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Cover: Yasmen Mehta and her troupe perform *Saffron*

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"The President's man"

I have read with great interest the news item referring to the appointment of Mr Kershasp Choksy as the Minister for Constitutional and State Affairs in the Government of the Republic of Sri Lanka in May 1993 ("The President's man," Zoroastrians Abroad, *Parsiana*, January 1994). Mr Choksy's performance is indeed creditable.

However, to set the record straight, I would like to make one observation. In this news item, it is mentioned that Mr Choksy became "the first Parsi (Zoroastrian)... cabinet minister in a national government in any country in the world."

To the best of my knowledge, and as will be well remembered by senior mem-

bers of the Parsi community, Mr Cooverji Hormasji Bhabha was the first cabinet minister in a national government in any country in the world. He was appointed commerce minister in the cabinet of the first government of independent India by Prime Minister Nehru in 1947.

Dr R. C. COOPER
Singapore

This refers to your article "The President's man," *Parsiana*, (January 1994).

The late Cooverji H. Bhabha was Minister for Commerce in India in 1947 and 1948.

Surely this makes him "the first Parsi (Zoroastrian) cabinet minister in a national government in any country in the world."

Ms KHORSHED R. K. S. GHANDHI

Parsiana regrets the error.

"JRD: the last rites..."

Arnavaz Mama's piece ("JRD: the last rites and wrongs," *Parsiana*, January 1994) covers many points. Still I find that an important point has been omitted. Mama mentions that Dr Peer was given two alternatives by the trustees of the N. R. Tata Ajiary, Bandra. As the mobbed declined to submit his resignation, he was sacked. The important aftermath has not been reported.

Soon thereafter, a meeting of the orthodox was held at Dadar on December 19, 1993. Some 40 orthodox ladies and gentlemen partook of a sumptuous lunch.

After discussing various definitions of the word orthodox and diverse ways of fighting the reformists in India and US, it was decided to form a World Organisation of Orthodox Zoroastrians (WOOZ). Of course, some dasturs and orthodox scholars did not attend the meeting. Some among those who attended were too embarrassed to participate in the meaningless discussions. An International Conference of Orthodox Zoroastrians (ICOZ) was mooted and the same, it is said, will "tear the masks (off) many reformists." What will be the ultimate outcome of this latest regrouping remains to be seen.

B. A. TAFTI

I stand in awe at the blatant arrogance with which Dastur Firoze Kotwal and Ervad Peshotan Peer dictate their own axioms to the Zoroastrian community. Yet, they establish their dogma and sanctify their opinions by alluding to "our venerated scriptures!" As a Zoroastrian I ask them to enlighten us on the contents and the origin of the so quoted "scriptures."

One does not need a doctorate degree to be aware and accept that:

- during the era that our Righteous Teacher (and at all times Asho Zarhosht addresses himself as thus) started his enlightening process in the region of Greater Iran, the art of writing and graphology had not been established. Consequently the *Gathas*, the divine songs of Zarathushtra, are in verse to facilitate memorization.

- the only veritable and authentic scriptures are the *Gathas*, memorized by the members of his entourage and handed down for generations, until the Achae-menids finally inscribed it in the Aramaic language.

- the scriptures, that Dastur Kotwal and Ervad Peer refer to and quote as sacrosanct, were generated by the fundamentalist clergies and clerical bodies.

To Kotwal and Peer I quote the true words of Asho Zarhosht (all translations are from *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra* by Dr I. J. S. Taraporewalla):

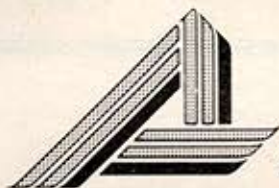
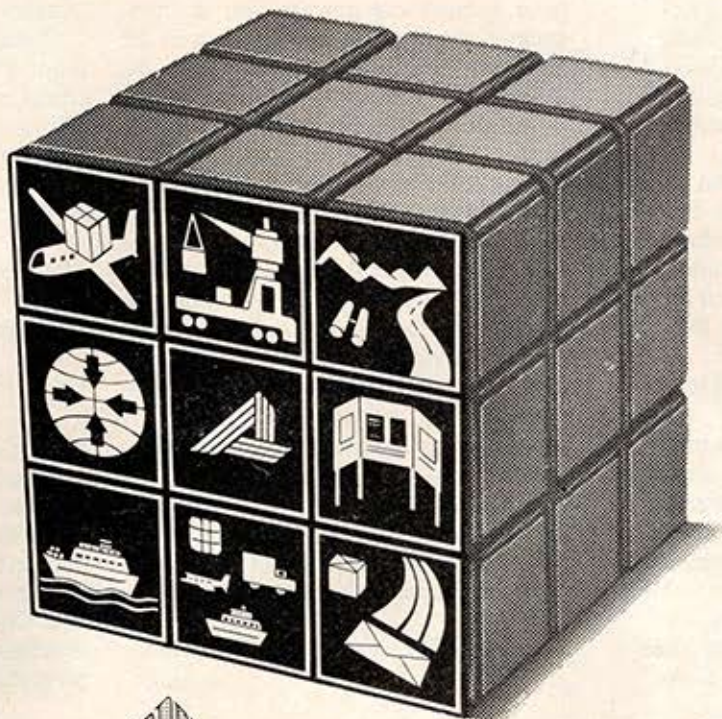
"The priests of Falsehood never show regard
For Thy Commands and Laws to love and guard
Our Mother-Earth, — Her servants they deceive;
These False Ones through false teachings, evil deeds,
At last into destruction shall be led;
In the abode of Untruth shall they dwell."

(*Vohu-Xsatra* 14 — Yas 31-14)

In reference to their comment about a marriage outside the community being a sin and regarded as adultery:

"These words I speak to maidens truly wed
and to their comrades young; hear them in mind,

We've got it all worked out for you



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And understand them deep within your
souls.
Bring down Vohu Man' in your lives on
Earth.
Let each one strive the other to surpass
In Asa's Truth, in Vohu Mano's Love;
Thus each one surely shall reap rich
reward."

(*Vahista-Isti* 5 -- Yas 53.5) is Asho
Zarhosht's prayer for marital bliss.
There is naught of censure and punish-
ment as now displayed by the two
priests. As for their opinion "in the eyes
of God neither is entitled to obsequial
ceremonies," may I ask from what source
Dastur Kotwal gets his information? And
through the command of which omnipo-
tent power he has been given the divine
right to proscribe or abrogate?

"Of all these sinners none doth under-
stand
What true and lasting progress might
imply,
This can be learnt from life on earth
alone.
The 'Fiery Test of Truth' proclaimed by
Thee;
The final end of sinners, Ahura,
Were best, O Mazda, judged by Thee
alone."

(*Ahunavaiti* 5.7 — Yas 32.7)

To those who pay respect undue and
acceptance unchallenged to the voices of
fundamentalists with fanatical selfmade
axioms and laws, I advise: Revise the
points of history. For historical events
have formed our present day circum-
stances and destiny. The conquest of the
Sasanian Empire and consequently the
Zoroastrian faith was not due to the
power of large armies nor powerful con-
querors. The fall of the Empire and the
change from our faith to Islam came
from within as the result of obdurate and
sterile laws and harsh religious rules en-
forced by the priests and clerical assem-
blies. The people were tired and unwill-
ing to carry out the restrictive, unprac-
tical and tyrannical laws set by mobeds.
Thus the enlightening teaching of Zara-
thushtra was obscured by bigoted or-
thodox rules. By enforcing antiquated fa-
natical rules, the best portion of the Zo-
roastrian community, namely our youn-
ger generation, will be lost to us forever:
"They surely are distorters of His Word,
Who as quite mortal sinners brand the
men
That gaze with clear eyes on Earth and
Sun;

E'en pious minds they twist towards
Untruth,
And poison thus our Spirit's nourish-
ment;
Tis their uplifted weapon 'gainst the
Truth."

(*Ahunavaiti* 5.10 — Yas 32.10)

Although born unto a Zoroastrian
family, today I am a Zoroastrian by
choice and not due to a birthright.
"I'll speak about the Greatest One of all,
Praising Him, Lord of Wisdom, through
His Truth,
And all the Lords of Wisdom that are
His;
May He through His Good Spirit hear
our call,
Through Vohu Man' my Faith to Him I
pledge,
He, in his Wisdom guides me to his
Light."

(*Ustavaiti* 3.6 -- Yas 45.6)

Good mind is an enlightened and pro-
gressive mind, the greatest gift, after life
itself, that has been given to mankind by
Ahura Mazda. Good words mark the
height of achievement in communica-
tion. Good deeds signify the basic quality
necessary for human beings' tangible
progress in life. Dastur Kotwal and

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Ervad Peer show none of the above in their practice of the faith of Zarathushtra.

I have been privileged to have known quite a few enlightened, progressive and assertive mobeds in my own lifetime. To them goes the greatest homage of all. They were indeed the prodigal children of our Teacher and Leader Asho Zarthosht. My point is only with those introverts whose shortsightedness condemns the genes of our next generation into degeneration, our progressive adults into revolt and the mature into senility.

Personally I knew him not. However, I pray in Zarathushtra's words for J. R. D. Tata to "gain Eternal Life as his reward;" and take the opportunity to express my most heartfelt condolence to his loved ones. As a Zoroastrian, albeit an Iranian one, I pay homage to the Tata family whose generosity of spirit has established them as "Veritable Zarthoshtis" by their humanitarian acts, by creating vast industrial, commercial and financial entities and founding educational institutions, through which thousands of human beings, Zoroastrian or otherwise, have benefited.

Ms FIROOZEH YEGANEHI

Middlesex, England

After reading about the controversy surrounding the uthamna of J.R.D. Tata, I am reminded of what a very great Parsi scholar wrote about the Parsis nearly 50 years ago, and which seems to be true even today. I quote: "Not only Hindus and Muslims, but also the 'highly educated' yet woefully uncultured Parsis have certainly grown more bigoted and more superstitious in the last 50 years: a living proof of this fact is the rank fetish worship at the holy well of Bhikha Behram in Churchgate Street that has sprung up and grown phenomenally only in the last 20 or 25 years. Another proof is the fact that only a year or so ago the Parsi Press was flooded with the solemn declarations made by Parsi MAs and PhDs of Indian and European universities, that the sacred urine of holy bulls was the very foundation of the Zoroastrian religion. The percentage of superstitious fools and fanatics is perhaps higher in this 'highly-educated,' but decidedly shallow-brained community than in any other community in India; and the number of 'highly educated' but utterly unscrupulous humbugs and hypocrites who sedulously encourage this su-

perstition, bigotry and fanaticism is also phenomenally large for so small a community."

It is, I suppose, beyond the comprehension of perverse and petty purveyors of organized religion, with all the mumbo-jumbo and bigotry attached to it, that J. R. D. Tata was too big a man to fit into any small slot created by organized religion. If ever there was a truly good human being, it was J. R. D. Tata who belonged to no one in particular and to all humanity in general.

There are occasions when I am ashamed to call myself a Parsi, and this is such a one.

What someone has said about Christianity may also be said about Zoroastrianism. I quote, "Christianity has been tested and has failed. Now the religion of Christ has to be tested." Can what these two priests are saying ever be the religion taught by Zarathushtra?

R. K. SANJANA

"You have to leave..."

I read Ms Firuza Shah's arguments against protesting to Saudi Arabia about religious discrimination against Mr

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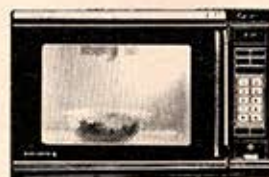
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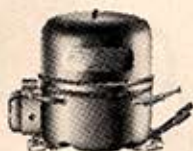
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Chichgar, and understand her concern for other Zarthoshtis working there ("You have to leave," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, January 1994). But, I am also concerned that if we keep quiet today, it will not stop victimization of other Zarthoshtis tomorrow, albeit piecemeal.

In Europe, when some Jews were mistreated, or killed, other Jews did not protest, justifying that the victims probably caused their own problem, and fearing that protest would unnecessarily put them and others in trouble. As we well know, when the time came for those who were silent to be victimized, other "safe" Jews did the same thing. Ultimately, all Jews were victimized, and the rest of the world was not even fully aware of their tragedy.

Mr Chichgar's is not an isolated case of discrimination against Zarthoshtis. In the 1970s when I applied for a position at the University of Riyadh, I was verbally told that since I was a Zoroastrian I would not get the position. My office colleague who was a Muslim from Pakistan with lesser qualifications, also had applied for the same category of positions, and he got the job. I also know of another Zarthoshti who had a similar experience.

We do not have to protest in an impolite manner. We can present it as a fact-finding inquiry, and in the process, educate the Saudi officials about our religion — that we also believe in one God, that we do not worship fire instead of God, that we consider fire as a sacred symbol, just as the cross is a sacred symbol for Christians, that we are not aligned with the government of Iran (with whom the Saudis have political friction), that Salman Farsi was a Zarthoshti adviser to prophet Mohammed who asked his followers to treat the people of his community with special favor.

Maybe, by having a dialogue with Saudi officials our community representatives could find out the real cause of their discriminatory attitude, and by educating them about our true beliefs and practices, we could convince them to respect our religion and people as friendly and non-threatening to Saudi Arabia and Islam.

MANECK N. BHUJWALA
San Jose, Ca, USA

20 years, and having had contact with the Middle East Arabian countries my attention was drawn by the Saudi London representative during an interview when he said, "I know your religion is 'Mazda Yasni'."

Learned Arabs know more of the Mazda Yasni religion than merely Zoroastrian which came later, historically. Hence, we should expound the "Mazda Yasni" themes in our Zoroastrian religion so that the Saudis and others in the Middle East can easily understand us.

R. P. BILLIMORIA
London, UK

"Whither, *Parsiana*?"

In response to Ms Soonu Jal's letter ("Whither, *Parsiana*?" Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, September-December 1993) I would like to clarify that the Holiday Programme for Youth (HPY) is not just confined to Bombay but also welcomes any Parsi youth from any part of the country who has just appeared for the Std X exam be it SSC, ICSE or CBS. Admissions are strictly on a first-come-first-served basis.

The admission forms for 1994 are available at the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) office and are also despatched to several schools, colonies and anjuman.

Ms BINAIFER BHARUCHA
Co-ordinator-HPY, BPP

"In defence of..."

Bernard Lewis explains how the Zoroastrians must have come to be regarded as the People of the Book by the Moslem rulers of Iran: "The *Quran* recognizes Judaism, Christianity and a rather problematic third party, the religion of the Sabians..." The inclusion of the not very precisely identified Sabians made it possible, by legal interpretation, to extend the kind of tolerance accorded to Jews and Christians much more widely, first to Zoroastrians in Persia, later to Hindus in India and other groups elsewhere (*The Jews of Islam*, Princeton University Press, 1984).

However, Wilferd Madelung of The University of Oxford, observes that even though Zoroastrianism thus gained the status of the "book religion" tolerated by the *Quran*, it "was unequivocally condemned as a false religion. Its founder was a pseudo prophet without any trace of divine authority. Muslims thus had no incentive to examine the Zoroastrian heritage for elements of religious values as they might search Jewish and Chris-

tian scripture and tradition ("Religious Trends in early Islamic Iran," *Bibliotheca Persica*, Columbia Lectures on Iranian Studies, Edited by Ehsan Yarshater, No 4). It is not surprising, therefore, to find that "There are significant differences in the fates of the three religions after the Moslem conquest. Zoroastrianism fared worst (op cit p. 17)," which would not be the case had Coorlawala's contentions been true.

Since Salman died before Ali became a Caliph, why would Ali sign a treaty decades later, especially when he spent most of his time barely managing civil wars? It is not surprising therefore that J. E. Saklatwalla regrets in his biography of Salman that Salman is "hopelessly ignored ... and where some mention is made, it is so deprecatory as to imply that Salman was a person of no consequence..." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th edition, has not his name even in its general index, the *Shah Namah*, written by a Muslim has not the least mention about him." The facts given by Saklatwalla in his biography border pathetically on the level of fable.

Since Coorlawala refers to Louis Massignon's book in French on Salman Pak, I had it reviewed and found only these facts: that he was born in Iran, was drawn to Christianity, went from place to place, master to master, to search a messenger of God, which he finally found in Mohammed. I have yet to find any reference to the 'Ahd-nameh there.

Ervad (Dr) KERSEY H. ANTIA
Illinois, USA

Edited by Amavaz S. Mama

Always remember



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Events and Personalities

A return to the PGH

On Jamshedi Navroze the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital (PGH) once again started to register patients to the relief of the community. A notice regarding the Hospital's return to regularity had been published in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* of March 20 and several patients were ready to admit themselves the following day.

Though there was no lockout at the PGH over the past two months, patients had been discharged or relocated in other medical centers by the management as they felt that labor indiscipline might endanger the health and lives of patients.

The decision to readmit patients is based on the detailed order of the Industrial Court dated March 17 which states "...it is also (the) obligatory duty of the workers to work in a peaceful manner and maintain normalcy in the Hospital so as to safeguard their employment and (the) life of patients," as informs a notice in the *Jam-e-Jamshed*.

The Court has also decreed that "the action of the respondents (the Hospital and its president Homa Petit) seem to be bonafide but (the) possibility of effecting lockout in future cannot be ruled out."

By its notice to the employees the management has reserved its right to take action against employees and to effect a lockout by due process of law should the labor resort to "indisciplined working, misconduct or non-maintenance of normalcy" in breach of the Court's order.

In the meantime, construction of the outer shell of the Hospital's new Jokhi wing is almost complete. Doors, windows, flooring are now on the agenda. The wing is architecturally designed to blend with the existing structure which is

a heritage building of the city of Bombay. It will house the X ray and pathology departments (including the blood bank for which the Food and Drug Administration's permission has been received) on the ground floor, four operation theaters plus one smaller one on the

ary 29 and 30) at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute (KRCOI) the other functions were held at the Framjee Cawasjee Institute hall. Throughout the week the KRCOI library hosted an exhibition of books and photographs from Iran whose pictorial beauty could not be denied.

On January 29, Mohammad Bagher Karimian, Iran's cultural counsellor in New Delhi, set the ball rolling with a recital of verses from Firdausi's *Shah Namah*. "I am very glad to be among my Zoroastrian compatriots and the Parsis of Bombay with whom we share a common heritage," he stated. Referring to the evolution of ideas, Karimian noted that Iran, being on the crossroad of world civilizations, has been able to borrow from many cultures and return the borrowings with value added.

"The Arabs of 1,400 years ago had not recognized the ability of Iranian intellectuals. They tried to humiliate the Iranians. When Firdausi composed (the *Shah Namah*) he was trying to overcome this prejudice and prove Iranian worth... Now, after more than 1,000 years he is remembered with honor, considered a part of world civilization," said Karimian.

"The rebuilding of Iran needs assistance and guidance from the Parsis... The people of Yazd have been the recipients of help from Parsis in the past — our educational and cultural establishments are proof of it, for example the clocktower and school of Pestonji Marker... Iranian Zoroastrians developed the culture and economy of the country along with their compatriots... (we have) educated our children on Zoroastrian principles... the Zoroastrians of Yazd have received many kindnesses from the



Parsee General Hospital: readmits patients Photo: Homiyar Mistry

first floor and an intensive care unit of 14 beds on the second floor. No alternate use for the areas which will be vacated by these services in the older structure has yet been planned. The project is steadily moving towards completion by October 1994 as requested by Hong Kong's Keki Jokhi who has been associated with the project after the demise of his philanthropist brother Shapurji Jokhi whose Rs 1½ crore donation first set the ball rolling in 1989.

Amavaz S. Manna

Iranian festival

The long history of Indo-Iranian affiliation was fondly recalled during the celebration of the Iranian Cultural Festival (January 28 — February 3, 1994) in Bombay. Except for two evenings (Janu-

representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran," noted Behram Demhari, one of a group of Zoroastrians who had flown in to Bombay to participate in the festival.

Demhari referred to an occasion when the residents of Mobarake village lined the route to Yazd holding flowers, sukhad, loban and glowing embers to see president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. Seeing them Rafsanjani stopped the cavalcade, shook hands with all the Zoroastrians, accepted the incense-filled smoke. They had never seen anyone of his status do this before and the gesture has kindled new hope among Zoroastrians in Iran, said Demhari.

