniment of music.

Towards the beginning of the film they show Percy's father die. In the end, his mother dies. "*Aay soo badhu* depressing *lagéch* (all this is depressing)." "Why can't the achievement stories of the community be presented? Why always show them in a negative light?" These were some of the criticisms levelled against the filmmakers. The low-middle-class backdrop for the story, the habits of the community as depicted through a constipated digestive tract, the defeatist attitude of the mamma's boy, the inspiration that comes from the apparition of his dead school friend, the inconclusive

ending... were some of the other points on which the film has been faulted.

"It is not a film on the Parsis," repeats Pervaz Merwanji, director of the film, for the nth time. "It just happens that the central characters are Parsis. I've tried not to include the sociology of Parsis in the film. I'm not there to document the social grouping, customs, rituals... Besides, here are two perfectly honest, decent folk. Let someone tell me what is negative about the characters."

The film narrates the story of a young boy who is trapped between the conflicting ideologies of his parents — the irreverent, fun-loving father and the pious, duty-bound mother. His father dies while he is still a schoolboy. With no dominant role model, no siblings and an overprotective mother, Percy becomes a recluse, a submissive son. There is a girl staying in his colony whom he loves but... all he does is go to her wedding to see her get married to another man. He is happy at his clerical job at a small pharmaceutical concern where he can assert himself. Little does the straightforward Percy realize that when he righteously exposes the fraud of a colleague he is inviting trouble for himself. The dismissed employee takes revenge on Percy by assaulting him and ransacking his office, leaving him wounded and without a job. It is his mother who tends his wounds. Despite his sincere intentions and despite his mother's nagging about his unemployed status in their poor household, Percy just does not manage to sell Banubai's homemade goodies the way she did until her sudden demise. On her death, Percy, who harbors a secret fascination for western music and dance, is shown conducting an orchestra with a baton in hand.

"No one seems to understand the last scene," believes Kurush Deboo who played the title role so convincingly that it is even presumed that he was considered for the acting award, according to a write-up in the *Indian Express* of April 21, 1990. This is when "Percy imagines he is free, independent and himself responsible for his life," he elucidates. Disappointment with the film, as expressed by his relatives and acquaintances, Deboo attributes to the "Parsi attitude of seeking entertainment and amusement" instead of appreciating an art film.

"Perhaps the non-Parsis appreciated the film better," concedes Merwanji. (The sub-titles in English helped them understand the story line.) The general media showered it with accolades like

"an absolutely endearing work, a near masterpiece." And the film has been acclaimed as the best among the ones dealing with a Parsi subject. At the international film festival in Calcutta, the first film to be shown in the panorama section was *Percy*. Besides, it was also selected for screening at international film festivals at Cannes and Mannheim, informs the director.

Contributing to the authenticity of the motion picture was the Parsi Gujarati medium of expression; the Parsi director, the story and script by Cyrus Mistry, the camera direction by Navroze Contractor, the art direction and costumes by Ms Roshan Kalapesi, the chief production controller Sorab Irani, the selection of a Parsi cast to play the Parsi roles. Since the film was in Parsi Gujarati, "I didn't have to speak Hindi and be a Parsi. I could be a Parsi and act a Parsi," de-

role as Percy's father.

Prior to *Pestonjee*, the Parsi life-style had been projected in *Khatta Meetha*, another Hindi feature film. But since that film did not have a story line on the Parsis, nor any statement to make on the community, being an adaptation of a Turkish film, it is not considered appropriate for comparison. *On Wings of Fire* was a film that belonged to a different genre altogether, providing more of a documentary narration on the religious-mythological-historical background to the community.

For Merwanji, *Percy* provided him his first experience as director of a feature film and therefore he says he "can never leave it behind." He is caught in the conflicting emotions of "attachment to it" and non-inclination "to even talk about it." Pleased with the overall response to the film, he would prefer not to view any one



clared Ms Ruby Patel whose brilliant enactment as Banubai, Percy's mother in the film, is, as was later conveyed to her, said to have missed an acting award by a narrow margin. The last film on the Parsis, *Pestonjee* (directed by Ms Vijaya Mehta with a lead star cast of Ms Shabana Azmi, Naseeruddin Shah, Anupam Kher), some artistes felt was a little contrived in Parsi Hindi even though the Parsi ambience was captured. *Pestonjee* provided an outsider's view of the community and lacked the analytical approach, were the comments expressed by film critics. "*Pestonjee* tended to be cynical. Somewhere along the line it got diffused, but *Percy* was very true to the script and the subject... This film was one from the heart," maintains Hosi Vasunia who played a short but impactful

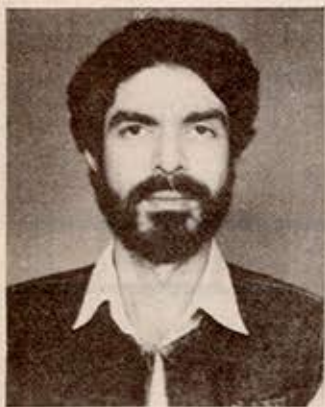
scene in isolation: "Actually any one shot being singled out would mean a detraction from the whole." However, being the perfectionist that he is, he refuses to tolerate the "*chalta hai* (let it pass) attitude" frequently encountered in India and refers to one particular scene: "We spent hours to get the shot right. This is when Percy leaves the house in search of a job and his mother tells him not to return without finding one."

Everyone, including Merwanji, talks of "having a ball" during the making of *Percy*. They do also remember the nearly 10 months of toil they put in, often working more than one shift a day if the schedule demanded it. The cooperation received from the administrators of different institutions — like the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, the Dadyseth Atash



was required to go before the camera, "he was all there," emoting the fledgling Percy's fears and inhibitions.

In fact getting back into the same emotional framework after each break is what needed the greatest adjustment from stage thespians Vasunia and Patel, used as they were to going through the entire gamut of emotions in a consequential order. "It was great fun doing a movie with Ruby after all the stage shows we have done together," adds Vasunia. If you ask him to identify his favorite scene, prompt comes the response: "My own death scene where I had to do nothing but lie on the bed," he roars with laughter. "But seriously, the scenes depicting loneliness of the mother and son really touched me," he specifies. It was the same loneliness and isolation he witnessed in real life during the shooting at Khareghat Colony. A house in Khareghat Colony which served



Bahram at Fanaswadi, the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute — also helped during the shooting, Merwanji acknowledges. The lead cast recollect their experiences whilst shooting Percy. Merwanji's ability to build an instant rapport with his unit members and creating a family atmosphere is what has brought approbation to him and his wife Suzanne who was assistant art director of the film. "I was particularly touched by the instant rapport which Pervez had with the child Percy (played by Porus Irani)," mentions Vasunia. The little boy would be fooling around at one moment and as soon as he

as Percy's residence was where most of the shooting was done. However it was the neighboring houses that the actors frequented when they had to change, and it is here that Vasunia got to observe the life-style of the older generation. They were "totally of another world," he feels.

Talking of the excitement and fun during shooting, Patel relates how after a particular scene was done correctly, everyone would clap encouragingly. Finally which scenes went into the film and how she came across on the screen Patel did not know because she had not got a chance to view the movie on television,

Scenes from Percy

Facing page: The dismissed employee takes revenge on Percy

Top: Young Percy in awe of his father as his mother looks on

Center: Bemused children show an interest in Percy.

Accentuating the Parsi touch :script-writer Mistry (in jacket) and director Merwanji (below)



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being away in Dubai at the time of the telecast, accompanying her husband Burjor who works for the *Khaleej Times*. She remembers making conscious efforts to stay within the camera angles, substituting magnified projections on the stage with subtle nuances and innocently enquiring at the time of dubbing "Aay scene *kah gayo* (where has this scene disappeared)?" only to be told "*kapai gayo* (it was cut)."

Similar was Deboo's reaction when one scene where he thought he had given a brilliant performance was cut, and replaced by a fresh take. This was the scene at the time of his mother's death, reports Deboo. After the briefing from Merwanji, "In the first take, I literally cried without glycerine. But Pervez said it is wrong, 'Don't break down in the beginning. That should come later.' It was a beautiful shot, wasted." With Percy, Deboo got his first break in films just after completing his training in dramatics under Ms Roshan Taneja, founder and former head of the acting department at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII). But Deboo is determined never to accept such a role again for fear of being typecast. His choice instead would be roles like that of a psychopath, drug addict, sex maniac, revolutionary... Until offers for the roles of his choice come to him, he is widening his experience playing the title role in a short FTII film *No 13*, a character role in director Mahesh Bhatt's *Dil hai ki manta nahin* (heart which refuses to listen), a villain's role in a romantic adventure, besides undertaking a couple of modelling assignments.

Intimidated she may have been earlier when selected to do the full-length film *Percy* but the totality of the experience was so overwhelming that even Patel admits "*ke have chasko lagoch* (it has created a craving) to work in more films."

"*Koi jise ke* (will anyone see it)?" was the doubt oft expressed before the completion of the film. Now in fact there is a consistent pressure for exhibition to the public because save one telecast which was marred and one screening in a cinema house in Bombay during the week long festival of national award winning and panorama films, many have not got a chance to view it.

The film, made at a cost of Rs 18.5 lakh, is co-produced by the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) and BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) Channel 4. The only disappointment was the restricted exposure because "NFDC don't have a distribution set-up and the bigger theater houses are finding it uneconomical to operate," notes Merwanji. His solution: break down the big theaters and build smaller ones to accommodate 300-400 people. The topsy-turvy tax angle and the imposition of entertainment tax in Maharashtra also need to be reconsidered, he insists. "My greatest desire is to see this film distributed in Bombay and Gujarat," adds Merwanji.

After Percy, Merwanji's next venture titled *Nada Brahma* is a docudrama on one of the earliest traditions of Carnatic music. Among the other subjects he has handled during his 17 years in the film direction line: a form of martial art in Kerala, wildlife, extraction of sandalwood oil... He has also tried his hand at directing a couple of teleserials.

He keeps "learning things along the way, enriching his experiences as a filmmaker." Brickbats have not deterred him and he says he is willing to consider making yet another film with a Parsi milieu. With an appeal directed to no one in particular, Merwanji adds, "I am on the lookout for another nice story for another film. If you have one, why don't you pass it on to me?"

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SPREADING THE GOOD WORD

continued from page 20

their identity. Members of The Assembly shall never identify themselves with the traditionalists...

"It is a fact that an increasing number of Parsis and Iranis are turning in favor of accepting 'not-born' Zoroastrians into the community. But that has no connection with the Assembly or any of its members. It is a movement which has started from within the Parsi and Irani communities, and is now well over half a century old.

"Mixed marriages are as old as the history of Zoroastrianism. The difference lies in the fact that in the past a non-Zoroastrian spouse was accepted if he or she wanted to become a Zoroastrian, but now he or she is refused admittance in certain orthodox circles. But again, in spite of condemning declarations, (such marriages) are increasing among Zoroastrian pockets all over the world because of the circumstances. The Assembly, still in its infancy, and its members have had no part in it. However, they can never condemn it because they find no trace in the *Gathas* or any part of the Avesta, Pahlavi, and Persian literature which prohibits a marriage between a Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian, and so

far not a single orthodox authority has come out with a clear, solid proof. Off-mark interpretations are of no value. They are only aimed at duping simpletons.

"The Assembly will ignore all attempts (at) blasphemy on the part of persons like Birdy. It has no time to react to them. It has its own constructive plan to

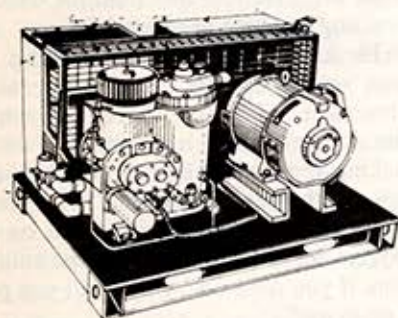
Members of The Assembly shall never identify themselves with the traditionalists...

execute. At the same (time), it hopes that the storm created will eventually subside by itself. But if forced into replying, let it be made clear, The Assembly is invulnerable. It has the *Gathas*, and no power can ever assail the sublime songs. It is the other side which, with its beliefs and traditions based on the *Vendidad* and relevant Pahlavi and Persian literature, is quite fragile. Instead of weakening itself by picking a quarrel with The Assembly, it will be more advisable for its members to teach the truth as they see it to their

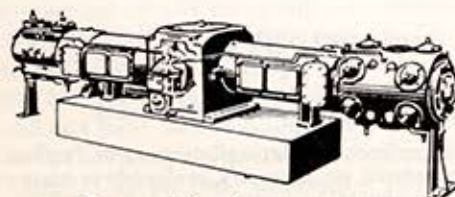
own ethnic brothers and sisters so that they stay strong within the ethnically closed doors; unless they are afraid that religious education will help the younger generation to realize and differentiate between the timeless teachings of Zarathushtra and the outdated modes of medieval life.

