

Paṛsiāñā

SEPTEMBER 1996 Rs 22



*Lady Mehri Tata
Social Vision*



THE NEW WHIRLPOOL 310 LITRE REFRIGERATOR.
It would be a pity to hide it in the kitchen.



Parsiana

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 Unsigned letters or those without an address will not be published.

Congratulations, Tamboly

I write this letter on behalf of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) committee to congratulate our colleague, Mr Dinshaw K. Tamboly, on his election to the position of trustee of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP).

We are certain that Dinshaw will bring to bear his considerable experience of work for the community, gained as a WZO committee member, on the affairs of the BPP. We wish him well and success in his new position.

We also take this opportunity to offer our commiserations to Ms M. Bengalee and hope that she will continue to contribute her expertise as an educationist for the benefit of the Zoroastrian youth.

Whilst writing this we have to state, with regret, that during the electioneering process, a couple of individuals, Mr

Marzban Giara and Ervad Peshotan Peer, thought it fit to bring the WZO into what was purely a local election. These gentlemen made statements which were inaccurate and quoted out of context. We have no desire to reply to these ill-founded statements as our colleague Dinshaw has done so admirably well already.

Finally, we wish good health and long life to Dinshaw and his equally dedicated and charming wife, Bachi, so that they may continue to serve Zoroastrian interests with dedication, honesty and integrity.

S. F. CAPTAIN

Chairman, WZO, London

"Captaining the WZO"

In his letter ("Captaining the WZO," *Parsiana*, June 1996) Mr Zal N. Sethna refers to The World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) obtaining charity status and allowing non-Zoroastrian spouses and their children to become members as his grounds for the WZO not being a world body.

The purpose of seeking charity status was to safeguard the financial resources of the WZO. It has not in the slightest diminished WZO's function of representing Zoroastrians the world over, which it continues to do.

We are sure that your readers know full well that all Zoroastrian institutions from the anjumans in India and Pakistan to associations in Australia, North America and UK are charitable and registered with the appropriate local authorities as such. This is natural as the community should not fritter away its scarce resources through taxation.

The change in the membership clause was introduced on the persistent demand of numerous Zoroastrians throughout the world. It also aligns the constitution with that of (other organizations) beneficial to Zoroastrians. In the same way, other activities of WZO are also well-known. For example, the WZO is well-known for helping displaced Zoroastrians from the Middle Eastern countries to settle in the West, for holding annual seminars on Zoroastrian religion, culture and history, for organizing very successfully their first ever *Gatha* Colloquium in London and, continuing in the tradition of being first, holding in November this year the first ever international conference on "The Religious and Secular Literature of

the Zarathushtrian Tradition." R. DUBASH
Jr Hon Sec, WZO, London

Mr Z. Sethna's letter (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, June 1996) reveals his sheer ignorance of the constitution and operation of The World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO).

His statement that the WZO, by obtaining charity status, has ceased to represent Zoroastrians worldwide, shows a total lack of understanding. The purpose of seeking a charity status was to safeguard the financial resources of the WZO. Since Mr Sethna feels the way he does, would it not equally apply to the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE), of whose committee he is a member, as it too is a charity? Taking Mr Sethna's argument therefore, the committee of the ZTFE does not represent the Zoroastrians of UK and Europe. Let us take this argument of Mr Sethna further and ask the question: Is any Zoroastrian institution from the Bombay Parsi Panchayet to the associations in Australia and North America a non-charitable body? The answer is an emphatic "no," thereby nullifying Mr Sethna's spurious objection.

Mr Sethna's derisory statement that "Over here, i.e. in London, WZO is considered no more than a private club..." reveals not only his ignorance but also his mendacity. He knows too well that this is a blatant untruth and that the WZO is held in high esteem by Zoroastrians of the UK and is well supported. The aim of the WZO is to act globally and it is not to have local functions, which is the responsibility of local anjumans/associations. In fact, in London there are two other associations besides ZTFE and all three of them are precisely what Mr Sethna states — "a private club," where people come to the functions because food is served to attract them.

The purpose of the WZO is to serve the Zoroastrian community's interests globally and the fact that it does so admirably well is the reason why some Zoroastrians, like Mr Z. N. Sethna, find it difficult to accept that the WZO is a truly global body of Zoroastrians for Zoroastrians. The WZO's charitable activities are renowned throughout the Zoroastrian world (a fact recognized by Mr Z. N. Sethna) and so also are other activities of the WZO. For example, the WZO is helping displaced Zoroastrians from Middle Eastern countries to settle in the West, holding seminars on

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Zoroastrian religion, culture and history, organized the first ever *Gatha Colloquium* at London (which incidentally Mr Z. N. Sethna and his ilk did not attend, revealing their interest in the Zoroastrian religion, but others from all over the world did) and for holding in November of this year an international congress on "The Religious Literature of the Zarathushtrian Tradition."

It appears that Mr Sethna finds it difficult to accept the changes in the constitution of the WZO with regard to allowing non-Zoroastrian spouses married to Zoroastrians and their children to become members of the WZO in line with the constitution of other Zoroastrian associations. What a flight of scaremongering on the part of Mr Z. N. Sethna to think that a non-Zoroastrian would become chairman of WZO when in the last three years only a few non-Zoroastrian spouses have become members! This exaggeration reveals his mental attitude. Besides, Mr Sethna forgets that the change was placed before the Zoroastrian members of the WZO worldwide and passed by an overwhelming majority. Further, since this change is difficult for Mr Sethna to accept, may we ask how is he going to cooperate in another world body with associations having similar provision in their constitutions?

Mr Z. N. Sethna complains about the accounts of the WZO and about the proxies. Once again, Mr Sethna reveals his total ignorance of the constitution and the laws pertaining to such matters.

I would like to end this letter by reiterating the fact that the committee of the ZTFE, of which Mr Sethna is a member, does not represent the Zoroastrians of the United Kingdom and Europe. The total membership of the ZTFE is no more than 1,000 of which perhaps 100 odd members are from overseas. In my estimation the total Zoroastrian population of the UK and Europe is in the region of 7,500 and therefore, the membership of ZTFE is roughly 12 percent of the total population of Zoroastrians in this part of the world. In addition, ZTFE committee is elected by no more than 100 to 150 individuals (out of a total membership of say 1,000) who attend its annual general meetings. Therefore, the committee is elected by no more than 13 to 15 percent of its total membership. The ZTFE committee is dead scared of giving proxy votes to all its members and that is because Mr Z. N. Sethna and his friends on the committee know that they will be voted out if the proxy vote was given.

Finally, I have to state with regret that the last few AGMs of the ZTFE have become spectacles of infighting and back-

biting within the committee. In view of all this, Mr Z. N. Sethna is the least qualified to point the finger at The World Zoroastrian Organisation.

RUMI SETHNA
Surrey, UK

I am a life member of The World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) and the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE), our local so-called "representative body." Also, I am currently on the committee of the WZO in London.

In my personal view Ervad Z. Sethna's complaint ("Captaining the WZO," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, June 1996), that the removal of clauses (g), (h), (i) and (j) from the WZO's memorandum and articles of association somehow diminished the ability of WZO to represent Zoroastrians worldwide, shows a total lack of understanding. In fact these clauses were considered out of date and unrepresentative of the community on a global scale. Their removal, together with the granting of charitable status, enhanced the Organisation, its standing within the wider community and safeguarded its resources.

When these changes were proposed they were placed before its Zoroastrian membership worldwide which voted and passed the new resolutions with an overwhelming majority. It was not done behind the scene or surreptitiously. Ervad Sethna may find it difficult to understand that openness and transparency works.

As regards the question whether the WZO could affiliate with most of the existing Zoroastrian bodies as a consequence of the membership changes, this will prove more of a stumbling block to him and his ideology than it ever could to the WZO, since most of the North American associations and anjumans have similar provisions in their constitutions.

In the UK there are two further local organizations: the Zoroastrians of South London (whose membership is larger than that of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago, USA) and the Harrow Zoroastrian Association. So far as I am aware, both these organizations have constitutions accepting non-Zoroastrian spouses and their children as members. In addition to the local activities of the WZO, both these organizations play their part in the life of the community with considerable success. No doubt in Ervad Sethna's eyes they too were no more than "clubs" which he would prefer not to see exist. The truth is they exist because of the short-sighted and unrepresentative policies of the ZTFE of which he has been a past president and a committee member for too long.

People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones at others and Ervad Sethna should first put his own house in order. The last 10 years or so of the ZTFE have been the most chaotic and traumatic this association has ever seen. Power struggles have seen the installation of five presidents. Trustees of the organization have had to step in and attend committee meetings to act as referees. Trustees have even found it expedient to take the platform at AGMs to explain their actions against the president. Moderation and consensus politics have gone out of the window. This community has endured over 10 years of stagnation, a catalogue of incompetence combined with diminishing human and financial resources.

Ervad Sethna is out of tune and out of step with the community's needs.

Contrary to his statement that the WZO has only one annual function, there are in fact three or more functions held each year — Jamshedi Navroze, Gala Charity Ball, Shehenshahi Navroze and if possible Christmas/New Year and Barbecue.

All these functions are arranged by hard-working committee members with the help of many WZO supporters and donors. Apart from the good food and merriment, all these venues are opportunities for fundraising for Gujarat, medical, etc. In the case of the Navroze, Barbecue and Christmas functions, of the 200 or so who attend 95 percent are Zoroastrians.

The Gala Dinner Dance, because of its high ticket price and distant venue does need, and attracts, a large number of non-Zoroastrians willing to participate and contribute to the good causes supported by the WZO. Somewhere in the region of £ 8,000 (approx Rs 4,40,000) is collected annually.

As Ervad Sethna appears to belittle and sneer at the fundraising activities of the WZO, perhaps he would tell us why funds from non-Zoroastrians in the past and present continue to be accepted by the ZTFE or will he debar all non-Zoroastrians from attending/donating to fundraising activities of the ZTFE in the future?

Ervad Sethna states proudly that he was a founder member of WZO and a signatory to the memorandum and articles of WZO as they then stood. With the new constitution one day there could be a non-Zoroastrian president of the WZO. He also criticizes the members attending the AGM held in London.

As a world body the WZO does everything it can to keep its membership informed within its finite resources. Proxy voting has existed since the formation of

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the WZO and is necessary as the membership is scattered worldwide. The members are hardly likely to make trips to the UK for the purpose of voting.

As a founder member he is also aware that the WZO has 41 Zoroastrian committee members worldwide who have committed themselves to serve the Zoroastrian community equitably.

I do not think Ervad Sethna's prognosis will ever come about, but even assuming it did, I would rather rely on their combined wisdom, should they ever propose or approve of a non-Zoroastrian president, than to rely on Ervad Sethna's ill-informed opinion.

To date only a handful of non-Zoroastrian spouses have become members. What is interesting is that many Zoroastrians have joined and supported the organization since the change in the membership clause and they are not all necessarily married to non-Zoroastrians.

Ervad Sethna has failed to grasp the nettle. Every year for the last 10 years between 150 to 200 individuals, predominantly Zoroastrians accompanied by a small number of non-Zoroastrians, have been attending the privately organized Farvardian prayers by a true Zoroastrian who was married to a Zoroastrian. These are held at Brookwood Cemetery (UK) out in the open, come rain, sleet or snow because he and many like him feel anger and revulsion at the pathetic behavior from those in our community who have re-introduced practices of segregation and division which are best consigned to history. The consequences are a community embittered and truly split down the middle in the UK.

This is not just some local difficulty which can be brushed under the carpet year after year. It is now a global problem for all of us.

As far as the UK is concerned, the Zoroastrian population is in rapid decline. Each year large numbers of our young marry outside the fold and turn their back on the community because of the injunctions placed on them by the local "representative body." Even the navjotes of children of Zoroastrian fathers have been abandoned by the mobeds for reasons best known to themselves.

What hope can we offer non-Zoroastrian spouses to assimilate and integrate into the community and help them to bring up their children as Zoroastrians, when their presence at religious ceremonies are an opportunity to hurl abuse at them or ask them to sit outside or at the back of the hall?

By changing its constitution, the WZO is striving to make us aware that we cannot continue to ignore the present unsatisfactory situation, that radical thinking should be our outlook to build the stepping stones for the future generation before it is too late.

To conclude, Ervad Sethna should understand clearly that there is only one World Zoroastrian Organisation. If he and others like him wish to create divisions within the community, then we can see the man for what he really is: destructive rather than constructive. According to him the class of leadership currently in the WZO is unsuitable to represent Zoroastrians all over the world. How ludicrous is this statement when the WZO committee consists of stalwarts like Mr Nani Palakhivala, Dr Farhang Mehr, Mr Mehraban Zartoshty, Mr Mehraban Farhangi, Prof Kaikhosrov D. Irani, Ms Roda Mistry, Dr (Ms) Shirinbanoo S. Kutar and many others. Ervad Sethna presumably considers himself a suitable candidate for the next new world body.

I for my part would like to say that if such a body is ever formed I would wish it every success, for it will need to be made of the stuff of revolution or it will be nothing more than a damp squib or a "private club" for the likes of Ervad Sethna.

S. BHIWANDIWALLA
Surrey, UK

Mr Zal Sethna (Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, June 1996) focuses on WZO (London)'s opposition to the formation of an international Zoroastrian body/world federation of Zoroastrians. The merits or otherwise of this stance may be debatable and it is not the purpose of this letter to engender it.

If there be any veracity in Mr Sethna's claimed/seemingly "vehement support" for the formation of a global Zoroastrian body, meaningful clarification is called for for the reported cooling off by the managing committee of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE), London — of which he is believed to be a member — to the Zoroastrian Federation of Europe/World Council of Zoroastrian Federations mooted by the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA).

Could this be another evidence of double speak, indicative of a facilitator of narrow sectional interests aiming at reflecting the wisdom of the entire Zoroastrian community? Limpets have been evidenced to attach themselves to any cause which gives them a pretext to do so. Such a scenario does make it hard to find a single redeem-

ing feature anywhere in this seemingly interminable encomium and hope it is not a case of calling off the dogs and putting up the poodles.

FURHOK K. TANGREE
La Roche-sur-Foron, France

"The Farohar"

I refer to the letter by Ervad Hormazd M. Pavri ("The Farohar," Readers' Forum, *Parsiana*, February-March 1996) regarding the correct facing of the Farohar.

It may interest readers/advertisers in your magazine that their advertisements are not in keeping with the explanation given by Ervad Pavri.

•Feb/March '96 issue: Page 9 - Capricorn Travel; Page 104 - Federal Services; Page 105 - State Bank of India; Page 162 - Parsi Zoroastrian Flag.

•June '96 issue: Page 6 - American flag; Page 33 - Zoroastrian flag designed by Dr Jehangir Madara of Canada.

If, as stated by Ervad Hormazd M. Pavri, the correct facing of Farohar is as indicated by him, then it would be alarming to have the Farohar facing the wrong direction on "Zoroastrian flags" in particular.

DOSSABHOY H. BHIWANDIWALA

The Editor replies

As with Zoroastrian texts and with the Farohar, there are various interpretations. We may note however that at Persepolis, the Farohar is shown facing different directions.

Igatpuri needs funds

The Igatpuri Agiary was founded by the late Dinshawji Maneckji Petit and the late Nanabhoy Faramji Kharadi 110 years ago. At that time Igatpuri was a thriving railway junction with a large Parsi community. Today the picture is different and there are barely a dozen Parsi families living in Igatpuri. Needless to say that there is hardly any income and the Agiary is existing entirely on donations to meet the running expenses of kathi, diva, mobed's salary, electric bills, mali's salary, etc.

My fellow trustees and I appeal to all our friends and philanthropically inclined Parsis to donate generously so we can build up a fund from the interest of which the running expenses could be met.

Kindly address your donations to The Igatpuri Zarhosty Anjuman, Parsi Agiary, Igatpuri 422403.

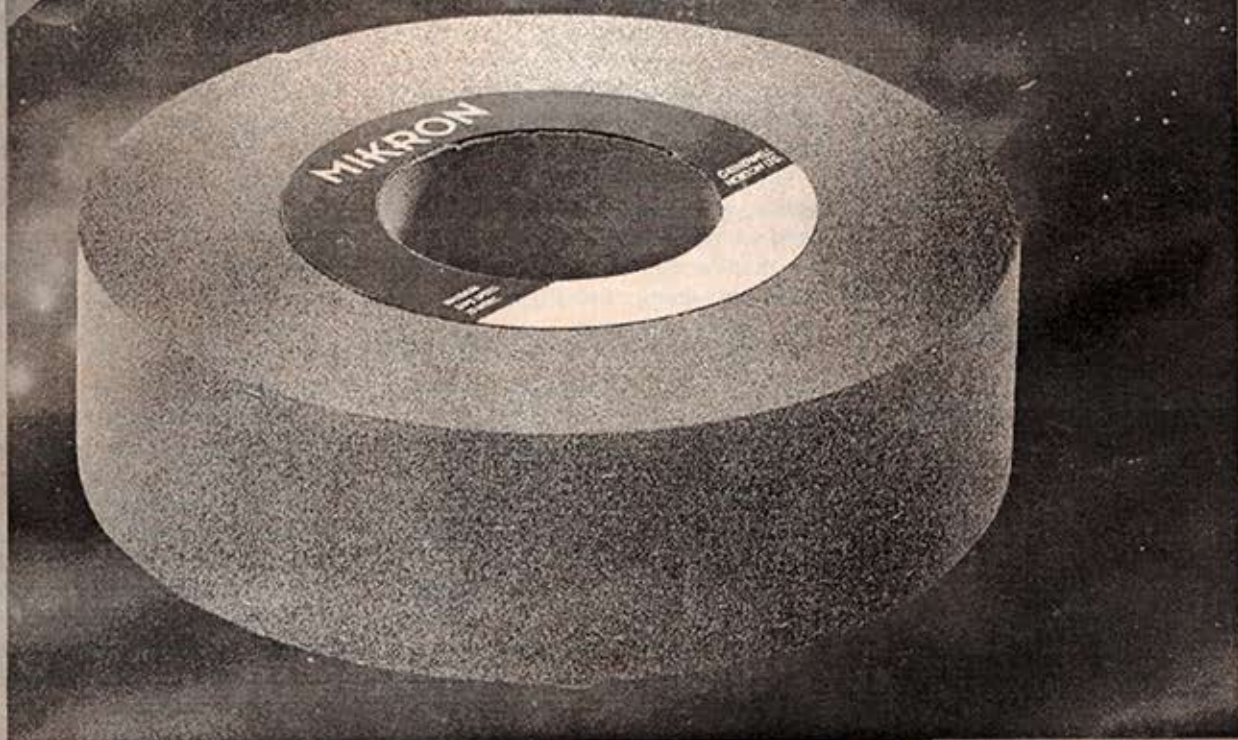
P. ECHAPORIA

A rational calendar

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each falling on 21-23, March and September respectively of every year) or the time taken by one revolution of the earth round the sun, which is 365 days, five hours, 48 minutes and 45.5 seconds which works out to approximately 365.25 days. This is a universally established, authenticated fact.

For simplification and practical purpose a year is normally made up of 365 days but it is short of one quarter day per year, therefore, every fourth year one day is added (known as the leap year). Alternatively, after every 120 years one full month of 30 days is added to make up the shortfall.

