

Pamphlet

JUNE 1992 Rs 12





At didi's wedding Ustaad did such dhamaal! To get the dulha's Rasna he called his dog Bozo. And asked him to create a hangama. Everyone ran after Bozo. And while that happened, Ustaad finished off all of dulha's Rasna. You know why? Because Rasna is so mmmmmmm.....! Isn't it? I love you Rasna.



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Parsiana

June 1992
Volume 14 Number 12

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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"Are the Kurds..."

The article "Are the Kurds Zoroastrians?" (*Parsiana*, March 1992) begins with the statement that reports on surviving Middle Eastern tribes with Zoroastrian antecedents have been a major revelation of 1991. This suggests that the claim made by the Iraqi Kurds of professing the ancient Zoroastrian faith is something in the nature of a discovery.

However, this relevant connection was recognized over 60 years ago as borne out by J. B. Sanjana's *A Comprehensive History of the Parsis*, published in 1935. I quote the pertinent extract from Sanjana's book (p 605):

"The Kurds, who number over two and a half million, claim to be descended directly from the ancient Persians and take pride in recognizing themselves as genu-

ine Iranians. A Kurd litterateur in a very suggestive writing acclaims himself as a Zardoshti and *dinbehi* (of the excellent faith). Prince Sureya Bedr Khan, a renowned leader of the Kurdish Independent League, mentions in one of his journals that many Kurds, notably the Yazidis, have clung to their ancient faith. The late Prince Amadudda Davla, who belonged to the royal family of Kajjars and whose administration of the province of Yazd is still remembered by the people with gratitude, used to identify himself as Ahura-Parast and Mazdayasni (worshipper of Ahura Mazda and of the Mazdayasni faith)."

The fact that these Kurds acknowledge 'Zaradhusht' as their prophet and that they accept the *Zend Avesta* as their holy book should dispel any doubts that they are pretenders.

The Parsis in India have flourished in a secular, multi-religious, multi-linguistic and multi-racial society, whereas our ancient coreligionists have struggled for over 1,300 years in a hostile atmosphere.

However, as your article and the extract from Sanjana's book suggest, if not all the Kurds, at least the Yazidis of Kurdish origin should be recognized as the followers of Zoroaster. Dr P. D. SUNAVALA

"The Purifying..."

I have read the arguments of Mr Ali A. Jafarey in his very informative article "The Purifying Prescriptions" (*Parsiana*, October 1991).

The ancestors of the modern Parsis and Zarathushtrian Iranis suffered untold hardship, persecution and tyranny in the days after the Arab invasion of Iran. The Jazia tax was not abolished until late in the nineteenth century when a handful of conscientious Parsis made a representation to the then Muslim Shah of Iran and through British influence got it abolished forever. Even in India, the ancient Parsis were not totally immune to persecution during the Mughal era. Considering all this and more, I feel the Parsi and Irani Zarathushtrians deserve to be encouraged to follow all their ancient religious customs and practices without any hindrance from friends and critics both here and abroad.

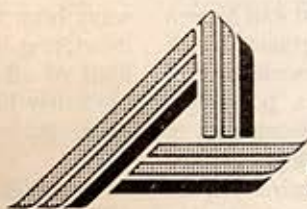
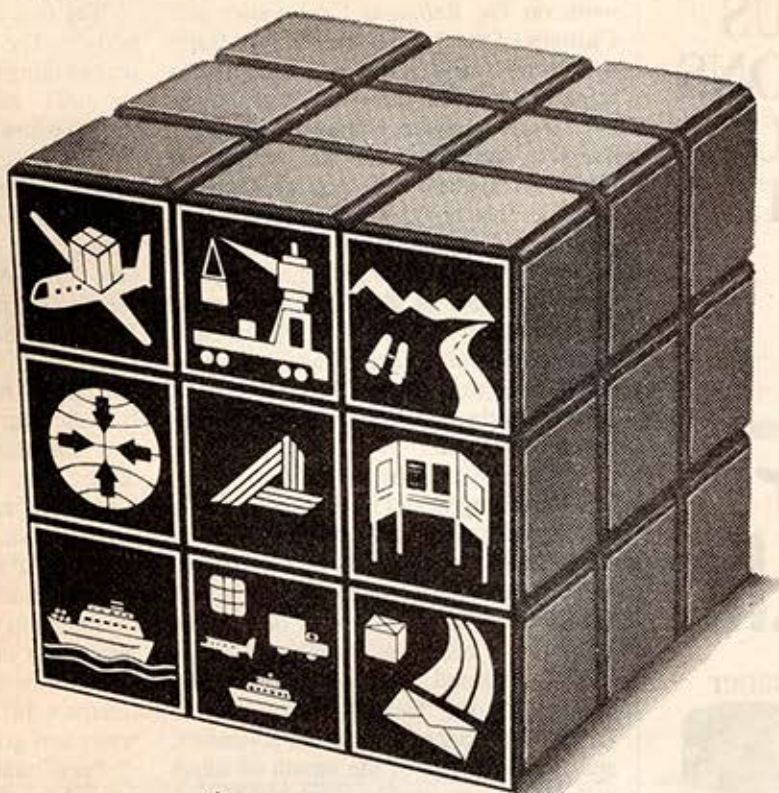
Each religion has its own set of traditions, customs and injunctions, both legal and religious. Why should the modern Parsi/Irani relegate his/her age-old customs to the dustbin of history, when younger members of other Indian communities are taking a renewed interest in their own customs and traditions?

For Parsi/Irani Zarathushtrians the sacred Avesta, Pahlavi and Persian writings are as important as the holy *Gathas*. For us, even the famed *Shah Namah* of Firdausi is considered a sacred and beloved heritage. It is not a "socio-religious heritage" as Mr Jafarey would have us believe but an entirely religious heritage in spite of virulent criticism from various quarters. The learned Firdausi himself states: "Tu een raa dooroogh o fasaanah madaan, Ba yaksaan ravesh dar zamaanah madaan," which means don't regard the stories in the *Shah Namah* as fables and fairy tales because every age is different from another and things are different in each era. This same mature view holds good for non-Gathic writings. Parsi/Irani Zarathushtrians revere the *Yashts* as well as the *Gathas*.

Any individual is free to follow Asho Zarathushtra's teachings according to his conscience and individual interpretation. This, however, does not mean that reformist Parsis/non-Parsis impose their own views on a community that still believes (and will continue to believe, come what may) in ancient traditions and hallowed customs. On religious matters like dokhmenashini, nirangdin and *gomez*, we (Parsi/Irani Zarathushtrians) would prefer to follow ancient traditions. We also do not accept conversions and mixed marriages. There is also a strong feeling that only Parsi/Irani Zarathushtrian children be considered for adoption.

While it is true that ancient Zarathushtrian tenets have influenced Islam in Iran, it is also a fact that all religions have their own distinct features. Each religion caters to individual souls on different levels, depending on the soul's *keshash* (destiny). For this reason Parsi/Irani Zarathushtrians require to follow the tenets of the *Vendidad* in its totality. They should not shun the use of bull's urine and other ceremonies which recommend

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washing with *gomez* and water as a prerequisite. Ervad Shams-ul-Ulama Dr Sir Jivanji Jamshedji Modi in his scholarly work on *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* quotes Prof Rapp as follows: "And before we determine to bring in accord all the customs of the ancient world that were employed for purification to our modern rational notions, we might like to know to be sure what advantage has that blood of an animal which Moses used, in respect of the purpose in view, over the urine of an ox!... the entire ceremonial law of Zoroaster rests upon the conception of a pure and impure creation... corporeal impurity was just as punishable and just as abhorrent in the eyes of Ahura Mazda, the Pure, as the moral impurity of the soul."

The *Ahd Nameh* is no "fabrication" as Mr Ali Jafarey would have us believe. In fact there are three *Ahd Namehs*. The first *Ahd Nameh* "was granted by the blessed Nabi Muhammad himself to Mehdi Farukh been Sakshan, brother of Salman-e-Farsi, and bears the Nabi's seal at the end. The second Arabic *Ahd Nameh* was granted by the blessed Hazrat Ali to Zarathushtra Behram Shad bin Khiradars, and bears the date of the month of Rajab in the Hirji year 39. The third *Ahd Nameh* in the Iranian language was granted by *Ali ibin Abu Tablib* to the descendants of Adarbad Marispand to his posterity." These *Ahd Namehs* are "documents of concessions, rights and privileges granted by the blessed Nabi and Hazrat Ali his saintly son-in-law to the Zarathushtrians of the times."

Salman-e-Farsi was in the words of Prof Edward G. Browne "the only Persian (born in the Zarathushtrian faith) who was included in the honored circle of the *As-hab* or 'companions.'" He has been identified as Dastur Dinyar who conferred with the prophet on religious matters.

The *Vendidad* from the word *Vi-daeva-dat* (law against the demons) is the *Leviticus* of the Parsi scriptures. The Jews had laws regarding purification of women, clean and unclean food, and other sundry laws. The *Vendidad* is a complete code on sanitary living for persons born in the Zarathushtrian faith. It is more valid today in the densely materialistic times in which the Zarathushtrians live. Over-crowding and congestion, immorality and vice in urban areas bring about conditions that require remedies as set out in the *Vendidad*. Unfortunately many modern Parsi/Irani Zarathushtrians do not care to

know the importance of *gomez*. For those born in the Zarathushtrian faith, mere soap and shampoo are of no avail.

The first duty is purity — of mind and body. The beast within us, however, makes things difficult for us and the duty is more often, not fulfilled. Asho Zarathushtra says: "Purity is for man next to life the greatest good." In practical, everyday life, water (*ab*) is of course a very great asset, but there are times when both *gomez* and water are a strict necessity. Mr Ali Jafarey has quoted Prof James Darmesteter from the *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol 23: "Wash thy hands with water, not with *gomez*." Mr Ali Jafarey has however forgotten to publish the learned professor's footnote on this quotation. Prof James Darmesteter says: "This is an allusion to the baresh-num purification (*Vendidad* VIII, 39). The unclean man washes himself with *gomez* first and with water last." Clearly the gracious king was not in a state of uncleanness to warrant washing with *gomez*. Hence the instruction to wash his hands with water only. It would be wrong to interpret this as a command to wash with water and give up *gomez*.

Parsi/Irani Zarathushtrians have always been a peace-loving people, never interfering in the rites and religious customs of other people. All of us would obviously like to see the same sentiment expressed by members of other communities.

A quotation from *Yasna* XII (verse 9) will be in order here: "Yea, I praise at once the faith of Mazda, the faith which has no faltering utterance, the faith that wields the felling halbert, the faith of kindred marriage, the holy (creed) which is the most imposing, best and most beautiful of all religions which exist, and of all that shall in future come to knowledge, Ahura's faith, the Zarathushtrian creed. Yea to Ahura Mazda do I ascribe all good, and such shall be the worship of the Mazdayasnian belief!"

DIJUN FRAM BILLIMORIA

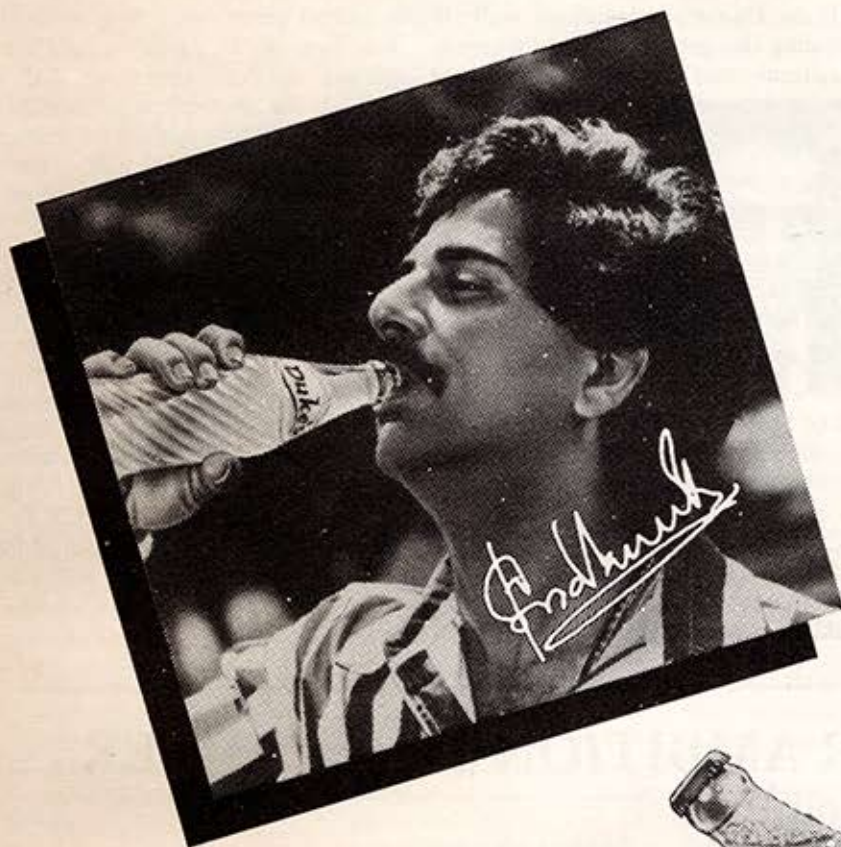
Calcutta

Perils of purity

We Parsis take pride in boasting about the purity of our race. We are one of the smallest ethnic communities in the world. The census carried out every 10 years in India gives us a grim reminder of an alarming rate of decline in our population figures, of 10,000-15,000 every decade. As a community we have one of the high-

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est incidence of genetically vulnerable diseases like cancer of breasts, high blood pressure, diabetes, G6PD deficiency, etc.

With a serious drop in our population and our norms insisting on marriages within our community, we are heading towards a grave concentration of genetic abnormalities in the generations to come. In the present circumstances even marriages between first cousins may be considered as risky on eugenic grounds and in the generations to come our small community will face disastrous repercussions of genetic abnormalities.

Our archaic laws and customs debar children born of a Parsi woman and her non-Parsi spouse from being inducted as Zoroastrians even though both the parents may be willing to do so. Strangely, the same rule does not apply to children born of a Parsi male and his non-Parsi spouse. I am not advocating marriages outside our community. But we must now be practical and sensible, and salvage hundreds of children and bring them within the fold of our community. We could thus introduce, even in a small measure, a change in the genetic profile without in any way adversely affecting our Zoroastrian tenets.