"The uproar created is harming the traditionalists instead. Many want to know the facts, and facts are not what the letters by the 'concerned' present. They are full of lies and rumors aimed at rousing common sentiments, not making the wise...think. They also awaken many to the question of conversion/acceptance. It must be remembered that ethnic values drastically change in the North American milieu. The best way, therefore, for the other side will be to guard against other sure erosions eating into the community — alienating westernization, weakening family and community bonds, unprecedented mixing with non-Zoroastrians... etc, etc — rather than to "cry wolf" about an organization which is not interfering in their traditional affairs.

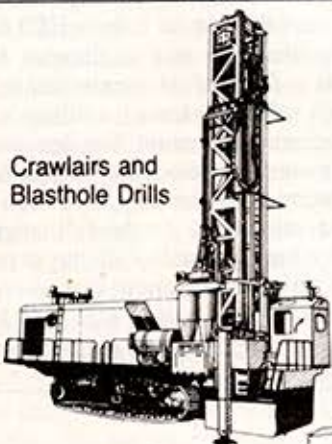
"So far the Assembly has not published anything against beliefs and traditions of the 'concerned.' Essays and books by a scholar member are his personal studies and are scholarly works.



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They should, therefore, be reviewed or criticized only by a scholar in a scholastic manner, and not ridiculed by one who

Paramount Principles of The Zarathushtrian Assembly

This corporation, its directors, elders and members, are committed to the following Paramount Principles which shall govern the conduct of its affairs, and which shall materially be changed during the existence of this corporation.

- The message of Zarathushtra was intended for all mankind, and admittance to the faith shall not be refused on any basis other than the lack of sincerity or commitment to the *Gathas* of the person desiring admission (as judged by the officers of this corporation) and/or the failure to successfully attain such basic knowledge of the religion as the board of directors may prescribe.

- We recognize that the *Gathas* are the only source of Zarathushtra's teachings, and take precedence over all other inconsistent teachings, customs, rituals and traditions.

- Service in the clergy shall be open to any qualified person and shall not be restricted on the basis of heredity, profession, religion at birth, or sex.

- All persons shall be welcome to attend any and all religious services and houses of worship, without regard to race, caste, creed, sex, physical condition, color, national origin, ancestry, marital status, physical handicap, medical condition or financial status.

- We recognize men and women as equals, and they must be treated as such by this corporation and its members.

- On matters of religious interpretation and morals outside of the official teachings of the Council, each person shall have full freedom of conscience guided, as individuals, by their own thoughts, and the voice of God within them.

- Acceptance of the above Paramount Principles shall be a prerequisite to initial and continued service as a director or an elder of this corporation. Acceptance of the above Paramount Principles shall be a prerequisite to initial and continued membership in this corporation. Any director, elder or member who does not subscribe to the Paramount Principles shall be removed from the office by the board, and from membership in the corporation; provided however, that no such person shall be denied the right of due process within the internal judicial processes of this corporation.

hardly knows the meaning of what he prays, is anything but a scholar, and has not a single publication in his name. It amounts to mud-slinging, and that does not behove a person who calls himself a follower of Asho Zarathushtra."

Jafarey further comments that Birdy's "letter and its consequences are not going to save the ethnic Parsi community in North America. It is not The Assembly or my person which poses a threat to the community's existence. Not at all. It is the engulfing American environment and the lack of religious knowledge that would finish it for sure in two or three generations, unless, of course, it is acknowledged that ethics make one a Zarathushtrian and not ethnics."

"What The Assembly is doing is persevering to preserve and promote the universal Good Religion of Asho Zarathushtra. Full stop!"

In the May 1991 issue of the *FEZANA Journal* Rivetna makes a plea for "staying united." Writes Rivetna, "After 1,200 years of separation, fate has brought us all together on this continent. Indian, Pakistani and Iranian Zoroastrians all bring our diverse cultures and customs to making our North American community that much richer. We have amongst us the liberal, the traditional, the thinker, the reformist, the ritualist — all types and shades of Zoroastrians. We value and respect them all. We may each have our respective beliefs and convictions. But when it is time to act for our common cause, the perpetuation of Zoroastrianism in North America, we must all pull together united as one."

While in Bombay in January 1991 Prof Kaikhosrov Irani, professor of philosophy in City College, New York, had noted the "extraordinary mistrust and vituperation" among the community in India and in certain areas of North America and commented sadly, "It looks like we are going from the universal morality of Zarathushtra to some pre-Zarathushtrian morality."

Jafarey, as Irani described him, is a person dedicated to the spirit of Zarathushtra, who has committed his personal abilities as well as his finances to the chosen cause. An Iranian of Moslem descent, Jafarey went to Karachi in his early youth and had most of his education there — learning Avesta and Pahlavi under Dr Manek Pithawala, and studying the *Gathas* under the liberal high priest of Karachi, Dastur (Dr) Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhallal. Along with the scholarship, Jafarey also imbibed Dhallal's concepts of Zoroastrian love and

tolerance, says Virasp Mehta, an old friend and schoolmate from Karachi and one of the founders of the *Informal Religious Meetings*, a monthly newsletter devoted to religious and community affairs.

Writing on 'Spenta Mainyu' in *An Introduction to the Gathas of Zarathushtra*, a series of essays published by Ms Dina G. McIntyre, Jafarey notes, "The progressive mentality plays a vital part in human progress. One may be 'a person of very small means (or) a person of great strength,' but if he is righteous he has been promised the best... It is the progressive mentality that separates the two parties of mankind on earth — the righteous who promote their world and the wrongful who retard their living. It is again the progressive mentality which 'enlightens' the wrongful to seek truth and ultimately become righteous..."

Who is a Zarathushtrian?

Spenta defines the term as "Any person who has, after considerable studying and discerning, chosen by his or her own will to adhere to the divine doctrine proclaimed by Zarathushtra over 3,728 years ago in his guiding songs, the *Gathas*, who understands and practices the Primal Principles of Life aimed at promoting and advancing the living world, who calls him or herself "Zarathushtrian," is a Zarathushtrian as an individual.

However, to join The Zarathushtrian Assembly as a community member, he or she will have to perform the "Initiation" ceremony in which he or she will declare his or her choice of the religion. It is then that he or she can apply, become a member upon the approval of the application, and enjoy all the rights provided by the constitution and bylaws of The Assembly. Those who are interested in the Good Religion, and those who, for certain reasons, are not in a position to be initiated into the circle, may associate themselves with The Assembly by becoming "friends." Friends can participate in all Assembly activities with the exception of elections and being elected to administrative positions.

It may be noted that the terms Zarathushtrian, Zartoshti, Zarathushti, and Zoroastrian are the same, all derived from the different forms of Zarathushtra's name: Zartosht in Persian, Zarathusht in Gujarati, and Zoroaster in English. The Zarathushtrian Assembly, however, prefers to retain the original and accurate form of Zarathushtra and therefore, Zarathushtrian."

Valor in the Gulf

With Zoroastrians being spread out all over the world it is not surprising to find that quite a few of them were involved or affected by the Gulf War earlier this year.

Reports sent in to *Parsiana* mention that music conductor Zubin Mehta cancelled his concert schedule in New York and flew instead to Tel Aviv to be with the members of the Israel orchestra as Saddam Hussain's Scuds fell on the country. "Zubin wants to share (the orchestra members') danger and not just their glory," his parents conveyed the maestro's sentiments.

Only miles away from the Iraqi border was Ms Farzana Irani who had to leave her husband Kaizad in Illinois when she was deployed to Saudi Arabia. They had been married only two weeks earlier. Having served the US Army for four years at Fort Carson, on her discharge she enlisted as a reservist at Danville and shortly thereafter got her activation orders to be part of Desert Shield, mentions the April '91 newsletter of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago. Her posting in Saudi Arabia was as records clerk in a petroleum mobilizing unit in the US Army, mentions a news clipping sent by a family source. One of the army barracks where she was working was hit by a Scud barely a few days after she was moved to a forward base, states the write-up.

Also on the reserve list was Lt Col Behrooz Irani of Nottingham. Volunteering before he was actually summoned to do so, Irani was sent as an anesthetist to the 205 General Hospital in Riyadh after a brief training at Saighton Camp. Fifty-five-year-old Irani had in the early '80s served the Royal Army Medical Corps and thereafter returned to civilian life working as a semi-retired doctor until he felt he was required to work for the war victims. He was among the 700 men and women who geared up for the 205 General Hospital "in a dirty, unfinished airport terminal...awaiting the first British casualties of the Gulf war," according to press clippings sent by Irani. Ultimately there were just 30 battle casualties plus another 170 non-battle injuries which needed attending to at 205 General Hospital, as per the reports.

"Greetings from the theater of war,"

wrote Irani in a letter to his friends. "History is being made and (I) am proud to be just where the action is. After an armful of injections and a mouthful of tablets against the expected chemical and biological attacks, we have been dodging the dreaded Scud Missiles. We jokingly refer to these almost nightly attacks as the 'Scud Express' from Baghdad..."

The physical, psychological and social impact on those civilians who had opted to stay on in Riyadh was related by Zarir Cama, deputy managing director of The Saudi British Bank:

"Most people here — especially the Saudis — were very shaken by the Scuds: nobody expected the war to come to Riyadh; it was always to happen in some faraway desert with faceless warriors. Otherwise life goes on in a fairly routine manner but as many people have left it is a bit quieter socially and there are several temporary bachelors..."

"What is wonderful is that we have received telephone calls and messages from all over the world from friends and business colleagues and institutions who have been concerned about our safety; many have given well-meaning advice; but the choice to stay has finally been ours and I believe in this matter every family makes its own and every choice



Lt Col Behrooz Irani: work for war victims Photo: Lt Col Bill Collin

and decision is the right one — hindsight is always different, but then hindsight has the benefit of 20/20 vision which we do not (have)..."

"We are all fine and the children are also in good fettle and enjoy the freedom

they have because of the changed circumstances. So far they have only been awake during two of the raids which were early ones i.e. 9 p.m. and 10 p.m. and there were friends for dinner as well along with their kids so we all scampered into our safe room and had a laugh whilst the Patriots went off overhead! Since the war started on the 17th we have had Scud attacks on most days after the 19th with one or two lulls. The first few days had much more intense raids i.e. four or five missiles each time and the alarms would go off at say 11.30 p.m., 3 a.m. and then again at 5 a.m. which was very exhausting as one can't get back to sleep immediately after the all clear sounds — but it's been getting less in recent days in that only one or two missiles come over at one time. We hope this means that either the mobile launchers have been taken out more and more and also that because of surveillance and attack and destroy tactics, they are finding things a lot more difficult. You all have probably seen on TV what it looks like and I can assure you it looks even more awesome when you see it above you. The procedure is as follows: First we hear the siren wailing and know that a possible launch has taken place; if the tone of the siren then changes to a high low, high low, we know we are under attack and the TV also tells you the same; this is when you hear the terrific 'whoosh' sound of the Patriots taking off to intercept and when they make contact there is a very loud explosion; depending on how far away or close you are to things, the doors and windows rattle. All one can say is, 'Thank God for the Patriots!'