The Gregorian calendar is normally made up of 365 days and is divided into 12 months, seven months containing 31 days, four months containing 30 days and one month containing normally 28 days (29 days every fourth year).

The Zoroastrians follow three calendars. The Fasli (Iranian) calendar takes into account 365 and a quarter days which is considered to be correct according to all internationally accepted and proven ways of thinking. The Fasli New Year starts from the 21st day of March according to the Gregorian calendar or Farvardin *mah* and Hormazd *roj* according to Fasli calendar. All the Zoroastrian calendars contain 12 equal months of 30 days making a total of 360 days and at the end of each year, five days known as Gathas are added to make a total of 365 days. The Fasli calendar takes into account the quarter day per year and at the end of every four years adds one day (following the same system as the Gregorian calendar) to make up the exact period of time required to complete one revolution of the earth round the sun. The Fasli New Year, known as Jamshedi Navroze (also followed by Shia Muslims of Iran) is the beginning of the spring season.

The other two Zoroastrian calendars namely Shehenshahi and Kadmi also contain 365 days per year, having 12 equal months of 30 days. The Kadmi New Year starts exactly one month or 30 days ahead of the Shehenshahi New Year. The Kadmis and the Shehenshahis have forgotten to take into account and add the quarter day per year which is required to exactly complete one revolution of the earth round the sun. They are neither adding one day in every four years nor are they adding one full month of 30 days after every 120 years, with the result that the Shehenshahi and Kadmi new years are now left far behind, losing a quarter day per year. The Kadmi new year is now celebrated in the third week of July. All the new years should

have been coinciding on Fasli *mah* Farvardin and *roj* Hormazd (March 21 — the vernal equinox), the start of the spring season, but the community is not prepared for it.

It is a pity that a civilized, cultured, sensible and 100 percent literate community is not prepared to face reality, accept the universal fact, take note of the phenomenon and adopt the Fasli calendar. The members of the Zoroastrian community (not all, but many of them) are indifferent and are not concerned. There seem to be some persons who are not for change and are trying to blackball the proposal for adopting a common calendar, for reasons best known to them. The common calendar will greatly help the different sects of the community to come together.

If the clergy and the punchayet have no time to waste on this issue, one may leave them alone, and resolve on our own to follow the Fasli calendar, provided one is fully convinced regarding its correctness and authenticity.

In the end, we request our readers to let the community members know through the medium of your paper the method of conversion of Shehenshahi and Kadmi *mah* and *roj* into Fasli *mah* and *roj*. If a ready reckoner is available, the same may kindly be made known to the community.

Ervad DINYAR VAJIFDAR

DALI J. GUNDEVA

Whither, Parsiana?

I was getting bored by *Parsiana*. Reading for the umpteenth time the same controversial topics like housing, dwindling population, conversion, etc.

In the June issue I enjoyed reading the letter, "I'm a man in a hurry," from Jehangir R. Bisney of Secunderabad. He throws a different light on the community's housing problem, that in spite of new housing schemes coming up, the Parsi population is dwindling.

The boys want a flat, a good job and other perquisites before they think of marriage and having children. But there are exceptions to the rule like my friend Mr Dumasia who stays in a room, where he can hardly fit two beds, one small kitchen and one toilet and bathroom and he has fathered three lovely daughters on a bank clerk's salary.

How long are we going to use the crutches of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP)? I feel the funds and accommodation provided by the BPP have made the community spineless and docile. Did the Jejeebhoy, Petits, Tatas, Wadias depend on the BPP to succeed in life?

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Thank God the Parsi settlers in the USA and Australia and Canada cannot, and do not, make demands on the BPP funds. They have burned the bridges behind them and are doing very well on their own.

It is high time the housing problem was seen in a different perspective. We can still bring back the pioneering and enterprising spirit in the youth of the community by having a pragmatic coordinated program for the youth.

The second interesting letter, "The Mahatma on the Parsis," was by Mr R. A. E. Cama. I wish from the letters of Mahatma Gandhi, the passages where he appreciates the Parsis, could be xeroxed and made available so we can frame them in our homes.

One last thing. I was pleasantly surprised when I went to the Anjuman Atash Behram and found that the picture of Zarathushtra in the hall was painted in 1917 by the famous Pestonjee Bomanjee — the same painter whose works can be seen at Bombay's Prince of Wales Museum.

ZEND M. ZEND

I am sorry to inform you that I do not wish to renew my subscription towards the magazine for the following reasons:

- It gives stale news. After the events have taken place, your articles appear inviting the readership to take part, e.g. the article on Boys' Town Public School, Nasik ("Boys' Town: lessons on living," *Parsiana*, September 1995) informing parents from rural areas to enroll their wards for free education when the school had already reopened after the summer vacation and the new academic session had already started.

- Same is the case with matrimonial advertisements. In almost all the cases, the ads of the boys/girls who work outside India and prefer to marry Indian Parsi girls/boys appear after they have gone back after their vacations.

- The magazine does not provide interesting reading material. You seem to give more weightage to the obstinate high priests. They have never performed/solved any problems facing the community and they'll never do anything for the community in the future also.

- The magazine should be such that the readership should look forward to it. e.g. your June '96 issue was received in September '96 and so on. I do not think that there is shortage of articles. Your magazine is full of (more than half the pages) advertisements from companies and prod-

continued on page 16

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Events and Personalities

Their voice is heard

Nearly 50 percent of the Parsis in Calcutta continue to favor dokhmenashini as a mode of disposing dead bodies, as per the results declared by The Parsi Zoroastrian Association (PZA) in May 1996. For the remaining 35 percent who would prefer cremation and 14 percent who indicated a choice for burial, the PZA which conducted the survey will convene another meeting to decide on the future course of action.

According to a report on the survey carried in *Calcutta Gavashni* (April-June 1996), 709 circular letters were issued to which 588 responses were received, indicating an 83 percent feedback.

The vice president of the PZA and trustee of the Calcutta Zoroastrian Community's Religious and Charity Funds, Adi Bapuji Rabadi was appointed member of the West Bengal Minorities' Commission constituted effective August 30, 1996 as per a communique from the Home Department, Government of West Bengal. On the 10-member body announced by the Governor of West Bengal "this is the first time that the Parsi community has been given representation," informs the PZA president Dinsha Surty.

Rabadi, who is trustee of the D. B. Mehta Atash Adaran and president of the

Calcutta Parsee Club, will now also head The Iran Society in Calcutta which promotes harmonious social and cultural relations between India and Iran, mentions the press release issued by Dr Russi Anklesaria. At the elections held last July, Rabadi was unanimously elected president of The Iran Society where H. A. Halim, speaker of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly and Justice K. M. Yusuf will serve as vice presidents.



Minorities' member Rabadi

Gaining ground in Jabalpur

The Parsi Anjuman, Jabalpur has finally been granted permission by the Registrar, Madhya Pradesh Public Trusts, to sell off 45,000 sq ft of surplus land on its aramgah property to enable it to finance the cost of reconstructing the boundary wall and a new bungli, states president Dorab Bajan in his write-up on the Anjuman. Following the vandalization of the old graves and bungli, the Anjuman had, on the advice of the then Minorities Commission member Homi Taleyarkhan in 1989 sought the Registrar's permission for sale to protect

and maintain the community institution.

The surplus of the sale proceeds will also be used to build a corpus to finance the salary of a priest whom they are keen to engage following the demise in 1993 of Panthaky Darabshah Karkaria who had served the Anjuman for 40 years. To augment the corpus for a priest, an appeal is being made to philanthropists to donate to this cause. Since there is no adarian there, the priest's work will be "quite light," maintains Bajan. However he is expected to handle the responsibilities as manager of their Dharamshalla which is the other property administered by the nearly 100-year-old Anjuman whose jurisdiction extends to the towns of Katni, Damoh, Maihar and Satna.

The Zoroastrian population in Jabalpur comprising mainly retired individuals is estimated to number 85. Katni is down to three families, Damoh to two families; none exist in Satna and Maihar. The early settlers were mainly railway employees with a few exceptions who were running their business in liquor, jewellery and stationery, says Bajan.

The two main pillars responsible for shouldering the Anjuman's activities over

Jabalpur's aramgah (left) and Dharamshalla cum prayer hall





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the years were its president Khan Sahab Rustomji Mehta and secretary Bhikaji Patel both of whom held their respective posts for several years. Presently on the mahaging committee, assisting president Bajan is vice president Aspi Daruwalla, honorary secretary Furrokh Homji, joint secretary Jamshed Mehta, treasurer Bobby Patel who is the seniormost member on the committee, and members at large Dadi Dossabhoy and Phiroze Panveliwalla.

Donations from Parsis in and around Jabalpur made possible the construction of the priest's quarters and prayer rooms in 1916. Eight years later were erected the prayer hall and the Dharamshalla thanks to the munificence of Pirojbai Bhiwandiwalla and her children. The Dharamshalla compound also accommodates two residential blocks. Once considered a very serene location, the materialization of the tempo and mini bus stand just outside the compound a few years ago has caused substantial disturbance. Unable to succeed in their efforts to relocate these conveniences, the Anjuman is planning to develop this property to generate the much needed revenue as also accommodation for its members.

Among the regular activities of the Anjuman is a jashan organized every Khordad Sal. This occasion is utilized to recognize and encourage academic excellence among the youngsters in the presence of the community that gets together for a round of games and a contributory dinner.



Aden patron

In the course of its platinum jubilee celebrations the Bombay Parsee Association (BPA) paid homage to its erstwhile patron Sir Hormusji Cowasji Dinshaw Adenwala on his birth anniversary on April 4, 1996. His statue which stands near the Bhikha Behram Well was garlanded by BPA president Vispi Dastur who recalled Adenwala's multifarious services especially in Bombay and Aden, and urged the representatives of other Parsi associations to similarly observe the anniversaries of other philanthropists lest their contributions be forgotten.

The president of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP), Jamshed Guzder, the president of the Navsari Parsi Association, Burjor Antia, and Adenwala's descendant Cowasjee Dinshaw highlighted the benefactor's deeds when addressing a select gathering that included BPP trustees, members of the BPA and Adenwala's family.

Known to have taken "a very active and useful part in all activities relating to the advancement of Bombay Parsis," Adenwala was, according to the *Parsi Lustre on Indian Soil*, "persona grata with the orthodox section of the community." In Aden he had established an Anglo-Gujarati school and endowed it with a fund of Rs 50,000. Besides heading the Parsi community in Aden, Adenwala also served as consul for Portugal and Austria in Aden. In his father's firm Adenwala was made senior partner and his business standing led to his appointment as trustee of the Aden Port Trust and member of the Aden Port Commission. He additionally enjoyed the distinction of representing the Aden Chamber of Commerce at the Fifth International Congress, Boston, reports the *Parsi Lustre*.

Kutar's conviction

"Yazdaan panahbaad (may God be your protector)" was the blessing he invoked to greet everyone. A man of principles, he never minced words; yet he never abused his opponents, never made verbal public assaults. Such traits and convictions of Dastur Kaikhushru Mahiyar Kutar were recalled by his students at a commemoration meeting organized on his 21st death anniversary on March 12, 1996 at Dadar's Rustom-Faram Agiary.

Following the jashan, and a humbandagi led by Rustom Chothia, the same as was recited in Kutar's religious classes, tributes were paid to this savant by his grateful students, according to a write-up from Marzban Giara. Ms Khorshed Sidhwa re-

Kutar: orthodox crusader



Commemorating Adenwala: Bengalee, Guzder, Dinshaw, Jejeebhoy and Dastur

ferred to Kutar's oratory and his ability to keep the audience enthralled with quotations and anecdotes during the course of his religious discourses. Giara read out quotes and verses from the book *Words of Wisdom*, a subjectwise compilation that included Kutar's favorite thoughts.

"Educate men without religion and you make them but clever devils." "Adversity is the greatest teacher of mankind." These and many such quotes were oft repeated by Kutar who was described as "a crusader for religious orthodoxy" by Ms Aban Sethna. Besides religious education, he was conversant with English literature and history, she added. Kutar was also founder president of the Sorabji Burjorji Garda College established in Navsari in 1945 to impart higher education to the younger generation.

One man's meat

With mutton costing over Rs 100 per kg and beef available at almost half this price, would it be a sin for Zoroastrians to partake of beef considering that all other types of meat and fowl are permitted? While some are under the impression that eating beef would cause a man to be shunned by Sarosh Yazd in the event of his death, others argue that this custom was adopted only out of deference to the sentiments of the Hindus who gave the ancient Zoroastrians shelter in India.

The Zoroastrian religion enjoins individuals to make their own choice guided

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by the good mind. On this debate of mutton vs beef the BASZA (Borivli and Suburban Zoroastrian Association) Newsletter sought the opinions of Dasturs (Drs) Firoze Kotwal and Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa, and Ervad Nadir Modi. The question posed to them was: "Looking to the exigencies of the situation, is it really a cardinal sin if a Zoroastrian chooses to eat beef instead of mutton?" Responded Kotwal and JamaspAsa jointly: "From scriptural evidence it is apparent that there was a school of thought during the Sassanian regime which advocated non-eating of meat.

"But we have references from the Avesta which clearly indicate that partaking of any kind of animal meat was allowed.

"As such it is not a cardinal sin if a Zoroastrian opts to eat beef instead of mutton.

"Zoroastrianism does not forbid consumption of any type of edible meat whatsoever."

Mentioned Modi: "Shakespeare has told us that nothing is either good or bad but thinking makes it so and very little knowledge of history is required to convince us that human thinking in matters of morality and religion is time-conditioned and is relative..."

"From Bertrand Russell in his *Sceptical Essays* we get the interesting thought that, 'it seems that sin is geographic. From this conclusion it is only a small step to the further conclusion that the notion of sin is illusory.'

"With this explanatory background I can only say that for myself I would not... 'choose to eat beef' because mutton is unaffordable... On the other hand, I find it difficult to believe that Ahura Mazda will cast into hell all people who are beef eaters."

Making merry in May

Nearly 1,500 merry makers gathered at Rustom Baug for the May Queen Ball 96 organized by the Sir Ness Wadia Club. In addition to the May Queen contest was the fashion show coordinated by Ms Hutoxi Dudhwala with the assistance of choreographer Roomi Madon. The youngsters from the colony who were specially trained by Shiamak Davar and his assistant Henri put up a jazz dance show while the rest of the crowd got a chance to dance to the beat of the band, Harmony, informs Dr Porus Turner, president of the Club, in his report on the function.

From the 14 contestants for the May Queen tiara, Parized Kolah was adjudged the winner with Farhana Khambatha and Nilufer Siganporia being declared first and



Beauties at Rustom Baug: Siganporia, Kolah, Khambatha and Balsara. (Right): Marker and Cawasji (far right)

second runners-up. The title of Miss Vivacious was conferred on Hufrih Balsara. The six-member panel of judges included Jamshed Guzder, Karl Divecha, Dr Keki Turel, Arif Patel, Ms Ruma Chandra and Ayub Khan. Tehmina Sholapurwala bagged the prize for the best female model, Khushroo Sarkari for the best male model and Ms Zeenia Tafti was the best dancer.

The chief sponsor for this year's event as in the years past continued to be Bombay Dyeing and Manufacturing Company Limited with Air Freight, N. S. Guzder and Company, REPL Engineering Limited, Colgate Palmolive (India) Limited and Indu Nissan OXO Chemicals Industries Limited joining in as co-sponsors. The unstinting support of all these organizations was acknowledged by Turner in his speech that evening. The recorded music and special lights by Sam Poonawala, video shooting by Sarosh Daruwala of Mazda Audio Video Labs, and cocktails and catering by Ms Pervin Mistry were the other highlights of the function, states Turner.

Notable in the Navy

Distinctive among the Parsis presently serving the armed forces are Captain Aspi Marker and Commander Aspi Cawasji, both affiliated with the Indian Navy. The only Parsi in the Indian naval submarine arm, Cawasji was awarded the prestigious Nao Sena Medal by the President of India Shankar Dayal Sharma on January 26, 1996, mentions Commodore Jal Postwalla. Commanding officer of *INS Shishumar*, regarded as one of the most sophisticated conventional submarines in the Indian

Navy's arsenal, Cawasji's untiring efforts, courage and innovativeness, during the two years he has been at the helm, have contributed to substantial saving of time and expense, mentions his associate.



The performance of Cawasji's submarine during the recently conducted Indo-US naval exercise, led to "enhancement of national prestige," writes Postwalla.

Officiating as commander of *INS Agnibahu* as also squadron commander of a missile vessel squadron is Marker who took up both the assignments in January 1996. Besides these posts he presently serves as chairman of the Naval Public School in Bombay, states a write-up.

During his 25 years of association with the Indian Navy he has commanded front line operational ships and additionally served in inter-service training establishments like the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington and the College of Defence Management, Secunderabad. Five years earlier when Marker was in command of *INS Khukri*, it was a significant event for the army and the navy when his ship was formally adopted by the army's Gorkha Brigade.

Custom House chief

For the third consecutive year Sorab Engineer was elected president of The Bombay Custom House Agents' Association at the organization's annual general meeting in June 1996 when the union minister of surface transport T. G. Venkatraman was the chief guest, according to a press release. Freight forwarders and custom house agents form a vital link in international trade and commerce, acknowledged Venkatraman who assured them of his support.

Partner of Messers S. D. Engineer and Son, a leading international freight forwarding and custom house agency, Engineer has played an active role in different organizations involved in these operations. In the apex body, the Federation of Freight Forwarders' Association, Engineer serves as treasurer. Recently he was appointed trustee of the Mumbai Port Trust by the Government of India and functions in the same capacity at the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, mentions the release.

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Ms D. Engineer presenting flowers to the Secretary, ministry of surface transport, Shri Supraj. Sorab Engineer (center) was reelected president of the Bombay Custom House Agents' Association for the third consecutive year

Further to these posts Engineer is also a member of the custom advisory committee and the public grievance committee of the Mumbai Customs. In addition, he is actively involved in the activities of the cargo facilitation committee of the Airport Authority of India, states the write-up.

Numero Uno

Five years earlier he was extremely weak in mathematics. "So it made me determined to catch up with the rest of the students in my class. When I became as

good as the others, I thought 'why stop now?'" 19-year-old Minoo Jokhi explained his rare mathematical prowess when interviewed by *The Afternoon Despatch and Courier* of September 14, 1996.

Whether it be finding the square or the square root, the cube or the cube root, Jokhi can reportedly give the solution in a few seconds without the help of a calculator or a computer. Multiplication of two three-digit numbers too he can manage within a few seconds, while his timing for two four-digit numbers is one to 1.15 minutes, and for two five-digit numbers is 1.30 to 1.45 minutes, says Jokhi who is constantly striving to improve his performance.

Like the well-known Shakuntala Devi, Jokhi too has started giving demonstrations of his incredible ability in schools, the first being his alma mater, Hindi Vidya

Bhavan. Though he originally suffered from stage fright, with the encouragement of his biology teacher he overcame that handicap and now enjoys performing before an audience. Give him your date of birth and within seconds he will tell you which day of the week you were born on.

A first year BCom student at Bombay's Hinduja College, Jokhi is not pursuing mathematics at the academic level, candidly admitting that while "I am good at quick calculations, I have never liked geometry and algebra." The secret of his calculations is not some mysterious codes but "sheer instinct," says Jokhi who confessed to *Express Newsline* that he has two hobbies: maths and lawn tennis.