Let us not gloat in the glory of our revered ancestors but be practical if we

have to survive as a small community with the teeming millions of our country's population. Let not the swan song of our die-hard orthodox be "we are a dying community but we will die pure!"

Dr M. D. DISAWALLA
Bangalore

But for this Park...

Dr Russi Dastur's meritorious work in promoting the good health of thousands of citizens and hundreds of athletes



should be appreciated. The Priyadarshini Park at Nepean Sea Road has come into existence through the efforts of Dr Dastur. He is the president of this sprawling

area of land which serves as a place for recreation and outdoor exercise for innumerable citizens of Bombay. This Park is also used for training Indian athletes.

The area covered by this Park far exceeds that of the Hanging Gardens in the same vicinity. But for this Park there would have been many more residential

buildings adding to the congestion of the city in general and the Nepean Sea Road and Walkeshwar area in particular.

Dr F. P. ANTIA

Indore dokhma needs help

The Indore dokhma complex has over five acres of land on which stand a dokhma, a bungli, two rooms, a well, a mango grove, etc. It is situated five kms away on the Agra-Bombay Road. A portion of land measuring 2.43 acres was in the possession of a cultivator. Recently, it was relieved of encroachment, but the cultivator, in turn, has filed civil and criminal suits against the Anjuman.

This appeal for help is addressed to every benevolent Zoroastrian as well as Parsi charitable organizations. We need two lakh rupees to meet the expenses of litigation, construction of a wall round the dokhma site, fencing of the open area, keeping watch to avoid further encroachments, etc. All help may please be sent to the Indore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman (which is a registered body), C/o Dr J. N. Pohowalla, 6/2, South Tukoganj, Indore.

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Events and Personalities

World Dental Congress

"Excellence in dentistry" has been selected as the theme of the Second World Zoroastrian Dental Congress to be convened at Karachi's Beach Luxury Hotel from December 25 to 27, 1992. Participants from India, Pakistan, UK, Canada and USA will avail of the "common venue for presentation of research and



Turner (examining a patient) with his teammates at the dental camp in Udwada. (Right) World Congress logo: cementing bond for dentists

clinically oriented papers on...aspects of dentistry in a congenial atmosphere," as notes the pamphlet announcing the Congress.

Of the 300 participants expected, the majority will be Zoroastrians, though non-Zoroastrians too will be welcome. The organizers of this Congress, the Zoroastrian Dentists Organization (ZDO), believe that "science is never restricted to any one community," as conveyed by ZDO president Dr Porus Turner.

Like the First World Zoroastrian Dental Congress in Bombay in 1988, the second Congress will give the participants an opportunity to learn of advances in dental technology and the evolution of restorative materials that have inspired new treatment, concepts and practises, notes a press release. A one-day pre-con-

ference course on dental implants will be conducted a day prior to the inauguration.

The registration fee for delegates from countries other than India and Pakistan will be US \$100 or its equivalent per person. Registration charges include admission to all scientific sessions (except the pre-conference course), dental trade fair and hospitality. The accommodation and travel formalities in Karachi will be managed by the chairman of the Congress Dr Rumi Sukhia of Pakistan with the cooperation of well-known hotelier Byram Avari. Those interested may contact Sukhia at Gulzar Bldg, 1st floor, Abdul Haroon Rd, Karachi, Pakistan or Turner at B-1, Rustom Baug, Victoria Road, Byculla, Bombay 400027.

The 40-year-old ZDO's future plans as announced in the pamphlet include publication of a quarterly journal, organization of a dental congress, recommendation of one Zoroastrian for admission to a private dental college every year, provision for dental treatment at affordable rates to needy Zoroastrians, and encouragement to conduct research in dentistry.

Preventive dentistry and treatment camps in rural and urban areas have been a regular feature of the ZDO whose membership totals 120. Recently 153 locals eagerly registered for a check-up at the dental camp in Udwada organized by the ZDO on April 12 this year. But due to time constraints not all of them were fortunate to receive treatment at the hands of the seven-member team of dental surgeons comprising Turner, Sarosh Master, Dinshaw Sorabjee, Framroze Antia, Ms Mehroo Turner, Fali Driver

and Ms Daisy Sidhwa, informs a press release from the ZDO.

The limited time at their disposal was effectively used by the medicos who, with the cooperation of their spouses, undertook 64 emergency extractions, 38 temporary fillings and 11 prophylaxes (scaling and cleaning of teeth) in the course of their check-ups.

Inaugurated by the high priest of Udwada Dastur Kekobad Dastur, the camp at the M. C. Damanwala Charitable Dispensary was open to all communities. Oral health was emphasized at this camp sponsored by Colgate Palmolive (India) Limited under their Young India Dental Health Programme. Free toothpastes and toothbrushes along with basic literature on oral health were distributed to the children attending the camp, the release further mentions.

The awareness created by the camp has made the local medical authorities realize the need for a permanent dental service in that area for which they have sought the assistance of the ZDO.

New president for BPA

Jehangir Shroff's 25 years of service as president of the Bombay Parsee Association (BPA) was rewarded with a *manpatri* and a memento presented to him at the Association's annual function on March 19, 1992.

His successor Vispi Dastur committed himself to promoting the organization's ideals and donated a rotating trophy for a quiz contest on the *Shah Namah* and Persian history, according to a press release from the Association. He expressed his disagreement with the statement "Parsis are living on past glory," citing the examples of present-day achievers.

At the function where Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustee Eruch Desai was the chief guest and businessman and philanthropist Dinshaw Merchant, the guest of honor, seven members of the community were felicitated. Those who received the



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silver medals and flowers were: Padma Shri winner Homi Taleyarkhan; Dhanwantari award winner Dr Eddie Bharucha; lady principals of four schools, Ms Nergish Daruwalla of the Hindi Vidya Bhavan, Ms Mani Engineer of the Alexandra Girls' English Institution, Ms Roshen Driver of the Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsee Charitable Institution and Junior College and Ms Silloo Commissariat of the Bai R.



Shroff (right) being felicitated by Dastur

F. D. Panday Girls' High School; and Burzin Mehta, the release notes.

Sixty percent of the Parsi population is aged, 60 percent of the remaining 40 percent are either unmarried, have no child or only one child, pointed out Merchant, stressing the need for housing. Desai wanted the youth in the community to be inspired. Unutilized idle funds due to obsolete trust deeds, and encroachment of upcountry dokhma properties was of concern to Taleyarkhan, further mentioned the release.

"Freddie forever"

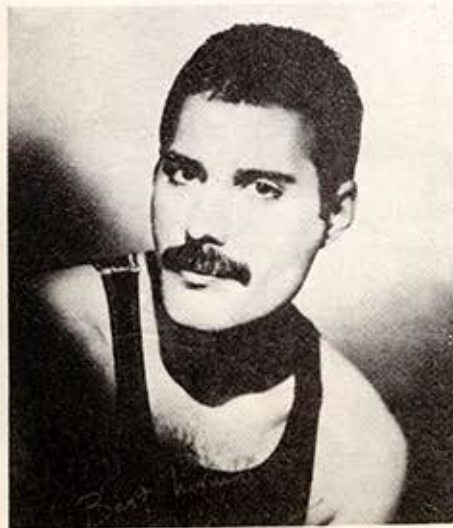
Seventy-two thousand fans of Freddie Mercury thronged the Wembley Stadium in London on April 20 this year at a tribute concert in his memory, barely five months after the lead singer of the British rock band Queen had died of AIDS. The admirers of Farokh Balsara, or Freddie Mercury as he was better known, had reportedly queued up all night to buy tickets for this concert. Outside the Stadium, tickets were being sold at £ 250, up to five times the face value. Those unable to afford the rates satisfied themselves with laying flowers and messages at the gates of the rock star's home in Kensington, reads a write-up in *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of April 30.

"Everybody who was anybody in pop music was there as the late Freddie Mer-

cury made a guest appearance at his own tribute concert... His face appeared on giant video screens high across Wembley Stadium," *The Afternoon* reports.

Considered the biggest concert since Live Aid seven years ago, those in the music world who put in an appearance to support this show were rock groups and solo artistes performing Queen's numbers: Annie Lennox and David Bowie sang *Under Pressure*, George Michael and Lisa Stanfield teamed up to sing *These Are The Days Of Our Lives*, Roger Daltrey sang *I Want It All*, Led Zeppelin leader Robert Plant performed *Innuendo* and Seal sang *Who wants To Live Forever*. Elton John, reportedly one of Mercury's greatest friends, sang Queen's greatest hit of 1975 *Bohemian Rhapsody* while Liza Minnelli led the stars in the final number *We Are The Champions*, the paper notes.

Remaining members of Queen, drummer Roger Taylor, John Deacon and Brian May came on stage to give "the most glittering send-off any showbusiness star has been given," *The Afternoon* informs. "This show is for Freddie, for you and for me," Taylor told the audience who were waving Union Flags emblazoned with "Freddie, we love you," "Freddie come back" and "Freddie forever." "It's also to show that AIDS affects us all," said Taylor. The proceeds from the spectacular show were to be directed to the victims of AIDS. The message of this extravaganza was a warning that AIDS, the disease that killed Mercury, could do the same to others.



While Mercury fans throughout the world got a chance to witness the show long distance thanks to the live telecast and a repeat viewing on the Star TV network, fans in India benefitted from an additional audio treat of his music. The record company HMV released a four-cassette set of recordings, *Four-Ever* from Queen's early years, mentions the *Blitz* of May 9.

Arjuna for Daruvala

The 13th Parsi and the fourth squash player (the third among men) to earn the Arjuna Award was Meherwan Rusi Daruvala. He was presented the Award — a statuette of an archer with a drawn bow mounted on a square pedestal — by the then President of India R. Venkataraman on June 20 this year, as notes a report in *The Times of India* of the next day.

At 20 years of age Daruvala had wrested the national championship title for the first time. He retained the distinction for the next four years after which he has maintained his national runner-up position, informs his bio data. Beginning his series of major wins with the junior national title that he won in 1981, Daruvala has year after year won a spate



Above: Venkataraman (left) commends Daruvala's squash distinction

Left: Mercury glorified at tribute show

of events and even represented India at the Asian Squash Championships and the SAF (South Asian Federation) Games.

"When he first came on the scene... (he) was shy and very reserved... He has grown to be one of India's finest players," reminisces 16 times national women's squash champion Ms Bhuvaneswari Kumari in an article in *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of May 27.

Judoka's C'wealth silver

Winning a silver medal in the over 95 kg category, national judo champion Cawas Billimoria became the first Indian to earn a medal at the Commonwealth Judo Championships, reports *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of April 23, 1992. The meet at Cardiff, Wales from April



Billimoria (left): wins a medal for India

17 to 19 this year saw 160 participants from 14 countries.

A third dan black belt judoka, Billimoria is said to have given a remarkable performance in the semifinal bout when he completed the match in 2.50 seconds by throwing his Welsh opponent before his home crowd. For most other participants and for Billimoria too this tournament was a qualifying event for the Olympic Games in Barcelona this year, informs a press release sent by the family.

World Cup umpire

The sight of umpire Pilo Reporter signalling a boundary had become a regular feature on the New Zealand commercial accompanying the World Cup Cricket series. To honor this popular umpire, the cricket fraternity assembled at the Bombay Cricket Association's Prabhudesai Hall on April 8 this year to felicitate Reporter on his successful completion of the Australia and New Zealand tour, reads a write-up in the *Indian Express* of April 11.

Organized by the Association of Cricket Umpires, this meet gave Reporter an opportunity to recount his experiences at the World Cup event, interspersed with photographs and other mementoes he had brought back from the tour. Particularly dear to him was the white ball, autographed by umpire David Shephred,

which was used in the last match at which he officiated in the World Cup series.

Fondly called "chief" by the players, on the field Reporter is said to tolerate no nonsense. A hard glare from Reporter and many an erring player would fall back on line, mentions *The Times of India* of March 11. His vigorous swing of the arms when declaring a boundary earned him a comment from Sir Richard Hadlee, one-time fast bowler, "There goes Mr Reporter putting his signature on the shot."

The wickets in Australia and New Zealand are more even in bounce and turn less than the ones found in India, Reporter drew a comparison. Also the smaller crowds and the lesser time involved in one-day cricket permits the um-

pire to be relatively free from worry on those tricky pad-bat decisions, the umpire is quoted in *The Times*.

Quest for cancer cure

Along with 26 other participants from different corners of the world at the International Medical Seminar, the only Indian to get an opportunity to study an alternative treatment for cancer at the Lukas Cancer Clinic in Switzerland last year was young

homeopath Dr Zubin Phiroze Marolia, informs a press release. The sessions from October 20 to November 23, '91 exposed Marolia to the application of iscador therapy (using extracts from the mistletoe plant) for treating cancers.



During the Seminar the doctors attended nearly 10 hours of lectures daily and used their spare time for

reference and intercourse with other eminent specialists.

From Switzerland Marolia proceeded to Germany where he visited the Weleda Factory in Schwabisch Gmund that supplies the iscador injections to India. Iscador injections (one box of seven ampules cost around Rs 1,000) are given twice a week or on alternate days depending on the severity of the disease. In Germany as also in London where he later spent two weeks, the enthusiastic doctor delivered lectures on homeopathy, the release mentions.

Twenty-five-year-old Marolia is presently a consulting homeopath at the Homi Wadia Basant Charitable Trust in Chembur and has a private practise at Dadar and Mahim. Standing third in the

The talent and creativity of the children were harnessed by Gul and (the late) Air Marshal Minoo Engineer (seated center and right) to entertain the audience with music using appropriate costumes and live props of chickens and snails. The proceeds of Rs 5,000 from the salon concert were given to the chief guest Dinshaw Tamboly of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (seated left) for use in their rural welfare project.





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Bombay University at the Bachelor of Homeopathic Medicine and Surgery examinations, Marolia did his internship at the Bombay Hospital under Dr Farokh Master. Since early 1990, Marolia has been working as clinical assistant to Master and Dr Kershasp Kasad, the homeopath's bio data informs.

SPOTLIGHT

The junction of Bhulabhai Desai Road and N. Gamadia Road has been named after the late Firdaus Homi Taleyarkhan, well-known lawyer who died whilst on a mountaineering expedition last year. The mayor of Bombay Chandrakant Handore unveiled the stone landmark on Taleyarkhan's first death anniversary on May 24, 1992, reads the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of the same day.