"The system appears to be working well, though there have been the occasional problems. So far only two or three Scuds have caused damage of any kind and the casualty figure has been very, very low — reportedly only one or two people. Anyhow, we are all getting used to it and some maniacs actually go out on their balconies to have a look and video the show going on outside and then follow the Scud/Patriot to where it has landed; a bit foolhardy and dangerous as one of the more likely ways of getting injured is the shrapnel which flies around on an explosion in the air or ground. I've seen a bit of it and it's razor sharp! — will get one as a souvenir! Our gas masks



At the function in Karachi in honor of three Parsi women (from left): Darius Kandawalla, Gool Minwalla, Meherbano Marker, Minoo Bhandara, Mani Cowasjee, Hoshidar Kotwal and Jehanbux Mehta

have also finally arrived so we have this additional and, I believe and hope, psychological comfort; Sheliella has in any event done a marvellous job of sealing up all the windows and doors and AC vents and our British soldier friends tell us that is really more than sufficient. When the siren goes and we are in the "safe room" we switch on and listen to BBC or the US Desert Shield as they tend to be very prompt in providing news about the Scud launch and then simultaneously have their reporter advising what is happening — same with CNN TV. It's interesting seeing how other people are reacting to the situation simultaneously. It's also incredible to be able to see on TV what is being launched at you as a live show! The wonders of electronics never cease to amaze me; the kind of precision bombing that we have seen the Cruise missiles achieve is astounding i.e. within 10 meters of their target. We also have a system whereby friends ring around to each other to keep in touch at this time to warn each other as well as to ensure everyone is safe — for those of us who have chosen to stay I believe the bonds of friendship have grown in different ways; I certainly have a very brave wife and kids! It's also got me to finally buy a cordless telephone so that we don't have to keep dashing out of the room when the phone rings...

"Our basement parking lots are used as night-time shelters! I play a lot of tennis and certainly the war has done wonders for all the practice I can have — not that working hours are any shorter, but somehow one has more time with less social duties. More importantly, the war gives a lot more time for the family. Nyresa and Yashan are both fine and wonderfully oblivious of what is really happening around them; however, Nyresa does suspect some of the seriousness; Yashan has a simple belief that his 'He-man' sword, in true manner down his back, will 'kill

Saddam.' In the words of *Star Wars* — may 'the Force' be with him!

"The one thing which has been affected is that sleep is not as easy as before; one has a ear constantly for the siren and so one also has 'siren' dreams but not in the traditional mode! I think it will take people some time to stop looking over their shoulders when this is all over when they hear the wail of a siren."

Three women venerated

There was a mentally deranged lady who did not know where she was going. So, a rickshaw driver in Karachi took her to the doorstep of "Mehra Aunty" as the kind-hearted Mehra Cyrus Minwalla was known by the community. Until a home was found for the disturbed lady she was accommodated at the Minwallas' residence. This story was recounted at a function organized by the Zoroastrian Association of Pakistan (ZAP) to honor three "venerable ladies of Pakistan (Minwalla, Tehmina Peshotan Bhandara and Meherbano Kaikobad Marker) for the services rendered by them to the Parsis of Pakistan and to the other communities in our country."

The felicitation was scheduled for March 8, 1991 at Hotel Metropole to coincide with the Woman's Day celebrations throughout the world, notes a report of the proceedings sent by ZAP honorary secretary Maneck Wania. Barely 20 days prior to the function Minwalla expired but nevertheless she was posthumously recognized for being a permanent member of honor of the All Pakistan Women's Association, for helping form the Pakistan Lioness Club, for chairing the Cyrus Minwalla Colony, for serving on the committees of the Jehangir Rajkotwalla Baugh Trust and the H. M. Khajurina Trust.

Chairperson of the Lahore Anjuman

for nearly a quarter century Tehmina Bhandara was among the three ladies publicly acclaimed, for having given her time and monetary help selflessly. Based on her life, a television drama *Baijee* was written by the dramatist Bano Qudsia, mentions the write-up. The tenthborn of Khan Bahadur Ardeshir Mama, the founder of the Mama Parsi Girls' High School in Karachi, she is the mother of two well-known figures: popular author Ms Bapsy Sidhwa and former member of the Pakistan National Assembly, Minoo Bhandara. Due to ill health she too was absent on that day but had sent a message with her son recommending that when doing charity, "the left hand must not know what the right hand gives."

It was the presence of the distinguished 90-year-old Meherbano Marker and her reply to the *manpatra* (scroll of honor) addressed to her that added lustre to the evening. She urged philanthropists to set up a fund, similar to the social security schemes of the West, to support the growth of the community. She was disappointed to note that few Parsi youth joined the forces or the federal services and that even fewer returned to their homeland after studying abroad. As per the release, among the distinctions she has received are: the Coronation Medal from Queen Elizabeth, Tamgha-e-Khidmat and Tamgha-e-Pakistan from the government and the Woman of the Year Gold Medal from the Business and Professional Women's Association. Their family business, Marker Alkaloids, is reputed for manufacturing pharmaceuticals. She is the mother of Jamsheed Marker, Pakistan's former ambassador to the United States.

Several other Parsi and non-Parsi organizations sent messages and representatives to the ZAP function on March 8 to express their support, adds the report.

When Ms Khorshedbanoo Hoshang Dinshaw completed a century in early 1990, the lone Parsi publication in Karachi — *Parsi Sansar* and *Loke Sevak* — greeted the event with a special four-color cover issue with congratulatory messages from a host of Zoroastrian associations. Reported the Pakistani daily *Dawn* of February 6, 1990, "Khorshedbanoo could rightly be called 'an angel to those in distress.' She soothed the sorrows of the widows and the orphans, housed the homeless and helped without causing any humiliation to the receiver. She visited hospitals to see the needs of the inmates and yet she found time to pay her daily visit to the Parsi fire-temple...with her daughter-in-law."

Billed as one of the oldest Parsi families in Karachi, the Edulji Dinshaws, now in their fifth generation, as per the *Dawn* article by Ms Kaity Khambata, have richly endowed the city. Born to Dr K. N. Spencer, after whom the Spencer Eye Hospital is named, Khorshedbanoo married her cousin Hoshang.

Sending greetings from the Karachi Zoroastrian Banoo Mandal, its then president Ms Mehra Cyrus Minwalla extolled Khorshedbanoo's personal phi-

losophy of happiness unto others: "Like Khorshed Yazad (the sun) you brought light and comfort and a variety of blessings...hope and happiness," wrote Minwalla.

Referring to Khorshedbanoo's enthusiasm for social work, a versified tribute by N. M. Yazdani notes,

"...she would be personally there To help them in their time of need, to see to their despair

Do we have another like her with courage and flair?"

From Karachi, Behram S. H. J. Rustomji sent us a newsclipping from the *Business Recorder* of January 9, 1990 reporting the death of the paper's former assistant editor Z. S. Daver.

"A well-known figure among the members and brokers of the Karachi Stock Exchange and the country's corporate sector," Daver strove to protect the "small shareholders and advocated wide dispersal of share holdings of listed companies," said the write-up.

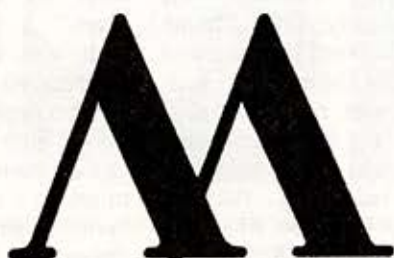
"His indepth analysis and comments on balance sheets and annual reports... were widely read and appreciated," notes the paper.

Having sailed through the Karachi University's bachelor of commerce exams first class first, Ms Khushnuma Darabshaw Bhada is studying for her masters in business administration (MBA), notes a *Parsi Sansar* clipping forwarded to *Parsiana* by Rustomji. Bhada, a product of the Mama Parsi Girls' School, had secured eighth position at the Secondary Board Matric examination and stood first class first at the inter commerce exams, notes the write-up.

Flushing success

Third grader Ms Diana Xerxes Bharucha's "water saver" invention — an environmentally sound way to flush a toilet — won her encomiums from the school to the national level, notes a write-up by Peter Schoenberg in *The Times Herald-Record* of July 11, 1990.

Observing the flushing problem at her home in Scotchtown, N.Y., Bharucha realized that the incessant flow of water was due to the kinked metal chain. "I thought if we could replace the chain with something else that wouldn't kink, water wouldn't keep flowing. I replaced it with a nylon (fishing) line. It saves a lot of water," explained the student who, with



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Affiliates of 100th Toronto, the all-Zoroastrian scout group

the help of her teacher, first outlined her invention in writing, then drew up a sketch and later constructed a working model of her device.

Her water-saver was adjudged best invention at her Pakanasink Elementary School in Circleville and also acclaimed at the state and regional levels fetching her a \$ 200 savings bond for a prize.

She was thereafter summoned to Washington DC to compete with 44 other regional winners in the national "Invent America" competition sponsored by the non-profit US Patent Model Foundation. The competition "stimulates creativity and develops problem-solving skills in students (from) grades kindergarten through eight," according to the write-up. "We salute Diana and all of our young inventors, their teachers and schools. The enthusiasm and creative thinking demonstrated by this year's participants is proof that America's entrepreneurial spirit is alive in our nation's youth," acknowledged the chairman of Invent America, J. Morgan Greene.

Toronto's Zoro Scouts

The 100th Toronto, an all-Zoroastrian scout group with 20 scouts and 15 cubs has been sponsored by the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO).

An offshoot of the original 100th Bombay, now renamed the Homavazir's 11th Central Bombay Bharat Scout Group (CBDA), the initiative to start a similar group abroad was taken by the CBDA's ex-scouters Maneck Sattha, Noshir Dastoor, Freddy Mirza, Noshir Mirza and Jimmy Mistry who now reside in Canada. Fellow Zoroastrians helping them include Phiroz Dastoor, Adi Mistry and Sheeraz Pardiwalla, the release notes.

Present at the inaugural function scheduled for March 24, 1991 was Jal Khan, reportedly one of the first members to enrol in the CBDA way back in 1927, and his wife Perin.

A girl scout unit is being planned, further reads the release.

'Ministering finances

As chief financial officer and vice president, finance and administration, of Catalytica, Inc, it fell to 47-year-old Hoshi Printer to monitor the company's business growth, joint venture and strategic alliance agreements, noted a press release from the company, forwarded by a family source.

Catalytica which develops advanced catalytic process technologies for use in the manufacture of chemical and petroleum products is an entrepreneurial company in an industry "dominated by well-established corporations," as noted the company executive vice president Ricardo Levy. "To grow we need to be as creative in the business vehicles we use to capitalize on our technology as we are in our science," Levy gave the rationale for inducting Printer as vice president in early 1990.

Prior to joining Catalytica, Printer, a mechanical and electrical engineer by training, was holding senior positions with Xerox Corporation and had also served as consultant on cash management issues to the White House, as per the release. A former lieutenant of the US Army, Printer's academic background includes a masters in business administration from Stanford University.

Pundole's Key position

"The corporate lender training program is an important step to maintain consistent high quality in the lending process," notes Kersasp Noshir Pundole, director of

lender trading and development for KeyCorp, as reports *Key Notes*, the bank's newsletter. Earlier, Pundole was senior vice president, credit administration of Key Bank of Idaho.

His responsibilities in the new job entail developing, implementing and managing lender training programs for all KeyCorp banking and non-banking affiliates, notes the write-up.

Using a variety of techniques including classroom training, videos and a newsletter, the director will coordinate training efforts using existing personnel in addition to lenders from various affiliates who will act as trainers.

Pundole is said to have 16 years of banking experience behind him. Beginning with the Bank of America, he moved on to the Idaho Bank and Trust Company, mentions *Key Notes*. Pundole has undergone his navar and maratub training and now resides in Albany, New York with his wife Judy, further informs a family source.

Popularizing street food

"Forget recipes! People are too slavish with recipes...my recipes are far more approximate," states Ms Niloufer Ichaporia who is planning to write a book on street snacks and picnic food from near and far.

"Discovering and learning about street food has become the focus of her extensive travels," notes the write-up featuring Ichaporia in *Arab News* sent to *Parsiana* by Zarir Cama, deputy managing director of The Saudi British Bank. "I once spent three months in Hong Kong where I ate on the streets every night, real feasts for the equivalent of \$1," she claimed. Another favorite of hers is the green papaya salad prepared by vendors in Thailand. "Their skill is the product of generations and generations of repetition... Some restaurants have tried to introduce some of these traditional dishes on their menus, but they never come out right," believes the San Francisco resident. Occasionally she teams up with other chefs or lends a helping hand at restaurants to prepare exotic dishes for special occasions. "It is an interesting challenge to give people food that is new and intriguing, but it is important to ensure that it is not too forbidding," she adds.