Noted chief guest Sohrab Godrej, president of the India Iran Cultural Society, "We Parsis are among the favored people of the world because we have inherited two great cultures... (but) we must see things in the right perspective, not persist in outworn ideas."

After the tea break with snacks provided by K. F. D. Caterers an Iranian group song which had a semblance of jashan prayers was heard. Then followed local music from Iran performed by a group of Zoroastrian ladies to the accompaniment of a drumbeat.

Iranian feature films with English sub-titles, music and documentaries was the fare offered on other days. A collection of rare Persian books and manuscripts from the collection of the University of Bombay was also placed on display at the Rajabai Tower building, February 3-10, 1994. A.S.M.

Surat's Directory

Of the 2,823 individuals who feature in the *Directory of the Parsee Zoroastrian Residents of Surat*, the majority (53 percent) are in the 20-59 age-group. Twenty-two percent are in the 0-19 age bracket and a marginally greater percentage (25) are aged over 60. According to their entries, the seniormost resident is 95 years old. This age-wise tabulation of the Surat Parsis was presented in the first directory brought out under the aegis of the Zoroastrian Women's Association of Surat (ZWAS) in 1994.

In addition to the names, addresses, telephone numbers and ages, there is also one more column which specifies whether that individual is earning or studying. The inmates of the Nariman



Home have been listed separately.

"It has been compiled and published with the sole aim of enabling the local community to be in touch with one another," writes Ms Maharukh Zubin Chichgar, president of ZWAS, in the editor's note. "We hope you will recognize, appreciate and benefit from the great pains that have gone into making this *Directory*," she adds. To make the *Directory* more readable, a quotation appears at the bottom of each page which bears names.

To collect information on the residents of Surat and the nearby areas, notices were published in three newspapers appealing to the residents to send in the data. For the names that may have been

Damanias Airways: penalized for alleged safety violations

Marshall and some nuggets concerning well-known families of Surat by Rusi Besania. A list of the Parsi dharamshalas in India and several advertisements constitute the remaining pages in the *Directory*. Priced at Rs 15, the directories are available from ZWAS, C/o Yezdi N. Karanjia, 12/723 Rati Villa, Bhavnagri Street, Surat 395003. Phone: 26497.

Damanias: tarmac tied

Damanias Airways — "India's most preferred airline," according to a *Business World-Marg* survey in August-September 1993 — were grounded for six days by the Director-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) from March 10 to 15, 1994.

The punishment of the air taxi operator who offers 26 flights a day to eight destinations in India began on the airline's first anniversary and resulted in total chaos at Bombay airport even as the Damania staff strove to put stranded passengers on board other planes. Damania had applied for licence renewal on February 24. But the axe did not fall until 4 p.m. on the eve of its first anniversary

in the form of a five-page note from the deputy director general.

Penalized for alleged safety violations, the order as quoted in *The Times of India* of March 11, 1994 notes that on a Damania flight from Bombay to Delhi on December 19, 1993 safety announcements were made after the plane was air borne while passengers were served refreshments during the initial stages of the



Ramrao Adik inaugurating the photo exhibition during the Iranian Cultural Festival

invariably omitted and the printing errors, the organizers apologize with a request for feedback to enable them to rectify the mistakes.

The *Directory* also carries a historical profile on the Parsis of Surat by Dr Ratan

takeoff. The hostess did not have the time to fasten her seatbelt before the flight was airborne as she sat down with a tray of glasses on her lap. On a flight from Calcutta on January 3, 1994 an inebriated passenger became belligerent even as the plane was descending for touchdown at Bombay. The cabin crew was alleged to have served the passenger four or more pegs of whisky. The DGCA "regretted that there were no instructions to the cabin crew regarding the quantum of alcohol which could be served to passengers," notes *The Times*.

The suspension was for a period of one month from March 9 "or till they take positive steps and institutionalize a system to the satisfaction of the DGCA... whichever is earlier," according to the order.

Despite the mortifying birthday present Damania gamely carried through with their anniversary celebrations on the grounds of the Dadar Parsee Gymkhana. A large gathering snacked and cocktailed while watching internationally renowned dancer Astad Deboo and his troupe present a synthesis of western and oriental dance forms. Another attraction was a revue of avant garde fashion creations as the Bombay semi-finalists and the all-India finalists of the first Damania Designer Awards presented their creations in a variety of fabrics and styles. A third attraction was the lilting voice of Ms Jasmine Bharucha. The entertainment was followed by a multicourse, Parsi buffet.

Chief guest Balasaheb Thackeray, Shiv Sena supremo, had some words of encouragement and sympathy (as did several other prominent citizens) for his host and some barbed comments on governmental inequity. It was pointedly mentioned more than once that evening that crashes of Indian Airline planes had not resulted in the grounding of the Airline; that air taxi services on the other hand were being penalized for minor transgressions. Thackeray assured his support as he launched *Touch*, the airline's 48-page inflight glossy with travel and managerial articles, dietetic advice and a spot of humor.

A.S.M.

The Parsis for Navroze

Leafing through volumes at antiquarian booksellers some 18 months ago, Ms Jeroo Vakil-Mango, owner of the Danai chain of bookshops, stumbled upon a

1917 English translation of Mademoiselle Delphine Menant's epochal work on the community, *The Parsis*, first published in France nearly a hundred years ago. Enthused to publish a reprint of this rare, and now completely forgotten monograph, Mango pursued with her task. For the 1994 Jamshedi Navroze she brought out the reprinted edition of the book in two volumes.

The Parsis throws light on Zoroastrians in Persia, the exodus, and the population of the Parsis a century ago, "when old ways were still generally practised but striking social changes were taking place." The chapter on population should be of particular interest to the community today, when, as Mango notes, "one of the urgent topics of debate in the community has been the decline of the Parsi population."

Mango's work is intended to be a faithful reproduction of the translation undertaken by M. M. Murzban, a Parsi lawyer and scion of a distinguished family, who with his access to material in the Gujarati language had added prefatory notes and appendices to enrich and support the original text. Some statistical appendices, made irrelevant by the passage of time, though, have been purposely omitted by Mango.

Profusely illustrated with over 235



Commissariat (left) and Katgara

half-tone portraits and illustrations, *The Parsis* has a foreword by Zoroastrian scholar Dr (Ms) Mary Boyce who, incidentally, holds Mlle Menant in great regard, and had only recently dedicated her latest work on Zoroastrianism to her (Menant). "The Parsis," notes Boyce in her foreword, "is a mine of information both for Parsis themselves and for all others interested."

Those readers interested in gifting or possessing a copy of the reprint, priced at Rs 790, may contact Mango at Danai,

Mangalsmruti, 14th Road, Khar, Bombay 400052. Tel: 6487123. Homi Rogers

Chief of world foundrymen

At the 60th World Foundry Congress held at The Hague last year, Sorabji Hormusji Commissariat from India was elected president of the International Committee of Foundry Technical Associations (CIATF) for the year 1994, mentions a report in the *Indian Foundry Journal (IFJ)* of October 1993. In its 66 years of existence this is the second time that an Indian has been selected to preside over the affairs of CIATF on which 36 member countries are enrolled. The new president will be inaugurating the international congress on metal casting in Dusseldorf in June 1994 where the latest technology and equipment concerning the foundry industry will be on view, informs Commissariat.

"For us in India, his election to this august post is particularly welcome since the Indian foundry industry, in the wake of the recent liberalization policies of the Government of India, is trying to integrate with a globalized system of economy," noted the *IFJ* write-up.

Acknowledged Commissariat, "The liberalization policy of the Government has given a new impetus to the Indian foundry industry as (it) will now be free to compete and export (its) castings to any country in the world. However, it has also opened the floodgates of competition as India will no longer be the protected market that it was for Indian foundries."

Some of the energy saving processes that Commissariat introduced have meant a saving of millions of rupees on fuel oil and even earned him a shield from the National Research Development Corporation, states Commissariat. He has pioneered too the production of synthetic pig iron in India. Besides leading the Indian delegation to several international foundry conferences, Commissariat — a fellow of the Institute of British Foundrymen, member of the American Foundry Society and the Standards Engineering Institute — has also been president of the Organisation of Professional Executives and is a member of several sectional committees of the Bureau of Indian Standards.

The Mercury Iron and Steel Company Private Limited of which he is presently chairman and managing director, was a

partnership firm that he had started as a young science graduate in a rented shed using a furnace designed from more or less scrap material, he reminisces. Subsequently there were other companies that he promoted and on which he accepted directorship.

Commissariat makes time for community institutions too. He is a trustee of eight charitable trusts like the N. M. Wadia Charities, Motibai Wadia Charities; of hospitals like the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital in Bombay and the N. M. Wadia Cardiology Institute in Pune; and religious bodies like the Iranshah in Udvada.

Hall of Fame for Katgara

Director of Travel Corporation of India (TCI) Nari J. Katgara was recently conferred the Hall of Fame Award by the Indian Association of Tour Operators at its convention at Khajuraho. Founder president of the Travel Agents Association of India, the honor was bestowed on Katgara in recognition of his contribution to the travel industry, notes a press release.

Former chairman and presently committee member of the Bombay Custom House Clearing Agents' Association, Katgara has also been a founder member of the Air Cargo Agents Association of India. Sixty-seven-year-old Katgara, as mentioned in the handout, even enjoys the distinction of being the first Indian to attend the annual convention of the American Society of Travel Agents in 1949. On the Pacific Asia Travel Association he has served as secretary and vice chairman of its Indian chapter and was distinguished with a life membership recognition.

The family firm of Jeena and Company where he has served as director since 1947, and of TCI with which he has been associated since its inception in 1961 have gained from Katgara's tourism exposure over the years. His commitment extends to educating people in the travel trade for which reason he founded the Florimond Volckaert Benevolent Fund (India) 17 years ago, adds the release.

"Little volcano of talent"

On screen she may have been visible on Zee TV's *Body 2 Body*, *Soul 2 Soul* program. Or she may have been seen in certain different advertisements. On stage, she was the star of the show *Punch-A-Tantra*, a dance-drama from Ashwin

Gidwani's Graffiti Productions. This "little volcano of talent," nine-year-old Zenia Kersi Mirza, "acts beautifully, dances nimbly and sings wonderfully," as notes a write-up sent to *Parsiana* by Ms Aban Kekobad. In fact, *Punch-A-Tantra* was conceived by Gidwani with solely Mirza in mind, according to the release.

Her dance talent has been nurtured by Shiamak Davar. She learnt jazz ballet



Mirza: stage presence

from Davar who has now included her in his advanced group of dancers. Mirza was selected by the well-known music maestro Kalyanji for his Kalaveer Academy, the prestigious institute that trains talented children from all over India. Her histrionics have improved at Ms Rael Padamsee's Little Actors Club. In singing she takes lessons from Merlin DeSouza and Ms D'Cunha. Currently she has been signed by Suresh Thomas' Crescendo Music Company for a three-year contract and it is hoped she may cut a disc next year, her background is made known.

Mirza's prowess is not merely in extra curricular activities. A student of the J. B. Vachha High School, Mirza's academic career is also brilliant. Besides, she has won prizes in elocution too. Notwithstanding all these achievements, this "down-to-earth sweet child like all little girls likes to play with dolls and watch TV, time permitting," adds the release.

Lawyer's will undone

As per the will, neither the widow nor the three sisters nor the two brothers got any share from Noshir Dara Marshall's estate. Relative strangers like a grocer got Rs 2.5 lakhs and another lawyer, Nandir Modi, Rs 50,000. Largely the beneficiary of the estate was the deceased's lawyer Pervez Manekshah Rustomkhan who was also named an executor in the will along with another lawyer Dheeraj Mirajkar.

The details of this case were reported in *The Times of India* of January 12, 1994 which carried a gist of the Bombay High Court ruling where the bench — comprising Justice Madhav Pendse and Justice M. L. Dudhat — declared that it was not empowered to penalize lawyers. Since they come under the disciplinary jurisdiction of the bar council, the matter would be directed to the Bar Council of Maharashtra and Goa to examine whether any action was necessary against the advocates.

When the notice of motion was earlier brought up in the court of Justice Ajit Shah his verdict was "in my opinion the so-called will appears to be completely suspicious and fraudulent." He further pointed out that no other profession was subjected to such severe scrutiny as the legal profession. He refused to accept Rustomkhan's case even prima facie believing it would tantamount to negating the high traditions of the profession and allowing it to become the sorriest of trades.

In the course of his order the judge observed that the advocate had met Marshall only a few months before his 82-year-old client's demise on November 27, 1989. On the strength of the alleged will, the advocate had sought an injunction restraining the widow from dealing with the estate in any matter. Rustomkhan asserted that Marshall's widow Dina was estranged from her husband and lived separately, while records indicated that Dina had been attending to her ailing husband.

The executors then went into appeal with the division bench where too the judges ruled that if such wills were allowed to pass judicial scrutiny, people would lose faith in the judiciary. They also agreed with the widow's counsel who pointed out that lawyers like Rustomkhan were a menace to society and needed to be punished.

Compiled by Parinaz Gandhi

The gold lining on the silver screen

Porus P. Cooper

Millionaire cinema owner Alayar Dabestani discusses the compulsions of the business



Dabestani (right) has given cinema houses a new lease of life with vintage and first-run movies



Alayar Dabestani has a stake in 10 movie theaters, with a total of 21 screens, spread over four chains in the United States and Canada, with personal holdings that he puts at several million dollars and a payroll of more than 150. And he plans to double the number of screens in the next two years.

Compared to where it began in the mid-1980s — with one small discount cinema house in the Seattle suburb of Marysville — Dabestani's little movie empire looms as large now as a close-up on the big screen.

Three theaters in 1983, three more in 1988, more openings in December 1990, February 1991, November 1991, February 1992, April 1992, June 1993, November 1993... Dabestani, 50, lists them by name and date and with palpable affection, as if accounting for the birth of his son Ardeshir and daughter Nousheen.

When he and his partners refurbished and reopened the 50-year-old (and long shut) Admiral Twin cinema, considered a historic landmark in West Seattle, he earned widespread notice. "If you want to go to Congress, you will be elected," he said a local official gushed to him during the gala opening celebrations.

Proud though he is of his business accomplishments, he said he prefers to measure his success by a different yardstick: service to his community.

Of the 150 people who work for his various partnerships, he said, 25 are Zoroastrians, several of them refugees from Iran, all of them hired because he trusts implicitly in their honesty.

It's a sentiment shared even by his American partner of three years, Jack Clark, who is president of the National Association of Discount Theaters. "From what we have seen," said Clark, "an awful lot of the values people have in today's world are situational. We have found that among Zoroastrians there is a high honesty level. They run a business as if it is their own business."

Said Dabestani: "I'd like to offer any Zoroastrian family a chance. I don't really do it for the money part. I want to benefit my society," he said in a recent interview.

To needy Zoroastrian students in the land of his birth, Iran, Dabestani, joined by a fellow Iranian, Shahrokh Mirzarian,

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each year sends scores of prizes and scholarships.

Each year about 60 college and university students in Iran receive interest-free and collateral-free loans from him, he said. The only condition is that they pay back the money after graduation. It's an arrangement that he says was inspired by a man who similarly assisted his education so many years ago. "I am paying back my moral debt," he said.

But with his scholastic assistance he said he mainly pays tribute to two members of his family — his younger brother Bahman, who died an untimely death, and his late father Ardeshtir, who founded a village school for Zoroastrians in Yazd province and was a teacher there for 39 years. In fact, "Dabestan means elementary school," said Alayar Dabestani.

Along the way, he worked as an errand boy and public bath attendant, then rose to become a government economic official and after that an executive with a World Bank affiliate. He said he resigned both positions on matters of principle.

Dabestani has come a long way from his days as a college student in Canada in 1972. His assets, he said, were "minus \$200."

Finishing his MBA in 1974, he got a summer job with the British Columbia telephone company, which ended up paying him \$5,000, to purchase his thesis on inter-provincial migration.

Then he dabbled in real estate. "Frankly for three months I did nothing, but I learned a lot," he said. Mostly what he learned was that real estate was a dumb idea during an economic slump. He needed something with "cash flow," he said.

Enter Rahim Hashemi, an Iranian Muslim friend who owned theaters in Fort Lauderdale and Miami, Florida.

"I went there and looked at their operation and really liked it. I started to study the business; for practically over a year I did research on such things as the impact of video" on the movie-theater business, said Dabestani, who by then had relocated to Seattle, in the bracing northwest corner of the United States.

That's where he spotted the Marysville, a bankrupt operation. "Nobody liked to touch it; I saw potential there," he said.

The problem, he concluded was management. Joined by his wife, Gitty and



Ardeshtir and Nushleen help mother Gitty and father Alayar maintain their theaters in financial health

his son and daughter, Dabestani made a series of moves to try to return the theater to fiscal health: first-run movies, second-run movies, art films, foreign films.

They finally settled on first-run movies as the way to go. Luckily for them, Marysville also started to grow.

The seed sown in the Seattle suburb has swiftly grown into a conglomerate. In the movie-theater business, he said, "you get bigger or you get out."

The larger the chain, the greater its clout with movie distributors and other suppliers who control its lifeblood. Then there are the usual economies of scale: "The district manager or technician can take care of five theaters, or 15 of them," Dabestani said.

And always, he said, the greatest pleasure is derived from creating jobs. "You are creating a life for them," he said of the growing number of people who work for him. "I don't know how you can quantify that."

His impulse for reaching out to his fellow Zoroastrians has led him to play an active role in a series of local associations. He is a co-founder and president of the Zoroastrian Society of Washington State, a small group of about 70 who

most recently hosted a seminar on the subject of "Zoroastrian thought from Achaemenian to present times."

He still belongs to the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia and the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario.

His activism and philanthropic impulses draw rave reviews from one of his colleagues in the Washington State group, Behram Deboo. "No matter how busy he is," said Deboo, "he always tries to make our meetings." Deboo, a microbiologist in the Seattle area and secretary of the association, cited one instance in which Dabestani joined in lending emergency financial assistance to a handicapped Parsi student who suddenly found himself short of funds to complete his education.

Always, there are small favors — like the free movie tickets that came in the year-end greeting card Deboo received from his friend. Too bad, Deboo chuckled, he's not big on going to the movies.

Ms Bella Tata, who was chairperson of the 1992 North American Zoroastrian Congress hosted by the Vancouver group, said what was most striking about Dabestani was that his promises to help the community were "not just lip service." On the association's annual sports day, she said, Dabestani "will come all the way from Washington State (and) he will drag whoever he can find in his family to the event."

Dabestani's own voice betrays some dismay when he discusses the Irani-Parsi tensions that have ruptured the fabric of the community in certain places in North America.

He was the first Iranian to join the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia in Vancouver, he points out, and was a director there for five terms. "It's a very delicate question," he ventures of disputes elsewhere, "a very unfortunate event." In its formative days, there were similar tensions amid the Seattle association, he said, but no rift followed.

"What we do," he said, "is we try to accommodate both sides. We never let our anjuman be divided because of language. We fought that in Vancouver, too. How many are we to have different groups?"

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To party and participate

Admission to the Seventh All India Zoroastrian Youth Seminar was contingent on participation

Arnavaz S. Mama

"Trapped between rosy memories and future fears, the potential of Zoroastrian youth lies untapped." Mehernosh Dhunjibhoy

"Mama's boys? We are loyal to our parents. Someone else said we are disrespecting our elders. These are contradictions... Even in the past, not every youth was a Jamsetji Tata."

Jehangir Bisney

"Thank you parents. Because you brought us up in such a cosy world we can't face the challenges outside." Ms Feroza Motashaw

"If you try to examine the reasons for intercommunity marriages you might find that parents were responsible." Jal Unwalla

"Zoroastrian youth... depending upon institutions to provide us with homes to our satisfaction, begging for everything... Beggars are no assets." Ms Yasmen Dadrawalla

"With current attitudes will the community continue to command respect from others?" Rayomand Palkhivala

"No proper direction from elders." Farhad Divecha

"Young lives wasted because of lack of parental guidance." Ms Firoza Bajan

The debate — "In the opinion of this house today's Zoroastrian youth is an asset" — proved to be the highlight of the three-day Seventh All India Zoroastrian Youth Seminar in Dahanu (November 26-29, 1993).