Assistant commissioner of police Sam D. Patel was presented the police medal for bravery by the acting governor of Maharashtra Gurup Singh on May 1, 1992, reports the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of May 3. Patel's expertise lies in detecting explosive bombs and exposing forged passports.

Compiled by Roxana A. Mirza

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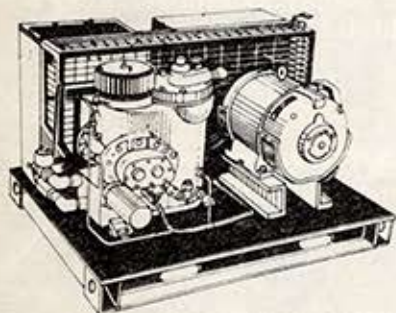
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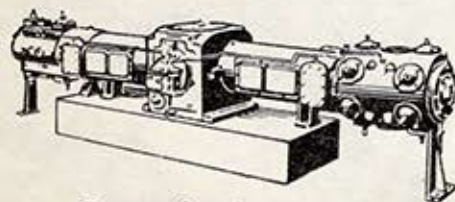
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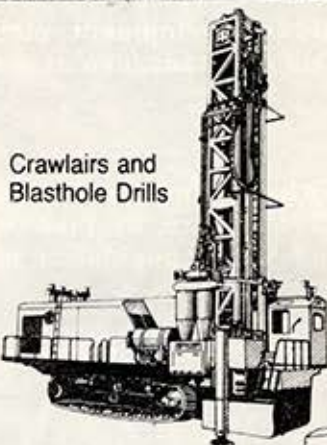
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US based Dinsa Mehta masterminds The Chase Manhattan Bank's trade in foreign exchange and commodities

Banking ON gold

Gustasp Irani

One billion dollars! To most laymen the figure is esoteric, with its uncertain number of zeroes (there are nine); for Dinsa F. Mehta it is a part of daily routine. As a vice president of The Chase Manhattan Bank, USA, and their global commodity research manager and chief gold trader, he deals with billions of dollars every day. His work environment is in the heart of a high-tension world where the megabuck rules supreme. Five large computer screens with a continuous flow of financial data keep him in touch with commodity markets the world over, in Tokyo, London, Hong Kong, Australia...

"It is a pretty crazy environment. A lot of noise, a lot of shouting... It's the kind of situation where you make your decision once every 40 seconds — on an average," says Mehta. And on that decision rides a lot of money, at times a billion dollars or more in a single transaction. "It's a kind of situation that you've got to enjoy or you can develop ulcers." No, he has none, not to his knowledge at least, he adds as a smile cracks his intense, bearded face.

"Essentially I had pioneered the use of gold as a currency," says Mehta as he explains his contribution to Chase and the commodity market. He illustrates the concept with a hypothetical example — the discovery of a new gold deposit. The prospectors need, say, 200 million dollars to develop the mine before the gold can be extracted. "We will now lend them gold which they will sell on the market to raise the finances needed to

develop the mine; and they will repay us, with interest, with the gold they extract from the mine later. What we have done is created gold assets and gold liabilities," says Mehta. Gold, he adds, was not thought of as a currency, not until he and Chase marketed the concept.

But gold is only part of Mehta's responsibilities. He trades in copper, oil, silver... "I run the Bank's commodity business from North America," he says. And advanced computers, like tentacles, keep him in touch with traders in Japan, Europe, America and all over the world.

He keeps in touch with the governments of various countries, too. "A big part of what I do is behind the scenes. I advise governments on how to manage their gold reserves," he says and does not elaborate, for the metal held by governments is tinted with subtle political overtones.

According to Mehta, it is an expensive proposition to hold gold as a form of personal investment for, as he sees it, "it is a sterile asset." In the West there is a growing disenchantment with gold. He points out that in the early 1980s, in the US, people started disinvesting in gold

and moving their assets into productive investments that offered higher returns. As a result of this the price of the metal plummeted from around \$ 800 to \$ 300 an ounce.

Gold in India however, Mehta observes, has been an important form of investment that hedges against the uncertainties of the economy. It is also a means of stashing away assets generated in the parallel economy that operates in the country. But as the economy opens up, Mehta visualizes that disenchantment with the metal will creep into India too. As people's confidence in the economy grows, they will start disinvesting in gold and moving their funds into more rewarding forms of investment. "It is encouraging to see the country (India) begin its journey to economic realism; and economic realism in any country is not a friend to gold," he observes. In simple

terms, he advises against gold from the investment point of view. It is advice that cannot be dismissed lightly for reputed journals like *The Wall Street Journal* seek and value his financial judgement.

As Mehta detaches himself from his role as a banker he looks at his own image with a touch of awe: "Not in my wildest dreams did I think that I would be a gold trader," he confesses. After qualifying as a chartered accountant in England (he schooled at the Cathedral and obtained his BCom from Sydenham College in Bombay) he joined Chase as a financial analyst in London. "It was at a time when the financial markets in London were going through a period of wild growth," Mehta recalls.

Mehta's first significant contribution to the Bank was when he developed a sys-



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tem whereby he could scan all the major exchange markets in 12 currencies every 60 seconds. The idea was to locate small discrepancies that could be translated into large profits. "This was at a time when PCs (personal computers) were not around," he clarifies. He was made an offer to go to the Bank's New York head office and see if his idea worked.

"It was a lot simpler than I had thought," he observes. Soon he had become the Bank's leading foreign exchange trader. Craving for greater challenges he suggested that he extend his trading activities to the commodities market — gold, silver, oil, etc. It was at a time when the Bank had decided to set up a gold trading department and offered Mehta the job of managing it. Under his stewardship the activities of the department grew and today he claims: "In terms of gold trading we are one of the most significant operators in the world."

It was more than just another job; it was a commitment. According to Mehta, the different time zones mean that an international trader has to keep odd hours to be in touch with the global markets. "My day starts at 6.15. I go home in the afternoon and I am back in the office at 8 in the evening when the markets in Aus-

tralia open," he says. With billions of dollars at stake he has to learn to live with the risks involved.

Sundays, Mehta treasures and he devotes them to his family which comprises his English wife Carole and two children, Farah, 13, and Rustam, 11. He uses his time off from work constructively. Since 1986, when his children's navjotes were performed, Mehta has been conducting Sunday religious classes for them. But first, such an undertaking meant that he had to rediscover Zoroastrianism himself and this he did by studying whatever literature he could lay his hands on and by visiting the local library. "Of course all this has been very good education for me. It has brought home to me the real beauty of our religion and that Zoroastrianism is very relevant even today," he says.

Mehta translated some of the prayers into English so that his children could relate to what they were mouthing. "Sometimes we all say our kusti prayers together in English," he states. Together they have studied the life of the prophet and the history of Persia when the Zoroastrian religion flourished. The fact that his wife is a Unitarian, Mehta believes, helps for it is a faith that has no prophet but seeks to draw the best from all other reli-

gions. On the children's birthdays she makes sure that the proper *sagan* is performed for them. The children, according to Mehta, quite enjoy the uniqueness of being probably the only Zoroastrians in their area.

Mehta confesses that he is guilty of not integrating more closely with the Zoroastrian community on the North American continent. On a few occasions he did attend functions of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) but was distressed to see its energies consumed in the dispute between Iranians and Parsis. "I must confess that I don't know enough to comment on the problems of Zoroastrians in India or the US," he states.

Yet, he looks back on his heritage with a degree of pride. His grandfather, Phiroz Mehta, was a self-made man who rose from humble origins to build the Burhanpur Tapti Mills at Burhanpur and later founded the Boys' Town Public School at Nasik. And of course there is his mother Rose who brought up Mehta and his two sisters singlehandedly after their father Fred died when Mehta was eight. Her little boy has grown up now and she looks on him with justifiable pride — he is virtually sitting on a pot of gold!

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The Stamp Safari

A childhood pastime has resulted in Darabshaw Mistry's unparalleled stamp collection

Meher Marfatia

He sizes you up with a slow smile spreading across his wizened face, the octogenarian visage crowning an immaculate grey waistcoat and crisp silk tie. Darabshaw Rustomji Mistry is clearly pleased to discuss his unique bio-philately collection with an interested visitor.

A collector with a difference, Mistry has — over 85 well-lived years — painstakingly gleaned a veritable treasure-house of the rarest stamps on birds, insects, reptiles, amphibians, fish, mammals and prehistoric animals.

"Mine is not merely a happy hobby, it is an obsession," he presses in tremulous tones, and proceeds to place for perusal a series of magnificently mounted albums. These are his most precious possessions today, not, of course, forgetting his rather unusual visiting card. Produced by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), it is a small, picturesque affair with a yellow-billed blue magpie swinging from a bough. The neatly italicized lettering on the flap inside announces him.

Proud owner of a 50,000-strong stamp fund, Mistry little dreamed of being lionized as a distinguished philatelist in the autumn of his life. His early memories barely hinted at international accolades, acclaim in his country, innumerable one-man exhibitions, rave press reviews and presidency of the Empire of India Philatelic Society, besides a close and abiding friendship with renowned ornithologist Dr Salim Ali.

A part of growing up for many people, stamps only sometimes hold the same appeal for adults. Not in Mistry's case, though. His knowledge of flora and fauna is formidable. Run a quick eye down the

pages of his bound volumes to see short paragraphs underlining each sample. The brief introduction to the *Birds on Stamps* portfolio (dedicated to his daughter Aileen) explains three basic bird orders: Carinata, Ratila and Saurura. The first, you learn, possess keeled breastbones and the power of flight. Members from the second group, on the other hand, have raft-like breastbones and are incapable of flying. The last is a lizard-tailed genus of which only one species has been detected, the extinct *archaeopteryx*.

All of which is just an example; Mistry has detailed sections such as that on diving birds like the tufted puffin and Emperor penguin, swimmers like the albatross, cormorant and black skimmer, shore inhabitants like the hoopoe, marshdwellers like the whooping crane... The highest number of bird stamps in a single set — 24 — was issued by Angola in 1951.

A thematically conceived album takes Mistry about four years to complete. The Latin and English name for every specimen is spelt out and elaborated on by way of origin, characteristics, incidence and endangered status. What is really exceptional is the distinct layout he has himself designed for each sheet, making it appear striking enough to be the work of some professional artist. Beautiful backgrounds

are framed in black ink panels accompanied by a delicately written legend.

But the philatelist's personal favorite is not winged, it happens to be hooved. The horse, followed by the dog, are rated most dear. Mistry's face clouds on recalling his pet Alsatian, lost in a car accident.

Butterflies charm him greatly too. Examples of moths and other lepidoptera are reproduced actual-size before being illustrated by their respective stamps. Particularly remarkable is an entire Israeli set of butterflies with their progress traced right from caterpillar stage.

"It is an unparalleled range. No one can hope to compete with me," Mistry declares, immodest

even if correct. Yet, such judges of the ilk of C. P. Thomas, ex-postmaster general, also observed that the philatelist's efforts have been "scholarly, impressive," while one-time BNHS curator J. C. Daniel praised his "impeccable standards and amazingly comprehensive repertoire."

Equally noteworthy are his collections of various countries. Historic Russia, America, Switzerland and India are among his best-known, with the USSR stamps alone totalling a staggering 4,000. Starting at the 1917 revolution and extending until 1974, the Soviet Consulate authorities have pronounced it a portrayal of their land on the grandest dimensions.



Mistry is of the opinion that by far one of the finest collections is the British Royal. This was initiated by King George V who was such a keen enthusiast that he actually attended public auctions to bid for his beloved stamps. In the United States the honor was President Roosevelt's who boasted an extensive individual lot which was sold on his death.

Back home it is the National Postal Museum formed from the postal archives in Delhi which, according to Mistry, is a must-see since it houses stamps from

1852 onwards. That was when postal stamps were introduced to the country, 12 years after they were in England by Sir Rowland Hills.

Mistry's 1988 solo show held in Bombay with a view to celebrate the golden jubilee of *India's Stamp Journal*, was a tremendous success. Declared a visitor, "Even an encyclopedia may fail to provide this much!" All 700 album sheets systematically arranged by the philatelist were appreciated in similar glowing terms which, he maintains, mean much more to

him than the plethora of gold and silver medals he has won lifelong. His cups and trophy awards along with the rarer stamp specimens he has acquired are scrupulously locked away in the safety of his bank.

Strict import restrictions on both collectors and dealers alike thwart a fair amount of budding attempts to philatelic fame. This, along with the inferior quality of hinges in India is something Mistry feels needs attention. He additionally cautions the amateur to look for "used"



Two leaves from the thematically conceived albums of Mistry (facing page). Prominent is the distinct layout with the Latin name for each of the prehistoric animals and reptiles appearing in his own neat handwriting

Photos: Varghese Fernandez

Carnivorous - flesh-eating mammals
Domestic Cats Poland 30-4-1964



The Christmas Butterfly (Pablo Dominguez)



The Christmas Butterfly is one of the most widespread of African Swallowtails. It has a wing span of 3 1/2 to 4 1/2 inches. It drifts about elevated points in the landscape. Attracted to flowering plants, it is also fond of visiting damp places to drink together with other butterflies.

stamps. The humidity in India causes the gum to melt, often resulting in staining and occasionally perforating a piece. "Otherwise there is rarely any difference between the value of used and unused stamps," he informs.

Stamp collection as a hobby is more popular among girls than boys, has been Mistry's observation over the years he has been visiting different schools in Bombay when invited to exhibit his rare specimens. He is keen to teach youngsters to go in for thematic stamp collections rather than the commonly followed practice of sifting stamps according to their geographic locales. The philatelist is only too willing to proffer guidance to anyone who seeks it. From the age of 18 when he became a scoutmaster, he has been striving to share his enjoyment of stamps with eager students. Among the amateur collectors who have gained from his expertise he names a few: Daraius Gazdar, Cyrus Sidhwa and Ms Perviz Siganporia. Hobbies like stamp collecting, involving general knowledge, interest the Parsi community, just as it did him, he mentions.

"It was so absorbing, like embarking

"There is rarely any difference between the value of used and unused stamps"

on a fascinating journey, endless in the riches it offered me," he avers, recalling the beginning of a lasting relationship. He found the habit instructive and creative at once. A quiet child immersed largely in his thoughts, Mistry lost his young father when just 11. Left with a private world to indulge in and "lacking consistent adult guidance," the boy grew to engage in pastimes organized to suit his loneliness. One such was corresponding with penfriends. Another, stamps.