SPOTLIGHT

London's Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists conferred its Solvay Award for 1995-96 to Dr Ruzva K. Bhathena of Bombay, notes a press release. Last July, Bhathena was reportedly invited by the British Menopause Society to relate his experiences of Hormone Replacement Therapy in Indian women.

Bhopal Parsi Anjuman president Dara Pavri was recently installed as president of the Rotary Club of Bhopal South for the year 1996-97 when Rotary International has adopted for its theme "Build the future with action and vision," mentions a press release. Three years earlier Pavri had been adjudged the best secretary in his Rotary district for zealously promoting the organization's goals.

Compiled by Parinaz Gandhi

READERS' FORUM

continued from page 9

ucts. And considering all these ads the cost should not be Rs 200 (per annum for 10 issues). There is hardly any reading material worth Rs 20 per month.

I had brought this in brief to your kind notice last year also but there is hardly any change in the style of your functioning and you expect wide publicity and readership.

In this current, fast moving age people want fresh news and you provide us with stale news and petty squabbles. People want result oriented discussions and look forward to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet as a guide but it seems that the guide has lost his way or been influenced by someone.

For all the above stated reasons, and many more, I am disassociating with your magazine and wish to discontinue my readership.

N. S. MOBEDJI
Indore

Ms R. A. Vaadoliwala, in a huff, decides to discontinue subscribing to *Parsiana* as she receives the current month's issue after a gap of about two to three months (Readers' Forum *Parsiana*, April 1996).

The Editor in a footnote to her letter, explains the reasons for the delay in publishing the issues on time.

I take Ms Vaadoliwala and other readers further, courtesy *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly* and Mr Dara Kadva.

Writing under his column — "In My Opinion" — in *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly* (June 16, 1996), Mr Kadva states that *Parsiana* is probably the best magazine being published by any single community in India, particularly so because we are numerically so small. It is owned and manned by Parsis and is meant to be read by Parsis world-wide. The magazine is well-written, well-edited and has first-class production values.

Whilst Mr Kadva laments that *Parsiana* suffers from a deep-rooted malaise — shortage of funds, its Editor Mr Jehangir Patel blames the shortage of staff more than the dearth of funds. Mr Patel says features, write-ups and reports have necessarily to be on Parsi matters only whose collection, research, compilation and editing take up lot of time to be flawless and show a high standard of journalism.

Mr Kadva concludes that *Parsiana* is the only medium in English which links Parsi expatriates with the mother community in India and with each other in different parts of the world.

I would urge Ms Vaadoliwala to reconsider her decision and restart subscribing to *Parsiana* and exhort her acquaintances and friends to also subscribe to it.

BHIKHAJI M. ADENWALLA

Edited by Amavaz S. Mama

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North American Achievers

Prof Kaikhosrov Irani, Homi Minocher Homji, Adi Dastur, Dr (Ms) Mehroo Jussawalla, Dr (Ms) Katy Driver and Arash Anoushiravani shared the limelight at the awards ceremony in San Francisco on July 6, 1996, informs the *FEZANA Journal* (Fall 1996). They represented the cream of Zoroastrian achievers in North America as announced by an awards committee constituted under the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) and chaired by Dinshaw Joshi. Joshi's six-member team, comprising Ms Dhunmai Dalal, Ms Villy Gandhi, Ness Lakdawalla, Farrokh Mistree, Dr Iradj Pourkarimi, and ex-officio Mehraban Zartoshty, was required to orchestrate the definition, selection and presentation of the biennial awards as notes the *Journal*.

The Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes a great North American Zoroastrian "who has not only achieved excellence in his chosen profession but has enhanced the cause of Zoroastrian faith and religion throughout the world and contributed immensely to Zoroastrian communities all over the world in general and the North America Zoroastrian community in particular," notes Joshi in a letter to *Parsiana*. The winner, Irani, was the only awardee directly selected by the Awards Committee (see "The future of Zoroastrianism is very bright," pg 41) and received it at the hands of the day's chief guest, Dadi Balsara. For the other four awards, nominations were invited from FEZANA's member associations, prominent North American Zoroastrians and through a notice in the *FEZANA Journal*. The committee appointed four five-member panels of judges to select the respective winners from among the 29 nominees. Three awards were presented by FEZANA president Ms Dolly Dastoor.

Minocher Homji of Toronto was declared the winner of the Rohinton Rivetna Outstanding Zoroastrian Award. A former United Nations (UN) advisor for regional community development in the Asian region and chief of the social and developmental division of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific region, Minocher Homji is a past president of the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO), founding vice-president of FEZANA whose charter he helped formulate, and a prolific writer and contributor on the subject of the Zoroastrian community's need

for reform. In Minocher Homji's absence the trophy was received by ZSO's Jamshed Mavelwala, also a former ZSO president and an "Outstanding Zoroastrian" awardee before Rivetna's name was prefixed to the award in 1994 in recognition of the latter's contribution as FEZANA architect.

The award for excellence in business or profession recognizes the Zoroastrian



Four of the awardees: (L to R, top) Jussawalla and Dastur, (below) Minocher Homji and Anoushiravani

whose career achievements have been nationally or internationally recognized. The revolving trophy for the award, sponsored by Bombay Parsi Punchayet chairman Jamshed Guzder and his wife Shirin by a personal donation of \$2,000 to FEZANA, was jointly presented to Ontario resident and nuclear physicist Dastur (received on his behalf by FEZANA congress committee chairperson Ms Bella Tata, herself the recipient of the Commemorative Medal for the 125th anniversary of the Canadian Federation from Canada's Governor General) and Hawaii based telecom economist Jussawalla. Dastur's leadership in developing Canada's deuterium uranium (CANDU) reactor had been recognized by the Canadian Nuclear Association's (CNA) prestigious Outstanding Contribution Award in 1994. Dastur is said to have developed many of the computer codes used in CANDU. The citation credits Dastur for his innovative technique for reducing long-term toxicity of used nuclear fuel and the identification of the cause of the disas-

trous Chernobyl accident in the USSR. The CANDU design won international acclaim because it is not susceptible to this kind of accident, noted the CNA citation. (According to his Bombay-based sister Ms Nergez Mehta, Dastur has been affectionately dubbed "Young Einstein" by friends and colleagues.)

Jussawalla is cited as "one of the foremost authorities" in her field. As senior fellow in the communications and journalism program at Honolulu's East West Center for the past 18 years, she has fielded numerous teaching assignments at universities in Germany, Japan and the USA. Having graced the boards of the International Institute of Onwards Communication in London, Information Network Corporation, AT&T and Motorola, Jussawalla presented a paper on "Women in the media" at the invitation of UNESCO at a seminar jointly sponsored by the UN body and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. As author and editor, her contributions to books and journals in her field are legion.

FEZANA's Humanitarian Service Award, named after the late Jamshed Pavri of Vancouver whose humanitarianism made him a legend in his lifetime, was presented to pediatrician Driver by Ms Roda Pavri. Driver "harkens back to the old school medical practitioner — a rare commodity these days — who sincerely believes in the Hippocratic oath and in selfless dedication and humanitarian contributions which all embody the true spirit of Zoroastrianism," notes the citation. Extolled for her 22-year involvement in the detection and prevention of child abuse, her sensitivity and regard for subtle interactions that can destroy or heal families affected by the problem, Driver's helping hand has been sought and received by families in need, notes the citation.

The largest number of nominations were received for the Outstanding Zoroastrian Student Award which was presented to California's 24-year-old Anoushiravani along with a one-time scholarship of \$1,000. Currently studying at the Harvard Medical School, Anoushiravani is a human biology graduate from Stanford University who won three prestigious awards in 1994 — James W. Lyons Award for service, Joshua Lederman Award for academic excellence in human biology and Phi Beta Kappa Award — even as he served in various capacities as a peer academic advisor, health program volunteer, etc.

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Defining a Zoroastrian

"A Zoroastrian is a person who attests to be a true believer and follower of the religion as propounded by Asho Zarathushtra in the *Gathas*, and who subscribes to established Zoroastrian habitual or customary practices."

This definition was accepted by the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia (ZSBC) in an extraordinary general meeting chaired by Ms Bella Tata on June 16, 1996. A majority of over 75 percent of the members approved the constitutional revision of the definition on the second ballot, informs the *FEZANA Journal*. Four proposals had been put to vote after over three years of meetings and discussion.

The constitutional revision further opens eligibility for ordinary membership to the ZSBC to "Any Zoroastrian, his spouse or his child residing in British Columbia, who is either:

- born of both Zoroastrian parents and who has been initiated into the Zoroastrian religion; or
- born of both Zoroastrian parents, but who has not been initiated into the Zoroastrian religion due to circumstances; or
- born of one Zoroastrian parent; who has not been initiated into the Zoroastrian religion and who is not practicing another religion; but declares his willingness to be initiated; or
- not born of Zoroastrian parents, but who has been initiated into the Zoroastrian religion.

FEZANA annual meet

The Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America's (FEZANA) two-day annual general meeting preceded the Tenth North American (NA) Zoroastrian Congress in San Francisco. The theme of the Congress was "Leadership, past, present and future." And the FEZANA AGM, where representatives of 14 of its 21 members attended, held a strategic planning session "designed to enable the community to look at itself and plan for the next 25 years," as noted FEZANA president Ms Dolly Dastoor in her president's message. "To the best of my knowledge this is the first time the Zarthushti community anywhere in the world has deliberated collectively for its future and taken responsibility for its implementation," noted Dastoor.

An essential aspect of the exercise seems to have been a "moving away from (the) preoccupation with survival" which as Dastoor amplified, leads to defensive and confrontational attitudes, stifling of voices and frustration for the youth.



FEZANA at work (from left): Collector, Kapadia, Dastoor, Sepehri, and Keikhosrow Harves

Dastoor's strategic planning initiative was organized into three sessions, the first two chaired by California's Mehran Sepehri, Zoroastrian Association of Houston's Farrokh Mistree respectively. The entire exercise was chaired by *FEZANA Journal* editor Dr Rustom Kevala. Having articulated and discussed the vision of the community for the next 30 years as presented by over 16 community members in the first session, the second session "analyzed the visions, identified 'shared spaces' or collective goals for the community and its organizations," notes the *FEZANA Journal* (Fall 1996). Each participant was asked to write down his/her personal goals within these shared spaces and what they would personally do to enhance those goals. The third session was devoted to discuss strategy, identify milestones and document personal commitments to secure the shared goals.

Surprisingly, "'survival' did not even appear in anyone's vision," notes Kevala's report in the *Journal*. The four collective goals were classified as:

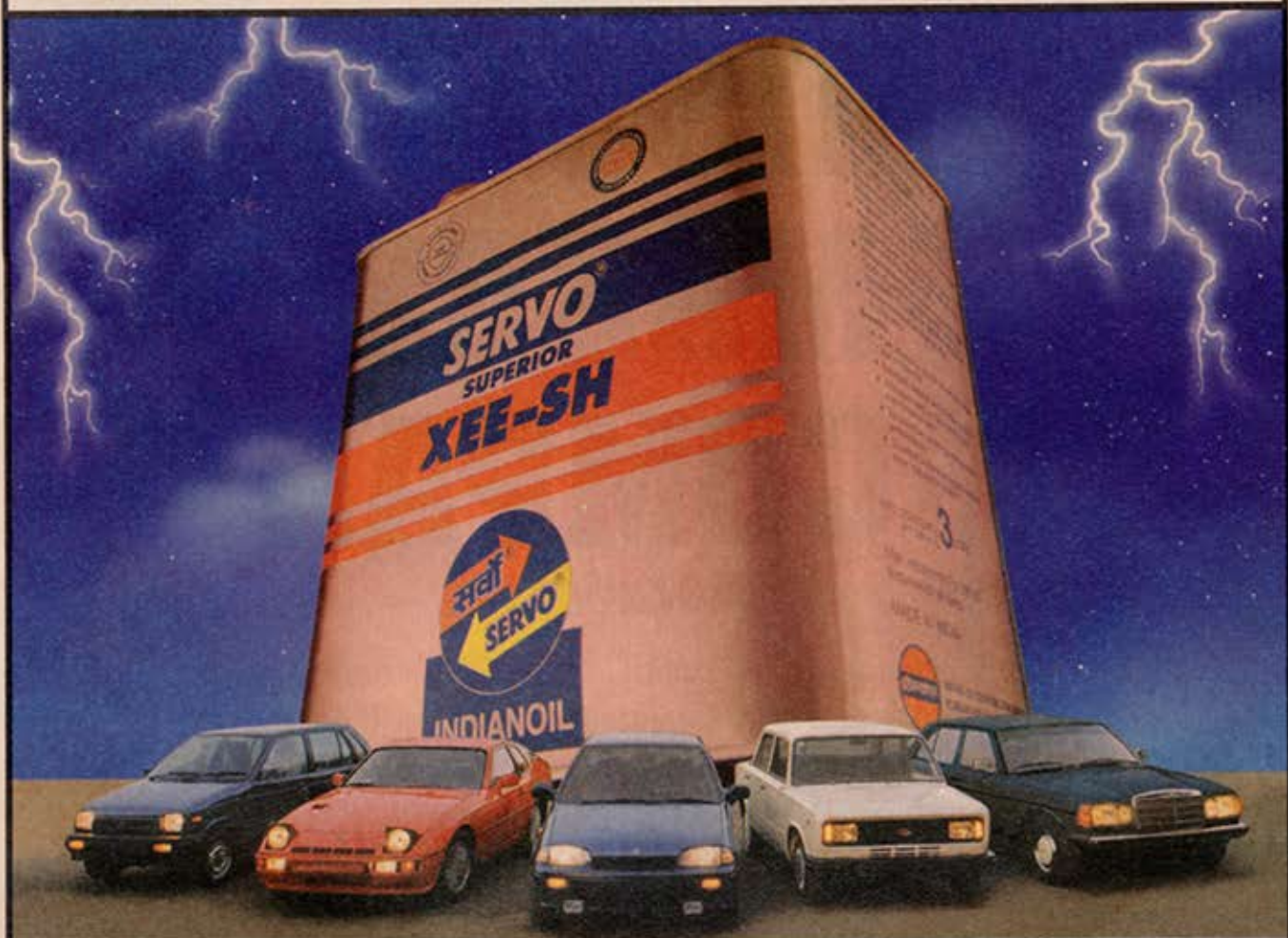
- Learning to live a Zarthushti life.
- Thousand points of light (indicating that each individual would be free to follow his dream but without acrimony or knocking anyone down).
- The development of internal infrastructures like community organizations to channelize energies, economically empower the aged and the youth, and bolster the priests to meet the community's spiritual and religious needs.

•External infrastructures to develop links with non-Zoroastrian and Zoroastrian communities beyond the NA ambit and "put our religion back on the map of the world."

Group leaders have been assigned to carry the process forward, provide reports with specific objectives and timetable: "what needs to be accomplished in the next three months, one year and after that." Thus Ms Khorshed Jungalwala is the focus for all comments/suggestions on leading a Zarthushti life; Ms Anahita Sidhwa for the thousand points of light; Kevala for external infrastructures. Considering the vastness of internal infrastructures as envisaged here, Adi Davar is the focal member on the topic of organizations, Gev Nentin for economic activities and Kayomars Mehta for ecumenical affairs, as notes the *Journal*.

The FEZANA AGM recorded two significant breakthroughs. Two-years of co-ordinated effort paid off in the publication and distribution of *Zoroastrians in North America*. The first edition of the NA directory and business yellow pages, priced at US \$10, was launched at the Tenth NA Congress. FEZANA's census/directory project team comprising Viraf Commissariat, Ms Sheroo Kanga, Sidhwa, Ms Yasmin Ghadiali, Ms Firoza Fitch, Teshtar Irani and Kaika Clubwala was galvanized by Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York's Noshir Langrana, details the *Journal*. Copies are available from Langrana, 19 Brookfield Way, Robbinsville, NJ 08691, USA.

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The other achievement belongs to FEZANA's education committee chaired by Mehta and co-chaired by Ms Villy Gandhi who distributed a comprehensive Zarthushti Religion Education Curriculum. Divided into six levels on the format of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago, the curriculum covers doctrine, scriptures, prayers, rituals, ethics and history. Each level is expected to be covered in two years. Adults can use the same curriculum at an accelerated pace, as notes the *Journal*.

The curriculum had been circulated to all NA associations, groups and both mobed councils, informed Mehta in an earlier issue of the *Journal*. Based on the inputs received, the education committee's revised draft #3 was presented at the San Francisco meet. A "train the teacher" plan, correspondence courses for dispersed members and a Web Page on the electronic forum are other goals beckoning the committee. The ambition and seriousness of the project is exemplified in Mehta's words: "Eventually, we envision the establishment of a certified university in North America, where one can engage in research and study for a higher degree in the Zarthushti religion."

The *FEZANA Journal*, published by Ms Roshan Rivetna, is itself a success story, its size varying between 76 and 80 pages full of news and information on history, traditions and tenets pooled together from knowledgeable community members. That over the past year its income exceeded its expenditure by over \$4,000 speaks as much for the efficiency of the Publications Committee chaired by Kevala as for the NA Zarthushti community's sturdy support!

The officebearers

FEZANA president Ms Dolly Dastoor and treasurer Sarosh Collector were reelected to their posts at the Federation's annual general meet in San Francisco. Ms Maharukh Motafram was elected assistant secretary in place of the outgoing Mehran Sepehri. Framroze Patel and Ms Katayun Kapadia continue as vice president and secretary, respectively.

A clinical psychologist, Montreal based Dastoor is also currently president of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec where she has had a seven-year term as president, earlier. Deeply committed to community and social affairs, Dastoor has been FEZANA's first secretary, Zonta International's (Montreal Club) president and founder president of the Alzheimer Society of Montreal.

A founder member of ZAGNY and its president in the early '80s, Patel is a professional cost accountant and business valuation analyst. He had earlier served FEZANA as treasurer for seven years.

Collector, an engineer and certified public accountant, hails from Houston where he helped draft the association's (ZAH) charter, is a member of its board and of its building fund committee.

Kapadia has been FEZANA secretary since July 1993. A certified internal auditor, certified fraud examiner and chartered accountant, she presided over the 550-member Philadelphia chapter of the Institute of Internal Auditors 1995-96. In 1994 she had co-chaired the IX NA Congress hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey (ZAPANJ) where she has been president, secretary and treasurer several times over.

A bio-organic chemist from the university of Illinois, Chicago, Motafram is involved in school and community affairs and currently also serves as chairperson of FEZANA's Small Groups Committee.

Compiled by Arnavaz S. Mama

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Dolly's devotion

Dr Sujata (Dolly) Dhawale sees failures as an incentive to improve her usefulness

Mehroze N. Pochkhanwalla

The postman knocks on the door with an envelope addressed to Dr Sujata Dhawale, Opera House, Bombay, and asks eagerly, "Taai hai kai (Is elder sister in)?" "Nai (no)," comes the answer. Conveying his heartfelt regards, he leaves. Just then a short man aged around 30 comes in with a big smile and a box of sweets and asks, "Taai kuthé aahé (Where is elder sister)?" She's held up somewhere, comes the response. He bows at the marble Sai Baba statue and declares that his wife delivered a daughter an hour back, and he can't leave till he has given the first sweet to his Taai. He sits on the bench to wait for her.