Unlike the six earlier events the orga-

nizers of the Dahanu Seminar had ensured full participation for the youth. After the jashan and formal inaugural, mistress of ceremonies Zarine Bahmani announced the 16 competing teams with 14 members each, named after Iranian towns.

The organizers, The Young Zoroastrian Association of Dahanu (YZAD),

and the afternoons to games — crazy olympics, volleyball, handball, etc. At plenary sessions a youth representative of each team spoke on its behalf. This was followed by the comments of the panelists — noted solicitor Ervad Burjor Antia, the principal of the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute Ervad (Dr) Rooyintan Peer, freelance journalist and

khshnoomist lecturer Adi Doctor and Noshir Dadrawala, secretary of the Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy. In the ensuing open forum the panelists, all from the orthodox camp, responded to questions and comments from the house.

At the formal inauguration, after the jashan had been performed by Dastur Kaikobad Dastur of Udva-da, Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) president Jamshed Guzder referred to the community's youth as its most

precious asset. "The future of India is bright. (The country) will overcome its problems and the same applies to our community."

Guzder who is known to be deeply attached to the religion, his image as bon vivant notwithstanding, reiterated his faith in prayer, its "strong vibrations. Unlike addiction to drugs, addiction to prayer can lead from strength to strength." He appealed to the youngsters to start the habit. But, he cautioned those who might take him too literally, "*Khoda ni meher amthij nahi avé* (God's grace



Dahanu youngsters who performed a folk dance

had labored long and hard to ensure that delegates from various locations merged and harmonized into a new kaleidoscope of ideas and opinions — and succeeded. For the delegates, boarded and lodged at Sea Breeze Hotel, it became necessary to shelve hometown affiliations and concentrate on team coordination from the very first evening.

The program had been so planned that the mornings were devoted to discussion

cannot be had for nothing). You must aim for it, work at it." Supplementing Guzder's message Dastur added, "Go to the atash behram, agiary, etc. *Padshah na khoré thora bi lev* (soak in the radiance of the sacred fire), especially at the time of the boi when the mobed prays against evil. His strength will save you innumerable times."

During the plenary sessions in the shamiana in the adjoining field, one could not avoid a sense of déjà vu. As noted a speaker during the discussion on "Survival strategies for the present and the future," there was the same atmosphere, the same topics as last year. "How far are we going to put our words into action or will we be addressing the same topics again?" Basically the youth insisted, "Speak to us in language we understand... Why not tell a smoker it's bad for health? Why say the religion says 'no'?" The theme of "Religious knowledge (being) an important factor and key to survival" was oft repeated on the podium and off it, but enthusiasm was notably absent when the youth were suggested titles for self education in informal chats. As Dhunjibhoy noted on the basis of his observation of the 11 Parsis

in his city, Bhopal: "(There is) neither honest disbelief nor (committed) belief in Zoroastrianism... We merely exist as Parsis... A jashan means *malida* (consecrated sweet); a lagan or navjote means *patras* (banana leaves laid out for the ceremonial banquet) or food. I am conditioned to accept my religion as acquired practice (which is) different from natural, spontaneous feeling... Apart from merely following the Zoroastrian faith, we must be happy to be Zoroastrians." Intermarriage should be debarred fully or not at all; everyone so inclined should be allowed into the priesthood. The need, according to him was to "change the mindset, not merely laws."

Neville Marker held Parsis in the 50-60 age-group responsible for the community's declining numbers because too many of them had remained spinsters. Ms Tanaz Dadrawalla noted that marriages will be speeded up and result in a minimal three children "only when the girls' parents stop demanding barristers and doctors (as sons-in-law) and when the boys' parents stop their fear of the girl." Homing in on the problem of intermarriage Ms Khushnaz Ghadiali noted, "Men of other communities are

more hardworking, more stable, (provide) better security. Only a hardworking attitude on the part of the Zoroastrian boys would help this problem." Accepted Gev Satarawalla, "Forty percent of women marry outside. (We are) partly to blame. (Our) lethargy and lack of entrepreneurship has a dually detrimental effect on the community... If man is made in God's image, it's about time we did justice to the image." Ms Mahrukh Shroff had spoken of the community's dangerous "fear of failure," noting that "ultimate glory lies in rising every time you fall." It was said of the community, "People are never satisfied; they are always chasing some material goal," in contrast to the Hindu concern for getting the children married.

Commented Noshir Dadrawalla, "You've done us proud... (You're) thinking articulately, thinking right. Everyone is very clear in their mind that mixed marriages are detrimental to the community." Antia underlined the traditional attitude towards wearing *sudreh-kusti*: "not only as a symbol of the religion but as a shield — without it (you're fighting) a losing battle in life... Immense faith is necessary; (it) elevates the soul... understanding is not essential."

Addressing himself to the youths' crying foul against the discrimination practiced against Parsi women with non-Parsi husbands in contrast to Parsi men with non-Parsi wives, Doctor reiterated, "According to the religion there's no discrimination — both males and females have to go if they intermarry... If you create a disorder in nature it's a sin." Then, referring to the comments about the never married 50-year-olds whom some of the youth considered responsible for the community's depletion, Doctor, a bachelor, said, "You as youths should not be sermonizing... some of us missed the bus!"

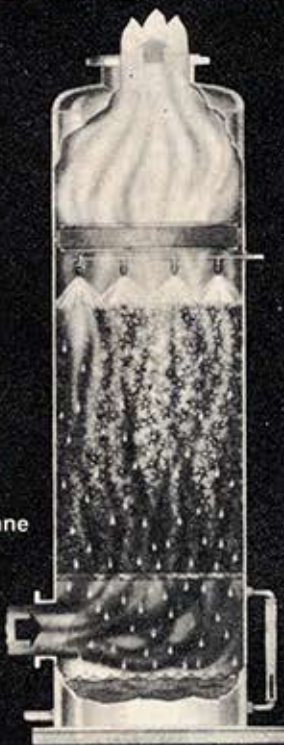
Peer urged the youth not to form opinions on "face value but on detailed study," advocating a knowledge of history, geography, sociology and anthropology to understand why intermarriage should not be condoned. The ratio between Parsis and Hindus is 1:10,000, somewhat equivalent to a pot of water in an ocean, said Peer, and pointedly referred to a Jewish curb on mixed marriages in the Gulf states as the number of



Above (from left): Peer, Noshir Dadrawalla, Burjor Antia and Doctor
Below (from left): Guzder, Banoogoshasp Irani and Aspi Irani

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Jews is said to be declining in the occupied territories. Antia also sought to shore up the anti-intermarriage lobby: "(There is) no breeding between Alsations and Doberman (breeds of dogs) because the results are not encouraging."

Antia, who had earlier cited the *Vendidad* to the effect that one who wears the sudreh-kusti, says his prayers and visits the fire-temple regularly would remain healthy in mind and body, had a query from Ms Nazneen Commissariat: "My father says the kusti four times a day, goes to agiary every day. He is still not a very healthy person. Can you explain why?" Antia invoked the *Vendidad* once more, adding "every law has exceptions." Dadra-wala intervened on behalf of his copanelist, pointing out by way of an analogy that the general concept is that smoking leads to cancer but there are many who smoke yet don't get cancer. The next day Kaizad Kotwal sought to justify Antia's stand. "The sudreh keeps the aura pure. (This leads to) good thoughts (and thereby) good health." But Commissariat seemed unconvinced.

"Ultimate
glory
lies in rising
every time
you fall"

The subject of the second day's plenary was "Existing religious institutions, teachings, practices and minor disciplines: how far are they valid in present times? Religious teachings and doctrines are of little use if no attempt is made to put them into practice in day-to-day life to a greater or lesser extent."

Quoting Dastur Kaikhushroo Kutar "Religion is to be thought, not taught; respect is to be commanded, not demanded," Zal Irani noted, "The cap is a basic necessity for Zoroastrians. Why is only the sudreh-kusti enforced?" Said Adarbad Motafram, "Religion is a rallying point for our miniscule ethnic group. Where more than 10 families settled, there were fire-temples. You feel secure when you are posted to places (which have) fire-temples and dharamshalas." But according to Rashid Antia "the simplest and easiest religion has become ridiculously difficult to follow." Mandatory kusti prayers (which entails the washing of hands, face and feet) four times a day was necessary "when man was unaware of hygiene but is unnecessary today... Can we categorically affirm that Ahura Mazda will not communicate with one who prays at home in his own words?" he challenged. Scoffing at the "pure blood" theory R. Antia asked, "What about our forefathers who married non-Parsi women and had children... what is wrong with accepting those who truly accept the theories of Zoroaster... Producing more children in Australia has relevance, not in India. We'd be better appreciated if we did not add to India's problems. (Adopt) from among the millions of disadvantaged children," he advised.

At the other end of the spectrum Adil Rangoonwala commented on the community's "self-destruction through indifference... Better to adhere to religion and lose a little than to lose religion and lose everything... (There's) nothing wrong with our practices though something may be wrong with the Parsi mindset." "What has been taught by Zoroastrianism has been corroborated by science but rituals are being eroded by modernists," complained Rohinton Siganporia. "Existing religious practices are a way of exhibiting staunch beliefs to

other communities... Discipline has to be followed to the fullest. Inculcate it in the child and the child will follow in the footsteps of his forefathers," advised R. Edalji.

One youth suggested a diversion of funds to revive old agiaries rather than build new ones. "Would Zarathushtra have liked us to pollute water as on Avan parab or burn scarce wood?... How to address the imbalance of religious infrastructure caused by demographic shifts?... What happens to mobeds when they retire?" they asked.

"Religion is not a matter of birth but of belief," declared Ms Havovy Wadia. "Whether we wear the armor (sudreh-kusti) and be proud of it or relegate it, is an individual decision... Our religion does not say change can't be made, (but) without faith there is regression. Let us use vohu mano... be noble and magnanimous in action."

The assembled delegates welcomed each forceful statement with impartial applause, leading Doctor to comment, "The audience claps for both sides (so we) don't know what their conviction really is." He urged the delegates, especially the ones who spoke in favor of ra-

tionality, to make a "scientific study of the pros and cons (of the religion) before coming to conclusions." It was Doctor's theory that the Parsi population never exceeded 1,20,000 between 1881 and 1991 and that it fell to 80,000 and 90,000 in the 1920s and 30s and that this "nature's balance" was maintained because of Zoroastrian pav mahal ceremonies and the talismanic foundation of the Iranshah. (According to the census of Zoroastrian population in British India there were 85,314 Parsis in 1881, 1,01,075 in 1921 and 1,08,988 in 1931. The peak of 1,14,890 was reached in 1941.)

Noting that other communities expect Parsis to study and know their religion, Peer said our ancestors were progressive. Trainloads of Parsi women travelled from Bombay to Thana when the railway was introduced. "Our forefathers were more foresighted. If they thought that intercommunity marriages were required, they would have provided for it... Social change can be assessed only in the third generation. We have to observe, learn and form an opinion whether change is essential."

"Religious institutions thrived up to the beginning of this century because af-

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ter that the mobeds were given a pitance," noted B. Antia. Recalling "qualified, highly evolved priests like Adarbad Marespand, Neriosang Dhaval, Meherjirana, he asked, "Where are they now? We have exploited such priests. Seeing my father's plight I decided I did not want to be a priest. Dastur Kaikobad's son is not willing to take up the gadi. We have to revive such priests. Only then will the community revive."

Mickey Mehta, the physical fitness expert who has established his own concern The Marathon Works, and who

chaired the debate, said he was "extremely impressed by the zeal of the youth present here...I've become a fan," but added that one Parvez Damania of Damania Airways, one Shiamak Davar, performer and founder of the Shiamak Davar Dance School, were not enough.

"Maybe some Zoroastrian youths are not an asset, but Dahanu Zoroastrian youths are," beamed YZAD president Ms Banoogoshasp Irani after the delegates had had their say and the opposition had triumphed. Damania Airways' chairman Parvez Damania had been introduced as

the chief guest in glowing terms. The young, informal Damania strode onto the stage to respond, "You guys have made me out to be very hot which I'm not. I'm a first generation entrepreneur. If we could do it, I'm sure everyone here could do it." Damania thanked the Parsi trusts which had enabled him to go for further education abroad. When, on his return, he found that bank loans were available to the "educated unemployed" with entrepreneurial schemes, Damania took one. "I wasn't scared of taking a loan...Take chances, take a risk; once the

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bank loans, it will keep supporting," Damania counselled the Parsi youth who he felt were becoming liabilities because of their overemphasis on security and contrasted them with Gujarati boys who "will start trading (while still) in college." Damania added that next year he would try and organize the youth fest in Ahmednagar.

Games in the afternoons, skits, songs and gags at the seaside campfire, were times for the young to unwind from the cares and scares of future leadership of a headstrong, argumentative community. But not entirely. There too the organizers demanded — and received — participation as the teams continued to nurse their overall scores. Only the final dance was free of care, without mandatory lights-out time. Those who danced too late however were not ready for the trip to Bahrot Caves the following morning. Not all the groups made it to the top either — but that's another story. The handful of YZAD members led by the redoubtable Banoooghasp Irani had seen the Seventh All India Zoroastrian Youth Festival to a successful conclusion — and they had done it their way.

The YZAD had accepted the responsibility of organizing the seminar with some reluctance but having done so they had busied themselves in laying out distinct guidelines along which the fest would be conducted. For the first time since the inception of the annual meet in 1987, letters to anjuman and delegate forms noted, "Those desirous of attending the seminar should be practising Zoroastrians — that is they should wear their sudreh-kusti at all times and should be willing to honor our Zoroastrian practices and rituals (smoking will not be allowed on the premises)."

The anjuman were also requested to ensure that 50 percent of the delegates would be between the ages of 16 and 21 years and 50 percent between 22 and 40 years. Energetically enforcing their right to restrict entry, each delegate had been instructed to send two photographs, one of which was used to make an identity card which the delegate was required to wear at all times. To eliminate glitches prospective delegates were informed that "each form bears a serial number and has been initialled by the organizers for iden-

tification. Hence it is essential that you kindly return, duly completed, the forms which are being sent herewith and not xeroxed or cyclostyled copies thereof." Furthermore, the delegates were asked to indicate on which of the two major plenary topics and which side of the debate they would speak, in which games they



Damania: "Take chances, take a risk"

would participate, etc.

With all that data pouring in, the organizers found themselves saddled with substantial homework to ensure an equitable composition of the teams. Their reward was to find near strangers locked together in producing statements that not only reflected the ideas of their teammates but were presentations that would score significant points for the team.

Reviewing the balance sheet of effort and achievement at the end of the event, B. Irani remembered how well attended had been the first meeting of Dahanuites. Thereafter hardly three or four people came, she noted with some asperity. Among those whose devoted help was available at all hours were Ervad Behram

Patel, their resident mobed, and his wife Bakhtawar and the indefatigable Pervez Irani. Work picked up after June and fatigue had been building up over the months: "Pervez and I, and occasionally other committee members, went two to three times a week, for several weeks, to Bombay to gather funds. Small places did not reply. Some places asked for a very large quota which we supplemented later, slowly. The problem of admissions accelerated in the last month. The impression we got was that Dahanu being close to Bombay the youths will be interested only in coming for fun and not to participate. Also, Bombay gets enough exposure. People from outstation need a chance to mingle with their community. Therefore we satisfied most places other than Bombay and Poona. Besides collecting money and allocation of forms, Bombay was my biggest headache!" laughed B. Irani in retrospect. "All said and done, in spite of all the headaches, if I've achieved anything for the good of my community, it's worth it."

When an exhausted, exhilarated Pervez Irani agreed to settle for a chat, he toted up the pluses and minuses of the Dahanu meet, particularly the change in format which led to the self-expression of the youth. He expects three or four marriages among Dahanuites as a result of the Seminar in addition to the four marriages known to have resulted from youth meets hitherto.

P. Irani had reason to be satisfied: "The attitude is changing. Now there is a responsibility to participate, cut down on tomfoolery. There was more interaction between (delegates from various) cities. Raising finance was the toughest problem but we didn't have any doubts. We received good cooperation from different anjuman (though) the local anjuman first thought it was a waste of money. They flatly refused support in the initial stages... But when they saw finance coming in and local youth joining, there was pressure on the trustees. The majority trustees... gave us... support but one or two blocked overt support. The increase in membership of the YZAD has led to a boost in local activity."

Coworker Ms Bakhtawar Patel complimented the teammates who had

continued on page 36

Driven by dance

Parinaz Gandhi

That she could and would dance her way through life came as a pleasant revelation to many who saw her perform her modern dance sequences on stage under the aegis of the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Bombay. Most surprised were those who had known Yasmen Sorab Mehta as an enterprising girl who had gone abroad to study hotel management but had opted out midway through the course to falteringly find her steps that would lead her to the dance floor. For they had then, when she was at the crossroads of her life, felt obliged to remind the 21-year-old girl that she was plump, had two left feet, and that professional dance would be far from fun. But, confides Mehta, the dance drive within her would not allow her to heed any advice, making her acquaintances speculate whether she had taken leave of her senses.

Ten years later, the spare fat replaced by grace and rhythm, the narrative of her life story interrupted with infectious smiles, Mehta candidly admits "I had more passion than common sense then."

Mehta does not choose to dwell on the gruelling hours of practice that she must have put in to master the dance technique. She only mentions casually, "In my seven years of professional training I had to put in double the effort put in by the others as I started so late." She gives full credit to her teachers at the Temple University in Philadelphia and later at the California Institute of Arts for giving her attention and painstakingly improving her style and caliber. Her professional life as a dancer is now being pursued in California. She was in India in October last to participate in workshops and to make arrangements for her dance





(Left) Mehta: perfecting her dance style
(Above) California Contemporary Dancers in action in *The Brides of Bernarda*

troupe that she plans to bring to India in 1994. As founder and director of the California Contemporary Dancers, the five-member all female troupe founded in 1990 that has earned accolades from other artists in the San Francisco Bay area, Mehta is keen that the first overseas trip made by her dance company is to her homeland.

Lest one dismiss modern dance as an art form which has no parameters and an undefined discipline Mehta clarifies, "Before you train in modern dance you must be extremely proficient in ballet. The strength and technique of ballet is very important. You must know how to stand, how to raise a leg, how to look..." And she turns her face with a poise, a

certain dignity that makes us aware that although she may be seated comfortably in her bedroom, the stage is where the artiste is. Where ballet differs from modern dance is in its vocabulary: "The way you use your body is very different. You must know how to jump, to lift, to roll without getting hurt." However unlike classical dance forms it allows freer movements and is more open to interpretation. "Every dance form has its own vocabulary; it's like learning another language." Just as you need a voice to speak a language, a dancer needs a certain inborn stage presence before the body movements can be synchronized.

Each evening the five members of her troupe come together for practice and rehearsal. For body tone and flexibility they join some other students at a class in ballet. Later they branch out to do their own production/rehearsal work. "By the time we get home it's 11.30 at night. I

As founder director of the California Contemporary Dancers, Yasmen Mehta draws upon the Indian milieu for inspiration

work them to the bone," says Mehta who mentions that when they are nearing a show they have to put in 15-16 hours of work a day. "But everyone's commitment and passion keeps us going... Very few can pursue dance on a full-time basis," notes Mehta. Each of her troupe members holds a separate job to supplement the income from dancing. Mehta herself is the production coordinator for City Celebration which produces the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival. So she enjoys a happy blend of on-stage and behind-the-stage work.

The all-female composition of her troupe was "a necessity in the beginning" because, as Mehta explains, "men being in high demand, there are few available to dance with. It forced me to look at dance without relying on its sexuality." Focussing on the thematic content she found was "very challenging." However, their work "was very well received" so now she is content, stating, "I'd rather have a good company than have men for the sake of men."

Through their productions the California Contemporary Dancers have touched upon varying themes: *Saffron* is based on the Indian festival of colors, Holi. *Pencil in the hand of God* is a tribute to Mother Teresa's selfless, saintly life. *The Brides of Bernarda* concerns the issue of dowry where a widowed mother has to handle five unmarried daughters each of them with their frustrations and expectations.