The array of street food in western countries is due to the immigrants who have introduced new products and spread their popularity, she mentions. On her frequent trips to India, the Bombay-born

Ichaporia now indulges in street food which was once "forbidden" territory. She also marvels at the respect Indians have for food. "Once I was struck by a vendor who, starting his day, lit a stick of incense; a simple ritual in which the act of selling food becomes an act of worship."

Besides her interest in art and anthropology, Ichaporia's present preoccupation is with launching a line of bath salts made with Indian fragrances with the support of her biochemist husband David, according to the report.

Priory's pride

With 22 fours and a six, opening batsman Zubin Bharucha batted to a glorious 159 runs in the Surrey Championship Division One of 1990 noted a local newspaper. Playing for the Reigate Priory team, 19-year-old Bharucha was unbeaten till the end when he became out in the final over.

Along with the other opening batsman, Tiku Patel, the pair displayed good timing, hitting boundaries as they progressed to an unbeaten partnership of 224 runs, it is reported.

As proficient in bowling as he is in batting, the young cricketer, in another game during the Championship, took the first of three slip catches "...this one being by far the best," the paper notes.

Described as "Priory's fine young Indian overseas player (and) one of the finest in the League," Bharucha also doubles as coach. When in Bombay, he is known to play the sport with veteran cricketers

Sunil Gavaskar, Ravi Shastri and Dilip Vengsarkar, further mentions the paper.

Life is a stage

"You can guarantee that every day you go into work something new and bizarre will happen," This is the similarity between journalism and theater as perceived by Firdous Bamji who after his graduation in journalism from The University of South Carolina opted to become a professional actor with subsequent intentions of taking up direction, according to the publication *Intercom* of spring 1990. Since August last Bamji has been awarded a scholarship to study at the prestigious Folger Institute in Washington DC, informs a family source.

Confident that his journalism training will help in his future career, Bamji referred to the two ingredients of success he imbibed — "organization and diligence. Without these two things you are not going to get anywhere and journalism taught me that."

He was a member of the University troupe that was invited to perform *The Fantasticks* at the International Amateur Theater Association Festival in Moscow in January '90.

"The thing that really turned me on to theater was Jim Thigpen and the Trustus Theatre," acknowledged Bamji. "The way he directs, his whole concept of theater: that there's always something new, that you can always find something different." At the time of announcing Trustus Theatre's First Professional Company in 1989 their newsletter outlined the performances of their popular cast among whom was listed Bamji: "A fine young actor you'll remember as Torch in *Beirut*, the punk kid in *Talk Radio*, the gay pris-

oner in *Bent*; the golf pro in *The Boys Next Door* and the near psychopath in *Burn This*."

Bamji's special skills: guitar, piano, singing, various dialects, volleyball and racquetball. He is also into community theater and has performed representative film/video roles in *It's a New World*, *The Freeman Case* and *AIDS, Should you be tested?*

Interns in the desert

"Something that really shook (me) was being out in the desert where there was no road, in the vast expanse of sand... People lived there all the time in huts. The women had to walk miles just to get water," noted Ms Sarvar Firdaus Kothavala who completed her international summer internship at the Pushkar Lake Valley in Rajasthan in August last year.

Along with Ms Gayatri Menon, Kothavala joined a team of 20 researchers whose main aim was to find ways to pre-



Kothavala: studying a new environment

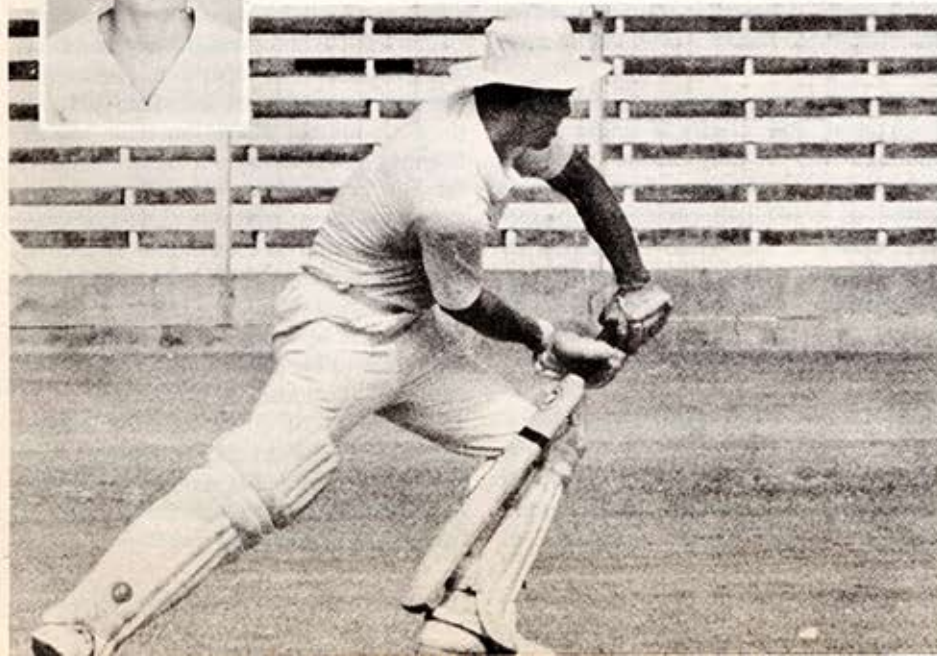
vent the desert sand from encroaching onto the marginally productive land of the Pushkar Lake Valley, notes a write-up in *The College Street Journal* of October 19, 1990. The findings had to generate employment for the local womenfolk, a condition laid down by the World Bank and the Ministry of Environmental Affairs, financiers to the project.

The project produced results. *Sacchromunja*, a kind of native grass, is now being planted on the sand dunes in the desert to prevent the sands from shifting, the write-up notes. The grass has been traditionally used to make baskets, footstools and chairs by the locals. Kothavala and Menon were of the view that the research team help the local women to form producer cooperatives to market their wares and thus "help defeat outside exploitation of their labor."

Kothavala is majoring in international relations and geography, Menon in economics, at Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts, USA. Last year Kothavala had the distinction of being included in the *Who's Who Among American College Students*, informs her mother Ferzin.



All-rounder cricketer Bharucha (inset) in action



The reaction to the resolution

Neither the orthodox nor the liberal factions are appeased by the Punchayet resolution on the Roxan Shah controversy

Arnavaz S. Mama

As anticipated, the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustees' decision to permit Zoroastrian women married to non-Parsis the right to be interred in a tower of silence has roused the ire of both the liberal and the orthodox groups.

While the response of the liberal group has by and large been restricted to articles, letters and editorials in the community Press, the orthodox group organized a meeting at the Birla Matushri Sabhagar on May 30, 1991 where they passed a resolution condemning the BPP trustees.

Among the speakers billed to address the gathering was surprisingly BPP trustee Homi Ranina who along with his co-trustee Dr (Ms) Mehroo Bengalee, vice-chancellor of the Bombay University, had voted against the Punchayet resolution. Although both were slated to talk at the meeting, only Ranina was present and no explanation was offered for Bengalee's absence.

The meeting of May 30, at which the crowd reserved its largest applause for derogatory remarks made against the BPP trustees, passed an almost unanimous resolution asking the BPP to "revoke forthwith its resolution dated April 9, 1991 'in the matter of late Roxan Darshan Shah' as it has committed a breach of the trust conferred on it by the community; otherwise the trustees should vacate their office of trusteeship (see "A stab in the back..." pg 37)."

"My liberal friends say 'change with the times,'" said Ranina. "'Yes, change with the times (I tell them) but in your personal life'... My advice to the liberals is 'Start your own dokhmas. Put your hands in your own pockets.' The Tatas, the Wadias, the Godrejs, the Petits, the fabulously rich" can support these institutions, he challenged.

The editor of *The Bombay Samachar* which has spearheaded the liberal movement, while terming the resolution as "a step in the right direction," noted it was "very much belated, and still has one or two points which are untenable from the point of view of law, religion and expediency as well as economy (*The Bombay Samachar*, May 5, 1991)."

Letter writers like Ms Homai Bode, Ms Bhicoo Manekshaw and Noshirwan Cowasjee also attacked in *The Bombay Samachar* the BPP resolution. "The female is punished, shown discrimination, insulted, humiliated but the male in the same situation remains unaffected... Why a separate dokhma for their bodies after death? A separate dokhma is kept only for criminals and those who commit suicide. These ladies are practising Zoroastrian Parsis and there should be no discrimination whatsoever," stated Bode. While expressing the same sentiments Manekshaw noted in addition, "The resolution could have been taken a step further by the trustees if they had included

one more point i.e. at the death of such a lady or her immediate family, her husband may be allowed with her children to attend the funeral and other religious ceremonies." The most vocal liberal Zoroastrian from UK, Cowasjee, termed the resolution "an insult to the dead... shameful" and a decision "to please (the) voters and (the) orthodox." Cowasjee further suggested that the BPP should instead keep a separate dokhma for "consigning the 'pure' bodies of the orthodox."

The BPP resolution concerns, a Parsi woman married to a non-Parsi, under the civil marriage act or any other legislation which permits the parties to retain their religion prior to such marriage and who continues to follow the Zoroastrian faith. The resolution permits "the use of doongerwadi facilities on her death on the basis of an affidavit made by her husband, or any of her parents or her brother or sister or other close relations to the effect that she continued to follow the Zoroastrian religion till her demise." The body would be consigned to a dokhma "specifically earmarked for the purpose" and the family would have to make their own arrangements with any priest to perform the funeral ceremonies, as per the resolution.

According to the community grapevine, the trustees were anxious that a resolution of such a nature be adopted unanimously. When trustees Ranina and

Bengalee remained unshakeable in their opposition, the resolution was ultimately adopted by a majority vote.

Public opinion remained agitated. A major thrust was the publication in *The Samachar* of February 10, 1991 of a letter to Dr Aspi Golwala, chairman of the board of trustees, from Dastur (Dr) Hormazdyar Mirza and Dastur (Dr) Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa dated December 29, 1990. The two respected scholar priests were at pains to correct the slant that the joint declaration of the seven High Priests, published in Gujarati in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of October 27 had created in the minds of the community (see "The controversy continues," *Parsiana*, October 1990). The seven Dasturs' joint missive had stated in unqualified terms that a Zoroastrian woman who married outside the community ceased to be a Zoroastrian and had no religious privileges within the community. The December letter clarified that "the opinion expressed (on October 27) is based only on the Zoroastrian religious practices, traditions and customs, without taking into consideration the constitution and the laws of the land."

When the October 27 opinion was published, the community was unaware of an earlier opinion given by Mirza and JamaspAsa to the Punchayet dated September 24, 1990 which was "written in the interest of our community as Zoroastrians as well as citizens of India." Regretting that the trustees had made no attempt to formulate guidelines for the community on the basis of the opinions of high priests and scholars whom they had polled in 1964, Mirza and JamaspAsa wrote, "Since the doongerwadi grounds rest in the hands of the trustees of the Punchayet, it is incumbent upon you all to settle this matter in the best interest of the community..."

"In our long history in India, we have always sought protection, direction and justice in matters religious under the law of the land. If we deny this authority, we are liable to forfeit our right to protection and justice in such matters in case of misdeeds against our religious institutions. In our opinion it is our duty to respect the constitution and law of the land. If we find any law repugnant or harmful, we have constitutional means to alter or remove it: But we have no right to challenge or arbitrarily defy it in the name of religious practices..."

"Our co-religionists marrying outside the community must be doing so after

considering the consequences about their future course of life and should not create unnecessary difficulties for the community. It is a matter for regret that the priesthood is being dragged into these types of controversies from time to time..."

"We have always sought justice in matters religious under the law"

"Whipping up hysteria and forcing such issues by exploiting religious sentiments are not in the best interests of the community and its religious beliefs and attitudes. We also emphasize the need for religious stability. Statistics point to a dwindling Parsi population, especially in India. Let us therefore work in unison and harmony in all community affairs. Let us not make Zoroastrianism a religion for some ulterior motive."

The Samachar's campaign was further strengthened by the outspokenness of two respected retired judges — Justice Dinsha Madon of the Supreme Court and Justice Bakhtavar Lentin of the Bombay High Court.