Jasmine, a young Parsi girl comes in and asks, "Where's Dolla aunty?" She has come to thank her for helping her set up a small business and recalls the day she casually spoke about it to aunty at an informal meeting. She carries a 'thank you' card in her hand.

A humble, dedicated and no-nonsense lady is *aapri* Sujata, nee Dr Dolly Irani, also known as Taai and the 'lady of the masses.' She heads a number of organizations that work for the underprivileged and is a live example of the true Zoroastrian attitude that protects the weak and helps the needy. She is loved and respected by all.

A student of the Queen Mary High School, Bombay, Dolly acquired a first division in her Senior Cambridge examination. Sports and other extra-curricular activities weren't neglected either and she bagged a number of interschool trophies in athletics, dramatics, elocution and debate. In college she added public speaking as one more feather in her cap. She decided to become a doctor and completed her MBBS at the Topiwala National Medical College and Nair Hospital. In 1975 she did her BA in English literature and history from Elphinstone College, topping the list in history. She followed this up with an MA degree and ended with an LLB from the

Government Law College. All this was managed along with her medical practice in the evenings.

Acutely conscious of the lack of medical facilities and infrastructure in our rural areas, she moved on to serve in the countryside. In the mushrooming polyclinic environment in the cities, few medical practitioners remain faithful to the oath of succor they've taken. But like her father, Dr J. K. Irani who runs a clinic at Rajaram Mohan Roy Road opposite the Cama Baug, Sujata has vindicated her profession by her selfless service.

Dolly/Sujata has held numerous elected posts: secretary of her medical college; president of the staff association at Bhatia Hospital; general secretary of the P. G. Students Union, Bombay; president and joint secretary of The Students Federation of India; founder president and general secretary of the Maharashtra Gazetted Medical Officers' Association; founder and chief convener of the Confederation of Doctors' Associations (CODA) consisting of 25,000 doctors, and others besides. To promote intellectual communication, The

Stable Center for People's Energies and Expressions (SCOPE) was founded, which functions as an impetus to a constructive society.

At Latur, Osmanabad, when the earthquake occurred, it was this lady who left with just one pair of clothes and medicinal stock for the relief of the needy. During the atrocious Mumbai riots she moved out to help people in the affected areas when they feared to get out of their houses. Such selfless service did not go unnoticed and veteran leaders urged her to contest the recent 1995 Maharashtra state legislative assembly elections with the Congress I ticket from the Opera House constituency. Unfortunately, she lost. She considers this failure fortunate, as an incentive to do more.

She has also taken a failed marriage in her stride (she is divorced from Dr Ashoke Dhawale) and this circumstance has not alienated her from the more conventional and essentially simple folk who turn to her for guidance. She continues to be a good mother and finds the time, in the midst of all her activities, for her son, a medical student, and a daughter who studies at the Queen Mary High School.

When asked what makes her tick, this is Dolly's response: "It is in the Zoroastrian culture to be benevolent and serve society. In fact, even in death we give our bodies to the vultures... The country has given me so much, I intend to give it all back to the people."



Addressing Congress party gathering

A clean contest

In sharp contrast to prior trends, even infirm members of the Anjuman Committee came to vote

Arnavaz S. Mama



The Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) trusteeship election on September 28, 1996 made history of sorts when 200 voters exercised their ballot within the first hour. Even Rustom Hormazdiyar, elected president of the election as per the High Court scheme and a veteran of innumerable BPP elections since 1981, was taken aback. This is "exceptional — it's never happened before," he declared. As the day wore on, 618 more voters exercised their franchise. Just as the gates were closing at 5 p.m. one lady arrived to cast her vote and insisted that her husband be admitted after he parked the car!

The BPP had made the usual arrangements: the hawkers on the sheltered pavement outside the J. J. Parsi Benevolent Institution building (which houses the

Punchayet) had vacated the area to enable the supporting teams of the two candidates — sitting trustee Dr (Ms) Mehroo Bengalee and World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) Trust Funds managing trustee Dinshaw Tamboly — to set up shop; the police were in attendance at the kerb to enable a fleet of cars to come and go unhindered. Three tables each, staffed by BPP employees enabled elected and donor voters of the Anjuman Committee (AC) to clear the registration formalities and cast their ballot without undue delay.

There was no doubt in anyone's mind about the loyalty of Zoroastrian educationists to Bengalee. The former vice chancellor of the Bombay University had the support of the principals of Zoroastrian schools who comprise the Zoroastrian Stu-

dent-Teacher Association (ZOSTA) — the Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsi Charitable Institution (BJPC), Girton, Alexandra, Panday, etc. They had been extolling the claims of Bengalee for a second term in the Punchayet in letters to the *Jam-e-Jamshed* and several of them were present in person on election day.

But to the community's givers and receivers alike, Tamboly was the man of the hour. They made no bones about where their preference lay and, at the end of the day when the votes were counted, he received three votes and more for each one that Bengalee got. Thus, of the 818 total votes cast, Tamboly received 618, Bengalee 195 (five were invalid) and laid to rest the prevailing myth that the sitting trustee always wins.



Facing page: BPP trustee Silloo, Kavarana, Bachi Tamboly, Guzder, Tamboly and Jesia.

Bengalee (seated, backing pillar), ambulance in the background

Right: On the pavement, Tamboly's supporters (top) and Bengalee's (below) including Taleyarkhan and principals Silloo Commissariat, Nawaz Sanjana and Roshan Driver

A prominent notice at the entrance to the building outlawed any electioneering inside its precincts. And Hormazdiyar, a stickler for propriety, insisted that Tamboly's supporters remove a badge with his photograph which they wore, before they entered it to assist aged or ailing voters.

Though the day had been peaceable, a

controversy suddenly erupted at 4.50 p.m. even as the scrutineers and staff readied to count the votes. Rustom Tirandaz, the BPP's juniormost trustee who had arrived on the scene a while earlier, demanded of Hormazdiyar a consolidated list of the AC members who had voted that day. While BPP trustee Dinshaw Mehta supported the demand, the rival candidates and their supporters kept out of the fray. Hormazdiyar, who seemed upset by the timing and tone of the demand, refused to accede to it. He contended that if the requirement had been notified at the start of the election at 10 a.m. or shortly thereafter, he would have asked the candidates to nominate one supporter each at every table to gather the required data. To expect the staff to produce two lists of 818

names at the end of the day was, he maintained, unfair.

The controversy generated an increasing decibel level with Mehta advocating that the demand be met as on "earlier occasions it had been done." Hormazdiyar stoutly maintained that it had been done only once — at the Dadi Engineer-Rustom Tirandaz election — and then too as a special favor to Tirandaz with the proviso that it would not be used as a precedent. Mehta nonetheless continued to maintain that at "every election they used to give numbers of the candidates on the list." Seasoned politician Homi Taleyarkhan, who was also present, declared himself "not in favor" of any such demand. It is believed that Hormazdiyar lodged a subsequent protest with the BPP against such



Top: Tamboly and Bengalee (ext right) at the hustings

Left: Getting the ballot in hand

interference from the trustees in the conduct of the election. There is no provision in the High Court scheme governing BPP trusteeship elections for such a list to be presented to the candidates.

When the results were announced by BPP chairman Jamshed Guzder, the jubilation in the Tamboly camp reached a new high. A bottle of fizzing champagne made the rounds and photo flashes popped in all parts of the building's foyer even as the rotund, balding Tamboly was hoisted on his supporters' shoulders, albeit briefly! Bengalee had left the venue even before the counting was completed.

Earlier, at a Cusrow Baug meet on September 21, 1996 Bengalee had maintained, "I have been very positive in my approach." Describing herself as the "only non-CER member of the BPP (several trustees are party members or had received

the electoral support of the Committee for Economic Revival)," Bengalee told her 15 member audience that 60 flats in Godrej Baug were unallotted and that the new merit rating scheme for allotment of flats was "not in action because trustees want the subjective element." This led to a vehement argument with Ms Daulat Mugaseth, a CER supporter in the audience.

Bengalee's biggest contribution to the Punchayet has been, predictably, in the field of education. The success of the BPP's 10-year-old star program, the Holiday Programme for Youth, has been attributed to her promotion and guidance. As of the past three years the Punchayet has been tutoring SSC and HSC students in the fine art of answering board exams in a manner guaranteed to gain maximum marks. Bengalee said 177 children from 17 insti-

tutions currently avail of the scheme. "Reelection for me is a concern because on-going programs may be disturbed," she told the small gathering. A side-effect is to get "young boys and girls together," to provide "continuity of rapport," an environment for them to meet and to combine every meeting with some education in Zoroastrianism. A simultaneous emphasis on vocational guidance from standard nine and the development of Zotarians — a project of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India which Bengalee said she had been pursuing — has led to a roster of 200 Zoroastrians from a variety of professions and walks of life expressing their willingness to help young people. As an example she mentioned a workshop with chartered accountants who stated their willingness to absorb young entrants into the profession.

Bengalee had the support of a number of Zoroastrian heavyweights, Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy, Cowasji Dinshaw, retired Justice Bakhtawar Lentin, noted lawyer Shiavax Vakil, homeopath Dr Sarosh Wadia, former BPP chairmen Dr Aspi Golwalla and Eruch Desai, well-known physician Dr Kekobad Mody, noted tax consultant and former BPP trustee Homi Ranina, among them. It may be pointed out, however, that during her trusteeship term Bengalee's participation had been perceived as erratic during her years as vice chancellor. Thereafter it was said that she left the long-drawn out BPP board meetings at a particular time.

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Tamboly's rainbow-hued supporters included the CER's heirarchy, a number of mobeds and orthodox spokesmen like Noshir Dadrawala and Adi Doctor plus a host of WZO beneficiaries. Even the Incorporated Trustees of HongKong and other outstation anjumans like Nagpur wrote to the *Jamé* in Tamboly's support. But perhaps Tamboly's main electoral assets were Ms Mithoo Jesia, the Dadar Parsi Colony social worker with her penchant for organization who had a string of more than 100 volunteers working for his cause ("We worked on a war footing for one month... divided the city into quarters," Jesia later described her strategy.) and the Union Press' Rohinton Chinoy who used the center spread of *Jam-e-Jamshed* (September 22, 1996) to showcase 22 opinions favoring Tamboly apart from his own. Paterasp Patel, Dara Marfatia and Nariman Mehta were other stalwarts Tamboly had reason to thank.

But what may have been the most relevant factor in the landslide towards Tamboly was said to be his easy sociability, and low-key, straightforward responses to

Top row (Left): Incapacitated donor voting from her Maruti 1000. (Right) BPP trustees Dadi Engineer and Mehta bantering with BPP joint secretary Sheroo Master
Second row (Left): Tamboly's poster and volunteers; (Right) BPP chief executive Behram Laskari, Hormazdiyar and scrutineers Rusi Bhungara and Homai Modi double-checking invalid votes

questions. Tamboly's approachability contrasted with Bengalee's reserve — which many people interpret as hauteur — to the latter's detriment.

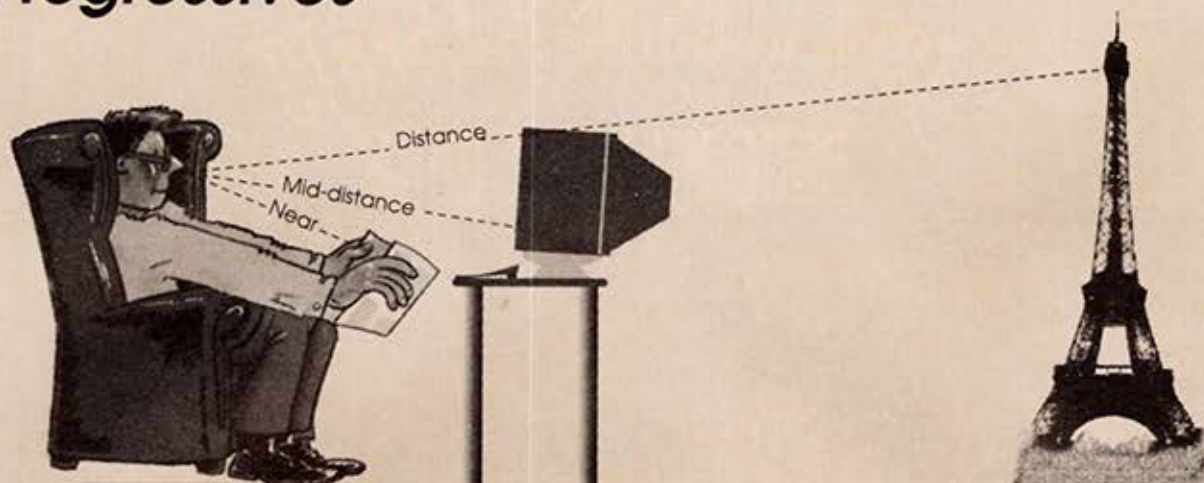
Apart from the allegation of money power made by his opponents — a fleet of 16 cars belonging to his supporters sported the Tamboly banner on September 28 and an ambulance on standby made five or six trips with infirm supporters — this election had no salacious undertones of any kind. As Dadrawala remarked at a congratulatory dinner hosted by Rohinton and Dinaz Chinoy at the Radio Club on Octo-

ber 15, 1996, "Not only was this election keenly contested but cleanly contested."

The only reserve in peoples' minds concerned the WZO's liberal stand vis-a-vis non-Zoroastrian spouses who can now be members of the world body. At Bengalee's meeting in Dadar on September 16, and in a subsequent letter in the *Jamé* (September 22) her supporters, notably Marzban Giara, had attributed the preference of various priests for Tamboly to the WZO donation to the Athornan Mandal (the two bodies are cooperating to economically uplift the Zoroastrian priesthood). Virtually every orthodox-liberal controversy was referred to and laid at Tamboly's door — the WZO's constitution, the Delhi Anjuman's liberal stand on the navjote of children of Parsi mothers, the donations by Babubhai Shah (whose late wife had been a Zoroastrian) to

continued on page 36

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"If they need help, I want to help them"

Incoming BPP trustee Dinshaw Tamboly's non-judgmental attitude towards aid recipients reaped a harvest of support

Arnavaz S. Mama

"Ideological differences don't come in the way of our work," says incoming Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP) trustee and World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO) Trust Funds managing trustee Dinshaw Tamboly who has emerged as a focus of Zoroastrian charity and social work in recent years. His appeals on behalf of indigent mobs and rural Zoroastrians, of ailing individuals in need of expensive medical treatment they cannot afford, of young entrepreneurs searching for seed capital have netted crores of rupees from Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians, from India and abroad. His openness and accountability in the form of regular articles in the community Press providing updates on each project (and in case of medical help, on each major case) has established his bonafides in the community's perception as one who can be trusted with public funds. And his supporters include proponents of warring groups and conflicting viewpoints.

Tamboly was in his shirt sleeves as he spoke to *Parsiana* on the sweltering afternoon of October 10 in his small office, in Bombay's Jeejeebhoy Towers, whose panoramic view of the city contrasts with the congestion within. Here, aided by a personal computer (PC), telephone and fax, a couple of assistants and much readily available information, Tamboly functions in his professional capacity as marketing and export consultant as well as the generator of funds for the WZO's growing social involvements. "Basically I'm a well-orga-

nized person," he declares. "When I started with the WZO (in 1985), I made sure it wouldn't clash with my professional work.

social worker had steered clear of making any statements on the Panchayet. "I do not know anything about the Panchayet's working in any area," he told a querist at a meeting at Khareghat Colony. "I will tell you after a few months (after joining the BPP board) after objective study." Claiming to be a "systems oriented person," he said he would aim at making "the Panchayet work as a corporate entity," believing that when you are systems-oriented, you are not as dependent on individual discretion.

Unlike the traditional bastions of Zoroastrian charity like the BPP and the Surat Parsi Panchayat (SPP), the WZO in India has consciously created an image of itself as a source not of doles but of philanthropy aimed at restoring self-esteem and helping people to stand on their own feet.

Thus, the uplift of rural Zoroastrians in Gujarat — the WZO's pilot project in India (initially in conjunction with the SPP and the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India) on the heels of the Kashmira Bhayya report describing their abject poverty and immediate and long-term needs — provided the recipients with pumps, pipes, building material and, even more relevantly, with professional training at the Tata Institute of Marginal Farming in Navsari.

And they are expected to return the cash equivalent of the inputs that enabled their recovery (a "sea change" as Tamboly described it) in about a decade (with leeway for the vagaries of weather). The loans for entrepreneurs, about 200 so far, are ex-



The Tambolys: "two trustees for the price of one" Photo: Arnavaz S. Mama

Now it's so well established that it's almost routine," he justifies his decision to expand his activities to include BPP involvement where he says he will spend three to four hours of every working day when he is in the city.

In his manifesto, Tamboly had spelt out his "dream" for the community as one "healthy in body and spirit; a community free from want, a community with vision, a community which takes pride in its past but which does not dwell there; a community which concentrates on the present and plans for the future."

During his electoral campaign the burly

pected to be repaid in 45 to 48 months. In many cases repayments have begun though the instalments vary in size. "The way our demographic trends are progressing is a cause for concern," concedes Tamboly, acknowledging the problem of keeping up with a growing demand for non-refundable moneys — like the payments for medical treatment (with a few notable exceptions, it is largely availed of by the 60 plus category), the doles to retired mobeds, elderly, ailing, or incapacitated individuals, etc — as the community continues to age and the workforce that can support it dwindles further. "Ours is a modest effort. We are doing our bit in whatever way we can. Even if we save 50 percent from becoming destitutes..." the soft-spoken Tamboly indicates he'd be gratified.

Some of the medical cases Tamboly has aided have led people to question his discernment. Like the case of Yazad Mobedji — a child born to a young mobed with a multitude of congenital defects whose costly and recurring surgical treatment abroad has been enabled by the generation of Rs 25 lakhs in India plus substantial contributions from the community abroad. "I try to take a compassionate view," says Tamboly adding that the social worker at the child's Spastics Society school told him that "this child has leadership qualities." It seems the boy often helps rally his depressed peers. Even in Tamboly's little office the now five-year-old child showed much interest in his surroundings, wiping out some material from the PC as Tamboly recollects with amused indignation. Similarly, he says he collected Rs 25 lakhs for a girl who needed a bone marrow transplant.

Tamboly's normal modus operandi is to make recommendations to his regular donors for the full amount required by a particular case, though where the amounts are very high, the donations come from a multitude of sources including the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), the WZO's arch critic, the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE), the Hongkong anjuman and from trusts and individuals everywhere. (He refuses to be dragged into the controversies and animosities that dog ZTFE and WZO officials, and says that when he goes to London he makes it a point to meet and share a meal with ZTFE president Rusy Dalal and other committee members.) His faith in the community is high. That "people respond" has been a repeated experience. "I don't sit in judgement on people... If

they need help, I want to help them... More than 99 percent of the donors don't turn them back."