As related in *The Saturday Statesman* of July 31, 1993, in *Saffron* Mehta "has tried to put ritual, color and passion... The women take their stance in a Kathakali-like position, lift each other, toss powder high as they leap, smear it on each other and dance joyously."

Regarding her keenness to do a piece on Mother Teresa, Mehta confesses, "For many years I had wanted to do this work. It's like saying I want to do a story on God. I was too much in awe of doing justice to her till I saw M. F. Husain's paintings and saw how he had tackled the subject emotionally. The painting is so incredibly beautiful in its simplicity. You say what you want to say straight from the heart." And so, against the backdrop of *chattais* (bamboo mats) in different states of disrepair on which Husain's paintings were projected during the course of the production, Mehta conceived dance sequences. "I have never met Mother Teresa. But you can't help but know her and have her as part of your life if you are in Bengal. Calcutta was part of my growing up life," says Mehta who had schooled at Dehra Dun's Welham School before she studied catering at Bombay's Sophia Polytechnic and hotel management in England.

Another of her dance creations that she warms towards is *The Brides of Bernarda*, based on the tragedy written by the Spanish playwright Federico Garcia Lorca. The story revolves round a widowed mother who can afford the dowry for only the eldest of her five daughters. And when the eldest daughter is married to the youngest's lover, there is anguish all around. Sexually and socially repressed, the women unleash their frustrations at home. "Floor rolls, off-center balances and sudden thrusts express the emotional intensity... In some sequences dancers react with head rolls as if slapped in the face," notes a dance preview in one of the local publications there. "In Indian dance, 50 percent of the technique taught has to do with facial expressions that create this magic on stage. In ballet and modern training, that is not stressed as much," points out Mehta.

Taking on an average seven to eight months to produce a new work, Mehta says it is like molding clay into a pot. They keep improvising a sequence until it is just right. "It is amazing how one seed germinates. At the end we say, 'God, it took us eight months to do this!'" we get a brief into the painstaking work undertaken. And to get a better insight into the story, for certain works the troupe members also undertake theory classes like they did in Spanish history in the case of *The Brides of Bernarda*.

Since Mehta can empathize so well with the characters in *The Brides of Bernarda*, we ask her whether she herself

has experienced such sex discrimination, to which she responds, "I have never felt that personally though I have seen that happen all around me. My family and my community have given me the same treatment as I would have received had I been a male... great education, great upbringing, allowed to think for myself."

After the death of her father Sorab who was working as an executive in a chemical company, people mistakenly assume that there must be a brother whom this

***"We take success
in our stride as also
failure and keep
trying to do our best"***

spinster dancer can depend upon. Presently she is in no hurry to find a marriage partner, having even convinced her mother Mehru that her career should get priority as of now.

Mehta feels strongly about women in the community being denied the privileges accorded to males if they marry out. "Why shouldn't my children, of my blood, have the same privileges if a Zoroastrian male's children can?" she reasons. "Where's the community going to? It's like suicide. Ours is one of the most beautiful, most enveloping religions. Why should we think so narrowly? What kind of religion is that if it says 'Don't spread the good word. Keep it among yourself.' I am sure the younger generation thinks the way I do. I don't know when and whether I'll make a dance on this. I just might," she declares. She still cherishes beautiful memories of the wedding ceremony of her sister Naushad in New York who is married to a non-Parsi. On the occasion were recited Zoroastrian and Christian prayers. And Mehta recalls her happiness when the Christian priest's benediction, following the translation of the Zoroastrian prayers, seemed to reiterate the same message. To keep in touch with community happenings Mehta goes to the Dar-e-Meher in San Jose which is one-and-a-half-hour's drive away.

In addition to the Zoroastrian religion the spiritually inclined Mehta finds solace in the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda. Yoga has become a habit with her as also vegetarianism. She refers to the change in her outlook because of "his teachings that surpass all religions. It has taught me how to deal with failure, re-

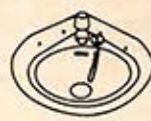
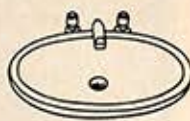
jection, believe in what you are, be objective — not emotional and personalized. This philosophy has worked wonders with our group. We take success in our stride as also failure and keep trying to do our best, never mind what." And she finds that this philosophy, of giving to the best of one's capacity and being happy about it, has helped them "tide over jealousies, politics and the race for money in such a competitive field."

The funding for her own group is possible because of her contacts with Asian businessmen and other sponsors who extend aid. This is part of her job as "manager, coordinator, choreographer, dancer and everything else," of her troupe. Her sister in New York also helps raise resources. In her independent capacity she enjoys participating in the brilliant tabla player Zakir Hussain's Rhythm Experience every year — a festival when against the sounds of percussion instruments she performs modern dance, and Hussain's wife Antonia Minnecola does Kathak. It is a fusion that enthralled Mehta. When she needs a break from dance she turns to hiking, squash, reading.

Mention anything Indian and Mehta yearns to return to her homeland where she is "spoiled and indulged in" during her brief stays. Friendships too are renewed as can be evinced from the phone calls she receives and the gentle tone in which she asks each caller, "Sweetie can I call back later?" As soon as she can afford to she will plan her next trip here. The present journey succeeded in getting organizers and sponsors for her troupe that she proposes to bring with her next year. Funds now only remain to be collected for their air passage but Mehta is hopeful things will work out.

When in India however, she misses certain conveniences like a computer without which she feels handicapped. Her frantic search for certain photographs yielding no results she summons her mother's aid and even playfully chastises her, "You mean to say you keep no photographs of me?" Used as she is to a systematic memory file she is aghast at her own functioning in India saying, "I am not always so disorganized." Her output may be more efficient in USA but for her inputs she depends on India, particularly "the colors and textures of life, the hibiscus, the palm trees, the *boomlawalas* (fishmongers), the *kachrawalas* (garbage collectors), the Durga and Ganpati festivals..." As she happily submits, "My inspiration comes from my life in India..."

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Surface evidence

Dr Roxana Irani's doctoral thesis on early Zoroastrian settlements in India indicated the need for further research

Homi Rogers

Little research has been done on the early history of the Zoroastrian community in India and the structures built by them. Even their date of arrival on the Indian subcontinent remains controversial, and much of their later history shrouded in ambiguity.

One of the main reasons for this lacuna is that there exists no record of the many events in Zoroastrian history on Indian soil. The only source material available to the community is a work written by a priest in 1699 with the purpose of recounting the community's advent, and the events that followed, in the Zoroastrian almanac. But the *Kisseh-i Sanjan* is more a literary piece than a historical document, as has been established by several commentators.

In such a bleak scenario, the appearance of a doctoral thesis on the early settlements of Zoroastrians on the west coast of India, is cause for cheer. The thesis is the work of Dr (Ms) Roxana Shapur Irani (33), of the Deccan College, Pune. Irani, who has been researching this subject over the past six years after completing her MA in 1986, has been awarded a doctorate and commended for her 'good work' by peers like Dr A. P. Jamkhedkar, director, Archaeological Survey of India, Maharashtra Circle.

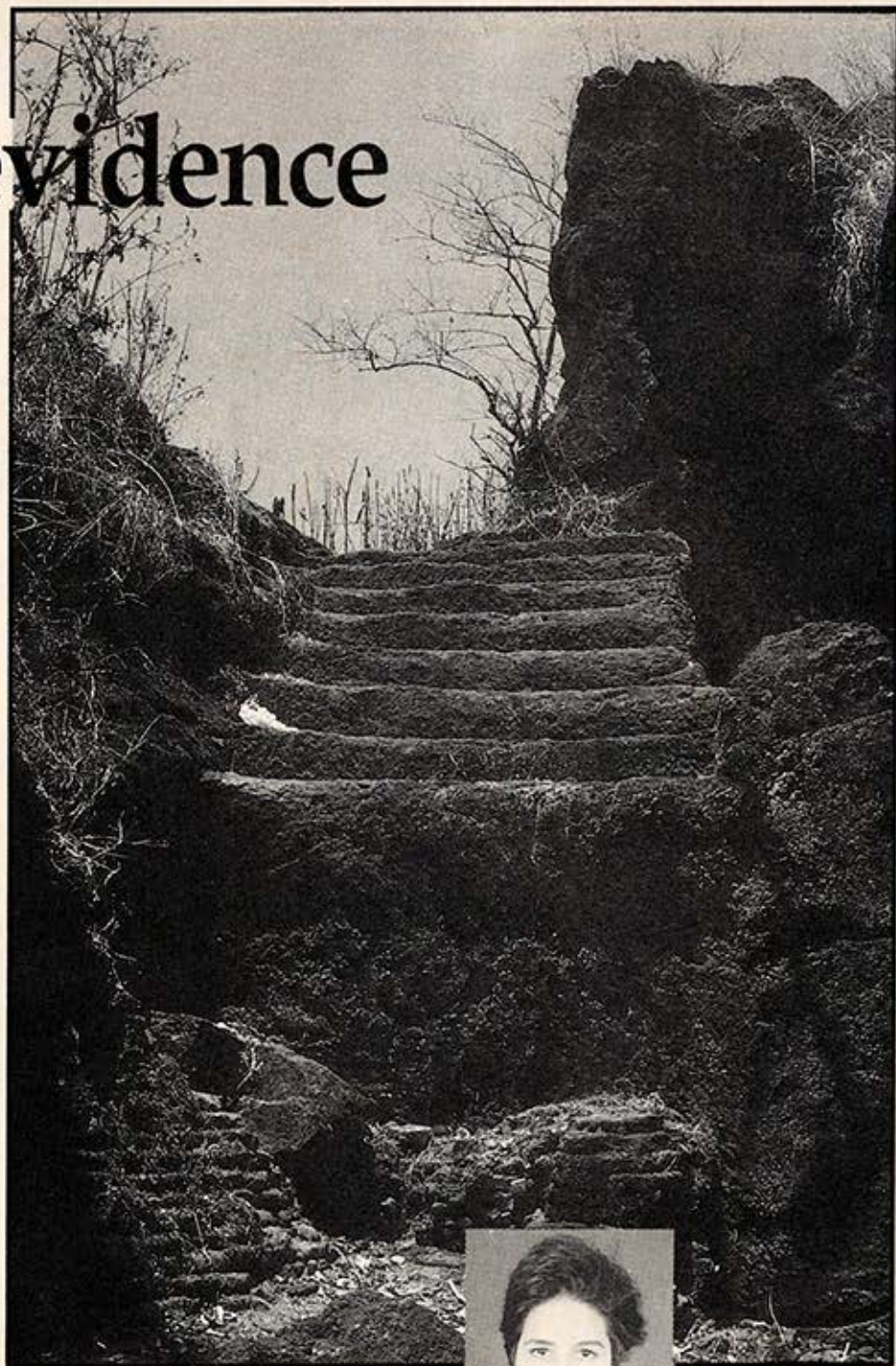
The K. R. Cama Oriental Institute (KRCOI) invited Irani to present her thesis to the community at a lecture-cum-slide-show meet held on December 3, 1993 in Bombay. From the tenor of the lecture, however, it was apparent that considerable research remains to be done

to establish the date of the Zoroastrian diaspora, and the community's subsequent history in India. Hearteningly, Irani is working on it, as she informed us during the lecture. At the same time it was rather disconcerting to learn that the scope of the study of the early settlements on the west coast has been restricted to Bahrot, a mountain top near Sanjan where the Zoroastrians fled and preserved the Iranshah for 12 years; and to Ajmalgadh, where the holy fire was sheltered for the next 14 years. The ex-



Irani (inset) on the Bahrot trail

istence of Ajmalgadh, a fortified mountain five kilometers from Vansda, inaccessible by road and even today an arduous trek, breaks new ground for few Zoroastrians are aware of this place. Yet it is difficult to accept that Irani could provide dates and historicity to early Zoroastrian events in India on the basis of her study of just these two places where the





Bahrot caves: need for preservation

community spent not more than 26 years of their total existence.

What is also rather disappointing is that despite her study for nearly a decade, Irani has not been able to date the Bahrot or the Vansda years, and she is still in the process of discovering whether the much-flawed *Kisseh-i Sanjan* is fact or fiction. H. E. Eduljee's work on the monograph, for which Irani seems to have a sneaking admiration, was published by the KRCCI (see "The Sanjan Saga," *Parsiana*, July 1992) and has already shed much light on the work. But would an archeologist lay much store on such a riddled tale? Or on the fanciful story that a tunnel from the top of Bahrot leads straight down to the coast? Can a 'walking' mango tree in Sanjan, said to have been planted by the first Zoroastrians, provide the date of the community's landing there?

Irani's lecture revealed that she hopes to find in them relevant answers for her post-doctoral work. A certain Mr Fitter had mentioned the tunnel in 1917, which Irani hopes to open up despite the tremendous effort required for such an enterprise. A member of the audience cautioned against such an exercise, pointing out that some years ago a similar exploration had to be abandoned when the Adivasi lad sent on it returned after venturing down a few feet and encountering nothing but darkness and, probably, a snake pit.

The 'walking' mango tree has apparently left behind roots as stumps as it 'walks': the farthest stump is hence said to be capable of yielding a date, based on its age-rings (a reference to the carbon-

dating method used by archeologists).

Irani's information on cave structures atop Bahrot, and her assumption that the Iranshah was enthroned in one such cave, based on the evidence of water channels and platform, was not enough to convince us. Not much new evidence was provided in the talk, her slides and text sounding surprisingly like the information already available to the community through a thin booklet published by the Free Food Service Charitable Trust which used to conduct regular pilgrimages to Bahrot.

The subject of early Zoroastrian settlements on India's west coast could lend itself to a fascinating treatise. It is believed that the Parsis resided in Thana, near Bombay, in the eighth century; and some two centuries later built fire-temples in Cheul (modern Revdanda, just 20 km south of Bombay by sea). Irani's lecture did not touch upon these or other early Zoroastrian settlements at Broach or Cambay. She has not been able to date the tower of silence in Diu, believed by many to be the first landing point in India of the fleeing Zoroastrians. A member of the audience also informed a surprised Irani of a tower of silence at Talgaon, just a little beyond Saronda near Nargol, which he stated was said to be over 800 years old, and which could provide more information for Irani's post-doctoral work.

Irani's continuing study highlights the scope for further research in this area, based on the available historical data, literary works and travelogues, inscriptions and other related sources. She also has permission to excavate at Ajmalgadh

which lies in a reserved forest. According to Irani the peaks of both these mountain retreats are so sited that one cannot see the top from the bottom of the hills.

Two interesting observations were put forth by Irani in the course of her hour-long lecture. One was that neither the fire-temple nor the tower of silence existed in ancient Iran, and were features introduced by the community only on their advent in India. Corpses were tied and left on hill tops for disposal by animals and the elements in Iran. The other was that fires were kept in the open where people assembled and worshipped, till post-Sassanian times when fears of persecution caused members to hide them in caves.

Irrespective of whether Bahrot or Ajmalgadh hold the key to Zoroastrian chronology in India, it is now vitally important that these two sites be preserved. Irani's statement that Bahrot, which she has visited annually for the past seven years, will collapse if no preservation is undertaken, is cause for concern. The mountain caves are a tenuous link with our past.

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Iranian pilgrimage...II

Achaemenian glory suffuses
the deserted sites of ancient cities

Ardeshir B. Damania



In the course of his work with the UN funded International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA), plant ecologist Ardeshir Damania made a professional visit to Iran. It also enabled him to visit sites that are a part of Zoroastrian history and legend.

In this issue Parsiana publishes the second part of Damania's account of what he saw there. The first part, published in Parsiana, February-March 1994, featured a report on Sasanian shrines and the condition of Zoroastrians and their institutions in and around Yazd.

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Pasargadae, the palace and tomb of Cyrus the Great, the first dynastic capital of the Achaemenian Empire, lies some 100 km north of Shiraz on the main road to Isfahan. They say Cyrus chose this site for his capital because it lay near the battlefield where he was victorious over Astyages, the king of Media (550 BC).

There is no signboard indicating where one must turn off the main road to reach Pasargadae and I almost missed it. Turning back on a hunch that the site should be nearby, I found myself standing at the gates of Pasargadae.

There are only a couple of guards looking after the historic site. The tomb of the founder of the Achaemenian dynasty who reigned from 559 to 529 BC was constructed out of huge white limestone blocks. But no photograph, however well taken, prepares one for the

majesty and the simplicity of the monument! The tomb faces west and is so constructed that in the evenings, just before the sun sets over the hills, the rays penetrate the tomb and light up the otherwise gloomy interior.

Even after more than 2,500 years the sight is awe inspiring to say the least. The fact that the tomb was looted several

times; the fact that the plaque with the words, "O human (man), whosoever thou art, from wheresoever thou comest, for I know thou shall come one day, I am Cyrus, King of kings, who founded the empire of the Persians. Grudge me not therefore this little earth which covers my dead body," was removed (or obliterated) long ago, does not rob the site in any way of its grandeur.

Legend has it, that Alexander asked that the tomb be broken open for his inspection and aimed to despoil it. But when the Macedonian read the above inscription on the tomb tears flowed from his eyes, and instead of destroying the tomb he ordered his Greek officers to tidy it and look after it while he proceeded on further conquests and marched towards India. The Greek officers, in whose care the tomb was entrusted, had seen a couch made of pure gold and the coffin draped with richly embroidered cloth, as well as silver and gold vessels and jewelry kept within the tomb when it was opened on Alexander's orders. After Alexander left they could not resist entering the tomb through the narrow door and looting it for personal gain. However, the golden couch was put inside the tomb by its builders before the walls and the narrow entrance were constructed and hence the Greek looters could not remove it although they carried off everything else. Finding their



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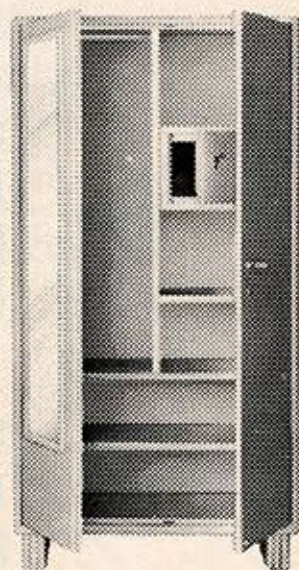
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plans to carry away the golden couch frustrated, they broke open the coffin and the embalmed body of Cyrus was left lying inside the tomb in disarray.

As we all now know from history, Alexander's soldiers after many conquests refused to fight further as they were thousands of miles from their home country and very tired. They beseeched Alexander not to go beyond the Indus river. While returning from the India campaign Alexander unexpectedly once again stopped at Pasargadae. And when he saw that his orders were disobeyed he flew into a rage. He ordered that Cyrus' body be replaced in the sarcophagus and duplicates of the stolen articles be found and replaced as far as possible. He then ordered that the door of the tomb be cemented and put his personal seal on it.

However, in later centuries the tomb was looted once again and today it is quite empty. Rumors have it, according to the local guide, that the actual body of Cyrus (and later his wife's) was interred in the roof of the tomb, and the body inside the tomb was that of another person — a decoy devised by Cyrus' successors for they feared grave robbers would loot

the tomb one day! At the extreme southern edge of the site, a rock-cut road indicates the course of the ancient highway between Pasargadae and Persepolis. After Darius I (the Great) came to the throne in 522 BC the capital was shifted to Persepolis.

One kilometer north of the tomb are the ruins of the once mighty palace of Cyrus the Great. Only a few pillars, one or two with some writings, and two or three carvings on black stone remain. A wall, of what is supposed to have been a fire-temple, is propped up by means of an iron scaffolding. At a distance from the palace, on a low hill, is a raised platform made of stones, the remains of a large building (perhaps an Achaemenian treasury which Alexander plundered in 330 BC). Nothing else survives; the surrounding plain and rolling hills are as silent as ever, with small ruminants grazing peacefully.