Madon noted forthrightly at the very outset, "Both my daughters have married non-Parsis with our consent and co-operation. We would not have consented nor would they themselves have perhaps agreed to do so had the thought at all crossed anybody's mind that by doing so either of them would cease to be a Parsi Zoroastrian." Referring to Dastur Kotwal's letter wherein he states that there is no custom or usage to support marriages between Parsis and non-Parsis, Madon writes, "Surely, with due respect, Dr Kotwal is ignorant of our history. He does not seem to be aware that the favorite wife of Khosrow Parvez was Shirin, a Christian... History shows that in all communities the priests have been, with very few exceptions, obscurantists, ritual bound, bigoted objectors to any innovation or reform and whenever religious reforms have come, it has hardly ever been from any priest. Incidentally I have also become a navar maratab from Navsari."

Referring to the then interim measure of the BPP that an affidavit be filed by the next of kin before the acceptance of the

body of a Zoroastrian woman married to a non-Zoroastrian, Madon noted, "When there is a death in the family, it may take place in the middle of the night. At that time has someone to run about getting an affidavit prepared, stamp it, affirm it, then bring it to doongerwadi to be filed? I would suggest that what should be more than sufficient is a declaration to the same effect by a next of kin. To insist upon anything else is to show lack of common sense and realism." He also challenged "this dichotomy between Parsi male and Parsi female" and asked, "Why does the BPP not insist upon a similar affidavit in the case of a Parsi male who has married a non-Parsi or those Parsis — some of them very eminent in life — who run after various godmen such as Saibaba of Shirdi or Satya Sai Baba or who ran after Rajneesh during his lifetime?"

"As an individual and presumably as a human being, I do not endorse and am revolted by the treatment meted out to the body of the unfortunate Roxan..." noted Lentin tersely and suggested that the issue be "set at rest once and for all by a judicial interpretation and decision, instead of it festering on interpretations and edicts of priests and individuals, howsoever learned." Added Lentin, "While everyone is entitled to his opinion, I fear that in attributing 'next to adultery' (whatever that means) to those who marry outside the religion and branding their children as 'illegitimate in the Zoroastrian religion,' perhaps the worthy High Priest momentarily forgot the basic tenet of the Zoroastrian religion — *Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni*."

The pressure was maintained. Rustom Gae of Delhi who had retired as secretary to the Government of India Law Ministry, in the course of a full-length article maintained, "When a Parsi female marries a Hindu under the Special Marriage Act (SMA) she does not automatically become a Hindu, simply because some ceremonies relating to a Hindu marriage are also performed at the time of her marriage. However, if she makes a public declaration that she has ceased to belong to the Zoroastrian religion i.e. she has renounced the Zoroastrian religion and has accepted another religion, she will be taken as professing the other religion (*The Bombay Samachar*, March 3, 1991)."

Earlier, in *The Samachar* of February 24, recapitulating the sequence of events doughty solicitor Rustom A. Gagrati had

noted, "Instead of prolonging this unfortunate controversy, I respectfully suggest to the trustees to resolve that in view of the legal position, Parsi Zoroastrian ladies married to non-Parsis are entitled to the same rights as all other Parsis, male or female, without any discrimination or any humiliation."

Another noteworthy development was senior BPP trustee Eruch Desai's 'note for my colleagues' dated February 4, 1991 which was published in instalments by *The Samachar* and the *Jamé*. The 34-paged note is a thesis examining the issue chronologically from the historical, religious, social and legal angles. Notes the trustee whose electorate was basically orthodox, "changed circumstances and a different air require a different approach." Referring to the Parsi girls who marry outside the community, Desai asks, "Would our decision to ostracize them reverse this trend of such intercommunal marriages? I have no doubt that it will not. For the religious ardor and *Parsi-panu* is no more a reckoning force with the young ones of our community as it was in the days gone by."

Noting that the trustees' duty was the care and custody of the community's funds and institutions including the doongerwadi facilities, Desai observes, "If we deny them the facility when in fact they are entitled, it would tantamount to a breach of trust on our part. If we allow them to make use of these facilities if in fact they are not entitled to avail the benefits thereof, it would also be a breach on our part."

He examines the *Rivayat* of Kaus Kamdin, the *Gathas* (*Yasna* 53.5-5), the *Vendidad* XV-II 62-65, the opinion of the late Dr M. D. Karkhanawala and that of some high priests and scholars who have observed generally that "those who marry outside the community were neither looked upon as a part of the community, nor were given any benefits of the community's institutions," and adds, "Our experience in respect of the above has rather been to the contrary. History has recorded the marriages of Zoroastrian kings to alien princesses and such marriages have not converted (these) Zoroastrian kings into (non-Zoroastrians)..."

Coming to "the opinion of the priests (which) is also based on the theory that the environment in the house of a non-Parsi wherein a Parsi Zoroastrian woman marries cannot in any way permit her to rigidly follow the rites, customs, rituals

and tenets of the Zoroastrian religion," Desai states, "This theory proceeds on the basis that all ladies married to non-Parsis stay along with the members of the husband's family. Times have changed now and in the majority of cases such couples stay apart from the husband's family where it would not prevent the

"To insist upon (an affidavit) is to show lack of common sense and realism"

Zoroastrian wife from practicing her own religion, either in the presence or absence of her husband from the house."

Desai quotes the opinion of the late Dastur Khurshed Dabu, "when a couple (Parsi girl with alien husband) undergoes a marriage under the SMA, there is nothing to show that either of the two is renouncing his or her allegiance to a particular faith. If she, born a Parsi, duly admitted to the Zoroastrian fold by the navjote rite, continues to remain a Zoroastrian then she is a Parsi Zoroastrian. The founders of all charities had in view as beneficiaries, such a person." Desai mentions that Dabu had cited a case in Nagpur where a girl married to a non-Parsi sought the use of the fire-temple. "The then chairman of the anjuman there (who was later on elevated to the Bench of the Bombay High Court) gave it as his opinion that she retained her title to worship within that temple," writes Desai and adds, "It is doubtful whether in a more secular society today an Indian judge would rule otherwise." Desai also mentions the three cases cited by Dabu when the bodies of Parsi girls married outside the community were consigned to the Tower of Silence after performance of the funeral ceremonies. He then updates his chronology to include the aforementioned opinion of Dasturs Mirza and Jamasp-Asa.

Basing his arguments on the High Court judgment of Justices Daver and Beaman in 1909 Desai observes, "The Zoroastrian religion does not only permit but even enjoins conversion and it was only after the advent to India that a custom has been built up not to convert. If, therefore, the religion permits non-Parsis or non-Zoroastrians into the faith it is dif-

ficult to say that the same religion enjoins that on a marriage to a non-Parsi the person concerned would renounce the faith."

Reiterating that "the High Priests and the scholars quote no direct authority of any religious scripture to the effect that on an intercommunal marriage a Parsi renounces the faith," Desai places the present case off the purview of the Supreme Court's 1962 judgment in the case of Saifuddin vs the State of Bombay on which the protagonists of the orthodox view lay great stress. In that case the court had held that the protection of articles 25(1) and 26(b) of the Constitution covers not only matters of doctrine and belief but extends to acts in pursuance of the religion including rituals, observances and ceremonies.

Desai also relies on the opinion of Justice Y. V. Chandrachud: "If a Parsi Zoroastrian female marries a non-Zoroastrian male under the SMA 1954, it would be impermissible to draw the inference from the fact of such marriage that she has renounced the Zoroastrian religion." The verdict of Justice Sawant of the Bombay High Court in 1981 instructing the BPP to enrol ladies married to men of other communities "on the Electoral Register meant only for Parsi Zoroastrians" further underscored the point that an intercommunity marriage implies no automatic renunciation of the faith, notes Desai. "If this is the position that we have accepted, how can we take a different stand now?... Subject to proper checking, excepting the present case of Roxan Shah, not a single case comes to mind where such ladies married outside have been denied such a facility (interment at doongerwadi) on an approach for the purpose made by the relatives," he adds.

Referring to a letter from co-trustee Ranina of January 28, 1991 Desai agrees that the settlers and donors of the Parsi Punchayet Funds, especially the Towers of Silence, understood a Parsi Zoroastrian to mean one who was a child of Zoroastrian parents whose forefathers came from Persia. "I would only add that even a Parsi girl who is married outside the community does not cease to be a child of Zoroastrian parents whose forefathers came from Persia," writes Desai.

A contention of Ranina was that the Davar-Beaman judgement did not go into the merits of the case and that their definition of Parsi Zoroastrian was based on a concession by the then trustees of the Parsi Punchayet as an eminent Parsi — a

member of the Tata family — was involved. Countered Desai, "If that were to be so, they would have given the concession straightaway and not taken steps which resulted in litigation."

"In my view," writes Desai, "by passage of time and consequential establishment of custom and usage, we have accepted the position that, unlike the view held by the High Priests of our community, a male or a female who married outside the community did not renounce his or her Zoroastrian faith. In fact, in a similar way, we have not denied such males and females the entry into our doongerwadi lands and even in the *bunglis* where the four days ceremonies are being performed. Even if we decide, in accordance with the views of the High Priests who hold that there is no distinction in this behalf between a male and female, we will have to go the whole hog with this decision and such a decision would set at nought the law of the land established as per the foresaid case of *Petit vs Jejeebhoy* in terms of which Parsi (men) who marry outside the community are not debarred of this facility. It will be difficult for us to sustain the decision if we restrict it only to the ladies

of the community. Apart from the fact that it will also be impossible for us to implement the same, particularly so far as their right to enter the *bunglis* is concerned, we cannot take a decision that during their lifetime they will be free to have such access, but after their demise we will not allow their dead bodies such access either in the *bunglis* or in the Tower of Silence."

The orthodox front issued a 'warning' and a 'notice' jointly sponsored by the Athman Mandal and the Bombay Zoroastrian Jashan Committee forwarded to *Parsiana* by Cowasjee Dinshaw, president of the latter body, on February 20, 1991. In contrast to the letter of the two scholar priests whose religious opinion was "based on the Zoroastrian religious practices, traditions and customs," the 'notice' states, "Please note that according to the Parsi Zoroastrian religious beliefs, precepts, tenets, doctrines, holy scriptures (not cited), customs and traditions — once a Parsi Zoroastrian marries a non-Zoroastrian, he or she is deemed to have renounced the Zoroastrian faith and ceases to be a Parsi Zoroastrian. Hence he or she does not have any Zoroastrian communal or religious rights or privi-

leges. The laws of purity of the Zoroastrian faith forbids intermarriages as mixing of physical and spiritual genetics (sic) is considered as a cardinal crime against nature."

"The above precept and belief have been upheld strongly by all the devout dasturs, scholars and stalwarts of our Zoroastrian religion since time immemorial and the same have been certified and confirmed once again by all the seven revered Vada Dasturji Sahebs of today. Regrettably the trustees of the Parsi Punchayet Funds and Properties seem to have ignored the spiritual guidance," reads the 'warning.' "We can always replace unworthy trustees by due process of democracy, but loss of our faith, loss of our priesthood and loss of our identity can never be replaced."

Desai, who had anticipated that his note would "displease the hearts of many a supporter of mine during the two terms of my election as trustee," and "notwithstanding the threats of intimidation and violence from some anonymous quarters," is satisfied with "having done my duty by not letting my heart rule my head. If the former were to prevail, it could possibly result in a breach of trust."

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"A stab in the back..."

Misuse of trust and disrespect towards religious principles were the charges levelled against the BPP trustees by the orthodox groups

Parinaz Gandhi

The pamphlet publicizing the meeting proclaimed, "Parsi Zoroastrians! You have been betrayed! BPP (Bombay Parsi Punchayet) commits breach of trust." It went on to list the threat to the community from intercommunity marriages and the BPP resolution permitting the use of doongerwadi facilities to Parsi women married to non-Parsis. Referring to the resolution as "a stab in the back of the Parsi community," the conveners — the Bombay Zoroastrian Jashan Committee, the Athorman Mandal, and the Dadar Jashan Trust — called on the faithful to attend in large numbers the protest meeting on May 30, 1991 at Birla Matushri Sabhagar.