Tamboly says he keeps "pumping the donors with information. Nothing is kept secret. Messieurs XYZ can go and see the cases for themselves in the villages... Earlier people didn't know who we were — (What was the WZO?) Who was Dinshaw Tamboly?" A series of videos have maintained an update on the Gujarat farmers even as letters and articles apprise on other projects and individual cases. "Earlier, more funds came from overseas. Today it has taken the imagination of the aristocrats

"If a man comes for by-pass surgery, I'd like to pay for by-pass surgery, not funeral expenses"

of the community in India and they have been very generous with their support," he acknowledges, noting that last year alone he received Rs 5.88 crores in donations for various causes. His next priority is to promote the Panchayat's image: "If the BPP is the apex body, Parsis should look up to it. (We must) make a sincere effort to revive its past glory," he says.

Another project being financed by a private trust in India under WZO auspices is the establishment of a five-storied senior citizens' center in Navsari. The shell of the 20,000 sq ft home with a capacity to house 52 individuals in single and double rooms with attached baths and common messing is ready and he expects it to become operational by this time next year. Thoughtfully located in a Zoroastrian mohalla in close proximity to an agiary and bazar, the facility is meant for low income retired people who could move there from Bombay leaving their flats for their children's use. "The whole idea is decongestion of Bombay," says Tamboly adding, "Ahmedabad is after me. They are willing to give space" for a similar project there.

Tamboly describes himself as "a practical man — neither orthodox nor reformist — (with) an ability to get along with people." He sees "no need to change customs which don't need change." Conversely, he believes that when the need of the times require certain changes, they will

come. "Why did you change the muktads from 18 days to 10 days?" he asks, by way of example. He is similarly pragmatic about the shift/amalgamation of sacred fires and prefers to leave matters of rituals and customs in the jurisdiction of the clergy. "When you are ill do you go to a doctor or a lawyer?" he asks, driving home his point that matters of specialist concern should be left to the professionals.

A product of Christ Church and Dr Antonio D'Silva Schools and Khalsa College, Tamboly has no formal university degree but business oriented diplomas from institutions abroad. His own professional expertise centers round providing market surveys to client exporters among whom are international names like Macy's and Littlewood. There are quite a few Indian Parsis in the export business, we learn, three or four being, in Tamboly's parlance, "very substantial." (There is also a Parsi businessman in the UK who imports from HongKong, Indonesia and India.) What are their chances of growth? "When you (read India) are doing only two percent of (the world's) export trade, you can only grow!" Tamboly is optimistic. His other commercial interest is in textiles retailing in Navsari.

The Tamboly family's involvement with social work goes back to the 18th century when the then patriarch of the clan decided to gift away the family house (along with 15 or 16 other like-minded individuals) to provide land for the construction of the Navsari Atash Behram. Dinshaw's great grandfather Naoraji Framji Tamboly established the Sankat Nivaran Fund to provide rations to the needy Navsarians during World War I. While his father owns Mazda Elevators, his two uncles are leading lights of the Navsari Malesar Behdin Anjuman. "Perhaps involvement with social work is in my genes..."

"When we got married, Bachi [his *kaka-ni-dikri* (first cousin), wife and 'pillar of strength'] had said that when we are well-off, we must do something for the community. In the 1980s we were comfortable and opted to help the WZO..."

These "fortuitous circumstances" which led to the Tambolys' involvement with WZO activities have resulted in the formation of three new trusts to promote various social service programs. Initially, donations for the Gujarat rural uplift project were accepted through the SPP account. "They used to give money whenever we needed it." But the pursuit of the scheme of rehabilitation required greater infrastructure than the Surat Panchayat could legiti-



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mately provide on the basis of their existing objects and the WZO Trust was registered in 1991. The SPP's Dr Sam Bhacca as chairman with Tamboly as managing trustee, joint managing trustee Firoj Panthaky and Parvez Italia, Shahpur Captain, Dara Deboo, Farrokh Kasad and Davar Kavasji Modi formed its board of trustees as on March 31, 1996. Its trust deed includes help to farmers, education of children, relief from poverty and medical relief among its objects. Set up as a cosmopolitan trust, it received the 80G certificate from the income tax authorities which led to greater donations coming in, explained Tamboly.

As the project matured and more cases came to their notice, they found the need to set up the WZO Trust for Women and Children in 1993 with Bachi as settlor. It was a cosmopolitan trust though a women and children's trust enjoys 80G exemption from income tax even if it is restricted to the community. Its board includes Rustam Gae as chairman with Tamboly as managing trustee, Bachi, Captain, Panthaky and Modi. The third trust with 80G exemption, the WZO Trust Funds, was registered in 1995 as the specific objects of aiding self-employment and running a senior citizens' home did not feature among the earlier trusts. According to Tamboly it is much easier and faster to set up a new trust than to revise or extend the objects of an existing trust. This trust is run by Tamboly as chairman with Bachi, Panthaky and Kasad on the board of trustees.

The new registered trusts are said to be better patronized because of the tax exemption that donors receive as also because the donors are reassured as income tax returns must necessarily be filed. The new trusts have not only given Tamboly more elbow room but increased pace: though "every case is investigated, speed is of the essence. If a man comes for by-pass surgery, I'd like to pay for by-pass surgery, not funeral expenses," he notes.

When asked about moves to form a World Council of Zoroastrian Federations, Tamboly says he is yet to get to grips with the idea: "I have been involved with one side of the coin," he admits, adding, "but (I can't see why) it can't be established within the framework of the WZO constitution, with a few modifications to it."

Though a world body of Zoroastrians had been mooted at the First World Zoroastrian Congress in Iran in 1960, there was no progress until the WZO was hurriedly set up in 1980 in London where Iranian emigrés fleeing the Islamic revolution in

their country initially congregated. Meant to provide individual membership to Zoroastrians in diverse parts of the world who felt the need to belong, the WZO was originally framed on the lines of a public limited company which entailed a tax liability on the organization. To offset this liability its constitution was altered in 1993 to bring it into charity focus with concomitant tax benefits by deleting clauses which restricted the membership to Zoroastrians only, explained Tamboly who is a committee member of the body in London and in India. Specifically, non-Zoroastrian spouses and their children were accorded full membership rights. This led to substantial heartburn among its orthodox members leading to a number of resignations, among them Dastur Meherji Meherjirana of Navsari who had been settlor of the WZO Trust and Noshir Dadrawala who had been editing the WZO mouthpiece *Hamazor*. Rohinton Chinoy of Union Press, where the magazine was printed, was "one of the dissenters" when the WZO memorandum was altered.

It had been expected that Tamboly would receive substantial flak on the above score. What had been omitted from the calculation, perhaps, was Tamboly's affability (he has a penchant for diffusing aggressive opposition) and the perception that he addresses donors and donees in the same tone of voice. People were surprised that Dadrawala's interview with him in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* had been so positive. "All our trusts were registered by Noshir (Dadrawala)," Tamboly responded matter-of-factly. "Everyone's been very supportive. Rohinton Chinoy did all the printing. I know for a fact that he spent a couple of nights in the press. It touched me a lot..."

"I was always confident of winning (the Punchayet election) but the margin was entirely due to Mithoo (Jesia, well-known social worker from Dadar Parsi Colony). She organized the entire campaign; ensured that I could sleep in peace; took all the problems on herself. (She involved) 108 volunteers from all the baus and colonies. It made me feel very humble, very small. It was a very moving, very touching experience." [Jesia, with characteristic modesty, shrugged off her contribution: "I was only a campaign *mukadam* (labor overseer)!"]

Solid support was also available at home. Bachi and Dinshaw Tamboly have worked as a team on the WZO trusts. Though she had been reluctant about the BPP trusteeship initially, "once decided, (she) has given full support... The BPP is getting two

trustees for the price of one!" exults Dinshaw.

As for the mixed priorities, divided loyalties, conflicts of interest and other such bugbears, Dinshaw Tamboly is sanguinely unconcerned: "For me, the community is more important than either the BPP or the WZO."

A CLEAN CONTEST

continued from page 30

Tamboly's philanthropic work, the recent resurrection of the Navsari Parsi Association, where Tamboly is joint honorary secretary, as a cosmopolitan trust, etc.

Referring to the Bengalee meeting when the aspersions were initially made, Tamboly wrote in *Jamé* (September 22): "It is only fair that the community should know that a group of individuals, which included Mr Marzban Giara had met me informally on Monday, September 9, 1996 to ascertain my religious beliefs, which were made known to them."

"If Mr Marzban Giara had any questions to pose to me he could have very well done so at that time, or even at my election meeting held in Dadar on Wednesday, September 11, 1996."

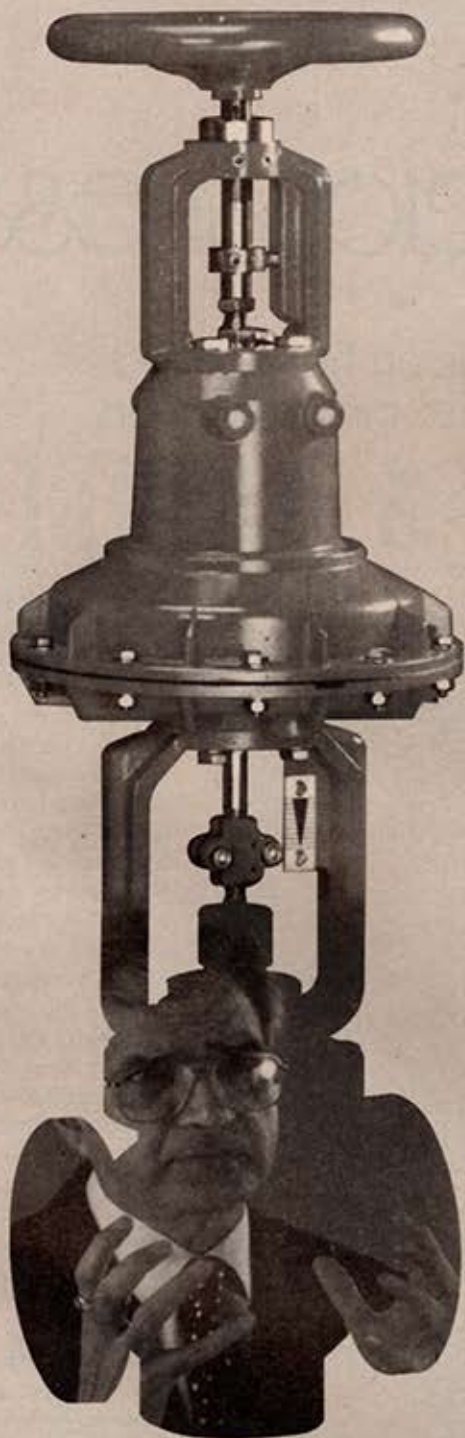
"These factors will serve to establish that the intent of Mr Marzban Giara has been to play mischief. I find it very surprising that my competitor in the election Dr (Ms) Mehroo Bengalee allowed Mr Marzban Giara to continue for some time to attack me, before Hon. Justice (Retd) Bakhtawar Lentin advised Mr Marzban Giara to cease and step down."

And so ended what may be the last BPP trusteeship election this century. While the AC's seven-year term will end in 1999, BPP trustee Ms Silloo Kavarana's trusteeship term will continue into the brave new 21st century!

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Grace and graciousness

Lady Mehri Tata believed in using her social position to better the prospects of Indian women

Parinaz Gandhi

"Your personality with its dignity and poise, its charm and graciousness has influenced me profoundly. To me you are an example of a woman whose intellect and emotions are perfectly blended. I shall be very proud if I can acquire qualities such as yours. They are what I shall strive for continually — keeping you in mind..." These sentiments addressed to Lady Mehri Tata were from Ernad Christiansen, a student of the Battle Creek College in the USA.

As wife of Sir Dorab Tata and daughter-in-law of Jamsetjee Tata, Mehri had sufficient resources for idle pursuits and luxuries to last a lifetime. But she elected instead to exhaust her energies for the cause of the underprivileged strata of Indian society, as attested by the many friends and admirers who contributed to the volume, *Lady Tata, A Book of Remembrance* published in 1932 on her first death anniversary as a "tribute to her untiring efforts for the uplift of Indian womanhood." It is from this book, gifted to *Parsiana* by Jamsetji Khambatta, that we have been able to piece together this article on Lady Tata.

Lady Tata: dedication to the underprivileged

Barely a few months before her demise, Tata, who was considered the life and soul of the National Council of Women in India, had written to Ms Brijlal Nehru,

chairman of the Women's Committee of the Commonwealth of India League (the book consistently uses the term 'chairman'), "I have always held that when

the women of a country take their just share in the affairs of their country, that country and that nation must rise to be one of the great countries and nations of the world. And so it will now be with our beloved India... As for the part played by women in India today I have no words to express my admiration of their courage, their steadfastness and determination, their willingness to suffer, their single-minded spirit, and their noble example to stand by their cause unflinchingly and untiringly at much sacrifice of time, health and bodily discomfort."

Social service and welfare work is essentially women's work, commented Tata in the course of her speech delivered as president of the Bombay Presidency Women's Council. "Give of your best, and give freely whether it be money or service... It is not an easy matter — this service for others. It



requires courage, patience, perseverance, human understanding and sympathy, tolerance, tact, the ever constant desire to serve and to help others, and the setting aside of one's self in the performance of this labor of love."

India then being under the British yoke she felt the Englishwomen "could do a vast amount of good if they would; women whose children are at school in England and therefore are free to devote themselves to any good work they may fancy, instead of living their lives entirely apart in a little groove and coterie all their own, and spending their time in lunches and teas and dinners and club-life and dances from year's end to year's end... The Englishwomen in India owe it as a duty to the country from which their husbands and their sons derive their living — those comfortable handsome salaries (excuse my plain speaking) which the vast majority of them would never dream of getting in (their own) or perhaps any other country..."

"Let us women of both countries join hands and determine to work for the good of those poor ignorant unhappy millions whose lot is a hard one — not in a condescending, patronizing spirit but with sympathy and genuine love. Let us unite in this great work and surely we ourselves will derive as much benefit and gain as much happiness as those for whom we work."

Tata realized that Indian women's uplift and their participation in international life were related. As chairman of a small committee of Indian women entrusted with the mission of deciding whether the time was ripe for forming a national women's body in India, Tata had recommended that a beginning be made and also suggested a constitution in consultation with Ms Palmer (wife of the then Bishop of Bombay) and Ms Cornelia Sorabji (India's first lady professor). As chairman of the executive committee of that Council until her demise, she presided over its meetings in India and led the Indian delegation at meetings in Geneva, London, Vienna and elsewhere. She was also on the committee of the International Council of Women in Europe.

The chairman of the International Council, the Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair, who had journeyed two nights in the train to attend the public condolence meeting in honor of Tata had remarked, "It is hard to believe that we can no longer look for that gracious presence amongst us, so full of vitality and attraction, whose every movement was instinct with dignity and rhythm and whose serene lack of self-

consciousness of her beauty added to her charm. Her entry into any assembly clad in those graceful garments of harmonious hues which she knew so well how to blend, and which seemed to be part of her very self, always brought distinction to any gathering... and that first impression was



Mehri's husband, Sir Dorab: shared enthusiasm for sports (Courtesy: Tata Agairy)

heightened when she took part in the discussion in her rich full voice, ever speaking to the point and showing the mastery of one who had thought out the subject of her remarks."

And yet, this charming lady — who possessed the 245 carat Jubilee Diamond, then the largest privately owned diamond in the world — had once astounded the mayor with her remark, "We ladies did not come here to be graceful, we came here to be useful." This comment had been provoked when, during the Bombay riots in 1929, members of the Women's Council offered to sell food at cost price to residents of Byculla who were finding it difficult to procure their provisions. The mayor insisted, "My volunteers would not consider it graceful for ladies to sell food." But a determined Tata proved him wrong and donated the monies collected to the Red Cross and hospitals as also to the soldiers and sepoys who were posted in the disturbed areas. Earlier her active work to raise contributions during the War years had earned her a CBE [Commander of (the Order of) the British Empire].

"Blessed are those that give, but still more blessed are those that give wisely, generously and selflessly," believed Tata.

The dole system, in particular, was anathema to her and she conveyed in no uncertain terms how some "foolish and ridiculous Parsi charities" were extending aid similar to the "wretched dole system." In a letter to Ms Serenbai Maneckjee Cursetjee, Tata wrote forcefully, "Where necessity must and there is no choice left, one has to make the best of things and to undergo any hardship in order to earn an honest living rather than be dependent on relations and friends or receive doles from any charitable concern or individual. There is not only indolence in our Parsi poor but also a sense of false pride and snobbishness in refusing to take up any work or profession which should be severely knocked out of them..."

Proud of her Persian roots, it is reported that when she was a student of the Bishop Cotton School in Bangalore she chose to spell her name as Mehri, instead of Mary, contrary to the wishes of her father Hormusji J. Bhabha who was influenced considerably by his education in England. Her father who was formerly the vice principal of the Central College in Bangalore and subsequently appointed principal of Mysore's Maharaja College monitored her progress in English and Latin until she matriculated and in his library she was later able to expand her mental horizons. A talented pianist she was one of those invariably selected to perform at every public concert in Mysore. In fact the Bhabhas, who were the only family to move in both English and Indian society, were regarded as an important link in the social circles of Mysore. When Jamsetjee Tata, the pioneer of industry in India visited Mysore and got to know the Bhabhas, he took a special liking for Mehri and later announced that his eldest son Dorab would like to wed her.

Married to Dorab when she was 18 years of age, and he 38, their common enthusiasm for sports is supposed to have laid the foundation of their marital happiness for 33 years which developed into "almost complete identity of outlook and interests in life." In tennis Mehri could hold her own with expert players and had won over 60 prizes in the different tournaments in which she had played in India and Europe. What distinguished her at the courts was her costume, insisting on wearing a sari and showing impatience with the younger members of her community who opted to wear the Western attire. A good rider, she rode her own horses and her own motorcar. Among her pets were two blue Persian cats, dogs, a deer, a parrot and a myna. She could not bear to see a boxing



Tata: riding side saddle in Matheran (left) and with her tennis trophies (below)

match or a bull fight. Her love for plays and music often took her to theaters around the world. Distinguished visitors to Bombay in the world of art, music and sport enjoyed her hospitality.

Her resplendent residence at Esplanade House was also used on different occasions as the venue of a fete to raise funds for the Bombay Presidency Women's Council Rescue Home for Indian women, and as the headquarters of the reception committee which she chaired to look after the hospitality of the delegates attending the All India Women's Conference in Bombay. "She had an inner life which, while loyally accepting and discharging the duties of the social position to which she had been called, was ever urging her to utilize her opportunities to promote the education and well-being of her Indian sisters," it is noted in her life sketch.

Among the other causes which she supported was for the betterment of conditions under which Indian coolie labor was indentured abroad (unskilled Indian labor was recruited to build roads and railways in other British colonies viz South Africa, Kenya, etc). The deputation to the Viceroy on behalf of the Indian women was led by Tata. She also believed that women should be assigned berths in politics and local government. During her last illness she felt compelled to leave her sickbed to attend a meeting in support of a resolution for the alteration of the rules to meet the present educational needs of the women of Bombay.

An education which does not affect character but merely imparts information is not education in the true sense, realized Tata who sought to introduce a boarding

school where character building and a spirit of service would be the keynotes. The two greatest needs in India, according to Tata, were the need to educate men to the idea that women could achieve great heights; and the need to educate both men and women in the science of rearing children with sound character. Sharing her enthusiasm in the model school project was her husband. They summoned an educationist from England to survey the whole field of girls' higher education in India and discover the good points that could be adopted and the weaknesses that could be avoided.

