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Parsiana

May 1994
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Readers' views are welcome on any subject of interest to the community and should be sent to the Editor, Readers' Forum, Parsiana, G.P.O. Box 892, Bombay 400001. Letters are subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity. Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

"JRD: the last rites..."

We are distressed at the needless controversy currently going on in the Parsi Press with reference to the uthamna ceremony performed for the late Mr J. R. D. Tata at the Doongerwadi premises. We are all the more distressed at the unwarranted attacks on all the three respected high priests of our community who are held in great esteem by the community.

We trustees feel and are also advised that there was nothing irregular in law to perform this uthamna ceremony of the late Mr J. R. D. Tata who was a Zoroastrian, at the Doongerwadi premises, and the denial of any such facilities would on the contrary not be in keeping with our practice and traditions.

It has also been alleged in the Press that there were non-Parsis present inside

the bungli. We categorically state that there were only Parsi Zoroastrians who had access to the concerned Albless Bungli. Even eminent non-Parsis such as Dr Manmohan Singh, Finance Minister and Mr Avinash Naik, State Minister of the Government of Maharashtra and many other prominent non-Parsi personalities -- who always respect our customs and traditions -- were sitting in the pavilion where the non-Parsis normally take their seat on such occasions.

We now earnestly urge the concerned persons not to needlessly carry on this unnecessary controversy and would also urge all of them to be more restrained in the choice of their language particularly against our high priests in future, so as not to tarnish the otherwise fair image of the community.

JAMSHED GUZDER, ERUCH DESAI, JAMSHED KANGA, HIRMI RANINA, MINOO SHROFF, Ms MEHROO BENGALIE, Ms SILLOO KAVARANA
Trustees, Bombay Parsi Punchayet

"Widening horizons"

The recent declaration of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet ("Widening horizons," *Parsiana*, February-March 1994) to sponsor the third child of Parsi couples has set me thinking. Quite a few issues arose in my mind, mainly stemming from my professional background as a social worker who has qualified from TISS (Tata Institute of Social Sciences). This decision seems to me to be quite myopic, overlooking long-term repercussions and lacking a holistic approach.

The dwindling of this wonderful community being the major problem and issue, the need to multiply is seen as the only solution. However the question is "To multiply at what cost?"

The first issue is basically ethical: After centuries of keeping our word and proving our worth, we are now going directly against the national policy which urges all citizens to restrict their families to two children. Or will the Parsi Punchayet ask us to go outside India and procreate and give us Air-India tickets as incentives?

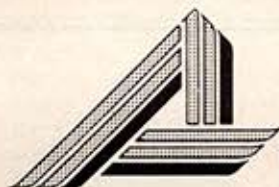
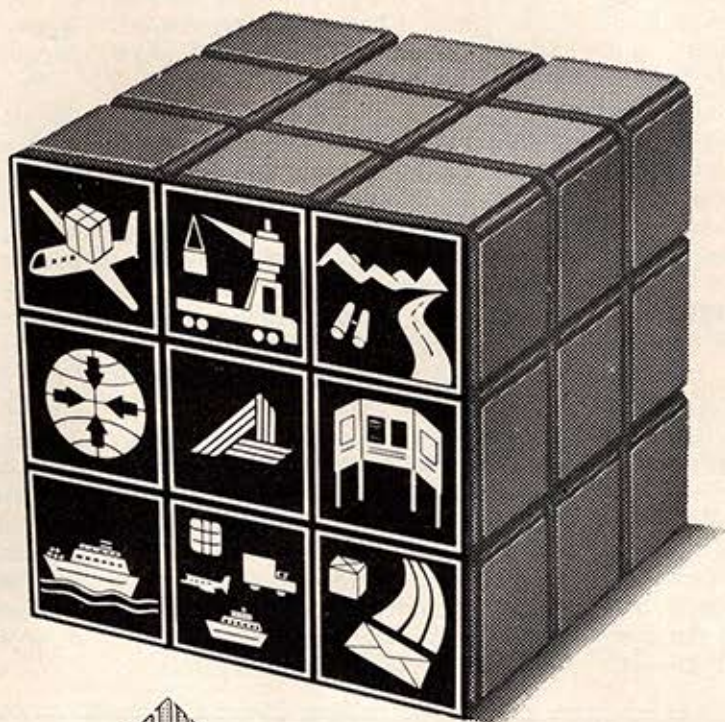
Bringing a life into this world is in my opinion, one of the biggest responsibilities of a human being. Do incentives/ sponsorships prepare couples for undertaking such a major, lifelong responsibility? Should not the decision to have or

not have a child be left to a couple as their intrinsic right and own need, assessment and confidence rather than be influenced (sometimes forced by familial/elderly pressure) or made a gimmick by such provisions?

Though Parsis are by and large better-off financially, the most important and neglected issue is that of psychological well-being! Resources even in rich households are never automatically replenishable. While parents work round-the-clock to maintain a particular standard of living, are on their toes all the time in today's competitive world with the crucial 'need to prove oneself syndrome,' who fulfills the proximity need, the being-together need of the child, so important for its healthy psychological development? Or do we want more individuals in the Parsi community who are addicts, strayers, mentally unsound? (I say more, since it is a well-known fact that mental retardation/illness is high in this community, mainly owing to large scale consanguineous marriages and inbreeding. And inbreeding is promoted as a countermeasure to inter-religious marriages though the latter are comparatively few in number.) Is it quality that is important or quantity? The point here being made is that the mere fulfillment of basic needs does not necessarily make finer individuals and the psychological dimension of any issue should never be overlooked.

The concept, "We want kids and so we give money" sounds like barter. What needs to be examined is, can life be treated as a commodity? And can a transaction/provision/exchange be even contemplated where a human being is concerned? Secondly, do such incentives and attractions change people's attitudes and outlook ultimately? To be told that I should procreate to help my community is absolutely ridiculous, for even if I have the provisions provided/have my own financial capability, do I wish to? Besides the material provisions, am I inclined to and do I have the interest, bent of mind and the confidence to bring up a child and bring him/her up well? If not, what is the difference between an uneducated couple producing half a dozen kids and me? The only difference I can see is that the litter of the uneducated couple will loiter around in the slums/the

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open, while my litter will loiter around in my backyard.

Hence, even if procreation is the only solution and speedy multiplication the only course of action for the Parsis, mere incentives is just not the answer. Attitudinal change is the most difficult of all changes (any change per se is difficult!) and it never comes by incentives/bribes/cajoling/wooing. It can be attempted by an understanding of the cause, the realization of the importance of a particular solution and more than anything, an identification with the cause and the solution, both. It is highly doubtful that the youth of today have the latter.

Ms DILSHAD G. KAPADIA

Priestly pronouncements

Mr Zerkis Dumania's letter ("Priestly pronouncements," *Parsiana*, February-March 1994) regarding the recent marriage by Zoroastrian rites of the son of the present Sir Dinshaw Petit needs correction.

The groom's mother, Nirmala, is in fact wholly non-Parsi (not just the maternal grandparent as stated in Dumania's letter) and his paternal grandmother half-French, thus making the groom more non-Parsi than Parsi. In fact, this adds

greater strength to Mr Dumania's argument about the hypocrisy of our high priests who turn a blind eye to a mixed marriage when a baronet's family is involved.

D. DAVAR

The Editor replies:

According to the present legal position, as the groom, Jehangir Petit, is the son of a Parsi Zoroastrian father, Sir Dinshaw Petit, he is a Parsi Zoroastrian.

As per the pronouncements and the practice of our dasturs, any Parsi girl who marries anyone other than a Parsi, though she may be observing and following Zoroastrian teachings, is considered an outsider and treated as a traitor and not allowed to enter our places of worship.

In this case, a girl from Indore who had married a Christian gentleman for 10 years, divorced her husband and fell in love with a Parsi boy from Mhow. Indore and Mhow are neighboring townships. The families of both, the girl and boy, are well placed. When the parents approached local panthakies to perform the marriage ceremony the Indore panthaky referred the case to one of the dasturs in Bombay. I am concealing the names of the dastur and the parents to

avoid embarrassment.

The dastur advised the Indore panthaky to perform the marriage ceremony after he had reperformed the navjote ceremony of the girl and prayed *Patet Pashemani* by having paivand with the girl. Accordingly the marriage ceremony took place at the Dadiseth Agiary, Bombay, on *roj Behram, mah Fravardin* on September 11, 1993.

How strange is the decision of the dastur! Is it not a case of an intercaste marriage? The girl had embraced Christianity and cohabited with a Christian gentleman for 10 years and parted ways afterwards. Then why do all the three dasturs make a hue and cry about the navjote of Darius Puz Surti and the navar ceremony of Percy Sam Modi? Is it not a decision of convenience? It is just like "You show me the man and I'll quote you the rule."

After all, who is the supreme authority to decide — the trustees who appoint priests as dasturs or the dasturs? What are the criteria observed while appointing dasturs? Do the trustees or the dasturs have more religious knowledge? Do the trustees notify any vacancy for appointment of a dastur whenever it occurs?

As we all know, most of our present



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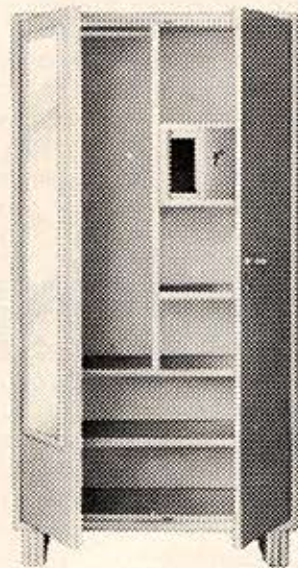


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lot of dasturs have inherited the post. Only in one or two cases have they been appointed by the trustees. While we respect our dasturs and expect from them the solutions to religious problems, up till now not a single dastur has solved any of the problems faced by the community.

Now it is the duty of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) to wake up and take bold decisions in the larger interests of the dwindling community. Even if the BPP invites all the dasturs from all over the world, they are not going to be of one opinion because they are Udvadias, Bhagarias, Surties and so on. All of them have different ideas and are bent upon showing each other up. We cannot solely trust them. We can have their opinion on the matters but the decision should be of the trustees who are better known to the community. N. S. MOBEDJI

Indore

"JRD: a penchant for..."

I would like to narrate a few recollections of my younger days in the steel town of Jamshedpur of the mid '30s, relating to a few episodes concerning J. R. D. Tata.

A professional lawyer of the town, Maneck Homi, was elected the president of TISCO's labor union which was, hitherto, a semi dormant body. Homi organized massive rallies and promised the laborers the very earth, if they would go on strike. The management took a grim view of the situation and despatched a team of negotiators led by J. R. D. Tata for an amicable settlement which he successfully achieved with his understanding of human relationships.

In another instance when Dilip Bose, a boy of my generation became the first Indian to win the Asian Lawn Tennis title, it was J. R. D. Tata who offered to sponsor his trip to the European tennis circuit. Coincidentally, I may mention that it was Dilip's grandfather, a geologist, who discovered the Chota Nagpur district in Bihar to enable Jamsetji Tata, the founder, to establish the Tata Steel works at Kalamati (Jamshedpur) in 1908.

Yet another member of our group from Jamshedpur of those days who is today an international personality in the field of metallurgy was encouraged to return to India and establish his world renowned firm of engineering consultancy in Calcutta.

I am sure the world will now be poorer by the passing away of the doyen

of industrialists — Mr J. R. D. Tata.

SOLI M. KOTWAL

Calcutta

"Women's rights?"

Your reply to Ms Sheroo Gupta (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, February-March 1994) gives the impression that if a woman goes to court, there is a possibility of children of Parsi mothers married to non-Parsis being considered as Parsis. You have quoted the Daver-Beaman judgment of 1908 which ruled paternity to be the deciding factor for establishing Parsi lineage. In that case the then Bombay Parsi Punchayet chairman Sir J. Jejeebhoy, defendant in the suit filed by Sir Dinshaw Petit, had himself filed an affidavit which stated that by definition, the progeny of a Parsi father could be deemed to be a Parsi.

Can that judgment be changed solely because the litigant is a woman?

Ms Gupta says that she would have married a Parsi man if she could have found one. Someone could also say that he/she would not have married a non-Parsi woman/man even if he/she had found one.

I am not a male chauvinist and I realize the predicament created in this country by the migration of educated boys abroad, especially to the USA, but the solution does not lie in intercommunal marriages. I am leaving myself open to criticism, but I feel that if Parsi girls find getting suitable male partners difficult, the community should think of permitting bigamy, with the wife's consent. The Muslims have officially permitted up to four wives and no law of the land has yet interfered with their personal laws. It is also happening unofficially amongst other communities, and yet the state does not prosecute them because in this matter, the litigant has to be the wife only. Even the early Parsi settlers in India practised it, but it was eliminated by the British.

Another point is that no priest would perform the navjote ceremony of a Gupta or a Mathur or a Fernandez. This is not only a question of tradition, but also for preserving the identity of the community.

Women like Ms Sheroo Gupta can at least prevent a loss to the community by getting their daughter (if any) married to Parsi boys by a civil marriage.

Dr P. D. SUNAVALA

"The case for..."

In a benighted age where heterodoxy

tries to masquerade as learning and truth, it is heartening to read Ms Pervin Mistry's staunch and upright comments on some crucial issues (Zoroastrians Abroad and Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, March 1993). The only red herrings to be seen are the ones dropped in by Mr Farrokh Vajifdar in his attempt at a rebuttal (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, September-December 1993), as he fails to meet Ms Mistry fairly and squarely on the issues and strains to apply twists in the rope instead. This not being entirely unfamiliar to alert readers of *Parsiana's* Readers' Forum, Ms Mistry should simply brush it aside and continue to educate us with more of the unvarnished home-truths so necessary to know.

However, no faithful Zoroastrian can easily brush aside Mr Vajifdar's wanton insults directed at Dahm Yazad in what sounds like a fit of pique at the item entitled "The Power of Dahm" (Events and Personalities, *Parsiana*, March 1993). The "high point" of Mr Vajifdar's pathetic little attempt at humor, clumsily contrived as a "joke" to ridicule this celestial Yazata, is a thinly disguised word-play on the phonetic resemblance between the divinity "Dahm" and the swear-word "damn!" And in passing, he cannot resist also taking a dig at our sacrosanct Yatha-Ashem recitations and our hallowed manthric nirang formularies. Besides the poor taste involved, one wonders whether such liberties would ever dare to be taken, or tolerated, in any other religious community.

Mr Vajifdar alleges "the promotion of Dahm (is) at the expense of Asha" as if Asha, and a Yazata like Dahm, are somehow mutually exclusive or at odds with one another! We would rather leave it to a great and genuine Zoroastrian to lay this strange thought to rest: "We find it mentioned in Avesta literature that the divine beings, the Yazatas, are also asho (i.e. possessing Asha). These great divine powers fulfil their tasks in accordance with Asha. Each one of them has been called 'Lord of Asha'" (Dr Irach Taraporewala, *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*, Bombay 1993 reprint, pg 5). So much for that little twist in the rope.

But Mr Vajifdar also makes the scholarly sounding pronouncement that Dahm Yazad has been "peremptorily dismissed from our panel of Yazads!" Perhaps from Mr Vajifdar's personal vision of Zoroastrianism, but not from the Zoroastrian religion. This is an example of how a partial piece of information can try to pass

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off as a whole truth in convenient support of prejudiced perspectives. For the full and authentic position, we would rather cull our material from sources like Prof Mary Boyce's latest work *Zoroastrianism — Its Antiquity and Constant Vigour* (Costa Mesa, 1992, pgs 108-110) and her earlier *Zoroastrians — Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London and New York 1987, pgs 70-74): these unbiased sources uphold the revealing historical and scriptural evidences provided in the remainder of this letter.

Probably by the early fourth century BC in Achaemenian times, the distinctive Zoroastrian calendar, where each of its 30 days is dedicated to a particular amesha spenta or yazata, underwent a revision. In addition to the first day already belonging by natural right to Ahura Mazda, three other "Dadvah days" (the 8th, 15th and 23rd, presently called Dae pa Adar Dadar, Dae pa Meher Dadar and Dae pa Din Dadar, respectively), were also dedicated to Ahura Mazda the Creator, thereby dividing the month into four roughly equal parts with each week commencing under the aegis of Ahura Mazda Himself. Accordingly, the three yazatic divinities, Apam Napat, Haoma and Dahma Afriti (i.e. Dahm Yazad)

who had originally presided over the demarcatory 8th, 15th and 23rd days, respectively, were obliged to give way to accommodate the new calendary dedications to the supreme lord Ahura Mazda.

Sagacious mortals, then as well as now, do not presume to cross swords with yazatas. The substitution of the three yazatas by the "Dadvah days" of Ahura Mazda is exclusively a calendary phenomenon for the cogent reasons already mentioned, and does not at all mean that these three divine entities ever were, or could be, expelled from the Zoroastrian religion like a trio of rusticated school-children. The sweeping generalization that Dahma Afriti is "peremptorily dismissed from our Zoroastrian panel of Yazads" is neither tenable nor scholarly, and this is evident from the following:

- Dahma Vanhvi Afriti personifies the prayers of the faithful, and she is the Yazata of the "pious good blessing." Her benediction, incorporated in the Yasna liturgy as Y.60:2-7, was regarded as one of the most powerful of utterances, and continues to be thus regarded to this day, now being known as the Avesta Doa Tandarosti.

- One of the sacred funerary prayers finally recited for a deceased Zoroastrian

by four priests on the sunrise on the fourth day after death, when the soul departs the earthly plane, is a special Afringan Dahman. Rather surprising for a "dismissed" Yazata!

- In the Siroza Yasht, even the three extra-calendary yazatas, including Dahm Yazad, are venerated with their "khshnoomans," i.e. propitiatory formulae bearing the Yazata's ritual invocation. (Such is not the case in Yasna 16:3-6 which is a presumably revised mnemonic enumeration mainly following the revised calendar.)

- Similarly, in the Fereshte ceremony, individual baj and afringan services are also solemnized for each of the three extra-calendary yazatas, including Dahm Yazad, in addition to the 30 revised-calendary divinities, so that 33, not 30, services are performed in all. Prof Boyce admires this "tenacity in observance" across thousands of years, and comments that "when their fidelity is demonstrable in such relatively small matters, there seems little reason to question the Zoroastrians' capacity for faithfulness in great ones." Would that we were all worthy of this compliment!

Every one of us has the freedom to express views on religious matters — in a

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straightforward and substantiated manner. But none of us should have the license to obfuscate, to mislead — or to be abusive.

RONI K. KHAN

Nasik

Divorce statistics

I would like to suggest that *Parsiana* publish the list of Matrimonial Court cases of divorce. Sometime back *Jam-e-Jamshed* used to give such lists once or twice a year in their paper. If the reason for divorce and name of the person is published it will help us to know how many Parsis are taking divorce each year.

RATAN J. PATEL

The Editor replies:

As divorce proceedings are stressful and painful to the parties concerned, *Parsiana* would not wish to further publicize the separation and add to their discomfort. Instead, the total number of divorces per year are published as and when available, the last statistics being carried in the Events and Personalities column of *Parsiana*, November 1992.

Whither, *Parsiana*?

I have been reading with interest recent comments (some adverse) regarding *Parsiana*. Overall it would appear that the publication is perhaps not as lively as it should be! Fair comment?

The overriding theme is always one of dwindling Zoroastrian numbers and methods required to reverse this trend. We are indeed an endangered species, and perhaps the Indian government should grant us special status, not dissimilar to that given to tigers (call it "Project Parsi?"). Jokes apart I believe Parsis can only flourish by adopting the following:

- Have very large families
- Leave the west and move back to their motherland (India, Pakistan, etc)
- Move away from "greed infested" Bombay and into a sedate agricultural life-style that would facilitate an increase in family size. After all, affluence will always dictate that the number of offspring are fewer in order that each child is financially well provided for.

Your sister publication, *Voyage*, is a fabulous publication, so why not borrow certain of its unique features? For instance why not have a travel section in *Parsiana* where your readers can discuss details of their favorite holiday spots, both inside and outside India? Why not have a "food" section? *Voyage* features restaurants,

Parsiana could perhaps feature new and evolving Parsi dishes. After all the Parsis' love for food is legendary, and I'm sure that even in printed form certain recipes would go down very well indeed! What about crossword puzzles? These could include Zoroastrian history, culture, or indeed food! Perhaps the winner receives a year's subscription to *Voyage*? Parsi jokes? Parsis can and do laugh at themselves, no bad thing, so why not capitalize on this?

There is I believe a crisis as regards our priests, and the fact that their numbers are dwindling. Has anyone suggested women dasturs and mobeds? Why not? If the Church of England can do so, why not us?

Parsiana is on the whole geared towards the over 60s (just as *Voyage* is possibly targeted at the under 40s). But it is the 20 and 30-year-olds that will dictate the future. What do our youngsters think about conversion, mixed marriages, emigration, disposal of the dead, and other controversial topics? Their voice is paramount.

I do enjoy *Parsiana* (though not as much as I do *Voyage*), but it always gives me the impression that it's the type of magazine (no offence meant) that would be distributed, if permitted, to attendees at a *paidust*, to browse through whilst prayers were taking place — perhaps this could be yet another marketing outlet! Let's make it younger, livelier...

I agree I'm playing "devils advocate," playing the "agent provocateur," but somebody has to!

S. RUSTOMJI

Middlesex, UK

I would like to congratulate you on having the courage to change the frequency of your magazine. It is sad that *Parsiana* should face problems in bringing out 12 issues a year, but heartening to note that at least someone in our community has been able to adapt to changing times!