Naqsh-E-Rostam

Fifty-five km from Shiraz and seven km from Persepolis is the royal cemetery of Naqsh-E-Rostam (literally "Picture of Rostam," the mythical hero who is said to be depicted in one of the carvings at

the bottom of the tombs). Here, carved at a height of 50 m into a solid rock cliff, are the tombs of Xerxes I, Darius I, Artaxerxes I (Artaxerxes or son of Xerxes also "Artakhshathra" in classical Persian) and Darius II. All the tombs have been carved in a similar fashion. At the ground level can be seen carvings of various Achaemenian kings in battle or with the conquered paying homage. Darius I's victory over the Greeks is also depicted. About 30 m above the ground, a door is seen to lead inside each of the tombs. Above the tomb are carved pictures of the king standing on a three-stepped dais paying homage in front of a fire placed on an altar. The tombs have been looted centuries ago and it is doubtful if anything of value or the bodies of the kings remain inside. The guide could not offer a satisfactory explanation on the latter point (he was merely there to collect the admission charge).

In front of the tombs is a small square building, which has been described as a fire-temple where a priest constantly prayed for the dead and worshipped Ahura Mazda. But others say it was a place where the skeletal bones of wives and other relatives of the kings were in-

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tered since they believed in exposing the dead bodies to animals and birds of prey. The kings, although Zoroastrians, themselves apparently did not practice exposure and preferred instead to be embalmed and buried in tombs.

Persepolis

Situated 57 km northeast of Shiraz on the road to Isfahan, in the province of Fars, stands the second ancient capital of the Achaemenian kings of Iran. The Greeks named it Persepolis after "Parsa" the old name for Persia and "Polis" meaning city. It is located near the confluence of two small rivers, the Pulvar and the Rud-e-Kor, which used to keep the city supplied with water. Construction began sometime during the reign of Darius I 522-486 BC. It was a part-time royal residence for it was hot in summer and cold in winter. At other times the effective administrative capitals were Susa, Babylon (the modern Baghdad) or Ecbatana (the modern Hamadan). It is said that the Greeks were unaware of the existence of Persepolis until the conquest of Alexander. He plundered the palace in 330 BC and set fire to the palace and library in a fit of intoxicated rage, in

revenge for the burning of Athens by the Persian armies of Xerxes in the past. It is said that Alexander requisitioned 3,000 camels to carry away the treasures from Persepolis. The Sasanian kings did not rebuild Persepolis (perhaps because it was too badly damaged) but set up a new capital in the nearby city of Istakhr.

Similar to Naqsh-E-Rostam, are three tombs in the rock cliffs behind Persepolis. The two completed ones belong to Ardeshir II and Ardeshir III, whereas the uncompleted one may have been for Darius III, the last of the Achaemenian kings who was overthrown by Alexander.

The best time to visit Persepolis is in the spring or autumn and the beauty, even after its massive destruction, at sunrise is breathtaking. The hill on the western side prevents the site being lit up by the setting sun. One can only imagine how grand it must all have been in its heyday when the 100 pillars of the Apadana and other palaces were covered with gold and silver plating on which writings glorifying the Achaemenian dynasty were inscribed. The writings also mention the contribution made by each

king to the expansion of Persepolis exhorting Ahura Mazda to preserve the buildings.

Hamadan

At Hamadan can be seen two Achaemenian writings carved into solid rock about 15 km from the city center. A waterfall fed by the melting snow and a forest grove are located very near to these carvings, almost as if the visitor was intended to relax and meditate on the thoughts expressed. Today it has become a picnic spot, complete with aerated-water sellers and eateries.

There are two blocks of carved writings, one slightly above the other. The higher inscription dates to the reign of Darius the Great, and the second one to that of his son Xerxes. The first one translates as "A great God is Ahura Mazda, Who created this earth, Who created heaven, Who created man, Who created happiness for man, who made Darius king, the one King of many kings, the one commander of many commanders, I am Darius, king of kings, the king of countries having many (types of) men, the king of this great earth far and wide,

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the son of Vistaspa, an Achaemenian."

The second block, at a slightly lower level than the first, reads similarly as follows: "A great God is Ahura Mazda, the greatest God, Who created this earth, Who created heaven, Who created man, Who created happiness for man, who made Xerxes king, the one king of many kings, commander of many commanders, I am Xerxes, the great king, the King of kings, the king of countries having many (types of) men, the king of this great earth far and wide, the son of Darius, an Achaemenian."

Hence it can be seen that Hamadan was of great importance in Achaemenian times even though it is far from Persepolis where similar writings can be observed on the walls of the palace which was completed by different kings at different times.

Epilogue

Every Parsi, if funds are available, should endeavor to make a trip to Iran and visit the small villages and towns such as Ardakan, Yazd, and Kerman and see how their fellow Zoroastrians live today. Only then will we realize the compelling circumstances which forced our ancestors to take the big decision to migrate and seek refuge in India. The major reason for this move was not economic, but to save our religion and culture which was severely threatened at that time. We, as the descendants of the courageous group of Zoroastrians who made the dangerous voyage in boats, have a certain obligation and duty to continue to preserve our religion and culture. Those who migrate to western and other countries for economic reasons (or as they say for the better education of their children), and those who marry outside the community, do not further this cause for which our ancestors thought it worthwhile to make so many sacrifices.

Parsis, wherever they may be, should make a pilgrimage tour of Iran, look in the faces of poor and hardworking agriculturists like Goolbanoo and Shirin eking out a bare living on subsistence farming and then see if it does not move them to thank Ahura Mazda for the refuge we obtained and the prosperity we gained in India. Instead of abandoning the community, our culture and our strongest settlement, Bombay, we should strive to keep our faith, strengthen our religion, and enrich our adopted country, as our stalwarts did in the past. That is our only salvation.

TO PARTY AND PARTICIPATE

continued from page 23

nurtured the project all the way, particularly the public relations acumen of B. Irani and the untiring field work of P. Irani, shying off from any overt recognition of her own contribution to the event.

In the final analysis, YZAD's major achievement in the words of P. Irani was "There was more discipline, no unruly crowds as at Ahmedabad. Our tougher stand paid off."

The FOZYA forum

Porus Karanjawalla was unanimously elected president of the Federation of Zoroastrian Youth Associations (FOZYA) at its annual general meeting in Dahanu on November 27, 1993. Sarosh Palakhivala as vice president and Jehangir Bisney as treasurer were also elected unopposed to concurrent two-year terms. The only contested post was that of secretary where Dahanu's Pervez Irani was opposed by Ms Shiraz Khambatta of Bombay but Irani sailed in with eight votes to four and one abstention. The committee members are Nozer Kasad, Sorab Anklesaria, Homi Gandhi and Porus Debara, reelected in absentia.

The Godrej Foundation's donation of Rs 5,000 was recorded and the 11 members present agreed that Ismail Associates, the firm auditing FOZYA accounts on an honorary basis, should be requested to continue doing so. A plea was made that the surplus funds on the conclusion of the youth fest be credited to the FOZYA account. The plea hung in the air for a while before it was quietly laid to rest as no youth group [or anjuman in the case of the parent body, the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI)] has seen fit so far to part with the residual surplus of the funds collected to finance the annual functions.

The tussle for admission to the Dahanu fest had been strongest between certain Bombay based individuals and the Dahanu organizers. Khambatta now brought up the issue of Bombay bodies not receiving an adequate number of admission forms. Though Karanjawalla declared that FOZYA had nothing to do with the matter, Khambatta was determined to establish the basis for the quotas. "There could be infrastructural, manpower or finance problems," reasoned Karanjawalla. "If there is limited capacity, who do you give it to?" "The first

applicants," countered Khambatta. "Anyone could apply to attend a youth fest. The BPP (Bombay Parsi Punchayet) said they received 20 forms. Seventeen were used and the rest returned... Once in a way we get the chance to meet. We're willing to pay; we shouldn't be left out. Here there are people from Bombay who've come as delegates from other cities. It was also said that someone who has been four times can't go... If we offer advertisements they shouldn't say we don't want anyone's help," Khambatta cited a litany of complaints. Snapped Ms Banoogoshasp Irani: "If you're giving me an advertisement as a bargaining ticket, I don't want it."

FPZAI secretary Keki Gandhi, the youths' favored symbol of authority and comfort, spread the proverbial oil over troubled waters: "It is peoples' impression that at a youth conference every youth has the right to attend. It is not so. It is the inherent right of the host to invite whom they want. What you are (asking for) is proportional representation. But each host anjuman has its own concept of organizing. The system of allocation belongs to the host. And the need of the mofussil centers is much greater. Therefore Bombay's quota was limited to 20 — 10 to the BPP Youth Club and 10 to the Matrimonial Bureau. Besides, if you grumble, you'll be putting off future hosts," Gandhi cautioned.

At the Ahmedabad meet in 1992, there had been no volunteers forthcoming to host the 1993 meet, recalled K. Gandhi. To tide over the problem, the Delhi youth had agreed to play host once more. When Dahanu accepted the responsibility of holding the 1993 festival, Delhi withdrew. Gauging by Parvez Damania's spontaneous offer (see main story) the next all-India Zoroastrian youth meet may be in Ahmednagar.

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How authentic is the 'Ahd-nameh?

Ali A. Jafarey

The author disputes the importance of Salman and the 'Ahd-nameh treaties in early Islamic history

Dr Ali A. Jafarey's review of the book *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism, Triumph over Evil* by Jamsheed K. Choksey ("The Purifying Prescriptions," *Parsiana*, November 1990) sparked a controversy during which a critic, Ervad Darius Sethna, had suggested Jafarey consult the 'Ahd-nameh (*Readers' Forum*, *Parsiana*, April 1991). In a rejoinder Jafarey had questioned the authenticity of the 'Ahd-nameh (*Parsiana*, October 1991) and Ms Mithoo Coorlawala joined issue with "In defence of the 'Ahd-nameh" (*Parsiana*, August 1992). Her assumptions were questioned by Ervad (Dr) Kersey Antia (*Readers' Forum*, *Parsiana*, March 1993). In this article Jafarey carries the argument forward.

Following "The Purifying Prescriptions," (*Parsiana*, November 1990), so far we have had three statements on 'Ahd-nameh and Salman Farsi (April 1991, June 1992 and August 1992). The first called the 'Ahd-nameh the "Islamic scripture" and Salman Farsi as "the Dasturan Dastur Dinyar, Muhammad's preceptor." The next informed us about three authentic 'Ahd-namehs, one "granted by the blessed Nabi Muhammad himself to Mehdi (note the Muslim name) Farukh been (sic) 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 (sic) Behram Shad bin Khiradars (in the month of Rajab, Hijri year 39 — barely two months before his martyrdom) and the third 'Ahd-nameh in the Iranian (?) language ... by Ali ibin (sic) Abu Tablib (as if this Ali is different from the 'blessed Hazrat Ali') to the descendants of Adarbad Marispanid;" and the last statement by Ms Mithoo Coorlawala with certain quotations.

The three statements may look good

to muse at the 'Ahd-nameh and to marvel at Salman, but they are far from convincing to scholars and searchers. Recognized authorities on Islamic lore are first the *Quran*, most authentic of the sources, secondly the Hadiths, those recognized to be authentic by Muslim authorities, thirdly the early biographies and history books, and fourthly speak the late history books on Islam.

None of the three have taken the trouble to provide the *Parsiana* readers, scholars or not, with any references for their statements regarding the authenticity of the 'Ahd-nameh or about Salman's high position as one of the As-hâb (the Prophet's companions) by quoting the *Quran*, either of the two biographies of the Prophet written by Muhammad ibn Is-hâq (died 151 Hijri/767 AD) and 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hishâm (died 213 Hijri/828 AD), any of the six Sunni recognized Hadith books or the four Shi'ah recognized books. The reason is simple. There are none. The 'Ahd-nameh or 'Ahd-namehs and Salman lie beyond these first and secondhand sources. That is why no *alim* among the *Ulimâ* (I hope Ms Coorlawala would accept these very Arabic transliteration for my *Ulema* used as singular because of the English usage) of world Muslims, with the exception of the Shiites of Iran, knows about 'Ahd-nameh.

Instead of the now familiar Arabo-Persian 'Ahd-nameh, meaning "treaty-letter," the *Quran* naturally uses the terms *mîthâq*, 'ahd and *mu'âhidah*, all meaning "treaty, covenant" over 29 times. None of them concern the reported treaties by the Prophet with any non-Arab people. There were none around during his time to negotiate a treaty with. In fact, the Iranians or Persians (*al-Furus*) and their homeland of Iran (*al-Fâris*) have not been mentioned at all in the *Quran*. However, the term *majûs*, the Magi, Zoroastrians, has been mentioned and that too only

once. Here they are included to be one of the four non-Muslim *Ahl-i al-Kitâb* (People of the Book), the other three being the Jews, Christians, and Sabaeans (the *Quran* 22.17). This is a Meccan revelation. The Zoroastrians are strangely enough excluded in two almost identical instances, both revealed later, after the Prophet migrated to and settled in Medina (2.62, 5.69). Why others remain and the *majûs* is dropped, is not clear. The Persians are not mentioned even when they defeated the Romans in a battle fought on Arabian soil. The *Quran* simply says: "The Romans have been defeated in the nearer land, and they, after their defeat will be victorious within 10 years... (30.2-4)."

The Quranic chronology shows that during Muhammad's lifetime there existed no intention at all of invading Iran. Iran plays no part in the *Quran*. Why then sign a treaty with Salman? I see no point.

As far as the reportedly great service of teaching the Prophet and the companions to dig a trench and save themselves against the combined Arab onslaught is concerned, the *Quran* speaks about the event at length (33.9-25). It describes the pre-battle fear among Muslims, the desertions by some, the divine help, the dusty winds sent to blind the enemy, the eventual withdrawal of the enemy, and the promise of a greater victory in the near future. The "trench" and its Persian innovator Salman are not given even a casual mention!

It is Tabari who gives the story in his commentary. It says that it was after the acceptance of Salman's proposal, that the Muhâjirs remarked that he too was, like them, a "stranger" in Medina and the Prophet added "Salman is one of us, the people of the house." A timely remark on a special occasion and that too about a person whose freedom he had purchased.

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This remark has been used by Iranian writers out of context to exalt Salman. I will elaborate later.

Salman a stranger in Medina yes, but not a muhajir, an immigrant or fugitive from Mecca. As a freed slave and a homeless convert, he was lodged, like hundreds of other homeless immigrants, in an Ansâr house. There is no evidence at all that he joined the Prophet in Mecca. In fact, Tabari's commentary shows that he was not one of the Meccan immigrants but like them a "stranger" in Medina. Later books throw more light on this point.

Regarding the treatment given to the people of the Persian and Roman empires, the conquering Arabs simply followed the Islamic law of "accept Islam, pay *jizyah* (poll tax levied on non-Muslim 'People of the Book' in order to protect their lives), or be killed (9.29)." This does not mean any special concession to Iranians or any extraordinary tolerance because of Salman. Furthermore, this did not need any special treaty. Whenever the threatened or besieged people of a town pleaded, negotiated and surrendered without a fight, it meant that they were ready either to embrace Islam or pay the *jizyah* to live in comparative peace as a conquered people. The advancing Arab armies were felling Iranian towns one after another from the Euphrates in Iraq to the Oxus in central Asia. They could not waste time in waiting for months at the gates of a town until the Caliph in far-off Medina or elsewhere signed the 'Ahd-nameh so that they could move to the next. The surrender was negotiated by the commander of the attacking army.

The Sasanian empire was run over during the caliphate of Umar and Uthman. Salman died sometime between 27 and 39 Hijri, during Uthman's days. Why did Ali sign the treaties decades later? And I hope that the respondents know that Ali spent most of his five years of caliphate in fighting civil wars, one of them initiated by Amir Mu'awiyah who, after Ali's assassination, succeeded as the sixth Caliph and as the founder of the Umayyid dynasty.

While turning to Islamic and Zoroastrian tradition in exalting Salman, Ms Coorlawala does not give any source book of the Hadith or an early history. She cites Tabari in part that according to Ibn Dahhak, the non-Arab teacher of the Prophet in his revelations was alleged to be Salman, but she does not refer to the

more authentic reports by commentators and chronicles that it was alleged that it was Suhaib ibn Saihan ibn Malik al-rûmi (the Roman), a Christian slave from Syria, an early convert who often sat and talked with the Prophet. Other names include Bal'am the Christian, Hâbis, and Nafis.

Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari was an Iranian who lived in the third century of Hijrah (839-923 AD). He is the author of two great works in Arabic: (1) the Annals of the Prophets and Kings, a kind of *Shah Namah* covering the Prophets recognized by Islam and the rulers of the Middle East, especially the Iranians, and (2) the oldest surviving commentary on the *Quran* on the pattern of the commentary on the Avesta by the Pahlavi commentators of the Sasanian and post-Sasanian days. He has been followed by more than 50 other Iranian commentators.

Tabari's commentary was translated into Persian by Abu Ali Muhammad ibn Muhammad Bal'ami, a vazir of the Iranian Samanid rulers (died 363 Hijri/974 AD) barely 40 years after Tabari. His work is one of the oldest modern Persian books. Although he has supplemented it with additional material, mainly on Iranian subjects, he omits the story of Salman being one of the alleged teachers of revelation. (Since, here in Los Angeles, I do not have Tabari's original in Arabic, I do not know whether he has it or not.)

Instead of giving firsthand sources, Ms Coorlawala cites Louis Massignon, the Ismailies of Persia, and a list of Parsi writers from Saklatwala to S. M. Desai — all at great distances of centuries from the Prophet and his companions — distances good enough to provide the liberty to the schools dominated by Iranian Muslims from Basra to Bukhara to make a myth of an Iranian who became a Muslim at the hands of the Prophet. I wish she had read Bertold Spuler's *Iran in Früh-Islamischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1952) to find out how Iranians made every attempt to fabricate reports and link themselves to their Arab masters and to early Islam in order to gain favor among higher circles.

The myth was woven only because the Sasanians were defeated and the Iranians had to collectively embrace Islam in large numbers. These converts wanted to show that they too had a finger in the pie of the early rise of Islam. Had the events been reversed to push the Arabs back and maintain Iran as Zoroastrian, then either Salman, an ordinary person, would have been completely ignored, or

if at all he was what we are told in the Sasanian hierarchy, he would have been listed along with Alexander, Mani, Mazdak, and a few others as an arch *gajastag*, *âshmog*, accursed, heretic, and even a traitor.

Making a mystic of Salman "who travelled for many years through Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Egypt (and) explored Manichaeism and Christianity, (and) met with masters in spiritual practice," makes the story more mysterious. However, the respondent does not say that he landed in Medina as a slave owned by Uthmân ibn Ashhal, a Jew of the famous Banu Quraidhah clan and that he was purchased and freed by the Prophet because of his inclination to Islam. This is how he became a companion of the Prophet. Salman is listed among the *mawâlî*, the clients or dependents of the Prophet.

It should be noted that the Quranic Islam does not harbor any mysticism. It is pure and straightforward. Muhammad and his companions were not mystics. Sufism, earlier condemned as a heresy, was accepted centuries after when it took an Islamic appearance. It is, in my opinion, a good blending of Buddhism, Manichaeism, Gnosticism, and Sasanian Zoroastrianism grafted to Islam.

As said, the two biographies of the Prophet were written 130 to 200 years after his death. The first has been lost and we have only quotations from it. The hadiths were collated first by Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhârî, an Iranian in the third century Hijri. Other prominent theologians following him are mostly Iranians with, of course, long Arabic names. Yet these writers say hardly anything about Salman except his part in the "trench" or, if Iranians, would include him (not the first but the third or fourth) among certain persons alleged by the antagonists alone to have taught the Prophet his revelations. The *Quran* categorically denies the allegation.

It is from seventh century Hijri (13th century AD) that we have the stories quoted by Ms Coorlawala. Hamd-Allah Mustaufi of Qazvin, a town 200 kilometers west of Tehran (680-750 Hijri/1281-1349 AD), supplies the text of '*Ahd-nameh*'. He gives the name of Salman's nephew (and not his brother) as Mâhâd ibn Farrukh ibn Badakhshân ibn Idris ibn Mursâlân (note the two non-Iranian names). Dâwûd Bunakati of northeastern Khurasan (died 730 Hijri/1329 AD) makes Salman, in his history book, relate

his story of deserting his farmer father in Isfahan and the faith of "fire-worship" to become a Christian, his wanderings through Syrian towns and meeting "masters," landing in "Medina" as a slave of a Jew, his conversion to Islam, and the subsequent purchase of his freedom by the Prophet.