"The greatest thing we lack is discipline," Tata had once commented. "Without discipline no group or body...can carry out anything successfully. Discipline leads to team-work." The school it seems was not launched "owing to unforeseen circumstances." But the survey which took over a year and was compiled into a report served for many years as the *vade mecum* (ready reference manual) which the Board of Education in Whitehall placed in the hands of all women inspectresses or teachers proceeding to India to take up the higher education of girls.

Within six years of Mehri's marriage, her father-in-law died. The massive projects launched by the visionary Jamsetjee had to

be completed by the next generation. The Institute of Science was set going, the iron and steel industry expanded into the city of steel at Jamshedpur, the rainfall on the Western Ghats was harnessed to serve the millowner in Bombay... "But this would never have been accomplished if Dorab Tata had not seen his purpose with wide-open eyes; if he had not had always at his side a wife who was as staunch in the pursuit of these filial and patriotic duties as himself," credits Sir Stanley Reed, then

editor of *The Times of India*, in his foreword to the book.

Despite a valiant fight, Mehri finally succumbed to leukaemia at the age of 51 at a nursing home at Ruthin in North Wales. Within a year of Mehri's demise, Sir Dorab died. But not before he decided to put his wealth, estimated at one crore rupees into a trust for cosmopolitan use for the advancement of learning and research, the relief of distress and other charitable purposes, writes R. M. Lala in *The Heartbeat of a Trust*. This was the



beginning of the Sir Dorab Tata Trust which was able to finance the construction and equipment of the Tata Memorial Hospital in Bombay. Shortly thereafter he endowed the Lady Tata Memorial Trust with a corpus of Rs 25,00,000 for research into leukaemia, and the Lady Meherbai D. Tata Education Trust (partly from public donations) for the training of women in hygiene, health and social welfare.

As wished by Mehri, her ashes were interred in the cemetery at Brookwood, on a plot of land next to the resting place of Jamsetjee. Erected on the site is a beautiful mausoleum designed in the old Persian style and the inscription on the tombstone reads, "She died as she had lived working nobly for the cause of women and for the country which she loved and served so well." It concludes with the apt quotation, "The reason firm, the temperate will/Endurance, foresight, strength and skill/A perfect woman, nobly planned/To warn, to comfort and command."

"The future of Zoroastrianism is very bright"

North American Zoroastrians publicly affirm their appreciation of Prof Kaikhosrov Irani's pursuit of the Zoroastrian vision

Arnavaz S. Mama



Photo:
Nazneen Vajldar,
Spectra Vision

"For his dedicated service to the Zoroastrian faith, for manifesting the attributes of Vohu Mano, Asha and Armaity as he has traversed through life, for his sterling and unique achievements in the cause of Zoroastrianism unparalleled by any living Zoroastrian on this continent, the Awards Committee proudly and gratefully recognizes Prof Kaikhosrov Dinshaw Irani."

As the quintessential professor was be-shawled in "typical Parsi-Iranian tradition" and presented the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America's (FEZANA) Lifetime Achievement Award Trophy on July 6, 1996 at San Francisco, California the audience rose to salute the man whom Dinshaw Joshi, chairman of the Awards Committee had described in his preamble to the citation as "the only scholarly voice of reason and moderation among Zoroastrians in both written and spoken word."

Bespectacled, balding, often bemused by the ways of his coreligionists ("What we need is the ability to talk to each other without rancor. I don't know if that can happen, but I don't see why as rational human beings we can't do it," he had once told *Parsiana*), Irani is "modest to the point of self-effacement," noted Jehan Daruvala in *The Bombay Samachar* (August 11, 1996) endorsing the award. Predictably, Irani considered Joshi's introduction "unduly laudatory."

Emeritus professor of philosophy at

City College, New York, (where he taught for 41 years before retiring four years ago) Irani continues to hold classes in philosophy of science and philosophy of mind. He has researched in the history and philosophy of ancient thought — religious, moral, mythical and technological for the past 25 years. As noted Joshi, Irani's "Knowledge of Zoroastrianism, especially the *Gathas*, his wit and sense of humor and his ability to tailor his discourse to the level of his audience... (has advanced) the knowledge of our faith, religion and community among those who know so little about Zoroastrianism... He is perhaps the only Zoroastrian in the world who was associated with Nobel Laureate Prof Albert Einstein in Princeton. Kaikhosrov was known well enough to Prof Einstein and Einstein had high enough regard for him to write out a personal letter of recommendation when so requested in support of Kaikhosrov's application for a new job early in his professional career."

Popular and respected as Irani is in academic circles, he has nonetheless been frequently vilified by the orthodox lobby whose protagonists stress the Sasanian ritualism that has been the lay community's concept of Zoroastrianism. To the Professor, however, Zarathushtra's is a reflective religion which fuses "a view of the world and a way of life offered to the prospective

believer, to be adopted upon due reflection as worthy of acceptance." In his introduction to *Understanding the Gathas* (introductory lectures on Gathic themes by his father Dinshaw Irani), Kaikhosrov summarizes Zarathushtra's concept of the world as a theater of conflict between two diametrically opposed moral spirits — the spirit of goodness (Spenta Mainyu) and the spirit of evil (Angra Mainyu, not so named in the *Gathas* but in the later literature) — in juxtaposition with Asha, "the ultimate truth, that is the ideal form of existence of the world as envisaged by Ahura Mazda; the form the world would have had but for the spirit of evil and hence the form the world ought to have..."

In the course of an interview with *Parsiana* in January 1995 after the conclusion of the Second International Conference hosted by the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, Irani reiterated his view "that the most significant part of (Zarathushtrian) worship is to lead the moral life... take responsibility for our actions and of the consequences which follow" and that the ideal society which would result from our moral actions would be a "society of justice."

In the course of his long teaching career Irani has found that students in the West are always very interested in the Zarathushtrian message. He recalls a student who

was so impressed with the *Ashem Vohu*, he carried a translation of it in his wallet in later life and recited it in translation at the beginning of an important government level conference. "If the religion of Zarathushtra — not the practices we are committed to in Bombay, but the message of the Prophet — becomes widely known, then the future of Zoroastrianism is very bright," he believes.

Referring to the "complex poetic structures... the multiple meanings, poetic resonances between lines and suggestions rather than fully literal statements" which the Prophet has employed in his hymns, Irani notes that a "completely literal translation of the *Gathas* would be utterly useless." The spiritual insight, the idea presented in each verse, is what needs to be grasped, he says, drawing an analogy with the *Psalms* in English which he had first heard sung in a church across the street where he lived as a youth with his family in England. "They were poetic and significant and they meant something to the congregation (but) they were not literal translations of the Hebrew Bible."

According to Irani, scholarly interest in Zoroastrian study has not waned in the West. He perceives the field as three-pronged: There are those who study the practices of Zoroastrians, both Parsis and Iranians, from a socio-anthropological viewpoint best exemplified by London's Prof Ms Mary Boyce and Colorado University's Dr James Boyd; those who pursue the linguistics of Zoroastrian scriptures and aim at the most accurate translations like Profs Helmut Humbach and Stanley Insler; and those who ask for the ultimate content of the religion ("There are not many who are interested in this and there are some very divergent views," cautions Irani) where again the leaders in the field are Humbach and Insler.

Though Irani abjures ritualism as the basis of religion, he does not discount the value of rituals as "the external social affirmation of (a community's) unity and identity... They express our continuity with generations of past believers which is something very worthwhile. But it would be a mistake to think that rituals constitute the core of religious belief... We do not ignore rituals (but) one does not want to make ritual the foundation of our (reflective) religion. It is merely the expression of our religiosity."

Pondering upon the fractious Zoroastrian community and its future, Irani believes we must "recognize our differences and similarities and make adjustments,

commit ourselves to certain agreements without charging all kinds of improprieties to each other and without trying to shut people up. Any sincerely held belief should be heard."

A humanist at heart, his intellectual objectivity intact, Irani examines the social issue that increasingly overarches the Zoroastrian community scene in the last decade of the 20th century: Can our organizations afford to be ethnically exclu-

"The most significant part of Zarathushtrian worship is to lead the moral life"

sive? "I don't think they can," he says proffering his reasons. "It is suicidal with so much intermarriage — which is inevitable though I don't cherish it. In fact I would very much prefer that both partners be of the same faith. But if the non-Zoroastrian partner is interested in becoming Zoroastrian, we should welcome it..."

"I do not believe that any... person should engage in proselytization. I however believe that if someone of his/her free will chooses a religious position, I don't think anybody has the right to tell him or her what to believe or not to believe... To reject someone who accepts Zoroastrianism because of (our) wrong conviction is contrary to Zarathushtra's message..."

"To reject someone as part of your religious community because of his ancestry is just inhuman. I know very few Zoroastrians who have the dedication of Joseph Peterson (the American engineer who chose to convert to Zoroastrianism in New York in 1983). And what about the treatment Ali Jafarey (Zoroastrian scholar and founder of The Zarathushtrian Assembly in California) gets? One whose navjote was performed, who recites the *Gathas* regularly... And there are people at FEZANA meetings who say we will become a laughing stock if he speaks on Zoroastrianism because he (was) a Muslim! I can't believe that Zoroastrians are so morally blind!" he exclaims, then adds more optimistically, "I think in a short while we'll come together and agree to live with our differences."

The controverting, argumentative characteristic of the community may be due to

"our upbringing which, in matters of religion is dogmatic," ventures Irani (stressing, "it is only my suspicion"). "The other aspect of our upbringing is that we make our children extremely sensitive to criticism. As a result we get personalities with brittle self-images. They present a self-image which they want validated: present divergent views, are given to sarcasm and invective instead of being open and flexible. When you criticize children and say, 'What will others think of you?' you get extremely argumentative people (who view their religion... as something to be defended rather than something to be lived!)"

Kaikhosrov ascribes his interest in Zoroastrianism to his father Dinshaw, a lawyer with a deep and abiding interest in the religion, who attended lectures by K. R. Cama, studied Avesta and Gathic (the language of the *Gathas*), translated the *Gathas* into English and prevailed upon Prof Pour Davoud of Tehran University to translate them into Farsi which, says Kaikhosrov, "opened Iranian consciousness to Zarathushtra's message." His mother Mithibai (née Sethna) too came from a family of lawyers. "Her father practised in Gujarat and knew Gandhiji when he practised there," recalls Kaikhosrov.

The interest planted by Dinshaw fructified when a seminar on world religions and cultures was planned under UNESCO (United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) auspices in the 1950s. "They were looking for a Zoroastrian and they got hold of me and so, naturally, I began to discuss with scholars," Irani recalls. Among them were the team's chairman Dr Moses Jung, Rabi Max Artz, "a very fine and humane scholar of Judaism," and Dr D. Suzuki, the world authority on Zen Buddhism. "We met two weeks for a few hours every evening. I had to read extensively to make sense. I got interested in the community..." Irani trails off as though it were the most natural, most commonplace turn of events!

After his basic education at Bombay's St Xavier's School and College Irani says his life has been that of an "intellectual wanderer" through several universities and institutions abroad. A consistent thread was a "semi-conscious but insistent drive to reach and disclose the fundamental belief systems underlying various disciplines." In physics, Irani says he shared "the outlook of Einstein and not (that) of most living physicists, that no matter how well we predict phenomena and solve complex problems, our task is not complete until we have a description of the underlying

ing reality which gives us understanding. This is nowhere in sight in physics." Irani is said to have raised this issue in several papers on the Reality Problem in Quantum Physics.

"I hold the 'Enlightenment' view that the Divinity has not shut us off from the comprehension of this Reality and that the human reason is capable of disclosing its inner physical and moral structure," elaborates Irani, acknowledging the influence of Zarathushtra, Kant and Einstein on his thinking. Irani considers Zarathushtra "the pioneer Enlightenment thinker," although the Enlightenment movement which, in Irani's words, "liberated humanity from servile obedience to mystery-mongering" was a European phenomenon of the 18th century. This inquiry into the workings of the human mind, "its phenomenal reach and its easy susceptibility to error," has led Irani to publish nine papers and edit three books on the philosophy of mind and the mind-brain relation. In addition he has written 10 papers on moral values and their roots in Reality as learned from the *Gathas*.

Thoughtful even in his food habits, Irani is vegetarian though "not fanatically so; there are social contexts where I make adjustments." His wife Piroja had once

humorously described the first dhansak she had made with the usual complement of meat and Irani's urbane response: "Is it possible to have, er, vegetables instead of the, er, meat?" Irani himself acknowledges Piroja's unflagging support. With her he discusses "every, even mildly original, idea to come to (his) mind." And the support and affection of his family, he says, have enabled him "to sustain a life of study and reflection."

At the time of the interview Irani said he was working on the philosophy of religion, applying it to Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity. Frequently invited to speak to the Buddhist Society of New York and now a member of their board, Irani is "impressed by their simplicity and openness." He has also been associated with philosophical projects with "moderately liberal Christians — the kind of Christianity promoted by the theologian A. Harnack in the early 20th century whose works are very influential in the moderately liberal tradition."

One of the most distinguished members — and former president — of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY), Irani feels that the Association pioneered on two fronts: to produce a

forum for the religious education of children including Sunday school classes and text books and of adults through organizing conferences and seminars; and the provision of communal get-togethers. "We want to maintain both these without confusing them." Though Iranian Zoroastrians have formed their own association, "it does not mean they are religiously diverse." Irani does not believe the two are in conflict any more and rapprochement is a continuing agenda — "(We) promote these goals as best we can," he says.

Irani has also been a functionary of the World Zoroastrian Organisation (WZO). It organizes international forums to go into various aspects of Zoroastrianism (the first World *Gatha* Conference was held under WZO auspices) and can arrange the interchange of information, he says. "I don't think we need any other body..."

"What we need in (our) leadership is openness to ideas — not a formulated stand. Religious conviction is not a matter of a political stand. Fundamental humanity is needed... I believe in the use of reason in human discourse. In no way (is it) inimical to our religion. We need leadership with a commitment to the prestige of the community, not the prestige of positions..."

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The Parsi Punchayet Case — 3

The muted voice

Once the trustees arrogated to themselves the right of appointing successor trustees, the community was denied a say in the affairs of the Punchayet

Should the entire community have a say in the election of trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet? There is a constant fear that by disregarding the present scheme for election of trustees, a time-honored institution may be abused and power may vest in the wrong hands.

Many community members may not be aware that originally the Punchayet whose selection was ratified by the entire anjuman and in whose hands the affairs of the community were entrusted, were invariably accountable to the anjuman or the community at large. Though the Punchayet members could suggest new names on its body as replacements or additions, it was only after the anjuman sanction was obtained that the changes were recognized as official.

These facts come across clearly in *The Parsi Punchayet Case* (Suit No 689 of 1906) when in the historic plaint filed by Sir Dinsha Manockji Petit, II Bart and others against Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy, IV Bart and others, Justices Dinshaw Dhanjibhoy Daver and Frank C. O. Beaman ruled on two issues in 1908: whether the Punchayet trustees were validly appointed and entitled to fill up vacancies in their ranks; whether the funds and properties in the custody of the trustees were intended for all Zoroastrians (including converts) or only the born Zoroastrians. The six others who joined Petit as petitioners were Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Rustomji Behramji Jijibhoy, Ratanji J. Tata, Bapuji Sorabji Patel, Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata and Nana-bhoy Naoroji Katrak. Arraigned as the defendants were Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Hormusjee Edaljee Albless, Jamsetjee Cursetjee Jamsetjee, Merwanji Muncherji

Cama and Bomanji Dinshaw Petit.

The verdict on the latter issue had been serialized over 16 issues of *Parsiana* from October 1981 to March 1983. In four episodes, beginning with the June '96 issue,



Daver and Beaman: in agreement

we are carrying at length Justice Daver's opinion (fully supported by Justice Beaman) reflecting the careful scrutiny he made of varied documents. In his words, "The members of the Punchayet were the appointees of the community...They had themselves no legal right to appoint trustees of property that belonged to the community, and they had certainly no right whatever to confer on others the power which they themselves never had."

The court however noted that the defendants were of impeccable integrity and honor "and their management of properties devoted to charity have been so fair and faultless that not a complaint has been heard against them." The judges observed that they were forced to remove the trustees from office on technical defects. Thus while ordering a scheme of elections to be framed, Daver authorized the surviving trustees to once again take charge of the

Bombay Punchayet funds and properties.

The judgment on this topic is being carried almost in its entirety barring those references which are technical, or of common knowledge to the community, or repetitions of statements made earlier. Minimal editing and stylistic corrections have been undertaken to facilitate smooth reading.

The first instalment gave an account of the origin and necessity of establishing the Punchayet as a governing body to regulate the internal affairs of the community. The nature and constitution of the earlier Punchayets was analyzed in the second instalment such that it establishes "beyond all doubt that the right of electing members of the Punchayet always was in the general body of the Parsi community of Bombay."

In this third instalment we learn how exigencies of administration necessitated the appointment of the first four trustees who assigned to themselves the power to nominate successor trustees, an authority later codified by the deed of 1851. However, as per the court ruling, "nothing that is subsequently done can validate an act which in its inception was invalid and unauthorized."

The original intention of the donors of immovable properties, analyzed in depth by Justice Daver, has been summarized and carried in the fourth instalment in parenthesis. *Parsiana* has also abridged the last part of the judgment that refers to the status of the defendants. The developments in the Punchayet after the judgment, presented in the article, have been taken from Sapur Desai's *History of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet: 1860-1960*.

It appears that, previous to the year 1823, there were no trustees. The members of the Punchayet or some or one of them used to act as the custodian of the funds of the community and the immoveable properties that existed then were also managed by them in conjunction with the other leaders of the community. In 1823, the funds amounted to about Rs 18,000, the bulk of which was in the possession of Wadiaji Hormusji Bomanji. Although he had agreed to pay six percent interest, he actually allowed nine percent interest on these charity funds. In November 1823, he desired to be relieved of the responsibility of keeping these funds any longer, and accordingly, on November 21, 1823, he addressed a letter to "the Akabars of the Punchayet and the entire anjuman" asking them to take away the moneys that were with him and deposit them elsewhere...

On this letter reaching Mr Framji Cowasji Banaji he, on the following day, writes a letter to his colleagues of the Punchayet suggesting that they should all meet and "should forthwith appoint three members so that those members for the period of one year should look after these moneys." In this letter... Framji Cowasji Banaji makes various other suggestions as to how these funds are to be deposited and how the trustees are to act, etc...

(At) the meeting of the whole Punchayet held on November 28, 1823, four of the members of the Punchayet — Wadiaji Hormusji Bomanji, Framji Cowasji Banaji, Wadiaji Nowroji Jamsetji and Jamsetji Jejeebhoy — were appointed "trustees for the purpose of taking care of the Punchayet moneys." They were to receive the moneys from Wadiaji Hormusji and deposit the same with Messrs Remington Crawford and Company, a well-known firm, then, of merchants in Bombay; and accordingly on that day they received from Wadiaji Hormusji the sum of Rs 15,863. It was at this meeting also resolved that all sundry sums of moneys that may come in from time to time were to remain with Framji Cowasji as a deposit. That out of those sums he was to meet sundry expenses, and when the sums so collected amounted to a thousand rupees he was to add the sum to the deposit account with Messrs Remington Crawford and Company.