The former fed the latter. Helped by a steady flow of postage and revenue stamps and labels from scattered corners

Glimpses of domestic cats which fall in the carnivorous flesh-eating mammals category (left) and the Christmas butterfly (right)

of the globe, Mistry gradually found himself the surprised recipient of several specimens from far-flung states he had hardly heard mentioned in geography textbooks.

He looks back on his formative school years with much affection. This in spite of the fact that financial constraints allowed him access up to only class five of the Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsi Charitable School. (At the School's centenary celebration function this year, Mistry was an enthusiastic participant.) Leaving his studies midway, the young boy diligently attended classes for shorthand and typing. Run by the same School, he realized these classes would prove the means to equip him with training for the job he needed in the near future. He picked up the skills quickly, practising regularly. But all the while he made sure his adored stamp volumes were never neglected. They sustained him, in that they provided

continued on page 32

The 1992 BPP Elections: marked by inertia

Of the nearly 19,000 voters who registered for the last Anjuman Committee elections, only 4,785 have bothered to collect their new registration certificates

Gustasp Irani

After a number of false starts the Anjuman Committee elections of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) have finally been scheduled for October. The two main contestants — the Zoroastrian Cultural Welfare Association (ZCWA) and the Committee for Economic Revival (CER, formerly Committee for Electoral Rights) — along with other smaller groups have started warming up. But where are the spectators? Compared to the last Anjuman Committee elections of 1980, the current one, according to all concerned with it, is a muted affair. The 1992 campaign is marked by a lack of road shows — make that baug shows — and highly charged issues. To date, at least, the parties appear to be limping around the Parsi colonies trying to persuade Parsis to re-register under the new election scheme and scrape up enough candidates to fill the 802 seats which are up for grabs.

The statistics reflect the apathy in the community towards the election. In 1981 there were about 11,000 new members enrolled on the various registers of the BPP to take its total strength to around 18,600. This time around only 4,785 have exchanged their old certificates against the new to enable them to vote under the revised scheme, according to figures provided by the BPP office on July 24, 1992. This, despite the efforts of the BPP which sent its staff twice to the various Parsi colonies around the city to facilitate the exchange of certificates. The first time in 1988, when they covered seven centers from Andheri to Colaba, about 2,500 Parsis obtained their new certificates and the second time in 1992, when they covered five colonies from Dadar to Colaba, a paltry 450

availed of the facility. "We express no opinions. We can only give you facts and figures." The figures are probably more explicit than any opinion that Ms Gool Tata, joint secretary of the BPP, could have offered.

Dr Syrus Irani, president of the ZCWA, attributes the apathy to the indifference of the community to the BPP. "Parsis feel that the real problems of the community are not understood by the BPP," he observes. The other factor, according to Irani, is that in the 1981 elections the CER had aroused the expectations of the community but once elected, had failed to deliver the goods. "They have not fulfilled any of their promises," he states.

Fali Poncha, a director of Tatas and one of the leading lights of the CER, defends the group's performance. He points out that the CER was instrumental in making the trustees more accountable, that it helped in rationalizing the flats allotment system, that its cross financing system was the catalyst in the construction of about 200 new community housing units and that it was directly responsible for a building at Godrej Baug planned to house 20 mobeds' families. He even defends the new election system. "It's not what we wanted but, at least, it prevents individuals from manipulating the system." Poncha attributes the apathy in the 1992 elections to what he calls "sheer inertia. The community has not woken up, or rather not been shaken out of its inertia as we (the CER) did in 1980," he observes.

The role of the CER in 1992 appears to have changed. This time around it proposes to refine rather than radically change the workings of the BPP while

the ZCWA has picked up the mantle of bucking the system. That in essence appears to be the postures of the two parties for we find that their objectives and aims largely overlap on many issues — BPP trustees should be elected by direct adult franchise, Parsis should be granted minority protection with reservation quotas in jobs and educational institutions — but their emphasis differs.

To gauge this difference we first look at the "Message" of the ZCWA (see box) that has been posted in almost all the fire-temples in the city, appealing "To all apostles of Ahura Mazda." In contrast Poncha observes: "The choice before the community is whether they want an Anjuman Committee which reflects orthodox fundamentalism or progressive individuals who won't compromise on the community or religion."

In real terms the two postures suggest that as the campaign gathers momentum it will fall increasingly under the shadow of the Roxan Shah case (the BPP trustees have permitted the bodies of Parsi ladies married to non-Parsis to be placed in a earmarked dokhma given that certain conditions are first met). "It is probably going to be one of the most important issues this time," says Poncha adding, "We hold the view that we must go according to the law. The law of the country cannot be subject to anyone's personal sentiments." The CER in essence supports the BPP's position in the matter. The ZCWA, however, believes the trustees acted with uncalled for haste. In fact the ZCWA, led by Irani, had in September 1990 organized a silent protest march from the H. B. Wadia Atash Bahram to the offices of the BPP and *The Bombay Samachar*. The intention was

"to place a memorandum of protest against the insult to the tenets of Zoroastrianism in criticizing Dasturji Firoze Kotwal." (Zoroastrian women married outside the community were guilty of "adultery," Kotwal had opined, which earned him the wrath of the liberals.) "They have divided the community into two on the Roxan Shah case. They should have called all the seven dasturs and asked them their opinion on the matter rather than have acted on the opinion of only two (Dasturs Kaikhusroo Jamasp-Asa of the Anjuman Atash Bahram, Bombay and Hormazdyar Mirza of Udwarda)." Religion aside, the other issue of concern is housing. Both parties believe that in the new scheme of things the poor of the community have been forgotten. "How can you expect a poor Parsi to pay a monthly rent of Rs 1,000 (as will be required of the new allottees at Godrej Baug)? We admit that not enough has been done for them and much more should be done," says Poncha. The ZCWA "Message" to the community vows to "fight against the maggots of corruption" and champion the rights of the community. "The trustees do not understand the problems," says Irani. "We need trustees who are more sympathetic."

As proclaims the ZCWA "Message: This will be our motto, to seek minority status." The CER too, though with less fervor, believes in reservation. "These are difficult times and I'm sure that if a sincere effort is made through the Punchayet and the Federation (of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of India) we will get our rights," says Poncha.

Another matter both parties propose to pursue is a system of adult franchise for BPP trusteeship elections. "When you have a total of 1,604, 802 donors and 802 Anjuman Committee members, voting for trustees you might as well have adult franchise," observes Poncha. Numbers aside, both parties point out inherent problems in the current system in which the BPP has divided the city into 1 constituencies on the basis of PIN (Postal Index Number) codes. To illustrate one of many such cases, those living on one side of Jam-e-Jamshed Road in Dadar, using the Bombay 400019 code, fall in the Bandra/Mahim constituency while those on the other side of the road, using the Bombay 400014 code, in the Dadar constituency. These discrepancies aside, one spin-off of the new system is that it discourages parties endorsing slates of can-

didates as they did in the past. Poncha believes that now with 802 candidates spread over 11 constituencies people will have to win the elections more on their own merit rather than on the endorsement of any group.

This is reflected in the problems the parties have faced in rustling up candidates to fill all the 802 seats on the Anjuman Committee. Here the ZCWA were the first to make a start. As soon as the new scheme was announced they set about persuading people to stand for election which, Irani admits, was a task in itself. As of June they have mustered

"The new election system prevents individuals from manipulating the system"

up the entire quota of 802 candidates, informs Irani. The CER by contrast had not yet filled the quota by early July. "If we find 802 suitable people we will field 802 candidates; but we are not going to field 802 only because we have to," Poncha clarifies. According to him the CER will support individuals and groups who they believe are rational and independent and who will contribute to the community's welfare. "The CER is not a formal organization. (It) is an idea," states Poncha.

Once on the Anjuman Committee, the main task of the members will be to elect trustees to the BPP. This they will get to do almost immediately as by December 31, 1992 they will need to decide who will be the occupants of the two seats to be vacated by Dr Aspi Golwalla and Jamsheed Kanga. The ZCWA has almost finalized who they will be putting up as candidates. "I will definitely be standing for trustee," says Dr Viraf Kapadia, an active member of the organization. "In all probability I will be the other trustee candidate," says Irani adding, "We don't want trustees from the elitist group of the community who can afford to sit on pride but do not care for the real problems of the community."

The CER however had no definite candidate as of July. They would like to persuade Ms Silloo Kavarana, an active

and committed social worker who has so far refused to accept the mantle. "Should Jamsheed Kanga seek reelections we will support his candidature," says Poncha clarifying, "We have always been open in the matter of who should be a trustee and have and will support individuals we believe are best suited for the job." He refers to the CER support of Eruch Desai and Dr (Ms) Mehroo Bengalee, who were not CER proposed candidates, to illustrate the point. "We believe that there is nothing like a CER trustee. We may support a candidate but we believe that he has a right to his own independence of thought."

Come October, and members of the community will awake from a long hibernation to exercise their independence of thought as they participate briefly, even if indirectly, in the running of the BPP.

ZCWA's Message

To all apostles of Ahura Mazda

•Awaken dear brothers and sisters for the time is short.

•Be aware of your rights at the age of majority in a community deemed lost in minority. This will be our motto to seek minority status.

•Do thou wish to lead the rest of your life under dictates of those who do not care for our rights?

•We shall not deviate from the tenets of Zoroastrianism for the lust of power and the flair for the chair.

•We will stand against self glorification and fight against the maggots of corruption for ours is an already dwindling community.

•Come with us, for we must act fast to eradicate injustice through solemnization of "adult franchise."

•We need guarantee and counter guarantee for seats in profession and jobs like medical, engineering etc. So also two percent reservation for Indian Police Service, Indian Administrative Service and other government jobs — this will be our priority.

•The security needed from "trustees" is lagging far back in yester years — perforce, we must have it.

•In unity lies our true strength with which we shall strive.

So come to us — we need each other now to protect what is still not lost.

With love from

Dr SYRUS DARVISH IRANI AND OTHERS OF ZCWA

Federation lends a sympathetic ear

A seven-member Tajik delegation conveyed their interest in Zoroastrianism and sought the Federation's assistance

Parinaz Gandhi

The seven-member Tajik delegation seeking religious collaboration with Zoroastrians and economic ties with Indians sought assistance from the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India. In the course of their discussions with the executive council members of the Federation at Bombay's Muncherji Khareghat Hall they conveyed their need for books on Zoroastrianism in Persian, help with the Avesta Conference planned in October this year, and priests to revive their ancient fire-temples fallen into disuse. The Tajiks who are newly liberated from the communist yoke were assured cooperation. Even those Federation members who expressed some reservation initially had no objection to aid being extended so long as it did not interfere with their practice of Zoroastrianism in India.

Another new pocket of Zoroastrians active overseas is Ali Jafarey's Zarathushtrian Assembly which accepts select converts to its fold. A confirmation from Rohinton Rivetna, president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), that the Assembly was not soliciting indiscriminate conversion set to rest any further controversy on this subject.

The FEZANA president was more concerned about the community in different pockets of the world growing independently of each other as there was no coordinating body in India: "We do not know whom to turn to; we do not get guidance."

The highest ever number of youths were present at this two-day Federation meet on March 28 and 29, 1992. Of all

the topics slated on the agenda, the maximum time — 75 minutes — was earmarked for youth affairs. Considering that only a day earlier the youngsters had convened their first ever executive council meeting of the newly formed Federation of Zoroastrian Youth Associations (FOZYA), the seniors were given a brief on the youths' priorities and plan of action.

At Federation meetings youths are invited to interact on all topics, as specified Federation president Dr Aspi Golwalla. However not all Parsi trusts, especially those granting scholarships for higher education, give them the same reception was a common complaint voiced by the youth. In fact they are regarded as "urchins of nuisance value," corroborated Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trustee Jamsheed Kanga. The Sixth All India Zoroastrian Youth Seminar in Ahmedabad this October will see the youth make a concerted endeavor to bring together on one platform spokespersons from different trusts. The community's dwindling population should be on the agenda, opined Golwalla, "That's one area where you can contribute."

Bequests to charity will henceforth not be invalidated if the stipulated 12-month time lag (six months if a will is not registered) does not pass between the making of the will and the death of the testator. The amendments to the Indian Succession Act (ISA) as applicable to Parsis were promulgated into law in December 1991 after getting a clearance from both the houses of Parliament. Discrimination on the grounds of sex has also

been done away with under the new amendments applicable to intestate succession thereby entitling a son and a daughter equal rights in the property of their father in the event of his dying intestate (hitherto a male would have got double the share of a female).

In Dahanu, the Zoroastrians will either have to fight for the continuation of the dokhmenashini system, or opt for burial as their 100-year-old dokhma will now stand within a distance of 100 feet from a new construction envisaged by a commercial builder. Though the Dahanu Anjuman has been advised to go to court as also solicit assistance from powerful lobbies, the ultimate outcome may mean a change in the system of disposal of the dead.

A study on the effect of housing on the fertility behavior of Parsis revealed that Parsi couples were not inclined to produce more than two children irrespective of the size of their tenements. However, had they not been in possession of a house, they may not have considered even one or two children, was the reaction. Six hundred couples in the child-bearing age-group constituted the sample in the study conducted by the BPP's family counsellor Ms Roda Pardiwalla with the collaboration of the faculty and students of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Repeated references at past Federation meetings to the declining strength of the community and accounting for it with the usual excuse — "lack of housing in Bombay" — had prompted the BPP to undertake this survey in 1990.

When the Parsi partners in a divorce

suit are fighting over the custody of their child, as happened twice recently, the Parsi Matrimonial Court solicits the assistance of the BPP's family counsellor. Even in cases of divorce by mutual consent, the family counsellor's intervention should be sought so as to bring about a rapprochement between the couple. This suggestion was to be put forth to the Parsi Matrimonial Court that meets twice a year to decide on divorce cases that come within the purview of the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act (PMDA).

Even before the Zoroastrians in India decide regarding the adoption of a common calendar for the community, the Zoroastrians in North America may reach a conclusion. Confronted as they are with the Parsi-Iranian divide, they are compelled to view the situation with greater urgency. They hope to arrive at a decision on this subject at the Eighth North American Zoroastrian Congress in Vancouver in September 1992.