Ahmad ibn Abu Ya'qûb (died 278 Hijri/981 AD), author of *Târikh-i Ya'qûbi*, says that "Umar appointed 'Abd-Allah ibn Mas'ûd as the Governor of Madâin (Ctesiphon, the fallen Sasanian capital). Another report says that it was

Why did Ali sign the treaties decades after Salman's death?

Salman (who was appointed the governor) and that Ibn Mas'ûd taught fiqh and religious knowledge." One would have expected the reverse of it. Salman, "the life-long" companion of the Prophet should have been more qualified to teach and preach among his countrymen. The life-long companionship of Salman could not extend beyond nine years because, of his 63 years, the Prophet passed only 10 years in Medina where Salman joined him a year later.

It is strange that none of the respondents and I am sure many of the readers of *Parsiana* have ever reflected how a person who had gone over to Islam and is reported — of course in late history books — to have played a very prominent part in strengthening it, could have suddenly turned around to plead or pursue the Prophet, and then posthumously Ali, to write treaties to spare his brother and his countrymen from converting to Islam "if they wish to remain Zoroastrian;" posthumously because Salman died before Ali was elected as the fourth Caliph. He should have been the foremost person to spearhead the conversion of the entire Iranian population to the religion he had so enthusiastically embraced. Early history books shed no such light on his career. As pointed out, history records neither show him as a great preacher, not a good warrior nor a special consultant on the invasion of Iran, his homeland.

None of the respondents have given a second thought on how Behzad Dinyar could be a brother of Mehdi Faruk been

Sakshab or Farrukh bin Shakshan. The names do not correspond as brothers.

Ms Coorlawala complains that Zoroastrian sources throw no light on his life in Iran. Then how could we say that he held a high position in the Sasanian hierarchy? Why not believe Bunakati's history that he was the son of an ordinary farmer in Isfahan, who "worshipped fire," and who "ran away from his father" when still a young man?

The conquest of the Persian empire and Afro-Asian part of the Roman empire brought in a flood of riches for the Arabs and every person was given a share in it. When things got better organized, all of them received salaries. Salman was one among thousands who received it. Like many others, he was given a part of the conquered lands in which to live comfortably. Being an Iranian, he chose to live in Ctesiphon. I need not give a list of the fat salaries and the amount of wealth obtained by other Muslims of the days of the Prophet and the first three Caliphs, and the names of Syrian and Iranian towns where they chose to reside for the rest of their lives.

Taking in view all the above points, presented with due apologies to *Parsiana* readers, I maintain every word I wrote earlier about the '*Ahd-nameh*' and Salman (*Parsiana*, October 1991): "I dismiss the so-called '*Ahd-nameh*' as a very late fabrication by the Iranians to win some favor from their belittling Arab overlords... (Salman) was a simple follower who joined Muhammad in Medina, (more accurately) some 14 years after (Muhammad) had proclaimed his prophethood." Salman's only distinction for the Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrians is that he is reportedly the only Iranian who, by his own accord, embraced Islam during the Prophet's time. After all, our Iranian historian Hamd-Allah Mustaufi is at hand to report that the Prophet had said: "I am the first Arab, Suhaib ibn Saihan ibn Malik the first Roman, Salman the first Persian, and Bilal the first African Muslim."



Ali A. Jafarey, who studied Avesta and Pahlavi under Dr Manek Pithawalla and Dastur (Dr) M. N. Dhalli, obtained his doctorate in Persian literature from Karachi. He has authored 11 books on Zoroastrianism in English and Persian.

Probing the Parsi mind

Burjor K. Karanjia

The Parsi Mind — A Zoroastrian Asset to Culture by Jer D. Randeria. Published in 1993 by Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Private Limited, Post Box 5715, 54 Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 110055. Pp: 161. Price: Rs 180

It is believed that Zoroastrianism, by all accounts the first revealed religion that deeply influenced Judaism and Christianity, would have become the religion



Randeria: relates culture to convictions

of the entire civilized world but for an accident of history (the defeats of Qudisiya and Nihavand). But where the religion failed in reach, it more than made up in inner strength, surviving all the vicissitudes of history as well as geography.

It has so survived since the time when, in the mountain vastness of Ushideran, 15-year-old Zarathushtra was deeply troubled by questions: Who determined the path of the sun and the stars? Who made water and plants? Who created sleep and waking, and morning, noon and night, that remind man of his duty? Then Zarathushtra saw the vision of Ahura Mazda, the one God, and good-thoughts-words-deeds as the glowing pathway to Him.

Ms Jer D. Randeria's *The Parsi Mind — A Zoroastrian Asset To Culture*, comes in the wake of several books describing Zoroastrian doctrines, beliefs and customs and others listing the impressive achievements of Parsi practitioners of the religion. Randeria's book, as pointed out by Prof Kaikhosrov D. Irani in his brief but thought-provoking foreword, "attempts to relate the two by exploring the source of their achievements and their problems in their culture, and recognizing their culture to be rooted in

their religious convictions."

The operative word in the book's title is Zoroastrian. The Parsi mind, rich and complex as it is, would not have achieved its cultural pre-eminence without the inspiration of Zoroastrian precepts. The book not only shows how the religious teachings led to a wealth of cultural assets, but hopes to "energize the community towards an upsurge in noble cultural ideologies."

Parsis in India give the appearance of exclusivity, but Randeria takes pains to point out that this exclusivity arises not from pride of class consciousness, but from genuine community consciousness. On the other hand, Zoroastrianism has

What is being safeguarded is mainly Parsism, Parsi interests and Parsi progress

had an almost universal appeal. The minority-majority relationship with the Hindus has largely remained without conflict since the Parsis landed at Sanjan more than 1,300 years ago. Likewise, in recent years they have not been in conflict with the Muslims. Again, one reason why Parsis earned the respect of their British rulers was that, unlike other minorities, they never asked for reservations or concessions. Even Islamic Iran, from whose religious persecution Parsis fled to India, had second thoughts, and made amends in the present century by referring to the fleeing Parsis as "our valiant truthful ancestors who regarded life as a perennial struggle between good and evil."

While the ethical influence of Zoroastrian scriptures has become a cultural influence visibly recognizable in the

achievements of its followers, the process has not been free of controversies. Randeria ascribes these controversies to the fact that Zoroastrianism includes the teachings and cultural traditions of four interlocked eras: The distant pre-Zoroastrian Ahura worshippers, the lifetime of Spitama Zarathushtra and his first disciples, the Zoroastrian period in recorded history, and the post-Sanjan era of Parsi Zoroastrians. To make things more complicated, during the conquests of Alexander (The Great and/or the Accursed in the Achaemenian period) Avestan parchments were consigned to flames, and many Magi priests who knew the scriptures by heart were killed.

Randeria treats these raging controversies as ripples on the surface that do not disturb the calm beneath. Take the long-standing controversy over the Zoroastrian calendar. Parsis today use at least three separate calendars with three different opinions on which "angel" a particular month is dedicated to. Randeria gently admonishes: "Failure of agreement and reconciliatory efforts... added to Parsi maturity," may at last "call upon Parsi pragmatism to insist on one calendar for one people!" One is inclined to comment: May this not remain a pious hope!

Another matter of controversy are the new cultural norms whereby cremation or burial is thought preferable to the system of exposure to birds of prey. Without taking sides, Randeria states with authority that the funerary proceedings that Parsi Zoroastrians follow incorporates some of the most advanced socioreligious and hygienic concepts. She is emphatic that the modernists have no reason to look down on the traditionalists for the simple reason that the latter's practices (like the morning gomez application before bathing, the evening "censuring" of the home with sandalwood and frankincense, and the practice of silence or baj-taking prior to starting the meal) are hygienic and health-oriented.

Other sensitive issues threatening Parsis today are the rejection of intercommunity marriages and children of non-Parsi fathers, and opposition to voluntary conversion. Here a further distinction, attributed to male chauvinism, is that the child of a Parsi father marrying outside the community is allowed privileges denied to children of Parsi mothers who marry non-Parsis. How can such a distinction be justified in this day and age?

Randeria is surprisingly silent. According to her, the Parsi communal mind being a majority organ, group departures which do not gain majority support may remain ineffective. But who is to determine what is merely a group departure and what is the genuine majority opinion? The tragedy is that organizations like the Parsi Punchayet are not so concerned with what is right or wrong, as with adopting the path of least resistance.

Misconceptions also persist about the Parsi insistence on exclusivity. The reasons attributed for this are self-preservation, and maintaining the purity of their religion. Surely it is arrogant to assume that Zoroastrian virtues are a product of Parsi blood, when in fact Parsis are indebted to Zoroastrian influences for whatever virtues they may possess. But within the exclusiveness of Parsi society today, only a Parsi born of a Parsi father enjoys rights. The real reason for this, as Randeria suggests, is socioeconomic (not religious) in the way of fixed trust deeds earmarked for specific Parsi usages "from the cradle to the grave." What is being safeguarded is mainly Parsism, Parsi interests and Parsi progress.

Two other matters which are the book's major concerns are the decline in the practice of Zoroastrian ceremonies and the disadvantaged position of the priestly class. The rituals are, in the main, purificatory, since purity is seen as a powerful defence against the forces of evil. Their performance serves a purpose that goes beyond reason. The grand chanting of invocations by the priests, even if little understood by the layman, can be soul-stirring to the receptive. "The entire cultural impact is not money-linked, but truly wealth-linked, the wealth of scriptural injunctions poured out in thought-word-deed, (striking) the mind's eye as a picture so perfect in orderliness that it touches one's deepest sensibility... A well-conducted Zoroastrian ceremony is an all-absorbing moving event, joyful or sad depending on the

occasion, but always inspiring, both spiritually and culturally."

Those in the priestly vocation, restricted by the very nature of their calling, reflecting the glory of a great religion, should inspire reverence and awe. Many do so by the simplicity and dignity of their lifestyle and the eloquence and fervor of their invocations. But alas, there are quite a few who, weighed down by worldly concerns, reciting prayers by rote without their heart in it, cut pathetic, dismal figures.

Randeria offers several suggestions to enrich Zoroastrian culture. She calls for a revival of ghambar celebrations. Apart from their religious function, they serve in the sociocultural context to bring together the high and the low as equals in the eyes of God. More importantly, she believes that Parsis with their versatility and linguistic skills should revive interest in ancient Persian languages to promote further study in our scriptural and historical writings. We should acquaint ourselves with the *Gathas*, she feels, "if we are to pride ourselves as cultured Parsi Zoroastrians."

In the early stages of acclimatization in India, after achieving a measure of prosperity in Gujarat, Parsis became aware of uncertainties and a lack of knowledge in their ecclesiastical conduct. This led to the origin of the Persian *Rivayats*, which were documents containing answers from Iran to religious queries on matters of rituals, purificatory observances, worship and customs. An important consequence of the *Rivayat* correspondence was that the literary-minded Parsi laity got involved in conveying the Persian replies to their Parsi kinsfolk. These *Rivayats* brought to the Parsis in India fresh memories of their fatherland after a separation of 600 years. They were followed by messengers and Irani priests who came to serve in Bombay fire-temples, bringing with them precious books and manuscripts. "It is time," Randeria pleads, "for a get-together to rake up ideas, to dig into treasure chests forgotten in dusty attics, to thread the pearls and stud the scabbards, now in Parsi style."

Parsi social conscience needs to be awakened to decide on norms for Parsi marriages and adoption. The community should go out of its way to make it possible for intending couples to get married. Parsis owe it to their young men and women to give them this opportunity. Didn't our forefathers get a similar

opportunity from the benign Sanjan ruler when they first landed in India?

The Parsi Mind doesn't make for easy reading. It does, however, make for rewarding re-reading. Every Parsi should read it, for the love and joy of soaking in the essence of a great religion. It would make him, if not a better Parsi, at least a more knowledgeable one, in tune with his heritage and willing to live up to it. Zoroastrianism has not only kept the Parsi religion-minded, but has provided them with the highest traditions in worldly conduct. The book ends on a note of hope. Vohu Mana, the mind that understands good, and Spenta Armaiti, the mind that helps one to achieve, are both omniscient and omnipotent. Zoroastrianism has in it the vitality of life everlasting.

Priestly tales

Homi Rogers

Dasturan Dastur First Meherjirana by Rusi Framroj Besania and *Sant Dasturji Kukadaru* by Minoo Burjorji Desai. Both books have been translated into English from Gujarati, and published in 1993 by Marzban J. Giara, Dhunmai Building, 667 Lady Jehangir Road, Dadar, Bombay 400014. *Dasturan Meherjirana* — Pp: 44+viii+14 plates. Price: Rs 25. *Dasturji Kukadaru* — Pp: 28. Price: Rs 15.

Despite the reverence and respect accorded by the Zoroastrian community in India to its dasturs, there is a hiatus in our knowledge of the lives and achievements of the priests who guided and guarded the community for over 13 centuries. Dastur Nairiosang Dhaval, for example, lies shrouded in myth: he is often erroneously referred to as the dastur whose glib tongue (remember the sugar and milk story?) secured the community refuge in Sanjan, though he lived around four centuries after the historic landing. Dastur (Dr) Maneckji Dhalla, while praised for his erudition, is generally mildly chastised for his forward thinking. And a certain Dastur Azar Kaiwan, who spent his lifetime in Patna (where his tomb can still be seen), is but a faint memory.

The only two dasturs whose names



Meherjirana: associated with miracles

immediately spring to a Zoroastrian's mind, are Dasturan Dastur Meherjirana and Dastur Jamshedji Sorabji Kookadaru. The latter is more famous, perhaps because he is closer to us in time, and possibly because a certain mobed in Bombay kept alive the Kookadaru legend by dispensing nirangs (efficacious prayers from the *Avesta*) to the afflicted, claiming visitations from his miraculous guru.

Yet surprisingly enough, not many Zoroastrians in India or abroad know much about the life of either, barring one famous legend woven around each of them. Mention Dastur Meherjirana, and the drama of how he recited Avestan prayers to expose a charlatan who put up a *thali* (metal plate) in the sky and pretended it was a 'duplicate' sun, comes to mind. Talk of Dastur Kookadaru, and pat comes the association with yet another handed down tale of how his prayers yielded a brick of gold to fund the building of the Anjuman Atash Bahram in Bombay.

Sadly, most Zoroastrians know nothing beyond this. To remedy this state of affairs Marzban Giara, who in the past few years has been publishing and publicizing books on Zoroastrianism, has brought out two slim books in English detailing the lives of the two Dasturs — a laudable enterprise. The books under review are translations from original Gujarati works by Minoos Desai, a mod-

est man of many parts who served as editor of *The Bombay Samachar*, and Rusi Framroj Besania, a resident of Surat.

Desai's book on Dastur Kookadaru is the work of a journalist, albeit one with hagiographic knowledge. He questions the material in hand, and it is apparent that he has selected for inclusion only such facts as can be authenticated or stand the test of reason. Thus, we have four long pages of "two documented letters" from a certain Shri Ratanji Hormusji Jivahmana who had written to the Dastur to "let me know what prayers I should recite on that day" (his birthday) and to inform him that "I have been blessed with a son... (who) will be named as ordered by you." The letters add little to one's knowledge about the Dastur, and they do not seem to have been replied to either. Yet it is apparent from their inclusion that Desai lays great store by the written word, and that he revered the Dastur, deeming it a joy to touch letters that had passed through Kookadaru's hands.

Probably this is the reason why Desai skims through many events which could show up Kookadaru's shortcomings, warts and all. We are informed in the booklet that Kookadaru was against granting inheritance rights to girls. Desai does not give any reason why the Dastur held this retrogressive stand before the Legislative Council in 1862 when the views of the community were ascertained on this matter. Similarly, Desai informs the reader of how the learned Dastur was miffed with the Bombay Parsi Punchayet when it did not undertake to fund his translation of the *Dinkard*.

Desai's work on the Dastur has long been hailed for rendering "true service to the community," and in the absence of a fresh edition of his Gujarati version, the present translation was keenly awaited. Unfortunately, the book reads more like newspaper articles strung together than a biography. We are not told what happened to Kookadaru's *Dinkard* translation nor, more importantly, how he contributed to the Zoroastrian way of life, barring his donation for the Atash Bahram and the

occasional miracles performed to help members of the community. A mere recollection of Kookadaru's personal habits ("he had only one meal of khichdi and ghee during the whole day") and miracles only adds grist to the mill of trivia adulators, and of the bedside-story fathers who smugly imagine they are making religion more alive for the younger generation. But are they?

On the other hand Besania's life sketch of Dastur Meherjirana is a more engrossing read. Besania, familiar with Navsari, a township that treats Meherjirana as its patron saint and where the 16th descendant of the subject holds ecclesiastical power, "likes to write life sketches of eminent Parsis." And surprisingly, neither his nativity nor his naivety at writing, detract from his producing an appealing book.

The tale of Meherjirana is a difficult one to narrate. Distanced by over 400 years (the original book in Gujarati was written as part of the celebrations held in Navsari to commemorate the 400th death anniversary of Dastur Meherjirana in 1992), there would seem to be little material at hand by way of records or live testimonials to help in recreating his life and times. Yet Besania has managed to produce a lively record, complete with photographs, plates of the document of Madad-e-Maash (grant of land to the Dastur by the then Moghul Emperor, Akbar), reports from foreign travellers, and even words of a song said to have been composed and sung by Tansen, Akbar's court musician, in praise of Meherjirana.

Like Desai's work, Besania's monograph is also episodic. And naturally, the emphasis is on the miracle that continues to be associated with Meherjirana. But where Besania's treatment differs from Desai's is that he does not simply describe the miracle, but proceeds to analyse it. Besania

takes care to mention the scientific fact that two suns can apparently be visible in the sky, if and when the sun's rays fall on the circles of corona (the colored halo often seen around luminous bodies). Desai's account of Kookadaru's golden miracle, on the other hand, does not



Kookadaru: might of prayers

speculate that alchemy was a possible cause.

Interestingly, both the monographs provide fodder for discussion and re-evaluation of the Zoroastrian faith and its practices down the years. Dastur Meherjirana, from Besania's account, seemed to have practically converted Akbar to Zoroastrianism. The emperor, we are told, performed jashans publicly, offered Parsi prayers, and used to wear a garment resembling the sudreh. Writes Besania glowingly, "When Zoroastrianism was acclaimed throughout India, its standard flying high in the sky, Zoroastrian hearts were full of joy." Could we say the same now, if a high-placed dignitary converted himself to the faith?

Besania's book concludes with a fairly lengthy note on the descendants of the first Meherjirana, bringing the history of his lineage up-to-date. This updating is not there in Desai's work. From one of Jivahmana's letters quoted by Desai, we know that Dastur Kookadar had at least one son Faramroz, and the reader would have liked to know more about the progeny of his/her favorite Dastur.

Nevertheless, both the monographs have achieved their purpose, even if it be rather marginal, as in the case of Desai's work.

The books, with their insight into the lives of the two Dasturs, make us feel proud to belong to the community that produced them. Giara has done a commendable job in presenting these books in English to the younger generation. The translation, though, can be faulted in parts. Giara talks of astrology on describing halos around the sun and moon, when he clearly means astronomy. And Meherjirana's descendants are said to "enjoy Dasturi" in the manner of reigning monarchs, when many Dasturs, we are informed, were "very poor financially." Also certain links in continuity have not been well maintained. Both the books could have done with tighter editing, even if this meant differing from the original, as on many occasions thoughts — and even sentences — are repeated.

Many a devout Zoroastrian claims to have seen the silhouette of Dastur Meherjirana etched on a wall of the Navsari Atash Behram. Even today Dastur Jamshedji Kookadar is said to visit a particular corner of the Anjuman Atash Bahram hall he helped to build. The publication of these two slim booklets, it is hoped, will help many Zoroastrians to glimpse the substance behind the shadows.