However bitter this medicine may taste, I am sure that it will help towards the survival of a magazine which would otherwise have become just another footnote in the history of our community's decline.

JAVID SOLI CANTEENWALA

London, UK

Food thoughts

I have lived in Bombay with my wife and children for over two decades.

Over the years, we have attended scores of weddings and navjotes in the various baugs — and each time I go to

such functions, I am dismayed by the antics of members of our otherwise 'erudite' and 'cultured' community when it comes to a matter of getting to the dinner table.

The bedlam that ensues between the end of one sitting and the beginning of the next, can well be compared to the preparation that troops go into, pending a tactical military maneuver! The musical chairs that precedes the next sitting with advanced bookings of sometimes an entire row of seats at a time and the getting into position behind the earlier incumbent, who has hardly started on the desert, do not augur well for our community.

This unabashed concentration on food leaves a poor impression on invitees from other communities. It appears that our community is rapidly developing a class culture that exudes the tenets of "food thoughts, food words and food deeds" instead of the noble principles to which Zoroastrians are expected to adhere!

SOLI CANTEENWALA

Taste the difference!

Whilst travelling to Udvarda or further up along Western Railway (the old B.B. & C.I. Railway) you invariably fall into a pleasant conversation with your fellow traveller. Along this sector the travellers are usually a cordial and friendly lot. You get a variety of eatables at every station, which no other rail line in the world can offer. To name a few:

- Green tea and fudina masala of Dahanu
- Chikoos of Gholvad
- Sing and suterfeni of Bharuch
- Boi of Udvarda
- Malai ghari of Surat
- Bruns of Yazdani

Can anyone extend the list? It would be fun to send the list to our relatives abroad who have to exist on a steady (read boring) diet of French fries, Kentucky chicken and McDonald hamburgers.

Z. ZEND

Does anybody know?

We, the Kharases, are wondering how we got our surname. Are we named after a place of birth, profession or what?

I asked my father once, and he made a joke of it. He said, "Khar in Persian means ass; ass in English means the same; so we are double asses."

Is it true that most of the flour mills in Surat were once owned by a Kharas?

HOMI ADRESHIR KHARAS

Edited by Amavaz S. Mama



The JNM Forbesons Group

Vidya viheenah pashuh.

So said our forefathers.

Thus ashrams were born, where the knowledge and principles needed to live an honest and fruitful life were inculcated in the child. The foundation of a man's character was laid within these homes. The style of education has changed considerably today. But the motive behind it is much the same. To prepare you for a tomorrow.

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IN MEMORIAM

KAIKHOSHROOS AMY MASTER

HORMUSJI B VANIA



Since the inception of the MAZDAYASNIE MONASTERIE and All India SHAH BEHRAM BAUG SOCIETY several of the Founder Members have passed on to the higher spiritual realms. We honour their memory. Their noble deeds on earth have left a lingering fragrance to inspire those who follow to continue their highest standards of social service and educational work for the universal benefit of humanity.

Late **KAIKHOSHROO ARDESHIR MASTER**, Queen's Counsel, Barrister, Advocate, Notary, was for many years President of the Tanganyika Law Society and the Tanganyika Parsi Anjuman. He was a keen sportsman, Captain of the Parsi Cricket team of Dar es Salaam, fond of bridge, swimming, and the Outdoors, Safaris. Born on 11-11-1897 in Satara the youngest of 5 children of Ardeshtir and Khorshed Master, he was educated at ST. Xavier's College, Bombay and Edinburgh University as an Engineer; and was Called to the Bar from Lincoln's Inn, London; and practised in the High Courts in Bombay, Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam since the 1920's. He encouraged social service and public welfare as a Rotarian. The first Law college of the University of Tanzania was constructed on his lands in Dar es Salaam in the 1960's; thanks to his good connections with the British Judiciary, especially Lord Danning, then Master of the Rolls in England. He was a pious and devout Parsi gentleman who was conscious of community responsibility. He constructed the Jashan hall, Prayer room and Parsi Cemetery in Dar es Salaam (since Agiary and Dokhma could not be built due to the few numbers of the Parsi Community). He led a retired life in Poona since the mid-sixties and became the Founder Member and Councillor of the MAZDAYASNIE MONASTERIE in 1977. He was always a staunch champion of the underdog and stood up for Truth, Justice and fair dealings with all. He was greatly respected by Africans, Asians and Europeans for his impartial, honest and frank ways. His advice was sought by persons of all communities. He passed away in Bombay on 19/7/1991 leaving behind his wife Amy, daughter Meher and son Jehan.

Late **HORMUSJI BEHRAMJI VANIA** was also an Engineer by training Born on 30 January 1885, in British India he came in close personal touch with late-USTAD SAHEB BEHRAM SHAH NOWROJI SHROFF from whom he received direct blessings and much spiritual illumination of the ancient Mazdayasnie Zarathushtrian Daena, especially the inner wisdom known as ILME KSHNOOM, the Science of Spiritual Bliss. He was a staunch and faithful follower of Ustad Saheb and practised the Spiritual Disciplines, Tarikats-which gave him much inner strength and spiritual power to fight the forces of evil. He travelled widely and held many important positions with British

Companies during the British Raj. Due to his piety and learning his advice was much sought after by British, Hindus and Muslims alike. He was able to perform daily life miracles due to his practice of Mantras. He had a good collection of books on Zoroastrian Religion and especially Ilm e Kshnoom, and in the later years of his life during 1978 to 1983 he gave much of his knowledge to the Mazdayasnie Monasterie President. He was instrumental in starting the All India Shah Behram Baug Society of which he became the Founder Vice President in 1983 at the ripe age of 98 years; and could deliver lucid lectures in public even then. In December 1982, he personally performed the Spiritual Ceremony of the purificatory drawing of cusps at the site of the land near Sanjan where the Zoroastrian College building is now standing. He was active to his last days and passed away on 24 March 1984 at 99 years of age, leaving behind his wife Baimai, son Keeki and daughter-in-law Goola.

MRS **AMY KAIKHOUSHROO MASTER** eldest of 3 children of Goolbai and Jamshedji Constable was borne in Bombay on 30th June 1913. Fond of music, opera singing, dancing, she took a keen interest in the Girl Guides Movement and Social Service. On 25/7/1938 she married Kalkhushroo Ardeshtir Master and resided for many years in Tanganyika where she was one of the leading ladies. She was the first Asian lady to become a Municipal Corporator of Dar es Salaam and did much social service as President of the R.S.P.C.A. T.C.W. and as Dy. Territorial Commissioner of Girl Guides. She was keenly interested in Religion and Spiritual Education and sponsored many Scholars and visiting lecturers to speak through the Theosophical Society and the Aurobindo Society. After retiring in Poona since 1963 she took keen interest in the Parsi Community and Zoroastrian Religious Education. She founded the Zoroastrian Studies Circle in Poona in 1965 through which many distinguished Speakers were invited to deliver lectures. Amongst them were late Mr. Jehangirji S. Chiniwalla, a close follower of late USTAD SAHEB BEHRAM SHAH SHROFF through whom she learned much about the Zoroastrian Ilm e Kshnoom knowledge; and she actively propagated this knowledge. She was a Founder of the Poona Athornam Aid Trust and the Poona Kamdar Fund. In 1977 she became a Founder and Governing Body Member of the MAZDAYASNIE MONASTERIE and in 1983 she became a founder and Governing Body member of the ALL INDIA SHAH BEHRAM BAUG SOCIETY; and through these societies and the Zoroastrian College she was closely and actively connected with the diffusion of Ilm e Kshnoom knowledge in English through books and lectures. She was very popular and her advice was much sought after by many persons in many countries. She was an accomplished hostess and her gracious

hospitality was always much appreciated by her wide circle of friends from many countries. She passed away in Bombay on 17th December 1993.

Mr. **BEHRAM SHAH SAVAKSHA SIDHWA** was born of the wellknown athornam family of Udwada Priests. He was educated in Bombay and joined the Central Bank of India at a young age and rose through its ranks as officer to become a wellknown Manager. He was a Manager of the Central Bank Branch in London; and through his acumen and driving personality he developed a wide business clientele. He settled in Bangalore as Central Bank Manager during the sixties; and was instrumental in the development of industries in Bangalore. He was an active Rotarian, District Governor; and enthusiastically promoted many social service projects. He was President of the Bangalore People to People International chapter, and organised a major international Conference in Bangalore in 1979. He was a devout and pious orthodox Parsi; and the President of the Bangalore Parsi Anjuman for many years. He always encouraged the young persons to come up in life by giving them jobs, appointments, positions and making them responsible for different projects under his stewardship. He was very popular and greatly adored and looked up to as a senior personage of Bangalore by people of all communities. In 1983 he became a Founder member of the Shah Behram Baug Society and organised several lectures and other Parsi Community Religious and social programs in Bangalore. He passed away in Bangalore leaving behind his wife Syllamai, daughter Homal and her husband and two grandsons.

Mr. **FURROKH S BAMEJI** of Bangalore was also born of a wellknown athornam family of Bombay; son of the wellknown Parsi Scholar Major Sohrab Bameji. Furrokh qualified as a Navar and Maratab; he was educated in Bombay and joined the services of the Tata Companies group; in which he rose to a senior managerial position. Through the Tata Companies he was posted in various parts of India and abroad. Married to his wife Shireen, he has two sons and one daughter. He settled in Bangalore after retirement and took keen interest in Parsi Community Social Service and Religious Education. He conducted Sunday morning classes for the Parsi parents and youngsters. He was an avid reader of all kinds of books pertaining to the Zoroastrian Religion and Parsi History. He was often invited to attend Conferences and represent the Parsi Zoroastrians as he ably lectured on this subject. In 1983 he became a founder member of the All India Shah Behram Baug Society; and he functioned as the Bangalore and South India representative and H.O. of the Society until he passed away in Bangalore on 4th July 1988.

Mr. **FARIDDOON KAIKHOUSHROO RUSTOMFRAM** of Hyderabad was a businessman married to Mrs. Samannaz, daughter of Dr. Kalkhushroo Ardeshtir Nadershah. He was an avid reader and had a large collection of books on Zoroastrian Religion, especially Ilm e Kshnoom. He was fond of encouraging young persons and children to practice daily prayers; and for this he published booklets and charts to be hung in Agiaries on the correct method of performance of the Kusti Prayers. He was a devout and pious person. He had great faith in the Fire Temples and did all he could to ensure sufficient supply of Fire wood Kathi for all the Atasbehrams. In 1983 he became a Founder member of the All India Shah Behram Baug Society. He passed away on 7th July 1985 in Hyderabad.

The ZOROASTRIAN COLLEGE Building near Sanjan is nearing completion of the construction work. Library Book Shelves Carpentry work is presently going on and Cataloguing of Books, Painting and Polishing work still remain for which Funds are needed. **DONATIONS ARE WELCOMED. YADGARI DONATIONS OF Rs 10,00/- and over upto Rs. 50,000/- entitle the DONOR, to have his/her name and also the names of any dear departed persons whose memory you wish to honour to be inscribed on the ROLL OF HONOUR in the main College Building. The cutout below may be used. All Donations are Tax Exempt under Sec. 80G of the I.T. Act and Donations Receipts are issued to all Donors. Cash or Cheques in favour of SHAH BEHRAM BAUG SOCIETY may be sent to the Mustafa Bldg. Address given above.**

The First Residential Week End Seminar was held in April 1994 at the College Building on Colour and Crystal Therapies and Ancient Mazdayasnie Cosmic Wisdom. Monthly Seminars are now being scheduled in addition to the Lecturers held in Bombay, at the College Bldg. near Sanjan. Persons interested in doing serious research may enquire at the above Mustafa Office address.

I am interested in Research; Seminars; Lecturers; Books; Videos;
I wish to Donate Rs/£/\$ _____ as YADGARI
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Events and Personalities

Judge favors seniority

An appeal against the decision of High Court judge Justice A. P. Shah, maintaining that trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) do not have the power to elect the president of the Punchayet, will be filed by June 20, 1994. Justice Shah's written order which details the reasoning behind the judgement is expected in mid May.

Justice Shah had responded to the queries raised in the originating summons of BPP trustees Homi Ranina and Dr (Ms) Mehroo Bengalee: whether the trustees of the BPP, under the current scheme of election of trustees, have the power to appoint/elect the president of the BPP (No); whether they can prevent the seniormost trustee from assuming the office of president (No); and whether the resolutions passed by the majority trustees electing Jamshed Guzder president of the BPP are valid (No).

Four of the seven trustees, namely Guzder, Jamsheed Kanga, Minoo Shroff and Ms Silloo Kavarana had elected Guzder president of the Punchayet on the retirement of Dr Aspi Golwalla. Considering this a contravention of the traditional system of appointing the seniormost trustee -- in this case noted solicitor Eruch Desai -- to the post, Ranina and Bengalee had sought the High Court's opinion.

June 25, 1994 is the date for the next trusteeship election to the BPP board as Ranina's 10-year tenure is drawing to a close, according to a public notice issued by the trustees. The last date for filing nominations is May 25.

As Ranina, an avowed orthodox, has expressed his intention to seek reelection, it is unlikely that any other contestant from the orthodox lobby is likely to challenge

him. The CER (Committee for Economic Revival) also at the present juncture has not selected a candidate to oppose him.

Old allegation revived

"The moot question is whether I will be able to continue my crusade against unau-



From left: Guzder, Desai and Ranina

thorized religious structures on municipal roads and footpaths that I initiated in 1985," Joaquim Menezes quotes G. R. Khairnar, deputy municipal commissioner of Bombay in an article describing some of the political pressures that Khairnar faces ("Pressure to stop shrine demolitions," *The Times of India*, March 23, 1994).

While there is no attempt in the article to distribute the offending structures (869 in toto) according to religion, the graphic illustrating it pinpoints offending Zoroastrian agiaries as five, attributing the source of the information to the Bombay Municipal Corporation's 1991 survey covering 21 of the city's 23 wards.

Noting, "This is obviously based on an earlier statement made by Mr G. R. Khairnar and printed in the *Indian Express* dated September 15, 1991," Bombay Parsi Punchayet trustee and former municipal commissioner of Bombay Jamsheed Kanga has challenged the allegation in a letter to *The Times*. Kanga further notes:

"These (so-called unauthorized religious shrines) included agiaries which have been in existence for over 90 years, such as, the Colaba Agiary and agiaries on Goga Street, Pherozeshah Mehta Road, Cawasji Patel Street and Perin Nariman Street. I had immediately taken up this matter with the then municipal commissioner, Mr K. Padmanabhaiah and I received a reply from the additional municipal commissioner Mr J. D. Jadhav dated November 19, 1991 which has stated the following:

"The news item that appeared in the *Indian Express* regarding the Parsi agiaries is not based on any information or briefing to the Press by any source from the Corporation. We have examined the actual position and we find that these five agiaries in South Bombay are existing over (the) last 50 years. We have neither plans nor intention to take any action of removal or demolition of such existing old structures."

"In view of this categorical contradiction which incidentally was published, it is surprising that such a false report is given publicity," Kanga admonishes.

In answer to a similar protest from Dr Syrus Irani, president of the Zoroastrian Cultural Welfare Association, Khairnar notes (*Jam-e-Jamshed*, April 24, 1994): "The five Parsi agiaries came to be listed as unauthorised, since no sanctioned plans are available with us. However, all of them, being very old, fall within the tolerable category warranting no action from our side. Nevertheless I express my regrets, if I unintentionally offended your religious feelings."

Parsi power on tracks

Of the 527 contestants who had registered

for the XIV All Parsis Annual Athletic and Cycling Meet, five talented youngsters were selected for sports scholarships of Rs 1,000 per month for one full year. The scholarships, courtesy Damania Airways Sports Foundation, were promised by Damania Airways chairman Parvez Damania who had presided as the chief guest on the second day of the two-day Meet organized at Bombay's University Stadium on February 12 and 13, 1994, notes a press release sent by Aspi Ustad, honorary joint secretary of the Meet, giving the highlights of the occasion. The cycling events had been held two weeks earlier at the V. Patel Stadium.

The privileged five who received the awards were Ms Delnaz Bulsara, Ms Feroza Engineer, Ms Zenia Daruwalla and Malcolm Anklesaria for their performance in athletics and cyclist Aastad Palkhiwalla who was declared the fastest man on wheels. Bulsara was declared the champion in the girls under-10 age-group, Engineer in the girls under-12 category, Anklesaria in the boys under-12 age-group, and Daruwalla was declared the fastest woman of the meet.

Dedicated to the memory of J. R. D. Tata, "the greatest sportsman the world has ever known," the Meet was organized by The Nowroze Baug Play Centre, the Zoroastrian Physical Culture and Health League, the Cusrow Baug United Sports and Welfare League and the Mancherji Edalji Joshi Memorial Trust. The sponsors were Damania Airways, Airfreight Limited, Union Press, Wibs, Selvel and Pepsi.

There were 65 outstation entries from Dahanu, Pune, Surat, Nashik, Chikli and Jabalpur. The six new meet records were all set by males, four in the field events and two in the track events, informed Ustad.



Zubin Lord of Pune heaved the discus in the men's group to a new distance of 31.62 m while teammate Farshid Irani set a new record in the discus throw in the under-17 age-group by covering a distance of 30.20 m. Lord also set a new record in shot put by tossing it across a distance of 12.02 m. Cyrus Doomasia who is the Maharashtra state champion in javelin throw set a new record of 51.42 m in the men's section. In the long jump event for boys under-17, Harvez Vakil cleared 5.97 m setting a new meet record. Kairosh Bazorgi and Hormuz Mehta covering 5.76 m and 5.64 m also eclipsed the old record in the same event. In relays, the Athletic East Track Club set a new timing of 3:37.8 seconds in the men's 4x400 m while the Cama Youth Association clocked 50.4 seconds in the 4x100 m boys under-17 thereby bettering the earlier meet timing.

The prize distribution function started with the presentation of the Late Air Marshal Minoo Merwan Engineer Trophy for life-time contribution in the field of Parsi sports to Jal Pardivala. The Jal D. Pardivala Trophy for the Best Athlete of the Year was presented to Homiyar Mistry. The championship winner in each of the 13 groups was encouraged with a gift coupon of Rs 1,000 that entitled the champion to purchase sports goods.

In addition to Bulsara, Engineer and Anklesaria, the other winners were Johaina Karanjia (girls under-six), Bianca Saklatwalla and Sanaeya Master (girls under-eight), Zarin Talati (girls under-15), Sanobar Daruwalla (women), Navroze Vania (boys under-six), Pourush Patel (boys under-eight), Shapur Irani (boys under-10), Rustom Pochkhanawalla (boys under-14), Hormuz Mehta (boys under-

17) and Yezdi Dapotawala (men). The team championship for men and women went to the Athletic East Track Club.

"Parsi power" on the tracks is bound to increase, feel the organizers, if they can be assured of the same support from donors and the same enthusiasm from participants as they witnessed this year.

Hansa takes off

The first two-seater aircraft in India to be entirely fabricated with composite materials took off on its inaugural flight from Bangalore on November 23, 1993 making front page news in papers like the Deccan Herald of the following day. And credit for this launch was given to the team of designers and engineers from the National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) led by Dr Rustom Damania.

The aircraft, christened Hansa, can serve as a trainer, be used for sport and hobby flying, surveillance, aerial photography and environment monitoring, according to the news report. Since aluminium alloys are substituted by composite materials, the two-seater is rugged, rust-proof, and easy to maintain. It weighs 850 kg, has a maximum cruising speed of 115 knots and an endurance of four hours, its other features are mentioned.

After further testing the aircraft will be manufactured by Taneja Aerospace and Aviation Ltd (TAAL) at Hosur in Tamil Nadu beginning next year. TAAL, which will be the first private sector concern to manufacture aircraft designed by a national laboratory, expects to produce 30-40 planes a year, each priced at Rs 20-25 lakhs. Flying clubs should be a good market for these aircrafts, deprived as they have been of new fleets since the '70s and

At the All Parsis Annual Athletic and Cycling Meet: Pardivala receiving trophy from Gul Engineer as Roshni Damania looks on

Right: Sports scholarship winners (from left) Palkhiwalla, Daruwalla, Anklesaria, Bulsara and Feroza Engineer with Parvez Damania (third from right)





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relying on aged fleets which are now unsafe, according to a report in the December 1993-January 1994 issue of *Technocrat*.

"(The model's) sleek lines and impeccable performance shout quality. Not unexpectedly, because Rustom Damania, deputy director of the NAL, along with his team of keen designers has spent countless man-hours working out every possible detail before putting glass fibres and resin into the air," notes the *Technocrat*. Damania, as notes the write-up, "is singularly well suited for this role, being practically born with a joystick in his palm; his father headed the

investment of Rs 67 crores in the new projects, in an interview with *The Economic Times* of February 25, 1994 Patel stated, "We want to constantly look for different things to do."

"Last month it became the first Indian company to set up a joint venture project in Hungary where REPL has taken over a majority stake in VSZM, a Rs 10 crore Hungarian company manufacturing heat shrink kits... Already exporting about 30 percent of its turnover, the management plans to now export more in bulk from India and package and assemble kits from its Hungarian company," notes *The Economic Times*.

In Malaysia, REPL has opted to set up a greenfield project at a cost of Rs 11 crore, to be called REPL Malaysia SDNBHD. The Industrial Development Bank of Malaysia is partly financing this project, according to the write-up.

REPL's tie-up with the French giant Elf Lubricants last year brought the company into the oil business. Its focus areas however are supposed to be power and telecom sectors where lie its major customers. Traditionally manufacturing heat shrink jointing kits, the company is now moving into opto-electronics and nonconventional energy generation like wind turbines.