In conformity with these resolutions, a sum of Rs. 18,062 was, in the beginning of December 1823, deposited with Messrs Remington Crawford and Co, who accepted the deposit on certain terms and agreed to pay five percent interest and not charge their usual commission on receipts and

payments, as appears from their letter to Jamsetji Jejeebhoy in reply to his letter to them... These documents show very clearly how trustees of the Parsi Punchayet Funds came into existence for the first time in 1823. These four gentlemen, although they were appointed trustees of the funds alone, seem to have managed all the immoveable properties belonging to the community. Previous to 1823, the immoveable properties belonging to the Parsi community according to Mr Modi were the Towers of Silence land at Malabar Hill with three Towers therein, namely, Mody's Tower, Maneckji Seth's Tower and the Anjuman's or Punchayet's Tower. There was on that land also a Sagdi in connection with the Towers, known as Maki Shroff's Sagdi and a Sagdiwalla house. Besides these, the

They had certainly no right whatever to confer on others the power which they themselves never had

only other property previous to 1823 was the Fort Nasakhana... The four trustees appointed in 1823 practically became trustees also of these immoveable properties.

Thus it seems to me to be established beyond all reasonable doubt that, according to ancient usage, the Punchayet was appointed by the whole anjuman, that is, the general body of the Parsi inhabitants of Bombay assembled in a meeting; that till 1823 the possession and management of the funds and properties of the anjuman was in the Punchayet; and that in 1823 they appointed four of themselves as trustees ostensibly of the funds but practically of both the funds and properties. This appears to have been done for their own convenience and for more effective control of the funds. The object of appointing trustees as appears from the documents before us, seems to be to have some duly authorized persons empowered to demand and get in many religious and charitable donations announced at uthamna or third day ceremonies of dead Parsis and on other auspicious and inauspicious occasions, which, in many instances, were never paid and became lost to the community.

Up to 1851, there was no formal docu-

ment, such as a trust deed evidencing the appointment of trustees vesting the funds and properties in them, empowering them to manage the same, and defining the trusts and the uses for which these funds were subscribed and to which these properties were dedicated. In 1850, the necessity for such a trust deed seems to have occurred to the members of the Punchayet, and a circular, dated July 12, 1850, was issued by the then secretary of the Punchayet addressed to the "shethias of the Punchayet." That circular states that it was "extremely necessary to make a trust deed of the funds of the Parsi Punchayet," but that there was a "difficulty in preparing the said trust deed in the names of 12 Adhikaries;" that therefore it was "intended to make the same in the name of five or seven sahebs" and these sahebs are invited to name the persons they wish to have appointed as trustees under the deed. The circular states that the trustees at that date were: Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy, Kt, Wadiaji Nowroji Jamsetji, Framji Cowasji Banaji, and Wadiaji Bomanji Hormusji.

It will thus be seen that out of the four persons appointed trustees for one year in 1823, three had continued to be trustees till 1850. The fourth trustee, Wadiaji Hormusji Bomanji, died on March 12, 1826, and, as appears from an exhibit, his son Bomanji Hormusji was appointed to "look into our Punchayet business." This document is a letter dated May 5, 1826, addressed to the Parsi Anjuman of Surat, by the "whole Anjuman" of Bombay. It is not quite clear from this whether Bomanji was appointed merely a member of the Punchayet or whether he was also appointed a trustee in his father's place, but from (another) exhibit it appears that he succeeded his father as a trustee and was acting as a trustee in 1850.

On October 22, 1851, another circular was issued and with it a draft deed of trust was circulated for approval of the members of the Punchayet.

On December 4, 1851, a trust deed of the funds and securities was executed. Framji Cowasji Banaji had, in the meanwhile, died on February 12, 1851 — after the date of the first circular and before the trust deed of 1851 was executed. By this deed, five members of the then Punchayet were appointed trustees of the funds and securities of the Parsi Punchayet.

One of the recitals of this deed is extremely important. It runs as follows: "Whereas no deed or deeds of trust has or have been executed concerning the said trust funds and securities, but it is now

considered desirable that certain new trustees should be appointed and that these presents should be executed for the purpose of distinctly defining their duties and of conferring all necessary powers for appointment of new trustees and for dealing with the said trust funds, etc."

It will be observed that here, for the first time, the idea of conferring upon the trustees the power of appointing new trustees takes birth. This idea is given effect to by a proviso in the deed, which runs thus: "Provided always and it is hereby agreed and declared between and by the parties to these presents that if the said trustees in and by these presents nominated or either of them or any future trustee or trustees to be appointed as hereinafter is mentioned shall die or be desirous of being discharged of and from, or refuse or decline or become incapable to act in the trusts or powers hereby in them reposed or to them given as aforesaid, then and in such case and when and so often as the same shall happen it shall be lawful for the surviving or continuing trustees or for the executors or administrators of the last surviving trustee by any deed or deeds, instrument or instruments in writing, signed and sealed and delivered by them, him or her from time to time to nominate, substitute, or

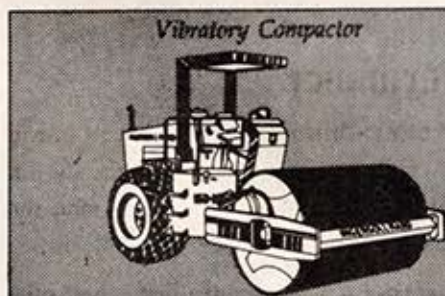
Up to 1851, there was no formal document evidencing the appointment of trustees

appoint one or more person or persons to be a trustee or trustees in the stead or place of the trustee or trustees so dying or being abroad or desiring to be discharged or refusing, declining or becoming incapable to act as aforesaid."

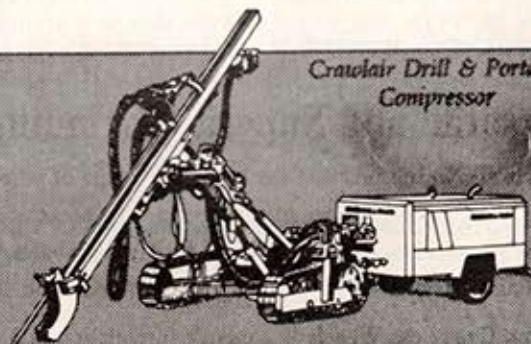
I have set out this clause in the deed of 1851 at full length to show what wide and comprehensive powers are conferred by the deed on the trustees to fill up a vacancy in their ranks whenever one occurs. This is the foundation of the defendants' case and this is the provision in the deed which the plaintiffs most vigorously attack. The signatories of the deed are six persons, presumably members of the then Panchayet, and these six people appoint five of them-

selves trustees of the funds and securities belonging to the community, and purport to confer complete and absolute power on these five individuals and their successors to fill up all vacancies amongst themselves. Had these six persons the right to confer such powers and had these five persons the right to arrogate to themselves the powers which this deed purports to confer on them? The answer is obviously in the negative, and even Mr Strangman, who argued this part of the defendants' case with great confidence, was constrained to admit that if a suit had been filed in or before 1851, the court would have granted a scheme for the nomination of new trustees as vacancies should arise.

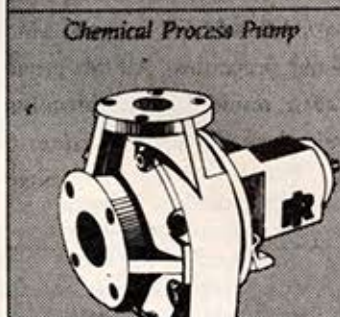
It is possible that this power of appointment was inserted in the deed with the best of intentions as was argued before us, but that cannot affect the question as to the legality or validity of such an act. The members of the Panchayet owed their existence to the anjuman — they derived their authority from the anjuman. They had, in the first instance, no right whatever to appoint trustees in any manner binding on the community. The appointment, in the first instance, was clearly for the purposes of their own convenience. The mere appointment of trustees was, in a sense, the



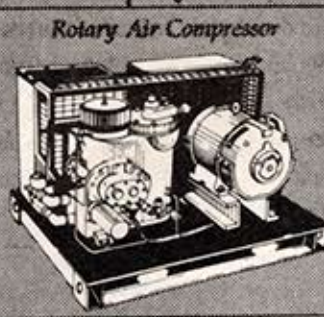
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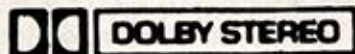
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delegation of their own duties to a smaller number of their body. That may be justifiable; but they had not a shadow of a right to confer on those whom they elected the power of for ever excluding everybody else from having a voice in the future election of trustees. The insertion of this power in the deed is wholly unjustifiable. The members of the Punchayet were the appointees of the community. The community never conferred on them any powers with regard to its funds and properties other than those of managing the same

**The members of
the Punchayet...
derived their
authority from the
anjuman**

while they served on the Punchayet. The community evidently was never consulted when they appointed some of themselves as trustees. They had no right or power to appoint their own successors in the Punchayet itself. They had themselves no legal right to appoint trustees of property that belonged to the community, and they had certainly no right whatever to confer on others the power which they themselves never had...

Let me here examine the arguments addressed to the court by the defendants' counsel in support of his contention that the defendants are validly appointed trustees of the funds and securities. We have seen that in 1823, when trustees were first appointed, the funds amounted to about Rs 18,000. In 1851, by means of additions and accretions to the existing funds and the creation of new funds, the amount in the hands of the trustees had increased to a lakh- and-a-half. This sum belonged to 15 different funds which were in existence at the date of the deed of 1851... With further additions and accretions of interest, etc., the amount to the credit of these 15 funds at present is somewhere about six-and-a-half lakhs of rupees. Mr Strangman argued that the worst that the court can do is to declare that the defendants are not validly appointed trustees as to these six-and-a-half lakhs of rupees, but as to the rest he said, with considerable emphasis, "the court can't touch us." What is the rest? and why can't the court touch the defendants as to the rest?

To be continued

With
best wishes
from

**Farah
&
Tanya**

To teach, more than entertain

Dina Mehta

The Zarathushtrian Saga by Tina Mehta. Published in 1995 by Writers Workshop, 162/92 Lake Gardens, Calcutta 700045. Pp: 711. Price: Rs 400.

In *The Zarathushtrian Saga* author Tina Mehta has developed her memories of a traditional Parsi childhood in India into a whopping novel. She makes no bones about her reason for writing it: she is concerned that a lazy community is losing touch with its customs and religious beliefs and the novel is her ingenious way to make it conversant with its own traditions.

From this anxiety has emerged a work of fiction which is overshadowed by its purpose; and while that purpose is laudable, one wishes that some of the instructive passages propagating the faith had been more skillfully edited to make this a less preachy and wordy book. The shorter novel, I have no doubt, would have sent out a stronger message.

So this novel is the fruit of deliberation, and perhaps should not be located on a scale of fictive merit, but in terms of its avowed aims. Yet the writing is sometimes so fluent and lucid, some of the characters so alive, credible and sharply differentiated (e.g. Grandfather, Banoomai, Hormazd) that one wishes the novelist had allowed her creativity full play and not clipped her own wings with conscientious dissertations on ancient concepts and rituals and taboos — all of which, one suspects, she not only tacitly approves of but hopes to perpetuate forever.

When the story is not so bogged down and encumbered by recitals of prehistoric exploits and the *raison d'être* of customs and ceremonies, it appears to flow naturally from the vicissitudes of the dramatic personae introduced by her and not from a predetermined schema of a plot. Which is how good fiction is written.

Mehta begins her story in the 1940s. The world is at war. On the very first page a door slams and a father walks out on his teary wife and seven-year-old daughter.

The child, Pouruchista (named after Zarathushtra's own daughter), finds solace in a lamp-lit picture of the Prophet, but her mother never gets over the pain of abandonment. Pouruchista goes to a Catholic school where she has learnt about Jesus whose father, too, seems to have ignored his son's agony. So, where does all the suffering come from? Who's responsible for the evil in the world? And Pouruchista is taught early by her



Tina Mehta: propagating beliefs and customs

grandfather (head of a teeming family and custodian of the household fire, *dadgah*), to differentiate between acts which are Ahuric (initiated by God and therefore good) and those which are Ahrimanic (instigated by Satan and therefore evil).

The novel traces the fortunes of Pouruchista from childhood to courtship (her heart is broken by her cousin Hormazd who takes to drugs), to marriage, motherhood and life in England with her husband Viraf (Hormazd's twin). The saga continues into succeeding generations with the experiences of Pouruchista's daughter and then of her grandchildren, and dwells on the adjustments needed to maintain the Zoroastrian way of life in a modern, alien setting.

Throughout the narrative the characters take sides in the ongoing battle between the polarized forces of good and evil. Taking drugs is Ahrimanic, melancholy is Ahrimanic, vegetarianism is Ahrimanic, illnesses are Ahrimanic, etc; and when Pouruchista is in shock over her first kiss, Grandpa, the cure-all metaphysician, dusts off Ahriman with the soothing strokes of an

eagle's feather and accompanying chants from the *Ardibehesht Yasht*. This method of banishing malefic forces is based on the legend of abandoned prince Zal who is nurtured by an eagle until his repentant father recalls him and makes him king. In times of distress Zal used the feather and the prayer and to this day, comments the author, "the recitation of the *Ardibehesht Yasht* using a clean handkerchief instead of a feather to whisk away fevers and alien ills is deemed by the faithful to be most efficacious." And so the trauma of the first kiss is exorcised!

While it is acceptable today that myths unfold and explain the world view of a people, and that allegories and parables underpin and shore up the faith and resilience of a community, these must be reinterpreted in the light of reason and knowledge by each new generation "lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

For example, take menstruation and its attendant taboos. Because the fiend Jahl, the story goes, was so full of envy of women being able to procreate, "she cursed them." Since then women feel cursed each month, and in that unclean state they are segregated and forbidden to participate in religious ceremonies or sometimes even in their routine housework. In ancient days the enforced retreat from housekeeping once a month for women who did exhausting physical work must have been a welcome one. That made sense. But to still think of a female biological function — ovulation — as unclean or Ahrimanic or as a pollutant, is to acquiesce in the inferior status accorded to women in the patriarchal scheme of things. Mehta appears to have no regrets on that score.

By reacting to such taboos and other questionable beliefs and customs as an orthodox traditionalist, Pouruchista (the author's mouthpiece?) appears to defend them even when she does not uphold them in toto. And indeed, at times she comes perilously close to being a bigot. Fortu-

nately for her, her zeal is tempered by the counsel of the more liberal Viraf; and challenged by her own daughter Tushnamaity when she falls in love with a juddin, the Jewish Dr Joseph Levi, a university professor researching ancient Zoroastrian texts. It is interesting that it is Uncle Hormazd, the black sheep of the family, married to the American Jo (she helps him kick his drug habit and practically saves his life) who advises Tushnamaity not to marry outside the community. She had hoped to hear Uncle say that "his marriage had worked out well and it could be the same for her and Joseph and that the wisdom of *khaetvadath* (marriage with your own kind) belonged to the past." But his answer had been: don't. Why? "Alas, the world hasn't arrived at that happy stage when we can mix and match our beliefs and live happily ever after." But when will that stage come, if the first bold step in that direction is not taken?

Yet the author is not unaware that "the old order changeth." At first it was thought preferable, she tells us, to marry your own cousin (before medical science warned against the dangers of inbreeding). That was stretched to include the union of like-minded Parsis. So why should it be Ahrimanic to stretch that to the "mix and match" of like-minded people?

While too much space is taken up in the novel to edify co-religionists in an unabashedly didactic manner, the sincerity of the effort is evident in all the 711 pages. And what shines through the verbiage is that good for goodness's sake is excellent counsel and infinitely worth perpetuating. That there is something so joyous about this faith! That it is life-affirming and compassionate and contemporaneous in its concern for the health of the planet we inhabit. And that it is perennial because of its dedication to good thoughts, good words, good deeds.

Prayers made poetic

Hormazdyar Dalal

Jarthostni Jindagi Samjati Bandagi by Noshir Dabu. Second edition published in 1996 by Homi, Bombay (author's address: Gandhi Block, Parsi Sanatorium, Ashram Road, Ahmedabad 380009). Pp: 92. Price: Rs 20.

Quick on the heels of *Phool Chhab -- Guru Prasad*, we have *Jarthostni Jindagi Samjati Bandagi* from Noshir Dabu.

As mentioned by the author in the introduction, the book is written with the noble

intention of acquainting a section of the community — boys, girls and a few elders, too, who claim to be ignorant of their mother tongue, Gujarati — with Jarthosti prayers. Since they do not know the alphabet of the language, they cannot read it, and subsequently are unable to say their prayers from the prayer books printed in Gujarati. Again, because of this primary handicap, they do not even comprehend the meaning of their kusti and other prayers.

To solve such a knotty problem to some extent, Dabu has ventured to versify the Avestan prayers of *Ashem Vohu*, *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*, *Kemna Mazda*, *Jashame-Avanghahe Mazda*, and some others. Even *Khorshed*, *Meher*, *Atash*, *Mahabokhtar*, *Niyaesh* and *Ardibeheshi*, *Vanant*, *Hom*, *Behram*, *Fravardin* and other Yashts are rendered by him in verses which the author believes can be sung. In all, 40 versified prayers have been listed by Dabu. In his own words, he has made "a humble effort to capture emotions into words."

The first section of the work covers events in the life of Prophet Zarathushtra, while the second part deals with the *sareh* or commentary on the prayers.

The poetic form has been employed by Dabu because he thinks that ignorant souls will be readily attracted to their faith by it, and also because the essence of the prayers would be easily understood.

This reviewer is reminded of a new wave that had swept over a small section of this community in Bombay in the mid '50s and '60s. Zarthosti prayers were then recited with music on the organ by a group of Parsis in a small agiary at Churchgate. The movement ebbed away when the originator of the wave migrated to the USA. Subsequently, however, it picked up again when a few musicians and their groups of singers came out with cassettes of some of the prayers, which are now sold at a few places in Bombay and elsewhere.

Anyway, I hold Dabu's contention to be fallacious. Its premise is flawed. For one, if some Zoroastrians are unable to read Gujarati, how will they read or sing these summarized Gujarati verses presented by him? And two, those who know the language, do not need them, as they would not like to substitute the original Avestan prayers with Dabu's ineffectual verses.

It is a pity that the descendants of the ancient Iranian immigrants have come to such a pass that they have lost touch with the Gujarati in which they could once easily express their thoughts. On landing on the western coast of Gujarat, the Parsis had promised to the then ruler of Sanjan to

Later the Parsis unwisely pursued the British way of life, and the English language

adopt the local way of life, including the language. They kept their word to a large extent. Not only did they learn Gujarati, they also acquired proficiency in Sanskrit, apart from Persian and other languages in which they wrote very useful works.

It is a matter of pride that Parsis are not only pioneers of Gujarati journalism, but are also the pioneering authors of a number of prose and poetic works. The names of Behramji Malabari and Ardeshir Khabardar are outstanding in the history of Gujarati literature along with the names of Fardunji Marzban, Kaikhushru Kabraji, Pijam and other journalists, writers and playwrights. Later the Parsis unwisely pursued the British way of life, and the English language. They are now proud to be proficient in French, German or Russian languages, but consider it below their dignity to learn a few simple languages of their adopted motherland.