Tajiks knock at the door

"We have been following a frog-in-the-well policy. Think of Zoroastrianism as a world religion," was the response of Mhow's Behram Masani to the Zoroastrians in India who felt threatened by the

to three million Tajiks are of Zoroastrian origin, was the estimate of Dr (Ms) Meher Master-Moos who was considerably involved in bringing the Tajiks to India and introducing them to different Zoroastrian bodies. Their conversance with Farsi as also Dari is a trait they share with the Zoroastrian Iranians in Persia, the Muslim Iranians speaking only Farsi, pointed out Peshotan Nargolwala of Bombay.

They were put through a series of questions to establish whether it was economic ties or religious help they were seeking from Indian Zoroastrians, whether they could, given the *Avesta*, recite the prayers in Avestan (a challenge one of them promptly accepted by covering his head with a *topi* before chanting aloud). The Tajiks were given a chance to communicate their expectations from the Federation fraternity: religious books in Persian, priests who could help them reconsecrate their fire-temples, cooperation for the *Avesta* Conference they propose to organize from October 16-20 this year...

But the response they sought came in the next morning. "They have come to our door. We should try and promote our religion," opined Tehmtan Anklesaria of Ratlam. "If we reject them now, they'll never come back later" because by then the other proselytizing faiths would have accepted them, stated Shavak Patel of Baroda. "Any group that chooses to imbibe our faith has the freedom to do so," believed Cmdre Jal Postwalla of Bombay. "We should assist as much as we possibly

can (without allowing anything to come) in the way of our own established practices," was BPP trustee Eruch Desai's response.

There were some among the Federation delegates who would have preferred to tread the path cautiously. Frankly expressing her fears was young Ms Navaz Palkhiwala from Poona: "I personally don't like the idea of their coming to our fold... to our fire-temples." Send an expert team from India to study the claims of the Tajiks, suggested her husband Sarosh. But they were outnumbered by the majority sentiment: "It is presumptuous to say we are the keepers of the faith;" "What we could learn from them is *Avesta* which we have happily forgotten;" "India gave us refuge when we sought it. What kind of Zoroastrians would we be if we refuse refuge to others?" "I believe the Federation has attained maturity," summed up the Federation's honorary secretary Keki Gandhi. "This is really a Zoroastrian Federation."

Similarly intimation of Jafarey's Zarathushtrian Assembly (he accepts converts to Zoroastrianism on proof of their knowledge of the faith) did not trigger any antipathy from the Federation delegates. Golwalla was however uncertain of the reception that would be accorded to Jafarey on his visit to India: "I hope he has not been threatened with broken bones as was (Joseph) Peterson (whose navjote in 1983 created a tumultuous uproar in the community, the



Tajiks' eagerness to learn more about their ancient faith and Jafarey's propagation of Zoroastrianism in the West through his newly constituted Zarathushtrian Assembly.

The seven-member Persian speaking Tajik delegation visiting India spent nearly an hour with the Federation delegates during which time they briefed the gathering (with the help of an interpreter) on their life-style under different regimes, their observance of certain customs and traditions that bear a semblance to the practices prevalent among present-day Zoroastrians, their fragmented knowledge of Zoroastrianism, the disused fire-temples in their midst... Nearly two



Master Moos and N. Kanga (top left) with the Tajik delegation

orthodox being opposed to the initiation of a non-Parsi.)"

An exponent of Zoroastrianism whose writings have inspired many community members, Jafarey and his activities were regarded by the Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) president Lt Gen Adi Sethna as more revivalistic than proselytic. He does not advocate conversion but keeps his doors open to others like himself who may have their roots in other religions but an inclination towards Zoroastrianism. "In a way he is going back to the old custom" where one could not practice Zoroastrianism unless his knowledge of the scriptures was "publicly examined," continued Sethna.

In India, like in Iran, the practice of Zoroastrianism is an adaptation of the religion to the prevalent socioeconomic forces, it was pointed out. In India it is the *topi*, and in Iran, the *sudreh*, that is donned at the time of entry to the fire-temple. "Possibly Jafarey is only trying to *vatlao* (convert) a Parsi into a Zarthoshti," said Sethna in a lighter vein.

Strength of the youth

The presence of a score or more youngsters before the commencement of the Federation meeting made Golwalla extend a "special welcome to the young boys and girls" in his introductory address. "Please do take an active part in the proceedings," he urged, simultaneously requesting the BPP trustees "not to take too active a part" and to defer reports on BPP projects till the last. Allahabad's Capt Homi Dandiwalla was specifically assigned the task of keeping track of which speaker talks at what length on which subject. Information about the BPP's Sixth Holiday Programme for Youth was among

the last items to be discussed even though this time they had a record high registration of 164 students from 61 schools.

Reports of youth activities from other anjumans and associations referred to so-

ing weekly talks on religious awareness that have resulted in some of the children wearing *topis* to school, entertaining the Tajiks, and organizing summer camps. The pentangular cricket match hosted by the twin cities of Secunderabad and

Hyderabad was a welcome distraction for all. While unity is valued by certain youth groups, in Surat, "it is best when all youth groups don't come together (in the interests of a genial atmosphere)," as conveyed Surat Parsi Punchayet (SPP) president Dr Sam Bhacca.

The Parsee Youth League of Ahmedabad (PYLA) is concentrating on the organization of the Youth Seminar and sought funds from different anjumans. To put the newly constituted FOZYA on a sound footing, donations were invited with Golwalla making a commitment of Rs 5,000 from the Godrej Foundation. The propagation and preservation of Zoroastrianism should be examined at youth forums,

advised Minoo Davierwala of Poona.

The youths, particularly those residing outside Bombay, seeking scholarships and loans for advanced studies abroad pointed out the discomfort of approaching different trusts, necessitating duplication of forms and certificates and the unnecessary time loss and legwork involved when it could have conveniently been avoided if all the trusts had come together under a common pool. While ideally it would sound a simple solution, Desai explained the difficulty of joining when the nature of the trusts differed, most being cosmopolitan. "What are trustees for if they were to delegate powers to a central body?" he asked. Those who were able, have already joined hands with the BPP's Higher Education Committee. Besides, this kind of labor for seven days is just called for once in a lifetime. All communities have to do it, he argued.



Youth delegates (from left) Top row: Bisney, Karanjawalla, Parakh and Debara. Second row: Khambatta, Katgara, Mehta and Billimoria. Third row: Irani, Dick and Palkhiwala

cial gatherings, picnics, dances... making Golwalla comment: "Dancing and picnics are alright but you should concentrate on welfare activities." The Baroda youth are involved in planting trees, cleaning the agiaries and dokhmas. The Thana youth had a *raddi* (discarded items) collection drive and the sale proceeds went into their corpus, earning in return twice the amount from the Anjuman's coffers as incentive. The Poona youths have volunteered to help out with data collection for their local directory. The Dahanu youth are involved in running the Learners Academy that they were instrumental in founding, introduc-

The two-child limit

Two children was the norm among a large proportion of the 600 couples interviewed by the BPP, informed Pardiwalla. These 600 couples who had married between January 1983 and December 1989 constituted the total sample for the research conducted to study the effect of housing on the fertility behavior of Parsis. Hundred couples had been allotted flats by the BPP, 500 had independent accommodation. Even those with more than two rooms "were not found to have produced more than two children," stated Pardiwalla.

Ideally couples should have two to three children was the most frequently heard response. Among the reasons quoted for restricting the size of the family, the most common were inflation, lack of finance and lack of housing. Sex pref-

Calendar calls

"One form of unity would be to accept a common calendar," advocated Golwalla. "We (in North America) feel the need for a unified calendar much more than you (in India) because of our Parsi-Iranian



mix," reiterated Rivetna. These views are supported by several others in the community who would like to see uniform celebrations among coreligionists, not a reduction in the number of festivals but a more scientific calendar beginning with the spring equinox.

While the Fasli calendar that begins with the vernal equinox on March 21 may appear to be the logical answer, who would be able to enforce that the Fasli calendar has in practice been adopted by everyone? How would the priests convince their clientele that prayers for the dead would now be recited on different days? How scientific would the new calendar be for those in the southern hemisphere? Would this issue, meant to unite, serve as ammunition to split the community further?

"The BPP trustees are called the akabars. If we don't face the task, who will?" questioned Golwalla, adding, "If Bombay takes it up, the rest will follow." Postwalla had a more simplistic solution. If only one calendar is printed, all will perforce follow it. "Whether you pray on one day or another is immaterial. All days are equally holy," stated Kanga.

While a subcommittee could be appointed to study this issue and arrive at a decision, it was



erence for a child was found to be negligible. With both the partners in a marriage working, day care centers are called for, especially at Godrej Baug, opined the counsellor.

To corroborate these findings the youngsters present at the Federation meeting were asked to give their candid views. Barring one male Agra resident who would welcome more children as he had neither constraints of space nor finances, the others, particularly females, seemed to have decided on not more than two children. The child's welfare and qualitative upbringing was one factor, the other being time for the career, not wishing to be bogged down as child-bearing machinery. Whatever their inclinations, the practice of late marriages and the consequent delay in begetting children would inevitably restrict the size of the family, BPP trustee Minoo Shroff believed.



From left: (Top row) Rivetna (Second row): Kanga, Golwalla and Gandhi (Third row): Sethna, Desai and Bodhanwalla (Fourth row): Bhacca and R. Anklesaria



proposed to defer taking any major decision which could have lasting repercussions. "Coming to the end of my trusteeship term I'm deviating from the principle of not discussing any controversial issues" in the Federation, admitted Golwalla. While it may take time for matters to progress in India, in North America they hope to arrive at a decision in September when this topic is scheduled for the agenda of the North American Congress in Vancouver.

Rural review

The Federation has committed a sum of Rs 50,000 for rural welfare work. But whether these monies could be used for the farmers of Maharashtra or only of south Gujarat where relief work is presently concentrated, became a debatable issue. The amounts collected so far (Rs 21,00,000) are "earmarked for the poor farmers of South Gujarat," clarified Bhacca, chairman of the rural welfare subcommittee. "Those who want to cover other areas must come forward and volunteer" with their own manpower and schemes, he continued.

Of the Rs 16 lakhs expended to date, one lakh was spent on the education of the farmers' families. Instead of giving outright loans the committee believes in part finance so that when the agriculturists' own money is involved "they take greater interest and are bothered about the returns."

The work undertaken by all bodies should be publicized, said Kanga. "There is a wrong impression being created that work is done only by the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO)." Dadi Mistry of Delhi was quick to respond on behalf of the WZO, "It is easy to criticize... It has never been our intention to hog the limelight... I would be happy to provide you articles showing that everyone has got the credit... Besides, our workers travelling all over the world have generated a considerable amount of interest. Even the non-Parsi spouses are soliciting funds for this venture."

The creation of a new WZO trust with similar objects was a topic on which Bhacca had scant knowledge. He was unable to confirm the receipt of funds expected from the government: "I don't know what the donors' (specifications) are. I don't know...about the money with the WZO trust." Mistry's clarification was, "All amounts collected by the WZO are deposited in a local trust formed in Navsari. All monies will go to the same

purpose...uplifting the poor farmers." As to whether its nature was cosmopolitan, Mistry replied that it wasn't although he had been wanting it so as to get an early tax exemption clearance.

Property in a fix

The housing complex being constructed within 100 feet of the dokhma at Dahanu has created unrest among the residents of Dahanu, Gholvad and Sanjan, reported Dahanu anjuman president Zarhost

Mobarakai. The help he sought from the Federation was assured. But before that his Anjuman would need to decide which of the recommended alternatives it chooses to pursue: go to court, get the Ahmedabad Punchayet's guidance as they've experienced such a problem, solicit the support of the environmental group in the area, seek former minorities commission member Homi Taleyarkhan's intervention, close down the dokhma and resort to an aramgah.

To whom should they turn?

"We need to grow together... If there is no communication between us, we'll go in divergent ways. You won't be able to recognize us in the next 40 years." Rohinton Rivetna, president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), was invited to the forum of the Indian Federation to address the delegates on the issues confronting the community overseas.

"We were very disappointed with the follow-up of the (Fifth) World Zoroastrian Congress" and for quashing the expectations of working "as a world community," mentioned Rivetna. Expressing the acute need for a global body, Rivetna assured cooperation from FEZANA: "Whatever organization you form is okay by us." They perceive three choices in the formation of a world body: continuing with the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) in its present format which is not considered truly representative; strengthening the WZO with FEZANA, the Indian Federation and the Tehran body affiliating themselves as a council body; or forming a separate global body.

Like all pockets, in North America too "we have all shades of Zoroastrians — conformists, traditionalists, free thinkers. We consider that our asset. Each person has an organization to identify with." But when diversity gets divisive, as it did with Parsis and Iranians, they appointed an ad hoc committee to coordinate the activities between them. They further have a North American Mobed Council and a Council of Iranian Mobeds advising on the religious score. A council of elders is also proposed by them to address the questions facing them.

Setting up of a capital fund that could be used for welfare work, and the formation of a body to promote business liai-

sons amongst the community throughout the world is on their list. They will be accepting the membership of business houses in all corners of the world believing, "we have strayed away from our business heritage... we want to bring it back."

They individually and collectively strive to make the religion and the community better known in the North American milieu. "We have people and financial resources. Our challenge is to tap the resources and channelize them so that we can jointly achieve our goals," summarized Rivetna.

In the series of interrogations that he was put through, he was asked whether he was speaking on behalf of himself or as a representative of the collective body, what was the North American Zoroastrians' reaction to Ali Jafarey's activities, why the seat for Zoroastrian studies in the Columbia University had been discontinued, whether they were encouraging marriages within the fold. Reiterating that the points raised by him had come up for discussion earlier in the States, Rivetna replied that there are stories about thousands joining Jafarey's Zarathushtrian Assembly which is not factually correct: "If it happens, it happens. But he is not after any one..." He then went on to answer the next queries: "The cost of a Zoroastrian seat is believed to be one million dollars... We encourage them (the youth) to get together as much as possible. However we don't disown them if they marry out. We are not harsh. (The attitude adopted is, irrespective of your personal choice you are welcome and accepted by the Association.) Invariably then the children of such mixed marriages have become Zoroastrians. We don't subscribe to the view that intermarriages are a loss to the community."