With an estimated turnover of Rs 44 crore this year and an expected hike to Rs 65 crore by the end of next year, REPL believes that three to four percent of its turnover should be reserved for research and development to give it the strong technical orientation to face world competition.

Nerve center in Udvada

"A cheerful, benign center with futuristic, secular leanings is proposed. Not quite a temple nor just an institution, the Zoroastrian Cultural Centre is visualized as a dynamic concept for a community," writes Ms Jeru Katpitia in her introduction to the design thesis conceived by her for her final year architecture examination, before she graduated from the Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda with a first class in 1993. The ideal venue for such a Centre would be Udvada, believes Katpitia who hopes that the project would promote sociocultural activity and also induce Zoroastrians to visit this ethnic stronghold for longer periods.

As envisaged by the architect, the Centre is meant to create an identifiable image promoting oneness in the community; a

nerve center housing literary and artistic material; a viable environment that would be conducive to undertaking quasi academic and research oriented programs; and promote productive social interaction at all levels and amongst all age-groups.

On a relatively unexplored site in Udvada spanning 13 acres, seabound on the north and west, a creek forming its eastern boundary and with an approach road from the south, Katpitia has planned her Centre with a built up area of 7,000 sq m. Administration, academics, research and development, residence, recreation and services are the facilities allowed for in the Centre.

The building's design is based on interlinked courtyards making it possible to construct it in phases, explains Katpitia. "The courtyards are the wells of light and air and were brought in (to deal) with the sultry, humid climate of Udvada. The Zoroastrian community has a strong duality in it being forward and open minded on majority of the issues but very closed and private when it comes to religion. The rigid geometric pattern is a direct reflection of the rigidness seen in the community and... interspersed with the free flowing spaces in the building gives (it) the dual character... The forecourt introduces one to the forthlike character of the building from the front, the gateways further accentuating the effect," Katpitia explains the rationale.

A model of Katpitia's Centre was on display at the Pirojsha Godrej Hall in January this year when Zoroastrians from all over India had converged at Baroda to attend a meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India. Elaborating on her project Katpitia noted, "The building and its practical aspects are important, but not as important as the concept behind which needs to be identified, so that the...faith...(can find) an identifiable place in Udvada in this century."

Presently working as a junior designer with Shah and Associates, a firm of architects in Baroda, Katpitia aims to study architecture abroad to better equip her to apply herself to historic preservation and conservation. Katpitia is also involved with other forms of applied and graphic art like Bharat Natyam, painting, fashion designing, sculpting, notes her curriculum vitae.

Compiled by Parinaz Gandhi



Hansa, designed by Damania and his team

Bombay Flying Club when he was a boy."

Earlier, under Damania's leadership a team from NAL had manufactured an all-composite Light Canard Research Aircraft, a two-seater weighing 600 kg with about 200 liters of fuel and a maximum range of 2,700 km, according to *The Hindu* (February 28, 1987). When he was with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), department of aerospace engineering, Damania's team succeeded in making India's first gyrocopter operational. A single seater gyrocopter has a freewheeling rotor resembling a helicopter and controls similar to that of a plane.

Teaching, research and developmental work Damania had undertaken in the field of aircraft design and flight mechanics while he was at the IISc, his bio data outlines his accomplishments. He got an opportunity to further apply himself to this subject when he joined NAL, initiating flight research as a new field of activity there and heading its new flight experiments laboratory. Damania's deputation to areas in Europe and USA has brought him the necessary exposure to competently handle research work in India.

REPL's global sights

"We want to be global players ourselves," said Homi Patel, chairman of REPL Engineering Limited, announcing the company's entry into the European market via Hungary and the South East Asian market via Malaysia. Estimating a total



Katpitia: historic preservation

"Goodness, I left the tap on!"



*The next time
you're careless,
remember over 250 million Indians don't have
access to drinking water.*

Buckau Wolf with Krupp technology



BUCKAU WOLF



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WORLD YOUTH MEET “Don’t shut us out”

Delegates to the First World Zoroastrian Youth Congress demand a coherent interpretation of Zoroastrian doctrine

Khursheed N. Khurody

Concern for the “unity, preservation and prosperity of the Zoroastrian community in the 21st century” drew nearly 500 young Zoroastrians from all over the world to Los Angeles, to attend the First World Zoroastrian Youth Congress, September 4-6, 1993. Today, six months later, these youth have achieved some of the targets discussed at the Congress, such as better education, communication, and community service and though much is left to be done, the organizers of the Congress stand out from other committees for their diligence in following up on issues discussed to ensure actual, practical achievement of targets.

The Congress was sponsored and hosted by the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA). Several private donors also helped considerably to meet the cost of approximately \$40,000. The chief organizers were the Helping Hands Zoroastrian Youth Communication Network Committee of FEZANA in cooperation with the youth committees of the California Zoroastrian Center, the Zoroastrian Association of California (ZAC) and the Traditional Mazdayasni Zoroastrian Anjuman (TMZA). Headed by chairperson Meher Dadabhoy Amalsad, the executive committee consisted of Sarosh Motivala, Darius Gandhi, Kashmira Variava, Zubin Gandhi, Scheherazade Aresh, Bahram Goshtasbi, Ara Anoshirvani, Arman Sassani, Behnaz Shahzadi, Kamal Dastur, Khushrow Machhi and Ervad Zarir Bhandara.

On the whole, their careful planning of the three-day event proved fruitful, and there were few snags. Though several sessions were ambitious, both in length and content — and, many youth com-

plained about ‘packed days’ with not enough recreation — the organizers kept to their schedule with admirable tenacity. Amalsad even arranged for a post-Congress meeting with his committee and several delegates in an attempt to ensure that issues discussed during sessions would find their way out into communities and not just remain within the confines of theoretical discussion.

The Congress opened with aplomb on the morning of September 4, 1993 in the Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr in Orange County. Built in 1985, and named after its chief donor, Arbab Rustam Guiv from Iran, the architecture of this building seeks to remind Zoroastrians and others of the Achaemenian era (approximately 600 BC to 400 BC), when Cyrus the Great made Zoroastrianism the chief religion of the Persian Empire. The California Zoroastrian Center, as it is commonly called, is surrounded by palm trees and in a quiet room at the back, a fire burns in an afargan.

Of the 500 delegates present, approximately 60 percent were women and 40 percent were Parsis, the rest being primarily Iranis. The official age range declared in the registration form was 12 to 40. However, although most of the participants were between 15 and 35 years, young children, parents, and grandparents were conspicuous too and the elders were encouraged to attend to hear the voice of the youth. In the past, the youth have complained that they have had no forum to air their views, so although easing communications between generations was an aim at this Congress, the elders (defined as parents, regardless of age) were asked to speak only when spoken to. Some sessions were held in separate rooms.

Further, although a world congress,

most participants were from the US and Canada. Internationally, teams from the United Kingdom, Iran, Pakistan and India were present. Some of these representatives, for example Dastur (Dr) Firoze Kotwal, High Priest of Bombay’s H. B. Wadia Atas Bahram and Ervad (Dr) Ramyar Karanjia, joint principal of the Dadar Athornan Madressa, had flown in to the US to attend the World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago and stayed on for the youth Congress.

After registration and an American breakfast of coffee and donuts, sessions began with an inaugural address by the president of the Congress, Meher Dadabhoy Amalsad, followed by a benediction by Dastur Kotwal and senior Iranian priest Mobed Fariborz Shahzadi. Even at this early stage, great attention was paid to the theme of unity between the two Zoroastrian wings — the Iranis and the Parsis — and an attempt was made to have representative priests and speakers from both communities. In the inaugural address Amalsad said, “one of the key purposes of this Congress is to develop undying love within ourselves for our religion and for our community. The goal of this Congress is to keep the Zoroastrian community united in one identity.”

The theme of unity remains particularly appropriate in the American setting where Iranis and Parsis have come together from cultural backgrounds that are, with respect to social customs, language and habit, essentially very different. Iranis feel alien to Parsis and vice versa, and the youth at the various congresses in the US have taken it upon themselves to try to eliminate social barriers and unite under the single title of Zoroastrianism. This remained a dominant theme in all aspects



Top (L) Organizers of the Congress; (R) Fashion show choreographed by Zarin Dastur. Below: Invocation by (from left) Bhandara, Kotwal and Shahzadi; California Zoroastrian Center facade
 Photographer: Shenaz D. Patel (California, USA)

of the First World Zoroastrian Youth Congress where even the menu sought to unite. We ate traditional Parsi food on the first day, an Irani lunch on the second, and American hamburgers at a barbecue party on the third. Further, great care was taken to arrange a cultural show where both, young Parsi and Irani men and women, modeled the salwar kameez (loose pants and long, dress-like shirt) and ghagra choli (long embroidered skirts and short blouses) from India. Then, several youth performed dances from the Irani tradition. Other entertainment items in-

cluded singing and piano music, a religious play and a karate demonstration, choreographed and performed by Sensei Zarir Bhandara who broke planks of wood with a single stroke and withstood a motor cycle being ridden over him with complete ease and without injury. He was a great success.

However, the differences between Parsis and Iranis still remain a reality and despite the theme of unity and the benedictions, once discussions were in session, the two youth groups seemed to segregate in part and converse in their own tongues, and further criticize one another. Comments came from Irani youth saying, "You have tainted and changed our religion in India." And Parsi youth complained that the Iranis make very little effort to talk in English. "They insist on speaking Farsi," one young man com-

mented, "so why the heck shouldn't we speak Gujarati? In fact they force us to resort to our mother tongue by being cliquish." Yet another young Parsi woman very emphatically stated to a community elder, "How can we marry them? We don't even have the same calendar and we don't understand their prayers: they say them so differently. We are essentially from two different cultures. I have more in common with a Brahman than an Irani, and they don't eat spicy food," she added. And so the communities do remain divided. But little by little the two groups are coming together, perhaps because of a deliberate effort to unite, perhaps because we are threatened with extinction.

Most sessions took the form of panel discussions and speakers, with plenty of opportunity for audience participation. Addressing the topic "Prosperity and Zo-

roastrianism," Aadil Palkhivala, yoga teacher and director of Yoga Centers in Bellevue, Washington, talked of the importance of mental, physical, emotional, financial and spiritual prosperity and how such prosperity may be achieved. For example, with regard to physical prosperity, Palkhivala talked of Iyengar Hatha Yoga, and an organic vegetarian diet. He also stressed the importance of financial wealth in Zoroastrianism—that it is not a crime, but rather essential—and proceeded to say, "I challenge you to let go of your upbringing and your past... to step into your potential... to bring forth the power that lies latent in you."

The topic of "Quest for excellence through Zoroastrian youth leadership" led to questions such as, "What is true Zoroastrian leadership?" Should we have a structured leadership in our community? Or should we have loosely defined leadership? Or should we have no leadership at all? Would a centralized system of leadership be more efficient than locally oriented leadership? Shahriar Shahriari, a mechanical engineer from Vancouver involved in the development of microwave technology, among other things, was the chairperson of this session. Shahriari who has served as founder and editor of ZYNA (Zoroastrian Youth of North America) journal which has since merged with the *FEZANA Journal*, asked many probing questions. Most youth were not in favor of a Parsi Pope, but several suggested that leadership is a problem, and they often don't know who to turn to.

Shiraz Daruwalla from the UK suggested that scholars and dasturs should be our leaders but many disagreed. Many felt that the priests say one thing (and Parsi and Irani priests disagree amongst themselves even on fundamental doctrines and rituals), scholars say quite another, and further each place has its own rules. The Parsis forbid intermarriage and conversion, yet there is no textual evidence to support this. And unlike India, many priests in America will initiate the children of mixed marriages into Zoroastrianism, yet these children are forbidden from entering the fire-temples in the community's stronghold, Bombay. Calendars differ, not just between Iranis and Parsis, but also within the communities. A general consensus was reached that there is need for centralized, global leadership for a central governing body to formulate one standard set of rules, and that this body must include priests, scholars and youth representatives from all over the



world. Farokh Karani Lam from Boston suggested that these leaders should not try to please. They should just lead. Nerina Rustumji from the US felt that we ought not to invest power in someone else. Leaders should organize and not impose their views. The debate soared across the room on how to form an acceptable governing committee. No conclusion was reached and it was not clear whether the youth would abide by all the rules and regulations were such a body to exist.

The question of central or local leadership is just one of many controversies raised here as at other prior congresses, and most youth felt an urgent need for unity and uniformity. They expressed despair and confusion at all the different doctrines thrown at them and at the constant bickering that divides the community. For example, several different opinions on marriage, conversion, ceremonial rituals, the fate of a dwindling community and how to survive in the America of the 1990s were expressed. Most viewpoints were entirely contradictory. How do bewildered youth find their way through this maze of ideas? Who can guide us? This perhaps was the most pressing question of the entire Congress. How do we really know what to believe and what is right? How do we know what to do?

An architecture student from Tehran university with a flair for English literature Mandana Mehryeen brought first hand information from her experiences in Iran. She stated that cities such as Kerman, Yazd, Shiraz and Isfahan have regular activities for their youth, that Zoroastrian youth committees have been active in Tehran for 20 years and in the towns of Kerman and Yazd for at least 200 years. She spoke of daily prayer classes, sports and games, the propagation of arts and culture and a high level of literacy as

compared to the general population. Although, she spoke of religious oppression in Iran, she made it quite clear that Zoroastrians were in no way being actively persecuted, that they were respected, and provided they abided by the general laws of the country they were left alone to get on with their own practices. This came as a shock to many at the conference who believed and stated quite the opposite.

Demographics: More confusion. While the data presented to us showed a definite

"We want to talk about our lives, not just of the Sasanian kings"

threat of extinction, senior priests from Bombay stated that since the Parsis survived the coming of Islam in Persia, and further since they have survived in their host country India, a land of almost 900 million people, they will go on. Dastur Kotwal stated that this threat of extinction has been there for thousands of years, but somehow Zoroastrians adapt and change, thus ensuring their survival. However, Aspandiar Jijina, who gave an overview of world Zoroastrian demographics had something quite different to say. In 1991 he estimated 57,000 Zoroastrians in India, 41,000 being based in Bombay, 2,900 in Pakistan, 90,000 in Iran, 5,000 in Europe, 9,700 in North America and 900 in Australia. Citing 1982 estimates of age distribution, Jijina said 12 percent of the community in India and Pakistan are below 14 years of age, 68 percent are between 15 and 64, and 20 percent are above 65. In Iran, 47 percent are below 14, 44



*The speakers
(from left)
Shervin
Shahriari,
Commisariat,
Feridoun
Anoshiravani,
Deboo, Khurody,
Homavazir and
Amalsad*

percent are between the ages of 15 and 64 and nine percent are above 65, he informed, citing the 1986 official Iran census. The age-group composition of the Western world remains unknown. The figures presented were based on estimates from documents presented at other congresses and the figure of 90,000 Zoroastrians in Iran was hotly contested. The speaker from Iran, Mandana Mehrayeen reported a figure of 17,297 in 1963 and 18,000 today. Others talked of Zoroastrians hidden in the mountains, afraid to come out, and still others talked of Zoroastrians in and around Kazakhstan, Kirghistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan who are afraid to express their identities. Who knows, but we do know that we are few in number and dwindling.

In the forum that followed, architect Nauzer Mistry from Canada asked, "What makes you a true Zoroastrian and what makes Zoroastrianism different from other religions?" Mistry asked several pertinent questions. None were answered, but his ideas were indeed food for thought for most of the youth. He asked, "If someone were to read some books and articles about our religion, would that person then be a Zarathushti? Similarly, if people believe in humata, hukhta and huvarashta, do they then become Zarathushti? Is living a life of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds something which every religion teaches? Are we the only philanthropic community? How is our Zarathushti religion uniquely "something special," "something different," which sets it apart and assists us in being true Zarathushtis? Since all religions are equal, then is there anything to be spiritually gained by changing the name of one's religion?" Mistry's session was largely spent in asking a series of probing questions, leaving the youth with much to

think about.

Farishta Dinshaw, a school teacher who flew to California all the way from Pakistan, spoke next on "Unity and Preservation of the Zoroastrian Community in the 21st century." She talked of the emigration from Iran to India as being the first exodus where Zoroastrians fled for freedom from persecution. The second exodus of Zoroastrians emigrating to the West from Iran, India, and Pakistan she said has been motivated by better economic prospects. Hence, Dinshaw stated, "You cannot compare this change to the one that took place 1,200 years ago." Today she said, "a new breed of Zoroastrians has emerged in the West, with a distinct lifestyle of (its) own." She went on to say, "If there is no communication, there is no community." The only solution to survival, she said, "is the formation of a centralized world body that will network with Zoroastrian associations throughout the world and act as a clearing house for information." Some of the functions of such an organization should be, she suggested, to compile a global census, to maintain a directory of names and addresses of various Zoroastrian organizations throughout the world, to produce a global newsletter, to maintain a reference library of publications and films on Zoroastrianism, to establish a Zoroastrian museum, and to raise funds for research. Dinshaw's ideas were well received and many in the audience responded positively. For example, Shahin Bekhradnia talked of starting a green movement with a group of Zoroastrian scientists, as Zoroastrianism is close to nature. The system of communication via an electronic mail network was also discussed and this was perhaps the most popular idea for effective communications.

After several intense forums and semi-

nars on the first day of the Congress, the last session, titled 'One or Two' came as a welcome change to the youth. Shervin Shahriari, a computer scientist from Vancouver who had chaired the Fifth North American Zoroastrian Youth Congress, used audiovisual aids to present a contrast between the two paths of good and evil. A visual dialogue ensued. Shervin had prerecorded himself as 'M' — the screen representation of evil. Ever so often the screen image paused, allowing the real Shervin to talk and respond about "good." The idea, a creative masterpiece, roused much interest and enthusiasm among the audience, and Shervin did indeed manage to convey his message that ultimately, the "good life" is worth every effort. His highly innovative system of communication not only encompassed a dialogue between TV versus person, but it also represented the dualism of man's nature in terms of the conflict between what one wants to do and what one should do. Shervin's idea of communicating with 'M' as the mirror image of oneself, drove home a powerful message to the audience.

Most of the papers delivered on the second day centered around education. Representatives from each place gave a brief summary of efforts being made in their local districts. Yet there was a definite call for greater learning. Wherever pockets of Zoroastrians gather, they organize Sunday schools for their youth. The demand then, was not so much for more classes, but for coherent information that was not full of confusing, contradictory reports. Many asked for one unified syllabus that Zoroastrians from all over the world could adhere to.

The need for adult education was also expressed and the youth criticized the elders of the community for not being able to answer their questions. As a speaker on

the second day, my own assigned topic was the importance of education for Zoroastrians, but at every congress the topic of a greater need for education is reiterated and reiterated. Hence, at this Congress, I decided to do something different. I decided to research what our prophet, Zarathushtra, himself had to say on the importance of education, if anything.

I read the *Gathas* for the first time in their entirety and was amazed at my findings. I sought in my lecture titled "Zoroaster on Education" to share some of these with my generation. For example, not only did I discover a wealth of passages that spoke of thought and learning, but I also realized that wisdom and enlightenment are a critical part of Zoroastrian theology and philosophy.

First, I tried to establish the meaning of the term "education," as a process of instruction, guidance and development that aims to cultivate both mind and soul. Education must "enlighten," I stressed. Several passages in the *Gathas* support that such enlightenment is a fundamental concept of Zoroastrianism. For instance in Yasna 30, verse 2, we read, "Reflect with a clear mind — man by man for himself — upon the two choices of decision, being aware to declare yourselves to Him before the great retribution (the time of final judgement)." In this short hymn the Prophet urges us to cultivate the two most important processes to attain enlightenment — to listen, and to reflect. Similarly the words "good thinking" are found repeatedly in the *Gathas* and many verses call attention to listening, thinking and reflection — all essential to the educative process.

A research scholar from the UK, Dr Rashna Writer spoke on "The role of education in the consolidation of Zoroastrian identity in the new world." She said that "the Zoroastrian will be best able to contribute to his country if he knows 'who' precisely he is. Being comfortable in his Zoroastrianness will enhance his contributions to his state and society... The re-education of ourselves in our cul-

ture will, in time, lead to a regeneration of understanding of it... Once we have learnt, we can then reevaluate." Writer suggested that "the Zoroastrian community needs to look closely at the shorter- and longer-term objectives. The shorter-term objec-



Registering delegates on opening day and the children's choir

tives would concentrate on wide-ranging educational facilities which will reinforce the longer-term consolidation of a sense of community and identity." Ms Writer suggested education classes, correspondence courses, the use of the audio-visual method, and the training of the trainers. "The educational program would help re-establish the individual Zoroastrian's identity: who he or she is" Writer went on to say. "Individual identity then reinforces group identity, the wider Zoroastrian community. It is this that will ensure the survival of the Zoroastrian peoples in their new countries. Changes will occur."

Malcolm Deboo, honorary librarian of the Zoroastrian House Library in London also spoke on behalf of the Zarathushtrian Trust Funds of Europe (Inc). His thesis stated that Zarathushtrians are declining not due to lack of numbers, but due to

"limited knowledge and information on our 3Rs, which are Religion, Roots, and Racial Identity." Deboo proposed a three-phase objective, "Operation Humata, Hukhta and Huvarashta." In the first phase small groups of young children should be informed on the basic tenets of our religion, heritage and culture. The second phase will concentrate on ages 16-21. The third will be the advanced phase of Zarathushtrian education which will, as Deboo put it, "provide us with intellectuals and visionaries in Zarathushtrianism, for them to carry out the necessary revitalization of the Zarathushtrian religion, which our contemporary community so desperately needs." Deboo also spoke of the "Zarathushtrian Education Project" in the UK which was launched in 1990 and comprises of various modules dealing with religion, history and culture.