This meeting has been convened not against any organization or individual but to respectfully uphold the time-honored values and to obey them, outlined Ervad Parvez Bajan in his introduction in Gujarati. He read out a message from Dastur Kekobad Dastur, High Priest of the Iranshah Atash Bahram in Udwarda, declaring the BPP resolution to be against the religious principles and reiterating that religious rules made by Zoroaster were sacrosanct. Bajan also quoted from the works of the late scholars Ervad (Dr) Minocher Karkha-

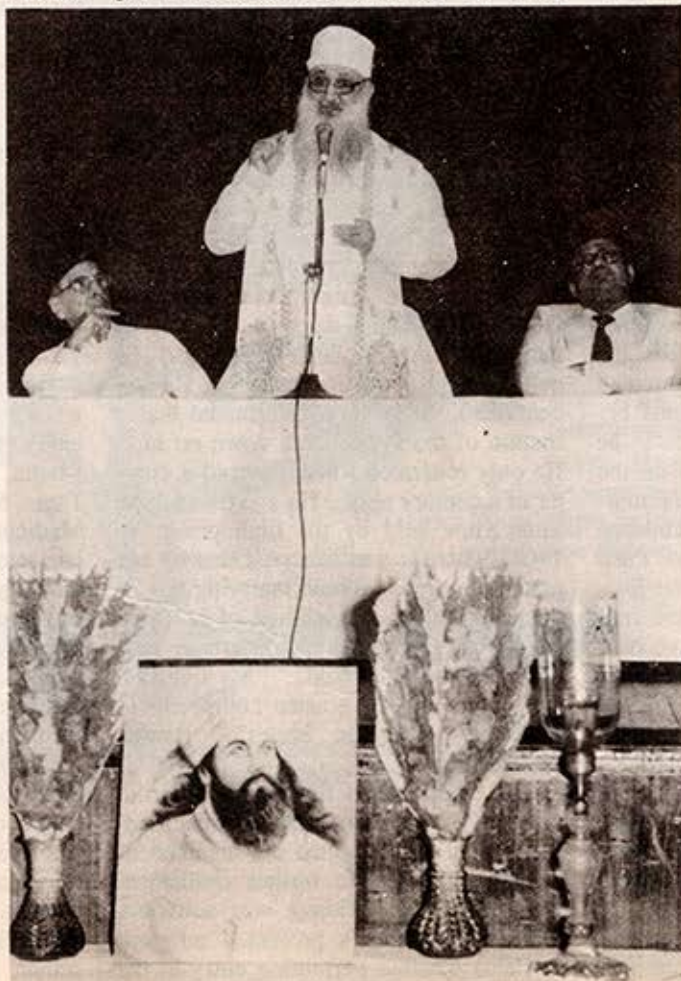
nawalla and Jehangir Vimadlal to indicate that "Parsis are legitimately proud of their blood."

Presiding over the day's deliberations was Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal, High Priest of the H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram, who Bajan introduced as one "*jéné hath pakri né kaum né dharam no rasto*

dékharyoch (who has led the community on the religious path)." Earlier Kotwal had sent a letter congratulating the BPP trustees for denying young Roxan Shah the right to have her body consigned to the Towers of Silence following her death in a tragic accident on July 27, 1990. On the Punchayet's subsequent resolution he castigated the trustees for "*chut-chat ané nakhod* (tearing to pieces, destruction) to our *buland* (colossal) institutions..."

"The trustees may hold any individual opinion. It doesn't concern us. Difference of opinion is bound to be there in any community, every family. But as trustees, the protection of our religion and community becomes their responsibility," believed Kotwal. His perception of a trustee was "one to whom something is entrusted. The intentions and wishes of the settlors should always be respected. To maintain their *iman* (faith) is the work of trustees. This is daylight robbery of *iman*." Kotwal, who addressed the gathering in Gujarati, stated that he was speaking in his personal capacity, "as a representative of the community, of you and not as a representative of the Wadia Atash Bahram."

"This property does not belong to us. We've not donated a single rupee (towards) the purchase of the doongerwadi land or the consecration of the



Kotwal presiding at the protest meeting at Birla Matushri Sabhagar

From left: (Top row) Ranina, Dhalla, Merchant (Bottom row) Sethna, Unvalla, Doctor

dokhma... Can we challenge the intention of the benefactors?" questioned BPP trustee Homi Ranina. He, along with co-trustee Dr (Ms) Mehroo Bengalee, vice-chancellor of the Bombay University, had dissented against the majority trustees' decision to permit a Parsi woman married to a non-Parsi the use of the dokhma subject to the marriage having taken place under the Special Marriage Act (SMA) and a family member filing an affidavit that she continued to profess the Zoroastrian faith. He then went on to state that the first dokhma, the Mody dokhma, had been consecrated in 1669 but the trust deed was codified only in 1884. "What (then) was the intention of Mr Mody? Were there any marriages outside the community then? Could he have even remotely thought of the dokhma being used by someone who has married outside? The answer is 'no'...

"We must protect and effectuate the wishes of the donors," asserted Ranina. He then referred to the difference of opinion among the high priests as to whether the constitutional law or the religious law should have a bearing on the Roxan Shah controversy. While Kotwal had said that "Courts have no jurisdiction over the community in matters of religion," High Priests Hormazdyar Mirza and Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa had opined, "We have no right to challenge or arbitrarily defy (the constitution and the law of the land) in the name of religious practices." There is some "confusion that the legal view should prevail," maintained Ranina. "Is there really a dichotomy between the religious and legal view?" he asked, before citing section 21 of the SMA which states that when a Parsi marries under the SMA, he or his children will not be governed by the rules of Parsi intestacy as spelt out in the Indian Succession Act. "This effectuates the religious view. Why (otherwise) have only Parsis been left out" from the application of this section? "My co-trustee (Eruch Desai) gave a long reply running into 33 pages but this point was not answered."

The discrimination meted out to Zoroastrian women married outside the community while permitting concessions to Zoroastrian men married to non-Parsis Ranina excused by citing a couple of other sexist laws in India where the foreign wife of an Indian male is permitted



Indian citizenship while the same privilege is denied to the foreign husband of an Indian woman. Also, according to Ranina, under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, a foreign wife of an Indian male enjoys better privileges than the foreign husband of an Indian woman.

Further, when the views of scholars like Prof Kaikhosrov Irani and Ms Dina McIntyre are taken into consideration (by the BPP) and the views of "our own high priests are not accepted... means the trustees are denigrating ecclesiastic authority, denigrating them in the eyes of our community," claimed Ranina. In defence of Kotwal in particular, Ranina continued, "It is very unfortunate that a section of the Press came down on him. He only reiterated what was said a quarter of a century ago... He's expressed the same view held by the high priests in 1964" where it was accepted that by her marriage a Parsi woman marrying a non-Parsi 'embraces the religion of her husband... goes out of the Zoroastrian religion and the Parsi fold...' "My question is: 'Is any present trustee competent to speak on religious issues?'" Ranina wanted to know.

His chief reason for dissenting from the BPP resolution, Ranina specified, was that it went against the mandate of the trust deed. He further challenged whether just an affidavit was sufficient proof of a person's professed religion; and also whether permitting entry to the

doongerwadi to a person married outside the community would interfere in the performance of religious ceremonies by others. "I want each one of you to consider whether my views are right or wrong," urged Ranina before assuring, "I will still continue to try to convince my co-trustees to reconsider..."

Bengalee had also been scheduled to speak but neither did she make an appearance nor was any explanation offered for her absence.

Iron sulphide

To decide on the merits of a racehorse they believe in studying its pedigree but when it comes to marriage they conveniently forget this, said Ms Aramaiti Dhalla, former scientific assistant at the Tata Memorial Hospital's Radiation Medicine Centre and daughter of the late scientist Karkhanawalla. She viewed marriage as "a formation of a compound" as versus "a formation of a mixture." To illustrate this point she cited the example of iron filings and sugar which can be combined to form a mixture. The distinctive feature of a mixture is that its constituents can conveniently be separated without causing any change in the nature or properties. Thus it would be possible to separate iron filings from the sugar in the mixture with the use of a magnet that attracts iron. However, when iron and sulphur are brought together, they form a compound, iron

sulphide. Once "a chemical union" has taken place between iron and sulphur, separation of the two is not easy. Likewise in a marriage which implies "a physical, mental and spiritual union," a wife is expected to merge with her husband and not retain her separate religious identity, she added. The claim of a Zoroastrian lady married to a non-Parsi to retain her own religion is "absurd and untenable... If she had genuine love for

they are creating problems," said Merchant amidst thunderous applause. "I wish every Parsi has this last wish," supported one male member of the audience.

"This matter which should have been handled with decency and decorum is brought to the streets by a section of the Press and a couple of lawyers (not of the BPP)," he specified. "Lawyers lie with impunity," stated Merchant, "because they are not obliged to say the truth.

this "malpractice," according to Sethna, "the most guilty is the priesthood, possibly because of poverty, corruption..."

Bangalore support

As time was running out, the next scheduled speaker Adi Doctor volunteered to skip his speech and permit Ervad Nadirshah Unvalla, who attended on behalf of the Bangalore Anjuman, to express his solidarity with the organizers. (Letters



In favor of the resolution: (From left) Bajan, Unvalla, Shroff, Jamsetjee, Jejeebhoy, Dinshaw
(Below) Support from the audience



her religion she would never have married outside." Convinced that the principle of unseen disturbance or defilement would apply if the body of a Zoroastrian lady married outside the community were to be brought to the dokhma, she further questioned the logic of the trustees in demanding an affidavit from a family member. Is the wearing of "the sudreh and kusti (going to) serve as an identity card (to permit entry to the doongerwadi)?" she asked.

If concessions are allowed, it would encourage rather than restrict "God-fearing people from marrying outside" the fold, feared businessman and philanthropist Dinshaw Merchant. He conceded however, "These are days of equality of sexes. Why should a girl be heaped with indignity when a boy can marry from a Negrass to a princess and his place in the dokhma be assured?" He failed to understand why so much weightage was given "to the last wish" of Ms Roxan Shah. "Is it possible to fulfil the last wish of all people?" he queried before specifying, "I also have a last wish. After I die, the next day all the trustees of the BPP should be bundled and thrown into the Arabian Sea. This will be an instant solution because instead of solving,



They are licensed liars..."

Forewarning of "racial suicide" if "the five wise men (BPP trustees)" persisted with their decision to permit interment of the bodies of women married outside the community was Ervad Darius Sethna, a champion of orthodoxy even when he was based in the UK. In the past such bodies were placed in a *chotra*, an unconsecrated well, used mainly for persons of doubtful identity, prostitutes and criminals served with capital punishment. "There is only a certain section which is trying to change the rules to suit their vested interests. The entire race needn't pay for these selfish people. The only solution is for them to separate from us and form their own institutions and resting places," he advised. Identifying power of money and the indifference of the laity as factors responsible for

had been sent to anjumans throughout India inviting support to the orthodox stand against the BPP. But barring Bangalore, there was no reference to the other anjumans. On behalf of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman a reply was sent with a copy marked to *Parsiana* stating that they believed "that the trustees of the BPP have acted with due deliberation and taken a decision in the best interest of the Parsi Zoroastrian population they represent." They therefore did not wish to associate themselves with the meeting. The organizers also had to deal with counteractive publicity when the presidents of the Rathesthar Mandal and the Zarhosthi Bhaibandh Mandali disclaimed having ever been consulted before their organizations were named among the 11 bodies who were to meet to review the BPP decision.)

In connection with a Zoroastrian lady whose first marriage was to a Parsi, the second to a European, Unvalla related how he had then sought the opinion of 14 high priests to determine whether she should be recognized as a Zoroastrian. The general verdict was that she had gone outside the religion, reported the Bangalore priest. Only one high priest — Unvalla intended to conceal his identity but finally the name "Dabu" (the late Dastur Khurshed Dabu, former High Priest of the Wadia Atash Bahram) escaped his lips — is said to have opined that if she didn't give up her religion, she should be allowed inside religious places of worship. Citing parallels from other religions, Unvalla mentioned that when Jackie Kennedy married Aristotle Onassis, the Vatican declared her "a public sinner for having renounced the Catholic faith... Her condition was described as 'in a state of spiritual degradation.'"