The Thana trustees happily reported that they had shortlisted 48 allottees for the Divecha Trust property that they had managed to save from being lost to the community. But their failure to give the necessary credit for their success to the Federation, and the BPP in particular, irked some members who felt that the BPP should also have been permitted some allotment rights.

In Khandwa, the fate of the 12 acres of the aramgah property is still to be resolved as Darayus Panthaky, the one-time local resident was unable to testify. With Ratlam's Anklesaria offering to involve himself as an individual, and the Federation's assurance to implead itself if necessary, the fear of the case being dismissed now does not arise.

No further details were available on the progress of the different issues concerning defunct anjumans in the absence of SPP executive officer and active member of the defunct anjumans subcommittee Sorab Katpitia. However BPP's chief executive Rustom Anklesaria impressed on the Federation the need to engage a

full-time employee to work on defunct anjuman matters for a couple of years from the funds expected from the sale of



From left: Mogrelia, Masani and T. Anklesaria

the Junagadh (Rs 1.75 lakhs) and Surendranagar (Rs 3,00,000) properties. If, however, funds fall short, anjumans would need to subsidize.

Awaiting action

The practical problems faced when selecting the recipients of the Federation awards for excellence has prompted the Federation to reconsider certain guidelines framed earlier. Whether a past recipient of the award should be debarred from receiving the same award in the same field in the future; whether more

awards should be instituted in those fields where there are greater contenders; whether with the donor's consent, an award in one field can be redirected to another or used in the subsequent year if there is no one deserving it in that particular year; whether the performance at the preceding year alone should be the criterion for adjudication; whether new awards should be instituted for 'youth' and 'miscellaneous' to accommodate some achiever who may not fall under any of the categories stipulated. Jamshedpur's Homi Bodhanwalla who had conceived the idea of the awards was asked to frame revised guidelines. BPP trustee Jamshed Guzder offered to sponsor one more award.

Deolali is in need of a paramobed. Agra, Jhansi and Jabalpur have jointly agreed to sponsor a paramobed. But there are no candidates available for training, and the ones trained have now started demanding a higher price for their services like the paramobed employed at Allahabad. Since Allahabad has limited resources (there

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Wedlock's end: 3

K. C. Vajifdar

Absence of a partner need not necessarily mean desertion, though both can be used as grounds for divorce

What are the responsibilities imposed by marriage and what redress does one spouse have when the other spouse chooses to disregard them? Answers to the question have been a part of the general social environment, changing with time.

The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act (PMDA) was the first to codify such social expectations in 1865, becoming the most advanced concept of social justice in India at that time. It was amended in 1936 but, 50 years later, contemporary Parsis were chafing at the restrictions and prejudices of a bygone social era. What is more, in comparison to other, later legislation in the arena of personal law, like the Hindu Marriage and Divorce Act, the PMDA had lost its preeminence as a legislation that was in keeping with the spirit of the times.

Legal personality K. C. Vajifdar analyses the main clauses of the PMDA since its last amendment in 1988. In a series of six articles Vajifdar explains the changes that have been incorporated as also the main heads under which either party to a marriage may apply for divorce.

In his third article Vajifdar explains what constitutes bigamy, desertion, "not heard of for seven years" and the decree of restitution of conjugal rights. In the two prior articles Vajifdar had compared the PMDA with the Special Marriage Act of 1954 and the Indian Penal Code, and had referred to bigamy, desertion, etc. Future articles will deal with adultery, cruelty and change of religion.

Under section 495 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) bigamy is punishable with simple or rigorous imprisonment up to 10 years and a fine. Bigamy, or marrying again during the lifetime of the husband or wife, implies concealment from the



second spouse of the fact of a former marriage. However, this section does not extend to any person whose marriage with such husband or wife has been declared void by a court of competent jurisdiction.

Also, when an allegation is made that a man has married twice it has to be decided whether the first marriage was duly solemnized or not. What is to be remembered is that the offence is directed against the second marriage. It is required that the second marriage also should have been celebrated with essential ceremonies and should be valid in form. If, however, either of the two marriages is found not to be duly solemnized, the only presumption in law could be that there is only one legal marriage and thus the charge of bigamy would not be sustained.

A person marrying for a second time

on the basis that a husband or wife has not been heard of for seven years, is required to inform the other party of the existence of the earlier marriage. To keep the other party in the dark about the same is a grave offence under the IPC (section 496).

What is usually done under such circumstances is that advertisements are placed in two newspapers stating the fact that such a person has not been heard of for seven years and anyone knowing his or her whereabouts should furnish such information. If no such information comes forth, then it is presumed that the person cannot be traced and a second marriage could be performed.

'Not heard of for seven years' should not be confused with desertion. 'Not heard of for seven years' means that a person, either husband or wife, suddenly leaves the matrimonial home and goes away and does not communicate at all and his or her whereabouts are not known either to the spouse or the family including father, mother, sister, brother and other relatives. It would mean that the person is presumed to be dead even though he may be alive. Thus the meaning of the words 'Not heard of for seven years' applies to an entity who has not communicated with those who were supposed to keep in contact for a period of seven years or more.

Desertion, on the other hand, means that either the husband or wife has left the other spouse of his or her own will and accord and does not wish to keep up the matrimonial alliance. In desertion the whereabouts of the party are known but the party is not willing to resume cohabitation.

A decree of restitution of conjugal rights is passed when a husband or wife has left the other party and does not wish to return and resume cohabitation. This decree is a decree in name which cannot be effected by due process of law. In

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other words neither the wife nor the husband could be forced either by the police machinery or any machinery to go and physically live with the other party. The only advantage is that after obtaining such a decree the party can go to a court of law and obtain a decree of divorce on the ground that the decree of restitution of

The person is presumed to be dead even though he may be alive

conjugal rights has not been obeyed by the other party and that there has not been any marital relationship between the parties during the course of one year. I may add here that formerly the law was that only the person who gets the decree could get a divorce but now the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act (PMDA) has changed and it states that either party can go to a court of law, namely even the guilty party, and obtain a divorce if it is proved that there is no marital relationship between the parties during the time that the decree was granted.

Section 52(2) of the PMDA states that a Parsi who has contracted a marriage under the Act shall remain bound by the provisions of this Act so long as the partner is alive and so long as the marriage has not been lawfully annulled or dissolved by the decree of a competent court. This would hold even if one of the spouses were to change religion or domicile.

Thus, a Parsi cannot remarry without obtaining a valid divorce and if he were to do so, he would commit the criminal offence of bigamy.

If a Parsi were to marry someone else without obtaining a divorce, his second marriage would be declared invalid and illegal and the property rights of the first wife would always remain if he were to die intestate. The second wife would get nothing. However, a person can certainly make a will and give his property to anyone and in that case the wife who is legally married would not be able to challenge the right of the husband to make such a will.

Koover C. Vajifdar is an advocate of the Bombay High Court. He is a frequent contributor to the general Press on the implications of the Rent Act and the legal ramifications of marital problems.

THE STAMP SAFARI *continued from page 22*

a healthy recreational option to his regular job — that of an insurance agent and accountant. Sundays were devoted to working on his labor of love when "I could not afford to spend more than Rs 25 a month on it."

His wife Kattie (they married while he was employed with Volkart Brothers — the Swiss insurance agency) and Aileen, their only child, played a vital role in nurturing Mistry's interest, helping out especially with the research. "Both extended the kind of support I could scarcely have done without," he beams. Today his wife teaches cutting and sewing to aspiring seamstresses and Aileen is a marketing officer in a multinational bank.

The philatelist affirms his immense faith in the Parsi community except that he's noticed a certain amount of honesty eroding over the years. "There is now more of a need to adhere to our central tenets of *humata, hukta and huvrashta* than ever before," he says. For Mistry, Zoroastrianism has been the guiding light spurring him on "to wage a spirited fight for justice" in trying circumstances. He narrates how he was forced to struggle to retain his integrity when he assumed the mantle of trusteeship of Surat's Jeevanji Jamasji Mistry Agiary; tempted with bribes at every step of the 18-year battle aiming to wrest the ancestral land (223 sprawling acres belonging to his grandfather's estate) from him. The case was eventually resolved by the Supreme Court all through which he claims he followed the lofty principles Zoroastrianism inculcated.

Mistry is not one to cash in on his assets. His rich wildlife cornucopia is presently evaluated at approximately four to five lakh rupees. Will he sell? Mistry, typically, shakes his head, remarking earnestly, "I could do with the money but can't think of it somehow. Maybe if it is a truly good rate, some day..." Meanwhile, he continues to busy himself going about collecting, corresponding, researching and making copious notes, now that he is long past retired.

His other interests include photography, and Indian and Western classical music. None, however, are anywhere near receiving the affection lavished on his first love. As he says, "perhaps it would be no exaggeration to claim that I live for this, my most constant source of satisfaction, life's enduring reward."

Dr Burjor Dastur's enduring commitment to gynecology was recognized with a Padma Shri this year

DASTUR'S DELIVERIES

Gustasp Irani

Thirty minutes past midnight: the phone rang. For Dr Burjor Dastur, obstetrician and gynecologist, this was not unusual. This time, however, it was a delivery of a different kind that had caught the doctor unprepared. The call was from Delhi. The delivery: news that Dastur had been selected for the 1992 Padma Shri award by the Government of India. "It was least expected. It was a bolt from the blue," says Dastur, confessing that his initial reaction was laced with a trace of irritation. This because he had a scheduled caesarian delivery the following day and had hoped to enter the operation theater after having enjoyed his full quota of sleep.

The events on the eve of Republic Day reflect, in a way, the personality of Dastur: humble, low profile, dedicated and still practicing at 74 though he looks years younger than his age. "I don't work for awards. I don't expect them. I don't need them," he states. The Padma Shri, if anything, he sees as a recognition of his service to the poor and middle class. "As an honorary obstetrician and gynecologist at the St Georges Hospital, it was not just a matter of going there for a few hours a week. I put in four to five hours a day," says Dastur. In recognition of his dedica-



Then President of India, R. Venkataraman presenting the Padma Shri award to Dastur (left)

tion to the Hospital (27 years in all), the Government of Maharashtra broke past traditions and norms and offered him two consecutive superannuation extensions and appointed him professor emeritus of obstetrics and gynecology for life, he informs.

Excellence has been the hallmark of Dastur's career. He was the first Parsi to win the Prince of Wales Gold Medal and two scholarships — Hansraj Pragji and Sir Mangaldas Mehta — in his MD examination (1943) and the first member of the community to have a triple qualification of MD, FRCS and FRCOG.

While in the UK, Dastur worked and carried out research under the guidance of Dr Wilfred Shaw at the St Bartholomews Hospital which culminated in the discovery of a cancerous cell in the ovaries called the Shaw-Dastur Cell. Later with the eminent Dr V. N. Shirodkar he developed an original operational procedure called the Shirodkar-Dastur Sling Operation which enables women to retain their uterus and extend their childbearing years. The Dastur-Shirodkar team also performed a delicate operation

whereby they were able to effect a blood transfusion to a child while it was still in its mother's womb.

Yet for all his medical progressiveness

and innovation, Dastur is, by his own confession, an old-world traditionalist at least in matters of medical ethics. "Maybe I am old-fashioned," he states, but then, in order to be contemporary he refuses to compromise his beliefs.

Every obstetrician and gynecologist, in India at least, must work out his own equation in relation to the paradox of his profession which makes him, in a way, partner in the unbridled population growth that is crippling the country. According to Dastur, the doctor must be viewed as an important link in the family planning program of the country — not just in his capacity as a man of medicine but as an educationalist and a catalyst of social change. Men must be educated and made aware that there is equality of partners in a marriage. "Men refuse to undergo vasectomy. It is always women who must take all the precautions in India," says Dastur.

One community, however, that needs no education in family planning are the Parsis. "Parsis must be discouraged from using contraceptives. They need to be re-educated on the need for having more children," says the doctor. He does not believe that the Parsis will ever become extinct but he fears that the community will shrink to such a small number that it will become totally irrelevant. The problem with the community is not one of fertility but of attitudes; they marry late, delay having children and stop having more once they have one or two, Dastur observes. "Medically there is nothing to suggest that there is any fertility problem in the community," he clarifies. To illustrate the extent of the problem Dastur points out that in 1950 there were about 350 births in the Parsi Lying-in Hospital, almost one a day. Now the Hospital is virtually deserted.

Dastur does not see the acceptance of children of Parsi women married to non-Parsis into the fold as a solution to the problem of declining numbers. "I am an orthodox," he declares and looks on with despair as children of such unions are smuggled into the community.

And talking of adoption, Dastur has, over the years played a quiet but effective role as the catalyst for adoption within the community. "I have given a number of babies born to poor Parsis to rich Parsi couples. No names are asked, the identity of the real parents is known only to me. It is a matter of trust," he



says. His orthodoxy is guarantee that the children given for adoption are only from couples where both the parents are Parsis.

Who are these parents who give up their children? The answer, according to Dastur, lies in the traditional prejudice against girls. Though Parsis in general are not so afflicted by it, there are cases (and here Iranis outnumber Parsis) when the need to have a son is compelling.

There are cases among Zoroastrians when the need to have a son is compelling

Should they get a girl instead, then the child is often surrendered for adoption.

Dastur has found that the exercise of trying to convince Parsis seeking abortion, and there are many such cases, to have the child and give it up for adoption is futile. Such couples normally come from the middle class. "They find it very difficult to give up the child to someone else. They would rather not have it at all." Yet, Dastur will plead his case each time around hoping that one day someone will listen and give that unborn child a chance.

They will also be giving childless Parsi

(From right) Aban, Gulshan, Dastur with wife Mehru, S. B. Chavan and Fardun

couples a chance for, according to the doctor, the foster parents also benefit greatly from sharing such a relationship. "I know of one rich Parsi lady who had all the possible illnesses imaginable. But once I got a baby for her to adopt she forgot all her illnesses and devoted herself to caring for the child." Recently Dastur was greatly distressed when a Parsi couple offered their child for adoption via sale.

Dastur's family consists of his wife Mehru, one son Fardun who is a general surgeon and two daughters, Gulshan, an obstetrician and gynecologist like her father, and Aban, a lawyer. When Dastur was a lad of five he lost his father and was brought up by his grandfather Khanbadhur Fardunji Dastur who was the first Indian registrar of the Bombay University. Dastur points to a photograph of his grandfather hanging on the wall.