Armaity Homavazir a science undergraduate from Ontario, Canada spoke on promoting unity. She stressed the importance of learning languages like Farsi or Gujarati to enhance communication.

She also talked of priests as being the backbone of a religious establishment and hence emphasized their learning and training. Other issues discussed included, how to educate ourselves and eventually our children to carry on our religion, and how to adapt to the trends of our society and still maintain our Zarathushti identity. Some of these workshops took place in the form of panel discussions between parents and youth and lively discussions gradually led to the most contested issues of the entire Congress — intermarriage and conversion.

A tremendous effort had been made to keep the topics of intermarriage and conversion taboo at this congress. In fact, unlike other North American congresses,

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there was no specific session assigned to them. The reason: certain donors forbade the discussion of these topics.

However, much of the second day was spent arguing, shouting and fighting over these issues. The organizers tried their best to control delegates, but "why have this congress for youth if we can't talk about what we want to," one young lady screamed from the back. "These are our concerns. This is the meat of the matter, you cannot suppress us." Armaity Bharucha, USA, continued, "You've avoided our need to talk about the split between Iranis and Parsis, but we want to talk about our lives, not just the lives of the Sasanian kings." Then Aaron Rustonjee, the offspring of a mixed marriage said, "If I impurified your religion, then I don't want to belong to it."

Gulshan Sethna, USA, reported in no uncertain terms that if she intermarried she wanted her children to belong... "I love my faith," she said. Shahriar Shahriari from Vancouver pleaded for better communication with adults. "The youth are very united," he said. "We (love) you and we want to be listened to and loved. Give us a chance, don't shut us out."

The response to this came from a parent, Ms Aban Commissariat who said, "I am shocked about how you can say we don't love you. We faced the dating pressures too, but we were told it is a personal choice, the consequences then being our responsibility. Take responsibility for your actions. You are asking us for an okay. We cannot give you that. Live with that responsibility." And a parent/child, adult/youth, orthodox versus reformist argument broke out in the hall causing virtual cacophony which no organizer could control.

Most Zoroastrian youth in America, especially women, felt angered that if they married non-Zoroastrians, then they would be barred from community activities and be treated as outcasts. Most expressed a great interest in wanting to bring up their children as Zoroastrians. They felt cheated by elders of their basic rights and argued that religion is personal and cannot be legislated upon. They demanded an explanation of these tenets. They felt sure they did not belong to a bigoted biased faith, but a tolerant one.

"Zarathushtra, our Prophet, converted people to his religion, so why can't we," shouted one young man. "If you're going to make rules about intermarriage, make them equal for men and women," stressed another delegate. At this point, one young

teenage priest from Chicago, Mazda Antia, declared that he would be happy to do the ceremony of any intermarriage, the initiation ceremony of the children of such marriages into the faith, and he would even initiate a convert.

Many felt that in their schools and colleges there were no Zoroastrians, so how were they supposed to date them. At this point, tired of the youth complaining, furious donor Tahamtan Aresh, who is president of the TMZA, declared that he would provide the funds for a party every

Video/Youth directory

A video presentation of the Congress is available to those interested for a donation \$ 18 (inclusive of postage). The first World Zoroastrian Youth Directory with more than 800 entries has also been published and is available at \$ 10. Donation cheques payable to FEZANA may be addressed to Meher Amalsad, Chairperson, Helping Hands Committee of FEZANA, 15842 Villanova Circle, Westminster, CA 92683, USA.

month to get young Zoroastrians from all over to come to the California Zoroastrian Center to meet one another and find partners. Still, the controversy raged and raged and only died down when the youth group of Houston put on an impromptu skit where they role played dynamic interactions between parents and children and men and women, followed by dinner. Then the lights were dimmed, the music throbbed, and the disco began. The theme for this dance? "Single, mingle with a jingle and no tingle!"

In conclusion, despite or perhaps because of the controversies, the First World Zoroastrian Youth Congress served as a catalyst for increased communication and religious education within the community. Most delegates dispersed to return to their predominantly American lifestyles, yet most stressed how the weekend's activities helped them come away with a greater appreciation for their culture, stronger ties with fellow Zoroastrians, and a better sense of what it means to be a Zoroastrian in America today.

Many promised to put into effect the possibilities discussed, such as adult education classes and a compiled list of texts for all to follow. And thanks to the efforts of Ms Roshan Motivala, a former presi-

dent of ZAC and a most remarkable woman, the youth were reminded about philanthropy and social service. There was no specific session assigned to this, but Motivala emphasized the importance of "helping a fallen person" as she put it. "In this we will unite." And most were united soon after in the games and sports that followed in a park at a barbecue picnic the next day.

Today, two projects are a direct outcome of the First World Zoroastrian Youth Congress: an emergency blood data-bank of world Zoroastrians run by Kamal Dastur from Los Angeles and the Zoroastrian Youth Religious Education Program which is being developed by the executive board of this youth congress.

Further, the First World Zoroastrian Youth Congress served as an experiment for future congresses where plans are being made to improve on organization. For the first time the organizers conducted a detailed audit of what they set out to do, and where and how their performance could be bettered in future. This covered among other things, the location and sponsoring of speakers, the quality of papers submitted, advertisements, souvenirs, hospitality, food, transportation, etc. They have also prepared a program evaluation sheet with comments from the audience, both positive and negative. For example, many youth felt burned out and several suggested that the term 'youth' spans too large an age gap. The organizers, in handing over the torch — to the Zoroastrian youth of UK for the Second World Zoroastrian Youth Congress in 1996 — have themselves suggested more intervals and dividing delegates into smaller groups for effective discussions.

On a personal note, I feel that many immigrant groups struggle to maintain an identity in a strange land, but for Zoroastrians it is an especially poignant concern. I would like to see myself and my generation devise ideas and practices which, while adhering to the basic immortal teachings of Zarathushtra, will not only adapt to the requirements of purposeful existence in contemporary society, but will also contribute concepts such as humata hukhta and huvarashta, and other similar Zoroastrian precepts, into the mainstream of modern humanitarian thinking and conduct. I am proud to be a Parsi Zoroastrian, to belong to one of the world's most educated communities where honesty and philanthropy are so highly honored. I look forward to preserving my priceless heritage — a noble but awesome responsibility.

Spark for the Navsari fire

Gustasp Irani

The second atash bahram fire to be consecrated in India was for the Navsari Atash Bahram

The autorickshaw purrs through the narrow streets of Navsari, past rows of low slung houses huddled together in small town intimacy. We swing around one final corner and the imposing stone-walled structure of the Navsari Atash Bahram greets us in all its majestic splendor. Afargans sculpted in stone adorn the roof and the sun glints off a golden farohar embossed on the building's forehead.

As we enter the wrought iron gates and pass through the flowering garden we feel the warm embrace of the Zoroastrian Parsi tradition embodied here. For it is here that the holy Iranshah fire, now in Udvada, was housed for over 300 years, and it is here that the second oldest atash bahram fire in India burns.

In the inner sanctum the *maachi* ceremony (the offering of sandalwood to the fire at the turn of every *gah*—see "Maachi: the throne," *Parsiana*, August 1990) has just commenced. A bearded priest, shoulders stooped, performs the ritual that has been relayed down the centuries (without missing out a single *gah*) from the first day the holy fire was consecrated in 1765. The richly carpeted area is otherwise empty and this makes us feel like an intruder on the sacred rapport between the holy fire and the priest.

The feeling is brief for soon another devotee enters the hall, his frayed trousers caught in cycle clips. His fissured, encrusted heels peep out from the holes in his socks. With ease he sits cross-legged at the entrance to the inner sanctum, comfortable in the reassuring glow of the holy fire. Watching him we realize that the Navsari Atash Bahram is an integral part of the local Zoroastrian tapestry.

During our two-day stay in the city we discovered that jashans are performed with



Top and right: Majestic architecture of the Navsari Atash Bahram Photos: Ashvin Mehta

unfailing regularity in the central hall. The two jashans we sat through were elaborate affairs with batteries of priests invoking divine favors. "A special feature of the Navsari jashan is that if the high priest is present, he does not take part but sits at one end to observe that it is performed correctly," Dastur Meherji Meherjirana, High Priest of the Navsari Atash Bahram, informs us.

The role of the high priest is a significant one in the Navsari Zoroastrian community. He is not only the permanent president of the Atash Bahram Trust, but also the ex-officio president of the Navsari

Anjuman. It is a tradition that reaches back to the 16th century when Dastur Meherji Rana (son of Rana Jeshang) visited the court of Emperor Akbar in 1586, and upon his return was honored by the Zoroastrians of Navsari who made him their first high priest. "There were no high priests in Navsari before him and I am the 16th descendant in the line," says the current High Priest, drawing our attention to the natural markings in one of the Italian marble slabs that line the wall facing the inner sanctum where the holy fire burns. If you look carefully and use a pinch of imagination you will discern the image of the first High Priest in the lines. We are informed that these natural markings are becoming more pronounced each year and that many Zoroastrians from all over the country and even abroad visit the Atash Bahram to see the phenomenon.

The 'miraculous' marble slab aside, Navsari is of special significance and interest to the Zoroastrian community for it was here that the Iranshah was housed for over 300 years, before it was moved to Bulsar and thence to Udvada (see "The Parsi Priesthood in India," *Parsiana*, May 1985). In the mid 15th century, when invading Muslim forces bore down on Sanjan, the fear that the Iranshah might be desecrated was very real and the fire was moved for safekeeping initially to Bahrot, then to Bansda and eventually to Navsari. And while the padshah stayed in Navsari it was the priests from Sanjan who tended it. However, when the Bhagaria priests of Navsari started to demand the right to participate in this sacred task, the Sanjan priests decided to move the holy fire out of the city.

The Navsari Zoroastrian community,

accustomed to the presence of the only atash bahram fire in India at the time and feeling a deep sense of bereavement, decided in 1760, to establish an atash bahram of their own. Within five years, in 1765, the

new holy fire was consecrated. According to Meherjirana, the new Atash Bahram is of special significance, not only because it is the second one in the country after the Iranshah, but also because all future atash bahrams, four in Bombay and two in Surat, would refer back to Navsari as the ritual base for the consecra-

tion of the most holy of fires. The reason they did not turn to the Iranshah for this information was because the records of its consecration are, at best, obscure.

In the early 1920s, the Zoroastrian community in Navsari decided to build a new structure for their Atash Bahram, designed by Pallonji Plumber. As part of the project they acquired all the property, including residential buildings in the immediate area around the new building they planned, so that it would be the only one on the block with streets on all four sides.

On December 24, 1925, the padshah was moved into this new home, with mobed Khurshedji Sahiar performing the first boi in the reconstructed Atash Bahram. Sahiar, with Rs 75,000, led the list of contributors to the project.

In the compound to the right of the main building is a small dry well with a sign in

Dry well in the compound of the Navsari Atash Bahram where once stood the Iranshah

Photo: Gustasp Irani

Gujarati that informs devotees that this was the exact spot where the Iranshah fire burned for all those 300 plus years when it was in Navsari. "The well was built to make sure no one accidentally walks over this holy spot," a resident Zoroastrian informs us. Yes, the Navsari community still takes immense pride in the fact they they were once host to the Iranshah.

In a wider geographical context, the Navsari lineage of the priests known as Bhagarias has played a significant role. As the Zoroastrian community started to fan out in large numbers and settle in different parts of the country, Bhagaria priests tagged along to perform the religious ceremonies at these new settlements. As the number of these migrations grew, the high priest in Navsari realized that it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep track of the priests and check the ritual purity of the ceremonies they performed.

"So he appointed two more high priests. In Surat he appointed Dastur Darab Palan as the High Priest of the Bhagarias there; and in Bombay he appointed Dastur





Jashan in progress at the Navsari Atash Bahram where stands the imposing clock

Photos: Gustasp Irani

Below: A Parsi locality in Navsari

Photo: Ashvin Mehta



Jamaspasa," Meherjirana informs us. The new high priests, he clarifies, did not necessarily have to be attached to any atash bahram. Further, the children of all Bhagarias, no matter where they were settled, had to be ordained as priests in Navsari only to maintain their lineage.

A fallout of this system was the rift that occurred in the 1870s. The High Priest of the H. B. Wadia Atas Bahram decided to ordain a Bhagaria priest in Bombay, rather than send him to Navsari. A group of priests attached to the fire-temple objected and took their brief to their local High Priest, Jamaspasa. It was the spark that inspired Jamaspasa to build the Anjuman Atash Bahram (see "When heat turned to light," *Parsiana*, February- March 1994).

Like the priests of Udvada, the Bhagarias also have a tradition whereby members of five priestly families take turns, one family each month, to tend the holy fire. These families trace their lineage back to the first five priests who came from Sanjan to serve the community settled in Navsari.

According to 59-year-old Ervad Homi Kotwal, a boiwalla at the Navsari Atash Bahram, the first priests arrived in a group of three and immediately asked for two more to join them. Today, Kotwal finds

himself as one of the last flagbearers of what was once a proud and robust tradition. "When I first became a boiwalla 40 years ago, there were 20 of us representing all five families at the Navsari Atash Bahram," he observes. The system collapsed in 1980 when five elderly priests died in a row and there were no priests from two of the families to keep the system alive.

Today the Navsari Atash Bahram is served by four boiwallas, only two of whom are of Bhagaria lineage. To supplement their earnings from boi offerings, the Atash Bahram Trust pays each priest a monthly stipend of Rs 1,300.

In addition the Atash Bahram employs three young Zoroastrians, originally from rural Gujarat, to maintain the building and help out with odd jobs. Firdoz Avari, 27, who has been attached to the Atash Bahram for eight years, does not visualise himself returning to his Khambla village some 80 km away from Navsari. "It's a hard life there and my family is very poor. The World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) helped us a lot. They also helped us to dig a well but it turned out to be dry," he says. But perhaps what really keeps him from returning to his rustic roots are the attractions of urban Navsari.

Avari illustrates what Meherjirana sees as the migratory pattern of the Zoroastrian community in India. "The poor rural Zoroastrians leave their farms and come to

It was becoming increasingly difficult to keep track of the priests

small towns like Navsari. They are replacing those who have moved to Bombay to replace those who have gone abroad," he observes. The Zoroastrian community in Navsari, he estimates, numbers around 4,000. However, once the supply from the rural areas "dries up," Navsari and the community as a whole will start feeling the pinch of declining numbers.

The pinch is already being felt in Navsari. Dosabhai Desai, secretary of the Atash Bahram, recalls his youth when the resident blocks around the fire-temple were peopled predominantly by Zoroastrians. "Each area was named after the families that lived there. So if you went to Desai Wada or Sanjana Wada you would find that most of the Parsis who lived there were

called Desai or Sanjana," says Desai.

As we walk down the narrow streets, past cosy little residential bungalows with old-world charm and small town trimmings, an old Parsi lady spinning a kusti smiles toothlessly in greeting. We stop to talk. In a little while, she is telling us all about her son who is now settled in the States and of how proud she is of him. But oh no, she will not leave Navsari. She likes it too much here. It's comfortably familiar even if she now has more neighbors of other communities than she would care to count.

A minute's walk away from the Atash Bahram is Navsari's dharamshala for Zoroastrians. Built in 1868, and renovated in 1985, the dharamshala is well maintained and a welcome stop for weary Zoroastrian visitors. Zoroastrian bus tour operators, from Bombay, Pune, Ahmedabad, Baroda, Surat and other cities, who organize atash bahram tours use the dharamshala's facilities for their passengers.

"We are almost like an annex to the Atash Bahram," says Ratanshah Karkaria, manager of the dharamshala. Indeed, the holy fire-temple appears to be the focal point around which the Navsari Zoroastrian community revolves.

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The Federation as custodian

The changing demographic picture requires Federation members to rethink their investment priorities

Arnavaz S. Mama

An equity based Zoroastrian financial institute to help Zoroastrian entrepreneurs with seed capital was mooted by Jamshed Guzder, Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) chairman and president of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India at its executive council meeting in Baroda on January 8 and 9, 1994. Guzder visualized the project as a bank for businessmen, set up with the permission of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), whose shares would be held by individual Zoroastrians.

Mhow has become the first anjuman to place its properties under the custodianship of the Federation. Saluting the anjuman's "forward, innovative step,"

Rustom Anklesaria, chief executive of the BPP graciously accepted the Federation's request to serve as its nominee on the Mhow Anjuman's board of trustees. Mhow, acknowledging itself as a depleting anjuman, had earlier deposited the conveyances and other papers concerning its properties with the Federation secretariat so that they may be safeguarded in the event of Mhow Parsis becoming too few and too old to do so. So far Mhow's acts of foresight have not been emulated by any other anjuman though there are several places where conditions are more adverse than in Mhow.

The difficulty of enforcing the special legal rights of a small and declining community were further underlined in the discussion pertaining to the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act (PMDA), the Indian Succession Act and the Special

Marriage Act (SMA) generating some light and much heat in the shamiana outside the Pirojsha Godrej Memorial Hall (Baroda's excellent hospitality arrangements did much to mitigate the latter).

Increasing awareness of old properties

the Iranians are keen to host it in Tehran as noted Guzder. If so, Indian Zoroastrians would be poorly represented. It may be remembered that the first WZC had been held in Iran in 1960. Others vying to host the sixth WZC are the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) and the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE), London.

An alternate venue could have been Delhi where the Delhi Parsi Anjuman (DPA) will be celebrating its 70th anniversary — and the 40th anniversary of its dharamshala — on January 28 and 29, 1995 but it is too late for that. DPA president and federation vice president Lt Gen Adi Sethna extended an invitation to the Federation members to hold a meeting in Delhi to coincide with the DPA celebrations. In the meantime, the executive council will reconvene in Bombay on June 4 and 5, 1994.



The Federation in session: (from left) Taleyarkhan, S. Patel, Guzder, Gandhi, R. Anklesaria, A. Sethna and Mogrelia

slipping out of the community's hapless hands is adding to the burden on Surat Parsi Panchayat (SPP)'s Sohrab Katpitia who has been the mainstay of the Federation's defunct anjumans subcommittee, leading the federation's joint-honorary secretary Keki Gandhi to ask, only partly in jest, "Ek Katpitia kettan dakhmama jase (In how many dokhmas will one Katpitia, go)?"

In view of the lapse of four years since the last World Zoroastrian Congress (WZC) was held in Bombay in 1990, the anjumans were urged to audit and report on the extent to which they had implemented the recommendations of the fifth WZC. The venue of the next congress is yet to be established as

The costs of survival

With the majority of its population over 65 years old, and young people not enticed to settle there, the Mhow anjuman has decided to make the Federation the custodian of its properties, said Mhow anjuman secretary Behram Masani. The Federation can veto any lien on these properties and would be supplied with copies of all reports but would not interfere in routine matters, Masani spelt out the terms under which the custodianship was invited. The arrangement has been made under the legal guidance of solicitor Burjor Antia of Mulla and Mulla and Craigie, Blunt and Caroe. Anklesaria, the Federation's nominee has

suggested that Tehmtan Anklesaria, president of the Ratlam anjuman, be also associated, subject to Antia's approval.

Mhow's sagiary—the only atashadarian in northern India—is more than 100 years old and in need of major repairs and reconstruction, informed Gr Capt Dhanjishaw Marker, vice president of the anjuman. Their "Mhow *chaloji* (welcome to Mhow) project" has resulted in a few enquiries from abroad and four families are on the waiting list. Marker says the anjuman wants to extend its scheme for allotting plots at 10 percent below the market rate to Parsis wanting to come there to settle. He holds out hope of business and service opportunities in the area.

Noting that in 25 years' time there may be more Zoroastrians in California alone than in the entire Indian subcontinent, Sethna urged the community to portray itself to the rest of the country as "thinking individuals planning for the future... The need of the hour is to retain in the community all those who wish to remain in/welcome those who want to get back into the fold." Advising his fellow members to be more tolerant of each other, open and extroverted as a community, Sethna referred to the recently concluded centenary of Dadabhai Naoroji's election to the British Parliament. Said Sethna, "When he started, it was a time of transition, just like today. He stressed reform, female education... He was a community leader in Western India, not just a Parsi." Underlining the need to be more outgoing Sethna noted, "Parsi pursers and airhostesses on Indian Airlines hadn't heard of the *Fed newsletter* or *Parsiana*. They didn't want to have anything to do with the community... The same had happened when Naoroji started the *Rast Gofar*. The BBC and western media look at Parsis as fossils. What do we need to do? Project a (positive) picture of ourselves and act... Aim not just at the Parsi Press but at the country as a whole... We have to get people to invite us (to talk to them) and they will invite us only if we show ourselves worthy."

Emphasizing that youth today are conscious of problems they knew nothing about in 1970, Ms Ava Khullar of Delhi sought a rational, scientific approach to the demographic issue. What we need now are not sample surveys but a comprehensive total survey with socioeconomic characteristics of the community. If this is compiled in a central pool and regularly monitored it could be updated every two or three years, she added. "The crux of the problem is not marriages or flats but babies. Fate,

God and Ahura Mazda will not look after us if we do not produce babies. The 60 to 80-year age-group is getting larger," she warned. If it is fertility help that is required, Parsi doctors could provide it, she said. We have to identify the youth group that is under-educated as well as the one that is over-educated and under-employed, because these latter are the potential migrants. The data base would indicate the forms of help required, said Khullar,

Punchayets should reset their priorities. Talent is wasted for lack of funds

adding that highly qualified individuals like Dr (Ms) Armaity Desai, director of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, researcher and social worker Dr (Ms) Huzan Kharas, demographers Dr (Ms) Shirin Jejeebhoy and Dr (Ms) Malini Karkal are all interested in helping.