At the end of nearly 125 minutes "an overwhelming majority" supported the resolution proposed by Cowasjee Dinshaw, president of the Bombay Zoroastrian Jashan Committee and seconded by Jehangir Shroff, chairman of the Athor-nan Mandal. The resolution denounced

the BPP for flouting the intentions of the settlers, for disregarding the ecclesiastical authority of the Zoroastrian high priests, and urged instead that "a Parsi lady marrying a non-Parsi cannot claim to continue to be a Parsi Zoroastrian, and is not entitled to the use and benefit of Parsi Zoroastrian institutions..." The BPP trustees were further called upon to revoke their resolution of April 9 or vacate their office of trusteeship. The conveners of the protest *sabha* (meeting) were also authorized "to initiate such action before any authority as they may be advised in order to prevent the Bombay Parsi Punchayet from implementing the decision taken by the majority of the trustees... which is clearly in breach of the trust deed of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet."

The enthusiastic audience, several of whom had come by chartered buses, had raised their hands in support of the resolution even before they were invited to do so. And as the video shooting of the audience with raised hands was in progress, Doctor admonished, "only one hand (up) please." The dissenters, barely eight to 10, disregarding shouts of "shame, shame" from their audience

colleagues continued to keep their hands up until their protest was lodged.

Seeing the auditorium nearly packed to its 1,200 capacity, Doctor commented how this "historic memorable meeting" had assumed significance for possibly being the only protest *sabha* in the last several decades to receive such widespread support. On behalf of the orthodox lobby he avowed, "This meeting is the first step..."

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MILESTONES

The age of Bombay's Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged from 21 to 44 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of ages divided by the total number of brides) being 26 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 26 and 51 years, averaging at 32.

From among the 85 Zoroastrians who died in Bombay, heart disease was the major killer claiming 17 lives, nine being over the age of 80 years. Fifteen victims fell prey to lung disease and pneumonia and 12 to old age and general debility. Diabetes and brain disease took six and five lives respectively while hypertension (four) and cancer (three) were the other killers. Three patients succumbed to accidents and two each to shock, high blood pressure, septicemia, anemia and bronchitis. The isolated cases registered last month: Parkinson's disease, bed sores, nervous disorder, tumor, kidney failure, uremia, burns and malnutrition. There were two cases of stillbirth. The youngest to die was a 20-year-old boy as compared to a 93-year-old woman.

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled from information supplied by various newsletters and announcements in India and abroad, courts and hospitals. This information is not always complete or consistent. In the breakup of deaths, according to illnesses, especially of the elderly, death is often due to a combination of several diseases.

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

BOMBAY

Born

A boy, Zubin, to Diana and Kerma Kadva on February 17, 1991

A girl to Mahrukh and Cyrus Kotwal; May 3

A girl to Dinaz and Maneck Sahiar; May 4

A girl to Ketty and Cyrus Bomanbehram; May 6

A boy to Shahnaz and Shahrukh Irani; May 6

A girl to Daizy and Homi Kotwal; May 6

A girl to Armaiti and Cyrus Shroff; May 6

A girl to Zenobia and Rusi Darji; May 7

A boy to Farzana and Neville Dumasia; May 7

A girl to Daisy and Berges Fitter; May 7

A boy to Shireen and Dinyar Lala; May 7

A boy to Meera and Mahadeo Prabhu; May 7

A girl to Arnaz and Godrej Mistry; May 9

A girl to Khorshed and Marzban Antia; May 10

A boy to Zenobia and Zubin Lakdawala; May 11

A boy to Gulshan and Percy Patel; May 17

A girl to Navaz and Cowsi Writer; May 17

A boy to Parveen and Rajeev Hemnadi; May 22

A girl to Binaifer and Kaiwaan Patel; May 22

Married

Niloofer Dadi Daruwalla and Jehangir Rusi Shroff; April 28

Nilufer Keki Wankadia and Gev Hormasji Irani; May 3

Kaenaz Bejan Bharucha and Cyrus Rusi Engineer; May 5

Ruby Jal Kateli and Dinyar Cavasji Nakra of Visakhapatnam; May 10

Hutoxy Jal Lahewala of Surat and Nauzer Jehangir Nicholson; May 10

Parizad Aspi Irani and Hoshedar Ratan Wandrewala; May 16

Zenobia Minoo Behramkamin and Mehernosh Jehanbux Karkaria of Poona; May 18

Kashmira Rusi Mehershahi and Kurush Minoo Daruwalla of Poona; May 19

Maharukh Dinshaw Irani and Jehanbux Kharshedji Palsetia; May 20

Viloo Soli Bharucha and Micky Ratan Umrigar; May 20

Died

Dockdu Maneckshaw Bamji (78), residing at Room no 39, 133, Mody St, Fort, 400001; April 30

Rustomji Nowroji Kharas (85), B/20, Shapur Baug,

V. P. Rd, 400004; April 30

Tehmina Rustomji Commissariat (75), 31B/21, Takshila, Mahakali Caves Rd, Andheri (E), 400069; May 1

Dhunjisha Burjorji Daruvala (91), 461-463, J.S.S. Rd, 400002; May 1

Baby boy of Dinaz Deeniyar Jehani (stillborn), 7, Pundole Bldg, Sleater Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; May 1

Kashmira Cyrus Jokhi (39), 4/13, Panthaki Baug, Andheri (E), 400069; May 1

Minocher Dosabhai Khajotia (83), 35, Karelwadi, Thakurdwar, 400002; May 1

Pirojsha Framroze Wadia (57), F/3, Contractor Baug, Mori Rd, Mahim, 400016; May 1

Aloo Hormusji Bhangara (72), 19, Ropa Lane, Chandanwadi, 400002; May 2

Jamshed Meherwanji Gazdar (62), Gazdar Hse, 45, B. Desai Rd, 400026; May 3

Homi Ruttonji Kotwal (81), 6, Wadia Hse, 22, Hughes Rd, 400007; May 3

Rustomji Jehangirji Dalal (78), Khurshed Mhl, 725, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 4

Jal Manekshaw Kolah (76), A, Gool Mhl Sleater Rd, 400007; May 4

Nergesh Naoroji Bhogal (72), Dr Kerawalla Bldg, 307, Tardeo Rd, 400007; May 5

Amy Dhunjisha Daruwalla (78), Wadia Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; May 5

Dinshaw Rustom Irani (75), 5, Gul Manor Bldg, Opp Telephone Bhavan, Strand Rd, Colaba, 400005; May 5

Alamai Darabsha Khambatta (86), B.A. Engineer Bldg, 815, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 5

Dinshaw Merwanji Mistry (82), 13, Tata Bldg, Dhanbaiwadi, Dadabhai Rd, Vile Parle (W), 400056; May 5

Bapai Mahiyar Nalladaroo (75), 680/8, B. Palamkote Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 5

Jer Rustom Sethna (77), 46, Colaba Rd, Off 3rd Pasta Lane, Colaba, 400005; May 7

Hormasji Dinshaji Davierwalla (84), Ivorine, 154, M. Karve Rd, 400020; May 8

Piroja Eruch Mistry (83), 4, Clover Apts, Sleater Rd,

400007; May 8

Behram Ardeshtir Irani (38), 15/A, United Chmbs, Grant Rd, 400007; May 9

Piroja Jamshed Dhabhar (85), 2, Ness Baug Annexe III, Nana Chowk, 400007; May 10

Hormusji Kaikhushru Mody (80), 36/A, Usha Sadan, South Wing, Colaba, 400005; May 10

Keki Rustomji Munshi (70), 259, Shroff Chmbs, Bazar Gate St, Fort, 400001; May 10

Piroja Nariman Balsara (83), 77, N. S. Patkar Marg, 400007; May 11

Jehangir Dinshaw Bamji (75), Madhuban, 323, Shahid Bhagat Singh Rd, Fort, 400001; May 11

Jal Sorabji Patel (76), 77/B, Gopal Mans, Turner Rd, Bandra, 400050; May 11

Freny Soli Wadia (70), 9, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; May 11

Framroze Bomanshaw Engineer (80), Khush-Villa, 621, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 12

Freny Dinshaw Katpitia (90), Windsor Chmbs, Cawasji Patel St, Fort, 400001; May 12

Soonamai Savaksha Toddywalla (80), 511/C, Adenwalla Rd, Matunga, 400019; May 12

Nader Burjorji Fitter (67), 2, Readymoney Bldg, Tardeo, 400034; May 12

Kaikobad Jehangir Dastur (92), 602/C, Lady Jehangir Rd, Matunga, 400019; May 14

Soli Nadirshaw Patel (72), 107, Mahavir Apts II, J. P. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; May 14

Khorshed Dinshaw Talaty (69), Mody Hse, Near Dreamland Cinema, 400004; May 14

Alamai Ratanshaw Bhathena (80), C/68, Bhiwandiwalla Ter, 400002; May 15

Behram Navroji Mory (50), 5, Godrej Bldg, Contractor Baug, Mori Rd, Mahim, 400016; May 15

Shirinbai Cursetji Chandaru (93), Hormuz Bldg, Sussex Rd, 400027; May 16

Meher Kersasp Kanga (93), Bhagat Manor, 787, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 16

Eruchshaw Rustomji Mehta (95), E/18, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; May 16

Khusroo Ratan Patel (37), P/23, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; May 16

Burjor Shavaz Paymaster (67), 524, Sandhurst Bldg, Opera House, 400004; May 16
Bhikhamai Nadarsha Bhoja (77), 12/B, Cawasji Petit Bldg, Marzban Clny, Lamington Rd, 400008; May 17
Nargis Cawasji Kutar (89), 45/47, Karelwadi, Thakurdwar, 400004; May 17
Dinamai Dhanjishaw Mehta (88), 29, Dadachanji Bldg, Dr Nayar Rd, 400011; May 18
Soona Nariman Engineer (81), 12, Doctor Lentin Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo Rd, 400007; May 19
Roshan Daraius Mukadam (62), Gai Bldg, 646, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 19
Manijeh Ratanshaw Patel (84), S/4, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; May 19
Minoo Cowasji Vania (68), 654, Firdausi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 19
Jerbanoo Kaikobad Contractor (86), G/55, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; May 20
Burjorji Jamshedji Driver (86), Tapia Bldg, Jalbhai St, Charni Rd Junction, 400004; May 20
Rashnabanoo Phirozshah Irani (51), 16, Nadirshaw Sukhia St, Fort, 400001; May 20
Mehlli Ardeshir Mehta (75), 10, Ness Baug Annexe No 3, Nana Chowk, 400007; May 20
Soonamai Framroze Contractor (86), 75, Hughes Rd, 400007; May 21
Mani Nowroji Gilder (88), 17, Perry Cross Rd, Bandra, 400050; May 21
Banoobai Bejonji Karanjia (68), Parsi Punchayet Staff Qtrs, Doongerwadi, Kemps Corner, 400036; May 21
Jehangir Hormusjee Secretary (92), 10, Apna Ghar, S. B. Rd, Colaba, 400005; May 21
Baby boy of Rashna R. Mehta (stillborn), E/10, Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri, 400058; May 24
Homi Rustomji Wadia (81), Silverene, 63, Worli Sea Face, 400025; May 24
Ratan Rustomji Buhariwala (82), J/1, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; May 25
Nozer Hormasji Cowjiva (56), E, Dalal Est, Lamington Rd, 400008; May 25
Framroze Cawasji Hodiwalla (68), M/11, Bharucha Baug,