Confused cosmology

Adi Doctor

Foundation of Zoroastrianism through Cosmology by Dada-Perviz Manijeh Rustumji Adagra. Published from Sagittarian, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari, Bombay 400102. Not for sale.

In his introduction to the 50 odd pages of typed monograph, the author makes a couple of confessions worth noting: "I have dared to give a comparative summary of the 30 divinities pertaining to the (Zoroastrian) calendar and have resorted to several conjectures..." And also: "I am a non-professional priest both navar and martab from Navsari; also a practising CA for 15 years..." These and other revelations not repeated here will serve as a background to what follows.

The work is divided into about a dozen short chapters, including the preface, and contains topics like, "Rationale of numbers," "Delineation of Yazads" and of Ameshaspands, a chart and a graph comparing the 12 zodiacal constellations with Zoroastrian divinities and depicting the "Inter-relationship of the 12 divinities of *mahs* (months)," "Philosophy of life" and "Stellar chemistry of metals."

To a lay reader the subjects and their treatment may appear impressive, even awesome. But delve a little deeper and one just can't help concluding that in spite of the author's resourcefulness and sincerity, the whole (or almost the whole) exercise smacks of a peculiar cockiness and an avoidable intellectual arrogance. Ervad saheb Adagra seems to be living in a world of his own — a world inhabited by beliefs and flights of theories and dogmas almost entirely alien to Zoroastrian scriptures and philosophy. The non-professional priest may be well versed in astrology and astronomy, as he claims, but that doesn't give him licence to play havoc with Zoroastrian texts and the calendar. The result is the clubbing together of wayward, disjointed thoughts and personal predictions that make the overall picture highly nebulous.

In this brief notice it is impossible to mention all the errors and fallacies that the pages of this monograph bristle with. Suffice to cite just two or three examples where he really comes a cropper: On page 5, he says: "Ahura (who is Self-Existent, all-round goodness...) is given No 1 in (the) Zoroastrian calendar and represents (the) Etheric Sun, whereas the Sun Khorshed Yazad is 11th and represents its physical side, which can be influenced by Angra Mainyus." If Khorshed Yazad can be influenced by Angra, then the first thing one is prompted to do is to stop reciting the *Nyaish* and *Yasht* dedicated to Khorshed! Right? Wrong, according to the author himself. On page 16 he writes, "Several times we recite, '*Khorshed Amerag Rayomand Aurvad Asp Beresad*,' meaning strength to the fastest moving, ever shining, immortal body of Ahura Mazda." Any comments are superfluous.

For the author, the Moon is Vohu Mano, Jupiter is Spendarmad and Saturn is Amerdad! Again, "I firmly believe that the symbol of Swastika represents Meher Yazad." Or, "...Meher, Sarosh and Rashna Yazads are not supernatural nor (sic) mythological beings... these are nothing but dormant sparks of divinity, which when enlightened (?) lift us to remarkable heights of spirituality..."

One of the more amusing fragments is on page 39, wherein the author, who at times seems to see himself as a latter-day reformer and savior, offers a "Supplementary Revision." "Zoroastrians rightly worship Atash," he says, "a man-made(?) creation as son of Ahura, but are shy of acknowledging Ameshaspands as planets..." Or, "All the characteristics of Mars the warrior and the killer planet are easily discernible in Ardibehesht, Tir and Dae-pa-Din... Dae-pa-Din relates to Pre-Mazdayasni-Din period when human sacrifices were common." On page 7, "Mars or Ardibehesht Ameshaspand... which is associated with two Faristes, Saok and Airyamana... are nothing but two satellites of Mars, Phobos and Deimos."

In his preface Adagra states that since 1939, "I have been addicted to the occult sciences..." A thousand pities that the one occult science directly connected with the Zoroastrian religion has completely eluded him! Had he some idea of the truths and facts of nature that are embodied in Ilm-e-Khshnoom, he would have been spared the Sisyphean labor of writing this monograph.

This month *Parsiana* publishes intercommunity marriages registered both at the Old Customs House and at the MHADA office in Bandra (East) for the five month period of October 1993 to February 1994. Civil marriages between Zoroastrians have also been listed. However, names that could not be confirmed as Zoroastrian have been omitted from the list.

There were 15 intercommunity marriages and two civil marriages registered at the MHADA office and 33 at the Old Customs House plus one civil marriage between Zoroastrians.

The Chandanwadi crematorium registered seven Zoroastrians who were cremated over the four month period of November 1993 to February 1994.

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 20 and 32 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 25 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 23 and 39 years, averaging at 29 years.

Due to the two month long labor strike at the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital there were no births registered there. Hence this month, *Parsiana* reports births from only three hospitals in Bombay.

As compared to 17 births in February there were 76 Zoroastrians who were consigned at the Doongerwadi. Twenty-one victims fell prey to heart disease which was last month's major killer, of whom seven were 80 years and above. Next came pneumonia and lung disease which took the lives of 17 patients, brain disease (10) and

cancer (nine). Two victims each succumbed to uremia, hypoproteinemia (deficient protein in the blood plasma from dietary deficiency or excessive excretion), head injuries, kidney failure and old age and general debility. Septicemia, fracture, multiple organ failure, hypertension, gastro-enteritis, Downs' syndrome (a type of congenital, mental subnormality with Mongoloid facial characteristics), Parkinson's disease, asthma and hernia were the isolated cases registered in February. The youngest to breathe his last was a six-day-old baby boy as compared to the oldest — a 98-year-old male.

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

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

Govekar; February 9
A girl to Ramona and Neeraj Maheshwari; February 9
A boy to Jesmine and Hanoz Baria; February 11
A girl to Tina and Neville Mehta; February 12
A girl Shireen and Kaikobad Mistry; February 16
A boy to Viloo and Darayus Irani; February 20
A girl to Jaloo and Rusi Shahna; February 21
A girl to Khushnood and Adil Vakil; February 22
A girl to Nergish and Homiyar Madan; February 28

MARRIED

Sangita Pradhan and Nauzer F. Gagra; October 17, 1993
Yasmin J. Bulsara and Manoj H. Goli; November 8
Zahera Y. Shums and Faroukh Gandhi; November 15
Parwana H. Chagema and Zulfikar Hussain; November 19
Charmaine Linda Dhondy and Devashis Roy; November 21
Melissa Michelle Rodrigues and Kerman Lalkaka; November 25
Roxana A. Cooper and Pravin S. Deokar; November 28
Niloufer J. Shastri and Ganu Dewnani; November 28
Shirley Maria Menezes and Viraj Adajania; November 29
Maharukh B. Chhapgar and Mayurkumar Manubhai Shah; November 29
Monica Koshal and Ariez Rustom Tata; November 29
Ayesha H. Sonavala and Homi T. Laher; December 3
Nancy Funk of Ohio, USA and Jimmy Mistry of Ohio, USA; December 6
Kamal D. Cooper and Rohinton Eruch Bhathena; December 10
Roxan Kekobad Mody and Nikhil Vithal Jhaveri; December 12
Roshni Dipak Shah and Feroze Rustom Soonawalla; December 12
Rashna Sheheriyar Dadrawalla and Uday Sadanand Limaye; December 16
Preksha Vrajlal Shah and Jonil Minocher Panthaki; December 16
Meher C. Dadachanji and Atul T. Ursekar; December 18
Mrinalini Raghunath Latkar

and Abud Tehemas Kelawala; December 18
Zenobia Jehangir Gazder and Khushnood Hosy Viccaji; December 19
Naseema Amin Umershaikh and Firoze Rustomji Cooper; December 22
Jasmin Hoshang Palsetia and Firdaus Bhathena; December 23
Hutoxi Dinshaw Katgara and Lokesh Kumar Shrivastava; December 23
Farida T. Patharia and Mallan K. Kurian; December 26
Anaita Marzban Nalladar and Paul Mathews Mullasseril; December 29
Hemali N. Shah and Persi D. Pooniwalla; December 30
Lidya Machado and Hormuz H. Bharucha; December 31
Meher Jimmy Bilimoria and Khurshed Burjor Poonawala; December 31
Meher Purvez Dholoo and Salim Roshanali Lokhandwala; January 2, 1994
Arnavaz H. Havewala and Sriram S. Ratnam; January 2
Mona Prakash Mehta and Rohinton Minoos Patel; January 4
Jermina Sutaria and Krishna Kumar Menon; January 9
Bhavna Parihar and Cyrus Sorab Patell; January 10
Dinaz G. Bhagoorwalla and Nitin S. Advani; January 15
Diana Rustom Machhina and Porus Rusi Daver; January 18
Hutokshi Jehangir Chinoy and Bomi Soli Bhajiwalla; January 20
Benaz Bomi Mistry and Zubin Phiroze Marolia; January 22
Anahita Homi Variava and Behram Hooshang Bakht; January 23
Nelly Adi Balsara and Barjoo Meherwan Dhei of Nasik; January 23
Arlene J. Mendonca and Ronnie H. Mehta; January 25
Delnavaz Godrej Bharthania and Eruch Noshir Kapadia; January 27
Nisha Chandrakant Pandya and Nozer Kersi Mistry; January 27
Dilshad Shavak Palia and Irfan Abubaker Fruitwala; January 28
Armeena Amir Sayed and Pervez Keki Nassarwanji;

BOMBAY

BORN

A boy, Mehrab, to Jerro and Kaizad Bhaya on December 7, 1993
A girl to Simonil and Dinyar Madon; February 2, 1994
A boy to Shiraz and Cyrus Parbhoo; February 2
A girl, Nyra, to Shernavaz and Cherezad Bharucha; February 4

A boy to Aban and Khurshed Birdy; February 4
A boy to Tanveer and Zubin Balaporia; February 7
A girl to Dilshad and Jamshed Kershaw; February 8
A boy to Anahita and Sorab Parekh; February 8
A boy to Gulshan and Marzban Gheewalla; February 9
A boy to Nergish and Zarir

January 28
Veena Stella Stanes and Aspy Eruch Engineer; January 29
Pearly Philomena Almeida and Adil B. Gandevia; January 29
Kamal Minoo Marfatia and Yezdi Dinshaw Mistry; February 1
Ava Phiroze Cama and Neville Cyrus Poonawala; February 1
Armaity Kavas Byramji and Noshir Gustadji Shroff; February 1
Shernaz Hosi Vasunia and Zulfiqar Shale Tyebjee; February 1
Teenaz Purvez Patel and Mahveer Maneck Javat of Karachi; February 3
Kashmira Hoshang Ranji and Adil Pervez Kakalia; February 3
Tanaz Bomi Kodla and Aspi Keki Illava; February 4
Zena Burjor Vakil and Maneck Minoo Mavji; February 4
Roshni Rustom Godawalla and Hormazdiar Rustomji Mobedji; February 4
Pearl Kersi Palkhivala and Farokh Bahadur Keravala; February 6
Diana Sarosh Todiwalla and Firdosh Khurshed Tolat; February 7
Soonoo Noshir Katrak and Sanab Natverlal Mazumdar; February 8
Zenobia Behram Movdawalla and Gopalkrishna B. Shettigar; February 8
Rashna Dara Sinor and Raionand Fali Poncha; February 9
Toshir Shapurji Chinoy and Zareer Shorabji Bhathena of Secunderabad; February 11
Natasha P. Alpawalla and Sunil Gopal; February 11
Shaheen Phiroze Irani of Dahanu and Hormuz Bheram Irani; February 11
Yasmin Sohrab Dahmubed and Jehangir Khodadad Parvereshi; February 11
Khushnam Nariman Kapadia and Yazad Pirojshaw Patel; February 11
Anahita Jamshed Aryana of Poona and Faroukh Rustom Pirozmand; February 11
Shahnaz Rustomji and Todd L. Slater; February 12
Kashmira Hoshang Mistry and Zarir Sarosh Patel; February 13
Petal Maria Crasto and Viraf Keki Colah; February 14
Nandini Bhaskaran and Hoshi Jal; February 14

Veera Shiavax Bachana and Rohinton Manecksha Nazir; February 14
Armaity Sohrab Elavia of Surrey, England and Zarir Dara Patel of Dahanu; February 14
Navaz Sheriyar Foujdar and Percy Firoz Sutaria; February 14
Navaz Dinshaw Kathawala and Darayus Erach Bacha; February 15
Deshnandani Hariprasad Mistry and Peshotan Paurusasp Dabdi; February 15
Armin Bahadurji Patel and Mehelli Cawasji Engineer; February 15
Sangeeta Singhvi and Dinshaw Soli Irani; February 15
Nazreen Dinshaw Daji and Eric Dadi Mistry; February 15
Yasmin H. Dalal and Satish Rao; February 15
Zenobia Dara Irani and Framroz Rustom Irani; February 18
Ayesha Naozer Aga and Kaizad Rusi Dadyburjor; February 19
Shiraz Burjor Patel and Sharoukh Mehrwan Irani; February 19
Agnella Rohini Viegas and Kersi Minoo Korkhaw; February 19
Beroze Faramroze Boga of Thane and Paurush Dorabshaw Govadia; February 20
Jasmine Firoz Bhot and Percy Dadi Irani; February 20
Kainaz Kharshed Dastur of Ratlam and Kurush Hoshang Bharucha; February 21
Khushnavaz Russi Chichgar and Jamshed Phiroze Kamdin of Ahmedabad; February 21
Sanobar Tehemton Bava-adam and Neville Faredoon Vapiwalla; February 22
Meher Kersi Palkhiwala and Mehernosh Minoo Contractor; February 24
Rozebeh Phiroze Gandhi and Rohinton Jehangir Satarawala of Kalyan; February 24
Rukmani B. Gurnani and Kurus M. Vakil; February 25
Behroze Rusi Patel and Bomi Dinsha Sidhva; February 26
Kashmira Hormuzdiar Mistry of Gulbarga and Rayomand Minocher Adajania; February 27
Meher Dadi Asli and Ferhad Phiroz Bharucha of Madras; February 27
Meher Dara Bhathena and Cyrus Faredoon Marchant;

February 27
Silloo Keki Sanjana and Aspi Noshir Dubash; February 28
Kashmira Noshir Motiwalla and Phiroze Phiroze Motiwalla; February 28

 DIED
Arnavaz K. Burjobeheram (84), residing at 11, Heera Meher, Wodehouse Rd, 400005; November 6, 1993 (cremated)
Jimmy Taleyarkhan, husband of Phiroza and father of Rasheid and Gitanjali; January 5, 1994 (cremated)
Framroz (Fali) Hormasjee Mistry (65), 6/5, Petit Chmbs, Opp Mehella Patel Agiary, Balam St, 400007; January 8 (cremated)
Hosie Kaikobad Framroze Nariman (78), 126, CCI Chmbs, D. Vatcha Rd, 400026; January 17 (cremated)
Meherjee Dinshaw Hirjee (67), Halima Manzil, V. M. Naik Rd, 400036; January 26 (cremated)
Rashid Boman Irani (Poonawalla) (74), Khareghat Clny, Behind Bldg 11 (32/E), Hughes Rd, 400007; February 1
Kaikhushru Palanji Patel (76), 2A/19, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Parcel, 400012; February 1
Homi Sorabji Pesina (88), 62, West Minister, 400022; February 1
Mani Erach Gora (75), 191, Bhabha Hse, Bore Bazar St, Fort, 400001; February 2
Nergesh Hormusji Kapadia (79), 20/D, Sagar Sangeet, Colaba, 400005; February 2
Shirin Darabshaw Khan (75), 3/A, Soonawalla Bldg, Tardeo, 400007; February 2
Pillamai Pestonji Pithawalla (87), Raj Mhl, M. V. Rd, Andheri (E), 400069; February 2
Darabshaw Pallanji Bhathena (84), 1A/31, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, J. B. Marg, Parcel, 400012; February 3
Phiroze Munchershaw Dhondy (88), J/6, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; February 3
Jerbai Sohrab Patel (81), 704, Sea Breeze, Seven Bglws. Versova, 400061; February 3
Sheriar Kaikhushroo Irani (75), 40, Raja Ram Mohan Roy Rd, 400004; February 4
Aloo Burjor Katgara (66), 2/C, Hormazd Apts, 44, Pali Mala Rd, Bandra, 400050; February 4
Adi Hormasji Mogal (54),

Chokshi Mans, Opp Fort Market, Mint Rd, 400001; February 4
Manekji Bejanji Hodiwala (84), Kwaliti Hse, Kemps Corner, 400036; February 5
Manek (Mack) Pirojshaw Khambatta (56), 113, Nibhana, Pali Hill, Bandra, 400050; February 5
Veera Jehangir Tarapore (60), Burjor Bldg, Wadia St, Tardeo, 400034; February 5
Nargesh Bomi Karai (53), C/14, Contractor Baug, Mori Rd, Mahim, 400016; February 6
Behram Rostam Parvaresh (73), Alpawalla Bldg, Cawasji Hormusji St, Dhobitalao, 400002; February 6
Jamshed Ruttonji Shroff (82), 81, Meherdad, Cuffe Parade, 400005; February 6
Behram (Behli) Shapurji Balliwala (76), Coste Belle, 603, Perry Cross Rd, Bandra, 400050; February 8
Katy Mervan Engineer (71), Dinath Court, 71, Pochkhanawalla Rd, Worli, 400025; February 8
Baby boy of Shiraz Cyrus Parbhoo (6 days), Dhun Villa, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; February 8
Hoshang Rattanshaw Bagwadia (70), 3, Chandrabala Est, 30th Rd, T. P. S. III, Bandra, 400050; February 9
Mehra Dara Bharucha (83), 5, Sleater Rd, Above Grant Rd Post Office, 400007; February 9
Keki Mistry (73), Haji Adam Mans, Store Lane, Fort, 400001; February 9 (cremated)
Tehmina Hormusji Turel (70), 692, Chinoy Bldg, Dr Dinshaw Master Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 9
Goolu Keki Udawadia (76), 22/A, Wellington Ter, Wellington St, Dhobitalao, 400002; February 9
Pervin Aspi Limbuwala (49), B-63, RNA Shopping Arcade, Lokhandwala Complex, Andheri (W), 400058; February 10
Hilla Eruch Mehta (84), M, Dalal Est, Lamington Rd, 400008; February 10
Dorabji (Darabshaw) Jamshedji Mistry (88), 15, Katgara Hse, Napean Sea Rd, 400036; February 10
Dara Sorabji Bagli (77), Daswani Hse, Dhuswadi, Dhobitalao, 400002;

February 11
Hormusji Manecksha Nanavaty (88), B/9, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; February 11
Jehangir Dossabhoy Ogra (71), 401/A, Laxminarayan Apts, Narayan Mhatre Rd, Dahisar (W), 400086; February 11
Jal Nadirshaw Badshaw (51), 17/A/2, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; February 13
Silloo Percy Khatow (57), Union Bldg, 54, Sleater Rd, 400007; February 13
Soli Hormusji Poonjiaji (65), 281, Sidhwa Bldg, Princess St, 400002; February 13
Fali Dinshaw Vachha (73), Q-13, Shapoorji Bharucha Baug, Andheri (W), 400058; February 13
Sorab Rustom Bastani (80), 5, China Bldg, 1st Carpenter St, Near Mazgaon Dock, 400010; February 15
Silloo Behli Battiwala (70), Jer Mans, Gowalia Tank, 400036; February 15
Naval Hormasji Contractor (69), 781, Readymoney Bldg, M. Joshi Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 15
Jean Bomanji Dubash (79), Mount Napean, L. Jagmohandas Marg, 400006; February 15
Jerbai Rustomji Mistry (90), C/11, Captain Clny, Tardeo, 400034; February 16
Freni Meherji Variava (77), 71/B, Embassy Apts, Napean Sea Rd, 400006; February 16
Jamsheed Dorab Dhondy (42), A-23, Rosary Hse, Gunpowder Rd, Mazgaon, 400010; February 17
Dolly Purvez Mistry (62), 7/B, Old Wadia Chawl, Chandanwadi, 400002; February 17
Perin Nariman Bharucha (79), 1/11, Pusha Vihar, Opp Colaba Post Office, 400005; February 18 (cremated)
Dhun Jal Mehta (90), Queen's Chmbs, 89, M. Karve Rd, 400020; February 18
Goolbanu Mondegar Tafti (Yazdegardi) (80), Marine Chmbs, Marine Lines, 400020; February 18
Manek Kaikhushru Baliwala (64), 4/18, A. H. Wadia Baug, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; February 19
Dhumai Rustomji Colah (82), Motiwala Bldg, E. S. P. Marg, Byculla, 400027; February 19