Erstwhile member of the government of India's (GOI) minorities' commission Homi Taleyarkhan was keen that the community realize the increase in drug addicts and HIV positive cases in its midst and take preventive/curative measures. "TB is a socioeconomic disease today. The morbidity is on the increase even if mortality is declining because of new drugs," he warned.

Remarking that "physical time needs to be spent with youngsters to enable them to go forward," Dadi Mistry, vice president of the DPA, noted that those who make suggestions should take on the responsibility of implementing them. Encourage the youth early, coopt him as youth trustee: "If he starts as youth trustee at 20, he'll be well ahead when he takes over the reins."

Only 15 persons attended when a joint meeting of Madras' three Zoroastrian organizations was called to implement the fifth WZC's recommendations, said Madras anjuman president Nariman Mogrelia. Though 14 of those present voted in favor of a common calendar, it was a matter on which the entire general body and especially the panthaky, needs to opine, says Mogrelia. The Nilgiris anjuman has already implemented the suggestion, he noted. A socioeconomic survey is underway in Madras but religious education has not taken firm roots and a meeting of young

mothers is in the offing. "My anjuman" is an antiquated concept, observed Mogrelia, urging its replacement with "my community." He advocated a closer liaison between anjumans, an accent on community welfare rather than social gatherings and the delegation of responsibility.

Poona Parsi Panchayat (PPP) president Minoo Davierwala's story was similar to Mogrelia's. Poona with a population of 7,000 and an earning capacity reckoned in crores is low on the charitable instinct, says Davierwala, although Dr Dhanjishaw Mehta who died recently has contributed Rs 3.75 lakhs to the PPP. Their housing project has been dragging over the past few years. As their constitution does not contain housing in its objects clause, the PPP's 1,100 members were summoned to pass an amendment. While two-thirds of the body constitutes a quorum for such an amendment, hardly 100 persons turned up on the first occasion. A repeat exercise saw 125 attendees the second time. "We couldn't pass the resolution to amend the constitution. We are handicapped. But the community in general keeps criticizing us for not doing anything," Davierwala said.

Areez Khambatta of Ahmedabad, happily reporting increased anjuman income from Rs 9,000 p.a. to Rs 50,000, nonetheless had a problem: Despite some of the best educational institutions being in Ahmedabad viz the institute of design, the entrepreneurial institute, etc, a list of which has been compiled and circulated to give the youth a better idea at the Std X level, 80 percent of the students are going into commerce without any aim. Recently the punchayet was offered a donation of five lakh rupees for *hunnar udyog* (technical training institute). Not having such an objective in their constitution, the punchayet needed an amendment. But the meeting called did not meet the two-third specification necessary for such an amendment and the donation went abegging. Khambatta underlined the need for action with determination. "We never come to conclusions," he noted with some exasperation.

Chiding punchayets for their overriding investment in properties which fetches a pittance in terms of rental income (Rs 60 lakhs' investment; Rs 1.5 lakhs income by way of rent) Ahmedabad's Hafiz Dalal advocated that punchayets should reset their priorities, earmark eight to 10 lakh rupees a year for the education and employment of youths, because talent is wasted

for lack of funds. It is Dalal's belief that if loans are given at nominal interest — including loans for housing instead of building flats — there would be rotation and better utilization of funds.

Support for Dalal came from R. Anklesaria. Putting forward what he termed as his "personal view as coopted member of the Federation," Anklesaria asked the community to reconsider the housing policy. "(We are) encouraging people to be totally spineless. Divert one and a half to two lakhs a year on education and employment schemes. We'd be doing much greater service. I urge my trustees to reconsider," he added.

Providing an insight into social problems in Bombay, R. Anklesaria noted that matrimonial counselling though urgently required by the community and provided by the BPP was a facility that was not being used to the full extent. "There are only 27 cases in hand." While the High Court has declined to involve the BPP's marriage counsellors in the divorce cases that are filed before it, R. Anklesaria felt "we should be able to do something before the breakup." In the meanwhile he urged all residents with three children in BPP one room kitchen flats to contact the Punchayet in view of Guzder's commitment to provide larger accommodation as and when available. The expenditure on school counselling is rising. They have currently budgeted Rs 60,000 for the program which germinated at a Federation meeting and to which the Federation also contributes.

Guzder referred to the recent BPP trustees' decision to set up a grievance cell and other suggestions incorporated in his own white paper. Maintenance of BPP properties with a prominent person in charge of the estates department, a reorganization among the senior staff, retirement at the age of 60 with capable persons beyond that age being maintained on a retainership, were some of the impending changes enumerated by Guzder. "Unless there is interaction with the community that has elected you, problems will follow," he counselled. The BPP was seeking ways to cut down on expenditure where possible in order to be able to fund its social service programs: creche and day-care centers, maintenance of the third child, 60 percent allotment of

flats to those engaged to be married, a home for the aged... Guzder was all praise for a "very beautiful" old peoples' home recently instituted by Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray to which Guzder said he had personally contributed Rs 60,000 and Thackeray had told him, "You can send your Parsis to our home." The BPP is also working on an idea to get top ranking insurance professionals to create a scheme for medical insurance, he revealed.

Surat's Davar Kavasji Modi gave a

eration to meet in Udvada, consider the overall development of the town. "After 10 to 15 years Udvada will also become defunct," he stated. Taleyarkhan noted how he had been instrumental in getting Udvada's road, electricity and telephone difficulties sorted out. Currently he is involved in studying the problem of erosion there (see "Iranishah: Time and Tide?" page 46).

Faroakh Gowadia of Nargol bemoaned the difficulty of maintaining agiaries vis à vis the spiralling cost of kathi, sandalwood and mobeds: "In the old days an agiary's annual budget for baval was in the region of Rs 50-100. When baval was rationed, 43 agiaries together paid Rs 20,000 p.a. for it. Today that figure is Rs 10 lakhs. In another 8-10 years it will range between 20-25 lakhs. Today private growers prefer to plant sugarcane. If there are no alternatives, agiaries may have to close down," he warned. However, Gowadia reckons, if the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman (IZA) uses its 1,500 acres in Pahlgar to plant baval, in 10 years there will be no problem except that the land is yet to revert to the IZA despite the judgement of the Supreme Court. In this context Guzder sought advice about creating a green belt at doongerwadi that would also promote the well-being of vultures.

Live and let die

The Federation has received Rs 4,67,000 from salvaged properties of defunct anjumans, informed Katpitia. This he noted unhappily is the result of success in only three property transactions so far.

Also, "when in difficulty anjumans welcome us. Once the problem is solved, they are not interested," Katpitia noted with some exasperation. If the concerned anjuman did not wish to participate further with the Federation it should at least bank its funds with the BPP for safe custody, he noted.

Katpitia urged the Federation to evolve a definition of defunct anjumans. Many tottering entities "don't believe they are going to be defunct," said Katpitia. Even as long held properties are disintegrating or slipping out of the community's hands, small settlements are trying to establish



Above (from left): Jimmy Havewala, Mistry, Dittia and Dandiwalla
Below (from left): P. Gandhi, Modi, A. Irani, P. Irani, B. Irani and Karanjawalla

brief resumé of the rehabilitation work going on in the 47 villages of rural Gujarat benefitting 85 families under the joint aegis of the Federation, the SPP, the BPP and the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO). The Pakistan Zoroastrian Association has sent a seven lakh rupee donation to the WZO, five lakhs being earmarked for the Gujarat project, he informed. Dorab Patel of Karachi has donated a further US \$ 5,000 for the Gujarat farmers and the Tambolis — Dinshaw and Bachi — have also spent over 14 lakh rupees to help the farmers, he added.

T. Anklesaria of Ratlam urged the Fed-

new institutions. While the Hubli and Dharwar trustee Mr Aibara wants to hand over the corpus and properties to the Federation, said Katpitia, Badnera and Amravati, with a mere 27 Parsis, want to create a fund.

Modi referred to the 10 dokhmas of Tena village in complete disuse since the past 30 years. Only three still exist, he informed. Apart from their historical value, they serve no purpose but the sole surviving trustee doesn't want to do anything, said Modi. He urged the BPP and SPP to desist from making any further payments to the Suwali anjuman where dokhma land worth Rs 20 lakhs may be pocketed by some individuals.

In Jabalpur there is reportedly encroachment on aramgah land. In Tarapur 15 to 18 acres of dokhma land is being encroached upon by Adivasis according to Ms Banoogoshp Irani of Dahanu. The trustee says the land is only 3½ acres and is very rude, according to Irani's report.

As instances of necessary action by the Federation add up, Gandhi commiserated with the growing burden on Katpitia, while R. Anklesaria asked the assembled youth to find him an assistant to share Katpitia's load at Rs 3,000 per month.

The discussion was rudely interrupted by the question: "*Tamé baddha bhéga thayach té tamara ké Parsi kôm né maté* (Are you all assembled here for your own benefit or that of the community?)" The interloper identified himself as Pervaz Kapadia from Surat.

Ahmedabad Parsi Panchayet president Kersi Sethna sought to justify the intrusion: "His grouse, and that of Surat Parsis, is that buildings that collapse are not being reconstructed." "Housing is important," conceded Taleyarkhan "but it is not true that the BPP and SPP are not building. They are building for the upper classes to provide resources to build for the (underprivileged)."

Explained SPP president and Federation vice president Dr Sam Bhacca, a certain SPP property was being sold for nine crores of rupees so that the money could be used to build elsewhere; but "some local Parsis had brought a stay order. There are people who have contributed up to Rs 11 lakhs and some buildings are close to collapse but we can't proceed until the money comes in," he averred.

Countered K. Sethna, "Orthodox people are of the opinion that a tall building on the dokhma periphery may enable people to look inside the dokhma." But Bhacca replied that "the sale covenant had restricted

"Fate, God and Ahura Mazda will not look after us if we do not produce babies"

the height of prospective buildings to two storeys, *pun orthodox na bhéja ma ootartu nathi* (but it is impossible to convince the orthodox)."

An exasperated Guzder challenged the intruder: "Kapadia, with due apologies, since you've got up there's been nothing but controversy. Who do you represent?" "The Parsi community," replied Kapadia. "You can only do so through the anjuman. How can you say we're not discussing community affairs?" admonished Guzder and called a halt to this "mildly acrimonious discussion."

Youth affairs

Kicking off the discussion on youth affairs Guzder deprecated the tendency of Parsi youth to seek employment: "Why can't we set up a bank with about 25 lakhs for Parsi entrepreneurs?" Envisaging equity participation from the community, Guzder clarified that he was thinking in terms of an industrial finance institution to be set up with RBI permission if the Federation supported the idea. He hoped a committee of retired Parsi bankers would help to formulate the scheme. A. Sethna urged that the idea be merged with that of Zorastrians — a mutual help body of Zoroastrian businessmen and professionals which expects to publish a directory of its members — mooted by the Federation and undertaken by the Federation of Zoroastrian Youth Associations (FOZYA). So far more than 360 Zorastrians have enrolled, informed Gandhi.

Though the official GOI census for the country is yet to come in, Zoroastrian youth who have undertaken the task in their areas have come up with the figures. Thus K. Sethna quoted a figure of 4,000 Zoroastrians in Ahmedabad on the basis of Ms Nazneen Commissariat's survey. Similarly, B. Irani noted that the Zoroastrian population of Dahanu was 800.

Bezun Dittia, the Zoroastrian member of the Andhra Pradesh Minorities' Finance Corporation, informed the gathering that Rear Adm Keki Pestonjee is his counterpart on the state's minorities' commission.

No Zoroastrian has been appointed to the Madhya Pradesh (MP) minorities' commission since the demise of Lucknow's Boman Khodaiji, noted his widow Bapsy though she herself has been recently approached on the subject. MP is one of two states that have not yet reconstituted their minorities' commission, informed Taleyarkhan who retired as a member of the central commission. Its steering committee, of which he is a member, has requested the government for Rs 500 crores to enable it to assist the minorities, of which Rs 200 crores may be granted to begin with, he said. Parsis should be ready to avail of the schemes when they are announced, he added.

In the course of his report on the Seventh All India Zoroastrian Youth Seminar in Dahanu Pervaz Irani told the Federation members that many of the Bahrot caves had collapsed, including the one where the fire had been kept, though the place for the washing of hands and feet, the provision of water and outlet for the smoke are clearly discernable. When he accompanied the youth on the hike at the end of the fest, P. Irani noticed that there were more Adivasis there "trying to claim the place as their own." They have set up a makeshift mandir. If they continue to colonize the place, Zoroastrian access will be restricted, he observed. "Can it be declared a Zoroastrian heritage?" he asked.

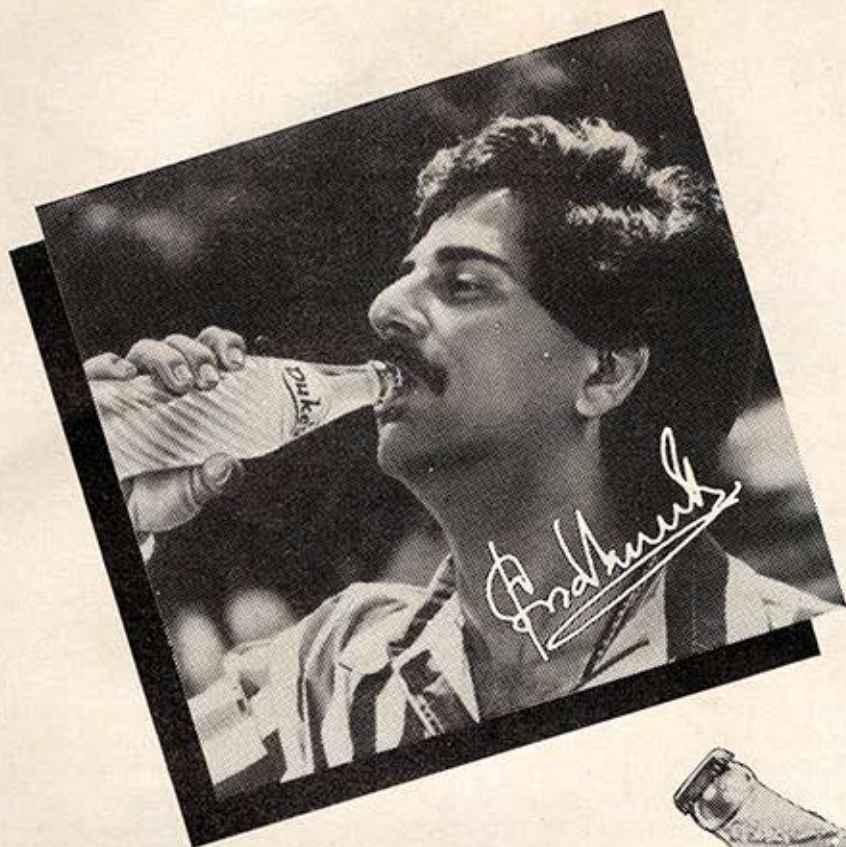
Referring to Ms Roxana Irani's doctoral thesis on Bahrot, Guzder suggested that a representation be made to the government that excavation be undertaken there. He also thought aloud about the possibility of instituting a chair for Zoroastrian culture in Pune University adding, "But how many would avail of it even if it were done?"

Responding to the suggestion that the caves be excavated, Gandhi said he was in favor of the Archeological Survey of India taking over and preserving the caves as a monument of national importance but not of excavating them. R. Anklesaria, on the other hand, felt that Zoroastrians should not be fearful of excavations disproving their long-held beliefs. "Why should we remain under false pride? Without excavation we can't really know (the truth about the place)," he added citing the example of Mohenjo-Daro. "Let's see if we can find the money," said Guzder.

The 30 plus hyperactive young people in Baroda say they are at the beck and call of their Panchayat and their involvement with every aspect in the organization of the Federation meeting and the awards func-

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tion was evident to all. Along with picnics and dances they organize the painting of the agiary, collect funds for philanthropic causes, etc.

The Delhi youth are always called upon for duty at the agiary, the aramgah and the dharamshala, informed A. Sethna. The organizing of the Shiyav Nargolwala Elocution Competition is one of their priorities though in 1993 it clashed with examination dates and had to be bypassed.

The Zoroastrian youth of Dahanu have established a cosmopolitan school, a school for the deaf and another for the mentally retarded. "They are working for the welfare of the whole place like our ancestors. (We) recommend that all anjumans do this because this is how we had earned the respect and affection of sister communities," Gandhi praised the youth of Dahanu.

In Madras there is a substantial difference in age-groups among the youth, informed south zone representative Ms Mani Clubwala. Even so an attempt is being made to create community interest among them. The youth of Pune meet socially every three months but it is the smaller places like Mhow, Indore, Allahabad, etc where they are too

few to function effectively as a group.

Hearing that Parvez Damania, chairman and managing director of Damania Airways, is recruiting Parsi boys for his organization, Sarosh Ginwala of Bharuch questioned, "What happens when the

**"When in difficulty
anjumans welcome
us. Once the
problem is solved,
they are not
interested"**

youth is from a backward area and not quite conversant with the English language?" While Gandhi suggested private classes/tuitions in conversational English, Katpitia informed that the SPP has a scheme for English language teaching plus hostel accommodation for interested students.

Bombay's 200 strong BPP Youth Club — the committed core from seven years of the BPP's Holiday Programme for Youth — has been busy cleaning agiaries, being foster children to lonely old people, etc. Their dinner dance on New Year's eve netted two lakh rupees which they have rechannelled for community service. Guzder has been supporting them in their ideas and funding them from his family trust and business organizations, informed R. Anklesaria.

Liens of the law

Joint Federation secretary Eruch Desai who was unable to attend the meet had sent a note clarifying certain legal issues for the Federation.

Desai had also suggested that government permission be sought to enable Parsi punchayets to register Parsi marriages under the PMDA in cases where the state did not provide the requisite machinery. Gandhi disagreed: "If today you give to them the power to register marriage, tomorrow they will want the power to grant divorce. ...Entrusting such powers to non-statutory bodies would be going back to the primitive days when BPP had the power to beat with shoes people who in their opinion had broken the code of conduct imposed by BPP." He was more concerned that Parsis with Parsi spouses registered under the SMA for various reasons be enabled to benefit from the law on Parsi intestate succession. Presently, only

those married under the PMDA can do so.

K. Sethna, a lawyer "not practising on the civil side" deemed the subject a "Pandora's Box," in the context of articles in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* regarding non-acceptance of Parsi marriages under the SMA and referred to the need for Parsi rites. "(Cotrustee Areez) Khambatta and I have reservations," he noted, wanting to ascertain the opinion of the general body on the issue. Bharuch, making common cause with Ahmedabad asked for a "few months to decide." Though these delegates, as individuals, were attending a Federation meeting for the first time, the matter had been on the agenda and deliberated upon at several meetings where Ahmedabad delegates had been present. Expostulated Modi on the unfairness of it. "Each time a new anjuman (representative) comes and asks for time!" He urged the Federation to proceed with its intention of making the rules of Parsi intestate succession applicable to all the members of the community. Chairman Guzder allowed the majority opinion to prevail but agreed that Ahmedabad's (and Bharuch's) reservations be minuted. In the meanwhile locations where the PMDA registers are not maintained have been urged to write to their respective state governments and forward a copy to the Federation for follow-up.

In the discussion on probate, its usefulness as a safeguard against unscrupulous relatives especially when a bequest was made to charity was underlined by Davierwala. The latter narrated the case of a Parsi who had bequeathed a bungalow to the PPP but whose will had been suppressed by the family. It was only when the other legatees quarrelled that the matter came to light.

Another legal problem that the Federation needs to address according to Masani, is the amendment of the public premises eviction act under which any person being a tenant in premises owned by the government can be evicted by a notice and a hearing. The protection of the Rent Act is not afforded to such tenants.

AGM

In a briskly efficient AGM the Federation reappointed H. P. Jain and Co as their auditors and reelected their vice presidents: A. Sethna (north zone), Homi Bodhanwalla of Jamshedpur (east zone) and Bhacca (west zone B). Davierwala (west zone A) and Mogrelia (south zone) were elected vice presidents for the first time, the latter being proposed by outgoing

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south zone vice president Darius Marshall. Delhi relinquished its seat on the north zone in favor of Jhansi. While the two joint honorary secretaries Gandhi and Desai continue in position, R. Anklesaria has replaced Guzder as the joint treasurer with Peshotan Nargolwalla. The Federation has 64 anjuman members. Some 40 anjumans still remain outside the pale, notably Bangalore and Udvada.

Happily for the Federation's lean finances, 15 issues of the newsletter were sponsored by individuals and anjumans: BPP picked up the tab for four as it does every year, while Guzder sponsored two personally. The DPA, SPP, Ahmedabad, Bharuch, IZA, Bhavnagar and Baroda sponsored one each as did entrepreneur/awardee Ms Rasna Hodiwalla and K. Sethna.