Photograph? Look again. It is a finely etched drawing done by Dastur himself. His artistic talents of portraying life did not get a chance to blossom as he immersed himself in life itself and participated in the miracle of birth with each new baby he helped into this world. But the task can be demanding. "In our profession every call is an emergency. You are like a fire engine rushing about all day and night. And you get used to it," he adds with a smile.

The age of Zoroastrian brides — as listed in this issue — ranged between 19 and 42 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 28 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 21 and 50 years, averaging at 31 years.

As compared to 75 Zoroastrians who died in Bombay in May, there were 21 births. Heart disease was the major killer claiming the lives of 25 persons of whom 10 were above 80 years of age. Twelve succumbed to old age and general debility. Pneumonia and lung disease took 11 victims, cancer, five, and diabetes and hypertension, four each. Two patients fell prey to angina and brain disease. The isolated cases registered last month were: tetanus (a disease caused by an anaerobe which may be present in road dust and manure), asphyxia (suffocation), cellulitis (an inflammation of connective tissue), high blood pressure, anemia, bronchitis, septicemia, kidney failure, liver disease, arthritis, paralysis, bed sores and Park-

inson's disease. The coroner's report was still pending in the case of one death. Two 32-year-old youths were lost to the community. A 98-year-old woman was the oldest to breathe her last.

The data on births, marriages and deaths has been compiled from information supplied by various newsletters and anjuman in India and abroad, courts and hospitals. This information is not always complete or consistent. For example, the birth figures for Bombay are supplied by four hospitals; births in suburban hospitals and private nursing homes are not included unless individuals send us information together with a copy of the birth certificate. In the breakup of deaths according to illnesses, especially of the elderly, death is often due to a combination of several diseases.

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

BOMBAY

Born

A boy to *Simone and Marazban Bhungara* on April 21, 1992
A boy to *Percis and Sarosh Daruwala*; May 1
A boy to *Anita and Sharukh Elavia*; May 3
A boy to *Mehernaaz and Freddy Elavia*; May 4
A girl to *Firangiz and Eric Sethna*; May 6
Twins (girls) to *Betsy and Kerman Jalnawala*; May 8
A boy to *Dhun and Noshir Vesuna*; May 9
A boy to *Roshan and Homiar Bhandari*; May 10
A girl to *Firoza and Porusp Tarapore*; May 10
A boy to *Anhaila and Khushroo Khambatta*; May 15
A boy to *Yanisha and Furokh Santoke*; May 15
A girl to *Shirin and Vistas Vesuwala*; May 15
Twins (boys) to *Soonoo and Hoshang Natarwala*; May 19
A boy to *Meher and Kersi*

Dubash; May 20
A boy to *Rashna and Mahiyar Panhaki*; May 21
A girl to *Kashmira and Navil Hakim*; May 23
A girl to *Pakeeza and Kersie Merchant*; May 25
A boy to *Parveen and Porus Pardiwalla*; May 25
A girl to *Roxane and Behram Khodaiji*; May 28
A boy to *Shareen and Marbin Colah*; May 29

Married

Havovi Rusi Tavadia and Hoshang Fali Kerawala; May 3
Nilufer Hoshang Kavarana and Behram Nariman Munshi; May 3
Shirin Behram Irani and Mehernosh Keki Patel; May 4
Zenobia Dorab Surti and Rustom Kharshedji Palsetia; May 5
Binaifer Behram Mehta and Hoshi Fali Siganporia; May 5
Farzeen Soli Irani and Shazad

Darius Irani of Indore; May 7
Shiraz Rustom Wadia and Kersi Rusi Dordi of Ahmedabad; May 9
Roxane Beji Bharucha and Darayus Spitman Desai; May 10
Mehroo Rusi Kodia of Surat and *Yezdi Jal Dumasia*; May 10
Gulshan Parvez Boyce and Mehernosh Jehangir Patel; May 16
Diana Khurshed Dotiwala and Navroze Gustad Dastur; May 17
Roxanne Jamshed Sethna and Pourus Roosi Panthakee; May 17
Moti Behram Irani of Bhivandi and *Behram Nadirshaw Karbhari*; May 18
Zarina Ratanshaw Bhathena and Keki Rustomji Bharucha of Thana; May 19
Kashmira Nariman Munshi and Bahmanshaw Dhanjishaw Baldawala; May 21
Nahid Rustom Manoocheri and Verzavand Jehangir Elavia; May 22
Nilash Rusi Dadyburjor and Ratanshaw Behramgore Vakil; May 22
Nilufer Tehmurasp Boatwalla and Minoo Jal Mehta; May 23
Farzana Adi Aga and Sharukh Dinshaw Chothia; May 24
Khorshed Kawasji Poonawala and Behram Rashid Irani; May 24
Dolly Homi Mehta and Dinyar Behram Vandrewala; May 25
Meherangez Erach Elavia and Farhad Faramji Elavia of Vashi; May 26
Arnavaz Erach Pardiwalla and Yazdi Sorab Sabavala; May 28
Yasmeen Dara Taraporwala of Thana and *Zarir Manek Bhada*; May 30

Died

Pulla Homi Mandroina (61), residing at 16, Dubash Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; April 30
Dinoo Ardeshtir Mistry (79), 17/A, Tardeo Chmbs, Kasinath Rd, 400034; April 30
Chandabhai Rustomji Mucadam (86), Orient Hse, Wodehouse Rd, Colaba, 400005; April 30
Dina Phiroze Taraporewala (75),

Sunama Hse, 140, A. Kranti Marg, 400036; April 30
Dara Gustadji Karkaria (67), B/5, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculia, 400027; May 1
Dinshaw Dhunjishaw Bharucha (69), Jeevan Complex, Khetwadi Main Rd, 400004; May 2
Khodi Ardeshtir Driver (59), 10, Station Ter, 63, A. N. Bharucha Marg, 400007; May 2
Jeroo Jal Godrej (67), D/2, Jolly Highrise Apts, Bandra, 400050; May 2
Adi Rustomji Mehta (58), 614, Kashinath Bldg, Girgaum Rd, 400002; May 2
Gulbai Rustomji Satha (87), 4, Church View, St Michael Clny, Mahim, 400016; May 3
Sorabji Cawasji Bhesania (90), Jeevanbai Tata Bldg No 2, Tata Blocks, S. V. Rd, Bandra, 400050; May 5
Hilla Pheroze Boyce (89), Schoem Hse, 13, Wodehouse Rd, 400039; May 5
Ratanbai Burjorji Cooper (92), 45, Ahmed Bldg, Gun Powder Rd, Mazgaon, 400010; May 5
Fardun Dara Dastoor (32), 401/402, Saidam, 719, Govind Patil Rd, Danpada, Khar (W), 400052; May 5
Adi Jehangir Dhollo (72), E/4, Captain Clny, Haji Ali, Tardeo, 400034; May 5
Jeroo Maneck Dhunboora (42), Lily Court, Churchgate Recl, 400020; May 5
Goolbai Mancherasha Sukhadia (84), H/37, Jivan Ngr, Veera Desai Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; May 5
Gool Jemi Tavadia (64), Jeevan Complex, Khetwadi Main Rd, 400004; May 5
Dosamai Jehangir Jijina (74), Sultan Manzil, Bora Bazar, Fort, 400001; May 6
Bapai Pirojshaw Vesuna (72), Hormouz Bldg, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; May 6
Khorshed Soli Dadyburjor (57), 801, Coover Villa, Jame-Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 7
Dhun Rusi Mehta (61), Rusi Mehta Compd, Jairajbhai Lane, R. S. Nimkar Marg, 400008; May 8

Keki Sorabji Parekh (77), Jer Villa, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; May 8
Sorab Byram Engineer (88), 117, Depot Lines, Saddar, Karachi, Pakistan; May 9
Nariman Ratanji Mandviwalla (84), Heliopolis, Near Colaba PO, Colaba, 400039; May 9
Janshed Maneckji Mistry (79), 9, Patel Chmbs, Gunbow Street, Fort, 400001; May 9
Meharbai Cawas Karanjia (80), Dharwar Bldg, Chikalwadi, Tardeo, 400007; May 10
Minoo Dinsha Magra (65), 94/D, Madhav Bhuvan, N. M. Joshi Marg, Lower Parel, 400013; May 10
Darabsha Edulji Patel (80), 1, Al-Farooq Bldg, 31, Dilima St, Dockyard Rd, 400010; May 10
Homi Framroz Bana (75), D-Pavri, Way Side, 63, Clerk Rd, Mahalaxmi, 400011; May 11
Eruch Jehangirji Garda (75), Shirin Manzil, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; May 11
Jamshed Sheriar Irani (73), 4/24, Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; May 11
Jal Faramroze Kharas (69), Ali Mohamad Mans, Grant Rd, 400007; May 11
Coomi Tehmuras Udawadia (77), R-5-14, Sunder Ngr, Malad (W), 400064; May 11
Minocher Mererwanji Engineer (85), C/5, Shanti Niketan, Garden Line, Ghatkopar (W), 400086; May 12
Rhoda Rustom Framjee (69), 61, Anita, Mt Pleasant Rd, 400006; May 12
Navzar Pirozshah Bamji (77), Bhika Behram Kuwa Bawadi, Churchgate, 400020; May 13

Dhunjisha Nawroji Elavia (73), F/21, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; May 13
Shirin Eruch Khasimay (73), Hormuzd Bldg, Sleater Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; May 13
Savak Soli Bacha (32), 208/8, Nandadeep, New MIG Clny, Bandra (E), 400051; May 14
Homai Savakshaw Mogrelia (84), M/50, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; May 14
Nariman Framji Daruwala (77), Nanabhoy Chmbs, R. Sidhwa Marg, Fort, 400001; May 15
Mani Phiroze Guard (70), Dubash Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; May 16
Fram Pestonjee Khambatta (80), P/14, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; May 16
Jerbai Homi Narielwalla (76), D. Khalakdina Ter, Gowalia Tank, 400036; May 16
Khorshed Shapurji Wadia (78), Sanjana Bldg, Forjett Hill Rd, Tardeo, 400007; May 16
Eruch Jal Arjani (64), Edward Bldg, Lamington Rd, 400007; May 17
Pesi Hormusji Dorabji (74), B/7, Taher Bldg, Jalbhai St, Charni Rd Jn, 400004; May 17
Noshir Nadirshah Elavia (69), 81, M. A. Patel Bglw, J. P. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; May 17
Aloo Dorabji Khambatta (77), 32, Karelwadi, Thakurdwar, 400002; May 17
Mota Jal Mirza (80), B/28, Gool Mhl, Sleater Rd, Grant Rd, 400007; May 17
Aloo Jal Mody (65), 3, Chaman Chmbs, Dhobitalao, 400020; May 17
Meheran Homee Billimoria (82), 4, Soona Mhl, 203, Marine

Drive, 400020; May 18
Noshir Burjorji Nicholson (82), Old Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; May 18
Homi Jehangirji Engineer (92), Room 6, Chawl 1, Ambawadi, Hanging Gardens, 400006; May 20
Byram Dinshaw Desai (83), 4, Meher Villa, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; May 21
Mani Temulji Ghadiwalla (82), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; May 21
Goolu Salamut Irani (73), 17 D/39, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; May 21
Burjore Merwanji Katrak (91), J/20, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; May 21
Rustom Nuserwanji Ginwala (72), C/o Maj H. B. Vacha, 16, Hampton Court, Colaba, 400005; May 22
Eruch Ardesir Wadia (62), 309, Zaveri Bldg, Girgaum Rd, 400004; May 22
Freny Rustom Kharegat (83), Khatau Mans, Oomer Park, B. Desai Rd, 400026; May 23
Freny Rustom Sanjana (86), 664, Roshan Mans, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 23
Hilla Nadirshah Udawadia (78), Katy Ter, 7, Sleater Rd, 400007; May 23
Kaikhushroo (Keki) Maneckshaw Pavri (85), 36, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; May 24
Aloo Nariman Gorimar (75), Abbas Bldg, Jalbhai St, Charni Rd Jn, 400004; May 25
Gustadji Pallonji Mistry (88), Arsiwala Bldg, Next to Novelty Cinema, Grant Rd, 400007; May 25

Freny Rustom Dubash (64), Navroze Mans, Opp Bhatia Hosp, Tardeo, 400007; May 26
Rusi P. Mistry (55), 24 A/B, Nawab Tank Rd, Mazgaon, 400010; May 26
Aimai Maneckshaw Jokhi (98), 660, Palamkote Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 27
Rustom Framji Hahiram (73), Habib Hse, Grant Rd Corner, 400007; May 28
Zomrot Khushroo Bastani (Allahabadi) (76), A/4, Mehr Mans, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; May 29
Gulcheir Meherwan Irani (79), Dhun Villa, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari, 400102; May 29
Homai Boman Irani (73), Dubash Bldg, Grant Rd, 400007; May 29
Nariman Nasarwanji Engineer (75), 614, Jarne Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; May 30
Eruch Pallonji Sooi (75), 394, Mancharam Bldg, Grant Rd, 400007; May 30
Najamai Sohrabji Taraporvala (91), Bhiwandiwalla Hse, 583, Chira Bazar, 400002; May 30
Nariman Jehangir Chhapgar (80), 17/8, Mehta Bldg, Panthaki Baug, Andheri (E), 400069; May 31
Dolly Keki Daroga (62), Niamat Manz, N. Petit St, Grant Rd, 400007; May 31

CALCUTTA Died

Aloo Bomansha Bhesania (67), sister of Phiroze, Bhiku Pesi Avari, late Putli Pesi Avari and Mani Behman Mistry; May 22
POONA
Died
Ratanbai Savakshaw Mistry (77), Mody Clny No 2, Synagogue St, 411001; May 3
Mehrabai Sorabji Motafaram (86), 176, M. G. Rd, 411001; May 25
Farokh Feroz Karbhari (44), Mody Clny, Synagogue St, 411001; May 29

SURAT Died

Najamai Bomansha Elavia (78), Gam Vavadi, Taluka Rajpipla, Dist Bharuch, 393145; April 29
Ratansha Hirjibhai Olpadwalla (74), Nariman Home and Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003; May 4