One wonders how many Parsis know that apart from Gujarati, our Zoroastrian prayers are available today in English, Hindi and Marathi, with scholarly explanations. Where then, is the question of saying our daily prayers without understanding their meaning or, for that matter, not being able to say them at all?

Dr Irach Taraporevala's publications of our prayers are well-known to the faithful. They are easily available. Similarly, other Oriental scholars have also published them with faithful interpretations in Hindi and Marathi.

The best work is the *Khordeh Avesta*, translated and transliterated into English by the late Prof Ervad Maneck Furdoonji Kanga. It was published by the trustees of the Parsi Punchayet Funds and Properties, Bombay 1993.

The question therefore, is of making sincere efforts to know and understand one's own prayers in the right spirit, rather than looking for shortcuts like following the prosaic, mediocre versification presented in *Jarthostni Jindagi Samjati Bandagi*, or playing jazzy tapes produced by dubious musicians. At best, such tapes are good enough to be played for creating a pleasant atmosphere on auspicious days.

MILESTONES

The age of Zoroastrian brides (as listed in this issue) ranged between 23 and 25 years, the arithmetic mean (the total number of individual ages divided by the total number of brides) being 23 years. The corresponding figures for the grooms were 29 and 32 years, averaging at 30 years.

There were 89 Zoroastrians who were consigned to the Towers of Silence in Bombay in September as against 17 births. Heart disease claimed 33 lives, 12 of whom were 80 years and above. Fifteen deaths were attributed to pneumonia and lung disease while cancer and old age and general debility took a toll of seven victims each. Five patients succumbed to kidney failure and three each to septicemia and brain disease. Two Zoroastrians each fell prey to hypertension, head injuries and high blood pressure. Uremia, diabetes and liver disease, dementia (deterioration of the mental faculties), Alzheimer's disease, gastro-intestinal bleeding, anemia, malaria, hypertrophy (excessive development of an organ) and atherosclerosis (deposition of fatty substances in the arteries) were the isolated cases registered in September. In the case of one death the coroner's report was still pending. "Death due to multiple injuries" was the cause mentioned in the case of

another death. Two stillborn babies were lost to the community. The age range fluctuated between 50 and 100 years. The Zoroastrian life expectancy at birth, in Bombay in September, was 77 years.

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. This information is not always complete or consistent: we are unable to carry data from areas where the anjumans do not furnish the particulars; the birth figures for Bombay are supplied by four hospitals — births in suburban hospitals and private nursing homes are not included unless individuals send us information together with a copy of the birth certificate. There may be an inadvertent repetition of names in the marriage list when a civil marriage precedes 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 *Zenovic* and *Jimmy Vazifdar* on September 4, 1996
A girl, *Ayesha*, to *Meher* and *Noshir Marfatia*, sister to *Zarir*; September 6
A girl to *Nawaz* and *Dinyar Medhora*; September 7
A boy to *Mahrukh* and *Hoshe-dar Cooper*; September 14
A girl to *Nilofer* and *Maneck Daruwala*; September 14
A girl to *Jasmine* and *Aspandiar Kharas*; September 14
A boy to *Yasmin* and *Sarosh Chothia*; September 18
A girl, *Niyosha*, to *Parinaz* and *Minoo Gandhi*, sister to *Berezida*; September 18
A girl, *Jenai*, to *Yasmin* and *Rummy Khan*, sister to *Sheroy*; September 23
A girl to *Dinaz* and *Dinyar Jehani*; September 24
A boy to *Kamal* and *Manzar*

Ajmerwala; September 25
A boy to *Daulat* and *Goshtash Jamasbi*; September 25
A boy to *Pervin* and *Ratan Mistry*; September 26
A girl to *Yasmin* and *Percy Karkaria*; September 27
A girl to *Tanaz* and *Sarosh Patel*; September 28
A girl to *Dilnaz* and *Hormuzd Mogralia*; September 30
A girl to *Roshni* and *Berzin Sethna*; September 30

MARRIED

Senaz Sam Irani of Poona and *Berzee Pestonji Damkevalla*; September 15
Rukshana Jehangir Amalsadiwala of Surat and *Jamshed Dara Davur*; September 21
Zarin Hoshang Daruwala of Surat and *Percy Feroke Rustomji*; September 29

DIED

Tehmina Minocher Amroliwala (86), residing at B, Merwan Bldg, Grant Rd, 400007; August 31
Perin Hormasji Arajanwalla (86), 88, Walkeshwar Rd, 400006; August 31
Dina Faramji Patel (74), Fakhri Manzil, Bhaji Gali, Tardeo, 400007; August 31
Dinbai Fakirji Vajifdar (93), Wadia Agiary Compd, Dr S. S. Rao Rd, Lalbaug, 400012; August 31
Hoshang Dhanjishaw Baldawala (87), 7, Cuffe Parade, Colaba, 400005; September 1
Framroze Bomanji Mistry (90), C, Botawala Bldg, Tardeo, 400007; September 1
Piroja Maneck Barsivala (80), 489, J. Shankerseth Rd, Girgaum, 400002; September 2
Jangoo Dorabji Bhada (73), G/1, Cusrow Baug, S. B. Rd, 400039; September 2
Nergish Bomanshah Nadirshaw (63), Room 33, 189, Hirabai Petit Bldg, Opp Grant Rd Stn (E), 400007; September 2
Shera Dhanjishaw Pesikaka (80), B/30, Godrej Baug, Off Nepean Sea Rd, 400036; September 3
Dossibai (Dolly) Rustamji Chanda (87), Wadia Hse, 22, Hughes Rd, 400007; September 4
Bakhtaver Jehangir Irani (80), Shirin Mans, Sleater Rd, 400007; September 5
Arnavaz Sorabji Bhaisa (50), Crompton Greaves Ltd, Dr E. Moses Rd, Worli, 400018; September 6
Dhanjishaw Fakirshaw Bharucha (78), Multani Bldg, Khambatta Lane, Khetwadi, 400004; September 6
Shavak Sorabjee Vakharia (80), 803/D, Ghatia Mans, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Dadar, 400014; September 6
Rustom Jamshed Dadachanji (69), C/o F. D. Daruwala, Tehmi Ter, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Dadar, 400014; September 7
Aspi Khurshed Irani (79), 21, India Hse No 4, Kemp's Corner, 400036; September 8
Hoshang Merwan Irani (67), C/o Firdos Irani, E/3, 1/2, Cidco Clny, Sector no 18, New Panvel, 410206; September 8

Ami Burjor Bhagwaghar (68), Shop no 21, Maharashtra Hindu Hotel, Govandi (W), 400046; September 9
Shirin Kaikhushroo Daruwala (86), 739, Cama Bldg, Rd no 5, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 9
Khodadad Sheriar Irani (73), Merwan Mans, J. V. Rd, Opp Ghatkopar Rly Stn, Ghatkopar (W), 400086; September 9
Purviz Naval Barsivala (65), 616, West View (Out Hse), Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 10
Khorshed Shapurji Bulsara (76), 3/2, Petit Sanatorium, Cumballa Hill, Kemp's Corner, 400036; September 10
Guloo Minoos Cooper (53), 135/B, Sindhi Clny, Chembur, 400071; September 10
Aloo Mehervanji Karanjia (89), 724, Dr Dinshaw Master Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 11
Phiroze Faramroze Kavina (78), A/23, Durlabh Bhavan, Jalbhai St, 400004; September 11
Adi Shavuxsha Batlivala (80), Gudder Mans, Princess St, 400002; September 12
Phiroze Rustomji Kerawalla (83), 2, Marine Chmbs, Marine Lines, 400020; September 12
Bachan Kaikhushroo Mehta (85), Alpawalla Bldg, M. M. C. Rd, Mahim, 400016; September 12
Naju Pesi Paghdiwalla (62), 4, Marine Chmbs, Sir Veer Thackeray Rd, 400020; September 12
Dinshaw Ardeshir Merchant (80), Casa Cama, Gandhigram, Juhu Beach, 400049; September 13
Bomi Framroze Minbatiwala (70), Rubans Apts, Setalvad Lane, 30, Nepean Sea Rd, 400036; September 13
Mani Jimmy Patel (62), G/8, Nowroz Baug, Lalbaug, 400012; September 13
Baby of Pervin H. Variava (stillborn), D-2/25, S. B. Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri, 400058; September 14
Phiroze Rustamji Bhesania (58), 4/A, Memorial Block, Marzban Clny, Gilder Lane, Lamington Rd, 400008; September 15
Burjorji (Buji) Bapuji Chinoy

(74), Dina Lodge, Garden Rd, Apollo Recl, 400039; September 15
Khorshed Khodaram Irani (50), Piroja Mans, Grant Rd (W), 400007; September 15
Meherwan Dinshaw Irani (64), 14, Bina Apts, Ceasar Rd, Amboli, Andheri (W), 400058; September 15
Piroja Dosabhai Sukhia (100), 788, Avanbai Mans, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 15
Baby girl of Benaifer Khusrav Bajan (stillborn), B/2, Sai Ashish, Turtulian Lane, Off Peter Dias Rd, Bandra, 400050; September 16
Banoobai Framroze Dapoliwalla (71), 13, Dana-wall Bldg, Ganesh Lane, Lalbaug, 400012; September 16
Minoo Nadirsha Jalnawalla (86), 3, Doctor Bldg No 2, Panthaky Baug, Andheri (E), 400069; September 16
Naju Jehangir Karbhary (76), 9, Tata Bldg, Dhunbaiwadi, Dadabhai Rd, Vile Parle (W), 400056; September 16
Rusi Furdoonji Kutar (61), F/2, Daswani Co-op Hsg Soc Ltd, 4

Bglws, Andheri (W), 400053; September 16
Hoshang Pirojsha Mirza (76), Q/2, S. B. Bharucha Baug, S. V. Rd, Andheri (W), 400058; September 16
Banoobai Dinshawji Mistry (74), 15, Daruwalla Hse, Ardeshir Dady Cross Lane, Khetwadi, 400004; September 16
Savak Cooverji Wadia (79), F. S. Parukh Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; September 16
Nergish Edulji Daruwalla (65), Batliwalla Villa, 44, East Sleater Rd, 400007; September 17
Pesi Pirosha Dubash (76), A/1, Florida, Mount Mary Rd, Bandra, 400050; September 17
Sheroo Darabsha Mistry (66), 422/A, Dubash Bldg, Novelty Cinema, Grant Rd, 400007; September 17
Neville Dadi Mody (56), B. Yusuf Mans, Khetwadi Back Rd, Grant Rd, 400004; September 17
Adi Eruchshaw Tantra (73), 645, Najoo Villa, Khareghat Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014;

September 18
Maneck Ardesar Vazifdar (92), Mistry Bldg, 2nd Marine St, Dhobitalao, 400002; September 18
Rohinton Jehangir Bharucha (58), 215, Amroliwalla Hse, N. M. Joshi Marg, Lower Parel, 400013; September 19
Roda Barjor Karkaria (64), Room 12, 209/F, Opp Gamadia Clny, Tardeo, 400007; September 19
Bahadur Savaksha Kapadia (74), 12/8, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; September 20
Perin Minoo Madan (77), 448, TPS III, 14th Rd, Bandra, 400050; September 20
Khorshed Dady Mistry (84), 607, Sohrab Hse, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Dadar, 400014; September 20
Freny Aspundiar Aga (90), 787, Bhagat Manor, Jame Jamshed Rd, Parsi Clny, Dadar, 400014; September 21
Alamai Bapuji Golwalla (80), 2/7, Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd, Byculla, 400027; September 21
Darabshaw Dhunjishaw Homavazir (86), F. S. Parukh

Dharamshalla, Hughes Rd, 400007; September 21
Tehmi Kaikhushroo Lilaoowalla (87), C/o Hector Mehta, Empress Court, 126, Backbay Recl, 400020; September 21
Jini Nariman Dastoor (68), 17, Kanga Bldg, Dr Ambedkar Rd, Dadar, 400014; September 22
Arnavaz Dhunjishaw Lam (75), 222/E, 4-B, Rustom Palace, Tardeo Rd, 400007; September 22
Sam Sorabji Master (67), 9, Malcolm Baug, Jogeshwari (W), 400102; September 22
Paterasp Nariman Vazifdar (68), 14, Tarachand Bldg, Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd, 400007; September 22
Khorshed Shiavax Bhamgara (72), 401, Silver Cascade, Mount Mary Rd, Bandra, 400050; September 23
Tehmurush Sheriarji Daruwalla (74), Munsiff Bldg, Captain Clny, Tardeo Rd, 400034; September 23
Behram Vafadar Irani (87), 21, Anil Bhuvan, Jerbai Wadia Rd, Parel, 400012; September 23
Dara Jal Pagdiwala (61), 2, Peace Castle, Dominic Clny,

**With Best Wishes
 from**

Mr Rusy M. Shroff, M.B.E.

and

Mrs Purviz R. Shroff

Orleri, Malad (W), 400064;
September 23
Jehangir Eruchshaw Palkhivala
(82), 604/B, Laxmi Sadan, Dr
Ambedkar Rd, Dadar, 400014;
September 23
Dhumbai Shapurji Ragi (90), 61,
Punita, S. B. Rd, 400005;
September 23
Bapsy Rustomji Batliwala (89),
14, Dharbhanga Mans, Carmi-
chael Rd, 400026; September 24
Roda Keki Dordi (64), R/29,
Godrej Baug, Off Nepean Sea
Rd, 400026; September 24
Jamshed Cawasji Sanjana (79),
Patel Agiary, S. V. Rd, Andheri
(W), 400056; September 24
Armaity Sorab Dalal (74),
26A/31, Takshila, Mahakali Rd,
Andheri (E), 400069;
September 25
Minoo Rustomji Bilimoria (74),
H/2, Tarachand Bldg, Captain
Clny, Tardeo, 400034;
September 26
Noshir Jehangirji Damania
(57), 12/11, Rustom Baug,
Victoria Rd, Byculia, 400027;
September 26
Khorshed Pirojshaw Gadialli
(85), Repon Bldg, Balaram St,
Grant Rd, 400007; September 26
Banubai Burjorji Jesia (92),
20/7, Panthaki Baug, Sir M. V.
Rd, Andheri (E), 400069;
September 26
Kensa Dadabhoy Wadia (81),
10, Heera Meher, Wodehouse
Rd, Colaba, 400005;
September 26
Phiroz Sohrabji Kapadia (86),
Ratti-Villa, Motibai St, Tardeo,
400007; September 27
Jamshed Hirjibhoy Bharucha
(86), Shanti Kuteer, Marine
Drive, 400020; September 28
Perin Kaikhushru Dariwala
(54), C/16, Bldg no 2, Saksaria
Compd, Gollanji Hill Rd,
Parel Tank Rd, 400012;
September 28
Pesi Savaksha Olpadwala (76),
15, Wadia Block, Old
Khareghat Clny, Hughes Rd,
400007; September 28
Hirabai Jamshedji Sanjana
(80), 22/A, Wellington Ter,
Wellington St, Dhobitalao,
400002; September 28,
Dina Dinyar Madan (92), 8,
Lady Dorab Tata Bldg no 3, S.
V. Rd, Bandra, 400050;
September 29
Kali Darabsha Nania (63), 5,
Rustom Baug, Victoria Rd,
Byculia, 400027; September 29
Homi Rustomji Dadina (76),

TOTALS FOR 1996						
	Bombay		India		World	
	A	B	A	B	A	B
BORN						
Boys	5	74	—	6	4	18
Girls	12	69	1	3	7	21
MARRIED						
Parsi	3	130	1	4	2	10
Intercommunal	—	17 [^]	1	4*	1	2*
DIED						
CONSIGNED						
Males	46	351	4	73	5	44 ^o
Females	47	378	7	61	4	32
CREMATED						
Males	—	—	—	—	—	—
Females	—	—	—	—	—	—

A: Total numbers in this issue
B: Running totals for 1996 (February-March 1996-September 1996 issues)

[^] Males married out — 9 * Males — 2 * Males — 0
Females married out — 8 Females — 2 Females — 2

^o Overseas deaths are listed in the consigned column as Parsiana does not have a breakup of those cremated.

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

692, Goolbai Chinoy Home,
Dr Dinshaw Master Rd, Parsi
Clny, Dadar, 400014;
September 30
Jal Kaikhusroo Hathikhanawala
(76), 34, Jhaveri Bldg, Opp
Albless Baug, Raja Ram
Mohan Roy Rd, 400004;
September 30
Jamshed Sorabji Khambata
(76), A/26, Nowroz Baug,
Lalbag, 400012; September 30
Alamai Sorabji Panthaki (91),
c/o Noshir M. Patel, 16,
Dubash Bldg, Gamadia
Clny, Tardeo, 400007;
September 30
Shavak Pestonji Patel (84),
Lyndewoole Hse, B. Petit
Rd, 400026; September 30

CALCUTTA
BORN
A girl, *Roshnee*, to *Farida*
and *Kersoo Indorewalla*;
May 2

MARRIED
Anita Rao and *Jessie Kanga*;
April 13
Jarin Chaudhuri (née Engineer)
and *Behram D. Jila*;
September 16

DIED
Goolbai Ruttonshaw Hilloo,

mother of *Homai Nariman*
Gyara, Mehru Kersi Sutaria,
Perin Dinsha Munshi and Hilla;
September 16
Loujee Katrak, husband of
Dolly and father of Zarin;
September 19

SURAT
DIED
Rodaben Fakirji Ichchporia
(71), Village Ichapore, Dist
Surat, 395003; September 7
Silla Jamshedji Bhurucha (82), I.
P. Mission Compd, Muglisara,
395003; September 8
Jalamai Dosabhai Rao (67),
Sugam Soc, Adajan Patia Rd,
395003; September 11
Jer Firoze Crawford (83),
Nariman Home and Infirmary,
Shahpore, 395003;
September 12
Minoo Darabsha Khambata
(82), Malhar Apt, Athwa Lines,
395001; September 13
Alanmai Maneksha Anklesaria
(71), Vejalpur, Parsiwad,
Bharuch, 392001; September 14
Pestanji Firoshaw Darbari
(69), Sayed Manzil, Kugi
Medan, Gopipura, 395001;
September 18
Ketty Ardeshtir Bhathna (87),
Anand Mangal Apt, Uymno
St, 395003; September 87

Darasha Ratansha Ghadiyali
(66), Mota Parsiwad, Valsad,
396001; September 24

AUSTRALIA New South Wales

BORN
A boy, *Rohahn*, to *Mahrukh* and
Raj Mundul; June 25
A girl, *Jayden*, to *Hilla* and
David Knight, sister to *Ranelle*;
August 9
A girl, *Priyanka*, to *Preeti* and
Keki Mazrai; September 7

DIED
Arnavaz Kerr, wife of Sam and
mother of Elizabeth and Naaz;
August 20
Hoshang Tantra, husband of
Mahrukh and father of *Jamshid*
and *Arzan*; September 7

CANADA Ontario

MARRIED
Maneck Akhuna and *Jamshed*
Homiar; April 27

Toronto

MARRIED
Michelle Engineer, daughter of
Roshan and *Yezdi* and *Ron*
Patel; September 1

Compiled by Roxana A. Driver

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