Those attending the Federation meeting were: Kersi Sethna, Areez Khambatta, Hafiz Dalal and Porus Karanjawala from Ahmedabad; A. E. Contractor from Ajmer; Capt Homi Dandiwalla, Ms Dandiwalla and Ms Parizad Gandhi from Allahabad; Parvez Mehta from Bardoli; Rohinton Jambusarwalla, Dinshaw Dastur, Ms S. N. Dastoor, Dara Mahudawala and Sarosh Ginwala from Bharuch; M. B. Bharucha and R. K. Mahuvawala from Bhavnagar; Jamshed Guzder, Ms Silloo Kavarana, Rustom Anklesaria and Peshotan Nargolwalla from Bombay; Ms Banoogoshasp Irani from Dahanu; Lt Gen Adi Sethna, Dadi Mistry, Ms Ava Khullar, Ms Nergish Nargolwalla, Noshir Captain and Keki Gandhi from Delhi; Dossabhai Oliaji from Devka-Daman; E. N. Dumasia from Dumas; Ms Dinoo Elavia, P. J. Madan, and Sharukh Edibam from Indore; Aspi Irani and Pervez Irani from the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman; Capt Panveliwala and Ms Panveliwala from Jabalpur; Ronnie Dick from Jhansi; Ms Bapsy Khodaiji from Lucknow; Nariman Mogrelia from Madras; Capt Dhanjishaw Marker, Behram Masani and Ms Shernaz Mancherji from Mhow; Farookh Govadia from Nargol; Dara Debu from Navsari; Noshir Jal from Neemuch; Minoo Davierwala from Pune; Tehmtan Anklesaria and Sohrab Anklesaria from Ratlam; Dinshaw Patel from Saronda; Ms Mani Clubwala from the South Zone; Dr Sam Bhacca, Kavasji Modi, Sohrab Katpitia and Dr Lashkari from Surat; Jal Postwalla from Visakhapatnam; Dr Bahadur Jokhi and R. M. Parabia from Vyara. The permanent invitees were Homi Taleyarkhan and Bazun Dittia. The press was represented by *Parsiana*.

"Explosion of the elderly"

The age structure of Indian society which used to be a pyramid is now turning into a mushroom, said J. R. Singh of Helpage India. He was referring to the normal visualization of a society's age structure which places babies and the very young at the base, leading upward, through increasing age groups, to the very old at the top. In 1900 the average life expectancy was 30-35 years. Now it is over 60, he noted. In fact, one who lives beyond 20 years may be expected to survive up to 75. In China, where the situation is extreme, the age profile resembles an inverted pyramid, he added.

Addressing the executive council members of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India in Baroda at the request of the Federation, guest speaker Singh noted that Indian society must learn to understand the needs and problems of the elderly and their special care.

Founded in 1978 by people who were able to comprehend demographic change and its impact on human lives, Helpage started by supporting old age homes. It turned out that these were not very successful because of the Indian cultural leanings towards the family. Such institutional support only works where there is "no family net to support them... a specific situation of the Parsi community."

Helpage's policy thrust is to develop intergenerational solidarity by aiming at school children, making them conscious of grandparental needs, urging them "to adopt a grand," using them to raise resources: "the school education program is the backbone of Helpage... Such projects and programs develop the strength of the family to care for the elderly." There are nearly 900 such projects all over the country, Singh noted, adding, "We don't work for the elite. We basically (aim at) those below the poverty line."

Observing that "my father worked for 25 years and drew a pension for 45 years!" Singh referred to the impending "explosion of the elderly." There are no set formulae to solve this problem which

is quite new in this country, "no road map except experience. (We have to) find ways which are cost effective and sustainable," he advised.

In answer to Bombay Parsi Panchayet's chief executive Rustom Anklesaria's query, "Does Helpage help old age homes that are running into difficulty?" Singh informed the gathering that the organization runs only two projects and different training programs with other non-governmental organizations but "if an organization has the manpower and has credibility, we help... Try to make old age homes self-supporting, generate resources within the institution to meet recurring expenses... Set up new homes only where there is need," he cautioned, noting that there have been instances of homes being built which are not being patronized by the elderly.

Despite the massive promotion of Helpage's school education program to inculcate "moral responsibility for the care of the elderly, get their last blessings," it has, however, evoked a mixed response. "Some children are responsive, others are not. Some don't come even on death," noted Singh.

Helpage's aid was sought by the delegates to help repair the structure of a cosmopolitan old age home in Lucknow and to evolve a medicare policy for those over 70 years old. "In the government's draft policy paper on aging this aspect has not been looked into," responded Singh. "(We are) trying to bring (it) in as part of our advocacy role."

The isolation and emotional deprivation of the elderly was emphasized by most speakers in the discussion that followed. Ms Ava Khullar of Delhi spoke of the need to keep the aged involved in community work. Social worker and Federation awardee Ms Beroze Vacha emphasized their yearning to be wanted, referring to an old age home she had visited in Denmark where 65 to 70-year-olds provide day-care facilities for working mothers, thereby fulfilling their need to be socially useful and accepted.

"ZOROASTRIANISM enjoins conversion"

Jamsheed G. Kanga

Many sincere Parsis, who cannot by any stretch of imagination be called fundamentalist, genuinely believe that our ancient Zoroastrian religion forbids conversion of non-Zoroastrians to our faith. My dear mother believed it, though she was too gentle and loving to be ever labelled a fundamentalist. However it was an article of faith with her, and when as a young man I used to discuss this with her and enquire how Zoroaster could have preached the new and so uniquely different religion 1,300 years ago to the Iranian people without converting them from their original, pre-Zoroastrian religion, she could not explain, and only admonished me to desist from such arguments. This I have done so far. But the same old question keeps on recurring in my mind.

Some high priests have told me that there was no conversion because the pre-Zoroastrian religion which was being practised before Zoroaster's birth was merely purified and reinterpreted by Zoroaster. Hence it was a mere purification of the old religion, and not conversion to a new one.

This however contradicts what I have read: "At the age of 30 Zorathushtra came down from the mountain, and started propagating the new faith (against) stiff opposition from the magicians and sorcerers (who were not) prepared to accept his new faith," writes Ervad R. Motafram in his book, *Zoroastrianism* (published by the Bombay Parsi Punchayet). Motafram recounts how Zoroaster converted King Gustasp and other members of the King's family. "Gustasp's son Prince Asfandiyar propagated Zarathushtra's new faith in far-off lands." After a holy war with Turan's King Arjasp, for not accepting this new religion, Gustasp was victorious and succeeded in spreading the new faith to Turan also.

As Rabindranath Tagore says in the *Religions of Man*, "While all religions of the primitive type tried to keep them bound

with regulations of external observances, Zoroaster was the greatest of all pioneer prophets who showed the path to freedom to men, the freedom of moral choice, the freedom from blind obedience to meaningless injunctions, the freedom from multiplicity of shrines."

Are we not therefore devaluing our great religion by categorizing it only as a purified version of the old one?

The recent unfortunate controversy regarding the uthamna ceremony for Mr J. R. D. Tata again raised this vital question as to what is the true scriptural position. Does

*"They made
no attempt
to convert because
any such attempt
would have
resulted in ruin
to the community"*

the original Zoroastrian religion permit conversion? By a strange coincidence this question, as to who is entitled to be considered a Zoroastrian, had arisen in the famous case of *Petit v/s Jeejeebhoy*, Suit No. 689 of 1906 concerning Mr J. R. D. Tata's mother, a French lady. Born Ms Suzanne Briere, her navjote ceremony had been performed by the High Priest, Dastur Kaikhooshroo Jamaspji, and thereafter the marriage ceremony was also performed according to the rites and forms observed by Parsis. (Ms Tata was subsequently known as Sooni.)

The judges, Justice Dinshaw Daver and Justice Beaman examined this and other questions at great length with Justice Daver's judgement running into over 120 typed pages. Lots of experts were exam-

ined on the question — Does the Zoroastrian religion permit conversion and if so how is the conversion ceremony to be performed? A very important piece of evidence on which Justice Daver entirely relied was the report of a committee of experts, consisting of learned men of the community, appointed by community members agitated by these occurrences, to examine this question.

It is not clear who were these learned persons who were members of the expert committee, but from the judgement it appears that they include some of the high priests and one of them was Dastur Darab Peshotan Sanjana referred to in the judgement as "the High Priest of the Parsis and the Head Priest of one of the most ancient Atash Behrams in Bombay, whose father and ancestors have been high priests before him and who as a member of the expert committee has signed the report" of the committee. Other eminent and learned members included Dr K. R. Cama one of the most eminent and highly respected Zoroastrian scholars whose biography was written by no less a person than Shams-ul-Ulema Dr Jivanji Mody, himself an eminent and highly respected scholar of the Zoroastrian religion.

I quote from the judgement of Justice Daver:

"When the controversy consequent on the navjote ceremony of the French lady arose, there was intense excitement amongst the Parsi community. Meetings were held, committees were appointed, and learned men from the community were selected as experts, to report on the various religious controversial questions that arose. The committee of experts made their report, which is Exhibit A87. On this report, Mr Lowndes, for the plaintiffs, has placed great reliance. This report says that not only is there nothing in the sacred books to prohibit persons professing other religions from being admitted into the Zoroastrian



Justice Daver and Sooni Tata (below)

religion, but that the Zoroastrian religion enjoins such conversions. I have proceeded throughout this judgement on the assumption that this is correct, and I propose to consider the questions before the court on that basis. The Zoroastrian religion is a revealed religion. It was revealed by the Supreme Being Ahura Mazda to Zarthost. Scholars differ as to the period when Zoroaster flourished, but they are agreed that he flourished in the time of Kai Vistaspa, one of the kings of the Kyanian dynasty. The religion revealed to Zoroaster was by him communicated to King Vistaspa who promulgated it amongst his people. It seems to me that all revealed religions must necessarily enjoin proselytization, for otherwise how is the religion to progress beyond the prophet to whom it is revealed?"

Justice Daver then considers the situation regarding conversion after the Zoroastrians fled to India 1,300 years ago. He again relies upon the report of the committee of experts and quotes as follows:

"After the defeat of Yezdezerd, the Zoroastrians began to fly. They were not able to preserve their religion in their own native land with freedom. In Hindustan, they enjoyed the freedom of their religion under the rule of foreign kingdoms with difficulty. Under these circumstances, when it was difficult for themselves to preserve their own religion, how can they teach the said religion to others and how can they spread the same amongst others? Therefore, after their advent to Hindustan, their attempt to spread their own religion amongst others ceased, and it was to some extent natural."

As had stated Sanjana in his deposition:

A community appointed committee of experts stated that Zoroastrianism not only permitted but enjoined conversion

"There were no conversions, because at first there were difficulties in the way of the emigrants who found a safe refuge in India. Jadav Rana, of Gujarat, gave them

were in a vast country, to follow.

To quote Justice Daver: "It is all very well for the Parsis to say we did not attempt to convert Hindus to our faith because it would have been ungrateful of us to do so. This may sound well; but, if the truth is told, they made no attempts because they knew not only the utter hopelessness of any such attempt, but they knew further that any such attempt would have been so seriously resented that it would have resulted in ruin to the community, living in the country on sufferance, and whose further countenance in the country depended on the goodwill of the ruling classes, the Hindus. Far from trying to proselytize, the Parsis, as years went on, adapted themselves to the ways of the people they lived amongst, that they earned their goodwill."

There does not seem to be any dissent amongst the members of the expert committee on the question of conversion being permissible — if so Justice Daver would have referred to it in his judgement before coming to this conclusion. The only difference amongst the members of the committee appears to be regarding the ceremonies that are to be undertaken for the conversion to be effective and legal. In fact since the French lady Ms Sooni Tata's navjote and subsequent marriage was performed by the eminent Dastur Jamaspji, it seems that at that time these high priests did not object to such conversion.

Having come to the definite conclusion that the original religion permitted conversion, the committee of experts considered a number of connected questions, such as who can be allowed into the Zoroastrian religion, and if so what was the method and ceremonies for this.

Justice Daver in his judgement has referred to some parts of the report which are as follows:

"Take Exhibit No. 1 — an important extract from the expert committee's report. Only those persons who, 'with good



refuge under certain conditions. Those conditions were not favorable to converting his subjects or anyone else in India to Zoroastrianism. During the first century of their settlement in India, the emigrants who settled in India had great difficulties in preserving their own people from going away from their own religion — they had great difficulty in preserving their religion and performing their religious rites and ceremonies, and safeguarding their religious books... It was felt besides that it would have been ingratitude towards the Rana who had given them refuge to try and convert his subjects."

Justice Daver therefore concludes that Parsis did not convert after settling in India because it was the only safe course for a small group of emigrants, such as they

object and pure intention...after showing their fitness to be considered as Zoroastrians,' desire to be admitted, then they may be admitted; but such admission must depend on a most important condition being fulfilled, and that is that such admission should be allowed 'if no harm of any kind whatever could be done to the Zarthosti Mazdayasnans themselves'...

"(Another question) submitted to the expert committee was 'What are the ceremonies that shall be performed (for admission of a non-Zoroastrian to the religion)?' To this question the expert committee gives a very clear and definite reply:

"There are to be three ceremonies: firstly, after a year's probation from the date of the written application of the candidate, he or she, after undergoing the purifying ceremony of nahan, is to be invested with sudreh and kusti in the same way as an ordinary Zoroastrian child; secondly, the candidate is then to be given the Burushnum; and thirdly, the candidate is to be then reinvested with sudreh and kusti."

In conclusion Justice Daver notes: "To sum up this part of the case, on the question of conversion, the conclusions which I have arrived at on the evidence before the court are:

- "That the Zoroastrian religion not only permits but enjoins the conversion of a person born in another religion and of non-Zoroastrian parents.

- "That although such conversion was permissible, the Zoroastrians, ever since their advent into India 1,200 years ago, have never attempted to convert anyone into their religion.

- "That there is not a single instance proved before the court of a person born of both non-Zoroastrian parents ever having been admitted into the Zoroastrian religion professed by the Parsis in India...

- "That, although conversion is permissible by the religion, there are certain conditions which the candidate must fulfil before becoming eligible for admission. The conditions are that it must first be satisfactorily established that he or she, in applying for admission, is animated by a good object and actuated by pure intentions in other words, that he or she seeks admission from religious convictions and not from other considerations; and further, that the candidate is in all other respects fit to be admitted to the Zoroastrian faith."

The conclusion arrived at by Justice Daver is that though Zoroastrian religion permits and enjoins conversion the usage of 1,200 years after coming to India is not

to admit such juddins though the religion may allow such admission. There are very clear authorities for holding that a well-established and ancient usage prevailing amongst a community must override such of the tenets of their religion as are shown to have fallen into desuetude and conflict with ancient usage prevailing in the community. However, this would not apply to

*Without defining
the term
'Parsi-Zoroastrian,'
the learned
judges could not
have decided
the claim made
on behalf
of Sooni Tata*

the children of Parsi fathers by non-Parsi mothers who are allowed to be vested with sudreh and kusti. This is the practice which is being followed even today as observed by Justice Vimadalal.

I have tried to locate this report of the committee of experts but unfortunately it is not traceable anywhere. Even the K. R. Cama library does not possess it. However, its existence cannot be in doubt since it was an exhibit in this very important case and has been extensively referred to and quoted from by Justice Daver in his judgement. It is in the interest of the community to trace this report since a question of this importance having been examined in depth by a committee of experts which included the learned high priests and eminent Zoroastrian scholars like Dr K. R. Cama as far back as 1906, would be very valuable evidence on this important question of conversion.

However the orthodox Parsis as well as certain dasturs state categorically that conversion is not permitted by our scriptures and cannot be condoned. I wonder if these persons are aware of, or have read the expert committee's report. If our learned high priests, such as Dr Kotwal, have any fresh evidence which would controvert the unanimous finding of this committee, it is in the interest of the community to be presented this evidence. Because one cannot disbelieve or scoff at the report of such a committee consisting of two (or more)

high priests and a person of the eminence of Dr K. R. Cama.

In this connection the views of an eminent judge, the late Justice Jal Vimadalal, are interesting and worth reporting. Incidentally, Justice Jal Vimadalal was a very orthodox person and could not be accused of holding radical opinions on any religious question.

"There are, however, some priests who do not accept the law laid down in these two cases (the other being the Privy Council judgement of 1925 in the Bella case) and decline to perform the navjote even of the children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers. It is, of course, open to a priest to refuse to perform the navjote of a particular person without assigning any reason for such refusal, and none can compel him to perform it. These priests, however, profess to follow, what they call, 'Canon Law' in declining to perform such navjotes. 'Canon Law' is a body of codified ecclesiastical law, especially of the Roman Catholic Church, as promulgated in ecclesiastical councils and by the Pope. For us, there is nothing like 'Canon Law' and there are no ecclesiastical councils or courts to promulgate or enforce any such law, and the view taken by these priests has, therefore, no legal basis. What is more, such an extreme stand is not in the interest of the community, for it seeks to unsettle a settled legal position and might cause an undesirable public reaction. I venture to say that the propositions laid down in Petit's case and Bella's case in regard to the definition of the expression 'Parsi-Zoroastrian' are so sound that they would be reaffirmed by any court, however high it may be, if an occasion to reconsider them unfortunately arises in future, and I make bold to say this regardless of 'threats' to the contrary held out by some interested persons to have the matter reargued in courts of law. I use the plural 'courts' advisedly, for it would mean taking the matter right up to the Supreme Court which would entail enormous waste of money that could be put to better use for the welfare of the community (Seven Discourses by Jal Vimadalal)."

The orthodox group argues that Justice Daver did not give any legally binding judgement on this issue and his observations are to be considered as "obiter dicta."

To quote again from the late Justice Jal Vimadalal: "When a judge says something in his judgement which is not necessary for the decision of the points that actually arise before him in a case, such statements are called obiter dicta. Such statements, as

well as statements which are in the nature of mere passing observations, are not binding as legal decisions. It is contended by some people that it was not necessary for Sir Dinshaw Daver or Justice Beaman to define the term 'Parsi' in that case and, therefore, their definition of the term 'Parsi' is obiter dicta and cannot be said to have laid down law which is binding on us. Without going into the technicalities of the concept of obiter dicta, I must point out that since the trusts in question in that case were for the benefit of Parsi-Zoroastrians, or in terms analogous to that expression, and it was claimed that the French lady was entitled to the benefit of those trusts, it was absolutely necessary for the learned judges to decide whether she fell within the definition of the expression 'Parsi-Zoroastrian.' It has been laid down by an authority as high as Lord Halsbury that it is only statements which are not necessary for the decision of a case that can be said to be obiter dicta and, as such, to have no binding authority. Without defining the term 'Parsi-Zoroastrian,' the learned judges could not have decided the claim made on

behalf of the French lady and those definitions cannot possibly be said to be obiter dicta and not binding as such."

We Parsis pride ourselves on being highly educated and scientific minded, and can boast of having the country's and

*"For Parsis there
is nothing like
'Canon Law'"*

perhaps the world's most famous scientists, lawyers, doctors and other professionals. Why is it that on this question, we do not examine the evidence that is already available and come to a definitive conclusion, so that the controversy regarding this question can be settled in an objective manner instead of on the basis of emotional factors being used by orthodox or liberal groups.

Just because the findings may be inconvenient for the fundamentalist we cannot brush them aside since only the authority

of the scriptures can be considered as relevant for deciding this vital issue. I would earnestly request our many eminent members of the legal fraternity to try and trace this report of the committee of experts from the court records and I also appeal to the members of the community who may happen to know the whereabouts of this report to bring it to light. Surely, documents of such importance which have been a part of the court records cannot be untraceable within such a short time.

I would like to state categorically that by raising this issue I do not advocate that we should consider allowing conversion. However, I feel that it would be a pity that such an important report on such a vital issue is not accessible to our scholars as well as to the community and its leaders who can use it for taking meaningful decisions in the larger interests of the community which is shrinking at an alarming rate. To suppress it or to attack any one who refers to it would be the wrong approach. As an educated and enlightened community we should be prepared to accept the truth even if it is painful to some.

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In search of excellence

Parinaz Gandhi

Distinction in various fields earned 18 awardees recognition from the Federation and the community

Intermittent raindrops could not dampen the spirit of community members assembled in the compound of Vadodara's Hira Baug to felicitate the award winners. Those whose excellence at the national level was rewarded by the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India and the outstanding academic achievers of Vadodara who were recognized by their anjuman could have perceived the raindrops as a blessing from above to reinforce the community appreciation that was showered on them on January 9, 1994.

Only seven, of the 18 who had been selected to receive the Federation awards for excellence for the years 1990 and 1991, came in person — from Bombay, Pune, Bangalore, Calcutta — to receive the acclamation.

Distance, work pressures, ill health and death, as in one case, had prevented the others from coming to Vadodara to partake the hospitality of the Shri Parsi Panchayat Vadodara which had hosted the two-day Federation meet as also the awards ceremony. The community members residing in Vadodara had turned up in full strength — to applaud the award winners and to join in for the free dinner organized by the Panchayat.

The applause wasn't however restricted for the local community's 18 recipients. Each time a citation was read for a Federation award came a round of applause but the longest ringing claps were reserved for Parvez Damania, chairman of Damania Airways, who had received the Federation award in the professional competence category for the year 1991. Major Cyrus Pithawalla in the military field, Ms Beroz Vacha in the so-

cial and community service field and Ms Rashna Hodiwalla in the small scale entrepreneurship category were the other 1991 winners who had come to collect their mementos in person. Rear Adm Keki Pestonji, in the military field, Ms Prochy Mehta in sports and Dady Patell in adventure were the 1990 winners who

for granting him scholarships to finance his studies. "Jobs won't get you anywhere," he reminded the gathering. His own concerns have been credited with creating employment opportunities for a large number of Zoroastrians. Damania started a poultry farm in Karjat in 1983, then launched Agritech Hatcheries and Foods Limited in 1990, Damania Pharma Limited in 1992, and Damania Airways in 1993.

The same award for the year 1990 was conferred in absentia on Rohinton Dhunjishaw Aga, chairman and managing director of Thermax Limited which has a turnover exceeding Rs 300 crores and is regarded as a "miracle" company in corporate circles, business schools and among management consultants. Thermax's leadership in boilers,

pollution control equipment, energy conservation and electronics among other diversified activities spearheaded by Aga has been acknowledged with Aga being made chairman of the energy committee of the Confederation of Indian Industry and the Maharashtra chapter of the Quality Circle Forum of India.