S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; May 25
Shera Noshir Vajifdar (73), Sheri Hse, Gunbow St, Fort, 400001; May 25
Cyrus Dhunjishaw Avari (20), B2/29, Bachani Ngr, Malad (E), 400097; May 26
Dolly Pirojsha Kavarana (85), Banaji Bldg, Forjett St Cross Lane, 400036; May 26
Aalamai Maneckshaw Mistry (76), Widows' Chawl, Old Mody St, Fort, 400001; May 26
Sohrab Pirojsha Shroff (90), Ratan Mans, Forjett St, 400036; May 26
Rusi Dhunjishaw Daruwala (62), 3, Readymoney Bldg, Sir Ratan Tata Rd, Tardeo, 400034; May 27
Faramroze Manchershah Antia (75), 598/B, Wadia Bldg, Girgaum Rd, 400002; May 28
Behramji Burjorji Bhatena (87), 146/B, Patel Bldg, N. M. Joshi Marg, Lower Parel, 400012; May 28
Jehangir Dorabji Postwala (85), Bhesania Bldg, Fort Market, 400001; May 28
Pheroze Jalejar Chinoy (70), 170, Bazargate St, Fort, 400001; May 29
Maneckbai Jehangir Karkaria (85), 4/11, A. H. Wadia Baug, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; May 29
Nerges Dinshaw Kasad (77), 1-B/20, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; May 29
Perin Ratanshaw Marolia (74), Mohamedi Minar, 14 Khetwadi Lane, 400004; May 29
Tehmi Fram Tamboli (70), Boyce Bldg, 671, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 29
Sheran Jal Cassad (77), Gemfrina, 630, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 30
Alamai Homi Hatteria (79), C/o Rita Mehta, 271/C, Dhan Lodge, Javji Marg, 400007; May 30
Pirojhai Navroji Mistry (95), Shroff Hse, 42, Sleater Rd, 400007; May 30
Sheranai Jamshedji Panthaky (80), A, Sidhwa Bldg, Balaram St, 400007; May 30
Banoobai Rustomji Vadiger (84), 14, Sneha Sadan, 163, Colaba Rd, 400005; May 30
Ally (Avabai) Dinshaw Dastur (91), 12, Thakur Nivas, 173, J. Tata Rd, 400020; May 31

Rustomji Nawroji Hathi (82), Kerawalla Bldg, 789, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 31

CALCUTTA

Born
A boy to Manekami and Rohinton Ghiara; March 27

POONA

Died
Shirin Jimmy Captain (47), 813/14, Bhavani Peth, 411001; April 15
Dinyar Cawasji Todiwala (22), 16, Queens Garden, 3/5, 411001; April 17
Ardeshir Kaikhshru Parekh (79), 29/A, Khan Rd, 411001; April 18
Perin Adi Wadia (89), Navdhan, 929, Synagogue St, 411001; April 23
Alloo Keki Karbhari (91), Ahura Soc, 12, Salisbury Park, 411001; April 30

SECUNDERABAD

Married
Perveen Chinoy, daughter of Roshan and Dinshaw and Viraf Sorabji Mehta; January 27

SURAT

Died
Pervez Ardeshir Fatakia (35), Nargol, Via Sanjan, Dist Valsad, 396001; May 26
Dolly Kobad Bodha (72), Sethna Bldg, Matharpakhadi, Mazagaon, Bombay 400010; May 27
Sarosh Keki Variava (45), Amroli, Dist Surat, 395003; May 29

CHICAGO

Born
A girl, Athena Elizabeth, to Dhun and Ashley Tellis; March 29

KARACHI

Died
Behramji Dadabhoy Mama (85); April 1
Homi Kawasha Randeria (70); April 10
Aspi Rustamji Sethna (65); April 11
Homi Jhanbux Vatcha (59); April 20
Minocher Jamshedji Katila (78); April 30

VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

Born
A boy, Zaal, to Benafsha and Sarosh Khariwala; February 20
A girl, Kashmira, to Dhun and Jimmy Daruwala, sister to Juristine; February 25

CORRECTION

A boy was born to *Mona* and *Navroze Seervai* on January 10. The father's name was mistakenly printed as *Hormasji in Parsiana*, February 1991. The error is regretted.

TOTALS (for this issue)

Births: Boys 10, Girls 13
 Marriages: 11
 Deaths: 93

Compiled by Roxana H. Kaka

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Final salute to CURSETJI

Parinaz Gandhi

A retinue of retired and serving, senior and junior officers had gathered at the parade ground outside Bombay's INHS Asvini Hospital on the morning of January 30, 1991 to pay their last salute to the 71-year-old former chief of the naval staff, Adm Jal Cursetji, who had died the preceding day following cardiac arrest. As the body lay in state on the customary gun carriage, wreaths were offered, arms reversed, three volleys fired and finally the buglers sounded reveille to symbolize that life has to continue.

The last journey of his mortal remains was to the Towers of Silence. However, the milestones reached by Cursetji during his 40+ years with the navy are recorded for posterity in the naval annals. He was the first to be appointed hydrographer to the Government of India, he commanded India's first aircraft carrier INS-Vikrant, he was the first Indian to be appointed naval attache in Washington, he was the first to pass out from the pres-

tigious training ship (TS) *Dufferin*... Recalling these achievements was VAdm Rusi Ghandhi who acknowledged, "Every step he climbed on the promotion ladder was achieved by sheer hard work and merit, not by flattery or by backbiting."

"Very conscientious and very popular, (Adm Cursetji) inspired confidence. He was fair in his dealings with others and very discreet in every way," remarked Cmdre Dorab Mehta who had known Cursetji since his early childhood having "travelled by the same *tonga* (horse carriage) to the same school in Jabalpur" and having worked on parallel naval assignments thereafter. Cursetji's considerate attitude was also referred to by RAdm Sarosh Lalkaka who described him as "very soft-spoken and pleasant. Even if he had to tick off somebody, he would do it in a nice way, not by shouting."

Any work that he undertook, he was

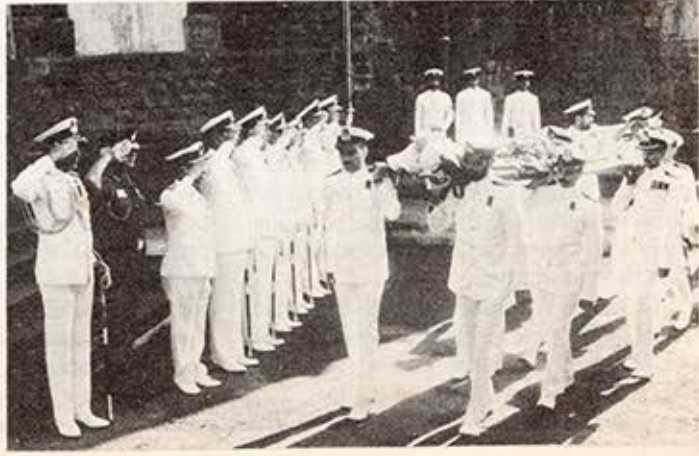
known to "go into it at great depth, more than necessary," opined Lalkaka. Corroborating on his thorough and meticulous ways, Cdr Madhu Dhavale who had served as Cursetji's flag lieutenant (equivalent to the better known ADC designation used by the army) added, "He wasn't one to take decisions in a hurry... He was one of those intellectuals... (who was always wont) to weigh the pros and cons." And despite his authoritative position "never ever would he bother his subordinates with personal requests."

"Probably Jal's finest hour was as vice chief (of the naval staff) when he masterminded the 1971 Indo-Pak War operations... True to his selfless spirit he managed to get awards and recognition for his entire team," credited Ghandhi. Cursetji

Above: Cursetji in uniform as chief of naval staff

Below: Military funeral accorded to

Adm Cursetji Photos: Western Naval Command



himself was conferred the Param Vishisht Seva Medal by the nation for rendering "distinguished service of the most exceptional order." Thereafter he was appointed head of the Western Naval Command as flag officer commanding-in-chief which in turn led to the highest appointment in the Indian Navy when he served as admiral for a three-year tenure. His promotion as admiral, on March 1, 1976, came during the difficult days of the emergency declared by the then prime minister Ms Indira Gandhi. When his term was due to expire, it was the Janata Government that was in power.

None of the naval personnel credit any single individual for specific accomplishments. However it is generally recognized that it was during Cursetji's term as admiral that the budgetary allowance for the navy was increased, that the standard of efficiency improved, that the conditions for the personnel were upgraded. "He always fought for the legitimate rights of younger sailors and officers," Mehta remembers.

"The size and strength of your navy has to be sufficient to fulfil the task assigned to it," was his philosophy as conveyed by him at the time of taking over as admiral. As regards preparation for battle, he noted, "When you go into combat you're pretty keyed up. There is nothing routine. Anything might happen. You don't have much time to think of anything else. You just hope you will

do well."

Cursetji's first experience of a major battle was World War II when barely two years after completion of training he was on a destroyer which was part of a force that attacked and sank the first German submarine of the War. Thereafter he was "commissioned as acting sublieutenant in 1940 and (later) commanded HMIS *Bombay* which was deployed on convoy escort and anti submarine duties," recounts *Hands Call*, the Western Naval Command newsletter in a tribute to Cursetji in its February '91 issue. His sea going commands included INS *Khukri*, INS *Investigator*, INS *Rajput*.

Born in Jabalpur, Cursetji studied at the local St Aloysius High School before joining TS *Dufferin*. It was he who "was responsible for inspiring at least a score of youngsters from Jabalpur, including myself, to join the then Royal Indian Navy either directly or through TS *Dufferin*," mentions Ghandhi remembering how he had sought Cursetji's guidance before proceeding on his own training.

"There has been an appreciable number of our community in the services and an equally high number in the higher ranks," Cursetji had remarked at the tercentenary celebrations of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet in 1982 when he was among the 15 eminent Parsis selected to receive a scroll of honor on a silver salver. But observing a decline in the num-

bers he had urged young Parsis to join the armed forces saying, "There is a lot the services can offer."

As a mark of tribute to the "liberal" officer, the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, at its executive council meeting on March 23, 1991 observed a moment's silence.

"It is a pity that the Government of India did not make use of his experience and talents after his retirement as he had so much to give. But it is a greater pity that the community did not use his sterling services," regretted a senior naval officer. Since his retirement he is said to have devoted his time to the various ecological and environmental groups of the city and to the Senate of the Bombay University. Reading and western classical music were his other interests. In later years, his bronchial problems restricted his activities.

Being an avid letterwriter "with beautiful handwriting," he maintained a regular and vast correspondence all over the world. Links that he had forged during his cadet and midshipman days, during his popular bachelor days in Coonoor and during his official assignments were carefully nurtured by him. His "reserved and non-gregarious" nature notwithstanding, he was reputed for having "kept up his friendships."

The admiral is survived by his wife Navaz, and daughters Meher Darius Raftat and Rashida Raghuveer.

READERS' FORUM

continued from page 11

When a being takes birth, the soul accepts the divine plan of suffering to a certain extent for itself during that particular life, knowing that it is good for its spiritual progress. But when there is no harmony between the soul and the outer personalities in the form of physical, astral (emotional) and mental bodies, these rise in rebellion against the soul and the life is cut short by suicide. In such a case, the victim suffers much more in the other world and has to repeat the remnants of the same suffering in the future lives on the physical plane, maybe with interest. In case of mercy-killing, those who have been instrumental in cutting short anybody's life have to face repercussions of the crime of murder.

During my practice as a divine healer for 21 years, I have had several cases which have made me aware of various facets of spiritual truths and the following is a relevant one:

A Zoroastrian lady, a great lover of dogs, had a pet dog, stately and beautiful in every way. Through the mistress, the dog became a divine healing patient for life. Towards the fag end of the animal's life it suffered so very much that anybody's heart would bleed at the sight of the suffering animal — blind, with flesh rotting all over and in great pain. Naturally, the owner of the dog was going through excessive emotional upheavals. She was going against the opinion of doctors and friends by refusing to put the dog to sleep on my and my colleague's advice. She was accused of cruelty and similar unjustified allegations were made by several people. The poor lady's faith in our wisdom started shaking and she pleaded that for her peace of mind we should ask Divinity and get a reply directly, particularly for this case. We obliged her and prompt came the message, "Ask after 15 days."

When the fortnight was about to get over, the dog breathed its last, dying a

natural death.

After this, Divinity deigned to reply and explained that the animal had made a tremendous effort for "individualization" — the budding into a full-fledged human being with a distinct, individual soul, from the state of animalism which entails a group soul — and during this process had voluntarily taken upon itself the suffering of some of its brethren dogs and even some of the suffering of its mistress and her family.

If the owner of the dog had put the animal to sleep by way of mercy-killing, she would have incurred the illwill of the dog for aborting its spiritual progress in effecting individualization during this very life only and she would have had to suffer herself, paying back for her wrong deed which, though of charitable intent, was based on ignorance.

Ignorance of divine laws is no excuse.

Ms NERGESH F. DAMANIA

Edited by Amavaz S. Mama



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