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Perin Firoj Contractor (73),
Rani Talao, 395003;
May 7
Bhikaji Hormusji Patmahelli-
walla (101), Gam Patbadeli,
Taluka Mangrol, Dist Surat,
362225; May 9
Dinamai Kaikhushroo Katpitia
(78), Khatki Wad, Near Patel
School, Maachlipith, 395003;
May 13
Najamai Manchershaw Tatti
(*Mobed*) (80), Maachlipith,
Shahpore, 395003;
May 13
Phirozsha Dosabhai Katpitia
(61), Stn Rd, 395003; May 17
Maki Nadir Daruwalla (75),
Nariman Home and Infirmary,
Shahpore, 395003;
May 19
Naval Sohrab Pithawala (75),
Vademan Chaklo, Opp J. C.
Munshi School, 395003;
May 20
Dosibai Burjorji Bhathena (86),
Nariman Home and Infirmary,
Shahpore, 395003;
May 25

Burjorji Savaksha Bhoja (69),
Opp Nariman Home and
Infirmary, Shahpore, 395003;
May 26
Jerbanu Rustomji Vajifdar (76),
Kamani Bazar,
Lal Gate, 395003;
May 28

AUCKLAND, New Zealand
Born
A boy, *Cyrus*, to *Dhun* and
Phiroze Karai; April 1

KARACHI
Born

A boy, *Naozer*, to *Katayun* and
Jamshed Patel; March 14
A boy, *Ardavan*, to *Maha-Zarin*
and *Pervaiz Taraporewala*;
April 2

Died

Dosa Jehangir Mohtafaram
(72); April 13
Aimai Faramroze Daruwalla
(82); April 23
Piloo Byramji Kotwal (70);
April 25

TOTALS FOR 1992

	Bombay		Other Indian cities		Foreign cities	
	A	B	A	B	A	B
BORN						
Boys	14	54	--	2	3	6
Girls	8	60	--	--	1	8
MARRIED						
Parsi	24	128	--	2	--	2
Intercommunal	--	24	--	1	--	3
DIED						
Male	40	225	6	23	1	12
Female	39	189	10	36	3	9

A: Total numbers in this issue

B: Running totals for 1992 (February-June issues)

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

NEW YORK
Died

Eruch Surti (68), of Calcutta,
husband of *Perin* and father
of *Jal* and *Aban Nentin*;
May 24

VICTORIA, Australia
Born

A girl, *Natasha*, to *Feroza* and
Khushroo Patel; February 24

Compiled by Roxana A. Mirza

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Engineer: building values

Died: Soli Framroze Engineer, 72, reputed builder and promoter, on January 10, 1992 at Bombay's Breach Candy Hospital following kidney failure.

The agent responsible for bringing the International Real Estate Federation to India, Engineer has also been credited with changing the skyline of Bombay. His firm S. F. Engineer has, during its 50 years of



operation, shaped buildings like Il Palazzo and WIAA Club House on Malabar Hill, Navroze Apartments on Warden Road, Harbour Heights at Colaba, as also one of the prime

commercial centers of Bombay, the Engineering Centre at Opera House.

"An upright builder of Bombay" was how Engineer came to be known in the construction circle. In his dealings with the government, public and private sector, national and international companies he was known for getting along with people "whoever they were and whatever their age" impressing them with "his wonderful smile, gentleness, great sense of humor...and generosity." These eulogies for Engineer were conveyed in the course of several resolutions and messages received by his family.

S. F. Engineer's first venture being Amalfi on Malabar Hill, the Group's subsequent developments have encompassed large scale low income housing schemes as well as beautifully located five star hotels, as notes a press release from the company. In fact, low cost housing schemes were projects very dear to him and he worked endlessly to try and bring 'housing' within the reach of the common man, remembers his daughter Yasmin Mody. Among the last projects that Engineer had taken on hand was the creation

of a township at Poisar, near Kandivli in the northern suburbs of Bombay.

He believed in "charity done quietly and unobtrusively," mentions his daughter, instilling in the entire family "a deep feeling of commitment to give a part of whatever one has to charity."

The progress of the Parsi community in particular was very dear to Engineer who would constantly express his willingness to help the community, said Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustee Jamshed Guzder at a condolence meeting convened by the Il Palazzo Cooperative Housing Society where Engineer resided. The Zoroastrian Co-Operative Bank Ltd where Engineer served as director for nearly eight years also passed a condolence resolution in the builder's memory. The Aslaji Agiary was another Zoroastrian institution on which Engineer served as trustee.

In addition to founding and serving as senior partner of S. F. Engineer, some of the other companies of which Engineer was promoter and director are Mazda Construction Company, Ahura Shipping and Engineering, United Property Investments, Bombay Real Estate Development and TCI Hotels and Resorts.

S. F. Engineer, the company, was founded in 1942 after Engineer gained the necessary work experience from his seven years' service with M/s Gilbert Lodge, an English firm of chartered surveyors, land valuers and estate agents. For a brief spell he was involved with a partnership firm Kuka and Engineer which was subsequently dissolved.

Educated at the Bharda High School, it was later in life that Engineer qualified as senior certified valuer of The International Institute of Valuers. He was a patron member of the Estate Agents' Association of India and was the only Indian member of the British chapter of the International Real Estate Federation.

Engineer's hospitality and generosity have been commented upon in *Mid-Town Musings*, the news bulletin of the Rotary Club of Bombay Mid-Town with which he was affiliated. But what Bombay in particular would remember him by is the "permanent mark he has left on this great city," as remembers a colleague.

Engineer is survived by his wife Mithoo and daughters Yasmin Mody, Feroza Mody and Kate Dinshaw.

Business on his own steam

Died: Ardeshir Sorabji Bhathena, 83, industrial entrepreneur who was instrumental in founding Wanson (India), later renamed Thermax, and National Steel Equipment Company, on October 6, 1991 in Pune following a stroke.



"He was an archetypal entrepreneur — a builder of men. A man of great courage and of great convictions," remarked his son-in-law Rohinton Aga

who had jointly promoted Wanson with Bhathena and who took over as chairman and managing director of Thermax since Bhathena's retirement in 1980. "A worker-entrepreneur" is how Bhathena viewed himself, writes his daughter Arnava, director of human resources at Thermax. "He believed that every organization is a human enterprise, and therefore fragile and to be handled with great care. He encouraged everyone to work in an atmosphere of mutual trust, respect and freedom — freedom to be used with great finesse," Arnava remembers the lessons she had learnt from him.

'Management by wandering about' came easily to Bhathena even before this term was officially coined. His constant interaction with the staff earned him tributes from his colleagues that were printed in the *Thermax house magazine*: "He had a knack of putting people at ease and also of making them jittery." "He had this remarkable ability to read a person. You couldn't fool him." "He was a simple man. He had no hierarchies in his mind." "(He had) a puckish sense of humor — ready for a fight. Lovable, sometimes devious, often exasperating, but always human..."

Merit and hard work qualified for success, believed Bhathena who used to say,

"deserve and then desire." Thermax which today has a turnover of Rs 280 crores with around 2,700 employees, has diversified from boilers to surface coating systems to water treatment plants and chemicals, to electronics and computer software. Thermax products are reported to have a market in Europe and America with Bhathena's eldest son Jamshed, based in Canada, boosting Thermax's sales by serving as a distribution agent.

They made their beginning 25 years ago, manufacturing boilers in Chinchwad, Poona, with 15 workers and a capital of less than three lakh rupees, notes a write-up from the Company. Prior to Wanson, Bhathena had for nearly 20 years been concentrating his energies on National Steel Equipment Company, a partnership firm he founded in 1947 in Sewri, Bombay, and later entrusted to his son Darayus, to manufacture hospital equipment and appliances, catering equipment and laundry machinery. He was chairman of various Indian Standards Institution committees on hospital appliances.

His first independent venture was an import-export business that he founded in 1942, being the first Indian to be allowed to import food grains in large quantities on government account during the famine years of 1943-45, according to a family source. The confidence to launch his own enterprises Bhathena earned during his decade of service with Godrej — starting his career as branch manager of Godrej and Boyce in Madras on completion of his commerce graduation from Bombay's Sydenham College, and later working as general manager of Godrej Soaps.

Parsis as a community were losing some of their cherished values and were blindly aping the West in Bhathena's opinion. Years ago his essay on the Parsis had won him an award from the Maneckji Cooper Trust and a subsequent appointment as trustee of the Maneckji Cooper School, mentions his daughter.

Travelling, reading, music, sports and especially yoga were Bhathena's chief interests. He also made time to visit patients at hospitals to bring cheer to their lives, mentions his associate D. R. Edibam. Another welfare organization that Bhathena promoted is the Jagruti Trust that he founded with the intention of giving guidance to the youngsters whom he believed could change the destiny of the country.

Bhathena is survived by his sons Jamshed and Darayus, and daughter Arnavaz.

FEDERATION LENDS... *continued from page 30*

being barely 40 Zoroastrians residing in the area) an appeal from the Federation made Aspi Irani of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman offer to help meet the parambod's increased demands.

The issues of the *Fed Newsletter* are sponsored every month yet the annual loss is in the region of Rs 10,000, informed Gandhi. Assurances for sponsorship came from: BPP (three), Guzder (two), SPP, Delhi, Ratlam, Secunderabad, Aspi Irani, Desai, Dinshaw Anklesaria, Shroff, Bodhanwalla and the WZO.

The centenary of Dadabhoy Naoroji's election to the British House of Commons will be celebrated in London, Delhi and Bombay by different Zoroastrian associations. "Whatever we do must not be from a parochial angle but (in our capacity) as Indian nationals," briefed Sethna who informed that the DPA was expected to be the focal point as they had also handled the Parsi presentation for the India International Centre.

The amendments sought on the ISA by the Federation have now, after being passed by both Houses of Parliament, been declared law. But a complication foreseen is with regard to a Parsi marrying (another Parsi or a non-Parsi) under the Special Marriage Act (SMA) and not the PMDA in which case the Parsi laws of intestate succession would not be applicable. Desai was asked to study the implications of the SMA and advise the Federation such that amendments to the SMA, if called for, could then be pursued.

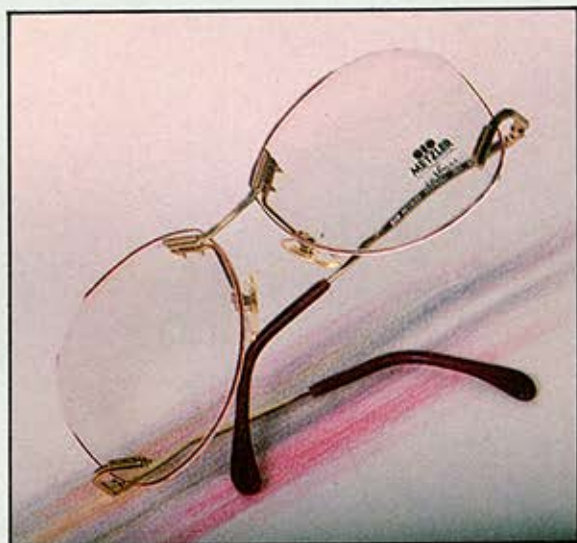
While some like Nariman Mogrelia of Madras felt that the Federation meetings were "well represented" as compared to meets of other professional bodies, others were dissatisfied and sought greater participation from the members and non-members of different zones. Ratlam, on the border of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan, offered to host the next executive council meeting of the Federation on September 5 and 6. The Parsis of Ratlam numbering about 145, together with the neighboring Parsis of Indore (200), of Mhow (150) and Neemuch (15) will be glad to receive the delegates, Ratlam anjuman president Tehmtan Anklesaria extended an invitation to all. (Subsequent to this meeting it was decided that

the next Federation meeting would be held in Ratlam in early 1993.)

Those attending the Federation meeting were: Porus Debara from Agra; Capt Homi Dandiwalla from Allahabad; Pervez Mehta from Bardoli; Shavak Patel and Baman Cama from Baroda; Dr Aspi Golwalla, Eruch Desai, Jamshed Guzder, Jamsheed Kanga, Minoo Shroff, Rustom Anklesaria, Ms Gool Tata, Ms Sheroo Master and Peshotan Nargolwala from Bombay; Darius Marshall from Calicut; Zarhost Mobarakai from Dahanu; Lt Gen Adi Sethna, Keki Gandhi, Noshir Captain and Dadi Mistry from Delhi; Edulji Dumasia from Dumas; Aspi Irani and Pervez Irani from the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman; Dolly Bajan from Jabalpur; Homi Bodhanwalla and Eruch Surti from Jamshedpur; Ronny Dick from Jhansi; Nariman Mogrelia from Madras; Behram Masani from Mhow; Dara Deboo from Navsari; Minoo Davierwala and Dinshaw Anklesaria from Poona; Tehmtan Anklesaria from Ratlam; Homi Palsetia from Saronda; Noshir Nagarwala and Jehangir Bisney from Secunderabad and Hyderabad; Ms Mani Clubwala from the South Zone; Dr Sam Bhacca and Davar Kavasji Modi from Surat; Rustom Cursetji, Hormaz Ghadially and Pervez Bhesania from Thane; and Homi Mehta from Zai Bordi.

The invitees and youth delegates attending the Federation meeting were: Ms Jennifer Debara from Agra; Porus Karanjawalla from Ahmedabad; Ms Parizad Ghandhi, Ms Shireen Dandiwalla, Ms Banoo Marshal and Nariman Marshal from Allahabad; Dr Kersi Hozdar, Ms Scheherezade Postwalla, Cyrus Driver, Ms Binokshi Billimoria, Khurshed Mirza, Murzban Dadiburjor, Ms Parizad Patel, Hushedar Mehta, Sheriar Kasad, Ms Shiraz Khambatta and Cmdr Jal Postwalla from Bombay; Gev Ayrton from Calcutta; Ms Banoogoshasp Irani from Dahanu; Ms Anahita Captain from Delhi, Ms Delnaaz Mubarakai from the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman; Ms Parizad Batiwalla and Jehangir Surti from Jamshedpur; Ms Goolnaz Dick, Ms Roshni Bhagat and Ms Kashmira Maneckji from Jhansi; Ms Navaz Palkhiwala and Sarosh Palkhiwala from Poona; Ms Hoofrish Bisney and Ms Mehernavaz Parakh from Secunderabad and Hyderabad; Ms Mehroo Bhacca from Surat; and Hafez Katgara from Thane. Rohinton Rivetna was invited as the guest speaker. The Press was represented by *The Bombay Samachar*, *Jam-e-Jamshed* and *Parsiana*.

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