In the small scale entrepreneurship category Ms Rashna Cyrus Hodiwalla, partner of Ariano Eleganza that manufactures leather garments, was the recipient of the Pirojsha Godrej Memorial Award for 1991. Within three years of the Company's inception in 1990 it has been recognized as a 100 percent export oriented unit by the ministry of commerce, government of India. She has also developed an inhouse training facility for the staff. "Your own zeal, your own goals are most important," believes Hodiwalla. "Opportunities are rare and



From left: Jal Patel, Taleyarkhan, Guzder and Shavak Patel

had come to attend the awards function.

The awards which carry a cash gift of Rs 1,000 plus a shield are meant to signify "recognition from the community," said Rustom Anklesaria, chief executive of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP), before he read excerpts from the citations (referred to in the course of this article when summarizing the achievements of the award winners). Acknowledging the contribution of such "illustrious persons" as an "inspiration for the young," he urged the winners to strive "for even greater laurels."

Grateful for the "honor, respect and hospitality" accorded to him, Parvez Cavas Damania who received the Nargis Adi Gandhi Memorial Award for 1991 made known his debt to the community



Top row: Guzder presenting award to Damania (left) and Pithawalla

Second row: (from left) Shavak Patel presenting trophy to Mehta and Nergish Nargolwala to Vacha

Third row: Dr Sam Bhacca (left) honoring Dady Patell. Other award winners in the front row are Hodiwalla (far right) with Pestonji two seats away

we have to find them," she continued. "We have to accept weaknesses in ourselves. Only then will we find happiness within our community," she said citing her own instance where, after 15 years of trying to conceive a child, she and her husband adopted a Parsi baby last year who has brought them much happiness.

"There are enough professionals among us. Let us again get into entrepreneurship," urged Rear Adm Keki Pestonji whose excellence in the military field was recognized with the Lt Col Adi B. Tarapore Memorial Award for 1990. "My forebears were all entrepreneurs. They did well for themselves and the community got better and better educated. My generation is a community of professionals," he said when addressing the Federation delegates. Retiring as chief of staff of the Southern Naval Command at Cochin, during his 30 years

of meritorious service with the Navy Pestonji has served as director, staff requirements, at the Naval headquarters, was the first commanding officer of the prestigious frigate *INS Godavari*, and was instrumental in the rescue of a merchant vessel during the 1971 Indo-Pak war.

Major Cyrus Adille Pithawalla was conferred the Lt Col Adi B. Tarapore Memorial Award for 1991. India's highest gallantry award, the Ashoka Chakra was presented to him in 1981 for successfully capturing alive the Peoples Land Army leader that eventually led to the break-up of the Peoples Liberation Army of Manipur. In recognition of his potential for higher command he was nominated to attend the Defence Services Staff College course in 1991-92.

Also the recipient of the same award in 1991 was Major Gen Rostum

Kaikhushru Nanavatty who has commanded army battalions, brigades as also the Junior Leaders School. His meticulous planning and conduct of operations in the Siachin sector, especially Operation IBEX against the Pakistani forces earned him the Uttam Yuddh Seva Medal. The Siachin Battle School and the coordination with the Airforce to enhance the Joint Services Operations in the Siachin area were also the outcome of Nanavatty's effectiveness, noted the citation read in his absence.

Removed from the war scene, in the sphere of social and community service, the Shiavax Nargolwala Memorial Award for 1991 was presented to Ms Beroz N. Vacha, director of the Helen Keller Institute for the Deaf and Deaf-Blind. In recognition of her pioneering work in the education of the deaf-blind she was awarded the prestigious Anne

Sullivan Medal in Sweden in 1991. Presently she has taken up a project under the auspices of Hilton Perkins International Outreach Services to train personnel from various institutes which have deaf-blind children. "Education should make a child confident, wherever he is and with whomever he is," she stressed inviting anjuman to bring handicapped children to her for training. "In your Parsi jamborees how many students are handicapped?" she asked noting, "The entire philosophy should be 'each one, teach one.'"

Yet another awardee in the social and community service category was the late Rusi Burjorji Gimi who made Selvel a legendary name in outdoor advertising. He was conferred the Maneck J. R. Gheyara Memorial Award for 1991 posthumously for his association with the St John's Ambulance Association, West Bengal, where he was chairman for 18 years, for founding the Rehabilitation Centre for Children and the Nava Nir Nava Asha home for the aged, for starting the Lions Deaf and Dumb School at Calcutta and for his other yeoman service to the old, destitute and handicapped persons in West Bengal.

To salute the social and community service of Ms Homai Byramshaw Illava who regardless of her old age and confinement to an invalid's chair and bed due to arthritis, has worked for the im-

**"As times change,
the punchayet
must change
its activities"**

provement of the quality of life of the unfortunate, the Shiavax Nargolwala Memorial Award for 1990 was presented to her. President of the Mhow Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman and of the Red Cross Society of Mhow, Illava was the recipient of the Tagore Literacy Award-1990 conferred on her in recognition of her work in the field of education, literacy and community involvement. In her message sent from Mhow and read out by her niece Pervin Jehangir she referred to the limitless possibilities of social work stressing, however, the need to realistically move forward, one step at a time. As desired by her, her cash award

was donated to the Vadodara Panchayat, to be used to ameliorate the lot of their community.

The lone award winner in the category of study of Zoroastrian history, culture and scriptures was Ms Piloo N. Jungalwalla whose advancing age did not permit her to come in person to collect the Bombay Parsi Punchayet award for 1990. Her study of this subject for more than four decades Jungalwalla has put to use by teaching religious subjects to children through the 'learn by play' method as is effectively used in Delhi's Young Farohars Club. A founder member of the Temple of Understanding, Jungalwalla continues to be invited to participate in interfaith seminars in India and abroad.

In the arena of adventure too there was only one winner — Dady Cowasha Patell who was conferred the Surat Parsi Panchayat Award for 1990. Patell's tryst with long-distance highway riding on a moped began at the age of 65. After succeeding in his jaunt from Secunderabad to Pune he embarked on another mission from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and later from Porbandar to Pangsau. "I had a pilion rider in the form of God Almighty," he informed the gathering at Vadodara.

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Referring to his own dream to cover the country on a moped he then interrogated, "How many of you have got the spirit of adventure in you? Apart from helping the community have you had a dream to achieve something?"

champion, Ms Jasmin Rohinton Arethna earned the Jimmy and Shirin Guzder Award in sports for the year 1991. At the 46th National Cycling Championships in 1991 she was acclaimed the individual track champion for having won two gold and two bronze medals. The preceding year saw her secure the fifth place in the one kilometer sprint at the Beijing Asian Games and participate in the nine-day European Stage Race for Women.

abroad, runs his own puppet theater Ishara. President of the Bharatiya Puti Sangh and vice president of Union Internationale de la Marionnette — India, Pudumjee has performed for the Trade Fair Authority of India, Artists against Communalism for the Safdar Hashmi Trust and other national bodies, trying to synthesize traditional and modern puppetry for the last 20 years.

MATRIMONIAL

Always remember



Juke -

CAFE
MONDEGAR

MA, the psychology student had stood first class first and was awarded the merit scholarship by the University of Bombay. Graduating in mechanical engineering, Kavarana secured the seventh rank in the Shivaji University in 1991. In zonal university championship tournaments, Kavarana had captained his college teams in cricket and badminton. In a state level competition, Vision-90, his paper on "Modern Trends in Control of Automotive Pollution" earned a certificate of merit. Selected as a J. N. Tata scholar in 1991, Kavarana is now doing his masters in mechanical engineering at the Virginia State University, USA.

The Dadabhai Naoroji scholarships instituted by the BPP in 1993 were won by Ms Urvakshi Mistry and Farzan Irani. After scrutinizing the achievements of the 41 contenders the selection panel decided that Mistry and Irani deserved the scholarships of Rs 2,000 each for four years on the assumption that they will continue with the same academic performance. Two more scholarships of the same denomination have been promised by the Bhamgara Charitable Trust, announced Anklesaria.

Academic achievements acclaimed

J. R. D. Tata Scholarships were a new beginning made by the Vadodara Panchayat in 1994. "From our small funds we set aside sums for education. Our community can come up only when education gets priority," Shavak Patel, president of the Panchayat, enunciated the direction that the anjuman opted to pursue. "As times change, the punchayet must change its activities. Our Panchayat is small, with limited income, yet education gets high priority... Years back funds were required for ghambars and agiary construction. Today funds are required for education and housing. After 100 years the needs may change," he continued.

Scholastic achievements of its students the Vadodara Panchayat decided to recognize by instituting cash awards for outstanding college students and brilliant school students. Altogether nine college students and eight school students received awards this year.

The Dr Rustom Cama Award of Rs 1,500 was claimed by Ms Hutoxi

Anklesaria who passed the third year engineering examination in computer science with 73 percent marks. Neville Jambusarwala won the Gulbanoo Contractor Award of Rs 1,500 for passing his inter cost accountancy examination with 50 percent marks. Ms Dilnaz Kasad who obtained 86 percent in the commerce stream in the Std XII examination, standing first

in the state of Gujarat, was given the Rusi Cama Award of Rs 1,200. Vispi Patwa who passed his second year BSc examination with 62 percent won the Rusi Cama Award of Rs 1,000. The Mehernosh Cama Award of Rs 1,000 was won by Ms Parizad Mirzan who passed Std XII with 72 percent marks. Securing 69 percent in the Std XII examination, Ms Franak Kapadia won the Mehernosh Cama Award of Rs 800. For clearing her first year BSc examination with 65 percent, Ms Jesmin Bharucha received the Mehernosh Cama Award of Rs 700. Rohinton Talati who passed his second year BCom examination with 62 percent won the Mehernosh Cama Award of Rs 500. The Pirojsha Godrej Award of Rs 800 was won by Javed Wykes who completed his third year of diploma studies in mechanical engineering. Architecture graduate Ms Jeru Katpitia was rewarded with a special memento in recognition of her thesis on the Zoroastrian Cultural Centre, Udvada.

Recipients of awards in the school section were: Bomi Talati who passed Std XI (commerce) with 64 percent winning Rs 1,200; Ms Kati Bavaadam who passed the same examination with 61 percent won Rs 800; Farhad Wadia and Ms Benaaz Hakim who cleared Std X with 71 percent and 67 percent respectively each won Rs 1,000; Ms Zarine Patel who passed Std IX with 75 percent won Rs 1,000 while Behram Ginwalla who cleared his grade IX examination, with 72 percent got Rs 800; Ms Thrity Kasad who passed Std VIII with 90 percent won Rs 500 while Ms Nekshan Daboo who secured 84 percent in the same grade received Rs 400.

"I wish there had also been an award for excellence in management which we could give to Baroda, especially Shavak Patel and Jal Patel (Vadodara Panchayat trustee who officiated as master of ceremonies during the two-day delibera-

tions)," said Homi Taleyarkhan, former member of the Government of India's Minorities Commission, who was instrumental in procuring messages from dignitaries for the over 650-page souvenir brought out on the occasion. Packed with advertisements, the souvenir was released at the hands of Taleyarkhan.

At the awards ceremony BPP chairman Jamshed Guzder repeated the salient issues that had come up for discussion during the preceding two-day Federation meet for the benefit of the guests who kept trickling in as the evening progressed until by dinner time the open ground was packed to capacity.

The purpose of the get-together of different anjuman representatives at Vadodara was summed up by Taleyarkhan who stressed that there had been "a melody of discussion, not melody" punctuated with "a sense of humor and sometimes a sense of rumor... It has not only been a talkshop, but also a workshop; a result of devotion, dedication and determination."

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Iranshah: Time and Tide?

Arnavaz S. Mama

The ingress of the sea in Udvada is a cause for concern

If Avan Yazad and Atash Dadar go to war, for whom will the Parsis cheer?

Though they did not quite see it as an epic struggle of the elements, concern for the safety of Iranshah and the town has led to the formation of a working group to counter the erosion of the beach at Udvada.

One and a half kilometers of shoreline receives the brunt of the lashing sea with the garden walls of hotels and bungalows crumbling under the onslaught. Though the Iranshah is not imminently threatened, a question in most minds is whether the ingress of salt water in the area could undermine the Atash Behram's foundations.

A natural tilting of the land in certain areas and the reclamation of land in others, specially in and around Bombay, are cited as major causes for this ingress of the sea. Global warming and the consequent rise in sea levels — the normal reason cited worldwide to explain tidal devastation — is said to be inapplicable in this case.

Functioning under the chairmanship of Homi Taleyarkhan, the working group's initial priority is a scientific study of ways to counter the inroad of the sea and the cost these would entail. Once an approximation of the costs is es-

tablished, Taleyarkhan, a former member of the Government of India's Minorities Commission, ambassador and governor, said he would take up the matter with the centre and state governments as Udvada is a part of the national heritage.

Taleyarkhan was speaking to community members gathered at his invitation to consider the problem in depth. Among them, in response to Taleyarkhan's invitation and concern, were the retired chief conservation and forest officer of the government of Gujarat, K. D. Karamchandani and engineer M. B. Tambekar. V. M. Meher-Homji, a geologist at the French Institute in Pondicherry and other responsible community representatives from Bombay, Surat and Baroda were also present.

Tahmuras Pundole informed the gathering that he had met a former home minister who had stated that the community would have to bear 20-25 percent of the costs. Building contractors Cyrus Unvala and Aspi Irani have begun to apply themselves to the problem, he noted.

Dr Minoo Parabia noted that due to the deepening concavity in the seashore the tide came in at an angle with increasing force. An earlier attempt to construct a pyre had been destroyed and any engineering project would be subject to ero-

sion, he said. Only the use of plants — trees and creepers, along the ground — would prevent the wind picking up the loose sand and pelting it on the orchards inland.

According to Meher-Homji, an oscillating shoreline is as much of a natural hazard as an earthquake. Another major heritage site in similar difficulties is the temple at Mahabalipuram near Madras, he noted. The barren desolate landscape in and around Udvada permits the "torrential rain water rushing down the hills (to carry away) soil particles, depositing them on river beds, decreasing their depth, leading to momentary floods and long spells of drought thereafter."

He advocates a two-fold program: of afforestation in the interiors "because forest soil, rich in humus, acts like a sponge — it absorbs rain water, stores it and releases it gradually to feed streams and rivers perennially;" and the dredging of storage tanks to increase their capacity to store run-off water, thereby augment-

Left: Erosion of the beach. Rubble belongs to old construction damaged by the sea

Right: New wall which has replaced damaged outer wall Photos: Jehangir Mistry



ing available drinking water in the town.

To counter the influx of the sea Meher-Homji advises a "proper wall to withstand the assault (though) a second line of defence is the propagation of plant resources available locally. (Such) a plantation along the coast will protect the shore, but alternate energy plantations of fast growing species would be needed to provide fuelwood for the weaker sections of society; otherwise the coastal plantation will not be allowed to survive," he added. The use of sandbinding trailers and salt-tolerant plants would absorb the salts from the soil, said the geologist. This would help reduce the salinity of well water while preserving the sand from getting washed away.

Tambekar suggested that one of the first exercises should be to get a height profile of the incoming tide on new moon and full moon nights during the monsoon. He also noted that the Gujarat government's Minor Ports Organization may have charts depicting the sea contours. According to him the work should normally be undertaken by the Gujarat public works department (PWD) but Parsi trusts may offer a share of the costs

and technical help from Bombay as an incentive. Otherwise the project may be shelved until the next five year plan, he added. And, "if you make a wall," he said, "make it as a promenade for the local population." The Gujarat Engineering Research Institute could also investigate this problem and find solutions. Another source of help it was suggested, could be the Central Water and Power Research Station, Pune, which undertakes all types of investigation into water related problems, with the help of scale models.

Commenting on the lack of an organization at the local level to grapple with the problem, Karamchandani wondered, "What is happening to the rich heritage of the Parsi community?" Though he felt that an engineering structure may be necessary and resources found to pay for it, he advocated the vegetative method as cheaper and more effective. "Ensure that 50 percent of the growth goes to the people," he cautioned, referring to the adivasis' need for firewood.

Meher-Homji urged the gathering to ensure that new constructions do not come up too close to the highwater mark. He advised that the extraction of sand for

building purposes be prohibited on the threatened beach. It was also suggested that for additional effect the sea wall be lined with tetrapods as at Marine Drive in Bombay. As a cheaper alternative to the wall and tetrapods Rustom Kassad suggested the use of cabians — galvanized iron netting boxes two to three cubic meters in size filled with stones. The life of such cabians however was estimated at three years or less and hence were not a permanent solution.

The gathering present suggested sources of finance for what may be an expensive project running into lakhs of rupees: an approach to Zoroastrians settled abroad and wealthy philanthropic anjumans like the Zoroastrian Charity Trust Funds of Hongkong, Canton and Macau; an approach to UNESCO because Udvada is a heritage site. Taleyarkhan noted that he had an impression, when he spoke to the Prime Minister about the problem that the latter might contribute from the PM's special fund. "Face the problem. This project is going to cost crores not lakhs... Only the government (can) help," said Bombay Parsi Punchayet chief executive Rustom Anklesaria. And Iranshah, perhaps?

Best Wishes From

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The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 19 and 46 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 26 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 25 and 50 years, averaging at 31 years.

This month too *Parsiana* does not have any births to report from the B. D. Petit Parsee General Hospital. In comparison to 72 deaths in Bombay in March there were 16 babies born. Heart disease, the major killer, claimed 26 lives. Eleven patients of those 26 were 80 years and above. Pneumonia and lung disease took a toll of 11, cancer of eight and brain disease of five Zoroastrians. Two victims each fell prey to kidney failure, anemia, gastroenteritis, old age and general debility, hypertension and a road accident. Fracture, burns, cervical cord compression, uremia, arrhythmia, liver disease, colitis and asthma were the isolated cases registered this month. The coroner's report was still pending in the case of two deaths. Forty years was the youngest age at death as compared to the oldest, 99½.

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

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

BOMBAY

BORN

A girl to *Pervin and Farhad Contractor* on March 1, 1994
A girl to *Bakhtawar and Dhunji Titina*, sister to Ava; March 2
A girl to *Sandra and Sarosh Irani*; March 3
A girl to *Sanobar and Parvez Barucha*; March 4
A boy to *Almitra and Neville Billimoria*; March 7
A girl to *Homai and Firdos General*; March 8
A girl to *Shahana and Farsheed Irani*; March 10
A boy to *Maharukh and Bhicaji Davierwala*; March 11
A girl to *Shiraz and Meherwan Parbhoo*; March 15
A boy to *Ava and Jamshed Lalkaka*; March 19
A girl to *Nergish and T. Balgopal*; March 21
A girl to *Siloo and Yezdi Jasoomoney*; March 22
A boy to *Bakhtawar and*

Neville Karbhari; March 22
A boy to *Hutoxi and Zubin Batliwalla*; March 23
A boy to *Havovi and Burzin Khan*; March 23
A boy to *Rukshan and Aspi Gotla*; March 31

MARRIED

Snowber Rusi Balsara and Cowas Dorab Bajan; February 22
Jasmine Noshir Cooper and Perviz Boman Daruwalla; February 27
Kashmira Rustom Irani of Bangalore and Mehernosh Gustad Irani; February 27
Firuzi Murzban Dubash and Vispy Noshir Wadia of Bhayandar; March 1
Tehmi Keki Bengali and Percy Nariman Patrawala; March 3
Roshani Merwanshaw Patel and Kurush Maneckshaw Rana; March 5
Hutoxi Sorabji Kerawalla and

Farokh Kaikhushru Bhedwar; March 6
Yasmin Phiroze Colabewala and Kaivan Minoo Doctor; March 6
Kashmira Rustom Bharucha of Poona and Rohinton Adi Doctor; March 6
Shehnaz Kaiki Engineer and Kaizad Hosi Dumasia; March 6
Parizad Phiroze Patel and Mahiyar Nadirshaw Katila; March 6
Hutoxi Keki Rao and Dara Erachshaw Panthaki; March 6
Shekufa Merwan Irani and Ardeshtir Namdar Irani; March 7
Gospi Hoshi Dolikuka and Cheherazad Baji Readymoney; March 7
Sherry Dorab Pavri and Sarosh Burjor Doodhmal; March 12
Jeroo Jal Kotwal and Xerxes Dara Madan; March 13
Anahita Firoz Irani of Gholvad and Komran Behram Amooyan; March 14
Rashna Jal Balsara and Vispy Noshir Ardeshtir; March 15
Jerbanoo Rustom Irani and Viraf Farokh Kolah; March 18
Mitra Hormazdyar Yegtafi and Nevil Shapur Irani of Dahanu Rd; March 20
Armeene Shapur Rao and Byram Phiroze Shroff; March 20
Yasmin Keki Sidhwa and Darayus Kawas Charna of Karachi; March 21
Kamal Jimmy Kekuna and Cyrus Erach Ghadiali; March 21
Havovi Kaikhushroo Irani and Aspi Faredun Bharucha; March 25
Behroz Rustom Bariker and Jehangir Minoo Rustomji; March 26
Armita Ardeshtir Frouhar of Dahanu Rd and Kaikobad Sheriar Irani of Ipswich, England; March 30
Parizad Soli Setna and Hormusji Noshir Dubash; March 31