Ardesher Hormusji Desai (95), Master Chmbs, Metro Cinema Lane, 400020; February 19
Nergish Behramshah Ghazi (65), Umrigar Bldg, Zoroastrian Clny, Tardeo Rd, 400007; February 19
Nariman Kavasji Chaina (98), Yusuf Mans, 204, Khetwadi Back Rd, 400004; February 20
Hilla Shavak Mistry (55), 422/A, Dubash Bldg, Near Novelty Cinema Lane, Grant Rd, 400007; February 20
Khurshedji Meherwanji Nagpurwala (78), 622, Palia Mans, Lady Jehangir Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 20
Pervez Nadarsha Chinwalla (61), Daruwala Trust Bldg, 13, Low South Freare Bridge, Grant Rd, 400007; February 21
Mani Dhanjisha Guzder (69), 14, Badat Manzil, Mehella Patel Agiary Lane, Grant Rd, 400007; February 21
Aloo Lovejoy Meherwanjee (68), 2/204, Beach Haven, Juhu Tara Rd, 400049; February 21
Burjor Hormusji Vacha (66), 905, Cumballa Crest, 42/A, G. Deshmukh Marg, 400026; February 21
Daulat Cawasjee Vajifdar (80), Tarachand Bldg, Zoroastrian Clny, Chikalwadi, Tardeo, 400007; February 21
Erachsha Navroji Mehta (86), Davar Hse, Bunder Rd, Kalyan, 421301; February 22
Homai Darabsha Vaicha (85), Boman Hse, Homji St, Fort, 400001; February 22
Jehangir Bomansha Follwadiwalla (64), 3/23, Tata Clny, Tardeo, 400034; February 24
Sorabji Jehangirji Gandhi (74), 209, F. Marwadi Chawl, Opp Gamadia Clny, Tardeo Rd, 400007; February 24
Jehangir Rustomji Dadabhoy Lakdawalla (80), The Orison, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari, 400102; February 24
Homi Framji Thuthy (75), Aria Bldg, P. D'Melo Rd, Fort, 400001; February 24
Goolbanu Dhunjishah Pardiwalla (84), E/7, Shapur Baug, V. P. Rd, 400004; February 25
Homi Ratanshah Balaporia (80), C/o Western India Oil Company, Nadkarni Marg, Opp B. P. T. Hospital,

Wadala, 400037; February 26
Daulat Khodaram Irani (88), 4/17, India Hse, Kemps Corner, 400036; February 26
Motoo (Pilo) Burjor Toorkey (74), 15, Park Haven, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; February 26
Bapaimai Hormasji Wachha (79), E/5, Model Hse, Proctor Rd, 400004; February 26
Jer Kaikhushroo Dalal (88), 512, Mehr-Muncher Mans, R. P. Masani Rd, Matunga, 400019; February 27
Dhunjishaw Kekishroo Lilaoowalla (88), 1/12, Kashinath Bldg, Kashinath Rd, 400034; February 27
Piroja Jamshedji Nagporevala (79), C/o Sam J. Nagporevala, 625, Nariman Bldg, Dhobitalao, 400002; February 27
Nowrojee Sorabjee Nuggad (Nowrojee) (86), 615, Dhun Villa, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; February 27
Soonoo Jolly Shroff (81), 19/C, United Chmbs, 347, Grant Rd, 400007; February 27
Behram Maneckji Buchia (59), 598/A, Wadia Bldg, J. Shankersheth Rd, 400002; February 28
Pilla Shavaksha Pardiwalla (78), 34/6, Hill Side, Godrej Clny, Vikhroli (W), 400079; February 28

CALCUTTA

BORN

A girl, *Sanaya*, to *Pareen* and *Jehangir Tankariwala*; December 10, 1993
 A girl, *Nainara*, to *Niloufer* and *Rajiv Patkar*; December 25

MARRIED

Suparna Roy and *Dinyar Nariman Mucadam*; January 17, 1994

DIED

Fram Dinshaw Billimoria, father of *Dhun*, *Dinshaw* and *Mary Fatakia*; February 12
Beji Kaikhushroo Engineer, father of *Yezdi* and brother of *Dolly H. Buchia*; February 12
Nergis Medhora, wife of *Jal* and mother of *Dorab*, *Burjor* and late *Veera*; February 22

MHOW

DIED

Mehera Rustom Dastur, mother of *Ardesher*; December 1, 1993

NAVSARI

MARRIED

Shanaaz Nariman Kasad of *Middlesex, UK* and *Mehernosh Phirojshaw Billimoria*; October 12

SURAT

DIED

Rusi Nariman Kelawala (64), *Athugar St*, *Nanpura*, 395001; February 3, 1994
Maneckshaw Pallanji Mirai (94), *Bhhaya St*, *Nanpura*, 395001; February 19
Alanmai Dhanjisha Variava (80), *Village Karjan*, *Taluka Kamrej*, *Dist Surat*, 394180; February 22
Jehangir Behram Ragebi (Irani) (66), *Nariman Home* and *Infirmiry*, *Shahpore*, 395003; February 26

CANADA

Barnaby, *British Columbia*

MARRIED

Sharareh Soltani and *Hormoz Diniary*; September 4, 1993

Montreal, Quebec

DIED

Tehmina Karkaria, mother of *Gev*; September 29

Ontario

BORN

A girl, *Veesta*, to *Camelia* and *Shahrad Mavandadi*; September 5
 A boy, *Jeandiar*, to *Medea* and *Esfandiar Kalanter*; November 13

Vancouver

MARRIED

Susan Hillary Ward and *Rubin Engineer*, son of *Gool* and *Minoo*; September 4
Roxana Anklesaria, daughter of *Diana* and *Dinshaw* of *Poona, India* and *Yezdi Pavri*, son of *Roda* and late *Jamshed*; December 4

IRAN

Tehran

DIED

Ardesher Sasany (83), father of *Simin Shahrivini*; January 5, 1994

PAKISTAN

Karachi

DIED

Dhun Manijah, mother of Khurshed Engineer and Nusserwanji; September 16, 1993
Jamshed Mehta; September 25
Khurshed Minwala, brother of Soonoo Mama, Purviz Saher and Villie Homji; September 25

SPAIN

Madrid

DIED

Goolrookh Sohrab Vimaladai, sister of Dinshaw; February 27, 1994

UGANDA

Kampala

DIED

Tarun Sidpra; December 14, 1993

UK

London

DIED

Rustom Edulji Kumana, husband of Perin and father of Cyrus, Thrity and late Tehemtan; February 25, 1994

Middlesex

BORN

A boy, *Kayvaan*, to *Yasmin* and *Farshid Kapadia*, brother to *Jehan*; December 28, 1993

USA

California

BORN

A boy, *Kyrus*, to *Zareen* and *Kaiyomarz Mohta*; October 6
 A girl, *Nasha*, to *Perveen* and *Minoo Katrack*; December 11

DIED

Pheroza Vania, wife of Tehmurasp and mother of Darab, Nilufer, Dhan Divecha, Keki and Bannu Shrikhande; September 12
Perviz Confectioner (66), wife of Adi and mother of Zarir, Vira Okuda, Darayus and Kolly; November 16

Cherry Hill, New Jersey

BORN

A boy, *Burjis*, to *Hutokhshi* and *Porus Cooper*, brother to *Malcolm*; October 6

Houston, Texas

BORN

A girl, *Tania*, to *Rubina* and *Farshid Khan*; October 16

DIED

Rusi Laskari, husband of Katy and father of Kairasp; February 17, 1994

Philadelphia

DIED

Arnavaz Arjani (79), mother of Tehemtan, Kobad, Neville, Freny Ranji, Dolly Balsara and Jer Udvadia; December 21, 1993

Smyrna, Georgia

BORN

A girl, *Delsheen*, to *Behnaz* and *Jehangir Dahmubed*, sister to Justin-Kaiwan; December 6

St Paul, Minnesota

MARRIED

Susan Anne Hallenbeck and *Farhad Patel*, son of Roda and Khushroo; January 22, 1994

Texas

BORN

A boy, *Jamsheed*, to *Nancy* and *Mehrdad Yazdani*; September 21, 1993

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

The Telling Figures

Both marriages and deaths in Bombay indicated an increase in 1993 when compared to the 1992 figures. In terms of actual numbers, the community marriages showed an increase of 64 over the 1992 totals of 260 to give a count of 324 in 1993; intercommunity marriages increased by 12 over the 1992 count of 67 to give a total of 79. Thus, while community marriages rose by 25 percent, intercommunity marriages rose by 18 percent.

Of the total 403 marriages in 1993, 79 were intercommunity matches. This means that the percentage of intercommunity marriages was 20 (if calculated as a ratio of intercommunity marriages to the total number of marriages -- 79:403) and 24 (if calculated as a ratio of intercommunity marriages to community marriages -- 79:324). The respective figures for 1992 were 20 and 26.

The number of bodies consigned at the Bombay doongerwadi increased by 137 to give a count of 1,087 in 1993. The corresponding figure for 1992 was 950. The count of those cremated remained con-

stant with both 1992 and 1993 registering eight deaths. But while the doongerwadi listing is exhaustive, that is not the case with the crematorium count as we have access to records only at the Chandanwadi crematorium and not at the three other crematoria in Bombay.

The birth figures available with *Parsiana* indicated a count of 272 in 1993, lower by 44 when compared to the 1992 figure of 316. This number includes offspring of intercommunity marriages irrespective of whether the father or mother is a Zoroastrian. However, as the Bombay Municipal Corporation no longer cites religion on the birth certificate, the official birth count for the community is unavailable. The average of the Greater Bombay birth figures from 1981 to 1990 was 557 but presently there is no way of ascertaining the actual decline in the community.

We list below the 1993 figures as collected by *Parsiana*:
 Born: Boys 137, Girls 135
 Married: Parsi 324
 Intercommunal 79
 Died: Consigned 1,087
 Cremated 8

TOTALS FOR 1993 AND 1994

	Bombay			India			World		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
BORN									
Boys	9	137	18	--	7	--	5	37	1
Girls	9	135	21	2	4	1	4	40	--
MARRIED									
Parsi	49	324	89	1	11	--	2	13	--
Intercommunal	49	79	24 [^]	1	4	1	2	6	1
DIED									
CONSIGNED									
Males	40	563	84	5	98	10	6	51	3*
Females	36	524	76	3	76	6	6	38	1*
CREMATED									
Males	5	2	5	--	1	--	--	--	--
Females	2	6	1	--	--	--	--	--	--

A: Total numbers in this issue

B: Running totals for 1993 (February 1993-April 1994 issues)

C: Running totals for 1994

[^]Males married out -- 13

Females married out -- 11

* Overseas deaths are listed in the consigned column as *Parsiana* does not have any breakup of those cremated.

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

Duggan: widening vision

Parinaz Gandhi

Died: Lady Jena Jamshedji Duggan, 96, social worker committed to blind welfare who was instrumental in starting the first eye bank in the country, on September 2, 1993 at her residence following a brief illness.

"As a founder member of the National Association for the Blind (NAB), she was a great source of inspiration and assistance in developing services for the blind," noted a resolution passed at the condolence meeting on December 15, 1993 presided over by the sheriff of Bombay, F. T. Khorakiwala. "So intense was her interest in the welfare of the disabled and deprived sections of society that despite very advanced age and indifferent health she would participate in the decision making process of many bodies on the managing committees of which she was an active member," further added the resolution.

Even at the age of 96, she climbed three storeys to reach the venue of the meeting when she found that the lift was not working on one occasion, remembers Dr Rajendra Vyas, honorary secretary general of the NAB, India. "A lady of very few words," Vyas refers to her "silent contribution, guiding people from behind the scenes and making herself available for good causes." The Red Cross, the War Widows' Fund, the Soldiers and Sailors Welfare Board and the Cheshire Home were the other philanthropic organizations for which she made time. Her services to the war widows was recognized by the British government who conferred on her the Kaiser-E-Hind medal.

She was involved in ameliorating the condition of the blind much prior to the passing away of her husband Col Sir Jamshedji Duggan, a leading ophthalmic surgeon at the Grant Medical College, nearly 35 years ago. But as acknowledges renowned ophthalmic surgeon Dr T. N. Ursekar, "We ophthalmologists will always remember her for establishing the first eye bank in Bombay." On Sir Jamshedji's demise, his widow persuaded the Government of Maharashtra to build a separate building for the eye bank in the compound of the J. J. Hospi-

tal. From her husband's legacy she is credited with having donated a munificent amount for this cause and thereafter retaining her association as a member of the governing board of this Sir J. Duggan Government of Maharashtra Bank.

The NAB Sir J. Duggan Library Press, the NAB M. P. Shah All India Talking Book Project Committee, the NAB Finance Raising Committee were the other avenues where she extended aid. "I was struck by her active and alert mind," admitted Ursekar. "When she undertook



Duggan greeting Sharad Pawar. Looking on (from left) are: Vijay Merchant, Nana Chudasama and M. Nasrullah Photo: Asian Photos

any work for some project, she would pursue it till completion... working relentlessly to see that these organizations get enough funds to carry out their social work."

"No future NAB function or an FRC (Finance Raising Committee) show will be the same without the august presence of this gracious lady — stick in hand, impeccably dressed, (the Dowager walked sedately to) her seat in the front row — one of the first to arrive and the last to leave the function," states Ms Ratty Nariman, vice chairperson of NAB's FRC. Considered as one of "the last remnants of the fading aristocracy of the Raj," Duggan had tremendous social contacts which she put to use for the charitable causes that she promoted. Lord and Lady Mountbatten she would address by their first names, Louis and Edwina. She was very intimately con-

nected with the Nehru family too, particularly Ms Vijayalakshmi Pandit who fondly called her "Chick," reminisces Vyas.

Bubbling with energy, an evening at home would be a torture for her, mentions a close friend. "She had a very active social life and a very loving personal life," says Ms Mihoo Coorlawala, president of the Time and Talents Club where Duggan was a founder member and on its executive committee until her demise. "She had a great capacity for nurturing people," adds Coorlawala, "being very generous with her approval and very honest about her disapproval." She had her share of tragedies, but she "would ride over calamities with

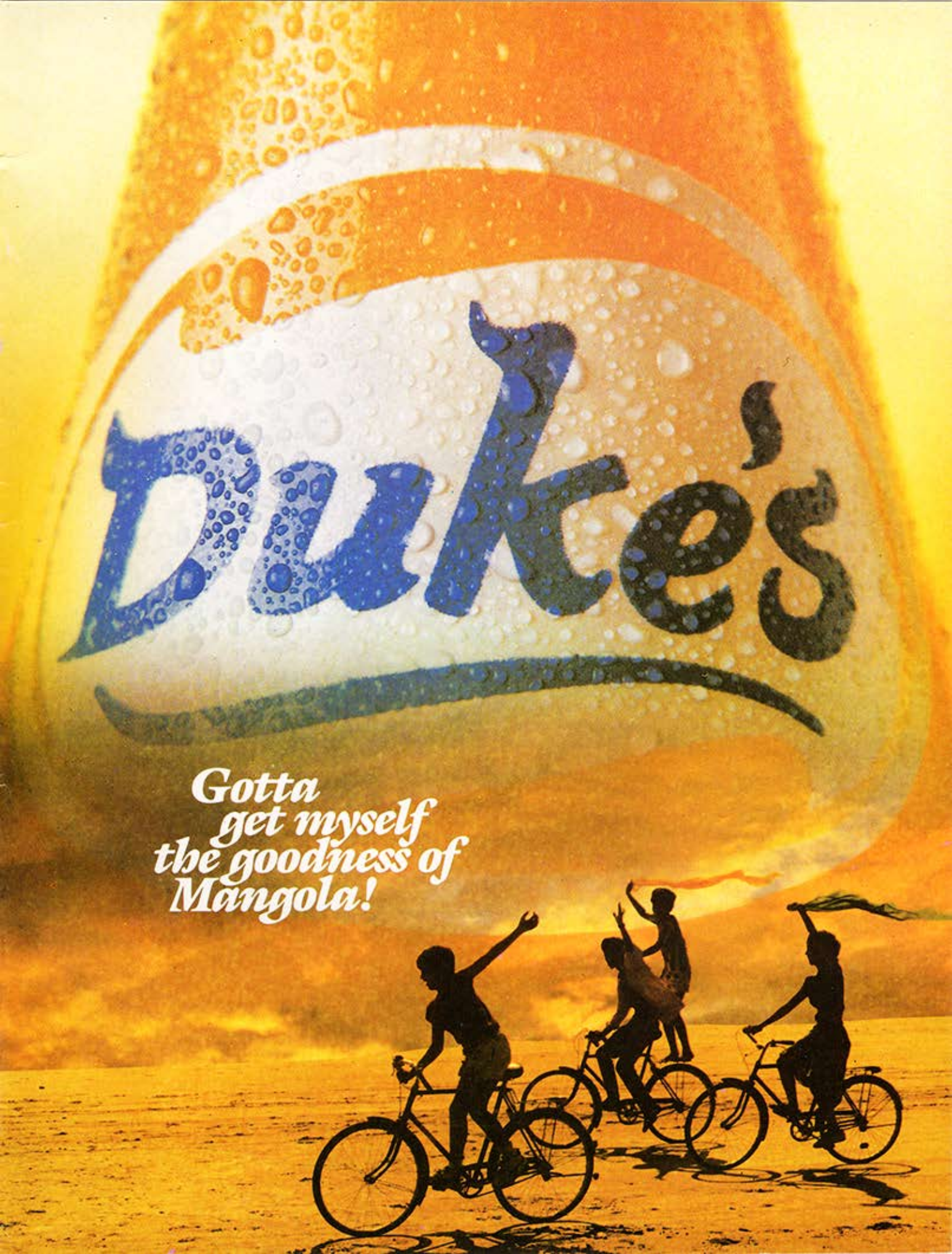
enormous graciousness," acknowledges Coorlawala.

Born to Alama and Munchersha Parekh at Bombay, she was brought up by her maternal grandfather Hormusji Guzdar and had schooled at the Fort Convent. She believed in prayer and ceremony, but

not all Parsi customs. In fact, on the Time and Talents' 50th anniversary, a multi-religious thanksgiving jashan was held at the prayer room at her residence. Invariably at navjotes and weddings she had that self discipline to be on time for the ceremonies and not merely to join in the festivities, remembers a family friend. Going to a funeral was a must with Duggan — an old Parsi belief that one must always pay one's respect to the dead. She did however break away from tradition in opting to be cremated.

While the large-hearted Duggan helped in widening vision, her own eyes could not be donated due to her old age and debility. One of her associates cherishes a short note scribbled by Duggan where she writes, "There is no way to repay affection except to offer affection."

Duggan is survived by her grandson Dr Firoze Duggan and granddaughter Farina Duggan, both her sons Nusly and Homi having predeceased her by a few years.

A large, stylized glass of orange juice with a rainbow arching over the word 'Duke's'. The glass is filled with orange juice and has many condensation droplets on its surface. The word 'Duke's' is written in a blue, bubbly font across the middle of the glass. The background is a warm, orange-yellow gradient.

Duke's

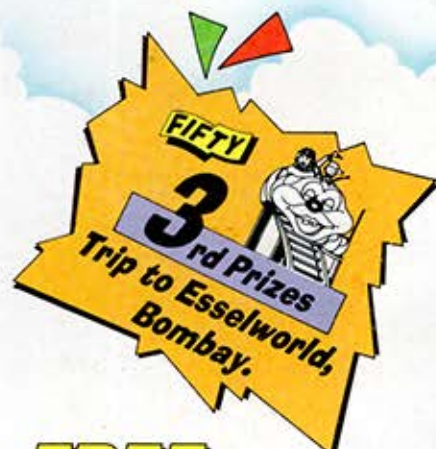
*Gotta
get myself
the goodness of
Mangola!*



Waah! Swad Ka Jadoo!



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