DIED

Goola Rustomji Daruwalla (71),

residing at 102, Zarina Co-op Soc, S. V. Rd, Bandra, 400050; February 28
Adi Hormasji Pithawala (73), 368/12, Ruby Light, 16th Rd, Bandra, 400050; February 28
Piroja Jehangirji Sadri (82), 2/6, P. C. Shroff Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; February 28
Minie Eruchshaw Tarapore (70), E-2/706-B, Highway Park, Thakur Complex, Kandivli (E), 400101; February 28
Faramroze Manecksha Postwalla (80), Kotwal Hse, 1st Cross Lane, Sleater Rd, 400007; March 2
Hilla Jamshedji Vaid (73), 11, Glass Bglw, Chikalwadi, 400007; March 2
Mani Naval Zaikar (65), 257, Botawalla Bldg, Thakurdwar Rd, 400002; March 2
Homi Maneckji Bhathena (77), 9/A, Horizon, Pali Hill, Bandra (W), 400050; March 3
Rattan Maneckji Cooper (88), 202/A, Georgina, Rizvi Complex, Shirley Rajan Rd, Bandra (W), 400050; March 3
Daulat Rustom Irani (92), Tapia Bldg, Jalbhoy St, 400007; March 3
Cyrus Firoz Kudyanwalla (40), Singaporewalla Bglw, Khandala, Dist Pune, 410301; March 3
Kawas Sorabji Lalkaka (88), 5, Dubash Mans, Asuder Kutir Co-op Hsg Soc, Mount Mary Rd, Bandra, 400050; March 3
Ratansha Rustomji Mobedji (80), 3, Divecha Bldg, Edulji Rd, Thane, 400601; March 3
Rusi Hiraji Broacha (49), No 11, Mody Bldg, Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; March 4
Merwan Rustom Irani (73), Cama Baug Hse, Khetwadi 11th lane, Opp Mommadi Minar, 400004; March 4
Rusi Hoshang Bharucha (59), Banaji Hse, Contractor Baug, Mori Rd, Mahim, 400016; March 5
Ketty Dadi Engineer (80), 15/4, Wadia Blocks, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; March 5
Jalamai Rustomji Patel (68),

A/601, Osia Classic, Off Caesar Rd, Amboli, Andheri (W), 400058; March 5
Faroukh Bomanji Rustomji (51), 49/30, Venus Apts, Worli Sea Face, 400018; March 5
Jehangir Naoroji Writer (75), 33, Santa Maria, Off Caesar Rd, Amboli, Andheri (W), 400058; March 5
Rustom Hormusji Broacha (76), 113, Meherdad, Cuffe Parade, 400005; March 6
Maccan Mahiar Panthaky (86), 614, Jam-e-Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 7
Edal Perozeshaw Oonwala (69), Indra Bhavan, 24, Vacha Gandhi Rd, New Gamdevi, 400007; March 8
Shirinbai Manekshaw Cooper (88), The Retreat, 64, Malcolm Baug, S. V. Rd, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; March 9
Gool Minocher Dastur (93), Saker Apts, Pochkhanawalla Rd, 400025; March 9
Hoshang Manchershaw Bharucha (68), Press Hse, 36, Adi Marzban Path, 299, S. B. Singh Rd, Fort, 400038; March 10
Bachan Rustomji Bhesania (78), 403/A, Sea Shell, 7, Bglws, Versova, 400061; March 10
Sheroo Minoo Mody (72), Hormuzd Baug Bldg, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; March 10
Ratamai Jivanji Wadia (80), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, 34, Hughes Rd, 400007; March 10
Khorshed Phiroze Mistry (68), 17/B-18, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculia, 400027; March 11
Piroja Faramroze Damania (85), Cooper Bldg, Khetwadi 9th lane, 400004; March 12
Burjor Bhikaji Gotlaseh (82), 16/A, Shreyas, Sleater Rd, 400007; March 12
Nariman Sorabji Marker (89), 95-C, Gulshan Villa, Oomar Park, B. Desai Rd, 400036; March 12
Themina Dhanjishaw Mistry (83), 8, Adenwala Bldg, Tulsi Pipe Rd, Mahim (W), 400016; March 12
Maneck Savaksha Parakh (70), B/5, Tardeo Chmbs, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; March 12

Tehmi Rustomji Diventry (53), Adenwala Bldg, Pavvala St, Charni Rd Jn, 400004; March 13
Dolly Rustomji Irani (75), Essup Bldg, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; March 13
Maneckshaw Behramji Morena (90), 730, Jehangir Vimadlal Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 13
Tehmi Hormusji Dadiburjor (65), 3/1, Sir Ratan Tata Bldg, S. V. Rd, Bandra, 400050; March 14
Purvez Rustom Patel (42), 704, Cumballa Crest, 42, Peddar Rd, 400026; March 14
Rashna Purvez Patel (40), 704, Cumballa Crest, 42, Peddar Rd, 400026; March 14
Fredun Rustomji Billia (93), 8, Cama Bldg, Gilder Lane, 400008; March 15
Fareedon Kaikhushru Laskari (79), 15, Calcuttawala Bldg, 124, Sopari Baug Rd, Parel, 400012; March 15
Roshan Rustomji Vania (70), 1, Kashinath Bldg, Kashinath St, Tardeo, 400034; March 15
Kate Homi Billimoria (57), C/o R. C. Italia, Mahalaxmiwala Bldg, 18, Sleater Rd, 400007; March 16
Homi Behramji Harda (82), Banaji Trust Bldg, Contractor Baug, Mori Rd, Mahim, 400016; March 16
Bomansha Nuserwanji Pagdiwala (76), 688, P. A. Hormarji Bldg, Dr Dinsha Master Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 16
Kershasp Kaikhushru Dubash (83), Minocher Block, M. P. Agiary St, Grant Rd, 400007; March 17
Dadi Bejan Shroff (80), 11, Faramji D. Petit Sanatorium, Cumballa Hill, 400036; March 17
Khurshed Jehangir Bode (79), 87-A, Chandanwadi, 400002; March 18
Rustomji Jamshedji Narawalla (65), C/o, Ms P. M. Amaria, Jaifal Ter, Forjett St, 400036; March 18
Sam Pirosha Udawadia (62), C/10, Varsha Milan Soc, Near Goldspot Factory, Sahar Rd, Andheri (E), 400099; March 18
Merwanji Sorabji Amaria (98), Mohmadi Minar, Khetwadi 14th lane, 400004; March 19
Nariman Nasarwanji Billimoria

(75), Ganga Devi Bhuvan, Uranwala St, Grant Rd, 400007; March 19
Dinamai Ardeshir Nentin (94), Peace Heaven, 49/50, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari, 400102; March 20
Dossan Minocher Elavia (72), 12-A/14, Panthaky Baug, Andheri (E), 400069; March 21
Peshotan Dinyar Madan (88), 3/8, Lady Dorab Tata Bldg, S. V. Rd, Bandra, 400050; March 21
Piroja Munchersha Karkaria (86), Kotwal Hse, Sleater Rd, 1st Cross lane, Nanachowk, 400007; March 22
Jal Muncherji Kateli (79), 5/23, A. H. Wadia Baug, Parel Tank Rd, 400033; March 24
Dara Burjorji Buhariwala (78), 44/A, Empire Est Bldg, Cumballa Hill, 400036; March 25
Faramroze Manecksha Pochkhanawalla (89), 2, Ocean Crest, B. Desai Rd, 400026; March 26
Sheroo Soli Palkhiwala (70), Nowroji Hse, Naigaum Cross Rd, Dadar, 400014; March 27
Dinamai Nadirshah Gandhi (94), Umergaum Bldg, Parel, 400012; March 28
Soonoo Phiroze Narsang (68), 804/C, Rati Lodge, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; March 28
Bachubai Ruttonsha Sumariwala (81), 15, Sidhwa Bldg, Balaram St, Grant Rd, 400007; March 28
Nurges Dorab Davar (87), Batra Hse, Sorab Bharucha Rd, Colaba, 400005; March 29
Rani Rustom Irani (59), Panthaki Baug, Andheri (E), 400069; March 29
Perin Kersasp Kothawala (99½), 51, Somerset Hse, Off Warden Rd, 400026; March 29
Rohinton Dinshawji Kasad (58), 1-B/20, Tata Mills Co-op Hsg Soc, Elphinstone Rd, Parel, 400012; March 30
Dina Jalejar Davar (82), Batliwala Bldg, Zoroastrian Clny, Chikalwadi, Tardeo, 400007; March 31
Homai Rustomji Godiwala (80), B/17, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; March 31
Pesotan Sorabji Postwalla (88), 18, Gamadia Bldg, 226, Tardeo

Rd, 400007; March 31

CALCUTTA

BORN

A boy, *Aatish Irfan*, to *Anahita and Lalit Mishra*; March 11

MARRIED

Shernaz Balsara and Yezdiar Bamji; March 29

DIED

Tehmina Ardeshir Wadia, mother of Khorshed and Nergis; March 3
Pestonji Meherwanji Ghiara, husband of Mani and father of Noshir, Rohinton and Jal; March 6

POONA

MARRIED

Freny Jahangirji Sooi of Bombay and *Sam Gustadji Hiramaneck* of Bombay; December 28, 1993

DIED

Keki Naoroji Mistry, 1166/Q, Parmar Ngr, Fatima Ngr, 411013; November 26

SURAT

DIED

Manchersha Behramji Siganporia (70), Parsi Wad, Siganporia; March 9, 1994
Freni Noshir Anklesaria (82), Vanki Bordi, 395003; March 11
Dhanmai Jehangirsha Bodhanwala (78), Mota St, Rustompura, 395002; March 11
Bomansha Edulji Ilavia (73), Village Raj Pardi, Taluka Zagadia, Dist Bharuch, 392001; March 14
Khorshedbanoo Jehangirji Rustomji (80), Shirin Engineer Bldg, Shahpore, 395003; March 15
Aloo Homi Italia (68), Parsi Wad, Saiyedpura, 395003; March 22

...

PAKISTAN

Karachi

BORN

A girl, *Charlene*, to *Cashmira and Adil Irani*; February 1

MARRIED

Pouruchisti Noshirwan Cooper and Freddie Jimmy Sidhva;

December 10, 1993
Diana Jehangir Andhyarujina
 and *Adil Jamshed Randeria*;
 December 29
Natasha Soli Patel and
Azdiyar Homi Mobed;
 December 30

DIED
Pesi Hormusji Bhadha (61);
 January 7, 1994
Shirin Nanabhoy Talati (76);
 January 7
Piloo M. Trobewala (75);
 January 7
Murzbani Nadershaw Dinshaw
 (68); January 15
Adi Jehangir (73); January 16
Nargis J. Irani (79);
 January 17
Ruby Jehangir Sidhwa (54);
 January 22
Khushru Dinshaji Behrana (75);
 January 26
Ratanshaw Maneckji Bilimoria
 (85); January 29

USA
 Chicago
 DIED
Phiroze Engineer, husband of
Daulat; March 27

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

TOTALS FOR 1993 AND 1994

	Bombay			India			World		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
BORN									
Boys	7	137	25	1	7	1	--	37	1
Girls	9	135	30	--	4	1	1	40	1
MARRIED									
Parsi	27	324	116	2	12	1	3	16	--
Intercommunal	--	79	24^	--	4	1	—	6	1
DIED									
CONSIGNED									
Male	37	563	121	4	99	13	6	51	9*
Female	35	524	111	5	76	11	4	38	5*
CREMATED									
Male	—	2	5	--	1	—	—	—	—
Female	--	6	1	—	—	—	—	—	—

A: Total numbers in this issue
 B: Running totals for 1993 (February 1993-May 1994 issues)
 C: Running totals for 1994 (February-March 1994-May 1994 issues)

^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.

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The librarian as educator

Arnavaz S. Mama

"I have outlived my time," he used to say with increasing frequency during the past few years. A man who lived by the aristocratic code of noblesse oblige, Dara Nusserwanji Marshall (87) felt out of his depths amid the corruption, blatant pursuit of wealth and position and disdain for basic human values that are increasingly in evidence today.

An immaculate figure in rimless glasses and bow tie who never spoke above a hush, the erstwhile librarian of Bombay University and its professor emeritus of library science kept a quiet vigil over the happenings in his Gothic domain, always ready to spot and serve the bashful student or researcher fumbling over the catalogs. Tracing Marshall's association with the University since 1931, when he joined it as assistant registrar, and thereafter as deputy and acting

registrar before he moved over as its librarian, Bombay University vice chancellor (VC) Dr S. D. Karnik noted in a letter of condolence to the family, "Professor Marshall was an institution in (himself). Everyone had regard for his honesty, integrity and ability."

At the public condolence meeting summoned by the University on December 23, 1993 the VC suggested that the road on which Marshall lived be renamed Dara Nusserwanji Marshall Marg, as informs a report in *The Times of India* (TOI). On the same occasion, A. C. Tikekar, the incumbent librarian quoted an authoritative British work on library architecture where Marshall's contribution in the designing of the new library at Kalina has been extolled as "a masterpiece of economic construction." The TOI report also notes that "the University will honor (his) memory by inaugurating the Marshall Centre for Research in Comparative Librarianship."

The resolution passed by the managing committee of the J. N. Petit Institute notes Marshall's passing on November 10, 1993 "with a deep sense of grief and sorrow." Writes the Institute's trustee and noted lawyer Dadi Patel, "All of us who had the privilege of sitting with him in our book and magazine and weeding

out committees continually sought his sage advice and counsel. His invaluable advice, always given in a gentle and persuasive manner, was invariably accepted as the final word. Towards the latter part of his life, even though ill health precluded him from attending the Institute personally, we continued to trouble him with our problems and he never failed to respond generously."

Barry Bloomfield, librarian of what was originally the India Office Library and Records in London,

notes in a letter, "I know that he had been very frail in recent years, but he had a wonderful spirit and gift for friendship and that sort of person is so rare nowadays." Rex Baker of the British Council in Bombay wrote to Marshall's daughter Niloufer, the only member of his family to be with him right to the end (his wife Banoo and sons Sam and Noshir having settled in England), "Your father was widely admired and respected and Bombay will be the poorer for his passing." Notes Rusi Lala, author, and director of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, "like all who knew him I had the highest respect for him as a professional and affection for him as a man... personalities like your father are scarce to find."

"He was not merely a librarian collecting books but was himself a scholar as his famous bibliography of *Mughals in India* testifies," writes R. Srinivasan in *Freedom First*. "Still in print, it remains an invaluable reference book for students

of the period. Interestingly, it is dedicated to the University to which he refers as his alma mater.

"He exemplified a high sense of fair play and probity and people even today talk of his not accepting even... a diary or a pencil from the booksellers and distributors. They were always happy to serve the library's needs for there was no institution that settled its outstandings so promptly and without any ado."

Dinshah Malegamwala of the J. N. Tata Endowment recalls Marshall's work on their scholar selection committee for higher education for many years, initially with the late Rustom Choksi and then with himself. Speaking from a vantage of over 30 years' experience together, Malegamwala says, "Such persons are not to be found today — such values, such dedication! Mr Marshall was extremely self-effacing, never took any credit for himself." Echoing the sentiment Adi Sarkari, who until very recently had held the portfolio of Bombay Parsi Punchayet scholarships, says his friendship with Marshall dates back to 1940. "His outstanding quality was the spirit of humanity and humility towards all." Marshall took "great interest in the youth of the community," says Sarkari and always advised students to go for postgraduate rather than undergraduate courses abroad.

The youngest of Nusserwanji and Pirojbai's three sons, Dara was born when his parents, especially his father, yearned for a daughter. The handsome, irascible Nusserwanji had been a successful electrical contractor, given to spending lavishly and counted a number of Bombay's rich and famous among his circle of friends. The family however was often left to fend for itself and Dara, recalling when he was well into his 80s, often spoke to this reporter of the times his mother had slept on newspapers on the floor, bravely keeping the family together by supplying meals to a few loyal clients. He would reminisce with a smile how he had helped her out in the kitchen!

Even otherwise, Nusserwanji had succeeded in creating enemies through his uncontrollable temper — a fact recorded in *The Bombay Samachar* (February 2, 1989) in an article titled "Dr Dara N. Marshall." One particular event had a long history as narrated by *The Samachar*: When Nusserwanji secured



Marshall: a gift for friendship

the contract for illuminating the Gateway of India in 1911 over the heads of the Bombay Public Works Department (PWD), the latter reacted by withholding payment on sundry excuses. Nusserwanji, an annual visitor to Britain, took up the matter with concerned officials in London. He got his payment and the Bombay PWD earned a reprimand — but they ensured that Nusserwanji was black-listed thereafter.

Dara, never his father's favorite, stood first class first at the MA examination, winning two gold medals and three scholarships and thereafter sailed through the Indian Civil Service exam. Just before he could be appointed to the secretariat in Bombay, a clerk brought the file concerning his father's contract to the attention of the government. The sins of the father were visited on the son. His career in the civil service ended before it had begun and the lifelong attachment to the Bombay University took its place with his appointment as assistant registrar. The correspondence between Dara Marshall and the Viceroy has been published in the *Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 1977, informs *The Samachar*.

During his years in the University administration Marshall sought devotedly to introduce a system of evaluation that was fair, regular and precluded favoritism. There were those who preferred otherwise. After years of service in the University's administration, disenchanted by the double standards around him, he opted in 1947 to join the library. It was

for the peace of his soul, as notes Dr Ratan Marshall, special officer to the Surat Parsi Panchayat, in an article in the *Jam-e-Jamshed*.

"He was a very hard taskmaster, a strict disciplinarian. He wouldn't tolerate talking in the library or unpunctuality. You could set your watch by his movements: at one o'clock he'd go for lunch; at 1.45 he'd be back," recalls Ms Katy

"He has built a tradition of service to scholarship, which has to be seen to be believed"

Mistry who retired from the librarianship recently. As Kamik recounted at the condolence meet, the one hour lunch break had been sufficient for Marshall's marriage to Banoo Katrak in a very quiet, very private ceremony in the fire-temple. At the end of it, Marshall was back to work!

"We thought of him as a walking-talking encyclopedia. No scholar would go away unsatisfied. If the required material was not available on the premises, Mr Marshall would try and get it from elsewhere. He knew the resources of most libraries in Bombay — he had helped to establish most of them — and most librarians were his students."

When the Kalina library was put up, Marshall scrapped the plans presented and drew up a blueprint of his own, says Mistry quoting the Bombay University's pro vice chancellor Dr V. N. Gupchup who in those days had been principal of the VJTI (Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute). The first wing was erected under his supervision. "After that the quality of work deteriorated and he stopped going," says Mistry.

Even after he retired in 1971 as the librarian, Marshall attended regularly until his deputy, successor, and friend B. Anderson also retired in 1978. Till then he had continued to take classes in librarianship, recalls Mistry. Thereafter, his attendance declined to a few times a week.

Marshall and his friends, all men of standing in the academic world, were used to their evening walk together. Returning after one such saunter, quite close to home, Marshall was knocked

down by a cyclist coming from the wrong side. People around who knew and respected the aged gentleman wanted to hammer up the offender. Of course, Marshall would have none of it — such a response offended his innate humanity — and the onlookers regretfully allowed the cyclist to go. But the hip fracture he sustained changed his lifestyle, prevented him from returning to his favorite library and robbed him of his prized freedom of movement.

The clocktower library is today a caricature of its earlier self. Only the department of law remains here, the rest having all shifted to Kalina. Old volumes of German and mathematics are among the volumes that remain, together with some rare books. "At least 50 percent of rare books were donated to the University Library because of his connections," avers Mistry.

In *Comparative Librarianship*, a book of essays in honor of Prof D. N. Marshall (edited by N. N. Gidwani and published in 1973) Padma Shri B. S. Kesavan, honorary library adviser to the Government of India, writes, "What he has done is to build a great tradition of service to scholarship, both postgraduate and undergraduate, which has to be seen to be believed... His professional life, with its deep involvements and incorruptible integrity, was so exemplary that he led without wanting to lead!" In his tribute to his mentor K. S. Deshpande, librarian to the universities of Karnataka, Mysore and Bangalore, writes "In my initial days as librarian, I bothered him with all sorts of questions every now and then. Whenever a problem arose I would write to him seeking advice and I was sure that a reply would be on my table in 48 hours... Guided by him at almost every step, I gained not only confidence but experience in building the (Karnataka University) library from scratch... Recently, on a matter of principle he resigned from the membership of the library committee of the UGC (University Grants Commission), a position which many have sought but failed to secure."

Marshall himself believed that "As purveyors of knowledge, librarians are deemed as missionaries, with the mission to wage a silent struggle to illuminate the nature of man by guiding individuals in search of knowledge and in pursuit of eternal truths."

Marshall is survived by his wife Banoo, sons Sam and Noshir, and daughter Niloufer.

Remembering Gool Rustomji

On April 14, 1994 seven years elapsed since Ms Gool Rustomji left this physical plane.

As her life touched yours, as a relative, friend, co-worker, teacher or pupil, it would be deeply appreciated if you would kindly recall and record your memories of her in seven words or seven lines or seven paragraphs or seven pages and please post them at your earliest or by June 30, 1994 to:

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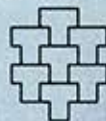
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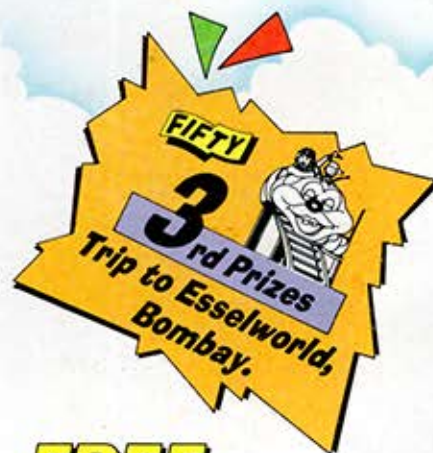
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